



# Nietzsche on the Art of Living

New Studies from the  
German-Speaking  
Nietzsche Research

Günter Gödde, Jörg Zirfas,  
Reinhard G. Mueller  
and Werner Stegmaier (eds.)


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# Preface

After *An Orientation to the Philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche* and the publication of the award-winning essays of our prize competition on the question *How Does the Digitization of Our World Change Our Orientation*, Orientations Press now presents a volume concerning *Nietzsche on the Art of Living*, like the other books open access.

The philosophy of the art of living asks the age-old question, the question of orienting one's own life: 'How can I live well?' It goes back to philosophers like Socrates and Plato, Epicurus and Seneca, Montaigne and the French moralists, Schopenhauer and Kierkegaard and, most recently, Nietzsche and Foucault. An art of living is always called for when people no longer know what to do and how to go on, when the ways of life are no longer self-evident, when traditions, conventions, rules, and norms lose their plausibility and individuals begin to worry about themselves. The art of living and of its philosophy has a practical aim: It is not concerned with ethical principles, but with the concrete practice of people's everyday life, with their individual and successful lives.

Nietzsche, as he often does, pushes the problem of the art of living to the extreme, making it palpable both in its dignity and in its force. Early on, he connects the beginnings of philosophical thought with the art of living in order to make the archaic 'sources of life' accessible anew and fruitful for contemporary and future philosophizing. For him, the modern uncertainty of human orientation caused by nihilism points to art and aesthetics, which, he

supposes, makes life if not “justifiable” (GT 5), at least “bearable” (JS 107). “I want to learn more and more to see the necessary in things as the beautiful: – so I will be one of those who make things beautiful.” (JS 276, our transl.) For him, this means “*amor fati*”: love of life as love of one’s fate, with all its sufferings and successes, opportunities and chances, surprises and overwhelms. An art of living as an *amor fati* becomes vital when metaphysical certainties lose trust.

The arts open up a multi-perspectival seeing and hearing, they experiment with alternative forms and techniques, and create the finest sensibilities for both – Nietzsche himself, with his rich forms of philosophical writing, is an outstanding example of this. They need not justify or refute anything – Nietzsche sovereignly rejected justifications and refutations. For “the change of general taste is more important than that of opinions; opinions with all their proofs, refutations and the whole intellectual masquerade are only symptoms of changed taste and quite certainly *not* what they are still so frequently considered to be, its causes.” (JS 39, transl. Adrian Del Caro) The changes, however, proceed, according to Nietzsche, from the judgments of individuals. They are perhaps based “in a peculiarity of their [i.e., the individuals’] lifestyle, nourishment, digestion, perhaps in a plus or minus of inorganic salts in their blood and brain, in short, in their *physis*” (ibid.). Sometimes, those individuals have “the courage to acknowledge their *physis* and to dignify its demands even down to the subtlest tones: their aesthetic and moral judgments are these ‘subtlest tones’ of *physis*.” (ibid.) This is evidently a self-confession of Nietzsche as well. The art of living goes hand in hand with impediments and idiosyncrasies. It is measured not by universal and supra-temporal norms, but is rather based on the life situations of individuals, their sufferings from life and their desires for life, and above all their individual vitality.

With extraordinary intensity and creativity, Nietzsche tried to find out how to render oneself and one’s culture as a whole more alive and thus affirm both. As a ‘philosophical physician’ he asked what will enhance or detract the individual human beings and the culture wherein they live. In doing so, he, who suffered from serious illnesses throughout his life, had a strong personal interest in therapeutic issues. This also challenged his pride to make his health stronger precisely through illness and suffering in order to achieve a ‘higher health’ mental and intellectual. He sought to prove (to himself) that one can change life through philosophy, resist pain and gain pleasure. For doing so, one has to free oneself again and again from coercions of the moral ‘herd’ by asserting

one's own personality against impositions of seemingly general standards. This is mainly the subject of Nietzsche's aphorism book *Dawn (Morgenröthe)* which deals above all with "thoughts on the presumptions of morality." There he is speaking of a "*moral interregnum*" and writes:

Who would now be able to describe that which will one day replace moral feelings and judgments! – as sure as one can be to recognize that these are erroneous in all their foundations and that their edifice is incapable of repair: their binding force must decrease from day to day, provided only that the binding force of reason does not decrease! To rebuild the laws of life and action, – for this task our sciences of physiology, medicine, our doctrines of society and solitude are not yet sure enough of themselves: and only from them one can take the foundation stones for new ideals (even if not the new ideals themselves). So we live a *provisional* existence or a *subsequent* existence, depending on our taste and talent, and do best, in this interregnum, to be as much as possible our own reges<sup>1</sup> and to found little *experimental states*. We are experiments: let us be so too! (D 453, our transl.)

According to Nietzsche, we experience a great reorientation of the fundamental standards of our lives. And he can help to gauge these standards.

In Anglophone Nietzsche scholarship, Alexander Nehamas in particular, with his 1985 book *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, brought the philosophical question of the art of living to the fore and made a major impact. His thesis was: Instead of providing a new theory or metaphysics, Nietzsche wanted to understand life, and first of all his own life, as a kind of work of art. Nehamas courageously dared to deny that Nietzsche – as he had been understood until then – had fought for reorienting philosophy as such from the ground up focusing on the great issues of truth and morality. Instead, Nehamas made Nietzsche's Socratic concern for himself the center of his philosophizing. He rejected to see a 'system' of any kind in Nietzsche's 'perspectivism, aestheticism and individualism' and found the 'authentic' Nietzsche in his concern for himself.

We don't want to refute that. However, it seems overstated. Nietzsche, in fact, wrote a separate work on himself, the late *Ecce homo* with the subtitle

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<sup>1</sup> interregnum = time between two kings; reges = kings.

*How One Becomes What One Is*, and he introduced himself with the sentence “And so I tell myself my life.” Here he dealt with his own art of living as well as asking how he could become “so wise” and “so clever” and could “write such good books.” We learn a lot about Nietzsche’s own life. But he wrote this not in order to provide an autobiography or a report on his art of living as such, as is so often assumed; for that, *Ecce homo* contains, to use Goethe’s phrase, too little ‘truth’ and too much overt ‘poetry.’ Instead, Nietzsche wanted to expound the conditions “why” he was so clever and wise and an author of such good books, and above all, “why” he could become, as he saw it, “a fate,” a fate for humanity, which was now detaching itself from its belief in ultimate truths and in highest values and therefore had to reorient itself philosophically from the bottom up. In the first instance, Nietzsche did not want to explain his art of living, but what it contributed to make him the fate of humanity. Just as he had delivered a genealogy of morality one year before, he now wanted to present a genealogy of his own philosophizing, an auto-genealogy of himself who, with the proclamation of nihilism, which he had lived through in an exemplary manner, now forced humanity as a whole to experience it. This reaches far beyond a perspectivistic, aesthetic and individualistic design of life. To be sure, he did not seek a ‘system,’ but explicitly evaded it (see TI, Sayings and Arrows 26). Nevertheless, as a philosopher he was concerned with humanity and its current and future form of life, not with his personal art of living. This, in fact, would be ‘literature’ which Nietzsche explicitly did not want as well (see the letter to Carl Spitteler, February 10, 1888: “Am I making ‘literature?’”). His personal art of living was only a precondition for him becoming a philosophical fate – albeit a very important one.

Recent German-language Nietzsche scholarship, which enjoys the privilege of being able to better catch and understand the subtleties and nuances of his native language, did not go along with reducing his philosophizing to the issue of the art of living. Instead one increasingly sounded out the ways and forms of his philosophizing, through which he abandoned rigid doctrines and systems. One keeps this in mind also when dealing with the art of living. Nietzsche seldom used the term orientation, but he was evidently concerned with what we understand by it today: the question of how we can lead a successful life in nihilism, doing it self-confidently and, to use Nietzsche’s own term, “sovereignly” (GM II 2). So we may say: The art of living is part of the answer to the question of how we can orient in nihilism. According to Nietzsche, the “truth” that “*we do not have*”

(N Spring 1880, 3[19]) and with which Nehamas continues to wrestle in the horizon of perspectivism and interpretation, is something that one looks for only in specific situations – when one, like scientists and most previous philosophers, continues to strive for unconditional certainty. Nietzsche, however, in his life and in his philosophizing, explicitly left behind the “feeling of security” and wanted to live out the “pleasure of uncertainty, of the unlimitedness of the horizon lines: The happiness of the great discoverers in the pursuit of certainty could now turn into the happiness of proving everywhere the uncertainty and the dare.” (N Summer – Autumn 1884, 26[280], our transl.). Precisely this, to see the uncertainty and the venture in the striving for certainty, belongs to a successful human orientation, both the personal and the philosophical one, as we understand it today.

The contributors of the volume we present here, all German-speaking Nietzsche scholars, accept Nietzsche’s perspectivism, aestheticism and individualism as Nehamas describes it. However, they do not commit Nietzsche to any such -ism, do not constrain his philosophizing to a certain point of view from which everything else has to be interpreted. The common question is rather, what an art of living looks like at all and what we can learn from Nietzsche on this issue. It is by no means self-evident to make an art out of one’s life or even out of the life of others, with all the playful, non-committal and experimental that the concept of art involves besides the creative. More strongly than the aesthetic, the successful creates hold in life, i.e., the successful as each individual sees it from their perspective. For an individual experience of success, very different motives can be crucial: besides the motive of creation as such, the motives of religion, education, knowledge and science. Some motives are idiosyncratic, if not even pathological. However, the motive Nietzsche asserts particularly, is distinguishing oneself in social competition and becoming superior, or in short: striving for rank. According to Nietzsche, the art of a successful life also entails the confrontation with the conditions under which one has grown up – for Nietzsche, the son of a pastor, above all Christianity – and the method of exploring one’s personal gifts – for him, above all psychology. With all unavoidable experimentation, for Nietzsche the basic conditions of the art of living include first of all dietetics as care for one’s health and its invigoration, next cheerfulness and joy in existence wherever pessimistic weariness of life threatens, and overcoming the constraints that conventional morals exert. Some important clues of an art of living in Nietzsche’s sense are leisure, silence, living



solitarily, and yet being able to relate to others with humor, wit, and irony. But for him all these skills prepare more – prepare a heroic art of living, which fights for rank, an art of festivals, with which both individuals and societies celebrate themselves, and finally the art of ‘great politics’ that is the most challenging for Nietzsche. His ideas of the art of living range from the simplest to the most extreme. They cannot be pinned down to truncating -isms.

Most of the contributions gathered in this book have already been published in German in the volumes

*Nietzsche und die Lebenskunst. Ein philosophisch-psychologisches Kompendium*, ed. by Günter Götde / Nikolaos Loukidelis / Jörg Zirfas, Stuttgart 2016,

*Kritische Lebenskunst. Analysen – Orientierungen – Strategien*, ed. by Günter Götde / Jörg Zirfas, Stuttgart 2018,

*Das Leuchten der “Morgenröthe.” Friedrich Nietzsche und die Kunst zu leben*, ed. by Eike Brock / Günter Götde / Jörg Zirfas, Stuttgart 2022.

The three volumes were produced by Metzler-Verlag, an imprint of Springer-Verlag. From a total of over one hundred contributions, we have selected and recompiled fifteen for this volume. They have all been abridged and revised for the English edition. Several authors have provided English versions themselves. Many collaborated on the translations of the remaining contributions into American English: We thank especially (in alphabetical order) Andrea Hiott, Manuel Knoll & Barry Stocker, Virginia Lilley, Renate Müller-Buck, and Mirko Wittwar. Some of the translations were done by one of the editors, Reinhard G. Mueller, the executive director of the *Hodges Foundation for Philosophical Orientation*, Nashville, Tennessee. He also concludes the editors’ final contributions with an original essay on Nietzsche’s art of living today.

We would like to thank all authors for their efforts in revising and translating their contributions. At the same time, we thank the publisher Springer for their kind permission to reprint the translations. We explicitly point out that the texts from the three volumes mentioned are copyrighted by

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We hope that English-speaking readers will now also enjoy the *New Studies from the German-Speaking Nietzsche Research on Nietzsche's Art of Living*. For an overview of the results of our papers, please refer to the first two sections of our conclusions.

*Günter Gödde   Reinhard G. Mueller   Werner Stegmaier   Jörg Zirfas*



# I.

## Motives and Forms of Nietzsche's Art of Living

*by Jörg Zirfas*

### Introduction: Nietzsche's Life and Thinking

The art of living is one of Nietzsche's central themes, even if he did not explicitly treat it under this term. He is convinced that the traditional arts of living have not only lost their meaning in the present, but that they – especially in their moral and religious variants – make it impossible for people to live a vital life. According to Nietzsche, a contemporary art of living has yet to be developed, and his writings offer important hints regarding such an art of living. Nietzsche attaches a completely new significance to it compared to the considerations and models of antiquity, the Middle Ages, and modernity.<sup>1</sup> For with an art of living that is based on the “will to power,” Nietzsche aims at an existential depth, dynamism, and energy that affect even the banalities of everyday life. The fact that Nietzsche's art of living implies suffering and nihilism, health and illness, caducity and death, but also pleasure and liveliness, intoxication and ecstasy, is at the core related to his principled considerations that have to do with ‘power,’ i.e., with forces and struggles, winning and losing, with determining and asserting.

Nietzsche's art of living is an art of optionality, mobility, development, rhythm, dynamism, intensity, becoming and of transforming life. One

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1 See Günter Gödde / Jörg Zirfas, “Das Wiederaufleben der antiken Selbstorgekonzeptionen bei Friedrich Nietzsche and Michel Foucault”, in: Friederike F. Günther / Enrico Müller (eds.), *Nietzscheforschung* 26 (2019): 229-247.

encounters these aspects of a vitalization of the art of living when dealing with Nietzsche's questions concerning corporeality, health, strength, dance, time, art, and pleasure. For Nietzsche, philosophical art of living offers answers to the question of how we can make our lives richer and more colorful, but also riskier and more dangerous.<sup>2</sup>

As a biographical reconstruction, this text wants to illustrate, first, how close the connection between biography and the art of living is in general and with Nietzsche in particular; second, it wants to name the most prominent motives and forms of the art of living in Nietzsche's biography. And thirdly, it tries to clarify a line of development in the philosophy of the art of living on the basis of Nietzsche's biography, which is also reflected *cum grano salis* in his work.

With Nietzsche, it becomes clear that the art of living has at its core an artistic, bodily, practical, and individualistic trait, which Nietzsche also emphasizes again and again in his works. But to what extent can aspects of an art of living be worked out and clarified in Nietzsche's life?

First of all, "theories" of the art of living do not write themselves, but they are written by specific authors with specific biographies. In this respect, a biographically oriented art of living emphasizes a continually perspectival view of individuals concerning the transformations and structures of their theories and practices of a successful life, with regard to the creation of meaning and happiness, the construction of identity, and how one deals with others and the world. An important point here is the dialectical interweaving of individual biographical experiences and historical-cultural circumstances, which can be considered from the social point of view of whether, how, and to what extent cultural life-worlds and overall world-historical situations promote or hinder experiences of the art of living, and from the individual point of view of whether, how, and to what extent people can design their lives according to aesthetic-ethical criteria of the art of living.<sup>3</sup>

In this sense, one can put forward the thesis that models of the art of living refer to biographical experiences in an outstanding sense; and one can probably go one step further and say that in the models of the art of living,

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2 Günter Gödde / Jörg Zirfas, Einleitung: "Friedrich Nietzsche und die Vitalisierung der Lebenskunst", in: Günter Gödde / Nikolaos Loukidelis / Jörg Zirfas (eds.), *Nietzsche und die Lebenskunst. Ein philosophisch-psychologisches Kompendium*, Stuttgart 2016, 1-26.

3 Günter Gödde / Jörg Zirfas, "Biographische Erfahrung, theoretische Erkenntnis und künstlerische Gestaltung. Eine Einführung in die Konzeptionen der Lebenskunst," in: Günter Gödde / Jörg Zirfas (eds.), *Lebenskunst im 20. Jahrhundert. Stimmen von Philosophen, Künstlern und Therapeuten*, München 2014, 9-27.

above all, experiences are expressed that one has had oneself and with others and the world. If one understands the art of living as an art that primarily concerns the theoretical and practical handling of oneself, then it becomes clear, especially in Nietzsche's biography, how close the connection is between biographical motives and practices on the one hand and reflections regarding the art of living on the other. If thinking comes from life and has an effect on life – and if life comes from thinking and has an effect on thinking, as Nietzsche emphasizes – then a biographical approach to Nietzsche's philosophy of the art of living is indispensable.

In order to clarify the connection between biography and the art of living in Nietzsche's sense, several paths are initially possible, which Nietzsche himself took in his philosophizing: One can proceed chronologically and reconstruct the development of the art of living from important life events and stages; one can proceed genealogically and intertwine the origins of the biographical and philosophical motives of the art of living with the cultural-historical backgrounds; one can proceed psychologically and supplement the conscious parts of one's biography and the philosophy of the art of living with the unconscious parts; one can proceed in a corporeal sense and interpret significant biographical-physical experiences in terms of the philosophy of the art of living; one can proceed hermeneutically and infer important concepts and metaphors of the art of living, for instance, from Nietzsche's letters; or one can proceed philosophically and relate Nietzsche's reflections on the art of living to biographical contexts; and finally, one can also combine different approaches to biography and the art of living.

The following is an attempt to combine chronological with life-art philosophical motives. In doing so, I assume a close connection between the experiences and meanings of art and the theories and models of the art of living.

This assumption can be supported with regard to Nietzsche's own reflections on life, thinking, and art. For he starts from the following consideration: Thinking must be rooted in life, especially in corporeal life, and thinking must have its positive effects in life, especially in corporeal life. The art of living only makes sense if it is perceived in a positive way.<sup>4</sup> Only sensing sense generates style and taste, pleasure and love. Nietzsche emphasized this again and again. And he noted: "The product of the philosopher is his *life* (at first before his

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4 Volker Gerhardt, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, München 1999, chap. 4: on 'life as art.'

*works*). That is his work of art. Every work of art is on the one hand turned toward the artist, on the other toward other people” (N Summer – Autumn 1873, 29[205]). For Nietzsche, philosophy should not only understand life as art, but also practice it as art. Art is to become life and life is to become art. Art and life not only interpret each other reciprocally, they also enter into tense practical syntheses without life becoming completely absorbed in art or art becoming completely absorbed in life. The following anthropological maxim summarizes Nietzsche’s intention of the art of living in a nutshell: “To become artist (creator), saint (lover) and philosopher (knower) in *One Person: — my practical goal!*” (N Autumn 1883, 16[11]).

## 1. The Motive of Religion

Nietzsche came from a religious family: His father, Carl Ludwig Nietzsche (1813-1849), was a Lutheran pastor in Röcken near Lützen (near Leipzig). Nietzsche therefore grew up in a Protestant parsonage, which in the 19<sup>th</sup> century stood as a symbol for religion, morality, history, and culture. The parsonage is considered an important cultural, educational and value-oriented institution. He was born on October 15, 1844, the birthday of the Prussian King Frederick William IV and thus received his first name.

Throughout his life, Nietzsche grappled with religion or with the meaning of religion for life. And he was primarily concerned with the Christianity and very often with Christian compassion. According to Nietzsche, Christians have represented a form of life that is hostile to life, a form that does not really strengthen the weak, but indeed weakens the strong. The Christian religion for Nietzsche is above all associated with *ressentiment*. It stands for guilt and bad conscience. It stands for the inversion of aggression and the establishment of a “herd morality” that leads to the leveling and decline of human possibilities. For Nietzsche, Christianity forms the negative counterpart to the art of living. He understands Christianity as a philosophy of the negation of life, which he contrasts with his philosophy of the affirmation of life.

One can hardly overestimate Nietzsche’s aspiration: He wants to overcome the prevailing morality of the West through his philosophy; he propagates a new art of living that does not focus on the next world, spirit, pity and religion, but on this world, the body, power and art. He is no longer concerned with all people, but rather with the individual, and he is no longer concerned with

morality, but with aesthetics, which he understands less as a reflective event, but rather as a sensual, physiological, and instinctive event.<sup>5</sup> And the timing of his philosophy of the art of living seems just right, for if his diagnosed death of God is true, in the sense of a loss of unquestionable certainties, then the world needs a new *religio* – though one that truly confronts the ambivalences and contingencies of the modern world. But when life is no longer secured by religion, one must face the monstrosities, the uncanniness, and the tragic moments of life. Life then needs an art of living. But this is a home-less art. It has lost its metaphysical canopy. In order to endure this new situation, one needs for protection the means of media: one needs education, one needs science, and one needs the arts – especially music and literature.

## 2. The Motive of Education

Nietzsche grows up in an all-female household after the early death of his father. Besides his mother and sister, he lives with his grandmother, two aunts, and a maid; then his family moved to Naumburg. Naumburg is the place of his first school education, first at the city's *Bürgerschule*, then at the *Domgymnasium*. From 1858, Nietzsche became a student at Schulpforta, where he acquired a thorough humanistic-philological education.

Education is – since ancient times – an integral part of the art of living. This is no different for Nietzsche, who understands education more strongly in bodily and aesthetic terms. The practical skills of reading, writing, and thinking as well as concentration, sensing, and repetition in terms of attitude belong for him indispensably to an art of living.

Education means division, self-division, means a readerly, writerly, and thinking way of dealing with oneself. Education needs distance-producing reflection, which one can obtain, for example, through reading and writing. Thus, writing means to describe oneself, to write oneself out, to overwrite oneself. For Nietzsche, the art of living is above all self-relation through the medium of writing. Here, the self emerges on the inner stage of the imagination and the outer stage of literature. What is at stake is self-perception, the perception of a self that always appears differently on these stages and that is nevertheless – “as” Nietzsche – a prerequisite for being able to appear as such. Nietzsche is

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<sup>5</sup> Werner Stegmaier, *Nietzsche an der Arbeit. Das Gewicht seiner nachgelassenen Schriften Aufzeichnungen für sein Philosophieren*, Berlin/Boston 2022, 13 f.



director, figure, and actor and sometimes also spectator of himself. The continual generation of differences that occurs in this process sets education in motion.

In October 1864, he began studying theology and classical philology in Bonn. And he took part in a cheerful student life, joining the fraternity *Franconia* (which he quickly left again) and visiting entertainment venues. Nietzsche then served as a ‘one-year-volunteer’ in 1867 with the Prussian artillery in Naumburg and suffered a serious riding accident just one year later, which made him unfit for military service.

His encounter with the classical philologist Friedrich Wilhelm Ritschl (1806-1876) from Bonn, whom Nietzsche followed to Leipzig in 1865 and with whom he studied until 1869, was significant for him. On Ritschl’s recommendation, Nietzsche was appointed associate professor in Basel at the age of 25 – before he had completed his studies, but due to several successful publications.

In the Leipzig period he discovered and read above all Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), who will have a great influence on him; and in 1868 he met Richard Wagner (1813-1883), whom he called a “star friend” throughout his conscious life and whose music he loved – even though he was very critical of it later.

Schopenhauer and Wagner acquaint him with the primal drives of mankind, with the unconscious, the drives – better: the abysses of our drives, which provide the abysmal grounds for our thinking, feeling, and willing. The art of living above all means dealing with this world of drives, with that which drives people. That this dealing is philosophical means that one can change with thoughts not only the spiritual, but also the physical-corporeal and the instinctual-automatic. Thinking as a force that is able to modify even the greatest passions. Broadly speaking: Nietzsche is in love with thinking, not with the beloved. The will to think is a will to love. And this, in turn, is “nothing other than a certain shape of the will to power. For is there a greater power than that magical transformation that makes something lovable?”<sup>6</sup>

### 3. The Motive of Art

Already in his youth, Nietzsche proved to be very artistic. He was perceived as extremely musical, an excellent piano player who also composed and later

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6 Rüdiger Safranski, *Nietzsche. Eine Biographie seines Denkens*, München/Wien 2000, 289, our transl.

received some fame for it; during his student days, he not only played the piano but also composed pieces for it, setting his own poetry to music. At the same time, he proved to be a writer who produces literature even at a young age. In addition to the usual humanistic school texts, he also read unusual romantic texts, like Jean Paul and Friedrich Hölderlin; and he began to develop a critical attitude toward religion and toward the expert, the 'philistine.'

In his philosophy, he will always emphasize the importance of art and aesthetics. And one can hardly overestimate the importance of literature and music for an art of living.<sup>7</sup> To ascertain one's life by writing/reading as well as by music/hearing, to interpret and understand it with the help of reading, writing, listening and composing, and to write and listen to it differently, is a central concern of the art of living.

After his university appointment, Nietzsche moved to Basel, and after a short time he sought contact with Richard Wagner, who lived in Tribschen near Lucerne from 1866-1872. In this climate, the first major work was written. In 1872, *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music* was published – a book that was met with the enthusiastic approval of Wagner and his wife Cosima; at the same time, it signified the end of the academic career of this classical philologist, which had just begun – though not yet the end of his activity as a university lecturer.

Art, according to the thesis put forward in this book, is about the connection between the Apollonian and the Dionysian, between dream and intoxication. The connection of dream and intoxication made possible by art, and especially by music, enables a distancing of the human being from the world. But it also permits an art of living as surrender to the world, which is understood as embodied music. Through the illusion of art – the imagery of the Apollonian dream and the Dionysian “intoxicating reality” – the human being can become the artist of his life. Art of living from the spirit of music is thus distance and separation on one hand (the Apollonian) and devotion and fusion on the other (the Dionysian).<sup>8</sup> Apollo, from the point of view of the art of living, embodies the beautiful form and a harmonious artistry that is both integrative and individuating (BT 1); in contrast, Dionysus stands for self-dissolution in an intoxication of collective fusion, in which the human being

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7 Alexander Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, Cambridge 1987.

8 Eckart Liebau, “Im Rausch des Lebens: Friedrich Nietzsche”, in: Eckart Liebau / Jörg Zirfas (eds.), *Lust, Rausch und Ekstase. Grenzgänge der Ästhetischen Bildung*, Bielefeld 2013, 85-106.

becomes a work of art: “Man is no longer an artist, he has become a work of art: all nature’s artistic power reveals itself here, amidst shivers of intoxication, to the highest, most blissful satisfaction of the primordial unity” (BT 1, transl. Ronald Speirs).

With this book, Nietzsche has written himself out of classical philology and into modern philosophy. The art of living appears as a binary of individualistic-idealistic artistry and a collectivized-ecstatic work of art. Art provides a home in times of homelessness. In other words, art creates its own home, with its own values, norms, and behaviors. But does art not thereby have a regressive or a progressive character (see HH I 159)?

In the production and reception of art, people experience happiness when enjoying a successful work of art. But they also learn something about their possibilities – and – this is also central – something about their limits. Isn’t the famous Nietzsche theorem of the *amor fati* also – and perhaps above all – a word about one’s own necessities that one is not able to change? And what happens when one is able to love them? Then, one turns one’s fate and changes one’s destiny – through love. The one who is able to recognize and positively evaluate his or her own limitations recreates himself. Only he or she is able to affirm his or her life in its entirety. Doesn’t he or she thereby move into a God-like position? “And God saw that it was good ...” (Genesis 1, 11). Nietzsche then says with artistic diction: And above all, art “has taught us for thousands of years to look upon life in any of its forms with interest and pleasure, and to bring our sensibility sufficiently far that we can finally cry: ‘life, however it may be, is good!’” (HH I 222, transl. Gary Handwerk).

And later, too, we find in him a conception of art associated with life, intoxication, power, and perfection.

*On the psychology of the artists.* — For there to be art, for there to be any kind of aesthetic doing and seeing, there is one indispensable condition: *intoxication*. [...] The essential thing about intoxication is the feeling of an increase in strength and fullness. Out of this feeling we hand over to things, we *force* them to take from us, we violate them — we call this process *idealizing*. [...] The human in this state [of intoxication, JZ] transforms things until they reflect his power — until they reflect his perfection. This *compulsion* to transform into perfection is — art. Even everything that he is

not still contributes to his pleasure in himself; in art, the human relishes himself as perfection. (TI, Forays of an Untimely One 8-9, transl. Carol Diethe / Duncan Large / Adrian Del Caro / Alan D. Schrift)

In *Joyful Science*, Nietzsche says that we need art to endure life:

*Our ultimate gratitude to art.* — [...] As an aesthetic phenomenon existence is still *bearable* to us, and through art we are granted the eye and hand and above all the good conscience to *be able* to make such a phenomenon of ourselves. At times we have to take a break from ourselves, by looking out and down upon ourselves and, from an artistic distance, laughing *over* ourselves or weeping *over* ourselves; we have to discover the *hero* and likewise the *fool* who resides in our passion for knowledge, we have to be glad of our folly from time to time, in order to be able to stay glad of our wisdom! And precisely because in the final analysis we are heavy and somber human beings and more weights than humans, nothing does us more good than the *fool's cap*: we need it for our own sake — we need all exuberant, soaring, dancing, mocking, childish and blissful art in order not to lose that *freedom over things* that our ideal demands of us (JS 107, transl. Adrian Del Caro).

In the four years from 1873 to 1876, Nietzsche wrote four *Unfashionable Observations*, including *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*. But shortly after Nietzsche parted ways with Wagner.

#### 4. The Motive of Pathology

The separation from Wagner signified a new phase in his life, which was announced in many ways: In 1878, his first great aphoristic writing, *Human, All Too Human*, was published. Nietzsche became increasingly ill, suffering from migraines and stomach cramps, and then in May 1879 he excused himself from his professorial duties. He wanted to marry and asked his older friend Malwida von Meysenburg (1816-1903) for help. But marriage remained denied to him throughout his life, a form of bourgeois defeat.

For Nietzsche, relationships with women are problematic: His first great love, Cosima Wagner (1837-1930), probably remained the unattainable woman of his dreams even after his separation from Bayreuth; yet this love was unrequited, as did his second great love, Lou Salomé (1861-1937). He met her in Rome in 1882 and would have liked to marry her. However, this was also true for his friend Paul Rée (1849-1901), who was also in love with her. Nothing came of the marriage plans for either of them. And the fact that the friendship between Nietzsche and Lou Salomé ended in the long run was due not least to the rather malicious intrigues of his jealous sister Elisabeth. The break with Lou puts an unbearable strain on the already difficult relationship with his sister and mother; Nietzsche contemplated suicide. In the following years, he led a philosophical life. As far as his health permitted, he would mainly read, write and converse with his few old and new friends. And he tried to find the thoughts that make it possible not only to live in this situation, but to live well in it.

Here, the notion of the art of living changes. Now it is no longer about the intoxicating salvation through the (musical) art, but about something more modest, about imitation and compensation. He brings art close to science, considers it under certain principles and refers to the imitation and practice of techniques. With these techniques he adopts the millennia-old tradition of dietetics, which highlights six points regarding cultivated ways of dealing with one's body: how to deal with light and air; the question of nutrition; the rhythm of movement and rest; the alternation of waking and sleeping; the question of digestion and the balance of the affects. When Nietzsche recommends to allow oneself a lot of time in the sun, to take great care of nutrition and intake as well as digestion and excretion (including the spiritual sense), to let the "doldrums" of the soul emerge after great activities (JS 42, transl. Adrian Del Caro), to sleep at the right time, etc. – we find valuable hints regarding the art of living. This scientific approach overcomes the illusionary character of art and can therefore be connected to reality.

Thus art can help taking things not so strictly concerning truth: "The artist has a weaker morality than the thinker; under no circumstances will he allow his brilliant, deeply meaningful interpretations of life to be taken from him" (HH I 146, transl. Gary Handwerk). Art makes the sick life easier, alleviates pain, without ultimately removing the roots of evil: "Admittedly, we can say some favorable things about the means that they use to make life easier: they soothe and heal only temporarily, only for the moment; they even keep people

from working toward genuine improvement of their circumstances, because they suspend and, by palliating it, discharge the passion that impels dissatisfied people toward action” (HH I 148, transl. Gary Handwerk).

In June 1879, Nietzsche travelled to St. Moritz in the Upper Engadine for the first time for health reasons. Two years later, he discovered the summer retreat Sils-Maria, where he later developed crucial thoughts of his philosophy. The following ten years were characterized by an unsteady wandering life, in the summers he mostly stayed in Sils-Maria, in the winter in Genoa, Rapallo, Turin, and Nice and, in between, sometimes in Naumburg.

If the art of living also and especially proves itself successful when dealing with suffering, then one may learn from Nietzsche's biography that the art of living is also and especially concerned with environments of climate and atmosphere. While art alleviates suffering, suffering can be made practically fruitful by philosophically reflecting on it and on how to give meaning to the suffering. Suffering is an active structure of life that must be affirmed. Only its affirmation can liberate you, create something new, and negate the suffering in order to understand it differently. The suffering in/of life is the condition for the love of life.

## 5. The Motive of Science

While he was on his travels, his philosophical production was in full swing: *Human, All Too Human* (1878) with its sequels *Mixed Opinions and Maxims* (1879) and *The Wanderer and His Shadow* (1880), *Dawn* (1881), and *The Joyful Science* (1882) finally made him a “free spirit.”

After Nietzsche left the university – the institution of science – he goes scientifically ‘all in.’ He takes into view all of humanity, the obvious but especially the latent and psychological aspects, the non-public and unconscious; not only the mind, but also the body and the soul. He can be considered – before Sigmund Freud – as a psychoanalyst and – before Pierre Bourdieu – as a social analyst who very carefully describes and criticizes the pathologies of everyday life for their implicit motivations and goals. Often in a pointed and condensed aphoristic form.

In this sense, the art of living is the pleasure in and the cultivation of an unsparing drive for knowledge. Thinking, education, and science become

delightful purposes of life. The aphorism 324 in the fourth book of the *Joyful Science* reads accordingly:

*In media vita.* No! Life has not disappointed me! On the contrary, from year to year I find it truer, more desirable and mysterious — from that day on, when the great liberator came over me, that idea that life could be an experiment of the knower — and not a duty, not a disaster, not a deception! — And knowledge itself: whatever it may be for others, for example, a bed to rest on or the way to such a bed, or entertainment, or idleness — for me it is a world of dangers and victories in which even heroic feelings have their dance- and playgrounds. “*Life as a means to knowledge*” — with this principle at heart one can not only live bravely, but even *live cheerfully and laugh cheerfully!* And who after all would know how to laugh well and live well if they did not first have a good understanding of war and victory? (JS 324, transl. Gary Handwerk).

Life is not only the starting point and the means, but also the playing field and the goal of science. Thinking in order to live – living in order to experiment with thinking: This is the art of living. But it also becomes clear that this is a dangerous art.

*On the goal of science.* — What? The ultimate goal of science is supposed to be to bring human beings as much pleasure and as little displeasure as possible? Now what if pleasure and displeasure were so knotted together with a single rope that whoever *wants* to have as much as possible of the one also *must* have as much as possible of the other — that whoever wants to learn to “jubilate to high heaven” must also stay prepared for being “depressed to death”? And maybe this is how things are! [...] Indeed, with *science* we can promote one goal as well as the other! Today perhaps it is better known for its power to deprive human beings of their joys, and to make them colder, more statuesque, more stoic. But it could yet be discovered as the *great bringer of pain!* — And then maybe its counterforce would be discovered at the same time, its tremendous faculty to light up new galaxies of joy! (JS 12, transl. Gary Handwerk).

The difference to art is striking: While art stands for great intoxication and integrative salvation or at least for mild anesthesia, science breaks the usual forms of thinking and acting. Emancipation cannot be achieved without pain. One must want suffering in order to set out for new shores. This is not easy: “*live dangerously!* Build your cities on the slopes of Vesuvius! Send your ships into unexplored seas! Live at war with your peers and with yourselves! Be robbers and conquerors as long as you cannot be rulers and possessors, you knowers!” (JS 283, transl. Gary Handwerk).

A scientific-philosophical art of living is literally painful at first: only then can “new galaxies of joy” light up. While science makes things unambiguous, problematic, even evil, art shows us how we can deal with these truths. Art makes the truth of science bearable; with distance, irony, criticism and skepticism, it can provide a remedy for the heaviness and burden of existence. The “*freedom over things*” (JS 107, transl. Gary Handwerk), the freedom of art lets us endure life. The cheerfulness of science, on the other hand, results from a broader experience of difference. Only those who have truly experienced intellectual pain know how to appreciate joy. Scientific joy makes it possible to celebrate successful structurings and restructurings that are worth of affirmation, as well as mere existence and self-joy: the joy of self-discovery, self-regulation, and self-strengthening. For Nietzsche, scientific joy is related to cognition, learning, the development and expansion of the person. It is furthermore connected with the formation of character as a continual positioning to the world and life. In this sense, one can say that the painful, scientific joy in the context of new ways of thinking has a close relationship with the joy of the fact of the liveliness of life. Which, conversely, means that the loss of scientific joy may well be accompanied by a loss of joy in life.

## 6. The Motive of Power

In the winter of 1882/83, Nietzsche stayed first in Genoa, then in Rapallo, and here Nietzsche wrote down the first part of *Zarathustra* – almost 100 printed pages – in ten days. By 1885, the other three parts followed. After that, he wrote more important books, such as *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), *On the Genealogy of Morality* (1887), *Twilight of the Idols* (1889), as well as his posthumous *The Antichrist* (composed in 1888) and *Ecce Homo* (composed in 1888/9). A central motive of his late writings and especially of the carefully composed



philosophical poem *Zarathustra* is that of power. The power that is sung about here in Dionysian terms is not a power of political domination and oppression, but a power of self-conquest and the creative reevaluation of values. The art of living is now no longer salvation and no longer compensation, but creation and self-transformation. The conclusion of the corresponding chapter “On Self-Overcoming” reads:

“[...] Only where life is, is there also will; but not will to life, instead – thus I teach you – will to power!

Much is esteemed more highly by life than life itself; yet out of esteeming itself speaks – the will to power!” – Thus life once taught me, and from this I shall yet solve the riddle of your heart, you wisest ones (Za II, On Self-Overcoming, transl. Adrian Del Caro).

In Nietzsche’s later years, art takes on a new significance as a stimulant of the will to power. Art now attains a disciplining and affirming character. “We find *art* here as an organic function: we find it inserted into the most angelic instinct of life: we find it as the greatest stimulant of life, — art thus, sublimely expedient even in that it lies... But we would be err to stop at its power to lie: it does more than merely imagine, it shifts values itself. [...] The lover is worth more, is stronger” (N Spring 1888, 14[120]).

The fate of existence is decided by the values with which we differentiate existence. We ‘arrange’ reality for ourselves according to our values, which in turn provide us with a horizon of thinking and action.<sup>9</sup> The will to power is above all a will to create, to change and to revalue. A re-evaluation that turns even the negative into the positive. In the will to power the love of life is expressed. Negation, (Christian) metaphysics, and nihilism become affirmation and pluralism. Through value(s) we can also acknowledge that which is in principle beyond our control – i.e., fate or chance. If you can affirm that which comes to you – and that which comes to you at every moment throughout your life – then you change everything. But whoever wants to affirm chance must be a gambler. You must literally put everything on the line. You can do that by laughing, dancing, and playing.<sup>10</sup> Then suffering is

<sup>9</sup> See Gerhardt, *Nietzsche*, 69.

<sup>10</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, transl. Hugh Tomlinson, London / New York 1983, 194.

transformed into joy, heaviness into lightness and randomness into necessity. And only then can human beings enjoy themselves.

## 7. The Motive of the Fragmentary

On January 3, 1889, Nietzsche suffered a mental breakdown in Turin; he was first treated in a Basel mental hospital, then transferred to Jena in mid-January, and from mid-March 1890, he was cared for at home by his mother. After his mother's death in 1897, his sister Elisabeth takes over his care. She also took control Nietzsche's works, most of which she doctored with regard to a right-wing ideology. On August 25, 1900, Friedrich Nietzsche died in Weimar.

Like every life of a human being, the life of Nietzsche can likewise be understood as a fragment. Perhaps one could call it a particularly tragic fragment, since the thinker, who wanted to change life by means of thinking, was no longer able to do exactly that at the end of his life. The question whether he himself would have affirmed this situation can no longer be answered. But we can answer the question to what extent the fragmentary belongs to the art of living.

The fragmentary is probably most readily expressed in the particular form of Nietzsche's philosophy, for instance in his aphorisms. An aphorism is a fragment, but a pluralistic one, which evaluates a thing and at the same time calls for evaluation. "Only the aphorism is capable of articulating sense, the aphorism is interpretation and the art of interpreting."<sup>11</sup> We thus read in Nietzsche: "So the relieflike, incomplete representation of a thought or of a whole philosophy sometimes has more effect than working it out thoroughly does: we leave more for the viewer to do, he is roused to continue shaping and to think through to the end what has set itself before him in such strong light and shadow" (HH I 178, transl. Gary Handwerk). One can understand this relieflike representation of thoughts as a "mosaic" that presents connections and differences of concepts and evaluations in a concise form: In it, however, "even the inconspicuous and seemingly insignificant can come together to form highly significant contexts and create a new, not preconceived image, make possible changes of shape in perception and new orientations in philosophy."<sup>12</sup>

To think a life in transformations and to live a thinking in transformations – these are the tasks Nietzsche and his art of living set us. On the one hand,

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<sup>11</sup> Deleuze, *Nietzsche*, 31.

<sup>12</sup> Stegmaier, *Nietzsche an der Arbeit*, 43, our transl.

he is concerned with opening up possibilities of decision again and again and, on the other hand, with getting involved in ever-new developments and constellations in life. Here one can orient oneself with the following questions, which can be found in his late notes under the title: “*The typical self-designs.* Or: *The eight main questions*”

- 1) Whether one wants to be more multiple or more simple.
  - 2) Whether one wants to become happier or more indifferent to happiness and unhappiness.
  - 3) Whether one wants to become more satisfied with oneself or more demanding and relentless?
  - 4) whether one wants to become softer, more yielding, more human or more ‘inhuman.’
  - 5) whether one wants to become wiser or more ruthless.
  - 6) whether one wants to reach a goal or avoid all goals [...].
  - 7) whether one wants to become more respected or more feared? Or more *despised!*
  - 8) whether one wants to become tyrant or seducer or shepherd or herd animal?
- (N Spring 1888, 15[114]).

*Translated by Reinhard G. Mueller*

## II.

# Christianity as a Trauma-Analogous Phenomenon: Nietzsche's Critique and Therapeutic Ideas in *Dawn*

by Dagmar Kiesel

My interpretation of *Dawn* does *not* start out from Nietzsche's own reception of the trauma research of his time but from current concepts of psycho-trauma; my perspective is thus a retrospective-updating one. Doing so, I would like to show that according to Nietzsche's analyses in *Dawn* and against the background of modern theories of trauma Christianity may be understood as a trauma-analogous phenomenon, becoming manifest as a *radical invalidation* of elementary, natural needs of man as well as a demonstration of allegedly abysmal human depravity, and predominantly circling around the topic of *guilt, sin, and dependence on the Divine*.

The contribution is structured as follows: I start with a short explanation of the applied concept of trauma as well as the concept of traumatically experienced invalidation. In the main part I will give a detailed description of the traumatogenic phenomenology of Christianity as implicitly and *avant la lettre* diagnosed by Nietzsche in *Dawn*. Here the focus will be on Christian morals, the doctrine of grace and original sin as well as on Christian education. After giving a short summary of the results, I will take a critical view at Nietzsche's suggestions concerning a therapy of psycho-trauma as a result of Christian socialization.

## 1. Definitions

### 1.1. Trauma: Attempt at a Definition

In the following I will refer to Fischer's and Riedesser's concept in *Lehrbuch der Psychotraumatologie (Textbook of Psychotraumatology)*. There, trauma is described in detail as a “vital experience of the discrepancy between threatening situational factors and individual possibilities of coping, which is accompanied by feelings of helplessness and defenseless abandonment and thus causes a permanent shock of self-understanding and understanding of the world.”<sup>1</sup>

I believe this definition of trauma to be not only factually convincing; at the same time it provides a suitable backdrop for interpreting Nietzsche's philosophy. The topic of threatening events and situations, the suffering from unfavorable living conditions and the attempt to cope with them and provide them with meaning<sup>2</sup> are found in Nietzsche with a wealth of detail, urgency and intensity as in few other thinkers, and they concern all important aspects and motives of his philosophy: the analysis of the genealogy of moral value judgements resulting from the resentment felt by the suppressed, the challenge of nihilism, evoked by the death (or the killing) of God, and the struggle for accepting the eternal recurrence of the same, just like the concept of the overhuman, are the most important keywords. Closely connected to this are feelings of “helplessness and defenseless abandonment” as well as “a permanent shock of self-understanding and understanding of the world” which Nietzsche repeatedly experiences (and suffers) as existential basic moods and which he addresses as a philosophical subject – indeed with the intention to work out coping strategies.

### 1.2. Traumatically Perceived Invalidation

The technical term ‘invalidation’ was coined by US American psychologist Marsha Linehan in the context of the etiology of borderline disorder and refers to ways of behavior which devalue a person's emotional experience, thought, perception or behavior, declare them void or qualify them as ‘evil’.<sup>3</sup> Lasting

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1 Gottfried Fischer / Peter Riedesser, *Lehrbuch der Psychotraumatologie*, 5th ed., München 2020, 88 (Italics in the original; transl. Mirko Wittwar).

2 The founder of logotherapy, Viktor E. Frankl, refers to Nietzsche's idea according to which an answer to the question of ‘why’ makes almost every kind of ‘how’ bearable (GD Maxims 12, and Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning. An Introduction to Logotherapy*, Boston 1963, 76).

3 In the psychological debate on the topic, there is currently no distinct definition of the concept of invalidation; see

invalidations, in particular during childhood and youth, may be perceived as traumatic and cause psychic disorders.<sup>4</sup> As shall be demonstrated in the following, in view of Nietzsche's philosophy particularly the aspect of invalidation in the form of the moral disqualification of physical-mental needs, ways of behavior or individual appreciations is of interest.

## 2. Christianity as a Trauma-Analogous Phenomenon in Dawn

### 2.1. The Morals and Dogma of Christianity

In Nietzsche, criticism of Christianity and criticism of morals are closely connected to each other, even though he has more to criticize about Christianity than just its morals, and even though he knows other morals besides Christian morals that he fiercely rejects – he equally disapproves all kinds of the ancient virtue ethics, Kant's duty ethics or utilitarianism. Paradigmatic for contextualizing the rejection of both Christianity and morals are his deliberations in *On the Genealogy of Morality* (1887) where he connects the genealogy of the slave-moral value concepts of 'good' and 'evil' at first with Judaism and then – even more intensely – with Christianity. Although for Nietzsche it is beyond all question that also the democratic or the socialist ethos belong to the type of slave morality, his main focus is undoubtedly on Christianity.

*Dawn*, too, is at first rather generally about "Presumptions of Morality" – so the subtitle of the work.<sup>5</sup> Crucial in this context is the concept of the morality of mores, which Nietzsche defines as follows: "morality is nothing other (therefore, above all *no more!*) than obedience to mores, no matter what ilk they might happen to be; mores, however, are merely the *traditional* manner of acting and evaluating." (D 9) In this context, he defines 'tradition' as a

higher authority, which one obeys not because it commands what is *useful* to us, but because it *commands*. — What differentiates this feeling with regard to tradition from the feeling of fear in general? It is the fear of a higher intellect that commands through

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Marsha M. Linehan, *Dialektisch-Behaviorale Therapie der Borderline-Persönlichkeitsstörung*, München 2006, 38–44.

<sup>4</sup> See Marsha M. Linehan, *DBT Skills Training Manual*, Second Edition, New York / London 2015, 7–9.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted from *Dawn: Thoughts on the Presumptions of Morality*, transl. by Brittain Smith, Afterword by Keith Ansell-Pearson, Stanford 2011. All quotes from *Dawn* in this essay are from this translation.

tradition, fear in the face of an inexplicable, indeterminate power, of something beyond the personal — there is *superstition* in this fear. — (D 9)

In this passage, the analysis of mores and morals becomes intermingled with a somewhat religious undertone. The alleged dignity of traditional morals creates a quasi-religious mood and is related to religious feelings: here, the keywords are ‘fear of a higher intellect’ and ‘*superstition*’. Nietzsche’s statement, “The most moral is whoever *sacrifices* the most to custom,” (D 9) drives the religious nimbus of the moral sphere even further. As one traditionally sacrifices to the gods, so one also sacrifices – and indeed oneself! – to custom. The motive of self-sacrifice in honor of morals runs through all of the work. Accordingly, Nietzsche characterizes common morals as “*Morality of sacrificial animals*. — ‘Enthusiastic devotion’, ‘self-sacrifice’ — these are the buzzwords of your morality.” (D 215) That this phenomenon becomes most obvious in *Christian* morals is a matter of course: Jesus, whose discipleship is imperative for any pious Christian, has sacrificed himself for the burden of sins and is also in this respect the paradigm of the Christian way of life. Nietzsche cannot approve of this, for “Human beings have become *suffering* creatures as a consequence of their moralities.” (D 425) He believes it to be most problematic that morality “demanded that one observe rules and precepts *without thinking of oneself* as an individual.” (D 9) And he goes on:

It requires overcoming the self, owing *not* to the useful consequences for the individual, but in order, instead, that custom, the tradition, might emerge triumphant despite all individual benefit from and desire to the contrary: the individual shall sacrifice — so dictates the morality of mores. — (D 9)

On the whole, Nietzsche’s verdict is: contrary to the declared goal of morality, to contribute to the “preserving and advancing of humanity,” (D 106) the strictly moral human internalizes the conviction that “the only legitimate human condition is one of *profoundest misery*?” (D 106)

It is due to the concept of sin, as a manifestation of guilt in the shape of man’s disturbed relation to himself, to his environment and to God, that it is particularly the contents of Christian morals which take man less *out of* than *into* suffering: “Oh, how much needless cruelty and torturing of animals has been

unleashed by those religions that have invented sin!” (D 53) Furthermore, he says, in Christianity, other than with the Abrahamic sister religions of Judaism and Islam,<sup>6</sup> natural human needs are disqualified as being ‘evil’ and are radically invalidated. This holds particularly for the sexual desire which, according to the Church Father Augustine’s (354-430 AD) doctrine of original sin, is not only the paradigm of a misguided and uncontrolled sinful concupiscence (*concupiscentia*) but, furthermore, functions as the transmission instance of original sin. The procreation of any human child is accompanied by sexual concupiscence which thereby transfers the guilt of the original sin to the conceived individual (see August. Simpl. 1, 2, 2). Nietzsche has good reasons to be critical of this:

*To think evil is to make evil.* — The passions become evil and malicious whenever they are viewed evilly and maliciously. Accordingly, Christianity has succeeded in turning Eros and Aphrodite [...] into infernal kobolds [...] in that it aroused in the believer’s conscience great torments at the slightest sexual excitation. (D 76)

As already indicated by the title of the aphorism, the negative appreciation of sexual passion is not based on moral facts (as is well known, these are non-existent according to Nietzsche). Rather, it represents a biased appreciation, not only causing unnecessary pangs of conscience among the believers but furthermore disregarding that “sexual feelings have in common with feelings of sympathy and worship the fact that, by doing as one pleases, one person gives pleasure to another — such benevolent arrangements are met with all too rarely in nature!” (ibid.) No question: Nietzsche considers the Christian devaluation of the sexual drive not only a grave but also an unjustified invalidation.

Such a powerful-suppressive, encroaching Christian morality, which actually appears hostile to man, proliferates, by way of being internalized, within the individual’s soul like cancer. In the shape of a “guilty conscience” (ibid.) as well as of feelings of guilt and shame it may cause massive psychic suffering which definitely may have the status of trauma:<sup>7</sup> the already quoted

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6 See Dagmar Kiesel, “Unter Töchtern der Wüste. Islamische Sinnlichkeit und christliche Sexualfeindlichkeit bei Nietzsche,” in: Marco Brusotti et al. (ed.), *European / Supra-European: Cultural Encounters in Nietzsche’s Philosophy*, Berlin 2020, 315-333.

7 That Christianity is in several respects both pathogenic and pathological is explicitly stated by Nietzsche also in other works. In GM II 22, given the idea of “guilt against God,” he diagnoses: “Here is *sickness*” (GM II, 22, transl. Adrian Del Caro). On this topic see Dagmar Kiesel, “Die Vertiefung der Seele. Überlegungen zu einer These Nietzsches *in Zur*



characterizations of morals as the “*morality of sacrificial animals*” (D 215), which indulges in practicing “cruelty and torturing of animals,” (D 53) thus leading its victims to “*profoundest misery*” (D 106) and making them “*suffering creatures*” (D 425), clearly illustrate the purposefully staged fierceness of Nietzsche’s critique. In D 77, with the telling title “*On the torments of the soul*,” Nietzsche compares physical cruelty to its emotional counterpart. He demands the recognition of the latter as being (at least) of equal value, and does not shrink back from the comparison with torture which is undisputedly a human trauma:<sup>8</sup>

*On the torments of the soul.* — These days everyone loudly decries whatever torment any individual inflicts on the body of another; indignation erupts immediately against a person capable of such a thing; we tremble at the very idea of some torment that might be inflicted upon a person or an animal and suffer most unbearably upon learning of an irrefutably proven instance of this sort. But one is a far cry from experiencing such certain and widely accepted feelings with regard to the torments of the soul and the heinousness involved in their infliction. Christianity has put them to use to an unprecedented and shocking degree and still continuously preaches this type of torture. (D 77)

Among the “instruments of torture” at the disposal of morality are the (guilty) “conscience, reputation, hell, and, if necessary, even the police” (D Preface).

## 2.2. Christian Education as a Relationship Trauma

The Father God of Christianity and the human father of a Christian child are closely connected: like other moralities, Christian morals are likewise passed on – as we have seen, for this phenomenon Nietzsche reserves the term ‘tradition’ (*Herkommen*). In this way, the origin of morality is deified: God himself is the first and absolute value-determining authority. According to the Christian idea, in the history of humankind the Divine code of morals has been communicated by way of the propagation of the Old and the New Testament;

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*Genealogie der Moral*,” in: *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 122 (2015), 45-75 (when it comes to guilt and shame).

<sup>8</sup> So called *man-made disasters*, that is traumata caused by humans, are more difficult to cope with than natural disasters or illnesses, and much more often they result in post-traumatic disorders.

its implementation into the mind of the individual, however, happens usually by way of education and socialization within the family. In this sense, human fathers are the communicators of the morality of God the Father.

The child's experience of his or her relationship with his or her parents and the value system conveyed by them becomes problematic if the parents do not fulfil their obligation to protect and care but, on the contrary, are themselves the cause of their children's trauma by exercising physical or verbal violence (devaluation, permanent criticism), by way of sexual or emotional abuse (parentification etc.) or neglect. Mental injuries of this kind are called "relationship traumata" and are defined as

traumatic distortion of the relationship schemes as a result of long-term inappropriate relationship experiences. In general, relationship traumata are paradoxically caused by those close attachment figures which are originally supposed to protect against traumatization. Victims of this type of trauma get into the paradox situation of having to seek protection and help from the traumatogenous persons.<sup>9</sup>

In the context of Christian socialization, a relationship trauma may occur, e.g., if the pious values and standards of behavior are communicated and enforced by way of physical violence. Accordingly, in a letter to E. J. Schenk, Carl Ludwig Nietzsche writes about his two-years-old son:

Brother Fritz is a wild boy whom sometimes only his Dad makes see reason, even more as the switch is not far from the latter; however now some powerful other person helps with educating, for that is dear Holy Christ who has already been occupying mind and heart even of little Fritz, so that he does not want to speak or hear of anything else than "Holy Kist"! (Goethe- und Schiller-Archiv 100/396; transl. Mirko Wittwar)

The claim of Christian morality to absolute and unconditional obedience is explicitly criticized in *Dawn*: "As with every authority, in the presence of morality one precisely should not think or, even less, speak one's mind; here,

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<sup>9</sup> Fischer / Riedesser, *Lehrbuch der Psychotraumatologie*, 417; transl. Mirko Wittwar.

one — *obeys!*” (D, Preface 3) Of course, the apodictic self-certainty delivered by a thus-communicated morality invalidates the child’s natural, pre-moral intuitions, just like his or her need of physical integrity and his or her desire for individual self-expression. At the same time, this kind of invalidation triggers a negative self-image as well as a grave problem with self-esteem. Unmistakably alluding to his own sensitivities, Nietzsche adds for consideration:

Every individual action, every individual way of thinking provokes horror; it is quite impossible to fathom all the many things that, through the whole course of history, precisely those are more unusual, select, and original intellects have had to suffer because they were always perceived as evil and dangerous, because, in fact, they perceived themselves as such. (D 9)

In this context, a feeling of one’s own malice is closely connected to the basic assumption of one’s own culpability. While implicitly referring to the Christian doctrine of original sin, according to which suffering in this world, the woman’s painful labors as well as death as the culmination of a lamentable existence are the punishing consequences of the original sin of the Biblical human couple (see Gen. 3, 16-24), Nietzsche criticizes: “Indeed, they have driven this madness to such an extreme as to bid us experience existence itself as a punishment — it is as if, heretofore, the phantasms of jailers and hangmen had been conducting the education of the human race.” (D 13) The perception of the culpability of individual appreciation results in cruel acts of self-punishment particularly among “those spiritual leaders of peoples who were able to actually move something within the torpid, yet fertile sludge of their mores.” (D 18)

The genesis of problematic self-esteem in the context of an unfavorable family situation is well researched. If the child’s closest caregivers are themselves the traumatizing perpetrators, the child will identify his or herself as being responsible or guilty: the reality-appropriate interpretation according to which the parents are the abusers would produce the result of the child losing his or her image of the parents as caring, protecting and loving. As such a loss would shake the foundations of the child’s mind, another explanation imposes itself: ‘I am bad, worthless and evil, and I deserve my parents’ brutality.’ At the same time, this interpretation suggests control of the parents’ future behavior: ‘If I am going

to be a good child, my parents will not hurt me anymore.’<sup>10</sup> Something like this may have happened concerning God, the heavenly Father, when four years old Friedrich Nietzsche lost his father (he died on July 30<sup>th</sup>, 1849). As his mother, Franziska, tells in letters to her friends, the whole family, including the small children, had trustfully prayed for Carl Ludwig’s recovery. In reality, however, their prayers are not heard, and the father dies. Little Fritz is confronted with the option of locating the cause for the lack of a divine answer to his prayers in God the Father. He might thus conclude that either God does not exist or that he is neither kind nor benevolent. This explanation, however, would mean that little Fritz is going to lose the comforting idea of a good, loving and caring God. Some explanation involving himself may thus have been more tolerable for Fritz, so that he might have come to the conclusion: ‘My prayers were not good enough,’ ‘I am bad, worthless and evil, and I am not worthy of God hearing my prayers.’ This way Fritz might have succeeded with not only maintaining his trust in a benevolent God but also with maintaining his optimism concerning the possibility to control life: ‘If I am going to be a good child, God will hear my prayers.’

Whether little Fritz actually thought and felt this way, we do not know. What we do know with certainty, however, is that the philosopher Nietzsche himself precisely describes these psychic defense mechanisms and that he attributed them particularly to Christianity:

*Justice that punishes.* — [...] But it was left up to Christianity to say for the first time: ‘There is a grave misfortune here, and underneath it there *must* lie hidden a grave, *equally grave guilt*, even if we don’t yet see it clearly. If you, misfortunate one, don’t feel this way, then you are *obdurate* — you will have even worse things to go through!’ — [...] only with Christianity did everything become punishment, well-deserved punishment; it makes the sufferer’s imagination also suffer so that with every malady he also feels morally reprehensible and deprived. Poor humanity! — (D 78)

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10 On the “immature system of psychological defenses” (Judith L. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery. From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*, London 2015, 96) of the traumatized child see *ibid.*, 145 and Martin Bohus / Martina Wolf-Arehult, *Interaktives Skillstraining für Borderline-Patienten. Das Therapeutenmanual*, 2nd ed., Stuttgart 2013, 322. By the way, the here described defense dynamic confirms Nietzsche’s prospective basic idea according to which our interpretation of lifeworld experiences is guided by interests and needs.

In *Dawn*, Nietzsche discusses two different genealogies of the Christian doctrine of original sin. According to the predominant analysis in Aph. 68, Saint Paul is considered “*the first Christian*” whose incapability to fulfil the commandments and prohibitions of the Torah, together with his “untamable will to lust for domination,” evoked in him the idea that for post-lapsarian man the Law can in principle not be fulfilled.

The second option for a genealogy is coherent with my deliberations above. Starting out from the assumption, ‘If I am a morally good person, then I will indeed fare well,’ Nietzsche analyzes:

In the event that obedience to a moral precept yields, after all is said and done, a result other than what was promised and expected and, contrary to expectation, unhappiness and misery set in instead of the vouchsafed happiness, then the conscientious and fearful always have at their disposal an escape clause: “something was overlooked in the *observance*.” In the worst-case scenario, a profoundly remorseful and crushed humanity will even decree, “it is impossible to observe the precept properly; we are frail and sinful to the core and in our heart of hearts incapable of morality and hence we have no right to happiness or success. Moral precepts and covenants were intended for better beings than ourselves.” (D 21)

According to the Augustinian doctrine of original sin and grace, one of the punishments for original sin is an elementary reduction of man’s moral capabilities: whereas the first human couple could still choose, by actualization of their own free will, between good and evil – and disastrously chose evil – the moral integrity of all of Adam’s children has been affected by the punishment of being ignorant of the good (*ignorantia*) and of the weakness of will to such an extent that only by way of a Divine act of grace the individual can be cured from his perverted will.<sup>11</sup>

In D 74, with the telling title “*Christian ulterior motive*,” Nietzsche attributes the sense of guilt of the “Christians of the first centuries” – which becomes dogmatically manifest in the doctrine of original sin – to their fear of God’s tyranny: “Given such great power, he’s more likely to pardon a guilty

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11 Cf. Dagmar Kiesel, “Die Emotionstheorie Augustins als Theorie personaler Identität,” in: *Augustiniana* 64 (2015), 93-123; 101.

person than to admit that someone in his presence might be in the right.’ —”. According to Nietzsche, the idea of God enjoying cruelty<sup>12</sup> implied here results in the assumption “that *voluntary suffering*, self-elected torment, makes good sense and is valuable.” (D 18)

An alternative etiological explanation of suffering attempts a reinterpretation: “whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth” (D 75). In this sense, castigation by the heavenly Father may be reinterpreted as an admonition to turn away from a sinful life, or as early chastisement on earth to atone for mistakes that reduce or completely obliterate eternal punishment after resurrection.

All attempts described by Nietzsche to give meaning to human distress suffer from the fact that they may bring short-term relief, but in the long run they massively damage self-esteem. In the extreme case, self-rejection culminates in self-hatred – here Nietzsche refers to Pascal’s dictum of the ‘hateful ego’ (see D 63, D 79) – going as far as to the wish for self-destruction: “We humans are the only creatures who, if they turn out unsuccessfully, can cross themselves out like an unsuccessful sentence — whether we do so to honor humanity or out of pity for it or out of revulsion for ourselves” (D 274).

### 2.3. A Short Interim Conclusion

In sum, Nietzsche’s analysis of Christianity in *Dawn* may be read – according to modern concepts – as a trauma-analogous phenomenon becoming manifest as a traumatically perceived invalidation of individual and natural needs, valuations and views, and accompanied by the coercion to subordinate to the predominant moral power (‘tradition’) of the Christian understanding of existence, which is partly enforced on the child’s mind by means of physical and emotional violence and may thus provoke a relationship trauma. This process is gravely reinforced if another trauma (such as the death of a parent) is added and interpreted in a dysfunctional way, so that negative assumptions concerning one’s own person are generated. The consequences are a lifelong feeling of powerlessness and helplessness as well as a massive problem with self-esteem which may sometimes even result in suicidality (the ego is hateful, evil and guilty). In this context, the doctrine of original sin and grace, initiated by Saint Paul and formulated by

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<sup>12</sup> The motive of the joy of cruelty (with humans and with gods) runs through all of Nietzsche’s thinking and is likewise present in *Dawn*.

Augustine, functions as the dogmatic background of Christian anthropology and understanding of the world.

### 3. Nietzsche's Ideas about Healing

Nietzsche does not limit himself to the analysis and criticism of the pathogenic effects of Christianity, but he also poses considerations on the therapy of the thus caused mental illness. Based on the ancient self-understanding of philosophy as healing the soul as well as by determinedly distancing himself from Christian salvation, Nietzsche asks:

*Where are the new physicians of the soul?* — It was the means of solace that imparted to life that fundamental character of suffering in which one believes nowadays; the human being's greatest disease grew out of the battle against its diseases, and the apparent remedies have, in the long run, produced something much worse than what they were supposed to eliminate. (D 52)

Nietzsche shares with modern clinical psychology the idea that there are means of consolation which relieve in the short run (such as the already described phenomenon that children who have been traumatized by their parents believe themselves to be guilty, or numbing of emotional suffering by intoxication) but which are damaging in the long run and themselves show features of illness (self-hatred or addiction). D 52 is immediately connected to the enthusiastic frenzy of "intoxicating feelings" (D 50) as well as "the oppression of fire-and-brimstone sermons and fears of hell" (D 53), so that we have to assume that both must be considered, in the sense of Nietzsche, to be pathogenic and pathological "means of solace."<sup>13</sup> The first and perhaps most significant of Nietzsche's recommendations is the recognition of the individual way: "Provided he wants to be happy, one ought not to give the individual any precepts regarding the path to happiness: for individual happiness springs from its own impenetrable laws." (D 108) Here, Nietzsche clearly opts for the validation of one's own and individually different life plans, thus representing a position which is generally accepted by psychotherapy and is firmly present in some therapeutic approaches.

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13 The counter-intuitive idea that thinking of punishment in hell might be a means of consolation results from the efforts by the traumatized person to be able, by way of good conduct, to positively influence their own fate, as well as from the idea that evil persons will someday receive the punishment they deserve. However, the thus caused positive feeling of retribution is ambivalent because any time it may shift to fear of one's own condemnation.

It is generally accepted that patients themselves define, in consultation with the therapist, the goals of both the therapy and their lives. Even more, particularly client-centered therapy, which was worked out by Carl Rogers, assumes that humans are determined “to move in the direction of growth”<sup>14</sup> which, in case of sufficiently developed competences, will result in a fulfilled life and should not be obstructed or redirected from outside. Connecting to Rogers, Marsha Linehan coined the concept of the *Wise Mind* in the Dialectical Behavioral Therapy she developed. According to Linehan, in the *Wise Mind*, emotion and reason combine to an individually shaped wisdom. Those who have learned how to connect with and trust in their *Wise Mind* are both capable of identifying their own goals in life as well as achieving them through the knowledge of appropriate paths.<sup>15</sup> In a similar way Viktor E. Frankl, who considers the “will to meaning” the proper and elementary driving force of man, emphasizes the uniqueness of individual sense-making: “This meaning is unique and specific in that it must and can be fulfilled by him alone.”<sup>16</sup>

The Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) goes even further than Nietzsche. Like Nietzsche, it assumes on the one hand that values are a kind of ‘life compass’ and help with providing orientation and that they allow for sustainable decision-making and acting, and, again in the sense of Nietzsche, it determinedly supports the legitimacy of *individual* appreciation. But its idea that values can do without justification<sup>17</sup> cannot find Nietzsche’s approval. He makes the “presumptions of morality,” about which he reasons in *Dawn* (D Subtitle) and which include the traditional values, subject to a sharp critical assessment. In particular in his later period, he also names the criterion for his assessment: do they contribute to an enhancement or a decay of life (see GM Preface 3)?

Apart from making a case for the acceptance and support of individual life courses, Nietzsche offers the strengthening of self-love as a therapeutic which is of no less significance. Anticipating the idea of resentment, he expresses the suspicion, “Whoever hates himself is a person to fear, for we will be the victim of [...] his revenge,” and he advises, in the sense of a practical prudence calculation, to “seduce” the neighbor “into loving himself!” (D 517) As a further

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14 Carl Rogers, *Client-Centered Therapy. Its current Practice, Implications, and Theory*, Boston 1965, 489.

15 See Linehan, *DBT Skills Training Manual*, 167-230.

16 Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 99.

17 Cf. Russ Harris / Steven C. Hayes, *ACT Made Simple: An Easy-to-Read Primer on Acceptance and Commitment Therapy*, Oakland 2009,



argument, he points out that the Christian idea of a hateful ego collides with the – also Christian – commandment to love one’s neighbor: if we are not worthy of self-love, why then should we be and feel worthy of being loved by others? The Christian answer, according to which the experienced love of neighbor is an act of undeserved grace, is countered by Nietzsche by the “*suggestion*”: “love yourselves out of mercy — then you won’t need your God any more at all, and the whole drama of original sin and redemption will play itself out to the end in you yourselves.” (D 79) Those who are capable of self-love are less in need of appreciative love and recognition by the religiously and morally biased social outside, but build up their own inner strength. A comparison of religions produces the result that, in this sense, Buddhism as a “*religion of self-redemption*” (D 96) is victorious. The ideal case Nietzsche has in mind, however, is a culture of self-redemption modelled by European atheists across all national borders:

There exist today perhaps ten to twenty million people among the different countries of Europe who no longer “believe in God” — is it too much to ask that they *give a sign* to one another? As soon as they *know* one another in this manner, they will also make themselves known to others — they will immediately be a power in Europe and, fortunately, a power *between* nations! (D 96)

Among current therapies, the Compassion Focused Therapy (CFT), recently developed by Paul Gilbert, is the one with the strongest focus on (self-)compassion and thus also self-love. Like Nietzsche, it assumes that self-love and authentic love of others are intimately intertwined; both are considered capabilities of the compassionate mind.<sup>18</sup>

Yet still: The parallels between Nietzsche and CFT should not be overemphasized. In *Dawn*, Nietzsche himself does not differentiate between compassion and sympathy (see D 423), and this is not just a *terminological* fact: even in the *subject matter* the philosopher – at least in this work – does not present any alternative to the compassion he criticizes but throws the baby out with the bathwater. As becomes obvious, e.g., from the concepts of the CFT, there do exist kinds of affection for others which are not concerned by Nietzsche’s criticism. The situation is similar concerning his advice to replace Christian self-hatred with self-love: whereas Nietzsche’s analyses of the genesis and the

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<sup>18</sup> See Paul Gilbert, *The Compassionate Mind*, London 2013, 193 f.

manifestations of the self-contempt of Christians are innovative, differentiated and, most of all, sound, none of this is true for his vague ideas concerning self-love. And there is no change even in his later period – quite on the contrary. After 1881 the lemma ‘self-love’ does not appear any longer in his works, and Nietzsche’s ideals when dealing with himself are increasingly characterized by self-harshness and self-conquest instead of self-acceptance. By his philosophical practice of asceticism, Nietzsche, as one of those “spirits, [...] for whom conquest, adventure, danger and even pain have actually become a necessity” and who are “acclimatized to thinner air higher up, to winter treks, ice and mountains in every sense,” (GM II 24) has involuntarily become a successor of Christian asceticism who lacks warmth and affection for himself. Rather, it seems, Nietzsche restaged the trauma of his childhood.

*Translated by Mirko Wittwar*



### III.

## Changing Who We Are: The Art of Defining and Re-Defining Oneself

*by Thorsten Lerchner*

### 1. Nietzsche's Anti-Essentialism

A very strange statement had once been made in a psychology lecture: Freudian psychologists would dream according to Freud, Jungian ones according to Jung, Adlerian ones according to Adler. The fact that this is true can be proved by the writings, biographies and letters of famous researchers of the soul. Narratives of one's own dreams always exemplarily illustrate the doctrine the dreamer adheres to.

This observation is very incompatible with statements about the psychic nature of the human being. To assume a constitutional common property of the human family such as the Freudian Oedipus complex, for example, is questionable. Anthropological constants are generally suspected of ideology nowadays. Today we distrust claims that something about human nature is inherently the way it is. People suspect that there are dishonest motivations behind such theories, namely the concealment of unjust political conditions. Therefore, what in reality depends on social structures of domination is made out to be natural. Psychological theories are being regarded with particular suspicion. They can be accused of subtle disciplining of consciousness. To return to Freud, we might think that the powerful theory of the Oedipus complex normalizes a competitive situation among people of the same sex, which has been a reality in the bourgeois milieu since the end of the 19th century. Freud's science would then not be a disinterested striving for knowledge of timeless

truths, but a contingent socio-historical practice, entangled in the ideological system that makes it possible, namely meritocracy.

Nietzsche was the first to start with such deconstructions. In *Dawn*, he calls himself a “tunneler, miner, underminer” (D Preface 1).<sup>1</sup> He also thinks that one should thoroughly question all psychological theories. To this project he dedicates especially aphorisms 119 and 128 of *Dawn*. His own thoughts about the unity, structure, and development of the soul could not be further away from any naïve or tendentious psychological thinking that rashly or intentionally pass models for ontologies without accounting for the epistemological or historical conditions of the theory. Nietzsche provides a complex critical instrument against such essentializations. With him, the soul, i.e., the totality of all psychic processes, can be shaped at will, and no study of the soul provides definitive results, “[n]o matter how hard a person struggles for self-knowledge” (D 119).

A very skeptical, partly hyper-reflexive attitude characterizes Nietzsche’s philosophical program around 1881, which dissolves in great parts the absolute subject, “[t]he so-called ‘ego’” (D 115). Nietzsche picks up where classical critiques of metaphysics usually left off: “[E]xternal things,” he summarizes their results, “are not what they appear to us” (D 116). “[T]here is no escape whatsoever, no underused or underhanded way into the real world!” (D 117). Relating to this he claims that it “is just the same with the inner world!” (D 116).

Although these insights are by now obvious on an intellectual level, they do not become obsolete. Nietzsche, and this is what is special about him, considers his insights relevant to our life and world. He considers them worth being worked through “slowly, deeply, backward and forward with care and respect” (D Preface 5). Only in this way could these insights create “wisdom” and “refined culture” (D 201). Especially our present time needs the practical awareness of the malleability of inner experience. Such sensitivity forms the core for a philosophical art of living in postmodernity that responds to basic existential experiences in the midst of a highly technological world. We are most deeply affected by the insight into our own finiteness, in the beginning and end of our existence, which gives life an aura of ever-dwindling possibilities. *Dawn* urgently warns against fixing one’s identity. Stamping oneself out is precisely a sign of finite incompetence. “[W]ise forgetfulness” (N Herbst 1883, 17[14]) is not for nothing regarded by Nietzsche as virtue (in German *Tugend*), here

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<sup>1</sup> The translation of *Dawn* follows overall Brittain Smith.

to be understood according to the German etymology as ‘fitness’ (in German *Tauglichkeit*) for living.

Having the courage to use one’s own identity is not at all what our self-distanced culture asks for. The admonition in *Dawn* sounds inactual and therefore deserves our attention. For us, tabular curricula vitae are commonplace, certificates of good conduct, anamnesis forms as well as a psychological everyday vocabulary, i.e., a certain grammar of inner experience, which is hastily at hand with ‘complexes,’ ‘projections,’ and ‘repressions.’ Already the sociologist Georg Simmel praises in Nietzsche’s works the corrective potential both toward the rational way of life and toward naive judgement.

When Nietzsche philosophizes about the plasticity of the psyche, his thought comes close to a metapsychology that is critical toward the naturalistic ideas of classical doctrines of the soul as well as common psychological short-cuts. His project, however, is not part of an academic discussion of contemporary theories about the soul. *Dawn* is, in its aphoristic construction, absolutely unsuitable for an academic discussion. Instead, the writing promotes a new practical attitude toward life. Full of surprising twists and unexpected thoughts, it provides helpful ideas against obstructive prejudices in life. The psycho-hygienic message in aphorisms 119 and 128 is: the inner character, the personality, is not something fixed and given, but a flexible formation, formed by external circumstances and one’s own decisions.

## 2. The Plasticity of the Psyche

According to aphorism 119, the fact that ultimate psychological attributions are pointless is due to the drives. By this Nietzsche understands “all animalistic-human” motivations (N Spring – Autumn 1881, 11[122]), and for a human “nothing can be more incomplete than the image of all the drives taken together that constitute his being. Scarcely can he call the cruder ones by name” (D 119). There is a huge gap in psychological self-knowledge. Although we still talk about the human “being” — a concept that reminds of naive ontologies — the argumentation with an unmanageable variety of drives allows us to eventually leave behind the concept of a ‘being’ as a fixed entity. ‘Being’ no longer means anything substantial, but a bundle of most diverse and mostly unknown strivings, which do not create reality, but conversely keep reality in

suspension and virtualize it. Accordingly, there is no fixed nature of the psychic, but a diffuse suspension.

From the same way of thinking arises the malleability of the soul, the maximum plasticity of all psychic processes. All the innumerable drives want “nourishment,” and they get it by “experiences,” by which they satisfy themselves. This leads inevitably to “the starving and stunting of some drives and the overstuffing of others,” since it depends on the daily “work of chance” which opportunities for the satisfaction of drives are offered. The entire psychic constitution turns out to be completely “contingent,” formed only by the environment. Psychic structures emerge exclusively a posteriori, through experiences, they never exist by nature, never ‘in themselves.’ At the bottom of the soul there is chaos among the drives, which circulate in “ebb and flow, [...] play and counterplay” (D 119). Hierarchies among the innumerable strivings emerge exclusively through the interaction with external stimuli and preferences and dislikes arise, i.e., regulations that allow us to speak of the so-called ‘ego’ and its interior life, no matter how misleading and full of “prejudices” such words are for Nietzsche (D 115).

The ego in Nietzsche’s understanding is not a transcendent fixed point. Nietzsche does not create a new metaphysics of the subject. Rather, he fights all variants of this doctrine so fiercely because he considers it to be a Christian inheritance, namely the structural monotheism of a subsistent ego.<sup>2</sup> Any belief in absolute entities, whether theological, cosmological, or anthropological, lacks the philosophical “*conscience*: namely, in that we do not want to go back once more into *what* we deem outlived and decayed, into anything at all ‘unworthy of belief,’ call it God, virtue, truth [...]” (D Preface 4). Whoever firmly asserts that “‘there must be a being,’” would better have “a little bit of skepticism for each and every thing, be it god, human, or concept” (D 207).

Instead of continuing the tradition that assumes fixed, substantial quantities in anthropology, Nietzsche understands the ‘ego’ and the ‘soul’ as the result of random drives. Drives fight against each other, they reinforce each other, drives extinguish each other — and in this process, something that people erroneously take for their essence emerges incidentally, without any plan or intention on the part of nature. Nietzsche thus denaturalizes the ego and the soul; neither exists ‘in itself’ or ‘by nature.’ And his critical thoughts extend to all psychological

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<sup>2</sup> See David Leroy Miller, *The New Polytheism: Rebirth of the Gods and Goddesses*, Dallas 1981, 47.

propositions about man. It is true that in Nietzsche's unpublished writings from the period of *Dawn* it says: "[m]aybe all moral urges can be traced back to the will-to-*have* and the will-to-*keep*" (N Spring – Autumn 1881, 11[19], our transl.). But this speculation is not to be misunderstood as an absolute statement that the will-to-have and the will-to-keep would constitute the essence of the human being. Nietzsche's proposition only has a relative validity, for a social order in which people particularly promote the will-to-have. Within this particular social order, his analysis is legitimate, because it does not reflect an ontological aspect, but a functional one: Under certain social conditions — such as those of capitalism — universal greed is formed out of dark drives. However, this is not the essence of man, but an arbitrarily established condition. In this way, Nietzsche does not make a statement about a substance, but about an effect.

Psychological attempts of understanding only have a relative validity, because the chaos of drives contains infinite possibilities for various psychologies as soon as one or the other drive finds nourishment and moves into the mental foreground. Nietzsche writes: "words actually exist only for *superlative* degrees of these processes and drives" (D 115), and from the narrow selection of words he draws his psychological conceptions, not knowing that he absolutizes surface phenomena.

In this, Nietzsche agrees with the historian of science Sonu Shamdasani, who also claims that psychological reflections can suggest a wide variety of ontologies.<sup>3</sup> Habitualized mental processes falsely give the impression of natural mental mechanisms. Meanwhile, the basis of all psychology is not the manifest psychic structure, but the latent reservoir of seething drives, of which only a small number is clearly noticeable. For his abstract metapsychology Nietzsche praises himself in 1888 in *Ecce Homo*: "Who before me was a psychologist at all among philosophers and not, rather, its opposite, 'higher swindler,' 'idealist'? Before me there was no psychology" (EH, Why I am a destiny 6).<sup>4</sup> This is plausible insofar as no one has actually yet asked about the role of psychological systems that thinkers distill from an infinitely plastic inner experience. What is at issue is not the therapeutic usefulness but the ontological reach of such doctrines of the soul. Instead of reflecting on their insignificance in this regard,

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<sup>3</sup> See Sonu Shamdasani, "Psychologies as ontology-making practices," in: Jeremy Carrette (ed.), *William James and The Varieties of Religious Experience*, London/New York 2004, 27–44: 40.

<sup>4</sup> The translation of *Ecce Homo* follows Adrian Del Caro in Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner / Twilight of the Idols / The Antichrist / Ecce Homo / Dionysus Dithyrambs / Nietzsche Contra Wagner*, Stanford 2021.



however, people keep on substantiating, essentializing, naturalizing, even far beyond Nietzsche's lifetime. This occurs regularly when psychologies make anthropological claims — claims about the everlasting nature of the human soul.

The result is a confusion of first and second nature. One takes the second nature, the acquired one, for the first, the substantial one: "The way we are being brought up these days," Nietzsche criticizes elsewhere in *Dawn*, "we first receive a *second nature*: and we have it when the world labels us mature, of age, usable." (D 455) The formless and malleable foundation of human life has been forgotten, and Nietzsche warns against the stagnation that follows. For him, deconstruction of the given is not an aesthetic game, as deconstructivist approaches have often been accused of being, because they allegedly offer no orientation. In *Dawn*, every deconstruction promises creative new constructions. Especially in the case of the psychic, the second nature par excellence, it is necessary "to shed this skin one day" and to become aware of the enormous potential, "when under its cover [the] first nature has matured" (D 455). Nietzsche's psychological reevaluations are not a theory but a practice against existential paralysis. They serve the art of living and the affirmation of life.

### 3. Metapsychology of the Drives

During the development of the psyche, some drives become stronger and others weaken. Manifest mental characteristics develop, which do not represent a substantial psychic nature, but rather represent accidental states of a free-floating, undifferentiated throng of drives. In the meantime, the numerous other drives that have fallen short do not vanish silently, but try instead to find satisfaction elsewhere.

In dreams, more drives are active than in waking life. Some needs can draw satisfaction from imaginary situations, they therefore use the hallucinatory dream experience for this purpose. This does not apply to "*hunger*: which refuses to be appeased by *dream food*; most drives, however, [...] *do exactly that*." Nietzsche assumes "that our *dreams* have precisely the value and meaning of *compensating* to a certain degree for that contingent absence of 'nourishment' during the day" (D 119) and thus anticipates an idea that Jung later advocates in his dream theory: the idea of compensation for one-sided ways of living in dreams.

In aphorism 128, Nietzsche cites the embarrassing dream Iocaste talks about in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, i.e., that many a man has already slept with his mother in his dreams. This is the same paragraph that Freud later quotes in the famous chapter V. D of his *Interpretation of Dreams* to illustrate the typical Oedipal passion a boy has for his mother. Nietzsche concludes from Iocaste's remark "that the vast majority of human beings must be aware that they have abhorrent dreams." It is remarkable from a historical point of view that already in *Dawn* dreams have this meaning and significance, almost 20 years before psychoanalysis. Nietzsche clearly distinguishes himself from materialistic-positivistic positions of his time, which disqualify dreams as meaningless neuron firing, a purely physiological phenomenon that goes along with our sleep. The fact that unknown impulses express themselves in dreams fits perfectly into his theory of drives. In sleep, man experiences completely new facets of his drives deep inside. "Nothing," Nietzsche reminds his audience, "is *more* your own than your dreams! Nothing more *your* work! Content, form, duration, actor, spectator — in these comedies you yourselves are everything!" (D 128).

This theory anticipates the topological model of depth psychology, i.e., that in the human soul there is an almost unknown, hardly accepted layer of imaginations and impulses that do not directly come to light. But from a metapsychological point of view there is however only a gradual difference between the manifest soul life, the day consciousness, and the latent soul life, the dream life. Dreams likewise do not provide a complete representation of any inner psychic 'being.' A dream, too, provides only fragments of a virtual ontological core, but more of it than the awake state does. The fact that Nietzsche, looking deep into the soul, discovers just the central idea of psychoanalysis, the Oedipal fantasies, should not distract from the fact that out of these secret desires he does *not* construct a concrete psychology with a specific anthropology. In Nietzsche's eyes, depth psychologies likewise only scratch the surface. Those impulses, which later will be called 'Oedipal,' are just one more human characteristic, which accidentally pushes its way up from the primordial bottom of the soul. And it does so in the darkness of the night, in the shadow of the imagery of our dreams.

Nietzsche's metapsychology of the drives blurs the distinction between the dream world and the waking world. He claims "[t]hat between waking and dreaming no *essential* difference exists." Nowhere, in fact, neither in dreaming nor in waking, do anthropological constants emerge. There is no

actuality in man, no true level of psychic events. This is important because only continuous categories between dreaming and waking make Nietzsche's next step understandable, namely to integrate the transcendental philosophy of Kant and Schopenhauer into the materialistic-biological ideas of aphorism 119. In doing so, Nietzsche declares his transcendental biologism to be "a matter of speaking in images" (D 119), i.e., inauthentic speaking. In the rhetorical design of the aphorism, he repeats the antimetaphysics of arbitrary drives. Here, too, no one is guilty of a naturalism, a new metaphysics, but one escapes the performative self-contradiction of wanting to deconstruct all naturalisms and leaving untouched the conceptual framework that conveys this critique.

According to Kant, transcendental philosophy focuses on the way people transform manifold impressions into objects, into the perceived world. According to Kant's follower Schopenhauer, the world we perceive is a brain phenomenon, created by complex processing mechanisms of sensory data. For Nietzsche, the follower of Schopenhauer, the best thing is to conceive the world as a phenomenon of drives, arising from their greed for "nerve impulses" upon which they "gratify [...], activate, exercise, invigorate, discharge" themselves (D 119).

Drives are always hungry. They seize every opportunity for activity, no matter whether in sleep or awake. The only difference is, that they are "less [...] unbridled" (D 119) when awake. Thus, the sublime life of the drives in dreams mixes with the vigorous drives in waking, that is, latent drives hardly noticeably intervene in daytime events. In reality an infinite number of drives are always active and subtly influence us, unnoticed, unconsciously. As a by-product of Nietzsche's theory of drives, we get a theory of a dynamic unconscious.

All drives, whether strong or weak, make use of a process that could be called 'retrojection.' This is an idealistic imaging process, which Nietzsche takes over in parts directly from Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer explains in the second edition (1847) of his epistemological dissertation: In the process of cognition "the understanding takes the assistance of all, even the most minute data of a given sensation in order to construct the cause in space in conformity with the data,"<sup>5</sup> that is, the mind forms our world of objects from effects, sensations and their causes. Nietzsche maintains this assumption, but modifies it as follows: He says "that the make-believing faculty of reason *imagines* today and yesterday

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5 Arthur Schopenhauer, "On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason," in: David E. Cartwright / Edward E. Erdmann / Christopher Janaway (eds.), *Arthur Schopenhauer: On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason and Other Writings*, Cambridge 2012, 1–198: 54.

such divergent *causes* for the same nerve impulses: the explanation for this is that today the prompter of this reason is different from yesterday's — a different drive." Therefore, our drives "interpret nerve impulses" every time they find a connecting point for their specific goals. They report to reason the "causes" of sensations "according to [their] own needs" and thereby create a world of imagination that does not represent facts but satisfies needs (D 119).

Nietzsche shifts Schopenhauer's transcendental concept of 'representation' toward a poetic concept of imagination, which has more the meaning of an adventurous fantasy than that of a reliable object world. This new creativity of the cognitive apparatus leads him to conclude "[t]hat all our so-called consciousness is a more or less fantastical commentary on an unknown, perhaps unknowable, yet felt text" — that is, our consciousness consists of tendentious interpretations of intrinsically inaccessible sensory impressions. The latter insight culminates in the concluding remark of aphorism 119 that for all "experiences," i.e., the raw data of human sensation, we must claim: "In and of themselves, there is nothing in them!" (D 119). Experiences could be completely devoid of essence and substance. To escape this metaphysical skepticism, we would need a first and last explanation, which, however, could not claim any validity. Our cognitive apparatus presents need-driven interpretations of white noise.

Nietzsche links "the freedom of waking interpretation" to "stages of culture" (D 119). He assumes that higher stages of culture limit the creative power of the drives, just as higher cultures would generally be characterized by stricter control. This can be dangerous, especially in the contemporary high phase of a technical-rational culture. There, the prevailing interpretative drives threaten to crystallize, caused by standardizations of an anthropology for the industrial age. All kinds of dogmas assert themselves, and this disciplining reaches even our personal psychology: "Don't most people believe in themselves as completed, fully grown facts" (D 560).

#### **4. Thoughts for Postmodernity**

For the postmodern theorist Lyotard, the call to always dare transformations and metamorphoses in thinking is Nietzsche's lasting legacy. But Nietzsche himself goes one step further: not only theoretical thinking, but above all practical life needs metamorphoses. Thus the art of living comes into view. Not only do the drives control consciousness. In this case there would be no place for the art of

living. Rather, consciousness also selects, inhibits, and promotes the drives.<sup>6</sup> According to Nietzsche, “[o]ne can handle one’s drives like a gardener” (D 560). One can prevent certain drives, certain interpretations, certain worldviews, from taking over for too long, until they freeze, stagnate and do harm. The late Nietzsche would diagnose symptoms of “decadence” when “the instinct of [...] plasticity” no longer provides renewal (N Spring 1888, 14[210]). The deconstructive procedure is a mental exercise in the freedom of instincts. “We are free to do all this: but how many actually know that they are free to do this?” (D 560).

This might be a project for the future. The ‘dawn’ dawns for a postmodern enlightenment whose theme is not substance but plasticity, which demands no hierarchies or dichotomies but diversity and flexibility. The new flexibility does not mean self-optimization, but self-cultivation, and the goal is not more efficiency, but a good life — as with Epicurus, whose ancient attitude towards life resonates in the metaphor of the gardener. “This Enlightenment,” Nietzsche demands, this “understanding of origin and evolution, sympathy with the past, the newly aroused passion for feeling and knowledge [...] we now must carry on” (D 197). This is the art of living for the 21st century: Art of living for a time in which self-definitions are becoming more and more fragile and the old metaphysical question of who we are is being replaced by the creative question of who we want to be.

*Translated by Renate Müller-Buck*

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<sup>6</sup> See Keith Ansell-Pearson / Rebecca Bamford, *Nietzsche’s Dawn: Philosophy, Ethics, and the Passion of Knowledge*, Hoboken, NJ 2021, 141–166.

## IV.

### Life as an Experiment

*by Kristina Jaspers*

“*we*, however, want to be poets of our life” (JS 299)

Nietzsche’s work was already provocative during his lifetime and remains so until today. His thinking has had an impact far beyond philosophy. Why is Friedrich Nietzsche, who was born over 170 years ago, still relevant to us? Nietzsche sets laughter, singing, and dancing against Western intellectual history. He performs intellectual tightrope artistry and at the same time knows about bottomlessness; about the fact that there can be no certainties for the human being. Irony becomes for him the highest form of expression of wisdom, he distrusts morality. He always thinks in opposites. Thinking is existential for him – and the mind does not exist without the body. Experienced in pain from his youth, he wrings his work from the impairments of his body.

Nietzsche is perhaps the first great thinker of the modern age. Homeless and unbound, he is also always a traveler. He rejects grand form and uses aphorisms. Nietzsche, the rhetor, always thinks content and form together, designs the typography of his books, builds in unusual punctuation marks – and thus brings the text closer to the expression of spoken language. His life is a permanent experiment. Whether media theory, physiology, or psychology – his reflections always begin with self-analysis. He tests himself writing on the typewriter as well as in composing music, he records the effect of various diets and analyzes what effects a change of location to different altitudes, and

climates, has on the mind and the body. He is concerned with the aesthetic stylization of life, with ‘self-formation’ in the literal sense, with the shaping of his self. Questioning everything, he searches for the premises of his own life. Life thus becomes an experimental arrangement for thinking; and failure is also part of this experiment.

Today, shaping one’s own life plays a crucial role. The possibilities for using one’s own body as a field for experimentation and design are greater than ever. Thanks to cosmetic surgery, one’s appearance can be improved, trophological findings promote healthy nutrition, gene therapy and prenatal diagnostics allow genetic selection and optimization. But will this make all human beings smarter, more beautiful, and healthier? Under the heading “Why I am So Wise,” in *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche poses questions about diet, place of residence and climate, and the forms of recreation one cultivates (for him, primarily engagement with literature and music). He does not offer simple instructions for a better life, but he shows how we can question ourselves and what we can dare to do. His areas of interest concern the psychological as well as physical form: Ways of thinking, speaking, and writing are questioned by him as well as the diet, the body movement, the artistic expression, and community with friends.

## 1. Thoughts, Born out of Pain

To begin with, it is necessary to mention an essential condition under which Nietzsche’s work was born and whose influence on his thinking and feeling cannot be underestimated: pain is the basic experience in Nietzsche’s life, which also becomes the starting point of his experimental attitude toward life. Since his youth he is exposed to strong physical impairments, his body is decrepit, inadequate, deficient. Already at the age of 17, he composed a piano piece entitled *Pain is the keynote of nature* (*Schmerz ist der Grundton der Natur*, 1861), in which he articulates states of pain with the help of chromatic tone sequences. He must laboriously wring thought and writing from his body, the stronger his sense of the mind’s dependence on the physical is. For while the struggle against pain encourages his resistance and his insistence on self-determination, it sharpens at the same time his sense of the dependence of thought on physical constitution. His life takes the form of a laboratory situation. For years he tries out the most diverse cures as therapy; at the same time he becomes a sensitive observer of himself.

It is remarkable that Nietzsche does not only seem to work against pain, he sometimes also works *with* it, uses it as a stimulant; yes, he states that during his pain attacks, he has a “clarity” and sharpness of thought that he cannot achieve in a healthy state. In the preface to *The Joyful Science*, homage is paid to “great pain” as the “ultimate emancipator” (JS, Preface 1 and 3, transl. Thomas Common), which made the deep insights of the respective works possible in the first place. Pain thus has a heuristic potential. Like a seismograph, Nietzsche records his various states of pain, analytically observing, occasionally exhausted, in resignation, at times proud, almost joyful, and adds them as postscripts to the letters to his friends. How he is *really* doing is something they can take from these comments about his respective stomach, head, and eye pains.

Many of Nietzsche’s thoughts take their starting point in the understanding of suffering as a human condition, whether in the wake of Schopenhauer as a concept of nihilism or, as in *The Antichrist*, as a critique of religion. The Buddhist maxim “Life means suffering” serves Nietzsche as a fundamental separation from Christianity. The pity he grants to friends in his private correspondence, but rejects for himself as degrading, is interpreted here – similarly to *Zarathustra* – as a nihilistic, depressive practice of weakness. In pain itself, Nietzsche sees both something heroic (in enduring it) and something degrading (in that it breaks the will). Likewise, in pain suffering and pleasure are inextricably linked. Thus, his descriptions of pain sometimes seem to take on masochistic-pleasurable traits.

## 2. Re-Scripting and Autosuggestion

Nietzsche’s strategies in dealing with experiences of pain, however, go beyond making them productive in the sense of artistic expression. He actually undertakes a “transvaluation of all values,” turning “sick” into “healthy,” and a victim attribution into a quasi-heroic story. Nietzsche understands the differences between health and illness as fluid and processual: “Health and illness are nothing essentially different, as the old physicians and today still some practitioners believe” (N Spring 1888, 14[65], transl. Manuel Knoll and Barry Stocker), they are rather gradual differences and proportions. What appears to be “healthy” under one set of conditions might be considered “relatively diseased” under another set of conditions, and what would be pathological in one person would be in accordance with his or her nature in another.



In this context, Karl Jaspers speaks of a “peculiar ambiguity.”<sup>1</sup> For the illness, which is based on an inner health, is considered health by Nietzsche, whereas a health purely in the medical sense, which is based on inner “dullness” without substance, is an expression of illness (JS 120). By reversing the terms, Nietzsche opposes the complacency of the healthy and valorizes the sick who struggle against their illness. Thus, the attributions are based less on biological or medical grounds than on the value of the human being, their inner attitude. Nietzsche understands illness as a challenge to the will to health. “Great health” is also to be understood in this sense, which he defines in several places as strength of will and readiness for the adventure of the free spirit. Here Nietzsche refers to his own experiences, because only the “healing instinct” (transl. Carol Diethe / Duncan Large / Adrian Del Caro / Alan D. Schrift) against illness, brought him himself, as he writes, to reason (EH, *Why I am so Wise*, 2, 6); “‘Forward,’ I said to myself, ‘tomorrow you will be healthy, today it suffices for you to feign health.’” (N 1885, 40[65], Preface, transl. Adrian Del Caro). With this form of autosuggestion, Nietzsche is quite in line with today’s therapy concepts. And likewise his understanding of health and illness as gradual attributions seems contemporary. This also applies to his idea of manifold, always individual “healthinesses,” of which he speaks several times in the plural. Thus, Nietzsche’s philosophy of health proves to be exceedingly modern. In the objectives of equal opportunities and diversity, as well as in the context of disability and gender studies, the concept of health has become significantly pluralized in recent years; so-called “disabilities” or even mental disorders are no longer pathologized, as being outside the norm. The self-knowledge and personal responsibility, demanded by Nietzsche, correspond to today’s requirements for the cooperation of patients in the healing process. With the help of his “revaluation” he succeeds in transforming a social stigma into a personal distinction. From today’s point of view, one could say that “re-scripting” one’s own disposition definitely heeds its self-efficacy.

### 3. Masquerade and Farce

In his works as well as in his personal letters, Nietzsche often uses the concept of the mask. For him, individuality itself is always only a masquerade;

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1 Karl Jaspers, *Nietzsche: An Introduction to the Understanding of His Philosophical Activity*, Baltimore 1997, 111.

it is never possible to fully grasp another human being. The human being is masked for their counterpart – whether they want to or not. Masks serve self-staging, identification, and demarcation. At the same time, they offer the possibility of concealing the truth. Nietzsche loves to play roles and change identities. Lou Andreas-Salomé describes him as someone who, through his behavior, “gave the impression of being concealed and discreet”: “But in this there was always a joy in disguise, – cloak and mask for an inner life that was almost never exposed.”<sup>2</sup> That nevertheless he too has a longing to lay aside all masquerades, in order to be *really* recognized – with simultaneous knowledge of its impossibility – becomes clear in letters to close friends. Thus, the masquerade remains a possibility to reveal, at least, different facets of the self. And while Nietzsche, on the one hand stylizes himself as the teacher Zarathustra or as ecstatic Dionysus, he at the same time criticizes himself in the role of the decadent as a child of his time.

The mask stands for a fundamental, ironic concept in Nietzsche. According to Michel Foucault, Nietzsche reacts with “parody and farce” to the historiography of his time and to the new founders of religion – whether they worship socialism, the machine god or Richard Wagner:

The good historian, the genealogist, will know what to make of this masquerade. He will not be too serious to enjoy it; on the contrary, he will push the masquerade to its limit and prepare the great carnival of time where masks are constantly reappearing. No longer the identification of our faint individuality with the solid identities of the past, but our ‘unrealization’ through the excessive choice of identities – Frederick of Hohenstaufen, Caesar, Jesus, Dionysus, and possibly Zarathustra. Taking up these masks, revitalizing the buffoonery of history, we adopt an identity whose unreality surpasses that of God, who started the charade.<sup>3</sup>

Nietzsche’s masquerade, however, also leads to misunderstandings. His self-stylizations are in the end interpreted as delusions of grandeur. In the final

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<sup>2</sup> Lou Andreas-Salomé, *Friedrich Nietzsche in seinen Werken* [1894], Hamburg 2013, 13, transl. Manuel Knoll and Barry Stocker.

<sup>3</sup> Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, *Genealogy, History*”, in: James D. Faubion (ed.): *Aesthetics, Method, Epistemology, Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984, Vol. 2*, New York 1998, 385-386.

analysis, he seems to have dissolved himself in his pseudonyms. He signed his so-called “letters of madness” (“*Wahnsinnsbriefe*”), from January 1889, alternately with “Dionysus” and “The Crucified One.”

After Nietzsche’s breakdown, the image of the philosopher was essentially shaped by his sister Elisabeth, who established a Nietzsche cult site in Weimar and had the Art Nouveau artist Max Klinger and the photographer Hans Olde produce formative portraits, not to mention her reinterpretation of his works and her interventions in the *Nachlass*. There is hardly a philosopher of whom posterity has formed a supposedly so clear and at the same time so falsified image. Whether as misogynist or anti-Semite, as “overhuman” and pre-fascist or as keyword giver for the life reform movement, whether as nihilist and anti-Christ, as Wagner-friend or Wagner-foe, and finally as martyr, madman, and semi-conscious genius – all these attributions say more about the interpreters than about Nietzsche himself. Therefore, to demonstrate his value for current discourses on the philosophy of life (*Lebensphilosophie*), it is necessary to free him from outdated clichés, to detach him from prejudices and political appropriations.

Nietzsche’s existential claim to stand up for his work with his life, to shape life along his own maxims as art, is still challenging. At the same time, it can be questioned how far he actually lives up to his own claims, whether he does not rather philosophize “with the hammer” only on paper, and rather proclaimed the Dionysian dance and ecstasy than experiencing it himself. Nietzsche is sometimes accused of radical positions that are only play, coquetry, and pose. But what are poses but consciously chosen attitudes, and what are attitudes if not expressions of a position that is publicly held with consistency? This is now to be examined by means of various ‘experimental fields’ in which Nietzsche put himself to the test. It concerns physiology and psychology as well as questions of style and expression, reading and writing as a possibility of inner formation and finally friendship. Conceptually, these experiments can certainly be subsumed under the idea of the ‘art of living.’ For Nietzsche, ‘art of living’ means, on the one hand, philosophy as a form of life and practice, and, on the other, philosophy as reflection on this very practice. Thus, his diagnosis and demand is: “We are experiments: let us also want to be such!” (D 453, transl. Brittain Smith).

#### 4. Reason in the Body

At the end of the 1870s, Nietzsche turned increasingly to physiological questions. He studied the latest specialist literature and increasingly opened himself to scientific topics. From the annotations in the books of his private library, one can see how attentively he studied numerous physiological works. However, his discussions were not only of a theoretical nature, but on the contrary, at the same time very close to the lifeworld and to reality. Since his youth, Nietzsche is exposed to strong physical impairments. In his letters, he reports various seizures, migraine-like headaches, stomach aches, “biliary vomiting,” and the limited ability to see. Throughout his life, therefore, he will be occupied with questions of nutrition and various dietary concepts. Here, too, the analysis always begins with self-experimentation: various cures lead him from the English beer diet to the milk and egg diet to vegetarian and, again, predominantly meat-based diets. At the same time, he loves sweet pastries, lamb with sage, salmon, ham, and sausages. He often becomes painfully aware of how difficult it is to follow his own resolutions, especially when it comes to his diet. He also hardly lives up to his demand that everyone should cook their own food and expand their culinary knowledge in the process. In Naumburg, however, he occasionally grows his own vegetables. Nietzsche’s perspective, however, goes far beyond somatic self-analysis. At the same time, he criticizes the eating habits of his time: people eat too much and many different things; the selection of food is chosen for the representative effect and not for the result. From today’s perspective, Nietzsche can therefore be considered an important gastrosophical pioneer, who fundamentally questions nutritional concepts and – by combining ethical, dietetic and culinary aspects – designs a doctrine of health, which at the same time is to be understood as character formation.

In addition, Nietzsche has always been concerned with the effect of certain climatic conditions on the organism. For, *how* we think *what*, is always dependent on *where* we live and *how*. Thus, in Nietzsche’s opinion, climate has immense physiological effects on the mind. He claims that the sunny, breezy climate of the Mediterranean is particularly beneficial to geniuses. It is not without reason that Nietzsche preferred the southern Alpine valleys in Tyrol and the Engadin as well as the southern Alpine foothills of the Riviera and the Adriatic Sea with Turin, Nice, and Genoa as places of residence. The advantages and disadvantages of the climatic conditions of his respective quarters – temperature, humidity

and altitude – he describes in detail in the letters to his friends. Walking is the most important form of exercise for him, which also inspires his thinking.

In Nietzsche's recourse to antiquity, the appreciation of corporeality and sensuality – for him the "Dionysian" – is of central importance. It is precisely in the Dionysian ecstasy that he recognizes the physiological prerequisite for the creation of works of art. In *Twilight of the Idols*, under the heading "*On the psychology of the artist*," there is a detailed analysis of states of ecstasy. How great his own experience with intoxicants was, however, can only be conjectured. It is attested that Nietzsche took large doses of chloral. Mercury was prescribed for his eye problems and he treated his headaches with bromine water. Opium is repeatedly used as a sleep-inducing drug and sedative. His sister speaks of a Javanese sedative that her brother had taken, after which he rolled on the floor in fits of laughter, and she also admits to his use of hashish. Both confessions, however, are primarily intended to counter speculations about a possible hereditary disease carried by Nietzsche.<sup>4</sup> Nietzsche himself speaks of a Dutchman who had come from Java and had provided him with a dubious white powder as a strong sleep-inducing drug. He mentions hashish in *The Joyful Science* and *Ecce Homo*, but without explicitly referring to his own experiences. Alcohol he tolerates badly, nicotine he enjoys for a while in the form of snuff. And as part of his diets he forbids himself caffeine, because coffee "clouds" him. The prophet of Dionysian ecstasy thus consumes rather ascetically. Ecstasy arises during the enjoyment of music or in the mental flight of fancy.

## 5. Re-Readings as Aesthetic-Therapeutic Appropriation

Nietzsche notes that there are books "that teach how to dance" (HH I, 206, transl. Gary Handwerk), whose moving language or moving typeface provokes a bodily reaction in the reader: "commas, question marks and exclamation marks, and the reader should add his body to them and show that what moves also moves" (N September-November 1879, 47[7], transl. Manuel Knoll and Barry Stocker). The moving written image evokes a bodily reaction, the written corpus affects the reader's body. This is exactly Nietzsche's demand for a "different reading,"<sup>5</sup> which should be a reading aloud, reciting, and which includes in

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<sup>4</sup> Reinhard Gasser, *Nietzsche und Freud*, Berlin/New York 1997, 52.

<sup>5</sup> Rudolf Fietz, *Das andere Lesen – oder: Nietzsche (über)Lesen*, Oldenburg 1999, 29.

the gesture the lungs, facial expressions, and posture. He wants reading for the ear and not only for the eye, the slow “tender,” “ruminating”<sup>6</sup> reading that wanders back and forth in the sense, and includes in its gesture the lungs, facial expressions, and posture. In *Ecce Homo* he describes the reader as “a monster of courage and curiosity [...], a born adventurer and discoverer” (EH, Books 3, transl. Carol Diethe / Duncan Large / Adrian Del Caro / Alan D. Schrift). In order to adequately present his texts to this monster, however, he must first put them on paper.

Due to his extreme myopia (at minus fourteen diopters he was nearly blind), Nietzsche was extensively involved with the writing process. His experiments with the typewriter (in 1882 he bought a so-called *Malling-Hansen-Skivekugle*) are known to have led to an intense reflection on how writing affects thinking.

Just as Nietzsche’s sick body, construed as the original medium, influences his writing style, so now the medium of the new writing instrument becomes formative. The pen, the stylus, or the typewriter are not only bearers of meaning, but are themselves meaning-giving. This insight is also reflected in Nietzsche’s publications during his lifetime. The philologist is extremely concerned about the decoration and design of his own works. He always looks for a coherence of form and content. Thus, he has his aphorisms set in small page format and with an airy typeface. Numerous typographic peculiarities catch one’s eye: He frequently uses performance marks, boldface, italics, and spacing to add graphic complexity. Instead of the customary German type (*Fraktur*), he typesets in the more ‘modern’ Antiqua script; spaces, dashes, and quotation marks interrupt and rhythmize the flow of the text, thus changing the reading pace. He had observed contemporary reading habits and therefore knew how much the typesetting of the text also determines its reception, that line spacing and font size, for example, influence the reading speed. In addition to his idiosyncratic use of performance and punctuation marks, there is also the lack of orientation aids for the content such as bibliographies and source lists or definitions of terms, since in his opinion education and preconceived interpretation often stand in the way of actual reading.

Nietzsche himself was a great reader, the library of the “Wanderer” was also fed by public libraries, whose works he sometimes did not return. Nietzsche’s

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6 Fietz, *Das andere Lesen*, 33.

re-readings, especially of fiction, can be understood as a dialogical monologue, as a mirroring of himself, but also as a discussion with absent friends.

Philosophical readings generally serve to gain intellectual knowledge. But possibly, in a maieutic sense, insights into ethical and aesthetic conduct of life can also be derived from them. Traces of this textual exegesis can be found in the readers' biographies. Nietzsche's re-readings could be explored in the sense of an aesthetic-therapeutic appropriation and its transfer into everyday life practice.<sup>7</sup> For the reading of a work not only affects it, but also changes the reader. Nietzsche's reading processes seem to go far beyond a classical academic discussion. Insights and experiences of congenial thinkers become role-models for him, and their insights are in turn used as a guide for shaping one's life. For example, Nietzsche reflects himself with Friedrich Schlegel's *Problematic Characters*, is inspired by Stendhal's concept of love, or recognizes in Dostoevsky the "only psychologist from whom I had something to learn" (TI, Forays of an Untimely One 45, transl. Carol Diethe / Duncan Large / Adrian Del Caro / Alan D. Schrift).

These readings, as a stimulus to inner dialogue, bring forth maieutically, in the sense of a "midwifery art," their own insights. And these are not to be implemented purely intellectually, but again in the concrete conduct of life.

## 6. Interplays of Proximity and Distance

Self-observation – whether in the reception of art, in the writing process or in the investigation of the relationship between body and soul – often forms the starting point of Nietzsche's thinking. This reveals his proximity to psychology and even more to later psychoanalysis. Nietzsche is an analyst of the unconscious. Thus, even Freud, who consciously abstains from a closer examination (since, similarly to Schnitzler, a kind of "timidity with regard to being a doppelgänger" holds him back) – attests Nietzsche's extraordinarily deep capacity for introspection. For Susan Sontag, Nietzsche, like Freud, Dostoevsky, or Sartre, is "a psychologist of the first rank."<sup>8</sup> Every psychoanalytic training begins with self-analysis and thus one could certainly grant Nietzsche a pioneering role in this. But here too

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7 Alexandra Pontzen, "Relektüre – Wiederlesen," in: Klaus Stierstorfer (ed.), *Grundthemen der Literaturwissenschaft: Lesen*, Stuttgart 2018, 294-322: 296.

8 Susan Sontag, "Sartre's Saint Genet," in: Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation and other Essays*, London/New York 2009, 93-99: 98.

he actually remains a skeptic who recognized the danger of self-deception early on. Thus, he notes in 1868: “Self-observation: it deceives / Know yourself / By acting, not by observing / [...] Observation inhibits energy, it decomposes and crumbles / Instinct is the best.” (quoted from Mette/Schlechta).<sup>9</sup>

One could understand Nietzsche’s work as a kind of inner monologue, as a critical soliloquy of the wanderer with his shadow. For solitude or isolation is a necessary element in Nietzsche’s life and work and his rhetorical appeals are mostly addressed to himself. Yet here, too, he experimentally transcends his own constitution and educates himself in sociability. Friendship could be called Nietzsche’s greatest experiment in life, and he succeeds sometimes more and sometimes less. Friendship is as “indispensable as it is impossible”<sup>10</sup>; precisely for this reason it is always to be struggled for. Especially as a young student and during his time in Basel, Nietzsche cultivated numerous friendships, planned extensive joint trips – with Erwin Rohde to Paris or with Carl von Gersdorff to Tunis – and also involved his friends in his work processes. Even in the 1880s he was still considering the possibility of living together in a kind of shared apartment with Lou Salomé and Paul Rée – ironically christened the “Trinity” by Salomé and doomed to failure from the start in its arrangement of a platonic ménage-à-trois. In his extensive study, Karl Jaspers comes to the assessment that Nietzsche’s friendships were ultimately all unsuccessful: With each new friend came “further disappointment and failure,” the result was in each case “increased loneliness.”<sup>11</sup> Franz Overbeck, however, states this is only for the later years, in which Nietzsche primarily looks for prominent advocates, or adepts, and neglects his actual friendships. But even if the philosopher sometimes complains to his sister that he cannot find comfort in anyone, since there is no one like him (letter to his sister Elisabeth, May 20, 1885), he is quite able to reactivate broken friendships and continue old ties. The theme of friendship runs through almost all of his works. It is not without reason that his last and by far most extensive composition is initially titled *Hymn to Friendship*. After failing to come up with the verses for it, he uses Lou Salomé’s poem *Prayer to Life*, which begins with the words “Certainly, that’s how a friend loves a friend

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9 Hans Joachim Mette / Karl Schlechta, *Friedrich Nietzsche – Werke und Briefe*, München 1937, Bd. 3, 126, transl. Manuel Knoll and Barry Stocker.

10 Gerd Schank / Paul van Tongeren, *Freunde und Gegner. Nietzsches Schreibmoral in seinen Briefen und seine philosophische “Kriegs-Praxis”*, Würzburg 1999, 77, transl. Manuel Knoll and Barry Stocker.

11 Jaspers, *Nietzsche*, 58.



/ As I love you, enigmatic life” and is entitled *To Pain* (transl. Manuel Knoll and Barry Stocker). Pain is conceived of here as a necessary part of life, and in friendship the two are bound together.

The volume of correspondence alone is an expression of Nietzsche’s will to communicate; more than 1,200 letters from the years 1850 to 1889 have been preserved. In them, he rarely speaks exclusively about himself; he always shows sympathy for his correspondent, enquires about the other person, strives for dialogue, for listening to and perceiving the other. Stylistically, too, he demonstrates a special affability by writing in an entertaining and witty manner, borrowing expressions from children’s and everyday language and inserting dialectal quotations, animal comparisons, or puns. In a linguistic study, Gerd Schank made a count and analysis of the linguistic expressions and related them to the different correspondence partners.<sup>12</sup> This shows that Nietzsche uses ironic and ridiculous formulations most frankly with regard to himself. He usually addresses critical comments directly to the addressee, while mockery of third parties occurs much less frequently. The complexity of his means of expression enables him to disguise emotional states such as disappointment, loneliness, or pain in trivializing or ironic form. Especially in letters to people close to him, these turns of phrase are frequent and seem to be an expression of familiarity. But what degree of intimacy can be achieved in friendship? Here, Nietzsche is under no illusions. Even if he seems to believe – especially in the enthusiastic attitude toward Richard Wagner or briefly also toward Lou Salomé – in a complete understanding and merging in a “star friendship,” this attitude necessarily leads to disappointment. Apparent openness and honesty are the premises of friendship, but distance, the knowledge that one can only be conditionally sincere, remains a necessary part of the concept. While mutual respect forms the foundation, the shaping remains an interplay of proximity and distance. According to Nietzsche, a true friend is characterized by discretion and secrecy. The prerequisite is self-knowledge, the condition remains one of masquerade and veiling. Here the meaning of the mask mentioned at the beginning becomes particularly clear. For, according to Nietzsche, love and kindness show themselves precisely in *not* completely exposing oneself to the other. Keeping oneself hidden, therefore, arises less from his distrust of others

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12 Schank / van Tongeren, *Freunde und Gegner*.

than from his distrust of himself. This may seem pessimistic at first, but it follows a lifelong self-analysis. And it certainly remains to be asked how much deception and misjudgment is contained in every friendship. Is it not an expression of successful friendship when two people express trust and affection for each other, and at the same time concede their respective masks and secrets? How far Nietzsche's psychological knowledge goes here is made clear by the aphorism *The Equilibrium of Friendship* from *Human, All Too Human*: "In our relationship with another person, we sometimes recover the appropriate equilibrium of friendship if we place a few grains of fault on our own side of the scale." (HH I, 305, transl. Gary Handwerk). Here, too, self-knowledge is at the beginning of friendship.

In 1882, Nietzsche sends the request from Pindar's *Pythian Odes* to Lou Salomé: "*become who you are!*" (letter to Lou von Salomé, probably June 10, 1882, transl. Manuel Knoll and Barry Stocker). He repeated and varied this, saying it as a kind of mantra both to Andreas-Salomé and to himself, until finally in 1888, the line graced the subtitle of *Ecce Homo* as the instruction *How To Become What You Are*. The suggestion to shape one's life in this way remains. Karl Jaspers once said: "True is only what comes out of ourselves through Nietzsche."<sup>13</sup> Nietzsche's texts there remains a challenge in the sense of a guide to self-experimentation.

*Translated by Manuel Knoll and Barry Stocker*

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13 Karl Jaspers, *Nietzsche und das Christentum*, Hameln 1947, 85, transl. Manuel Knoll and Barry Stocker.



## V.

# Healthy Growth: Nietzsche's Dietetics as a Philosophical Agenda

*by Johannes Heinrich*

“Where is this whole philosophy headed with all its detours? Does it do more than translate, as it were, into reason a constant concentrated drive [...]?

A philosophy that at bottom is the instinct for a personal diet?”

(D 553, transl. Brittain Smith<sup>1</sup>).

### 1. Dietetics: More than just Nutrition

Questions about health, illness, and the proper lifestyle always play an important role in Nietzsche's life and thinking. Dietetics, a topic which first appeared in the philosophy of antiquity, describes a bundle of measures and doctrines that revolve around the idea of a good way of life and aim at physical and mental health. In Nietzsche's philosophy, dietary considerations are generally of immense importance; he considers them essential to one's foundation for building individual independence and spirituality. Especially in the middle period of Nietzsche's work, a stretch of time to which *Dawn* belongs, he turns increasingly toward questions of diet and the body.<sup>2</sup>

As laid out by Nietzsche in *Dawn*, dietetics addresses techniques and considerations concerned with topics such as personal nutrition, human interaction, sleep, stimulus minimization as well as living, control over one's

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<sup>1</sup> All quotes from Nietzsche's *Dawn* are from Brittain Smith's translation (Stanford University Press).

<sup>2</sup> See HH II Preface 5; D 203.

habits, correct forms of speaking and reading and the choice of proper location and climate.<sup>3</sup> In short, when Nietzsche speaks of *diet* or *dietetics*, he means more than just nutritional guidelines. Dietetics here also includes instructions regarding the rhythm of everyday life and wider-reaching ascetic practices and considerations, addressing questions such as how much external influence we should allow to penetrate our consciousness, and which environment might encourage us to achieve our greatest self-actualization.

The foundation for such dietetics is Nietzsche's overall philosophical position, according to which the spiritual only emerges from the crucial and more comprehensive corporeal sphere: "body am I through and through, and nothing besides; and soul is just a word for something on the body" (Z I, *Despisers of the Body*, transl. Adrian Del Caro).

In other words, mental processes derive from physiological ones. It is no wonder then, that Nietzsche demands close attention be given to physiological processes such as nutrition, as these form the basis for developing 'light' and successful mental states. Nietzsche thus comes from the supposedly 'lowest' to the 'highest.' In this regard, he writes in his more autobiographical work *Ecce Homo*: "The tempo of metabolism stands in direct relationship to the fleetness or lameness of the spirit's *feet*; for the 'spirit' itself is just a form of this metabolism" (EH, *Clever 2*, transl. Carol Diethe / Duncan Large / Adrian Del Caro / Alan D. Schrift). Hence the 'German spirit,' like the German cuisine, is heavy and sluggish.<sup>4</sup>

In *Dawn*, Nietzsche has already taken a similar path toward a harmony of diet and mental development, bemoaning the "much too much" and "ever such variety" of the local cuisine and concluding that diet impacts mental life and mentality follows from physiology: "Phooey, what arts and which books will be the dessert of such dinners!" (D 203). Diet, in the sense of nutritional requirements, plays a prominent role in Nietzsche's dietetics.

For Nietzsche, the conscious design of the environment is also critical for both mental and physical dietetics. The environment includes human interaction alongside the choice of location and climate. Regarding the choice of location and climate, Nietzsche is inclined towards the Mediterranean. He longs for "mild sunshine, clearer and fresher air, southerly vegetation" and "sea air" (D

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<sup>3</sup> See D 203, 435, 553, 555, 566.

<sup>4</sup> See EH, *Clever 1*.

553). Nietzsche's repeated emphasis on the importance of light and air is not accidental but comes from Hippocrates and a tenet of his which considers light and air to be essential factors in the constitution of spiritual and bodily health. For Nietzsche, spirit and mental wellness are, in this sense, consequences of bodily processes that are below awareness and go back to factors such as the impact of air and light.

We learn to *think less highly* of all consciousness: [...] We perceive almost nothing of the numerous influences in every moment, e.g., air electricity: enough forces could exist that continuously influence us, even though they never enter into our perception. (N Winter 1883-1884, 24 [16], transl. Paul S. Loeb and David F. Tinsley).<sup>5</sup>

In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche also states that “the influence of the climate on *metabolism* [...] is so great that a mistake in place or climate can not only alienate people from their task, but can completely rob them of it” (EH, Clever 2, transl. Carol Diethe / Duncan Large / Adrian Del Caro / Alan D. Schrift). Nietzsche's push for a Mediterranean climate as emphasized in *Dawn* is to be understood in this sense. Choice of climate is also a decisive choice for one's way of life, for one's inner creativity and wellbeing. The external southern climate thus leads to a lighter, brighter, and ‘southern’ mentality:

The cheapest [...] way to live is that of the thinker: [...] his work is not hard, but, as it were, Mediterranean; [...] he moves about, eats, drinks, and sleeps to the degree that his spirit grows ever calmer, stronger and brighter; he takes pleasure in his body (D 566).

For the Nietzsche of *Dawn*, dietetic exercises of asceticism—being attentive to sleep, nutrition, one's surroundings, etc.—are, in the end, about developing the thinker's intellect such that he can enjoy his work while also bringing himself into fuller development.

The concept of self-discipline in turn refers to the Socratic-Platonic ethic of moderation. According to the Socratic maxim of self-knowledge, one has

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<sup>5</sup> See Heinrich Schipperges, *Am Leitfaden des Leibes. Zur Anthropologie und Therapeutik Friedrich Nietzsches*, Stuttgart 1975, 162 f.; Hippokrates: *Luft, Wasser und Ortslage*, in: Richard Kapferer (ed.): *Die Werke des Hippokrates. Die hippokratische Schriftensammlung in neuer deutscher Übersetzung*, Stuttgart 1934, vol. 6.

to find out for oneself how much pleasure, food, and drink is good for one's own body.<sup>6</sup> Nietzsche makes similar remarks about moderation regarding nourishment: "You must *know* the size of your stomach" (EH, Clever 1, transl. Carol Diethe / Duncan Large / Adrian Del Caro / Alan D. Schrift). This can also be summarized in saying that by caring for the body, the health of the soul is assured. Self-actualization only comes about by working with one's body on a daily basis.

## 2. 'The Formation of Metaphors': Nietzsche as a Gardener

Again and again throughout his complete works, Nietzsche uses plant metaphors to convey processes of self-realization, growth, and propagation.<sup>7</sup> In general, it can be said that Nietzsche's use of metaphors corresponds systematically with the contents of his philosophy.<sup>8</sup> This is particularly consistent when it comes to the comparisons he makes with the plant world.

Nietzsche also makes regular use of such metaphors in *Dawn*. He speaks of "the little vegetation, that grows in between everything," for example, and of the "thousand tiny tendrils of this or that small and small-minded feeling," and finally of the "weeds" that "grow unwittingly, then unwittingly [...] destroy us" (D 435). By 'weeds,' Nietzsche means feelings of resentment that have become too dominant and pathological, such as anger, pity, regret, or envy which may grow into our relationships with others and the world.

Behind such thinking is Nietzsche's general view that our mental and emotional state can be traced back to what are taken to be more 'basic' things such as nutrition, climate, and bodily care—in short to the *great reason of the body*.<sup>9</sup> It follows from this that the danger of wasting away and perishing can be replaced by a more successful sort of living. According to Nietzsche, aligning one's habits and ascetic practices with one's bodily constitution—living according to one's own "personal diet" (D 553)—gives one the potential for leading a healthy, or at least a healthier, life. In this context, Nietzsche writes about the "detours" taken by philosophy and its propositions which lead the body to dietetics and thus to where it has always been striving:

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6 Plato, *Republic*, 410e, 412a.

7 See JS 348; N End of 1880, 7[49].

8 See Sarah Kofman, *Nietzsche und die Metapher*, transl. Florian Schertübl, Berlin 2014, 32, 34.

9 See D 553; Z I, Despisers of the Body.

Where is this whole philosophy headed with all its detours? Does it do more than translate, as it were, into reason a constant concentrated drive, a drive for mild sunshine, clearer and fresher air, southerly vegetation, sea air, quick repasts of meat, eggs, and fruit [...] little speaking, infrequent and careful reading, solitary living, pure, simple, and almost soldierly habits, in short for everything that tastes best to me and me alone, to me and me alone is the most beneficial? (D 553).

Ultimately the much more comprehensive “great reason of the body” uses the intellect as a “tool” (D 109) to reach its own goals. It is in this sense that the body comes back to itself by way of its philosophical dietetics—through conscious manipulation of air, nutrition, living conditions, and habits.

As a counter concept to the idea of the weed, Nietzsche comes up with the more positive metaphor of the gardener, through which the art of living and his ideas of dietetic self-shaping are pointedly expressed: “One can handle one’s drives like a gardener and [...] cultivate the shoots of one’s anger, pity, musing, vanity as fruitfully and advantageously as beautiful fruit on espaliers” (D 560). This refers to a self-cultivation whereby having one’s drives and passions ‘harnessed and unharnessed’ in a positive manner yields growth. The gardener’s philosophy involves giving instructions about which drives are allowed to push through the surface and when, in order to achieve a positive effect in a certain life situation and not – if it is held back for too long, for example – to become weeds, i.e., pathogenic. Those parts of the personality that might potentially lead to disease (pity, anger, brooding) are to be deprived of achieving dominance and instead transformed into a well-manicured collection of drives, feelings, and affects. Staying with this image: The gardener must weed so that between the shoots of pity, anger and vanity, no pathological growth is allowed to take root, and individual plants come together to form a beautiful overall aesthetic.

While one can provide the “espaliers” through such means as ensuring the right circumstances and environment, the plant’s growth in itself remains predetermined. Though the overall development of the plant can be influenced in a general way, its growth and organic development is something one can only watch: “one can [...] let nature have her sway and only tend to a little decoration and cleaning up here and there” (D 560).



In letting go and allowing the body's natural drives and instincts to take over, a person's only autonomy is in framing those drives as they come. These drives, instincts, and affects—not the rational self—are what ultimately steer our behavior.<sup>10</sup> We are only free, according to Nietzsche, to the degree that we make certain aspects of ourselves grow and subordinate others to that growth. That means we are free to “give style” to our character (JS 290)—in other words, to create it artistically. Any freedom thus consists in steering the preconditions of our actions—namely, our drives and affects: “We are free to do all this” (D 560). According to Nietzsche, however, action itself is not at all free for us. For everything we do is a necessary process, a living out of our drives and powers, a process to which ‘reasonable choice’ is only added after the fact: “*you are being done!* moment by every moment! Humanity has, through all ages, confused the active and the passive” (D 120).

An autonomous individual would thus be able to steer his or her nature, or that which determines it, and adjust the rank and order of the instincts, drives, and affects which necessarily set one's behavior. This, in turn, comes about through dietetic practices of self-care which make it possible for people to gain knowledge of their needs and exert influence over their drives.<sup>11</sup> As Nietzsche sees it, this is where the creativity comes in—how we are capable of working on ourselves towards transformation—and why we should by no means consider ourselves “completed fully-grown facts” (D 560).

Finally, this image of the garden and the gardener must be understood as alluding to the work of Epicurus. During the time when he was writing *Dawn*, Nietzsche saw Epicurus as a model for his own ideas about fellowship, withdrawal, and self-cultivation.<sup>12</sup>

The idea of a potential community ultimately leads to the question to what extent Nietzsche's recommendations for place, climate, and nutrition can be taken as general instructions for action, or whether dietetics is more of an individual matter, one which must take the constitution of each individual into consideration. This question points to the topics of health and illness, which for Nietzsche are also closely connected to those of climate, nutrition, metabolism, etc. Is health something that can be created by following general

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10 See N Spring – Summer 1883, 7[76].

11 See Heinrich, *Individualität, Subjektivität und Selbstsorge bei Nietzsche*, 103 f., 259; N Spring – Autumn 1881, 11[97].

12 See WS 192; Keith Ansell-Pearson: “True to the earth: Nietzsche's Epicurean Care of the Self and World,” in: Horst Hutter / Eli Friedland (eds.), *Nietzsche's Therapeutic Teaching. For Individuals and Culture*, London 2013, 97-117: 102.

dietary rules, or does each individual have to discover the preconditions for their own health and recovery?

### 3. Health and Illness

In *Dawn*, there are various passages where Nietzsche discusses these complex topics of health and illness. Nietzsche calls here for very practical “instruction about the body and about diet” which should focus on “the health of a society and of the individual” (D 202). Altogether, this goes hand-in-hand with the wish to “ponder with considerably more conscience the aim of those prescriptions, namely our health” (D 322). What does Nietzsche mean by health?

Health, for Nietzsche, is not something that can be dualistically divided from illness, nor is it something that has universality. He rather offers a pluralistic concept of well-being that repeatedly reaches over into the concept of illness: “there is no health in itself [...]” (JS 120, transl. Adrian Del Caro).

Nietzsche writes additionally about the idea of “*the great health*” which “one does not merely have, but also continually acquires and must acquire, because one gives it up again and again” (JS 382, transl. Adrian Del Caro). For Nietzsche, health is not just something individual and relative, but also something beyond what is given to us through inheritance or our biological constitution. Instead, health, as he views it, is something we are always creating in ourselves through techniques of self-care, asceticism, and dietetics. Measuring the value of “great health” is asking how much pain and illness one can endure without perishing from the consequences of such suffering.

Illness also has positive aspects for Nietzsche because it ultimately allows for the personality to be transformed by way of the body. In addition, illness functions as strong means of cognition. Those who are sick have no choice but to reflect on the reasons for their condition, ruminating over health and disease on a more philosophical level while also becoming better acquainted with their own intimate histories of bodily illness. In this way, illness is a necessary condition for recovering and establishing the body’s health.<sup>13</sup>

The ideal of great health can be reached, at least temporarily, through the practice of dietary techniques carried out by each person on their own.<sup>14</sup>

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13 See CW 5.

14 See Günter Gödde, “Der Wert der Muße und ihre Beziehung zur Lebenskunst,” in: Günter Gödde / Nikolaos Loukidelis / Jörg Zirfas (eds.), *Nietzsche und die Lebenskunst. Ein philosophisch-psychologisches Kompendium*, Stuttgart 2016, 143-156: 152.

Since any conception of health is strongly individualistic, and each individual sick person must find the means to their own healing, it goes without saying that the necessary dietary requirements for recovery will likewise be unique to each individual.

The realization of the most suitable ascetic techniques can only be accomplished practically, namely through trial-and-error and by way of “experiments” with one’s “nutrition, ways of living” and the “lifestyles of the body” (N Winter 1883-1884, 24 [16], transl. Paul S. Loeb and David F. Tinsley). It is only through these successes and failures with dietary practices that one arrives at the self-knowledge needed to achieve a healthy way of life.

These dietary experiments and practices are to be done in doses rather than carried out too quickly. As Nietzsche writes: “There is wisdom in this, the wisdom of life, in prescribing even health to oneself for a long time only in small doses” (HH Preface 5, transl. Gary Handwerk). In *Dawn*, Nietzsche comes back to this theme: “If you want to effect the most profound transformation possible, then administer the means in the smallest doses, but unremittingly and over long periods of time” (D 534). According to Nietzsche, this knowledge to initiate the process of recovery slowly and evenly is based on the experience with intoxicants and narcotics. Experience teaches us that the “intoxicating means” that provide a sudden and short-term relief from illness ultimately end up in a “profound worsening of the ailment” (D 52). Examples of such additional ailments for Nietzsche are withdrawal symptoms such as restlessness and nervous tremors. That Nietzsche is so specific here in cautioning against nervous disorders makes it clear that when he uses words like “consolations” and “quackery” he means concrete medications and intoxicants. On the other hand, when Nietzsche talks of remedies, a spiritual dimension also opens up: By “consolations” at this point, Nietzsche also means the consolations of the Christian religion. In this sense, even beyond the purely physiological approach, he cautions against ascetic, other-worldly, life-denying ideas and ideals (‘soul,’ ‘guilt,’ ‘redemption’) that can, in the end, make a person even sicker.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> See GM III 28.

#### 4. Nietzsche and the Physicians

Accordingly, Nietzsche sees the philosophical trend of pessimism as another form of disease, a view which not least also expresses a beginning dissociation from his former mentor Arthur Schopenhauer.<sup>16</sup> In *Dawn*, following this same vein, Nietzsche asks: “Where are the new physicians of the soul?” (D 52). For him, the old ‘soul-doctors’ (Christian priests, pessimistic philosophers), those who in their assessments of suffering have either blamed the sick for their suffering (Christianity) or denied life in its totality (Schopenhauer) have ultimately been sure to make the sick person sick in a more lasting sense, namely morbid. By morbidity here, Nietzsche means the evaluating and justifying of one’s suffering through nihilistic instincts of resentment which, in the end, are directed against life itself: “the human being’s greatest disease grew out of the battle against its diseases” (D 52).

In the retrospectively written preface to *Human, All too Human*, a work which was published not long before *Dawn*, Nietzsche reflects on the biographical turns that, due to illness, led to his leaving his professorship in Basel in 1879. This departure inaugurated his middle creative period as a ‘free philosopher’ during which he journeyed in search of the right climate for his delicate constitution. In the preface Nietzsche writes about this time of his life, looking back with hindsight on these days of writing the book and of how he was “doctor and sick person in one,” forcing himself to establish unfamiliar but healthier guidelines upon himself when it comes to “friends, letters, duties [...] new nourishment, a new sun” (HH II, Preface 5, transl. R.J. Hollingdale). Thus, finally, a “dietetic and discipline” is addressed with which Nietzsche, according to the harmony of the physical and the mental, also wanted to “make it as easy as possible for the spirit.” According to his own statement, the dietary rules of self-care finally led him into a deeper state of health: “all this finally resulted in a great spiritual strengthening, an increasing joy and abundance of health” (HH II Preface 5, R.J. Hollingdale).

In *Dawn*, Nietzsche also wants to persuade the reader to become a doctor and a patient in one. There, he calls for a way of life that is as independent as possible from the advice of doctors. This finds its reason in the fact that health, as seen, is something strongly individual which cannot be produced by general, binding rules. Nietzsche thus raises the possibility of living “without a doctor,”

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<sup>16</sup> See D 409.

for insofar as a man places his health under the responsibility of a physician, “it suffices for him to behave strictly in accordance with all prescribed measures” (D 322). If, on the other hand, we are responsible for our own health, “we notice much more, adjure and abjure ourselves much more than would occur upon doctor’s orders” (D 322). Thus, the experience of one’s own history of illness ‘from within’ best enables the sufferer to find his own remedies.

Nietzsche presents himself as someone whose history of illness forced him “not to allow myself to be [...] *doctored*” (EH, Wise 2, transl. Judith Norman) and it is his own experience of agony and illness that enables him to guide others in this philosophical-dietetic direction.

Nietzsche’s *own* ideal physician would thus be someone who philosophically guides the sick person in his bodily dietetics in order to enable him to lead a better life. Nietzsche’s concept of the ‘physician of the soul’ is rooted in the ancient tradition of Stoicism (Chrysippus), as it was already used there in connection with the attainment of mental Stoic tranquility: Affects are described as something generally pathological that, which the help of psychological techniques, should be transformed towards finding inner balance. According to an analogy between mental and physical suffering which Nietzsche adopts as well, this Stoic philosophy also speaks about the ‘physician of the soul.’<sup>17</sup>

Even when Nietzsche does not see something unhealthy in drives and affects in general, he still discusses similar techniques that can make counteracting a drive possible when it becomes too violent, e.g., when it becomes an illness. In aphorism D 109, Nietzsche presents various potential solutions that could be used to overcome the intensity of such drives. These dietetic practices of Nietzsche’s philosophy thus aim at finding the right way to handle one’s personal drives. By drives here, he not only means sexual urges and hunger, but also emotions such as pity, anger, and vanity.<sup>18</sup>

While one such technique is to fight an urge through abstinence, avoiding any occasion for its satisfaction and letting it “wither away” (D 109), Nietzsche also sees a different way of opposing the dominance of a single drive, advising that “one can intentionally give oneself over to wild, uncontrolled gratification of a drive [...] provided one does not imitate the rider who drove his horse to death and broke his own neck in the process” (D 109). The point of this

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17 See Jochen Schmidt, *Kommentar zu Nietzsches “Morgenröthe.”* Historischer und kritischer Kommentar zu Friedrich Nietzsches Werken, vol. 3/1, Berlin/Boston 2015, 34.

18 See D 560.

procedure is to ultimately become so weary and disgusted with the drive by recklessly acting it out that the drive is weakened, and one regains control of it.

Nietzsche, self-declared representative of the new physicians of the soul, advises the sick person not only ascetic withdrawal and minimization of drives, but also to occasionally give in to those drives and passions in order to eventually be able to better control them. For Nietzsche, the purpose of dietetics is not only to discover the healthiest and most favorable circumstances (climate, location, intellectual activity) so that one's body is able to keep an urge 'in check,' but also to know when it is more advisable to act the urge out so that it becomes better ordered in the hierarchy of instincts and affects.

Nutrition, withdrawal, self-cultivation, spiritual and bodily diet—these are the key footholds to a sovereign and healthy life for Nietzsche, both in his biography and in his philosophy.

*Translated by Andrea Hiott*



## VI.

### **“Serenity, Joyful by Cognition,” as a Remedy against the “Weariness of life”**

*by Renate Müller-Buck*

Two basic experiences characterize Nietzsche's entire physical and spiritual existence in the 1880s more than anything else: solitude and illness. They characterize the basic condition of his existence and form the central point in which “amor fati” and “eternal return” converge as the highest form of affirmation of life and thus of suffering. In this philosophy, suffering and solitude are no longer thought of as something to be endured or denied, but as something to be willed and affirmed. The letters open our eyes to the importance of Nietzsche's thoughts as a strategy of survival and show us at the same time the extreme difficulty of this path, on which “every victory avenges itself with a defeat” (Letter to Franz Overbeck, February 13, 1888).

#### **1. The Birth of *Dawn***

Suffering and solitude, weariness of life and the nearness of death stand at the beginning of Nietzsche's wandering years, whose first book, *Dawn*, bears witness to this. It was written in 1880 during Nietzsche's first winter in Genoa, “in times of most severe and painful infirmity, given up by the doctors, in the face of death and in the midst of an unbelievable deprivation and solitude” (Letter to Hippolyte Taine, July 4, 1888). It is the darkest time in Nietzsche's life, a year about which we know only little, because he hardly wrote any letters at that time, at most postcards, and even of these only a few, endless repetitions, of



constant lamentations about this “extremely agonizing incomprehensible time, where all evils of body and soul” fell upon him, he had “barely escaped with his life” and had “suffered like a pinched in a trap” (Letter to Franz Overbeck, November 17, 1881).

The simple facts are shocking: “In the last year I had 118 heavy attacks,” he reported to his sister in 1879 (Letter to Elisabeth Nietzsche, December 29, 1879) and: “The condition was appalling, the last attack accompanied by three days of vomiting, yesterday an alarmingly long state of unconsciousness. If I cannot get away to better and warmer air, it will come to the worst” (Letter to Franz Overbeck, December 28, 1879). He is convinced that the end is imminent. In any case, the “terrible and almost incessant torture” of his life made him “thirst for the end.” Nietzsche writes farewell letters:

Although writing belongs to the most forbidden fruits for me, you, whom I love and adore like an elder sister, must still have a letter from me — it will probably be the last one! [...] according to some signs, the redeeming stroke is close enough for me to hope. As far as agony and renunciation are concerned, the life of my last years can be compared with that of any ascetic of any time; nevertheless, I have gained much from these years for the purification and smoothing of the soul — and need neither religion nor art for it any more. [...] I believe to have done my life’s work, admittedly like one who was given no time. (Letter to Malwida von Meysenbug, January 14, 1880)

Paul Rée likewise receives a farewell letter: “I confess to you, I no longer hope for a reunion, the shock to my health is too deep, the agony too persistent; what good is all my self-conquest and patience! Yes, in Sorrento times there was still hope, but that is past” (Letter to Paul Rée, end of January 1880). The nearness of death is a basic experience in this period. Still in the preface to the second edition of *Dawn*, Nietzsche reminds us that this preface “could easily have become an obituary, a funeral oration” (D, Preface 2, transl. Brittain Smith<sup>1</sup>). But soon after, in *Sanctus Januarius*, he can again proudly proclaim that he knows more about life, because he was so often “at the point of losing it: and this is precisely why I have more from life than all of you!” (JS 303,

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<sup>1</sup> All quotes from Nietzsche’s *Dawn* are translated by Brittain Smith.

transl. Adrian Del Caro). In a preliminary stage of this aphorism, Nietzsche explicitly spoke of himself in the first person. Marco Brusotti has already pointed out that "in the 'preliminary stage' it is explicitly about two characteristics of Nietzsche himself."<sup>2</sup>

The "tyranny of pain" is joined by the "radical isolation" (JS, Preface 1). Giving up his professorship in Basel, Nietzsche was suddenly torn out of all practical life contexts. In search of a place where his suffering would be bearable, he embarks on an adventurous journey to the south. Lake Garda and Venice were his first stops. He finally settles in Genoa without speaking any Italian. A more radical self-reliance and deeper solitude are hardly imaginable. And yet, this solitude and "the heart-constricting silence (Herzzerstöhnende)" (N Summer 1883, 13[3]) is the prerequisite of his philosophizing. "Mihi ipsi scripsi" ("I wrote to myself") he emphasizes again and again and confesses that he would not have "kept above the black tides" without a goal that he did not consider unspeakably important. This goal was his "recipe and self-brewed remedy against the weariness of life. What years! What protracted pains! What inner disturbances, upheavals, solitude! Who has endured so much as I have? Leopardi certainly not!" (Letter to Erwin Rohde, middle of July 1880). It sounds very similar in a letter to Lou von Salomé: "Oh what years! What agonies of all kinds, what solitude and weariness of life! And against all this, as it were against death and life, I have brewed this my medicine, these my thoughts with their little strip of unclouded sky above them" (Letter to Lou von Salomé, July 3<sup>rd</sup> 1882). To the point, Nietzsche says: "aut mori aut ita vivere" ("either to die or live like this") (Letter to Erwin Rohde, middle of July 1880). So, let us have a closer look at this "ita vivere" and his "self-brewed medicine."

## 2. Saving Thoughts and Passion of Knowledge

Nietzsche's letters are not only harrowing documents of his deplorable state of health, but also testimonies of his Promethean struggle against his disease. They testify to his infinite "inventiveness and courage in enduring, surviving, interpreting, and exploiting misfortune" (BGE 225, transl. Adrian Del Caro) and contain numerous references to the means of consolation and "remedies," "medicine," and "recipes" that were at his disposal.

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<sup>2</sup> Marco Brusotti, *Die Leidenschaft der Erkenntnis. Philosophie und ästhetische Lebensgestaltung bei Nietzsche von "Morgenröthe" bis "Also sprach Zarathustra"*, Berlin/New York 1997, 461.

The letter to Lou quoted above already contains the decisive hint: His thoughts are the most important means, his most important “medicine” in the fight against weariness of life. Some “great perspectives of the spiritual moral horizon [were his] most powerful source of life,” which to him “make life still more estimable than non-being,” it says in another letter to Lou (Letter to Lou von Salomé, July 12, 1882). Basically, he had precisely formulated the entire program of his struggle against pain and weariness of life right at the beginning of his wandering years, in a letter to Otto Eiser: “My consolation is my thoughts and perspectives,” he writes to the latter; he would have long since thrown off the burden of his existence, if he

had not made the most instructive tests and experiments in the spiritual-moral field precisely in this state of suffering and almost absolute renunciation — this joyfulness thirsting for knowledge brings me to heights where I triumph over all torture and all hopelessness. On the whole, I am happier than I have ever been in my life (Letter to Otto Eiser, beginning of January 1880).

Otto Eiser was Richard Wagner’s personal physician and author of a book about the Ring of the Nibelung.<sup>3</sup>

What saves him, however, are not only his thoughts as such, but above all his way of thinking, a new, different way, as he writes to Hans von Bülow: “The different way of thinking and feeling, which I have also expressed in writing for 6 years, has kept me in existence and almost made me healthy” (Letter to Hans von Bülow, beginning of December 1882). This new way of thinking consists in the fact that thinking has developed into a passion for him, a “new passion,” according to the title of aphorism 429 of Dawn, whose “drive for knowledge” is so strong that we can no longer even imagine happiness without knowledge. Mazzino Montinari has dedicated a separate essay to aphorism 429 of the Dawn.<sup>4</sup> This new way of thinking, this “passion for knowledge” is at the center of Dawn. It is the pivot of Nietzsche’s art of living and at the same time a means that does not shy away from its own extinction. “Perhaps humanity will even be destroyed by this passion for knowledge! – Even this thought holds no sway over us!” it says in aphorism 429, and in aphorism 45 “A tragic ending

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<sup>3</sup> Otto Eiser, *Richard Wagners „Der Ring des Nibelungen“. Ein exegetischer Versuch*, Chemnitz 1879.

<sup>4</sup> Mazzino Montinari, “Nietzsches Philosophie als ‘Leidenschaft der Erkenntnis,’” in: Mazzino Montinari: *Nietzsche lesen*, Berlin/New York 1982, 64–78.

for knowledge" Nietzsche develops the idea of a humanity sacrificing itself to the knowledge of truth. In the fifth book, he then compares this new passion with an unhappy love:

The restlessness of discovery and ascertainment has become just as appealing and indispensable to us as an unrequited love is to the lover, a love he would never trade at any price for a state of apathy; indeed, perhaps we too are unhappy lovers! Knowledge has been transformed into a passion in us that does not shrink from any sacrifice and, at bottom, fears nothing but its own extinction."  
(D 429)

The idea "that mankind perishes from this passion of knowledge," is not an argument against it, "otherwise death would be an argument against life" (N End of 1880, 7[171]). Since humanity is going to perish anyway, just like every single individual, the "main question" is merely how it is going to perish. In Nietzsche's words: "Do we desire for humanity an end in fire and light or in sand?" (D 429). The answer is clear.

### 3. On the Value of Solitude

Besides his new way of thinking, it is above all solitude that he needs. In the light of his tragic thinking, solitude and pain take on a new significance. "As a recipe as well as a natural passion, solitude appears more and more clearly with me, and indeed the perfect one – and the state in which we can create our best, one must be able to produce and make many sacrifices for it" (Letter to Paul Rée, October 31, 1880).

Franz Overbeck and Jacob Burckhardt serve him as models. By their example he had come to know and appreciate the "dignity and grace of a separate and essentially solitary direction in life and cognition." His own aspirations were now aimed at following the example of these two men in Genoa to realize an ideal isolation as a "counterweight to very general, very lofty urges" that dominated him so much that he "would have to become a fool without great counterweights" (Letter to Franz Overbeck, second half of November 1880). After each brief excursion into "civilization," he stresses anew that it would be quite impossible for him to live in society and among people when he is again "attacked by the spirit," for it demands solitude from him (Letter to Franziska

Nietzsche, October 30, 1884). “When ‘the spirit comes upon me,’ I must be a hundred times more solitary and ‘undistracted’ than I can be here [in Zurich]” (Letter to Elisabeth Nietzsche, October 19, 1884).

Solitude, namely the “deep undisturbedness, aloofness, strangeness” is the “first and most essential condition” without which he cannot “descend” to his problems, he writes to Overbeck and adds: “without this subterranean work I can no longer endure life” (Letter to Franz Overbeck, April 14, 1887). Solitude means above all “no more listening to others, patterns and masters! A life that is and becomes in accordance with our innermost desires, an activity without haste, no foreign conscience over us and our actions!” (Letter to Heinrich Köselitz, November 24, 1880). He writes to his mother and sister, after he has just discovered Genoa as a place where he could stay all winter, that he is trying again to find a life that is harmonious with himself:

I want to be my own doctor, and for me this means being true to myself deep inside and no longer listening to anything foreign. I cannot tell you how much solitude helps me! Do not think that it diminishes my love for you! Rather, help me to keep my hermitage hidden [...] the great bustling sea city, where over 10,000 ships land annually – it gives me peace and being-for-me (Letter to Franziska and Elisabeth Nietzsche, November 24, 1880)

Being “true to oneself” and “not listening to others” are important aspects of his solitude. As a philologist in Basel, Nietzsche experienced firsthand that one cannot think against one’s innermost convictions. This made him ill, as he states in *Dawn*:

A thinker can force himself year after year to think against the grain: I mean, to pursue not the thoughts that present themselves to him from within, but those to which an office, a prescribed schedule, an arbitrary type of diligence seems to commit him. In the long run, however, he will grow ill: for this apparently moral overcoming ruins the vitality of his nerves just as fundamentally as could any habitually indulged, extreme intemperance. (D 500)

He leaves no doubt that he himself only wants to follow those thoughts which “offer themselves to him from within.” Life and thought form a unity, body and spirit, body and soul cannot be separated. “I have written my writings at all times with my whole body and life: I do not know what ‘purely spiritual’ problems are,” he writes in a notebook from summer 1880 (N Summer 1880,

4[285]). Thoughts are only interesting for him, when they unfold "a passionate history of the soul," when they constitute the "involuntary biography of a soul" (D 481), one always has "necessarily the philosophy of one's character" (JS, Preface 2).

How much one has to spare such a thinker, how endangered and fragile this solitary thinking can be, is shown to us by aphorism 478 of Dawn: "Let's pass on! — Spare him! Leave him to his solitude! Do we want to break him completely? He received a crack, as happens with a glass into which one suddenly poured something too hot — and it was such a precious glass!"

The solitude of the thinker's *vita contemplativa* is not passive, it has nothing to do with renunciation of the world and withdrawal, but is a fruitful experience in the highest sense. Accordingly, Nietzsche contrasts the solitude of the thinker with that of a nun:

To relinquish the world without knowing it, like a nun — that leads to an infertile, perhaps melancholic solitude. This has nothing in common with the solitude of the thinker's *vita contemplativa*: when he elects it, he in no way wishes to renounce; on the contrary, it would amount to renunciation, melancholy, downfall of his self for him to have to endure the *vita practica*. (D 440)

Nietzsche even pleads for teaching solitude: "No one learns, no one strives toward, no one teaches — to learn to endure solitude"; therein, he complains, lies the most general and greatest deficiency of our modern education and upbringing (D 443).

Besides physical solitude, there is also the solitude of thinking. The problems his books deal with lead to solitude, he emphasizes again and again. His joy is all the greater when he accidentally discovers Spinoza in summer 1881:

I am quite amazed, quite delighted! I have a predecessor and what a predecessor! I almost didn't know Spinoza: the fact that I was now longing for him was an "instinctive action." Not only is his overall tendency the same as mine — to make knowledge the most powerful affect — I find myself in five main points of his teaching, this most abnormal and lonely thinker is closest to me precisely in these things: he denies freedom of the will —; purposes —; the moral world order —; the un-egoistic —; the evil [...] In summa: my solitude, which, as on quite high mountains, often, often made me breathless and caused the blood to gush forth, is at least now a togetherness. (Letter to Franz Overbeck, July 30, 1881)

Behind this thinking there is always the question: “Can we not reverse all values? and is good perhaps evil? and God only an invention and a subtle ploy of the Devil? Is everything perhaps at bottom false? And if we are deceived, are we not thereby also deceivers? must we not also be deceivers?” Such thoughts lead him into an even deeper solitude, which “surrounds and encircles him, ever more threatening, suffocating, heart-constricting.” (HH I, Preface 3, transl. Gary Handwerk) According to a later plan, the third book of the “Revaluation of all values” was supposed to contain a “History of solitude” (N Autumn 1885 – Autumn 1886, 2[100]). At the same time, however, Nietzsche warns against solitude as a “recipe”:

You needn’t worry that I will summon you the same perils! Or even merely to the same solitude! For whoever travels down such paths of his own encounters no one: such is the nature of “own paths.” No one comes to help him along the way; he alone must contend with all danger, chance, malice, and bad weather that befall him. He has his path for himself — and also of course his bitterness, his occasional vexation over this “for himself.” (D, Preface 2)

#### **4. On the Benefit of Illness**

“Only great pain is the ultimate liberator of the spirit” is said in the preface to the *Joyful Science* (JS, Preface 3, transl. Adrian Del Caro), and right at the beginning of the wandering years, Nietzsche had emphasized in the letter to Otto Eiser quoted above that he had made the most instructive samples and experiments in the spiritual-moral field precisely in the state of suffering. “There are many means to become strong [...] privation and pain belong to them, they are means in the household of wisdom,” he writes to Marie Baumgärtner (Letter to Marie Baumgärtner, July 15, 1881). Of course, Nietzsche also wants his own long history of suffering to be understood in the sense of such a stimulant. Only the “discipline of suffering, of great suffering” has so far created “all the enhancements of humans,” he says in *Beyond Good and Evil*:

That strength-cultivating tension of the soul in misfortune, its shudder at the sight of great ruin, its inventiveness and courage in enduring, surviving, interpreting, exploiting misfortune, and whatever it was granted in terms of profundity, mystery, mask, spirit, cunning and greatness: – has all this not been granted

through suffering, through the discipline of great suffering? (BGE 225, transl. Adrian Del Caro).

Only great pain is the ultimate liberator of the spirit [...] that long slow pain that takes its time, in which so to speak we are burned as if on green wood, compels us philosophers to descend into our ultimate depth and rid ourselves of all trust, all that is good natured, cloaking, mild, mediating where we perhaps had formerly placed our humanity. I doubt whether such pain "improves" us: but I know that it deepens us. (NCW, Epilogue 1, transl. Carol Diethe and Adrian Del Caro).

And Zarathustra says: "Spirit is life that itself cuts into life; by its own agony it increases its own knowledge" (ZA II, On the Famous Wise Men, transl. Adrian Del Caro) or, as it says in Dawn: "As long as truths do not slice themselves into our flesh with knives, we retain within us a secret residue of disdain for them" (D 460). In *Ecce homo* Nietzsche says that Dawn was written during the first winter in Genoa at his physiologically lowest point:

The perfect brightness and cheerfulness, indeed, exuberance of spirit mirrored by the said work, is, with me, consistent not just with the deepest physiological weakness, but even with an excess of feeling of pain. In the midst of agonies that an uninterrupted three-day-long migraine with painful vomiting of phlegm brings in its wake — I possessed a dialectician's clarity par excellence and analyzed most cold-bloodedly things for which in healthier circumstances I was not enough of a climber, not honed, not cold enough. (EH, *Why I am so Wise*, 1, transl. Carol Diethe, Duncan Large, Adrian Del Caro and Alan D. Schrift)

Quite similarly he formulates it in his 'vita' written for Georg Brandes:

My specialty was to endure the extreme pain cru, vert with perfect clarity two to three days in a row, under continuous vomiting. [...] My spirit matured even during this terrible time. [...] In the end, my illness has brought me the greatest benefit: it has released me, it has given me back the courage to myself (Letter to Georg Brandes, April 10, 1888).

How was that possible, how should we imagine the benefit of his disease?



## 5. Transfiguration of Suffering

“A philosopher who has made the passage through many healths and repeatedly does so has also gone through just as many philosophies: he can simply not do otherwise than to translate his state each time into the most spiritual form and distance — this art of transfiguration simply is philosophy” (JS, Preface 3, transl. Adrian Del Caro). So how did Nietzsche “transfigure” his experiences into philosophy?

Aphorism 114 of Dawn contains a possible answer to this question. It is titled “On the sufferer’s knowledge” and describes exactly this process of transfiguration and transformation of suffering into knowledge and philosophy. For Nietzsche sobriety and clarity are the necessary prerequisites for knowledge and only suffering can create the necessary sobriety and clarity which leads to knowledge. Concepts such as “coldness” and “disillusionment” are central in this process: “The heavy sufferer looks out onto things with a terrifying coldness: for him all those little deceitful enchantments in which things usually swim when regarded by the healthy eye disappear: in fact, even he himself lies before himself void of flesh and hue. [...] this supreme sobering up through pain” is the best, indeed perhaps the only means of tearing people out of their illusions. Perhaps, Nietzsche speculates, this is what Jesus Christ encountered on the cross, when in the moment of supreme agony, he suddenly became “clairvoyant” regarding himself and his fate with “the bitterest of all utterances — ‘My God, why hast thou forsaken me!’” For Nietzsche these bitter words bear “witness to universal disappointment and enlightenment as to the delusion that was his life.” Only in the face of death he was clairvoyant enough to see through the “phantasm” of his life. Nietzsche’s second guarantor is Don Quixote, who also became “clairvoyant” and regained his sanity only on his deathbed. Only when he is dying does Don Quixote realize the madness of his fight against windmills.<sup>5</sup> In addition to the metaphors of coldness, sobriety, and disillusionment, it is primarily metaphors of light that Nietzsche uses to describe the knowledge of suffering. “The prodigious straining of the intellect, which wants to resist the pain” contributes to the fact that the cognizer sees everything in a “new light,” in a “horrible, sober brightness” in which the “veil has fallen” and he has become “clairvoyant.” The “indescribable attraction” of this “new illumination” is “often powerful enough to defy all enticements toward suicide and to make

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<sup>5</sup> Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, 2nd book, chapter 74.

continuing to live appear highly desirable to the sufferer.” In this state, according to Nietzsche, the sufferer “thinks back with contempt on the warm, cozy, misty world in which the healthy person lives his life without a second thought; he thinks back with contempt on the most noble and cherished illusions in which he used to indulge himself.” This contempt and the deep mental suffering enable him to resist the physical pain, to elevate himself above his life and suffering, and to “look down into the depths of meaning and of meaninglessness!” But at the first sign of recovery, Nietzsche continues, the cognizing person again looks at things with the mild eye of a healthy person, and wants “to step out of the horrible, sober brightness” in which the suffering person looks at the world. Although he returns to the mild, veiling state of a convalescent, he remembers that he has come to know certain things about people and nature “in a new and different way than before, that a veil has fallen” (D 114).

Such a convalescent, restored person does not want to give up his once acquired knowledge:

Our drive for knowledge is too strong for us to be able still to value happiness without knowledge or the happiness provided by a strong, deeply rooted delusion; we find it painful even to imagine such a state! The restlessness of discovery and ascertainment has become just as appealing and indispensable to us as an unrequited love is to the lover, a love he would never trade at any price for a state of apathy (D 429)

In *Joyful Science*, Nietzsche adds a new thought. In this text the whole life becomes an experiment for the knower. The idea, that “life could be an experiment of the knower” overcame him like a “great liberator.” “‘Life as a means of knowledge’ — with this principle at heart one can not only live bravely, but even live cheerfully and laugh cheerfully!” (JS 324, transl. Adrian Del Caro).

In summer 1881, right after the publication of *Dawn*, the passion of knowledge leads Nietzsche to the knowledge of the eternal return of the same, a thought that acts like a new heavy weight (N Spring – Autumn 1881, 11[141]). It is the central thought of his philosophy, Nietzsche himself calls it the “thought of thoughts,” which transforms the people who assimilate it. “The question in everything you want to do: ‘is it so that I want to do it countless times’ is the greatest weight” (N Spring – Autumn 1881, 11[143]). This thought is being developed later on in GS 341.

In *Dawn* Nietzsche makes another argument for the “happiness of those who seek knowledge.” In aphorism 550, entitled “Knowledge and beauty,” we read that

people are of the opinion that reality is ugly: but it does not occur to them that knowledge even of the ugliest reality is itself beautiful, nor as well that whoever spends a lot of time inquiring into knowledge ends up being far-removed from finding the great whole of reality, the discovery of which has always given him so much pleasure, ugly. [...] The happiness of those who seek knowledge increases the amount of beauty in the world and makes everything that is here sunnier; knowledge places its beauty not merely around things but, in the long run, into things.” (D 550)

In doing so, he refers to “two such fundamentally different people as Plato and Aristotle” who “were in agreement as to what constitutes the highest happiness, not only for them personally or for humans, but in itself, even for the most blissful of gods: they found it in knowledge, in the activity of a well-trained, inquisitive and inventive understanding (D 550).

Thus, for Nietzsche, basically all philosophy becomes art of living, not only his own philosophy of the passion of knowledge, which he developed in *Dawn* and *Joyful Science*: “Every art, every philosophy can be considered a cure and aid in the service of the growing, struggling life: they always presuppose suffering and sufferers,” he says in aphorism 370 of *Joyful Science*, the writing, which was originally intended to be the continuation of *Dawn*. The two books, according to Nietzsche, contain his entire philosophy.

## VII.

# From Knowledge Horror and the Disgust of Being to the Delight in Being Human: Nietzsche's Perspectival Philosophy of the Art of Living

by Eike Brock

### 1. Philosophizing with Your Senses

Friedrich Nietzsche belongs to that special sort of philosopher whose texts should not only be read sitting upright but also with a keen ear. Because his philosophy has its own sound. It is musical. Ever since his first aphoristic book, *Human, All Too Human* of 1878, Nietzsche starts composing philosophy. Here he is in his literary element. In his early work *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), which lied under the spell of a composer,<sup>1</sup> he was not yet. Though the book, as the caption suggests, deals with the birth of the tragedy “*out of the Spirit of Music*” – music also being its subject matter among other things – it is itself comparatively unmusical (i.e., compared to his other works). Nietzsche is aware of this. He prefaces the reissue with an “Attempt at Self-Criticism,” castigating not only the metaphysical contents of his work (see BT Attempt 1), but also its style and, one should add, its sound: the book had been “badly written,” i.e., “clumsy, embarrassing, with a rage for imagery and confused in its imagery, emotional, here and there sugary” and featured a lack of “will to logical cleanliness” as well as an unevenness “in pace”. The latter weighs heavily from a musical viewpoint. What is even worse however, is the fact that the author should have fundamentally treated the book with more musicality,

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<sup>1</sup> Obviously referring to Richard Wagner, that “great artist to whom [the opus; E.B.] addressed itself, in a kind of dialogue” (BT, Attempt 2).

according to his own perception: “It ought to have *sung*, this ‘new soul,’ and not talked.” In retrospect Nietzsche is not happy with the ‘sound’ of the book, his soul striving for expression had been “stammer[ing] as a strange tongue” (BT Attempt 3, transl. Ronald Speirs).

Nietzsche’s critical view of his own early work opens an aesthetic problem area<sup>2</sup>: the author had problems with his tongue, which now, as a reader, cause him problems with his ears and eyes. Upon rereading, the book presents itself to him as “unpleasant,” it appears “alien” before his “eyes which are older and a hundred times more spoiled, but by no means colder.” While his tongue back then, as stated, had been merely stammering, his eyes were alright, because he calls the peculiar perspective taken in the book the lasting merit of *Birth of the Tragedy*. In the tragedy book he dared to tackle the philosophical “challenge” “to look at science through the prism of the artist, but also to look at art through the prism of life” (BT Attempt 2, transl. Ronald Speirs). This special view and the unusual perspective shining a new and unfamiliar light on things is something that distinguishes Nietzsche’s philosophy as a whole. Nietzsche practices a true ‘art of perspectivism’ and does so, as I want to show, in pursuit of an art of living. The following shall show how to imagine a philosophy of perspective change as a philosophy of the art of living using selected aphorisms from *Dawn*, with recourse to the opus bearing the eye as a ‘sunful’ organ in its title. As we will see however, not everything in Nietzsche’s art-of-living usage of changing perspectives depends entirely on the right employment of the eyes. One who sees differently feels differently, and sometimes in order to feel differently one has to see differently. One who sees or feels differently than before, is differently in the world. And the art of living comes down to Being-in-the-World especially. As a philosopher of the art of living Nietzsche attunes his readers by means of his writing prowess to a different relation to the self and the world. A change in perspective, which leads to a change in Being-in-the-World, in a crisis renders itself not only as necessary but ideally also as what can turn misery around. The following will deal with the interrelationship of perspectives and crises, with perspectivity coming into consideration once as part of the problem, i.e., the crisis, and once as part of the solution, i.e., the overcoming of the crisis.

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<sup>2</sup> Nietzsche’s self-criticism culminates – consciously or unconsciously – in two ironical points: the book about music is too unmusical for him and the book propagating an aesthetic justification of being as the only justification of being does not satisfy his aesthetic judgement.

## 2. Philosophizing in Scenes – Staged Philosophy

Nietzsche long belongs to the classics of philosophical history. This makes the receptive history of his thought a success story, although at first academic philosophy had a rough time with Nietzsche – let alone with recognizing him as a philosopher at all. In artistic circles Nietzsche was received quickly and euphorically. This is hardly surprising since Nietzsche is not only a wordsmith equipped with an astounding registry of expressions, but also has a very fine sense for the dramatic dimension of certain philosophical questions and problems. For this reason, he does not just write philosophical texts but rather consciously stages philosophy. Stagings are “always bound to acting people [...], be it the director, the actor, the author or text-internal actors.”<sup>3</sup> The acting people bring vitality into staged philosophy. It is polyphonic and attempts to grasp things from as many perspectives as possible. Introducing characters taking their own point of view is an established literary device to attain polyphony and richness of perspective. Nietzsche draws on this device again and again. He does so most abundantly in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* – philosophical fiction with a large dramatic cast. In *Zarathustra* Nietzsche introduces numerous minor characters (humans, animals, dream figures) as contrast filters and philosophical sparring partners for his main character Zarathustra. Zarathustra recognizes himself in distinction from them and thus sharpens his own philosophical position. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is staged philosophy through and through. Nietzsche also features himself as the director of his own text in *Dawn* when he calls on two text-internal actors A and B, who pose and discuss gripping philosophical lifeworld problems in a dialogue spread across different passages.

## 3. D 483 or B’s Disgruntlement: A’s “Serious Attack” by Reason

Aphorism *Dawn* no. 483 is an especially interesting case of staged philosophy, as it pertains to the immense impact of a philosophical thought on everyday life. This thought causes a crisis in A, which B identifies as a “serious attack” by reason. Nietzsche dubbed this aphorism “satiety with mankind.” With the help of B’s diagnosis and Nietzsche’s title choice we can conceive A’s crisis as a

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<sup>3</sup> Markus Andreas Born / Axel Pichler, “Einleitung,” in: Markus Andreas Born / Axel Pichler (eds.), *Texturen des Denkens. Nietzsches Inszenierung der Philosophie in Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, Berlin 2013, 1-14: 4 (our transl.).

serious attack triggered by reason, whose subject matter is satiety with mankind. As a crisis management strategy B suggests a therapeutic change of perspective to A, through which the world of the human, all too human fades into the background for a while. Ideally this change of perspective is accompanied by a change in mood. A's satiety would then be banished. But I will get to the latter when addressing aphorism D 423 "In great silence," which reads like a partner aphorism of D 483. First, we must understand A's "satiety with mankind" more deeply. Where does it stem from, what does it touch on, and what does it consist of at all?

A: Learn to know! Yes! But always as a man! What? Always to sit before the same comedy, act in the same comedy? Never to be able to see into things out of any other eyes but these? And what uncountable kinds of beings may there not be whose organs are better equipped for knowledge! What will mankind have come to know at the end of all their knowledge? - their organs! And that perhaps means: the impossibility of knowledge! Misery and disgust! - B: This is a serious attack - *reason* is attacking you! But tomorrow you will be again in the midst of knowledge and therewith also in the midst of unreason, which is to say in *delight* in the human. Let us go down to the sea! - (D 483, transl. R. J. Hollingdale)

The first words of the aphorism, A's exclamation "Learn to know!" already set the philosophical framework of the dialog. A philosophical, better yet an epistemological, problem is being addressed here and, as the three exclamation marks ("Learn to know! Yes! But always as a man!") underline, with a certain urgency. In general, A speaks in a rapid succession of exclamations and questions that might have well been concluded with exclamation marks, since they are rhetorical questions that A presents with indignant breathlessness - according to the rhythm of the text. Philosophically, A is in dire straits, which shows through existentially. The problem complex presents itself as follows: As a philosophical mind, A conceives of knowledge as an ideal to live up to: "Learn to know! Yes!" On one hand the "Yes" can be read as approval, with A confirming that knowledge is one, if not the central goal of all philosophizing. On the other hand, one can read A's "Yes" as a judgment stating that knowledge is fundamentally possible.

But this judgment is being qualified by A immediately. Knowledge is possible, but with one caveat, on which everything depends: We can understand (“Yes!”) – “But always as a man!” This means that humans, upon getting to know something, are dependent on their knowledge organs, which in the aphorism are represented by the eyes *pars pro toto*. “Never to be able to see into things out of any other eyes but these.” Indeed there are different modes and methods of knowledge: humans are capable of attaining knowledge through mere conceptual work, philosophical craft in a narrower sense, but they can also approach things through quantitative analysis, they can experiment, measure, compare etc. But regardless the way of knowing that man chooses, he does it “always as a man,” so that in the end it will always be human knowledge. Viewed from the human standpoint one may call this knowledge objective and assign universality to it. If one follows A in imagining other “kinds of beings” equipped with other knowledge organs, the human perspective suddenly appears subjective or, if you will, arbitrary in being. To top it all, it might also prove deficient. That would be the case if the “organs” of other beings were “better equipped for knowledge.”<sup>4</sup> Regardless however, whether human knowledge is poor or not, it depends on the human knowledge organs that – and this would be a “comedy” – are not only a possibility condition at the bottom of all knowledge but also that which no way of knowledge can go beyond, marking its end in the sense of a border. Through its will to recognize, philosophy would then not have discovered God, the good or the truth, but taken a look inside its own epistemic intestines.

Thus, human reflection literally ends in a reflex: the human being in their strife for world-opening truth is thrown back on himself and after a philosophical flight ruggedly lands with his organs<sup>5</sup>. Here the transcendental and the visceral blend: “What will mankind have come to know at the end of all their knowledge? - their organs!” One who strives for a higher truth outside of man can only perceive this as failure, as “impossibility of knowledge!” A is not shy to tell B what this thought triggers in him: “Misery and disgust!” Indeed, A doubly denotes the human knowledge situation as a “comedy.” But the misery and disgust he feels as observer and actor of this comedy, are not

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4 This thought obviously calls for the existence of a criterion without which no comparison between the attainment of knowledge between different beings can be made. However, the aphorism does not address this topic.

5 Put differently once more: For every act of learning to know something, man is dependent on his knowledge organs and knowledge tools; and as a philosophically knowing spirit that sets itself apart by thinking about the borders and possibilities of knowledge, one eventually inevitably meets his knowledge organs.



actually part of a comedy's affective sphere. They rather hold relevant positions in the realm of tragedy. As a classical philologist Nietzsche is obviously aware of this. He knows that Aristotle in his *Poetics* classifies misery and disgust (*eleos* and *phobos*) as the typical and simultaneously paramount affects enacted on stage through tragedy and elicited in the audience. According to Aristotle's influential tragedy theory the audience laments the excessive misery of the tragic hero who, not without fault of his own (*hamartia*), ends up in a dreadful condition, but in truth never could escape his fate. This specific entanglement and hopelessness marks the tragic in a tragedy. A's knowledge comedy follows a similar structure and therefore likewise arouses misery. A's mistake is his knowledge-critical self-reflection, which he cannot evade as a philosophically wired human. His condition is the same as Oedipus's, who was given a riddle (Whose crime is responsible for the crisis in Thebes?) which he, as a born riddle master and also as king bearing responsibility for the common good, has to solve, but to which following his own interest (being the sinner himself after all) he ought to keep his distance as a private person. Be that as it may, as riddle master he does what he must do: Oedipus solves the riddle. The philosophical imperative ("Know thyself!") applies to him, too. When Oedipus recognizes that he as his father's murderer and his mother's husband has brought misery over Thebes, he too feels disgust. He is disgusted in view of the deed, but it is also a disgust of knowledge – not without reason he pokes out his eyes, which as in D 483 represent human knowledge overall. In the case of King Oedipus, it is mainly the audience that shivers, sensing that without fault of their own, they might be unknowingly entangled in a similar guilt constellation as the tragic hero, who might have aristocratic roots, but morally is neither superior nor inferior to his audience. In "satiety with mankind" there is no such shiver since A is the tragic hero and the audience in a personal union. Thus, A can skip the tragedy specific shiver to be disgusted by himself – as a human being.

#### 4. D 539 or Knowledge as a "horrible comedy"

In another passage of *Dawn* Nietzsche reintroduces the shiver into the knowledge comedy A experiences with misery and disgust. This is possible because the knowledge comedy in this case, "Do you know what you want?" (D 539) is not told from the inner perspective of one affected person brought to a (reading) audience from the outside, which is supposed to be affected. A speaker not

further identified is turning to an audience invoking shivers. Through questions the audience is encouraged to understand themselves as tragic heroes of a “horrible comedy.” This “horrible comedy” is a variation of the knowledge comedy depicted in D 483. It again deals with perspectivism and relativism of knowledge. Once more it is concerned with being cut off from truth. But while D 483 observes the necessary perspectivism of knowledge as if through the species’ wide angle lens and concludes that even homo sapiens are only relatively rational, D 539 carries perspectivism to extremes stressing that every knowledge process originates from an I whose knowledge situation is always unique. Every piece of knowledge contains a whole individual world, namely a certain physical condition, a set of moral beliefs, a current mood (always ready for a reversal), specific interests and needs, in short each of our “whole lovable and hateful ego,” which again is not only different from other Is but also subject to constant change. Our morning-I is a different one than our evening-I and the world also looks different in daybreak’s increasing light than in the waning light of the evening:

Have you never been plagued by the fear that you might be completely incapable of knowing the truth? The fear that your mind may be too dull and even your subtle faculty of seeing still much too coarse? Have you not noticed what kind of will rules behind your seeing? For example, how yesterday you wanted to see more than another, today *differently* from another, or how from the very first you longed to find what others fancied they had found or the opposite of that! Oh shameful craving! How you sometimes looked for something which affected you strongly, sometimes for what soothed you – because you happened to be tired! Always full of secret predeterminations of how truth would have to be constituted if you would consent to accept it! Or do you believe that today, since you are frozen and dry like a bright morning in winter and have nothing weighing on your heart, your eyes have somehow improved? Are warmth and enthusiasm not needed if a thing of thought is to have justice done to it? – *and that precisely is seeing!* As though you were able to traffic with things of thought any differently from the way you do with men! In this traffic too there is the same morality, the same honourableness,

the same reservations, the same slackness, the same timidity - your whole lovable and hateful ego! When you are physically tired you will bestow on things a pale and tired coloration, when you are feverish you will turn them into monsters! Does your morning not shine upon things differently from your evening? Do you not fear to re-encounter in the cave of every kind of knowledge your own ghost – the ghost which is the veil behind which truth has hidden itself from you? Is it not a horrible comedy in which you so thoughtlessly want to play a role? – (D 539, transl. R. J. Hollingdale)

Looking at this with a sober view, “frozen and dry like a bright morning in winter” with “nothing weighing on your heart” (D 539), one will likely not share the excitement and apprehension the aphorism wants to invoke. In such a state of unagitated attunement rather than shivering one will merely detect that in D 483 and D 539 Nietzsche is sketching out a philosophical position which can be called double perspectivism. In the perspectival, perspectivism recognizes the “necessary and therefore inaccessible limitation of all forms of knowledge.”<sup>6</sup> And that, as stated, applies doubly: once on the general human (see D 483) and once on the individual level (see D 539). This philosophical perspectivism seems even less horrible if understood positively as a condition of knowledge, meaning as something indispensable for knowing at all. “The *perspectival*” is, as Nietzsche writes in another passage, nothing less than “the basic condition of all life” (BGE Preface, transl. Adrian Del Caro). Seen in this way, it does not enclose the human being in on themselves and shut them off from truth but opens up the world for them. It is the condition for a possibility (of knowledge at all) that itself allows for innumerable possibilities (single insights, knowledge systems and actions based on them).

But D 483 and D 539 look at perspectivism differently.<sup>7</sup> Both aphorisms stage knowledge as an idiosyncratic sort of comedy that elicits primarily negative emotions: misery, disgust and shivers. The comical stems mainly from the drop height and the direction of movement: man substantially defines himself through his capacity for knowledge and uses everything at his intellectual disposal to

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<sup>6</sup> Enrico Müller, *Nietzsche-Lexikon*, Paderborn 2020, 207.

<sup>7</sup> One of the ways D 539 does this is by asking critically whether the sober and cold ‘winter morning view’ is really the ideal scientific mode of knowledge: “Are warmth and enthusiasm not needed if a thing of thought is to have justice done to it? - and that precisely is seeing!”

transcend himself toward a heaven of ideas, God or anything absolute only to realize in the end that in truth he has not moved an inch. Instead of limitless possibilities man finds a priori borders of possibility. What was before understood or seen as a condition of possibility now appears as an obstacle.

If you imagine this entirety as a scene – which seems natural for a philosophy built on staging – then the comical about the situation becomes evident. Let us imagine a human being desperately trying to know something. He twists and turns, perhaps even jumps up and bends down, in a word: He takes all conceivable positions to get a clear view of that which he wants to know without regard for discomfort or ridiculousness. But nothing works. No matter how hard he tries and whatever he does, his enterprise is destined to fail from the start, because he is inevitably getting in his own way. “Man and things. – Why does man not see things? He is himself standing in the way: he conceals things.” (D 438, transl. R. J. Hollingdale) That is the comical side of the coin.

But what is so horrible about it? In D 483 Nietzsche describes that man upon knowing always ends up with his organs. He moves the scene inside, conjuring up images of flesh and intestines talking about organs – hence the disgust. D 483 plays with the disgusting presence of the material. D 539 aims for other images and therefore other emotions. Here the absence of all material, the missing of flesh, intestines or bones, elicits a certain emotion, namely shivers. D 483 and D 539 both stage a sort of knowledge horror. Yet they each employ a different sort of horror: While D 483 evokes the body horror genre, D 539 stages an uncanny horror. While in body horror human beings meet themselves as vulnerable beings of flesh and blood in an uncomfortable (disgusting) way, in uncanny horror they meet themselves, meaning whom they ought to know best (the homely, familiar) as an impalpable phantom (as something unfamiliar, unhomely).<sup>8</sup>

This is dreadful, since everything else he believed to be true also turns out to be illusory. The horrible message is: truth, understood as the mold of life, as the fundamental reason for our everyday actions, has no substance. It is merely an illusion, a “ghost”: “Do you not fear to re-encounter in the cave of every kind of knowledge your own ghost - the ghost which is the veil behind which truth has hidden itself from you?” (D 539, transl. R. J. Hollingdale) So

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<sup>8</sup> See Sigmund Freud, “The Uncanny,” in: Pelican Freud Library, ed. Angela Richards, transl. James Strachy, Harmondsworth 1985, vol. 14, 335-376, who understand the unhomely (uncanny) as the homely transmuted by suppression.

knowledge and truth do not serve much, and this also applies to self-knowledge. Hence, we are for instance “[a]lways full of secret predeterminations of how truth would have to be constituted if” we, every single one of us, “would consent to accept it” (D 539) These “predeterminations” are secret. Simultaneously they are decisive for our view of the world and ourselves, since they act like a board of censors only allowing very specific knowledge to pass.

In this view, the conclusion seems obvious that we all live in a world of self-deception. We certainly also continuously deceive each other or, more carefully put, our communication is deeply and in unfathomable ways led by interest. This also applies to cases where we are not aiming to intrigue against or get an advantage over somebody. Every communication, not only the hostile but also the amicable kind, even a conversation among lovers, is ghostly in the discussed sense. Like a ghost intrinsically evades our grasp, we also fail to grasp the psychophysical forces that prevail in every communication, in every attempt of self-knowledge and external knowledge. Once having fallen for this thought, one can easily get scared. In D 539 Nietzsche asks twice if we are plagued by fear given our knowledge situation, another time if we are afraid.

## 5. At the Sea with Nietzsche (D 423): Of Philosophical Landscape Painting

So how to view the perspectival as a fundamental condition of knowledge is itself a question of perspective. A’s perspective is a desperate one. He is thinkingly entangled with himself. He is simultaneously victim and perpetrator in a fatal philosophical soliloquy. He is caught in the crossfire of skepticism. How can he escape this precarious situation? Indeed, there is no escape from the vicious cycle as long as the cycle is not interrupted.<sup>9</sup> A has to escape, and that means that he, at least for a while, has to stop thinking. He must stop being human for some time. This sounds like an impossible challenge. But luckily for A, B is around and offers advice: “Let us go down to the sea” (D 483).

Treating the aphorisms D 423 and D 483 as a pair,<sup>10</sup> the evening visit at the sea (D 423) can be understood as a cure for satiety with mankind (D 483). More specifically, it is a silent cure:

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<sup>9</sup> For that reason, Zarathustra, suffering from the circular thought of eternal return, in a dream challenges a shepherd to bite down. A disgusting snake has crawled into the shepherd’s throat. He is unable to pull it out. The snake symbolizes eternal return as an unending circle (see Za III, The Convalescent 2) and the shepherd’s bite halt the circling. It is a cesura, a standpoint enabling a change of perspective (see Eike Brock, *Nietzsche und der Nihilismus*, Berlin/Boston 2015, 268 f.).

<sup>10</sup> The fact that the order of the aphorisms is switched because M 423 is being interpreted as an answer to D 483 does

*In the great silence.* – Here is the sea, here we can forget the city. The bells are noisily ringing the angelus - it is the time for that sad and foolish yet sweet noise, sounded at the crossroads of day and night- but it will last only for a minute! Now all is still! The sea lies there pale and glittering, it cannot speak. The sky plays its everlasting silent evening game with red and yellow and green, it cannot speak. The little cliffs and ribbons of rock that run down into the sea as if to find the place where it is most solitary, none of them can speak. (D 423, transl. R. J. Hollingdale)

At the sea “we can forget the city” (D 423) that populated and accordingly noisy place where one can quickly become satiated with mankind. The opening aphorism of the fifth book of *Dawn*, which intensively deals with the human search for knowledge<sup>11</sup> stages the sea in contrast to the city as “the place where it is most solitary.” At this place of maximum loneliness man not only gets rid of his fellow human, but also of himself – as a human. But it does not simply work out like that. The silent cure he performs in the face of the sheer endless sea and the equally endless evening sky, is “lovely and dreadful,” with its “tremendous muteness which suddenly overcomes us.” We – the aphorism starts in plural – are being hit here, i.e., at the sea, and now, i.e., in the evening, with a “silent beauty” that makes our hearts swell. At the same time the muteness of the landscape mocks us, because it could speak if it wanted. In this case the human being is supposed to brace himself for what is quite something: “How well it could speak, and how evilly too, if it wished.” In both the silent and – as will become evident – eloquent loneliness the human being (the text-I, now in singular form) becomes aware of an organ whose relatedness to the sea and the sky is indicated through it being equally unable to talk. However, it is a knowledge organ – it gains knowledge after all, it discovers a “truth” about itself: “Ah, it is growing yet more still, my heart swells again: it is startled by a new truth, *it too cannot speak*, it too mocks when the mouth calls something into this beauty, it too enjoys its sweet silent malice.” (D 423, transl. R. J. Hollingdale)

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not contradict this reading. The opposite is the case. Reading *Dawn* in chronological order, one feels as if thrown back to D 423 upon reading D 483. The silent sea, Man’s perpetual delusion speaking etc. – those are all references too clear to read over them and continue to the next aphorism. Instead, reading D 483 challenges one to read D 423 again; now in the context of the problem situation in D 483, however. Nietzsche, it seems to me, wants to instruct us to not only look at the perspectivistic theoretically but he wants us to practice perspectivism as an art of reading. It is then just one more step from perspectivism as an art of reading to perspectivism as an art of living.

11 See Paul Franco, *Nietzsche’s Enlightenment. The Free-Spirit Trilogy of the Middle Period*, Chicago/London 2011, 91.

The aphorism of the “great silence” is picturesque. It is influenced by the fondness of and sense for landscapes by the rambler and hiker Nietzsche, and indeed he is fond of landscapes as a philosophical author as well. One encounters painting-like aphorisms like D 423 again and again in Nietzsche’s oeuvre. I call such aphorisms philosophical landscape paintings.<sup>12</sup> What is special about philosophical landscape paintings is that they seek to express a certain mood and carry it over to the readers. The philosophical content of such an aphorism is then always already submerged in a pictorially conjured mood. In this way thoughts can downright happen. An aphorism then becomes an existential message.<sup>13</sup> To be sure, we are always able to clarify what terms like silence or solitude mean. We just need to look it up in a dictionary. But what silence and solitude mean existentially we will probably grasp better if we travel into the philosophical landscape of an aphorism, such as D 423: if we conjure up the sea and the evening sky in front of our mental eye, if we feel our way into the scene. Philosophical landscape paintings are philosophical stagings aiming to pull the readers into the scene.

If that succeeds, the philosophical force of the mood unfolds. Moods each open up the world in a particular way. Our world- and self-experience is always ‘mooded’ in one way or another, and that mood sets the frame for our particular world- and self-reference. Moods are “pre-intentional, fundamental states” that “render our specific directedness towards the world possible in the first place.”<sup>14</sup> And depending on how we are tempered, we experience the world and ourselves, i.e., “our Being-In-The-World”<sup>15</sup> differently. Thinking also is a form of world- and self-access. It is therefore dependent on our moods. Philosophical landscape paintings are supposed to attune us thinkingly and open our eyes and – as we shall see – our hearts to certain knowledge that would remain closed to us in a different mood. However, these landscape paintings are in danger of being underestimated in a philosophical respect, in which case they cannot unfold their power. They are reliant on participation, namely the engagement of the readers, who must already be in the right mood

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12 See Eike Brock, “Eingespant zwischen Lust und Leid. Nietzsches Suche nach dem Glück. Der Wanderer und sein Schatten: Aphorismen 170-350,” in: Eike Brock / Jutta Georg (eds.), *Friedrich Nietzsche: Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, Berlin/Boston 2020, 261-287.

13 Sampsa Andrei Saarinen, *Nietzsche, Religion and Mood*, Berlin/Boston 2019, 5 f.

14 Ruth Rebecca Tietjen, *Am Abgrund. Philosophische Theorie der Angst und Übung in philosophischer Freiheit*, Paderborn 2019, 278 (our transl.).

15 Tietjen, *Am Abgrund*, 290 (our transl.).

to let themselves be attuned. Those who are not in the right mood will get stuck at the picturesque surface of such an aphorism and miss the underlying complexity of the thoughts developed there.

While in conceptual philosophizing the specific threatens to disappear in the universal, with pictorial philosophy it is the other way around. The aphorism of the “great silence” however indeed wants to reveal the universal in the specific. Hence, it stages a special situation (namely an evening by the sea) that turns out to be a general situation upon closer examination. D 423 deals with nothing less fundamental than the situation of man in the world. Put differently, it is about “the complexity of humanity’s situation as conscious, yet embodied and embedded within the natural world.”<sup>16</sup> However, humanity’s situation is not only complex, but also difficult, because the mind, as seen, indeed on the one hand enables knowledge at all: Without our terms we would be unable to distinguish the sea from the sky any more than we would be able to interpret the tolling of a bell as signaling the change from day to night. On the other hand, however, in skepticism the mind discovers itself as an entity that slides in between man and the world and prevents an immediate world encounter. Things lie differently with the heart. While the mind is an organ only in the literal sense of a tool, the heart as a blood-pumping muscle is also a bodily organ in the medicinal-material sense. Compared to the mind it is thus the more ‘worldly organ’: “[A]s a part of the body [the heart E.B.] is hence more obviously and immediately a part of the natural world [...]”<sup>17</sup> Seen in this way, the heart is closer to the world than the mind, which is why the world presents itself differently to it.

In my view, the text-I of the aphorism describes how it can arrive at a deeper or at least alternative world- and self-knowledge through a change in its knowledge registry. This works via a perspective change immediately followed by a mood change. The I first sees different things only to then see differently and finally also feel differently. It leaves the city behind (averts its eyes, forgets it) to come up to the sea (which it turns its attention to). The text-I leaves the world of humans<sup>18</sup> to find itself as part of nature in nature. In doing so, the seascape speaks to the I in the word’s truest and strangest sense: it does not

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16 Keith Ansell-Pearson / Rebecca Bamford, *Nietzsche’s Dawn. Philosophy, Ethics, and the Passion of Knowledge*, Hoboken, NJ 2021, 266.

17 Ansell-Pearson / Bamford, *Nietzsche’s Dawn*, 266.

18 First it does so in plural form: “Here we can forget the city” (D 423, transl. R. J. Hollingdale), which I understand as an invitation to the reader to join in going to the sea in spirit.



speak like a human, but touches its heart. The I intuitively knows itself as a part of nature. It is in the world and of the world. Thus skepticism, attacking the mind with its intellectual means, loses its dread for the I. That dread is a matter of the rationally knowing mind that does not bother the intuitively knowing heart. From its view the mind is, as nature's silence seems to be saying, hardly worth talking about. It may be true that the epistemic skepticism of D 483 and D 539 resembles the knowledge that "pushes up on nature in the 'great silence'"<sup>19</sup>: "I begin to hate speech, to hate even thinking; for do I not hear behind every word the laughter of error, of imagination, of the spirit of delusion?" (D 423, transl. R. J. Hollingdale)

But that does not make it the same knowledge. Rather, here, i.e., by the sea, far away from humans, it seems to me that the epistemic skepticism of D 483 and D 539 in the face of the sublime forces of nature takes the shape of "spirit of delusion" (D 423) itself. The I experiences itself as a part of nature with all senses. It discovers itself as a being with a heart that is beating in a certain rhythm. The heart is the switching point of a circuit that means life. But the I also experiences itself as a part of nature which is tracing its own rhythm. It experiences itself as a part of the circle of life, which includes the rhythmic change of the tides and the succession of day and night. This is a truth that becomes intelligible for man as a bodily being. The mind can contradict this intuitive insight fundamentally and drive a wedge into the human self, who Nietzsche understands as psychophysical entity (see *Za I*, *Despisers*). Here and now, by the sea in the evening, its objection fails to materialize. Because the I is not in the mood to listen to skepticism – it is way too busy listening to the silence of nature.

In listening to the silence of nature man turns his back on epistemic skepticism, impending to fall into the other extreme. He who hates speaking and thinking is on course to alienate himself from being human: "O sea, o evening! You are evil instructors! You teach man to cease to be man! Shall he surrender to you? Shall he become as you now are, pale, glittering, mute, tremendous, reposing above himself? Exalted above himself?" (D 423, transl. R. J. Hollingdale) But man cannot become like the sea and the evening. As a part of nature he already is like the sea and the evening. As a speaking and

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<sup>19</sup> Marco Brusotti, *Die Leidenschaft der Erkenntnis. Philosophie und ästhetische Lebensgestaltung bei Nietzsche von Morgenröthe bis Also sprach Zarathustra*, Berlin/New York 1997 1997, 308 (our transl.).

thinking or else as a self-reflective being he is at the same time different from the sea and the evening. He is simply a human and can become satiated with that. But by distancing himself from himself, changing his direction of view, opening himself up to a different world- and self-experience, he can find his way back to himself. That is why B is not worried about A. He takes him down to the sea and reassures him, in view of the next morning: “But tomorrow you will be again in the midst of knowledge and therewith also in the midst of unreason, which is to say in delight in the human.” (D 483, transl. R. J. Hollingdale)



## VIII.

# The Art of Survival and ‘Self-Overcoming of Morals’

by *Enrico Müller*

### 1. The Preface of *Dawn* and Its Relation to the Work

The preface to *Dawn* is a text in which the height of pathos, the existential wrestling for self-assurance and philosophical aim condense into a literary artwork of enormous richness of allusions. The reader is, as it were, invited to a journey on which the author at the same time renders his philosophical experiences as exemplary self-experiences. *Dawn* is therein invoked as the work of someone gravely ill, barely surviving, who for that very reason thinks forward to the brightly colored break of the new day. It describes the ‘subterranean’ existence and thinking of someone digging, undermining – and in this way metaphorically explicates the genealogical approach. And it presents a subversive history of moral philosophy, which presents its author, in an almost unsurpassably high claim, as the turning point in the thinking of morals. Lastly, it expects patience from the reader and demands an art of slow reading that is concerned, beyond grounds and reasons, with the backgrounds and abysses that are at stake.

Yet between the publishing of *Dawn* and the composition of its preface lie five years. In this period Nietzsche first wrote the *Joyful Science* and in the following the four separately released parts of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. In the summer of 1886 and thus right after the publication of *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche decides to compose a series of new prefaces for his hitherto published works and with regard to a new edition of them. Having almost completed them in November, he writes to Overbeck: “These 5 prefaces may be my best prose,

[...]" (Letter to Franz Overbeck, November 14, 1886). Indeed, the texts are masterfully composed with respect to the interaction of form and content and are particularly demanding in their implicit communication technique. They refer to one another and are yet respectively drafted as a coherent *protrepticus*, thus as an introduction into and advertising for philosophy. In them, Nietzsche founds and stages his concept of philosophy through varying authorships, with which he retrospectively characterizes the earlier works as necessary, yet temporary sojourns in the movement of his thought.<sup>1</sup> One's own practice of thinking is thereby stylized as the drama of a particular existence with particular conditions of existence. In the auto-genealogical mode of representation, the writing form of *Ecce Homo* is already largely anticipated. At the same time, the texts operate physiologically. The biographical element of existence is probed in these texts only so far as they make the interactions between life and thought its actual topic. It is precisely the translation of a life lived experimentally into new forms of subject- and author-constitution<sup>2</sup> that Nietzsche is concerned with: "this art of transfiguration *is* indeed philosophy" (JS, Preface 3, our transl.).

Thus far, Nietzsche research with respect to the textual corpus of the new prefaces has placed particular value on two narratives: first the programmatic history of the great liberations ('großen Loslösungen') from the preface of *Human, All Too Human I*, according to which the spirit (*Geist*) becomes free only through the painful relinquishment of trusted ties with persons, former obligations, and living environments for the development of new and thereby their 'own' perspectives.<sup>3</sup> And second the tale of 'great health' from the preface of the *Joyful Science*, which culminates in the question if not all previous philosophy is indeed a failure to recognize the scope of the body and is a 'misunderstanding of the body.'<sup>4</sup> According to this, health is great only when it has gone through illnesses, that is, when it carries out the dialectic of health and sickness within itself in order to determine and affirm itself as an exemplary passage through the illnesses.

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1 In this context, the thesis of Mark Georg Dehrmann, "Sich selbst lesen. Nietzsches Vorreden von 1886/87 und *Also sprach Zarathustra*," in: Christian Benne / Enrico Müller (eds.), *Ohnmacht des Subjekts – Macht der Persönlichkeit*, Basel 2014, 273-285, is worth considering, according to which the prefaces as a whole are developed compositionally and in a self-commenting manner entirely with regard to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, which is viewed as the main work. For him, they "lay out the prior writings" and "arrange them into a work" (278).

2 See Enrico Müller, *Nietzsche-Lexikon*, Paderborn 2020, 27-42.

3 See Jan Frederic Hilgers, "Zur Darstellung des Perspektivischen in der Vorrede zu *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches I*," in: *Nietzscherforschung* 25 (2018), 299-312.

4 See Enrico Müller, "Auslegungen des Leibes. Physiologie als fröhliche Wissenschaft," in: Giuliano Campioni / Chiara Piazzesi / Patrick Wotling (eds.), *Lecture della Gaia scienza – Lectures du Gai savoir*, Pisa 2010, 309-324.

Both narratives are also present in the preface of *Dawn*, which has thus far rather been neglected in research. They are no longer directly referenced, but they are conditions for the establishment of another basic idea that constitutes the work. If one takes seriously the work-political achievement of communication in the prefaces, then the idea of the 'self-overcoming of morals' attains the status of a third philosophical narrative and simultaneously a hinge function. For the fundamental rearrangement of philosophy in its relation to morals, which Nietzsche specifically make the subject here, is both a perspectival practice as well as an exploration of the accompanying conditions of existence. In this regard, the preface of *Dawn* is in equal parts an introduction into and a performance of the self-referential critique of morals.

## **2. *Vita Nuova* in Venice: *Dawn* as a Work of the Art of Survival**

If philosophical prefaces are commonly concerned with laying the foundation for the elaboration that follows, then the preface of *Dawn* not only abandons such claims: it immediately counteracts them. From the beginning the authorial situation is arranged as a 'subterranean' one. The author, his topic and his way of procedure compose a unit which refuses the traditional subject-object-schema. The grounding for a stable standpoint is – not only metaphorically – demonstratively withdrawn. What occurs in *Dawn* is "work of the depths" (D, preface 1, transl. Brittain Smith). In a sense, the composer of the book can, as suggested by the preface-writer, be observed in his work as "a tunneler, miner, underminer" – "provided that you have eyes" for doing so. It is therefore advisable to go beyond the observation of the metaphorical description of thinking and also take into account the sequence of the metaphors themselves. Their succession unmistakably indicates a movement of radicalization. The "tunneler" or "driller" (*Bohrender*) so to speak, delves into the smallest of spaces, he probes the depth as to what it might possibly yield. The one 'digging' broadens the field of the abysmal investigation, while he compensates his lack of precision with the determination of his access and the mass of the reworked material. Up, or rather down, to here one can indeed find analogies to the proto-genealogical program of thought, which had previously been aiming at uncovering the submerged

phenomena.<sup>5</sup> It is only with the new activity of undermining, however, that the new form of thought becomes problematic, for it also involves the subject of the action in a principal way. This self-referentiality is precisely what is at stake for Nietzsche with regard to the critique of morals: “I began to undermine our *trust in morality*” (D, preface 2, transl. Brittain Smith).

Before the preface unfolds the programmatic new approach into a self-referential critique of morals in sections 3 and 4, it brings to the fore the existential preconditions for such a procedure, which no longer can or wants to be purely theoretical. The experience of thought described as “work of the depths” is thereby at the same time invoked as a self-experience in the face of the most extreme. Thereby the ability to thematically and procedurally destabilize morals is deliberately linked with the endangerment of one’s own existence. What was introduced or more so alluded to as “lengthy deprivation of light and air” is both consequence of the subterranean work as well as the sign of a “plight” (*Noth*). From the distance of a few years the composer can look back on himself and his work as someone who “escaped.” For the characterization of what then was the point of departure he utilizes the rhetorical figure of the *Adynaton*, the ‘impossible,’ at the beginning of the second passage: his “belated Preface” could thus “easily have become an obituary, a funeral oration.” What is almost playfully addressed in the recapitulation reveals itself fully in two of Nietzsche’s letters to the doctor Otto Eiser from *Dawn*’s year of origin. Appropriate to the addressee, he documents: “account of my condition according to the *average* of last year, not the exception”: “Statistically: I had 118 days of severe attacks; the milder of which I have not counted” (Letter to Otto Eiser, mid-January 1880). Notably closer to the tenor of the preface and in a sense its template is the previous message. Therein, for the first time, Nietzsche actively establishes the connection between his bodily condition and his ability to develop new, exclusively self-responsible perspectives precisely from the destabilized physique:

My existence is a terrible burden: I would long have thrown it from me, if I hadn’t gained the most instructive samples and made experiments in a mental-moral area precisely in this state of suffering and almost complete renunciation – this joyfulness

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<sup>5</sup> See also: “So as to grasp this, we must, as it were, remove this artful building of the Apollonian culture stone by stone until we see the foundations on which it is grounded” (BT 3). On the development of the genealogical approach in Nietzsche see most recently Enrico Müller, *Nietzsche-Lexikon*, 152-158; for its philosophical points of reference, see Werner Stegmaier, *Nietzsches “Genealogie der Moral,”* Darmstadt 1994, 70-93.

thirsting for knowledge brings me to heights from which I prevail over all torment and all hopelessness. On the whole I am happier than ever in my life: and yet! Constant pain, several hours a day a feeling of half-lameness closely related to sea-sickness, where speaking becomes hard, alternating with raging attacks (the last one forced me to vomit 3 days and nights, I thirsted for death). Not being able to read! Very seldomly write! Not being able to consort with people! Nor being able to listen to music! [...]. All inner means of mitigation have proven useless, I no longer need anything (Letter to Otto Eiser, beginning of January 1880).

The at once unsparing and yet also reflective passage in which the sufferer of illness shows thankfulness for the fatal effects and consequences of his sickness before his doctor, mentally anticipate the five years which lie between the direction of the interpretive thrust of *Dawn* and the corresponding concept of philosophy of the new prefaces. With the partly historically, partly evolutionarily addressed tracing back of a morality to conditions of life on the one side and a concretization of these conditions of life as physiological states on the other, the Nietzsche of the preface construes the earlier “experiments in a mental-moral area precisely as these states of suffering.” The path of life and research lead into a joint, as of then still unfathomed depth. Nietzsche still calls his “thoughts and perspectives” in the same letter a “*solace*” for his own sufferings. Five to six years later, in the new prefaces, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, as well as in the book ‘We Fearless Ones,’ which is added to the *Joyful Science*, this motive is developed into a fully-formulated philosophy of the perspectival. In a significant way the preface of *Dawn* at the end thematizes itself and in a no less significant manner it separates and connects work and composer: “This Preface comes late, but not too late; what different, after all, do five or six years make? A book, a problem such as this, has no hurry; besides, both of us, I just as much as my book, are friends of the *lento*.” (D, Preface 5, transl. Brittain Smith).

The introduced figure of the cave-dweller and the one who survives himself experiences a further development with the Trophonius comparison. The ancient mythology of Trophonius itself is as heterogenous as it is labyrinthian. It can only be touched upon here. Lasting moments of the scattered tradition are of the mythical son of Apollo and Epicaste, an earthly master-builder, turning into a demonic cave-dweller after the murder of his companion Agamedes and



setting up his life between the spheres. In the cave of Trophonius at Lebedeia in Boeotia lies the spring of the underground river Lethe (forgetfulness) and Mnemosyne (remembrance). Congruously Trophonius mutates early into the oracle god, from which he is successively ascribed philosophical abilities in the periphery of the Orphic-Pythagorean tradition.<sup>6</sup> Nietzsche seems to allude to the highly dramatic and auto-suggestive rituals of consulting the Trophonius oracles, when he composes a corresponding scene, in which, in relation to his readers who are consulting him, he posits himself as one who came back and got away: “Do not think for moment that I intend to invite you to the same hazardous enterprise! Or even only to the same solitude! For he who proceeds on his own path in this fashion encounters no one: that is inherent in ‘proceeding on one’s own path.’ No one comes along to help him” (D, Preface 2, transl. R. J. Hollingdale).

Research has shown that Nietzsche under the impression of his illness, which he increasingly perceived as inescapable, temporarily assumed that he had written his last text with his supplement to HH II *The Wanderer and his Shadow*.<sup>7</sup> According to this, the wanderer is always already followed by his own shadow also as his coming death. In the spring of 1880, which Nietzsche spends in Venice for the first time, this self-perception is transformed despite enduring health problems. Within six weeks Nietzsche will dictate 262 aphorisms to Heinrich Köselitz. The collection, which will form a basis for *Dawn*, receives the name *L’Ombra di Venezia*.<sup>8</sup> The shadow is thus once more the companion, his phenomenology meanwhile has become a different one. Therein Nietzsche at first expressly emphasized the view from his balcony of his perhaps most spacious accommodation ever, a hall-like room in the Palazzo Berlendis on the cemetery island San Michele – the ‘Isle of Death,’<sup>9</sup> The ‘Isle of Death’ is in front of his eyes and at the same time kept at a distance; from the beginning the first sojourn in Venice stands for the possibility of a new start. The auspices of

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6 See Sabine Neumann, “Inspiration aus der Tiefe – zur sakralen Bedeutung von Höhlen in griechischen Orakelheiligtümern,” in: Katja Sporn / Sabine Ladstätter / Michael Kerschner (eds.), *Natur - Kult - Raum. Akten des internationalen Kolloquiums Paris-London-Universität Salzburg*, Wien 2015, 245-266.

7 See Marco Brusotti, *Die Leidenschaft der Erkenntnis*, Berlin / New York 1997, 179: “To him middle age is by necessity the time of completion, for he sees it concurrently as the time of imminent death, as the time of a bethought farewell to life. [...] After the winter 1879-1880 this fear of a sudden death gradually dissipates.” (our transl.).

8 The collection of aphorisms has meanwhile been published as *L’Ombra di Venezia*. According to Heinrich Köselitz’ manuscript pub. by Jochen Strobel in collaboration with Falko Heimer, Dresden 2006. Instructive, particularly with regards to the participation of Köselitz, is the afterword of Jochen Strobel (109-132), which I in parts follow with respect to the interpretation of the title or rather the title’s genesis.

9 See also Letter to Franz Overbeck, March 27, 1880.

a *vita nova* further solidify themselves, with the city having after all “the best pavement and shadow like a forest: yet no dust” – within the centuries-long literary glorification of Venice, Nietzsche’s praise appears highly peculiar and yet nevertheless telling. For the later title-giving shadow of Venice is here already newly connoted, while no longer following as one’s omnipresent companion, but instead becoming the gift of the site, the narrow, deeply carved Venetian alleys which Nietzsche wandered through daily for hours: it becomes the guarantor for new ideas discovered on foot. No less vitalizing is the site-specific usage of the semantics of the shadow: the *Ombra* is a wine glass filled to a quarter, which the Venetians take at any time of day, as it were, in between. A further elucidation of the successive existential revitalization which Nietzsche experiences in Venice has to, at this point, be omitted. Yet, Tilmann Buddensieg, who deserves credit for having freed Nietzsche from the swiftly spreading prejudice that he was not a visual person, rightly highlights how strongly Nietzsche’s Venice experiences are orchestrated from the beginning by the “interplay of the most diversified forms, sounds, colors, images and buildings.”<sup>10</sup> The city, which appeals through its coloring in painting as well as in the encrusted facades of its buildings, shapes his experience in a two-fold manner: as “emotional in his devotion to the power of seeing as well as in the sensitive defensive against the flood of impressions.” Nietzsche as a writer “at once conceals and transforms the objects of his perceptions.”

From the post-Venetian notebooks created between the summer 1880 and January 1881, as is well known, a fair copy arises which is decisive for a later work with the title “The Ploughshare. Thoughts on the Moral Preconceptions,” which Nietzsche promptly sends to Köselitz for transcription. Yet not until the following incorporation of the Venetian aphorisms the significant change of the title occurs, while retaining its subtitle. In the editorial process, returning to the site of the physiological revival, color effects, the synesthetic perception and new beginning as a writer, Nietzsche writes the following message: “I also want to change the title; [...] should the book not be called: ‘*A Dawn* [literally Red of Dawn - Eine Morgenröthe]. Thoughts on the Moral Prejudices etc.’ There are so many colorful and namely red colors therein!”<sup>11</sup> With the final edit

10 Tilmann Buddensieg, *Nietzsches Italien. Städte, Gärten und Paläste*, Berlin 2008, 65-108: 67.

11 Jochen Strobel, *L’Ombra di Venezia*, 116, may be going too far when he states subsequently to this letter: “It was Köselitz by the way, as is confirmed by Nietzsche by letter, who contrived the book-title *Dawn*.” Köselitz merely placed the loosely noted verse of the Varuna-hymn editorially successfully as the motto. Indeed, he is skeptical toward the sudden change of title: “I thought to myself that it may be good after all if you first called this book the ploughshare,

of the title, the abbreviation of ‘A Red of Dawn’ (A Dawn) to ‘Red of Dawn’ (Dawn), the Venetian resurrection, the entry of Trophonius into a new life, is broadened by the dimension of the future according to the motto of the book. As soon as the new beginning is realized, the bright possibility of its repetition is elicited. After the publication of the book Nietzsche gives to his art work of survival the pursuant significance which he relays to Overbeck: ‘Ultimately: it is a beginning of my beginnings – what still lies ahead of me! upon me!’ (Letter to Franz Overbeck, August 20/21, 1881).

### 3. ‘Authority,’ ‘Seduction,’ ‘Belief’: The Moral Power over Thought

With the final passage of the second paragraph the auto-genealogical positioning of the author ends. For the last time, the inseparable existential preconditions of *Dawn* are referenced:

Back then I undertook something that might well not be for everyone: I climbed into the deep; I tunneled into the foundations; I began to investigate and to dig away at an ancient *trust* upon which, for the past few millennia, we philosophers have tended to build as if it were the securest of foundations — time and time again, although every building heretofore has collapsed: I began to undermine our *trust in morality*. But you don’t understand me? (D, Preface 2, transl. Brittain Smith).

From now on the fundamental philosophical experience of the work lies at the center of the elaborations, while the composer of the preface emphatically steps back from his problem, the problem of morals. With the objectification of the mood, the language of the preface’s orator transitions from an allusive, dramatic tale to thetic and critical argumentation. The initial thesis, according to which “thinking has been at its worst with regard to good and evil” (D, Preface 3, transl. Brittain Smith), proceeds from the fundamental moral distinction as such and immediately clarifies the abysmal nature of the problem at hand. For

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as I am convinced that by way of your inexorable advance the next one will be just as deserving of the title ‘Dawn’ (Letter to Friedrich Nietzsche, no. 57, February 10, 1881). Thus, Köselitz here fails to recognize the for Nietzsche crucial connection between the new self-interpretation and the work pertaining to this interpretation. The later preface unfolds in precisely this connection.

with the asymmetrical difference of good and evil, morality becomes capable of action on the one hand, while it taboos the application of the difference to itself on the other.<sup>12</sup> Morality thereby appears in its basic form as a command, formulating what *should* be. As a decision on what is good and evil, it initially acts as an “authority”: “As with every authority, in the presence of morality one precisely *should* not think or, even less, speak one’s mind; here, one — *obeys!*” (D, Preface 3, transl. Brittain Smith). The concept that morality, as an authority, gives to human life thus enables a living together that functions to the degree that morality is posited as an unquestioned and even unquestionable instance. In *Dawn* the basic authoritative structure of unquestioned moral behavior is presented in the famous aphorism 9 “*Concept of the morality of mores*” (transl. Brittain Smith).

The preface presupposes this exclusive point of departure of the moral command, so as to successively garner the forms of European moral philosophy via ethics. However, it thereby initially also concedes that when morality no longer commands rules “every type of terrifying bogey” (D, Preface 3, transl. Brittain Smith) but is grasped as a challenge for thinking, then it has already lost its old character of authority. In the European tradition, Socrates embodies this context of a philosophical rupture of a lived and self-evident morality as few others. His questioning of the essence of prevailing Greek values such as prudence, fortitude or justice, his radical criticism of all representatives and salesmen of a teachable virtue, his insistence on being in accord with oneself in speech, thought and action stands at the beginning of moral philosophy on the one hand. On the other, this questioning of the foundation of lived morals at the same time had the effect of individual devastation and collective disconcertion. Contemporaries saw Socrates precisely in this sense more as a danger for the binding character of morals and condemned him as a seducer of the youth. Indeed, for Nietzsche the Socratic gesture of a renewal of morals from reason is not a critical act, but the instigation of a lasting disaster. For the turn connected with the question of essence establishes a special realm of morality accessible only to reason. This not only disregards concrete life, or rather the differences of situations and individuals, but it also itself as absolute as opposed to them. From the logos-based ethics beginning with the Greek

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<sup>12</sup> See also Werner Stegmaier, *Nietzsches "Genealogie der Moral,"* Darmstadt 1994, 14: “Whoever wishes to deny moral action or judgment to be good, had to expect to be declared evil.” In the third section of the preface the composer exemplarily assumes this role.

classical period onward, morality works at the same time in a new and an old form, as both “power of enchantment” and “mistress of seduction” (D, preface 3, transl. Brittain Smith). The medium of seduction, in Nietzsche’s pointed interpretation, is reason itself. What remains significant, however, is that the composer likewise initially sees himself as part of this history and thereby already prepares his own revaluation program *via negationis*: morality proves to be “as far as we philosophers are concerned, the actual *Circe of philosophers*”.

A doubtful key function is granted to Kant’s project of the critique of reason within the preface’s deconstructively conceived history of philosophy.<sup>13</sup> For the most severe position which thinking can take in regards to itself and thereby also to the thinking of morals is that of critique. In Kant’s project, the revision of absolute claims of reason regarding their highest objects goes hand in hand with a critical demarcation of reason by itself and pursues the goal of rendering philosophy possible on a foundation capable of science. Bindingness in understanding via the objectivity of knowledge is therein achieved through the construction of a transcendental subject. At this neuralgic point the preface commences its critique of critique. For by providing universal forms of subjectivity the subject, according to Nietzsche, is robbed of its individuality. In accordance with the credo propounded in *Dawn*, that the moral and moral-philosophical conceptuality is in fact a retrospective rationalization of moral feelings,<sup>14</sup> Kant is confronted with his language precisely where it – which is rare enough – becomes emphatic. In the preface this is expressly identified as “innocent language,” only to be quoted twice with a pertinent phrase. According to this, Kant’s critique of reason is organized already in its conception as a foundation for “majestic moral buildings.” The famous wording, according to which Kant had to “deny knowledge” “in order to make room for faith,”<sup>15</sup> experiences an interpretation conceptualized as an enlightenment of enlightenment (Aufklärung) in the preface:

in order to create room for *his* “moral realm,” he found himself obliged to posit a nondemonstrable world, a logical “Beyond,” — expressly to this end did he need his *Critique of Pure Reason*. Or to put it another way: *he wouldn’t have needed it*, if one thing had

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13 An overview of the multifacetedness of Nietzsche’s engagement with Kant is provided by Beatrix Himmelmann (ed.), *Kant und Nietzsche im Widerstreit*, Berlin / New York 2005.

14 See D 34, as well as Brusotti, *Die Leidenschaft der Erkenntnis*, 256-258.

15 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* II 257. Our transl.

not been more important to him than everything else: to make the “moral realm” unassailable, better yet, inapprehensible by reason — he felt too powerfully the very assailability of the moral order by the forces of reason!” (D, Preface 3, transl. Brittain Smith).

With the uncovering of Kantian motives and sentiments Nietzsche’s provocative reinterpretation of the relation of reason and morals reaches its pinnacle and at the same time readopts another complex of motives from *Dawn*.<sup>16</sup> What aphorism 197 dealt with under the title “*The Germans’ hostility to the Enlightenment*” is in the preface determined as the culture of German pessimism. What is new at this point is solely the daring punch line of psychological exposure. What purportedly stands in the face of an immoral nature and history is the critical demarcation of reason as a sign of an anti-Enlightenment, ultimately Christian basic intuition already present in Luther. Kant, too, “believed in morals.”

#### **4. The ‘Self-Overcoming of Morals’ as an Art of Thought and Life**

Nietzsche deliberately creates the idiosyncratic linking of Kant, Luther and Hegel to a specifically German line of tradition of pessimism in order to present his new stance toward morals in *Dawn* at the same time as his own emancipation from pessimism. What he initially found persuasive about Schopenhauer was the disillusioned character of pessimism, with which life was structurally interpreted as suffering. Already in the *Birth of Tragedy*, however, he begins instead to acknowledge the connection between life and suffering as a ‘tragic’ experience and stylizes it as a cultivating force. In Schopenhauerian metaphysics art leads to the self-mirroring of the will and thereby to calmness. In contrast, Nietzsche devises it as an active realization of the experience of suffering and the creative expression of the affirmation. The transformation of life-negating pessimism into an aesthetic transfiguration of suffering seemed thereby also to have solved the problem of morals. Yet the depth of problematization achieved in *Dawn*, according to which the topic of morality permeates all other topics, can and should also be seen as the admission of underestimating of it in the early work. This at least is the tenor which the preface itself puts forward. It portrays

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<sup>16</sup> See also D 197.

the work in paradoxical form as the “last step” of the previously disavowed “German pessimism,” while turning the direction of its thrust: Thereby “*this* book is pessimistic even over into morality, over into and beyond the trust in morality” (D, Preface 4, transl. Brittain Smith). By way of this new point of departure, with morality giving significance to suffering, it reaches into human life more fundamentally and at the same time more complexly than the experience of art. In this respect it is therefore not something human, all too human, but relevant as a primary source of meaning for the concept of the human being as such. In the interpretation of life as a meaningful suffering, morality at the same time acts as devaluing, while also giving value. It thus enters into a demanding, sometimes purposefully overdemanding relation to life – and in this sustainably exercised reevaluation of life, it has for Nietzsche become the prevailing life-form.

The revocation of “trust” in morality is therefore also the decisive gesture according to which the entire preface is composed. It is in equal parts intellectual operation (sections 3 and 4) and existential decision arising from one’s own experiences of life and suffering (sections 1 and 2). What the preceding destruction of all approaches to morality led only by reason merely prepared is given a fundamentally new perspective with regard to the relation of morals and reason in the opening sentence to the fourth section:

*Logical* value judgments, however, are not the deepest and most fundamental to which our valorous suspicion can descend: faith in reason, according to which the validity of these judgments stands or falls, is, as faith, a *moral* phenomenon . . . (D, Preface 4, transl. Brittain Smith).

This sentence is not only of programmatic significance for Nietzsche’s philosophical approach from *Dawn* onward to the last writings. It is also connected with insight that makes explicit its enduringly disconcerting stance within philosophy itself. Every foundation and justification of morals, every reflection on morals emanates from a thinking that is already always morally constituted at its core. This circumstance is in force right throughout the inaccessible logical basic operations of thinking. Thus, the preference of unity over multiplicity, of identity over difference or the exclusion of contradiction act just “logically” as counterfactually in relation to the complexity of life. Consequently, what expresses itself initially in lived as well as ethically reflected

morals, is merely “a *sign language of the affects*” as Nietzsche writes almost at the same time in *Beyond Good and Evil* (BGE 187, transl. Adrian Del Caro / Judith Norman). With the “thoughts on moral prejudices” the practice of the continuous deciphering of such ‘sign-languages’ is instated in Nietzsche’s work. Even “historical philosophy,” which was in *Human, All Too Human I*, in its opening aphorism elevated to being a paradigm as the “youngest of all philosophical methods” (HH I 1, transl. R. J. Hollingdale), is under the now established reflections of *Dawn* applicable only to a limited degree. For the genealogical figure of self-undermining no longer tolerates an anti-metaphysical ethos of science as its ultimate ground; rather it exposes the moral implications of self-negating objectivity. *uman, d*

For this reason, like the “faith in reason” the revocation of all trust in morals is designated as moral behavior in the preface. It however occurs: “*Out of morality!*” Having arrived at the turning point of its argumentation, the preface establishes the stance of a necessary moral critique of morality, which electively announces itself as the “last morality,” as a “strict law set over us” or as “*conscience*.” It can be elucidated only by way of negation. In the summary synopsis of what “we deem outlived and decayed” the moral critique presents itself somewhat as a self-educational ethos of immoralism. This encompasses the main occidental concepts of “God, virtue, truth, justice, or love thy neighbor” as well as the political ideologemes of “all romanticism and fatherland-fanaticism” and the gestures of aesthetic escapism, further the “artists’ love of pleasure and their lack of conscience, which would like to convince us to worship where we no longer believe” (D, Preface 4, transl. Brittain Smith). The program of a self-referential critique of morals can therefore not be formulated as sets of positions or critical methods.<sup>17</sup> It presents itself, on the contrary, as a performance of forms of self-overcoming, having always to be accomplished anew, in which every moral-critical position itself is to be examined with respect to its underlying structures of affect, belief and knowledge.<sup>18</sup> Not only the passion of thinking belongs to the critical work of the moral critic who frees himself from prejudices, but so too does the simultaneous struggle for affect-control and self-disciplining

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17 See Paul van Tongeren, *Die Moral von Nietzsches Moralkritik*, Bonn 1989.

18 On the logic of the figures of self-overcoming in Nietzsche as a whole see Claus Zittel, *Selbstaufhebungsfiguren bei Nietzsche*, Würzburg 1995, on the possibility of a productive handling of moral-critical self-relations Chiara Piazzesi, “Die soziale Verinnerlichung von Machtverhältnissen. Über die produktiven Aspekte der Selbstdisziplinierung und Affektkontrolle bei Nietzsche und Elias,” in: Friederike Günther / Enrico Müller (eds.), *Zur Genealogie des Zivilisationsprozesses*, Berlin/New York 2010, 193-216.



regarding this passion up to the last possible point of the respective critique. What is readily overlooked in this connection is the restriction in the oft-cited closing statement of the fourth section: “Fulfilling itself in us is, in case you want a formula—*the self-sublation of morality*. — —” (D, Preface 4, transl. Brittain Smith).

The last passage of the preface is not by chance formulated as a plea for slowness. Above all it wants to prevent a misunderstanding of the preceding rapid elaborations. The orator of the preface practices exemplary auto-correction and promptly asks himself and those he imagines: “why should we have to proclaim what we are [...] so loudly and with such fervor?” (D, Preface 5, transl. Brittain Smith). He tempers himself and his readers with regard to the emphatic affirmation and the rash attempt of implementing his program. It is imperative to see the things “more coldly, more distantly, more prudently, from a greater height” to say what is to be said “secretly”: “Above all let us say it *slowly* ...” (D, Preface 5, transl. R. J. Hollingdale). The depicted “work of depth” concerns the author, his work and his audience equally. It prescribes patient familiarization with other kinds of thinking and living – and hopes to be read as such. The insistence on slowness has little in common with the cheeky gesture of the author who fears that the subtleties of his text are overread. It is a philological invitation to a subtle reading which ties the respectively developed perspectives back in with each perspective’s necessary point of departure. It conceives of reading as a spiritual practice, in which the newly gained insight solidifies into a stance, wherein the state of objective needs and those of personal interest converge. And it remains committed to the therapeutic hope for a new image of man, which can at least be prepared through good, incorporating reading: “We must *learn to think differently* — in order finally, perhaps very late, to achieve even more: *to feel differently*.” (D 103, transl. Brittain Smith).

*Translated by Virginia Lilley*

## IX.

# The Value of Leisure for the Art of Living

*by Günter Gödde*

There are a striking number of utterances, statements, aphorisms, and notations from Nietzsche's *Nachlass* in which he emphasizes the high value of leisure for the individual as well as for culture. He is certainly one of the most resolute advocates and defenders of leisure in the modern age. In view of the restlessness and sensory overload in modern life, human beings absolutely need hours of composure and reflection to be able to process and integrate their manifold experiences and to come to themselves. Whoever allows himself to be deprived of this free space (*Freiraum*) will inevitably become "enslaved." Only in phases of withdrawal to oneself, of taking distance and being a loner, even solitude can that spiritual independence from state, religion and conventional morality be attained and preserved which characterizes the 'free spirit': "He too, knows the weekdays of unfreedom, of dependence, of servitude. But from time to time a Sunday of freedom must come to him, or else he will not be able to endure life" (HH I 291, transl. Gary Handwerk).

If leisure has experienced an eventful fate in Western thought since Greek antiquity, it lost attention and appreciation in the 19th century under the inexorably growing influence of 'economism' and the bourgeois work ethic. There is no doubt that Nietzsche operated from the position of an outsider with his decided statements in favor of leisure. He was clearly aware that with his views he would encounter considerable resistance because the mainstream of his time was optimistic about progress, advocated the 'usefulness' and 'dignity'

of work, and propagated diligence, a love of labor, being tirelessly active, and a striving for achievement and success as almost cardinal virtues. “At no time have active people, that is to say, restless people, counted for more,” Nietzsche states. Hence: “Among the necessary corrections in the character of humanity that we must therefore undertake is a considerable strengthening of its contemplative element” (HH I 285, transl. Gary Handwerk).

The debates about the – often misunderstood and one-sidedly interpreted – phenomena of leisure are still virulent and unfinished today, and this also applies to the question of how far the capacity for leisure touches on the subject of the art of living. Many have warned of the dangers of a one-sided *dolce far niente* (sweet idleness) and have expressed their horror of a ‘useless’ living for the day without structure and goal. Others are literally afraid of being alone and unfulfilled, of boredom and emptiness; for them ‘inner silence’ and the confrontation with ‘nothingness’ are hardly bearable, let alone productive forms of experience. This is contrasted by an extensive philosophical, literary, religious, psychological, and psychotherapeutic literature that regards leisure as a necessary precondition and basis for a ‘good life’ and a theory and practice of the art of living.<sup>1</sup>

In this article, I would like to examine Nietzsche’s statements on leisure in the overarching context of the development of his thought and explore their significance in the context of his philosophy of the art of living. These statements, be they explicit or rather implicit, have turned out differently in his early, middle, and late creative period and have been formulated from changing perspectives. A closer look reveals that Nietzsche’s statements carry the most weight in the writings of the middle phase in this regard, beginning with *Human, All Too Human* (1878-80) continuing through *Dawn* (1881) and *The Joyful Science* (1882), and therefore deserve special attention. These three writings of the middle creative period can be counted among the classics of the philosophy of the art of living in the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup>

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1 See Gisela Dischner, *Friedrich Schlegels Lucinde und Materialien zu einer Theorie des Müßiggangs*, Hildesheim 1980; Günter Gödde, “Das beschauliche Moment in großem Maße verstärken.’ Zu einer Theorie der Muße bei Friedrich Nietzsche,” in: Josef Tewes (ed.), *Nichts Besseres zu tun – über Muße und Müßiggang*, Oelde 1989, 77–95; Rüdiger Safranski, “Jenseits des Glücks. Lebenskunst im Anschluss an Nietzsche,” in: *der blaue reiter. Journal für Philosophie* Nr. 14 (2001), 30–35; Christoph Wulf / Jörg Zirfas (eds.), *Paragrana. Internationale Zeitschrift für Historische Anthropologie, Themenheft: Muße*, 16 (2007).

2 See Wilhelm Schmid, “Uns selbst gestalten. Zur Philosophie der Lebenskunst bei Nietzsche,” in: *Nietzsche-Studien* 21 (1992), 50–62; Josef M. Werle, “Nachwort. Philosophische Lebenskunst: Positionen und Profile,” in: Josef M. Werle (ed.), *Klassiker der philosophischen Lebenskunst. Von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart. Ein Lesebuch*, München 2000, 579–628.

## 1. The Changing Fate of Leisure

Is the concept of leisure ‘outdated’ today or is it still viable and significant for the elaboration of a conception of the art of living in succession to Nietzsche? To approach an answer to this question, one must consider the high esteem in which leisure was held in antiquity and the courses set in the later history of leisure.

In antiquity, leisure was an identity-establishing ideal for wealthy aristocrats, against which they aligned and upheld themselves to lead their lives in an ethically and politically responsible manner. The material prerequisite for a lifestyle “in the seclusion of unexcited privacy”<sup>3</sup> was the privilege of being able to afford such a life without having to pursue a financially gainful activity. This was connected with the ethical requirement not to be entangled by sensual pleasures, bad habits and addictions, nor to be absorbed by the worries, burdens and constraints of everyday life. From an intellectual point of view, the idle person was granted a lot of ‘time of one’s own’ and now and then a ‘time out’ as well as a large ‘area of freedom’ – if possible at an idyllically situated country estate – in order to be able to regularly create distance from the pressures of everyday life, to reflect on oneself in all tranquility and thoroughness and to dedicate oneself to philosophical and artistic activities. Leisure could be realized in the bodily-vital area as loosening up and relaxation, in the emotional area as the release of self-healing powers of one’s own soul to cope with ‘melancholy,’ ‘delusion,’ states of anxiety and burdensome affects (such as irascibility, jealousy, envy, avarice, etc.) and in the spiritual area as the facilitation of ‘aesthetic experiences’ up to the level of existentially significant insights.

In the Middle Ages, leisure (*Muße*) and idleness (*Müßiggang*) drifted far apart. Due to the Christian hostility to the body and the senses, idleness was increasingly brought close to vice and made contemptible. Leisure, on the other hand, is rather spiritualized and sublimated, “radicalized as *vita contemplativa* and becomes the way of life of the clergyman, the monk, the divine scholar, and the hermit.”<sup>4</sup>

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3 Eberhard Straub, “Das Glück, das sich verweigert,” in: Mirko Gemmel / Claudia Löschner (eds.), *Ökonomie des Glücks. Muße, Müßiggang und Faulheit in der Literatur*, Berlin 2014, 17–30: 18, transl. Manuel Knoll and Barry Stocker.

4 Gabriele Stumpp, “Müßiggang als Provokation,” in: Wolfgang Asholt / Walter Fähnders (eds.), *Arbeit und Müßiggang 1789–1914. Dokumente und Analysen*, Frankfurt am Main 1991, 181–190: 182, transl. Manuel Knoll and Barry Stocker.

In the bourgeois society of the modern era, work advances to become a leading cultural value, which is disseminated by ideological means and radiates into all areas of life. In the 19th century, work is celebrated in a hymnal way as a ‘blessing,’ while idleness is increasingly connoted not only with ‘vice’ but also with ‘laziness’; “Whoever avoids work ends up in a moral vacuum that allows vices to flourish for the very first time. [...] Idleness now becomes the actual Fall of Man, a way of life that threatens the bourgeois cosmos with chaos, vice, and poverty.”<sup>5</sup> The ascetic work ethic of Protestantism is of particular influence here. In its further development, a rigid time economy comes into being, which prevails to a large extent at the expense of ‘leisure time.’ Industrial work demands the highest possible efficiency not only from the workers in the narrower sense, but from the entire personnel, and this has meant since then and to this day: optimal use of time, accelerating time rhythms and avoidance of time-wasting.

Already at the end of the 18th century and even more so in the 19th century, however, other voices were making themselves heard that countered economism, ‘alienated labor,’ and the hypertrophic work ethic. In his *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1795), Schiller clairvoyantly recognizes the danger that the division of labor resulting from economic constraints comes at the expense of individual ‘wholeness.’ For him, only a ‘playful leisure’ leaves enough room for the sensual and the ‘ludic drive’ to develop. In his *Idyll on Idleness* (1799), the Romantic Friedrich Schlegel goes one step further and argues that one should “not so wantonly neglect the study of idleness, but rather form it into art and science, even religion.”<sup>6</sup>

Nietzsche’s thought moves along the lines of both the ancient philosophy of leisure and its modern advocates Schiller and Schlegel. Nietzsche, too, is very skeptical of the highly praised work ethic: “More and more it is *work* that entices the good conscience to its side: the inclination to joy already refers to itself as a ‘need for recuperation’ and is beginning to be ashamed of itself” (JS 329, transl. Adrian Del Caro). Accordingly, leisure, still sacrosanct in antiquity and even in the Middle Ages, threatens to lose its meaning. Even the scholars would be ashamed of leisure, Nietzsche states and expresses himself in an aphorism *In favor of the idle*, where he states: “Yet there is something noble about leisure and idleness” (HH I 284, transl. Gary Handwerk). One can only agree with

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5 Stumpp, “Müßiggang als Provokation”, 182, transl. Manuel Knoll and Barry Stocker.

6 Stumpp, “Müßiggang als Provokation”, 187, transl. Manuel Knoll and Barry Stocker.

the leisure expert Gisela Dischner when she writes: “Nietzsche’s work implicitly contains a theory of idleness [in the sense of leisure] as part of a theory of the art of living.”<sup>7</sup>

In the 20th and 21st centuries, the concept of leisure is primarily used to cast doubt on an elitist attitude associated with it, which was also present in Nietzsche. Joseph Tewes sees the beginning of a new development after the turning point of the 1968 movement, since “leisure in the sense of a behavior of a social class” has now died out. In fact, no one today has leisure “merely because of their class affiliation”; “the idea of work and performance has taken hold of all classes. Leisure is thus apparently again positively usable.” Since then, there have again been connections between leisure and maturity (*Mündigkeit*), leisure and happiness, leisure and creative life, and even leisure and ‘intuition.’ According to Tewes, due to the “crisis of work,” a “rediscovery of leisure” has reemerged as a real possibility. “Leisure seems to have been transformed from an allegedly reactionary class concept to a progressive value.”<sup>8</sup>

How far this is actually valid and how far a wish is the ‘father of the thought’ remains to be seen. A number of recent book publications can be regarded as indicators of a “rediscovery of leisure.”<sup>9</sup>

## 2. Leisure in the Biographical Context of the Young Nietzsche

Nietzsche’s ideas and concepts of the art of living are closely linked to his biographical experiences and conjoin with contemporary historical, social, and cultural influences, which are then reflected and processed from changing perspectives.

In a first review of his life, written at the age of 17, Nietzsche recognizes in himself “a certain calmness and taciturnity (*Schweigsamkeit*), by which I easily kept away from other children, and at the same time an occasionally erupting passion” (BAW I, 281, transl. Manuel Knoll and Barry Stocker). He describes the first years of his childhood as idyllic: “Untouched by the outside world, I

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7 Gisela Dischner, *Friedrich Schlegels Lucinde*, 228, transl. Manuel Knoll and Barry Stocker.

8 Josef Tewes, “Einleitung,” in: Josef Tewes (ed.), *Nichts Besseres zu tun – über Muße und Müßiggang*, Oelde 1989, 9–24: 15–16, transl. Manuel Knoll and Barry Stocker.

9 See Mirko Gemmel / Claudia Löschner (eds.), *Ökonomie des Glücks. Muße, Müßiggang und Faulheit in der Literatur*, Berlin 2014; Jochen Gimmel / Tobias Keiling, *Konzepte der Muße*, Tübingen 2018; Robert Krause, *Muße und Müßiggang im Zeitalter der Arbeit: Zu einer Problemkonstellation der deutschen und französischen Literatur im „langen“ 19. Jahrhundert*, Stuttgart 2021; Byung-Chul Han, *Vita contemplativa oder von der Untätigkeit*, Berlin 2022.

lived in a happy family circle; the village and the immediate surroundings were my world, everything further away a magic realm unknown to me,” until the cheerful, harmonious mood was suddenly clouded one day by a serious illness of his father and his early death. He was not quite five years old at the time.

Another autobiographical text talks of a second “turning point,” namely the transition from the *Naumburg Gymnasium* to the elite boarding school *Schulpforta*, which Nietzsche attended from 1858 to 1864. Here, he had found a “surrogate of the paternal education [...], the discipline of an orderly school that created uniformity”; “but just this almost military compulsion, which [...] treats the individual coolly and superficially, led me back to myself.” He had been able to save his private inclinations and aspirations, had lived “a hidden cult of certain arts” and only little had been missing, “otherwise I would have dared to become a musician at that time. I had felt the strongest attraction to music since I was nine years old” (BAW 5, 252, transl. Manuel Knoll and Barry Stocker).

In the summer of 1860, he meets with his two Naumburg friends Gustav Krug and Wilhelm Pinder on the ruins of an old castle near Schulpforta and, in a solemn ritual, founds the artistic-literary association “*Germania*” to “find a firm and binding organization for our productive inclinations in art and literature” (BA, KSA I, 653, transl. Manuel Knoll and Barry Stocker). Each of them is free to deliver once a month – and at least six times a year – a musical composition, a poem or a treatise on contemporary history, which was then in each case subjected to friendly but very open criticism. The friends kept to this agreement for three years in the end.

At the end of his high school years, however, Nietzsche decided to give up “all his artistic plans for his life,” and philology then stepped into the resulting gap (BAW 5, 253, transl. Manuel Knoll and Barry Stocker). From 1864 on, Nietzsche studied classical philology as a major and theology as a minor.

It is remarkable that Nietzsche wrote about his development nine times in the period between 1858 and 1868 and that it always becomes an “education novel (*Bildungsroman*).”<sup>10</sup> With the help of writing, he seeks “to recognize everything that hits us as an element of education and to utilize it on oneself” (BAW 3, 344, transl. Manuel Knoll and Barry Stocker). His notes reveal that he was confronted with very different educational concepts and styles in his

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10 Safranski, *Jenseits des Glücks*, 30.

family, at the academic high school Schulpforta, and in his university studies of philology – with shelteredness and Prussian rigor, individualization and unifying compulsion, freedom and boundedness. As difficult as the transitions from one educational world to the other may be for him, his determination not to let anyone deny him the freedom for his individual development is impressive. He is not content with specialized scholarship but strives for “universal education (*Universalbildung*).” His main sources of education are music, philological, philosophical, and literary reading, love of nature and art, and his own creative activities such as composing, writing, and writing poetry. In his development following educated middle-class principles, time and space for creative solitude, critical self-reflection, and collected reflection on culture are only freely available on occasion at times; they must be laboriously asserted in demarcation from constricting circumstances.

What fills the young Nietzsche with both concern and indignation is the fear that the intellectual elite is moving further and further away from true education. He envisioned an intellectual aristocracy for the creation of a ‘truly German culture,’ as a redemptive idea. He offered his first public criticism of the state’s domination of education in his lectures *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions*, which he delivered at the University of Basel in 1872. In the preface, he establishes a direct link between education and leisure. He explicitly addresses those who “cannot get used to assessing the value of every thing according to the time saved or wasted; these ‘still have time;’ they are still allowed [...] to select and gather the good hours of the day and their fruitful and vigorous moments in order to think about the future of our education” (BA I, KSA 1, 649, transl. Manuel Knoll and Barry Stocker).

If scholars once used to belong to the representatives of education, then their increasing specialization leads, according to Nietzsche, to narrow subject-specialization. With regard to the relationship of the scholar to leisure, he writes in *Schopenhauer as Educator*:

Whereas the true thinker yearns for nothing more than leisure, the common scholar flees from it because he does not know what to do with it. He finds his comfort in books: that means, he listens to other people thinking, and manages to keep himself entertained throughout the long day. (SE 6, transl. Richard T. Gray)



In his early creative period, Nietzsche advocates a concern for cultural renewal. In doing so, he orients himself toward Arthur Schopenhauer for the development of a higher self and leans on Richard Wagner as a quasi-father substitute. In the context of the young Nietzsche's German national and romantically inspired aspirations, the high esteem of leisure is implicitly assumed rather than explicitly addressed. This changes from the ground up when, in the mid-1870s, he radically questions his previous philosophical convictions and works out a new orientation for himself that comes under the sign of 'enlightenment' and 'scientificity.' With this cesura, the theme of leisure becomes an important focus of his philosophizing.

### 3. Leisure in the Context of the "Great Liberation" and the "Free Spirits"

The middle creative period of Nietzsche documents his "great liberation" (*grosse Loslösung*) from the models Schopenhauer and Wagner as well as his turn from a "constrained" to a "free spirit" (*Wende von einem 'gebundenen' zu einem 'freien' Geist*) (HH I, Preface 3-5). In the context of liberation, one can ask how Nietzsche experiences and reflects on this process and what role leisure played in it. First of all, it is striking that the theme of the "life of contemplation" or the "*vita contemplativa*" in *Human, All Too Human I* is explicitly and extensively treated both in the fifth main section (especially in Aph. 282-292) and in the ninth main section (among others in Aph. 624-638).

Nietzsche misses great moralists like Montaigne and Pascal, Epictetus, Seneca and Plutarch, who emphasized the value of leisure in earlier epochs, while in the present "work and diligence [...] sometimes seem to rage like a disease." There is a lack of "time for thinking and tranquility while thinking," so that "the spirit and eye have become accustomed to seeing and judging partially or falsely" (HH I 282, transl. Gary Handwerk). What the "active" lack in contrast to the "idle" is "the higher activity: I mean individual activity. They are active as officials, business people, scholars, that is to say, as species beings, but not as fully distinctive individual and unique human beings; in this respect they are lazy" (HH I 283, transl. Gary Handwerk). "Laziness" lies at the bottom of the soul of the active person and prevents him from "drawing water from his own well" (HH I 286, transl. Gary Handwerk). In contrast, Nietzsche places idleness in the "closest proximity to all virtues" (HH I 284, transl. Gary Handwerk).

He who is ill is “usually ill from his official position, business, or society” and gains his wisdom “from the leisure that his illness forced upon him” (HH I 289, transl. Gary Handwerk).

At this point, Nietzsche indirectly speaks of himself, because he himself suffered from such serious – also work-related – symptoms of illness that he had to take a leave of absence from his professorship in the fall of 1876. This gives the 32-year-old the first opening of freedom for leisure after his appointment at Basel. He spends the time from October 1876 to May 1877 with Malwida von Meysenbug and Paul Rée in Sorrento and can devote himself to hiking, reading, exchanging ideas and writing.

Nietzsche’s reflections on the value of leisure revolve primarily around aspects of self-care: to pay attention to oneself, taking one’s time, maintaining inner peace, dwelling in the moment. With regard to possibilities for individual education, the question of how the individual can gain access to his or her “*higher self*” imposes itself on him (HH I 624).<sup>11</sup> In order for the “innermost will of man” to remain calm and concentrated, he needs “firm, restful lines on the horizon of his life [...], marked by mountains and forests” (HH I 290, transl. Gary Handwerk). Nietzsche holds people admirable who rest in themselves in such a way that they resemble a music which “consists of nothing but loud, long-drawn-out harmonic chords” (HH I 626, transl. Gary Handwerk).

The mental condition of leisure and serenity appears as a breeding ground for processes of cognition, and ‘*cognition*’ now becomes the most essential thing for Nietzsche. Everyone who seriously strives for freedom wants “nothing more earnestly than knowledge and the means to obtain it, that is to say, the lasting state in which he is most fit for gaining knowledge” (HH I 288, transl. Gary Handwerk). In this context, Nietzsche introduces the colorful figure of the “free spirit” (HH I, Preface 2-5, Aph. 225, 282, 291, 292 et al.), who is capable of a “great liberation” from personal dependencies and fixed “faith”-convictions and is distinguished by his “passion for knowledge” and has courage for experimental and perspectival thinking.<sup>12</sup> Nietzsche draws many ideas for the characterization of the free spirit from the great moralists and especially from Montaigne and his religious counterpart Pascal. From Pascal comes the image of the lonely

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11 Günter Götde, “Nietzsches Hoffnungen auf ein ‘höheres Selbst’ und eine ‘höhere Cultur,’” in: Eike Brock / Jutta Georg (eds.), *Friedrich Nietzsche: Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, Berlin/Boston 2020, 185–204.

12 See Marco Brusotti, *Die Leidenschaft der Erkenntnis. Philosophie und ästhetische Lebensgestaltung bei Nietzsche von Morgenröthe bis Also sprach Zarathustra*, Berlin/New York 1997; Werner Stegmaier, *Nietzsches Befreiung der Philosophie. Kontextuelle Interpretation des V. Buchs der “Fröhlichen Wissenschaft,”* Berlin/Boston 2012.

tightrope walker over the abyss, and from Montaigne Nietzsche takes important motives and examples for the distinction between free and constrained spirits.<sup>13</sup>

While on the one hand the free spirit leads a secluded and strongly spiritually oriented life, he is, on the other, conceived of as an adventurer who does not shy away from dangerous risks (HH I Preface 4) and as a ‘wanderer’ (HH I 638; HH II WS) who sets out on journeys, roams through foreign lands, and is open to encounters with those who think differently. In Nietzsche’s words:

To have refined senses and refined taste; to be accustomed to the choicest and very best things of the spirit as well as the proper and closest food; to enjoy a strong, bold, daring soul; to go through life with a calm eye and a steady gait, always prepared for extremes, as if for a celebration and full of longing for undiscovered worlds and seas, human beings and gods [...]. (JS 302, transl. Adrian Del Caro)

The figure of the free spirit was only one of several visions of Nietzsche’s ‘Experimental Philosophy,’ but “certainly the one to which Nietzsche’s own way of life comes closest.”<sup>14</sup> One cannot conceive of spiritual freedom without rich experiences concerning idleness and leisure and the practices developed for them.

#### 4. Leisure in the Context of Illness, Recovery, and “Great Health”

In the second volume of *Human, All Too Human* (1879-80), in *Dawn* (1881) and in *The Joyful Science* (1882), the theme of “physiological needs,” including drives and drive fates, illness, therapy and health, body and corporeality, becomes the “guiding thread” of Nietzsche’s philosophy and his developing psychology of the unconscious.<sup>15</sup>

The “great liberation” from ties of loyalty is not only painful for Nietzsche, but also leads into a longer phase of illness: “As I alone went further, I was sick, more than sick, that is weary from the ceaseless disillusionment [...] at

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<sup>13</sup> See Vivetta Vivarelli, *Nietzsche und die Masken des freien Geistes: Montaigne, Pascal und Sterne*, Würzburg 1998.

<sup>14</sup> Volker Gerhardt, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, München 1992, 208, transl. Manuel Knoll and Barry Stocker. For Nietzsche’s experimental philosophy, see Jaspers in this volume and Friedrich Kaulbach, *Nietzsche’s Idee einer Experimentalphilosophie*, Köln 1980.

<sup>15</sup> See Günter Gödde, *Traditionslinien des “Unbewußten.” Schopenhauer – Nietzsche – Freud* [1999], Gießen 2009, chap. XI-XIII.

the energy, labor, hope, youthfulness, love everywhere being *wasted*,” he writes in retrospect. In addition, he feared that “after this disillusionment” he “was condemned to distrust more deeply, to despise more deeply, to be more deeply alone, than ever before” (HH II, Preface 3, transl. Gary Handwerk). In this situation of crisis he prescribes an “*anti-romantic* self-treatment,” as he called it afterwards, and connects with it the idea of a “*lesson of health*, which may be recommended to the more spiritual natures of the race just now arising for their *disciplina voluntatis*” (HH II, Preface 2, transl. Gary Handwerk). A first step in this direction is that he strictly forbids himself to listen to romantic music, since it deprives the mind of its rigor and evokes “every sort of vague desire” (HH II, Preface 3, transl. Gary Handwerk).

Just like a doctor who makes sure his patient is “removed from his entire ‘up-to-now,’” and learns “to stretch his hands and senses toward new nourishment, a new sun, a new future,” Nietzsche has forced himself “into a reverse, untested *climate of the soul*, and especially into a diverting wandering abroad, into the unknown, toward a curiosity about every kind of strangeness . . . A long period of moving about, seeking, changing followed from this, an aversion toward everything settled, toward every blunt affirmation and denial; likewise a dietetic and discipline that wanted to make it as easy as possible for the spirit to run far, to fly high, above all to fly away again and again” (HH II, Preface 5, transl. Gary Handwerk).

During this period, the recourse to practices of leisure obviously played a decisive role. This assumption is especially supported by Nietzsche’s subsequent account of his course of illness in *Ecce homo*:

Sickness *slowly released me*: it [...] likewise gave me the right completely alter my habits; it allowed me, it *commanded* me to forget; it bestowed on me the requirement to lie still, to be at leisure, to wait and be patient . . . But of course, that means to think! [...] That submerged self, as if buried alive, as if muted amid a continual *mandatory* hearkening to other selves [...] slowly awoke, shy and doubting — but finally *it spoke again*. (EH, HH 4, transl. Carol Diethe / Duncan Large / Adrian Del Caro / Alan D. Schrift)

This statement reveals that Nietzsche, on the one hand, is actively in a searching movement and goes on wandering to influence the “climate of his

soul,” and that, on the other hand, he can use an almost ‘forced leisure’ from the illness for his recovery, which only seems to be a paradox at first sight. The illness causes him to take the greatest possible care of his physical well-being, to change his whole way of life. Constantly searching for the best climatic conditions for him at any given time, for sunshine and cloudless skies, he leads a wandering life between the sea in the northern Italian coastal cities of Genoa and Nice and the steep mountain landscape of the Engadin. His favorite place to stay is Sils Maria, where he experiences hours of supreme bliss. His euphoric moods, however, can quickly turn back into depression and painful states. His period of illness is the starting point and driving force of a process of change that captures his entire personality. Various aspects can be distinguished in this process:

- the new method of interpreting philosophical issues from the body: Whoever goes to the school of suspicion can infer “better than before [...] the involuntary detours, side streets, resting places, *sunny* places of thought to which suffering thinkers are led and misled precisely as sufferers, one knows henceforth where the sick *body* and its neediness unconsciously press, push, lure the mind [...]” (JS, Preface 2, transl. Adrian Del Caro);

- the willingness to be instructed by pain as the ultimate liberator of the spirit. Only the great pain “compels us philosophers to descend into our ultimate depth and rid ourselves of all trust, all that is good-natured, cloaking, mild, mediating in which perhaps we had formerly placed our humanity. I doubt whether such pain ‘improves’ us —; but I know that it *deepens* us.” (JS, Preface 3, transl. Adrian Del Caro)

- a free-floating, boldly audacious way of thinking, a “dialectician’s clarity” for which he had not been refined and cold-blooded enough in healthier circumstances (EH, Wise 1, transl. Carol Diethe / Duncan Large / Adrian Del Caro / Alan D. Schrift);

- a heightened sensitivity and irritability of the sense organs, whereby Nietzsche speaks of “finer eyes” and “ears behind the ears,” of his “evil eye” and his “evil ear,” as well as of a “cleanliness instinct” with which he physiologically perceives – smells – the “entrails” of each soul.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Heinrich Schipperges, *Am Leitfaden des Leibes: zur Anthropologie und Therapeutik Friedrich Nietzsches*, Stuttgart 1975, 15–16, transl. Manuel Knoll and Barry Stocker.

As a “physician of culture” Nietzsche sets himself the task to find out what is beneficial or harmful for the individual human being and for culture as a whole, with the goal of a ‘*higher health*’ in mind. An approach to this goal presupposes that human beings strive for the ‘sublimation’ of their drives, i.e., bringing a certain order into the chaos caused by the drives, but without weakening or even suppressing the energy and passion of their drive impulses (see Kaufmann 1950). Nietzsche attributes ‘illness’ in the sense of neurotic and psychosomatic disorders to the fact that essential needs of drives are neither satisfied nor sublimated, but suppressed. From this point of view he criticizes – similarly to Freud later – the drive renunciation demanded from the individual in all areas as an excessive demand and pathogenic factor.

When Nietzsche brings up the symptoms and causes of the inability to engage in leisure, he often attacks the value of ‘selflessness.’ Those who constantly take refuge in work, pleasure, or other distractions cannot be in touch with their inner selves, but stand alien to their own selves. The ‘self’ seems to be something that gives the person the experience of being whole and together.

According to Nietzsche, it is important for human beings, who are rooted in this world, to use their bodily powers sparingly and not to give them away to all kinds of institutions. If this succeeds, the way is open to be bodily present in the decisive situations of life, which means to have presence of mind. Only from corporality or bodily presence and presence of mind does the path lead to fulfilled leisure. Nietzsche’s turn to the body and to corporeality is connected with a strong orientation toward physiology and physiological psychology, which were emerging at that time and were soon in full bloom.<sup>17</sup>

According to Nietzsche, the ideal of a higher health refers in each case to an *individual* phenomenon. All attempts to grasp it with objective criteria have failed: “It depends on your goal, your horizon, your strengths, your inspirations, your errors and especially your ideals and the phantasms of your soul, to determine *what* healthy means even for your *body*.” (JS 120, transl. Adrian Del Caro) As a consequence, all individuals must conquer their own health – and thus their individual ability of leisure – themselves.

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<sup>17</sup> See Christian Emden, *Nietzsche’s Naturalism. Philosophy and the Life Sciences in the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge 2014.

With his doctrine of health, Nietzsche takes up the millennia-old tradition of dietetics, which dealt with six points of a cultivated handling of one's own body:

- the handling of light and air,
- the question of nutrition,
- the rhythm of movement and rest,
- the alternation of waking and sleeping,
- the question of digestion and
- the regulation of the affective balance.<sup>18</sup>

In all these areas, insights of a wise lifestyle have been gained, which Nietzsche as a philosophical physician has taken up and developed further. When he recommends to allow oneself plenty of sun, to take great care of nutrition and intake as well as digestion and elimination (also in the spiritual sense), to let the “doldrums” of the soul (JS 42, transl. Adrian Del Caro) set in after great activities, to squeeze in sleep at the right time, etc. – so we find here valuable indications of what leisure can mean in the practice of life.<sup>19</sup> Thereby he always emphasizes that one can become healthier only in small steps, in each case starting from the next. One should give the remedy in small doses, but unceasingly over long distances, until good habits have gradually developed.

## 5. On the Actuality of Nietzsche's Philosophy of Leisure

In 2013, a ‘Special Research Area’ (*Sonderforschungsbereich*) funded by the ‘German Research Foundation’ (*Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft*) was established at the University of Freiburg on the topic of *Leisure. Concepts, Spaces, Figures*. In a first anthology, the two project leaders Burkhard Hasebrink and Peter Philipp Riedl pointed out that the concept of leisure “is currently enjoying an unmistakable boom, perhaps because, in view of the massive pressure to innovate in science and technology, it announces precisely a free space that seems to be able to evade this interest in commercial exploitation.”<sup>20</sup>

In this context, Nietzsche's philosophical contributions on leisure, which are endowed with manifold practical elements and constitute a central aspect

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<sup>18</sup> See Schipperges, *Am Leitfaden des Leibes*, 160 ff.

<sup>19</sup> Mirella Carbone / Joachim Jung (eds.), *Langsame Curen. Ansichten zur Kunst der Gesundheit*, Freiburg/Basel/Wien 2000.

<sup>20</sup> Burkhard Hasebrink / Peter Philipp Riedl, “Einleitung,” in: id. (eds.), *Muße im kulturellen Wandel. Semantisierungen, Ähnlichkeiten, Umsetzungen*, Berlin 2014, 1–11: 1, transl. Manuel Knoll and Barry Stocker.

of his conception of the art of living, appear highly topical. Thus, it is among his merits to have recognized the ideology of utility as the opponent and enemy of leisure, and “because this ideology is so all-dominant, leisure must first be slowly relearned: one’s own rhythm, the suppressed capacity for enjoyment, the return to natural needs that are not determined by the world of consumption, the art of doing nothing, the devotion to the moment.”<sup>21</sup> If leisure is learned and practiced again to a greater extent, its ‘higher benefit’ for individual self-development and for culture will probably become more clearly recognizable again.

Nietzsche took sides with the idler (*Müßiggänger*) to protect him from the hostilities and resentment of the ‘good people.’ Thus, he can see neither vice nor selfishness in the fact that the idler lays claim to free spaces in order to use them for his own self-development. Rather, the real vice lies in the restlessness and unrest which, originating from the modern way of working, permeates the whole of life. Work is “the best police force,” since it inhibits the development of reason and the urge for independence, consumes “an extraordinary amount of nervous energy” and withdraws it from self-development (D 173, transl. Brittain Smith).

For Nietzsche, the virtues of ‘selflessness’ such as diligence, obedience, chastity, piety, justice, etc. are highly questionable since they are “mostly *harmful* to their owners.” The praise of these virtues is tantamount to “the praise of drives that rob a human being of his noblest selfishness and his strength for the highest stewardship of himself.” Moreover, the praise of “the one who does not spend his entire strength and reason on *his* preservation, development, elevation, promotion, expansion of power but instead lives modestly and thoughtlessly, perhaps even indifferently or ironically with regard to himself — this praise in any case has not sprung from the spirit of selflessness! Our ‘neighbor’ praises selflessness because *he has his advantage in it!*” (JS 21, transl. Adrian Del Caro).

When people talk tirelessly about the ‘blessing of work,’ this indicates a fear of the ‘individual’ life. In the case of the industrious, paradoxically, a tendency to ‘inertia’ is shown where it concerns them personally. To conclude from this that Nietzsche was hostile to being active would be misleading. What he has in mind as an ideal of personality is precisely the powerful human being

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<sup>21</sup> Gisela Dischner, *Wörterbuch des Müßiggängers*, 2nd ed., Bielefeld/Basel 2009, 188, transl. Manuel Knoll and Barry Stocker.



who intervenes in life through action and thereby increases his feeling of being alive and his self-esteem. Nietzsche could not accept, however, that a human being becomes the “slave” of his or her work. His alternative to the bourgeois “slave morality” can be summarized in three points: A more relaxed and less cramped relationship to work itself, so that joy and satisfaction can arise from work; a renewal of the high esteem for leisure that has existed since antiquity, so that one can indulge in the *vita contemplativa* with a good conscience; and a more balanced rhythm of work and leisure, so that the human being does not become a mere “homo faber” but can also cultivate “reflection, brooding, dreaming, worrying, loving, hating” (D 173, transl. Brittain Smith).

As a form of life and a practiced art of living, leisure has a lot to do with the *temporal* organization of one’s own life. The “freedom from temporal constraints” goes hand in hand with the “expectation of a particularly valuable use of time.”<sup>22</sup> It is primarily in leisure that human beings can experience time in a self-determined and active way, rather than being lived by it. Leisure is primarily realized in the ‘fulfilled moment’ or *kairos*. In Nietzsche’s words:

Life consists of rare individual moments of the highest significance and countless intervals of time in which at best the shadowy images of those moments hover around us. Love, spring, every beautiful melody, mountains, the moon, the sea — only once do all these things speak fully to the heart: if in fact they ever do find their way completely into words. For many people do not have any such moments at all and are themselves intervals and pauses in the symphony of real life. (HH I 586, transl. Gary Handwerk)

This account shows that in such moments ‘*aesthetic experiences*’ are actualized. In contrast to the pragmatic everyday life with its utilitarian attitude, the aesthetic experience grants “a kind of psychic relaxation, intellectual detachment, a conscious disengagement from being restlessly driven in the world of the active,” which “makes possible (like the glider pilot’s release during the descent) the free state of floating.”<sup>23</sup> To illustrate this state of freedom, Nietzsche frequently resorts to the metaphors ‘flying,’ ‘floating,’ and ‘dancing.’

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<sup>22</sup> Hasebrink / Riedl, *Einleitung*, 3, transl. Manuel Knoll and Barry Stocker.

<sup>23</sup> Dischner, *Friedrich Schlegels Lucinde*, 229, transl. Manuel Knoll and Barry Stocker.

From leisure as an aesthetic experience one can build a bridge to Freud's conception of 'equally suspended attention' (*gleichschwebende Aufmerksamkeit*). This attitude recommended to the therapist is the counterpart of the patient's 'free association':

Just as the analyzed should communicate everything he catches in his self-observation, with the restraint of all logical and affective objections that want to move him to make a selection, so the physician should put himself in a position to utilize everything communicated to him for the purposes of interpretation, of recognition of the hidden unconscious, without substituting his own censorship for the selection given by the sick person.<sup>24</sup>

Freud thus resolutely opposes any intentional and therefore selective attention on the part of the therapist, because then there is a danger of "never finding anything other than what one already knows; if one follows one's inclinations, one will certainly falsify the possible perception."<sup>25</sup>

In a similar way to leisure, suspended attention is equally an attitude of 'active passivity'<sup>26</sup> or 'intentional purposelessness.'<sup>27</sup> Both are about (unconscious) letting things happen, perceiving in a relaxed tension (Aristotle), contemplation (Schopenhauer) or passionate cognition (Nietzsche). Like leisure, equally suspended attention is a model that owes itself to a dialectic of distance and engagement; it resembles a purposeful attitude without purpose, in which the unconscious of the patients is to come into relationship with that of the therapists.<sup>28</sup>

The happiness of leisure does not fall into our laps. But neither can we strive for it with our will. Nietzsche's philosophizing about the value of leisure, gained from his own existential experience, philosophical thinking and self-

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24 Sigmund Freud, "Ratschläge für den Arzt bei der psychoanalytischen Behandlung" [1912], in: Sigmund Freud, *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. VIII, 376–387: 381, transl. Manuel Knoll and Barry Stocker.

25 Freud, *Ratschläge für den Arzt bei der psychoanalytischen Behandlung*, 377, transl. Manuel Knoll and Barry Stocker.

26 Martin Seel, *Aktive Passivität. Über den Spielraum des Denkens, Handelns und anderer Künste*, Frankfurt am Main 2014, transl. Manuel Knoll and Barry Stocker.

27 Hans-Georg Soeffner, "Muße – Absichtslose Absichtslosigkeit," in: Burkhard Hasebrink / Peter Philipp Riedl (eds.), *Muße im kulturellen Wandel. Semantisierungen, Ähnlichkeiten, Umsetzungen*, Berlin 2014, 34–53, transl. Manuel Knoll and Barry Stocker.

28 Günter Götde / Jörg Zirfas, "Von der Muße zur ‚gleichschwebenden Aufmerksamkeit‘ – Therapeutische Erfahrungen zwischen Gelassenheit und Engagement", in: *psycho-logik. Jahrbuch für Psychotherapie, Philosophie und Kultur* 2 (2007), 135–153.

therapy, is characterized by realism and pragmatism. It is important to him to think from the body and from vitality, to recognize in leisure mental and spiritual free spaces for the self, to develop one's own style of dealing with life's adversities, to endure tensions, to integrate pain and to affirm one's own destiny nevertheless and in spite of it.

*Translated by Manuel Knoll and Barry Stocker*

# X.

## **Silence under Black Cypresses and Dawns: Friedrich Nietzsche on Strategies for the Art of Living**

*by Renate Reschke*

Even the painful can be true.  
(Sigmund Freud, *Vergänglichkeit*, 1915)

### **1. Why the Art of Living?**

Two aphorisms from *Dawn* (1881) and letters between 1880 and 1884 form the context for the following reflections. I pursue the question of how much Nietzsche's reflections on losses of interpersonal relationships, of existential and intellectual securities, on solitude, mourning or melancholy, on hopes and life plans, on the freedom of the spirit or work on oneself determine his strategies of the art of living. Do they provide information about the extent to which a philosopher's life structures or writes his philosophy, is his life, and maps out the path to becoming who one is? To what extent are such reflections useful as statements on strategies of the art of living for the modern subject? Aph. 570 is about a thinking of loss that evokes states of mind that enrich the human soul with an experience from which it can emerge strengthened for life: "*Losses. – There are losses that impart a grandeur to the soul under whose influence it refrains from lamentation and seems to walk about in silence among tall black cypresses*" (D 570, transl. Brittain Smith). In aph. 568 it is made clear that a constant examination of one's own life and one's own works is part of the emergence of viable thoughts: radical judgment is necessary to separate

oneself from ways of life and thinking in order to open new horizons, to trust in new dawns: “*Poet and bird*. – The bird Phoenix showed the poet a flaming scroll turned to ashes. ‘Do not be terrified!’ it said, ‘it is your work! It does not possess the spirit of the times and still less the spirit of those who are against the times: consequently it has to be burned. But this is a good sign. There are many types of dawn’” (D 568, transl. Brittain Smith).

Such images are carefully chosen by Nietzsche. Cypresses and dawns are metaphors with metaphysical and existential pictorial potential, which not only give shape to the moods of psycho-physical momentary situations: they are rather charged with interpretations of the art of living, which have a tradition since antiquity and continue to have an effect in artistic modernism, especially in French postmodernism. It is a matter of opposing ignorance of the self with self-care understood in the ancient sense, of not only pursuing “spiritual exercises of existence” (*Exerzitien der Existenz*)<sup>1</sup> as work on oneself, but also of philosophically justifying them as a cultural technique of the self and setting them as constitutive for the identity of the modern subject. For this, resistance is necessary against everything contemporary, everything self-evident and mediocre, which make the inner and outer sophrosyne, the prudence and temperance of the ancient way of life, impossible under the conditions of modernity. Nietzsche sees the philosophical and cultural-practical renaissance of such behavioral work of the modern philosopher and subject in himself, which goes to the limits of existence, as an alternative for the ever-greater fragmentation (*Zerrissenheit*) of man in modernity. A re-interpretation of the ancient demand from the Apollonian Delphi ‘Know thyself’ as an existential form of life, as a life plan in modern culture seems to him inevitable, if the modern subject does not want to lose itself in the obscurity (*Unübersichtlichkeit*) and unranked variety of illusory societal offers. To enable oneself to live in an environment that is characterized by a dramatic loss of values, whose mental and cultural irritations plunge modern man into a void of values and existence, and where metaphysical consolation is no longer available, requires an awareness that new securities can only come from one’s own self. A new self-understanding of the subject is the prerequisite for this. Nietzsche knows about difference in self-understandings. The tragic moment of human existence in modernity has

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<sup>1</sup> Wilhelm Schmid, *Auf der Suche nach einer neuen Lebenskunst. Die Frage nach dem Grund und die Neubegründung der Ethik bei Foucault*, Frankfurt am Main 1991, 15, transl. Manuel Knoll and Barry Stocker.

different connotations than that of antiquity. The abysses are the same and yet different, to be experienced differently. The modern subject no longer finds support in given hierarchies of values and behavior. Gods no longer provide security. It must trace the abysses within itself and learn to endure them. Losses, mourning, self-awareness in silence become prerequisites for living and continuing to live. Caesuras of critical examination of one's own path in life, renunciation of what has been achieved so far, in order to make new beginnings possible on the way to the cognition of identity and difference, to an understanding with oneself, to a change of perspective on oneself and others, are part of it. Self-shaping of existence up to a new dietetics are the ways to become who one has to be and to a comprehensive affirmation of life in all facets, culminating in the "yes" to *amor fati* – Nietzsche's most extensive formula for strategies of the art of living.

## 2. Modern States of Mind

With bare feet he descended from the edge of the boat onto the steps  
and walked to the cypress grove, whose slender, towering crowns,  
moved by the sea breeze welcomed him with familiar whispers....  
(Joachim Köhler, *Nietzsches letzter Traum*, 2000, 299)

Cypresses enclose living spaces, offer protection, allow one to confront the non-sense of life in their shade, to find a sense to life, to communicate in silence: to take stock with oneself, the past, or the forgetful, to outwit the transient, to imagine the future. Uncertainty, the quiet disgust of the future, corresponds with the feeling of sublimity that arises under cypress trees. Black cypresses reflect a feeling of life, are a mood formula, even more: an existential formula for those who seek them to attain certainty about themselves. The secrets of life can be heard in the rustling of cypresses.

Since biblical and ancient times, cypresses have been said to have a divine, life- and death-giving aura. In the *Old Testament*, the cypress was considered a tree in the garden of God (Ezekiel, 31.8), a guardian of the door of paradise and a tree of life (Hosea, 14.9): Israel is considered to be a greening cypress (Isaiah 55.13). The *New Testament* assigned it to the enthroned Christ, Christian art has placed the cross of Christ between cypresses: Symbol at the same time for the certainty of transience and the hope of eternal life. The aesthetics of death has known it since then as a sign of mourning, death, and the nearness

of death. Greek mythology saw it as a tree of the dead. Cypresses pointed the way to Hades, stood by the river Lethe, which has its source in its roots. A white cypress stood in Hades. Being itself imperishable, it announced mortality; being itself perishable, immortality was its attribute. As Apollo's tree it was sacred, a tree of mourning. For Horace (*Odes* 2.14) and Virgil (*Aeneid* 2.713), they were death-bringing, grief-announcing. The light in which they show themselves points to their parable-like mood of life. Green is the promise of life, black the assurance of death and mourning. Nietzsche knew this, he had philosophically participated in psychological iconography (*Ikonographie in psychologicis*), continued the career of their black into modernity and philosophy.

It was not until the modern age that black cypresses were connected via parables and allegories to subjective states of the soul. Nietzsche was aware of it from Charles Baudelaire and Arnold Böcklin. In Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal*, he read of solitude and suffering from existence, life pain and life greed. In Böcklin's Cypress Paintings he saw congenial images of the longing for death and the fear of death. Since then, they have been part of the image reservoir of the human being in modernity. Nietzsche integrated them into his thinking, staged them as powerful sentences and metaphors of his philosophy. Baudelaire's black cypresses steer his path of thought, Böcklin's *Island of the Dead* probably provides the image of the island of the graves in *Zarathustra*. Cypresses set an accent of threat, are embedded in all thinking about oneself. Their mysterious beauty forces us to silence, to a standstill of all mental agitation, gives an understanding distance of the subjective self to itself, in order to come paradoxically so close to itself that nothing remains but radical self-contemplation, which has to decide between life and death. Baudelaire's cypresses are associated with death-impending gallows: "What we saw was a gibbet, made of three great stakes./ It reared against the sky, black, as a cypress stands."<sup>2</sup> Gallows give cause for longing to measure oneself against them: "Do you grow always taller, grandest tree, / Older than cypress?"<sup>3</sup> Life-weary sadness, meanwhile, colors everything black: dreams, sun, days, life. To walk under cypresses blackens above all the soul, plunges it into the abyss of melancholy to the point of unbearability and hopelessness. Nietzsche may have recognized in this the situation of the modern subject, who is torn between the longing for death and the hope for life. The

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2 Charles Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, 'A Voyage to Cythera,' transl. James McGowan, Oxford 1993.

3 Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, 'Voyaging' IV.

philosopher did not want to supply any arguments for this. Such suffering from oneself was for him a sign of an existential, aesthetically formulated, decadent art of living. He was no stranger to it, hence his resistance to it.

Nietzsche's perspective of a processual overcoming is very precisely pictured in aph. 570. The keyword 'losses' summarizes pain, suffering, solitude in a life-threatening bundle of experiences, which mercilessly weighs on the soul of the one who has experienced and suffered them. However, the pain that goes beyond measure causes the soul to react in an unusual way. According to Nietzsche, inner torture, soundless outcry, powerlessness in the face of any hostility and misunderstanding, do not lead to the surrender of the soul: rather, it gains from itself a strength hitherto unknown to it, a feeling of sublimity and strength to find itself in silent walking. Under black cypresses, from an optic where a different light falls than in Baudelaire. Protectively they put their shadows around the psychically healthy-wanting, who needs a sphere of being with oneself, a darkness that makes one see, that is necessary to expose oneself to in order to return to life. Silence belongs to the shadows. Böcklin had described the effect of his *Island of the Dead* in this way: "You will be able to dream yourself into the dark world of shadows [...] Until you shy away from disturbing the solemn silence with a loud word."<sup>4</sup> Nietzsche too describes something of this in aph. 570.

Nietzsche did not put the case for a philosophy of melancholy. The philosopher's work of mourning takes place in a pendulum movement between mourning and melancholy, in order to accept both in a final pendulum movement and thereby to overcome them. As one who doubts (and despairs of) his current life situation, he reflects on him or herself to free him or herself from the deadly clutches of overpowering pasts and life-destroying events, in order to be able to experience the world as life-giving again. Cypresses delimit taboo zones. They break free from habitual time structures, lift out of time, suspend (*aufheben*) time, give space to metamorphoses in which grief becomes courage to live, despair becomes confidence, weakness becomes strength: "I live as if the centuries were nothing and pursue my thoughts without thinking of the date [...]" (letter to Franz Overbeck, November 2, 1880<sup>5</sup>). Thus, distance to oneself is inaugurated, which falls under the exceptionality of the sublime.

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4 Guido Magnaguagno et al. (eds.), *Eine Reise ins Ungewisse. Arnold Böcklin. Giorgio de Chirico. Max Ernst* (Ausstellungskatalog), Zürich, München, Berlin 1998, 75, transl. Manuel Knoll and Barry Stocker.

5 All letters have been translated by Manuel Knoll and Barry Stocker.



1880 to 1883 were years of deep physical and psychic suffering for Nietzsche. The dramatic relationships with Richard Wagner and Lou von Salomé, the associated relationship turbulences with Paul Rée, with his sister, with friends show the immediate pain, being struck to the bottom of existence, disappointments, suspicions, the feeling of immense distance from life, from warmth, understanding, love, and friendship. It took a long time until he could think about this with philosophical serenity, until immediate experience became distant reflection and life strategies could be formulated, which for modern man mean an option for self-assertion, but for philosophers are a *sine qua non* of their existence. From the *Fleurs du Mal* Nietzsche knew the “*Alchemy of Suffering*: One’s ardor, Nature, makes you bright / One finds within you mourning, grief! / What speaks to one of tombs and death / Says to the other, Splendor! Life!” He confessed to Köselitz:

For my part, I suffer abominably when I am deprived of affection; and nothing can compensate me [...] for having lost Wagner’s affection in recent years [...] I have experienced similar things before and will probably experience them again. These are the hardest sacrifices that my path in life and thought has demanded of me – even now, after an hour of friendly conversation with complete strangers, my whole philosophy wavers (letter to Heinrich Köselitz, August 20, 1880).

In the fall he let know Paul Rée: Solitude is indeed the perfect state for philosophers, but for this “many sacrifices have to be made [...] For such a solitary person (*Einsamen*), however, ‘the friend’ is a more delightful thought than persons in company of many (*Vielsamen*) here” (Letter to Paul Rée, October 31, 1880). When a relationship with Lou was in sight, he wrote to her: “I don’t want to be lonely anymore and learn to be human all over again” (letter to Lou von Salomé, July 3, 1882). Nietzsche’s courtships and pleas failed. At the height of the crisis, he lashes out, hurts those who have disappointed him and most of all himself. He knows himself human, all too human. And he generally doubted: “Ah, this melancholy! [...] How *shallow* people are to me today! Where is there still a sea in which one can really *drown*? I mean a human being” (letter to Lou von Salomé, November 8, 1882). By the end of 1882, he knew he had been closer to death than to life, “what is worse, to pain” (letter to Hans von Bülow, early December, 1882), the pain of humiliation. In order to turn the role

of the humiliated victim into a philosophical benefit, he had to make a deep cut: “Someone who has lived alone for so long no longer experiences individual experiences at all, but only symptoms of general behaviors to my life: and I have brought back *horrible* memories with me, and am not able to free myself from them” (letter to Unknown, mid-February 1883, draft). But: “It’s no use: I have to help myself, or it is over” (letter to Franz Overbeck, February 22, 1883). He knew this at the beginning of 1883. Working to be able to live requires “*fresh strength* [...] and the *deepest* loneliness,” he already knew this in 1882 (letter to Franz Overbeck, January 29, 1882). One must be able to endure and master the balance to turn it into “the most powerful promotions and sources of life” (letter to Ida Overbeck, August 14, 1883), he himself had to defy all hostility and “*turn* all my fates in favor of my *task into gold*” (letter to Franz Overbeck, August 18, 1884). Every button of extreme behavior has to be pushed for this: “I’m going to have to invent myself a new *patience*. And even more than patience” – “And if it has to be, go to ruin alone!” (letter to Franz Overbeck, July 12, 1884). Inscribed in such a life strategy is a philosophy of suffering that, unlike Arthur Schopenhauer’s or Søren Kierkegaard’s, was not oriented toward suffering itself as an attitude toward life, but rather allowed suffering to be experienced and determined as a source of strength and self-determination: Suffering belongs “*to the matter*” (letter to Paul Rée, August 1881). More: “such pain [...] is a high honor” (letter to Ida Overbeck, August 14, 1883, draft). He even dedicated a hymn to pain: “Life without you – it would be beautiful, / And yet – you too are worth living! [...] You are the pedestal for the spirit’s greatness!” (letter to Heinrich Köselitz, July 1, 1882). Pain as a connection and binding (*Ver/Bindung*) between life and spirit held in peculiar suspension: “One must *bury* a pretty lot in order to be able to *live* a pretty lot” (letter to Franz Overbeck, October 4, 1884). The greatness of the pain gives birth to the greatness of the spirit. Only then the life curve rises and keeps itself on the high ground.

Such thoughts are born under black cypress trees. In landscapes which not only correspond to the heaviness of these thoughts but are also their midwives. Zarathustra must have the experience that solitude painfully produces wisdom (Za II, *The Child with the Mirror*). Only those who have stood on the edge of the unbearable have the strength to do so: “And only where there are graves are there resurrections” (Za II, *The Grave Song*, transl. Adrian Del Caro). Böcklin’s *Island of the Dead* comes to mind, cypresses tower “like a mourning society.”

Nietzsche knew it well.<sup>6</sup> This is a landscape with philosophical topography: Nietzsche staged in it his program of the art of living, his understanding of life and a philosopher's life. Cypresses stand motionless and without shadow in the 'great noon,' the suspicious hour of Pan, its black becomes the cipher of "death with awake eyes" (WS 308). It is a time in time, a moment of remembrance of all that has been before that recognizes the illusory and the deceptive in order to encounter and endure life returning anew: "There at last the wind rises in the trees, noon is past, life snatches it back" (WS 308). Whoever has lived through this noon, straightens up into life: "Everyone *has to carry*: let us not unlearn, above the carrying and the carrying heavily, the flying up and looking far out! It does not get along so badly with each other!" (letter to Marie Baumgartner, July 15, 1881). Under the recurring shades of the black cypresses, roses become visible, as emblematic embodiments of beauty, transience and life: "I may well be a wood and a night of dark trees, yet whoever does not shrink from my darkness will also find rose slopes under my cypresses" (Za II, *The Dance Song*, transl. Adrian Del Caro). Nietzsche recalled his own walks in Sorrento, provoked with such images and radicalized the thought that only one who knows how to live among cypresses *and* with roses succeeds in accepting life in its contradictions, which in modern discourse-language means that the basic structure of all existence determines the perspectives of the subject to determine itself. However, only the one who knows how to transform losses of subjective existence into reflected experiences will, as a "*philosophus radicalis*" (letter to Franz Overbeck, November 14, 1886), possess the freedom to have an interweaving of self-feeling and life-feeling, to choose life and to give it form, irrespective of its dubiousness and in the certainty that it could also ruin oneself. Having to live in antinomies is "the most *objective* expression" and the "complicated [...] situation" of a philosopher (letter to Franz Overbeck, November 14, 1886). What is formulated to Overbeck as a description of his own situation has paradigmatic significance for every existence.

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<sup>6</sup> Joachim Köhler, *Nietzsches letzter Traum. Roman*, München 2000, 51, 189 ff.

### 3. Diverse Dawns

There are so many dawns that have not yet broken.  
(Motto from the Rigveda for *Dawn*, 1881)

As coincidentally as the title of *Dawn* came about<sup>7</sup>, so congenially was it chosen. It summarizes a liberation, not only from moral prejudices. To have taken a first step against these with the book is more consequence than cause: “a fate more than a book” (letter to Ernst Schmeitzner, February 23, 1881). Nietzsche had overcome a crisis of life and thought, which only then allowed him the radicality of his morally critical philosophizing. The silence under black cypresses, as he himself called it, had taken effect. To experience dawns, one must have gone through the great noon and sunset (see Za III, *Of Old and New Tablets*). The self-contemplation, the concentration on his self-imposed tasks made him as defenseless as strong. In the interplay between giving himself to be known and keeping quiet about the actual goal of life, in order not to lose the last interpersonal securities, he henceforth practiced an art of living, which for a time yielded dawns of unknown dimensions for him.

Dawns – a metaphor for the certainty that something new is always possible: “There are so many bright and especially red colors in it!” (letter to Heinrich Köselitz, February 9, 1881). The color red, a sign of a pulsating, powerful life. He could have known this from Baudelaire’s “The Setting of the Romantic Sun” in *The Flowers of Evil*: “How lovely is the sun fresh in the skies, / Blasting his good day to the world below!” In *Ecce Homo*, he describes its shade as gentle red, because every new thing is tender and holds the possibility of a “whole world of new days” (EH, *Dawn* 1). In its light, as the later interpretation goes, an unprecedented reevaluation of moral values has become possible, a reevaluation of everything that for so long had to hide under prohibitions and taboos and misinterpretations. This is how the request to Köselitz is to be understood, namely to make reading “a passionate *state*” (letter to Heinrich Köselitz, June 23, 1881), since all previous morality had become groundless. Everything appears under the sign of a new dawn: his philosophy, his attitude to life, his relationship to Lou. To her he dedicated the verses: “Five feet wide earth, red sky (*Morgenroth*), / And *below* me – world, the human being and

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<sup>7</sup> Andreas Urs Sommer, *Nietzsche-Kommentar: Der Antichrist, Ecce homo, Dionysos-Dithyramben, Nietzsche contra Wagner. Historischer und kritischer Kommentar zu Friedrich Nietzsches Werken*, ed. Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Bd. 6.2, Berlin/Boston 2013, 526.

death” (letter to Lou von Salomé, August 24, 1882). Lou herself became for him “the *golden* possibility at the horizon of all his future life” (letter to Lou von Salomé June 7, 1882), like a goddess, as in the *Rigveda*: life-awakening light-bringer. But what persists in mythology turns out to be transitory in reality.

Nietzsche was familiar with Vedic ideas through Max Müller, among others.<sup>8</sup> In ancient Indian culture, dawn was considered the “problem of all problems” of existence. It was the unknown land, from which rose every day those shining symbols of divine power, which left in the human spirit the first impression and hint of a higher world [...] and of wisdom [...]. The whole theogony and philosophy of the ancient world found its center in the dawn, [...] the sun in its various appearances [...] – it is itself the shining image and face of immortality.<sup>9</sup>

The dawn (the sun?) was mistress of time, gave everything a structure and order, moved everything, knew its power over and between transience, duration and eternal return.

In contrast to mythological interpretations, Nietzsche claimed dawns for the modern subject and consistently filled their content with sensitivities of a subject’s soul: “Here are some hopes; but what will you see and hear of them if in your souls you have not experienced luster and radiance and dawns?” (JS 286, transl. Adrian Del Caro). To have experienced dawns in one’s own soul is the prerequisite on which its enlivening effect is based. But this seems to be only an ideal at first. People who are able to keep themselves under high spirits for a long time are rare. Someone who would even be able to “be [...] the embodiment of an individual great mood,” is considered by Nietzsche so far only an “enchancing possibility” (JS 288, transl. Adrian Del Caro). External conditions and inner willingness and ability to do so are still lacking in the modern subject. The dream, a “morning dream,” would first have to find its world (Za III, *On the Three Evils* 1). But like Zarathustra, the philosopher saw this ideal on the horizon. It could become real if the modern subject develops the strength within itself to separate itself from the baggage of the past, of prejudices, of the insufficient, to remake itself like a phoenix (D 568). Nietzsche saw himself in the same image: “In the meantime, I think of the ashes and the phoenix: upward!” (letter to Franz Overbeck, November 17, 1880). It was

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<sup>8</sup> Sommer, *Nietzsche-Kommentar Der Antichrist, Ecce homo, Dionysos-Dithyramben, Nietzsche contra Wagner*, 526.

<sup>9</sup> Max Müller, *Indien in seiner weltgeschichtlichen Bedeutung*, Berlin 1884, 169, transl. Manuel Knoll and Barry Stocker.

indeed a euphoric mood of departure, but it is more essential that the modern subject learns to enable itself to highest moods, to a yay-saying world- and self-relation, and to form them as fundamental states of life, as “unrelenting movement” (JS 288, transl. Adrian Del Caro).

The necessary work on oneself comes from the depth. One must have dug very deep within oneself to come upwards. To do this, one must have been a mole inside oneself for a long time. Deprived, lightless, risky, relentless: to be able to recognize what the soul needs. Only then he comes to “his own *dawn*” (D, *Preface* 1, transl. Brittain Smith). Then one has freed oneself to a new, to one’s self-understanding, because one has freed oneself from prejudices and learned to no longer trust any certainties, only oneself and one’s goals: “Without a goal, which I did not consider unspeakably important, I would not have kept myself up in the light and above the black tides!” (letter to Erwin Rohde, mid-July 1882). The path has become conscious as a double one: to resist every morality that hinders the self-determination of the subject through behavioral norms hostile to life and to give oneself a form in which the self-willed identity can find its expression. His famous recommendation to Lou von Salomé, that it is necessary to give style to life (letter to Lou von Salomé, August 24, 1882), formulated this path as an aesthetic life plan, gave the example of linguistic and gestural self-expression. Whoever masters the medium of expression or the art for it succeeds in what Nietzsche called a state “*in media vita*” (letter to Heinrich Köselitz, August 4, 1882), i.e., not to be the goal, but the way to it, namely a philosopher’s existence without any randomness: “I survey with serenity and certainty what I have achieved and not achieved so far and what I still *want* from myself” (letter to Elisabeth Nietzsche, August 29, 1883), and to have “become sufficient” to oneself “in the hardest” (letter to Franz Overbeck, September 9, 1882). The greatest danger is to “leave the *path*,” to become “renegade” to the highest in oneself (letter to Elisabeth Nietzsche, August 29, 1883).

Nietzsche’s medium for this is the language of philosophy and poetry, but also dance and music. Music, by definition, belongs under the jurisdiction of early hours: “Music as the art of the dawn!” he noted in the fall of 1881 (N Autumn 1881, 12 [119]). In his dawn, the demon of music forced him “to speak of it in tones as well” (letter to Overbeck, August 9, 1882). While working on *Dawn*, he repeatedly addressed musical structures and musical creation, compositions and musicians in notes and letters. In *Zarathustra*, dance, the dance-like, the fulminant, experiences an apotheosis that is explained by its

purpose as the elixir of life for life. Divinely-Dionysian, he gave the light, the floating, the free spirit an invincible choreography of the living. He indicated to his friend Erwin Rohde: “My style is a *dance*; a play of symmetries of all kinds and a skipping and mocking of symmetries” (letter to Erwin Rohde, February 22, 1884). His language in poetry and philosophy also follows this. To follow the asymmetrical as a principle of life, to live it and to realize it in reflection as experienceable, therein lies for Nietzsche the highest art of living. It unites everything that is painfully separated into an aesthetic execution of life, completes the departure into the open, which – as he knew from Friedrich Hölderlin – is not without risk and danger, but instead with ‘holy sobriety’ and a serenity “illuminated by a new dawn” and with the view of free horizons (JS 343, transl. Adrian Del Caro). As there are dawns that have not yet shone, there is “another world to be discovered – and more than one!” (JS 289, transl. Adrian Del Caro).

#### 4. Philosophical Self-Assertions

... be what you *have* to be.

(Nietzsche to Lou von Salomé, November 24, 1882)

For this, Nietzsche favored a subject who does not subordinate his or her life strategies to a given ideal but finds the highest fulfillment out of him or herself in the process of life’s actualization: “[...] if I could not take my strength out of myself, if I had to wait for shouts of encouragement, consolations from outside, where would I be! What would I be!” (letter to Heinrich Köselitz, August 14, 1881). Toughness against oneself “daily, hourly” (letter to Franziska Nietzsche, August 24, 1881): Only in this way is everything questionable of existence acceptable, understood as belonging to life: “Yes, there is something invulnerable, unburialable in me, something that explodes boulders: it is called *my will*. Silently and unchanged it strides through the years” (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra* II, *The Grave Song*, transl. Adrian Del Caro). Repeated overcoming of oneself to the point of self-denial is the price. One must become who one is supposed to be. For this one must change to remain the same. Snakes give the image with their molting: a snake that does not know how to do this “perishes. So too with spirits who are prevented from changing their opinions; they cease to be spirit” (D 573, transl. Brittain Smith).

He wrote to Lou von Salomé that she should become who she is. Referring to Pindar's *Pythian Odes* ("Pindar once says 'become who you are,'" to Lou von Salomé, June 10, 1882), Nietzsche recurred to a process of self-formation that starts from an inner disposition of the subject, the development of which is the meaning of one's actual life formation. With many variants, the request pervades all considerations about life strategies that are supposed to succeed. Two months later followed the imploring request: "become who you are!" (letter to von Salomé, end of August 1882).<sup>10</sup> Zarathustra acts according to the same motto: "Become who you are!" Only in this way can he be the "disciplinarian (*Zuchtmeister*)" for others (Za IV, *The Honey Sacrifice*). The *Joyful Science* too demanded the self-shaping of free subjects: "But we *want to become who we are* — the new, the unique, the incomparable, the ones who give themselves their own laws and create themselves!" (JS 335, transl. Adrian Del Caro). In 1888, *Ecce Homo* was still given the subtitle "How One Becomes What One Is" (EH, subtitle, transl. Carol Diethe / Duncan Lurge / Adrian Del Caro / Alan D. Schrift). The different formulations show how much Nietzsche's borrowing from Pindar brings forth his own ideas of subjective work on the self in a thought process whose mental strands converge in something other than a mere prompting formula. Whereby the result lies already in the beginning: Not only to become and be who one is or wants to be, but to be who one *must* be (see letter to Lou von Salomé, November 24, 1882). This '*must*' unfolds Nietzsche's whole philosophy of the art of living from a cultural-critical perspective: In it, the conditions are critically embedded that make the subject one that needs to assert itself beyond the values provided and fixated by modern culture, to set itself up in and as an opposition to them. To counter the cultural illnesses of modernity with a new health, a capacity for recovery as an alternative, therein lies the meaning of the '*must*.' The subject in modernity must have gone through their 'diseases,' may they be called loneliness, melancholy, illusion, superficiality, must have lived and suffered them to the point of turnover, to understand them as a prerequisite, precisely to free oneself from them with them. Walking under black cypresses inaugurates this change, triggers the comprehension, e.g., to see loneliness as a possibility of creative self-reference, as a transformation of life threats into life increases or their preconditions. Transforming subjective naivety into a reflected cultural technique, showing the seemingly uncontrollable

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<sup>10</sup> See Sommer, *Nietzsche-Kommentar: Der Antichrist, Ecce homo, Dionysos-Dithyramben, Nietzsche contra Wagner*, 354.



evidences of cultural existence their limits in the practical self-determination and freedom of the subject – this process gives the foundation of a subjective existence, which at the same time allows an experimentation with perspectives and establishes a permanent transgression into ever-new spaces of experience, reflection, and life. Along the lifelines of open horizons, the modern subject can become what it must be. This means to gain sovereignty over oneself and the circumstances of one's existence in always different dawns, without subordinating oneself to metaphysical or culturally given norms. What postmodern thought from François Lyotard to Michel Foucault has brought into discourses as identity-creating or -maintaining techniques of self-care: Nietzsche's seemingly minor shift of emphasis from an ethics of 'ought' to an ethics of 'must' of subjective behavior already contains the certainty that only in this way the modern subject does not become a plaything or executor of life resolutions formulated and determined apart from it. Already Nietzsche left it to the subject's discretion to give his or her own life that form, the contours of which only he or she has to determine. That this is a problematic advocacy for the subject, because failure is also given a chance, is not only beyond question. To remain in an image of Baudelaire: After dawns a sun can also rise whose blackness leads to the downfall. The freedom of negating oneself belongs to the risk of the subject in modernity.

## 5. Aesthetical Pictorial Similes

Nietzsche compressed his ideas on the conduct of life, self-determination, and freedom in expressive metaphors and images. This is due to his distrust of systematic circles of thought and unambiguous concepts. The images are a transparent panorama of natural, cultural, and self-representations, which, however, can only be understood by those who know their connotations. They attain a clarity of their own that transcends any concept. Concepts such as solitude, mourning, or pain do not reach the image of the black cypresses; theories of departure or new beginnings do not reach that of the dawn. Especially not when it comes to the art of living. Their expressiveness goes into the deep dimensions of experiences that became images. They have stored the pictorial knowledge of all previous and modern culture. From Vedic wisdom and Greco-Roman thought to aesthetic modernity. From ancient *sôphrosynê*, medieval *melancholia* to the setting of the black sun in Baudelaire. Nietzsche consciously employed their expressiveness, mindful of the fact that all art of living has

an aesthetic element of philosophical reflection. Or vice versa, that every philosophical reflection is oriented toward aesthetic techniques of existence.

*Translated by Manuel Knoll & Barry Stocker*



## XI.

# “... I Need Solitude”: The Communication of a Solitary Person as an Art of Living

by Werner Stegmaier

### 1. Thinking and Living in Solitude

For Nietzsche, the art of living was above all, as he wrote again and again in his letters, notes, and works, the art of living in solitude and – since this often became very difficult for him – of surviving in it. It was not solitude in the usual sense of living without people around him, but in the unfamiliar one of having to live without receiving any understanding for his thinking. This meant for him: He could not share the plight (*Not*) with anyone that his thinking was causing him.

In early December 1882, he communicated this very openly and clearly to the pianist, conductor, and composer Hans von Bülow, who had conducted premieres of Wagner’s operas, whose wife Cosima had left him for Wagner’s sake, and who had emphatically praised Nietzsche’s *Birth of Tragedy* whereas he had scathingly criticized his compositions. Recalling his veneration for him, Nietzsche told him, apparently out of a spontaneous impulse, about his satisfaction with his new philosophical thinking, which had allowed him to survive and revive during his increasingly severe illness as professor of classical philology at Basel: “the changed way of thinking and feeling, which I have also expressed in writing for the last 6 years, *has kept* me alive and almost *made* me healthy” (our translation). On the other hand, it was precisely this way of thinking that isolated him from his friends: “What do I care if my friends claim that this ‘free spiritedness’ of mine is an eccentric *resolution* held fast by the

teeth, wrested from my own inclination, and forced onto it?" May this be "a 'second nature': but I shall yet prove that with this second nature I have only acquired the actual possession of my first nature." Since 1876, the year of his own separation from Richard and Cosima Wagner, he had been "forced into an alienating solitude [...]," had lived "for years a little too close to death." "My trip to Germany this summer – an interruption of the deepest solitude – taught and frightened me. I found the whole dear German beast jumping on me – for by all means it considers me no longer to be 'moral enough.'" Through his disillusionment with the Schopenhauer and Wagner intoxication, he was now spiritually separated also from the Wagnerians, until then his admirers, and through his new free-thinking moral criticism from all people who wanted to be 'good.' A brief enthusiastic communion in his thinking with the Russian Lou von Salomé, half his age, ended miserably, poisoned by his own mother and sister, who would never be able to understand his thinking and with whom he now tried – unsuccessfully – to break (of which he did not write to Bülow). Thus the immersion in his new thinking saved him:

Enough, I am a hermit again and more than ever; and I think up – consequently – something new. It seems to me that only the state of *pregnancy* binds us again and again to life. –

The grief of losing people who had liked him, but whom repelled his alienating thinking, finally also concerned the person who had become Nietzsche's highest intellectual authority and remained on friendly terms with him, though at a proper distance: his Basel colleague and teacher Jacob Burckhardt, who for his part thought in a new and solitary way in matters of history and culture. The letter that Burckhardt wrote to Nietzsche after receiving *Beyond Good and Evil* saddened him – Nietzsche wrote in a letter from October 12, 1886, to his true and constant friend, who nevertheless did not claim to be able to comprehend his thinking: Franz Overbeck. Burckhardt indeed, Nietzsche wrote to Overbeck, is "of the greatest distinction" to him. "But what do I care now! I wish to hear 'that is my plight! That took away my speech!'" What he called his plight (*seine Not*) was his gaze into the abysses of philosophical thinking, which, as it became increasingly clear to him, had concealed from itself over millennia for fear of falling down into the abysses. Nietzsche, however, could no longer avert his gaze from them, but advanced to ever further depths and shallows. This was a plight, because, as it likewise

became increasingly clear to him, no one wanted to or could follow him, not even Jacob Burckhardt and Franz Overbeck who were indeed open to new ways of thinking.

In this sense alone, my old friend Overbeck, do I suffer from my 'solitude.' I have no lack of people anywhere, but of those with whom I share my concerns, my concerns!

Nevertheless, he wanted to persevere:

But that's an old story; and I've proved it handsomely that I can stand it all the same. –

After all, Nietzsche still had friends to whom he could bluntly communicate and dare to say that he had no friend in his thinking, besides Overbeck namely Heinrich Köselitz, who copied and prepared many of his manuscripts for printing. Without such friends, who helped him in his daily life, he would not have been able to live in his way. He needed friendship in solitude and at the same time solitude in friendship, and he coped with both. And he needed places for his solitude. Even Sils Maria in the Swiss Upper Engadine, which was not very prominent at the time, and even more so Nice, which was highly prominent then and frequented by kings and emperors, and to which Nietzsche had fled for the climate in order to get through in health, were finally no longer sufficient for him. He wrote again to Franz Overbeck:

In both places, I am now lacking that first and most essential condition, the solitude, the deep undisturbedness, aloofness, strangeness, without which I cannot descend to my problems (for, between the two of us, I am in a downright frightening sense a man of the *deep*; and without this subterranean work, I can no longer endure life). (letter to Franz Overbeck, April 14, 1887, our transl.).

And the more difficult, the more burdensome this work became for him – for he had grown up in the very religion, morality and culture, which he now attacked so vigorously –, the more he suffered again from his solitude in his thinking. He thus wrote again to Franz Overbeck, again from Sils Maria and

shortly after he had immersed himself most deeply in what he called ‘European nihilism’ in Lenzer Heide:

To endure these last years – that was perhaps the most difficult thing that my fate has ever demanded of me. After such a call as my Zarathustra was, out of the innermost soul, not to hear a sound of answer, nothing, nothing, always only the soundless, now thousandfold solitude – that is something terrible beyond all comprehension, from which the strongest can perish – alas, and I am not ‘the strongest’! Since then I have felt as if I were mortally wounded; it amazes me that I am still alive. But there is no doubt, I am still alive: who knows what I still have to experience! (letter to Franz Overbeck, June 17, 1887, our transl.)

Thus, Nietzsche was primarily less concerned with the art of giving his life an ‘aesthetic style’ or finding such a style in it and recommending it to others, or with a life full of meaning, happiness, and love. All this already requires a rather easygoing life – concealing the plight that Nietzsche felt through his thinking.

Finally, he also wrote to his audience: “I need *solitude*” (EH, Why I am so wise 8) – in order to be able to think as he did. He thought a lot about the reasons for this solitude and broke them down into ‘seven solitudes.’ The number 7 is to be taken rather symbolically, Nietzsche’s distinctions of the solitudes change, and it is difficult to discover logical consistency in their enumeration. Nietzsche talked about these 7 solitudes publicly since 1882, beginning in his *Joyful Science* (JS 285, 309), but did not set them apart for his readers until the end. His Zarathustra, who in poetry lives sovereignly in solitude among all the people surrounding him, should talk about them and thereby depict “how *the plight grows* parallel with happiness” (N Autumn 1883, 16[9], our transl.), but actually does so rather incidentally and not in a specific speech. Only for himself, Nietzsche once created an overview of the seven solitudes. There is (N Autumn 1883, 16[64], our transl.):

“1. The solitude in shame and weakness and silence before a great thought. Wherefore truth!” It is thinking itself that makes one solitary, if one does not align it from the outset with truths that allegedly all share and that are to be equally valid for all. Such truths, according to Nietzsche, are indifferent to all and therefore have little value; they do not create plight, but redeem from it.

"2. Solitude, which has lost all the old means of consolation." According to Nietzsche, these consolations are God, a reason allegedly common to all, the truths recognized by it, and the moral obligation to follow it. Their credibility and authority were massively challenged in the 19th century by scientific, especially evolutionist, thinking.

"3. Solitude with temptations." These are, on the one hand, the temptations to fall back into the old, more comfortable, easy-happiness thinking, and, on the other hand, the temptations to dig the grounds of thinking deeper and deeper and thus make it even harder for oneself.

"4. Solitude without friends, indeed with the awareness of sacrificing friends." Nietzsche announces to specifically 'abolish' just 'good friends' who believe to understand him and yet cannot go along with his new thinking, and he eventually abolishes them (we will come back to this).

"5. The Solitude of the highest responsibility." Nietzsche believed deeply in the impact of philosophical insight, especially the impact of insight into nihilism. He felt all the more deeply the responsibility for the effects of this insight. This is a responsibility beyond the hitherto valid morality, since nihilism undermined also and especially this morality. Thus Nietzsche calls

"6. Solitude in eternity, *beyond morality*: the creative one and goodness. There is no solution but to *create* another being that does *not* suffer as we do." Nihilism, he assumes, will remake human beings, at least some of them, so that they will eventually be able not only to endure it, but themselves "create," namely new values. The solitary thinker thus comes into a position that was previously reserved for God. He must also think eternity anew, and for this Nietzsche had his thought of the eternal recurrence of the same. The

7th solitude is for him: "The Solitude of the Sick. Consolation song. Becoming tired, becoming silent. Sanctified by suffering." It is the solitude of which Nietzsche speaks in 1886/87 in Book V of the *Joyful Science*:

that philosopher's claim to *wisdom*, which has been made here and there at times on earth, the craziest and most immodest of all claims — in the past hasn't it always been, in India as in Greece, *above all a hiding place?* [...] a hiding place of the philosopher, behind which he rescues himself due to exhaustion, old age, growing cold, hardening; as a feeling that the end is near, as the prudence of that instinct displayed by animals before death —



they go off to the side, become silent, opt for solitude, crawl into caves, become *wise* . . . (JS 359, transl. Adrian Del Caro)

Nietzsche wanted to deal with the 7 solitudes on 13 pages each and add the “overcoming thought” each time at the end. Which thoughts these should be, he does not list in the note. But he still writes:

*All misgivings are signs of the will to suffer, a deepening of the pain: when the pain is highest, Z<arathustra> throws it off: greatest final moment (the lion): I will!!!* (N Autumn 1883, 16[64], our transl.)

In the end, for such a thinker, there can only be the *will* to solitude, a will triumphant over all pain. And thus a “hymn at the end” should follow with the title “*the victorious*. (10 pages).”

Such a victor will also be solitary because he does not want to subject others to similar struggles and pain. At the end of July 1888 – Nietzsche has only a few months of mental health left – he writes to his faithful friend Malwida von Meysenbug, who had once enabled him and his friend Paul Rée to philosophize together for months in Sorrento: “I involuntarily become silent against everyone, because I less and less desire to let anyone look into the difficulties of my existence. It has really become very *empty* around me.” (end of July 1888, our transl.). Soon after, Nietzsche will also ‘do away’ with her as a friend (letter to Malwida von Meysenbug, October 20, 1888). And in one of his last notes, he writes: “I am *solitude* as a human being... The fact that no word ever reached me *forced* me to reach myself...” (N December 1888 – early January 1889, 25[7], our transl.).

Nietzsche also professes this in his published writings, especially in *Joyful Science* (No. 276) and in *Beyond Good and Evil* of 1886, but in a different way. Where he addresses his audience, he advises instead of setting oneself apart from people in mistrust and hostility to practice solitude behind the “mask” of politeness and friendliness as a “*good* solitude, as the free, willful, easy solitude that gives you a right in a sense to stay good yourself!” (BGE 25, our transl.). For “without solitude, without one’s own solitude,” which Nietzsche now, alluding to his Zarathustra, further stylizes as “our ownmost, deepest, most mid-nocturnal, most noon-diurnal solitude,” philosophical thinking flattens (BGE 44, transl. Adrian Del Caro). Here he associates solitude with greatness. Solitude itself is to become an “ideal”:

the greatest should be the one who can be most solitary, most hidden, most deviating, the human who is beyond good and evil, the master of his virtues, the one whose will is superabundant; precisely this should be called *greatness*: being able to be just as manifold as whole, just as broad as full. (BGE 212, transl. Adrian Del Caro)

This great solitude amidst people (in contrast to the petty solitude of someone's inability to be without others) becomes for Nietzsche one of the "four virtues" of the "*true philosophers*" (BGE 211) besides those of "courage, insight, sympathy." It expresses itself as

sublime yearning and urge for cleanliness that realizes how whenever there is person-to-person contact — "in society" — there is unavoidable soiling. Community of any kind somehow, somewhere, some way makes us — "base." (BGE 284, transl. Adrian Del Caro)

– in thinking and especially in thinking about morality. The great solitude frees from the expectation that a philosopher must have "genuine and ultimate' opinions," that a philosopher *could* have such opinions at all and instead in a philosopher. Instead he would doubt whether "behind every cave there does not lie, must not lie a still deeper cave — a more comprehensive, stranger, richer world above a surface, an abyss behind every ground, under every giving of 'grounds.'" (BGE 289, transl. Adrian del Caro)

Such a philosopher will be far away from what is considered philosophy today, that is: erudite analysis of concepts and texts; delivery of 'good reasons' for 'good thinking and acting.' Reasons, a solitary philosopher in Nietzsche's sense knows, are also only assertions, but assertions that one assumes others share. In philosophy it is thus especially reasons that lead to a kind of thinking that solidifies existing opinions, for which neither courage nor individual responsibility is needed anymore. Nietzsche, instead, confessed: "Even the most courageous among us only rarely has courage enough for what he actually *knows* . . ." (TI, Sayings and Arrows 2, our transl.). What he knows about is, as Nietzsche noted down for himself and only for himself, nihilism (N Fall 1887, 9[123]).

## 2. The Art of Communicating Solitary Thinking

It was precisely the insight into nihilism and the solitude connected with this insight which Nietzsche wanted to communicate to the public. This forced him to use paradoxical forms of communication – public and yet not directed to everyone. This required a special art of behaving and writing, which Nietzsche time and again spoke about in his late work. This art was *his* ‘art of living,’ it allowed him to survive. He handled it masterly, was very proud of it; it constituted a great part of his later success.

He introduced this art through great art itself, in aphorism no. 27 of *Beyond Good and Evil*. The aphorism exemplifies Nietzsche’s “ambition” to “say in ten sentences what other people says in a book, – what other people do *not* say in a book...” (TI, Forays of an Untimely One 53). It reads like this:

It is hard to be understood: especially if you think and live *gangasrotogati* among nothing but people who think and live differently, namely *kurmagati* or at best “in the manner of the frog,” *mandeikagati* — am I just doing everything to be hard to understand myself? — and we should cordially acknowledge the good will to a modicum of subtlety in interpretation. But as concerns “the good friends” who always want to have it too easy and think they have a right to easiness just because they are friends: you do best at the outset to grant them some leeway and a playground for misunderstanding; — then you can still laugh; — or just get rid of them completely, these good friends — and laugh then too! (transl. Adrian Del Caro, mod.)

Nietzsche tries to make his readers understand his thesis that it is hard to be understood if someone thinks and lives differently. He begins this with words that most people will *not* understand: *gangasrotogati*, *kurmagati*, *mandeikagati*. They originate from Sanskrit and deal with different tempi of communication: “gangasrotogati ‘flowing like the flux of the Ganges’ = presto / kurmagati ‘like the gait of the turtle’ = lento / mandeikagati ‘like the gait of the frog’ = staccato,” Nietzsche had noted (N Beginning – Spring 1886, 3[18], our transl.). He audibly changes his own tempi, shapes his aphorism like music, puts it into music, makes it understandable as music. After the beginning with the brief and powerful, both the intellectual and musical ‘theme’ (“It is hard to be understood”), there

is a trilling variation: an explanation, itself hard to understand, and hidden indication that in what follows, music will help for understanding; for music is understood without language, and through music one still understands the difficult-to-understand language of the solitary thinker, though differently than usual ("particularly when you ..."). At the height of the trill, another, the author's own voice intervenes: saying "I", he concedes that it could also only be about his personal, i.e., not about a general problem, and at the same time he questions just that with a question mark. Problems of understanding, it is conveyed, are *always* personal problems, precisely because there is and can be no universal understanding. Then the theme is carried out in an extension ("and"): Introduction of the sub-theme "good will" which moralizes the understanding process. The author preliminary agrees with the moralization: There is no other way to understand than via good will (today, we say 'charity'). Then the author moves away from the "I" again and speaks for all, after it is admitted now that everyone's understanding is personal and for this very reason needs good will, moral support. But if a thinking is more subtle, the more clearly it can distinguish its distinctions and the more artfully it can therefore employ them. In this way – and only in this way – thinking can become more different.

While this was still said *gangasrotogati* and *kurmagati*, what now follows is *staccato*, *mandeikagati* – a breathlessly continuing, climaxing second sentence (the aphorism consists only, you hardly notice it, of two 'sentences,' both grammatical and musical ones): Especially "the good friends" are lazy in understanding, disregard its subtleties in understanding the thinking of others, stick to the usual thinking that has developed among friends for a long time. One can indeed concede this to friends, allowing them "some leeway and playground of misunderstanding," just as one lets children romp and run riot on a playground. But one knows, nevertheless, that this is not a serious thinking and life, and has therefore "to laugh." But if one takes the thinking and understanding of others seriously and nevertheless wants to be understood, one has to "do away" with precisely such "good friends," with their (understandable) belief in "a right to laziness." One becomes solitary in the midst of people. When Nietzsche then ends with a high-sounding and shrill "and also to laugh!" it is open, what the author is laughing about now, still about the friends, who can childishly hold on to their perhaps common, but then averagely limited thinking and understanding, or about himself, who with his 'doing away with friends' not

only becomes solitary, but in the eyes of the abolished friends also becomes a ‘comical figure.’ In the second case, at least *he* would have understood the friends.

The ‘good friends,’ however, who do not recognize problems in communication, will not understand why they should be abolished for this very reason. They will – Nietzsche noted down in a draft of BGE 27 – simply be “offended” (N Fall 1885 - Spring 1886, 1[181]). But here he added an objection: “It flatters more to be misunderstood than to be not understood: against being not understood, one remains cold, and coldness offends.” Out of fear of social coldness, we accept much misunderstanding. But Nietzsche eventually added to the note “there is something insulting in being understood.” (KGW IX 2, N VII 2.80, our transl.) For with an average understanding, which approximates people, one renounces the “subtlety of interpretation” and comforts oneself to the belief of an understanding that is more or less equally possible for both sides and therefore equal for all.

Nietzsche says *and shows* in BGE 27 that it is difficult not only to be understood, but also to distinguish between being understood, being misunderstood, and being not understood, even and especially among friends. Since one can always only proceed from one’s own thinking and understanding, the understanding of another understanding becomes paradoxical. Nietzsche therefore generally no longer assumes understanding in communication, but rather misunderstanding, and takes understanding to be a special and lucky case. But even if one believes to understand each other, one may still be mistaken. According to him, one always deals with fundamental otherness in understanding. He calls it “*pathos of distance*” (BGE 257). ‘Pathos’ is distinct from ‘concept’ and ‘distance’ from ‘difference,’ i.e., conceptual distinctions. ‘Pathos of distance’ makes common reasons on both sides unlikely. Nietzsche calls the knowledge of the pathos of distance in understanding “noble” in the sense that one can let others have their otherness, their different thinking and understanding and, nevertheless, is able to grant reciprocity without expecting it in return. This is indeed a very noble morality that most value highly, even if they themselves can not display it. Solitary persons who think differently need this morality as an art to survive.

For the noble understanding with others, Nietzsche formulates jokingly “principles” in some aphorisms of the Fifth Book of the *Joyful Science* under titles like “*The hermit speaks*” (JS 364). These principles proceed from the aversion to the supposedly ‘good’ understanding. They include: “muster your

courage as in a mishap, dig in bravely, admire yourself meanwhile, bite down on your revulsion, swallow down your nausea"; "improve' your fellow man, for example through praise, so that he starts sweating out his happiness with himself" moreover, insofar as even this does not help to make unfitting company bearable, "autohypnosis" (JS 364, transl. Adrian del Caro); and finally, generally wear "masks" and engage the curious with detecting them. In extreme cases: act as a "ghost." Nietzsche especially recommends this if you want to "get rid of them quickly and make them scared. Example: they reach for us and don't get hold of us. That scares them." (JS 365, transl. Adrian del Caro, mod.)

That may still be acceptable. But then it gets really spooky: "Or: we walk through a closed door. Or: when all the lights go out." And finally, after all the desperate comedy, it only seems that a ghost is speaking: "Or: after we have already died. The latter is the masterpiece of *posthumous* people par excellence." Here, as numerous other passages in his work attest, Nietzsche is obviously speaking about himself. But he lets, in parenthesis, another posthumous person speak:

"What do you think?" someone like this once said impatiently, "would we have any desire to tolerate this strangeness, coldness, graveyard stillness around us, this whole subterranean, hidden, mute, undiscovered solitude that among us is called life and could just as well be called death, if we didn't know what would *become* of us — and that we first come to *our* life and become alive after death, oh! very alive! we posthumous people!" —) (JS 365, transl. Adrian del Caro, mod.)

Such "principles" again will not be understandable to everyone and are not meant to be. "*We incomprehensible ones*," Nietzsche writes, do not want and are not allowed to "communicate" that what we do not "share": He refers by that to the heavy "fate" (JS 371) to be able to see things "*from above*," from a higher and more comprehensive view deeper into the abysses of nihilism (BGE 30).

Nevertheless, Nietzsche also communicates this, and he does so in books for the anonymous book market. This requires the highest art of communication. For only in this way can he reach the few who might understand him in his understanding-differently and share it in their own ways. He thus has to speak in a way that he is understood by them, but not by others. He also writes this publicly, in another aphorism "*On the question of comprehensibility*" (JS

381). There, his “it is hard to be understood” from BGE 27 is left behind and replaced by a proud “One does not merely want to be understood when one writes, but likewise certainly also *not* understood.” Nietzsche wants to select his readers via “subtler laws of style,” which, as he has proven often enough, have the highest refinement:

Each nobler spirit and taste also selects his listeners when he wants to communicate; by selecting them, he simultaneously establishes boundaries against “the others.” All the subtler laws of style have their origins in this: they simultaneously keep away, they create distance, they prohibit “entry,” comprehension, as mentioned — while they open the ears of those who are related to us by ear. (JS 381, trans. Adrian del Caro)

The main features of this style are precisely the “coldness,” the kind of immoralism, which must appear to advocates of the ‘good’ morality for all as a deterrent cynicism, and, last but not least, the “brevity” of the communication, which will make moralists idealizing the ‘good’ miss all the nuances necessary for understanding. This nuanced “music of life” (JS 372), as Nietzsche has called it before, is only for the elect ones. He writes: “I approach deep problems such as I do cold baths: fast in, fast out.” In order to think and understand more finely and deeply, it is not so much broad erudition that is needed, but a “taste for independence, for quick coming and going, for wandering, perhaps for adventures of which only the swiftest are capable.” If you connect all this with music, it is a taste for “dance”:

I would not know what the spirit of a philosopher would prefer more to be than a good dancer. For dance is his ideal, also his art, and ultimately also his single piety, his “divine worship” ... (JS 381, transl. Adrian del Caro)

Part of “his art” is surely the art of communicating solitary thinking.

### **3. Incommunicability of the Truthfulness of Communication**

Nevertheless, despite all his art of masking, Nietzsche insists on honesty toward himself and others calling it also truthfulness, uprightness, sincerity. Again,

he sees a "finer development of honesty and skepticism": It can go further, it can fall back, it remains an "experiment" (JS 110). In any case, honesty is for Nietzsche "a matter of conscience for cognition," i.e., the cognition of his own "experiences" (*Erlebnisse*) (JS 319), even if it is perhaps only possible in "rare hours," in "*leisure and idleness*," as granted by the scientific and philosophical profession (JS 329, transl. Josefine Nauckhoff, mod.). And truthfulness can also be observed to a certain extent: in the ability for attentive "self-observation" and the will to distinguish and label as such the illusions and fictions one so easily falls for (JS 335). Even the will to truthfulness may well "get tired one day" or become "our vanity, our pomp and finery, our limit, our stupidity" (BGE 227). Thus, Nietzsche calls upon the "free spirits" to "work on it with all the love and malice at our disposal, and not get tired of 'perfecting' ourselves in *our* virtue, the only one we have left" (BGE 227). The commitment to truthfulness, through which he opened up ever deeper the conditions of communication and the abysses of nihilism, was something like Nietzsche's *credo*, the last thing he held on to. And yet he could hold on to it only to some extent: You can never be completely certain of your honesty.

*Translated by Reinhard G. Mueller and Werner Stegmaier*





## XII.

# Humor, Wit, and Irony as Weapons and Therapy in Nietzsche's Works and Letters: The Way of Life and the Art of Living

by Vivetta Vivarelli

### 1. Life Design and Life Wisdom

A source of spiritual and psychic tension fuels much of Nietzsche's self-experimentation and psychological insight throughout his life, all the way up to his eventual collapse. One of his existential concerns in this regard is the notion of '*lightening life*' (*Erleichterung des Lebens*), a theme that becomes especially pronounced in *Human, All Too Human*, a book Nietzsche wrote after repeated bouts of illness:

Everyone has *recipes* for enduring life [...] This art of living applied everywhere must be pieced together. Not to *lighten* life but to *take life lightly*. Many want to *make life harder*, so that afterwards they can offer *their supreme solutions* (art, ascetism, etc.) (N 1876, 16[7], our transl.).

In the notes that follow, Nietzsche writes—“the *easy life*” (ῥεῖα ζῶοντες), “*path to spiritual freedom*” [...] (N 1876, 16[8]). He borrows this phrase from Homer and the Greeks, taking his cue from Schopenhauer and from Jacob Burckhardt, whose lectures he heard in 1874 and 1875 and whose *Greek Cultural History* he read as a transcript written by Louis Kelterborn in 1875. In these lectures, Burckhardt discusses “the *easy life*” of the Greek gods. Being so

intimate with tragedy, the Greeks worshiped the gods for the ways they took life lightly almost as a means of staying balanced.

During this time, Nietzsche must have been struggling hard with the ‘torment of life’: “The machine seemed to want to go to pieces and I can’t lie, there were a few times I wished it would have done so” (Letter to Carl von Gersdorff, June 26, 1875).<sup>1</sup> In the notes, such physical suffering even recalls the title of a poem from Novalis, ‘Longing for Death’: “—Just as the seasick passenger strains from within the boat to find the coast in the breaking dawn, so too one often longs for death.” (N end of 1876 – Summer 1877, 23[188]). Seasickness and “Odyssean wanderings” form the backdrop of a letter to Malwida von Meysenbug from May 13, 1877, in which Nietzsche describes the terrible attacks brought on by his headaches during a boating trip:

—in brief, I am today once more in the mood of serene crippledom, whereas on the ship I had only the blackest thoughts, and concerning suicide I only doubted where the sea might be deepest so that one would not be immediately fished out again and have to pay a terrible mass of gold as a debt of gratitude to one’s rescuers.

Such temptations, however, are relayed in a remarkably playful tone: Writing to the Wagnerian, Nietzsche stages *Der Fliegende Holländer*, casting himself as the flying Dutchman in Wagner’s text who sings: “How often, full of longing, have I thrown myself down into the depths of the sea.” With the words “eternal sleeplessness was my fate,” Nietzsche varies the Wagnerian saying— “eternal damnation is their lot.” As Nietzsche describes the storm: “Everything on board was rolling about with a great deal of noise, the crockery leaped about and came to life, the children shrieked, the wind howled” (Letter to Malwida von Meysenbug, May 13, 1877). Throughout the letter, Nietzsche considers his life and his suffering with the help of a humorous distance. His human condition strikes him as “terrible, and yet actually laughable.” Still, this isn’t, or isn’t only, a matter of his manic-depressive mood swings. Instead, it’s a way of stepping out of himself and becoming a spectator of his own condition. He’s able to look at himself as a pawn in his own drama, revealing that he is also an artist of alchemic transformation: “What does not kill me, makes me

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<sup>1</sup> See Olivier Ponton, “Il tema dell’alleggerimento della vita’ in *Umano, troppo umano* e nei manoscritti preparatori (1875-1880),” in: *Cultura tedesca* 20 (2002), 69-83: 69. – All letters are translated by ourselves.

stronger,” he writes in *Twilight of the Idols* (TI, Sayings and Arrows 8, transl. Judith Norman). In his last haiku-like fragments of poetry, we find: “One can be sure of death / why wouldn’t you be cheerful?” (N Summer 1888, 20[13]) or: “you stiff sages / it became all a game to me” (N Summer 1888, 20[40]).

As Werner Stegmaier points out, Nietzsche makes his own experience of suffering and his will to health fruitful for his philosophizing and thus becomes a master of “changing perspectives.”<sup>2</sup> A cheerful mood alongside a diet or long walks can be seen as a ‘precept of health’ or a prescription written out to oneself: Everyone should seek out or invent the recipes that correspond best with their physiological needs and personal philosophy.

Among Nietzsche’s prescriptions, I would like to take a closer look at a particular thread in his thinking, namely the one running through his writing which is at times ironic and humorous, at other times, a profane, mischievous, and roguish whim that grows ever-more prominent in his last writings and letters. His unseen companions in this approach are writers such as Sterne, Abbé Galiani, Lichtenberg, and most of all “l’adorable” Heine, to whom Nietzsche comes closer and closer over the years. This playful tone often appears during dramatic situations such as earthquakes or floods, seeming to banish the misery or tragedy of the moment. It can be understood as a kind of respite from his ‘tremendous’ task:

Dear friend, forgive me for this perhaps overly cheerful letter: but as day after day I have revalued values and had reason to be very serious, there now comes a fatality and inevitability in serenity. Not unlike a funeral. (Letter to Heinrich Köselitz, May 17, 1888)

This letter is characteristic of many of his final letters. It stands witness to two opposing but interacting tones—joking and deep seriousness—which in fact belong together like the face and the mask. This joyous side, the “most cheerful whim,” the “arbitrary Epicureanism of the heart” or forced euphoria, can be seen as a self-made or self-prescribed diet against pessimism, the fruit of an exercise, a brave disposition: “It seems we are cheerful because we are immensely sad [...]. Stay bravely with ourselves, mocking frivolity, cool us, wind that sweeps over glaciers.” (N Autumn 1885 – Autumn 1886, 2[33]). This ducking away into joy, this need to cool down, is not only like the flipside of

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<sup>2</sup> Werner Stegmaier, *An Orientation to the Philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche*, Orientations Press, Nashville 2022, 43-44.

suffering or a giving way to gloom or like a dance at the edge of the abyss. It often becomes an artificial way of taming and subduing passion, rather than perishing from it as the Romantics often did. He writes about *The Case of Wagner*, one of his most wickedly whimsical works:

Passion *numbs*. It does me good, makes me forget a little [...]. I am also artist enough to retain a state, until it takes form, takes shape [...], numbs also cheerfulness. It does me good, makes me forget [...]. I really laugh so much with such products (Letter to Franz Overbeck (draft), July 20, 1888).

Now the question arises as to whether this mood can be attributed to Nietzsche's wisdom of living, namely to his striving to put a good face on the evil of illness, and whether the clothes really do make the man—in other words, whether the bright face and frivolous appearance Nietzsche so often recommends is in effect therapeutic. In a late note, he considers himself “exuberant and encouraged even by affliction”: “for affliction *sustains* the fortunate—; a little tail of farce even attached to the holiest — this, of course, the idea of a heavy, extremely heavy spirit, a *spirit of heaviness* [...].” (N Spring 1888, 14[1]). Nietzsche's letters contain frequent calls to action, especially to himself, which read along the lines of – “And above all, let us be and remain in good spirits: there are a hundred reasons for being courageous in this life” (Letter to Carl von Gersdorff, February 12, 1885); and with a biblical allusion: “Stay in good spirits, all tribulation is worthwhile neither on earth nor in heaven.” (Letter to Heinrich Köselitz, February 14, 1885). This proclivity, which he calls “an overflowing freshness and cheerfulness” is also underlined as a primary characteristic in works where Nietzsche stages himself, namely in *Ecce Homo*: “I do not know any other way of handling great tasks than as *play*: [...] a gloomy look, any sort of harsh tone in the throat, all these are objections to a person and even more to his work!” (EH, Clever 10, transl. Judith Norman). He'd written mercilessly about Dühring: “One speaks to me at table about Eugen Dühring, one ‘excuses’ many things, for one says: he is blind. So? I am almost blind myself. Homer was completely. Must one therefore be in a bad mood? And full of worms? And look like an inkwell?” (N Summer – Autumn 1884, 26[382]). In contrast, Nietzsche's calls to actions have a soldierly, valiant, and courageous tone, as implied in the title of the aphorism “*In the field*” where he writes: “We must take things more cheerfully than they deserve; especially

since we have for a long time taken them more seriously than they deserve. – So speak brave soldiers of knowledge” (D 567, transl. R.J. Hollingdale).

To Köselitz he writes: “Noble is, for example, the poised appearance of *frivolity* by which stoic hardness and self-control are masked” (July 23, 1885); and then to Ferdinand Avenarius: “That the deepest spirit must also be the most frivolous, this is nearly the formula of my philosophy” (10 December 1888). In this same letter, he also calls himself a ‘*Hanswurst*,’ a buffoon or clown. Nietzsche’s statement in *Ecce Homo* is well-known: “I do not want to be a saint, I would rather be a buffoon” (EH, Destiny 1, transl. Judith Norman). Even after his collapse in Turin, Nietzsche is convinced that he is the “clown of the new eternity,” the perplexed Overbeck reports to Köselitz in dismay (Overbeck to Köselitz, January 15, 1889). In his last letter to Burckhardt Nietzsche also seems to enjoy telling ‘bad jokes’ twice. The word ‘clown’ likewise comes as a reference to Hamlet: “Shakespeare is the most poignant reading I know: how much suffering does it take for somebody to need to play the clown! – Have people *understood* Hamlet? (EH, Clever 4, transl. Judith Norman, mod.). The identification with Shakespeare’s hero is obvious here, confirmed by his quotation of Hamlet’s last words in his letters: “Everything else is silence” (EH, Wise 3, transl. Judith Norman). In a letter to Carl Fuchs, Nietzsche ends by confessing to “nothing but buffoonery” “as a way of becoming the master of an unbearable tension and vulnerability (July 18, 1888).

Humor has different faces in Nietzsche’s work: as a joke, irony, or a teasing type of cheerfulness, it can be regarded as a sharp weapon following the tradition of the Enlightenment (i.e., as we find in Montaigne, Voltaire, Lessing, or Lichtenberg). Nietzsche’s aphorisms frequently juxtapose many of “the most delightful and daring nuances of free, free-spirited thought” and the “ponderous, lumbering, solemnly awkward” (BGE 28, transl. Judith Norman). By clanging together “words and dice,” Zarathustra wants to outwit and escape the “strict overseers” as the thinkers of the French Enlightenment once did (Za III, On the Mount of Olives). The most poisonous of arrows are shot toward ‘the cattle,’ anti-Semitism, Germanophilia, and especially the Wagnerians. As Yovel points out, Nietzsche also engages in the dangerous practice of seizing upon anti-Semitic images and emotions to use them against anti-Semites.<sup>4</sup>

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3 Franz Overbeck / Heinrich Köselitz [Peter Gast], *Briefwechsel*, edited and commentary by David Marc Hoffmann, Niklaus Peter, Theo Salfinger, Berlin/New 1998, 206.

4 See Yirmiyahu Yovel, “Nietzsche und die Juden. Die Struktur einer Ambivalenz,” in: Jacob Golomb (ed.): *Nietzsche*

Wagner is likely the target of a similar game of parody, despite Nietzsche having explained in *Ecce Homo* that he never wages war directly against people: “I only attack things that have been victorious” (EH, Wise 7, transl. Judith Norman, mod.). Nietzsche, for example, takes up the arguments Wagner used against Heine in *Das Judentum in der Musik (Judaism in Music)* and now turns them against Wagner, saying he is not a real German: “Being the great pupil that he was, he learned to imitate a lot of Germanisms – that is all” (CW, Postscript, transl. Judith Norman). He also plays recklessly with a Christian word that Wagner and his followers held as sacred: *redemption*. Nevertheless, Nietzsche criticizes irony and ironic writers as “ignoble” (N October – December 1876, 19[25]), for they and their readers only wish to feel superior to everyone (HH I 372). Pascal, too, only justified irony so long as it was directed against presumptuousness and arrogance. Nietzsche jots down a line from the *Goncourt Journal*: “the means of skepticism is irony, the formula least accessible to the thick, the obtuse, the simple, the masses” (N November 1887 – March 1888, 11[296]). Plato’s irony, “with which an excessive tenderness of feeling and senses, a vulnerability of the heart knows how to protect itself, at least how to hide,” looks different to Nietzsche. It resembles “the Olympic nature of Goethe, who made lyrics of his suffering so as to dispel it, as did Stendhal, Merimée –” (N Autumn 1885 – Autumn 1886, 2[181]). This characterizes much of Nietzsche’s state of mind, which really has little to do with his destructive sarcasm and owes more to his vitality, the practiced strategy of reversal, or the tried and tested art of overcoming oneself. For his role model, Nietzsche seems to continually orient himself to his old French mentors, especially Montaigne, to their bravery and spirit, their *esprit gaillard*. In a letter to Overbeck, after looking back bitterly on former friends, he admits to having “enough *esprit gaillard*” to make fun of himself and his memories and “everything else that only pertains to me” (November 12, 1887). The ‘*gaillardise*,’ a word that shows up often in Montaigne, is in principle the *gaieté* of the old French, which means the tendency to make fun of life (“sourire à la vie en la chansonnant”), a quality Paul Bourget finds absent in his contemporaries’ disease of will.<sup>5</sup> The psychologist Théodule Ribot, who first diagnosed and analyzed the ‘disease of the will’ in

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und die jüdische Kultur, Wien 1998, 126-142: 134.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Bourget, *Nouveaux essais de psychologie contemporaine*, Avant-propos de 1885, Paris 1886, IV.

1885, recognized in the 1890s Anhedonia as a symptom of the ‘maladie de la volonté,’ i.e., the inability to feel pleasure, joy, and desire.

In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche claims to have something of Montaigne’s mischief in mind and (who knows?) maybe also in his body. Nietzsche admired Montaigne’s “gay health” or rather his conception of a joyful wisdom that could have an influence on the health of the body. Especially emphasized here is the interaction between both spheres: “A soul, where the wisdom of the world lives, must also make the body healthy through its own health’: Montaigne said this and today I gladly affirm it” (N August – September 1885, 40[59]). To Bourdeau, Nietzsche writes: “I count cheerfulness among the *proofs* of my philosophy” (December 17, 1888). In his preface to *The Joyful Science*, in which, among other things, the figure of the “philosophical doctor” appears, he asserts that: “We philosophers are not free to separate soul from body” (JS 3, transl. Josefine Nauckhoff). Nietzsche’s well-practiced skill, indeed his mastery of looking “from the optic of sickness towards *healthier* concepts and values” to engage in a critical dialogue with *décadence*, also becomes a strategy towards mastering his own life and suffering.

## 2. Humor in the Last Letters

Writing to his mother and sister after they had given him Bismarck’s speeches, Nietzsche strikes a playful tone: “B<ismarck> lets himself go in the Reichstag and expresses his innermost self, like Goethe did to Eckermann. It’s the first time a statesman has needed a Reichstag to be able to *pour his heart out* about anything and everything. Obviously, he can’t do it in front of his wife, she’s too dull. In fact, I envy him such a Reichstag myself,” (Letter to Franziska and Elisabeth Nietzsche, Early January 1885). There’s a double joke lurking here behind the reference to Eckermann’s *Conversations with Goethe*: First, Nietzsche implicitly likens Goethe to Bismarck standing before the Reichstag. Second Goethe had himself used a similar analogy, albeit an inverted one: “‘If Lord Byron,’ said Goethe, ‘had an opportunity of working off all the opposition in his character, by a number of strong parliamentary speeches, he would have been much purer as a poet. But, as he scarcely ever spoke in parliament, he kept within himself all his feelings against his nation, and to free himself from them,



he had no other means to express them in poetical form. I could, therefore, call a great part of Byron's works of negation 'suppressed parliamentary speeches.'<sup>6</sup>

In a letter to Franz Overbeck, Nietzsche confesses that the only interaction that is good for him is the kind he has with buffoons. Tedious people like Paul Lanzky, "a *strangely* noble and fine character, while unfortunately not a 'spirit'" (Letter to Franz Overbeck, January 9, 1886) do him harm. Using Galiani's words, whose letters to Madame d'Épinay he's tenderly poured over, Nietzsche writes: "Il m'ôte la solitude, sans me donner la compagnie" ["he robs me of my solitude without giving me company"] (Letter to Franziska and Elisabeth Nietzsche, December 11, 1884, our transl.). In this same period, Nietzsche is drawn to the elegance of mind and gestures of older ladies like the Englishwoman Emily Fynn, who knows well how to mask her stories of suffering with cheerful tones. Nietzsche discloses his inner life in his letters more than he does in his other works and notes, reporting more details to his friends and relatives about his existential resolutions and decisions, and discussing the recipe by which he confronts his illness.

His correspondence with Reinhart von Seydlitz quivers with life and style. His interlocutor's tone offers Nietzsche the keyword and scale by which he can strike up his own. Both shine by upping one another's brilliant jokes and absurdities. To Seydlitz in Cairo, for example, Nietzsche writes: "Dear friend, it is hard to believe that you have finally decided to become a mummy (or in more manly terms: a *mum*)."<sup>7</sup> (letter to Reinhart Seydlitz, May 13, 1888). The German Empire remains the main butt of his jokes – "bristling stiff with weapons though it may be," but the spell cast by his impish tone seems to take the wind out of his indignation: "Germany seems to me to have become, during the past fifteen years, a real school of stultification. Water, mess, and filth everywhere: that silly smile of old Wilhelm hovering over the waters—" (letter to Reinhart Seydlitz, February 24, 1887). Note here especially the allusion to 'spirit' as expressed in the Bible in lines like "and the spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters" (Mose 1,2).<sup>7</sup> In this same letter, we find an almost cynical aside about a recent earthquake in Nice: "We are living, in fact, in the interesting expectation that *we shall perish* –thanks to a well-intentioned

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6 John Oxenford (ed.), *Conversations of Goethe with Eckermann and Soret*, Cambridge 2011, vol. 19, 153 (December 25, 1825).

7 See Jakob Golomb, "Nietzsche: amico degli ebrei e nemico dell'antisemitismo," in: Vivetta Vivarelli (ed.): *Nietzsche e gli ebrei*, Firenze 2011, 58.

earthquake, which is making not only the dogs howl far and wide. What fun, when the old houses rattle overhead like coffee mills! when the ink bottle assumes a life of its own!” In contrast, the letter to Emily Flynn from March 4, 1887, betrays genuine concern and compassion for the unfortunate citizens of the Italian coast. Nietzsche’s tone only becomes bemused when considering the hysterical reactions of some of Nice’s wealthier guests: “Conversely, it seems to me that the truly heartbreaking events that took place in the small coastal towns between Genoa and San Remo have aroused far too little public interest. In Nice, at any rate, the center of the movement was not underground but in the nerves of the people [...].” Here, the joking tone makes another appearance: “the house in which two of my works were written became so shaken and untenable that it had to be demolished. This has the advantage for posterity that there will be one less place of pilgrimage to be visited.” Nietzsche writes to Seydlitz on September 13, 1888, about a flood: “I admire my patience, as I’ve had reason to slip out of so many skins that I could have wallpapered my room with them. Finally, the Engadin flooded itself in a fit of dropsy, not much more and we would have all become fish.” In another letter, he defends himself from the pushiness of Carl Fuchs with a surreal comparison: “Letters about ‘phrasing’ to the philosopher of *the revaluation of all values!* [...] In Nice they want to get me interested in the people living on Mars; they have the strongest telescopes in Europe for this star. Question: who is really nearest to me – the people of Mars, or the phrasing?” (letter to Carl Fuchs, September 6, 1888).

Reading Nietzsche’s last works, especially his last letters, one cannot help but feel that this bizarre, naughty cheerfulness of his accompanies the rise of an extreme spiritual tension. The letters, an unexpected treasure trove of ideas and puns, demonstrate a genuine delight in taking formulas apart and unhinging schemes and idioms. This unmistakable aspect of Nietzsche’s style, especially his preference for paradox, is tied to a conception of reality and life that proves bizarre and unpredictable. The corrosive humor, often barely distinguishable from sarcasm, delights in taking down convictions and destroying any square inch of certainty, yet Nietzsche’s arrows also have a liberating effect, at least for those who are not his targets. His ‘scornful levity’ is linked with the struggle against the meaninglessness of suffering and existence, and so also with the choice to say *yes* to life. Like Zarathustra’s laughter, such a stance can scare off the uncanny visitations of nihilism. According to Nietzsche, life is to be affirmed, not despite its being tragic but precisely because of it. Through humor,

as through the theatre of the satyrplay that follows tragedy, Nietzsche stands up to these dark, pessimistic, raven-black temptations.

*Translated by Andrea Hiott*

## XIII.

# Heroic Art of Living: Nietzsche's Rank Order of the Types of Life

*by Manuel Knoll*

The art of living aims at a good and happy life. This form of art was a central theme of ancient philosophy. Therefore, it is surprising that existing studies on the topic of happiness and a good life in Nietzsche – who calls himself a “student of more ancient times – above all, of ancient Greece” – often do not or only partially succeed in illuminating his thought from its roots in ancient philosophy (UM II, foreword, transl. Richard T. Gray).<sup>1</sup> This is especially true of Nietzsche's orientation toward the category ‘type of life’ or ‘form of life’ (*bios*), which is central to Plato's and Aristotle's thought on a good and happy life.<sup>2</sup> The central importance of this category for Nietzsche's philosophy is not recognized even by Thomas Brobjer in his study on Nietzsche's ethics, which successfully elaborates its proximity to ancient virtue ethics and Aristotle.<sup>3</sup>

Plato and Aristotle argue that there are both better and worse types of human beings and, in correspondence, better and worse types of life. According to the first thesis of this article, Nietzsche takes up Plato's and Aristotle's views on the existence of a rank order of human beings and types of life. The second thesis claims that Nietzsche, like the two ancient thinkers, places the life of

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1 Gocha Mchedlidze, *Der Wille zum Selbst. Nietzsches Ethik des guten Lebens*, München/Paderborn 2013; Ursula Schneider, *Grundzüge einer Philosophie des Glücks bei Nietzsche*, Berlin / New York 1983; Helmut Walther, “Nietzsche und das Glück,” in: *Aufklärung und Kritik*, Sonderheft 14, Schwerpunkt: Glück und Lebenskunst, 2008, 136–162.

2 On the concept ‘type of life,’ see Rudolf Reuber, *Ästhetische Lebensformen bei Nietzsche*, Munich 1989, 1–10.

3 Thomas H. Brobjer, *Nietzsche's Ethics of Character. A Study of Nietzsche's Ethics and Its Place in the History of Moral Thinking*, Uppsala 1995.

contemplation of the philosopher at the top of the rank order of types of life. The existing literature has already demonstrated that the ‘heroic individual’ occupies a central role in Nietzsche’s thought.<sup>4</sup> Building on this research, the third thesis maintains that Nietzsche should be understood as a representative of a heroic art of living. Demonstrating Nietzsche’s high appreciation of the life of contemplation, this article explains his heroism of philosophical cognition that is inextricably linked to his ideal, which is to “*live dangerously!*” (JS 283, transl. Adrian Del Caro).

Plato and Aristotle distinguish only between three relevant types of life. In contrast, Nietzsche addresses also other types such as the life of the saint and the life of the artist. His high regard for the aesthetic type of life – the shaping of one’s life into a work of art – has already been studied in detail.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the aesthetic component of a philosophical life can be largely neglected in the following. Nevertheless, it should be noted that Nietzsche conceives of the true philosopher, as well as of himself, as a creator of art. The central aim of the present investigation is to shed light on Nietzsche’s understanding of happiness and a good life, starting from Nietzsche’s appropriation of Plato’s and Aristotle’s doctrine of a hierarchy of human beings and forms of life.

## 1. The Rank Order of Types of Life in Plato

The distinction between different types of life goes back to Plato’s *Republic* (= *Resp.*). Aristotle takes up this distinction and integrates it into his practical philosophy and in particular into his doctrine of a good and happy life. In the *Republic*, Plato introduces the three types of life in the context of the happiness of the citizens of Kallipolis, the good city he outlines in the book. In his unpublished essay ‘The Greek State’ of 1872, Nietzsche gives an interpretation of Plato’s constitutional outline that remains his model for a good political order until his late works.<sup>6</sup>

Plato’s Kallipolis is a hierarchical order of three estates. The basis of this social order is his psychology, according to which the soul consists of three

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<sup>4</sup> Leslie Paul Thiele, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of the Soul. A Study of Heroic Individualism*, Princeton 1990; see also Günter Götde / Jörg Zirfas (eds.), *Lebenskunst im 20. Jahrhundert. Stimmen von Philosophen, Künstlern und Therapeuten*, München/Paderborn 2014.

<sup>5</sup> Daniel Mourkojannis, *Ethik der Lebenskunst. Zur Nietzsche-Rezeption in der evangelischen Theologie*, Münster 2000; Alexander Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, Cambridge, Mass./London, England 1985; Reuber, *Ästhetische Lebensformen bei Nietzsche*; Thiele, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of the Soul*.

<sup>6</sup> See Manuel Knoll, “Nietzsches Begriff der sozialen Gerechtigkeit,” in: *Nietzsche-Studien* 38 (2009), 156–181.

different parts: reason, spirit, and desire (*Resp.* IV, 435a ff.). In analogy to the well-ordered soul, Plato conceives of the well-ordered city as a large tripartite human being: the most rational govern it, the most spirited defend it, and the covetous provide the necessities of life. Plato's analogy of soul, man, and city makes it clear that he does not regard human beings as merely unequal, but as fundamentally unequal. For, according to this analogy, persons of the lowest and the highest estate are as radically different as desire, the lowest part of the soul, is different from reason, its highest part.

The central topic of the *Republic* is the human virtue called justice and in particular the just political order and the just individual. The good city is just if everyone minds his own business and refrains from meddling in the business of others (*Resp.* IV, 433a-b). In Book IX, Plato presents three proofs for his view that justice coincides with happiness and injustice with unhappiness. With them he wants to demonstrate that the most just persons are the happiest and the worst, the tyrants, are the most unhappy. In the course of his second proof, Plato introduces his distinction between three types of life.

In a first step, Plato builds on his distinction of three parts of the soul and distinguishes between three types of pleasure (*hedonē*) and of striving associated with them. The lowest part of the soul, desire (*epithymētikon*), strives for sensual pleasure and hence for money and gain in order to obtain this pleasure. The middle part, spirit (*thymoeides*), aims at power, victory, and honor (*timē*). The highest part, reason (*logistikon*), aspires to learn and to achieve truth and wisdom (*Resp.* IX, 580d–581b). In a second step, Plato explains that in the soul of all human beings one of these three parts has a leading and dominant position. Therefore, he distinguishes between three types of human beings: the lovers of wisdom, the lovers of honor, and the lovers of gain (*Resp.* IX, 581c).

In a third step, Plato matches the three types of human beings – in correspondence to their predilections – with three different ways or types of life. The farmers, craftsmen, and traders, the members of the lowest and working estate, hold a life dedicated to gain and sensual pleasure to be the best type of life. Such human beings consider the pleasure acquired through learning and honor to be worthless. In contrast, the members of the warrior class, who prefer a life dedicated to honor, assess the pleasure obtained through money to be ignoble and base and the pleasure from learning “to be smoke and nonsense” (*Resp.* IX, 581d, transl. A. Bloom). At the top of the social order is the estate of the philosophers. Even though they take turns in governing the

city, their peculiar type of life is a life of contemplation devoted to knowledge, consisting chiefly in the contemplation of divine forms and their order. The philosophers consider the pleasure provided by this type of life to be by far the best (*Resp.* IX, 581c-e).

The aim of Plato's second proof is to demonstrate that the type of life of the philosophers, who are also the most just persons, is by far the best. As he emphasizes during his first proof, "the consideration is about the greatest thing, a good life and a bad one" (*Resp.* IX, 578c, transl. A. Bloom). The three types of life correspond to three different views of a good and successful life: "Each of these types of life is a road to happiness."<sup>7</sup> Plato, like Aristotle later, in this context uses the term 'eudaimonia,' which is usually translated with 'human flourishing' or 'happiness' (*Resp.* IX, 577b). This term, however, does not primarily refer to a subjectively experienced state of elevated mood, but rather to a good and successful life as a whole.

Usually all people are convinced that their path to happiness is the best and their type of life makes them happy. In line with this, opinions about pleasure and a good life diverge widely. Plato is far from any kind of relativism that recognizes the different types of life as being of the same value. Rather, he claims that he can overcome the disagreement by finding knowledge of the truth and by establishing an objective rank order of the different types of life. Only the philosopher has the expertise to pass judgment on all three types. Only he is able to base his judgment on experience (*empeiria*), prudence (*phronēsis*), and argument (*logos*) (*Resp.* IX, 582a). Furthermore, only the philosopher has experience of all three types of pleasure. Since in him experience is accompanied by prudence, judgment based on reason, and argument, he is the only one capable of knowledge of the truth and thus of a correct judgment of the value of the different types of life (*Resp.* IX, 581e–582e).<sup>8</sup>

The philosopher's judgment on the three types of life and their ranking is clear: a life of contemplation is best, a life devoted to honor comes second, while a life dedicated to gain and sensual pleasure is third (*Resp.* IX, 583a). This order of rank corresponds to both the hierarchy of the three parts of the soul and of the three types of human beings or of the three estates of Kallipolis.

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7 Henning Ottmann, *Geschichte des politischen Denkens. Die Griechen. Von Platon bis zum Hellenismus*, Vol. 1/2, Stuttgart 2001, 64 (my transl.).

8 See Ottmann, *Geschichte des politischen Denkens*, 64.

Thinking in orders of rank is characteristic not only of Plato's philosophy, but of Nietzsche's as well.

It is surprising that Plato assigns only one type of life and pleasure to each of the three types of human beings. Does a good life not presuppose the activities and pleasures of all three parts of the soul? Similarly, it is astounding what great weight Plato attributes to pleasure as a criterion for hierarchizing the types of life. After all, he is a determined critic of hedonism. However, Plato's remarks on the three types of pleasure and his considerations on pleasure in the third proof show that he recognizes the philosopher's pleasure in learning and knowing as the only true and pure pleasure. Like "the life of the many," Plato radically devalues the two other types of pleasure. The pleasures the crowd chases are "mixed with pains," they are also "mere phantoms and shadow paintings of true pleasure" (*Resp.* IX, 586b, transl. Allan Bloom).<sup>9</sup>

## 2. The Rank Order of Types of Life in Aristotle

Aristotle takes up Plato's distinction between three types of life and integrates it into his practical philosophy. According to his doctrine, human flourishing or happiness (*eudaimonia*) is the highest good and supreme goal human beings can achieve through their actions. Aristotle's points of departure are the pluralism of opinion and the disagreements on a good and happy life that existed in his time among the people, the educated, and the wise. Corresponding to the different opinions about happiness, there are also different views regarding the question of which type of life leads to happiness. The crowd, which identifies happiness with sensual pleasure, strives for a life of enjoyment (*bios apolaustikos*) and for the wealth to be able to realize such a life. The educated and noble, who conceive of happiness in terms of recognition and honor (*timē*), choose a political life (*bios politikos*). The wise aim at a life of contemplation (*bios theoretikos*) (*Nicomachean Ethics = Eth. Nic.* I 3, 1095a20–1096a10).

In addition to the three types of life Aristotle takes from Plato, he also mentions the life of money-making as a fourth type. However, he immediately rejects this type with the argument that money is merely a means for a good life and not an end in itself (*Eth. Nic.* I 3, 1096a5–10). Similarly, Aristotle denigrates a life that is purely devoted to sensual pleasures as "a life fit only for cattle"; he

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<sup>9</sup> See *Resp.* IX, 581d-e, and Ottmann, *Geschichte des politischen Denkens*, 65.



is also criticaö because “the masses appear to be quite slavish” (*Eth. Nic.* I 3, 1095b19–22, transl. Roger Crisp). Aristotle discusses hedonism in detail only at the end of Book VII of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and at the beginning of Book X. Furthermore, he still differentiates between the two goals of a political life, ‘virtue’ (*aretē*) and ‘honor’ (*timē*). Aristotle argues against honor as the goal of a political life and claims that virtue is a goal superior to honor (*Eth. Nic.* I 3, 1095b20–31).

As a result of his famous human function argument, Aristotle defines happiness or human flourishing as the “activity of the soul in accordance with virtue” (*Eth. Nic.* I 6, 1097b22–1098b8, transl. Roger Crisp). For a good and happy life, he considers it essential that citizens develop and actively realize the virtues that are peculiar to their psychic constitution as human beings. These virtues correspond to the two types of life which, according to Aristotle, alone make possible a truly good and happy life in the *polis*: the political life and the life of contemplation. In order to attain the happiness of the life of contemplation, citizens have to develop and actively realize the intellectual virtue called wisdom (*sophia*) through learning. Wisdom enables the philosopher and scientist to understand causes and principles and to derive cogent conclusions from them (*Eth. Nic.* VI 6, 1140b31 ff.; *Eth. Nic.* X 7, 1177a12 ff.). Unlike Plato, Aristotle does not consider a life of contemplation as a necessary condition for governing a city well.

There are good arguments for the controversial interpretation that Aristotle also considers a political life to be a road to happiness.<sup>10</sup> In a political life, citizens participate in the council and the law courts and shape their civic life together through such political activities. In order to attain the happiness of a political life, citizens have to develop and actively realize the intellectual virtue called prudence (*phronēsis*) and ethical virtues such as justice, temperance, courage, and friendship (*Eth. Nic.* II–VI, VIII–IX).

At the end of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle revisits the question of the most desirable life and presents a series of arguments for his view that a life of contemplation is better than a political life. He argues that the human intellect (*nous*) is the best part of human beings and that the objects it contemplates are “the highest objects of knowledge.” Therefore, the contemplative activity is the best; moreover it is “the most continuous” (*Eth. Nic.* X 7, 1177a17–21, transl.

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10 See John L. Ackrill, *Aristotle on Eudaimonia*, London 1975.

Roger Crisp). Likely, with his term ‘highest objects of knowledge’ Aristotle refers to the divine celestial bodies and to the divine unmoved mover. In line with his *Metaphysics*, he explains that God’s activity and type of life is contemplation (*Met.* XII 9, 1074b33–35; *Eth. Nic.* X 8, 1178b21–22). The philosopher is “dearest to the gods” because his contemplative activity corresponds to the activity of the divine intellect (*Eth. Nic.* X 9, 1179a22–24, transl. Roger Crisp).

In his praise of a life of contemplation, Aristotle resumes Plato’s argument that such a life grants the highest, purest, and most lasting pleasure (*Eth. Nic.* X 7, 1177a23–27). He immediately adds that a life of contemplation, which is desired for its own sake, is more self-sufficient than a political life because a philosopher just needs the necessities of life (*Eth. Nic.* X 7, 1177a28–b2). Another argument starts with the premise that a good and happy life requires leisure (*scholē*). The practical virtues, Aristotle argues, do not agree with leisure because they are realized in politics and war. In contrast, the activities of a life of contemplation go hand in hand with leisure (*Eth. Nic.* X 7, 1177b4–26). Although the philosopher is capable of divine activity, “in so far as he is a human being and lives together with a number of others, he chooses to do actions in accordance with virtue” (*Eth. Nic.* X 8, 1178b5–7, transl. Roger Crisp). This statement clearly suggests the interpretation that a life of contemplation may well go hand in hand with a political life. In his *Politics*, Aristotle mediates between the two main types of life and abandons their hierarchy (*Pol.* VII 2, 1325b14 ff.).

### 3. The Rank Order of Types of Life in Nietzsche

Between the ancient world, which was home to Plato and Aristotle, and the modern world, in which Nietzsche composed his writings, is more than 2000 years. The ancient *polis*, with its institution of slavery, differs in many ways from a European nation state in Nietzsche’s time. A central difference between antiquity and modernity is the valuation of work. The ranking of life forms in Plato and Aristotle makes clear that they consider a truly good life to be incompatible with a life in which people have to spend a considerable part of their time in a work activity. This is true even for more demanding activities such as those of artists or architects.

In the Christian Middle Ages, work was held in similarly low esteem as in antiquity. A life of contemplation (*vita contemplativa*) was generally assessed

as the highest type of life. In contrast, since the Renaissance, an active life (*vita activa*) and work had been reevaluated. The first humanist, Petrarch, defined the human being as *homo faber*, a maker and fabricator of technical tools to master nature. Two centuries later, the formation of Protestantism gave rise to the Christian appreciation of secular work, a phenomenon Max Weber analyzes in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. In the 18th century, the Christian tradition was increasingly secularized. This process brought about the bourgeois appreciation of work as “an accomplishment which provides life with significant content”; work became “a source of all earthly proficiency, virtue, and happiness.”<sup>11</sup> A century later, Karl Marx interpreted labor as a free and conscious activity and as the essence of man. This evaluation corresponded to the general view of his time: “In the nineteenth century, work and education became the substance of the life of bourgeois society.”<sup>12</sup>

Nietzsche’s assessment of work differs clearly from the value Marx and his century attributed to it. Rather, his untimely evaluation of modern professional work and of the people who perform it harkens back to the value judgments of Plato and Aristotle. As early as 1872, Nietzsche mocks expressions such as “dignity of man” and “dignity of work” as “conceptual hallucinations” that the Greeks did not need. Rather, “they voice their opinion that work is a disgrace with shocking openness” (CV, *The Greek State*, Foreword, transl. Carol Diethe). For his time, Nietzsche diagnoses both “a diminishing and an occasional underestimation of the *vita contemplativa*” and “that work and diligence – once in the retinue of the great goddess health – sometimes seem to rage like a disease” (HH I 282, transl. Gary Handwerk). Nietzsche criticizes in particular “the Americans” who spend their “life in hunt for a profit”; he understands “their breathless haste in working” to be “the true vice of the new world,” which “is already starting to spread to old Europe” (JS 329, transl. Josefine Nauckhoff; see also HH I 285). In contrast, Nietzsche shares the “aristocratic feeling that work *disgraces*” because “it makes the soul and the body common”; related to this he criticizes the “modern, noisy, time-consuming industriousness, that is so proud, so stupidly proud of itself” (BGE 58, transl. Adrian Del Caro; see also GS 329).

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11 Karl Löwith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche: The Revolution in Nineteenth Century Thought*, transl. David E. Green, New York 1964, 264.

12 Löwith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche*, 263.

In line with Plato and Aristotle, to whom the idea of a universal human dignity is alien, Nietzsche's thought is based on the view "that there is an *order of rank* between people" and thus a fundamental inequality and difference in value (BGE 228, transl. Judith Norman).<sup>13</sup> Nietzsche understands only the philosophers, artists, and saints as "true men" (*wahre Menschen*) (SE 5 and 6). The different value and rank of human beings manifests itself also in their activities. The main deficiency of "active men," by which Nietzsche understands officials, businessmen, and scholars, is that they are small cogs in the big general social wheel who perform merely general social roles. In contrast to the true human beings, they "are generally wanting in the higher activity," i.e., "the individual" (HH I 283, transl. R. J. Hollingdale). Nietzsche considers "active men" to be slaves, i.e., unfree people: "for he who does not have two-thirds of his day to himself is a slave, let him be what he may otherwise: statesman, businessman, official, scholar" (HH I 283, transl. R. J. Hollingdale; see also GS 18). Nietzsche's classification of statesmen among the slaves already suggests that he considers contemptible not only a life dedicated to gain, but also a political life.

According to Nietzsche's basic anthropological conviction, people are extremely unequal and have unequal value. This conviction is central for the interpretation of Plato's *Republic* that Nietzsche gives in *The Greek State*: "The actual aim of the state, the Olympian existence and constantly renewed creation and preparation of the genius, compared with whom everything else is just a tool, aid and facilitator, is discovered here through poetic intuition and described vividly" (CV, transl. Carol Diethe). This interpretation, however, does not do full justice to Plato because the Athenian does not understand the two lower classes as mere means for the highest estate. Thus, Plato explicitly declares that the happiness of a particular estate does not matter in Kallipolis. Rather, the goal is that the entire city should flourish and become happy and that every estate should receive the share of happiness assigned to it by nature (*Resp.* IV, 420c–421c). Nonetheless, the previous section on Plato demonstrates that the Athenian does not particularly value the worth and happiness of the members of the lowest class. Hence, Nietzsche's interpretation that Plato only cares about the members of the highest estate is by no means far-fetched.

In the *Anti-Christ*, Nietzsche interprets the caste order established by the ancient Indian *Law Code of Manu* and the activities of the members of the three

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13 See Knoll, "Nietzsches Begriff der sozialen Gerechtigkeit."

castes in analogy to the order of estates introduced by Plato in the *Republic*.<sup>14</sup> In his interpretation, Nietzsche claims that the members of the lowest caste also differ from the members of the two upper castes by the kind of happiness assigned to them by nature:

To be a public utility, a wheel, a function – you need to be destined for this by nature: it is not society but rather the type of *happiness* that the vast majority of people cannot rise above that make them intelligent machines. For the mediocre, mediocrity is a happiness; mastery of one thing, specialization as a natural instinct (AC 57, transl. Judith Norman).

The kind of happiness “that the vast majority of people cannot rise above” corresponds to their life dedicated to gain and sensual pleasure. Like Plato and Aristotle, Nietzsche rejects such a conception of happiness. He makes this clear in particular with his statements on the last human beings from *Zarathustra*: “‘We invented happiness’ – say the last human beings, blinking” (Za I, Prologue 5, transl. Adrian Del Caro). Nietzsche conceives of the last human beings as “the most contemptible human beings,” toward which the human animal, ‘the *as yet undetermined animal*,’ tends to develop (ZA I, Prologue 5, transl. Adrian Del Caro; BGE 62, transl. Adrian Del Caro).<sup>15</sup> The *last* human beings understand themselves as the highest and *last* possible form of enhancement of human beings.<sup>16</sup> They form the contrast to Nietzsche’s elitist and aristocratic ideal of the overhuman (Übermensch), with which he opposes the threatening “over-all degeneration of humanity” (BGE 203, my transl.).<sup>17</sup> The last human beings represent a bourgeois type of life in which ideas of happiness characteristic of hedonism and eudaimonism are realized. As Nietzsche’s remarks in *Zarathustra* suggest, this type of life goes along with human diminishment, flattening, and growing effeminacy of the human being, a fixation on security and avoidance of pain and suffering, industriousness and education, a loss of creativity and

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14 See Annemarie Etter, “Nietzsche und das Gesetzbuch des Manu,” in: *Nietzsche-Studien* 16 (1987), 340–352; Knoll, “Nietzsches Begriff der sozialen Gerechtigkeit,” 176–181; Andreas Urs Sommer, *Kommentar zu Nietzsches Der Antichrist. Ecce homo. Dionysos-Dithyramben. Nietzsche contra Wagner = Historischer und kritischer Kommentar zu Friedrich Nietzsches Werken*, ed. Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Vol. 6/2, Berlin/Boston, 2013, 274.

15 See Laurence Lampert, *Nietzsche’s Teaching. An Interpretation of “Thus spoke Zarathustra.”* New Haven 1986, 24.

16 Werner Stegmaier, *An Orientation to the Philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche*, transl. Reinhard G. Mueller and Werner Stegmaier, Nashville, Tennessee 2022, 115–116.

17 See Manuel Knoll, “The Übermensch as Social and Political Task: A Study in the Continuity of Nietzsche’s Political Thought,” in: Manuel Knoll / Barry Stocker (eds.), *Nietzsche as Political Philosopher*, Berlin/Boston 2014, 239–266.

authority, and a massification and levelling of the human being. Nietzsche identifies the ideas of happiness characteristic of hedonism and eudaimonism with the life goals of the English. In this context, he refers in particular to the utilitarianism of Jeremy Bentham, John Stewart Mill, and Herbert Spencer.<sup>18</sup> As early as 1874, Nietzsche firmly rejects the view that the “ultimate goal” of humanity lies “in the happiness of all or of the greatest number” (SE 6, transl. R. J. Hollingdale). Later, he notes, “*many happy people of lowest rank* is almost a disgusting thought” (N Summer / Fall 1884, 26[234], my transl.).<sup>19</sup>

Nietzsche’s assessment of a political life is not much better than his evaluation of a life dedicated to gain and pleasure. Unlike Plato and Aristotle, of course, Nietzsche’s assessment does not refer to the ancient *polis*. The *polis* was a small association of people, identical with its male citizenry, who actively participated in the political life of the city. In contrast, Nietzsche is focused on the modern nation state, which formed in the transition from the Middle Ages to modern times. Nietzsche, who sees himself as a “*good European*” (*guter Europäer*), is just as critical of the modern territorial state as he is of the strong nationalism associated with it in 19th century Europe (HH I 475).

In Nietzsche’s time, political life was understood primarily as a life serving the state or the nation. Nietzsche rejects this type of life and criticizes the state as the “new idol” (*neuen Götzen*) (Za I, New Idol). Against the modern nation state of his time, he objects that “it wants men to render it the same idolatry they formerly rendered the church” (SE 4, transl. R. J. Hollingdale). The enthusiastic devotion to the state, which lures and binds many people to itself with its lies, could hardly be explained without the “death of God,” which means that “the belief in the Christian God has become unbelievable” (JS 343, transl. Judith Nauckhoff). After this significant event, the state fills the void left behind in many people (Za I, New Idol; HH I 472). As the “new idol,” the modern nation state becomes the purpose of life for many people, some of whom make themselves slavishly dependent on it.

The nation states that existed in Nietzsche’s time undoubtedly enjoyed considerable esteem and veneration. He holds this to be by no means justified, just as he rejects the common view that the “ultimate goal” of humanity lies “in the development of great communities” (SE 6, transl. R. J. Hollingdale).

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<sup>18</sup> See Brobjer, *Nietzsche’s Ethics of Character*, 130–191.

<sup>19</sup> See BGE 228, KSA 5, 165; TI *Arrows and Epigrams* 12, N May–July 1885, 35[34].

In particular, Nietzsche refuses the prevailing doctrine that “the state is the highest goal of mankind and that a man has no higher duty than to serve the state” (SE 6, transl. R. J. Hollingdale). In the context of his criticism of the exaggerated appreciation of a modern political life, Nietzsche is also critical that education is meanwhile expected to “give up its own highest, noblest, loftiest claims and content itself with serving some other form of life, for instance, the state” (BA, Zukunft Bildungsanstalten, transl. D. Searls).

Nietzsche also ranks the statesmen among the slaves because a political life does not grant enough free time to independently organize one’s day. Political life lacks leisure, which – as already Aristotle argued – is a prerequisite and component of a good life. Above all, leisure forms the prerequisite of a life of contemplation, which for Nietzsche, as for Plato and Aristotle, deserves by far the highest place in the ranking of types of life. The two ancient thinkers were “justified in considering the pleasures gained through knowledge to be the most desirable – provided that they wanted to express a personal and not a universal experience: because for most people the pleasures gained through knowledge are among the weakest, ranked far below the pleasures attained through a meal” (N Spring 1880, 3[9], my transl.). In line with Nietzsche’s appreciation of a life of contemplation, he criticizes his time because, while “the valuation of the contemplative life has declined,” the “men of action” historically receive a maximum of recognition. Nietzsche laments that meanwhile scholars compete with “men of action” and are ashamed of leisure (*otium*): “But there is something noble about leisure and idleness” (HH I 284 and 285, transl. R. J. Hollingdale). Indeed, “in order to prevent their privilege from seeming an injustice,” starting in the 19th century the educated called themselves “intellectual workers.”<sup>20</sup> Nietzsche rejects the “modern restlessness” and talks, like contemporary critics of culture, of “the tremendous acceleration of life” (HH I 282 and 285, transl. R. J. Hollingdale). For him, this agitatedness “is growing so great that higher culture can no longer allow its fruits to mature,” which has the consequence that “our civilization is turning into a new barbarism.” Therefore, “the most necessary corrections to the character of mankind that have to be taken in hand is a considerable strengthening of the contemplative element in it” (HH I 285, transl. R. J. Hollingdale).

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20 Löwith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche*, 263.

#### 4. The Heroic Ideal of a Life of Contemplation

Nietzsche explicitly describes himself as one of the “men of the *vita contemplativa*,” which he once defined as “strolling with thoughts and friends” (D 41, transl. R. J. Hollingdale; GS 329, transl. Adrian De Caro). While Plato and Aristotle identify a life of contemplation exclusively with the life of the philosopher, Nietzsche distinguishes between four types of human beings who lead such a life: the “so-called *religious* natures,” the artists, the small number of philosophers, and “the thinkers and the workers in science” (D 41, transl. R. J. Hollingdale; see also N Summer 1880, 4[58]). Nietzsche emphasizes that the thinker – which in this context likely means the philosopher – does not choose “the solitude of the *vita contemplativa*” because he is melancholic and wants to renounce or abstain from something. Rather, he forgoes the *vita practica* in order to find himself and gain “*his* cheerfulness” (D 440, transl. R. J. Hollingdale; see N Summer 1880, 4[46]).

In contrast to Plato and Aristotle, for Nietzsche ‘God’ is no longer an object of contemplation, but of a philosophical critique of religion. For his present, Nietzsche states that the “time is past when the Church had a monopoly on contemplation, when the *vita contemplativa* always had to be first and foremost a *vita religiosa*” (JS 280, transl. Josefine Nauckhoff). As a milestone of the historical development toward an unchristian philosophizing, Nietzsche understands Luther, who aroused mistrust “for the saints and the whole Christian *vita contemplativa*: only since then has the way again become open to an unchristian *vita contemplativa* in Europe and a limit set to contempt for worldly activity and the laity” (D 88, transl. R. J. Hollingdale; see also N Summer 1880, 4[59]).

Nietzsche’s ideal of an unchristian life of contemplation, which he regards as the highest-ranking type of life, is closely linked to his understanding of philosophy and the task of the philosopher. Nietzsche’s develops his own philosophical position, which he assumes in the context of ancient thought, already in the early 1870s. Thus, he critically distances himself from the rationalism and optimism of Socrates, whom he regards as the “archetype and progenitor” of the “*theoretical man* working in the service of science” (BT 18, my transl.). In contrast to the optimistic belief in the “happiness of all on earth” and the abolition of suffering through science, Nietzsche advocates a heroic and tragic culture whose “most important feature lies in putting wisdom in place of science as the highest goal” (BT 18, transl. Ronald Speirs). While Nietzsche rejects the plebeian Socrates in both his early and late works, he



recognizes a kindred spirit in the proud aristocratic thinker Heraclitus. In Heraclitus's philosophy, which he understands as a philosophy of becoming, Nietzsche is fascinated above all by his doctrine of the omnipresent struggle and conflict of opposites, which he recognizes in a transformed form in his teacher Schopenhauer (PTAG 5–8 and EH BT 3). Nietzsche takes over from Heraclitus the affirmation of competition, struggle, and war on all levels. This constitutes the core of his ideal of the heroic, which he opposes to the bourgeois values of his time.<sup>21</sup> While the bourgeois way of life is focused on industriousness, gain, and security, as well as on the avoidance of unpleasure and suffering, Nietzsche's Zarathustra advises not to work but to fight: "I do not recommend peace to you, but victory instead. Your work shall be a struggle, your peace shall be a victory!" (Za I, On War and Warriors, transl. Adrian del Caro). This advice is accompanied by an affirmation of danger, hardship, self-conquest, sacrifice, passing away, destruction, and suffering, as well as an appreciation of manliness and of virtues such as self-control, courage, and bravery.

As a philosopher, Nietzsche is primarily concerned with a war of thoughts and values. The more "manly" and "warlike" age he hopes for is one "that will carry heroism into the search for knowledge and wage wars for the sake of thoughts and their consequences. [...] For – believe me – the secret for harvesting from existence the greatest fruitfulness and the greatest enjoyment is – to *live dangerously!*" (JS 283, transl. Josefine Nauckhoff). This quote and the whole aphorism make clear that Nietzsche formulates his heroic ideal "*live dangerously!*" not so much for the realm of action, but for that of philosophical cognition. A philosophical life oriented toward this ideal promises "the greatest enjoyment" and highest pleasure, which already Plato and Aristotle saw linked to a life of cognition. The heroism of philosophical cognition requires strength and virtues such as bravery and probity or truthfulness (*Redlichkeit*). Only in this way can the philosophical hero resist the widespread human need for a faith and for convictions to cling to: "great minds are skeptics" (AC 54, my transl.).

With his celebration of skepticism, Nietzsche ties in with his thoughts on the "free spirits" in *Human, All Too Human*. In this *Book for Free Spirits*, its subtitle, Nietzsche contrasts the exceptional "free spirits" with the "fettered spirits," which "are the rule." Generally, the free spirit has "truth on his side, or at least the spirit of inquiry after truth: he demands reasons, the rest demand

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21 See Thiele, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of the Soul*, 12.

faith” (HH I 225, transl. R. J. Hollingdale, see HH I 226, 282, 464). In *The Anti-Christ*, Nietzsche associates the heroic brave, free, and skeptic spirits with “strength and super-strength” and characterizes its opposite, the “men of faith” and of “convictions,” who have a “need for faith,” as weak and as slaves: “Convictions are prisons” (AC 54, transl. Judith Norman). The men of faith and of convictions are “the *antagonist* of the truthful person [*des Wahrhaftigen*], – of truth ... The ‘believer’ is not free to have any sort of conscience for the question ‘true’ or ‘untrue’: honesty [*rechtschaffen sein*] on *this* point would be his immediate downfall” (AC 54, transl. J. Norman, slightly modified; see also BGE 227 and EH Destiny 3). It is noteworthy that Nietzsche understands both the heroic skeptic and the heroic truthful person as the antagonists of the ‘believer.’

The heroic struggle of the philosopher is also a struggle with himself or with the conflicting forces that constitute his soul. It is a struggle to become who one is and at the same time a battle to become an autonomous individual.<sup>22</sup> This struggle can also be interpreted as a striving for “perfectionist self-realization.”<sup>23</sup> At least to the same extent, however, it is a struggle for thoughts, values, and ideals. According to Nietzsche, philosophy is “the most spiritual will to power” (BGE 9, transl. Adrian Del Caro). In his struggle against Christianity, metaphysics, Judeo-Christian morality, and the “ascetic ideal,” Nietzsche’s own will to power as a philosopher is given expression. His work and his creative urge, which constitute his actual happiness, are part of this struggle.<sup>24</sup> As successors, he wishes for “philosophers of the future,” who counteract nihilism by experimenting and by creating new values and a new morality, thus working on the “aggrandizement” of the human being. Nietzsche rejects the “small politics” of nation states and the prevailing ideal of a national political life. The future “new philosophers” are to be legislators and commanders who, in the tradition of Plato, pursue a “great politics” of the global shaping, education, and breeding of the human being (BGE 203, 208–212).<sup>25</sup>

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22 See Reuber, *Ästhetische Lebensformen bei Nietzsche*; Thiele, *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of the Soul*.

23 See Mehedlidze, *Der Wille zum Selbst*.

24 Schneider, *Grundzüge einer Philosophie des Glücks bei Nietzsche*, 5–6.

25 See Knoll, “The Übermensch as Social and Political Task: A Study in the Continuity of Nietzsche’s Political Thought” and Andreas Urs Sommer, “Philosophen und philosophische Arbeiter. Das sechste Hauptstück: ‘wir Gelehrten,’” in: Marcus Andreas Born (ed.), *Friedrich Nietzsche, Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, Berlin / Boston 2014, 131–145.



## XIV.

# Nietzsche's "Higher Art, the Art of Festivals"

*by Marco Brusotti*

"We want to experience an artwork again and again! Thus one should shape one's life so that one has the same wish with respect to its individual parts! This the main idea!" (N Spring – Autumn 1881, 11[165], transl. Adrian Del Caro). Nietzsche connects this proposition with the idea of eternal recurrence: in order to affirm life, and even more, in order to wish to "experience" it "again and again," we have to shape it like an artwork. Festivals too are part of such events that people wish to "experience again and again;" and along with the art of making an artwork out of oneself, goes the "invention of festivals." Nietzsche contrasts this "higher art" with the "art of artworks," which does not enter into life and is not an art of living. "Against the art of artworks I want to teach a higher art: that of the invention of *festivals*" (N Spring – Autumn 1881, 11[170], transl. Adrian Del Caro).

New festivals and new people who celebrate these festivals are part of a new culture and new values. The festival is the leitmotif that connects, with significant new accentuations, the ideas of the young Nietzsche to the last results of his late philosophy.

### 1. The Dionysian Spring Festivals and Tragedy

"That is why the greatest German festival, the Bayreuth Festival is in a singular position: here tragic people celebrate their consecration festival as a symbol for

the beginning of a new culture. A striving back to health” (N Spring – Autumn 1871, 13[2], our transl.). The cultural ideal of Wagner’s young follower centers upon “the Bayreuth Festival” and the “unfashionable people” who “attend” it (WB 1). A new German culture is to emerge from Wagner’s art and ancient tragedy is to be reborn from his festival. This (supposed) analogy to the ancient Greeks is a basic theme in Nietzsche’s first philosophical writing. Tragedies in ancient Greece had an emphatically festive character; the tragedy that emerged “out of the spirit of music” resembled less a play than a musical drama like Wagner’s *Tristan and Isolde*. The enraptured audience went through an ‘oceanic’ experience of universal togetherness: the boundaries of individuality disappeared, and the spectators or rather listeners felt at one with the portrayed hero, even with the god Dionysus himself.

The most admirable “deed of the Hellenic culture” (ITS, KGW II 3, 13; N September 1870 – January 1871, 5[94]), in which its “idealistic power” (DW 1, transl. Ira J. Allen) expresses itself, is the “spiritualization of the Dionysian festival” (ITS, KGW II 3, 13; DW 1); for it is precisely from the “Dionysian spring festivals” that tragedy emerges: “The ecstatic state of the Dionysian spring festivals is the origin of music and dithyramb (of tragedy)” (ITS, KGW II 3, 12). “Important statement: tragedy gives way to a rebirth of the Dionysian” (ITS, KGW II 3, 16, our transl.). The birth of tragedy is a rebirth of the Dionysian in a more spiritual form; but the process of “spiritualization” that eventually leads to this rebirth already starts with the spring festivals.

In general, the Dionysian festivals represent a “reunion with nature” (N Winter 1869-70 – Spring 1870, 3[61]) and in this sense they are also a “festival of reconciliation”: “The festivals of Dionysus not only forge a union between man and man, but reconcile man and nature” (DW 1, transl. Ira J. Allen; see also BT 1). The reconciliation with nature, however, can happen in the most diverse ways, depending on the respective culture. Spring festivals and similar events are “ancient and can be found everywhere” (DW 1; see also BT 2, our transl.), but a “vast gulf” separates “the *Dionysiac Greeks* from the *Dionysiac Barbarians*” (BT 2, transl. Ronald Speirs). “The strongest contrast to the Asiatic forms of the Dionysian festival” was to be found in Greece (ITS, KGW II 3, 14, our transl.).

This doubtful opposition reveals deeply rooted prejudices that were widespread in the (not only) German philology of the time.<sup>1</sup> Nietzsche

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1 See Barbara von Reibnitz, *Ein Kommentar zu Friedrich Nietzsche “Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik” (chapters 1-12)*, Stuttgart/Weimar 1992, 96 ff.

completely ignores the ritual, ceremonial, cultic context of the festivals in the Middle East ("from Babylon to Rome"), which he, on the other hand, exclusively emphasizes in the Greek festivals; the latter ones get transfigured aesthetically, while the former ones are being interpreted as a wild return to animal nature. Nietzsche and his contemporaries exaggerate the sexual permissiveness, even "the unrestricted hetaerism" of Middle Eastern festivals (BTT; see also DW 1): "Almost everywhere an excess of sexual indiscipline ... lay at the heart of such festivals" (BT 2, transl. Ronald Speirs). These festivals, in which "just the wildest of nature's beasts were unleashed," showed a "repulsive mixture of sensuality and cruelty"; the "Babylonian Sacaea" thus represented a regression "to the condition of tigers and monkeys" (BT 2, transl. Ronald Speirs).

"The opposite to this is the Greek Dionysus-Festival which Euripides sketches in the *Bacchae*. From this festival flows the same loveliness, the same musical transfiguration and intoxication that Scopas and Praxiteles banned into statues" (DW 1; BTT, our transl.). Thus, for Nietzsche, "the Bacchic choruses of the Greeks" may have their pre-history in Asia Minor, extending to Babylon and the orgiastic Sacaea" (BT 1, transl. Ronald Speirs); but in strongest opposition to the Sacaea, "the significance of the Greeks' Dionysiac orgies was that of festivals of universal release and redemption and days of transfiguration" (BT 2, transl. Ronald Speirs). For Nietzsche, following Euripides, the Maenads are an "example of noble modesty" (ITS, KGW II 3, 14) and he emphasizes "the measure of these Dionysian festivals" (ITS, KGW II 3, 12, our transl.).

Sexual excesses and cruel riots are thus exclusively attributed to the 'oriental' type of these festivals; the Greek "spring festivals," however, are largely free from this. This strong opposition of Greek versus Barbarian has an important function in the *Birth of Tragedy*. The early Nietzsche obviously thought that his hypothesis of the origin of tragedy from the Dionysian festivals was rather provocative, so he tried to moderate it by drawing them in a soft light. On the one hand tragedy is supposed to represent the highest form of synthesis between the Dionysian and the Apollonian; but on the other, the young classical philologist describes the historical development in Greece as if here the Dionysian had already been tamed in the Dionysian festivals themselves and not only in tragedy. The late Nietzsche will set completely different accents. But the focus on sublimation, also inspired by Schopenhauer's philosophy, corresponded for the moment quite well to Wagner's ideal of a music festival. Therefore, we should learn from the Greeks "not to become orgiastic beings through our

music” and “the myth in tragedy should save us ... from musical orgasm” (N Spring – Autumn 1871, 13[2], our transl.).

## 2. Functions of the Festival

The young Nietzsche attributes to Dionysian spring festivals (or rather their ‘rebirth’ in tragedy) all the functions on which later theories of the festival focus exclusively: A. excess; B. subversion; C. affirmation.

A. The Dionysus festivals have an excessive nature; however, Dionysian ‘intoxication’ takes different forms: In Babylon, it was about sex and crime; in Greece, “lust and cruelty” were kept under control, and what remained of the ‘intoxication’ associated with erotic, narcotic, and cruel excesses was ecstasy and transfiguration as a sort of tamed excess.

B. All Dionysian festivals tend to disrupt (temporarily) the social order. Nietzsche interprets spring festivals “as festivals of freedom and equality” (N Winter 1869-70 – Spring 1870, 3[61] our transl.). Especially in the Middle East, Dionysian Festivals represented a subversion of social order; the Babylonian Sacaea were a “great festival of freedom and equality” in which “the full freedom of nature was restored” (ITS, KGW II 3, 13, our transl.).

C. The subversive potential that spring festivals had all over, also in Greece, has been tamed in the Greek tragedy that was organized by the state. Thus, the tragic festival had, as a form of controlled subversion, also a socially affirmative function. “Tragedy is above all a solemn act organized year by year by the state that unites the whole people” (N late 1870 – April 1871, 7[121], our transl.). “The state celebrated a *great* festival, [...] in harmony with the people’s religion, in accordance with the priesthood” (ITS, KGW II 3, 19, our transl.). In nineteenth-century Germany, things are very different for the young Nietzsche: the tragic festival rather calls into question the existing social order. The new German culture that was supposed to be affirmed by the festival does not yet exist.

## 3. “Where we do research and work, the Greeks celebrate festivals.”

The ideal of the art of festivals, which Nietzsche often refers to in his middle writings, but does not elaborate, has a concrete historical background, which the manuscript for the lecture on the *The Religious Worship of the Greeks* (RWG)

describes in great detail. Here the main ideas are being developed in a systematic context. They then appear later on in a condensed form in some of the more important aphorisms of his middle writings. In this lecture manuscript, some of the basic themes of *Human, All Too Human I and II* turn up for the first time, whose author confirms this image of Greece and expresses the hope that remained implicit in the philological lecture: a future art of festivals.

In this lecture about *The Religious Worship of the Greeks*, Nietzsche's earlier results undergo a thorough revision. In a new way, the festival thus remains an important theme even in the far more critical middle period of his thinking.

The *Birth of Tragedy* focused on the Dionysian festivals, from which tragedy had developed, while the later lecture manuscript treats the Greek festival system as a whole. In this context new festivals are considered, which had completely different backgrounds and procedures and not necessarily an ecstatic character of intoxication.

Nietzsche is fascinated by the Greek festivals without any regard to their religious significance; unlike in the *Birth of Tragedy*, one no longer finds anything like a metaphysical concern in the "Worship-Lecture". The *Birth of Tragedy* had already questioned the stereotype of Greek 'serenity' in a radical way. This anti-classical tendency, however, is now continued in a decidedly anti-metaphysical direction. The philologist who transfigures the world of Greek festivals, pursues at the same time a completely different goal, in which the ideas of *Human, All Too Human* turn up for the first time: the unmasking of 'impure thinking.'

The cultus, insofar as it still had a religious or metaphysical meaning, is definitively not possible any more. Nevertheless, the worship of the Greeks remains an unparalleled model. "There has never been anything like the Greek worship: it is by beauty, splendor variety, correlation unique in the world and one of the highest results of its spirit" (RWG, 363, our transl.). "The 'Greeks celebrating festivals,'" i.e. the festive aspect of the cultus, is at the center of this consideration. The Greeks attained their cultural hegemony over "the Romans and the Orient" precisely "as a splendid appearance in processions, temples, cultic equipment, and in general as celebrating Hellenes" (RWG, 363-364, our transl.). The Greek cult is exemplary and overwhelming as an art of celebrating festivals that increase the joy of living, "finally, in addition, their cult, the sum of all *relaxations and delights*" (N Spring – Summer 1875, 5[150], transl. Gary Handwerk).



The Greeks as “*celebrators of festivals*” are the opposite to the present time: to the modern world of mechanical labor, to militarism in the newly founded German Empire, to the cultural decadence that in Nietzsche’s eyes goes along with it, and finally to the way of living of contemporary philologists. “Where we do *research* and work, the Greeks celebrate festivals. They are the *celebrators of festivals*” (N Spring – Summer 1875, 5[150], our transl.). Scholars are part of the modern world of working. The young professor of philology thus finds himself in a conflict: the object of his studies, the Greeks, are the opposite model to himself.

“Antiquity is on the whole the age of the talent for *rejoicing in festivals*” (N End 1876 – Summer 1877, 23[148], transl. Gary Handwerk). Among the Greeks, the festival had the highest priority. It was part of a life ‘centered around festivals.’ Already Jacob Burckhardt, a friend of Nietzsche, remarks that “the educated classes” “formerly” – which for the Swiss cultural historian means in the Renaissance – “devoted all their energy” to these things. For Nietzsche, it was similar with the ancient Greeks: “They spent an enormous amount of energy on the development of the customs of worship, including time and money,” (RWG, 364, our transl.).

Celebrating was “essentially an activity of idle people” (RWG, 366, our transl.). The relationship between celebration and everyday life in those days was very different from that of the 19th century world of working. And not only for the reason that “for the Athenians, one sixth of the year consisted of festivals” (RWG, 364, our transl.). Nietzsche, who must not have been a night owl, emphasized another characteristic: “*play time* in broad daylight” (ITS, KGW II 3, 19; N Autumn 1869, 1[76]); “unusual festive mood, serene open morning sentiments” (ITS, KGW II 3, 18, our transl.). The Greeks attended the tragedy with fresh forces; it was not a recreation for tired people, not a celebration after work or a holiday after a working week. Nietzsche probably thinks of the morning performances in ancient Greece when he regrets in the *Wanderer* that “the conscience of a *hardworking* age: this does not allow us to give our best hours and mornings to art” (WS 170, transl. Gary Handwerk).

Nietzsche wants to subvert the relationship between feast and work in modernity as well. The Greeks are the counter-model to modern times in which work presents the seriousness of life whereas feast days are only a break for recreation. In a certain sense, Nietzsche is practicing a kind of ‘monumental’ historiography; but he is aware of the fact that the Greek festivals have finally

perished and are therefore not a model that we can simply adopt; it must, however, inspire modern men to create something new: a new art of inventing new festivals.

#### 4. The Extreme Syncretism of the Greek Festivals

Even in his lecture about the *The Religious Worship of the Greeks* Nietzsche, who still wants to "preserve" for the beloved Greeks "their unique place in world history" (RWG, 363, our transl.), contrasts 'Greek' and 'Barbarian': the Greeks as "celebrators of festivals" thus serve as a measure "for what is barbaric in religious cults" (RWG, 363, our transl.).

But the focus is now on the Greeks' art of appropriating disparate elements of foreign cultures by transforming them into something new. Already in his earlier *Encyclopedia of Classical Philology*, the "unlimited syncretism" (ECP, KGW II 3, 414) was an important topic; the "equalization and mingling of different cults" was "as old as history" (ECP, KGW II 3, 415, our transl.). Syncretism however, receives a positive status only in the lecture about the worship of the Greeks: the philologist Nietzsche, who focuses on the festival and the cult as a solemn act, ascribes to the synthetic effort of the Greeks in the cultic field an artistic character. "It is their most brilliant side: the appropriation and overcoming of the foreign; from the beginning, they have been stimulated by a foreign cultural world in a general and uniform way" (RWG, 377, our transl.).

Nietzsche emphasizes again and again "[t]he inventive thinking, appropriating, interpreting and transforming in this field," i.e., in the field of cult (RWG, 363; see also RWG, 366), the "talent to organize" (RWG, 376), the sense of "order, structure, beauty, κοσμός" (RWG, 376; see also RWG, 377, our transl.). Still *Human, All Too Human* emphasizes that in "the world of antiquity" unlike in "the Christian era" "an immeasurable force of spirit and ingenuity was expended in order to increase the joy in life by means of festive cults" (HH I 141, transl. Gary Handwerk; see also RWG, 363-364).

In this amazing "ingenuity" (HH I 141) the Greeks are "completers, not inventors. They *conserve* by means of this beautiful completion" (N Spring – Summer 1875, 5[155], transl. Gary Handwerk). They did not simply invent festivals, but picked up existing traditions and led them to completion.

In regard to this "ingenuity" (HH I 141), the consensus with Burckhardt is striking too: *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860) describes most

impressively how festivals and processions were arranged intentionally by artistic and aesthetic means; Burckhardt mentions, for example, the Florentine ‘festival artists,’ the use of machines and the role of architecture. The “train of masked figures on foot and in chariots,” the *Trionfo*, received (only) in Renaissance Italy “an artistic method of treatment which arranged the processions as a harmonious and significative whole.” (transl. S. G. C. Middlemore, p. 256).

Nietzsche’s Greeks were creative in a similar sense – and became thus a model for his art of the *invention* of festivals. Even in later years, the synthetic achievements of the Greeks’ remain a model for him: One must “step by step become more comprehensive, more supranational, more European, more supra-European, more eastern, finally *more Greek* – for the Greek was the first great bond and synthesis of everything eastern – : and therewith the very *beginning* of the European soul, the discovery of *our ‘new world’*” (N August – September 1885, 41[7], transl. Gary Handwerk). The ‘extraordinary’ syncretism of Greek festivals, particularly the cult of Dionysus remains unparalleled for the late Nietzsche, too, even though this syncretism was Europe’s “*beginning*” and not its goal.<sup>2</sup>

## 5. The Rejection of Wagner’s Ideal of Festivals

At the time of *The Birth of Tragedy*, there was a clear division of labor between the young philologist and the ingenious composer. Wagner created the work of art, gathered around him the ‘tragic people,’ founded his theater and organized festivals. He was the ‘artist of festivals’ and the new festival was essentially his invention.

This was soon to change. It is true that for Nietzsche the laying of the foundation stone of the Festival Theatre, that was celebrated at Bayreuth in May 1872 had been elevating; but then a great disillusionment followed: the experience of the first festival. “What a depressed and false ‘festival’ that was in 1876” (N June – July 1879, 40[11], our transl.). What Nietzsche now worries about is that his contemporaries with this festival turn out to be incapable of ‘real’ celebration. After the Bayreuth dreams have burst, there is a huge gap for

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<sup>2</sup> Regarding the concept of supra-European, see Marco Brusotti, “‘Europäisch und über-europäisch.’ Zarathustra, der gute Europäer, und der Blick aus der Ferne,” in: Mathias Mayer (Ed.), *Also wie sprach Zarathustra? West-östliche Spiegelungen im kulturgeschichtlichen Vergleich*, Würzburg 2006, 73-87: 84 ff.; Marco Brusotti / Michael J. McNeal / Corinna Schubert / Herman Siemens (eds.), *European / Supra-European: Cultural Encounters in Nietzsche’s Philosophy*, Berlin/Boston 2020.

Nietzsche: No longer is it clear who should invent the new festivals, for which community, on which occasions, and even what these festivals might look like.

In the late seventies, Nietzsche, who had retired early for health reasons, also said goodbye to his philological profession. Much of what he had worked out for his lecture on "The worship of the Greeks" finds its way into his works, beginning with *Human, All Too Human*; but Nietzsche's reflections on the celebration of festivals take on a different character.

They continue to develop simultaneously and chronologically in several directions. Only three of them, the more important ones, shall be mentioned here:

A. The theory of the Greek festival in the lecture about *The Religious Worship of the Greeks* is later matched by the analysis of the modern decline of the art of festivals. This decline is also one of art in general (see chapter 6).

B. The possible art of inventing and celebrating new festivals is a concern of Nietzsche's middle period, rather than a *theory* of historical or ethnological festivals (see chapter 7). A new "order" of festivals remains also a main concern in the *Zarathustra* period (see chapter 8).

C. The organization of life and the future art of celebrating festivals that goes along with it are no longer the main focus of Nietzsche's late writings. He rather elaborates a sort of genealogy of festivals, and in this genealogical investigation, ideas of the *Birth of Tragedy* are substantially revised.

## 6. Against the Art of Artworks

Rather than "teach" the art of "the invention of *festivals*" (N Spring – Autumn 1881, 11[170], transl. Adrian Del Caro), the middle writings from *Human, All Too Human* to *The Joyful Science* merely warn that "that higher art, the art of festivals" (JS 89, transl. Adrian Del Caro) may get lost to contemporaries. In this context, the characteristics of Greek culture's dealing with festivals that he had pointed out in his lecture function (implicitly or suggestively) as a yardstick for modern times and modern culture. In Nietzsche's eyes the festival for the Greeks belongs to an overall aesthetic and artistic form of life, and this is also what he hopes for future ages.

In modern societies however – according to his diagnosis – the contrast between festivity and everyday life gets smaller and smaller: it shrinks to the mere difference between working day and recreation break or holiday. The

hours “for leisure, for recuperation” are, as it were, only “the *left-over portion* of our time and our energies” thus “*our* great art will be useless for an age that reintroduces free, full days of festival and rejoicing back into life” (WS 170, transl. Gary Handwerk). In the world of 19th century, Europe is poor of leisure and works of art become marginalized. For Nietzsche, the still persisting “art of artworks” suffers from this. It has degenerated into the art of entertainment: it is no longer an art of festivals as it was for the Greeks, but an afterwork art. Visits to the theater, to the opera or concerts may have a festive character, but they are only breaks in a world dominated by work. This diagnosis of the present contains an implicit but transparent criticism of Wagner: the Bayreuth Festivals are no rebirth of the old art of festivals, and his dramas belong to the untenable “art of artworks.”

While works of art allow people who “have leisure hours” to “fill up their time,” but precisely by doing so they keep them from thinking “upon their work, for example, or their ties to others, upon the pleasures that they could render to others” (AOM 175, transl. Gary Handwerk). The aphorism concludes by inviting the reader to raise objections against this criticism, perhaps the objection that remained implicit in AOM 174: in contrast to the “*art of artworks*” as a social phenomenon, i.e., the art of entertainment, works of art themselves indeed have their justification and meaning, but only if they serve art’s “great, indeed colossal, task” (AOM 174, transl. Gary Handwerk.) of making life beautiful, or if they emerge from an aesthetic life.

For Nietzsche, the Greeks were the exceptional people who discharged their “surplus of such embellishing, concealing and reinterpreting energies [...] in artworks” (ibid.). As an expression of those energies “formerly all artworks were exhibited along the great festival road of humankind, as commemoration and memorials of elevated and blissful moments” (JS 89, transl. Adrian Del Caro). This is also what Nietzsche wishes for the future.

According to Burckhardt’s *Civilization of the Renaissance*, the “Italian festivals in their best form mark the point of transition from real life into the world of art,” namely because in the festivity the ideals of life “took visible shape,” indeed become perfected art (transl. S. G. C. Middlemore, p. 256). According to this, already in Burckhardt’s work, the festival is a transition from art into life. This is also true for Nietzsche’s art of festivals. It is precisely the postulation to shape life itself artistically that distinguishes this art from the art of artworks. Nietzsche criticizes the latter only insofar as here art does not

pass into life, i.e., only insofar as *these* artworks do not really touch life nor do they transform it. They have nothing more to do with festivals and with life. Aesthetic pleasure is no longer a celebration. The decline of art and the decline of festivity go hand in hand in modern times.

## 7. The Art of Celebrations

Modernity however does not simply result as inferior in comparison to antiquity. It is true that the ancients "continually used all their wealth of discernment and reflection to discover new reasons for feeling well and for celebrating festivals"; but they treated suffering only "in a palliative way, whereas we attack the causes of the suffering and prefer on the whole to work in a prophylactic way. — Perhaps we are only building the foundations upon which later humans will once again erect the temple of joy" (AOM 187, transl. Gary Handwerk). This scientific prophylaxis together with the technical "mastery of nature" in general could prepare a new future "age of festivals" (N Summer 1880, 4[137], our transl.).

In this future age, "the art of the artists" should, as it was in ancient Greece, "be completely absorbed in the need of people for festivities"; then the artists would be "in the first row among the people who are inventing new pleasures and festivals" (N beginning 1880, 1[81], our transl.). In the future, there will be "festivals" "in which many individual inventions are united for the great purpose of the festival, because those who celebrate a festival must themselves be part of the invention of the festival" (N Spring 1880, 3[81]). Nietzsche thus puts the emphasis not only on the celebration, but again and again (and still in *Zarathustra*) on the *invention*, and wants to teach the higher art "of the invention of festivals."

The "artists of festivals" (*Festkünstler*) of the Renaissance, as Burckhardt calls them, also serve as a model, for instance architects like Leonardo da Vinci, who at that time contributed decisively with "machines" and "automata" to the artistic completion of festivals and processions (Burckhardt, *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, p. 263, transl. S. G. C. Middlemore)

The future artists of festivals however are in a different situation. The old ideals are obsolete – and with them the old festivals, not only the religious cults, but also, for instance patriotic festivities; therefore, the new philosophers have to invent new values, and the new 'artists of festivals' will neither take over the former occasions for celebrations nor simply modify the old ceremonies, as did

the ancient Greeks, who were in this sense only “completers, not inventors” (N Spring – Summer 1875, 5[155], transl. Gary Handwerk). Nietzsche’s “*preparatory human beings*” will have “their own festivals, their own workdays, their own periods of mourning” (JS 283, transl. Adrian Del Caro); and the new festivals will “celebrate the future, not the past!” (N Autumn 1883, 21[6]; our transl.).

Nietzsche’s ‘art of *festivals*’ must thereby face two needs that cannot be easily reconciled: On the one hand, the celebration is defined by its difference from everyday life, which the ‘art of festivals’ must not level out. On the other hand, festivals must not simply be short interruptions of a dull, unaesthetic everyday life, as Nietzsche assumes life in modern society to be; they must not leave out everyday life. Nietzsche, in fact, also claims to make a celebration out of life as a whole, “to think of life as a *festival* [...]” (N Spring – Summer 1878, 28[34], transl. Gary Handwerk).

The problem of Nietzsche’s art of living could therefore be put this way: How can turning ‘everyday life into a festival’ succeed without turning ‘the festival into everyday life’? How does the art to think of life as a festival relate to the art of the invention of new festivals? In summer 1881, Nietzsche does not want to “teach” only this art (N Spring – Autumn 1881, 11[170]), but above all the new idea that just appeared on his horizon, “the thought of eternal recurrence.” Whoever wants to deal with this thought must be able to look at and shape one’s whole life aesthetically; because one would only want to experience an artistically shaped life “again and again.” Nietzsche considers this propaedeutic role of the art of living his “main idea.” “Only at the end is the *teaching* then presented of the repetition of all that has been, after the tendency has been implanted to *create* something that can *flourish* a hundred times more strongly under the sunshine of this teaching!” (N Spring – Autumn 1881, 11[165], transl. Adrian Del Caro).<sup>3</sup>

The art “of the invention of *festivals*” (N Spring – Autumn 1881, 11[170], transl. Gary Handwerk) Nietzsche talks about shortly after is an art of shaping individual events and experiences, an art of elevated moments. How does this art relate to the art of shaping one’s life in a way that it can be affirmed?<sup>4</sup> This comprehensive art has, so to speak, a miniaturistic side: the ‘poetics’ of everyday habits and the organization of the day. Whoever wants to shape his

3 See Marco Brusotti, *Die Leidenschaft der Erkenntnis. Philosophie und ästhetische Lebensgestaltung bei Nietzsche von Morgenröthe bis Also sprach Zarathustra*, Berlin/New York 1997, 344 ff.

4 See Brusotti, *Die Leidenschaft der Erkenntnis*, 466 ff., 452 ff.

life artistically must start first of all with the "smallest and most mundane things"; we must be "the poets of our life" (JS 299, transl. Adrian Del Caro).

The aphorism "*L'ordre du jour pour le roi*" shows how the art of mastering the most mundane things becomes something like an art of festivals in the life of an individual who withdraws from the world. The self-deprecating aphorism presents a dream: A master of ceremonies arranges "the business and festivities of our most merciful master"; since "His majesty" is somewhat suffering on this day, the agenda provides to "conduct business somewhat more solemnly and the festivities somewhat more festively than would otherwise be necessary." The majesty who suffers here is Nietzsche, who at the same time acts as the master of ceremonies for himself; and the dream interprets his "habit to begin the day so that [he] can organize and make it bearable *for [him]self*" (JS 22, transl. Adrian Del Caro). The festivity serves here as a metaphor, and the art of festivals is a parable for the art of making everyday life solemn and festive.

*The Joyful Science* wants to make "the various divisions of the day, the consequences of a regular schedule of work, festival and rest the object of research" (JS 7, transl. Adrian Del Caro). The art of everyday life and the art of festivals complement each other: together they form, so to speak, the scaled-down version of the art to think of life as a festival or shape it as an artwork. The art of festivals, however, does not merge in its miniature function. The individual festival relates to life like a miniature to the great work of art; but the festival is at the same time like a microcosm, which in itself expresses the meaning of life. Furthermore, Nietzsche's idea of the art of the invention of festivals implies a new conception of life in general if those celebrating individuals want to see the center of their lives in the festival, as the ancient Greeks did.

### **8. Thus Spoke Zarathustra: "The vision of a festival I may yet experience ..." (EH, The Birth of Tragedy 4)**

"The trick is not in organizing a festival, but instead in finding the ones who *take joy* in it. A festival is generally a spectacle without spectators, a table full of food without guests." (N July 1879, 41[37], transl. Gary Handwerk). This is Nietzsche's diagnosis of the first Bayreuth Festival. One does not celebrate festivals alone, and for the philosopher, who had mutated into an anti-Wagnerian, it proved to be particularly difficult to find people to celebrate with. Does the longed-for art of festivals (like the ideal of a monastery for free spirits) remain



a pure desideratum? Would it really be able to give this art of living a social, if not sociable aspect? The art of festivals which the classical philologist had praised in the Greeks does not necessarily go along with the way of living of the free spirit; for, on the whole, Nietzsche's art of living is made for solitary individuals rather than for a community. Thus, the festival becomes rather a metaphor for the life of the withdrawn philosopher: "Abstract thinking is for many a toil, for me, on good days, a celebration and an intoxication" (N April – June 1885, 34[130], transl. Adrian Del Caro). This tendency to metaphorize is there, but not everywhere. The problem of finding people who celebrate with him however grows bigger and bigger in the years of crisis after *The Joyful Science*.

Schematically, he says: "III To the Artists. New concept of the creator; the *Dionysian*. New festivals. The transfiguration" (N May – July 1885, 35[84], transl. Adrian Del Caro). This new concept further involves that the creator invents new festivals, including Dionysian festivals. "The organization of festivals" (N Autumn 1883, 16[84], transl. Paul S. Loeb and David F. Tinsley) belongs to Zarathustra's main tasks; and Nietzsche had temporarily aimed at a more systematic presentation: "(chapter) Arrange festivals / Festival of cosmic designations / Festival of the earth / Festival of friendship / great noon" (N Summer – Autumn 1883, 15[13], transl. Paul S. Loeb and David F. Tinsley). Zarathustra must create new values; and the new values are embodied in new festivals. Here is just one example: the idea of making a festival out of death is part of the art of the invention of new festivals even before Zarathustra; to celebrate death means to revalue it, and this possibility gains additional importance for Nietzsche when the thought of eternal recurrence appears on his horizon.

Several plans see the plot culminating in decisive events that take place at a festival; for instance Zarathustra is said to die when the masses at the festival affirm the idea of eternal recurrence (see N Autumn 1883, 21[3]). The theme of the festival is also present in the final version. The frame setting aims toward "the great noon," this longed-for event is a festival that Zarathustra wants to celebrate together with his recovered disciples. Part four describes the visit of the "superior men" and culminates in the festival they celebrate with Zarathustra: "§ The murder-of-God-penitents and their festival" (N May – June 1883, 9[45], transl. Paul S. Loeb and David F. Tinsley). This "donkey festival" is called "'Festival of Life'" in a note from 1883 (N June – July 1883, 10[44], transl. Paul S. Loeb and David F. Tinsley). In the poem Zarathustra emphasizes

that the superior men need "new festivals" and that they have invented a new festival with him, which they should celebrate again in his memory (Za IV). However, the following morning they are not up to the elevated mood of the celebration and take flight. Zarathustra shall not celebrate his "great noon" with them; nevertheless, the poem closes with a hopeful outlook: More worthy fellow celebrants already announce themselves.

With whom can Nietzsche celebrate, however, if the old friends are "merely ghosts of friends" (BGE, *From Lofty Mountains*, transl. Adrian Del Caro) and the longed-for new friends do not exist yet? Finally, only with Zarathustra himself: "At once then, my friend! One turned into Two – / – And Zarathustra strode into my view..." (JS, *Songs of the Prince Vogelfrei*). Thus, Nietzsche in *Sils Maria*; and in *From Lofty Mountains*, the *Aftersong* to *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche too has turn "One into Two" at noon. This self-duplication is the drastic solution of the problem mentioned above. Now, finally, the "wedding" can be celebrated, in which "light and darkness" marry, and Nietzsche celebrates this "fest of fests" alone with himself, i.e., alone with the "guest of all guests," with his "friend of noon" Zarathustra:

The friend of noon — no! do not ask me who —  
It was at noon that One turned into Two . . . .

Now we celebrate as triumph unites,  
The fest of fests:  
Friend *Zarathustra* came, the guest of all guests!  
The world laughs now, torn is the shroud of fright  
The wedding came of darkness and of light . . . .  
(BGE, *From Lofty Mountains*, transl. Adrian Del Caro)

*Translated by Renate Müller-Buck*



## XV.

# Enabling Politics: The Art of Living as a Self-Reflection of Humanity

*by Helmut Heit*

### 1. The Art of Living as a Task of Philosophy

The art of living is often understood as an individual task, and Nietzsche is often seen as an individualistic philosopher of distance, solitude and self-overcoming – and rightly so. This contribution, however, argues that we must also emphasize the social, communal and political elements in order to assess Nietzsche's contribution to the philosophical art of living. The society and its political organization play a decisive role for any given individual, its prospects and its opportunities. The political framework could either increase or decrease the possibility of an individual to flourish artfully; politics could be enabling or not. The question of the good life is therefore not to be answered purely individually; as a philosophical art of living, its answer is a task for humanity. Before elaborating Nietzsche's views on this issue, I will give three introductory remarks. First: The art of living is an art, not a science. Second: Nietzsche's texts are invitations, not doctrines. Third: Nobody is an island.

Not the least because of Nietzsche's attacks on moral prejudices, it seems hardly possible anymore to make universal and truthful statements about the good life. This is especially true if you wish to avoid statements that are trivial or ambiguous, or both at the same time, such as those you may find in fortune cookies. Most memes of wisdom circulating on social media platforms are either hyperbolic, or petty, or false. This is in part due to the fact, that neither the subject nor the object of the art of living seems accessible by a scientific

approach searching for universal truths. The possibilities of individual ways of life are too manifold and the question of the good is too open to give the same advice to everyone. Nietzsche is aware of this and in consequence, he does not contribute to the increasing market of advice-literature and manuals for a good life. The philosophical art of living must cope with the philosophical insight that in many areas we do not have subject-independent truths. We need to deal with the fact that the question of the good life is not answerable once and for all in the form of a precise algorithm. Not all urgent problems of living people in culture and society divide into empirical questions or into puzzles of logical analysis. This is certainly true for the question of what I should do with my life, or what we should do with our lives in community. It is not without reason that one speaks of an art of living and not of a science of the good life. Nietzsche therefore invites us to see “*science under the optics of an artist, but art under the optics of life*” (BT Attempt 2, our transl.); and he not only propagates, but also practices this change of perspective.

I believe that Nietzsche consciously implements these insights into the composition of his texts, and that their significance for the philosophical art of living largely has to do with their literary composition. Rather than proposing doctrines, Nietzsche found a different approach to important questions. His philosophy of the art of living uses the means of art; it is itself a work of art. As in art, an experimental approach is required, a meticulous work with the material and a creative will for expression and design. The criteria for a successful work of art are not in the realm of truth, but in that of beauty. As such, art conveys meaning without determining the interpretation clearly and unambiguously. Thereby the possibilities gain a greater weight compared to the facts. Nietzsche’s writings consistently take into account the fact that the art of living is not accessible by empirical and logical analyses alone. Therefore, his approach is more in line with the state of affairs. In this case, it reveals intellectual honesty to refrain from the construction of a coherent system of dogmas. The most important consequence, however, is that art does not appear in the mode of compelling demonstration or authoritative command, but in the form of inspiration, stimulus, and invitation. Engaging with a work of art can take our feeling and thinking in a new direction – if we want it to do so. As opposed to a scientific argument, which demands cognition, Nietzsche invites his readers to think differently and experiment with his suggestions.

These suggestions, however, are far from ambiguous or empty, even though the designed openness of an artistic composition confronts recipients with a different set of difficulties. To understand or decipher Nietzsche's artful philosophical work, it is effective to apply what Werner Stegmaier calls "contextual interpretation" and what he has demonstrated *in extenso* and *en detail* using the example of the fifth book of *The Joyful Science*. Nietzsche compiles "the aphorisms standing for themselves [...] in carefully composed books" in such a way that "in the interconnection with other aphorisms, thematic chains arise, which Nietzsche in turn artfully interweaves."<sup>1</sup> The resulting thematic meshes form – to use the musical repertoire instead of chain- and texture-metaphors – compositions of preludes, leitmotifs, consonances, dissonances, variants, and tempo changes with a rich but by no means arbitrary leeway for their interpreters. In this paper, I will mainly draw upon a series of aphorisms in the third book of *Dawn*, addressing the topics of morality, society and forms of life.

Despite its deliberate artistic form, Nietzsche's writing is philosophy. The individualistic and aesthetic character of his texts should not blind us to the fact that Nietzsche is addressing fundamental and most often very old questions of humanity. In accordance with his philosophical aesthetics, the compositions of his texts do not formulate simple doctrines, but as a whole, they point in a certain direction. As any work of great art, they do not express just anything, but a specific, communicable and comprehensible perspective. They require a hermeneutics of suspicion, which Nietzsche himself regularly applies in his dealings with other thinkers: "Gradually, it has occurred to me what every great philosophy has been so far: namely the self-confession of its author" (BGE 6, transl. Adrian Del Caro, mod.). In Nietzsche's case, too, it is helpful to ask: What is Nietzsche attacking, what is considered as the problem, how is it attacked and from where is this criticism steered? What is he aiming at, in which direction does he point, and for which goals does he strive? One could call this interpretive maxim a hermeneutics of Nietzsche's tasks, targets of attacks and most distant goals. I assume that Nietzsche is best understood as a critic and reformer of modern culture. He criticizes the history of occidental civilization and its moral prejudices because he wants to aim at a fundamental

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<sup>1</sup> Werner Stegmaier, *Nietzsches Befreiung der Philosophie. Kontextuelle Interpretation des V. Buchs der Fröhlichen Wissenschaft*, Berlin 2012, 11. My transl.

transformation. As Peter Sloterdijk puts it: Nietzsche “has nothing less in mind than a *reformatio mundi*.”<sup>2</sup>

It is necessary to think about a reformation of the human world in the context of an art of living because we are part of that world and we cannot change without it. In the beginning, we are an inseparable part of our mother’s body and we continue to rely on others throughout our lives. The human individual is not only biologically part and product of our evolutionary natural history, but also in sociocultural terms. Within natural associations, primordial hordes and herds, the physically separated specimen develops from merely serving a function in the whole into a more or less individually organized being. In this respect, the subject is and remains inseparable from society: “Once the ego was hidden in the herd” Nietzsche notes in 1882 “and now the herd is still hidden in the ego” (N November 1882 – February 1883, 5[1.273]). Nietzsche rejects the contractualist idea of autonomous rational agents forming a society based on mutual interests and agreements. This idea confuses a late and precarious product with the beginning of a process. The recognizable and somehow distinct individual personality is not primordial but develops relatively late in human history, and ultimately remains dependent on the herd for its flourishing and development to this day. Culturally acquired and incorporated interdependencies are manifested not only in those drives that relate to others, such as sex drive, love, envy, hatred, or the need for recognition, but also in the so-called ‘higher capacities’ of human beings. The social nature extends in particular to language as the most basic system of cultural conventions. Language is very private and at the same time completely social and thus involved everything we consciously think or articulate (BGE 268). To Nietzsche, therefore, the individual is a precious and precarious product of society, always in danger to be eliminated or reduced to its social functions.

## 2. Philosophical Art of Living as a Task of Humanity

In the light of the hermeneutics of attacks and tasks proposed here, it is illuminating to take a closer look at Nietzsche’s later reassessment of *Dawn* (1881). In retrospect, he dedicates two sections to this work in *Ecce Homo* (1888).

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2 Peter Sloterdijk, “Nietzsche, Autor, Reformator. Peter Sloterdijk im Gespräch mit Rüdiger Schmidt-Grépany,” in: Rüdiger Schmidt-Grépany (ed.), *Zur Rückkehr des Autors. Gespräche über das Werk Friedrich Nietzsches*. Göttingen 2013, 27-62: 41. My transl.

Nietzsche not only emphasizes the deconstructive and destructive concern of his campaign against the moral prejudices; he also highlights the loving and yes-saying view, “the start of a new day,” and the prospect of a “*revaluation of all values*” to the fore (EH, D 1, transl. Carol Diethe, Duncan Large, Adrian Del Caro, and Alan D. Schrift). The first sentence of the second section, which I will examine in more detail, corresponds to this concern:

My task, to prepare for a moment of the highest self-reflection for humanity; a *great noon*, where they look back and look around, where they step forth from the domination of chance and of priests, and pose for the first time *as a whole* the question of why?, wherefore? – this task follows with necessity from the insight that humanity is *not* by itself upon the right path [...] (EH, D 2, transl. Carol Diethe, Duncan Large, Adrian Del Caro, and Alan D. Schrift, mod.)

This is not the only passage where Nietzsche speaks about his task and he does so in different ways. The version he gives here, however, is particularly remarkable for several reasons. Nietzsche identifies his philosophical ambition with a human reorientation through a moment of self-reflection, contemplation and fundamental questioning. The metaphor of the “*great noon*” refers to the time of the brightest daylight, the clearest vision and the shortest shadows. Primarily, this requires an interruption of previous practices and routines. It is a question of a coming to consciousness of “humanity,” not only of single individuals. Moreover, we should note that Nietzsche sees his task in the *preparation* of such a moment of self-reflection for others and not in defining its result. The task is not to instruct or guide, but to stimulate self-reflection and self-determination, or to make them possible in the first place.

In more detail, this moment of contemplation is determined in two directions. On the one hand, the gaze turns to the past by looking back and posing the “question of why?” Nietzsche’s own studies of antiquity, Christianity, the history of language, morality, science, and philosophy serve this historical orientation. History shows no meaningful or purposeful progress, but a sum of “all-too-human” events and actions, hopes and errors. Only against this background, one can seriously ask what reasons and causes the course of our history has had so far and how it has come to the present situation. According to Nietzsche’s genealogical perspective, the current situation is the arbitrary



product of the preceding situations; there is no hidden rationale evolving underneath the surface. The path we went so far, however, led to a certain ensemble of options currently available. In the light of these opportunities, Nietzsche poses the question “wherefore?” in a fundamentally new way. What possibilities does the present situation open up? Repeatedly he emphasizes what I call the normative power of the possible, be it in the guise of a philology of the future, a music of the future, a philosophy of the future, or in the thought of a “*revaluation of all values*.”

Nietzsche ties the possibility of genuine self-contemplation to a double liberation in which humanity steps out of the “domination of chance and of priests.” The necessary turning away from the authority of church representatives is familiar from the emancipatory Enlightenment since Voltaire or Kant. Freethinking must first break away from obedience to conventional human authority. Beyond religious authorities in the narrow sense, however, Nietzsche also targets dogmas, as he sees them at work in the belief in laws of reason or nature. His famous speech about the ‘death of God’ (JS 125) is therefore not only criticism of religion, but also the request to overcome the “shadows of God” (JS 109) in ascetic ideals, in science and politics, in the views on history and morality. At the same time, Nietzsche demands a liberation from the “domination of chance” and thus opposes a rule of scientific authority. By the rule of chance, I understand the mere stating of external necessities of nature, which may be captured in a neutral scientific theory but which remain completely indifferent regarding its positive or negative consequences for us. According to the worldview of the modern sciences and their technological conception of culture, we can only determine mere facts that have neither sense nor meaning. They fall upon us and are simply as they are. The thought of a value-free and meaningless world of random events, however, sets the basis for hedonistic consumerism and holds the danger of nihilism. Nietzsche therefore tries to avoid the false alternative between religious dogmatism and resigned fatalism.

The starting point is the sketch of a radically post-metaphysical constellation and an associated crisis. The crisis consists in the insight that mankind has so far not been governed divinely or even in the name of an all-wise, all-good and all-powerful authority. We are not on the right path by ourselves. The cultural process is no progress and humankind does not proceed to the good by itself. Like the individual, culture also needs an idea of where it wants to go and for which goals and purposes it undertakes its efforts and makes its

sacrifices. We work hard, we employ and destroy many resources, we may even undermine the very foundations for our future, but do we know why? The critique of the previous moral prejudices opens the horizon to consider the possibility of completely different ones. The announced self-contemplation therefore goes the whole hog, because it renounces the mere continuation of the previous direction of development, at least in reflection. At the beginning of a fundamental reorientation is the loss of the certainty of having been on the right path so far. The confusion of the soul is a prerequisite for its conversion.

The situation of humanity described by Nietzsche with the image of the *dawn* is crisis, challenge and space of possibility at the same time. In this, it resembles the fundamental turning points in the lives of individuals that invite or compel pause and reflection. That Nietzsche sees his task – merely – in *preparing* for a moment of supreme self-reflection, expresses his caution but also his trust in our capacity to think and act. This preparation consists, on the one hand, in underlining the failure of the previous direction of development and thus in making conscious the state of crisis in the first place. On the other hand, it is necessary to make clear the possibility and meaningfulness of such a reflection. It is worthwhile to pause for a moment and think about alternatives. Moreover, again, Nietzsche does not anticipate the result of such self-reflection. He does not claim to be a teacher or therapist of humanity. In this, in my opinion, he draws the coherent consequence from his rejection of absolute knowledge-claims. His idea of a *reformatio mundi* thus confronts the consequences of a radicalized Enlightenment.

The status of Nietzsche's role as a preparer under these auspices and what they mean for a philosophy of the art of living derives clearly from the section *A few theses* in the second book of *Dawn*. The first thesis underlines the contrast between the intersubjective rules of morality and the sources of individual happiness: "Provided he wants to be happy, one ought not to give the individual any precepts regarding the path to happiness: for individual happiness springs from its own impenetrable laws; external precepts can only hinder and check it." (D 108, transl. Brittain Smith) The explicit conditional is noteworthy, according to which an individual does not *per se* strive for happiness. Nietzsche denies a close connection between morality and individual happiness. Namely, so-called moral prescriptions are more likely to hinder the development of an individual. If one takes this assessment seriously, it not only limits the doctrinaire status of any philosophy of the art of living, but it embeds

consequences for those who want to help others on the way to their happiness. Instead of prescriptions and advice, it is a matter of helping others to broaden their horizons and empower them.

Elaborating on the conditional character of the human pursuit formulated at the beginning of the aphorism, Nietzsche continues to the question of the goal, which is central for his thinking. He denies that conscious beings like animals, individual humans, or humankind somewhat unconsciously pursue the goal of highest happiness. There is no latent, otherworldly, and idealized quest for happiness underlying the constant dynamics and change in life; Nietzsche states: “Evolution (*Entwicklung*) does not desire happiness; it wants evolution and nothing more.” (D 108, transl. Brittain Smith) Natural development neither defines nor strives for happiness or any other morally laden goal. For the time being, no such goal exists and to “inflict the demands of morality onto humanity” is thus “irrationality and frivolity” (D 108, transl. Brittain Smith) – morality understood as the set of normative conventions in a given society at a certain time. This diagnosis corresponds with the statement in *Ecco Homo* quoted earlier, according to which humanity is not on the right path by itself. The following sentence, however, explicates the task and the proper self-understanding of a philosophy of the art of living for humanity:

To *recommend* a goal to humanity is another matter entirely: then the goal is thought of as something that *is in keeping with our own discretion*; granted, if humanity were inclined toward the proposed goal, then it could, as a result, *give* itself a moral law — likewise, in keeping with its own discretion. Up until now, however, the moral law was supposed to stand *above* inclination: one did not so much want to *give* oneself this law as to *take* it from somewhere or to *discover* it somewhere or to *let oneself be commanded* from somewhere. (D 108, transl. Brittain Smith)

We do not find a goal of humankind, neither with the means of modern research, nor with the traditional methods of metaphysical speculation or spiritual intuition. We find it neither in the laws of nature, nor in the rules of human reasoning or in a traditional book. We do not find it at all, because it does not exist secretly hidden somewhere, waiting to be found. The hope to find and adopt a goal, which is already set, reveals an authoritarian mindset. Instead of yearning for an unknown pre-existing goal, Nietzsche insists that

we must make a conscious and self-determined decision and agreement. This is the honest and mature consequence of the progressing Enlightenment, which leads to a self-cancellation of universal claims to validity. This diagnosis holds for individuals and communities as well as for humankind. No holy scripture and no religion, but also no natural necessity, no science and no law of reason takes away from us the decision on the goal or the goals we want to direct our efforts to. It becomes now evident that the moment of highest contemplation and self-reflection of humanity is not merely investigative but rather a creative act. The decisive difference to earlier forms of orientation to values and goals lies in its explicitly conventional character. The content of the goal might be old or new, but its foundation is completely different. If we take this seriously, the goal may be, what it is, but it would be truly *our* goal.

Statements about the goal of humanity do not express a normative truth, they rather represent the wishes and values of living people. That the definition of our goals is at our discretion does not make them arbitrary, but realizes our capacity for autonomy. To Nietzsche it is decisive that we step out of our passive self-deception and become aware that we have always been the rulers and lawgivers behind our moral imperatives and goals. Moreover, in the awareness of this autonomous constellation it is legitimate to make recommendations. Anyone and everyone can and may recommend a goal to humanity – no special authority is needed or required for this. It lies in the nature of a recommendation that it is put forward without binding coercion between people who tend to have equal rights. Especially among friends, such recommendations have their place. Like a good friend, Nietzsche invites humanity to pause, to contemplate, and to set goals courageously. In this, he proves himself not a self-righteous improver of humanity, but a philanthropist.

### **3. Toward an Enabling Politics of the Good Life**

After the epistemic and normative ground of a philosophical art of living as a general human task has been prepared in this way, now in particular the question remains open how humankind can become the active subject of such a self-contemplation. How should eight billion people stop their accelerating activities and contemplate on a common goal? The collective singular ‘humanity’ cannot come to its senses as such, but only in a somehow organized sum of its specimens. How should this happen and what can Nietzsche contribute to the preparation

of such a self-contemplation? With regard to these practical questions, it must be stated that Nietzsche indeed “never set forth a complete political theory, nor did he provide an exhaustive definition of the terms usually associated with the subject.”<sup>3</sup> One looks in vain in Nietzsche for a doctrine concerning which representative, participatory, or deliberative bodies are responsible in which institutions for the “self-contemplation of humanity” and according to which procedural rules and formats they should operate. Nevertheless, I assume with Maria Cristina Fornari that Nietzsche was fully aware of the fundamental importance of the cultural, economic and social order. The structure of *Dawn* corresponds to this. While the first book of *Dawn* primarily performs a genealogy and deconstruction of Christian morality and religion, the second is devoted to a critical analysis of philosophical ethics, especially the concepts of compassion and altruism. Finally, in the third book, Nietzsche addresses social conventions, politics, the state, and man in society.

I therefore turn to the third book to learn more about the practical conclusions Nietzsche draws from his self-set task in *Dawn*. Already the first aphorism of the third book gives an impression of the way in which Nietzsche thinks about the possibilities of changing overall societal objectives. To start with, Nietzsche sees “*the need for tiny deviant actions!*” (D 149, transl. Brittain Smith) Especially in “matters of *custom*,” it is crucial not only to mark the difference between thinking and opinions, but also to refuse atavistic customs like baptism or military service, instead of setting a wrong example out of misplaced consilience. Here as in many other passages Nietzsche emphasizes his care and concern for the deviant and uncommon. In concert with intermingled reflections on marriage and oath as well as on the comparison of modernity with Greek culture and education, Nietzsche once again dwells on the issues of difference and a pluralism of morals. In an aphorism entitled “*Perhaps premature*,” he observes an increasing organizational effort of those who “don’t consider themselves bound by existing mores and laws” (D 164, transl. Brittain Smith). Nietzsche appreciates this tendency, even if these morally questionable associations and parties make the coming century more dangerous. We know that Nietzsche was right with this foresight of the *Age of Extremes* (Eric Hobsbawm). Without even being able to foresee its excesses, Nietzsche emphasizes the instructive

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3 Maria Cristina Fornari, “Nietzsche und die politische Philosophie,” in: Helmut Heit / Lisa Heller (eds.), *Handbuch Nietzsche und die Wissenschaften*, Berlin 2014, 322–340: 322. My transl.

and emancipating nature of moral diversity, namely where it manifests itself in organizations and groupings. When the power of the prevailing morality is opposed by other countervailing powers, their very existence reminds us “that there is no such thing as a one-and-only-moral-making morality and that every code of ethics that affirms itself exclusively destroys too much valuable strength and costs humanity much too dearly” (D 164, transl. Brittain Smith). The existence of organized disagreement in the domain of morals is dangerous, indeed, but such pluralism and diversity is at the same time a signal of a strong and healthy culture. Advanced societies can cope with the fact that there is no justification for any exclusively self-affirming morality.

Nietzsche may have overestimated the human ability to tolerate divergent morals or even to take them as evidence of the lack of the absolute validity of one's own beliefs. The armed struggle between several exclusively self-affirming morals has also cost humanity dearly. Too many people lacked and probably still lack the required sovereignty, generosity and serenity. Nevertheless, the central leitmotif resonates clearly in Nietzsche's *perhaps premature* reflections, and it is productive for the philosophical art of living: Nietzsche encourages his readers to defend the possibilities of developing the unusual, deviant, and individual against the leveling and equalizing demands and necessities of tradition, state, economy and society. Accordingly, aphorism 164 concludes with five demands:

The deviant, so often the inventive and fructifying person shall no longer be sacrificed; it shall no longer even be considered in the least shameful to deviate from morality, in deed or in thought numerous new attempts at living life and creating community shall be undertaken; an enormous load of bad conscience shall be purged from the world — these most basic goals shall be recognized and furthered by all honest people in search of truth. (D 164, transl. Brittain Smith)

Nietzsche cares about the deviant. We do not know if he thinks about a creative artist, an innovative engineer, a daring entrepreneur, a criminal, a tightrope walker, a dreamer. In a world, that regards efficiency and parsimony as its highest values, moral deviance may also express itself in leisure, laziness or meandering contemplation. From the perspective of a society, the main concern is how to treat moral deviance. Are people confident enough to observe difference or diversity without reservation or resentment? Dares a community

to accept or even encourage novel experiments of living? Could we do with much less bad conscience? With regard to Nietzsche's own political strategy, the fifth demand is decisive. Set apart from the preceding ones by a dash, it summarizes the previous four as the most general goal; it also changes from the definite indicative to the recommending subjunctive: "these goals ought to be." At the same time, the addressee of this concluding demand is also clearly stated. If we may assume that most of the readers of *Dawn* are happy to count themselves among the honest ones and the seekers of truth, he speaks to you and me. His text is an appeal to all (and none) for the recognition and promotion of a pluralistic and experimental practice of difference.

Only two aphorisms later Nietzsche illustrates the alternative to a culture which appreciates deviance and experimental pluralism. In Aphorism 166 *At the crossroads*, he outlines the desire to become a well-recognized and accepted member of the given moral community; a person with a clear social function within a well-functioning network: "Pfooeey! You want to become part of a system in which you must either be a cog in the wheel, totally and completely, or else be steamrolled by it!" (D 166, transl. Brittain Smith). One cultivates contacts, one makes oneself useful, and one discredits oneself "through deliberate conformity to such mores" and devalues oneself to "an inferior piece of nature's pottery" (D 166, transl. Brittain Smith). Even if Nietzsche strives for a clear deterrent and despite his drastic words, we should not underestimate the attractiveness of this path. From the disciplining education in the parental home and at school to the networks of the successful or the well-meaning social service for the unsuccessful, everyone aims at being a wheel rather than being under the wheels. Paradoxically, the prospect of the relative realization of individual particularity consists in successful adaptation to the dominant forms of interaction.

However, if we continue to follow the chain of aphorisms in the third book of *Dawn*, we see that Nietzsche's project of a fundamental cultural transformation also includes reflection on political and economic constellations. Nietzsche proceeds from a critique of the panegyrist of labor (D 173), the trading culture (D 174, 175), and the state (D 179) to a social psychology of demagoguery (D 188) and reserved thoughts on big politics (D 189). This chain of aphorisms investigates the conditions for the already set theme of dissonance between deviant individuality and conventional custom. It illuminates the political and economic framework, which prevents individuals from flourishing. Nietzsche was well aware of the social and economic contexts of any art of living, but he

chose philosophy as his mean of political intervention. If we disregard the young boys foundation of the *Germania* with two friends in Naumburg, his engagement for the philological association in Leipzig, and his undeveloped role in the circle around Wagner, Nietzsche does not make any attempts “to organize and thereby to create for themselves a *right*” (D 164, transl. R. J. Brittain Smith.). In this sense, he is not a politician. Thus, he evades the dilemma of organized individuality, but he does not renounce politics. His political and reformatory practice from the *Birth of Tragedy* and *Untimely Meditations* to the hectic succession of writings before his collapse in 1888 is persuasive philosophical publication. Nietzsche did not found a party, nor did he engage in political movements; Nietzsche wrote books. Like Plato, St. Paul, or Luther, Nietzsche chose writing and the public word as the instrument of his *reformatio mundi*.

I want to close this essay with drawing a line to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* because it seems to me that my interpretation of *Dawn* sheds light on a more famous if not infamous passage in Zarathustra’s prologue:

You have made your way from worm to human, and much in you is still worm. Once you were apes, and even now the human being is still more of an ape than any ape is. | Whoever is wisest among you is still no more than a discord and hybrid between plant and spectre. But do I bid you become spectres or plants? | Behold, I teach you the Overhuman! | The overhuman is the sense of the earth. May your will say: Let the Overhuman be the sense of the earth! (Za, Prologue 3, transl. Graham Parkes)

This dense address cannot only specify the mentioned questions, but at the same time hints at the directions where answers are to be sought. In the first lines, Zarathustra formulates a narrative with strong evolutionary-biological echoes. He addresses his audience in the plural and place the people in a diachronic and synchronic continuity with worms and – in an even clearer association with Darwinism – apes. It is true that man has come a long way to his present, but at the same time he has remained a creeping animal and ridiculously unreasonable in many respects. Zarathustra thus characterizes humans by means of a tense and contradictory simultaneity. Even a subtle, educated, and cultivated person is at the same time only the intertwined contrast of mere spirituality and mindlessly living nature. The speech of plant and ghost brings the classical dualism to an ironic formula and at the same time transcends it to an ambivalent hybrid.



The metaphorical alliteration of dichotomy and hybrid (*Zwiespalt and Zwitter*) illustrates a unity of opposition and thus a dynamic tension, a charge and force from which new options arise.

Nietzsche's Zarathustra does not leave it with a mere description or diagnosis, but comes to speak about future directions of development. As in *Dawn* or *Ecce Homo*, however, he does not suddenly shift into dogmatic imperatives nor does he derive categorical duties from ostensibly compelling reasons. Again, he rather offers an invitation and tries to make it attractive and palatable. He invites us to employ the dynamic tension between ghost and plant and direct our energy into a self-esteemed goal. This goal is set to avoid the false alternative of either being a wheel in the machinery or getting under the wheels we found in *Dawn* 166 quoted above. The over-human is introduced as a real alternative, and Nietzsche encourages the presumably free will of an open audience to make a clear and conscious decision. The over-human is an inner-worldly goal by which we ourselves want to rise above ourselves. It is perhaps necessarily part of such an ideal that it remains unachieved. This was also the case with earlier ideals. However, unlike the notions of a "likeness to God" which Plato posits as the ideal of Socratic philosophy,<sup>4</sup> or the Pauline *imitatio Christi* (1. Cor. 11,1), the ideal proposed here is consistently earthly. Moreover, this ideal is deliberately construed in a way that it remains open to future experiments. If a society sets itself the over-human as a goal, then perhaps this should also simply mean that it wants to create conditions, which generally increase the possibilities for the formation of remarkable, deviant characters. Understood in this way, the 'over-human' is an invitation to the self-overcoming of the human species toward a world, which enables the diversity of human ways of life to grow and remains curious to see what comes next.

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<sup>4</sup> Plato, *Theaetetus*, ed. and transl. by Harold N. Fowler (Loeb Classical Library 123), Harvard 1921, p 176b.

## XVI. So what? Conclusions

### First Section: Results for a Critical Art of Living according to Nietzsche

by Günter Gödde

A critical art of living helps analyze difficulties that stand in the way of an everyday art of living, discusses practices and processes for dealing with them, and designs models of a successful life. It is not only related to specific moments of crisis, but also develops certain forms of critique that serve as a theoretical basis for applications in real life practice, whether in everyday life or in educational or therapeutic settings.<sup>1</sup> Since there is no explicit outline for a critical art of living in Nietzsche, we are faced with the task of illuminating critical dimensions of his philosophy that lend themselves to develop the foundation of a critical art of living.<sup>2</sup> For this purpose, we have compiled particularly insightful perspectives.

#### 1. Critique of Metaphysics

Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics is directed against Plato's doctrine of the two worlds, Kant's distinction between 'thing in itself' and 'appearance,' but also against Schopenhauer's distinction between the worlds of the 'Dionysian' will and the 'Apollonian' imagination. In *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche speaks explicitly of the task "to overcome metaphysics." This, he says, requires a "reverse movement" both historically and psychologically (HH I 20, transl.

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1 See Günter Gödde / Jörg Zirfas (eds.), *Kritische Lebenskunst. Analysen – Orientierungen – Strategien*, Stuttgart 2018.

2 Günter Gödde / Jörg Zirfas, "Einführung: Friedrich Nietzsche und die Vitalisierung der Lebenskunst," in: Günter Gödde / Nikolaos Loukidelis / Jörg Zirfas (eds.), *Nietzsche und die Lebenskunst. Ein philosophisch-psychologisches Kompendium*, Stuttgart 2016, 1–26.

Gary Handwerk). What is needed is a historical philosophizing that recognizes neither eternal facts nor absolute truths. The “small, unpretentious truths,” which are won in laborious detailed research, are to be valued “higher than the blissful and blinding errors that stem from metaphysical and artistic ages and human beings” (HH I 2, transl. Gary Handwerk).

Insofar as metaphysics advocates the freedom of the will, Nietzsche polemically calls it a “science that deals with the fundamental errors of human beings, but does so as if they were fundamental truths” (HH I 18, transl. Gary Handwerk). In *Beyond Good and Evil*, he raises the question of why the postulate of free will is still held: How is one to explain the human desire “to bear on your own the entire and ultimate responsibility for your actions, and to absolve God, the world, ancestors, chance, and society” of it? (BGE 21, transl. Adrian Del Caro). For strategic and ideological reasons, theology and metaphysics would have created a “will-world.”

Just as the experience of freedom of the “I will,” Nietzsche also fundamentally questions the immediate certainty of Descartes’ “*I think*.” It belongs to the questions of conscience of the intellect whether one is justified “to speak of an I, let alone of an I as cause, and finally of an I as the cause of thought” (BGE 16, transl. Adrian Del Caro, mod.). The “superstition of the soul” lives on as “superstition of the subject and the I,” the speech of the I or of the subject is ultimately only a “play on words,” a “seduction on the part of grammar” (BGE Preface, transl. Adrian Del Caro, mod.). Nietzsche resolutely advocates a decentering of the I. Instead of continuing to pay homage to the I as the actual subject of all events, one must realize that the I has become a “fiction” (TI, The Four Great Errors, 3).

Just as the concepts of will and the ‘I,’ Nietzsche also seeks to “deconstruct” the concept of consciousness. He counts the belief in the primacy of consciousness in one’s soul among the basic errors in the history of metaphysical thinking. Our so-called consciousness is “a more or less fantastical commentary on an unknown, perhaps unknowable, yet felt text” (D 119, transl. Brittain Smith); “only now is the truth dawning on us that biggest part by far of our intellectual activity takes place unconsciously and unfelt by us” (JS 333, transl. Adrian Del Caro). Nietzsche’s reevaluation of consciousness shows a style of

thinking of “dynamic criticalism,” with which he wants to set ossified concepts in motion again.<sup>3</sup>

It is obvious that a modern art of living, in turning away from metaphysical certainties, must seek its starting points in perceptible realities, in practical contexts, in “small” significances and demonstrable effects of human life.

## 2. Critique of Morality

Since *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche has dedicated himself to a fundamental questioning and perspectivization of morality. Due to an erroneous analysis of “the so-called unegotistical actions,” a “false ethics” with a rigid division between the egoistic as the evil and the unegoistic as the good had built up, which had caused a “*self-division of human beings*.” Such deep-seated moral prejudices had to be overcome in order to help the human being make of him or herself a “whole *person*” (HH I 37, 57, 95, transl. Gary Handwerk).

In the *Joyful Science*, Nietzsche emphatically emphasizes that he sees “no one who would have ventured a *critique* of the moral valuations” (JS 345, transl. Adrian Del Caro). Such a critique presupposes “a position *outside* morality, some beyond of good and evil to which one must ascend, climb, fly” in order to carry out a detachment from “commanding value judgments” that “have entered into our flesh and blood” (JS 380, transl. Adrian Del Caro).

In the *Genealogy of Morality*, Nietzsche puts forward the thesis that the life-denying values of Christian morality had led to a severe suppression of drives and affects in individuals, to an “*internalization*” of the outwardly inhibited affects and thus to a “turning against oneself.” In Nietzsche’s analysis of the “bad conscience” his moral genealogy and psychology gains a cultural-theoretical and phylogenetic scope. The entanglement in severe feelings of shame and guilt is the “greatest and uncanniest sickness” in human history: “the suffering of humans *from humans*, from *themselves*” (GM II 16, transl. Adrian Del Caro). Nietzsche’s call for the transformation of the bad conscience into a sovereign good conscience is borne by a moral-therapeutic intention, aims at freedom regarding one’s own morality and can be seen as an ethics of freedom toward other morals.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Erwin Schlimgen, *Nietzsches Theorie des Bewusstseins*, Berlin/New York 1999, 164, our transl.

<sup>4</sup> See Werner Stegmaier, *Nietzsches “Genealogie der Moral”*, Darmstadt 1994.

### 3. Critique of Psychology

Nietzsche's "unmasking psychology" anticipates much of what Sigmund Freud, Alfred Adler, C. G. Jung and others later developed further as the psychology of the unconscious.<sup>5</sup> On the one hand, certain virtues, values, and ideals are scrutinized for their psychological, by no means always noble motives; on the other hand, rationally represented motives are revealed as illusory, being rooted in completely different, namely libidinal desires and interests. Thus, the uncovering and unveiling of human self-deceptions, which necessarily go hand in hand with, or lead to, deceptions of fellow human beings, become one of Nietzsche's programmatic concerns (see D 523).

In Nietzsche's late work, his increasing interest in physiology, illness, and health leads to a "physio-psychology." He speaks of a "morphology and *doctrine of the development of the will to power*" (BGE 23, transl. Adrian Del Caro) in order to show that psychic development is essentially determined by the conflict dynamics of mutually opposing drives and affects. In this development of drives and affects, "firmer forms" gradually emerge.<sup>6</sup> In the process, philosophy and morality – as rational and ideological means and strategies – are also used to gain and consolidate power.

If the entire psychology, according to Nietzsche, had been stuck "in moral prejudices and fears," he claimed to free himself from them and dare a look into the depths. A physio-psychologist of his kind has to fight "with unconscious obstacles in the heart" and overcome their "own remnant of morality" (BGE 23, transl. Adrian Del Caro). If he had something ahead of other psychologists, then it was having an eye "for that most difficult and trickiest form of *backward inference* in which most mistakes are made — the backward inference from the work to the maker, from the deed to the doer, from the ideal to the one who *needs* it, from every manner of thinking and valuing to the commanding *need* behind it" (NCW, *We Antipodes*, transl. Carol Diethe and Adrian Del Caro).

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5 See Günter Gödde, *Traditionslinien des "Unbewussten."* Schopenhauer – Nietzsche – Freud, Gießen 2009 [1999]; Martin Liebscher, "Friedrich Nietzsche's perspectives on the unconscious," in: Angus Nicholls / Martin Liebscher (eds.), *Thinking the unconscious. Nineteenth-century German thought*, Cambridge 2010, 241–260; Jutta Georg / Claus Zittel (eds.), *Nietzsches Philosophie des Unbewussten*, Berlin / Boston 2012.

6 See Wolfgang Baßler, "Seelisches Geschehen als 'Kampf der Affekte.' Gestaltentwicklung und Geschichte als Grundbegriffe der Psychologie Friedrich Nietzsches," in: Gerd Jüttemann (ed.), *Wegbereiter der Historischen Psychologie*, München/Weinheim 1988, 63–69, our transl.

#### 4. Critique of Knowledge, Truth, and Science

Already the young Nietzsche dealt intensively with the critique of knowledge and truth. In the essay *On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense*, written in 1873, he emphasizes at the beginning “how pitiful, how insubstantial and transitory, how purposeless and arbitrary the human intellect looks within nature,” in order to then express himself with abysmal skepticism about the possibilities of human cognition and self-knowledge: “What do human beings really know about themselves? [...] Does nature not remain silent about almost everything, even about our bodies, banishing and enclosing us within a proud, illusory consciousness, far away from the twists and turns of the bowels, the rapid flow of the blood stream and the complicated tremblings of the nerve fibres?” (TL 1, transl. Ronald Speirs).

For Nietzsche, there is neither pure striving for the sake of knowledge itself nor truth in itself. Ultimately, in processes of social agreement, what is “to count as ‘truth’ from this point onwards” is “fixed,” and thus “a way of designating things is invented which has the same validity and force everywhere.” From this, society then derives “the obligations to lie in accordance with firmly established convention” (TL 1, transl. Ronald Speirs). Already here, Nietzsche developed a series of theses that were highly provocative for the time:

The human “intellect” is seen in the sense of Schopenhauer primarily as a tool in the service of life. It unfolds, according to Nietzsche, its main powers in “dissimulation” and generally leads to “deception,” be it self-deception, the misleading of other people, or the illusionary misjudgment of the world. There is no “honest and pure drive towards truth.” The striving for the sake of knowledge is opposed by biological needs and social-cultural adaptation processes. But the human being is, for Nietzsche, no longer conscious of these motives and comes to the “feeling of truth” through this unconsciousness. Truths are “illusions of which we have forgotten that they are illusions, metaphors which have become worn by frequent use and have lost all sensuous vigour, coins which, having lost their stamp, are now regarded as metal and no longer as coins.” Accordingly, truth “contains not a single point which could be said to be ‘true in itself,’ really and in a generally valid sense, regardless of mankind.” (TL 1, transl. Ronald Speirs).

One can ask about the meaning and justification of Nietzsche’s provocative critique of knowledge and truth in the sense of a critical art of living. What catches the eye are his often repeated references to the limits that are drawn to

human cognition and the impossibility of an objective finding of truth. These emphatically skeptical reflections show his concern to effectively counter the optimism for knowledge and reason of the Enlightenment and German idealism, but without doubting the utility of knowledge and truth, let alone the moral value of the pursuit of knowledge and intellectual honesty.

A critical art of living can thus be made more aware of a skeptical examination of the ‘insights’ and ‘truths’ ultimately controlled by interests. Consequently, this means the acceptance of human limits of knowledge, but also the attempt to bring one’s own ‘truths’ against other ‘truths’ into the game of power and knowledge. For truth is “not something that would be there and that could be found, discovered, – but something *that is to be created*” (N Autumn 1887, 9[91]). There can then only be “perspectival valuations,” whereby “every achieved amplification and expansion of power opens up new perspectives and means to believe in new horizons” (N Autumn 1885 - Autumn 1886, 2[108]). Nietzsche thus achieves an ironic distance to science, which he consistently has merge into a critique of the faith in science.

In aphorism 344 of the *Joyful Science* with the telling title “*How we, too, are still pious*,” Nietzsche presents his critique of science: The starting point of his reflections is the assumption that “convictions” have a right to exist in (empirical) science at best when they descend to the “modesty of a hypothesis.” But “doesn’t this mean,” Nietzsche asks, “only when conviction *ceases* to be conviction, is it allowed to achieve access to science?” From there, however, one must consistently continue to ask whether there must not already be a conviction, and “moreover such a commanding and unconditional one that it sacrifices all other convictions to itself.” The underlying conviction is: “*nothing* is required *more* than truth, and in relation to it everything else has only a second-class value.” Nietzsche wants to point out that it is “still a *metaphysical faith* on which our faith in science based” (JS 344, transl. Adrian Del Caro). Within the framework of science, faith, albeit as “its unconscious imperative,” refers to “a value *in itself of truth*” (GM III 24, transl. Adrian Del Caro). Science depends “in all its goals and methods thoroughly on philosophical views, *but easily forgets this. The dominating philosophy, however, also has to consider the problem to what degree science may grow: it has to determine the value!*” (N Summer 1872 – Early 1873, 19[24]).

## 5. Critique of Nihilism

In his late work, Nietzsche's thinking revolves around the question: How can the modern human being create a horizon of meaning and a life-affirming world orientation despite the loss of moral support, of metaphysical and religious security? The questions of meaning (vs. nihilism), freedom (vs. morality), power (vs. asceticism), metaphor and construction (vs. truth), and the eternal return of the same (vs. faith in the afterlife, progress, and science) continued to occupy him.

Willing liberates: that is the true teaching of will and liberty [...]
   
No more willing and no more esteeming and no more creating!
   
Oh, if only this great weariness would always keep away from me!
   
[...] (Za II, On the Blessed Isles)

Willing liberates because willing is creating: thus I teach. And you
   
should learn only for *creating!* (Za III, On Old and New Tablets
   
16, transl. Adrian Del Caro)

Just as the will to power, the idea of the eternal return of the same is directed against the danger of "nihilism." The high esteem of the present moment, of the finite, and the individual appears to Nietzsche as a redeeming alternative both to the Christian belief in the next world and to the scientific and political belief in progress of the 19th century.

As a historical-cultural phenomenon, nihilism essentially means "*that the highest values have devalued themselves*" (N Autumn 1887, 9[35], our transl.). It gains its dangerous practical relevance in the nihilistic value judgment that mankind is tempted to make about the world and about itself, suffering from *ressentiment* and feelings of guilt as a result of the suppression of emotions. Whoever is exposed for so long to the domination of the ascetic ideal inevitably suffers at some point from historically practiced self-contempt; he or she lets nihilism secretly take over the direction of his or her own life: "To live *in such a way* that there is no longer any *meaning* in living, *that* now becomes the 'meaning' of life . . ." (AC 43, transl. Carol Diethe and Adrian Del Caro). The question of how to overcome this contempt and the accompanying disgust with existence so that humanity can arrive at a new affirmative image of itself is at the center of Nietzsche's life-affirming late philosophy. In essence, this is as



much a psychological as a philosophical question, which cannot be answered without a psychology of the will.<sup>7</sup>

## 6. Critique of Values

When traditional values begin to falter – and this insight applies beyond Nietzsche’s 19th century – then values must be reassessed or new ones invented. Values serve as orientation for life and the art of living, they point to what makes sense, and in this respect they also explicitly or implicitly criticize other values and other forms of life. For Nietzsche, the central value of an art of living is a permanent individual self-transformation: “to create ourselves, to sculpt a form out of all elements – is the task! Always that of a sculptor! Of a productive human being” (N Ende 1880, 7[213]). The art of living means above all an individual stylization of life according to aesthetic aspects, which on the one hand acknowledges the contingencies of life and on the other hand gives this life an absolute validity. It liberates from conventional (Christian) moral concepts and takes on the task of self-care, of constantly reshaping the individual aesthetically through reflection and practice. The monadic, identical, and predictable moral subject becomes the nomadic, transformational, experimental, and multiform individual of self-care – a person of “incessant *transformation*” (N Spring - Autumn 1881, 11[197]).

Against this background, Nietzsche’s critique refers to the moral and cultural barriers of self-transformation, or in other words: to fixations and determinations, to generalizations and absolutizations, to normalizations and categorizations, to demarcations and pathologizations. In short: Nietzsche does not want to think the art of living from a morality universally valid for all, but morality from an individual art of living. For this idea, we can refer to the well-known speech of Zarathustra “On the Three Metamorphoses” at the beginning of Part I. The spirit is first a “camel,” then a “lion” and eventually a “child”: While the camel is burdened with old values and norms, with outdated attitudes and practices of “thou shalt,” the lion can free itself from them, it procures the freedom for “new creation” by propagating an “I will,” but without being creative itself. Nietzsche’s ideal, however, is the child who constantly recreates him or herself through playing: “The child is innocence and forgetting, a new

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<sup>7</sup> See Eike Brock, *Nietzsche und der Nihilismus*, Berlin/München/Boston 2015, 207–235.

beginning, a game, a wheel rolling out of itself, a first movement, a sacred yes-saying” – a yes-saying to every moment of life and to each their world designs. The child is the new artist of life who eternally creates and destroys him or herself, who begins ever anew: the eternal return of change that affirms plurality, contingency, and freedom. As Nietzsche’s maxim of the art of living one could accordingly pose the statement: ‘Become ever-different!’

But this does not mean unlimited libertinism. For only the one who masters and sublimates his sensual-vital forces can direct them into productive channels. Mastery and sublimation means to bring a certain order into the chaos caused by the passions, but without weakening or even suppressing the energy and passion of the drives. Such a purification of the will to power is accompanied by the unceasing striving to work on one’s own character and to give it style: “‘Giving style’ to one’s character – a great and rare art! It is practiced by the one who surveys everything that his nature offers in strengths and weaknesses, and then subjects it to an artistic plan until each thing appears as art and reason and even weakness delights the eye” (JS 290, transl. Adrian Del Caro).

With regard to the topic of “self-design” or “giving style,” “*One thing is essential*” is Nietzsche’s best-known aphorism: “For one thing is essential: that a human being *attain* satisfaction with themselves — be it by this or that fiction and art: only then is a human being bearable to look at in the first place!” (JS 290, transl. Adrian Del Caro) The stylization of character is thus an excellent path to a successful life. But it is not the only one. Another is to rather avoid the self-critical distance to oneself and instead like oneself in one’s own surprising spontaneity.<sup>8</sup>

Besides the model of the child, the “superman” or Zarathustra, Nietzsche himself also forms a model: “I am not a man, I am dynamite” (EH, Why I am a Destiny 1). In this sense, the art of living can also be understood as an attempt to blow up the existing (moral and cultural) values and forms of life in order to use the fragments and remnants to develop new, individual life collages.

## 7. Critique through Genealogy and Aphorisms

The core of his genealogical criticism can be summarized in the notion that life can always be arranged differently. With the title “genealogy” Nietzsche

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<sup>8</sup> See Dieter Thomä, *Vom Glück in der Moderne*, Frankfurt am Main 2003, 180.

refers to a call for self-examination. It enquires how the subject could become what they are and how they understand themselves in the process; it asks what powers could gain influence on the subject and how much influence they still have; and it finally asks what the subject can or could become. In this sense, Nietzsche's genealogical critique is historical, power-analytical, and educational. It aims to show how the life-denying ideas and practices of Christianity, which lead to guilt, bad conscience, and ascetic ideals, still determine the subject. In the context of this genealogical critique, which shows individuals the history, power relations and self-relations they are 'stuck' in, especially physically, Nietzsche tries to sound out what possibilities they have for change. He does so primarily in an aphoristic form.

The aphorism, I claim, expresses from the point of view of the art of living above all the possibilities of change. An aphorism is a form of text that values something while at the same time calling to be valued. Due to its structure and open character, it pointedly highlights facts on the one hand, but on the other leaves a lot of room for interpretation. Aphorisms are therefore particularly suitable for breaking up patterns of thought and action; they irritate and disturb, but also suggest alternatives and perspectives without putting them into a systematic or structural Procrustean bed. The art of the aphorism is thus congruent with the art of living: overturning prejudices, irritating thought patterns, reevaluating values, trying out new ways of living, proposing aesthetic alternative ways of life.<sup>9</sup>

The aphorism as an individualistic art of interpreting is first of all a written self-experiment. Based on the idea that the meaning of life lies in its cognition and in shaping it, Nietzsche's aphorisms can be seen not only as a project of shaping one's life through self-description and self-knowledge, but also as a scriptural cultivation program in which the writer uses texts to examine his relations to himself and the world. They situate a thought in a space, where the writer records his genealogical research and tries out his aesthetic designs. They are, so to speak, documents of one's own self-understanding and reflections.

Due to their openness, aphorisms have a dialogical character; they promote conversation. In them we are challenged to change, and for this we find, so to

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<sup>9</sup> See Werner Stegmaier, "Philosophieren als Vermeiden einer Lehre. Inter-individuelle Orientierung bei Sokrates und Plato, Nietzsche und Derrida," in: Josef Simon (ed.), *Distanz im Verstehen. Zeichen und Interpretation*, Frankfurt am Main 1995, 214–239.

speak, the blown-up set pieces of Western thinking and life and can then draw on them to live our own idea of a life worth affirming.

And in this respect, they serve not least their own critique: For their dialogical-open character, which relies on individual life solutions, risks that individuals question Nietzsche's aphorisms and their insights. As an aesthetic form, the aphorism has no unconditional claim to truth, but only – if you will – to correctness and coherence for an individual art of living. And this can certainly also be lived contrary to the aphoristic insights of Nietzsche.

*Translated by Reinhard G. Mueller*



## **Second Section:**

# **What We May Learn from Nietzsche on the Art of Living Today**

*by Jörg Zirfas*

Questions about an art of living often arise when the plight of life threatens to become existential, but still seems philosophically manageable. The plight of life must not become a mere question of survival; only then can the art of living gain significance. The “plight” meant here refers not only to the threat to the biological existence of the human being, but also to the facts that people can no longer understand their lives to a certain extent, that they can no longer shape and form their lives, and finally that they no longer see any meaning in their lives that make it worth living.

While Nietzsche takes a critical-constructive perspective toward physical suffering, he favors a critical-destructive attitude toward mental suffering. In this regard, the attitude of a bitter humorist or a mockingly frivolous person is in line with the goals of an art of living that, on the one hand, focuses on the shattering of certainties and the enlightenment of, above all, moral ideals and, on the other hand, on the liberation and relief from compulsive (Christian) moral forms of thinking and living. The art of living thus appears as a critical therapy of the suffering of life that wants to include – beyond bourgeois and Christian morality, guilt, bad conscience and pity – even nihilism and overcome the utilitarian idea of happiness in order to realize an art of living that is based on the individual and their instinct, taste, and style.

Thus, the life artist in Nietzsche’s sense must first deal with questions of illness and health and specifically also with physiological and physical – or

more broadly: the natural-empirical – conditions in order to be able to realize a life that is as carefree as possible. Nietzsche mentions here, for example, that climate, food, diet, clothing, walks, and atmospheres may be life-denying or life-affirming. In particular, however, it is the individual physical and psychological pains in and from life that raise questions about a successful life. These pains can only be worked out in a radical self-analysis rooted in bodily life. Philosophical thoughts and practices must accordingly have their positive effects in life. Now the pains can be understood not only as reasons for the art of living, but also as a medium essential to it: One can and should shape one's life with the help of pain. In this respect, it is not necessary to remain in self-pity, but to understand one's own suffering as a condition for the possibility of further development. The art of living consists here in meeting the present suffering by remembering the glorification of survived crises, in order to thereby inspire the life to be lived in the future.

In short, the art of living refers to the un-lived possibilities of human life. A philosophical art of living according to Nietzsche will always have to face the question of how to deal with vulnerability and pain, with physical illness and mental suffering – facts that existentially belong to life. What is at stake here is that these facts must first be perceived in their phenomena (diagnosis), then their causes and conditions must be clarified (etiology, genealogy) and evaluated (philosophy) before, in a fourth step, perspectives for dealing with physical and psychological suffering (therapy) can be developed. If it turns out that diseases do not have a medical background, but are due to contingent cultural pathologizations, then philosophical-genealogical discussions and clarifications can already contribute to recovery and thus claim to be therapeutic.

Philosophy can act like self-medication in this respect. The “inner sage” or the “inner therapist” that every human being carries within him or her often appears as a good idea, a soothing perspective, or comforting cognition, and in the case of philosophers suffering from psychological, physical and/or existential problems, often in the form of philosophy. A thinker's philosophy can thus also function as autotherapeutic medication. In Nietzsche's case, the figure of Zarathustra assumes this autotherapeutic function. Zarathustra, Nietzsche's therapeutic alter ego, the awakened archetype of the inner healer, proclaims the “great health” that is always there – even in the face of sorrow, illness, and suffering – when one says “yes” to life and, in the final analysis, can then say that the life one lives shall return. These considerations kept Nietzsche healthy

by his own standards, despite many ailments, disorders, and illnesses. Health has thus risen in Nietzsche's subjective theory of illness and health to a category of the spirit, to a noetic determination. Philosophical considerations, philosophies of life, and worldviews can promote or inhibit this health. Philosophy thus becomes a therapeutic agent.

What can we learn from Nietzsche for a contemporary art of living? Looking at the writings of this volume, it first becomes clear that Nietzsche's art of living primarily focuses on the connection to a lived biography (*Jörg Zirfas*). It is concerned with the causes and reasons, the forms and media as well as the goals of a Nietzschean art of living. It is the respective individual physical and psychological pains in and from life that raise the questions of a successful life. These pains can only be worked out in a radical self-analysis. This radical self-analysis must be rooted in bodily life and philosophical thoughts and practices must accordingly have their positive effects in life. The art of living aims at an affirmation of life. For this one needs education, one needs science, and one needs the arts. Only in this way can one think a life to the end and live a thinking to the end – despite all pain.

This affirmation can no longer to be attained with Christianity (*Dagmar Kiesel*). On the contrary, according to Nietzsche's analyses, Christianity can be understood as a trauma-analogous phenomenon. In the foreground is the Christian radical invalidation of elementary natural needs of the human being, as determined by him, as well as the abysmal human depravity and dependence on the divine, asserted by the Augustinian doctrine of original sin. Nietzsche problematically assesses the feelings of powerlessness and helplessness associated with Christian traumatization, as well as a massive self-esteem problem that sometimes leads to suicide, in which the 'I' is seen as hateful, evil, and guilty. It is therefore no wonder that in his therapeutic approach he argues both for the acceptance and promotion of individual life paths and for a strengthening of self-love.

The perspectivism also plays a role when the art of living comes into view from a metapsychological perspective (*Thorsten Lerchner*). For the plasticity of inner experience, which Nietzsche claims, questions the validity of psychological models. From his point of view, such abstract edifices of thought give only snapshots of the soul. In truth, the psychic play of forces passes fluidly from one configuration to another through personal and social circumstances – and thus we always gain different perspectives regarding ourselves. Accordingly, there



is no such thing as a psychological nature of the human being. Psychological models must remain in flux, as must the phenomena to which they refer. One-time fixations of personal identity are highly problematic – they turn out to be internalizations of an outdated substance metaphysics.

With Nietzsche, the pains can be understood not only as reasons for the art of living, but also as a medium essential to it: One can and should shape one's life with the help of pain; but also with the help of thinking, writing, music, physicality, sensuality, and masquerades (*Kristina Jaspers*). Nietzsche is concerned in these practices with the aesthetic stylization of life, with a shaping of the self: the self can and should be shaped. In the search for the premises of one's own life, everything must be questioned that constitutes one's (individual) life. Life becomes the experimental setup for thinking; and failure is also part of this experiment. Nietzsche formulates the existential claim take responsibility for his work with his life, to shape his life along his own maxims as art.

A new way of dealing with oneself, a new form of self-care, is also in view when Nietzsche speaks of diet or dietetics (*Johannes Heinrich*). But these terms do not simply refer to dietary instructions. Rather, dietetics includes instructions for the rhythm of everyday living as well as far-reaching ascetic practices and settings, which deal with the question of how much influence from the outside should penetrate our consciousness and which environment strengthens us to be able to carry out the most successful self-realization possible. And it involves directing human nature or that which influences it and determine the rank order of its instincts, drives, and affects, which necessarily govern action. And we can be successful doing so through dietetic practices of self-care, which make it possible to gain knowledge of one's needs and thus also to influence one's drives. Nietzsche therefore advises the sick person not merely ascetic withdrawal and minimization of drives, but also to cultivate his drives and passions and give in to them when the opportunity arises, in order to better control them in the end.

Nietzsche emphasizes again and again that he always made the most instructive experiments in the spiritual-moral field in the state of suffering and renunciation (*Renate Müller-Buck*). Thus, pain becomes for Nietzsche the “liberator of the spirit.” A look at aphorism 114 of *Dawn*, “*On the sufferer's knowledge*,” clarifies how we can imagine this transfiguration process from suffering in knowledge. Here, concepts like “sobering up,” “coldness” and “clairvoyance” play an important role. Only the great pain helps the knowledge-

seeking to gain a “new perspective,” makes him or her sober and clairvoyant enough to renounce the fantasies of ordinary life (D 114, transl. Brittain Smith). In this context, Nietzsche, completely in the sense of an art of living, sees all art and philosophy as “a remedy and aid in the service of a growing, struggling life,” which always presupposes “suffering and sufferers” (JS 370, transl. Adrian Del Caro).

Philosophy, as a remedy and aid, recognizes in the changing perspectives the basic condition of all life (*Eike Brock*). Thus, the perspectival is also the basic condition of all philosophizing, knowledge, and being-in-the-world in general. As Nietzsche demonstrates, this insight can trigger a downright horror of cognition, because with it every ground of an ultimate truth has become impossible. Whoever falls prey to this horror plunges into an existential crisis. However, the insight into the perspectival character of life can also be a liberation. For it allows us to consciously take other positions and look at things from different viewpoints. Conscious perspectival philosophizing becomes, among other things, a philosophy of the art of living in Nietzsche. Moreover, one frequently encounters philosophical landscape paintings in Nietzsche’s work, which function primarily as mood paintings. They are invitations to the readers to let themselves be put into the according mood. Specific moods, in turn, suggest specific perspectives.

Nietzsche’s reflections on the art of living turn out to be the work of seriously ill man, who still just survives and for this very reason reflects on the colorful dawn of a new day (*Enrico Müller*). His thoughts deal with the “subterranean” existence of a digger, underminer, who wants to question the moral ground of culture anew. They present a subversive history of (Christian) moral philosophy, wherein Nietzsche himself dares a claim that can hardly be exaggerated – to be the crucial turning point in thinking morality. His fundamental reorientation of the Western morality entails both a perspectival practice and a sounding out of the associated conditions of existence.

Perspectivism also means to perceive and assess fundamental facts of human life differently (*Günter Gödde*). Nietzsche therefore passionately advocates the value of leisure throughout his life and addresses its relationship to the art of living in many facets. He is not one of those who have understood leisure as a relic of an education that has supposedly rightly disappeared, an elitist pretension that is outdated in today’s society. Instead, he emphasizes the subversive character of leisure as an antithesis of self-alienation: leisure becomes a journey to the

sources of one's own strength. Central ideas of leisure concern new forms of dealing with time and aesthetic bodily experiences in play and meditation.

Nietzsche therefore propagates distance to himself and distinction to his fellow men (*Renate Reschke*). The life artist as a free spirit is an outsider who enjoys his exceptionality in a kind of sublimity. Spaces like cypress forests or red morning skies support the "birth" of the life artist from the spirit of disruption and the pains of modernity and at the same time inaugurate the invention of the individual and the new by stimulating one to experiment with perspectives and stylizations and develop new forms of perception, thinking, and living.

The life artist also requires a disposition to solitude, conceived of as a state in which one does not receive any understanding for one's existence and one's thinking, so that one cannot share the plight of one's thoughts with anyone else (*Werner Stegmaier*). In this respect, the art of living is not so much attuned to aesthetic stylization and happiness in life, but rather to just survive in solitude. However, one can gain a lot from solitude. Nietzsche makes this clear by his notion of distance in thinking and in understanding others – namely his notion of "pathos of distance": it makes him learn finer forms of communication and by that distinguishes the solitary philosopher from mediocre average thinkers. In Nietzsche's words, it creates his "rank" and "nobility."

Life is to be affirmed, despite the struggles, the suffering, and the tragic: through humor, Nietzsche defies every pessimistic temptation (*Vivetta Vivarelli*). Cheerful joke and deep seriousness belong together like the mask and the face. In this respect, the artist of life should develop a habitus that can combine strategies of humor, irony, and light-heartedness with strategies of inversion (of valuations) and self-conquest – not in the sense of stoic torpor, but in the sense of soulful excitability. The serene art of living advocates a vitality that owes itself to the art of self-conquest. The philosopher steps out of him or herself, becomes his or her own spectator, and develops into an artist of transformation. This philosophy of cheerfulness can basically be considered as a forced euphoria, as it were, as a self-invented and self-determined dietetic against pessimism.

Nietzsche's philosophical-psychological considerations focus primarily on dispositions or virtues (*Manuel Knoll*). In recourse to the rank order of the forms of life and people, as we find it in Plato and Aristotle, the contemplative life of the philosopher ranks for him at the top of the forms of life. Corresponding to this theoretical contemplativeness is a practical heroism, which – borrowing from Heraclitus – aims at the affirmation of competition, struggle, and war

on all levels. It is therefore reasonable that dispositions such as masculinity, self-control, courage, and bravery, in the face of a perspective on life for which danger, hardship, sacrifice, perishing, and destruction are central, are held in enormous esteem by Nietzsche.

As an antithesis to solitude, Nietzsche uses festivals, whose meaning he gains by looking at the ancient Dionysian festivals (*Marco Brusotti*). Moments of these celebrations such as excess, subversion, syncretism, and eventfulness are to enter into a new art: the art of inventing festivals. This new festival-art propagates transitions between art and life, without art being absorbed in life or life in art. However, what is at stake is making a festival out of life as a whole through an art of elevated moments.

New horizons of a philosophical art of living as a universally valid science of the good life cannot be adequately problematized in a post-metaphysical constellation either only in terms of moral philosophy or only in political terms (*Helmut Heit*). At the same time, thinking about the life worth living must nevertheless engage with the transindividual level of society, politics and humanity – without neglecting individual self-experience. In this respect, such an art of living must clarify, with Nietzsche, the conditions for a proper reflection on the art of living as a task of post-metaphysical philosophy. In order to be able to redeem this character with a view to the possibilities of successful individuality, a fundamental reflection on the goals of culture as a whole is required in turn, a self-reflection of humankind, so to speak. Nietzsche's philosophical publications aims at a *reformatio mundi*.

If we summarize the elements of the texts gathered here, the following overview emerges: Affirmation, Self-Love, Plasticity, Experimentation, Dietetics, Remedies, Perspectivism, Criticism, Leisure, Free Spirit, Solitude, Celebrations, Heroism, Humor, Globality. Thus the picture of an art of living appears that is individualistic and biographical to a high degree, thereby proceeding in a sense-critical, changeable and perspectival way, developing new practices of self-care and self-shaping, proceeding altogether with much deliberation, humor, and consistency, and finally aiming at a (festive) affirmation of self and world.

Nietzsche's art of living can in this sense also be read as an attempt to come closer to one's individuality in one's fragmentary and precarious life, which, like a constantly changing composition, results from the right tension between self-knowledge and self-transformation and between recklessness and regularity. A successful life is the result of a balance of freedoms of intentions

and coincidences that can only be partially intended and realized. Therefore, whoever succeeds in being able to recognize the harmonies and disharmonies of life unconditionally in a process between life and death, lives a good life, since he or she can harmoniously unfold a multitude of his or her instincts. The success of one's own life as cultivation and civilization of oneself is, however, subject to reservation: One can indeed want to develop one's instincts and live one's own values, but whether these possibilities become probabilities or realities remains in principle withdrawn from one's own intention as well as its practice to a certain extent.

Thereby, the search for a right way of life is subordinated for Nietzsche to the idea of a philosophy as a cultural or moral critique, whose main question is a philosophical question: The question of the meaning of life, whereby physiological, psychological, or spiritual processes of the individual as well as of the cultural and social shaping of people's lives are addressed under the title "life." In order to be able to give oneself this meaning of life and to stylize one's life into a coherent whole, one needs appropriate forms of self-mastery, a genealogical self-exploration, perspectival self-questioning, as well as an experimental self-design.

At the center of Nietzsche's theory and practice of the art of living is the question of the expansion and intensification of life possibilities. Formulated as a thesis: Nietzsche's art of living is an art of option, of mobility, of development, of rhythm, of dynamism, of intensity, of becoming and transforming life. For Nietzsche, philosophical art of living offers answers to the question of how we can make our lives richer and more colorful, but also riskier and more dangerous. Such an image of the art of living can certainly serve as an orientation in today's world, which is characterized by acceleration, crises, uncertainties, and fears.

*Translated by Reinhard G. Mueller*

## **Third Section:**

# **The Art of Living as an Art of Orientation**

*by Werner Stegmaier*

### **1. The Art of Living in Economic, Moral and Religious Leeways**

It is an attractive idea to make an art out of one's life, and to not just to manage it in its economic, moral, and religious conditions, but to shape it – at least in part – according to aesthetic criteria. The economic, moral, and religious conditions in modern, enlightened, and highly developed societies as we know them today have so far permitted doing so: The economic hardships have, despite all crises, become less difficult; public morals have pluralized in many countries and become more flexible; religions are rather oriented to spiritual experiences than dogmas. The lives of if not all people, then at least large parts of such privileged societies can enter into greater freedom, enjoy it and be self-sufficient in the free spaces guaranteed by politics based on the rule of law and with the resources generated in socially restrained markets.

Michel Foucault, who developed the idea of an “aesthetics of existence,” did not limit it to modern conditions but, on the contrary, derived it from his analysis of forms of life in antiquity and late antiquity – especially with regard to how people dealt with sexuality. But here, too, it was a matter of privileged social classes: An aesthetics of existence was more natural to aristocrats, who wanted to distinguish themselves from each other in their ways of life and who were thus constantly competing with each other; at royal courts, where everything revolved around the ruler, this competition became the main occupation of

the nobility anywhere in the world. Nevertheless, the aesthetic way of life is not dependent only on wealth and power. It is also possible through modesty and seclusion, as exemplified by some of the ancient sages and later by monks and nuns in monastic devotion to God.

In today's societies, the idea of an aesthetic art of living is also an expression of liberation – after fierce class struggles, brutal totalitarianisms, devastating world wars and decades of threatening nuclear war. While the art of living reached its peak in the aristocratic competition for distinction, which drew on the hard labor of broad lower classes, it may now be boosted by the successful economic competition of more balanced societies, which now, however, outsource arduous and poorly paid labor to other countries. As far as the latter aspect is disregarded, even the materially lavish enjoyment of life loses its former morally and religiously offensive smell of luxury.

## 2. The Alluring Model of Visual Art

'Free spaces' or 'leeways' (*Spielräume*) permit unregulated behavior within regulated limits. Art has always been granted such free play within limits, without which it cannot produce anything remarkable. The boundaries may be narrower or wider in different cultures and ages; in modern democratic states they are larger than ever and guaranteed by law. Nevertheless, the creative freedom of art is limited by its respective means of creation: paper and pencil or screen and keyboard in literature; instruments and notation systems in music; human bodies in dance and acting; earths, woods, stones, metals in sculpture; paints, canvases and easels in painting – new materials and techniques are continually found and invented. For the art of living, the model of visual art, painting and sculpture, are guiding. This evokes the idea of having one's life in front of one like a canvas or a block of marble, which one can turn to or away from, and which one can work on freely according to one's own ideas. At the same time, this is the model of Western science: one views oneself in 'theoretical' distance to one's object – 'theory' understood in the broad sense of 'pure viewing' – and thereby assumes a position independent of the object. However, this does not apply to one's own life; one does not have it in front of one like a block of marble, but it is simultaneously the basic condition for one's artistic activity; the respective living conditions, however eased they may be, constrain it. Human life certainly leaves room for its shaping, but hardly for

modeling it like a free-standing statue. The model of fine arts must not obscure how narrow the leeway for the art of living is for human beings.

### **3. The Art of Living under Conditions of Life: Paradoxes of Self-Reference**

In other words, one's own life is not the object of a subject; in the art of living, one cannot keep subject and object apart. In an art of living under the conditions of life, life refers to itself. If concepts are used self-referentially, tautologies arise on the one hand, paradoxes on the other; this has made the concept of life particularly interesting for philosophy. A tautology confirms a concept in a way ("life is life"; "art is art"; "truth is truth"), but can also make it empty ("a rose is a rose is a rose"). A paradox, on the other hand, troubles logical thinking: when the famous Cretan says that all Cretans lie, and thus lies and tells the truth at the same time, one is faced with statements that are equally correct and yet mutually exclusive. One can, in order to escape the logical trouble, simply prohibit the self-reference of terms. But one can also make use of it and thereby gain new possibilities of orientation. For if paradoxes lead to contradictory statements, one has alternatives from which one can think further. As such, one can view human life as being conditioned everywhere and at the same time as self-determining; and one can think of life as a whole that encompasses all life at all times and at the same time as a certain life at a certain time that can only be observed at a certain time. The paradox is hidden in the distinction between whole and part: the part can only be understood from the whole, but the whole can only be observed from its parts.

The two alternatives in the self-referential concept of life – on the one hand being-conditioned, on the other condition-setting; on the one hand being only a part, on the other being the whole – open up and delimit precisely the scope in which the art of living is located. However, the concept of leeway itself is paradoxical, insofar as it encompasses regulated and unregulated behavior at the same time. But leeways can also be self-referential, in that they in turn shift within leeways, as happens 'in real life' all the time, e.g., when one occupies free spaces step by step; eventually, such shifts within limits may change the whole thing over time. They involve time, and time has always been paradoxical for logical thinking; already Aristotle has noted that 'now' is always the same and always different. But if everything 'has its time' or 'is in time' – and both



life and art certainly are – everything one tries to hold on to must eventually turn out to be paradoxical. In the art of living, the paradoxes of life, leeway, and time come together. This makes it particularly interesting logically and philosophically.

Moreover, contingency is a basic feature of life; despite all the regularities that can be stated scientifically, life is full of coincidences – i.e., events that cannot be explained scientifically according to laws. But even in contingency, continuity can develop. Life does not run randomly as it may appear, neither life as a whole nor an individual life. This is ensured by the temporalization of self-referentiality itself, the so-called recursivity: life processes are fed by life processes; whatever is generated by life processes goes back into new life processes. Life thus runs continuously and discontinuously at the same time; it is – an age-old paradox – always the same and always different at the same time.

#### **4. Orientation Art as a Precondition and Core of the Art of Living**

Recursivity can be observed comprehensibly and plausibly in everyday orientation. Every new orientation in every new situation works with prior orientation experiences made in prior situations. On the other hand, the mere fact that one has oriented oneself sufficiently in a situation already changes the situation; one now feels more secure. But orientation is not only a striking example of a process of life, it is much more, namely the first need of all living beings: Animals and humans can only live and survive if they can orient themselves sufficiently in their life situations, that is: know their way around, cope with the problems of the respective situation, and thus successfully master it. Even the search for food and shelter requires sufficient orientation. And orientation, as an orientation “to” something, always operates within leeways: it constantly has to decide which footholds offered in the respective situation it will hold on to and which direction is to be taken within the leeway the footholds provide; with every successful or unsuccessful orientation decision, the leeway can shift again. In this way our orientation copes with time and uses that which is paradoxical for logic creatively.

Orientation deals with something that is clearly distinguishable from it, but is not an object of a subject – the ‘situation’ that is at stake that it is involved with. One orients oneself in each case *about* a situation *in* the situation;

there is no theoretical distance; orientation and situation always change in connection with each other. Therein, no subject can be isolated; orientation always operates as a whole with all its physical, psychological, and communicative components, which come into play differently from case to case. If one defines orientation as the achievement of finding one's way in a situation and make out promising opportunities for actions to master the situation,<sup>1</sup> then we're also always concerned both with the situation and the success of orientation in it, at the same time. But since every situation is different and may have to be mastered with different means, there can be no universal criteria for a successful orientation in a situation. Thus, orientation is also a kind of art.

In sum, orientation not only fulfills all conditions of the art of living, but the art of living itself is not conceivable without the art of orientation; it is based on the art of orientation. The art of orientation may not only be its precondition, but also its core. For the art of living cannot be more than the art of 'mastering' life, of 'making the best' out of the conditions of life as they arise over time and change with time within leeways – in the sense that one can be satisfied with it, take pleasure in it, enjoy it and therefore 'affirm' it. The art of living and the art of orientation are not true or false, but 'succeed' or fail. That the art of living is singular and creative becomes clear in the art of orientation: it must react anew to every new situation and can only do so from its point of view, in its horizon and perspective; even if children are initially relieved of their orientation decisions, in time they must make them themselves and take responsibility for them. And like the art of living, the art of orientation relies on neither final criteria nor final certainties without therefore being completely uncertain; orientation, as life, has sufficient means to stabilize itself. Orientation, as the example of Michel de Montaigne already showed centuries ago, needs as little as the art of living metaphysical preconditions and does not have to take refuge in high ideals. A philosophy of orientation can stick to everyday observations of how orientation actually takes place.

## **5. Orientation Art as a Critical Concept of the Art of Living**

Even if orientation art is the core of the art of living, their terms do not simply coincide. Orientation can also be understood as a critical concept of life and orientation art as a critical concept of the art of living.

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<sup>1</sup> Werner Stegmaier, *What is Orientation? A Philosophical Investigation*, translated by Reinhard G. Mueller, Berlin/Boston 2019, 5.

First of all, one can survey neither life as a whole nor one's own life, except in retrospect and even then only by means of strong simplifications, abbreviations, and alignments; a successful orientation is limited to a surveyable situation. The future is open, also for the art of living. Speaking with Foucault of a 'life goal' is therefore problematic: a life need not have a goal, and if one sets goals for one's life, one can and often enough must change them under new conditions. So-called 'life designs' and 'life plans' can rarely be sustained for a whole life and, on the contrary, often lead to 'life disappointments.' Instead, one orients oneself in every life situation in different time horizons, i.e., short, medium, or long term: for instance, in the short term, how to get from A to B in the most favorable way; in the medium term, one's plans for the next days and weeks; in the long term, how to secure a good life in old age. Some of these plans will hold true, others not. Thus, in order not to undergo too many surprises and disappointments, even a long-term art of living must critically keep within the framework of temporary orientations and, in crucial situations, see whether and to what extent previously successful orientation decisions continue to prove themselves, e.g., if you can further rely on your own abilities, other people, or certain legal guarantees.

Foucault primarily dealt with power structures. If his background idea was to find ways to regain power over oneself under existing power relations, then doing so in fact begins with 'mastering' specific situations, and a situation can in turn be short-, medium- or long-term, depending on what one deals with. Power becomes noticeable in situations that we are unable to master ourselves, i.e., that 'overwhelm' us. As an individual, you can overcome social or even cultural power relations only to a certain degree, but you can often create new leeways within them and in opposition to them, thereby undermining or subverting existing power over time and hence preparing targeted resistance and revolts. Here, too, the art of living is first of all a clever art of orientation.

After all, just as in life, you can also lose your orientation, fall into disorientation, which appears in the short term as fear, in the medium term as despair, and in the long term as depression. We *experience* them, and we can then learn from them for subsequent orientations. From time immemorial, preparing for death has been an important part of the art of living. But one does not experience death itself; one cannot say anything about it and one cannot learn from it. One can only imagine it, and today one will mostly imagine it as the ultimate ceasing of one's orientation. Short-term and temporary

ceasing of one's own orientation is known from falling asleep and from states of unconsciousness over which one has no power and from which one may not awake again. When you wake up, you experience, if you pay attention, how your orientation gradually builds up again and now perhaps in a different way than before you fell asleep: Now, you have 'slept on' your experiences and problems.

Thus, according to the three factors time, power, and loss of self, the art of living is an art of orientation. It could be helpful to limit also the concept of the art of living critically to this, if one does not want to lull oneself into illusions and experience disappointments with the whole idea of the art of living.

## **6. Self- and Other-Orientation of the Art of Living: Orientation to Other Orientations**

The concept of the art of living can not only be critically limited through that of the art of orientation, but also enriched in several dimensions.

Looking at the 'use of pleasures' and the 'concern for oneself' in later antiquity, Foucault conceived of the theme of the art of living in a strongly self-centered way. The retreat to the self was enforced by the transition from urban democracies to the empires of Alexander and the Romans, which instated strong authorities and clearly limited the possibilities of political participation and influence, especially in the provinces. While the artful 'care for oneself' remained a matter for the privileged, Christianity in its beginnings turned primarily to the less privileged and less free, including women and slaves, and it did so with a life concept of charity, the fulfillment through service to others, and it thus opposed self-reference and other-reference. Nietzsche, in his *Genealogy of Morality*, based on this the shaping of European culture through 'ascetic ideals' that combine both the concern for others and self-fulfillment, both under the control of a 'dominant morality' to whose rule all together are subjected equally.

Even if this rule today leaves far more leeways, it nevertheless still shapes modern enlightened societies, for instance in the will for their ever-further democratization. Both the art of orientation and the art of living are now subject to this condition. They include – what Nietzsche strongly opposed – an almost unconditional affirmation of equality and reciprocity, institutionalized by law and state. In turn, law and state, especially in European societies, guarantee comprehensive care for individuals insofar as they are unable to care for them-

selves in economic and health hardships, and increasingly regulate education, the basic conditions of the economy, a certain balance among incomes, and so on. The art of living as that of shaping one's own life has thus largely become a concern of the state; the leeway for self-determination is partly restricted by it, partly made superfluous. Most of those benefiting from state services accept and welcome this. In doing so, they accept a strong other-reference in their orientations' self-reference.

However: In human (and animal) orientation, other-reference is always already integrated in it, not only through the constant reference of the orientation to the respective situation, but also through the reference to other living beings with *their* orientations: Since they can be both helpful and dangerous, others are of special concern in every situation of orientation. This other-reference is not altruistic 'selflessness': Since every orientation depends on a certain point of view with a certain perspective in a certain horizon, people constantly look to each other in their situations in order to discover promising possibilities of action which they themselves did not see. Others are not only competitors in life, but also offer, voluntarily or involuntarily, help. They may contribute well-proven orientation experiences in comparable situations of orientation; orienting oneself to other orientations can thus facilitate, accelerate, and abbreviate one's own orientation efforts. As a child and adolescent, one is of course dependent on others, parents and families, teachers, instructors, etc., in order to learn how to orient oneself in the world; but even later one needs advisors of all kinds in many areas of life, e.g., craftsmen, doctors, lawyers. Even if you can orient yourself well in your own matters, you still must rely on others, above all to use complex technology. In doing so, you usually orient yourself again to others who themselves rely on such techniques while most people assume that experts sufficiently have checked everything. In this way, one remains calm or calms down when fear arises. In the art of orientation and life as a whole, it is reassuring when others orient themselves and live in a comparable way, and it is unsettling when one remains alone with one's orientation and way of life. The art of orientation and living finds its hold largely by orienting to other orientations. Only on this basis can one dare one's own life experiments. And sometimes one has to do so: because if all orient themselves (more or less) to each other, all together may go astray.

## **7. Horizontal Differentiation: Life Worlds – Orientation Worlds**

Everyday orientation differentiates the self-reference and other-reference of orientation in a horizontal and vertical way: horizontally in what the term ‘life-worlds’ has come to mean, which are worlds of orientation at the same time, vertically by distinguishing superiority and inferiority in orientation, for which Nietzsche used the term of ‘rank order.’ Both structure the art of living in its basic features.

Orientation worlds differ by weighting other-reference beyond self-reference:

- In the *individual life- or orientation world* of one’s own body, one’s hygiene, sexuality, health, and diet, everyone (as far as he or she is not dependent on the permanent help of others) basically takes care of himself or herself and seeks (under the respective basic societal conditions) to follow his or her own wishes, plans, and life rhythms, to make of his or her life what he or she wants. This is the area that Foucault claimed for the art of living.

- Most people, however, live at the same time in *interindividual or communal life- and orientation worlds*, in which one adapts to the living conditions and needs of people with whom one has chosen to ‘share one’s life’: the friends you make, the family you start, the colleagues you prefer to work with, and the acquaintances you visit and that visit you and with whom you do things together with, and so on. These life- or orientation worlds, which each have their own rules and are interconnected with one another, are altogether strongly oriented to others: The individual art of living must fit into those of others.

- In the *societal life and orientation world*, everyone has to adjust to the living conditions and needs of people they *did not* choose themselves: from classmates via colleagues, club and party members, etc. all the way to the members of the whole society in which one lives. In the growing distance, complexity, and intransparency, interindividual proximity and trust among people whom you personally know is lost. At the same time you gain new freedom to shape your own life through far more diverse social offerings – under conventions, norms, and laws over which you have little influence for the most part, but according to which you are sanctioned if you do not comply with them. Thus, in the societal life- and orientation world, self- and other-reference interweave and mutually intensify.

- The *global orientation world* you share with all people on earth, whom you do not know for the most part and whose cultures are unfamiliar. Here you experience otherness in the highest degree, but here your own orientation also gains its widest horizon. The concern for yourself can here become a concern for the living conditions of people on the whole earth, and your own rhythms of the art of living become unimportant compared to universal obligations.

Nevertheless, these rhythms remain present. One switches between life worlds when changing communication partners and places, but also when the concerns of one orientation world suddenly become urgent in another (e.g., when your baby phone goes off while you are at work in your factory or in your office). In general, one always tries to meet the needs of one's individual life first, and only expands one's horizons of orientation when specific concerns and needs prompt one to do so. The individual life- and orientation world remains, so to speak, the home of all the others, but one leaves it time and again in the short, medium, or long term. The broadest horizon, i.e., the universal one, does not, as idealistic philosophies would make us believe, have something like a self-evident priority over the narrower, i.e., the individual, interindividual, and cultural ones; on the contrary, one usually needs special reasons to give priority to it.

## **8. Vertical Differentiation: Superior and Inferior Orientations – Rank Orders in the Art of Living**

The vertical differentiation of an art of living understood as an art of orientation likewise does away with popular prejudices. Orientations, which are limited to respective standpoints, horizons and perspectives and therefore seek connections to other orientations, can choose which orientations they want to hold onto in each case. If one does not already presuppose an entity of 'reason' (*Vernunft*) that is to be the same for everyone and common to all, but accepts that our abilities of orientation, judgment, and decision-making differ greatly, then the superiorities and inferiorities among orientations become apparent: This person will be able to orient him or herself better in this regard, but another is better in that regard, and they will both hold onto that orientation from which they expect greater security. If a group of hikers gets lost in the high mountains and someone can read maps, estimate the points of the compass, and better than others distinguish between accessible and inaccessible paths, the rest of the group will follow him or her; if someone comes to a clear judgment when

everyone else is uncertain, the debate will focus on him or her; if someone can propose a decision in an economically or politically difficult situation that promises to solve the problems, it will be gladly accepted. In such cases, someone 'provides' an orientation, and the others 'place' or 'put' their trust in him or her. Nevertheless, they are free in following their own decisions.

Nietzsche highly estimated the value of 'rank', which is crucial in the art of living as an art of orientation and which the Enlightenment, concentrated on the one reason of all human beings, risked losing sight of. In one's orientation to other orientations, humans always distinguish degrees of others' abilities of orientation, judgment, and decision-making – even among Enlightenment thinkers and scientists and so likewise in the art of living. We are more attentive to some than to others: they receive more attention; their judgment is more valid; and they have higher authority. This may pertain only to specific situations; however, a person can also permanently attract stronger attention and gain higher authority, even if he or she does not strive for it. Through rank distinctions or, using Nietzsche's term, 'rank orders,' our orientation itself is oriented and relieved and abbreviated: one does not need to look in each case for yet other persons who can help with their superior orientation experiences (if they have done a good job, one always prefers *this* craftsman, *this* doctor, *this* lawyer, *this* marriage counselor). The rank or authority in orientation, however, which someone has is always limited to certain fields (a good doctor does not have to be a good marriage counselor). The orientation superiorities and inferiorities can be different (also among life partners) in different fields and balance each other out on the whole, so that they do not automatically justify hierarchies. The art of living certainly involves the ability to balance such different orientation competences to thereby make them welcome for each side.

Nevertheless, clear and lasting superiority in orientation can also grant power. Contrary to the prejudice that power is 'intrinsically evil,' power is indeed appreciated as long as it establishes order and enables stable leadership, without which groups and societies cannot exist. This is true from the power of janitors all the way up to the power of a country's president. In principle, power apparatuses are made up according to orientation superiority and inferiority: Whoever has the greater overview, insight, judgement and decision-making ability is supposed to be superior in the apparatus or *should* be superior in it. Power becomes 'evil' only when it is no longer used for orientation tasks but is abused in the self-interest of those exercising it, and one can usually clearly



distinguish the two. But superiors, too, are always dependent on the specific orientation experiences of those who ‘work for’ them; thus, in formally fixed hierarchies, an informal balance of power often occurs in power apparatuses.

Rank distinctions, which are observed and used in the art of orientation and life, nevertheless do not exclude different assessments. Already in the interindividual, but at the latest in the global or universal orientation world, in our political culture the dignity of every human being has priority, and here it is also explicitly asserted, especially when a human being is helpless in his or her orientation due to a temporary emergency, illness, disability, or age. Even though the art of orientation and living must pay attention to differences of orientation capacities, it is not fixated on them.

## 9. Ethics of the Art of Living – Ethics of the Art of Orientation

Morally, the art of living as an art of orientation does not submit to the dogma of equality. Since orientation is always singular, one can only demand reciprocity in the fulfillment of legal and moral norms in the respective society. Here too, Nietzsche suggested the crucial keyword, that of a ‘noble morality,’ which he explicitly did not connect with any social classes. A morality is noble if it can accept other morals beyond its own and is willing to reflect and question its own standards against those of others. It observes reciprocity, but does not expect it from others. It knows the limits of one’s own moral points of view, horizons, and perspectives. It leaves behind the moral fixations and in this way allows us to recognize them as such. Instead, in a noble morality the specific virtues of orientation are practiced, such as *circumspection* and *foresight* when exploring the situation, *consideration* for other moral orientations and *precaution* against violating them, *forbearance* where little consideration is given to one’s own concerns, and *confidence* that different moral orientations can coexist and cooperate through these virtues.

## 10. Sovereign Orientation – Sovereign Art of Living

Such an orientation, which proves to be a long-term art of living, is called ‘sovereign.’ Sovereign is he or she who masters even surprising situations, pragmatic and moral ones as well, with an ease and certainty that wins even

aesthetic admiration – of those who themselves have the rank to respect and recognize it.

*Translated by Reinhard G. Mueller and Werner Stegmaier*



## **Fourth Section:**

# **Nietzsche's Art of Living in the United States Today**

*by Reinhard G. Mueller*

In the 21st century, we increasingly live in a Nietzschean world. What was once feared as 'nihilism,' the loss of all final certainties and absolutes, or 'relativism,' that everything relates to a standpoint, has become a lived reality for many people today. Especially younger generations have learned to affirm the living conditions of uncertainty and temporality by eclectically adopting ways of life, routines, and orientations in individual ways for only certain periods of time. Digital technologies, especially the smart phone, have widened our horizons permitting immediate access to different cultures and orientation worlds. Never before have we lived in a world that is as multi-perspectival, fast-paced, and uncertain, while never before have there been so many opportunities for actions. At the same time, people increasingly orient themselves in similar ways to a dominant morality that abbreviates reality and narrows down opportunities of action according to the guiding values of equality and reciprocity, as Nietzsche predicted it. Under these conditions, Nietzsche's art of living is particularly relevant in many orientation worlds today, especially those of entrepreneurship, business, and our everyday life.

I will narrow my focus on three aspects of Nietzsche's art of living that have become relevant today especially in the United States (but not only here): first, regarding some facets of the economic-political conditions of any contemporary art of living; second, the widespread adoption of Nietzsche's notion of self-overcoming and artistic self-design in entrepreneurship and individual's lives;

and third, how his notion of ‘incorporation’ has been further developed in current approaches to habit design. Eventually I will show via the example of Anthony Robbins that some notions of Nietzsche’s art of living have become most popular outside of academia, namely in the commercial industries of what has been called ‘self-growth’ or ‘self-development.’

## 1. The Economic, Political, and ‘Spiritual’ Conditions for an Art of Living Today

An art of living (and orientation) is possible only within leeways, within certain societal conditions. These conditions have crucially changed since Nietzsche’s time: Through a globalized economy and digital technologies, we orient ourselves in ever-growing horizons and perspectives, can immediately communicate across the globe, and learn about major events anywhere on earth, and we compete with our orientation skills on a global marketplace. These conditions manifest what Nietzsche anticipated philosophically: our horizons and perspectives have multiplied and keep changing and expanding ever-more rapidly; we are forced to shift between orientation worlds and must be willing to adapt and grow in an ever-faster and ever-more complex economic environment. In Nietzsche’s terms, our current world requires continual self-overcoming and growth, if we want to orient ourselves successfully. This means for an art of living that career and life paths have become less linear, that we tend to orient ourselves in life stages; individuals must live with more uncertainty; our identities become more malleable and changeable. A contemporary art of living needs to find its way with the guiding values of today, which Werner Stegmaier calls “time values”; these are: innovation, creativity, efficiency, mobility, flexibility, resilience, and an appetite for risk.<sup>1</sup> They all manifest that economic demands and values increasingly permeate all our orientation worlds.<sup>2</sup>

Especially in recent decades, corporations have grown to such a vast degree that many of them are more powerful than nations. For example, the market capitalization of Apple (\$2.1tn) is larger than that the GDP of Italy, Microsoft’s (\$1.9tn) larger than that of Brazil, and Amazon’s (\$1.7tn) larger

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1 Werner Stegmaier, *What is Orientation? A Philosophical Investigation*, transl. Reinhard G. Mueller, Berlin/Boston 2019, 263 f.

2 See also, in critical perspective regarding the spread of entrepreneurial values, Ulrich Bröckling, *The Entrepreneurial Self: Fabricating a New Type of Subject*, Los Angeles et al. 20.

than that of South Korea.<sup>3</sup> And behind these are huge investment companies such as Blackrock or Vanguard Group with, respectively, almost \$10tn and \$9tn of assets under management, which is each more than double the GDP of Germany (\$4.3tn).<sup>4</sup> These corporate giants tend to develop their own functional differentiations and into small countries of their own, including their own self-designed 'corporate cultures,' including values and ideals.

The *political* landscape of past decades has likewise, at least in the West, become more shaky; moral or ideological grounds have lost their immediate plausibility and grown more controversial. The post-1945 world, based on liberal democracy, the values of equality and freedom, under U.S. hegemony, seems to lose its dominance, facing China's economic growth and a multi-polar world. The *Geisterkrieg* ("spiritual war") that Nietzsche anticipated for the 20th century – "there will be such wars as there have not yet been on earth" (EH, *Destiny* 1, transl. Carol Diethe / Duncan Large / Adrian Del Caro / Alan D. Schrift) – may now in fact reemerge with regard to the very foundations of our political orientation. And within Western countries, key words of fundamental moral conflicts are 'culture wars,' 'cancel culture,' and the 'wokeness' debate, which depict a polarization where the opposing standpoints rely on different 'truths,' plausibilities, and values. Economically, politically, and morally, there is no longer an absolute foothold — instead, to use Nietzsche's metaphor, it is a matter of antagonistic wills to power where everything engages with everything else.<sup>5</sup>

Beyond economics, politics, and morals, our "spiritual" or rather basic philosophical worldviews have likewise become 'nihilistic' and 'relativistic' in Nietzsche's sense; this means: we less seek final spiritual certainties, but eclectically orient ourselves to various orientation worlds in individual ways: one may practice a Buddhist meditation and yoga exercise in the morning, engage in science during the day, attend a Taoist Kung Fu class in the evening, and then go to a Catholic Church on Sundays. Countless authors of popular literature prepare originally religious or philosophical content for 'everyday use' to help people be more successful in their everyday art of living (for instance, authors like Deepak Chopra, Jay Shetty, Wim Hof, concerning Indian thinking

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3 <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/the-tech-giants-worth-compared-economies-countries/> accessed on April 18, 2023.

4 <https://www.thebalancemoney.com/which-firms-have-the-most-assets-under-management-4173923> accessed May 1, 2023.

5 For Nietzsche's concept of wills to power, see Werner Stegmaier, *An Orientation to the Philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche*, Nashville 2022, p. 118.

and practices, or Ryan Holiday regarding Stoicism). The perception of the simultaneous diversity of orientation worlds is amplified when we are trying to orient ourselves in the digital realm to ever-more possibilities. Art of living today means mastering the ever-increasing simultaneity of opportunities for action for one's individual life.

## 2. Self-Overcoming, Self-Design, and Identities in Institutions and Everyday Life

The future is always unknown. We orient ourselves toward the future by imagining and expecting probable future events or outcomes. We expect that footholds of orientation remain in the future as well. For Nietzsche, "it is the future that gives the rule to our present" (HH I, pref. 7, my transl.). And "If you have your *why?* of life, you can put up with almost every *how?*" (TI, Sayings and Arrows 12, transl. Carol Diethe, Duncan Large, Adrian Del Caro, and Alan D. Schrift).<sup>6</sup> The core idea of the art of living is to design and thus create one's own life and future based on one's own decisions; in Nietzsche's terms: "*to create ourselves, to sculpt* a form out of all elements – is the task! Always that of a sculptor! Of a productive human being" (N End of 1880, 7[213], my transl.).

Nietzsche's notion of "permanent individual self-transformation" (Günter Götde) is popular in everyday life today, especially among younger generations, whose individual future tends to be more open. In the fast-paced business world it is more relevant than in politics, education and academia; here, it is most clearly visible in entrepreneurship, particularly in the start-up environment, which operates under great uncertainty and the pressure of time. As Eric Ries puts it in *The Lean Startup: How Today's Entrepreneurs Use Continuous Innovation to Create Radically Successful Businesses* (New York 2011): "A startup is a human institution designed to create a new product or service under conditions of extreme uncertainty." (27) They most clearly adopt a core value of what Manuel Knoll calls Nietzsche's "heroic art of living," namely to "*live dangerously!* Build your cities on the slopes of Vesuvius!" (JS 283, transl. Adrian Del Caro) And their task is, as Peter Thiel lays out in his *Zero to One: Notes on Startups, or*

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<sup>6</sup> The quote continues: "The human being does *not strive* for happiness; only the Englishman does that." Today, the popular psychologist Jordan B. Peterson has picked up this idea of Nietzsche's and made it a key aspect of his "rules for life," namely that we find meaning in life not in happiness, but rather in responsibility: "the willingness to take on that responsibility is identical to the decision to live a meaningful life." (see Jordan B. Peterson, *12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos*, Toronto 2018, p. xxxv).

*How to Build the Future* (London 2014) to fundamentally “question received ideas and rethink business from scratch” in order “to build a different future” (10 f.). Start-ups are an extreme case of self-transformation. To survive, they must quickly adapt to a constantly changing environment, react to customers’ feedback, and redefine their roles, systems, processes, and strategies as they grow and compete. As such, they need to permanently re-design their identity and values – although most do not survive the competition (over 90% of startups fail).

Not only organizations self-design their identities, but we also do so in our everyday life as individuals. Identities do not simply exist as objects in the world, but rather we identify with certain identifications of ourselves. One can, for instance, identify with one’s nationality, one’s company, one’s sports team, with being a father, a mother, etc. – or not. An identity is a foothold in our mutual orientation that helps us navigate ever-new situations in an uncertain world, not more, not less. And within certain leeways, we are able to design an identity of ourselves and of who we want to be, like artists of our lives.

Identities need not be defined in words; we mostly “stick to vague *images*” of ourselves.<sup>7</sup> Neither are they fixed; rather, we *perform* our identities via actions and behaviors, as Judith Butler showed with regard to sexual identities. When we are with other people, we are always more or less concerned about the impression we make on them. For Nietzsche, “we are like shop windows in which we are continually arranging, concealing or illuminating the supposed qualities others ascribe to us – in order to deceive *ourselves*.” (D 385, transl. R. J. Hollingdale). Erving Goffman adopted this idea in the 20th century and elaborated how we constantly engage with our “impression management” regarding others and how we always ‘play-act’ by presenting a certain self that we mostly believe to be our authentic self.<sup>8</sup> Identities thus provide various leeways for an art of living today: we can identify with identifications and thus choose among different identities; we can perform our identity in individual and unique ways, or imitate others, and thus play-act in this or that way.

However, the conditions for people to design or create their identities have changed over time and differ across cultures. For Hans-Georg Moeller and Paul D’Ambrosio, there are three “identity technologies”: “authenticity,” “sincerity,” and “prolificity.” “Sincerity” is historically the oldest, relating to our roles in

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<sup>7</sup> Stegmaier, *What is Orientation?*, 151.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*



family, groups, and society, e.g., in ancient or medieval Europe and traditional China: “sincerity demands commitment to roles. The outside is real, and the inside must back it up honestly.” “Authenticity” is younger; its focal point is originality and one’s true interiority, as especially highlighted in Protestantism and Romanticism: “authenticity demands the pursuit of originality.” Here, the inside is considered as real and true core, and the “outside must be an accurate representation of it.” The most recent identity technology, which is as old as modern mass media and which comes to the fore especially through digital technologies, is that of “profificity,” which “demands the curation of profiles. The outside is real, and the inside must be truly invested in it.”<sup>9</sup> The three regimes are not mutually exclusive, but rather coexist with each other, and oftentimes older identity modes are “put into the service of newer identity paradigms” such as authenticity into that of profificity.

Today, all three identity technologies impact our everyday life; they all offer footholds for orientation, including limitations and coercions regarding who we ought to be. Each “identity regime” provides different leeways for creative self-design: while in “sincerity” the group’s or society’s roles rather constrain freedom for self-creation, “authenticity” emphasizes it through the paradoxical notion of self-actualization, which is at the same time discovery and invention of one’s self. “Profificity” foregrounds artistic self-creation because each profile must be designed or ‘curated,’ less so for specific individuals, but rather for the ‘general peer’ of the respective social media platform, including different purposes and aims, e.g., for Facebook, LinkedIn, dating apps, or Academia.edu. But paradoxically, these curated profiles will only be convincing, if they appear authentic. And the profific lens in turn shapes how we view our everyday lives: “Today people are increasingly speaking, dressing, and acting as if a video of them might, at any moment, be uploaded for dozens, hundreds, thousands, or even millions to view.”<sup>10</sup> On Instagram, for instance, every post and every story is an artistic creation, and by curating our profile in this way, we indeed

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9 Hans-Georg Moeller / Paul J. D’Ambrosio, *You and Your Profile: Identity After Authenticity*, New York 2021, 253. See also Hans-Georg Moeller / Paul J. D’Ambrosio, “Orientation to Profiles: Identity in a Digitized World,” in: Reinhard G. Mueller / Werner Stegmaier (ed.), *How Does the Digitization of Our World Change Our Orientation? Five Award-Winning Essays of the Prize Competition 2019-21 Held by the Hodges Foundation for Philosophical Orientation* (Nashville 2023), 23-70, where they applied their distinction of the three identity regimes to the prize question regarding the digital transformation of our world and emphasized that of profificity in the digital age.

10 *Ibid.*, 254.

become artistic creators of our (prolific) lives. Art of living then means, in an “age of prolificity,” that we are also coerced to be artists of our lives.

### 3. Incorporation and Habit Design

As became clear throughout this volume, art of living is for Nietzsche not merely a theoretical enterprise, but it involves our whole body, including what we eat and drink, what we read, hear, and mentally ‘digest,’ whom we are spending time with, and in principle all our activities and everything we do. He is interested in ideas and habits through which we can orient ourselves more successfully in life. In this sense, he quotes Goethe at the beginning of *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*: “In any case, I hate everything that merely instructs me without augmenting or directly invigorating my activity.” (HL, pref., transl. R. J. Hollingdale) For him, as Johannes Heinrich highlights, body and mind go hand in hand: “the metabolism stands in direct relationship to the fleetness or lameness of the spirit’s *feet*; for the spirit is just a form of this metabolism” (EH, Clever 2, transl. Carol Diethe / Duncan Large / Adrian Del Caro / Alan D. Schrift). An overview of the broad variety of how Nietzsche’s ideas have been adopted in dietetic, metabolic, physical, and athletic concerns would require a separate chapter; I will here focus only on his notion of ‘incorporation.’

In this holistic sense, Nietzsche uses the concept of ‘incorporation’ for something that becomes routine and thus instinctive or natural in our entire orientation. Both our physiology and our thinking are for him the result of evolutionary processes of incorporation. And consciousness is here only the “final and latest development of the organic” (JS 11, transl. Adrian Del Caro). Something is incorporated by means of orientation processes that have become routine. When something becomes routine, it becomes, as it were, instinctive. We do it without thinking; it becomes automatic and something like “self-forgotten knowledge.”<sup>11</sup> As far as our incorporated routines also set limits to our thinking, then it is the philosopher’s task to experimentally incorporate “unusual and unheard-of orientations” and that means, making “them routine and thus bearable.”<sup>12</sup> By incorporating new and different habits, philosophers become, as Nietzsche writes, “experimental stations of humanity” (N Beginning of 1880, 1[38], my transl.; see also D 453).

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<sup>11</sup> Stegmaier, *What is Orientation?*, 84.

<sup>12</sup> Stegmaier, *An Orientation to the Philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche*, 100.

Today, Nietzsche's notion of incorporation has been widely adopted, less so in terms of philosophical experiments for the sake of truthfulness, but with regard to a self-directed art of building habits, especially in the genre of 'self-growth' or 'self-development.' For instance, Stephen R. Covey presents *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (London et al. 1989) under the headings "be proactive," "begin with the end in mind," "put first things first," "think win/win," "seek first to understand, then to be understood," "synergize," and "sharpen the saw." Especially in recent years, highly popular habit approaches include new research from cognitive and behavioral studies that show orientation tools for effective "habit design." For example, James Clear, *Atomic Habits: An Easy and Proven Way to Build Good Habits and Break Bad Ones* (New York 2018), argues that "your identity emerges out of your habits" and "every action is a vote for the type of person you wish to become" (41). He proposes a two-step approach – "1. Decide the type of person you want to be. / 2. Prove it to yourself with small wins" (39) – and breaks down the "neurological feedback loop" (50) of the habit building process in order to show how each element can be influenced: 1. Cue, 2. Craving, 3. Response, 4. Reward. New habits can be implemented through four laws, which he expounds with great detail: 1st "make it obvious" (e.g., put healthy food in your surroundings); 2nd "make it attractive" (e.g., put fresh healthy food in an appealing place); 3rd "make it easy" (e.g., easily accessible); and 4th "make it satisfying" (e.g., highlighting the benefits of the new behavior).

B. J. Fogg, who founded and directed the "Stanford Behavior Design Lab" (formerly: "Stanford Persuasive Technology Lab") that famously impacted the development of Instagram, Facebook, and Clubhouse, and who reportedly worked with "40,000 people during years of research and refinement," further develops the minutiae of habit design in his *Tiny Habits: The Small Changes that Change Everything* (New York 2020).

As Johannes Heinrich shows, Nietzsche connects the art of living with regard to managing one's drives with the metaphor of the gardener: "One can handle one's drives like a gardener and [...] cultivate the shoots of one's anger, pity, musing, vanity as fruitfully and advantageously as beautiful fruit on espaliers" (D 560, transl. Brittain Smith). Both Clear and Fogg likewise base their habit theories on this metaphor. Clear writes:

the seed of every habit is a single, tiny decision. But as that decision is repeated, a habit sprouts and grows stronger. Roots entrench themselves and branches grow. The task of breaking a bad habit is like uprooting a powerful oak within us. And the task of building a good habit is like cultivating a delicate flower one day at a time.<sup>13</sup>

Fogg argues that we can design our life by cultivating our garden of habits:

Cultivating habits – good or bad – is a lot like cultivating a garden. [...] You could stand on your back porch and wish that your scraggly yard would somehow become beautiful. As the weeks go by, weeds begin to grow. You pull a few out here and there, but this becomes laborious so you stop. But you keep wishing that beautiful things grow instead.

A much better approach is to *design* the garden (habits) you want. You identify what vegetables and flowers you'd love to have in your garden (motivation), you choose plants you can easily support (ability), and you consider which spot in the yard is best for each plant (finding a place in your routine).

It takes a bit of planning and care in the beginning to get those delicate little sprouts up and out of the ground, but you've made sure the roots are strong by celebrating your tiny successes. Soon it's time to let your rooted habits do their natural thing — grow bigger.<sup>14</sup>

Fogg's key concept is that a "new tiny behavior" is added right after an "anchor moment," which is part of an "existing routine," and then you "celebrate immediately after doing the new Tiny Behavior" by means of a celebratory gesture, which he calls "shine" (12). Celebrating is, for Fogg, a way to "hack" your brain (140) because doing so spurs the production of dopamine and thus the brain's reward system: "with the help of dopamine, the brain encodes the cause-and-effect relationship, and this creates expectations for the future" (136). Overall, he argues that habits can be incorporated most successfully when they are "tiny" and we enjoy doing them.

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<sup>13</sup> Clear, *Atomic Habits*, p. 22.

<sup>14</sup> B. J. Fogg, *Tiny Habits: The Small Changes that Change Everything*, Boston / New York, 2020, 165.

Indeed, many apps, like Instagram or Facebook, have utilized such “hacking” mechanisms by offering small rewards of dopamine to the brain that make us continue using the apps and in a sense ‘get addicted’ to them. When we create a post on Instagram we feel like artists of our lives, and this new routine then easily becomes part of our habit garden, possibly against our will. Since behavior design is a powerful tool that may be used for ‘good’ and ‘evil,’ Fogg says that with this “awesome potential” comes “awesome responsibility” (270).

If our everyday orientation gains its “main foothold” in our routines, including our “bodily routines,” “routines of actions and work,” as well as “highly controlled social routines,”<sup>15</sup> then the notion of an art of living becomes most tangible here: through habit design we can change who we are. By gardening our own habits we can become artists of our life. But at the same time, institutions and mass media may create habits for entire societies.

#### 4. Nietzsche’s Art of Living in the Popular Field of ‘Personal Growth’: the Example of Anthony Robbins

As far as art of living in Nietzsche’s sense is also an “art of orientation” and thus an art of “mastering life,” then living successfully is at its core about finding one’s ways in ever-new situations in life. If it aims, as Jörg Zirfas puts it, at “the expansion and intensification of life possibilities” to make life “richer and more colorful, but also riskier and more dangerous,” then we need to take risks and in this way grow our ability to orient ourselves more successfully. These ideas, including that of living dangerously, have been picked up less in academia; but they are at the heart of the “personal development” or “personal growth” industry, which eclectically combines various therapeutic models, especially cognitive behavioral therapy and positive psychology (Martin Seligman) with training models used for top level athletes and performers. As an example, I will zoom in on one of the most influential proponents in this field: Anthony Robbins (\*1960), who adopts many ideas of Nietzsche’s notion of an art of living and explicitly bases a key aspect of his work on him: “To paraphrase the philosopher Nietzsche, he who has a strong enough why can bear almost any how. [...] If we gather a set of strong enough reasons to change, we can change in a *minute* something we’ve failed to change for years.”<sup>16</sup> Robbins is of course

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<sup>15</sup> Stegmaier, *What is Orientation?*, 83.

<sup>16</sup> Anthony Robbins, *Awaken the Giant Within: How to Take Immediate Control of Your Mental, Emotional, Physical*

neither an academic nor a philosopher, but rather a commercial “success coach” whose service lies in helping people orient themselves more successfully in their everyday and professional lives. Given his business interests and success he has hardly been studied or taken seriously in academic discourses.

However, his models and concepts regarding an art of living can indeed be viewed as results from Nietzsche’s philosophical reorientations. Similar to Nietzsche’s holistic notion of healthy growth, Robbins defines “success” as “the ongoing process of striving to become more”: “to continually grow emotionally, socially, spiritually, physiologically, intellectually, and financially while contributing in some way to others.”<sup>17</sup> We may compare his own work to that of the sophists in ancient Greece, who were “*professional teachers of orientation*.”<sup>18</sup> And just as they did in their time, so has Robbins coached or given advice to many famous people, such as Bill Clinton, Nelson Mandela, Mikhail Gorbachev, Princess Diana, and François Mitterand, to only mention a few. He is not a philosopher of orientation, but rather someone who prepares and abbreviates pragmatic orientation tools and models with the aim to quickly help people orient themselves successfully with regard to their own goals.

Just as Nietzsche proceeds from a fundamental perspectivism, where “it could even be part of the fundamental character of existence that someone would perish from complete knowledge of it” (BGE 39, transl. Adrian Del Caro), Robbins argues: “You would probably go stark raving mad if you consciously had to make sense of thousands of stimuli ranging from the pulse of blood through your left finger to the vibration of your ear.”<sup>19</sup> But we can indeed direct our perspectives with regard to our goals. Learning to live within nihilism means for Nietzsche that you learn how to live a self-directed life, according to goals and values that you take responsibility for yourself, and that you learn how to

become master of yourself and master of your own virtues as well. Previously they were your masters; but they should simply be tools among your other tools. You must acquire power over your For and Against and learn how to take them out and hang them back up according to your higher aim. You must learn

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*and Financial Destiny*, London 1991, 126. Robbins does not mention Nietzsche anywhere else.

<sup>17</sup> Anthony Robbins, *Unlimited Power: The New Science of Personal Achievement*, London et al. 1986, 4.

<sup>18</sup> Werner Stegmaier, *Courageous Beginnings: 25 Situations of New Orientations in the History of Philosophy*, Nashville 2019, 7.

<sup>19</sup> Robbins, *Unlimited Power*, 41f.

how to grasp the perspectival element in every valuation — the displacement, distortion, and seeming teleology of horizons and everything else that pertains to perspectivism. (HH, pref. 6, transl. Gary Handwerk)

For Robbins, too, we can only perceive reality via “generalization, distortion, and deletion,”<sup>20</sup> and we therefore must learn the art of choosing our perspective and the meaning we give to it: “we don’t experience life. You and I experience what we focus on and the meaning we give to it – so choose well.”<sup>21</sup> Since, he argues, “an undirected mind tends to go to fear” – because “we have a two-million-year-old ‘fight or flight’ brain that evolved to protect us from saber-toothed tigers” – it is “critical that we learn to direct and control our own minds.”<sup>22</sup>

We always already, Robbins argues, make three perspectival decisions that we are mostly unaware of: first “what we decide to FOCUS on”; second “what does this [what we focus on] MEAN”; and third “What am I going to DO?”<sup>23</sup> His guiding distinction is, in a Nietzschean sense of “autosuggestion” (see Kristina Jaspers in this volume), the question whether a perspective or thought is ‘empowering’ or ‘disempowering’ for an orientation. If you “focus on the worst-case scenario, you’re going to feel fearful and sick to your stomach,” whereas “if you focus on the best case, you’re going to feel confident.” Robbins seems to pick up Nietzsche’s art of perspectivizing, the mastery ‘over your For and Against’ and the meaning we give to them: “we are the creators of our own meaning . . . if we take control. Otherwise we let the external world tell us what is good, bad, terrible, or horrific” – the external world is not only other people, but also mass media and social media.<sup>24</sup> Relying on oneself, and setting values and ideals oneself vs. letting others and the world tell us what to do is also how Nietzsche provocatively distinguished between ‘master morality’ and ‘slave morality.’<sup>25</sup>

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20 Robbins, *Unlimited Power*, 41.

21 Tony Robbins / Peter H. Diamandis / Robert Harari, *Life Force: How New Breakthroughs in Precision Medicine can Transform the Quality of Your Life and Those You Love*, New York 2022, 581.

22 Robbins et al., *Life Force*, p. 574f.

23 Robbins et al., *Life Force*, p. 580f.

24 Robbins et al., *Life Force*, 580f.

25 Regarding Nietzsche’s provocative distinction of “*master morality* and *slave morality*,” see Stegmaier, *An Orientation to the Philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche*, 136 f.

Mastering the art of perspectivizing, in accordance to our individual higher goal, also involves, for Robbins, the art of mastering our emotions. Just as we are 'thrown' into certain habits of dieting, moving, thinking, speaking, and of perspectivizing reality, so are we thrown into what Robbins calls our individual "emotional home," where each of us feels 'at home' and we return to again and again, even if we know it may be a problematic place: When faced with an irritation or a strong stimulus, people tend to turn "to their emotional home, to the place they went out of habit";<sup>26</sup> for some, this is moral outrage, for others theoretical seriousness, for yet others it is sadness, or concern, determination, anger, frustration, enthusiasm, calmness, drama, etc. We connect with this emotion a certain habitual view and interpretation of life and our role in it (for Nietzsche: our morality and its limits). If you feel emotionally at home in theoretical seriousness, then you may view life as a difficult task that you need to solve; if you tend toward enthusiasm, then life may appear as a place of excitement and your role may be that of cheering others up. If it is moral outrage, then the world is a place of scandals and violations that must be judged by you and others. In addition, "our emotional home shapes our relationships, our careers, our parenting styles, even the level of intimacy we accept or reject."<sup>27</sup> But just as all our habits, our emotional homes can likewise be changed and even shaped, within leeways, and we are also able, Robbins argues, to "upgrade" them.

Just as Nietzsche, according to Marco Brussoti, strives for a festive mood in everyday life and even, according to Renate Reschke, for "highest moods" and a "yes-saying world- and self-relation," Robbins proposes the ideal of a "peak state": "if you keep yourself in a high energy or 'energy-rich' state, you'll deal with problems so much more easily and find solutions more quickly."<sup>28</sup> Putting yourself into a peak or high-energy state is a skill that Robbins says he, too, has trained himself like a top athlete or artist does. We can, according to him, train ourselves to (almost) always be in this state, firstly, by disciplining our physiological routines, such as movement and exercise, diet, sleep, breathing techniques, a cold plunge, or by using our voice and posture in energetic ways,<sup>29</sup>

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26 Robbins et al., *Life Force*, 585.

27 Robbins et al., *Life Force*, 586.

28 Robbins et al., *Life Force*, 602.

29 In their famous study at Harvard University, Dana R. Carney, Amy J. Cuddy, and Andy J. Yap, "Power Posing: A Brief Nonverbal Displays Affect Neuroendocrine Levels and Risk Tolerance," in: *Psychological Science* 21, 10 (September 20, 2010), 1363-8, confirmed that even short 'power poses' elevate testosterone, decrease cortisol, and increase both feelings of power and tolerance for risk.



secondly, by consciously setting our focus on the respective goals (‘where focus goes energy flows’) and utilizing meditation and gratitude exercises, and thirdly by controlling the communication we have with ourselves internally (e.g., to ‘discipline your disappointment’).

Mastering the art of living means, for Robbins, that we need to “master” “the *science* of achievement and the *art* of fulfillment.”<sup>30</sup> While the first relates to building habits for achieving the rather objective skills for success in professional and personal life, the second refers to living in “an extraordinary mental and emotional state,” which is an art rather than a science, because one’s success does not guarantee a positive mental state. This art of fulfillment adopts in an abbreviated and pragmatic sense Nietzsche’s *amor fati*: “my formula for greatness in humans is *amor fati*: that you wish nothing different, neither in the future, nor in the past, nor in all eternity. Not just bearing necessity, still less concealing it — all idealism is hypocrisy in the face of necessity — but *loving* it . . .” (EH, Clever 10, transl. Carol Diethe, Duncan Large, Adrian Del Caro, and Alan D. Schrift) Robbins puts this idea into the context of an everyday art of living: “life is always happening for us, not to us. [...] Trade your *expectations* for *appreciations* and in that moment, your whole life will change.” And to do so, one must “believe something simple — that whatever happens, including the toughest challenges and problems, it’s meant to serve a purpose. And it is our responsibility to find that higher purpose, and use it.”<sup>31</sup>

Eventually Robbins likewise uses the metaphor of gardening for the art of living:

Life is like a river. It’s moving, and you can be at the mercy of the river if you don’t take deliberate, conscious action to steer yourself in a direction you have predetermined. If you don’t plant the mental and physiological results you want, weeds will grow automatically. If we don’t consciously direct our minds and states, our environment may produce undesirable haphazard states. The results can be disastrous. Thus it’s critical that — on a daily basis — we stand guard at the door of our mind. [...] We must daily weed our garden.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Robbins et al., *Life Force*, 601.

<sup>31</sup> Robbins et al., *Life Force*, 606-609.

<sup>32</sup> Robbins, *Unlimited Power*, 46.

Successful and fulfilled artists of life must, according to Robbins, grow in all their orientation abilities. For him, there are “two fundamental truths” in the universe: “Everything in the universe either grows or it dies . . . and everything in the universe either contributes or it’s eliminated by evolution.”<sup>33</sup> Since, for him, we will always do more for others than we will ever do for ourselves, he summarizes his ethics: ‘you must grow in order to give,’ which means that we are most alive when we give or contribute — and thereby in a pragmatic way adopts the motif of giving that Nietzsche connects with Zarathustra’s art of living, now without its philosophical background.

To come back to the guiding question of these concluding essays — SO WHAT? What now? —, Nietzsche shows that a philosophy of an art of living begins with our bodies, our daily routines and our habits, with what we eat and drink, how we move and what we do and think. Our lives are not pre-set or a matter of theoretical insight; rather, our philosophy is to a great extent an expression of our bodily conditions. And within leeways, we can indeed become artists of our lives by means of gardening our daily habits, influencing our moods and emotions, and changing our thinking routines. For Nietzsche philosophy is less about what “is” but about how we live, not about the truth, but about life: “What was at stake in all philosophizing hitherto was not at all ‘truth’ but rather something else – let us say health, future, growth, power, life . . .” (JS, pref. 2, transl. Josefine Nauckhoff).

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33 Robbins et al., *Life Force*, 604.



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## Abbreviations of Nietzsche's Writings Cited

AC	The Anti-Christ: A Curse on Christianity
AOM	Human, All Too Human II: Assorted Opinions and Maxims
BGE	Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future
BT	The Birth of Tragedy
BTT	The Birth of the Tragic Thought
CV	Five Prefaces to Five Unwritten Books
CW	The Case of Wagner
D	Dawn
DD	Dionysian-Dithyramps
DS	David Strauss the Confessor and the Writer (Unfashionable Observations I)
DW	The Dionysiac Worldview
EH	Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is
ECP	Encyclopedia of the Classical Philology (lecture; Enzyklopaedia der klass. Philologie, [summer semester 1871; potentially winter semester 1873–1874])
ITS	Introduction into the Tragedy of Sophocles (lecture series; Einleitung in die Tragödie des Sophocles. 20 Vorlesungen. [summer semester 1870])
GM	On the Genealogy of Morality: A Polemic
HH	Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits
HL	On the Utility and Liability of History for Life (Unfashionable Observations II)

JS	The Joyful Science
N	<i>Nachlass</i> : Nietzsche's notes
NCW	Nietzsche Contra Wagner: Documents of a Psychologist
PTAG	Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks
RWG	The Religious Worship of the Greeks (Der Gottesdienst der Griechen)
SE	Schopenhauer as Educator (Unfashionable Observations III)
TI	Twilight of the Idols, or How to Philosophize with a Hammer
UO	Untimely Observations
KGW	Kritische Gesamtausgabe der Werke, vols. I-IX (vols. I-II not published in KSA = Kritische Studienausgabe, vols. 1-15, neither in <a href="http://www.nietzsche-source">www.nietzsche-source</a> )
WB	Richard Wagner in Bayreuth (Unfashionable Observations IV)
WS	Human, All Too Human II: The Wanderer and His Shadow
Za	Thus Spoke Zarathustra

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*The Greek Music Drama* (1870):

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and *The Wanderer and His Shadow* [1880], which Nietzsche added in 1886 as second part to HH with a new preface):

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### Notes

- CWN *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*: appears in 19 volumes, including Nietzsche's notes; so far available notes are:
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The philosophy of the art of living asks the age-old question of orienting one's own life: 'How can I live well?' An art of living is always called for when people do not know what to do and how to go on, when the ways of life are no longer self-evident, when traditions, conventions, rules, and norms lose their plausibility and individuals begin to worry about themselves. The art of living and of its philosophy has a practical aim: It is not concerned with ethical principles, but with the concrete practice of people's everyday life, with their individual and successful lives. Friedrich Nietzsche, as he often did, pushed the problem of the art of living to the extreme, making it palpable both in its dignity and in its force. For him, the modern uncertainty of human orientation caused by nihilism pointed to art and aesthetics, which, he supposed, makes life if not justifiable, at least bearable. The arts open up a multi-perspectival seeing and hearing, they experiment with alternative forms and techniques, and create the finest sensibilities for both – Nietzsche himself, with his rich forms of philosophical writing, is an outstanding example of this.

The volume we present here, entails contributions of German-speaking scholars on Nietzsche and the ways of living he proposes, especially, but not alone in *Dawn*. The papers are selected from a book series on the common issue "Critical Art of Living," edited by Günter Götde, Jörg Zirfas, and others, and translated on behalf of the *Hodges Foundation for Philosophical Orientation*, Nashville, Tennessee.



The *Hodges Foundation for Philosophical Orientation* is based on the philosophy of orientation, as developed by Werner Stegmaier, and it strives to promote, research, and further develop this philosophy in theory and practice in academic and among the general public. Learn more at [www.hfpo.com](http://www.hfpo.com).

