

Transcendence, the Divine and Nietzsche

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By

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PREFACE

One teaches, one wanders, one engages thought and travels, one observes and one's purpose unfolds in spacetime. The cosmos is replete with meaning and mystery, awaiting further wonderment and knowledge to come. It calls, it invites, as if we are to return home; the "belonged" is invited to understand its very own belonging, as if he is waylaid by time. To be has become vexed; time's becoming is fraught with countless uncertainties and questions, especially whether truth lies in the earth or in the heavens, the eternal or the *matter* before our very own eyes. Mind and spirit attend every encounter, every sensorial experience is both had and examined; artfully body and soul dance to the rhythm of life, to the joy of being alive. The course of living is manifold, punctuated by love, reverence, will, decay, purposeful striving, pernicious repetition and robust extension. It beckons toward two things simultaneously: astro-nadir and haughty elevation. Life is a tension where Am-I is tensed by the bow of Apollo's horizontal parallax; the direction, or instruction, of Being (*Sein*) appears confusing hence consciousness seeks to catch-up, in part, by overcoming and in part by creatively using Apollo's light. These performances—*musike* (Gr.)—allow the world to come-forth; hence consciousness is now in the world, in the stars, clouds, air, water, otherwise called the πολλά—the Many. The creature *Mensch* (hominoid) transfigures into something it was unacquainted with: the bow of *Kosmos* calls him and her to grasp the One and Many, the Earth and Sky.

This call is amplified by sickness or somatic decline, when the reach of the sky is too far and the light too bright. Gravity pulls one down to *terra* where consciousness feels the weightiness of the earth due to the ominous Higgs-field's encirclement. Weakness overtakes where "mind" fails understanding; no longer able it instead follows the direction to go under and within. Whence? Trillions upon trillions of protons and neutrons, cell machinery, pull-downwards so you are directed that way. The mystery has unfolded: why do my will and my mind fail to overcome the directive—do I not have purpose to fulfil on earth? Joy and enjoyment are now distant; yet one longs for elation (more than mere comfort). Embodiment is king; and yet something grows, grows out of him. "Within" seems connected to the all—the Many which are One. Yet how, one asks? Logic fails him. I-Am confronts the unknowing, not wilfully. What is this ubiquitous connection? He deceives himself and asks "Am I strong enough to learn it?" Thundering

Fate overwhelms him; yet thunder (*Adad*) is also the harbinger of striking electricity—powerful lightning. Zeus and Apollo are in the wings carrying the *πολλά* which mortals confuse for *Τύχη* (destiny). What is this strike of lightning—perhaps elation, ecstatic infinity, perfection, All's oneness: the unity of cosmos and I-Am? Of “under-and-over” perhaps with Isis (earth) and Osiris (Urania) its charioteers? Is the secret (*mysterio*) in fact both, unity in manifold cosmographical planes of transcendence and being-conscious? Up is Down, Over is Under said the ancient Milesian Heraclitus. Divisibility is an error he thought—yet mortals are slaves to it. This is learned through painful experience—to *soma* teaches one this regardless. Hence why the Egyptians cherished the body-eternal (embalming)—as any good Alexandrian will testify.

Suffering is only the means by which incorporation makes forgotten *Geist*, that is, breath, *Hridaya*¹ and *von Herzen*² effable. The return of Spirit (*Geist*) is a remembering fundamentally; one does not learn what is already known. It is pure Reminiscence. Inscribed in the spinal DNA coding is this ineffable source that is often confused with “Being”. Yet recollection-as-knowledge does not refer sickly ones back to “Being”. The soul is the seat of Remembering (knowing) so it can never be destroyed by quarks or neutrinos let alone ammonia. Degrading matter seems fear-full for the human; yet fear of decay is merely anthropic weakness or more precisely de-spiritredness. Spirit wanes, cells predominate—both are facets of Parmenidean “what is” or the Is. The One is the “Is” hence I am not my body quizzically wondering how I may be related to all other living bodies. That is our pernicious perversion stemming from fear. Originating from heart's love is the access-point to the beautiful Oneness of all things. The philosopher is deluded: “I love him who is of a free spirit and a free heart: thus his head is only the entrails of his heart” (Z Prologue, 4). Once the head no longer intercepts, due to sickness, we see *Seelenscheinleib* (“life of the soul”) coming-forth, constituting each moment of *Wesen* (“to be”, essence). Silencing thoughts brings-forth; sounding the soul's wavelength out of the body enlivens essence just when you think death is nigh³. This is the paradox of *l'homme*; a bridge between fear-love, mind-heart and *physis*-Spirit.

Across landscapes the wanderer searches out silence while movement reveals him variation. Yet wherever he goes his higher self seeks solitude to meditate on things cosmic, things “of breath”. The invisible “oversoul”⁴ accompanies him everywhere, always, for there is no space or

¹ “That which gives and takes in perfect balance” in Sanskrit.

² “Of heart” in German.

³ It is the heart that drives one to “go under”, according to Nietzsche.

⁴ Ralph Waldo Emerson's term which Nietzsche favoured.

time as such. He writes continuously in his notebook on the move: from Melbourne to London, to Brisbane, to Paris, to Rome, to the ocean, to Paris and to the earth's forest. Does he leave behind stench or preconceptions, crowded hotels or decadence, God or churches?⁵ He thinks he ought to *Become* but awakens to cosmic wonder *in himself* where the self dissolves away and behold there before him stands the I-Am of *Kosmos*.

This (written) exercise and contemplative work of art and *Nous* was given birth to by *Physus* and suffering. The wonder of spirit and the earthly wanderer meshed in most unexpected ways: coming home (France), leaving certainty, diminishing power, suffering, waves of decomposition, energy physics, intensive love at death's door, octaval movements, arrangements by celestial quaverings and inquisitive minds. Writing, stopping, starting again, illness, teaching minds, moving to home, insight, collapsing, writing again then teaching students *sophia*. Finding solace in precious solitude, not merely for thinking or *Seyn*; rather to "let be", to allow stillness to draw in wonder(ment). Like quiet moments in the eastern Sahara desert before Daybreak where "to be" unfolds *simply*. One does not contemplate in its wide open expanse; even meditation only follows what preceded it: dawn lights-up and *awakens*. The oracular sun and moon, and the words of Socrates heightened this awakening experience—where horizon and eternal join up in the Now. Joy flickers but infinity and grace-ful Beauty surpass it thus making *Bios* Divine.

I have benefited from a number of esoteric dialogues over the years and wish to acknowledge those who have participated in this arduous journey and venture of spirit with me. Despite painful days beloved friends kept journeying with me. I also wish to acknowledge and thank my colleagues and students for the wonderful *esprit de corps* I experienced at the *grande ecole* SciencePo (Paris). The inspiring milieu there when working on this project and my brief visit to the *École Normale Supérieure* (Paris) helped spur my investigation into this most fundamental question of our time. Thanks to Frédéric Worms and Marcella Hendersen-Peal for their warmth and *esprit* whilst teaching in Paris and enjoying coffee over notebooks. Further, my other *philos* Friedrich Nietzsche, had we spoken sometime would know of my deepest gratitude for his incisive insights and *erga* of the heart (as Novalis would say). Socrates and Nietzsche now are φίλοι through my *henosis* (binding) and friendship. Special thanks go to the 'holy family' YSM and my son Michael who remained steadfast and close-by throughout arduous, challenging times—each of them unique, wonderful

⁵ Refence to Nietzsche's focal points—the latter chosen.

beings in their own beautiful way whom I value greatly. Light of Apollo glistened with them.

Parameters and the Problématique

Our discussion of divinity and Nietzsche's thought will be delimited to an examination of works Nietzsche produced that discuss and thematize the problem of God and modes of deification. In contrast to common philological and textual approaches (not taken up here) which largely assume a certain *finality* to the pronouncement of the "death of God", we shall keep open the matter of *anything* being final and pose it rather as a question of modality. That is to say, anthropically- how are the gods, God and significantly, "how the spirit that leads us would like to be *called*?" (BGE 227) to be understood? Not merely conceptually, for Nietzsche is no conceptualist *per se*, but as modalities of creating transcendently within the *Wesen* of existence which wrecks of suffering and joy. In this fashion rather than following the standard interpretation beheld by Martin Heidegger and Anglophone scholars in, for instance, the *Companion* and *Handbook*⁶ series—after Walter Kaufman and Richard Schacht's exemplary forays—we will implore readers to consider *closely* Nietzsche's actual analytics of a) modes of reverence b) modes of divination and c) modes of god-creating as expressions of the basic will of the spirit. Modalities, types and (pivoting) axes, we shall see, paint another picture altogether; a more complex yet supple picture of Becoming, or as he put it once: "That "savage animal" has not really been "mortified"; it lives and flourishes, it has merely become—divine" (BGE 229). For the German verb for spiritualization has so many (more) connotations than modern Saxon-English carries, thanks in part to the enormity of Luther's *Deutsch*, German romanticism and the powerful effect of the Rhineland mystics upon the German mind. Nietzsche never quite leans on will, power or fate alone; in the "basic will of the spirit" we in fact carriage many spirits so that immanence evinces a kind of transcendental empiricity. Heidegger, Deleuze, analytic Kantian and quasi-Humean versions of Nietzsche elide this dimension and therefore miss the open-ended transcending power of (his) Becoming⁷ and its quintessential Greek *Ungrund*⁸. Our close analysis demonstrates the *Gay*

⁶ See for instance *The New Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019; *A Companion to Nietzsche*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006; *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

⁷ *Werden*.

⁸ "Non-ground", in Greek also "original ground".

Science declaration of a “death” or rather murder of God the Divine Being by mortals is a major event upon the *Abendland* horizon (Occidental modernity). An event amongst many events, in this case a significant *axial* event, whereafter two religious-type “ideals” (dominances) of truth-seeking and science prevail over the souls of persons. Neither truth-telling nor empirical investigation are pure; that is, devoid of the metaphysics of presence and belief. For even disbelief—manifest in modern nihilism—is still an attachment to something, a will to negate, Nietzsche argues. We will find, by contrast, that the will to affirm is paramount so therefore when men and women *affirm life* by means of a “comprehensive” “art of arranging” the *thei* (supra-natural beings) by divinating Spirit, they transvaluate *nihilio* (nothingness void). This process of generation following the fall of idols is never-ending: the ebb and flow of destruction-generation shall abide time and thus will not end due to one *single event*—for it is eternal and new Dionysian or Apollonian or Elysian forms of the divine shall contest or vie in the name of a sacred affirmation of life. Why? *Mensch* must affirm necessarily lest the process of suffering intransitoriness overwhelms her or him. In my analysis below I demonstrate that the heart of blessedness belongs to this redemptive vision where *Bios* (life) must not be destroyed by pessimism, meaninglessness, disbelief worship or “materialistic atomism” (BGE) along the eternal path of becoming “that which you are” (ex-Pindar). It is, I show, the weakly or feeble god-types that Nietzsche believed hampered the redemptive project of self-creating and ennobling the species-being of higher and lowly types. The book aims at this powerful vision instead of regurgitating an out-dated death of God thesis with the aim to inform the reader *why* our zeitgeist is so different to the 20th and 19th centuries.

ABBREVIATIONS OF NIETZSCHE'S WORKS

A	The Anti-Christ
BGE	Beyond Good and Evil
BT	Birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit of Music
CW	The Case of Wagner
D	Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality
EH	Ecce Homo
GM	On the Genealogy of Morality
GS	The Gay Science
HH	Human, All Too Human I & II
KG	Nietzsche Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe, edited by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, Wolfgang Muller-Lauter and Karl Pestalozzi, Berlin: DTV/de Gruyter
PP	The Pre-Platonic Philosophers
PT	Philosophy and Truth
TI	Twilight of the Idols
Z	Thus Spoke Zarathustra

For unpublished notes and notebooks

WP	Will to Power (compilation by Elisabeth Nietzsche and Peter Gast)
NB	Writings from the Late Notebooks (Edited by Rüdiger Bittner)

Reference to Nietzsche's works and passages follow conventions of citation by abbreviated title section numbers rather than page numbers. Abbreviations of Nietzsche's published works translated into English often refer to translations of Walter Kaufmann and Reginald J. Hollingdale except where otherwise indicated. Reference to *Twilight of the Idols* ('TI') refer to chapter and section number respectively; and 'P' refers to the preface of the work cited. Limited use of Nietzsche's unpublished notes from his *Nachlass* reflects the philological point that notes, while not necessarily final, are insightful into the author's viewpoints. Notes consistent with (Nietzsche's) published material have been incorporated into the analysis.

CHAPTER ONE

SCIENTIFIC DECENTRATION: EARTH AND CELESTE

We commence our discussion of the withering away of God in our lives as something commonly attributed to Nietzsche's work and his stance on divine matters. In this chapter I show that Nietzsche has a keen interest in naturalistic inquiry, "scientific thought", such that appears to turn his gaze downward from Celeste (celestial heavens) toward earth and nature. Yet though Nietzsche shared an enthusiasm for empirical science with Goethe and Kant before him, he nevertheless developed strong notions of tragic wisdom and the *amor fati* of the soul. Consistent with critiques of the *Aufklärung* (Enlightenment) his revaluation of nature leads him to an embrace of physiology, sexuality and a certain "godless honesty" regarding the world. My argument here is that Nietzsche propounded a view of profound transformation, existentially and in *Vorstellung*, as a result not only of a scientific revolution but *also* of "Natural Man"¹ tragically murdering the Father. This rupture in our *Weltanschauung* (worldview) is called an event: the "death of God" following the spirit of Wagner and Hegelian philosophy. As a signifier of transformation—a component of Becoming—this event is significant for the course of life on the planet since the bedrock of existential meaning and surety is fundamentally shaken, even ruptured. Science steps in to fill the void of unknowing—radical doubt and purposelessness, but not very meaningfully or indeed honestly—with "good conscience" Nietzsche says. This paradox, and indeed unhappy consciousness, we shall see below, finds Nietzsche looking beyond material atomism and "*factum brutum*" (GM) while simultaneously denying the "Heaven to Come" of Christianity. Later he would see himself as a prophet of the god Dionysus and wonders whether his disciples will properly understand the enormity of his task and the new

¹ *Vorstellung*: idea or representations; "natural man" is Aristotle's term for Nietzsche it is apposite for Copernican man who now seeks the fruits of the earth via a knowledge that is a "joyful science" of nature's Becoming.

world-orientation he wishes to give birth to (as indeed all gods do). We shall see in this chapter why the “promise of the earth” should emerge as an enticing prospect for his “Copernicanism”, yet it is one counterpoised by an ineluctable honouring of the “structure of the soul” and the will to reverence of “our spirits” as he says in *Beyond Good and Evil*. From his previous book to his last, Nietzsche is not content to ignore the eternal and the “image of eternity” stamped² upon the flux of *Werden* (Becoming). Here though we will see that Nietzsche acknowledges “we still take our fire from that blaze” bequeathed to us by Christian-Platonic metaphysics even when we do science (GM III, 24). So while it seems at first the *grund* of earth proves triumphal, in following chapters we shall see a different link to Celeste being upheld and inaugurated, not accidentally. First though, we must introduce the weighty significance of cosmos in Nietzsche’s philosophical schema.

Is the divine, and indeed reverence, destroyed by Nietzsche’s turn to nature is a question which backdrops our broader theme of the death of the traditional God and the importance of celestial potencies such as Dionysus. These are the questions which will guide our discussion as we enquire into how³ Nietzsche accounts for modes of divination definitive of human existence across time. Therefore, the standard “death of God” interpretation commonly attributed to him by modern scholars in the field—most famously Martin Heidegger in Germany—will be challenged and repudiated. Even though the pronouncement of the “death of a God” is considered a turning-point in Nietzsche’s account of modernity, we shall see it only as a single event—a significant event amongst many in which modes of reverence and modes of divination *coexist* alongside his resuscitation of nature (following the mesmerizing affect which science had on Nietzsche). There is nothing intrinsically stable about *an* event, a happening, for him. World-historical events are directive rather than ontical for agents; weaker agents differ from “higher ones” in their response to the push–pull effect of an event’s intrinsic “forward-willing” and “backward-willing” force. At the gateway of time (in *Zarathustra*) the double-folding of Time’s passage yields different challenges: to a magnanimous-soul distinctly from that of an enfeebled-soul. The prophet knows this belongs to Be-coming (double inflection). To more correctly

² See further Robin Small “A Dynamic Interpretation of Nietzsche’s ‘The Greatest Weight’”, *Nietzsche-Studien* 49 (1): 97-124, 2020.x

³ How Nietzsche performs these accounts genealogically and analytically will be our focus rather than an *a priori* metaphysical commitment to naturalistic presuppositions. The key *explanadum* concerns his “how”, not his “what” i.e. how does the human adopt a reverence of some kind?

see Nietzsche as one who prophesizes rather than a grand metaphysician—given to grand declarations of the “end or death of”—is consistently Zarathustrian, not neo-Kantian. The philosopher of the future declares the fundamental openness (not repetition) of “coming-into-being”) wherein reverence for the essential *durée* of all transitive events allows recognition, even appropriation, but never petrification. The horizon changes in Apollonian light—where the eagle flies high *above* valleys of convention (or stupidity)—often referred to in Heraclitean terms as flux.

It is doubtless particular religious influences bore upon the life and mind of Nietzsche; however, this uncontroversial point is insufficient in bearing out the *axial* interpretive stratagems he employed to explain both profane and sacred phenomena alike. Rather than basic points such as “influences” or “immoralist” objections, we find more significant here the ubiquitous intellectual commitment to *creativity* to be the pulse beat of Nietzsche’s thinking. How the world is formed, how it undergoes transformation through actualization, is pivotal; thus creating (and destroying) is highly important to Nietzsche and his type of philosophizing. The various ways in which humankind has created community and meaning has not always been through a scientific-rational prism. Further, the appeal to a Dionysian way is most decidedly an unscientific gesture, one that beckons the mysteries of ancient religious *festiva* and cults to the rough shores of calculative reason. Neither a return to religion or reason will heal humankind’s sickness; but nor will pure scientific logic (whether mechanical or biologic). In creating meaning, purpose, Man is thought to create himself—his inner and outer life. His or her *Kosmos* is not mere flux because creativity intervenes to disrupt chaos and repetition thereby instituting *life*—his most esteemed value viz, the “enhancement of life”. What has “enhanced” life for millennia is a manifold thing; but Nietzsche never falls for the modernist trap of transposing “present” perceptual frames onto past civilizations or epochs. Therefore, logical positivism cannot be easily applied to ancient Egypt, Rome, Babylonia or Miletus. Nor can the hegemonic rise of ecclesiastical precepts and categories since we know that modern science itself, he argues, emerges out of (Western) rational theology. Kant after-all is merely the mouthpiece of protestant theology (A). Hence the manifold that is “life” must also include those forms by which peoples obtained significance, purpose, meaning and value: these are valuations, ideals, forms of “arranging” and forms of reverence (BGE, GM, GS). Empiricism and brutal facticity won’t cut it for him: the order is much higher and experience per se is not an adequate guide to *Wirklichkeit* (actuality).

Sickly existence, degeneracy; or deified beauty and creative

generation? Might this be the most significant question underlying Friedrich Nietzsche's thought concerning religiosity⁴. Perhaps it was the decaying effect that Christianity had upon the spirit and body of the human that impressed upon the young German Lutheran the spiritual bankruptcy of religion: "A radical antagonism...to the senses is a telling symptom"; as a "a deadly hostility" it promotes "castration, eradication" where the will is too weak to barrage the force of desire (TI: *Morality*, 2). All theistic religions which are structured-organized around a nominal "priesthood" of some kind are accordingly decadent because they degenerate the creature of the earth. A degeneration of instinctual senses, of the passions and erotics of the body is characteristic historically of such forms of social organization. It is conceivable that the critique of such forms is based upon his criticism of the petrified life that such organizations perpetuate. Petrified institutions, whilst inherently lacking, appear to be only secondary to the main criticism of modern society, of *le esprit moderne*. Religious forms of organization ossify the passions of the instinctual drive the drives of the body and Eros more generally, which are eschewed by a fundamental will to negate and suspect (if not punish) nature. While "modern ideas" appear to embrace progressive change, Nietzsche in contradiction depicts all modern institutions as stultified bodies. Cultural as well as social institutions exemplify an order of being, an existence of existents that at is organized around a moral code which fundamentally originates from an otherworldly discontentment (hence resentment) with the world. The type of moral code which is highly decisive for understanding spiritual decay is very significant in the present context but shall be discussed shortly. Secular, including scientific, institutions and practices sustain and reinforce the *paleoarche* of a metaphysical transcendentalism⁵ that founded an ideal, a perfected world of unity, harmony and goodness, beyond the promise of the earth.

The corruptibility of modern secular institutions is intrinsically tied to the demise of formative practices embellished by monastic, ascetic and noble dynastic traditions of training and discipline. Where the arts of the body and the earth once entwined with the adventure of the mind as a soulful activity, the nascent emergence of scholarly pursuits by secular (and later bourgeois) citizens of the "modern" epoch dirempted this all-important nexus. From the beginnings of the scientific revolutions and the

⁴ Religiosity and not religion because the former includes the ethos, pathos and practice of spiritual activity of various kinds. The colloquialism spiritual is inappropriate here.

⁵ See Richard Schacht (ed.) *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

industrial age of democratic revolutions (e.g. America and France), “modern ideas” took hold in the metaphysical soil of the priests’ morality. Nietzsche’s critique of “modern ideas” includes all the resounding icons of modern logical thought: the internal I, the will, cause, substance, atom purpose, teleology, equality, the just and the Good not to mention laws of nature. It appears the penultimate destruction is of “God” and “morality” which in counter-metaphysical terms might be right and yet we find Nietzsche nowhere is enamored with modern postulates of the real. In one specific sense at least, “modern” is equivalent to “decadent”; modernity is synonymous, for Nietzsche, with decline both cultural and spiritual decline. So, if we *have* killed God and he is nowhere to be found, why is the world not more beautiful, glistening with light and elevated by superior arts of cultivation? Is not “Cause” better than the “hidden God” of old? Similarly, why would he not adapt to “laws of nature” and mechanics over and above the metaphysical world of Augustine and Aquinas? It may well be supposed that any ardent atheist would welcome such alternative concepts or methods. Science is indeed valuable, according to Nietzsche’s genealogy, if it remains untethered to the ascetic ideal of truth. Empirical dogmatism, on the other hand, is just as equally condemnable and deficient. Science and logic afford the human creative insight into means by which it can disclose its own finite nature the physics of the “human-all-too-human”. All “hail physics” he declares after *Human All too Human*.

The condition of man (sic), its physiology as an organism and its physics of dynamic alteration, can consequently be interpreted from so many material perspectives. Physics, biology and astronomy reveal the operations of the (will-) force immanent in nature, in the cosmos: the force which allows growth, extension, exuberant manifold forms in organic and inorganic life and the light of the earth to shine. Historical genealogy serves the useful function of identifying the perspectives; perspectives onto the operations of the immanent “force-will” of *natura*. *Genealogie* is essentially unscientific; yet it reveals the fundamental interpretative nature and illusory forms of natural science. Naturalism, for Nietzsche, incorporates an unconscious degree of illusion what he calls the will to deceive and therefore requires the critical spirit (or spiritual interrogation) of genealogical analyses. Hence the vintage preoccupation with science versus anti-science is redundant here. Nietzsche adopted an axiological stance, a position that asks what is the worth (“*axia*” in Greek) of a particular biological or physics analysis of the nature of phenomena. Valuations along with perspectival “interpretations” are propounded and even altered by scientific investigations of truth: Nietzsche thinks “we must

become the best learners and discoverers of everything that is lawful and necessary in the world: we must become *physicists* in order to be able to be *creators* in this sense—while hitherto all valuations and ideals have been based on *ignorance* of physics” (GS 335). One esteemed value of scientific theory is its ability to suspend the “hidden God” force in existence, in the actuality of vital life where an otherworldly permanence is surplus to requirement.⁶ Nature’s endowment through the erotics of the body and biologic life, and the inexorable forces of decomposition and regeneration embedded therein, were decoupled from the Church’s mysterious and providential Almighty Creator. Although not delineated as far back as required, his genealogy of scientific thought would lend itself to finding Roger Bacon (1220) and Nicholas Cusanus (1401) as progenitors of a new naturalistic outlook much earlier than the famed Newton, Copernicus, Galileo, Brahe and Lyell line.

The earth no longer stands at the centre of the universe as the crucible of God’s creation. Once the twin faithful believers of the church, Nicholaus Copernicus and Galileo Galilei, brought about the demolition of the holy world order—Aristotelian fixed crystalline spheres—humanity was thrown off its high pedestal. The venerated position in which Man (humankind) was held in ecclesiastical eyes and therefore the common folk was suddenly withdrawn by the findings of early modern astrophysics. A collapsing of the privileged centred world wherein “modern man” derived his or her meaning, the purpose of life, would utterly shatter the cosmogony and theodicy of venerable Christian thinkers from the twelfth century. By the time of Gottfried Leibniz this radically new situation would already begin to yield the fruits of scientific reason. Two yields in particular stand out. Firstly, the gaze of the human eye and mind was understood to properly ascertain the regularities of nature’s less mysterious obedient laws of force, event and repetition. Nature was endowed not only with elemental substances that comprised matter and energy; it also consisted of a microscopic world which appeared to operate in almost clockwork-like fashion a cosmic mechanical system seemingly independent from the old authoritarian God of the Church Fathers. Without any need to meddle with the movements of planets and stars, the benevolent Father of Christianity stood aside to allow the mechanical laws of nature to produce diachrony and synchrony. Grand forces of nature performed what medieval peasants of Europe otherwise attributed to the holy One, the Creator. Yet these immeasurable powers and dynamics of

⁶ On the relevance of scientific theory (*Wissenschaft*) see Wolfgang Müller-Lauter *Nietzsche: His Philosophy of Contradictions and the Contradictions of His Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999).

nature both terrestrial and celestial so greatly diminished the size and place of Man(kind): the centrality of Adam and Eve's heirs no longer held sway. De-centred, mankind appeared wayward, vulnerable to contingencies and at a loss what this inexorably big expanse of space (and energy) entailed. Its "meaning", as Nietzsche names it, is suddenly open to conjecture, to speculation and to doubting the faith (in a higher, transcendent realm of being). This radical doubt is not the beginning of scientific reason which was already exercised by Iberian Jews and Arabs and later Christian monks but rather the natural outgrowth or child of natural theology. Truth-searching inquiry led to the search for scientific verities; paradoxically Rene Descartes' attempt to found a method premised on certainty coincided with a growing scepticism that, ultimately would yield the specter of "European nihilism". Hence Nietzsche rightly finds the ascetic idea of churchmen to be embedded in modern science itself. This "modern science" ...is for the present the *best* confederate of the ascetic ideal" (GM III:25). What the men of the Church espouse everywhere as virtuous, viz "poverty, humility, chastity", was then fruitful for the development of a scientific or logical outlook (GM III:8). Above all, this rational evolution of seeing things in a different, unorthodox light meant significantly a fundamental alteration to the plane of existence. "Since Copernicus men seems to have stumbled onto an inclined plane he is now rolling faster and faster away from the center" (GM III:25). Whither, asks Nietzsche? Into nothingness?

A second outcome here is not that of European nihilism. Too many commentaries on Nietzsche's writings on religion are distracted by a keenness for the phenomenon of nihilism. The enumeration of the consequences of nihilism interests many, yet for Nietzsche the pertinent question became: if there is no unassailable authority over the earth, how might we venerate that which *is* noble and thus affirm life without any sense of guilt or shame? The point is the new dawn, the new, infinitely new daybreak which awaits all of humankind once it has awoken from its slumber. Having realized it was not placed at the centre of the universe and, moreover, that "coming into being" and "passing away" concords more with the Greek understanding of *physis*, the human race must heed the call of life, the will to life, without any condemnatory ill-morality. Sickliness ought not impede our move to the dawn of Apollonian light. Life beckons and because we exist in the whole of the totality of life-forms we can take part in its manifold beauty and danger, in its power to regenerate, define and question all things. Life holds out a promise as Nietzsche well learned from Christology and the taste of "higher men" was to overcome modern nihilism in order for a brighter, affirmative grasp

of the future to take hold. The fruits of this epiphanic revelry, therefore, are arguably about the self-belittlement of man leading to a heightening of the human creative to a stature more befitting noble Greeks and Romans yet without the strictures of antiquity. In arriving at disbelief or unbelief, Europeans (firstly) would not arrive at utopia where existence was suddenly devoid of morality and Churchly condemnation. It is not the terminus of the much heralded “death of God” announced by Hegel and Jacobi. Unbelief or disbelief are signs of the operation of a ubiquitous “self-critique of knowledge” in which neither science (realism) nor art (romanticism) reign supremely. A general godlessness analogous though dissimilar to an all pervasive nihilism could not be justified as a final *telos* of human endeavor, of striving and willing. The will must be saved because life (*Lebens*) first must be redeemed; and generic, pervasive godlessness cannot achieve this. Why? Why do not a-theists in the name of science and logic and so forth not prove sufficient ultimately for Nietzsche? The reason is the relentlessness of becoming the striving power will of life to keep regeneration in motion while the truth of the godless ones is essentially negative: to negate that which was. If so, then shall not they too be negated by the force of negation (i.e. argumentation). To stop with the godless ones is to stay still, to remain ossified in the temporal event which defined their importance: the bold gesture of reacting against the truth of the Church in the name of *Logos* (or reason in modern parlance). The accomplishment of destruction—of de-deifying the world—in itself appears simply one-sided, that is nihilistic. Its salience is intimately linked to its timeliness; an age in which the indisputable centredness of humankind had to come under the scrutiny of the examining eye, the conscious mind of natural law. Rather than its historical necessity Nietzsche identifies its temporal pertinence for the alteration of our fundamental perspective—a perspective onto our place in the universe. This paradox that finds Man diminishing his own importance in the world allows his belittlement to engage in a scientific reasoning into the make-up of his own *umwelt* (environment), physiology and spirit. Without the onerous trappings of faith, doctrine and mysterious absolutes, the human could come into full view—almost with “innocent” eyes. This semi-emancipation from the dead-weight of ecclesiastical authority—priestly power one could say—and the traditional blind faith of “the people”, is classified by Nietzsche as an “event”—a major event of world-historical becoming.

Death of God Event

The “death of God” pronounced boldly in *The Gay Science* is often temptingly discussed as the greatest event on earth. Nietzsche gave great prominence to the symbolic-philological meaning to the consequences of nihilism, both as a decentration of our *Weltanschauung* (worldview) and as a fundamental devaluation of the highest values. The first force yielded a radical reevaluation of one’s overestimated value (place) in the universe and the latter force yielded a most transformed, lowly estimation of our worth or “good” in the natural world. With science we gained naturalistic, empirical descriptions and yet we also suffered the sway of nihilistic sentiments regarding an empty, arbitrary, brutal *human-all-too-human* condition. Man (sic) fell but knowledge increased, a theme wholly consistent with German Romanticism and Christian metaphysics. The possibility of redemption (science) is only attended by the necessity of a (historic) Fall which as a pre-condition for the possible enhancement of Man—that fallen all too human creature. Nietzsche’s frequent “secular” use of the word “redemption” (or redeem) betrays something of his vehement criticism of the religion of his boyhood years and education. Throughout his *On the Genealogy of Morality* and *Zarathustra* this becomes most evident: because “There is so much in man that is horrifying...this insane sad beast man” whose “will to erect an ideal” (of the “holy God”) condemns. It does so to the point of a “psychic cruelty” that he argues “it cannot be atoned for” (GM II 22). Whilst the metaphysics of Augustine and Aquinas’ Christianity were rendered superfluous to natural human existence—arguably by Darwinian presuppositions and for others the realism of Greek tragic wisdom—something of the quest to restore the (noble) stature of the human being was preserved. Naturalizing Man(kind), as he frequently sought to do, would not preclude the possibility of incorporating fundamental spiritual powers and resources to once again redeem the fallen human creature. The myth of the Fall was replaced by a historico-genealogical philology of the real presence within becoming that faltered and lapsed into “decadence”. The restoration of the man of decadence to a noble “height” is replete with religious imagery and meaning even though Nietzsche distinctly reacted against Lutheran and Christian teachings and precepts. His claimed “immoralism” is decidedly hostile to the ordinary moral meaning of “decadence” with all its pious, moral condemnatory force. The ascetic condemnation of worldliness uncannily sits in an opposite albeit parallel position with Nietzsche’s disdain for modern worldliness. He is more than a mere “conservative

communitarian”⁷: Nietzsche must find a way to the radical over-turners who will redeem humankind from its own stupidity without resorting to the miracle of the Crucified One—the Crucifixion. The so-called “Anti-Christ” is to substitute for the work performed by the Redeemer of the Christian Church. The corrupt Church, churchly metaphysics and commoners (believers) are declared not to be the means by which the “promise of the earth” (*Z Prologue*) may be realized. By withdrawing from the world, a utopia is promised; however, Nietzsche reverses this formula of psychic cruelty by advancing the opposite: no Promised Land is necessary if we stay grounded in the soil of temporal being where presence incessantly comes-forth and passes-away eternally. Eternality is “of this world” and not the other—the ideal, transcendent world of immortal souls—yet Nietzsche must also provide an account of how this glorious earth degraded into a “madhouse” (GM II 22). His “most terrible sickness”, the condition in which the cheerful “freedom of soul” was lost to servile herd docility in the name of blind-faith, must parallel the symbolic might and spirituality of Christian sin. The reversal is cunning and astute: decadence is no longer a breaking of the moral (Mosaic) code but a breaking (or rejection) of the code of nature, our human nature. To esteem the body, the erotics of the soul of the earth, is to commit a transgressive overcoming of the opposition Good-Evil. If Nietzsche redeems the body—an eros of biology and therefore regeneration—then he can counter the ascetic’s dictate that sin requires a Saviour—a Holy One still to come. This move beyond the sacred, a return to the profane world of festive gods, valour, war and conflict, strength, courage and the “animal soul” (GM II 16) is consistent with early French anthropology (Count Buffon, Lavoisier, Lamarck) and German *Natur philosophie* preceding the time of Immanuel Kant. Through these very modern prisms Nietzsche re-appropriates archaic Greek (i.e. Bronze Age) physical principles of the motion of the earth and celestial bodies—the *nomos* of worldly phenomena and events. Violent, dangerous and eternally regenerating forces of *physis* (Nature) loom large in the mind of this teacher of classical philology whose disgust with the modern was retrojected back through Renaissance effected understandings of the natural order. Here the animalic was refracted through the optic of *scientia* and noble high Renaissance cultivation—namely, *ars et scientia*. At this conjuncture knowing and intensive refinement were wedded to the instinctual drive of the animalic being. To esteem the hitherto lost value of man—his forgotten former

⁷ Julian Young *Nietzsche’s Philosophy of Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

estimation of his mortal existence—Nietzsche must recover what he took to be the primordial nature of the human *creature*.

Caging the Animal-Human

This anthropology of the animality of the human being is central to Nietzsche's *reaction* to religious mysticism and therefore power too. All religions possess power: a power over the body, the spiritual imagination, the community, the erotics of existence, the daily mundane order and above all, over time (i.e. future). When Hinduism and Zoroastrianism predominated over diverse peoples in their nascent epochs, they restructured the cosmological plane to effectively marshal the "lowly" elements of the moral body. They conquered the "weaker" and transformed it into the "stronger". The animal in man metamorphosed into a Sphinx-like creature that possessed the power of logic (*logos*) and spirit—the latter eventually becoming the soul and elevated during the classical period. Ancient religions—although mostly polytheistic—overturned the chaos of pre-moral and pre-metaphysical existence of whole communities largely by invoking a (new) hierarchical order of all sentient beings—a great Chain of Being⁸. This tragic world-historical innovation meant, for Nietzsche, a supreme loss of innocence: the innocence of becoming within nature. For millennia the human animal—as demonstrated in *On the Genealogy of Morality* and *Daybreak*—had roamed relatively free, uninhibited and instinctually vigorous in orientation. For the "longest part of the history of man, his prehistory"—before the "feeling of guilt" as a "reaction of the soul"—the body-soul of a human being remained uncaged and therefore untamed (GM II 14). Nietzsche maintains that modern humans bear an "over-refinement of taste" that evolved over millennia as an artistry for "conscience-vivisection and cruelty to the animal-soul"—a kind of self-torture of the animal-human. From the historical evidence he deduces that non-polytheistic religions accelerated and exacerbated the self-torture of the animal-human by endowing (i.e. imputing) it with guilt and shame. The Crucifixion was (made) necessary by an impoverishment of the soul derived from the caging of the primordial instincts and drives of this once untamed creature. Speaking of the "prehistory" of humanity's encagement by states Nietzsche finds "these half animals who were happily adapted to wilderness, war, roaming about, adventure—all at once all of their instincts were devalued and 'disconnected'" (GM II 16). Nietzsche's evolutionary

⁸ Arthur O. Lovejoy *The Great Chain of Being* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964).

anthropology posits two essential features of the animal's encagement: forces which compelled it to no longer roam freely offered it *Gesellschaft* (society) to captivate the animal-human into the lure of the pleasures of security and herd-happiness. Complex society justified its general confinement by alluring the (once wild) animal into a matrix of social contracts as compulsive social intercourse that assuaged its primary instincts and passions. The futurity of civilized existence—its open-ended horizon of unfolding power and controlling forces—was dangled seductively before the ignorant or “stupid” roaming native of nature. She was asked to surrender her striving or will in order to gain a mystical future by means of forgetting her Past (i.e. prehistorical freedom). A “freedom of the will” was sacrificed for the benefit of belonging—belonging to a community in which the challenges of the stranger enemy were greatly defused⁹.

Secondly, by losing his primordial “freedom of the will” the human animal could no longer freely or spontaneously vent its feelings and potentially destructive affects. Anger, retaliations for misdeeds, lust, hatred and usurping sensations for domination had to be controlled in some fashion. To abide by the sacro-magical but increasingly priestly-bureaucratic order of social relations (*Gesellschaft*), this once wild “free” creature had to acquire the psychical apparatus for self-restraint. The much-vaunted “bad conscience” only emerges in history once the channel to nature, to vital organic life, is tortured by constant choking (e.g. punishment) and moralization. A pronouncement of Thou Shall Not, simultaneously creating “customs of morality” (D) and prohibitions against instinctual impulses, not only killed off free striving but it also produced the bad conscience that has ever since inflicted mankind. The “bad conscience” presupposes the historic suppression of once naturally vented impulses and affects that now registers as a poisonous corruption of the spirit. Unfreedom or what Nietzsche otherwise sees as the “instinct of denial, corruption, and decadence” promulgated by these ascetic “slanderers of the world and violators of man” is his equivalence of moral sin (EH: Dawn, 2). No deity is responsible for its Fall; the fallenness into corruption and decadence was humankind's own doing as it was in the Book of Genesis. By appropriating a hydraulic-biologic model of pressure and distribution (“organization”) Nietzsche anthropomorphizes what the idealists and priestly-caste construed in metaphysical terms. Namely the *homo religiosi* constructed a perfect world to reduce this (natural) world

⁹ This was a universal lie performed by each civilization which only perpetuated systemic violence by means of organized hatred and revenge against the “outsider”.

into something pitiful and lesser; and their transcendent world rendered the earth lesser by means of corruption, decadence and denial of the truth. To save humankind from this lesser, sickly life the priests had to invent not the means of its atonement but, most importantly, they first had to make *necessary* the “bad conscience”. Thus the metaphysical creation of “the soul” was made necessary to relieve human beings from (their newly acquired) bad conscience—to absolve them of their sin. Sin had an instinctual, anthropic basis but a forgetfulness was properly secured by the first noble priestly class who invented concepts and ascetic disciplinary practices to govern the body and ordinary rhythms of organic life. Once the transcendentalized world took hold, the “slave revolt” performed by the priests (and their common followers) succeeded in the ascent of “Judea” over the downfall of the almighty empire of Rome. Under polytheistic Roman gods, the impulses and instincts were not sacrificed to a moral order founded on self-negation and self-torture—the infamous “unselfing” of the self (BGE 207). That is, no proper “forgetting” of the animal-soul had yet transpired; whereas under Christianity, Nietzsche identifies a perverse and all-pervasive loss of the animal soul that once roamed freely amongst other creatures.

Route to Redeeming the Future

Nietzsche’s genealogies aim to recover and rekindle this specious memory of itself—to demythologize the Past by recouping its lost memory. For redeeming the past is the route to redeeming the Future. Much that has been written about the “bad conscience” most often psychologizes the phenomenon of tragic loss at the expense of this important (Protestant) religious interest in the condition of *Mensch* (humankind). Reverence toward the past as much as toward Europe’s future by means of reclaiming original Man is uppermost in Nietzsche’s modern, quasi-Protestant mind. He well understood that the pagan Greeks’ outlook towards their gods was lost and incuperable—the Greeks were fundamentally strangers to us (TI: The Ancients 2). The abeyance of a return to the Greeks—to the tragic *agon* (contestation) of the *theatro* (drama)—meant for him an alternate path to the spiritualization of animal instincts and thus the animal-soul too. Why the prophetic tone, language and vision of Zarathustra? For Nietzsche, the ancient Persian prophet turned over to a modern noble spirit captures the essence of the overhuman (*Übermensch*) who, having roamed the earth, achieves hitherto unknown heights by means of a necessary fateful “spiritualization”. To know his Past in order to form his Future, Zarathustra required a spiritualization of his inner drives and perspective—

and not merely a re-remembering of his once noble life in wild nature. The prophetic teacher of time's eternal recurrence on this and other planets is the beneficiary of the passages which ascetics and priests first laid down in a transcendental fashion. He must emerge out of the Fall into decadence in order to conquer it; he does not conquer death like Christ, no, he conquers the weakly, sickly Man that Judaeo-Christianity valorized as the common flock of believers. Death *is* conquered but not by the figure of Zarathustra but rather by the all-pervasive eternity¹⁰ which he calls "becoming". Nietzsche snatches away the believers of faith from the picture and turns instead to the finitude or finite universe of Spinoza's world. Faith in the eternal is retained, as is disgust for the corrupt world of the herd, sickly and meek. Eschewing the "good Samaritan" and the Sermon on the Mount ethos, Nietzsche reverses the dependence on the flock to find redemption elsewhere. Namely, *not* in "the people" whom Christianity and democrats hold faith in; for people possess will and desire and thus are forsaken by their very own "human-all-too-human" nature (HA). Theirs is the pursuit of happiness, that is, comfort, ease and pleasure—what do they know of eternal matters? he ponders. This is a uniquely profound religious conception of the corruptible world, of its flaws and of its need for redemption. The religious conception of the cosmos—preceding the ascent of "modern society"—is not foreign at all to Nietzsche's critical eye. As a former student of theological Protestant doctrines, with his powerful paternal figure in the Lutheran church, young Nietzsche was deeply immersed in the good and evil of soteriological preoccupations with (forsaken) life. His dialectical¹¹ contradiction of the "filth" thrown upon "the origin, the presupposition of our life" by Christianity meant that Nietzsche had first to *know* thoroughly the decadence that was "Platonist Christianity"—the religion of the masses (TI The Ancients 4). To know, that is, its evil so that he could identify another good, a good beyond the evil perpetrated by the Crucifixion tellers. The Crucified is not exactly the object of his attack; it is the commoners who depend upon the priests' transcendent, otherworldly world of perfect being, the *Volk* who are enslaved by the faith in the filth of the body and sexuality. Instead of the suffering of the Jew crucified by the Romans, we instead end up with a pernicious "*ressentiment against life*" (TI The Ancients 4). Yet Christ represented life itself, its light and its goodness; he more so represented

¹⁰ See Paul Loeb *The Death of Nietzsche's Zarathustra* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) for a discussion of the eternal.

¹¹ Dialectics is a key Greek philosophical practice, usually personified by Socrates, stemming from the artistry of the *dialectikos* who instructs others by use of *Logos*, a penetrating logic of unconcealing.

the will to overcome, the overcoming of death and priestly authority or domination. Hence the problem is the Church, its deacons and its practice of resentment against life whilst purporting to *save* life. Here the dialectics of Nietzsche's Greek mind hones in on a fundamental problem, a contradiction that must be overturned i.e. overcome.

The agency of redemption is condemnable as "corrupt". The original ancient Semitic "way of life" of Christ was overrun not merely by the disciple Paul but by the *rock* of the Christian faith—"Peter". It is the institution, in particular, by way of the institutionalization of what was once merely "the way" of Jesus, the unorthodox Jew who eschewed the sacrilege of money and Pharisaic priestly authority. Demarcating "a way" to conduct one's life was important in Nietzsche's eyes. One must have applications, comportments, discipline and sundry strictures to enhance one's access to life, to the flow that is "becoming". In Christ, in the radical departure from Sephardic practices, Nietzsche recognized a certain overcoming man, an individual who strove, with will, to overcome Jewish weakness (i.e. corruptibility) and priestly domination. By contrast, the Church values and perpetuates atrophy; it does so because it petrifies what is fundamentally dynamic, changing and alterable. Churchly religion in other words (following St Peter) becomes tradition; and traditional ways conveyed through customary rituals and beliefs betrays the essential message of He who shall overcome the suffering of the earth. The truth of overcoming—for Zarathustra truth is the highest virtue—is stalled, even negated in the Petrine¹² church. The Pauline church inaugurates the era of the flock-herd, the passive followers of a will-to-truth enunciated and protected by the rank of priestly power. Faith in the priest's truth has replaced the *ayonia* (pain) of the Crucified one who must struggle perennially with his conscience in the face of the Father: Jesus must confront his own destiny. The Christ is a destiny; and the Persian figure of achieving the "Beyond" through passages of time must experience the ordeal of having a destiny—a demand to encounter in the most fundamental of ways resistance to his (temporal) existence, a resistance to his "will to life". Here the analogue between two personifications of greatness (i.e. overcoming) becomes inescapable—that of the Occidental Christ with that of the archaic (ancient) Zoroaster. Each embody a certain *imaginaire*, a vision of the primordial "will to life" that is transcendent of commonly, social, temporal forms. Their "destiny" is marked off by this visionary sense of a higher life, a more esteemed, more valued life, but not one cut-

¹² The rock of the Church signifying solidity and continuity through tradition and orthodox dogma.

off from this world—as the ascetic monks or hermits would wrongly have it. Without a life which exceeds the valley existence of the herd and their idols¹³, without the stench of the filth of the mob-herd, there would be no fundamental transvaluation. In other words, a destiny to a point hitherto unavailable and unknown to the droves that constitute traditional religion—“the people’s” religion. The exceptional ones must have an alternate destiny, a direction exceeding (yet incorporating) the condition that Nietzsche designates as “the human-all-too-human”. It is the condition from which any redemption of Man (sic) must emerge from; namely, the abyss of the chaos of a purposeless existence where desire and will (affects) revolve eternally around the exigencies of an essentially nihilistic form of life. The eternal wheel of nothingness turns inexorably when the foresaid “forgotten” memory of one’s human nature prevails; its prevalence means that the dominance of (perceived) meaninglessness is now naturalized. It is ordained as a given in other words. Neither Christ the suffering one nor Zarathustra the prophet-teacher of eternal overcoming embraced this “given”. Theirs was a ridiculing, a defiance, of the given (idols of the valley) since what is given is only given by Time; that is, a corrupted Past without memory. The offering of a future—a futural time that has shaken-off the shackles of herd following—must therefore be something not reducible to the now, the here, the Present. Theirs is a world-historical task to transform the face of the earth; to accomplish the *promise* which no “given” or “natural” state of affairs can deliver or actualize. Their destiny is bound up with situating the given of the present Today as a temporal error, an illusion, that is both real and powerful. Its effectiveness is undisputed hence the reason for their rejection of it. To redeem the Future, Christ and Zarathustra must first make amends with the Past; the Past must first be redeemed by an un-forgetting of the animal soul’s genealogy into a human spirit.¹⁴ Restoring the Past without denying the human-all-too-human in the present is the passage through to a nobler Future—to a destiny that is greater than the feeble, herdish, commonly vision of “Today” which British utilitarianism represents.

¹³ When Moses left “the flock” to their own devices in the desert journey to liberation, they resorted to the worship of heathen idols and corrupt orgiastic pleasures.

¹⁴ Nietzsche states we who know otherwise do not separate body and mind nor mind from soul as “the people” are wont to do.

CHAPTER TWO

PHANTASMAGORIA AS PRESENT ILLUSION

It seems at first that this analysis (from chapter one) runs contrary to Nietzsche's thinking; that is, his critical thought about those (ascetics) who eschew everyday life as profane. Was not Nietzsche an ardent advocate of *this* world, with all its pitfalls and shortcomings and idealistic idols? It would seem that Nietzsche wants us to stop denying this world and glorifying some other world where perfection and pure being may lie. For instance, in *Twilight of the Idols* he ponders why we would want "to fabricate a world "other" than this one unless we had a powerful instinct for libeling, belittling and casting suspicion on life" (Reason in Philosophy, 6). He argues, furthermore, that this "phantasmagoria of an 'other', a 'better' life" is merely ourselves avenging life through a degenerate instinct. Christianized Platonism, or in other words, the metaphysics of the Church—promulgated by the sermon, mass and ritual of sacrifice—is the perpetrator of this dangerous "phantasmagoria". The phantasmatic ideal of a "true world" is set against this world, the illusory world of present phenomena (what he constantly calls *becoming*). In denying the "actual world" of its reality they declare phenomena to be illusory; however, "it is an illusory world to the extent that it is just a *moral-optical* illusion" (Reason in Philosophy, 6). In short, the problematic phantasmagoria of a truer world is founded on a fundamental "moral-optical illusion". It is this illusion, and its attendant perfusion of the "will to life", that Nietzsche singles out as an analyst; and he does so because he claims perspectives (hence "optical") knowingly are conditioned by time, by the eventual moments of time's becoming.¹ The disenchantment with "this world" is therefore temporally adduced by an identified moral-optical illusion that only holds sway for a given time. It is a "prejudice" of the present age: a discriminatory taste of the moralists, the priestly types, the metaphysicians and the commonly believers (the *Volk*). And scientists are not immune either: they perpetuate the phantasmagoria

¹ See Robin Small *Time and Becoming in Nietzsche's Thought* (London: Continuum, 2010).

of an other, truer world, through their favoured scientific concept of “cause” (causation); their wont to declare sense unreliable and appearances as illusory. Scientists are Platonistic in so much as they seek the truth behind the veil of appearances by means of knowable “laws”. They explain this world by means of the non-illusory mechanics of laws of nature, proposing that temporal becoming is illusion while “true being” is to be accessed through a fundamental “physics”.

Nietzsche finds both religious and scientific myths concerning *Werden* (becoming) part of the essential dynamics of projecting one’s form and image upon the optical appropriation of reality. Theism and scientific empiricism are each bedeviled by the erroneous commitment to an *absolute* will to truth: a will to disclose an absolute or perfect Whole, a true underlying reality of the actuality we live and breathe. Laurence Hatab has given a useful picture of the decisive “will to truth” at play in both paradigms, observing: “Even though God is no longer at the forefront of culture, we still have confidence in the “shadows” of God (GS 108), in supposedly secular truths that have nonetheless lost their pedigree and intellectual warrant”.²

What each side, doctrine and worldview cannot fully grasp is the scope of time in which reality unfolds as Plato, Leibniz, Hegel, Bergson and Heisenberg declared. “You don’t have eyes for something that has taken two thousand years to achieve?” says Nietzsche; and “There is nothing to wonder at in this: all lengthy things are difficult to see, to see in their entirety (GM1:8). It is the entirety that is elusive, slippery and difficult: each organism, mind, organ or people experiences this entirety without knowing the whole, without feeling a part of the whole. They simultaneously exist within the entirety whilst also trying to objectify it in order to know it. It is an optical take on the entire whole but it’s one buttressed by a moral commitment, a “value judgement” more specifically. Both doctrines—theism and atheism—necessarily misunderstand the fundamental complexity of the universe. They fail as they must do: they form interesting experiments in the capricious domestic animal’s attempt to fathom its own ever-changing world. Nietzsche can discern strategies which we deploy to find a Cause behind a thing, an event, a phenomenon; he has the “height” from which to see and identify diverse “moral-optical” interpretations of what is constantly moving and shifting in this “entirety”.

This returns us to the millennial vision of the long *durée* which the foresaid figures of destiny encapsulate: the Galilean Christ and the Persian fire of Zarathustra. If Nietzsche is not restricted to, or by, his own

² Laurence Hatab *Nietzsche’s Life Sentence* (New York: Routledge, 2005), p.15.