

**The Productive Conflict of Art and Philosophy in *Thus Spoke
Zarathustra* and *The Prelude***

by

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Abstract

This thesis engages two texts that might be seen as battlegrounds of philosophy and literature, offering an interpretation of Friedrich Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* while using William Wordsworth's *Prelude* in an illustrative role. I investigate the relationship of philosophy to art in the story of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, reading the two to be warring parties in a work in which we might expect them to coincide. This struggle is carried out in Zarathustra's relationship to time. I associate the relationship of the self to the past and future in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* synecdochically with the more general relationship of the self to all that outside of lived experience. Zarathustra's desire for a totalizing consciousness that admits of nothing outside itself, an eternal present with no past or future, is thwarted when, trying to achieve such a consciousness, he is forced to recognize the alterity he is fighting against by the very fact that he is fighting against it. In his teaching of the eternal recurrence, he responds to this failure by renouncing the desire for an all-encompassing consciousness, instead asserting a consciousness that feels no responsibility to correspond to anything outside of itself. The recognition of the alterity that confronts him is associated with the philosopher's tracing of genealogies and search for origins; the turn back to the present in the forgetting of this alterity is associated with the artist. My thesis is that *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* argues for the instability of both the artistic and the philosophical paradigm, as each one leads directly out of itself and into the other.

I dedicate the first chapter to a close reading of this highly metaphorical text. As of yet there is no seminal critical work on *Zarathustra* whose explication of the book's vast web of metaphors is regarded as authoritative; any thematic discussion of the work must therefore begin with close reading. In Part I Zarathustra champions an artistic consciousness that is to assert itself as the entirety of existence; he asserts this in temporal terms as an embrace of the present. In Part II he comes to recognize the impossibility of this naïve ideal. The harder he tries to assert his own vision as the sole reality, the more forcefully he becomes aware of an alterity that his own consciousness can never artistically subsume, a world that is shut out by his artistic visions.

In the second chapter I turn to the "Simplon Pass" and "Winander Boy" passages of *The Prelude*, in which the poet expresses anxiety about the practice of writing imaginative verse. This anxiety is limned as a feeling of separation from the world as he asserts his own imaginative vision in poetry, a vision which blocks out the material world. He is simultaneously invigorated by the freedom of a language that does not feel the need to accurately represent an external reality, however. Rather than despair at the mediation of the world by a vision that transforms it and ultimately leaves it behind, Wordsworth embraces this mediation as a way of life.

I read the eternal recurrence as the existential test posed to Zarathustra that challenges him to do the same. The vision of the interminable lanes is to be read as the end-point of a process of philosophical inquiry that ends in the denial of consciousness via an affirmation of a limitless alterity; the golden ring is to be read as the artistic counter-stroke to the existential impasse arrived at in the vision of the interminable lanes, and as a celebration of self-immersion in the present moment. The former recognizes the incapacity of the subject to achieve unmediated vision of the world; the latter embraces this incapacity and exalts in the artist's capacity to create his own world.

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SHORT TITLES

- [N] Heidegger, Martin. *Nietzsche*. Trans. David Krell. Volumes 1-4. San Francisco: Harper Collins 1991.
- [KSA] Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden*. Vol. 1-15. Ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari. Munich: de Gruyter 2007-2008.
- [BT] Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Birth of Tragedy*. In: *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. Modern Library: New York 2000.
- [GS] Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Gay Science*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Random House 1974.
- [UAB] Nietzsche, Friedrich. "On the Uses and Abuses of History for Life." In: *Untimely Meditations*. Ed. Daniel Breazeale. Trans. R.J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997.
- [TL] Nietzsche, Friedrich. "On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense." In: *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*. Ed. Raymond Geuss and Ronald Speirs. Trans. Ronald Speirs. Pg. 141-153. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1999.
- [Z] Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Penguin Books 1978.
- [LB] Wordsworth, William and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. *The Lyrical Ballads*. Ed. R.L. Brett and A.R. Jones. London and New York: Routledge 1991.
- ex: [1805 I.1-25] Wordsworth, William. *The Prelude: 1799, 1805, 1850*. Ed. Jonathan Wordsworth, M.H. Abrams, and Stephen Gill. London: Norton 1979. *In citing The Prelude, I list the text (1805 or 1850), the chapter (e.g. "I") and then the lines (e.g. "1-25")*.

INTRODUCTION

The question of philosophy's relationship to literature in Nietzsche's writing is raised not just by Nietzsche's writing style. It is raised by Nietzsche himself. Nietzsche more or less explicitly asks us to consider how the aesthetic effect of his writing affects his philosophical assertions, and vice versa. He refers to himself both as an artist and as a philosopher. In his preface to *On the Genealogy of Morals*, one of his most straightforwardly "philosophical"-sounding works least characterized by ornamental style, Nietzsche asks his reader to develop an art of reading when interpreting his aphorisms:

An aphorism, properly stamped and molded, has not been 'deciphered' when it has simply been read; rather, one has then to begin its *exegesis*, for which is required an art of exegesis. ... one thing is necessary above all if one is to practice reading as an *art* in this way ... something for which one has almost to be a cow and in any case *not* a "modern man": *ruminatio*.¹

"Rumination [*wiederkäuen*]" is a physical process in which cows regurgitate partially-digested food to chew on it more. Nietzsche wants his writing, even in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, to work on his reader over time, producing an effect that is not only cerebral. The effect is to also to be an aesthetic effect, one which reverberates. Nietzsche is not

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, in: *The Portable Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann. (New York: Penguin 1982), Preface §8.

merely a case study for those interested in the ways in which philosophy and art might cross. He is himself a commentator on the subject.

Nietzsche's perceived relationship to philosophy and to literature might be argued not to be merely an important topic in the history of Nietzsche scholarship, but *the* motivating topic of inquiry that has most centrally determined how Nietzsche has been read over the years. Prior to Martin Heidegger's writings on Nietzsche, Nietzsche's habitual refusal to engage in sustained linear argumentation prevented him from becoming a mainstay in philosophy departments. The Russian Lev Shestov, one of the more enduring pre-Heideggerian Nietzsche commentators, who wrote *The Good in the Teaching of Tolstoy and Nietzsche* and *The Philosophy of Tragedy, Dostoevsky and Nietzsche* around the turn of the twentieth century, gives today's reader a picture of a Nietzsche very foreign to our own Nietzsche(s). Shestov's Nietzsche is a literary figure, a profoundly irrationalist thinker who does not have much to offer us in the way of systematic philosophy, other than the observation that systematic philosophy is both unhealthy and impossibly naïve.¹

Heidegger's writing on Nietzsche, the antithesis of readings like Shestov's, finally secured for him a place of prominence in philosophical history. Heidegger's most important work on Nietzsche is contained in the four-volume collection *Nietzsche*, cobbled together from a series of lectures delivered at the University of Freiburg beginning in the summer of 1939. Perhaps motivated by the difficulty of convincing a philosophically serious audience that Nietzsche should be read as a philosopher, Heidegger seems, in light of subsequent trends in Nietzsche scholarship, to overshoot the

¹ See Lev Shestov, *Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Nietzsche*, trans. Bernard Martin and Spencer Roberts (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press 1978).

mark: he reads Nietzsche as aiming at a totally coherent philosophical system. Heidegger famously claims that Nietzsche marks the end of metaphysics. Nietzsche is the last metaphysical thinker. His work reveals that no essentially new metaphysical thought is possible, but he remains himself stuck in metaphysical thinking. His philosophy is the “metaphysics of the absolute subjectivity of the will to power.”¹ Nietzsche’s perspectivism is thus a metaphysics for Heidegger: “absolute subjectivity” is the nature of all existence. This metaphysics is to be read as informing all of Nietzsche’s mature writing. Where something does not fit with this metaphysics, Heidegger explains it as carelessness on Nietzsche’s part, or does not bring it up. The attempt at internal unity that Heidegger ascribes to Nietzsche forces him to ignore the various effects of Nietzsche’s style of writing. Nietzsche calls the assumptions of the inquiry into question,² breaks off thoughts, and explicitly attempts to render impossible a reading of his texts that separates the man from the thought, claiming that every philosophy is a “personal confession.”³ While Heidegger sees art as very central to Nietzsche’s philosophy (as we will discuss later), his lack of attention to the stylistic elements of Nietzsche’s own texts leads to limitations in his understanding of Nietzsche’s philosophical assertions. Much in Nietzsche’s literary style asks us *not* to view his polemics as attempts at complete philosophical cohesion.

¹ Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, trans. David Krell (Harper Collins: San Francisco 1991), 4:147. Hereafter cited in the text with the prefix “N.”

² Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak notes the extent to which Heidegger’s reading obscures or denies some of the most obvious elements of Nietzsche’s texts: “for [Heidegger], Nietzsche remains a metaphysician who asks the question of being, but does not question the questioning itself!” Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Translator’s Preface” to *Of Grammatology* by Jacques Derrida (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press 1976), xxxiv.

³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, in: *In: Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Modern Library 2000), §6.

Deconstructionist readings take these observations into account, restoring attention to the generic ambivalence of Nietzsche's texts. Paul de Man in *Allegories of Reading* reads "On Truth and Lying in an Extra-Moral Sense" as a deconstructive cannon leveled at philosophical discourse, unmasking philosophical language, which must assume itself to be reflective of truths in a reality outside of language, as in fact creative of its own truth. "Philosophy turns out to be an endless reflection on its own destruction at the hands of literature"¹: when the charade is recognized, the only language left to us is self-consciously artistic language. Philosophy can observe the limits of experience but is practiced by individuals confined by these limits. Jacques Derrida focuses on Nietzsche's parenthetical assertion in *Twilight of the Idols* that, with Christianity, truth "becomes female."² "The woman, truth, is skepticism or veiling dissimulation."³ When, in philosophical investigation, we obtain the truth – which in fact is the "untruth of truth" ("The Question of Style" 179), the merely perspectival quality of any "truth" we might ascertain – the philosophical project as it has always been understood is scrambled: "the system of philosophical decidability" is disqualified (188). The "question of woman ... becomes the question of style as the question of writing" (188). At this point, writing becomes "originary" for Nietzsche: "Reading, and therefore writing, the text [are] 'originary' operations,"⁴ freed from their status of "dependence or derivation with respect to the logos" (*Of Grammatology* 19). As by de Man, philosophy's pursuit of truth becomes art's freedom of expression in Nietzsche's texts. These readings do not deny

¹ Paul de Man. *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust* (Westford, MA: Yale University Press 1979), 115.

² Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, in: *The Portable Nietzsche*. trans. Walter Kaufmann (Penguin: New York 1982), 485. Hereafter cited in the text with the prefix "TI."

³ Jacques Derrida, "The Question of Style," in: *The New Nietzsche* (New York: Dell 1977), 180.

⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press 1976), 19.

Nietzsche the title of “philosopher.” They do, however, give Nietzsche’s philosophical assertions a kind of provisional status, as philosophical claims are, on Nietzsche’s own account, to be seen ultimately only as aesthetic expressions of one’s own perspective. Other influential readings from around the same time also seem to place an asterisk next to Nietzsche’s philosophical assertions in paying attention to the literary character of his work. For Jean Granier, the reason to do so comes from Nietzsche himself. Granier says that the “primitive text” that Nietzsche interprets, “nature,” is “not a book written by a superior intelligence; it is what Nietzsche calls chaos.”¹ The moment we interpret this text, we “scrawl” on it as artists (138). Sarah Kofman sees in Nietzsche a return to the Presocratic metaphorical and imaginative style of philosophy. Nietzsche’s Presocratic use of metaphor unites philosophy and poetry but precludes assertions of truth and falsity that meet the argumentative standards of philosophy after Aristotle.²

Some more recent work on Nietzsche has attempted to recover Nietzsche the philosopher, appealing to the fact that, despite his perspectivism, Nietzsche makes arguments that are intended to convince on issues commonly regarded as philosophical. Günter Figal and Volker Gerhardt associate Nietzsche with Socrates, in that both regard philosophy as a process, not a collection of a certain kind of claims.³ Figal addresses the question of Nietzsche’s positioning in relation to philosophy and art at length in *Nietzsche: Eine philosophische Einführung*. He distances himself from the deconstructionist approach to Nietzsche (40-41),⁴ objecting that Nietzsche’s belief that

¹ Jean Granier, “Nietzsche’s Conception of Chaos,” in: *The New Nietzsche* (New York: Dell 1977), 137.

² Sarah Kofman, “Metaphor, Symbol, Metamorphosis,” in: *The New Nietzsche* (New York: Dell 1977), 209-211.

³ The close association of Nietzsche with Socrates may be an unspoken jab at either Derrida or influential American critic Alexander Nehamas (addressed later), both of whom see writing and life as almost indistinguishable for Nietzsche.

⁴ Günter Figal, *Nietzsche: Eine philosophische Einführung* (Reclam: Stuttgart 1999), 40-41.

philosophy is a personal confession does not mean that Nietzsche is not trying to get at the way things really are. Figal argues that what we find in Nietzsche's texts is "philosophy in the Socratic tradition: it is not an isolatable teaching, but he who is philosophizing that is essential" (30).¹ That Socrates wanted the philosophical process to be a vital practice that never rested satisfied does not mean that he was an artist and not a philosopher. He was searching for the right view, as philosophers do, even if he valued the search over any single view. Gerhardt observes that Nietzsche's and Socrates's philosophical projects are united in their goal of achieving a certain mode of living that prizes a dynamic philosophical project over individual philosophical truths. He argues, however, that this does not set Socrates or Nietzsche apart from the bulk of the Western philosophical tradition.² Many of the recent English language critics whom I cite separate themselves from the focus on Nietzsche's style in a more unambiguous way: they try to get *through* his style to his philosophy. They focus on careful attention to the text, undertaking (sometimes massive) decoding efforts to reveal beneath the layers of metaphor a coherent philosophical argument that can be stated linearly and propositionally.

My aim in this thesis is to show that Nietzsche's own favorite work, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, engages in this same discussion that the corpus of his work has generated in universities in the last century, namely, that of philosophy's relationship to art. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* shows philosophy and art as warring parties which, despite their violent relationship, catalyze each other's achievements. The struggle between

¹ My translation. German: "Philosophie in Sokratischer Tradition: nicht auf die isolierbare Lehre, sondern auf den Philosophierenden kommt es an."

² Volker Gerhardt, "Philosophieren im Widerstand gegen die Philosophie," lecture delivered in Freiburg, Germany, Oct 29, 2009. iTunes University (4 November 2009).

philosophy and art is played out in Zarathustra's changing attitude toward time. He associates artistry with a state in which one is fully present in the moment. His brand of philosophy, by contrast, involves looking into the past and the future, thus dividing one's consciousness.

It is in the attempt to be fully present in the present, and the difficulty of doing so, that I find a vital point of connection between *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and William Wordsworth's *Prelude*. Wordsworth's now-famous line from his Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, "I have at all times endeavoured to look steadily at my subject,"¹ sounds as though it describes a goal easy enough to accomplish. Who could have trouble "looking steadily" at something in front of him or her? Why, then, if this task is so easy, does Wordsworth use the word "endeavoured"? Nietzsche, too, in his valorization of the sensible against Christianity, lays out a philosophical project for himself that, considered in its barest terms, also would seem to be a fairly easy task to complete. He wants, more often than not, not even to deny, but only to degrade, the transcendent, in order not so much to affirm, as to exalt, the sensible.

Both Wordsworth and Zarathustra see themselves as prophets speaking on behalf of the earth. "The earth" is a rich and complex concept for both, and although it is not identical in the two works, for both it denotes the phenomenal, sensible, immediately present world. For both Wordsworth and Zarathustra, the attempt to focus one's consciousness intensely and vividly on the physically immediate produces a compulsion toward the temporally immediate. Their devotion to the "here and now" leads them to a fixation not only on the "here," but also on the "now." Wordsworth calls the times in

¹ William Wordsworth, "Preface of 1802," in: *The Lyrical Ballads* (London and New York: Routledge 1991), 251.

which he is granted the most vivid vision of the natural world around him “spots of time.”¹ A spot has no anterior and no posterior; it has no extension at all – it is a single point that is differentiated from everything around it. The spots of time intrude upon and disrupt the narrative progression of the poem, setting themselves apart from what comes before and after them, in a present that has no past or future. Zarathustra advocates a “rapturous”² creative state that involves a total break from the past in every new moment, an endlessly repeated phoenix-like destruction of one’s former self and one’s former world to make way for a new self and a new world. To “remain faithful to the earth”³ is not to remain caught up in the Christian past, or to look forward to a heavenly future situated in the great beyond, but to embrace the sensuous immediate world that is right in front of us, right now.

Both Wordsworth and Zarathustra, though, run into a similar problem: an atemporal earth, stuck in an interminably drawn-out present “Moment”⁴ with nothing temporally before or behind it, is not a natural earth, is not “the earth” at all if the earth is the phenomenal world as we know it. Spots of time, moments that at first seem to be moments of vivid vision of the earth for Wordsworth, quickly become moments of blindness, or moments of a vision that does not see the natural world but is rather granted an insight into a world on the other side, the otherworldly world created by his own

¹ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude: 1799, 1805, 1850*, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth, M.H. Abrams, and Stephen Gill (London: Norton 1979), 1805.XI.208. Hereafter cited in the text according to the rubric explained on the short titles page (i).

² “Rapture” [Rausch] is the word around which Heidegger focuses his interpretation of the psychological state of the Nietzschean artist. I will discuss this later on.

³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin Books 1978), Prologue 3. All translations of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* are Kaufmann’s unless otherwise noted. Hereafter cited in the text with the prefix “Z.”

⁴ M.H. Abrams capitalizes the word “Moment” in *Natural Supernaturalism* (New York: Norton, 1973) when speaking of instances of “timeless time” (386-390), of which he takes Wordsworth’s spots of time to be the paradigmatic instance. Walter Kaufmann translates the name of the eternal gateway which separates the past from the future in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as “Moment” [*Augenblick*] with a capital M (158) in his *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (Cleveland: World Publishing 1962).

imagination. Zarathustra realizes shortly into his career as a prophet that “the earth” is an earth of causal determination – that is, an earth on which the present is a product of the past – a fact that his romanticized self-contained present denies. The suppression of the past that he recommends in the form of the phoenix-like “creator” becomes impossible for one who wants, in good faith, to be a spokesperson for the earth. The Moment of creative vision, advocated by both prophets of the earth, for the sake of the earth, ends up denying the earth. The Moment of creative vision, advocated by both prophets of the earth, for the sake of the earth, ends up denying the earth. Wordsworth moves beyond the earth, taking up the power of his verse as consolation for the loss. Zarathustra’s dictum to “*Remain faithful to the earth!*”,¹ posed so dramatically in Part I, permanently vanishes from his vocabulary after he leaves his disciples at the end of Part I.

Since *Zarathustra* is such a winding and enigmatic text, I dedicate most of the first chapter to a close reading of Parts I and II of the book. In Part I, Zarathustra longs for a visionary artistic state that is free from the flow of time, situated in a moment experienced as its own origin. In this state he will shape the entire world according to his own vision. The harder he tries to make all reality the product of his vision, however, the more keenly aware he becomes of a reality outside of his vision, as he must confront this reality in order to bring it into his artistic world. Part II, he recognizes the naïveté of his original ideal. This change of heart is the result of philosophical and scholarly investigation, which forces Zarathustra to acknowledge the past through the practice of genealogical excavation. The acknowledgement of time outside the present moment is the acknowledgement of an alterity that can never be subsumed by consciousness, a

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin 1978), Prologue §3, §I.22.2. Hereafter cited in the text with the prefix “Z.”

realization that is antithetical to the artistic project of Part I's Zarathustra. In chapter 2, I turn to the "Simplon Pass" episode of Wordsworth's *Prelude*. Wordsworth also experiences a conflict between his artistic visions and his perception of nature, finding that he can't have both. He learns, however, to accept the loss of the phenomenal world and to create his own world in the void created by this loss. This is what Zarathustra must do in order to in order to regain his artistic voice. His attempt to do so in Parts III and IV of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is the topic of chapter 3. In that chapter, I read his existential struggles as a battle between art and philosophy.

CHAPTER 1

UNMEDIATED VISION

I. FORGETTING AND VISIONARY POWER IN NIETZSCHE'S EARLY WORKS

My discussion of Nietzsche in this thesis focuses, for the most part, on the relationship between temporal awareness and artistic power as it appears in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Before proceeding to *Zarathustra*, though, I will examine how Nietzsche thinks about the power of forgetting in his early works, especially “On the Uses and Abuses of History for Life,” “On Truth and Lying in an Extra-Moral Sense,” and *The Birth of Tragedy*. I choose to discuss these books in this reverse-chronological order because this allows me to begin with the work which, of the three, is at the farthest remove from concerns about artistic expression per se, and to end with a work which is primarily focused on artistic expression, which makes it the most related to *Zarathustra*. Then I will briefly look at Nietzsche’s thoughts on artistry, artistic forgetting, and the development of artistic talent in his so-called middle period, of which *Zarathustra* is generally taken to mark the end. I will suggest that Nietzsche’s rigorous genealogy-tracing in the middle period, which aims to expose the roots of “all ‘good things,’”¹ no matter how unpleasant this task turns out to be, in some ways offers a counter-movement to the early Nietzsche’s valorization of forgetfulness. *Zarathustra*, I will argue, can be seen as growing out of thoughts on time and artistry already present in his preceding works. *Zarathustra* considers both the drive to artistic forgetfulness advocated in his

¹ “... how much blood and cruelty lie at the bottom of all ‘good things!’” (*On the Genealogy of Morals* §2.3).

early works, and the rigorous remembering of the genealogizing project in his middle works, and tries to harmonize them.

Nowhere does Nietzsche speak of the value and dangers of forgetting at greater length or more explicitly than he does in “On the Uses and Abuses of History for Life,” the second of his *Untimely Meditations*, published in 1874. Nietzsche argues that both the individual and the ethnic group (*Volk*) must strike the right balance between attention to the past and self-immersion in the present. Veneration for past generations and for established tradition stabilizes the world of the individual and the people, making it appear more familiar and less imposing than it otherwise would. This respect for the past allows the individual to gain strength from the fact that previous generations, with whom the individual identifies, have met and overcome the problems that the individual faces in the present. A critical view of history allows a people to correct its past mistakes. To look backward too completely, however, is to fill one’s consciousness with what has already been done, to reify it into the only way to approach things. This mindset is a state antithetical to decisive action in the present, which must involve a break from the past and a self-projection into a new future. Even the critical approach to history is subject to this criticism if it dominates a people’s consciousness too completely. Assertive action in the present must involve looking forward in time, which means looking away from the past, a willful *forgetting* of the past and a self-projection into the future. Toward the end of the essay, Nietzsche designates *Wissenschaft* [scholarship] as a fundamentally historical, backwards-looking way of thinking, and art as a fundamentally a-historical way of thinking: “*überhistorisch* nenne ich die... *Kunst* und *Religion*.”¹

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden* (Munich: de Gruyter 2007-2008), 1:330. Hereafter cited in the text with the prefix “KSA.” Translation: “I call ‘suprahistorical’

“On Truth and Lying in an Extra-Moral Sense,” an unpublished essay from around the time of the *Untimely Meditations*, focuses Nietzsche’s sensibilities about the value of forgetting for human life, as expressed in “On the Uses and Abuses,” onto a more restricted domain, that of language. Here, the word “forgetting” is used in a less precisely temporal sense: it is not a case of an individual forgetting what has already occurred in his or her life, but of a linguistic group’s preserving its power to use its language by remaining ignorant of its language’s origins.

Thus, forgetting that the original metaphors of perception were indeed metaphors, [one] takes them for the things themselves.

Only by forgetting this primitive world of metaphor... only because man forgets himself as a subject, and indeed as *an artistically creative* subject, does he live with some degree of peace, security, and consistency.¹

Our language comes from a “primitive world of metaphor” inasmuch as our sensations differ from the objects in nature that cause them, and our words are changed and related without strict necessity to concepts (denoted by different words) distinct from the original sensations. This history of distortion brings our words, Nietzsche argues, to be anything but descriptive of any external world. By “forgetting” this history, forgetting that words

... art and religion.” - Friedrich Nietzsche, “On the Uses and Abuses of History for Life,” in: *Untimely Meditations*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, ed. Daniel Breazeale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997), 120 Hereafter cited in the text with the prefix “UAB.”

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, “On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense,” in: *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, trans. Ronald Speirs, ed. Raymond Geuss and Ronald Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1999), 149. Hereafter cited in the text with the prefix “TL.”

are worked on by the mind in an “artistically creative” process, one is able to use language with “peace, security, and consistency.” Of course, the individual does not really “forget” any once-remembered event in the past – the temporal language of this essay is not literal. The idea, however, that ignorance of genesis and of historical development may be an aid to action in the present, is an idea that will be echoed in Zarathustra’s confrontation with the past. The value of forgetting in a more literal, temporal sense had already been explored in *The Birth of Tragedy*, in which forgetting was linked to artistic power.

In *The Birth of Tragedy* of 1872, Nietzsche identifies two “artistic energies,”¹ the Apolline and the Dionysian. Simply put, Apollo symbolizes the artistic drive to beauty and harmony, which Nietzsche associates with permanence and stability; Dionysus symbolizes the drive to depth of feeling – a drive which Nietzsche sees as bound up with the recognition of transience, the underlying reality of all things. Apollo and Dionysus are not metaphysical opposites, but productively conflicting forces that in combination yield great artwork, “just as procreation depends on the duality of the sexes” (BT 33). Artists operating under the Apolline impulse immerse themselves in a “dream world” (BT 66) of “pure contemplation of images” (BT 50). The phrase “dream world” implies for Nietzsche not only that this world is an illusory one, but also, as Günter Figal observes, that it is “complete in itself [in sich schlüssig]” (Figal 69), that it is an “art-world [Kunstwelt]” (KSA 1:26).² This completeness, this self-contained unity and inner

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, in: *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Modern Library 2000), 38. Hereafter cited in the text with the prefix “BT.”

² Does the phrase “complete in itself” at all describe the way we dream? Figal’s tone (70) shows skepticism on his part that it does, but he argues convincingly that Nietzsche believes that our dreams are really this self-contained, that they are in some way coherent without outside reference. He speculates (71) that Nietzsche may have inherited this understanding of dreams from Schopenhauer.

harmony of the work, is obtained through a willed unconsciousness of everything outside of the purely aesthetic art-world, a willed “naïveté” (Figal 88). This immersive aesthetic experience serves the survival function of temporarily relieving the artist and observer from the overbearing, cacophonous transience of all things in the world of lived experience, the “Becoming and Passing-Away” [*Werden und Vergehen*] (Figal 89) of all things. Thus, says Figal, “Apolline art, looked at in this light, is a forgetting” (89).¹

Dionysus, as the symbol of the ultimate metaphysical truth of the world, the *Urgrund*, to use Schopenhauer’s word, represents the eternal “Werden und Vergehen” which the Apolline artist sublimates. The Apolline visions which mediate one’s experience of this psychologically destructive becoming and passing away are illusions. They present themselves openly as illusions, however. That is, both the artist and the observer recognize that the Apolline visions before them are not visions of the real world. Apolline vision is deception, but “the deception is transparent” (Figal 93),² and doesn’t wish to be anything but transparent. The Apolline sublimates the ultimate Dionysian reality of Becoming into a beautiful, stable picture, a kind of stable “Being” – but

¹ My translation. German: “Apollinische Kunst ist, so betrachtet, Vergessen.”

An easy mistake to make in *Birth of Tragedy* criticism is to associate Apollo with rational thought. Stanley Rosen, whose work on Part I of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* I consider in detail in this thesis, briefly mentions *The Birth of Tragedy* in his book on *Zarathustra*, entitled *The Mask of Enlightenment* (Yale University Press: New Haven 2004): “Apollo is the symbol of recollection and Dionysus of forgetting” (Rosen 11). But this interpretation is based on the understanding that “Apollo... represents philosophical lucidity” (Rosen 11), a view of Apollo probably based on the fact that Socrates descends from Apollo on Nietzsche’s telling. Socrates’ essence is dialectical, reasoned argumentation, which Nietzsche associates in “On the Uses and Abuses of History for Life” with memory: moments in a dialectical argument grow out of and depend on arguments made previously. Michael Stephen Silk and Joseph Peter Stern, however, make a strong case that Apollo is *not* to associated with reason (*Nietzsche on Tragedy*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 1981). Their argument centers around the fact that Nietzsche clearly wants the reader to see a stark difference between Apollo and Socrates: “In Nietzsche’s book ‘Apolline’ Olympianism is of course more *orderly* than its Dionysiac antipode, but not, strictly speaking, any more rational ... the Apolline and Socratic are both sources of optimism. The difference is that the Apolline offers an ‘exuberant’ (BT §3), ‘higher’ (BT §9), optimism, the Socratic only the optimism of ‘cool’ rationality” (Silk and Stern 162-163). Dialectic, which requires an awareness that extends into the past and the future, is fundamentally opposed to the naïve forgetfulness of the Apolline artist.

² My translation. German: “Der Trug ist durchschaubar.”

because this “Being” announces itself from the beginning to be false, the Apolline experience ultimately reaffirms and leads back to the Dionysian Becoming out of which it originally came. This dialectic is not a temporal one, but a logical one: Greek tragedy simultaneously embodies the height of Apolline genius, and, *as a result*, of Dionysian genius.

Apolline art is a forgetting, but the encounter with Dionysus to which it leads in Greek tragedy is by no means a remembering, at least in any straightforward sense. As the obliteration of the “*principium individuationis*” (BT 36) which enables Apollo’s form-giving acts of beautification, the Dionysian moment of the tragedy dissolves both material and temporal structure into “mysterious primordial unity” (BT 37). The Dionysian experience, however, is not simply a temporal unawareness: though the past and future fade away in an embrace of the moment, Nietzsche stresses that the encounter with Dionysus is an encounter with eternity. This paradoxical moment is felt, in the words of M.S. Silk and J.P. Stern, as a “dissonance” which “evokes infinitude” in a way that is “keenly – *painfully* – pleasurable.”¹ It is useful to keep in mind that Nietzsche ostensibly wrote *The Birth of Tragedy* for philologists, who would have known the historical details of cults of Dionysus, and of the Dionysian festivals out of which, Nietzsche claims, Greek tragic drama developed. Festivals of Dionysus were fertility festivals, often accompanied by sexual rites or the general suspension of normal sexual mores (Silk and Stern 171-185). The painfully pleasurable moment of self-forgetting in the encounter with Dionysus is strongly suggestive of orgasm: an “oceanic” experience yields a cosmically vast awareness of things but simultaneously forcefully concentrates

¹ Michael Stephen Silk and Joseph Peter Stern, *Nietzsche on Tragedy* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 1981), 378.

all of one's consciousness on the single point of time that is the present moment. As consciousness collapses around a single moment in the Dionysian experience, it meets eternity. If Apollo forgets in "pure contemplation," then Dionysus forgets in pure feeling. This forgetting obliterates the rational faculties which could make sense of temporal progression from past to present and from present to future. It is, however, as Geoffrey Hartman says of Wordsworth's spots of time, "creative *of* time or of a vivifying temporal consciousness."¹ There is a mundane, everyday kind of temporal awareness which can make sense of the progressive development of a Socratic argument or a story narrative, and this sort of awareness is necessary for survival. But for the early Nietzsche, as for Wordsworth, the sacrifice of this mundane sort of temporal awareness, in a moment of artistic vision, can offer the artist a view of eternity, so that blindness to time results in a transcendence of time.

The later Nietzsche, the author of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, will find the simplicity of this story naïve. My goal with the above discussion, however, was to demonstrate that the potentially antagonistic relationship between artistic "rapture" (to use Heidegger's key word in describing the state of Nietzsche's artist) that loses itself in the present, and reflective awareness of the past, was a well-established concern of Nietzsche's by the time he wrote *Zarathustra*. A reading of *Zarathustra* in these terms is not an assertion that Nietzsche tackled a new topic in that work, but rather that *Zarathustra* deals with a continuing concern of Nietzsche's.

The early Nietzsche does not advocate a permanent state of enraptured artistic self-forgetting. "On the Uses and Abuses of History for Life" states that a life without

¹ Geoffrey Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry, 1784-1814* (Forge Village, MA: Yale University 1965), 212.

memory is the life of an animal. In “On Truth and Lying,” Nietzsche in some ways valorizes forgetfulness but himself tries to remember. While *The Birth of Tragedy* exalts the forgetting of Apollo with language suggestive of masculine vitality and the forgetting of Dionysus with language suggestive of feminine sensuality, Nietzsche recognizes that the rational remembering of Socrates, though not granted association with alluring imagery,¹ has a certain survival value. But it is the possibilities offered by forgetful immersion in the present, and not the necessity of some awareness of the past, that capture his imagination, as is made evident by his language regarding Apollo and Dionysus as compared to his language regarding Socrates. In Nietzsche’s so-called middle period, in which he wrote *Human, All Too Human*, *Dawn*, *Idylls from Messina*, and *The Gay Science* (and to which *On the Genealogy of Morals* and parts of *Beyond Good and Evil* might be said to belong in spirit, though written slightly later), the preference for rapture over rigor and for blissful moments over narrative storytelling is reversed.

Most important for our purposes here is the change in Nietzsche’s approach to art. Nietzsche is willing to say in *On the Genealogy of Morals* that there is “no hope, no pride, no *present* without forgetfulness” (§2.2). But Nietzsche approaches this forgetfulness entirely different than he does in the early works, as it relates to the power to create great art. It is not lyrically exalted or personified in the form of beautiful gods as it was in *The Birth of Tragedy*; it is fitted, rather, into a genealogy of social survival strategies.² The focus is on a world understandable through the idea of causation. All

¹ “Socrates was plebs. We know, we can still see for ourselves, how ugly he was... Was Socrates a Greek at all?” (TI 474).

² The line quoted in this sentence from *On the Genealogy of Morals* occurs in a discussion of the origin of the notion of responsibility.

human behaviors and mythologies, including the belief in a “self-forgetting” artistic genius, have a genealogy and a reason for appearing in history the way they do – this is the mindset of the middle-period Nietzsche. In *Human, All Too Human* Nietzsche associates the notion that genius can be some kind of “unfathered vapour” (1805 VI.527) (like Wordsworth’s imagination in the Simplon Pass scene) with the Romantics, and heavily criticizes it. “Genius,” if it even makes sense to use the word, develops out of circumstances, and is by no means a moment of mystical rapture cut off from the past. It may, of course, masquerade as just that. The following passage could also be used to criticize Wordsworth or the Zarathustra of Part I, who preaches an artistic lifestyle associated with a blissful embrace of the moment that denies its own causal relation to the past:

The artist knows that his work produces its full effect when it excites a belief in an improvisation, a belief that it came into being with a miraculous suddenness; and so he may assist this illusion and introduce those elements of *rapturous restlessness*, of *blindly groping disorder*, of attentive reverie that attend the beginning of creation into his art as a means of deceiving the soul of the spectator or auditor into a mood in which he believes that the complete and perfect has suddenly emerged *instantaneously*. – The *science of art* has, it goes without saying, most definitely to counter this illusion and to display the bad habits and false conclusions by virtue of which it allows the artist to ensnare it.¹

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1996), 80.

One can see a tension between this desire to unmask the set of circumstances which led up to what appears as enraptured genius, and the exaltation of that rapture in *The Birth of Tragedy*.

The skeptical middle period corresponds more closely to what Nietzsche seems to see as philosophy proper, than do Nietzsche's early writings. Philosophy wants to get to the bottom of things, wants to dispel illusions. As such, it is, for Nietzsche, a "Neinsagen", or "no-saying," as Figal says (111). Art is a "Jasagen" (KSA 6:160). In *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche wants to show us a "heiliges Nein," a "holy No," that leads to a "heiliges Ja-sagen" (KSA 4:30-31). It is easy to interpret the imagistic and often outrageous *Zarathustra* as a case of Nietzsche turning away from the concerns of his middle period works. This is not the case. *Zarathustra* will be challenged by a truth revealed by the investigative strategy of Nietzsche's middle works: that his work is not his own, but the result of a past which gave rise to and controls this present through causality, and that the future is not in his control, but in the control of this same past. This "No," born of philosophical and scientific investigation (of *Wissenschaft*¹), will rip him out of his enraptured artistic immersion in the present moment. He will have to answer it with a "holy Yes" which does not simply disregard, but is able to accept and move through this "No," if he is to make his way as an artist.

¹ *Wissenschaft* denotes any scholarly investigation which works toward the goal of a systematized body of knowledge.

II. HEIDEGGER'S NIETZSCHEAN ARTIST

I begin my consideration of *Zarathustra* by looking at Heidegger's thoughts on Nietzsche's philosophy of art, which, I will argue, can shed some light on Zarathustra's initial message. Heidegger lays out his interpretation of Nietzsche's concept of art in the first volume of his four-volume work *Nietzsche*, entitled "The Will to Power as Art," named after the section of posthumously published *Will to Power* which received the same heading from the assembling editors. In 1991, David Krell wrote in his introduction to his edition of *Nietzsche* that no post-Heidegger critic of Nietzsche "can readily separate the names Nietzsche/Heidegger."¹ Derrida may have superseded Heidegger as the most dominant voice in Nietzsche criticism, but he frames his reading of Nietzsche against Heidegger's reading. Like Derrida, I will take Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche as a starting point and then move away from this interpretation. I employ the terminology that Heidegger uses in his book in my interpretation of Zarathustra's message in Part I of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, to which I will turn after my discussion of Heidegger's "The Will to Power as Art." Heidegger's Nietzschean artist is a radically free sovereign individual, possessing the grand power to create a self-contained world of beautiful "Schein" (appearance, radiance, shining)² out of the "chaos" (N 2:91) of sensory input.

While Heidegger's description of the sovereign Nietzschean artist elucidates Zarathustra's conception of the artistic life in Part I, the vision of artistic self-creation that Zarathustra proposes at this early stage of the book is challenged by the later events of his story. After my analysis of Part I, I will examine how Zarathustra's message is forced to

¹ Krell, David. Introduction to the Paperback Edition of *Nietzsche*, xxvii.

² Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, In: *Gesamtausgabe* Volumes 6.1 and 6.2. Vittorio Klostermann: Frankfurt am Main 1996. Cited hereafter in the text as "Gesamtausgabe."

change over the course of his career. T.K. Seung, who in his recent *Nietzsche's Epic of the Soul: Thus Spoke Zarathustra* highlights the changes Zarathustra makes in his philosophical message, claims that “the two thematic ideas of *Zarathustra*” are “the sovereign individual and the deterministic universe” whose struggle to annihilate each other is the “central crisis” of the work as a whole.¹ The deterministic universe only makes its appearance as an existential problem for Zarathustra beginning in Part II. I will leave discussion of the final two parts for chapter 3.

In “Who is Nietzsche’s Zarathustra,” Heidegger says that Zarathustra “is the advocate of Dionysus,”² which means for Heidegger that Zarathustra is an advocate of art, as I will show momentarily. As is well-documented, Dionysus changes in meaning from *The Birth of Tragedy* to his re-emergence in Nietzsche’s later works. Walter Kaufmann writes that the later Dionysus is “actually a union of Dionysus and Apollo: a creative striving which gives form to itself”(Kaufmann 245). Figal, in *Nietzsche: Eine philosophische Einführung*, describes Dionysus as a figure representative of an unstable playful stepping back-and-forth between Apolline creation of order and the eternal flux embodied by the earlier Dionysus: “Dionysus is a name for the step over the boundary

¹ T.K. Seung, *Nietzsche's Epic of the Soul: Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books 2005), xiv, xvii.

² Martin Heidegger, “Who is Nietzsche’s Zarathustra?” trans. Bernd Magnus, in: *The New Nietzsche* (New York: Dell 1977) 77.

Although Seung points out Nietzsche’s subtle use of some symbols of Dionysus in *Zarathustra*, such as grapes (276), an ass (290), and a sexual, vital woman named Life (205), it is worth mentioning, as Stanley Rosen does, that “Zarathustra never mentions Dionysus by name” (11). To find in *Zarathustra* themes which are tied in other works to the name “Dionysus” hardly seems implausible, but in the context of the whole corpus of Nietzsche’s published works, in which Dionysus makes very frequent appearances, it seems to me far more intuitive to first notice Dionysus’s general absence in *Zarathustra*, than to see his imprint as pervasive throughout the book, as Heidegger does. In fact, Rosen points out that the historical Zarathustra was the leader of the Hyperboreans, who worshipped the sun, and that Zarathustra himself seems obsessed with the image of the sun, suggesting that, if Nietzsche wants to bring one of the gods of *The Birth of Tragedy* to mind, it is Apollo. Despite the fact that both Dionysus and Zarathustra are names which occur frequently in discussions of Nietzsche’s thoughts on art, I will generally try not to assume conceptual association of the one with the other.

into the boundless, and inversely from [boundless] Becoming into [bounded] Being” (Figal 279).¹ In his “Nietzsches Dionysos”² Figal contrasts this Dionysus with the Dionysus of *The Birth of Tragedy*, who could be described as a “step over the boundary into the boundless” but could not be associated with the counteracting move “from Becoming into Being.” If Zarathustra is the advocate of Dionysus, he is not the advocate of self-annihilation in the act of confronting eternity, as he would be if he were the advocate of *The Birth of Tragedy*’s Dionysus. The later Dionysus represents a more subtle ethical imperative than the self-destructive forgetting for which he stands in *The Birth of Tragedy*, one that involves both destruction (entry into “the boundless”) and, simultaneously, creation (movement from chaotic “Becoming” into organized “Being”). He also embodies a different metaphysical stance than the Schopenhauerian *Urgrund* with which one might associate him in *The Birth of Tragedy*.³ According to Heidegger, in the metaphysical stance represented by the later Dionysus, “the Platonic hierarchy of the supersensuous and sensuous is reversed and the sensuous is experienced in a more essential and broader sense” (“Who is Nietzsche’s Zarathustra” 77).⁴ Oddly, no form of the word “Kunst [art]” appears in “Who is Nietzsche’s Zarathustra.” This is odd because Heidegger says in his lectures on Nietzsche’s philosophy of art that “Art... is yes-saying to the sensuous, to semblance, to what is not ‘the true world’... the ‘true world’ of the supersensuous” (N 1:74-75). Zarathustra is the advocate of Dionysus; Dionysus is the triumph of the sensuous; the sensuous triumphs in art. It follows that by claiming that

¹ German: “Dionysos ist ein Name für den Schritt über die Grenze zum Unbegrenzten, umgekehrt für den Schritt vom Werden zum Sein.”

² Günter Figal, “Nietzsches Dionysos,” in: *Nietzsche-Studien* 37 (Berlin 2008).

³ Silk and Stern elucidate the relationship of *The Birth of Tragedy* to Schopenhauer (see in particular 241).

⁴ I have replaced the words that Bernd Magnus here translates as “super-sensible” and “sensible” [the base words *sinnlich* and *übersinnlich*] with David Krell’s translations in Heidegger’s *Nietzsche*, “sensuous” and “supersensuous.”

Zarathustra is most essentially to be understood as an advocate of Dionysus, Heidegger is claiming that Zarathustra is to be understood as an advocate of art. On this crucial point I agree with Heidegger. “Who is Nietzsche’s Zarathustra” is a very short essay early in the history of Nietzsche criticism, which discusses the work in very broad terms I will not find helpful here. But, stringing together Heidegger’s own claims this way, we may find that Heidegger’s study of Nietzsche on art can be found to reveal something about *Zarathustra*.

In *Nietzsche*, Heidegger situates his reading of Nietzsche’s philosophy of art within a very expansive work that attempts to unify Nietzsche’s thought into something of a coherent, systematic whole. Nietzsche sees himself as the destroyer of Plato’s philosophy; Heidegger sees Nietzsche as the inverter of Plato’s philosophy. David Krell translates Heidegger’s description of this inversion thus: “For Plato the supersensuous [*Übersinnliche*] is the true world. It stands over all, as what sets the standard. The sensuous [*Sinnliche*] lies below, as the world of appearances” (N 1:201) (here the “supersensuous” could more literally be translated as “transcendent,” the “sensuous” as the “sensible”¹). “After [Nietzsche’s] inversion... the sensuous, the world of appearances, stands above; the supersensuous, the true world, lies below” (N 1:201). The three main modes of understanding that exalt the “supersensuous” in the modern world are, for Nietzsche, religion, morality, and philosophy. His section on art in *The Will to Power* begins: “Our religion, morality, and philosophy are decadence forms [*décadence-*

¹ German: “Für Platon ist das Übersinnliche die wahre Welt. Sie steht oben als das Maßgebende. Das Sinnliche liegt unten als die scheinbare Welt.” (*Gesamtausgabe* 6.1:203). I draw attention to the translator here not to suggest that Krell’s translation is unsatisfactory or to propose a different translation, but only because of the not-quite-literal character of the translation, which Krell himself draws attention to in footnotes.

Formen] of man. The *countermovement: art.*”¹ The true nature of the “sensuous” (sensible) world is the Will to Power, and art is the “supreme configuration” (N 1:62) of the will to power. Thus, the greatest celebration of the sensible world is art.

Walter Kaufmann’s tracking of the development of the idea of the will to power over Nietzsche’s career makes Heidegger’s intimate linking of the concepts of “art” and “the Will to Power” easy to relate to what we have already said about “forgetting” and artistry in Nietzsche’s thought. Kaufmann argues that in the idea of the will to power, the eternal striving that is the foundational nature of all things, “a reconciliation was finally affected between Dionysus and Apollo” (Kaufmann 152). Kaufmann reads the development of Nietzsche’s thought over his career as the project of synthesizing Dionysus and Apollo. “The will to power,” writes Kaufmann, “is not only the Dionysian passionate striving, but it is also Apollinian and possesses an inherent capacity to give itself form” (Kaufmann 204). The term *Rausch* [rapture], says Heidegger, is a configuration of the will to power and signifies for Nietzsche the essential “aesthetic state” (N 1:92). Accordingly, for Heidegger, who sees artistic creation as the most straightforward or fundamental form of the will to power, the enraptured artistic will is both “*formschaffend* [form-giving]” (*Gesamtausgabe* 6.1:114) like Apollo and, in a sense, self-destructive or self-canceling like Dionysus: “Rapture as a state of feeling explodes the very subjectivity of the subject. By having a feeling for beauty the subject has already come out of himself; he is no longer subjective, no longer a subject” (N 1:123).

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House 1968) §794. Hereafter cited in the text with the prefix “WP.”

Heidegger does not speak in explicitly temporal terms in his exposition of Nietzsche's view on art. Kaufmann's connecting of the Will to Power with the Apollonian and Dionysian drives, however, allows us to relate Heidegger's understanding of Nietzsche's mature view of art to the theme of time. Earlier I spoke of Apollonian and Dionysian art as kinds of productive, creative forgetting. One can see how the implicit preservation of the notions of the Apollonian and Dionysian in Heidegger's interpretation preserve the "forgetful" quality of art. The "form-giving" quality of art is not simply a willful structuring and beautifying; it is a willful structuring and beautifying out of "chaos." As Stanley Rosen notes, for Nietzsche, "chaos is atemporal,"¹ as it lacks all form, such that there cannot be various chaotic arrangements that temporally succeed each other. Thus, temporally anterior to the action of the artist, when he is in his artistic state, is nothing, or, nothing but chaos – which, as the formless, cannot develop, change, or be situated in time at all.² The word *Rausch*, also a word used to speak of the Dionysian experience in *The Birth of Tragedy*, suggests the same self-forgetting as that ecstatic experience: intuitively, "rapture" is not reflective but caught up fully in the moment. The artistic state, as the most active and straightforward configuration of the will, is a destruction of what came before, as "will is in itself simultaneously creative and destructive" (N 1:63). Heidegger does not speak in temporal terms, but we can extrapolate that the Nietzschean artist of whom he speaks is temporally unaware: his consciousness is as fully immersed in a present moment that has no anteriority, as was the Athenian encountering Dionysus in an Aeschylean drama in *The Birth of Tragedy*.

¹ Stanley Rosen, *The Mask of Enlightenment* (Yale University Press: New Haven 2004), 178.

² Cf. *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* by Schopenhauer.

Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche's philosophy of art is not wrong per se, but it is incomplete. As his title suggests, he draws his interpretation mostly from the section "The Will to Power as Art" in *The Will to Power*, less than twenty pages of scattered notes collected by editors whom we do not trust for multiple well-discussed reasons. Heidegger organized the four-semester lecture series (beginning in 1939) from which *Nietzsche* is assembled such that his course on these few notes comes directly before his course on the entirety of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, titled "Eternal Recurrence," problematically reading Nietzsche's magnum opus, over four hundred pages long, through a lens developed in the reading of a small number of scattered notes. The notes are Nietzsche's, though, and they correspond to a real moment in Nietzsche's thought that is reflected in other works, both early and late: the state of artistic creation as a state of "Rausch." Kaufmann translates *Rausch* in *The Will to Power* not as "rapture" (as Krell does in translating Heidegger's *Nietzsche*) but as "intoxication." In this "moment" of Nietzsche's thought, the foundation of the state necessary for artistic creation is the "feeling of intoxication, in fact corresponding to an increase in strength; strongest in the mating season" (WP §800). When we read that "Art reminds us of states of animal vigor" (WP §802), we are reminded of the animal of "On the Uses and Abuses of History for Life", which cannot remember and does not have the ability to project itself into the future. Moments of artistic "intoxication" are "climactic moments of life" (WP §800). Here there is the same orgasmic dissolution of temporal anteriority in the act of artistry as in *The Birth of Tragedy*. We cannot disregard any reading of Nietzsche's thought influenced by *The Will to Power* as irrelevant, as these thematic connections to published works demonstrate.

We will see that the Heideggerian picture of the artist in *Nietzsche* is indeed a thought that is *articulated* in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, but that it is articulated only to be rejected. It is the view of the artist held by the Zarathustra we meet in Part I, who still has much to learn and whose philosophical message is not Nietzsche's philosophical message. It is in essence a Nietzschean view, in its vocabulary and its categories, but a crude and unperfected Nietzschean view, one which the Nietzsche writing *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* interrogates and modifies. Ultimately, a new and revised vision for artistic living is put forth, one which grows dialectically out of Zarathustra's vision for the life of the artist in Part I.

III. ZARATHUSTRA'S CONFRONTATION WITH TIME: PARTS I AND II OF THUS SPOKE ZARATHUSTRA

When Zarathustra comes down from his mountain at the beginning of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, he comes inspiring anything but confidence in his ability to lead us to philosophical truths. From the first time he speaks, he uses bumbling metaphors that induce more humor in the listener than reverence: "Behold, I am weary of my wisdom, like a bee that has gathered too much honey" (Z Prologue §1). He is both pedantic and overeager.

Zarathustra's delivery of his first philosophical announcement should arouse further misgivings about his credentials. On the way down from his mountain to preach his prophetic message to the people living below, he says dramatically to no one in particular, "God is dead!" (Z Prologue §2). As it becomes clear what he means when he

says this, we have even more reason to question Zarathustra's value as our guide to philosophical enlightenment. He means that belief in God is dead; this means for him that a complete break with the Christian past is possible. The notion of the "death of God," however, has a history he seems to be unaware of. It has been used by others before him, including Hegel, who coined the phrase.¹ Hegel situated the death of God in a dialectical, historicistic view of history, in which there is no possibility of easily and completely breaking from the past. The death of God was also previously announced by a different fictional character of Nietzsche's, the madman of *The Gay Science*. While a comparison with Hegel's announcement of the death of God makes Zarathustra's sound naïve and overly simplistic, a comparison with the madman's announcement of the death of God makes Zarathustra's sound inappropriate in tone. Zarathustra seems to be overjoyed at the death of God. By contrast, the madman had a full appreciation of the stability and the grand cultural tradition that are lost with the death of God. His tone, accordingly, is sublime and apocalyptic: "Whither is God... *We have killed him* - you and I. But how did we do this? How could we drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now?"² We can gather from the start that Zarathustra has much to learn, and that the philosophical message he will be giving us initially will not be quite right. This expectation is borne out by the rest of the book, in which, as Zarathustra develops intellectually over the course of his career as a thinker, his message changes.

¹ G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller. (New York: Oxford University Press 1977) § 795.

² Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House 1974), §125. Hereafter cited in the text with the prefix "GS."

Zarathustra rejects the past in his rejection of God, and with his rejection of Christian religion rejects “eternity,” a word that has a negative connotation for him at the beginning of the book. He associates eternity with the otherworldliness of the God whom he is rejecting. In place of allegiance to God, he proposes allegiance to the earth:

I beseech you, my brothers, *remain faithful to the earth!* And do not believe those who speak to you of otherworldly hopes! ...

Once the sin against God was the greatest sin; but God died, and those sinners died with him. To sin against the earth is now the most dreadful thing, and to esteem the entrails of the unknowable higher than the meaning of the earth. (Z Prologue §3)

Whereas God is “unknowable” because he is not of this earth, the earth is the sensible and immediate, the knowable material world. While God is associated with the eternal and otherworldly, the earth is associated with the immediate and present. One is, says Zarathustra just before the above lines, “a conflict and cross between plant and ghost” (Prologue §3). In Christian times the “ghost” was seen as the essentially human, at the expense of the plant. The ghost, the soul, hovers above the earth when detached from the plant (“otherworldly” appears in the German as “*überirdischen*” – over-earthly).

Zarathustra calls for an embrace of the corporeal, the sensible, in his admonition to remain faithful to the earth.¹

¹ “Lead back to the earth the virtue that flew away, as I do – back to the body, back to life” (Z §I.22).

Zarathustra does not want human beings that are soulless plants (like the last man), but rather “a unity with oneself, by which body and soul can no longer be distinguished” (Figal 202). He probably uses a phrase which stresses the return to the sensible and immediate because Christianity represents a rejection of

God's death is a social phenomenon – God has been forgotten by the masses. On a superficial analysis, it looks like everybody Zarathustra meets in the first part has gotten beyond the Christian past. Nobody Zarathustra meets over the course of the book contests the fact of God's death, except the hermit whom Zarathustra meets in the very first scene. But while nobody believes in the Christian eternity anymore, the people of the town of The Motley Cow are still under the influence of its spiritual effects. The Christian opposition to the earth expressed itself as a preference for the soul over the body: "Once the soul looked contemptuously on the body... she wanted the body meager, ghastly, and starved" (Prologue §3). This attitude hasn't really changed in the modern bourgeois ethos as embodied by the "last man" of whom Zarathustra speaks. "A little poison now and then: that makes for pleasant dreams," says the last man in Zarathustra's speech, "One has one's little pleasure for the day and one's little pleasure for the night: but one has a regard for health" (Prologue §5). The Christian hated the body before the death of God; after the death of God, the last man wants an anaesthetized body of "pleasant dreams" and only "little pleasure."

In this way, the last man has allowed the Christian past to determine his secular present. The most essential characteristic of his existential state is passivity. Active self-assertion requires "too much exertion."¹ He allows himself to be an effect, rather than a cause, as is suggested by his title as the *last* man. He is the culmination of a process that began in the past and ends in the present, not the creative instigator of anything new – in fact, he needs to ask, "What is creation?" (Prologue §5).

the sensible plant in favor of the soul, and Christianity is the belief system against which his opening philosophical claim ("God is dead") is aimed and against which he models his own philosophical claims.

¹ "One no longer becomes poor or rich: both require too much exertion. Who wants to rule? Who obey? Both require too much exertion" (Z Prologue §5).

By contrast, Zarathustra preaches that one ought to be a first cause, a prime mover, a cause and not an effect: “Are you a new strength and a new right? A first movement? A self-propelled wheel? Can you compel the very stars to revolve around you?” (§I.17). This is called “the way of the creator,” which is “the way to yourself” (§I.17). Whereas the last man is a mere helpless product of the past who chooses to have no say in his own destiny, Zarathustra advocates an artistic self-generation that is a total break from the past. The self-generated artistic individual of whom he speaks can fashion the world around himself according to his will via a kind of transformative vision that is powerful enough to “compel the very stars” to revolve around him. Thus, the spontaneously self-created individual, who has broken free of the past to become “a first movement,” can create a present that is totally free from his past, which is to be forgotten. T.K. Seung points out how radical this ideal is: “the process of self-creation” in the present, he says, means “destroying the old self” (Seung 47), so that one is perpetually creating a new self in order to stay completely in the present: “You must wish to consume yourself in your own flame: how could you wish to become new unless you had first become ashes!” (Z §I.17). The radical creativity Zarathustra advocates requires an enraptured self-forgetting in the present. The self of the past must be continually and completely forgotten, disintegrated like something that is burned to ashes by fire. What is anterior to this enraptured moment must be entirely suppressed so that the fiery luminescence of this moment’s creative power can realize itself. This is, in Heidegger’s terms, “rapture” as the fundamental “aesthetic state,” where this “rapture” is “simultaneously creative and destructive.”

This self-immersion in the creative present is Zarathustra's first interpretation of what it means in real terms to obey his own dictum, "Remain faithful to the earth." The Übermensch is the figure who embodies the creative will, and "the Übermensch shall be the meaning of the earth" (*Z Prologue* §3). The earth is the immediate, and the immediate in temporal terms is the present moment. The "creator," as the person who fully immerses himself in the moment, is the figure who remains true to the earth. Thus, an embrace of the physically immediate is linked with an embrace of the temporally immediate.

Stanley Rosen's methodology in his book *The Mask of Enlightenment* acknowledges the metaphorical complexities of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, providing the kind of line by line analysis of Part I that is hard to come by. Ultimately, my objection to his reading of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is similar to my concerns regarding Heidegger's reading: in focusing nearly half his book on the Prologue and Part I, Rosen either does not recognize or does not acknowledge the importance of the fact that Zarathustra challenges earlier versions of his own message as his story develops. While the thematic fundamentals of my interpretation of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* ultimately differ in important ways from T.K. Seung's interpretation in *Nietzsche's Epic of the Soul*, published in 2005 (over a decade after Rosen's book), Seung's book makes too strong a case for the idea that Zarathustra's message radically changes over the course of the book to place the kind of weight on Part I that Rosen does. Rosen's attention to biblical and mythological allusion in Part I, however, helps elucidate many of Zarathustra's enigmatic speeches.

Rosen sees "the death of God" as a play on Plato's myth of the temporally reversible cosmos in *The Statesman* (Rosen 10). In the myth, human beings, originally

created by a demiurge, progress normally through time in eras like ours, living lives much like ours. As their creation by the demiurge recedes further and further into the past, they gradually forget their creation by a divinity and move into a period of decadence. When the god who created humankind sees that he has been forgotten, he “takes up the helm of the cosmos,” in Rosen’s words, “and guides it backward in a cycle of rejuvenation,” so that “rejuvenation depends on forgetting rather than recollecting”(10). Nietzsche’s “death of God,” as I noted above, is a social phenomenon, not a metaphysical one: God has not actually died a mortal’s death but has been forgotten.

The power of “rejuvenation” that comes with the forgetting of a god – which in the case of the death of the Christian God is, more broadly, the forgetting of the cultural past of Europe that has been so intimately linked with the idea of God – is not ascribed by Zarathustra to the forgotten god himself, as in Plato’s myth, but to creative individuals. “Creation is a power of the Judeo-Christian God,” says Rosen, and “Nietzsche¹ transfers to mankind the power assigned by the Judeo-Christian tradition to God” (11). The “creator” is granted the power of world creation in Zarathustra’s vision. This power comes from forgetting: one can either remember or create, but not both: “the one who... remembers is distinct from the one who, having forgotten, creates” (Rosen 188). The concepts of “genesis” and the “natural and historical world orders” are “willed away” (Rosen 12), so that the power to defy temporal normality - not temporal reversal as by Plato, but rather willful and total temporal blindness, we might say a *superhuman*

¹ I would here say “Zarathustra” – see my concern, stated above, regarding the dangers of too great a focus on Part I.

(*übermenschliches*) act of willful forgetting, is the condition of enraptured world-creation.

The child in Zarathustra's speech "On the Three Metamorphoses" (§I.1) is the figure which embodies the forgetting required for world-creation. Rosen notes that "Zarathustra assumes that children have no memory or that they act spontaneously" (Rosen 83). In the Three Metamorphoses speech, Zarathustra claims that the way to the creative state he envisions requires three transformations of the self: a transformation from human to camel, from camel to lion, and from lion to child. Zarathustra, who appears to be comparing himself to Moses and will later come down from his mountain bearing tablets that proclaim a new ethical order, claims the ability to guide those who are spiritually strong enough through these transformations. In becoming a camel, one embraces one's enslavement to tradition despite being an inhabitant of a decadent time that no longer honors that tradition; one "carr[ies] the dead weight of tradition" (Rosen 80), in Rosen's words. When the camel breaks free of this bondage and "speeds into its desert" (Z §I.1), it becomes a lion. The spirit will not immediately find the promised land of creative liberation, however, without wandering in the desert for a long time. As a lion, it must do battle with the "great dragon" named "Thou shalt" (Z §I.1). The dragon represents "thousands of years" (Z §I.1) of tradition that must be shaken off by the lion. The lion says a "sacred 'No'" (Z §I.1) to the cultural past. As I previously noted, Nietzsche views philosophy as an essentially skeptical activity that says No more easily than it says Yes. Philosophy is symbolized by the figure of Socrates, and "Socrates," says Figal, "as Nietzsche sees him, is the genius of negation" (112).¹ Only when one reaches the promised land of Zarathustra's spiritual program, that of creative and playful rapture,

¹ My translation. German: "Sokrates, wie Nietzsche ihn sieht, ist das Genie der Verneinung."

can one say Yes. One can do this when one becomes a child. “The child is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game” (Z §I.1). The child in “The Three Metamorphoses,” who is the product of the camel’s and lion’s confrontation with history, is described with a phrase identical to part of the description of the “creator.” The child is “a self-propelled wheel, a first movement” (Z §I.1).

The practice of philosophy for Nietzsche is an undertaking that brings one’s consciousness to focus on the past, like one does as the lion: the investigation of genealogies, both historical and personal, is central to his notion of philosophy. The child grows out of the lion. There is some critical disagreement as to whether the child is identical to the *Übermensch*, the ideal creative individual who is the centerpiece of Zarathustra’s early teachings, but the child is generally seen as either the *Übermensch* as a kind of precursor to the *Übermensch*. Whether the child is the *Übermensch* or not, however, the fact that it is anything like an ideal for Zarathustra – whether his ideal itself or only the precursor to his ideal – reveals a major problem for his vision in general. The child is “innocence and forgetting, a new beginning.” It has reached its current state, however, via a process which involves a harrowing confrontation with all of the most overbearing – and presumably innocence-ruining - elements of the past. Having thrown off all old values as the lion in the desert, how is the child to “forget” them? Zarathustra says only that the lion “must” (Z I.1) become a child. Given Figal’s observation about the connection between No-saying and philosophy, the task of becoming the child has to do with the practice of philosophy – the lion offers the sacred No which Nietzsche associates with Socrates. How could one, having cultivated the philosophical, retrospective

sensibility required to complete the spiritual task of the lion, simply dissolve this sensibility upon command?

Yet somehow the child does just that. Figal points out that the figure of a child as artist suggests that there is a “naïveté” inherent in art (Figal 87-89). The child has no memory. Its naïveté and its innocence suggest ignorance, specifically ignorance of anything outside the present moment of creation. This ignorance carries a positive connotation; indeed, Zarathustra wants to posit this ignorance, inherent in *Rausch*, as the state of the artist. Zarathustra, however, is a prophet. Ignorance and naïveté are not the natural condition of the prophet, who brings knowledge. After all, Zarathustra claims full knowledge of the entire narrative which must be played out in order to one to reach the state of the artist. He implicitly claims knowledge of the past against which he rebels by proclaiming its decadence.

This tension reveals the fault lines along which his teaching is about to fall apart. In *Zarathustra*, says Rosen, “prophets cannot enter into the promised land” and “innocence... cannot be achieved intentionally” (199). In the case of Zarathustra himself, I think the second statement implies the first. The prophet approaches his vision intentionally, moving zealously toward the vision of naïve forgetfulness he preaches. This vision cannot be fully realized, however, because intentionally rebelling against the past means intentionally keeping the past in mind. Rosen seems to see this (199), but does not realize that this puts into question not only Zarathustra’s own prospects for fulfilling his ethical program, but anybody else’s prospects for becoming a “creator,” too. Zarathustra’s constant interaction with the past as the loud enemy and would-be destroyer of the past does not itself generate, but merely amplifies, the impossibility of a total break

from the past, an impossibility which in fact lies in the very fabric of human experience: all human beings are constantly and inescapably interacting with the past, integrating it into their present whether they want to do so or not.

Nietzsche asserts the impossibility of such a total break in “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life” when he writes that human life is “an imperfect tense that can never become a perfect one.”¹ He argues in that essay that humankind naturally desires to “play in blissful blindness on the hedges between past and future” (UDH 61). If one should ever successfully block out the past and future, however, she would “at the same time [extinguish] the present and all existence”, because only “death at last brings the desired forgetting” (UDH 61) that is required for this temporal obliviousness. It may be that Zarathustra never reaches the state of total temporally unaware *Rausch* that he advocates, but it is also true that the closer he and his disciples get to succeeding in carrying out his spiritual mission, the more seriously they risk self-annihilation.

One scene in Part I deals directly with the danger of the suppression of the past that is inherent in Zarathustra’s message: Zarathustra’s encounter with his youthful disciple in “On the Tree on the Mountain” (Z §I.8). The youth is ascending a mountain; he hopes to reach the peak so that, as the highest point, he might be struck with the lightning of the *Übermensch*. When Zarathustra meets him partway up the mountain in a disordered and pitiable state, his mental state could most optimistically be described as that of confusion, and might be described as delirium. “I transform myself too quickly; my Today contradicts my Yesterday” (Z §I.8), he says. Zarathustra feels for the climber,

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, “On the Uses and Abuses of History for Life,” in: *Untimely Meditations*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, ed. Daniel Breazeale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997), 61. Hereafter cited in the text with the prefix “UAB.”

but it is not clear that he holds out any hope for him as he continues on his dangerous quest.¹ Mountaintops are associated with the present more than once in *Zarathustra*. In “The Seven Seals” of Part III Zarathustra is “on a high ridge, wandering like a heavy cloud between past and future” (Z §III.16). Rosen notes (176) that the two seas surrounding the mountain on either side in “The Wanderer” of Part III are described similarly to the roads of the past and future stretching from the gateway of the Moment in “On the Vision and the Riddle” and posits that the mountain is linked symbolically to the gateway itself. In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche writes of artists that “we climb up on the most hazardous paths to scale the roofs and spires of fantasy – without any sense of dizziness, as if we had been born to climb ... We artists!” (GS §59). The gradual ascent corresponds with a loss of the youth’s Yesterday. He ascends too quickly; he is unable to part with his Yesterday as quickly as the speed of his ascent requires. His danger is not that he should fail in reaching the summit, but that he should succeed, since the lightning of the *Übermensch* will set the highest tree on fire (Z §I.8), potentially destroying it. Being struck with the lightning of the *Übermensch* happens in attempting to become the *Übermensch*. To become the *Übermensch* means to become the radically free individual who has thrown off the dead weight of the past, both in the form of tradition and in the form of his own Yesterday as a social being in the social world below the mountain in favor of the rapturous “way of the creator.” The youth may perish in this attempt, as the logic of “On the Uses and Abuses of History” predicts he might, because his Yesterday is inextricable from his existence today. To lose his Yesterday is to lose his Today. He searches after a sort of metaphorical death, a death of the old self in order to be reborn as

¹ “It tears my heart. Better than your words tell it, your eyes tell me of all your dangers... Indeed I know your danger... I beseech you, do not throw away your hope and love... Hold holy your highest hope!” (Z §I.8).

a new transfigured self. Zarathustra's piteous tone suggests, though, that the youth may literally die. As Rosen notes in connection to another scene, Zarathustra's advocated "self-consuming," the desire to sacrifice one's former self to simultaneously be reborn as a new one, "is in a sense suicide" (Rosen 124). Both this scene and "On the Uses and Abuses of History for Life" suggest the impossibility of attaining an unadulterated Today entirely liberated from one's Yesterday, of ever totally succeeding at "play[ing] in blissful blindness on the hedges between past and future." Human life necessarily proceeds along a continuum in which the present does not and cannot appear like a still frame, and to challenge the dependence of the present on the past is dangerous.

Yet Zarathustra's relationship to the present is more complex than an attempt to immerse himself in it fully, despite his rhetoric in "On the Way of the Creator." He is a prophet, after all, in the mold of Old Testament prophets, and in a very straightforward sense, he is unsatisfied with the present: the way people live now must be changed. Zarathustra begins to suffer from loneliness as Part I progresses. By Part II, people in the present are not really people to him: "I walk among men as among fragments of the future" (§II.20). The earth is the immediate, the sensible, the here-and-now, and Zarathustra is a prophet of the earth. Yet Part I is flooded with language that suggests a temporal stance that looks forward in time. The people of the present have forgotten the earth, forgotten the body. Zarathustra yearns for a future in which this is not the case. As Rosen observes, "The prophet sees the future within the present; that is, he sees the present as the future. And this means he does not see the present as the present" (13). We might think of Zarathustra as a kind of blind seer. His visions have a vivid immediacy for him, but they are not really visions of the here-and-now, of the *materially* immediate.

This complicates his status as a prophet of the earth. Paul de Man's description of Wordsworth's spots of time describes the temporal status of the rapturous state that Zarathustra seeks. De Man argues that a spot of time is "The moment of self-projection into the future (which is also the moment of loss of self in the intoxication of the instant)"¹ The difference is that Zarathustra apparently wants this "self-projection into the future" and "loss of self" in the present moment to be a permanent state; he wants the "instant" to go on forever, in the sense that the phoenix cycle is to be perpetually repeated.

This "intoxication of the instant," which is the state corresponding to world-creation in the early Zarathustra's vision, is associated by T.K. Seung with what he calls the "Faustian will" (117). Seung's basic thesis in his reading of *Zarathustra* is that it is a unified story of a "sovereign individual" challenged by a "deterministic universe;" the "Faustian will" is this "sovereign individual." The Faustian will asserts itself on the universe, trying to subdue it by fashioning the whole of the sensible world according to its own vision by "compel[ing] the very stars to revolve around" oneself. The *Übermensch* which Zarathustra advocates in Part I is a "Faustian hero," Seung says (xviii). The universe which opposes itself to the Faustian will presents itself as "accident" (Z §II.20).² "Accident," Seung shows, is for Zarathustra the arbitrariness of the past, the fact that the past is out of our control and that it is the determinant of our present. "Accident," then, is causal determinacy. This seems counter-intuitive, since "accident" suggests spontaneity or randomness, and causality suggests regularity. Causality strikes Zarathustra as accidental in that it is not the product of anyone's will; it is unreasoning.

¹ Paul de Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press 1984), 58.

² The word translated as "accident" by Kaufmann is *Zufall*, which could also be translated as "chance."

Zarathustra calls it “der Unsinn, der Ohne-Sinn” (KSA 4:100) – “nonsense, no sense” (Z 77). In Part II, “accident” becomes Zarathustra’s greatest enemy. It is a threat to the free creation of the enraptured artistic subject, because, as Seung says, “In a deterministic universe” ruled by causality, “all human beings are only puppets” (xii). Seung sees Zarathustra’s clash with the accident of causality as the central conflict of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

In Part I, the Zarathustra rebelled against the past in the form of cultural tradition. But from the beginning, he knew that he stood at the beginning of a new historical period which began with the death of God, and the death of God meant, in some sense, the death of tradition, or at least the phenomenon of tradition growing old and decrepit. Thus, the tone of Part I was largely optimistic. In his last speech before leaving his disciples for the first time at the end of Part I, he tells them,

Not only the reason of millennia, but their madness too, breaks out in us. It is dangerous to be an heir. Still we fight step by step with the giant, accident; and over the whole of humanity there has ruled so far only non-sense – no sense. (§I.22.2)

The “reason of millennia,” that is, old paradigms and tradition, has been the “dragon” against which Zarathustra set himself in Part I. In Part II, he recognizes the “madness” and “non-sense” of “accident,” of causality as a far more serious threat to his naïve vision of self-generating artistic vision. The secularization of culture is tied to the development of a mechanistic view of the world, the modern

scientific viewpoint as embodied in Newtonian physics and the theory of evolution. On this view the present is the product of no one's freely acting will, but is rather the product of the past, and is out of the control of any would-be "creator" who believes himself to be spontaneously fashioning his world around himself in the present. As Zarathustra begins to grasp that he lives in a deterministic universe, Seung says,

There is a subtle dialectical development in his thought. He becomes aware of his passivity in his attempt to assert his active will, because it runs into the obstacles of resistance. These obstacles are what he meant by "the giant of accident" in the last section of Part I. the more deeply we get involved in the active dimension of our existence, the more keenly we feel its passive dimension or our vulnerability to suffering. (59)

Zarathustra's existential test in Part II is to overcome "the will's ill will against time and its 'it was'" (Z §II.20). Before, says Zarathustra, "I taught you, 'The will is a creator.'" But now this thought is challenged by the realization that "All 'it was' is a fragment, a riddle, a dreadful accident" (§II.20). This seriously deflates Zarathustra's mood: "Everything passes away; therefore, everything deserves to pass away... Alas, the stone *It was* cannot be moved" (§II.20). Eventually, Zarathustra approaches total nihilism, renouncing his former message:

Will – that is the name of the liberator and joy-bringer; thus I taught you, my friends. But now learn this too: the will itself is still a prisoner. Willing liberates; but what is it that puts even the liberator himself in fetters? ‘It was’ – that is the name of the will’s gnashing of teeth and most secret melancholy. Powerless against what has been done, he is an angry spectator of all that is past. The will cannot will backwards; and that he cannot break time and time’s covetousness, that is the will’s loneliest melancholy... That time does not run backwards, that is his wrath; ‘that which was’ is the name of the stone he cannot move. (§II.20)

Critics focus on Zarathustra’s confrontation with the past and the idea of the “accident” of determinism to varying degrees. I doubt it stands in question for any reader of *Zarathustra* that the power of the past over the present is in fact a major theme of Part II, and so I will not deal with Zarathustra’s confrontation of the past as extensively as I did in my consideration of Part I, and instead will look at only one section, which I believe deserves more attention than it has received.

In “The Soothsayer,” a prophet-figure offers a grim picture of end times in which, contrary to John’s vision of the Apocalypse in the Book of Revelation, the world is not destroyed by violence, but rather stands on the brink of collapse by exhaustion. I will reprint Kaufmann’s translation of it in its entirety here:

-And I saw a great sadness descend upon mankind. The best grew weary of their works. A doctrine appeared, accompanied by a faith: ‘All is

empty, all is the same, all has been!’ and from all the hills it echoed: ‘All is empty, all is the same, all has been!’ Indeed we have harvested: but why did all our fruit turn rotten and brown? What fell down from the evil moon last night? In vain was all our work; our wine has turned to poison; an evil eye has seared our fields and hearts. We have all become dry; and if fire should descend on us, we should turn to ashes; indeed, we have wearied the fire itself. All our wells have dried up; even the sea has withdrawn. All the soil would crack, but the depth refuses to devour. ‘Alas, where is there still a sea in which one might drown?’ thus are we wailing across shallow swamps. Verily, we have become too weary even to die. We are still waking and living on – in tombs. (Z §II.19)

The scene evokes the thought of the ultimate heat death of the universe. Both humanity and the natural world have neared a standstill. Both the image of ashes, which are easily scattered, and of the diffusion of water throughout the earth, so that there are no more seas but only “shallow swamps,” suggest entropy. Both this picture of a final loss of energy and the thought of the forever destructive energy of the will to power in the eternal return are spiritual challenges in which time destroys through causality everything the creator might create. After hearing this speech, Zarathustra has a troubled dream. He ascends a mountain to the “castle of death” (Z §II.19). Seung argues that the castle of death “is the outcome of scientific reduction. It is the world of dead matter” (Seung 90). Newton’s first law separates the concepts of “motion” and “matter,” and Nietzsche would not be the first to associate the scientific mechanistic worldview with stagnancy and

death.¹ Causality forces recognition of the fact that the present comes from the past and is erased by the future, robbing the artist of the illusion that the present can be its own origin and smothering the vitality of the present.

The Soothsayer's vision is one of the dissolution of the world by the all-powerful, where the all-powerful is time itself. Causality, which makes the past such a threat to the artistic will, will also undo all human efforts in the future. Time, destroying through causality, is the culprit here, and causality is recognized in the modern secular viewpoint. Time's destructive power is revealed by scholarship – by scientific investigation, which exposes the naïveté of the artistic belief in the self-originating present as philosophical investigation does in “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life.”

The style, however, is that of Old Testament sublimity, not of staid scholarly discourse. The Soothsayer's speech echoes the first chapter of Ecclesiastes, in which Ecclesiastes says that “all is vanity... All the rivers run into the sea yet the sea doth not overflow:... All things are hard... What is it that hath been? The same thing that shall be. What is it that hath been done? the same that shall be done. Nothing under the sun is new.”² Zarathustra grasps that temporal progression according to causality, and not an endless moment of free artistic creation, is the fundamental state of the universe. In the Old Testament, a harsh God was a threat to annihilation. After the death of God, time is the all-powerful force which annihilates everything.

¹ “And substitute a universe of death / For that which moves with light and life informed, / Actual, divine, and true.” – *The Prelude* (1850 XIV.160-162). These lines may be read as an assertion of a vitalism that opposes the Newtonian separation of matter and motion.

² *Douay Rheims Holy Bible* Ecclesiastes 1:2, 1:8, 1:9, 1:10.

Zarathustra is deeply hurt by this vision and his ensuing dream,¹ but by the end of Part II clearly accepts its implication: the universe is ruled by “the giant, accident.” The statement attributed to Pericles, “Time is the king of all men; he is their parent and their grave,” sums up the conclusion Zarathustra has come to. The notion of a “*self-propelled* wheel” in Part I implied the wish or desire that the artistic individual be one’s own parent; the image of the child as a metaphor for the creative spirit suggested a denial of death through an endlessly-renewed moment of rebirth. This ideal is no longer plausible, Zarathustra realizes.

Zarathustra’s coming to grips with the reality and power of the past coincides chronologically with his encounters with scholars and people who practice some form or other of *Wissenschaft*. Section titles include, “On Priests,” “On the Famous Wise Men,” “On the Land of Education,” and “On Scholars.” There is a noticeable thematic unity to Zarathustra’s vitriolic criticism of the academic types he meets: “they want to be mere spectators,” (Z §II.16), rather than active creators. One may argue that Nietzsche’s own thought as expressed in other works contains some element of this attitude. It may be, however, that the scholars themselves bring about the temporal awareness which Zarathustra must at some point accept in order to be a respectable thinker. Part II is the only part in which Zarathustra encounters so many scholarly thinkers, and in one section,

¹ I do not discuss the second half of the dream here, in which the gates of the castle burst open and a sublime laugh comes from the castle, and which Zarathustra professes not to understand. The second half of the dream is enigmatic, and may have something to do with the solution to the problem of the dead universe of Newtonian physics (as Seung believes). The castle of death becomes a castle of (imposing, violent) life as the gates open up and a horrible laughter knocks Zarathustra down. The coffins attack him. It becomes the world as understood through the paradigm of the will to power and is no longer the dead world of Newtonian physics. Rhetoric of “inside” and “outside” are used to differentiate an artistic state from a scholarly or philosophical state more than once in *Zarathustra*: the artistic “creator” stands under a sky he controls himself in “On the Way of the Creator” in Part I; in Part III, the philosopher must climb out of the world bounded by the artist’s firmament (see chapter 3 below). The artist resides on land, on a mountain or on the “Blessed Isle,” whereas the philosopher-sailors of “On the Vision and the Riddle” (also discussed below) set sail into a limitless sea.

“On the Land of Education,” consideration of the past and the scholarly mindset are explicitly linked. This link is made very clearly in “On the Uses and Abuses of History for Life.” Zarathustra reacts angrily to the scholars, seeing them as jaded, skeptical, and weary of life, but he learns from them.

I see this as analogous to the progression of Nietzsche’s own thought from *The Birth of Tragedy*, in which Nietzsche advocates what Figal calls the “forgetting” of Apolline and Dionysian art, through Nietzsche’s middle period, which is motivated by the goal of investigating the past to find the genealogy of all valued things, including, as we saw in the above-cited passage from *Human, All Too Human*, the belief in forgetful, enraptured artistic creation. In his “Attempt at Self-Criticism,” written in 1886 as a foreword to *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche calls his younger self, the author of *The Birth of Tragedy*, a romantic (BT 26). The younger author privileges forgetful creative energy, embodied in the gods Apollo and Dionysus and the artistic drives they represent, over philosophical dialectic, a stereotypically romantic valorization of genius at the expense of scholarship. Adrian del Caro calls the middle-period Nietzsche an Enlightenment thinker, whose thought is characterized by “restraint.”¹ Zarathustra starts out romantically naïve, but his mood is deflated because his naïveté is confronted with the knowledge imparted to him by more “restrained” thinkers in Part II. The movement from Part I to Part II of *Zarathustra* is a movement from a New Testament optimism whose thirty-year-old prophet is hopeful of the possibility of announcing a new ethical order – that of the creative individual – to an Old Testament sublimity in which the individual is threatened with annihilation by the all-powerful. In Part I, the message

¹ Adrian del Caro, *Nietzsche contra Nietzsche: Creativity and the Anti-Romantic*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press 1989), 6-7. I would say “relative restraint.”

preached is that of a new power of expression linked, as in the Acts of the Apostles, to the image of fire: “consume yourself in your own flame”; in Part II, the Pentecostal image no longer carries any hope: “if fire should descend on us, we should turn to ashes.” Part I’s Zarathustra, like Christ, tells his disciples to waste no time, to, in effect, “Let the dead bury their dead”¹ and forget their past lives, leaving their friends, families, and towns behind. In Part II, this *carpe diem* message is deflated by a feeling of domination by the past, by which, one might say, “the dead bury the living” (UDH 72). The present is mediated – even obscured, buried – by an awareness of the fact that its origin lies elsewhere. Its destiny is to be erased by the process of change that brought it here, until finally all monuments to the flaming imagination of the artist are lost and forgotten. It comes from and leads to something that the artist’s vision can never penetrate. But for all of the excitement of Part I and relative dejection of Part II, the lesson he learns as he encounters the philosophically-inclined characters of the second Part are lessons that he must learn. The “sacred No” of philosophy has to be an interrogation of all naïve beliefs, not just traditional ones, and the belief in a self-sufficient, independent present of enraptured creation is shown to be a naïve belief. Zarathustra’s intent is to gain his creative power not from the transcendent but from the earth, the immediate and *present*. As we saw, though, a present cut off from the past in which one “compels the very stars to revolve around” oneself is not the present of the sensual world but rather the present of someone who is not seeing the sensual world, the earth, at all. The actual earth is a place of a temporal progression ruled by causality.

¹ Douay Rheims Holy Bible Matthew 8:22: “But Jesus said to him: Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead.”

CHAPTER 2

THWARTED VISION

Although Zarathustra's travails in the first two parts of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* often appear to us as the product of a clownish self-aggrandizement at which the author laughs along with us, they reveal the real difficulty of Nietzsche's task in that part. He wants to reconcile the permanence of Being, required by the work of art, with an acknowledgement of the transience of all things, what he calls "sovereign Becoming [*souverainen Werden*]" (KSA 1:319). In Part One, Zarathustra champions the artistic life, which to him is a life in which one made an artwork of oneself. This requires an escape from time, a perpetual suppression of all that went before. This escape from time, which is to be made possible by an all-powerful will which could defy time, is shown to be impossible in Part II.

The Zarathustra of Part I sought a moment of artistic creativity in which the self was an absolute origin, a moment of vision unfettered from the past and the future. When he obtained a temporal awareness through scholarly and philosophical investigation in Part II which showed this moment impossible, he despaired at the loss of his artistic voice. For Zarathustra, this moment of artistic self-fashioning, the achievement of the great artist (the "creator" or the "child") was to be a transcendence of time, an escape from time. But, as we have seen, the attempt to realize such a moment in fact leads to an awareness of the present's dependence on the past and the future, and thus to an awareness of the fact that the present is not self-contained and self-sufficient, that it cannot be experienced as its own origin.

In the Simplon Pass episode of Wordsworth's *Prelude* (Appendix A), Wordsworth limns the experience of gaining a powerful awareness of a state beyond the destructive power of time, but, unlike the imagined condition of Zarathustra's idealized artist in Part I, the mere perception of such a state does not imply the achievement of it. Wordsworth sees the "types and symbols of eternity" (1805 VI.571) but does not feel himself to be liberated from time's destructive power; to the contrary, he feels himself strongly subjected to it.

In the final stanza of the Simplon Pass scene (1805 VI.549-572), as he is crossing the Alps with Robert Jones on a hiking trip through Europe, Wordsworth gives us images in the Gondo Gorge of a stable state of tumult and decay which never exhausts itself:

The immeasurable height
Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,
The stationary blasts of waterfalls,
And everywhere along the hollow rent
Winds thwarting winds, bewildered and forlorn,
The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky ... (1805 VI.556-561)

The images of movement and change ("woods decaying," "blasts of waterfalls," "torrents shooting") are not images of an unprincipled chaos but rather are expressions of the permanent rule of transience that is itself an unchanging principle. The final lines of the stanza reveal the images to be "the types and symbols of eternity" (1805 VI.571), pictures of a grounding principle of things that is "without end," (1805 VI.572) which Paul de

Man calls a “metatemporal, stationary state beyond the apparent decay of a mutability that attacks certain outward aspects of nature but leaves the core intact.”¹ Wordsworth becomes aware of a state of “sovereign Becoming” which is “stationary” and “never to be decayed,” which stands above time.

The scene in the final stanza pointing to a state beyond the effects of time is brought about by the honing-in of the narrative in the preceding two stanzas to a single point in time. The progression of the narrative slows as the points in time described get closer and closer together. When the travelers’ movement commences with the word “upturning,” the action of “A length of hours” is summarily described in the first part of the sentence. Then the travelers stop for lunch. They begin traveling again in the next sentence, and in the sentence after that (“This we took” [1805 VI.506-511]) they take a “short pause” (1805 VI.507) because they are unsure in which direction they should head. Then “By fortunate chance, / While every moment now increased our doubts, / A peasant met us” (1805 VI.511-513). The temporal focus having narrowed from “A length of hours” to the duration of a lunch break to a “short pause” of indecision, the poet’s eye now dwells on “every moment” as it succeeds the last. The last sentence contains one temporal word, “Ended,” which emphatically corresponds to a “halt” in the travelers’ spatial “progress” as a meter-interrupting trochee to begin the final line:

[...]

And all the answers which the man returned

To our inquiries, in their sense and substance

¹ Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight* (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis 1988), 197.

Translated by the feelings which we had,
 Ended in this – that we had crossed the Alps. (1805.521-524)

With this, the progression of the story through time, as represented through the narrated progress of the travelers, comes to a halt, and the next stanza reflects on the moment of “usurpation” which occurs between the stanzas, the moment in which “Imagination! Lifting up itself / Before the eye and progress of my song / Like an unfathered vapour” (1805 VI.525-527) renders Wordsworth blinded and speechless.

Single moments are often claimed by Wordsworth, as by Zarathustra, as the source of poetic inspiration, and fixation upon one instant in time often gives rise to an evocation of eternity as it does in the Simplon Pass scene. In Book VIII, the sight of London is followed by these lines:

A weight of ages did at once descend
 Upon my heart ...
 ’twas a moment’s pause.
 All that took place within me, came and went,
 As in a moment, and I only now
 Remember that it was a thing divine. (1805 VIII.703-710)

M.H. Abrams interprets such statements as the assertion of a “revelatory and luminous Moment” as the site of “an intersection of eternity with time.”¹ The single “awful”

¹ M.H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism* (New York: Norton, 1973), 385, 387.

moment reflected on in the second stanza of the Simplon Pass scene does indeed give way to a vision explicitly associated with “eternity.”

The language of the stanza beginning with “Imagination!”, though, speaks against any belief on Wordsworth’s part that the poet, situated within time, could in any way join with “eternity,” however fleetingly. The self is situated in the present moment. Its “destiny,” “nature,” and “home” is “with infinitude” (1805 VI.539). This infinitude is recognized as our “home” in a moment of “awful promise” (1805 VI.534):

Our destiny, our nature, and our home,
Is with infinitude – and only there;
With hope it is, hope that can never die,
Effort, expectation, and desire,
And something evermore about to be. (1805 VI.538-542)

Only what *is* is within reach from the standpoint of the present moment. The infinitude spoken of as “something evermore about to be” and not as something which is, cannot intersect with our experience. What is promised, hoped for, expected, and desired is always something which is as yet not within one’s grasp. Hope “that can never die” is thus hope never fulfilled. The infinitude hoped for is not one which ever intersects with the present in which we are located. The “eternity” of the scene in the Gondo Gorge, an infinitude in its scope and its duration, is not one that the poet feels himself merging with, but one which excludes him and opposes itself to him violently, as is made clear by the tone of the stanza. The experience in the Gorge, then, might be described as a vision of an

eternity that can be seen but cannot be entered. Along these lines, Geoffrey Hartman reads the Simplon Pass scene as the most self-conscious and decisive statement of the poet's imaginative desire to pass beyond the material world to a state independent of time and place (46), a state of "unmediated contact with the principle of things" (x), which the poet can move toward but cannot reach.

A vision of eternity would seem to require a state of heightened perceptive faculties; the rhetoric of the passage, though, is not that of heightened vision but of thwarted vision. In the imaginative moment, imagination wraps itself around Wordsworth like a "cloud" (1805 VI.529) "before the eye" of his song. In this moment "the light of sense / Goes out in flashes" (1805 VI.534-535). Though the poet ostensibly recovers before entering the Gorge, the language describing the experience there continues to suggest loss of vision rather than acute vision. The Gorge itself is obscure, a "narrow chasm" and a "gloomy pass" (1805 VI.553, 554). The scene is a "sick sight" and a "giddy prospect" (1805 VI.564-565). All this suggests that seeing has become a struggle. The intimations of vertigo ("immeasurable height," "bewildered," "giddy prospect," "tumult" [1805 VI.556-567]) and images and sounds suggestive of madness ("raving stream," "The rocks that muttered close upon our ears" [1805 VI.565,562]) imply that the speaker is struggling not only to retain his vision but even to hold on to consciousness.

For the still-naïve Zarathustra of Part I, the advocacy of a free artistic moment is a call to an amplified consciousness, a countermovement to the anaesthetized life of the last man. He sees himself as championing a life "faithful to the earth," faithful to the sensible, sensual, and visible. He longs for a self-sufficient and totalizing consciousness manifested in the present moment, with nothing exterior to it, the world as appearance

and appearance as the sum of reality. The moment of artistic rapture is the moment of immediacy, the moment of contact with the earth, which means contact with the sensible. We saw this message unravel over the course of the first two parts of *Zarathustra* due to its internal contradictions in chapter 1.

For Wordsworth, by contrast, absolute temporal immediacy – the “spot” of time or the moment which halts the progress of the song, thus setting itself off from what came before – does not entail the illusion of an absolute visual immediacy; an unmediated vision of neither the material world nor the “principle of things” beyond the material, to use Hartman’s phrase, is claimed. Wordsworth does not claim that he sees “eternity” but only that he sees “Characters of the great apocalypse, / The types and symbols of eternity.” He sees not eternity but things that point to eternity. The “characters,” “types,” and “symbols” of eternity stand between the poet and the material world, which has been obscured by an alien landscape of “rocks that muttered close upon our ears- / Black drizzling crags that spake by the wayside / As if a voice were in them” (1805 VI.562-564), lines visually and aurally suggestive of the same conversion of nature into text indicated in the words “characters,” “types,” and “symbols.” The visible scene melts into an image suggestive of written characters, “Black drizzling crags,” and natural sounds become spoken words. These “types,” “symbols,” and “characters” also stand between the poet and eternity itself, as signs which point to something that is not itself visible. Speaking of the futurity implied by phrases like “something evermore about to be” and “apocalypse,” Simon Jarvis observes that Wordsworth does not claim “immediate vision”; instead, the mediation of the subject by nature is sustained and is compounded by a

further mediation, the mediation of consciousness itself by a peculiar kind of time or history, and thus, implicitly, the impossibility of ever finding a point at which consciousness is present to itself. The absence of an immediate vision of divinity is thus linked to the absence of immediate self-presence of any kind.¹

The experience described is as much an experience of absence as it is an experience of an overbearing presence. Zarathustra in Part I unwittingly advocated the annihilation of the object by the subject in his romanticized artistic moments, and in Part II he experienced the reverse against his will; the scene in the Gorge fits into neither category comfortably. The conscious self is threatened and overpowered by the vision at hand;² the material world has been blocked off as by an opaque cloud and subsequently transformed into something not of this world; the eternity that is spoken of is only gestured at, not seen. Neither the self, nor the material world, nor eternity is fully present; the traveler feels the absence of all of them, and in this ungrounded state, feels himself losing his hold on consciousness. The absence of all these things, embodied in the characters, types, and symbols witnessed, is all that is decisively present.

The rhetoric of nature-turned-text belies Wordsworth's acute awareness that he, as the poet writing all these things, is the active agent in the creation of the scene he gives us, regardless of his protestations that imagination and the vision that follows it "came /

¹ Simon Jarvis, *Wordsworth's Philosophic Song*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007), 157.

² Thomas Weiskell, *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence* (Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore 1976), 199-201.

Athwart” him (1805 VI.528-529). He wants to master nature: his hubris is reflected both in the attempt to cross the Alps and in his self-christening as a prophet of nature. Nature, however, recedes from him as he asserts himself over and against it, obscured by verse that has reached its apex by leaving nature behind. This creates a crisis because Wordsworth has set out with the intention of justifying himself as a nature poet.

A similarly free-floating and precarious consciousness is exhibited in the Boy of Winander lines (1805 V.389-422). In this scene, a boy stands at the side of a lake, responding to the hooting of owls by mimicking their sounds, initiating a lively conversation:

And they would shout
 Across the wat’ry vale, and shout again,
 Responsive to his call, with quivering peals
 And long halloos, and screams, and echoes loud
 Redouble and redoubled. (1805 V.399-403)

When the birds stop responding to his calls, “a gentle shock of mild surprise / Has carried far into his heart the voice / Of mountain torrents” (1805 V.407-409). The “mountain torrents,” we know from Wordsworth’s use of water throughout *The Prelude*, signify the arrival of imagination.¹ The “uncertain heaven” (1805 V.412-413), reflected on the surface of the lake, is spoken of as if falling into the water, “received / Into the bosom of the steady lake” (1805 412-413), perhaps along with the whole “visible scene” (1805 V.409). This fall portends the boy’s own fall into death (1805 V.414). This passage was

¹ Jonathan Bishop, ‘Wordsworth and the ‘Spots of Time.’” *ELH*. Vol. 26, No. 1 (1959): 51, 65.

originally written in the first person.¹ By writing in the third person, Wordsworth can speak of a loss of self which cannot in fact be experienced. The self is thus given up twice by a process of objectification, first by externalizing himself in the form of the boy, and then in death. The loss of the self corresponds to the loss of the material world, which is lost the moment the communication between the self and nature, represented by the conversation of the boy with the owls, breaks down. Both self and nature are given up in the moment in which imagination arrives, as noted by de Man: “the moment in which the lower form of poetic imagination – ‘fancy’ – transforms itself into true visionary ‘imagination’,” that is, the moment in which the owls stop responding to the boy, “There is a hidden but indubitable connection between the loss of the sense of correspondence and the experience of death” (*Rhetoric of Romanticism* 53). The permanence of the “steady lake,” which outlasts both the calls of the owls and the “visible scene” that falls into it, indicates a kind of eternity. This eternity is, however, as in the Simplon Pass scene, not one which is here, within the present moment of lived experience. It is, rather, only attainable in death, in the loss of experience, and thus not attainable by the imagination, with which it is associated. Again the vivid experience of a single moment in time seems characterized less by the fullness of a grand power of perception than by a blindness in which neither the material world nor eternity is visible, and the perceptive faculty has been given up. “Types,” “symbols,” and “characters” are again the culprit in the loss of self and world. De Man observes in the same discussion of the Winander Boy: “the transition from perception to imagination implies a growing boldness of language which distances itself more and more from the norm”; imagination is “defined by the power of its language precisely not to remain imitatively and repetitively due to sense

¹ *The Prelude 1799, 1805, 1850* Norton critical edition. Editors’ footnote, 172.

perception” (*Rhetoric of Romanticism* 53). These imaginative moments are thus not moments of contact with an unmediated truth of nature but moments when language runs free and breaks the contact between the self and the world, obscuring everything but itself.

Thus described as a power which breaks the bond between the self and a world now lost to sight, these spots of time appear to be all about death. The situation in which Wordsworth finds himself in these two passages is somewhat analogous to Zarathustra’s predicament in Part II, in which the rapturous embrace of a single moment of blind seeing has led to a search for an origin outside the moment, which results in fragmented vision (§Z II.20) and stumbling blindness in place of visionary blindness (Z §II.11). Imaginative verse does not seem to allow us here to “see into the life of things” (LB 114) but to obscure the self and the world as it drives toward a “home” it cannot reach, severing the connection of one to the other and thus bringing with it an anxiety of death.

The violent clashing of opposing forces gives the last stanza of the Simplon Pass scene its infernal character despite the fact that Wordsworth and Jones in fact pass through the Gorge on a sunny day (“Torrents shooting from the clear blue sky” [1805 VI.561]). It is difficult and at points impossible to represent the scene to oneself in images: the positive assertion of one term describing Wordsworth’s view of the Gorge is immediately met with its opposite. There is both “Tumult and peace,” and “darkness and ... light” (1805 VI.567), a process of “decaying” which is “never to be decayed.” Many images, such as that of the “raving stream” or the “unfettered clouds” (1805 VI.566) make use of adjectives with no visual element. Some lines which sound like depictions of the natural world, such as “winds thwarting winds” (1805 VI.560), are simply not images

at all. The verse, besides depicting an experience of incapacitated vision, also disables the sight of the reader, who must struggle to represent to herself in images what Wordsworth is saying. The types and symbols contradict each other; the verse apparently turns against itself. This speaks against the notion that they are representing a moment of contact with an ultimate truth or foundational principle of things.

This self-thwarting of the verse, the fact that it does not reference anything we can imagine, does not cause the passage to come to nothing. In the lines preceding the descent into the Gorge, Wordsworth says of moments when the “light of sense / Goes out in flashes” that

The mind beneath such banners militant
 Thinks not of spoils or trophies, nor of aught
 That may attest its prowess, blest in thoughts
 That are their own perfection and reward. (1805 VI.543-546)

De Man interprets these lines as saying that the “language of imagination is privileged in terms of truth; it serves no empirical purposes or desires other than the truth of its own assertion.” The truth sought is a truth about the self, and such a truth is “best described not in terms of accuracy but in terms of authenticity.” The truth about the self sought here is the truth about our “relationship with time,” a relationship “necessarily mediated by death.”¹ Death, which lies beyond experience, cannot be represented any more directly than “eternity” can. The verse fails to represent the eternity of which it speaks. The verse,

¹ Paul de Man, *Romanticism and Contemporary Criticism*, ed. E.S. Burt, Kevin Newmark, and Andrzej Warminski (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press 1993), 93.

though, is not to be valued for any correctness of representation. The “glory” that comes out of the moment of imaginative usurpation is not in thoughts that correspond to realities in a material world; it is in “thoughts / That are their own perfection and reward.” The “characters,” “types,” and “symbols” that are the product of the imaginative moment are not to be valued because they enable an intersection of the moment with eternity but because they enable the poet to fashion his own present in the void created by the loss of self and world felt in the thought of death.

In the London passage cited above, Wordsworth speaks of “a weight of ages” which “did at once descend / Upon my heart,” and says he has “no / Distinct remembrances” of the experience, but remembers “weight and power, / Power growing with the weight” (1805 VIII.703-706.). The later revision to “Power growing *under* weight” (1850 VIII.555) leaves no doubt that the “power” is Wordsworth’s own poetic power,¹ the power which has produced the passage we read. The location of this power inside the mind of the poet, in a moment in which there is nothing of worth to be seen outside (the scene is of the bland limitlessness of London), affirms that imaginative power is not the power of a special kind of vision into a truth of nature or any other external entity, but of the mind’s power to create its own positive vision in a moment characterized by the awareness of a threatening nothingness.

Wordsworth’s versified meditations on death thus turn out to be the assertions of life. Zarathustra asks, “Is not seeing always – seeing abysses?” (Z III.2.1). The question is rhetorical: the substance of the speech in which he delivers this question, as well as the storyline of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, answer in the affirmative. To reverse the formula,

¹ Jonathan Bishop writes, “*Power growing under weight*; the image expresses a paradoxical release of inner force complementing the very pressures which inhibit it, as if suffering authorized strength” (51).

for Wordsworth, seeing abysses is always seeing, as it eventually is for Zarathustra as well, as we will see. The powerful awareness of something irresolvably exterior to the moment of perception threatens Zarathustra's power of perception itself, as he gets lost in the "abysses" of the boundless past and future in the hopeless search for a point of origin. Wordsworth, faced with a similar predicament, feels the moment slipping away in the thought of the end of perception, death, but fashions his own present by authentically reflecting on the loss of presence in verse. For Zarathustra, the impossible search for origins, and the discovery of the impossibility of this search, a process which robs one of one's vision in the present moment, are associated with philosophy, whereas a visionary immersion in the present is the state of the artist. To learn to see despite seeing abysses, as Wordsworth does, is necessary for Zarathustra to keep philosophical investigation from destroying artistic insight, to bring the two into harmony, or at least a generative conflict.

CHAPTER 3

TRANSFIGURING VISION

I. THE FIGURE OF ZARATHUSTRA IN NIETZSCHE'S OTHER WORKS

Before proceeding to a discussion of the eternal recurrence and Zarathustra's efforts to save himself from the spiritual quandary in which he found himself at the end of Part II of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, I will briefly look at some of Nietzsche's mentions of the character of Zarathustra outside of the work which bears his name. Because his appearances outside of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* are generally brief, Nietzsche's comments on him in other works often offer a more concise and integrated picture of the conceptual work Nietzsche wishes his character to perform than does any single passage in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

An analysis of the rhetoric with which Nietzsche rejects romanticism reveals that his negative stance toward it is motivated by a desire to "remain faithful to the earth," in Zarathustra's words. Among Nietzsche's objections to romanticism is his charge that romantics indulge in Christian-looking redemption schemes which seem to him to be rejections of the immediate, of the "Now" (BT 25). In his review of *The Birth of Tragedy* titled "Attempt at a Self-Criticism," written in 1886 fourteen years after the initial publication of the work, Nietzsche spurns the work, calling it, above all, romantic. The older Nietzsche writing the review cautions the younger Nietzsche writing *The Birth of Tragedy* not to end "as romantics end, as *Christians*" (BT 26). Romanticism, Nietzsche

believes, is inherently Christian, which means for him that it values the transcendent over the sensible.

Given that Nietzsche sees romanticism the way he does, namely, as “*Christian*,” his objection to his earlier work is understandable. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Dionysus represents two different notions which are, *prima facie*, diametrically opposed to each other. Dionysus represents nature; this never changes. When Dionysus is introduced, he seems to represent “nature” understood in a fairly straightforward sense: nature is the sensible and sensual, the material. The Dionysian attitude is characterized by the “extravagant sexual licentiousness” (BT 39) of the historical Dionysian festivals and is a “horrible mixture of sensuality and cruelty” (BT 39). The satyr, associated with the wilderness, fertility, and sex, is mentioned in connection with Dionysus. Yet shortly thereafter Nietzsche reads into this experience a drive to “self-abnegation” (BT 41). Ultimately, the “nature” which Dionysus symbolizes appears to represent not the sensual but a pre-phenomenal realm before and beyond the immediate one. Silk and Stern say that “*The Birth of Tragedy* takes over Schopenhauer’s postulate that behind ordinary reality lies an ultimate ground of being, the *Urgrund*” (Silk and Stern 241). This *Urgrund* is symbolized by Dionysus. Nietzsche says of the ancient Greek that “Apollinian consciousness ... like a veil, hid this Dionysian world from his vision” (BT 41). What we might call the material world, the world of forms, shapes, and colors, is, following passages like this one, closer to the form-giving Apollo than to Dionysus – and it stands *between* the individual and the true essence of things, rather than being the true essence of things. Dionysus in *The Birth of Tragedy* actually represents a “true world” beyond the

“apparent one” that Nietzsche makes it his task to advocate (TI 485-486) – the Dionysian life force is a will to transcendence, a wish for *das Übersinnliche*.

Thus, a drive which at first expresses itself as an embrace of the sensible, immediate world turns into an impulse to go beyond the sensible world into the otherworldly realm of a deeper or more foundational reality (much like Wordsworth’s drive to apocalypse on Geoffrey Hartman’s reading of *The Prelude*).¹ The meeting with Dionysus, though it is “self-annihilation,”² brings a kind of reintegration, a redemption from the fragmentation of the *principium individuationis* that rules the phenomenal world, as nature “celebrates once more her reconciliation with her prodigal son, man [*mit ihrem verlorenen Sohne, dem Menschen*]” (KSA 1:29).³ Since Nietzsche’s understanding of romanticism is so heavily informed by the operas of Richard Wagner, it is not surprising that he later sees this book as romantic – the climactic scene of *Tristan and Isolde* also ends in union and wholeness achieved via transcendence of the sensible world. Like *Tristan and Isolde*, *The Birth of Tragedy* entertains the possibility of redemption by passing beyond the material world. This kind of redemption is a very Christian-looking “metaphysical comfort” (BT 26), the older Nietzsche speaking in the Attempt at Self-Criticism warns the younger Nietzsche, that prevents one from “learn[ing] the art of *this-worldly* comfort” (BT 26). Nietzsche sees in the metaphysics of his earliest work “deep hatred against the ‘Now’,” created by someone “believing sooner in the Nothing . . . than in the ‘Now’” (BT 25). The younger Nietzsche would do well to

¹ The language with which Silk and Stern describe the actual, historical Dionysian festivals brings out this paradox: sexual licentiousness and the “dismembering and swallowing raw of an animal body” are the means to the end of “the union of the worshipper with the divine” (Silk and Stern 171-172).

² Nietzsche asserts without apparent irony that if *Tristan and Isolde* expressed its Dionysian wisdom unmediated by Apollo’s healing powers manifested in “world and image,” one could not experience the opera “without expiring in a spasmodic unharnessing of all the wings of the soul” (BT 127).

³ Kaufman translates “verlorenen Sohne” as “lost son,” which does not make the biblical allusion obvious. Otherwise, this is Kaufman’s translation (BT 37).

study under “that Dionysian monster, who bears the name of Zarathustra” (BT 26) in order to learn how to remain faithful to the “this-worldly.” The later Nietzsche’s eternal recurrence is a model for redemption from suffering, but Zarathustra wants to pose it as an earthly and not a transcendent model, a model which embraces the “Now” of lived experience.

A reading of M.H. Abrams’s *Natural Supernaturalism* reveals that Nietzsche’s project of building an earthly model of redemption from earthly woes is not an anti-romantic, but in some senses a typically romantic, undertaking. Taking Wordsworth’s *Prelude* as the most exemplary of all great romantic literary works, Abrams argues that the romantics tend to structure their works around the biblical cosmological narrative, secularizing this narrative. Characters begin in a state of prelapsarian innocence, then fall from this state of innocence by gaining knowledge which fragments their lives and alienates them from nature, and finally are reunited with nature in a marriage of mind and earth, completing a “circuitous return” (Abrams 323) to nature and wholeness via a “a revolutionary mode of imaginative perception which accomplishes nothing less than the ‘creation’ of a new world” (338). This “revolutionary mode of imaginative perception” is often to be consummated in a “Moment” in which, in Wordsworth’s case, “the eye is fixed on the object without being mastered by it, the object itself suddenly becomes charged with revelation” (Abrams 388). The Moment is the consummation of a process, for Abrams, of “unity achieved, lost, and regained” (284).

Such observations about what might be considered typically romantic can hardly be said to place Nietzsche at a far remove from the romantics. In Part I, Zarathustra is innocent and naïve, and his ideal is the innocence and naïveté of the playful, creative

child. In Part II he falls from creative bliss as he gains knowledge of “the giant, accident,” which ruins his naïve happiness and causes him to lose the ideal of the free present of artistic creation. In Parts III and IV, he attempts a return to a paradise that is on a higher plane because he is now conscious and knowing. The image with which Zarathustra speaks of this return is the “circuitous” path of the sun through the sky: the individual “sets” or “goes under” and rises again as a transformed being, in the same place and on the same earth.¹ This transformation is carried out in the attitudinal change embodied by acceptance of the eternal recurrence of the same, a change which must come from within, from what Abrams calls “renovating ... perception” (339), rather than from above as in the Bible, in which only God can transform the world into a paradise, as he does in Revelation. Christian redemption comes from a transcendent realm and lies in a promised future; Zarathustra’s proposed redemption comes from the here and now, from the earth and the present Moment. That Zarathustra wants his redemption from suffering to be possible on the physically immediate earth is obvious from the text; that he wants it to come from the temporally immediate Moment is clear from the image of the “gateway Moment” (Z §III.2.2), the central image in Zarathustra’s first conception of the eternal recurrence.

The idea that Zarathustra teaches an embrace of the present in the eternal recurrence is in sync with the ways in which Nietzsche speaks about Zarathustra not only in the “Attempt at Self-Criticism” but also in *Twilight of the Idols*. As I noted above, in the “Attempt at Self-Criticism,” Zarathustra is associated with love of the “Now” and the “this-worldly.” In “How the True World Became a Fable” of *Twilight of the Idols*, the

¹ The phrase Kaufmann translates as “going under” (e.g. Z Prologue §4) is *untergehen*, which does mean literally going [*gehen*] under [*unter*], but also means “to set.”

appearance of Zarathustra coincides with the final dissolution of the “true world” (TI 485), the transcendent, eternal, supratemporal world of platonic forms and of Christian truth: “The true world – we have abolished ... INCIPIT ZARATHUSTRA” (TI 486). What is left is the world which transcendence-oriented forms of thought regarded as merely “apparent” (TI 486) – the immediate, sensible world, which is present before us in this moment.

II. ETERNAL RECURRENCE

Just before the introduction of the eternal recurrence in “On the Vision and the Riddle” (Z §III.2), Zarathustra reflects upon the whole of his journey hitherto in “The Wanderer (§III.1), a journey from the naïve ideal of a self-sufficient visionary present to the loss of this ideal at the hands of the “abyss” of the boundless past and the boundless future. Here I will briefly retrace this journey as I have interpreted it before turning to the actual text of “The Wanderer.” The present, associated with an immediacy of vision and an integrity of experience that knows nothing outside itself, has given way to blindness, as looking into the past – and, in the case of the Soothsayer’s prophecy, looking into the future – has been caused Zarathustra to experience a loss of vision, the boundlessness of both past and future making them unfathomable. The present is not its own origin; its origin lies in the past, with “the giant, accident,” but it does not lie at some fixed, discernible location that we can see: this is precisely what makes what Seung calls the “cosmic will” (Seung 199), causality, so threatening. When Zarathustra looks into the past, eventually his sight fails; after some point he can see no further. This is the

experience associated with the investigative spirit of philosophical investigation and of *Wissenschaft*, of the leonine will as a “No-saying.”

The rhetoric of vision and blindness has been complicated slightly in “The Wanderer”; the awareness of a reality exterior to the this present is a kind of blindness, but the present of lived experience is no longer associated strictly with sight. Zarathustra is wandering alone at night on a mountaintop, having left his friends behind. I mentioned in chapter 1 that mountains are associated with the present in the book, and seas with the interminable past and future. Zarathustra climbs the mountain and finally reaches the top, and claims great clarity of sight for a moment: “the night was cold at this height, and clear and starry bright” (§III.1). The summit, however, turns out not to be a high point of unfettered artistic self expression, as we might have expected it to be in Part I. Zarathustra sees not a brilliant vision that is the product of his own mind but instead the black sea that surrounds the mountain and symbolizes all that is exterior to the moment. “One must look away from oneself in order to see much” (§III.1), he muses, slightly before reaching the summit. The sea, however, is, as far as we can tell, not a sight to him at all but only a black pit of “pregnant nocturnal dismay” (§III.1) that he cannot actually see in the darkness.

There is no clear way out of the blindness into which Zarathustra finds himself thrown. Questioning his own assertion that “One must look away from oneself in order to see much,” Zarathustra opines,

But the lover of knowledge who is obtrusive with his eye – how could he see more of all things than their foregrounds? But you, O Zarathustra,

wanted to see the ground and background of all things; hence you must climb over yourself – up until even your stars are *under* you.” (§III.1)

The eye of Zarathustra the lover of knowledge – the eye of the philosopher – looks beyond the present of lived experience to see the “ground and background of all things” but discovers that this is impossible without “climbing” out of the present moment. The image of the artist of “On the Way of the Creator” in Part I, who was to fashion his own firmament (“*your* stars”), is invoked. That artist was to create his own present by “compel[ling] the very stars to revolve around” him. The “lover of knowledge” must leave the artist behind. The lover of knowledge originally strayed from the rapturous moment in the first two parts because he recognized it as a blindness impossible to sustain, but his quest for sight in looking into the past is also represented as hopeless: “Your own foot has effaced the path behind you, and over it there is written: impossibility” (§III.1). Philosophically searching for the origins of the lost moment in the black seas of the past will yield only a confrontation with blindness.

The artist’s summit, however, is now also the site of blindness. Zarathustra cannot abandon his quest into the “abyss” outside the moment by returning to the artistic moment: “Peak and abyss – they are now joined together.” The unfettered moment of artistic vision is no longer a possibility: it can no longer be separated from the alterity which has been acknowledged to exist outside the moment. Have reached the summit, a disappointed Zarathustra realizes he has no choice but to descend to the interminable seas that surround the mountain. “Whence came the highest mountains? I once asked. Then I learned that they came out of the sea. The evidence is written in the walls of their peaks.

It is out of the deepest depth that the highest must come to its height” (§III.1). The cult of the present advocated by Zarathustra in Part I depended on the notion of the present as a point of origin. “Alas, destiny and sea!” he concludes, “To you I must go *down!*” (§III.1). He descends to the “black sorrowful sea” (§III.1).

Zarathustra thus descends to the unfathomable sea that he recognizes as the origin of the present of lived experience in “On the Vision and the Riddle” (Appendix B). The language of opacity used to describe the sea suggests that, if sailing out onto the sea is metaphorically linked to the practice of philosophy, philosophy will no more succeed in finding fixed origins of experience than art did in attempting to assert the present as its own origin.

The impossibility of perceiving the origins of experience is not only asserted but dramatically demonstrated in the practice of Nietzsche’s own philosophical investigations. Because the origin inquired after is never revealed, the process of the inquiry is ultimately more important than any single thought at which the philosopher arrives. In “On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense” and *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche sets out to uncover the foundations of language and morality, both of which contribute to the very fabric of our experience in the present without being invoked or reflected on. His inquiries reveal, however, that the investigator is himself the product of separation from whatever “origin” our linguistic and moral paradigms might be said to spring from; his search into the past for origins is thus limited by his situation within the present reality. In “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life,” Nietzsche observes that we are inescapably the product of the historical past, but whenever we engage with the historical past to uncover whatever insight it may offer us, we do

violence to it, turning it to our own needs and thus sacrificing the reality of the events of the past in favor of a useful interpretation of them which is in fact a product not of the past but of the present. In all three cases, philosophical search for the origins of experience beyond the horizon of experience yields not a vision into those origins but, instead, a heightened awareness of our blindness to those origins.

Despite having some sense of the tragic futility of his sojourning quest out into the sea, Zarathustra appears to be in fairly high spirits when he sets sail. Whereas Zarathustra reacted angrily in Part II to the intellectuals who ruined his naïve belief in a free artistic moment, he praises the adventurers on the ship sailing away from the mountain in “On the Vision and the Riddle,” calling them “bold searchers, researchers,” who “embark with cunning sails on terrible seas” (§III.2.1). Philosophically confronting our blindness to the origins of experience is now recognized as courageous. Sailing is also associated with intellectual discovery in *The Gay Science*, written shortly before *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, in which the following declaration immediately precedes the madman’s pronouncement of the death of God:

In the horizon of the infinite: We have left the land and have embarked.

We have burned our bridges behind us – indeed, we have gone farther and have destroyed the land behind us. Now, little ship, look out! Beside you is the ocean: to be sure, it does not always roar, and at times it lies spread out like silk and gold and reveries of graciousness. But hours will come when you realize it is infinite and that there is nothing more awesome than infinity. Oh, the poor bird that felt free and now strikes the walls of this

cage! Woe, when you feel homesick for the land as if it had offered more *freedom* – and there is no longer any ‘land’.” (GS §124).

The image of the infinite sea is associated here with the experience of nihilism, in which the devaluation of the highest values disorient one and rob one of the safety and self-assurance they provided. In his essay “The Limits of Experience: Nihilism,” Maurice Blanchot associates the above image with scientific pursuits, which posit knowledge of an objective world alien to our experience of ourselves as subjects.¹ Another passage from *The Gay Science* suggests that the “bold searchers and researchers” are also philosophers:

Indeed, we philosophers and “free spirits” feel, when we hear the news that ‘the old God is dead,’ as if a new dawn shone on us ... our ships may venture out again, venture out to face any danger; all the daring of the lover of knowledge is permitted again; the sea, *our* sea, lies open again; perhaps there has never yet been such an “open sea.” (GS §343)

While the image of an “infinite” horizon might be said to overwhelm one’s sight, the imagery of the infinite sea is clearly more optimistic than that of the “black, sorrowful sea” in the immediately preceding chapter, “The Wanderer.” The sea of the past and the future was a visual abyss for Zarathustra before he set out on it; now, while still

¹ Maurice Blanchot, “The Limits of Experience: Nihilism,” in: *The New Nietzsche* (New York: Dell 1977), 122.

acknowledging its dangers, he appears to hold out some hope that it will be a place of discovery.

Zarathustra's artistic desire for an unmediated present and his philosophical acknowledgement of the naiveté of that desire come to a dramatic collision in the dream he has while sailing the seas. The dream begins with Zarathustra again climbing a mountain:

Not long ago I walked gloomily through the deadly pallor of dusk ... a mountain path crunched under the defiance of my foot. Striding silently over the mocking clatter of pebbles, crushing the rock that made it slip, my foot forced its way upward. Upward – defying the spirit that drew it downward to the abyss. (§III.2.1)

Zarathustra has just willingly gone down to the black sea, which to his eyes from the mountaintop appeared as an abyss in “The Wanderer.” In his dream, however, he still resists this movement, climbing upward, perhaps in the hope of finding an artistic moment. A dwarf, identified by Zarathustra as “the spirit of gravity” (§III.2.1), rides on his shoulder. The dwarf's first words to Zarathustra again bring to mind the image of the world creating artist of Part I, who can “compel the very stars to revolve around” him:

“O Zarathustra,” he whispered mockingly, syllable by syllable; “you philosopher's stone! You threw yourself up high, but every stone that is thrown must fall. O Zarathustra, you slingstone, you star-crusher! You

threw yourself up so high; but every stone that is thrown must fall. Sentenced to yourself and to your own stoning – O Zarathustra, far indeed have you thrown the stone, but it will fall back on yourself” (§III.2.1)

Zarathustra is a “star-crusher” where he once imagined himself fashioning his own firmament; the sky, at one time to be painted above the earth by the artist, comes falling in on Zarathustra in the form of “philosopher’s” stones (the original German reads “*Stein der Weisheit*” (KSA 4:198)], which, like crushed stars, threaten to smash Zarathustra to death. The world, originally to be created by the godlike artist, now collapses on the mortal artist.

Zarathustra cannot answer the dwarf, who seems accurately and succinctly to have summarized the existential impasse Zarathustra has come to in his journey from the artistic optimism of Part I through the philosophical No-saying of Part II. He can only be combative, and assert his “courage” against the dwarf’s challenge: “‘Dwarf! It is you or I!’ For courage is the best slayer, courage which *attacks*” (§III.2.1). “Courage,” Zarathustra goes on to say, “slays dizziness at the edge of abysses: and where does man not stand at the edge of abysses? Is not seeing always – seeing abysses?” (§II.2.1). This is perhaps Zarathustra’s most explicit renunciation yet of the hope for a lived present of such integrity that it points to nothing but itself.

The vision of the “gateway Moment” and the “interminable lanes” (§III.2.2) that stretch endlessly in either direction from the gateway affirm this renunciation. Rosen makes the simple but important observation that this gateway, like all gateways, must be a gateway to something else (178); the very idea of a gateway implies a kind of

secondariness. The Moment is a hollowed-out arch. It points in the direction of two lanes of which one sees some small part but of which one loses sight when they meet the horizon. This vision of the eternal recurrence stresses the incomprehensibility of the cosmos as a whole; we see almost nothing of it from the limited standpoint of the gateway Moment.

The proper reaction to this vision, according to Zarathustra, as his ensuing dialogue with the dwarf shows, is to feel overawed. “But whoever would follow one of [these paths], on and on, farther and farther – do you believe, dwarf,” asks Zarathustra, “that these paths contradict each other eternally?” “All that is straight lies,” the dwarf replies, “All truth is crooked; time itself is a circle” (§III.2.2.). Zarathustra’s reaction, perhaps surprisingly, is not to agree (though Günter Figal, Carl Jung and T.K. Seung note that he does end up accepting the dwarf’s statement in ways which make his criticism hypocritical¹), but to respond angrily, “do not make things too easy for yourself!” (Z §III.2.2). Kathleen Higgins says that

The dwarf is content with the view that “time itself is a circle,” but Zarathustra objects to this statement, which approaches time with the detachment of a God who has synoptic vision and who is not himself involved in the temporal sequence.²

¹ Seung 129. Seung cites Jung’s observation in : *Nietzsche’s Zarathustra: Notes of the Seminar Given in 1934-1939* by Carl Jung. Ed. James L. Jarrett. 2 vols. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988.

² Kathleen Higgins, *Nietzsche’s Zarathustra*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press 1987), 175.

The dwarf's reaction to the sight of the interminable lanes is inappropriate because the mortal condition that has haunted Zarathustra and catalyzed the spiritual ordeal he has gone through over the course of this book is a lack of synoptic vision. The image of the gateway Moment and the interminable roads makes apparent the limits of human vision, limited by space and, of course, by time. They point to something metatemporal, a sustained process of permanent movement, but the eternity to which they point can not be seen here in the moment; it is not seen in the image of the gateway and the tiniest portions of two roads. The interminable lanes are eternal in their entirety, not merely in the foreseeable past and the foreseeable future which Zarathustra can see before the roads vanish on the horizon. Like in the Simplon Pass scene, the self is overawed by a harrowing vision; the material world is allegorized until it not at all material; and eternity is gestured at but not grasped. This sight embodies the limitations of human vision that have been made evident to Zarathustra by the No-saying, leonine questioning of experience associated with philosophy and *Wissenschaft*.

The image of the interminable lanes and the gateway Moment embodies the consummation of a philosophical realization, then, but Zarathustra's reaction to the feeling of being overpowered by it is an artistic reaction. We find the process by which Zarathustra transfigures the sublime and overawing thought of the interminable lanes into the beautiful image of the golden ring is suggested in *The Gay Science*:

What one should learn from artists.- How can we make things beautiful, attractive, and desirable for us when they are not? And I rather think that in themselves they never are. ... Moving away from things until there is a

good deal that one no longer sees and there is much that our eye has to add if we are still to see anything at all ... this we should learn from artists ... we want to be the poets of our life. (GS §299)

On the dwarf's cue, Zarathustra makes the jump from the image of two interminable lanes to the unwarranted conclusion that the two paths meet at some point:

Must not whatever *can* walk have walked on this lane before? Must not whatever *can* happen have happened, have been done, have passed by before? And if everything has been there before – what do you think, dwarf, of this moment? Must not this gateway too have been there before? And are not all things knotted together so firmly that this moment draws after it *all* to come? Therefore – itself too? For whatever *can* walk – in this long lane out *there* too, it *must* walk once more. (§III.2.2)

The world revealed by Zarathustra's experiences in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* up to this point has hardly been a world in which "all things" are "knotted together so firmly"; the story told up to this point is far more a story of the dissolution of certainty and of the belief in the integrity of experience. We see Zarathustra here beginning to ignore the evidence of sight in order to create a more aesthetically appealing picture of reality.

The arbitrariness of the assertions Zarathustra makes about the scene he witnesses when he applies his beautifying interpretations to it, the violence this interpretation does to what he actually sees, is hinted at in the final vision of the dream. The gateway

Moment and the interminable lanes disappear, and “A young shepherd I saw, writhing, gagging, in spasms, his face distorted, and a heavy black snake hung out of his mouth. Had I ever seen so much nausea and pale dread on one face?” (§III.2.2). Seung notes that black is the color of the abyss, that which threatens the loss of experience or of sight, and that the heaviness of the snake links it with the dwarf, the spirit of gravity (131). Zarathustra has become more and more threatened by the abyss, as time has become more and more of a burden for him throughout the book. In this scene, Zarathustra proposes no brilliant and complex solution to the horrible situation in which the shepherd finds himself, nothing that could be interpreted as a metaphor for some insightful philosophical path to redemption from the abyss, but rather counsels the shepherd to

“Bite! Bite its head off! Bite!” ... The shepherd ... bit as my cry counseled him; he bit with a good bite. Far away he spewed the head of the snake – and he jumped up. No longer shepherd, no longer human – one changed, radiant, *laughing!* Never yet on earth has a human being laughed as he laughed! O my brothers, I heard a laughter that was no human laughter. (§III.2.2)

We know from the laughter and from the superhuman status granted the shepherd by Zarathustra that the shepherd is the Übermensch. The abyss is overcome by an arbitrary act of rejection.

Nietzsche’s own reflection on *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in his last book, *Ecce Homo*, also suggest that Nietzsche sees Zarathustra’s transfigurations of the interminable

lanes – at first into an only partly-visible but imagined eternal circle, of which the interminable lanes are a part, and then into the fully visible golden ring – as unreasoning and ungrounded. “Zarathustra is a dancer,” Nietzsche says, “he that has the hardest, most terrible insight into reality, that has thought the ‘most abyssal idea’ nevertheless does not consider it an objection to existence, not even to its eternal recurrence.”¹ The word “nevertheless” indicates that Zarathustra conceivably has reason to see his “terrible insight into reality” as an objection to the eternal recurrence. Zarathustra “says No and *does* No to an unheard-of degree” yet is “the opposite of a No-saying spirit” (*Ecce Homo* 762); the question the book invites, Nietzsche says, is how this can possibly be. “In every word he contradicts, this most Yes-saying of all spirits; in him all opposites are blended into a new unity” (*Ecce Homo* 761). This sentence does not explicitly address the eternal recurrence, but may make us think of it: in transforming the interminable lanes of the past and future in his dream into the single eternal ring, he blends opposites into a new unity in a way which contradicts the very meanings of “past” and “future.”

Thus, Zarathustra’s transfiguration of the vision of the interminable lanes into the “nuptial ring” (§III.16) or the “round golden ring” (§IV.10) is not sold as anything other than the arbitrary act of artistic creation that it is. By transforming the lanes into the golden ring, Zarathustra “make[s] things beautiful, attractive, and desirable ... when they are not” by very literally “moving away from things until there is a good deal that one no longer sees and there is much that our eye has to add if we are still to see anything at all,” zooming out until all time can be taken in, in one view. The content of the ever-changing

¹ Kaufmann translates the word “abgründlich” (from “Abgrund – “abyss”) here and elsewhere as “abysmal.” I use “abyssal” to stress the element of loss of vision contained in the word. Otherwise, this is Kaufmann’s translation: *Ecce Homo*, in: *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Modern Library 2000), 762.

past, present, and future are rendered into the smooth, unchanging golden ring, which is the same at each of its points. But the boundless past and the boundless future, which the ring represents, are not fathomable and perceptible like the ring is, and this fact has been foregrounded in the sight of the interminable lanes and of the endless seas of the past and future. The ring does not capture any all-encompassing truth; it is not to be seen as the site of intersection between eternity and the moment, as center of temporal gravity which gathers in all time and all reality to one visible object that Zarathustra can hold in his hand. It is rather a “type” or “character” of eternity which evokes the thought of eternity without pretensions to a vision of or access to eternity. This stands in marked contrast to Dionysus in *The Birth of Tragedy*, who symbolizes an eternal *Urgrund* with which he offers a direct encounter in the experience of tragic drama.¹

We can see now why Heidegger’s view of Nietzsche’s thoughts on art, which served as our starting point, is not entirely satisfactory. Heidegger understands Nietzsche as arguing that an artist has the capability to set a sharp horizon around a world of appearance which the artist creates, and, implicitly, of rapturously asserting this world as something with no history or future, as eternal and fully contained in the present. The vision of the artist is to be entirely self-sufficient, with nothing outside of it impinging on it in space or time. Because, Heidegger believes, art for Nietzsche is the assertion of mere semblance [Schein], and semblance, as the expression of the will to power, is the basic character of all reality, “art is the basic occurrence of all beings” (N 1:72). Accordingly, the eternal return, an artwork whose canvass is the whole of existence, is “the fundamental thought of Nietzsche’s metaphysics” (N 2:7). Like any other work in the

¹ Paul de Man discusses conflict between the Dionysus of *The Birth of Tragedy* and Nietzsche’s later assertion of the figural nature of all signs in *Allegories of Reading*, 79-118.

“grand style” (N 1:124), the eternal recurrence is the assertion of a self-sufficient world, a totally self-sufficient truth to be grasped without leaving the present moment. Referring to the other emblem of the eternal recurrence, the image of a serpent held in the talons of an eagle soaring “through the sky in wide circles” (Z Prologue §10), Heidegger says: “In the image of the serpent the connection between eternity and the Moment is established for Nietzsche in its unity: the living ring of the serpent, that is to say, eternal recurrence, and – the Moment” (N 2:59). In the gateway Moment, Heidegger says, “past and future *run up against each other*. Whoever stands in the Moment lets what runs counter to itself come to collision” (N 2:57), reconciling itself into the unity that is the Moment.

As a result, past and future, and everything exterior to the unity of a consciousness which manifests itself in the present moment, is on Heidegger’s account brought into the gateway and made a part of that unity. The eternal recurrence is to offer redemption from the revenge against transience spoken of in “On Redemption,” but transience is precisely what the image of the eternal ring denies. “What else remains for us to say,” Heidegger concludes in “Who Is Nietzsche’s Zarathustra,” “but that Zarathustra’s doctrine does not bring deliverance from revenge?” (76). But this does not tell the whole story: the eternal recurrence is a picture free of the abysses of the past and future that are brought into view by the recognition of transience. This fact about the eternal recurrence is not hidden; we might almost say it is openly asserted. It does not mean that Zarathustra or Nietzsche falls into a massive blunder, affirming a permanentizing work of art that represents time as one enduring moment while intending to affirm transience, affirming an integrity of experience while intending to affirm

alterity. Feeling the weight of a world outside of his experience which his art cannot represent, Zarathustra turns to his art for its own sake.

Nietzsche does not assert a metaphysics as Heidegger believes. Alexander Nehamas argues that Nietzsche's texts do not give us a metaphysics as long as we understand the context in which Nietzsche's assertions are made. Nietzsche's "texts yield not only a philosophical view but also a view of what it is to be engaged in philosophical views,"¹ and his understanding of philosophical thinking precludes metaphysics, according to Nehamas. To be engaged in philosophical views for Nietzsche is to assert a perspective. A grand totalizing description of all existence, for Nietzsche, cannot be issued from the standpoint of a single perspective. Seeing is always seeing abysses; having a perspective is always having a limited perspective, one whose horizon does not circumscribe all things. Metaphysics, as long as metaphysics is to be understood as making unconditional assertions about the nature of beings, is thus untenable on Nietzsche's view of philosophy. Heidegger is not unaware that Nietzsche wants to avoid metaphysics, but claims that the eternal recurrence is metaphysical in spite of itself. Zarathustra's own language defends Nietzsche against this claim. Transience and causality permeate all things, and Zarathustra's goal is not to say anything about the nature of these forces pertaining to all reality but to adopt an certain attitude toward them, to say to them "Thus I willed it" (§II.20) and to say "The time is gone when mere accidents could still happen to me" (§III.1). To say to the past "Thus I willed it" is to place what seemed at the time to be an accident, something occurring outside and against our power, into a narrative which we ourselves freely choose, and thus to make it ours.

¹ Alexander Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1985), 233.

Zarathustra wants us to do this to all accidents in our life or affecting our life; Nehamas argues that viewing all the past and future as contained in the image of the eternal ring is simply the outer limit of this existential stance.

Zarathustra, on Nehamas's view, counsels us to become the authors of our own lives, creating ourselves by interpreting ourselves and all that has affected us, giving our lives a freely chosen meaning after the death of the God who at one time wrote meaning into our lives for us. The challenge of the eternal recurrence is the challenge to "become an author, to see [all unconnected, chance events] after all as parts of a unified pattern" (Nehamas 168). The image of the ring, for Nehamas, is the result of this authorial process, enacted from the gateway Moment, of re-interpreting events that are in themselves cacophonous, meaningless, and accidental as part of a beautiful story of how we have "become who [we] are" (Z §IV.1). The greatest expression of this interpretive-creative power is embodied in the *Übermensch*, the person who exalts in the eternal recurrence, and who takes all accidents from the past and the future and from them renders the simple, beautiful, and totally visible golden ring. Nehamas's picture is one of divine power shifted to humanity through an act of reading and writing, in which reading and writing are indistinguishable from each other.

To make the entire past and future beautiful, comprehensible, and unified by narrative in the authorial process implies a state logically prior to the meaningful text of nature yielded by the supremely powerful act of interpretation, the eternal recurrence. The inscrutable past, which cannot be represented, needs to be coerced into representation to be seen; it needs to be gathered into our field of vision to be comprehensible. The act of representing all the incomprehensible as comprehensible, of

representing everything not totally visible as entirely visible, in the image of the ring or the golden serpent is not a denial but an affirmation of the fact that the creative fashioning in this Moment of a world to be lived in does not entail the making-present of all alterity, or dispelling all alterity as alterity by making it present.

The golden ring, then, is not Zarathustra's denial of the alterity whose reality is forced upon him in the image of the interminable lanes, but rather a sign of his coming to love this alterity because it allows the art which he fashions out of his own, limited vision to be important in itself. Zarathustra's art bears no relation to the world outside of his experience besides an arbitrary connection of signification; the arbitrariness of this link devalues the eternity the ring points to and makes the ring more important for its own sake. In Part I, Zarathustra wanted to be unaware of a world outside of his moment of vision, so that he could see his visions as the totality of reality. In Part II, he was forced to acknowledge a world outside of consciousness on which his world was dependent for its reality, and this destroyed the aspirations of Part I. The creations of his own mind were thus devalued by the fact that they could not be the entirety of existence. In the final two parts, Zarathustra is reinvigorated by the realization that they can still determine the nature of *his* existence. His creations do not offer him access to the world outside him, but this is precisely what liberates him as an artist: they are his thoughts, which "are their own reward." Experience is mediated by its temporal secondariness to the lane out of which it has arrived; the lane of the future is obscured by the self's situation in the present, which renders the lane mostly invisible; eternity can be spoken of but never fathomed or obtained; "In the end one experiences only oneself" (Z §III.1). Recognition of this fact led Zarathustra to despair over his failure as an artist in Part II but now lends

his artwork independent significance. The eternal recurrence is the magnum opus of one individual, creating from the limited perspective of the present. “This is *my* way; what is yours? – thus I answered those who asked me ‘the way.’ For *the* way – that does not exist” (Z §III.11.2). Zarathustra does not claim to offer a vision of any all-encompassing truth, but rather a way of life that can thrive after the acknowledgement of the impossibility of such vision.

The moment of free artistic vision desired in Part I expressed a yearning for a self-sufficient, all-encompassing consciousness that could create its own world. The acknowledgement of the past in Part II was felt as the threat of something outside and prior to experience, such that it could not be self-sufficient and all-encompassing. The eternal recurrence is the recovery of experience in the realization that “In the end one experiences only oneself,” that the breach between the self and the world outside of lived experience gives the self a free room for creative expression. In *The Will to Power* Nietzsche says,

That it is the measure of strength to what extent we can admit to ourselves, without perishing, the merely *apparent* character, the necessity of lies.

To this extent, nihilism, as the denial of a truthful world, might be a divine way of thinking. (§15)

The “merely apparent” character of the products of Zarathustra’s mind make them appear false and empty to him in Part II; they do not correspond in any way to the reality

inaccessible to his mind. But their “merely apparent” character is precisely what has made possible the divinity of thought which Nehamas ascribes to Zarathustra in Part III.

III. THE PRODUCTIVE CONFLICT BETWEEN ART AND PHILOSOPHY

The present moment is the site of experience; the more pressing the awareness of time outside the moment, the more critically conscious one is of the contingency of experience. Nehamas views Nietzsche’s philosophical career as revolving around two central claims, the ideas that have been called “perspectivism” and “aestheticism.” We can use these two ideas to summarize the dialectical movement of the struggle between a visionary present that is blind to everything outside of it and an awareness of the flow of time *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Nehamas defines “perspectivism as the thesis . . . that every view is an interpretation” (66). Observations of the world contain an active element; all acts of perception involve an act of creation. There are no “things-in-themselves” to be perceived. Nietzsche’s “aestheticism . . . is the other side of his perspectivism” (8). Aestheticism is the view of “the world in general as if it were an artwork” (3). In Part I, in which Zarathustra is attempting to live in the moment as fully as possible, he strives to view all existence as his own artwork. Nehamas links aestheticism to “the creativity of interpretation” (39), which suggests a certain abstracting from or falsification of whatever is actually there to be interpreted, a difference between whatever is interpreted and the perception of it mediated by interpretation. Zarathustra recognizes this difference, which comes to him as the difference between the isolated moment of interpretation and the temporally fluid interpreted world. The recognition that something real exists in a way

not accounted for by his interpretation of it in artistic process of world-formation leads him directly to the recognition of the contingency of his own perspective. Aestheticism thus leads for Zarathustra to perspectivism. This very contingency, however, leads directly back to aestheticism, which returns in Part III. As interpretation of the world is recognized as creative and not literal, the interpreter comes to consciousness of his role as “the poet of his own life,” rather than a researcher of truth relying on a dependable correspondence between mind and world.

Aestheticism and perspectivism are two distinct thoughts, then, which in *Zarathustra* struggle against each other in practice but ultimately affirm one another as realities. Aestheticism is the paradigm of the artist; perspectivism is the reality revealed by a Nietzschean philosophical inquiry into the origin of experience.

The title of Nietzsche’s early essay “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life” names two entities that, over the course of the essay, are shown to be understood almost as antonyms. “‘Life’ is conceived not just in biological terms but in temporal terms as the ability to *forget* whatever precedes a certain situation,” Paul de Man observes (*Blindness and Insight* 146). “Life” naturally desires to extend its domain as completely as possible, lending the present moment the highest possible degree of wholeness and completeness by suppressing the past. Art and religion are identified as present-minded, forgetful modes of thought; all forms of *Wissenschaft*, scholarship, are past-minded. Academic investigation, as fundamentally historically minded, is therefore conceived of as essentially antithetical to “life.” Nietzsche’s historically-minded philosophy, intensely concerned with genealogy, is subject to this critique. The backward-looking historical sensibility, searching for origins that lie outside of lived

experience, divides experience and is thus in a sense a loss of experience as life meets its negation in history. “Insofar as it stands in the service of life, history stands in the service of an unhistorical power” (UDH 67). Although the backward-looking historical sensibility divides experience and is antithetical to life, it “stands in the service” of life and is ultimately necessary for life. Whoever successfully blocks out the past will “at the same time [extinguish] the present and all existence.” Without the opposing force of history, life ceases to be. Nietzsche does not state life’s requirement to look outside of itself and backwards in time as a need for something totally exterior and opposite to itself; rather, life contains its own negation in itself: “[E]xistence is only an uninterrupted has-been, a thing that lives by negating, consuming, and contradicting itself” (UDH 61). The “has-been” with which life contradicts itself is history’s gaze into the past.

The more intensely one tries to embrace “life,” then, as Zarathustra does in “the way of the creator” advocated in Part I, the more forcefully one experiences life’s negation, “history.” The artistic attempt to live in a repeatedly renewed present, with each present bearing no relation to the last, amplifies the passing nature of the present through the world-shattering process of renewal itself. Such an ethos is an ethos of constant change. But change is precisely the experience through which the past and the future force themselves into consciousness. In “Literary History and Literary Modernity,” de Man links the desire for an unmediated present described in Nietzsche’s essay with literature under the name of “modernity,” saying “Modernity invests its trust in the power of the present moment as an origin, but discovers that, in severing itself from the past, it has at the same time severed itself from the present” (*Blindness and Insight* 149). This is precisely what Zarathustra experienced when he attempted to fulfill his own imperative to

live the phoenix-like life of the artist in Part I. As a result, his attention was turned to the past and future, and he ultimately joined the “searchers and researchers” on the open sea.

I have said that Nietzsche identifies “No-saying” and consideration of time outside of the lived present with “philosophy”; the “philosophy” here considered is, of course, a very specific kind of philosophy, namely, Nietzsche’s own philosophical method. When Nietzsche speaks of “we philosophers and ‘free spirits’” who embark on the “open sea,” he is not thinking of all thinkers who have called themselves philosophers, but of those who question appearance as he does in his philosophical investigations, and who have the “bold[ness]” (Z §III.2.1) to search for the origins of experience as he does in works such as *On the Genealogy of Morals*, “On Truth and Lying in an Extra-Moral Sense,” and “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life.” It is this kind of philosophy to which Zarathustra turns when he discovers the impossibility of the self-sufficient, free moment of consciousness. The experience of the dominance of the past and of “the giant, ‘accident’” provisionally challenge what Jacques Derrida calls the “privilege accorded to consciousness,” a privilege which always “means a privilege accorded to the present.”¹ Nietzsche, Derrida says, “put consciousness into question in its assured certainty of itself,” a certainty under which “the power of synthesis and of the incessant gathering up of traces is always accorded to the ‘living present’” (16-17). As we have observed, however, for Nietzsche this questioning can only sustain itself up to a certain point, until it reveals the questioner’s own limitations.

In this practice of gesturing at blindness rather than bringing origins to light, the process of excavation rather than the product of the inquiry becomes what is most

¹ Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1982), 16.

important, as the image of the sojourning philosopher-sailors suggests. They will never find land, but sail for the sake of sailing: “To gain knowledge is a *joy* for the lion-willed!” (Z §III.12.16). Volker Gerhardt observes that Nietzsche privileges “*Philosophieren*” (“doing philosophy”) above “*Philosophie*.” Gerhardt argues that Nietzsche “wanted ... to transcend the paradigm of *merely thinking, merely questioning* theoreticians who place all importance in knowledge. In this he remained a Romantic.”¹

In *Blindness and Insight*, Paul de Man identifies a suspicion of a totalizing “living present” in Wordsworth’s writing as well as Nietzsche’s. De Man contrasts Wordsworth’s allegorical language with Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s conception of symbolic language. A “Symbol,” Coleridge says,

is characterized by a translucence of the Special in the Individual or of the General in the Especial or of the Universal in the General. Above all by the translucence of the Eternal through and in the Temporal. It always partakes of the Reality which it renders intelligible, and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part in that Unity.²

This language is suggestive of Abrams’s interpretation of Wordsworth’s spots of time, discussed in chapter 2, or Heidegger’s interpretation of Nietzsche’s “gateway Moment” and his “golden ring,” discussed above. In the moment in which one visually perceives

¹ Volker Gerhardt, “Philosophieren im Widerstand gegen die Philosophie,” lecture delivered in Freiburg, Germany, Oct 29, 2009. iTunes University (4 November 2009). My translation. German: “Er wollte das ... Paradigma des *bloss denkenden, bloss fragenden* und allein auf Erkenntnis setzenden Theoretiker ... überwinden. Darin blieb er Romantiker.”

² Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Statesman’s Manual*, in: *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Lay Sermons*, ed. R.J. White (Princeton: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1972), 30.

the symbol, Coleridge claims, one grasps the eternal. This claim, de Man says, expresses the “temptation ... for the self to borrow, so to speak, the temporal stability that it lacks from nature, and to devise strategies by means of which nature is brought down to a human level while still escaping from ‘the unimaginable touch of time’” (*Blindness and Insight* 197). An allegorical signifier, by contrast, refers to a meaning that it does not itself participate in. The steady lake which receives the Winander Boy and the “types and symbols” witnessed in the Gondo Gorge illustrate what de Man means here. All gesture at an eternity associated with nature, but in neither case does it make sense to speak of a “translucence of the Eternal through and in the Temporal,” which suggests a visible eternity, with which the self might join through perception in order to gain “the temporal stability that it lacks.” The disjunction between signifier and signified indicates a gap between a mutable self and an eternal nature which cannot be breached. Only with the loss of perception in death can the boy be said to join with the eternity of the lake. Similarly, the images in the Gorge are not an unmediated vision of an eternal natural principle, but rather the painful awareness of an eternity that cannot be seen and from whose power the finite self cannot borrow. “Whereas the symbol postulates the possibility of an identity or identification,” de Man says, “allegory designates primarily a distance in relation to its own origin” (*Blindness and Insight* 207). The result is a depiction of a loss of experience, a loss of the present, as Wordsworth’s language fixates on something that is not present, that cannot be grasped from the standpoint of the here-and-now.

The very same movement, however, can be said to pave the way back to the present. Allegory is characterized by “a relationship between signs in which the reference

to their respective meanings has become of secondary importance” (*Blindness and Insight* 207). The eternity pointed to, which cannot be obtained, is not what is important; what is important is the “thoughts” evoked in the crossing of the Gorge, which are “their own perfection and reward.” The “conscious soul” (1850 VI.598) is shown to be incompatible with the nature that threatens it with annihilation in the scene, and yet Wordsworth says to his soul “I recognize thy glory” (1805 VI.532). In these lines it is not the ultimate conclusion that eternity lies on the other side of experience that is seen as important, but the process of poetic thinking that is occurring on this side of experience. “The sign,” de Man says, “points to something that differs from its literal meaning” – that is, it points to something outside the present scene – “and has for its function the thematization of this difference” (209). The first half of this sentence stresses allegory’s negative element. The second half, however, indicates a positive element that grows out of this negativity: the language, set loose from the world to which is it linked by a flimsier connection than the link claimed by symbolism, obtains a freedom not open to symbolism. Due to the lack of any obvious link between signifier and signified, allegory must always refer to a previous sign to assert meaning, extending temporal awareness outside the present moment. “Renouncing the nostalgia and the desire to coincide, [allegory] establishes its language in the void of this temporal difference” (207): allegory forces an awareness that extends beyond the present moment and, in the same move, ascertains its power to fashion a present that is independent of the things it ostensibly points to.

In the ascent of Snowdon, in the final book of *The Prelude*, Wordsworth embraces an imaginative language with rhetoric marked by far less anxiety over the fact

that it is independent of nature. The scene begins with an image that brings to mind the imaginative vapor in which Wordsworth finds himself enwrapped on the Simplon Pass: “Little could we see, / Hemmed round on every side with fog and damp” (1805 XIII.15-16). Again a moment of imaginative vision is preceded by a blindness to the material world. The travelers walk through

a dripping mist

Low hung and thick that covered the sky;
 Half threatening storm and rain, but on we went
 Unchecked ... (1805 XIII.11-14)

The word “Unchecked” stands in marked contrast to the disorientated and calamitous tone of the Simplon scene, in which Wordsworth says that “I was lost as in a cloud, / Halted without a struggle to break through.” The solipsism pervading the second stanza of that passage is echoed in the lines “silently we sunk, / Each into commerce with his private thoughts” (1805 XIII.18-19). The movement toward the summit, at which the imaginative climax of *The Prelude* occurs, is not entirely without resistance:

In that wild place and at the dead of night –
 ... on we wound
 In silence ... With forehead bent
 Earthward, as if in opposition set
 Against an enemy, I panted up

With eager pace ... (1805 XIII.27-32)

The movement is laborious, and a muted echo of the danger and violence of the Simplon Scene can be heard in the first line above. When the travelers finally break through the clouds and reach the top of the mountain, however, the imaginative vapor seen below is not threatening: “on the shore / I found myself of a huge sea of mist / Which meek and silent rested at my feet” (1805 XIII.42-44).

Wordsworth stresses the suddenness of the imaginative scene’s onset as he did in the Simplon passage: “instantly a light upon the turf / Fell like a flash” (1805 XIII.39-40). This “flash,” though, brings “light” with it, as opposed to in the Alps, where it was said that in imaginative moments of “usurpation ... the light of sense / Goes out in flashes.” The sea of mist below the poet is marked by much of the same vocabulary as the Simplon scene, but displays none of the madness or vertigo of that passage:

on the shore

I found myself of a huge sea of mist,
 Which meek and silent rested at my feet.
 A hundred hills their dusky backs upheaved
 All over this still ocean, and beyond,
 Far, far beyond, the vapours shot themselves
 In headlands, tongues, and promontory shapes,
 Into the sea, the real sea, that seemed
 To dwindle and give up its majesty,

Usurped upon as far as eye could reach. (1805 XIII.42-50)

The “real sea,” the material world, is “Usurped upon” as it was in the Simplon Pass, but nothing else here indicates the violence we might expect to find attending the verb “usurp.” The mist, resting meekly and silently at Wordsworth’s feet like a tamed animal, does not pose a threat, but instead seems to be under his control.

In the Simplon scene, the imaginative impulse was linked with the thought of death, as the material world was lost as Wordsworth’s free-running imaginative language crowded it out. Here, however, a view of the “real” substantial sea, which seems “To dwindle and give up its majesty,” is willingly given up in favor of the imaginative vapor that obscures it.¹ Whereas the lack of correspondence of imaginative vision to nature in the Boy of Winander and the Simplon Pass scenes led to the threat of the loss of experience and the loss of the present through the awareness of an eternity not within reach from the present, the poet freely accepts the power of poetic language to fashion its own present. Similarly to Zarathustra’s artistic realization in the final two parts of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, the successful harnessing of one’s own artistic power depends on the realization that one does not have to fashion a language which will encompass all the truth of nature, that can tell of everything that passes on the interminable lanes or that can grasp the eternal principle of dynamic nature gestured at in the Simplon Pass scene. To the contrary, the natural world – “the real sea” – is here obscured and excluded by the imaginative mists. “In the end one experiences only oneself,” Zarathustra says. The statement can be read as a statement of either perspectivism or aestheticism; either it asserts the essentially negative realization of the merely contingent nature of experience,

¹ From a conversation with Marjorie Levinson 2/28/10.

the fact that experience, limited to a finite time and place, can never subsume all alterity, or it expresses the positive freedom of a mental world liberated from the responsibility to coincide with external realities. Wordsworth highlights the truth of the first statement in the Simplon Pass scene, and the second in the Snowdon passage.

A loss of the present through the lack of correspondence of a non-literal language thus leads for Wordsworth to a present regained in the creative power of a figural language. This is similar to the logic of “On Truth and Lying in an Extra-Moral Sense” and, in a more general way, to the progression of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. In “On Truth and Lying,” Nietzsche begins by comparing the human being to a mosquito in her conviction that her world is the totality of all existence (TL 141) – an apparent denigration of human cognitive powers. This conviction comes from her belief in her ability to grasp the world in language, to fit all truth about the world into her language. Philosophical investigation reveals, frighteningly, that this is ungrounded. The realization that language is figural, however, is the realization that the human is an “artistically creative subject” (TL 149), an “architectural genius far superior to the bee” (TL 147). The realization that language cannot be literal emphasizes the impossibility of our ability to see into any unconditional truths of nature from the finite standpoint of lived experience; the conclusion that follows as a necessary result, that we are always artistically wielding the creative power of a figural language, affirms our ability to create *our* world despite not being able to grasp *the* world. In this early text, published in 1874, nine years before the publication of the first part of *Zarathustra*, we can see the blueprint of the circular logic of perspectivism and aestheticism, in which perspectivism corresponds to language’s lack of literality, and aestheticism to its figural nature.

The mode of discourse at which Nietzsche most pointedly taken aim in “On Truth and Lying in an Extra-Moral Sense” is, of course, philosophical discourse, which, unlike openly artistic language, relies on the illusion of a literal language, as Nietzsche himself does in order to make claims about language in the essay. “[T]he proudest man of all, the philosopher, wants to see, on all sides, the eyes of the universe trained, as through telescopes, on his thoughts and deeds” (TL 141): the philosopher posits a correspondence between “the universe” and “his thoughts.” Nietzsche repeatedly refers to himself as a philosopher, and the text should not be read as a slighting of the project of philosophy. What he does in “On Truth and Lying in an Extra-Moral Sense” could in fact be seen as the height of philosophical rigor: before making assertions, Nietzsche challenges the very linguistic ground on which any philosophical assertions can be made. We associate this concern for consistency with philosophy, not art. The Nietzschean philosopher, the “free spirit,” consistently turns his tools against themselves, revealing the tenuous nature of the conceptual ground from which the inquiry began. Derrida makes the connection in Nietzsche between the self-critique of philosophy and artistic freedom explicit:

Nietzsche determines as liberation (or liberty of thought) the movement which finally would free us from the language and grammar that until now have governed the philosophical order. Quite traditionally, he thus comes to define the law of language or of the signifier as a ‘slavery’ from which one must be freed ... Language, however, has within it an illogical element, metaphor. Its primary force operates an identification of the

nonidentical; it is therefore an operation of the imagination. (*Margins of Philosophy* 177)

The artistic element of language is associated with freedom.

The ideal of self-aestheticization, whether in versified autobiography or in the unceasing “effort of turning life into literature” that Nehamas see advocated in the eternal recurrence (137), requires accepting one’s language as one’s own, identifying the self and its creations as one’s own. This is the movement from “the stars” to “your stars,” the movement from “types,” “characters” and “symbols” that “came athwart” the artist to the image of the artist in control of a docile imaginative sea that obscures the real sea without anxiety. The breach revealed by philosophy between self and world requires the artist to assert his creations not as all of creation but as *his* creation, having felt his existence circumscribed by the negativity of whatever lies beyond the horizon of his experience.

But this same realization leads, of its own logic, out of the negativity into which it throws the self. It separates “my world” from “the world,” but “my world” takes pride of place over “the world,” because “In the end one experiences only oneself.” After philosophically recognizing the cleft between the finite individual and a natural world whose truth he cannot grasp, played out in the temporal difference between the individual situated in the gateway Moment and the unfathomable metatemporal process of change represented by the two interminable lanes, Zarathustra freely and arbitrarily creates a link of signification between the fathomable golden ring with the unfathomable internal lanes and thereby creates his magnum opus, falsely identifying a ring which can be taken in completely from the standpoint of the present with the entirety of the boundless past and

future. He asserts “my world” as “the world.” Philosophy has led to art as art led to philosophy.

Thus Spoke Zarathustra thus asserts a difference between philosophy and art in precisely the text in which we would most expect the two to collapse into one and the same thing. Philosophical rigor, in questioning the ontological self-sufficiency of lived experience, destroys the artistic vision of Zarathustra by declaring its origin to be in a world outside of appearance. This contingency of lived experience is Nietzsche’s “perspectivism.” The merely apparent quality of perspective, however, in turn leads to the realization that, as Nietzsche claims in his first philosophical book, *The Birth of Tragedy*, “it is only as an *aesthetic phenomenon* that existence and the world are eternally *justified*” (BT 52). Jochen Schmidt notes that this grand claim mimics Martin Luther’s statement that only through faith are existence and the world eternally justified, thus proclaiming a religion of art.¹ The doctrine of the eternal recurrence and the book in which it appears bear religious overtones too numerous and obvious to mention here, beginning with Nietzsche’s mimicry of Luther’s writing style in the voice of Zarathustra. The prophet who asserts the golden ring of the eternal recurrence is not a philosopher but an advocate of a religion of art, just as the philosopher who set sail on the infinite sea with a band of “bold searchers and researchers” was not an artist. Art and philosophy do not collapse in on each other but lead out of themselves and circularly back to each other. Perspectivism and aestheticism entail each other and lead to each other in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* but do not carry the same existential weight. Perspectivism devalues the

¹ Jochen Schmidt, “Nietzsches *Geburt der Tragödie* aus dem Geist Schopenhauers und Wagners,” lecture at Albert-Ludwigs-Universität, Freiburg im Breisgau. Dec 3, 2009, iTunes University (4 December 2009).

present moment of lived experience, recognizing it as merely contingent; aestheticism exalts the present moment of lived experience, recognizing it as the site of appearance and thus of beauty.

Wordsworth, by contrast, encourages us to read his poem as a seamless merging of philosophy and art:

then

I yearn towards some philosophic song
 Of truth that cherishes our daily life,
 With meditations passionate from deep
 Recesses in man's heart, immortal verse
 Thoughtfully fitted to the Orphean lyre ... (1805 l.229-234)

In the *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge recalls a conversation with Wordsworth in which the two spoke unfavorably of “translations of prose thoughts into poetic language”; Coleridge, in the same discussion, asserts the superiority of “poetic thoughts” to “thoughts *translated* into the language of poetry.”¹ In the 1802 Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth claims that “poetry is the most philosophic of all writing ... its object is truth, not individual and local, but general, and operative” (LB 257). All this suggests perhaps not only the compatibility of philosophical and poetic writing but even their identity.

¹ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria; or, Biographical Sketches of my Literary Life and Opinions* (New York: Leavitt, Lord & Co. 1834), 17-18.

I have not engaged with Wordsworth's poetry extensively enough in this thesis to make any summary claims about the relationship between poetry and philosophy in *The Prelude*, but some observations made in this thesis may be pertinent to such a discussion. Wordsworth's philosophical project is, like Nietzsche's, one which values the process over any single proposition arrived at. Simon Jarvis, in his recent book *Wordsworth's Philosophic Song*, says that the "sense given to truth" by Wordsworth is related to that of the ancient Greek language, in which it is "fundamentally characterized by performative efficacy" (Jarvis 20). Truth, as the phrase "philosophic song" suggests, happens, rather than being once and for all secured. Jarvis argues that

The long, disabling division of Wordsworth scholarship between the systematizers and the anti-intellectuals ... misses the fact that as soon as the persisting tension between these two impulses – which in the end is also the tension between the disenchanting attempt to look steadily at a subject, and the nostalgic and utopian wish for efficacious magic, the wish actually to change this world with writing – is lost, everything that makes Wordsworth's poetry his own has been lost. (Jarvis 25)

The tension between philosophic and poetic thought in Wordsworth is the tension between "the disenchanting attempt to look steadily at a subject and the nostalgic and utopian wish for magic." We can describe the tension we have traced between philosophy and artistry in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in these terms. The "disenchanting" attempt to get to the bottom of things, to see things for what they in fact are, is for Zarathustra the

philosophical willingness to confront time, to confront whatever lies outside the present moment of lived experience. The “utopian wish for efficacious magic” is the assertion of the world-creating power of art.

Perhaps one can read the passages we have looked at in *The Prelude* as exhibiting a productive conflict between these two forces that is similar to that which we have seen in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. In the Boy of Winander and the Simplon Pass passages we might speak of a harsh and insistent impulse to reveal to us *how things are*, to sweepingly assert truths that hold for our existences in their entirety: the mind is not compatible with the natural world; the assertion of the mind’s power is the loss of the natural world; nature is infinite and eternal, but our vision is finite and mortal. Almost indistinguishably from these revelations is an assertion about *how things can be* under the power of the poetic ability to change one’s world. The emotional valence of this assertion is often difficult to pin down in a concise description, but can be joyous:

The mind beneath such banners militant
 Thinks not of spoils or trophies, nor of aught
 That may attest its prowess, blest in thoughts
 That are their own perfection and reward ...

Even the boy of Winander does not die without receiving a visitation of imagination described in terms that make it sound as if it could be more than a small consolation: “a gentle shock of mild surprize / Has carried far into his heart the voice / Of mountain torrents.” Wordsworth’s contemplations on how things are tell us of the loss of the

natural world; his claims about how things can nevertheless be under the influence of poetic language tell us of how we can make our own world, how to fashion a present out of the loss of the present. Neither of these two seemingly contradictory modes of thought occurs without the other.

CONCLUSION

The phrase “endeavour[ing] to look steadily at my subject” (LB 251), if it names a philosophical impulse, invites a question about the relationship of philosophy to literature as kinds of perception. We can summarize the story of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as a movement from vision to blindness back to vision; this is in keeping with most of the imagery of the book, which begins in light, descends into darkness, and ends at high noon, tracing the pathway of the sun under the earth and back up again. As the movement of the book as I have told it here is a movement of artistry to philosophy and back to artistry, this would mark *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as something of an anti-philosophical text. Yet Nietzsche repeatedly calls himself a philosopher.

In “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life,” Nietzsche identifies art as the present-minded, forgetful mode of thought that suppresses temporal anteriority. In the same text, he speaks of a human desire to “play in blissful blindness on the hedges between past and future,” a desire which, if fulfilled too completely, results in death. The artistic immersion in the moment is a kind of blindness; the philosophic mind endeavors to look steadily at its subject, endeavors to demystify, disenchant, and uncover. To the disenchanted Wordsworth who, looking steadily at his subject, has observed the dangers of asserting the mind’s power in the death of the boy of Winander, the boy himself, receiving the powers of imagination, is blind to their danger; from the open sea, the philosophers who feel “as if a new dawn shone on us” see anyone still standing on Zarathustra’s now dark and disempowered artistic mountaintop as standing in blindness. From the standpoint of the free-spirited Nietzschean philosopher who undertakes a

genealogical questioning of the present of lived experience, anyone who remains in the ignorance of the self-evident present is blind. It appears, then, that these texts do not simply argue for the visionary power of art and the blindness of philosophy.

It may be, rather, that both art and philosophy each appear as modes of blindness from the standpoint of the other. The integrated present of the artist regards the divided consciousness of the investigative philosopher as a case of impaired vision; the philosopher regards the “modern” refusal of the artist to look beyond the present moment as a refusal to see. Yet each feeds into the other in a process that has no apparent reason not to recur eternally.

Appendix A

from the Norton Critical Edition of *The Prelude*, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth, M.H. Abrams, and Stephen Gill, p. 214-218

Yet still in me, mingling with these delights,
 Was something of stern mood, an under-thirst
 Of vigour, never utterly asleep.
 Far different dejection once was mine-
 A deep and genuine sadness then I felt-
 The circumstances I will here relate
 Even as they were. Upturning with a band
 Of travelers, from the Valais we had clomb
 Along the road that leads to Italy;
 A length of hours, making of these our guides,
 Did we advance, and, having reached an inn
 Among the mountains, we together ate
 Our noon's repast, from which the travelers rose
 Leaving us at the board. Erelong we followed,
 Descending by the beaten road that led
 Right to a rivulet's edge, and there broke off;
 The only track now visible was one
 Upon the further side, right opposite,
 And up a lofty mountain. This we took,
 After a little scruple and short pause,
 And I climbed with eagerness-though not, at length,
 Without surprise and some anxiety
 On finding that we did not overtake
 Our comrades gone before. By fortunate chance,
 While every moment now encreased our doubts,
 A peasant met us, and from him we learned
 That to the place which had perplexed us first
 We must descend, and there should find the road
 Which in the stony channel of the stream
 Lay a few steps, and then along its banks-
 And further, that thenceforward all our course
 Was downwards with the current of that stream.
 Hard of belief, we questioned him again,
 And all the answers which the man returned
 To our inquiries, in their sense and substance
 Translated by the feelings which we had,
 Ended in this-that we had crossed the Alps.

Imagination!-lifting up itself
 Before the eye and progress of my song
 Like an unfathered vapour, here that power,
 In all the might of its endowments, came

Athwart me. I was lost as in a cloud,
 Halted without a struggle to break through,
 And now, recovering, to my soul I say
 'I recognise thy glory'. In such strength
 Of usurpation, in such visitings
 Of awful promise, when the light of sense
 Goes out in flashes that have shewn to us
 The invisible world, doth greatness make abode,
 There harbours whether we be young or old.
 Our destiny, our nature, and our home,
 Is with infinitude-and only there;
 With hope it is, hope that can never die,
 Effort, and expectation, and desire,
 And something evermore about to be.
 The mind beneath such banners militant
 Thinks not of spoils or trophies, nor of aught
 That may attest its prowess, blest in thoughts
 That are their own perfection and reward-
 Strong in itself, and in the access of joy
 Which hides it like the overflowing Nile.

The dull and heavy slackening which ensued
 Upon those tidings by the peasant given
 Was soon dislodged; downwards we hurried fast,
 And entered with the road which we had missed
 Into a narrow chasm. The brook and road
 Were fellow-travellers in this gloomy pass,
 And with them did we journey several hours
 At a slow step. The immeasurable height
 Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,
 The stationary blasts of waterfalls,
 And everywhere along the hollow rent
 Winds thwarting winds, bewildered and forlorn,
 The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,
 The rocks that muttered close upon our ears-
 Black drizzling crags that spake by the wayside
 As if a voice were in them-the sick sight
 And giddy prospect of the raving stream,
 The unfettered clouds and region of the heavens,
 Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light,
 Were all like workings of one mind, the features
 Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree,
 Characters of the great apocalypse,
 The types and symbols of eternity,
 Of first, and last, and midst, and without end. (1805 VI.488-572)

Appendix B

From *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

Translated by Walter Kaufmann

Penguin edition 155-160

On the Vision and the Riddle

1

When it got abroad among the sailors that Zarathustra was on board – for another man from the blessed isles had embarked with him – there was much curiosity and anticipation. But Zarathustra remained silent for two days and was cold and deaf from sadness and answered neither glances nor questions. But on the evening of the second day he opened his ears again, although he still remained silent, for there was much that was strange and dangerous to be heard on this ship, which came from far away and wanted to sail even farther. But Zarathustra was a friend of all who travel far and do not like to live without danger. And behold, eventually his own tongue was loosened as he listened, and the ice of his heart broke. Then he began to speak thus:

To you, the bold searchers, researchers, and whoever embarks with cunning sails on terrible seas – to you, drunk with riddles, glad of the twilight, whose soul flutes lure astray to every whirlpool, because you do not want to grope along a thread with cowardly hand; and where you can *guess*, you hate to *deduce* – to you alone I tell the riddle that I *saw* – the vision of the loneliest.

Not long ago I walked gloomily through the deadly pallor of dusk – gloomy and hard, with lips pressed together. Not only one sun had set for me. A path that ascended defiantly through stones, malicious, lonely, not cheered by herb or shrub – a mountain path crunched under the defiance of my foot. Striding silently over the mocking clatter of pebbles, crushing the rock that made it slip, my foot forced its way upward. Upward – defying the spirit that drew it downward toward the abyss, the spirit of gravity, my devil and archenemy. Upward – although he sat on me, half dwarf, half mole, lame, making lame, dripping lead into my ear, leaden thoughts into my brain.

“O Zarathustra,” he whispered mockingly, syllable by syllable; “you philosopher’s stone! You threw yourself up high, but every stone that is thrown must fall. O Zarathustra, you slingstone, you star-crusher! You threw yourself up so high; but every stone that is thrown must fall. Sentenced to yourself and to your own stoning – O Zarathustra, far indeed have you thrown the stone, but it will fall back on yourself.”

Then the dwarf fell silent, and that lasted a long time. His silence, however, oppressed me; and such twosomeness is surely more lonesome than being alone. I climbed, I climbed, I dreamed, I thought; but everything oppressed me. I was like one sick whom his wicked torture makes weary, and who as he falls asleep is awakened by a still more wicked dream. But there is something in me that I call courage; that has so far slain my every discouragement. This courage finally bade me stand still and speak: “Dwarf! It is you or I!”

For courage is the best slayer, courage which *attacks*; for in every attack there is playing and brass.

Man, however, is the most courageous animal: hence he overcame every animal. With playing and brass he has so far overcome every pain; but human pain is the deepest pain.

Courage also slays dizziness at the edge of abysses: and where does man not stand at the edge of abysses? Is not seeing always – seeing abysses?

Courage is the best slayer: courage slays even pity. But pity is the deepest abyss: as deeply as man sees into life, he also sees into suffering.

Courage, however, is the best slayer – courage which attacks: which slays even death itself, for it says, “Was *that* life? Well then! Once more!”

In such words, however, there is much playing and brass. He that has ears to hear, let him hear!

2

“Stop, dwarf!” I said. “It is I or you! But I am the stronger of us two: you do not know my abysmal thought. *That* you could not bear!”

Then something happened that made me lighter, for the dwarf jumped from my shoulder, being curious; and he crouched on a stone before me. But there was a gateway just where we had stopped.

“Behold this gateway, dwarf!” I continued. “It has two faces. Two paths meet here; no one has yet followed either to its end. This long lane stretches back for an eternity. And the long lane out there, that is another eternity. They contradict each other, these paths; they offend each other face to face; and it is here at this gateway that they come together. The name of the gateway is inscribed above: ‘Moment.’ But whoever would follow one of them, on and on, farther and farther – do you believe, dwarf, that these paths contradict each other eternally?”

“All that is straight lies,” the dwarf murmured contemptuously. “All truth is crooked; time itself is a circle.”

“You spirit of gravity,” I said angrily, “do not make things too easy for yourself! Or I shall let you crouch where you are crouching, lamefoot; and it was I that carried you to this *height*.”

“Behold,” I continued, “this moment! From this gateway, Moment, a long, eternal lane leads *backward*: behind us lies an eternity. Must not whatever *can* walk have walked on this lane before? Must not whatever *can* happen have happened, have been done, have passed by before? And if everything has been there before – what do you think, dwarf, of this moment? Must not this gateway too have been there before? And are not all things knotted together so firmly that this moment draws after it *all* to come? Therefore – itself too? For whatever *can* walk – in this long lane out *there* too, it *must* walk once more.

“And this slow spider, which crawls in the moonlight, and this moonlight itself, and I and you in the gateway, whispering together, whispering of eternal things – must not all of us have been there before? And return and walk in that other lane, out there, before us, in this long dreadful lane – must we not eternally return?”

Thus I spoke, more and more softly; for I was afraid of my own thoughts and the thoughts behind my thoughts. Then suddenly I heard a dog howl nearby. Had I ever heard a dog howl like this? My thoughts raced back. Yes, when I was a child, in the most distant childhood: then I heard a dog howl like this. And I saw him too, bristling, his head

up, trembling, in the stillest midnight when even dogs believe in ghosts – and I took pity: for just then the full moon, silent as death, passed over the house; just then it stood still, a round glow – still on the flat roof, as if on another’s property – that was why the dog was terrified, for dogs believe in thieves and ghosts. And when I heard such howling again I took pity again.

Where was the dwarf gone now? And the gateway? And the spider? And all the whispering? Was I dreaming, then? Was I waking up?

Among wild cliffs I stood suddenly alone, bleak, in the bleakest moonlight. *But there lay a man.* And there – the dog, jumping, bristling, whining – now he saw me coming; then he howled again, he *cried*. Had I ever heard a dog cry like this for help? And verily, what I saw, writhing, gagging, in spasms, his face distorted, and a heavy black snake hung out of his mouth. Had I ever seen so much nausea and pale dread on one face? He seemed to have been asleep when the snake crawled into his throat, and there bit itself fast. My hand tore at the snake and tore in vain; it did not tear the snake out of his throat. Then it cried out of me: “Bite! Bite its head off! Bite!” Thus it cried out of me – my dread, my hatred, my nausea, my pity, all that is good and wicked in me cried out of me with a single cry.

You bold ones who surround me! You searchers, researchers, and whoever among you has embarked with cunning sails on unexplored seas. You who are glad of riddles! Guess me this riddle that I saw then, interpret me the vision of the loneliest. For it was a vision and a foreseeing. *What* did I see then in a parable? And *who* is it who must yet come one day? *Who* is the shepherd into whose throat all that is heaviest and blackest will crawl thus?

The shepherd, however, bit as my cry counseled him; he bit with a good bite. Far way he spewed the head of the snake – and he jumped up. No longer shepherd, no longer human – one changed, radiant, *laughing*! Never yet on earth has a human being laughed as he laughed! O my brothers, I heard a laughter that was no human laughter; and now a thirst gnaws at me, a longing that never grows still. My longing for this laughter gnaws at me; oh, how do I bear to go on living! And how could I bear to die now!

Thus spoke Zarathustra.

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