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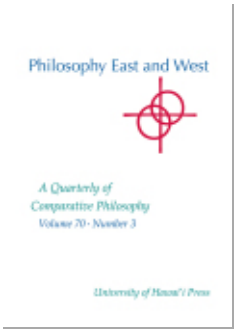

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CULTIVATING WEEDS: THE PLACE OF SOLITUDE IN THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHIES OF IBN BĀJJA AND NIETZSCHE

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> To live alone one must be a beast or god—says Aristotle. Leaving out the third case: one must be both—a philosopher.
>
> Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, "Maxims," 3

In this article I examine the central role that solitude plays in the political thought of Ibn Bājja (d. 533 A.H./1139 C.E.) and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900). These two thinkers come from disparate milieus, are separated by a variety of historical, linguistic, cultural and theologico-political boundaries, and espouse seemingly antipodal worldviews.[1] Yet they share certain concerns about the proper place of the philosopher that set them apart from their respective contemporaries and link them as kindred thinkers. One way to illuminate this kinship is by reading Ibn Bājja's *Governance of the Solitary* and Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* against the background of Plato's *Republic*. For both texts embrace the Platonic ideal of the philosopher-ruler, yet ultimately postpone the task of founding a new aristocratic political order based on the marriage of power and wisdom. Instead, they aim at cultivating an autonomous regime of the solitary individual, so that anomalous philosophical natures arising spontaneously in sick cities can flourish and keep philosophy alive in unpromising times and places.

In the following discussion, I will focus in particular on these regimens of solitude and their potential bearing on the traditional ambitions of Platonic political philosophy. Strategic withdrawal from society can be understood as a kind of *askēsis* or spiritual practice aimed at the health, cultivation, and transfiguration of the self.[2] It is a vital aspect of philosophy, understood as a 'way of life' rather than simply a set of logically coherent true propositions about the world. As Pierre Hadot and others have, I think, persuasively shown, the traditional understanding of philosophy as a way of life is a rich one that we late moderns would do well to recuperate.[3] In particular, I think there is much we can retrieve from Ibn Bājja and Nietzsche's unapologetic embrace of this long-ignored ascetic technique, especially as regards philosophy's relation to the political. At first glance, it would seem that for both Ibn Bājja and Nietzsche, the value of solitude remains tethered to residual Platonic hopes about the possibility of future

legislator-prophets and the establishment of a new society founded on their beneficent dispensation of philosophical wisdom. Yet I believe a closer reading of their key texts throws such ambitions into question. As I hope to show, the political philosophies of Ibn Bājja and Nietzsche point us toward a reappraisal of the virtues of solitude, one that finally gives up trying to vindicate them in terms of their political utility and raises the question whether philosophers should abandon venerable conceits about edifying and improving society and opt instead for the apolitical contemplative life.

The Tension between the Philosopher and the City

According to Cicero, Socrates was "the first to call philosophy down from the heavens and set her in the cities of men."[4] There have been those who have wondered, however, whether this was altogether a beneficial thing and whether the polis is ultimately the most appropriate place for philosophy. Even in Platonic dialogues one sees clearly the corrupting influence that feverish cities have on philosophical natures. Perhaps more dramatically, one can see the corrosive effect that the philosopher's truth-seeking has on the laws, myths, traditions, and inherited values of the city-state—hence the city's long-standing animus against the philosopher.[5] Socrates' solution to this tension, in the *Republic* at least, is to distinguish between "true" philosophers and their useless or vicious imitations, resituating the former from the periphery of society to the very center of Kallipolis, the "fine and noble city," as its rightful rulers.[6] In this way he and his interlocutors seek to establish the ideal coincidence of philosophical wisdom and political power necessary for a healthy and just city.

But if the healthy city requires philosophers, philosophers do not necessarily require a healthy city. Indeed, Socrates speaks in the *Republic* of philosophical natures *(philosophōn phuseōn)* that "come to be" *(gignomenoi)* of their own accord in sick cities.[7] In such cases, "it is fitting for them not to participate in the labors of those cities, for they grow up spontaneously *[automatoi]* against the will of the regime in each; and a nature that grows by itself *[autophues]* and doesn't owe its rearing *[trophēn]* to anyone has justice on its side when it is not eager to pay off the price of rearing to anyone" (*Rep.* 520b). More importantly, they must keep to themselves and not allow themselves to be contaminated by the city's values: in effect, they are free to pursue the *bios philosophos* and avoid the *bios politikos*.[8] Not so, however, in the fine and noble city. There, after a lengthy and ambitious state-sponsored education culminating in a vision of the Good, the philosophical natures will be compelled to go back down into the city in order to bring to bear what they have learned and *realize* it, to whatever extent possible (*Rep.* 519c–d). As we know from the cave allegory, not to mention Socrates' fate and Plato's own experiences in Syracuse with Dionysius II, this is not a pleasant prospect.[9] Understandably,

the philosophers would rather live a life of quiet, noetic contemplation—optimally among the few, but if necessary alone—than return to the shadowy cave-world of the ignorant many.

Thus, as a kind of sop thrown to the philosopher-rulers, Socrates promises that after they have discharged their civic duty they will be allowed to return to their contemplative life, this time on the "Isles of the Blessed," while new guardians take over and pay back their own debt to the city (*Rep.* 540b; cf. 519c).[10] Whether the philosophers ever finally liberate themselves from the tyranny of the city hinges on whether we understand this concession as the prospect of a happy retirement or simply a blithe recognition of their eventual death.[11] We might say, then, that behind the Platonic utopia of Kallipolis (the city in which the tension between philosophy and the city is ostensibly resolved) lies perhaps an even more improbable utopia: the paradisiacal Isles of the Blessed, in which the philosophers are actually free to pursue their preferred way of life, ostensibly the best one available to human beings.

The ideal of the 'philosopher-king' sketched out here has a long and influential history, running from Plato's *Republic* through Greek and Hellenistic thought into late antiquity, over to the medieval Islamic and Jewish philosophical traditions, and then to the European Renaissance.[12] With the advent of modern political philosophy and the subsequent Enlightenment, the Platonic influence went underground, but was intermittently embraced by anomalous philosophers whose thought sometimes ran against the grain of modernity. As a rule, thinkers in the Platonic political lineage have tended to emphasize the philosopher's unique social responsibility as the key to resolving the tension between philosophy and the city: the philosopher-king, especially when merged with Jewish-Islamic conceptions of the lawgiver-prophet, is an exemplary, even salvific figure. And yet within this ambitious tradition, a small minority of thinkers—most notably Ibn Bājja and Nietzsche—have harbored doubts about the ideal coincidence of philosophical wisdom and political power. They wonder whether the tension between philosophy and the city is ultimately resolvable. They raise the question whether the political life of the ruler is really the best possible life for the philosopher. And they entertain the possibility of a philosophical life that, to a greater or lesser extent, remains independent of the city. Accordingly, one finds in the thought of these hesitant Platonists a lingering desire for separation, autonomy, and even solitude rather than integration and reconciliation.[13]

Ibn Bājja's Philosopher-Legislator: The Weed in the Sick City

Our first thinker, Ibn Bājja, needs to be understood against the background not just of Plato but of his Eastern predecessor Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (870–950 C.E.), so it will be necessary to say a word about the latter first.[14] Arguably the

first great figure in the Islamic philosophical tradition, al-Fārābī famously appropriated, extended, and transformed Plato's political teaching within the Islamic milieu, linking it to the revealed religious law and the phenomenon of prophecy.[15] In this new religio-political context, Plato's philosopher becomes supreme ruler, prince, legislator, and imam, a figure who rules the virtuous city *(al-madīna al-fāḍila)* and makes salvific perfection and happiness possible for all its citizens.[16] Like Socrates' Kallipolis, al-Fārābī's virtuous city is conceptually set over against a host of ignorant, wicked, and erring cities.[17] But it also contains within itself dangerous oppositional forces: a profusion of citizens who in certain ways share in the nature of the philosopher but also fall short with respect to the ultimate goals they pursue, or their ability to reason properly, or their capacity to enact their convictions about the good. Al-Fārābī calls these types of people "weeds" (*nawābit*, sing. *nābita*) (*PR* 92, 122–126).[18] Weeds come in all sorts of shapes and sizes: some are opportunists (*mutaqanniṣūn*, lit. "hunters"), others are distorters or deliberate misinterpreters *(muḥarrifa)* of the religious laws, yet others are apostates, agnostics, skeptics, relativists, and so forth. Their station in the city, he says, is like "that of darnel in wheat, the thorns of plants within the crop, or the rest of the grasses that are useless or harmful to the crop or seedlings" (*PR* 92). The weed-people have a disruptive effect on the integrity of the virtuous city, and al-Fārābī accordingly proposes various means of ameliorating, controlling, or eliminating them altogether (*PR* 125).[19]

Ibn Bājja in many ways takes his orientation from all this. Like al-Fārābī, he embraces the Platonic ideal of the healthy, virtuous, aristocratic regime as the best possible arrangement for human life, and, like al-Fārābī, he believes this can only be made possible when the philosopher becomes the statesman. Yet in his main work of political philosophy, *The Governance of the Solitary (Tadbīr al-mutawaḥḥid)*, he rejects the possibility of such an arrangement ever coming into being.[20] For Ibn Bājja, *all* cities are more or less sick and ignorant, and thus inimical to the philosophical life. As such, they have no use for philosopher-rulers.[21] The philosopher must therefore cultivate a regime of the solitary, dwelling in the imperfect city and depending upon it to some extent for his bodily survival, but carefully insulating himself from it spiritually and intellectually.[22] Philosophers thus become the "weeds" of imperfect cities, and the best possible regime is reduced to a microcosm of the solitary individual.

Now, strictly speaking, for Ibn Bājja there can be no weeds at all in the virtuous city because it is by definition perfect.[23] All opinions would be true and all actions would be right.[24] There would be no room for the confused beliefs, disagreements, arguments, inappropriate desires, or vicious actions that al-Fārābī associates with the weeds, because "in the strict sense . . . it is free of false opinions; and in the general sense . . . their presence means that the city is already diseased and disintegrating and has ceased to be

perfect" (*GS* 101; 43). Indeed, there would be no room even for learning a new science or discovering a proper action, since that would imply a kind of change, and change—whether from better to worse or worse to better—entails imperfection. These are things that of course can and do occur in the various imperfect cities, which by their nature must retain a certain element of openness and dynamism. But the virtuous city, insofar as it is perfect, would seem to be entirely static.

Two things follow from this. First, Ibn Bājja rejects the historical actuality of the virtuous city. All the ways of life that exist now or have existed before, he claims, are mixtures of the various types of regimes (i.e., aristocratic, timocratic, oligarchic, democratic, and tyrannical), and are predominately mixtures of the four imperfect ones (*GS* 101; 43). In other words, there is not now, nor has there ever been, a perfect city: even the best city is still a hybrid. Whether there *can* be one remains here an open question, but his reflections on the impossibility of development or change within a perfect state would seem to suggest otherwise. Second, he inverts and revalues the Fārābian concept of the weeds. For al-Fārābī, they were a problem endemic to virtuous cities specifically. Now of course, on Ibn Bājja's account, there are no virtuous cities. One might then expect him simply to discard the idea of political weeds as a useless category, but instead he retains and reinterprets it. Weeds for Ibn Bājja become philosophical types who spring up spontaneously of their own accord in the imperfect cities.[25] They are the ones, as he puts it, "who stumble upon a *true* opinion that does not exist in the city or the opposite of which is believed in the city. . . . The more such opinions they hold, the more crucial the opinions, the more appropriate the appellation. Strictly speaking, the term applies to these men alone" (*GS* 101; 42—italics mine).[26] The weeds therefore represent not the vulnerability and potential downfall of an already realized perfect city but the possibility of ascending knowledge and virtue within an always imperfect city.[27] He even goes so far as to claim that "their existence is the cause that leads to the rise of the perfect city" (*GS* 101; 43).[28]

Having gestured in this optimistic direction, however, the remainder of Ibn Bājja's discourse takes a more sober and prudent tack, focusing exclusively on the *solitary* weed in the imperfect city and its prospects for perfectibility and happiness. "The happy" *(al-su'adā')*, he says, "were it possible for them to exist in these [imperfect] cities, will possess only the happiness of an isolated individual *(mufarrad)*; and the only right governance [possible in these cites] is the governance of an isolated individual, regardless of whether there is one isolated individual or more than one, so long as a nation or a city has not adopted their opinion" (*GS* 101; 43). He likens such solitary individuals to the Sufi "strangers" *(ghurabā')*, "for although they are in their homelands and among their companions and neighbors . . . these are strangers in their opinions, having travelled in their

minds to other stations that are like homelands to them" (*GS* 101; 43).[29] However, the life of the individual philosophical weed is one of books, study, and intellectual contemplation rather than spiritual discipline, love, and mystic experiential gnosis.[30] His aim, according to Ibn Bājja, is ultimately to attain conjunction *(ittiṣāl)* with the active intellect *(al-ʿaql al-faʿʿāl)* and thus to achieve perfection, happiness, immortality—as Ibn Bājja describes it, even a kind of divinity.[31] By the end of Part I, it has become clear that Ibn Bājja's intent in writing the *Governance* is primarily practical: "this discourse is addressed to the isolated weed *[al-nābita al-mufarrad]*: how he is to achieve happiness *[saʿāda]* if he does not possess it, or how to remove from himself the conditions that prevent his achieving happiness or achieving the portion he can achieve of it" (*GS* 101; 43).

Given the solitary individual's apparent ability to attain the highest perfection and happiness available to us in the absence of any kind of robust sociality, it may seem that Ibn Bājja rejects the idea of the human being as a political animal altogether.[32] But this is not entirely true: even as he counsels hygienic withdrawal and disassociation from others in the sick city, he recognizes the desirability of community wherever possible, at the very least in order to care for the body.[33] "[I]n some of the ways of life," he says, "the solitary must keep away from men completely *so far as he can* [in particular, those whose aims are merely corporeal], and not deal with them *except in indispensable matters* and to the extent to which it is indispensable for him to do so" (*GS* 104; 90—italics mine).[34] For this reason, he can never entirely eschew political association. Indeed, Ibn Bājja encourages the solitary philosophers to "emigrate *[yuhājir]* to ways of life in which the sciences *[al-ʿulūm]* are pursued—if such are to be found," suggesting that a life lived in association with others—perhaps a school or academy of sorts, if not an actual city—remains preferable despite the individual thinker's epistemological and soteriological autonomy (*GS* 104; 90).

Unsurprisingly, Socrates' mythical Isles of the Blessed (*jazāʾir al-suʿadāʾ*, the "Fortunate" or "Happy Isles") remain on the periphery of Ibn Bājja's discourse, even if they are still chiefly symbolic and reserved for the elderly (GS 74).[35] Further, he concedes that isolation is an unnatural evil in itself. In certain circumstances, it can be incidentally salutary, as is the case with many things in nature: for instance, mortal poisons like opium, which can be provisionally beneficial in certain "unnatural states," or the temporary avoidance of wholesome and nourishing foods, which can sometimes be accidentally dangerous (*GS* 104; 91—cf. 101; 43). Ibn Bājja's regimen of solitude is thus an unusually strong *pharmarkon* to be employed provisionally and temporarily to stave off contagion in the absence of the best possible social arrangement.[36]

Finally, as mentioned earlier, Ibn Bājja gestures toward the possibility of a future political association that might arise from the weeds, suggesting the growth and dissemination of small friendship communities out of like-

minded individuals and, from those, possibly the eventual emergence of a virtuous city (weeds, if not vigilantly uprooted, can quickly take over a landscape). The regimen of solitude would thus seem to be as much about the preservation of philosophy *itself* and the future possibility of the virtuous city as it is about the immediate well-being and self-actualization of the individual philosopher.

Yet before we tuck Ibn Bājja back into place as an essentially orthodox Platonist with a few rough edges, it is worth bearing in mind that all these considerations are at bottom mere qualifications and promissory notes. At the end of the day, Ibn Bājja's chief concern is with the ragged, imperfect present: the self-governance of the solitary weed-philosopher in the sick city. Indeed, his treatment of the virtuous city seems perfunctory and even cartoonish compared to Plato's or al-Fārābī's. Consider his assertion that there are no false opinions or wrong actions—indeed, not even the possibility of discovering new truths or right actions—in the virtuous and perfect city. Imperfect cities are by their very nature mutable and dynamic: people can disagree, argue, disabuse themselves of false opinions, discover new actions, learn new sciences. There is an openness there, and with it the possibility of change and development.

But Ibn Bājja's description of the virtuous city is, as mentioned before, curiously static: there is no room for improvement, correction, or presumably change of any kind, whether generative or corruptive. It is thus hard to understand how such a city could even come into being and why we should understand it as anything more than an ideal, regulative pattern.[37] And given Ibn Bājja's insistence that there is not now, nor has ever been, a perfect city—an inauspicious fact if there ever were one—how seriously should we take his single, offhand assertion that one might emerge from a few scattered weeds?[38] Indeed, the ostensibly "unnatural" state that requires solitude as its provisional cure really seems on Ibn Bājja's account to be the normal state of affairs. It is thus best not to fetishize the possibility of the virtuous city too much, even if it provides a kind of distant Platonic mooring for his political philosophy. Ibn Bājja's main concern is ultimately with the perfection and happiness of the weed, the solitary, the lone philosopher in the sick city, and this leaves little room for the ambitious civic powers and responsibilities Socrates had conferred upon the philosopher-rulers. We might say that Ibn Bājja's solitary weed ascends to the summit of self-transformative, soteriological knowledge and lingers there, never to descend back into the cave.[39]

Nietzsche's Philosopher-Legislator: Zarathustra as Self-Standing Tree

Given Nietzsche's well-known anti-Platonism, it may seem perverse to situate him in the same lineage as thinkers like al-Fārābi and Ibn Bājja. Certainly, the overturning of metaphysics is a crucial aspect of his thought. But although Nietzsche problematizes traditional metaphysics and all that it

assumes—a stable realm of being, a unified and intelligible cosmos, an eternal moral order—he nonetheless retains, with al-Fārābī and Ibn Bājja, Plato's teaching on the ideal coincidence of philosophical wisdom and political power.[40] Indeed, he attributes to philosophers the singular responsibility of legislating new values and determining the future of humanity, a task he will ultimately describe as "great politics."[41] "*Genuine philosophers*," he claims, "*are commanders and legislators [Befehlende und Gesetzgeber]*: they say '*thus* it *shall* be!' They first determine the Whither and For What of humanity" (*BGE* 211; cf. 203).[42] In their cultivation of new forms of world-affirming life, the Nietzschean philosopher-rulers may appropriate various types of traditional spiritual *askēsis* as provisional means of reshaping the self—albeit now naturalized and stripped of their other-worldly metaphysical baggage.[43] The most important of these ascetic practices is solitude *(Einsamkeit)*, which serves as an indispensable tool for the cultivation of higher types and, even more importantly, a condition for the possibility of the philosopher creating and legislating a new table of values. The single best place to turn if we want to understand the value and function of solitude in Nietzsche's political thought is *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. There are two reasons for this: first, his prophet Zarathustra represents the idea of the philosopher as commander and law-giver in its purest, most undiluted form, and second, Nietzsche curiously describes the book as a "dithyramb to solitude" (*EH*, "Wise," 8).[44] Accordingly, I will focus on this text in particular, singling out the speeches and interstitial developments that specifically pertain to this theme.[45]

The Prologue begins with Zarathustra's solitude in his mountain cave, a condition he has enjoyed for ten years, as he prepares to go back down into the cities to share his wisdom and "become human again" (*Z* P 1).[46] This phrase suggests that for Nietzsche the human being is still a political animal, but also that the human condition is one that might be abandoned: the boundaries between the human, animal, and divine are permeable.[47] As Zarathustra re-descends into the human world, he pauses to chat with an old saint *(Heilige)* he had passed years ago, when he first retreated from society (*Z* P 2). The man is a fellow solitary, albeit for significantly different reasons: although love of humanity originally led him to renounce the world, he can only love God now, and his forest solitude is the bulwark that enables him to maintain a constant connection with the divine.[48] He is thus skeptical of Zarathustra's gift-giving desire, and warns him against returning to the city:

> "They are suspicious of solitaries and do not believe we have come in order to bestow.
>
> "Too lonely for them is the sound of our footsteps in the lanes. And when in their beds at night they hear a man going by long before the sun has risen, they surely ask themselves, Where is that thief going?

"Do not go to human beings but stay in the forest!" (*Z* P 2)

Zarathustra responds with gentle irony to the holy man's advice even as he expresses silent astonishment at his residual faith ("Could this be possible! This old saint in his forest has heard nothing of this yet, that *God is dead!*"). But by the end of the Prologue, it becomes clear that the holy man has in fact offered Zarathustra some valuable worldly counsel: the philosopher-legislator's first lesson in the marketplace has gone badly (*Z* P 3–6), and he finds himself abandoned, wandering before the dawn, distrusted and despised by the unreceptive townspeople (*Z* P 7–8)—just as the saint had predicted.[49] He does not, however, retreat to the forest as the holy man advised. Rather, he decides to redirect his teachings away from the vulgar many in the marketplace to the elite few: prospective "companions," "fellow creators," and "solitaries" (*Z* P 9).

By the beginning of Part I, Zarathustra has settled in the Motley Cow, a kind of modern-day Platonic democracy from which he will recruit his disciples.[50] His first speech there, "On the Three Transformations" (*Z* I.1), provides a template of sorts for the spiritual self-cultivation he will advocate. Here we see the pivotal role that solitude plays in the self-transfiguration of the human. The camel (the strong, weight-bearing type that has reverentially subordinated itself to tradition) presses on into the desert (the spiritual place of early Christian hermits and anchorites)[51] and is there transformed into a lion that seizes freedom for itself, "becomes lord in its own desert," and slays the great dragon of inherited values. Having internalized and overcome that which is passed down, the spirit is finally transformed into a child: Zarathustra's archetypal image of innocence, creativity, and yea-saying spontaneity.[52]

This rather compressed allegory plays out in a more diffuse way throughout the remainder of the book. For instance, in his speech "On the Flies of the Market-Place" (*Z* I.12), Zarathustra urges his recently acquired disciples to flee into solitude in order to escape the noise, idle chatter, entertaining distractions, and poisonous irritations of modern public life.[53] This is not simply provincial city-bashing, of the sort that Zarathustra's ape will later engage in (*Z* III.7). The point is that, through such a withdrawal, one can bracket inherited truths and herd values; twist free of simplistic, reductive, and reified dualisms; achieve a feeling of height and distance from the familiar; and, perhaps most importantly, break the cycle of continuous reinfection by feelings of resentment and revenge.[54] Solitude provides the leisure for contemplation, silence, and space for self-reflection and self-discovery—not of some fixed, essential, original self, but of possible alternate configurations of the multiple soul.[55] It helps us see the contingency and optionality of the selves we thought we were in the sick city—the ossified, slavish psychic regimes we simply took as given. Only through the discipline of solitude can nascent philosophers gain the freedom

and distant perspective they need to reorder the regimes of their souls and create new values. Put otherwise, solitude is a prerequisite for nobility (i.e., self-reverence), autonomy, and philosophical *poiēsis*.[56]

Yet this exercise is not without its risks: Zarathustra will direct a subsequent speech on "The Way of the Creator" to a promising student, warning him about the dangers of philosophical solitude devolving into isolation *(Vereinsamung)* (*Z* I.17).[57] Part I concludes with Zarathustra leaving his disciples in the Motley Cow to return to his mountain solitude. His ostensive reason is to give them space to "lose" him and "find" themselves (*Z* I.22). But as becomes clear in the next part of the book, this, too, is part of Zarathustra's cultivational strategy. He will wait like a "sower who has cast forth his seed": time and distance are needed for his teachings to take root and come to fruition (*Z* II.1).

The Second Part of *Zarathustra* begins with his next great solitude, which lasts several years. While Zarathustra's initial retreat was liberating, revivifying, and ultimately productive of a radically new, world-transforming wisdom, this second retreat has few of those advantages.[58] It is undertaken not for his own sake, but for the sake of his disciples. As such, it is marred by loneliness, concern, and impatience. Finally, a nightmare (in which a child holds a mirror up to him and shows him a devilish image of himself) convinces Zarathustra that his teachings have been misunderstood and distorted—he describes his previously sown teachings as "weeds" *[Unkraut]*)—so he breaks off his anxious solitude to return to his disciples. They, however, have now established an insulated colony of sorts on the familiarly named "Blessed Isles" *(glückseligen Inseln)* (*Z* II.1).[59] The establishment of this community must be understood as a continuation and intensification of Zarathustra's rhetorical shift from the many to the few: just as Zarathustra by the end of the Prologue chooses to reserve his message for a select group of friends and co-creators recruited in the archetypal city (the Motley Cow), the Blessed Isles represent the eventual withdrawal of that elite few from the city itself. As suggested by Zarathustra's initial teaching, this isolation is necessary for their proper cultivation. Yet instead of each disciple retreating individually to the forest or desert, they opt for a small, tightly knit friendship community, a hidden cloister of free spirits. This is an arrangement Nietzsche will elsewhere describe as the "*good* solitude" (*BGE* 25). With only two exceptions (*Z* II.1 and II.18), all the speeches in the Second Part take place on the Blessed Isles. The location itself is thus presumably not without significance.

What, then, do Zarathustra's Blessed Isles signify? The first and most obvious fact here is that Nietzsche takes up the name of the ancient soteriological utopia that we have already encountered several times. In Greek myth, the *makarōn nēsoi* are a paradise tucked away in the distant Western stream of the Okeanos, where the heroic dead live eternally and happily. In Plato's *Republic*, the vision of the Isles of the Blessed hovers in

the background of Kallipolis, representing for Socrates and his interlocutors the prospect of a philosophical community liberated from the distracting political demands of the city. In Ibn Bājja's treatise, which ostensibly abandons the dream of the healthy, aristocratic city, the *jazā'ir al su'adā'* remain at best a regulative ideal for the life of the solitary weeds. In Nietzsche's tale, however, the *glückseligen Inseln* emerge as a concrete reality: an actual alternative to the imperfect—and imperfectable—cities of Europe. In this respect, they must be understood not merely as an evocation of the Greek epic heroes' afterlife, or even Plato's shadowy meta-utopia of retired philosopher-rulers, but also of Epicurus' fabled Garden. For the Garden was originally proffered as the Isles of the Blessed made this-worldly, no longer a distant promissory note but a realizable way of life in the here and now.[60] And indeed, Nietzsche had Epicurus very much in mind when he created Zarathustra's Blessed Isles; it in many ways represents a modern-day Garden.[61]

What transpires on the Isles? For the most part, Zarathustra simply lives with his fellow creators and refines his teaching. As mentioned before, the establishment of this quasi-Epicurean friendship community intensifies the shift from the vulgar many to the select few initiated in the First Part of the book. Zarathustra is now addressing his disciples outside the parameters of the sick city. His first discourse on the Blessed Isles accordingly marks a turning point in the presentation of his teaching. In a speech saturated with the autumnal imagery of death and fecundity he offers up a new post-theistic, post-metaphysical allegory of time and becoming—a "justification of all impermanence"—and concludes with a powerful Neoplatonic image, simultaneously enticing and disturbing, of the philosopher-sculptor's hammer freeing the superhuman *(Übermensch)* from the ugly stone of humanity (*Z* II.2).[62] At the very beginning of this speech we are presented with an image that will recur in various forms through the book: the tree *(Baum)* as life-exemplar, source of empowering new values and transformative knowledge. In this particular speech we find fig trees laden with ripe doctrinal fruits, which are dislodged and distributed by Zarathustra's "north wind." More often, however, the creator is depicted as the tree itself—great, self-sufficient, resilient, growing in noble solitude far from the city, often high up in the mountains or perhaps on an isolated coastline, a "living lighthouse of invincible life" (*Z* III.3).[63] Such an outlandish growth is in effect the Nietzschean equivalent to the Bājjian weed.[64]

Now, given their removal from the Motley Cow, there are notably fewer discussions of solitude, but two details merit mention. In one speech, Zarathustra contrasts the "free spirits," who are willing to remove themselves to the forests and deserts, with the "famous wise men," who remain in the cities to be honored by the people and so ultimately end up pandering to them and being exploited by them (*Z* II.8).[65] The rhetorical function of this speech is uncertain, since both the speaker and audience now inhabit a

tertium quid that is neither desert nor city: a geographically isolated monastic community of sorts, which oddly even seems to accommodate enemies (*Z* II.1). It may, however, constitute a veiled self-critique, for in the following speech a lone Zarathustra sings (for the first time) a lament to himself on being the only solitary spirit described there (*Z* II.9). This strange solitude in the midst of community consists in his unique, restless, and increasingly wearying status as gift-giver *(Schenkender)*, the very task that drove him down from his mountain retreat in the first place (*Z* P 1–2).[66]

It is at least in part for this reason that Zarathustra will unhappily abandon his disciples once again and leave the Blessed Isles at the end of the Second Part (*Z* II.22; cf. III.9). He does, however, offer two additional reasons. The first is presented at the very beginning of the Third Part, where he observes that too much protection makes one "sick" (*Z* III.1).[67] The modern Epicurean Garden and its apolitical life-strategy of living secretly (*lathe biōsas*) among a community of like-minded comrades has its advantages, but it cannot constitute a terminus: the sheltered life it makes possible will eventually become counterproductive and even enfeebling. The second reason is that more work still needs to be done. The challenges that Zarathustra encounters from both the Soothsayer (*Z* II.19) and the "cripples and beggars" (*Z* II.20) have revealed to him the incompleteness of his teaching, tested his mettle as legislator, and made him doubt his ability to command.[68] As his mysterious *daimon* tells him at the end of the Second Part, "Your fruits are ripe *[reif]*, but you are not ripe for your fruits! So you must go back to your solitude; for you are yet to become mellow *[mürbe]*" (*Z* II.22).[69]

In short, Zarathustra's transformative work on others requires further work on himself: "for the sake of his children," he says, "Zarathustra must perfect himself" *(sich selbst vollenden)* (*Z* III.3). And this is something he must do alone. His nascent co-creators are still coming into being and need a select, insular community to do so; their provisional protection is still making them stronger rather than sickly. To this point he characterizes them as growing trees that—at least for now—need to stand together, until one day they can perhaps be replanted on their own and "learn solitude and defiance and caution" like Zarathustra. But Zarathustra's own self-cultivation, which is ultimately subordinated to "the greater perfection of all things," must be undertaken in solitude. So he must now "evade" his happiness *(Glück)* and offer himself to all unhappiness—for what he calls his "ultimate testing and recognition." Here he confesses that he had remained on the Blessed Isles for too long because of his love for his children but was increasingly stultified by its insularity. His most difficult "abysmal thought"—the eternal recurrence—lay dormant and was still waiting to be summoned up, articulated, and affirmed.[70] Living in the modern Garden with his disciples had enabled Zarathustra to dodge the troubling ramifications of his own teaching by repressing them.[71] This is, in a nutshell, Nietzsche's

reservation regarding the Epicurean Garden as a philosophical way of life: it makes us spiritually complacent and unphilosophical. Historically, others have of course offered comparable criticisms.[72] However, such critiques typically point toward a return to the city and emphasize the need for some kind of political engagement, if only indirect.[73] Zarathustra's move is unique, in that it points not back to the city, but (at least temporarily) toward the need for a longer, purer, and more rigorous solitude.

Zarathustra thus takes leave of the Blessed Isles at the beginning of the Third Part, returning reluctantly to his mountain abode. Yet within a day of his departure, he is again savoring his solitude: "Alone I am again," he says, "and want to be so" (*Z* III.3). The way home is long and winding: his ship journey takes several days, and upon reaching the distant shore Zarathustra decides not to return directly to his cave.[74] Rather, he takes the scenic route, wandering at leisure through the various towns that lie between the sea and the mountains in order "to experience what had happened to humanity in the meantime" (*Z* III.5). Of these speeches, the most pertinent to our theme is "On Passing By" (*Z* III.7), where Zarathustra encounters a degraded imitation of himself at the gates of "the great city."[75] The lengthy and repetitive speech in which Zarathustra's "ape" encourages him to spit on the city and turn back is a caricature of Zarathustra's own political teaching, comprising vulgarized fragments from some of his earlier speeches (cf. *Z* I.12–13). Zarathustra finally interrupts the ape's tedious harangue by putting a hand over his "frothing" *(schäumend)* mouth. His counter-speech exposes the merely imitative and reactive affect of resentment operative in the ape's condemnation of the city and culminates in a parting gift that evokes the holy man's earlier advice to him: "where one can no longer love, there one should—*pass by!*" (*Z* III.7; cf. *Z* P 2).[76] The ape philosopher hates and resents the city yet chooses to remain within it to curse it and wage war against it. The spirit of revenge has made him as small and loathsome as the place he despises. Zarathustra presses this point and asks him why he hasn't simply left:

> Why did you live for so long in the swamp that you yourself had to become a frog and a toad? . . . Why did you not go into the forest? Or plough the earth? Is the sea not full of grass-green islands *[grünen Eilanden]*? (*Z* III.7)

If the philosopher cannot be at home in the city, there are other options: the life of the renunciant or anchorite (the forest, desert, or cave), the life of the agrarian primitivist recluse (the self-sufficient farm), the life of the monk or Epicurean friend (the cloister, Garden, or "grass-green island").[77] In spite of Zarathustra's recent abandonment of the Blessed Isles, we see here a residual acknowledgment of its abiding importance for nascent free spirits and higher types. If nothing else, Zarathustra's impatient reply to the ape makes it clear that, wherever the appropriate place of the philosopher may ultimately be, it is *not* locked in a perpetual zetetic *agon* with the great city.

Having wandered again through the human world, Zarathustra finally returns to the solitude of his mountain cave one more time (*Z* III.9). At last alone, he strikes up a conversation with solitude itself, which he addresses variously as his "home," his "mother," and his "own house." Solitude scolds, comforts, and reminds him that "among human beings [he] will always be wild and strange." Here we get a clear sense of what was only hinted at earlier: Zarathustra's intense loneliness in the cities and even amidst his disciples (cf. *Z* II.9). The philosophical legislator is lonely when not in solitude because of the continual problem of prophetic misunderstanding: he must either remain silent or his public speech must always be guarded and cautious, a kind of prudential dissimulation.[78] We thus see the extent to which Zarathustra's public—and even private—teachings are themselves necessarily mythopoetic condescensions, partial truths, and noble lies. Paradoxically, it is only in solitude that Zarathustra can finally speak freely and honestly, or simply be himself.[79] And of course, it is also in this final solitude that Being can "come to word" (*Z* III.9), that Zarathustra can reweigh the world (*Z* III.10–12) and ultimately articulate and affirm the doctrine of the eternal recurrence (*Z* III.13–16). The remainder of the Third Part takes place in Zarathustra's solitude, with the exception of his animals, whom he finally leaves behind by the end of *Z* III.13. The completion of his wisdom thus occurs in solitude.[80]

The stage is now set for Zarathustra's return. At least that is what one expects, based on the dramatic arc of the book, which has so far been structured in terms of an oscillation between Zarathustra's withdrawals into the isolation of his mountain cave and his ambitious descents into the sociality of human life: the prophet's solitude is associated with the acquisition and ripening of wisdom, which must then be disseminated by going back down into the cities and friendship communities of his disciples. The dialectic of solitude and political association mirrors the dialectic of fullness and emptying out, or gift-giving.[81] The solitude of the philosopher thus seems not to be an end in itself, as desirable as it is, but rather merely a prelude to great politics: the legislation of new values and the determination of the future of the human. It is in solitude and silence that revolutionary new thoughts can emerge and a different kind of speech about the world and life becomes possible. As Zarathustra repeatedly observes, the world revolves "invisibly" and "inaudibly" around inventors of new values (*Z* I.12, cf. II.18), and "thoughts that come on doves' feet direct the world" (*Z* II.22; cf. *BGE* 285). Yet, interestingly, the final speeches of Part Three do not indicate any desire to "become human again": nothing Zarathustra says there suggests that he will now go back down to the polis and share his gift with the world (*Z* III.13–16; cf. *Z* P 1 and *Z* II.1). The book—at least as originally published—ends with the prophet-philosopher in blissful, self-sufficient, divine solitude. One might even say that the apex of Zarathustra's existence, far from being a *vita activa* of great politics, is rather a post-theistic *vita contemplativa*.[82]

To find any further clue, we must turn to the Fourth and Final Part of *Zarathustra*. This originally unpublished part of the book was distributed only to a small circle of friends and seems not to have been intended as an integral part of the Zarathustra cycle. Indeed, it is often read as a kind of satyr play in relation to the first three "tragic" parts.[83] Yet it nonetheless sheds some light on our topic and so merits a word. The narrative begins with an aged Zarathustra enjoying his mountain solitude. He has been alone now for a good time—years, Nietzsche says, long enough for his hair to have turned white—and his doctrinal fruits have ripened (*Z* IV.1). That is to say, they have reached maturity, completeness, or perfection, presumably through the articulation of the eternal recurrence. But Zarathustra's *Reife* also suggests that his teachings have mellowed and sweetened with age: they are no longer so sharp, sour, or bitter to the taste, as his first difficult formulations of the eternal recurrence had been (*Z* II.20, III.2, and even III.13).[84] They are thus more appealing and fit to be consumed by their intended recipients (presumably Zarathustra's children).

But why, then, has Zarathustra remained in solitude after all these years, instead of undertaking his third and final descent into the human world and disseminating his completed teaching? This after all is the supposed task of the philosopher qua commander and legislator: to provide us with our necessary whithers and what fors; to create new values, goals, and meanings; and, finally, to determine the future of the human (*BGE* 211). Zarathustra, however, remains frozen at the apex of his philosophical journey, like Socrates' escaped prisoner transfixed by the radiant image of the Good or Ibn Bājja's lone, autonomous weed lingering in felicitous conjunction with the active intellect. One might therefore conclude that the self-transformative revelation of the eternal recurrence has unmoored Zarathustra from his grand political aspirations, that he has finally chosen to prioritize his own self-sufficient, divine bliss over the transfiguration of humanity and remain in solitude. In this respect, the central speech of the Fourth and Final Part of *Zarathustra* might very well be "At Midday" (*Z* IV.10), an almost Epicurean idyll that depicts the prophet liberated from his nomothetic work, relishing his solitude and relaxing under a grape vine, while the sun hovers serenely at its apex. His repeated blessing—"Did the world not just become perfect *[vollkommen]*?"—is perhaps one of the most beautiful expressions of world affirmation in all of *Zarathustra*.

Of course, the prophet's eternal moment of golden happiness is short-lived. He is wrenched from his midday nap by the nagging consciousness that much more still needs to be done—no surprise, perhaps, given the almost comedic valorization of perpetual busyness that bookends Part Four: "What does happiness matter! I am striving after my work" (*Z* IV.1; cf. IV.20). The residually bourgeois-Protestant subordination of *Glück* to *Werk* is reflected in the restless, frantic, and often logically underdetermined developments of *Z* IV: awaiting a "sign" that it is time for him to descend

once again, Zarathustra inadvertently lures a motley assortment of superior humans *(höheren Menschen)* up into his mountain lair (*Z* IV.1) and tries to entertain them, but increasingly finds their presence unbearable (*Z* IV.2–9). The ill-fated visit culminates in an awkward Last Supper/Symposium event that grows stranger and stranger until it devolves into a mock religious ceremony (*Z* IV.11–19). The following morning, Zarathustra receives his much-anticipated sign, which tells him his time has come (*Z* IV.20). The intimation is that he will now finally to go back down into the cities of human beings and present his new teaching.[85]

But at this point, the reader must wonder: *why*? Zarathustra's previous attempts at great politics have not turned out well: his initial teaching was completely unintelligible to the vulgar many in the city and almost cost him his life (*Z* P 3–8). Then, having recruited elite disciples (his "children"), he abandoned them twice to return to his beloved wild solitude (*Z* I.22, II.20; cf. III.1, 3, 9). And when the superior human beings—the cream of the crop, as it were—are drawn by Zarathustra's honey sacrifice to come visit him in his mountain retreat, he can't get rid of them fast enough. These failures are presumably not unrelated to whatever drove Zarathustra up to his ten-year-long hermitage at the very beginning of the book. However we carve it up, the Nietzschean philosopher-legislator prospers in solitude and flounders in community. One wonders, then: what will be different this time? Why return? Despite all the rhetorical grandstanding about legislating new values and goals, shaping the future of humanity, and redeeming the world, when read between the lines *Zarathustra* seems like one long argument against returning to the city.

In Praise of Uselessness

For both Ibn Bājja and Nietzsche, philosophers must live an isolated, even parasitic life on the margins of the society they reject in order to preserve their spiritual autonomy and care for themselves properly. The regime of the solitary is supposed to be temporary and provisional, aimed at the attainment, preservation, and dissemination of philosophical wisdom and ultimately the creation of a healthy and virtuous political regime. For Ibn Bājja, it is the spontaneously arising weed in the sick city that plays this vital role. For Nietzsche, it is the powerful self-standing tree rooted beyond the bounds of the city. Like Plato's *philosophōn phuseōn* in the *Republic*, both seem to arise spontaneously, growing of their own accord, neither dependent upon nor indebted to any preexisting regime, which would likely see their worldviews as the negation of its own. Yet neither ultimately founds a new regime. At the end of the day, they opt not for the city but for the desert or forest; not for community but for solitude; not for the *vita activa* of great political legislation and regime-shaping but for the hidden *vita contemplativa* of the lone philosopher.

We thus return to the rather traditional question with which we began: the place of the philosopher relative to the city. As Socrates notes in the *Republic*, there is a dangerous tension between the two. On the one hand, feverish cities have a corrupting influence on philosophical natures: they can distort their perspectives, warp their values, and disrupt the possibility of them becoming what they are to be.[86] On the other hand, the philosopher's implacable truth-seeking inevitably undermines the traditional laws, opinions, and mores of the city. Small wonder, then, that philosophers have been ridiculed, despised, and even sometimes persecuted by the communities into which they were born. The Platonic solution to this problem—at least as traditionally understood—is to somehow resituate the philosopher at the center of the city as its appropriate ruler, thus aligning wisdom with political power. Ibn Bājja and Nietzsche in many ways embrace the ideal of the philosopher as commander and legislator, yet seem unconvinced about the long-term prospects of this conciliatory strategy: their thought abides in the tension that Plato was supposed to have resolved.

Perhaps for them the opposition between philosophical truth and the necessary fictions of conventional social life is simply too deep and intractable to be overcome. Could Ibn Bājja's imitation of god or monopsychic conjunction with the active intellect be translated into the popular vernacular without dangerous simplification, distortion, and misunderstanding? What about Zarathustra/Nietzsche's doctrines of the superhuman or the eternal recurrence? The first demands the self-overcoming of the human; the second is a thought which, if truly understood, is supposed to either "transform" or "crush" its thinker (*JS* 341). These are nuanced, demanding, and potentially fatal philosophical teachings that cannot easily be cashed out into the unconditional truths and simplistic binary categories of the state and marketplace.[87] And of course, as Zarathustra repeatedly points out, the creator of new and different values will always be 'evil' to those for whom the received, established and familiar is 'good'.[88] One might try to ameliorate this danger by tempering philosophical radicalism with prudential dissimulation, exoteric teachings, or simply good old-fashioned political moderation: a necessary prophylactic, so to speak, lest society harm its philosophers—or philosophers harm society.[89] Or one might simply conclude that it's best for all involved if philosophers keep themselves apart from the political life of the city as much as possible. This is not to say that the philosopher-type can flourish *only* in solitude, although we late moderns have all but forgotten the irreplaceable value of this spiritual exercise. Perhaps small subcultures or friendship communities are the best compromise one can hope for, not as some provisional strategic preparation for a new philosophical millenarianism, but as a kind of permanent, if malleable and adaptive state of affairs. As we've seen, Ibn Bājja and Nietzsche both experiment with this Epicurean possibility (via their own 'Isles of the

Blessed'), but ultimately return to the regime of the solitary as the most promising alternative to a healthy, virtuous city.

Looking at their alternatives side by side, Nietzsche's would at first appear to be the more radical and thoroughgoing: Zarathustra has, after all, withdrawn from the city altogether, while Ibn Bājja's weed manages only a relative solitude in the midst of alienated sociality. But even in full-fledged isolation, Zarathustra seems unable to shrug off the Platonic conceit that true philosophers must also be rulers, prophets, and legislators—and one could certainly say the same of Nietzsche himself. Ibn Bājja, on the other hand, seems fully to have come to terms with the fact that there will be no wholesale redemption for the city, or culture, or humanity, or the earth. He has stopped worrying about imposing a healthy regime on some greater macro-entity and focuses instead on cultivating the private regime of his individual soul.[90] Moreover, we might say that Ibn Bājja grapples with the philosopher's genuine need for solitude in a more serious, honest, and resourceful way than does Nietzsche. For how many of us can be like the self-sufficient Zarathustran creator alone in the mountains, or saint in the forest, or camel in the desert? These are of course symbolic ideals, and as such can be as pure and ambitious as we'd like them to be. Ibn Bājja, however, gestures toward a way of life that, while still demanding, can actually be adopted and instantiated in various forms. Indeed, when Nietzsche himself intermittently embraced solitude throughout the nomadic period of his life, it looked very much like what Ibn Bājja proposed.[91]

Finally, the respective metaphors for the solitary philosopher in Ibn Bājja's and Nietzsche's accounts—the weed and the tree—are each in their own way suggestive. Again, Nietzsche's at first seems more enticing: the image of the philosopher-legislator as the lone, noble, self-standing tree far beyond the parameters of the city is a romantic one, whether he is speaking of the fig tree on the Blessed Isles (heavy with philosophical fruit that might transform humanity), or the gnarled and crooked but powerful tree planted alone on some desolate coastline ("a living lighthouse of invincible life"), or the silent, hard, but pliant and adaptable wild pine up in Zarathustra's distant and elevated domain.[92] As one of the kings of the superior human beings says, "who would not climb high mountains to see such growths?" (*Z* IV.11). Compare to that the humble weed: small, ugly, common, and useless—neither desired nor deliberately cultivated. But the weed is hardy: it flourishes in harsh, neglected, unpromising places and multiplies quickly. And its apparent uselessness is perhaps not altogether a bad thing. Emerson once remarked that a weed is "a plant whose virtues have not yet been discovered."[93] This is no doubt true, but having one's utility exposed can be dangerous. Consider the 'useful' trees whose fruit is torn from them, whose branches are rudely broken and whose bodies are reduced to lumber for human purposes.[94] It may be that philosophical natures flourish best as weeds whose virtues remain hidden: ugly to those

who lack the eyes to see a different kind of beauty, evil to those who seek only to preserve inherited truths and values, and useless to those whose dream is aimless, self-immolating productivity.

Notes

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1 – Abū Bakr Muḥammad Ibn Yaḥya Ibn al-Ṣā'igh al-Tūjībī Ibn Bājja was an influential vizier to the Almoravid dynasty in twelfth-century Muslim Andalusia and by all accounts a controversial figure: he indulged a taste for the finer things in life, cultivated a good number of enemies, was jailed on several occasions, and allegedly met his end due to a poisoned eggplant. Yet in spite of this restless, worldly life of political intrigue, he managed to eke out some time to think and write, and is credited as the first major figure in the Western Islamic philosophical tradition. On Ibn Bājja's life, see D. M. Dunlop, "Ibn Bādjdja," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., ed. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W. P. Heinrichs (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2012), http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573–3912_islam_SIM_3098. For the most recent and comprehensive account, see Josep Puig Montada, "Ibn Bājja," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2012 edition), http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2012/entries/ibn-bajja/. Nietzsche, on the other hand, was an unusually gifted but discontented professor of philology at the University of Basel, forced by his various physical ailments (and philosophical ambitions) to retire early. Convinced that his radical reorientation of philosophy constituted a world-historical event, he spent his productive years wandering unobtrusively and nomadically throughout Southern Europe in the latter part of the nineteenth century, far from the centers of political power, writing for an audience that didn't yet exist. The unlucky fate that awaited him in the last decade of his life and beyond is well-known and need not be recounted here. On Nietzsche's life, see Julian Young, *Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). For a fascinating account of Nietzsche's pivotal visit to Sorrento during his sick leave from the University of Basel in 1876–1877 (an experiment which precipitated his retirement from academia in 1879),

see Paolo D'Iorio's beautiful study, *Nietzsche's Journey to Sorrento: Genesis of the Philosophy of the Free Spirit*, trans. Sylvia Mae Gorelick (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

2 – *Anachōrēsis* ('withdrawal' or 'retreat') is typically associated with the Desert Fathers and Christian monastic communities, but has older and deeper roots in Greek philosophy. *Ascetic Behavior in Greco-Roman Antiquity: A Sourcebook*, ed. Vincent L. Wimbush (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), includes several 'pagan' philosophical sources—Cynic, Stoic, and Neoplatonic—that touch upon this strategy (pp. 117–155), but the impulse toward withdrawal can be identified in Platonic dialogues and arguably traced back to the Presocratics—it may be as old as philosophy itself. For a useful overview of *anachōrēsis* as an ascetic strategy, see Kallistos Ware, "The Way of the Ascetics: Negative or Affirmative?" in *Asceticism*, ed. Vincent L. Wimbush and Richard Valentasis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 3–15; cf. Roland Barthes' short but suggestive entry on the topic in *How to Live Together*, trans. Kate Briggs (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), pp. 24–25. For a broader discussion of ascetic practices among ancient Greek and Hellenistic philosophers, see Richard Finn OP, *Asceticism in the Graeco-Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 9–33.

3 – On the traditional conception of philosophy as a 'way of life', see Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, ed. Arnold I. Davidson, trans. Michael Chase (London: Blackwell, 1995); cf. Michel Foucault, *The Care of the Self*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, 1986), and Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994). For an illuminating reading of the classical Islamic philosophical tradition along Hadotian lines, see Mohammad Azadpur, *Reason Unbound: On Spiritual Practice in Islamic Peripatetic Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2011), esp. pp. 3–19. For a comparable reading of Nietzsche, see Horst Hutter, *Shaping the Future: Nietzsche's New Regime of the Soul and Its Ascetic Practices* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005).

4 – Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, trans. J. E. King, Loeb Classical Library 141 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927), Bk 5.4.10–11.

5 – On this traditional tension between philosophy and the city, see Leo Strauss, *On Tyranny: Corrected and Expanded Edition, Including the Strauss-Kojève Correspondence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), pp. 22–132 and 177–214; *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), pp. 7–37; "Plato," in

History of Political Philosophy, ed. Leo Strauss and Joseph Cropsey, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), pp. 7–63; and "On Plato's Republic," in *The City and Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), pp. 50–138.

6 – Plato, *Republic*, 473b–497c and 473c–e. All subsequent quotations from *The Republic of Plato*, trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1968) are cited in text.

7 – See, respectively, *Rep.* 485b ff., 520b, and 486d. Such natures are nonetheless fragile and easily damaged or corrupted; see, e.g., *Rep.* 490e–492a, which stresses the importance of sowing, planting, and nourishing the philosophical nature in what's suitable, and *Rep.* 497b, where he likens the philosophical nature to "a foreign seed sown in alien ground" that is "likely to be overcome and fade away into the native stock."

8 – For a striking portrait of the apolitical philosopher in the sick city, see *Rep.* 496d–e.

9 – *Rep.* 516d–517a, 519d, and 520c; cf. Plato, *Seventh Letter*, passim.

10 – The Blessed Isles *(makarōn nēsoi)* are, in Greek myth, an eschatological paradise located in the far Western streams of Okeanos where the elite few—originally heroes, later the righteous, in Platonic dialogues, philosophers—live eternally and happily. They begin as a conception of the afterlife (in opposition to Hades, later merged with Elysium), but in some versions become merely a place where life is easiest and best for mortals on earth. For other references to the Blessed Isles in Plato's dialogues, see *Symposium* 179e, 180b, and *Gorgias* 523b, 524a. For pre-Platonic mentions, see Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 167–173; Pindar, *Olympian Odes*, 2.68–80; and Herodotus, *Histories*, 3.26.1. See Eckart Olshausen, "Makarōn Nēsoi," and Christine Sourvinou Inwood, "Elysium," in *Brill's New Pauly Encyclopedia of the Ancient World: Antiquity* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2006).

11 – Socrates remarks earlier that those who have been allowed to spend their whole lives pursuing a philosophical education would not make adequate stewards of a city, since "they won't be willing to act, believing they have emigrated to a colony on the Isles of the Blessed *while they are still alive*" (*Rep.* 519c; italics mine). This would suggest that the *makarōn nēsoi* function here as a kind of afterworldly reward.

12 – On the legacy of Platonic political philosophy in Greek and Hellenistic thinkers and rulers, see William Desmond, *Philosopher-Kings of Antiquity* (London and New York: Continuum, 2011). On its adoption by subsequent Neoplatonic thinkers (long believed to be antipolitical) into late antiquity, see Dominic J. O'Meara, *Platonopolis: Platonic*

Political Philosophy in Late Antiquity (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003). On the Islamic philosophical tradition, see Erwin I. J. Rosenthal, *Political Thought in Medieval Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), esp. pp. 113–223 (Part II, aptly titled "The Platonic Legacy"). On the Jewish philosophical tradition, see Abraham Melamed, *The Philosopher-King in Medieval and Renaissance Jewish Thought*, ed. Lenn E. Goodman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003).

13 – In this respect, one might argue that this skeptical contingent is more genuinely Platonic than those who accept the ideal of the philosopher-king ideal at face value. This was in any case Strauss' own view, put forth exegetically in the above-mentioned published texts (see note 5 above) and stated more explicitly in his correspondence with Jacob Klein regarding his discovery of exotericism: "[the *Republic*'s] actual theme is the relation between the *bios polit[ikos]* and the *bios philos[ophos]*. . . . [I]t is dedicated to a radical critique and rejection of the political life," or, as he puts it subsequently, "the problem . . . of the *Republic* [is] the problematic relation between justice and truth, or between practical and theoretical life" (quoted in Laurence Lampert, *The Enduring Importance of Leo Strauss* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013], pp. 19–20). On Plato as advocate of political quietism *(apragmosunē)* and the contemplative life *(bios theoretikos)* see also L. B. Carter, *The Quiet Athenian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 155–186.

14 – On al-Fārābī's life and thought, see Richard Walzer, "al Fārābī," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0212.

15 – On al-Fārābī's influential reimagining of Platonic political philosophy, see Leo Strauss, "Farabi's Plato," in *Essays in Medieval Jewish and Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Arthur Hyman (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1977), pp. 391–427; Miriam Galston, *Politics and Excellence: The Political Philosophy of Alfarabi* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); Muhsin Mahdi, *Alfarabi and the Foundation of Islamic Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Christopher A. Colmo, *Breaking With Athens: Alfarabi as Founder* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005); and Joshua Parens, *An Islamic Philosophy of Virtuous Religions: Introducing Alfarabi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006).

16 – For al-Fārābī, this is understood hierarchically, i.e., according to people's differing natural capacities, and made possible through a plurality of religions, which convey philosophical truths to the many in dialectical, rhetorical, and mythopoetic form. See al-Fārābī, *Taḥṣīl al-*

sa'āda, ed. Jafar al-Yasin (Beirut: Al-Andaloss, 1981), trans. as *The Attainment of Happiness* in Alfarabi, *Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, rev. trans. Muhsin Mahdi (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press: 2001), sections 37–64. Henceforth, all references to al-Fārābī's works cited in text are by abbreviation of English title, followed by section number in the translation. See, esp., *AH* 58: "So let it be clear to you that the Philosopher *[al-faylasūf]*, Supreme Ruler *[al-ra'īs al-awwal]*, Prince *[al-malik]*, Legislator *[wāḍi' al-nawāmīs]* and *Imam* are but a single idea." Note that al-Fārābī characterizes the philosopher-legislator as creating conventional laws here (Ar: *nawāmīs*, sing. *nāmūs*; Gr: *nomos*) rather than divine laws *(sharī'a).* And, as al-Fārābī himself indicates, by *imām* he means "one whose example is followed and one who is well-received" (*AH* 57).

17 – On the virtuous city versus the various ignorant *(al-jāhiliyya)*, wicked *(al-fāsiqa)*, and erring *(al-ḍālla)* cities, see al-Fārābī's *Al-siyāsa al-madaniyya*, ed. Fauzi M. Najjar (Beirut: Catholic Press, 1964), translated as *Political Regime* in Alfarabi, *The Political Writings, Volume II: "Political Regime" and "Summary of Plato's Laws,"* trans. Charles E. Butterworth (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015), §§ 68–121 (henceforth *PR*). See also his *Principles of the Opinions of the Citizens of the Virtuous City (Mabādi' ārā' ahl al-madīnat al-fāḍila)*, in Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *On the Perfect State*, trans. Richard Walzer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), chap. 15 passim, which adds a fourth pathology, "the city which has deliberately changed" *(al-madīna al-mubaddila)*. Al-Fārābī's treatment of the various permutations of imperfect cities is in certain respects more complex, nuanced, and comprehensive than Plato's. Compare, for instance, the heterogeneous typology above to Plato's homogeneous categorization of the four sick cities (timocratic, oligarchic, democratic, and tyrannical), which themselves are expanded in al-Fārābī's account into six ignorant cities: the necessary city, the "depraved" or plutocratic city, the "vile" or hedonistic city, the timocratic city, the city of domination, and the democratic city of the free (*PR* 93–119).

18 – I follow the majority of scholars here in rendering *nawābit* contextually as "weeds"; some, however, translate it as "spontaneous growth" (Rosenthal), "outgrowth" (Fakhry), or "opposition" (Alon). Lane's *Lexicon* has as the first verbal form of the trilateral root *n-b-t*: "It [a thing or plant] grew; grew forth; sprouted; vegetated; or germinated." See Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (London and Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1863–1893), Bk I, Part 8, 2753–2754. On the historical origins of the term, see Erwin I. J. Rosenthal, "The Place of Politics in the Philosophy of Ibn Bājja," *Islamic Culture* 25 (1951): 187–211 (esp. p. 205 n. 63); Ilai Alon, "Fārābī's Funny

Flora: Al-Nawābit as 'Opposition'," *Arabica* 37 (March 1990): 56–90; and Wadād al Qāḍī, "The Earliest 'Nābita' and the Paradigmatic 'Nawābit," *Studia Islamica* 78 (1993): 27–61. For a fascinating examination of the way in which the metaphor of the weed figures in the thought of al-Fārābī, Ibn Bājja, and Ibn Ṭufayl, see Michael S. Kochin, "Weeds: Cultivating the Imagination in Medieval Arabic Political Philosophy," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 60, no. 3 (1999): 399–416.

19 – It should be noted that al-Fārābī's *Political Regime* is the only work in which he discusses the weeds. Although the *Virtuous City* is in many ways a companion text, there is no such discussion there; for a comparison of the two texts on this point, see Alon, "Fārābī's Funny Flora," pp. 56 and 66–67. Cf. al-Fārābī's *Attainment of Happiness*, where he draws a Platonic distinction between the "true" philosopher *(al-faylasūf al-ḥaqq)* and various types of "mutilated" *(batraʿ)* philosophers: the "counterfeit" philosopher *(al-faylasūf al-zūr)*, the vain philosopher *(al-faylasūf al-bahraj)*, and the "false" philosopher" *(al-faylasūf al-bāṭil)* (*AH* 60–62). It is not clear, however, whether such imperfect specimens correspond to the weeds discussed in the *Political Regime*.

20 – Ibn Bājja, *Tadbīr al-mutawaḥḥid*, in Ibn Bājja, *Opera Metaphysica*, ed. Majid Fakhry (Beirut: Dār al Nahār, 1968), pp. 37–96, partially translated by Lawrence Berman as *The Governance of the Solitary* in *Medieval Political Philosophy: A Sourcebook*, 2nd ed., ed. Joshua Parens and Joseph C. Macfarland (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), pp. 97–104. A complete working translation of the text *(The Regime of the Solitary)* is included in Maʿan Ziyādah, "Ibn Bājja's Book *Tadbīr al-Mutawaḥḥid*" (MA Thesis, McGill University, 1968). The Arabic text is divided into three parts, the first two of which have been conventionally subdivided into subsections by editors and translators, the last of which (titled "Discourse on the Spiritual Forms" *[Al-qawl fī al-ṣuwar al-rūḥānniyya]*) is formally subdivided into seventeen chapters. Because there is as yet no complete, authoritative English translation of the work, nor any clear, consistent, and standardized method of divvying up the text (as is the case, e.g., with al-Fārābī's political writings), all references are cited in text as *GS* with the page number of the Berman translation (when applicable), followed by the page number in Fakhry's Arabic edition. Ibn Bājja's language of the solitary *(al-mutawaḥḥid)*, solitude *(al-tawaḥḥud)*, one *(al-wāḥid)*, etc. hinges on the triliteral root *w-ḥ-d*; Lane's *Arabic-English Lexicon* has as its first verbal form: "He, or it, was or became alone, by himself or itself, apart from others . . . without anyone to cheer him by his

society, company or conversation" (Bk I, 2926–2928). Variations can signify being single, unique, incomparable, etc.

21 – On the 'uselessness' of the philosopher in this respect, see W. Craig Streetman, "On Being 'Useless' Yet 'True': Plato, Farabi and Ibn Bajja on the Condition of Philosophers in the Context of a Corrupt State," in *The Misty Land of Ideas and the Light of Dialogue: An Anthology of Comparative Philosophy: Western and Islamic*, ed. Ali Paya (London: ICAS Press, 2013), pp. 359–387.

22 – Wherever possible, I use the non-gendered plural pronoun "they" when referring to philosopher-types. However, I retain the masculine singular pronoun in Ibn Bājja where unavoidable (the plural, if used exclusively, would distort the tone of his discourse, since the emphasis is first and foremost on the solitary individual).

23 – Ibn Bājja does not explicitly make the argument that the virtuous city is perfect, but his language clearly suggests it. He begins by speaking of the "virtuous city" *(al-madīna al-fāḍila)*, repeats the phrase two more times, then abruptly starts to refer to it as the "perfect city" *(al-madīna al-kāmila)*. After doing this twice, he uses the phrase "the virtuous and perfect city," then reverts solely to the term "perfect" for the remainder of the discussion (*GS* 100–101; 41–42).

24 – Ibn Bājja takes as his reference here Socrates' symbolic insistence on the absence of the arts of medicine and judication in Kallipolis (*GS* 100; 41). As Kochin points out, in insisting that all opinions in the virtuous city are true, he effectively rejects al-Fārābī's "careful hierarchy of classes and the corresponding images and opinions," which acknowledges and adjusts for the apparent inequality of human capacities (Kochin, "Weeds," p. 407).

25 – Ibn Bājja is imprecise about the parameters here—presumably he means all imperfect cities—but it would seem as though the timocratic, oligarchic, and especially tyrannical cities generally provide less fertile soil for weeds. One might make the argument that democratic cities, by virtue of their love of freedom and their pluralistic nature, are uniquely disposed to leave space and perhaps even leisure time for the emergence of weeds (cf. Plato and al-Fārābī's ambivalent accounts of the democratic regime). In this respect, Ibn Bājja's usage of the term very much seems to be rooted in the botanical passages quoted earlier from Plato (see esp. *Rep.* 520b), as Rosenthal suggests ("The Place of Politics," p. 205 n. 63; cf. *Political Thought*, p. 172). Cf. *Euthyphro* 2d-3a, where Socrates jokingly likens himself to an old weed that the good political "gardener" (*geōrgon*) Meletus is "clearing away" (*ekkathairei*), so that the "young shoots" (*tōn neōn tas blastas*) of the city are not corrupted. Xenophon, *Oeconomicus* XVII.14–15, presents

Socrates with a less generous attitude toward weeds. Ibn Bājja mentions weeds elsewhere in his *Kalām fi al-nabāt* (Discourse on plants), translated into Spanish by Miguel Asín Palacios as "Avempace Botánico," in *Al Andalus* 5 (1940): 255–299, although, as Kochin notes, it does not shed any particular light on his discussion in the *Governance of the Solitary* ("Weeds," p. 407 n. 42).

26 – He goes on: "But it may be applied, more generally, to anyone who holds an opinion other than the opinion of the citizens of the city, regardless of whether his opinion is true or false. The name has been transferred to these men from the weeds that spring up of themselves among the plants. But let us restrict the use of this term to the ones who hold true opinions" (*GS* 101; 42).

27 – That is to say, they go from being something negative to something positive. On this, see Rosenthal, "The Place of Politics," pp. 204–205.

28 – The sentence concludes unhelpfully, " . . . as explained elsewhere." Berman's translation refers to a passage from al-Fārābī's discussion of the democratic regime in the *Political Regime* (*PR* 114–115). But cf. *PR* 121, where al-Fārābī specifically denies that any meaningful or sustainable political association can arise from the weeds: "From their opinions, no city at all is attained, nor a large association from the populace. But they are embedded among the inhabitants of the city as a whole."

29 – As Rosenthal points out, Ibn Bājja seems to have inherited this symbolic figure via al-Fārābī as well, although al-Fārābī never equates the strangers and weeds, and describes them only as excellent, not happy (Rosenthal, "The Place of Politics," p. 203).

30 – Ibn Bājja curiously never mentions *taqiyya* (lit., prudence, caution, fear) as a possible self-preservative strategy for the solitary weed in the sick city. Precautionary dissimulation—the concealment of one's beliefs and practices to escape religio-political persecution (or to preserve and selectively transmit esoteric truths)—was a fairly common practice among certain groups in the Islamic tradition (e.g., Shī'a and Sufis, but also sometimes *falāsifa*). See R. Strothmann and Moktar Djebli, "Taḳiyya," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_7341.

31 – On this end, see *GS*, Part III (esp. chaps. 15–17), as well as Ibn Bājja's *Conjunction of the Intellect with the Human Being* (*Ittiṣāl al-'aql bi-al-insān*), in *Classical Arabic Philosophy: An Anthology of Sources*, trans. and ed. Jon McGinnis and David C. Reisman (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2007), pp. 269–283. In this respect, he is pretty much in line with predecessors like al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā; see Alexander Altmann,

"Ibn Bājja on Man's Ultimate Felicity," in *Studies in Religious Philosophy and Mysticism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969), pp. 73–107. On the Aristotelean notion of the active intellect *(nous poiētikos)* and related ideas in the Islamic tradition, see Herbert A. Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes, on Intellect: Their Cosmologies, Theory of Active Intellect, and Theories of Human Intellect* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992). On the divinity of the philosopher in Ibn Bājja, see *GS* 104; 79. On the appropriation of the Platonic maxim that "philosophy is the imitation of god insofar as it is possible for a human being" *(homoiōsis theōi kata to dunaton)* in the Islamic philosophical tradition as *tashabbuh bi allāh*, see Lawrence V. Berman, "The Political Interpretation of the Maxim: The Purpose of Philosophy is the Imitation of God," *Studia Islamica* 15 (1961): 53–61.

32 – On the tension between the apparently communal conditions of human perfection and the philosopher's independent happiness, see Claudia Baracchi, "The Shining and the Hidden: Notes on Politics and Solitude from the 'Greek Prophets' to al-Farabi," in *Aristotle and the Arabic Tradition*, ed. Ahmed Alwishah and Josh Hayes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 214–233. For a reading that emphasizes the apolitical and anti-social individualism of Ibn Bājja's philosophy, see Rosenthal, "The Place of Politics," and *Political Thought*, pp. 158–174. As Rosenthal points out, even when Ibn Bājja recognizes the necessity or desirability of political association it is as a basis for the more effective attainment of individual metaphysico-soteriological knowledge rather than for the usual practical reasons (Rosenthal, "The Place of Politics," p. 193; cf. *Political Thought*, p. 173). See also Kochin, "Weeds," pp. 402, 407, and 409. Against this reading, and in favor of a more robustly political Ibn Bājja, see Oliver Leaman, "Ibn Bajja on Society and Philosophy," *Der Islam* 57 (1980): 109–119; Steven Harvey, "The Place of the Philosopher in the City According to Ibn Bājja," in *The Political Aspects of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Charles E. Butterworth (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 199–233, and Rima Pavalko, "The Political Foundations of Ibn Bājjah's Governance of the Solitary (Tadbīr al-mutawaḥḥid)" (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Maryland, College Park, 2008). Pavalko in particular argues that for Ibn Bājja the human being is by nature political and that for the city and the individual the highest life is the same. Indeed, on her reading, the governance of the solitary is ultimately nothing more than a preparation for the emergence of the virtuous city. She accordingly sees him as a full-blooded political Platonist, rather than, as I have cast him, an ambivalent anomaly.

33 – Cf. Ibn Ṭufayl, *Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān: A Philosophical Tale*, trans. Lenn Evan Goodman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), the

eponymous hero of which grows to maturity on an optimally located Mediterranean island and attains perfection in the absence of any human community whatsoever.

34 – Cf. *GS*, Part III, chap. 11 (13 in Berman), where Ibn Bājja warns against the baseness of concerning oneself solely or predominately with one's corporeal form, yet acknowledges the importance of at least minimally maintaining the body (*GS* 103–104; 77–79).

35 – On Ibn Bājja's adaptation of the Greek soteriological ideal of the Isles of the Blessed, see Harvey, "The Place of the Philosopher," pp. 217–218 n. 38. They may have been the implied location of Ibn Ṭufayl's tale as well (see note 33 above). For a discussion of the *jazā'ir al-su'adā'* or *jazā'ir al-khālidāt* ("Eternal Isles") in the Islamic tradition see Stefan Reichmuth, "Nachricht von den Inseln der Seligen: Mythos und Wissenschaft im *Tāǧ al-arūs* von Murtaḍā az-Zabīdī (gest. 1205/1791)," in *Alltagsleben und materielle Kultur in der arabischen Sprache und Literatur: Festscrift für Heinz Grotzfeld zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Thomas Bauer und Ulrike Stehli-Werbeck (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 2005), pp. 291–308.

36 – He calls it a *ṭibb al-nafus* or "medicine of the soul" (*GS* 102; 44), a familiar expression picked up from ancient Greek literature, which often cast philosophy as a spiritual parallel to bodily medicine (cf. Abū Bakr al-Rāzī's *Ṭibb al-ruhāni*, or "spiritual medicine"). Ibn Bājja likens his task here to that of Galen in his *Preservation of Health (Tadbīr al-ṣiḥḥa).* Josep Puig Montada aptly describes Ibn Bājja's counsel as a "*regimen sanitatis*" (Montada, "Ibn Bājja," pp. 30, 35).

37 – One could argue that Ibn Bājja remains truer to Plato in this respect than does al-Fārābī, for if the perfect city is meant to be a form *(eidos)*, then its being outside the realm of change must be understood in accordance with its status as a structure. If this is what Ibn Bājja is taking up in his own account, then the virtuous city's static character cannot be interpreted in the way we would see a real city being static. The virtuous city doesn't change, doesn't contain false opinions, etc. precisely because it *is* a structure: the structure of the city (and therefore the "best" city). Yet one might then question whether the virtuous city ultimately functions as a regulative ideal in any genuinely meaningful sense, since the weed philosopher's aim (living the contemplative life within an imperfect political reality) remains teleologically independent of that structure.

38 – As Harvey points out, "This possibility is not suggested again" (Harvey, "The Place of the Philosopher," p. 208). Rosenthal makes another important point regarding the presumed emergence of the virtuous city. *Falāsifa* like al-Fārābī and Ibn Rushd believed that the ideal state is

possible only on the basis of the perfect, divinely revealed law (cf. the late Plato of the *Laws*). "As a rule," he writes, "they follow Plato in assuming a downward trend of change from one state to another. Without the philosopher who is at the same time the lawgiver and prophet, no ideal state can come into being and exist" (Rosenthal, "The Place of Politics," p. 205). For Ibn Bājja, however, this 'top-down' approach is not an option; all he has to work with are a handful of philosophical stragglers, and between their governance of solitude and the emergence of the perfect city is little more than vague hand waving.

39 – Rosenthal, "The Place of Politics," pp. 210–211; cf. *Political Thought*, p. 172.

40 – On Nietzsche's political kinship to Plato, see Leo Strauss, "Note on the Plan of Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*," in *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), pp. 174–191, and *On Nietzsche's Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, ed. and annot. Richard L. Velkley (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017); Georg Picht, *Nietzsche* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1988), pp. 226–241; Laurence Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teaching* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); Lampert, *Nietzsche and Modern Times: A Study of Bacon, Descartes and Nietzsche* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); Lampert, *Leo Strauss and Nietzsche* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp, 117–128; Lampert, *Nietzsche's Task: An Interpretation of Beyond Good and Evil* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 196–207; Lampert, "Nietzsche on Plato," in *Nietzsche and Antiquity: His Reaction and Response to the Classical Tradition*, ed. Paul Bishop (Suffolk, UK: Camden House, 2004), pp. 205–219; Lampert, *What a Philosopher Is: Becoming Nietzsche* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018); Stanley Rosen, *The Mask of Enlightenment: Nietzsche's Zarathustra* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Alex McIntyre, *The Sovereignty of Joy: Nietzsche's Vision of Grand Politics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997); Hutter, *Shaping the Future*; and Peter S. Groff, "Wisdom and Violence: The Legacy of Platonic Political Philosophy in al-Fārābī and Nietzsche," in *Comparative Philosophy in Times of Terror*, ed. Douglas Allen (Lexington Books, 2006), pp. 65–81.

41 – *Ecce Homo*, "Why I am a Destiny," 1. All references to Nietzsche's works henceforth are cited in the text by abbreviation of English title *(SE = Schopenhauer as Educator; HH = Human, All Too Human; AOM = Assorted Opinions and Maxims; WS = The Wanderer and His Shadow; D = Daybreak; JS = The Joyful Science; Z = Thus Spoke Zarathustra; BGE = Beyond Good and Evil; GM = On the Genealogy of*

Morals; TI = Twilight of the Idols; AC = Antichrist; and EH = Ecce Homo), followed by essay/chapter, section and/or aphorism numbers. Passages from *Schopenhauer as Educator* are cited by section number and page number of the English translation; speeches in *Zarathustra* are cited by number rather than title; Parts in *Twilight* and *Ecce Homo* are cited by abbreviated title (e.g., "Wise," "Books," etc.). I have relied on Walter Kaufmann's translations for Penguin/Vintage and R. J. Hollingdale's translations for Cambridge University Press, with the exception of Graham Parkes' translation of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). Unpublished notes and fragments from the *Nachlass* are cited as *KSA* (= *Friedrich Nietzsche: Sämtliche Werke, Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Einzelbänden*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1988]), followed by volume, notebook, and note numbers. Letters are cited as *KSB* (= *Sämtliche Briefe: Kritische Studienausgabe in 8 Bänden* [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003]), followed by volume and letter number.

42 – This claim is in many ways the punchline of a sustained and (for Nietzsche) decisive inquiry into what the philosopher is, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, Part 6 ("We Scholars"). *KSA* 11:26[407] and 11:38[13] are interesting sketches for *BGE* 211 that shed further light on the idea (Plato and Muhammad, for instance, are cited as predecessors). For a comprehensive examination of Nietzsche's honorific conception of the philosopher-type, see Lampert, *What a Philosopher Is*.

43 – The Nietzschean regimen for the production of higher types attends to variables ranging from one's diet, climate, what one hears and sees, where one dwells (architecture), how one structures the day and measures time, etc. (see, e.g., Nietzsche's emphasis on the "small things which are generally considered matters of complete indifference" in *EH*, "Clever," 10; cf. *WS* 5–6) to traditional ascetic practices like solitude, fasting, and sexual abstinence (*BGE* 47; cf. *GM* III.7–10), to more nuanced cultivating tools such as education, doctrines (e.g., the eternal recurrence), myths, religions, and tables of values.

44 – Despite Nietzsche's various friendships, he was from an early age obsessed with the idea of solitude as the condition of philosophical fertility; in a rough draft for *Ecce Homo* during his final productive year he even proclaims (somewhat hyperbolically), "I am solitude as a human being" (*KSA* 13:25[7]). The period immediately preceding and during which Nietzsche wrote *Zarathustra* (1882–1885) was particularly marked by a return to solitude—necessary for the sake of his mental and physical health after the disastrous Salomé affair and its myriad consequences; see Young, *Nietzsche: A Philosophical*

Biography, pp. 353–358. By 1884, he would come to refer to himself half-jokingly as "the hermit *[Einsiedler]* of Sils-Maria." See Letters to Franziska Nietzsche (August 10, 1884; August 20, 1884; August 10, 1885; *KSB* 6:525, 6:530, and 7:620), to Heinrich von Stein (August 20, 1884; *KSB* 6:527), to Heinrich Köselitz (September 20, 1884; *KSB* 6:536), and to Malwida von Meysenbug (September 24, 1886; *KSB* 7:756). As Kathleen Higgins points out, however, his periods of self-imposed isolation were punctuated by shared meals with fellow boarders, occasional visits from friends, and copious correspondence: he was "at most, only a part-time hermit." See Kathleen Higgins, "Festivals of Recognition: Nietzsche's Idealized Communities," in *Individual and Community in Nietzsche's Philosophy*, ed. Julian Young (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 77.

45 – For two more comprehensive treatments of the topic that examine Nietzsche's entire corpus, see Peter H. Van Ness, "Nietzsche on Solitude: The Spiritual Discipline of the Godless," *Philosophy Today* 32, no. 4 (Winter 1988): 346–358, and Hutter, *Shaping the Future*, pp. 47–74.

46 – Cf. the beginning of the *Republic*: "We went down to the Piraeus. . . ." (*Rep.* 327a) and the escaped philosopher's imagined descent back to the cave-city (*Rep.* 516c–517a, cf. 540a–b). For an excellent discussion of the various senses of Zarathustra's *untergehen*, see Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teaching*, pp. 14–16.

47 – See *TI*, "Maxims," 3, which makes more explicit the Aristotelian background here (*Politics* 1253a25–30). Cf. *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. IX.9 (which emphasizes the need for friends and political community as a condition of the good life) with Bk. X.7–8 (which emphasizes the godlike self-sufficiency of the philosopher in the activity of *theōrein*).

48 – Note that the old holy man retreats into "the forest and the desert," two archetypal places of solitude. His interest in humanity has waned because it is "too incomplete an affair" *(ein zu unvollkommene Sache)*—a fact that arguably draws Zarathustra back down into the world. Cf. Nietzsche's own description of the human being as the "not yet fully determined animal" *(noch nicht festgestellte Thier)*; the openness and incompleteness of human nature is a condition for the possibility of his non-teleological ethical perfectionism (*BGE* 62; cf. *GM* III.13).

49 – On the saint as foreshadowing a major obstacle that Zarathustra will face, see Robert Gooding-Williams, *Zarathustra's Dionysian Modernism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), p. 61; cf. Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teaching*, p. 17.

50 – See Rosen, *The Mask of Enlightenment*, p. 78.

51 – Cf. the holy man's earlier forest retreat (*Z* P.2). On withdrawal to the "desert" and what that means specifically for the philosopher-type (as opposed to, say, the ascetic priest or saint), see *GM* III.7–8. Nietzsche interprets such ascetic strategies not as moralistic renunciations of this-worldly existence, but rather as "bridges to *independence*" (*GM* III.7) and "the most appropriate and natural conditions of their best existence, their fairest fruitfulness" (*GM* III.8). It is, in other words, simply a hygiene aimed at flourishing and achieving the maximal feeling of power.

52 – What exactly precipitates the camel's initial retreat into solitude is not explained (cf. *Rep.* 515c on the philosopher's liberation from the prison of the cave "by nature" *[phusei]*). It could be a necessary consequence of the camel's nature, the logical culmination of his task as reverential weight-bearer, or simply a contingent accident. Cf. Nietzsche's own life of nomadic solitude, precipitated by his sickness, which forced his retirement from academia: this was something that fell to him by chance or accident *(Zufall)* but was nonetheless a liberating gift.

53 – As T. K. Seung points out, the four consecutive speeches of *Z* I.11–14 all in fact address the value of solitude, first in terms of freedom from the state, second in terms of freedom from the marketplace, third in terms of freedom from—or at least sublimation of—sexual desire (i.e., the ascetic function of chastity), and finally, as a complement to, or perhaps even a condition for the possibility of, genuine friendship (T. K. Seung, *Nietzsche's Epic of the Soul:* Thus Spoke Zarathustra [Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005], pp. 34–41). Ofelia Schutte rightly points out that Zarathustra's language of "fleeing" *(fliehen)* here seems to suggest a kind of escapism or retreat from the world he professes to embrace, and she interprets this impulse as reactive, resentful, and even nihilistic (Ofelia Schutte, "The Solitude of Nietzsche's Zarathustra," *Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry* 17 [1981]: 209–222). See, however, Kathleen Higgins, *Nietzsche's Zarathustra*, rev. ed. (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010), p. 73, which reads Zarathustra's solitude not simply as a retreat but as an essential, productive part of his work. The evaluative ambivalence of *anachōrēsis* can be traced back to its earliest Greek philosophical and religious expressions: is it ultimately world-denying or world affirming? On this question see Ware, "The Way of the Ascetics," pp. 4–8.

54 – On this last point, see Hutter, *Shaping the Future*, pp. 47–74. Michael Ure, *Nietzsche's Therapy: Self-Cultivation in the Middle Works*

(Lanham: Lexington Books, 2008), overlooks the political dimension of solitude in Nietzsche's thought, but has an interesting take that complements Hutter's. For him solitude is part of what he calls the "work of the self," which makes possible "a relatedness to others that does not fall prey to the pathology of pity and envy" (Ure, *Nietzsche's Therapy*, p. 17).

55 – In this respect, solitude makes possible a dialogue with oneself, or rather between the constitutive plurality that is the self: an irreducible multiplicity of drives with competing perspectives and interpretations that admit of different possible psychic regimes. For a fascinating treatment of the drives *(Triebe)* and Nietzsche's conception of the multiple soul, see Graham Parkes, *Composing the Soul: Reaches of Nietzsche's Psychology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 273–362.

56 – As Zarathustra says, "Around inventors of new values the world revolves—invisibly it revolves," and this world-making occurs "far from the market place" (*Z* I.12; cf. II.18 and II.22). Lampert points out that the speeches in *Z* I.9–14 are all descriptions of the aforementioned lion spirit (Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teaching*, p. 51).

57 – This acknowledgment of the dangers of solitude is anticipated by *Z* I.8 and I.16; cf. *D* 499 and *HH* 348, where the point is put most starkly: "In solitude the solitary eats himself, in the multitude he is eaten by the many. Now choose." For a fascinating application of this problem to Nietzsche's own life, see Carl Jung, *Nietzsche's Zarathustra: Notes of the Seminar Given in 1934–1939*, ed. James L. Jarrett (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), vol. 2, p. 1485.

58 – The narrative does say, however, that" [Zarathustra's] wisdom grew *[wuchs]* and caused him pain with its fullness" (*Z* II.1).

59 – I translate *glückseligen Inseln* as "Blessed Isles," rather than "Isles of the Blest/Blessed" as Parkes does (and as *makarōn nēsoi* should be rendered) to highlight Nietzsche's own departure from the more literal, scholarly rendering of the Greek *(Inseln die Seligen)* generally found in philological studies and lexica. I leave aside here the question why Nietzsche opts for this looser, and perhaps more literary, construction.

60 – Bernard Frischer, *The Sculpted Word: Epicureanism and Philosophical Recruitment in Ancient Greece* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), p. 38.

61 – On this, see Peter S. Groff, "Zarathustra's Blessed Isles," 24th International Conference of the Friedrich Nietzsche Society, Newcastle on Tyne, UK, September 2018.

62 – Cf. Plotinus, *Enneads*, I.6 (Sixth Tractate). For a rich and sensitive interpretation of Zarathustra's speech that draws upon classical Greek and Neoplatonic philosophy, Patristic theology, mystical and alchemical texts, Goethe, Schiller, and Jung, see Paul Bishop, *On the Blissful Islands with Nietzsche and Jung: In the Shadow of the Superman* (London: Routledge, 2017). For comparable imagery in Nietzsche, see *D* 174, *BGE* 62 and 225, and cf. *GM* II.17–18, which describes the unconscious, unintentional, and accidental imposition of "form" *(Form)* by warlike nobles on the "raw material" *(Rohstoff)* of the conquered.

63 – In the Prologue, for instance, Zarathustra tries to galvanize the vulgar multitude by telling them that the soil of humanity is not yet too poor to cultivate a tall tree, here presumably the distant ideal of the superhuman (*Z* P.5). In an early speech to a troubled friend, he likens the noble creator to a great tree perched on high, far away from the city, flourishing in solitude: "the tree stands alone here in the mountains, it has grown tall beyond human and beast" (*Z* I.8; cf. *Z* III.5.3: "for a tree to become great, it wants to strike hard roots around hard rocks"). In a subsequent speech he encourages his friends, "Be again like the tree that you love, broad-branched: quietly listening it leans out over the sea" (*Z* I.12). Later, he will describe his friends—now his "children"—as a thicket of trees standing together on the Blessed Isles and growing stronger, until finally they can be replanted on their own: "[O]ne day I want to dig them up and place each one on its own that it might learn solitude and defiance and caution. Gnarled and crooked and with pliable hardness shall it then stand there by the sea, a living lighthouse of invincible life" (*Z* III.3). And during Zarathustra's final withdrawal into his mountain abode, one of the kings of the superior humans describes the solitary prophet in strikingly similar terms: "There is nothing, O Zarathustra, that grows more delightfully on earth than a lofty, strong will: that is earth's fairest growth *(Gewächs)*. An entire landscape is invigorated by one such tree. To the pine I compare whoever grows up high like you, O Zarathustra: long, silent, hard, alone, of the finest, most pliant wood *(besten biegsamsten Holzes)*, magnificent. . . . [O]h, who would not climb high mountains to see such growths?" (*Z* IV.11). The sight of such trees, he adds, refreshes and heals even the gloomy (cf. *Z* II.8 and IV.10, where unique trees provide momentary shelter for resting creators). Zarathustra eventually recoils from the reverence of the higher humans and reminisces about his children, whom he now describes with a variety of botanical metaphors: "my gardens" *(Gärten)*, "my beautiful new kind" *(Art)*, "this living plantation" *(Pflanzung)*, "these trees of life *(Lebensbäume)* of my will and my highest hope." It should be noted that the idea of the forest *(Wald)* plays a crucial role

in *Zarathustra*, too, not only as a traditional place of solitude and retreat, but a home to many creator-trees (see esp. *Z* P.2, 8–10, I.12–13, II.10, III.7, 9, and IV.3).

64 – Cf. McIntyre's notion of the "atopian" individual who is "both outside . . . and at the center of his culture . . . an outlaw and lawgiver at the same time" (*The Sovereignty of Joy*, p. 72).

65 – Zarathustra describes *die Weisen* in the city as becoming "slaves" and "servants" of the people. Cf. Plato, *Rep.* 493a–c.

66 – Cf. *Z* III.9: "[D]o you remember, Zarathustra? When you sat on your island, a fount of wine among empty buckets, giving and giving away, pouring and pouring out among the thirsty: —till at last you sat alone and thirsty among drunkards and lamented every night, 'Is receiving not more blessed *[seliger]* than giving? And stealing more blessed yet than receiving?' —*That* was loneliness *[Verlassenheit]*!"

67 – Cf. *KSA* 10:16[89], where he speaks similarly of weakness, softness, and slackness.

68 – These challenges constitute the turning point of the text, which anticipates the emergence of the eternal recurrence as Zarathustra's final mature teaching (*Z* III.2, 13, 15–16).

69 – This voiceless, impersonal entity, which Zarathustra refers to only as 'it' *(es)*, may be the as yet still unconscious doctrine of eternal recurrence.

70 – Zarathustra here associates this thought with both his "past" and his "pain"; see *Z* II.19 and 20, which unearth these and bring the prophet to a crisis point. The vision recounted in *Z* III.2, in which Zarathustra haltingly begins to articulate the doctrine of the eternal return, presumably occurs while he is still on the Blessed Isles.

71 – The encounter with the nihilistic Soothsayer (*Z* II.19) and the redemptive need to affirm the "it was" of one's past or fate (*Z* II.20) both indicate the existential incompleteness of Zarathustra's teaching as it is so far articulated.

72 – Critiques of Epicurus' *lathe biōsas* doctrine are commonplace and need not be enumerated here—suffice to say it was a controversial and deeply unpopular doctrine (Epicurus was, in his own way, just as much of a philosophical 'heretic' as Nietzsche). For a discussion, see Geert Roskam, *"Live Unnoticed" (Lathe Biōsas): On the Vicissitudes of an Epicurean Doctrine* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007), pp. 29–66. On Nietzsche's dalliance with this doctrine, see Peter S. Groff, "Great Politics and the Unnoticed Life: Nietzsche and Epicurus on the Boundaries of Cultivation," in *Nietzsche and Epicurus*, ed. Ryan

Johnson and Vinod Acharya (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), pp. 172–185.

73 – See, e.g., Strauss, who rejects the idea that one can remain a true philosopher in a friendship community or school: "Friendship is bound to lead to, or to consist in, the cultivation and perpetuation of common prejudices by a closely-knit group of kindred spirits. The philosopher must leave the closed and charmed circle of the 'initiated' if he intends to remain a philosopher. He must go out to the market place; the conflict with the political men cannot be avoided. And this conflict by itself, to say nothing of its cause or its effect, is a political action" ("Restatement on Xenophon's *Hiero,*" in *On Tyranny*, p. 195). In other words, the withdrawal of philosophy from its eternal *agon* with the opinions of the city simply results in dogmatism.

74 – The speech of *Z* III.1 takes places in the mountainous ridge of the Blessed Isles the night before he departs and is addressed to himself alone; *Z* III.2–4 take place on the ship and involve speeches respectively to fellow passengers, himself, and the heavens; and *Z* III.5–8 chronicle Zarathustra's travels through various towns and cities before ascending to his mountain cave (the speeches are addressed variously to Zarathustra himself and (oddly) the denizens of the towns and cities. *Z* III.5 is particularly puzzling, insofar as it is the first speech to be directed to the many since *Z* P.3–5. *Z* III.8 takes place in Zarathustra's beloved Motley Cow (the city from which he originally recruited his disciples) and concerns his "apostates" (i.e., the "second companions," "half-and-halfers," and mere "believers" who did not repair to the Blessed Isles after Zarathustra's withdrawal into solitude and have thus "become pious again"). It is unclear whether he is conversing with them again or simply reflecting on them to himself. Further, it is unclear whether his remarks constitute a formal speech: Zarathustra is ultimately described as having talked *(redete)* rather than spoken *(spracht).*

75 – On Zarathustra's ape and the speech "On Passing By" (*Z* III.7), see Peter S. Groff, "Who is Zarathustra's Ape?" in *A Nietzschean Bestiary: Animality Beyond Docile and Brutal*, ed. Christa and Ralph Acampora (Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), pp. 17–31.

76 – Zarathustra's advice to his ape condenses the second aspect of Nietzsche's own "dearest thought," *amor fati*: "I do not want to wage war against what is ugly. I do not want to accuse; I do not even want to accuse those who accuse. Looking away shall be my only negation" (*JS* 276).

77 – Zarathustra's second suggestion that the ape might "plow the earth" *(pflügtest die Erde)* does not point back to real options explored

elsewhere throughout the text in the way that the forest or island possibilities do. However, the life of agrarian retreat has a long history as a response to sick cities and has at times been taken up as a philosophical life-strategy. See, e.g., Carter, *The Quiet Athenian*, pp. 76–98, and A. C. Graham, *Disputers of the Tao* (Chicago and LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 1989), pp. 53–72. The image of the plow, as breaking up, turning over, and resuscitating the compacted, exhausted soil of received traditions was a crucial one in Nietzsche's thought. The working title of *Human, All Too Human*, his first middle period work, was *Die Pflugschar*, or "The Plowshare" (D'Iorio, *Nietzsche's Journey to Sorrento*, p. 47).

78 – Toward the end of the pivotal "Redemption" speech, Zarathustra inadvertently broaches the doctrine of the eternal recurrence, falls into terrified silence, and finally remarks, "It is hard to live with human beings, because keeping silent is so hard." To which the hunchback pointedly responds, "But why does Zarathustra speak otherwise to his students than to himself?" (*Z* II. 20). This state of affairs is, again, ultimately rooted in the old tension between the philosopher and the city. Political prudence or moderation is a necessary complement to philosophical radicalism: on the one hand because it would provoke defensive hostility on the part of the city (thus potentially endangering the philosopher) and on the other because the philosopher's truths are inimical to the life-preserving fictions of the city. As Zarathustra says in *Z* III.6, "*must* I not conceal myself, like one who has swallowed gold—so that they do not slit open my soul"? (cf. Plato, *Symposium* 215b, as well as Maimonides' interpretation of Prov. 25:11 in his Introduction to *The Guide of the Perplexed*). Nietzsche sometimes remarked on this tension in his own life: "I feel I am condemned to silence or tactful hypocrisy in my dealings with everyone" (Letter to Ida Overbeck, August 14, 1883 [*KSB* 6:448]). In *Z* III.9, solitude effectively eliminates the need for any moderation in speech (cf. *BGE* 284). On Nietzsche's esotericism or appreciation for dissimulation, see *BGE* 25–26, 30, 283, 288, and 290. On hermits, masks, and "caves within caves," see *Z* IV.2, *JS* 365, and *BGE* 289. It should be noted that for Nietzsche, solitude is not entirely a panacea for the tyranny of the city: "Where there have been powerful societies, governments, religions, public opinions, in short wherever there has been tyranny, there the solitary *[einsamen]* philosopher has been hated: for philosophy offers an asylum to a person in which no tyranny can force its way, the inward cave, the labyrinth of the heart; and that annoys the tyrants. There the solitaries conceal themselves: but there too lurks their greatest danger" (*SE* 3, 139).

79 – See Van Ness, "Nietzsche on Solitude," p. 352.

80 – Yet Zarathustra's articulation and affirmation of the eternal recurrence is a far cry from Socrates' escaped prisoner gazing serenely upon the radiant form of the Good or Ibn Bājja's weed achieving conjunction with the active intellect: one would certainly not expect either experience to elicit nausea! Zarathustra's revelation of the eternal recurrence is all struggle and suffering, even after the new Eden is disclosed (*Z* III.13)—hardly the happy, serene transcendence of generation and destruction envisioned by his predecessors.

81 – Van Ness, "Nietzsche on Solitude," pp. 353–356.

82 – In short, Zarathustra seems finally to have accepted the Holy Man's sage advice: "Do not go to human beings but stay in the forest!" (*Z* P.2). On the possibility of a post-theistic *vita contemplativa*, see JS 280.

83 – Cf. JS 342, which introduces *Zarathustra* as a tragedy. I take Paul Loeb's treatment of this to be comprehensive and decisive; see his discussion in *The Death of Zarathustra* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 91–97.

84 – Zarathustra specifically plays on the metaphor of honey here: "What is happening to me is what goes on in all fruits that are ripening. It is the *honey* in my veins that is making my blood thicker and also my soul more tranquil" (*Z* IV.1, "The Honey Sacrifice"). He uses this honey as bait to lure promising human beings with the potential for self-overcoming up to visit him. On the motif of ripeness, see also *Z* II.2 and *Z* II.22. The trope of making a dark, difficult teaching palatable through additional sweetening agents is an old one; Lucretius, e.g., likens his own use of poetry and rhetoric in conveying Epicurus' teaching to a doctor smearing honey on the rim of a cup of bitter medicine (*On the Nature of Things* I.936–350 and IV.1–25).

85 – I say presumably here because, in a surprising twist, Zarathustra interprets the sign as indicating the proximity of his "children" (*Z* IV.20), which leaves open the question of what is supposed to happen next. If they have ascended to his mountain world, does that mean they have come to reestablish a new "Blessed Isles" in the mountains, rendering a final descent unnecessary? Or will Zarathustra still descend one last time, now with his "beautiful new species" (*Z* IV.11) in tow?

86 – On this point, consider Steven Harvey's comment on the lesson of Ibn Bājja's political life of materialistic excesses: "the harmful effects of associating with the multitude can be more than simply physical. While the philosopher may be destined to fail in his attempt to teach true happiness to the nonphilosopher, the nonphilosopher may

succeed in impressing his notion of happiness upon the philosopher" (Harvey, "The Place of the Philosopher," pp. 231–232 n. 70). While tempting, I think it would be foolhardy to try to deduce a comparable moral lesson from the *grand guignol* of Nietzsche's final ten years.

87 – I set aside here the old question whether they can be adequately conveyed through mythopoetic accounts or popular religious doctrines, à la al-Fārābī.

88 – See, e.g., *Z* P.8 and I.8. The opposition between the creator and traditional inheritor of values is generally aligned with the opposition between the noble and the 'good' or 'righteous', as well as the solitary and herd-type. Cf. *BGE* 260 and *GM* I passim on more detailed oppositions between the 'good'/'bad' value system of master (or noble) morality and the 'evil'/'good' value system of slave (or herd) morality.

89 – In order for philosophers to cultivate their ideas they need to be protected from the political world, but the political world needs in turn to be protected from their ideas. For a salutary examination of would-be philosopher-rulers in the twentieth century, see Mark Lilla, *The Reckless Mind: Intellectuals in Politics*, rev. ed. (New York: New York Review of Books, 2016).

90 – In this respect, Ibn Bājja is closer in spirit to Nietzsche's middle period texts, which emphasized privatized, pluralistic experiments in therapeutic self-cultivation rather than the great politics of *Zarathustra* and subsequent writings. But his is clearly an unpopular position. See, e.g., Kochin: "The philosopher who leaves the city leaves it to the anti-philosophers; he shows no concern for his fellow weeds, nor any for the lot of the masses. . . . Philosophy itself . . . forces the philosopher back into the cave; thus Ibn Bājja would ever be, as al-Fārābī would call him, a false philosopher" (Kochin, "Weeds," p. 416). Muhsin Mahdi makes a similar point when he observes, "There have always been philosophers who think that they can pursue wisdom as private men regardless of the quality of public life; that they should tend exclusively to their own private gardens; and that their task as philosophers is to explore the depths of their own souls, imaginations and intellects. Perhaps there are times and places that necessitate these views. Yet one need not make a virtue out of necessity" (Mahdi, *Alfarabi and the Foundation of Islamic Political Philosophy*, p. 62). For a more detailed critique of the private philosopher's abandonment of civic duty, see Leo Strauss, "Liberal Education and Responsibility," in *Liberalism Ancient and Modern* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 24.

91 – See note 44 above.

92 – See, respectively, *Z* II.2, *Z* III.3, and *Z* IV.11.

93 – Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Fortune of the Republic* (Boston: Houghton, Osgood and Co, 1879), p. 3. One wonders in this respect whether Zarathustra—or even Nietzsche himself—might be understood as a kind of Bājjian weed. Nietzsche employs the trope of the weed *(Unkraut)* quite often in his writings, but also very traditionally: for instance, to signify internal vices that, if left unchecked, can eventually overtake and strangle the economy of the soul (*SE* 1 [p. 130], *HH* 373, *WS* 53); or to represent types of people with great potential but little cultivation (*WS* 99); or to indicate destructive affects, desires, or tastes (*D* 50, *D* 188, *JS* 289, *GM* III.14); trivial external circumstances that gradually wear us down and sap our potential for greatness (*D* 435, *Z* I.12, *JS* 358); pernicious concepts, opinions, or doctrines (*D* 13, *JS* 345); and untended or misunderstood teachings (*Z* II.1). This is at least a little surprising, given the transparent conventionality of the category: part of what makes a weed a weed is that it is not deliberately cultivated or desired by humans. In this respect, perhaps the closest thing to Ibn Bājja's weeds in Nietzsche's political philosophy are what he calls *Glücksfalle* or *Glückswürfen*: "fortunate accidents," "lucky strikes," or "throws," i.e., exemplary human beings produced by some chance concatenation of forces and historical circumstance who serve as signs to what we might yet become (see *GM* I.12 and 16 and *AC* 3–4; cf. *SE* 6, 162). However, the higher types that Nietzsche ultimately hopes to cultivate are actually quite fragile and vulnerable—susceptible to all sorts of unfavorable conditions—unlike the robust, adaptive, but ultimately mediocre weed, which seems to flourish anywhere and everywhere (see, e.g., *BGE* 62; cf. *KSA* 13:14[133]). Nietzsche's rather traditional attitude toward weeds is especially odd given his prophet Zarathustra's desire to redeem chance accidents and "remain truth to the earth" (*Z* P.3, I.22.2; cf. *Z* P.4). Yet even Zarathustra's animals inform him (after his transformative struggle with the doctrine of the eternal recurrence) that "the world awaits you like a garden" (*Z* III.13.2). The fact that Zarathustra's new redeemed world emerges as a garden—something that is the result of intentional human cultivation and continual care—rather than a wholly dehumanized and de-deified nature bereft of aesthetic anthropomorphisms (*JS* 109) speaks volumes. Nietzsche is typically adamant about getting penned in by the human perspective, let alone inherited value judgments, but here he plays the game and provisionally adopts the conceit that human interests and purposes are sufficient to determine the worth of things. By extension, one might argue, he seems to embrace the assumption that the worth of a philosopher's thoughts must ultimately be estimated in terms of their utility for broader human interests and purposes in the

political sphere. On the cultivated garden in Nietzsche's thought, see again Parkes, *Composing the Soul*, pp. 157–247, and Gary Shapiro, *Nietzsche's Earth: Great Events, Great Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), esp. chap. 5.

94 – See *Zhuangzi: Basic Writings*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), pp. 59 ff. Cf. the 'uselessness' of the enormous serrate oak at Crooked Shaft, which helps to ensure its prosperity and longevity. Numerous other such examples are given throughout the text, particularly in chapter 4 ("In the World of Men"), but see also the story of Zhuangzi and the sacred tortoise in the "Autumn Floods" chapter (p. 110).