Nathalie Lachance
German Studies
McGill University, Montréal
August 2009

'Thou shalt not believe (me)' : Nietzsche's Ethics of Reading and the Movement for Emancipation

A thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank McGill University and Le Fonds Québécois de la Recherche sur la Société et la Culture for their financial assistance, as well as Dr. Karin Bauer, thesis supervisor, for her invaluable insights, firm guidance, and joyful wisdom. She has made me richer and stronger in countless ways.

On a more personal note, I wish to thank Dr. Helmut Famira, an agonal educator who does not even like Nietzsche; my family, for love and laughters; Katia, for joy in movement; and Martin, for making sense out of it all.

Abstract

This dissertation explores Nietzsche's ethics of reading. I argue that narrative strategies such as metaphors, irony, and parody, amongst others, must be interpreted against the backdrop of Nietzsche's utterances on reading and statements addressed to the reader. These strategies are interpreted as pedagogical tools which serve the education of an emancipated reader - a reader aware of the responsibility to emancipate himself from (meta)narratives. Nietzsche's ethics of reading consists in principles deriving from his preoccupation with agonistics: *suspicion*, *contest*, and *performance*. The reader must be aware of the constructed nature of texts and suspicious of textual assertions; the act of reading also consists in the reader's response to textual assertions and challenges. This dissertation thus contributes to Nietzsche scholarship by investigating the significance of agonistics for Nietzsche's ethics of reading, by linking this ethics of reading to his call for a revaluation of values, and by showing that both partake in the same narrative of emancipation

Nietzsche's ethics of reading is interpreted here as his response to the ethics of reading which arose out of the Platonic, Christian, and Kantian traditions. In order to show this, I use the chapter "Der Genesende," from *Also sprach Zarathustra* as case study. I show that "Der Genesende" is Nietzsche's counternarrative to fall narratives found in Plato (*Phaedrus*; the parable of the cave), Christianity (Genesis 3), and Kant (*Mutmasslicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte*). Nietzsche undermines the teleological and dualistic worldviews of these narratives as well as their use of dialectics, prohibitions, and imperatives, to show that these narratives restrict the freedom of movement (of thought) of the individual and reader. In contrast, Nietzsche's style in *Also*

sprach Zarathustra (the entwinement of Zarathustra's teachings, for example, which underpin and undermine one another) is interpreted as his way to promote movement in the reader's mind.

The study ends with readings of Nietzsche's early writings on education, language, and agonistics. These preoccupations coalesce in *Ecce Homo*, a text which, because of its confusion of genres, provocative questions and statements, and agonistic style reveals itself to be not so much about Nietzsche's own identity construction but about the reader's.

.

Résumé

Mon sujet est l'éthique de la lecture chez Nietzsche. J'y soutiens que ses stratégies narratives - métaphores, ironie, et parodie, entre autres - doivent être interprétées en tenant compte de ses déclarations sur la lecture et de ses remarques adressées au lecteur. Ces stratégies sont des outils pédagogiques pour éduquer un lecteur conscient de la responsabilité qu'il a de s'émanciper des (méta) récits. L'éthique de la lecture chez Nietzsche se base sur des principes découlant de son intérêt pour l'agonistique : *scepticisme*, *compétition*, et *performance*. Le lecteur doit être conscient de la nature construite des textes et être sceptique quant aux affirmations textuelles; lire est la réponse du lecteur aux affirmations et défis d'un texte. Cette étude contribue à la recherche sur Nietzsche car elle démontre l'importance de l'agonistique dans son éthique de la lecture, elle relie cette dernière à la promotion d'une transvaluation des valeurs, et elle révèle que toutes deux construisent un même récit de l'émancipation.

L'éthique de la lecture chez Nietzsche est interprétée ici comme sa réponse à l'éthique de la lecture du Platonisme, du Christianisme, et de la philosophie kantienne. Pour démontrer cela, j'utilise le chapitre « Der Genesende, » d'*Also sprach Zarathustra* comme étude de cas. « Der Genesende » est un récit qui s'oppose aux récits de la chute chez Platon (*Phaedrus*; l'allégorie de la caverne), dans la Genèse, et chez Kant (*Mutmasslicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte*). Nietzsche mine la téléologie et le dualisme de ces récits, et leurs utilisations de la dialectique, d'interdictions, et d'impératifs, pour démontrer que ces récits limitent la liberté de mouvement (de pensée) du lecteur. À l'opposé, le style de Nietzsche (l'interdépendance des enseignements de

Zarathustra, par exemple) est interprété ici comme une stratégie qui encourage le mouvement.

Cette thèse se termine par des lectures de textes du jeune Nietzsche sur l'éducation, la langue, et l'agonistique - préoccupations que l'on retrouve dans *Ecce Homo*, un soi-disant texte autobiographique qui, en raison de son genre indéfinissable, de ses questions et déclarations provocantes, et de son style agonistique ne sert pas tant la construction de l'identité de Nietzsche que celle du lecteur.

Welches Problem erschließt sich uns da,

wenn wir nach dem Verhältniß des Wettkampfes

zur Conception des Kunstwerkes fragen - ![1]

keinem Gedanken Glauben schenken,

der nicht im Freien geboren ist

und bei freier Bewegung[2]

Chapter 1. Introduction. Nietzsche and the Question of Emancipation

In this dissertation, I explore the points of intersection, in Nietzsche's work, between philosophy, philology, and education, in order to formulate *a Nietzschean ethics of reading*. The Nietzsche reader cannot help but notice how frequently Nietzsche addresses him or her, in a challenging or provoking way, providing warnings, issuing disclaimers, giving tips on how to read in general and how to read him in particular. This has received little attention in Nietzsche scholarship, whereas Nietzsche's narrative strategies (his rejection of concepts, his reliance on metaphors, his use of parody, his irony, his confusion of genres, etc.) have been the subject of many a study. I contend that any analysis of Nietzsche's style ought to address, on the one hand, Nietzsche's questions and remarks addressed to the reader, and, on the other hand, his many utterances regarding the act of reading itself.

---

[1] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Homers Wettkampf," *KSA 1*, Eds. G. Colli, and M. Montinari (München: DTV, 1999) 790-91.

[2] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Ecce Homo," *KSA 6*, Eds. G. Colli, and M. Montinari (München: DTV, 1999) 281.

The Ethics of Reading is the title of a study by J. Hillis Miller, which I want to mention briefly here in order to show where I situate myself with this dissertation. In his study, Miller defines the ethical moment in the act of reading as follows: "On the one hand it is a response to something, responsible to it, responsive to it, respectful of it. (…) On the other hand, the ethical moment in reading leads to an act."[3] I do not wish to address this definition in any detail here. I just want to point out, as one scholar remarks, that Miller's study is a response to attacks on deconstruction, which its detractors deem nihilistic and relativist.[4] Jonathan Culler writes that the relationship between deconstruction and ethics has become a major topic of interest in recent years.[5] My own study of Nietzsche could be said to gravitate around the scholarship that tackles this problem. The filiation between Nietzsche and deconstruction has long been established; Nietzsche's call for a revaluation of values has been deemed, long before deconstruction, nihilistic and relativist. What I wish to show here is that Nietzsche's call for a revaluation of values is inextricably linked to his ethics of reading and that both partake in a narrative of emancipation which aims at making the individual and reader aware of his or her responsibility to emancipate him- or herself from (meta)narratives.

Nietzsche wishes to educate an emancipated reader but he certainly does not pretend that this emancipation can ever be fully achieved. Nietzsche understands freedom not as a goal which has been attained but rather "als Etwas, das man hat und *nicht* hat,

---

[3] J. Hillis Miller, *The Ethics of Reading : Kant, de Man, Eliot, Trollope, James and Benjamin* (NY : Columbia University Press, 1987) 4.

[4] Éva Antal, "The Ethics of Reading – a Postmodern Theory?," *Pedagogy Studies (Pedagogika)* 71 (2004): 16.

[5] Culler writes this in the 2007 preface to the 25th anniversary edition of his book on deconstruction. See Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction. Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (Ithaca, NY : Cornell University Press, 2007) 6.

das man *will*, das man *erobert*…"[6] As Herman Siemens remarks, freedom in Nietzsche is an *exercise* which requires tension, conflict, resistance.[7] I thus speak, in this dissertation, of a *movement for emancipation*, instead of emancipation or freedom as a state (*Zustand*). One could be said to be emancipated inasmuch as one realizes the need for the movement for emancipation, the responsibility to direct one's energy against (meta)narratives which seek to disempower one. As Nietzsche writes: "Denn was ist Freiheit! Dass man den Willen zur Selbstverantwortlichkeit hat."[8]

This ethics of reading, which lies at the centre of Nietzsche's pedagogy, as Keith Ansell Pearson writes,[9] consists in a set of principles which derive from his preoccupation with agonistics and which I will designate here as *suspicion*, *contest*, and *performance*. Nietzsche's vision of an emancipated reader is that of a reader who is suspicious of texts, of the (Western) written tradition and its prohibitions and imperatives; who is aware of the fragmentary and fictive nature of texts; who challenges and opposes textual assertions; the act of reading, for Nietzsche, also consists in the reader's own response to textual assertions and challenges; it must lead to the reader's own performative shaping of all that arises out of the act of reading.[10] Nietzsche devises a

---

[6] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Götzen-Dämmerung," *KSA 6*, Eds. G. Colli, and M. Montinari (München: DTV, 1999) 140.

[7] Herman Siemens, "Nietzsche *contra* Liberalism on Freedom," *A Companion to Nietzsche*, Ed. K. Ansell Pearson (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006) 445.

[8] Nietzsche, "Götzen-Dämmerung," 139.

[9] Keith Ansell Pearson, *An Introduction to Nietzsche as Political Thinker* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1994) 205.

[10] I thus contend that this shaping, through and against Nietzsche, is the reader's, not (just) Nietzsche's, as claimed by Nehamas, who writes that Nietzsche creates a literary character, himself, "whose way of life consists of the philosophical ideas he promotes," see Alexander Nehamas, *Nietzsche. Life as Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985) 4.

writing style which serves this ethics of reading: narratives strategies such as his rejection of concepts and reliance on metaphors result in texts in which the reader is called on, oft quite directly and literally, to pause and ponder, to fill certain gaps, to make certain connections, etc. The many provocative, paradoxical, or contradictory statements which one finds in Nietzsche's work function similarly: they seem to have been penned in order to be contested and rebuked. The subtitles of *Ecce Homo* come to mind: "Warum ich so weise bin," "Warum ich so klug bin," "Warum ich so gute Bücher schreibe," etc. Nietzsche's style engages the reader in a contest for meaning, bestowing upon and demanding from the reader a great "textual response-ability,"[11] to use a coinage by Alan D. Schrift.

What I thus wish to explore in this dissertation is the significance of *agonistics* for Nietzsche's ethics of reading. In his short essay *Homers Wettkampf* (1872), Nietzsche praises the agonal education which prevailed in the Hellenic world: "Jede Begabung muss sich kämpfend entfalten, so gebietet die hellenische Volkspädagogik."[12] Nietzsche's preoccupation with agonistics has received much attention in the last decade or so, most notably in the works of Christa Davis Acampora, Fredrick Appel, Lawrence J. Hatab, and Herman Siemens; in articles published in the collections *Agonistics: Arenas of Creative Contest* (1997), edited by Janet Lungstrum and Elizabeth Sauer, and *Why Nietzsche Still?* (2000), edited by Alan D. Schrift; and in the anthology *Political Writings of Friedrich Nietzsche* (2008), by Canadian scholars Frank Cameron and Don Dombowsky. These studies have looked at the agonal problematic in Nietzsche's work in

---

[11] Alan D. Schrift, *Nietzsche and the Question of Interpretation*. *Between Hermeneutics and Deconstruction* (NY, London : Routledge, 1990) 193.

[12] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Homers Wettkampf," 789.

epistemological,[13] aesthetic or cultural,[14] but mostly in political terms.[15] As for the significance of agonistics for education in Nietzsche's thought, Timothy F. Murphy, in his study *Nietzsche as Educator*, has identified the contest as "the pivotal element of educational practice."[16] Nietzsche scholarship has yet to explore, however, the implications of the agonal problematic for Nietzsche's writing itself and for the act of reading Nietzsche, which is what this dissertation will do.

Nietzsche's ethics of reading is inextricably linked to Zarathustra's (in)famous claim according to which *God is dead*. The death of God is also that of the author, which is implicit in Nietzsche's work long before postmodern theory. Jean-François Lyotard defines the postmodern condition as "l'incrédulité à l'égard des métarécits."[17] The postmodern is suspicious of religious and philosophical metanarratives (amongst others), which propose teleological readings of the world, the function of which is to legitimize the very existence of religious and philosophical discourses. Close readings of *Also sprach Zarathustra* and *Ecce Homo* will show that Nietzsche undermines Western religious and philosophical (meta)narratives by undermining not only their teleological

---

[13] See, for instance, Christa Davis Acampora, "Nietzsche's Agonal Wisdom," *International Studies in Philosophy* 35 (3) (2003): 163-182.

[14] See, for instance, Herman Siemens, "Agonal Configurations in the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*. Identity, Mimesis and the *Übertragung* of Cultures in Nietzsche's Early Thought," *Nietzsche-Studien* 30 (2001): 80-106.

[15] See for instance, Fredrick Appel, *Nietzsche contra Democracy* (Ithaca, NY : Cornell University Press, 1999), Lawrence J. Hatab, « Prospects for a Democratic *Agon* : *Why We Can Still Be Nietzscheans*, » *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 24 (2002) : 132-147, Herman Siemens, « Nietzsche *contra* Liberalism on Freedom, » *A Companion to Nietzsche*, Ed. K. Ansell Pearson (Oxford : Blackwell Publishing, 2006) : 437-454, and Frank Cameron and Don Dombowsky, eds., *Political Writings of Friedrich Nietzsche. An Edited Anthology* (New York : Palgrave MacMillan, 2008).

[16] Timothy F. Murphy, *Nietzsche as Educator* (Lanham, NY, London : University Press of America, 1984) 4.

[17] Jean-François Lyotard, *La Condition postmoderne. Rapport sur le savoir* (Paris : Les Éditions de Minuit, 1979) 7.

postulates and their distinction between true and apparent worlds, but also their authoritative and authorial fallacies, their prohibitions, imperatives, and assertions. Nietzsche could not attack the Western tradition without attacking the Western written tradition itself: in a world in which God is dead, the author is doomed. If God, as supreme authority, is challenged and rebuked, how could the human, all-too human author not be subjected to the same scrutiny?

My analysis of these issues – of the relationship, in Nietzsche's work, between the death of God and that of the author, that is: between Nietzsche's revaluation of values and his ethics of reading – will revolve around a particular narrative or story which has influenced, for the last two thousand years, those very (meta)narratives which Nietzsche undermines in *Also sprach Zarathustra*, namely: the myth of the fall of man, the story of Adam and Eve, of their sin and their lost paradise. Nietzsche undermines these (meta)narratives by rewriting the fall in his philosophical tale. My interpretation of *Also sprach Zarathustra* will focus on what leads to and culminates in the chapter "Der Genesende," which I will show to be Nietzsche's response to Genesis: Zarathustra's journey is a journey away from the teleological views of history and dualistic views of the world which have prevailed in our 'fallen' world, leading (back) to a Garden beyond good and evil, to the paradise regained depicted in "Der Genesende."[18]

In the context of a revaluation of values, Nietzsche cannot ignore the significance and importance of the biblical myth of the fall: it has shaped the way in which the Western world conceives of itself and of certain phenomena and experiences which

[18] The importance of the chapter "Der Genesende," a chapter replete with intertextual references to Genesis, cannot be underestimated. John Carson Pettey indicates that the first recognizable narratorial passage in Nietzsche's notes written in preparation for what would become *Also sprach Zarathustra* is a narrative that sets the stage for this very chapter. See John Carson Pettey, *Nietzsche's Philosophical and Narrative Styles* (N.Y. : Lang, 1992) 65.

Nietzsche investigates in his work and that are central to his project, such as knowledge and emancipation, as well as reading.

I will thus use the chapter "Der Genesende," from *Also sprach Zarathustra*, as case study. The second and third chapters of this study will contextualize "Der Genesende," and in the fourth one I will propose close readings of it. I will investigate how Nietzsche presents Zarathustra's teachings of the *Übermensch* and eternal return, showing that these teachings are entwined, as it were: they cannot be thought separately, there must be an interplay or interaction between the two. This entwinement comes to light in the chapter "Der Genesende." I will show that Nietzsche's narrative strategies function as pedagogical tools directed not only against Platonism, Christianity, and Kantian thought, but also against the ethics of reading which arose from these traditions. Nietzsche's call for a revaluation of values, which grows out of his critique of these traditions, is also a call for a revaluation of the very acts of writing and reading. In the fifth chapter of this study, I will investigate this further, concentrating on Nietzsche's early views on language, education, and agonistics, views which informed his later work, and, as such, I will end this chapter with readings of *Ecce Homo*. If "Der Genesende" parodies Genesis 3, which stands at one end of the Christian eschatological narrative, *Ecce Homo* will be shown to undermine the other end of Christian eschatology and its philosophical pendant, the philosophy of history (*Geschichtsphilosophie*), by rehabilitating, as it were, the character of Pilate, whose scepticism Nietzsche can recuperate for his ethics of reading, as I will show.

It must be said, at this point, that the fall itself is by no means an exclusively Judeo-Christian trope. The **second chapter** of this study, concerned with paradigms of

the fall, will thus start with an analysis of the vertical movement of the soul and of the distinction between true and apparent worlds, as found in *Phaedrus* and in *The Republic*'s parable of the cave. Plato's subject is plagued by a forgotten knowledge which must be recovered and which, once recovered, enables him to elevate his soul to a *high* and *true* realm (however briefly, as the soul's journey, according to Plato, is one of constant ascents and descents). The Christian subject, in contrast, fell from grace because of an (emancipatory) act of disobedience leading to the acquisition of a forbidden knowledge which will keep him in a state of servitude until the Christian savior redeems him. In spite of major differences in their assessments of the value of knowledge and emancipation, Platonic philosophy and Christian thought share a few, important features. Both postulate a world of concepts and ideas, on the one hand, and a deceiving world of appearances, on the other – a dualistic view of the world which has had dire consequences on our relationship to the body, for instance. Both praise what I would call a *disembodied knowledge*, a knowledge that is cerebral or spiritual, never sensual or material. My analysis of the Platonic narrative of the fall will thus highlight features from Platonic philosophy which will later influence Christian interpretations of the myth of the fall, lending credence to Nietzsche's claim according to which "Christenthum ist Platonismus für's Volk."[19] Nietzsche's own treatment of the fall will oppose both Platonic and Christian narratives.

In an age of growing secularization, the story of Adam and Eve could still inspire a Western world entering modernity: the philosophical discourse of Enlightenment and Idealism, in the wake of early scientific discoveries and inventions, came up with its own

[19] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Jenseits von Gut und Böse," *KSA 5*, Eds. G. Colli, and M. Montinari (München: DTV, 1999) 12.

narrative of knowledge and emancipation, interpreting the story of Adam and Eve as humankind's fortunate fall into an emancipatory knowledge. In this second chapter, after my discussion of the fall in Platonic philosophy and Christianity, I will provide a brief survey of the modern reception of the myth of the fall, a survey indebted to Odo Marquard's essay "Felix Culpa? – Bemerkungen zu einem Applikationsschicksal von Genesis 3," in which Marquard investigates how modernity, from the early period on to Romanticism, has interpreted the story of the fall of man. I will then offer a more detailed analysis of Kant's treatment of the myth of the fall and a brief overview of his contribution to the narrative of knowledge and emancipation, by proposing readings of his texts *Mutmasslicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte*, *Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?* and *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*.

Why Kant – and not Hegel, for instance, who wrote about the fall in numerous texts?[20] Because Nietzsche, in his work, repeatedly draws a line between Platonic philosophy, Christian thought, and the Kantian Enlightenment project, as this study will show. Kant's take on the myth of the fall will be shown to be radically different from those of his predecessors: in a bold move by Kant, Adam is cast in the role of Creator, turning Christian eschatology into a secular philosophy of history, as Marquard explains, who calls this Kant's "*Radikaltheodizee durch die autonomistische Emanzipationsphilosophie.*"[21] For all its radicality, the Kantian narrative of knowledge

[20] For an overview and a discussion of passages in Hegel's œuvre in which he discusses the myth of the fall, see Elfriede Lämmerzahl, *Der Sündenfall in der Philosophie des deutschen Idealismus* (Berlin : Junker und Dünnhaupt, 1934).

[21] Odo Marquard, "Felix Culpa? – Bemerkungen zu einem Applikationsschicksal von Genesis 3," *Poetik und Hermeneutik. Text und Applikation. Theologie, Jurisprudenz und Literaturwissenschaft im hermeneutischen Gespräch*, Eds. M. Fuhrmann, H.R. Jauß, and W. Pannenberg (München: Wilhelm Fink, 1981) 56.

and emancipation fails to correct what Nietzsche deems to be a mistake that runs from Plato to the Christian scriptures and on to Kant, and which I would sum up as follows: the devaluation of the worldly for the sake of the otherworldly.[22] It is that mistake which Nietzsche tries to correct as he rewrites the fall in *Also sprach Zarathustra*.

I must indicate, at this point, that my readings of the Platonic, Judeo-Christian, and Kantian texts discussed here will focus on elements which Nietzsche criticized and decried, elements against which he devised his own (counter)narrative of emancipation. My readings do not pretend to do justice, as it were, to the complexities of these texts - just as Nietzsche's readings of them did not, one could argue. Nietzsche would have been the first to admit that his interpretations of these texts of the Western religious and philosophical canon were not meant to do justice to them, as it were, but rather served a specific function: to educate the reader against (these) texts and (their) textual assertions. Thus, the point, here, is not to try to justify or rectify Nietzsche's interpretations of these texts; I rather attempt to identify elements in these texts which Nietzsche deemed problematic and which he, fairly or unfairly, attacked.

Rewriting the fall, for Nietzsche, does not only mean proposing a different narrative: it also means proposing a different way to write and read narratives. This is what I meant when I wrote earlier that I was interested in the relationship, in Nietzsche's work, between the death of God and that of the author, between his revaluation of values and his ethics of reading. What is characteristic of *the Western tradition*,[23] that is of Plato,

---

[22] See the chapter called "Wie die 'wahre Welt' endlich zur Fabel wurde. Geschichte eines Irrthums" in Nietzsche, "Götzen-Dämmerung," 80-81.

[23] I use the expression *Western tradition* here to sum up a plurality of voices which, in Nietzsche's view, form but one discourse, as Bernd Magnus remarks: "How extraordinary to speak as though there were *a* Western philosophy, *a* Western religion, *a* Western morality, we thought. Had we not spent years learning to distinguish between, say, Plato, Hume, and Kant; Judaism, Roman Catholicism, and Protestantism;

Christianity, and Kant is not only the devaluation of the worldly for the sake of the otherworldly. They also share a certain other trait, which Nietzsche harshly criticizes. To put it boldly and undoubtedly a bit unfairly: these doctrines attempt to close up certain avenues of interpretation, they try to guide or direct the reader's reception and interpretation of a text.[24] By contrast, Nietzsche, as mentioned above, devises a style by means of which he agonistically invites his reader to criticize, refute, and oppose him, writing books that, as Murphy writes, "beautifully exemplify the spirit of the contest between master and student, between author and reader."[25]

The Platonic, Christian and Kantian texts and/or readings of texts do not invite the reader to step into the ring, leaving (too) little room for movement and (too) little to the imagination. Of course, these texts have been contested. What interests me here is what Nietzsche claims that these texts imply with regard to the act of reading: he claims that they use narrative strategies which attempt to foreclose possibilities of interpretations. Nietzsche writes, for instance, that Plato is boring - "Plato ist langweilig:"[26] the Platonic dialogue is an "entsetzlich selbstgefällige und kindliche Art Dialektik"[27] and dialectics itself is the weapon of the weak who wishes to render his opponent harmless.[28] What

---

utilitarianism, emotivism, and prescriptivism? We were now being told that, in effect, these differences are superficial. We were being told that these differences do not make *the* difference." Bernd Magnus, *Nietzsche's Existential Imperative* (Bloomington & London: Indiana University Press, 1978) 42.

[24] Northrop Frye explains that great doctrinal structures "are designed to establish the claim: this is what our central revelation really means, and this is how you have to understand it." See Northrop Frye, *The Great Code. The Bible and Literature* (NY, London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982) 226.

[25] Murphy, 48.

[26] Nietzsche, "Götzen-Dämmerung," 155.

[27] Ibid., 155.

[28] Ibid., 70.

Nietzsche is calling to our attention here, amongst other things, is a certain discrepancy between content and form in Platonic dialogues and Socratic dialectics. The dialogue form in Plato has been interpreted as inherently open-ended, but, as John M. Cooper indicates, "all Plato's dialogues do have a principal speaker, one who establishes the topic of discussion and presides over it."[29] It is fascinating, upon reading *Phaedrus* and the parable of the cave, to realize how the figure of the educator is directing the pupil's thought process, as I will show - the authoritarian form of the discourse undermining to a certain extent its emancipatory content.

As for the institution of the Church, from Saint Paul to Saint Augustine, it has always been the champion of imposed readings and interpretations. The Roman Catholic Church was quick to select a canon and dismiss from it texts which threatened its own spiritual and material power. It never hesitated to burn at the stake those who proposed unorthodox readings of the scriptures. It picked, chose, and imposed elements from the scriptures which reinforced its own power, such as the commandments and beatitudes; it was protective of its message, refraining from translating the Bible into vernacular languages and from giving it to all to read (up until Luther's protest). A critical reader is a threat to the Church, as reading is knowledge and knowledge is power - hence Nietzsche's harsh statement regarding the nature of original sin, from a Christian perspective: "Die Wissenschaft ist das Verbotene an sich, - sie allein ist verboten. Die Wissenschaft ist die *erste* Sünde, der Keim aller Sünde, die *Erb*sünde."[30] After my readings of Plato, I will thus look at how Saint Paul and Saint Augustine tried to fix the

---

[29] John M. Cooper, Introduction, *Plato. Complete Works*, Eds. J.M. Cooper, and D.S. Hutchinson (Indianapolis/Cambridge : Hackett Publishing Company, 1997) xxi.

[30] Nietzsche, "Götzen-Dämmerung," 227.

meaning of Genesis 3, turning a complex, elusive, and evocative story into a dogmatic lecture on original sin. Saint Augustine's concept of original sin serves the Church's worldly designs, as Elaine Pagels explains: reading and interpreting Genesis 3 as the story of a humankind that is forever flawed enables the Church to justify its own existence (as well as certain exactions it imposed onto its flock), as a helpless humankind is in need of the Church, as mediator of divine grace, if it is to be redeemed.[31] This is what Nietzsche understood: reading and interpreting are exercises in power. The Church has always known this, ruling over the Christian message with an iron fist, claiming lordship, for its God and thus for itself, over writing and reading from the very beginning, as the Gospel of John reveals: "Im Anfang war das Wort, und das Wort war bei Gott, und Gott war das Wort."[32] [33]

Nietzsche's critique of Kant is directed at what he sees as Kant's failure to challenge this Christian dictatorship of the word. Kant, whom Nietzsche calls an underhanded Christian[34] and unconscious counterfeiter,[35] undertakes a rigorous philosophical inquiry into knowledge and its limits "um Raum für *sein* 'moralisches Reich' zu schaffen,"[36] Nietzsche claims. Nietzsche, whose own project radically

---

[31] See the chapter "The Politics of Paradise" in Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* (N.Y. : Vintage Books, 1989).

[32] *Das neue Testament*, Tr. Martin Luther (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1999) 107.

[33] Regarding the scriptures themselves, Northrop Frye writes: "The Bible deliberately blocks off the sense of the self-referential from itself: it is not a book pointing to a historical presence outside it, but a book that identifies itself with that presence. At the end the reader, also, is invited to identify himself with the book." See Frye, 137-38.

[34] Nietzsche, "Götzen-Dämmerung," 79.

[35] Nietzsche, "Ecce Homo," 361.

[36] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Morgenröte,"*KSA 3*, Eds. G. Colli, and M. Montinari (München : DTV, 1999) 14.

challenges (Christian) morality, investigating its origins and functions, criticizes Kant for what he sees as a manipulation of philosophy for the sake of moral imperatives. These are no more than philosophical paraphrases of Christian tenets, in Nietzsche's view. Nietzsche never tires of denouncing Kant's categorical imperative, this absolute practical law which, as Kant concludes in *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, reason cannot grasp or apprehend, lest it cease to be a moral law.[37] The categorical imperative is a glaring example, according to Nietzsche, of Kant's *Falschmünzerei* as Enlightenment philosopher: Kant's narrative of knowledge and emancipation rests on moral imperatives, such as the categorical imperative, which render reason moot. Humankind's fall into an emancipatory knowledge paradoxically culminates in a leap of faith.

This second chapter will thus show how the fall is (re)presented in Platonic, Christian, and Kantian texts, in order to highlight the elements of those narratives which Nietzsche criticized, namely not only their inherent teleology and their distinction between true and apparent worlds, but also the disempowering quality of their discourses. In his work, Nietzsche will attack those traditions, calling for a revaluation of values and a new ethics of reading which will both seek to empower the individual and reader.

The **third chapter** of this study will set the stage for my subsequent interpretation of Nietzsche's treatment of the fall in *Also sprach Zarathustra*. By means of this chapter, I wish to acknowledge that some of the most critical voices in the German literary sphere of the nineteenth century could be said to have laid the groundwork for Nietzsche's counternarrative of the fall, of which he conceives in opposition to the Platonic, Christian, and Kantian fall narratives. Recognizing the extraordinary influence which fall

---

[37] Immanuel Kant, "Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten," *Schriften zur Ethik und Religionsphilosophie. Werke in sechs Bänden, Bd. IV*, Ed. W. Weischedel (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1956) 101-102.

narratives have had on the shaping of modern consciousness, Friedrich Schiller in *Wilhelm Tell*, Heinrich von Kleist in *Das Erdbeben in Chili*, and Heinrich Heine in his poems "Hortense IV" and "Seraphine VII" rewrite the myth of the fall in order to highlight the highly theoretical, abstract, and disembodied quality of religious and philosophical fall narratives, in a way which anticipates Nietzsche.

Schiller's play *Wilhelm Tell* poignantly brings to light the abstract quality of the *Erziehung zur Mündigkeit* (education to maturity or autonomy) which Schiller, as Kant before him, celebrated in theoretical essays. Wilhelm Tell's education to maturity or autonomy (after his 'fall' in the third act) involves murder. Had he lived in accordance with Kant's categorical imperative, according to which one ought to act only according to a maxim which one would want to become a universal law, a situation of tyranny would have endured. Nietzsche once wrote that Kant's categorical imperative smelled of cruelty:[38] for Tell (and his fellow citizens) to abide by Kant's imperative would have been worthy of the worst Christian self-mortifications. In *Wilhelm Tell*, Schiller shows the disembodied quality of Enlightenment's and Idealism's narrative of knowledge and emancipation, in comparison to a human, all-too human reality.

Kleist's short story *Das Erdbeben in Chili* could be described as a tragic depiction of the limits of reason. Human consciousness, may it be that of the lovers Jeronimo and Josephe or that of the mob which executes them, is entangled in a mesh of desires, beliefs, assumptions, intuitions, pulsions, feelings – a state of affairs which Nietzsche, decades later, will never tire of reminding the reader. As such, human consciousness could never succeed in bringing about - and holding on to - the new Eden

[38] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Zur Genealogie der Moral," *KSA 5*, Eds. G. Colli, and M. Montinari (München : DTV, 1999) 300.

which moderns wished to (re)create, and of which Kleist gives a fleeting vision in his short story. Kleist's text testifies to the shortcomings of human reason and to the tragic consequences of these shortcomings on a couple's dream of freedom.

Heinrich Heine's poems "Hortense IV" and "Seraphine VII" offer the utopian vision of a humankind which emancipates itself from the teleological and dualistic views which have shaped the Western world. In the former poem, a snake offers a woman from the tree of life, a gesture which will redefine her relationship to her body and immanence. In the latter poem, a couple of lovers is shown to have overcome the Christian debasement of matter; theirs is a whole new Testament which celebrates a humankind that has discovered a pantheistic divine, including that which dwells within itself. Heine provides a narrative of emancipation which, as opposed to the theoretical, abstract, and disembodied narrative of Enlightenment and Idealism, is rooted in sensualism and materialism - a revaluation of values which Nietzsche could only admire.[39]

In this third chapter, I thus wish to show that Schiller, Kleist, and Heine, before Nietzsche, undermined religious and philosophical (meta)narratives by rewriting the myth of the fall. Schiller and Kleist rewrote the fall in a way which highlighted the entanglements of reason and the paradoxes of the movement for emancipation, bringing to light the limits of human consciousness and the tragic gap between idyllic ideals and a wretched reality. Heine's treatment of the fall underscored certain mistakes that were made as humankind abode by the Christian reading of the biblical fall; Heine proposed to root the human experience in altogether different grounds, emancipating the flesh which suffered too long under the yoke of destructive worldviews. Elements of these critiques or attacks against Christianity and against a philosophical narrative of knowledge and

[39] Indeed, Nietzsche was a great admirer of Heine and of his "göttliche Bosheit," see "Ecce Homo," 286.

emancipation which owes too much to Christian tenets will find their way into Nietzsche's own treatment of the fall in *Also sprach Zarathustra*.

Nietzsche's originality (although he would certainly greet this term with a mocking smile) lies, in my view, in the fact that he offers a (counter)narrative of emancipation which simultaneously attacks the views and tenets of religious and philosophical fall narratives *as well* as the forms which these narratives take and what these forms imply with regard to the act of reading, devising a style that opposes these forms. By the time Nietzsche was born, the death of God had already been announced - by Heine, for one.[40] The originality of Nietzsche's project, as revealed, amongst others, by his treatment of the fall in *Also sprach Zarathustra*, is that he understood and exposed that God and the author were but one character. One cannot challenge truth, may it be religious or philosophical, without challenging the means by which one disseminates this truth. Nietzsche's philosophical crusade against truth must also be a philological and literary crusade.

That a growing incredulity toward metanarratives, to use the previously quoted coinage by Lyotard, has repercussions on literary narratives is what Linda Hutcheon demonstrates in her study *A Poetics of Postmodernism. History, Theory, Fiction*. Some of her examples, which I will briefly discuss here, are of great relevance in the context of a study of Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra*. Hutcheon writes, for instance, that certain literary forms, better suited to the playfully sceptical attitude of postmodernism, become more prevalent in postmodern narratives, such as parody, which she calls "a perfect postmodern form, in some senses, for it paradoxically both incorporates and challenges

[40] Heinrich Heine, *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland* (Stuttgart : Philipp Reclam jun., 1997) 90.

that which it parodies."[41] Certain literary tenets such as "the notion of authorial originality and authority"[42] are contested by postmodern texts, writes Hutcheon. As genre, the postmodern novel, for example, questions concepts which are constitutive of its modern pendant, such as teleology and causality:[43] just as postmodern theory challenges notions of teleology and causality, postmodern novels oft relinquish linear plot or character development in favor of a more fragmented storyline or character depiction, for instance. What Hutcheon brings to our attention is that the postmodern challenge to modernity is embedded within the very form of its discourse.

In the **fourth chapter** of this dissertation, I will examine the poetics of Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra*, a text in which the reader finds features which Hutcheon ascribes to postmodern narratives. Firstly, it is replete with parodical elements, the most obvious ones relating, of course, to Judeo-Christian scriptures. Secondly, Zarathustra is constantly making assertions which undermine his own authority, thus indirectly undermining that of Nietzsche's text. Furthermore, *Also sprach Zarathustra* exhibits features associated with the postmodern novel, such as the relinquishment of linear plot and character development; as such, one could argue that Nietzsche's text is not only a parody of the Bible, a commonplace in Nietzsche scholarship, but also a parody of the *Bildungsroman*, the genre *par excellence* of modernity's narrative of knowledge and emancipation.

---

[41] Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism. History, Theory, Fiction* (N.Y., London : Routledge, 1988) 11.

[42] Ibid., xii.

[43] Ibid., 90.

The relationship of Nietzsche's text to the Bible is, as Pettey writes, "one commonplace that rarely escapes more extensive critical works on *Zarathustra*."[44] The nature of this relationship is parodical, as Nietzsche subverts and undermines the Biblical message while playing "with biblical models of speech and narrative conventions."[45] Sander Gilman states that parody is, for Nietzsche, "the creative mode par excellence," explaining that "the artist as creator functions parodically in relationship to all rigorous structuring."[46] An example might help us understand what Gilman means. In the chapter "Von alten und neuen Tafeln," Zarathustra provides the reader with new tablets. The reader is reminded of the Biblical tablets listing the Ten Commandments. What Zarathustra offers, however, are "neue halb beschriebene Tafeln:"[47] they do not dictate imperatives in the rigorously structured way of the Ten Commandments. Nietzsche opens up, as it were, the form of the tablet: as opposed to its Biblical variant, the Nietzschean tablet may or must be supplemented by the pupil and the reader. This is but one example of a parodical moment in Nietzsche's text, a moment in which he incorporates and challenges that which he parodies, to use Hutcheon's definition of parody.

The story of Zarathustra can also be interpreted, as previously mentioned, as parody of the *Bildungsroman*. Rolf Selbmann, in a study of the *Bildungsroman*, explores the works of scholars who have provided us with definitions of this genre. A few definitions resonate with the Zarathustra reader, for instance that according to which

---

[44] Pettey, 113.

[45] Ibid., 115.

[46] Sander L. Gilman, *Nietzschean Parody. An Introduction to Reading Nietzsche* (Bonn : Bouvier Verlag Herbert Grundmann, 1976) 17.

[47] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Also sprach Zarathustra," *KSA 4*, Eds. G. Colli, and M. Montinari (München : DTV, 1999) 246.

"nicht nur der Held, auch der Leser des Romans soll gebildet werden,"[48] or that which explains that a *Bildungsroman* depicts the "Spannungsverhältnis"[49] between individual and society. It is clear that these are elements which Nietzsche incorporated in his work. What differs, however, regards an essential feature of the *Bildungsroman*, namely its triadic structure, which led one scholar quoted by Selbmann to designate the *Bildungsroman* as "säkularisierte Heilsgeschichte."[50] The *Bildungsroman* typically portrays a character's *Erziehung zur Mündigkeit*. Kathleen Marie Higgins writes, regarding the character of Zarathustra, that it is "the strides forward toward maturity that mark him as the protagonist of a *Bildungsroman*."[51] I would claim that Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra* might actually be prefiguring the genre of the *Umbildungsroman* or *Entbildungsroman* which will flourish in the twentieth century (one of the most splendid examples of which being Thomas Mann's novel *Der Zauberberg*). Zarathustra does not get educated as Goethe's Wilhelm Meister does, for instance, who experiences much before returning to the comforting bourgeois fold. Zarathustra rather undergoes a profound transformation which will make him question and revaluate the very nature of education, the function of the educator and the role of the pupil, and strategies for the transmission of knowledge. This could make Nietzsche's text a *Bildungsroman* on a meta-level, as it were. What makes it a parody of it, is the lack of a triadic structure culminating in redemption: there is no *telos*, and with that, Nietzsche undermines this genre which exemplifies the philosophy of Enlightenment and Idealism.

---

[48] Rolf Selbmann, *Der deutsche Bildungsroman* (Stuttgart : Metzler, 1984) 10.

[49] Ibid., 17.

[50] Ibid., 23.

[51] Kathleen Marie Higgins, *Nietzsche's Zarathustra* (Philadelphia : Temple University Press, 1987) 100.

An important parodic moment in Nietzsche's text, the chapter "Der Genesende," will be that around which my interpretation of *Also sprach Zarathustra* will revolve: as previously mentioned, I will show "Der Genesende" to be Nietzsche's response to Genesis 3 and Enlightenment and Idealism fall narratives. In this chapter, Zarathustra undergoes a healing process. He finds himself in a garden which is reminiscent of the Garden of Eden, as its depiction is laden with intertextual references to Genesis. This chapter is of utmost importance, as Laurence Lampert indicates: "This chapter presents Zarathustra's redemption. It also solves the riddle of 'On the Vision and the Riddle' (III. 2) and gives the most direct statement of the meaning of eternal return."[52] Zarathustra, whose first words to the crowd on the marketplace were "*ich lehre euch den Übermenschen*,"[53] now becomes "*der Lehrer der ewigen Wiederkunft*,"[54] as his animals put it. Regarding this latter teaching, Lampert writes:

> It seems to me that one of the greatest single causes of the misinterpretation of Nietzsche's teaching is the failure to see that the clearly provisional teaching on the superman is rendered obsolete by the clearly definitive teaching on eternal return.[55]

The transition then, from one teaching to the other, would take place in the chapter "Der Genesende." How does this chapter relate to the two teachings? Why and how does it mark the transition between the two? Why must this transition take place in a chapter in which the Garden of Eden is being parodied? What could be the relationship between

---

[52] Laurence Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teaching. An Interpretation of 'Thus Spoke Zarathustra'* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1986) 211.

[53] Nietzsche, "Also sprach Zarathustra," 14.

[54] Ibid., 275.

[55] Lampert, 258.

Nietzsche's depiction of Zarathustra's healing garden and the Garden of Eden, the site of the fall? How does this chapter in particular and Nietzsche's text in general relate to Platonic, Christian, Kantian fall narratives?

To answer these questions, I will focus on depictions of movements and the lack thereof in Nietzsche's text, comparing them to depictions of movements found in Platonic, Christian and Kantian fall narratives. My use of the term *movement* is both literal and metaphorical: in these texts, movements of the body allude to movements of the mind. Depictions of movements are used in all these texts to express and promote certain views regarding knowledge, morality, and/or teleology, issues that are central to Nietzsche's revaluation of values and ethics of reading. Depictions of movements in Platonic, Christian, and Kantian texts share one feature which is especially relevant here: these depictions of movements partake in a discourse which *undermines* the possibility of emancipating oneself by means of the movements of one's body or mind.

Platonic, Christian, and Kantian fall narratives do not depict movements as emancipatory experiences. The soul's journey, in Plato's *Phaedrus*, is a vertical one, it is one of ascents and descents; a close reading of the parable of the cave reveals a similar structure, as the journey out of the cave and into the light is depicted as a vertical one. Close readings of selected passages (provided in the second chapter) will have shown that this division of the world into high and low provides a vision of the world by which the individual and reader ought to abide: the former (the high, true world) is that toward which one ought to strive. The direction to be taken is thus indicated or imposed, rather than freely chosen by one. This division of the world into high and low influenced early Christian readings of Genesis 3, such as that of Philo of Alexandria (discussed in the

second chapter), who suggested that original sin led to the fall of man, that is to a vertical movement downward for which there is no actual textual evidence in the original text. This vertical movement must be redeemed and the Christian Church provides tenets which one must follow if one is to take the only desirable direction, that is: *up* (and back to God). The categories of high and low will be challenged by Kant, who interprets the myth of the fall as the first step of a journey which unfolds in a rather linear way. It is not a journey of ascents and descents, as in Plato or as in the Bible. Kant uses terms which do not evoke verticality but rather a linear progression, such as *erster Schritt*, *Fortschritt* and *Fortschreiten*,[56] terms which bespeak steps, progress, and advancement. Kant's vision is that of a march which is not be halted or redirected lest it be "ein Verbrechen wider die menschliche Natur, deren ursprüngliche Bestimmung gerade in diesem Fortschreiten besteht."[57] Here, as in Plato and as in Biblical texts, the direction is given and deviations are not encouraged. The movements depicted by all these texts cannot be said to be emancipatory.

In *Also sprach Zarathustra*, Nietzsche offers a narrative which promotes the idea of emancipatory movements. Depictions of movements, and the lack thereof, abound in Nietzsche's text. They help define Zarathustra's teachings: the tightrope walker, for instance, helps illustrate the teaching of the *Übermensch*, whereas the contortions of the black snake are associated with eternal return. These teachings have always been the subject of heated debates in Nietzsche scholarship. There is an apparent contradiction

---

[56] Immanuel Kant, "Mutmasslicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte," *Werke in sechs Bänden, Bd. VI*, Ed. W. Weischedel (Darmstadt : Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964) 92-3

[57] Immanuel Kant, "Beantwortung der Frage : Was ist Aufklärung?," *Werke in sechs Bänden, Bd. VI*, Ed. W. Weischedel (Darmstadt : Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964) 58.

between the two which has been baffling interpreters as far back as Georg Simmel, as Ansell Pearson writes: "The overman ideal seems to require a linear conception of time, while the doctrine of the eternal return presupposes a circular, or cyclical, notion of time."[58] When one starts paying attention, however, to the depictions of movements used by Zarathustra to present these teachings, it becomes clear that such readings do not do justice to the actual text, which reveals the interactive quality of these teachings: they cannot be thought separately, one cannot linger by one or the other, they presuppose, supplement, undermine and underpin each other eternally, as I will show. It seems to me that one of the greatest single causes of the misinterpretation of Nietzsche's teaching is *not*, as Lampert writes, the failure to recognize that the teaching of eternal return is the *clearly definitive* one. It is rather the failure to admit that Nietzsche's text makes it impossible for the reader to decide whether this or that teaching is the *clearly definitive* one. Zarathustra's teachings, the entwinement of which comes to light by means of depictions of movements, induce a movement in the mind of the pupil and reader, who cannot dwell very long by one or the other.

Postmodern readings of Nietzsche have insisted on the unreadability of Nietzsche's texts, on this difficulty or impossibility to identify anything at all that is *definitive* in Nietzsche's work: even though my own readings of Nietzsche are informed and to a certain extent inspired by postmodern contributions to Nietzsche scholarship, I would not agree with, say, Derrida's claim that one ought to consider that "la totalité du texte de Nietzsche est peut-être, énormément, du type "j'ai oublié mon parapluie"."[59] a

---

[58] Ansell Pearson, *An Introduction to Nietzsche as Political Thinker*, 116.

[59] Jacques Derrida, *Éperons. Les Styles de Nietzsche* (Paris : Flammarion, 1978) 112.

provocative claim which, I believe, robs Nietzsche's thought of its educational *intent*, a word which, in our field, has been shunned in the wake of postmodern thought. Postmodern scholarship has provided us with invaluable insights with regard to literary exegesis, but, in Nietzsche's case, it neglects to address this preoccupation with education which permeates his work, as if it were no longer legitimate to reflect upon the vital question of education and the transmission of knowledge once one had asserted the unreadability of texts. This problem is the crux of Nietzsche's thought. His ethics of reading proposes a way out of this cul-de-sac. My discussion, in this fourth chapter, of the interplay or interaction between Zarathustra's teachings will show that it enables Nietzsche to avoid providing the reader with clearly definitive teachings which would bring the reader to a standstill, whereas it is movement, in Nietzsche's thought, which is educational and emancipatory.

An analysis of passages in which Zarathustra confronts the spirit of gravity will help clarify this: Zarathustra despises the spirit of gravity as it induces stasis, turning his teachings into dogmas, truths, petrified or mummified knowledge. Zarathustra's journey down his mountain is interpreted by Lampert as "a descent to the things of the earth that gives them weight and importance again."[60] It is gravity which, literally and metaphorically, attracts Zarathustra. Gravity has an impact on the movement of his body: he descends from his mountain. It has an impact on the movement of his mind: gravity gives weight to things, it makes things significant again. By itself, gravity is not the enemy: the spirit of gravity is. It endows things with so much weight that it makes movement difficult, if not impossible. The spirit of gravity is not associated with one

[60] Lampert, 10.

teaching or the other: it is the danger that threatens any teaching. It is that which transforms knowledge into a web that ensnares one.

As such, the spider in *Also sprach Zarathustra* will be shown to serve the spirit of gravity. In *Der Antichrist*, Nietzsche alternately refers to God, the priest, and Kant as spiders,[61] indicating that, in his view, they all spin webs to catch prey. Zarathustra alludes to this very idea as he speaks, alternately, of a "Kreuzspinne"[62] and a "Vernunft-Spinne"[63] (as will be further explored in that fourth chapter). The spider, in *Also sprach Zarathustra*, is in the service of the spirit of gravity: it spins a web, that is a system of assertions which is so tightly spun (by their authors and/or authorized interpreters in the case of the Church) that it leaves no room for movement. This is the danger that threatens Zarathustra's teachings when one tries to capture or grasp them without any regard to their constant undermining and underpinning of one another : these teachings too run the risk of turning into webs, inducing stasis in pupils and readers alike.

If we pause for a moment and consider how Nietzsche scholarship has dealt with Zarathustra's teachings, we see a tendency, amongst Nietzsche scholars, to identify one teaching as the one which takes precedence over the other. It is necessary at this point to briefly discuss this, in order to contextualize the present endeavour, which does not side with either teaching. It is fascinating to observe the shift that took place in the scholarly reception of Zarathustra's teachings over the last decades. When one reads Walter Kaufmann's seminal study *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, first

---

[61] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Der Antichrist," *KSA 6*, Eds. G. Colli, and M. Montinari (München : DTV, 1999) 178, 184, 210.

[62] Nietzsche, "Also sprach Zarathustra," 228.

[63] Ibid., 209.

published in 1950, one comes across the following statement in the chapter on the *Übermensch* and eternal recurrence: "The two conceptions have seemed contradictory to many readers, and most interpreters of Nietzsche's thought have simply disregarded the recurrence."[64] Kaufmann explains that many commentators thought that Nietzsche's *Übermensch* symbolized a belief in endless progress, an interpretation which was then, of course, irreconcilable with eternal recurrence. Kaufmann argues against such interpretations but he feels nonetheless justified in writing, regarding Nietzsche and eternal return: "Why did he value this most dubious doctrine, which was to have no influence to speak of, so extravagantly?"[65] Half a century later, however, Ansell Pearson can state: "Recent interpretations have cast doubt especially on the coherence of the ideal of the overman in Nietzsche's thought."[66] Reasons for this shift need not be further explored here.[67] Suffice it to say that the statements above indicate that Nietzsche scholars, in general, have privileged one teaching over the other. What strikes me, here, beyond which teaching is privileged by whom, is that there seems to be a resistance to the text itself, to the eternal *to and fro* movement between the teachings, which close readings of the text reveal, and to the function of this interaction.

---

[64] Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche : Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (Princeton : Princeton University Press, 1974) 307.

[65] Ibid., 323.

[66] Ansell Pearson, *An Introduction to Nietzsche as Political Thinker*, 102.

[67] Amongst possible reasons, we might have, for instance, the political history of the twentieth-century : contemporary scholars might not want to pay heed to a teaching which was sadly recuperated by fascist leaders and thinkers; the shift might also be due to the fact that more recent scholars have had access to a reliable edition of Nietzsche's texts and notes (his *Nachlass*) which reveal just how important he considered eternal recurrence to be; it might also hint at the contemporary disdain for metanarratives, for teleological narratives (the teaching of the *Übermensch* is oft seen as such a narrative, as will be discussed in the fourth chapter of this study), and at the desire of postmoderns to claim Nietzsche as one of their own.

As previously mentioned, postmodern thinkers have brought to our attention the fact that Nietzsche's style confronts the reader with textual unreadability, indeterminacy, and undecidability. Jacques Derrida, for instance, criticized hermeneutic readings of Nietzsche, claiming that the hermeneutic circle, the movement from the whole to the parts and back, postulates a totality (a center, a truth) that does not seem to be present in Nietzsche's work. Derrida writes that if Nietzsche meant to say anything at all, then it might be that there are limits to what one wants to say.[68] This is a valuable insight, but what does it imply with regard to the act of reading Nietzsche? Gilles Deleuze, in his essay *Pensée nomade*, might provide clues to that effect. Deleuze writes that Nietzsche's style enables him to decodify the world without recodifying it. Deleuze uses the term *déterritorialisation*.[69] The nomad never dwells very long in one place, a nomadic lifestyle is all about movement. The indeterminacy or undecidability arising from Nietzsche's style opens up paths for the reader. Karin Bauer writes that the openness of Nietzsche's style "mirrors the openness and freedom of movement of the reflecting mind that accepts no higher authority."[70] Nietzsche does not delimit a territory and, as such, he does not restrict the reader to a specific space ruled by specific codes. The elusive quality of his work does not invite readers to dwell here or there (by this truth or that one) but rather *to transgress* - a verb which literally means *to go beyond*[71] and which felicitously evokes

---

[68] Derrida, *Éperons. Les Styles de Nietzsche*, 112.

[69] Gilles Deleuze, "Pensée nomade," *Nietzsche aujourd'hui? Tome 1* (Paris : UGE 10/18, 1973) 165.

[70] Karin Bauer, *Adorno's Nietzschean Narratives. Critiques of Ideology, Readings of Wagner* (Albany, N.Y. : State University of New York, 1999) 191-92.

[71] "Transgression," *Online Etymology Dictionary*, July 16, 2008 http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?search=transgression&searchmode=none.

the idea of emancipatory movements present in Nietzsche's work, especially in *Also sprach Zarathustra*.

The Deleuzian interpretation with its movement imagery cues us to a feature of Nietzsche's philosophy which, in my view, postmodern thought ignores too oft: Nietzsche's philosophy provides us with a narrative of emancipation. This aspect of Nietzsche's thought is also dismissed by those who, like Jürgen Habermas, believe that Nietzsche's critique of rationality makes him *postmodern*, a designation which, for Habermas, means *antimodern*, as Bauer explains.[72] Nietzsche's philosophy, as I contend here, may question and challenge several modern tenets; it does propose, however, a narrative of emancipation which is resolutely modern, as his constant preoccupation with education reveals. Bauer can thus write that Nietzsche's critique of the educational system of nineteenth century Germany reveals a "belief in a form of education marked by humanistic concerns for the emancipation of the individual."[73] This will lead Nietzsche to devise a style which truly serves the emancipation of the individual and reader.

As such, the idea of emancipatory movements pervades *Also sprach Zarathustra*. Here, Nietzsche depicts Zarathustra's teachings as interactive, indicating the need for the individual and the reader to move, eternally, from one to the other. This movement is most obvious in the chapter "Der Genesende." This chapter starts with a depiction of a Zarathustra who has come to a standstill, weighed down by the grave thought of eternal return. It ends with a Zarathustra who is ready to experience the productive tension arising between the teachings of the *Übermensch* and of eternal return. At the beginning of this chapter, Zarathustra finds himself in a catatonic state which lasts seven days. He

---

[72] Bauer, *Adorno's Nietzschean Narratives. Critiques of Ideology, Readings of Wagner*, 13.

[73] Ibid., 174.

cannot bear the thought that the small man, whom he despises, will eternally return. The spirit of gravity, to which Zarathustra fell prey, leads to a fatalism which induces stasis: why bother doing anything if everything will eternally return anyway? Hence Zarathustra's static state. However, as he wakes up from his slumber, he explains (by referring to a riddle, that of the chapter "Vom Gesicht und Räthsel") that the teaching of eternal return ought not be conceived as a closed circle in which one is trapped. It is rather a thought experiment by means of which one can give a new direction to one's life, as Nietzsche also explains in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*: the thought experiment of eternal return means that we must ask ourselves whether we would want this life which is ours, here and now, to eternally return – and that we act accordingly.[74] One is not a spectator, trapped in a circle, but rather the artist who imagines and creates the circle, by reflecting, at every point of the circle, in a linear way: what is my goal and how do I work toward it? This linear way of thinking, however, must be, every step of the way, confronted to the imaginary circle of eternal return: would I want this again and again? It is thus no surprise to the reader that the riddle told by Zarathustra to present eternal return and to deny any allegation of fatalism ends with words which announce the *Übermensch*: "Und *wer* ist, der einst noch kommen muss?"[75] What is clearly definitive here seems to be the *interaction* between the two teachings.

Why must the revelation of the interaction between Zarathustra's teachings take place in a chapter, "Der Genesende," in which Genesis is being parodied? In the context of Nietzsche's revaluation of values, this parodic moment undermines Christian

---

[74] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Die fröhliche Wissenschaft," *KSA 3*, Eds. G. Colli, and M. Montinari (München : DTV, 1999) 570.

[75] Nietzsche, "Also sprach Zarathustra," 202.

eschatology, a teleological worldview which Kantian philosophy did not challenge but rather recuperated and secularized as *Geschichtsphilosophie*.[76] Such teleological views are intrinsically tied to dualistic views of the world, which distinguish between true and apparent worlds. That toward which one is moving is the true world, a view which has dire consequences on the human experience of the only world that there is, the world which we perceive. Our senses have been deemed deceitful, our body has been subjected to the worst mortifications because of its role in this deceit.[77] In "Der Genesende," as Zarathustra wakes up in a garden reminiscent of the Garden of Eden, he is healing from this very disease, from this debasement of the body to which Heine alludes in his poem "Seraphine VII:" "Vernichtet ist das Zweierlei, / Das uns so lang betöret; / Die dumme Leiberquälerei / Hat endlich aufgehöret."[78] The symbolic reconciliation with the body which is depicted in "Der Genesende" calls for a view of history that is not teleological: the present (in which the body perceives, needs, and desires) ought not be repressed for the sake of otherworldly ideals. The thought experiment of eternal return helps one think in such terms: that, which is happening here and now, that, which my body is feeling here

[76] I will explore this question further in the second chapter. For now, I just want to point out that Nietzsche considered Kant's philosophy of history – and the narrative of emancipation related to it - to be a by-product of Christian eschatology. Odo Marquard expresses this filiation and liquidates thereby the Idealist philosophy of history in striking terms: "Wenn die Neuzeit – nach einer möglichen Definition – die Neutralisierung der biblischen Eschatologie ist, so ist die Geschichtsphilosophie die Rache der neutralisierten Eschatologie an dieser Neutralisierung." See Odo Marquard, *Schwierigkeiten mit der Geschichtsphilosophie* (F.a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1973) 16.

[77] Consider the role played by sight in Genesis 3 : the apple offered by the snake is for Eve "eine Lust für die Augen;" once Adam and Eve eat the apple, it is stated: "Da wurden ihnen beiden die Augen aufgetan," at which point they experience shame, thus giving their deed away. Beyond the obvious contradiction implied here if the two statements are to be taken literally, sight, which partakes of humankind's first experiences of sensuality, knowledge, and morality, is associated with both crime and punishment, as it were. *Das alte Testament*, 5.

[78] Heinrich Heine, "Seraphine VII," *Sämtliche Gedichte in zeitlicher Folge*, Ed. K. Briegleb (F.a.M. : Insel, 1997) 363.

and now, would I want it again and again? "Der Genesende" offers a counternarrative to the teleological and dualistic views of fall narratives.

As counternarrative, "Der Genesende" undermines teleological worldviews without, however, completely doing away with them: it could be said to reveal the uses and abuses of teleology for life. As previously discussed, the teaching of the *Übermensch* does resurface as Zarathustra discusses eternal return, indicating the need for a goal. Zarathustra once asks: "Wenn der Menschheit das Ziel noch fehlt, fehlt da nicht auch – sie selber noch?"[79] Zarathustra believes that human beings cannot (and ought not) be satisfied with living solely in the here and now, as animals do. Being human means having a goal and working toward it… asking oneself, every step of the way, whether one would want this again and again. The interaction between the two teachings is a way to avoid that either one of them become the one and only truth by which to live.

Nietzsche uses the dance metaphor to convey the attitude with which one may best tackle the challenge of Zarathustra's entwined teachings, which constantly undermine and underpin each other. Dance is depicted, throughout *Also sprach Zarathustra*, as the highest expression of a true affirmation of life's tensions and conflicts. The tension between Zarathustra's teachings – this indeterminacy that keeps us from deciding, once and for all, which teaching is the clearly definitive one – is one of these tensions and conflicts which quite naturally, in Nietzsche's view, pervade our lives. Those who believe that they have found the truth and cling to it have come to a standstill. They no longer transform and do not know how to react when life around them transforms. The dancer, in contrast, is highly flexible and mobile. The metaphor of dance thus indicates how to deal with *gravity*. Dance is a movement for emancipation from

[79] Nietzsche, "Also sprach Zarathustra," 76.

gravity. Dance is an impermanent elevation and motion, condemned, eternally, as it were, to fall prey to a gravity it cannot elude. A dancer, however, does not bemoan this but rather turns this tensed relationship into a performance. The Nietzsche reader who is confronted to Zarathustra's teachings is not taught truths: neither the teaching of the *Übermensch* nor that of eternal return is a truth. The only truth that there is, is the eternal movement induced by the interaction between these teachings.

This chapter on *Also sprach Zarathustra* will thus serve the following purposes: it will show, firstly, that Nietzsche, in this text, offers a counternarrative to Platonic, Christian, and Kantian fall narratives, in order to undermine their teleological views of history and dualistic views of the world; secondly, it will show that Nietzsche's narrative strategies (his rejection of concepts, his reliance on metaphors, his use of parody, etc.) function as pedagogical tools which serve the education of an emancipated reader; the interaction between Zarathustra's teachings sends an important message to the individual and the reader: the author will no longer hand truths to you on a silver platter, reading is no longer the passive acceptance of assertions or claims, it must become an active undertaking by means of which you partake in the creation of meaning; thirdly, it will show the relationship between the two previous points, that is between Nietzsche's revaluation of values and his ethics of reading, the principles of which may be reconstructed by means of close readings of the text.

The principles of this ethics of reading are, as mentioned above, *suspicion*, *contest*, and *performance*, and, as such, Nietzsche ensures that the reader is constantly reminded of the limits of Zarathustra's wisdom. Let us take as example the oft quoted passage "'Das – ist nun *mein* Weg, - wo ist der eure?' so antwortete ich Denen, welche

mich 'nach dem Wege' fragten. *Den* Weg nämlich – den giebt es nicht!"[80] Zarathustra uses a sententious tone to utter a statement, the meaning of which is not what one usually expects from sententious statements. This is not a commandment such as, say, *thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife*, a sententious statement which seeks to impose the moral code of the one who utters it onto others. As far as commandments go, this one could read *thou shalt not believe (me)*, a paradoxical statement if there ever was one. Nietzsche's text and Zarathustra's discourse abound in statements, such as the one quoted above, that are meant to remind the reader that he or she ought to be suspicious of (textual) assertions. The above quote (*das – ist nun **mein** Weg, - wo ist der eure?*) does not only serve the function of arousing suspicion in the reader, it is also a provocation, it challenges the reader to question and oppose Zarathustra's way(s), reminding the reader of the need to respond, in a most personal, active, and creative way, to the text. It encapsulates the principles named above – suspicion, contest, and performance – and, by referring to a *path* which one must find, it exemplifies the idea that emancipation is, first and foremost, a *movement*.

As Alderman writes, what Nietzsche makes implicit in *Also sprach Zarathustra* is made explicit elsewhere;[81] in the **fifth chapter** of this study, I will firstly look at early texts by Nietzsche in which he discusses language, education, and agonistics, in order to investigate further the principles of his ethics of reading. I will focus on *Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten*, *Ueber Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinne*, *Homers Wettkampf*, *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*. I will then end with readings of *Ecce Homo*, a text which exemplifies, in my view, the conflation of Nietzsche's call for a

[80] Ibid., 245.

[81] Harold Alderman, *Nietzsche's Gift* (Athens : Ohio University Press, 1977) 2.

revaluation of values and his ethics of reading. As I will have shown in the previous chapter on *Also sprach Zarathustra*, Nietzsche's ethics of reading promotes a movement for emancipation not only from all (meta)narratives, but also from his own narratives. This fifth chapter will show that this must also be an emancipation from texts in general, and, as such, Nietzsche constantly undermines his own authority as author. By looking at passages in which Nietzsche discusses reading and readers, I will thus provide further evidence to support the main claim of this study according to which Nietzsche's narrative strategies function as pedagogical tools which serve the education of an emancipated reader.

This chapter will start with an interpretation of Nietzsche's preface to his lectures *Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten*, a preface titled "Vorrede, zu lesen vor den Vorträgen, obwohl sie sich eigentlich nicht auf sie bezieht," in which he provides reading guidelines by means of which we can (re)construct his ethics of reading. Nietzsche's depiction of an emancipated reader, in this preface, clearly opposes the product of the German education system, which he describes and criticizes in the following lectures. In this preface, Nietzsche states what he expects, as author, from his reader: reading slowly, reflecting (before, during, and after reading), opening up to a quest for knowledge which will not yield immediate, tangible results, and, last but not least, doubting the author's assertions and opposing to these one's own acts or actions. In stating these principles, Nietzsche calls into question his own authority as author, promoting scepticism in the reader, engaging the reader in a contest for meaning.

The suspicion of texts which Nietzsche entertains and promotes could be attributed to his fundamental scepticism with regard to language, which is essentially

metaphorical, as he claims in his text *Ueber Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinne*, the significance of which, for the present study, will then be examined. Language is described here as a *supple construction*, seemingly made of "Spinnefäden,"[82] whereas the whole structure of concepts is referred to as a "Begriffsgespinnst."[83] Nietzsche thus makes the reader aware of yet another spiderweb in which he or she is entangled. He certainly does not pretend that one could ever break free from it but he makes one aware of language's suppleness and constructedness, encouraging the reader to take liberties with it. Nietzsche points out that this is what we have been doing all along: names and designations are conventions on which speakers have agreed in order to communicate with one another. The fact that language is a construct ought not be forgotten when one reads religious or philosophical texts - or any other kinds of texts, for that matter. Nietzsche's critique of language thus ultimately reveals the unstable foundations of all texts and provides a warning to readers, which, again, could be formulated as follows: *thou shalt not believe (me)*.

Such warnings function as challenges to the reader and are inextricably linked to another principle of Nietzsche's ethics of reading: the contest. In his text *Homers Wettkampf*, Nietzsche discusses the significance of the Hellenic contest for the Hellenic state. The state needed such contests, he explains, which, as stimulant, promoted development and excellence amongst its citizens, in order to thrive and flourish. Nietzsche is quick to point out that such a pedagogical philosophy greatly differs from that of modern pedagogy: "Jede Begabung muß sich kämpfend entfalten, so gebietet die

---

[82] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Ueber Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinne," *KSA 1*, Eds. G. Colli, and M. Montinari (München : DTV, 1999) 882.

[83] Ibid., 887.

hellenische Volkspädagogik: während die neueren Erzieher vor Nichts eine so große Scheu haben als vor der Entfesselung des sogenannten Ehrgeizes."[84] Reading *Homers Wettkampf* casts an interesting light upon the plethora of martial metaphors which pervade Nietzsche's writing: they can be understood as a call for a much needed agonal education.

This agonal education, for which Nietzsche does not hide his admiration, must also be that of the reader, as I will explore in this fifth chapter. Nietzsche scholarship, as mentioned, has yet to investigate the significance of this agonal problematic for Nietzsche's writing and for the act of reading Nietzsche. I will show here that Nietzsche's emancipated reader is a reader who must educate himself or herself *through* but also *against* texts. This reader is a suspicious reader who has been taught to question and challenge whatever a text is asserting.

Following my discussion of *Homers Wettkampf*, I will turn to Nietzsche's text *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, to explore the relationship, in Nietzsche's thought, between education and agonistics. To the German institutions of higher learning, criticized in *Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten*, Nietzsche opposes Schopenhauer, or rather: his *Schopenhauer construct*. Nietzsche does not discuss, in this text, the tenets of Schopenhauer's philosophy, he rather explains the *effect* which reading Schopenhauer had on him: it liberated him by revealing him to himself, a feat which universities cannot achieve, he claims, as they only dispense knowledge in the shape of tables and charts. Schopenhauer, on the other hand, is depicted by Nietzsche as one of those true educators

[84] Nietzsche, "Homers Wettkampf," 789.

who reveal, "was der wahre Ursinn und Grundstoff deines Wesens ist."[85] Of course, the Nietzsche reader knows that Nietzsche will soon reject Schopenhauer's philosophy and devise a philosophy in opposition to it, as he explains in his preface to the second edition of *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, a preface titled "Versuch einer Selbstkritik." Nietzsche's identity construction, his philosophy, and his writing, could be said to be his performance in a contest which opposes him to Schopenhauer: Nietzsche educated himself *through* and *against* him.

This performative act which arises out of suspicion and contest is an act of identity construction which Nietzsche performed not only with regard to Schopenhauer, but also to Wagner, of course. Karin Bauer has investigated this agonal relationship (from Nietzsche's point of view) in her study "Strategies of Identity Construction in Nietzsche's Critique of Wagner." She writes that "Nietzsche's relentless critique of Wagner emerges as a choreographed staging of similarity and difference and a repetitious ritual of renunciation and sacrifice."[86] It is the first part of this statement, on the *choreographed staging of similarity and difference*, which is especially relevant here. As previously stated, dance is used, in *Also sprach Zarathustra*, as a metaphor for the highest expression of a true affirmation of life's tensions and conflicts. Dance, in Nietzsche's text, is depicted as a performance by means of which one shapes the tensions and conflicts arising from similarity and difference. The dancer, flexible and mobile, performs the movements induced by that to which he or she is confronted. Nietzsche's

---

[85] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Schopenhauer als Erzieher," *KSA 1*, Eds. G. Colli, and M. Montinari (München: DTV, 1999) 341.

[86] Karin Bauer, "Strategies of Identity Construction in Nietzsche's Critique of Wagner," *Seminar* 35:4 (November 1999): 296.

choreographed staging of similarity and difference (may it be with regard to Wagner, or Schopenhauer, Socrates, or Christ, for that matter) is a movement by means of which he explores, absorbs, rejects, mocks, integrates, parodies (the list could go on) elements of the *self* and the *other*. What this performance reveals is not a stable identity, but rather, as Bauer writes, "the constructedness of all identities."[87]

I will end this chapter with readings of *Ecce Homo*. Why *Ecce Homo*? It seems felicitous to conclude this study, which revolves around Nietzsche's treatment of fall narratives in *Also sprach Zarathustra*, with a text, the very title of which evokes the other end of the Christian eschatological narrative, namely the New Testament and its narrative of redemption. It is also, more than any other text by Nietzsche, a text which reveals his preoccupation with suspicion, contest, and performance. One example ought to suffice, for now, to illustrate what I mean by this. In this text, Nietzsche explains, for instance, that he does not take reading all that seriously and that books are absent from his surroundings when he writes.[88] This can be interpreted as a warning to the reader, to a certain extent: reading can be a pleasant recreational activity, but one ought to set it aside when writing. Setting reading aside in order to write: this idea encapsulates the three principles named above, those of suspicion, contest, and performance. Let us explore this idea a bit further.

Setting reading aside in order to write implies a self-protective, self-assertive suspicion of texts, an agonal relationship to the texts which one has read and which might exert a detrimental influence on one's creativity and originality, and a very personal

---

[87] Ibid., 296.

[88] Nietzsche, "Ecce Homo," 284.

performance or a shaping of these very influences and of one's own thoughts. In his study *The Anxiety of Influence. A Theory of Poetry*, Harold Bloom writes, using a metaphorical language that resonates with the Nietzsche reader: "Influence is *Influenza* – an astral disease. If influence were health, who could write a poem? Health is stasis."[89] In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche reveals that his writings grew out of the experience of suspicion, contest, and performance (with regard to Wagner, Schopenhauer, Socrates, Christ, etc.). A condition of suspicion is that one be exposed to the thoughts of others, of course, so nowhere in Nietzsche does one find the imperative *thou shalt not read*. Suspicion, however, is essential if one is not to be contaminated and debilitated by the thoughts of others. One must be strong enough to fight back,[90] enter the contest and produce one's own thoughts. Identity construction is the very personal, discriminating (as in *kritisch*, *wählerisch*, *urteilsfähig*) shape we give, at any point in time, to the mass of eclectic influences, thoughts and movements which conflate in us.

Nietzsche thus reveals in *Ecce Homo* how identity construction is related to suspicion, contest, and performance, but how can this text be said to promote these principles on a more formal level, thus partaking in the education of an emancipated reader? Does Nietzsche arouse suspicion in the reader, here, and if yes, how so? The question of the text's genre, for one, must be explored: in his preface, Nietzsche

---

[89] Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence. A Theory of Poetry* (N.Y. : Oxford University Press, 1973) 95. Such a formulation reminds the reader of Nietzsche's claim in *Der Fall Wagner*: "Mein grösstes Erlebniss war eine *Genesung*. Wagner gehört bloss zu meinen Krankheiten." In spite of this dismissive *bloss*, Nietzsche admits (tongue-in-cheek but nonetheless) in this text's epilogue that this text, in which he harshly criticizes and even ridicules Wagner, is "von der Dankbarkeit inspirirt…" On the one hand he diminishes the significance of his Wagner experience (*bloss*), on the other hand it is only logical and consistent to be thankful to Wagner, since Nietzsche could not have experienced this recovery (*grösstes Erlebnis*) had he not, first and foremost, experienced the illness, Friedrich Nietzsche, "Der Fall Wagner," *KSA 6*, Eds. G. Colli, and M. Montinari (München: DTV, 1999) 53.

[90] Or, as Nietzsche puts it: "Die Krankheit selbst kann ein Stimulans des Lebens sein: nur muss man gesund genug für dies Stimulans sein!" Nietzsche, "Der Fall Wagner," 22.

announces that he wishes to tell us who he is ("*wer ich bin*"[91] – the italics are his), raising certain expectations in the reader who might expect, then, an autobiography. According to Jacques Derrida, when Nietzsche writes shortly thereafter "*ich bin der und der*,"[92] we are likely dealing with "une ruse de la dissimulation,"[93] a claim which could be supported by numerous passages in Nietzsche's work. When one reads, for instance, what Nietzsche has to say on the topic of autobiographical writing, one can only raise an eyebrow at Nietzsche's supposed desire to reveal himself: Nietzsche wants to tell us who he is? This is the same Nietzsche who once wrote "welcher kluge Mann schriebe heute noch ein ehrliches Wort über sich?"[94] By calling into question the autobiographical genre elsewhere in his work, Nietzsche invites the reader to question and doubt the claims and assertions about himself which he makes in *Ecce Homo*.

Thus warned, the reader can approach the text with a healthy suspicion. The titles of some of the chapters, for instance ("Warum ich so weise bin," "Warum ich so klug bin," "Warum ich so gute Bücher schreibe," "Warum ich ein Schicksal bin"), may now take a whole new significance: they seem to have been written *in order* to be rebuked. They may not be formulated as questions but they seem to function as questions addressed to the reader: Am I so wise, do you think? Am I so clever? How so? Compared to what? Are my books that good? Am I a destiny? In what sense? Would you want me to be a destiny? What has been your destiny so far? Would you trade your destiny for that

---

[91] Nietzsche, "Ecce Homo," 257.

[92] Ibid., 257.

[93] Jacques Derrida, "Otobiographie de Nietzsche," *L'Oreille de l'autre*, Eds. C. Lévesque, and C.V. McDonald (Montréal : VLB, 1982) 22.

[94] Nietzsche, "Zur Genealogie der Moral," 386.

offered by – me? It is necessary to ponder these titles and reflect upon their implications for the reader: Nietzsche's autobiography, which he tells himself, as he writes early on in the text ("und so erzähle ich mir mein Leben"[95]), is not a monologue about Nietzsche but rather a pedagogical tool which engages the reader in a contest for identity construction.

The issues which Nietzsche discusses in the early texts investigated in this last chapter (such as language, education, and agonistics) will be shown to coalesce in his call for a revaluation of values and a new ethics of reading. These already come to light in *Also sprach Zarathustra*, a text in which Nietzsche attacks one end of Christian eschatology, that is the myth of the fall, and which thus functions as Nietzsche's counternarrative to Platonic, Christian, and Kantian fall narratives: here, Nietzsche undermines what one could call the original sin of Western religious and philosophical discourses, that is not only their teleological postulates and their distinction between true and apparent worlds but also their attempts to restrict the reader's freedom of interpretation. Nietzsche's call for a revaluation of values and a new ethics of reading also define one of his last texts, *Ecce Homo*, a text which, more than any other text by Nietzsche, I would claim, undermines not only the authority of religious and philosophical (meta)narratives but also textual authority. I wish to investigate *Ecce Homo* as it attacks the other end of Christian eschatology by rehabilitating Pilate, as I will show, the one character of the New Testament whom Nietzsche can recuperate for his project as he is the one character who could be said to undermine the New Testament from within, by asking "Was ist Wahrheit?"[96]

---

[95] Nietzsche, "Ecce Homo," 263.

[96] *Das neue Testament*, 132.

Chapter 2. Emancipation in Platonic, Christian, and Kantian Fall Narratives

In his foreword to *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, Nietzsche famously claims that "Christenthum ist Platonismus für's 'Volk'."[97] An interpretation of the fall narratives found in Plato's *Phaedrus* and *The Republic* and in the Christian tradition will enable the reader to identify certain similarities between the two, similarities which led Nietzsche to make such a statement. Nietzsche sees in both the same teleological and dualistic view of the world which promotes the cerebral or spiritual, that is the world of ideas and concepts, to the detriment of the sensual or material, that is the world as it appears to our senses. Nietzsche will find the same problem (as he deems the above to be a problem) in Kantian philosophy which postulates a world of *noumena*, that is of *things-in-themselves*, as opposed to things as they appear to us, or *phenomena*, a postulate which underlies Kant's fall narrative in *Mutmasslicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte*. Nietzsche, as I will subsequently show, also underscores the authoritative tone or pose of Socratic dialectics or Christian prohibitions and dogmas. Such an authoritative stance is also a feature of Kantian philosophy, in which we find imperatives, such as the categorical imperative, for instance.

As explained in the introduction, my main concern here is to contextualize Nietzsche's own rewriting of the fall in *Also sprach Zarathustra*: what Nietzsche criticizes in the Platonic, Christian, and Kantian discourses by means of his own rewriting of the fall is what he deems to be their *disempowering* quality. Their distinction between true and apparent worlds results in a depreciation of the only world that there is, according to Nietzsche, that is the world to which individuals have access, the world which they can, to a certain extent, grasp and shape. The form of their discourses

[97] Nietzsche, "Jenseits von Gut und Böse," 12.

(dialectics, prohibitions, dogmas, and imperatives, as mentioned above) functions as a spider's web which ensnares the reader:[98] authoritative prescriptions restrain and restrict a mind's freedom of movement. It is thus essential, in a study that deals with the relationship in Nietzsche's philosophy between his revaluation of values and his ethics of reading, to situate and assess these aspects of Platonic, Judeo-Christian and Kantian thoughts, against which Nietzsche devises his (counter)narrative of emancipation. In order to examine this, I will focus, as mentioned, on Platonic, Judeo-Christian, and Kantian fall narratives (in this chapter) and on Nietzsche's treatment of fall narratives in *Also sprach Zarathustra* (in the fourth chapter).

The fall, as metaphor for the tragic human condition, is by no means an exclusively Judeo-Christian trope. In Plato's *Phaedrus*, the soul's journey is one of ascents and falls. The soul can elevate itself, albeit at the cost of an incessant struggle, and perceive, however fleetingly, the true world, a world of ideas and concepts, that which Socrates calls "Reality."[99] Socrates compares the soul to a team of winged horses and their charioteer. One horse is described as beautiful and good, while the other is the opposite. This makes driving the chariot quite a difficult task for the charioteer. Whereas the experience of beauty, wisdom, and goodness gives strength to the winged soul, enabling it to rise to the divine and have a view of Reality, the experience of foulness and ugliness causes the wings to shrink and disappear, i.e. to "fall away from the soul."[100] The divine is thus located above the human, and one can attain it, however briefly, as a

---

[98] As mentioned in the introductory chapter.

[99] Plato, "Phaedrus," Trans. A. Nehamas, and P. Woodruff, *Complete Works*, Ed. J.M. Cooper (Indianapolis/Cambridge : Hackett, 1997) 526.

[100] Ibid., 525.

result of what one could simply call the Good. The soul falls from these heights when it encounters the opposite, the Bad. Torn between Good and Bad, the soul thus "sees some real things and misses others."[101] Interestingly, it is not only wrongdoing but also forgetfulness that acts as a burden which causes the soul to fall.[102] The Platonic fall is thus (also) a result of forgotten knowledge, whereas in the Christian tradition, the fall is portrayed as the consequence of forbidden knowledge.[103] Plato thus uses the vertical movement of ascent and fall to illustrate a soul's struggle between true and apparent worlds, whereby it can ascend and get a glimpse of Reality, a knowledge it once had but forgot.

Socrates expounds this theory of the soul in true dialectical fashion. Dialecticians are, as he explains it to Phaedrus, people who are "capable of discerning a single thing that is also by nature capable of encompassing many."[104] Dialecticians thus master the art of conceptualization, that is: they can conceive of an abstract or generic idea, drawing from several phenomena. François Flahault claims that in Plato's oeuvre, "on voit pour la première fois développées de manière systématique la pensée conceptuelle et sa forme spécifique d'argumentation."[105] Socrates admits to being "a lover of these divisions and collections"[106] and remarks that he would gladly follow someone who masters this art,

---

[101] Ibid., 526.

[102] Ibid., 526.

[103] As Joseph Anthony Mazzeo points out in his article "Fallen Man : Forbidden Knowledge, Forgotten Knowledge," *Notre-Dame English Journal* 11 :1 (October 1978) : 47-65.

[104] Plato, "Phaedrus," 542.

[105] François Flahault, *Adam et Ève. La Condition humaine* (Paris : Mille et une nuits, 2007) 184.

[106] Plato, "Phaedrus," 542.

that is a dialectician, "straight behind, in his tracks, as if he were a god."[107] The art of conceptualization is thus depicted by Plato's Socrates as something divine and worthy of devotion. The dialectician has seen Reality and is thus superior to others who have not yet made this journey upward. The dialectician's world is the world of concepts, the true world toward which the (pupil's) soul should strive.

Nietzsche was critical of this distinction between true and apparent worlds. In *Götzen-Dämmerung*, he describes the true world of Platonic philosophy as follows:

> Die wahre Welt erreichbar für den Weisen, den Frommen, den Tugendhaften, - er lebt in ihr, *er ist sie*.
>
> (Älteste Form der Idee, relativ klug, simpel, überzeugend. Umschreibung des Satzes 'ich, Plato, *bin* die Wahrheit'.)[108]

This quote by Nietzsche indicates that which he finds problematic in Platonism or Socratism. This enumeration concerning the 'wise,' the 'pious,' and the 'virtuous' reminds one of the equation of "Vernunft = Tugend = Glück"[109] with which Nietzsche sums up the Socratic project and which bewilders him. Nietzsche rejects the idea that knowledge can (or should) have anything to do with virtues (or happiness). Knowledge is one thing, virtue is another, but indeed, Plato's originality (and appeal, as it were) might precisely be this clever blurring of the two spheres, as Flahault writes: "Le génie de Platon a été de réussir à associer étroitement une doctrine métaphysico-religieuse à l'usage raisonné du concept."[110] Beyond the form it takes, however, the Socratic praise

---

[107] Plato, "Phaedrus," 542.

[108] Nietzsche, "Götzen-Dämmerung," 80.

[109] Ibid., 69.

[110] Flahault, 185.

of pure reason and the objection to perceptual knowledge, to senses, instincts, pulsions, are features which Nietzsche never ceases to criticize.[111]

This distinction between true and apparent worlds is an essential feature of the parable of the cave in *The Republic*. This parable, told by Socrates, bears a striking resemblance to his theory of the soul: here too, there is a distinction between true and apparent worlds, here too, there is a vertical movement upward which leads one to experience the true world of Reality, and here too, Reality is equated with concepts. Prisoners in the cave live in a world of appearances. They cannot grasp that the shadows which they see on the walls of the cave refer to real things beyond those walls, they take these shadows to be the real things. They are deceived by their senses, in this case by sight. Should one prisoner ascend, that is walk up toward the light, he would be blinded, at first, by the sun, and would lower his gaze to watch shadows on the ground. Eventually, he would understand that the sun produces these shadows and would then find the courage to catch a glimpse of the sun itself. This upward movement which leads one to Reality is compared to dialectics by Socrates, who explains: "Whenever someone tries through argument and apart from all sense perceptions to find the being itself of each thing and doesn't give up until he grasps the good itself with understanding itself, he reaches the end of the intelligible, just as the other reached the end of the visible."[112] In the parable of the cave, the sun is like a concept: the shadows produced by the sun are like the particular instances which derive from a concept. Dialectics as the art of

---

[111] Nietzsche, "Götzen-Dämmerung," 67f.

[112] Plato, "The Republic," Trans. G.M.A. Grube, and C.D.C. Reeve, *Complete Works*, Ed. J.M. Cooper (Indianapolis/Cambridge : Hackett, 1997) 1147f.

conceptualization is that which liberates the human mind from the world of appearances, to which the senses belong, giving the human mind access to the true world. Here, as in *Phaedrus*, the knowledge of Reality is depicted as a kind of forgotten knowledge: it resides in a soul, but the soul cannot see it anymore as it is turned toward darkness.

It is the educator's task, according to Socrates, in both *Phaedrus* and *The Republic*, to give a new direction to the soul, by turning the pupil's gaze toward the light – to *enlighten* the pupil, quite literally. It was just mentioned that the knowledge of Reality resides in a soul, albeit forgotten. The educator's project is to revive this memory. In *Phaedrus*, Socrates explains that the philosopher has seen Reality, which he describes as real beauty; the worldly beauty of young people reminds the philosopher of this real beauty; the philosopher will thus love his pupil, whom he will venerate as a kind of shadow, or residue, of the divine; he will then undertake the pupil's education, so that the pupil can regain this forgotten Reality which is real beauty.[113]

It is especially enlightening, in the context of this study, to examine how Socrates describes the educator's pedagogical methods: the educator is authoritative and will force enlightenment unto his pupil, if necessary. In the parable of the cave, as the enlightenment process of the prisoner who ascends toward the light is described, one cannot help but notice the plethora of terms which betray the educator's authoritative (or maybe even authoritarian) attitude. About the prisoners of the cave, Socrates explains: "When one of them was freed and suddenly compelled to stand up, turn his head, walk, and look up toward the light, he'd be pained and dazzled and unable to see the things

[113] Plato, "Phaedrus," 527f.

whose shadows he'd seen before."[114] In spite of the residue of Reality which sits in his soul, the prisoner cannot embark upon the journey to knowledge on his own, he must be *compelled* by the educator, who forces the knowledge of Reality onto him, as it were, even though it is painful for the pupil. Socrates goes on to describe the prisoner's enlightenment process using terms and phrases such as "if we (…) compelled him to answer," "if someone compelled him to look at the light itself," "if someone dragged him away from there by force, up the rough, steep path, and didn't let him go until he had dragged him into the sunlight," amongst others.[115] The educator is removing the pupil from "a sort of barbaric bog"[116] in order to enlighten him. He does so, however, in true barbaric fashion, as it were, 'compelling' the pupil to follow him by 'dragging' him along – terms that remind the modern reader of cavemen, if anything, not of educators. The educator commands, the pupil follows, and indeed, Socrates describes, in *Phaedrus*, the oratory art which he practices as a way to "direct the soul."[117]

It is no surprise, then, to read Nietzsche's critical attitude with regard to the Socratic dialectical method, of which he writes: "Man wählt die Dialektik nur, wenn man kein andres Mittel hat."[118] Only he who has no other weapon makes use of this method, by means of which he can finally rule over others. It might be enlightening here to briefly reiterate Nietzsche's admiration for the agonal education which prevailed in the Hellenic world, which he discusses in his early text *Homers Wettkampf*. Nietzsche explains that it

---

[114] Plato, "The Republic," 1133.

[115] Ibid., 1133.

[116] Ibid., 1149.

[117] Plato, "Phaedrus," 548.

[118] Nietzsche, "Götzen-Dämmerung," 70.

was necessary for the contest to take place between opponents with more or less equal skills. Were one opponent greatly superior to the other, the contest lost of its pertinence. This is certainly what makes Nietzsche so critical of Socratic pedagogical methods. Nietzsche does praise the fact that dialectics is a kind of contest between two interlocutors,[119] but this strictly logical method, which Socrates masters as no one else and which negates all other kinds of knowledge, ultimately fails to educate, as it disempowers the interlocutor: "Der Dialektiker *depotenziert* den Intellekt seines Gegners."[120] As Acampora puts it: "Nietzsche thinks Socrates' contestants do not have even a remote chance to win."[121] The methods of the Socratic enlightenment project can thus be said to contradict, to a certain extent, this very project: the educator acts as an authority figure who knows what is best for his pupils and forces it onto them.

Socrates as educator reminds the reader of the ascetic priest depicted by Nietzsche in *Zur Genealogie der Moral*. I have quoted above two statements by Socrates in which he uses religious terms to describe his dialectical method and pedagogical project: in order to impress upon his pupil the powers of dialectics, he remarked that he, Socrates, would gladly follow someone who mastered this art "straight behind, in his tracks, as if he were a god,"[122] undoubtedly insinuating that the pupil should thus behave with regard to him, Socrates, whose task it is, as educator, to "direct the soul."[123] Nietzsche can thus

---

[119] Nietzsche, "Götzen-Dämmerung," 126.

[120] Ibid., 70.

[121] Acampora, 173.

[122] Plato, "Phaedrus," 542.

[123] Ibid., 548.

write, about Socrates: "er schien ein Arzt, ein Heiland zu sein."[124] The ascetic priest, in *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, is depicted as someone whose task it is to provide healing. It is not necessary here to explain in great detail Nietzsche's presentation of the ascetic priest in the text's third essay "Was bedeuten asketische Ideale?" It ought to be sufficient to mention that the cure proposed by the ascetic priest to a suffering humankind implies a redirection and a numbing of feelings, pulsions, and instincts. This is exactly what Socrates proposes, according to Nietzsche: he offers his dialectical method, a strictly logical method, as a cure to a world which is tyrannized by pulsions.[125] The enterprise of the ascetic priest is worthy of recognition, in Nietzsche's view, but it certainly cannot be said to partake in a project that *truly* promotes enlightenment, as it negates or represses a whole realm of vital human experiences.

The portrayal of Socrates as authoritative educator and ascetic priest throws light on Nietzsche's claim according to which Christianity is Platonism for the people: the Judeo-Christian God is such a character, as Genesis reveals. Of course, the Socratic project is an enlightenment project, in spite of the paradox of its methods, as stated above; this cannot be said of Christianity. The Judeo-Christian God is not a dialectician who explains or justifies his actions, utterances, and dictates in a logical fashion. This God has no intention whatsoever of promoting enlightenment in his creatures. His very first words to man are uttered in order to permit and forbid: "Du darfst essen von allen Bäumen im Garten, aber von dem Baum der Erkenntnis des Guten und Bösen sollst du

[124] Nietzsche, "Götzen-Dämmerung," 72.

[125] Ibid., 71.

nicht essen."[126] By means of this prohibition, God indicates that it is not desirable for man to be taught to discern good and evil. He deems it best to keep his creatures in a state of ignorance.

Even more so than the Socratic dialectical method, God's prohibition disempowers the individual, restricting and restraining the individual's freedom of movement. One cannot ignore the possibility that this interdiction is not (just) the act of benevolence of a God who wants to protect his creatures from the hardships that might accompany the acquisition of knowledge. It is (also) a way to prevail, to remain in a position of authority. This is quite clear, as God speaks to himself after man's transgression: "Siehe, der Mensch ist geworden wie unsereiner und weiß, was gut und böse ist. Nun aber, dass er nur nicht ausstrecke seine Hand und breche auch von dem Baum des Lebens und esse und lebe ewiglich!"[127] This quote indicates that God was lying when he spoke of the consequence of transgressing his interdiction. As Gerhard von Rad explains in his interpretation of Genesis, the consequence of disobedience, as God explains it to Adam with regard to the tree of good and evil, is to be *immediate death*, not *mortality*,[128] as God declares: "*an dem Tage*, da du von ihm isst, musst du des Todes sterben"[129] (my italics). The snake was thus not lying when it said to Eve, to lure her into eating the apple: "Ihr werdet keineswegs des Todes sterben, sondern Gott weiß: an dem Tage, da ihr davon esst, werden eure Augen aufgetan, und ihr werdet sein wie Gott und

---

[126] *Das alte Testament*, 4.

[127] Ibid., 6.

[128] Gerhard von Rad, *Das erste Buch Mose. Genesis Kapitel 1-12, 9* (Göttingen : Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1949) 77.

[129] *Das alte Testament*, 4.

wissen, was gut und böse ist."[130] God's reaction to the transgression, then, confirms that the snake was right all along. God's lie is that of an educator who believes it is best to keep his creatures obedient and ignorant.

This disobedience to God causes that which has been called by early Christian interpreters the *fall*, a designation influenced by Philo of Alexandria (20 BC – 50 AD).[131] Philo, a Jewish philosopher versed in Greek philosophy and Judaism, provides an interpretation of this episode of Genesis 3, interpreting obedience and disobedience to God in terms of a vertical motion. Plato's theory of the soul, with its upward and downward movements, certainly informed Philo's interpretation, as Flahault writes: "Le *Phèdre* propose une vision de la chute: Philon n'avait qu'à l'appliquer, comme un calque, sur l'histoire d'Adam et Ève."[132] Philo divides the world of the biblical fall into the Good, located high above, and the Bad, located down below, just as Plato does in *Phaedrus*. Consequently, the snake turns into a symbol of all that is wrong for man (this will be of great significance when I will later analyze the function of snakes in *Also sprach Zarathustra*): "Le serpent, pour Philon, c'est le symbole du plaisir tourné vers la terre et non vers le ciel, de la volupté qui fait ramper l'homme."[133] The fall is thus a "decline from the spiritual to the corporeal."[134] This judgment against earthly life, matter, and sensuality, which the snake embodies, has shaped Christianity to this very day.

---

[130] *Das alte Testament*, 5.

[131] This subtitle, *der Sündenfall* in Luther's translation, did not appear, originally, in the *Old Testament*. It is a Christian addition. See Flahault, 92.

[132] Ibid., 34.

[133] Ibid., 33.

[134] J.M. Evans, *Paradise Lost and the Genesis Tradition* (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1968) 69f.

Interestingly, the snake is not described at the beginning of Genesis 3 as an animal which crawls on the ground. It is its role in the fall which causes it to be cursed by God, who tells it: "Auf deinem Bauche sollst du kriechen und Erde fressen dein Leben lang"[135] – as if to have a most intimate relationship with the earth were the greatest curse. The snake is thus the only character of Genesis 3 which literally falls from what seems to have been an upright position. When God tells Adam "Du bist Erde und sollst zu Erde werden,"[136] the verticality of Adam's own fate becomes quite evident. Adam (*man* in Hebrew) is pulled out of the ground (*adama* in Hebrew) by God and raised to (almost) divine heights, until he falls out of favour.[137] By insisting on this vertical movement, which is reminiscent of the Platonic theory of the soul, and which devaluates the material world, Philo sets the tone for later interpretations of this episode of Genesis.

The early Christian theologian and missionary Paul the Apostle turned the myth of the fall of Genesis into an essential feature of his Christian teaching on the redemption in Christ. He was the first to make a connection between the fall of man and redemption, between the figures of Adam and Christ.[138] In his first letter to the Corinthians, he writes: "Denn da durch *einen* Menschen der Tod gekommen ist, so kommt auch durch *einen* Menschen die Auferstehung der Toten. Denn wie sie in Adam alle sterben, so werden sie in Christus alle lebendig gemacht werden."[139]

---

[135] *Das alte Testament*, 5.

[136] Ibid., 6.

[137] On the terms *adam* and *adama*, see v. Rad, 61.

[138] Flahault, 36.

[139] See *Das neue Testament*, 202. Paul expresses the same idea in his letters to the Romans, see *Das neue Testament*, 177f.

The feature of Saint Paul's interpretation which is most relevant to the present study is that which turns the myth of the fall into something quite different from Plato's theory of the soul (as opposed to Philo's very Platonic interpretation of the biblical fall), as Flahault explains: "Ce n'est pas, en effet, par ses propres forces que l'âme se régénère, mais grâce au sacrifice du Rédempteur."[140] Plato depicted the soul as something that did indeed struggle between Good and Bad, but the outcome of its struggle was, *literally*, in its own hands: the soul was given both a good and a bad horse and it was up to it to control them, to master them. Saint Paul, on the other hand, read the fall and thought it revealed "the ultimate source of human misery."[141] It is the dualism of spirit and matter which sentences man, as it were, to this misery. Adam and Christ are opposed, here, as Adam's body is called natural (*natürlich*) whereas Christ's body is called spiritual (*geistlich*).[142] Adam's natural body is thus a death sentence – that is the human misery which Saint Paul saw revealed in the myth of the fall. Redemption or reconciliation happens when the spirit that is Christ, whom Saint Paul calls *the last Adam*, comes to revive all those who believe in him.[143] As opposed to the Platonic theory of the soul, Saint Paul's interpretation of the myth of the fall postulates a powerless humankind, whose otherworldly fate is not in its own hands.

French philosopher Paul Ricoeur, in his study on original sin, underscores Saint Paul's insistence upon the powerlessness and passivity of this natural body which is man. Ricoeur writes that this confers a certain mythical greatness to sin (*une grandeur*

---

[140] Flahault, 36.

[141] Evans, 10.

[142] *Das neue Testament*, 203.

[143] Ibid., 203.

mythique); sin inhabits man, it is, according to Saint Paul, an essential feature of human existence.[144] For Saint Paul, evil dwells within man, and the episode in which Eve eats the apple[145] might very well indicate this: it is, as Gerhard von Rad remarks, so "unsensationell beschrieben," as if transgressing the divine interdiction were "etwas Selbstverständliches."[146] Later Enlightenment thinkers will also see the transgression as something which just had to happen, but they will give this claim a special, positivistic twist, as will be shown later in this chapter. As for Saint Paul, the transgression was a sign of the powerlessness and passivity of the first Adam, which had to be offset by the coming of the last Adam, Christ.

In Saint Paul, the Platonic distinction between true and apparent worlds resurfaces, lending credence to Nietzsche's assertion according to which Christianity is Platonism for the people, as quoted at the beginning of this chapter. Saint Paul distinguishes between the world of Christ and that of Adam (of man) in a way which is reminiscent of Plato. Adam or man is condemned, because of his natural body and its limits, to human misery. Belonging to the world of matter, his existence on earth does not have any redeeming qualities. All he can do is believe in and wait for the one who is pure spirit, Christ, to come and redeem his abject earthly life. Nietzsche, in the section of *Götzen-Dämmerung* in which he traces the genealogy of the distinction between true and apparent worlds, starting with Plato, explains that this distinction thus enters its second stage with Christianity:

---

[144] Paul Ricoeur, "Le 'péché originel.' Étude de signification." *Le conflit des interprétations. Essais d'herméneutique* (Paris : Éditions du Seuil, 1969) 273f.

[145] Gerhard von Rad writes with regard to the Christian designation of the forbidden fruit, in Latin *malus* for apple : "Die Überlieferung vom Apfelbaum ist erst christlich lateinisch und mag durch die Assoziation *malus – malum* veranlasst sein," whereby *malum* means evil, see v. Rad, 73.

[146] Ibid., 72.

> Die wahre Welt, unerreichbar für jetzt, aber versprochen für den Weisen, den Frommen, den Tugendhaften ("für den Sünder, der Busse thut").
>
> (Fortschritt der Idee: sie wird feiner, verfänglicher, unfasslicher, - *sie wird Weib*, sie wird christlich…)[147]

This distinction between true and apparent worlds, especially in its Christian version, devaluates earthly life, the body and its senses, and is a view which Nietzsche will never cease to criticize.

Saint Augustine, a philosopher and theologian who exerted the greatest influence upon Christianity, offers, a few centuries later, an interpretation of the fall which differs from that of Saint Paul in one aspect which is relevant to this study: Saint Augustine does not portray Adam as a powerless and passive figure, but rather as a responsible being who fails to behave properly and thus causes his own fall. It is thus *disobedience* that is problematic for Saint Augustine, a discourse which served, of course, the interests of the Church, which could then advocate obedience to its precepts as bulwark against moral corruption. This is yet another strategy of disempowerment which Nietzsche criticized. Saint Augustine's interpretation of Genesis 3 is a synthesis of earlier interpretations and provides a "firm and systematic pattern which was to dominate the Church's thinking on the subject for the next thirteen centuries and longer."[148] Evans explains that commentators after Saint Paul but before Saint Augustine either portrayed the prelapsarian Adam as a childlike figure (innocent, naïve, ignorant) or portrayed him as an

---

[147] Nietzsche, "Götzen-Dämmerung," 80.

[148] Evans, 93.

intellectually and morally perfect being.[149] Saint Augustine, on the other hand, depicts Adam neither as a childlike figure nor as a perfect being. Depicting Adam as a childlike figure would turn God into a loveless father or a cruel tyrant who sentences a poor child to a rather dreadful fate, whereas depicting Adam as a perfect being would make this transgression and fall rather implausible. Saint Augustine thus reduces Adam's intellectual and moral stature, as Evans explains, in order to make the episode of the original sin plausible.[150] The tree of the knowledge of good and evil is not evil per se, but it represents a challenge to man's obedience – a challenge at which man fails.[151] The fall of man is thus, as per Saint Augustine, the consequence of an act of disobedience on the part of man – a sin which encompasses other sins, such as pride, blasphemy, theft, and avarice.[152]

Saint Augustine's interpretation of original sin and the fall was famously challenged by one of his contemporaries, the British monk and theologian Pelagius.[153] In Saint Augustine's view, original sin is responsible for a genetic flaw. It inflicts a wound to human nature, which, in its prelapsarian state, possessed the ability not to sin, and which lost this ability because of Adam's disobedience.[154] Pelagius contests this view, which contributes, as Wiley writes in her study of original sin, "to moral irresponsibility

---

[149] Ibid., 78f.

[150] Ibid., 97.

[151] Ibid., 96.

[152] Ibid., 96.

[153] The terms of this debate were similar to those which had previously opposed the Gnostics and their belief in determinism to Clement of Alexandria and his promotion of self-determination. See Tatha Wiley, *Original Sin. Origins, Developments, Contemporary Meanings* (N.Y./Mahwah, N.J. : Paulist Press, 2002) 40.

[154] Ibid., 65.

by making sin fated."[155] Should the Church spread the Augustinian view that the very nature of Adam's descendants compels them to sin, human beings might start behaving immorally, abdicating any moral responsibility for their deeds, as Pelagius explained. As opposed to Saint Augustine, Pelagius does not believe that the fall deprived human nature of its ability to do the right thing: he insists upon autonomy, and thus, on responsibility. Augustine finds this perspective on original sin and the fall offensive, as it suggests that human beings can save themselves, thus rendering Christ unnecessary.[156] The Council of Carthage (411-418) will examine the Augustinian and Pelagian positions and reiterate the views of Saint Augustine which consolidate rather than threaten the Church's position as mediator of divine grace. Pelagian views will henceforth be seen as heretical.[157] The Augustinian concept of original sin and interpretation of the fall will prevail.

The postulate of a genetic flaw in postlapsarian humankind is, however, a poor pedagogical strategy, as Pelagius points out. As previously mentioned, Saint Augustine conceives of original sin as a genetic flaw, which has, ever since Adam, been transmitted from one generation of sinners to the next. In his study, "Le péché originel," Paul Ricoeur explains that this "inculpation en masse de l'humanité, c'est la disculpation de Dieu."[158] The Augustinian God is untouchable: it is Adam who is to blame for the sad human condition. The issue which must be addressed here, however, is, of course, that of Adam's (dis)obedience. Why did God endow man with volition in the first place? If God's interdiction was a test for Adam, at which the latter failed, what about his

---

[155] Ibid., 67.

[156] Ibid., 68.

[157] Ibid., 71.

[158] Ricoeur, 276.

offsprings? Are they not to be tested? Has God given up on them, because of Adam? If this is indeed the case, what keeps man from evil deeds? Why does sin matter at all then? Is evil not given *carte blanche* while everybody just sits (and sins) around, waiting for the Redeemer? The Augustinian concept of original sin is thus called a "faux savoir"[159] by Ricoeur, who writes: "Je dirai qu'avec le péché originel est constitué, par le moyen d'un concept absurde, l'anti-type de la régénération, l'anti-type de la nouvelle naissance; grâce à cet anti-type, la volonté y apparaît chargée d'une constitution passive impliquée dans un pouvoir actuel de délibération et de choix."[160] For Ricoeur to call the Augustinian concept of original sin a *faux savoir* suggests that the myth of the fall, thus interpreted, fails to educate. On the surface, the concept promotes obedience as opposed to disobedience, faith as opposed to knowledge, but upon closer inspection, the message that comes across is that all comes to naught. If the episode of the fall of man is to have any redeeming qualities, as a teaching, it must be presented, writes Ricoeur, not as a concept, which undermines its own edifying intent, but rather as a symbol, which conveys a universal message, namely that of the tragic experience of exile[161] (i.e. of banishment, loss, solitude, etc.).

Ricoeur's claim according to which the Augustinian concept of original sin precludes any kind of regeneration or rebirth, as quoted above, strikes a chord with the Nietzsche reader, of course, and as such, deserves closer attention as this idea will be discussed later in the sections dealing with eternal return. What Ricoeur is underlining

---

[159] Ricoeur, 266.

[160] Ibid., 281f.

[161] Ibid., 279.

here is that the Augustinian concept of original sin, Saint Augustine's interpretation of the fall of man, for edifying purposes, cannot be reconciled with a cyclical view of history. If one were to insist, as Ricoeur suggests, on the symbolic function of the myth of the fall, then one would not need the Church. Were the episode in the Garden of Eden just a symbol of the tragic human condition, of the universal, unavoidable, and eternal human predicament, then one would have no use for a (Christian) Redeemer. It would thus be counterproductive for the Church to hold a cyclical view of history. History, for the Church, must have a beginning and an end. Prelapsarian man is prehistoric. History begins with the fall – or, as Rüdiger Safranski puts it in *Das Böse oder das Drama der Freiheit*, history "beginnt nämlich als Strafe. Geschichte ist offenbar etwas, wozu man verurteilt wird."[162] Historical man must be redeemed from history. The Church thus relies on a concept which suggests that humankind is on a journey with a beginning (the fall) and an end (redemption), in order to justify its very existence. Were life to eternally return, were life never to be redeemed, what would be the point of a faithful obedience to Christian precepts? Thus, the myth of the fall cannot be depicted by the Church as symbolic of the human condition: just as Saint Augustine depicted it, it must be presented as the very beginning of man's earthly predicament, a predicament to which the Church alone can offer a solution: Christ.

In his study of anxiety and original sin, Protestant philosopher Søren Kierkegaard also rejects the idea that history begins with the fall and draws the reader's attention to the role played by rationality in traditional Christian interpretations of the fall. Kierkegaard claims that, according to the biblical text, sin entered the world through sin.

---

[162] Rüdiger Safranski, *Das Böse oder das Drama der Freiheit* (F.a.M. : Fischer Taschenbuch, 2007) 31.

This is not how the story of Adam and Eve has been interpreted in the Christian tradition. Kierkegaard explains this as follows:

> The difficulty for the understanding is precisely the triumph of the explanation and its profound consequence, namely, that sin presupposes itself, that sin comes into the world in such a way that by the fact that it is, it is presupposed. (…) To the understanding, this is an offense: *ergo* it is a myth. As a compensation, the understanding invents its own myth, which denies the leap and explains the circle as a straight line, and now everything proceeds quite naturally.[163]

It is this last sentence which is particularly interesting, here. In order to have a certain grasp onto its followers, the Church cannot accept the closed circle in which sin is located, according to Kierkegaard, as this would preclude any form of historical beginning or end. Kierkegaard does not, like Paul Tillich, distinguish between Adam's prelapsarian essence and his postlapsarian existence:[164] he does not exclude the possibility of a prehistoric Adam, but Adam's historicity is, in his view, a moot point.[165] Christian interpreters, such as Saint Paul and Saint Augustine, however, construct the linear narrative of a fallen humankind which is to be redeemed in Christ in order to justify the existence of the Christian doctrine. They turn a circular motion into a linear one. Faith, in this context, becomes merely a means to an end, whereas faith ought to be, for Kierkegaard, that which transforms repetition (the cyclical) into freedom's own

---

[163] Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety. A Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation on the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin*, Trans. R. Thomte (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980) 32.

[164] Paul Tillich, *Systematische Theologie. Band II* (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1958) 36.

[165] Niels Thulstrup, "Adam and Original Sin," *Theological Concepts in Kierkegaard*, Eds. N. Thulstrup, and M.M. Thulstrup (Copenhagen : C.A. Reitzels Boghandel, 1980) 135.

task.[166] This relationship, in Christianity, between a linear view of history on the one hand and faith or obedience on the other hand, will, of course, be challenged by Nietzsche in *Also sprach Zarathustra*, a text in which the thought of eternal return is inextricably linked to freedom and responsibility, as we will see.

The fall, or original sin, ought to be interpreted, Kierkegaard suggests, neither in theological or philosophical nor in scientific terms, but rather psychologically. The anxiety which Adam experiences is not a consequence of the fall, but rather of God's prohibition. First of all, Adam cannot possibly understand what this prohibition means, as it involves concepts or ideas which are unknown to him, such as good and evil, and death. Secondly, any prohibition presupposes and acknowledges the possibility of its own transgression. This is the crux of Kierkegaard's interpretation of Adam's story: "The prohibition induces in him anxiety, for the prohibition awakens in him freedom's possibility."[167] This is, according to Kierkegaard, the human predicament, but one should not bemoan this, as anxiety has the power to educate "because it consumes all finite ends and discovers all their deceptiveness."[168] Anxiety, as "freedom's possibility,"[169] has the power to educate, but the Church could never endorse such an interpretation of Genesis 3 which suggests that the individual has a certain agency, a certain freedom of movement. Instead, it sanctions the Augustinian concept of original sin which depicts humankind as powerless.

---

[166] Kierkegaard, 18.

[167] Ibid., 44.

[168] Ibid., 155.

[169] Ibid., 155.

More than one thousand years after Saint Augustine's death, the Protestant Reformation will challenge the Church as institution with regard to its discourse on redemption. It is not Martin Luther's interpretation of original sin or of the fall per se which represents the greatest threat to the Christian (Catholic) Church. Luther resolutely sides with Saint Augustine with regard to the human inability to do the right thing: human beings must be aided by God's grace, they cannot do the good on their own.[170] That is why Luther insists on *belief*. The human conflict with God is the consequence of *unbelief*. Salvation can arise from faith alone. More than any other Lutheran tenet, it is this very idea which threatens (and weakens) the Church as institution: if salvation can arise from faith alone, the believer is in no need of a middleman, that is: of the Church as institution.

This revolutionary idea of salvation from faith alone will have philological repercussions which cannot be ignored in the context of a study devoted to Nietzsche's revaluation of values and ethics of reading. Luther dismisses the institution of the Church as mediator of divine grace and makes a conversation between God and his believers possible, as it were, by translating the Bible into a language which laymen could understand and by encouraging every household to own a copy of the Bible, as the Holy Spirit, in his view, "works through the reader's discovery of the text's literal sense – its meaning."[171] It is in that sense that Luther's religious revolution can also be said to be a philological one: the Church is no longer to have (sole) authority with regard to biblical exegesis, the Christian believer is to be reformed and transformed into a reader and an

[170] Wiley, 95.

[171] Ibid., 105.

interpreter.[172] In his essay "The Genesis of Ignorance," Andrew Martin stresses the paradox that is inherent, however, in the act of reading the Bible. The Bible proposes that man make peace with God, the kind of peace which Adam experienced in paradise. Martin writes: "Communion with God, the intimacy Adam enjoyed with Yahweh, presupposes the absence of books."[173] Postlapsarian readers must read the Bible to try to recapture a paradise of immediacy in which there was no need for the self-reflectiveness of texts.

In response to the Lutheran earthquake, the Council of Trent (1545-1563) could only reiterate Augustine's concept of original sin and interpretation of the fall. The Catholic Church had to justify its existence which was threatened by the Lutheran idea of justification by faith alone. It did so by officially defining original sin as *dogma* of the Roman Catholic Church,[174] that is: as belief or doctrine which ought not be disputed. Salvation or redemption in Christ, which is to offset the consequences of the fall, cannot arise from faith alone, claims the Church. The Council of Trent would thus provide "the reassertion of an ecclesial theology of justification that would emphasize the necessity of participation in the church's sacramental life for salvation."[175] By means of the administration of sacraments, the Church acts as mediator of divine grace, thus justifying its existence as an institution.

---

[172] This will lead, of course, many a reader and interpreter, subjecting the scriptures to scrutiny, to criticize and reject Christianity and/or the Church altogether. Nietzsche's ethics of reading could thus be said to take the Lutheran philological revolution to its logical end.

[173] Andrew Martin, "The Genesis of Ignorance : Nescience and Omniscience in the Garden of Eden," *Philosophy and Literature* 5 (1981) 6.

[174] Wiley, 88.

[175] Ibid., 91.

For all their differences, Catholics and Protestants alike cast a damning light on the fall, condemning human disobedience; this view will drastically change with the scientific revolution, as I will briefly explain here in order to contextualize Kant's own treatment of the fall, which will then be discussed. Modern interpreters, in view of the scientific discoveries and accomplishments of their time, give a rather positive twist to the story of Adam and Eve. The modern tendency is to depict the fall as the first contribution to the development of knowledge and to progress, while the issue of morality, which was a key aspect of Christian readings of the fall, recedes into the background. Gerhard von Rad explains, in his interpretation of Genesis, that what English and German readers know as *the knowledge of good and evil* means knowledge in general or *omniscience* in the original Hebrew text.[176] In his critique of Christian interpretations of the fall, Nietzsche can justifiably claim: "Die Wissenschaft ist das Verbotene an sich, - sie allein ist verboten. Die Wissenschaft ist die erste Sünde, der Keim aller Sünde, die *Erb*sünde."[177] This idea of a fall into knowledge immediately raises, once again, the question of God's prohibition of knowledge. As Martin writes: "Clearly, there is a conflict here between the inbuilt propensity for cognition and the interdiction of cognition."[178] If any prohibition presupposes and acknowledges the possibility of its own transgression, one cannot help but wonder: does the transgression – and man's subsequent acquisition of knowledge – belong to God's plan for man? The traditional negative connotation of the word *transgression* makes way for the actual

[176] v. Rad, 65.

[177] Nietzsche, "Götzen-Dämmerung," 227.

[178] Martin, 13.

significance of its combined Latin roots: *trans*- (across) and *gradi* (to walk, go): *transgression* is a *going beyond*, as previously explained, one could say a *progress* or a *progression*. Francis Bacon, for one, holds a position which constitutes a radical break with the thought of a cosmic fall as depicted in Platonic and Judeo-Christian texts: he does not believe in a prelapsarian Golden Age, but rather praises modern science, the accomplishments of which are made possible by the very knowledge cursed by the Church.[179] This position, which greatly differs from that of the Christian Church, does not do away with God, or at least not openly: there certainly is room for God in the (early) scientific belief in the argument of design.[180]

In his study of Genesis 3, Odo Marquard attributes to Leibniz (1646-1716) the first positive interpretation of the fall or, as he writes, "die *erste Positivierung des Sündenfalls*."[181] Born in the midst of the scientific revolution, Leibniz is famous for his optimism. In his *Essais de théodicée sur la bonté de Dieu, la liberté de l'homme et l'origine du mal*, Leibniz exonerates God from all accusation or blame with regard to the sorry state of the world, as Marquard explains: God allowed evil into the world because it contributed to the creation of a greater good ("ohne malum kein optimum"[182]). There is a teleology at work here, and the end justifies the means. Leibniz also claims that, overall, good outweighs evil, and that the former frequently comes into being because of the

---

[179] R.W. Hepburn, "Cosmic Fall," *Dictionary of the History of Ideas. Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas. Vol.I*, Ed. P.P. Wiener (N.Y. : Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973) 509.

[180] Ibid., 511.

[181] Marquard, "Felix Culpa? – Bemerkungen zu einem Applikationsschicksal von Genesis 3," 56.

[182] Ibid., 55.

latter.[183] With regard to the fall, Leibniz does not question it per se (as Baconian thought implies), but instead of depicting it as *malum* (evil, ill, or *Übel*), he emphasizes the good that came out of it – what Marquard calls "bonum-durch-malum"[184] (as French speakers say: *un mal pour un bien*). Such a thought has been called *felix culpa*: the fall of man is a *fortunate fall* (or a *blessed fault*) as it made the coming of Christ necessary. Leibniz is thus the optimistic champion of the argument of design, an attitude which Voltaire ridicules in his treatment of the myth of the fall, *Candide ou l'optimisme*, as Candide's tutor Pangloss repeats over and over again, as innumerable catastrophes and calamities strike tutor and pupil, that this truly is the best of all possible worlds.[185]

Immanuel Kant will also exonerate God from the ills of the world, as Marquard explains, albeit in a radical, blasphemous way, as it were. Whereas the Leibnizian enterprise effects the exoneration of God by claiming that we live in the best of all possible worlds, the Kantian project defends God's goodness in view of the existence of evil by casting someone else in the leading role of Creator, namely: man. This is what Marquard calls "die *Radikaltheodizee durch die autonomistische Emanzipationsphilosophie*."[186] An interpretation of Kant's treatment of the fall in *Mutmasslicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte* will help elucidate this, as the next paragraph will show, and it will also help us contextualize Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra* as (counter)narrative of emancipation.

---

[183] Ibid., 55.

[184] Ibid., 55.

[185] The story of Candide is modeled on the biblical fall. Candide's fall (the consequence of sexual intercourse) takes place at the very beginning of the story, after which he is "chassé du paradis terrestre" and embarks upon a life of hardships. See Voltaire, *Candide ou l'optimisme* (Paris : Maxi-Livres, 2001) 16.

[186] Marquard, "Felix Culpa? – Bemerkungen zu einem Applikationsschicksal von Genesis 3," 56.

In Kant's radical theodicy and philosophy of emancipation, Marquard sees the second positive interpretation of the fall ("*zweite Positivierung des Sündenfalls*"[187]): Kant's depiction of the fortunate fall, the *felix culpa*, is, in Marquard's words, "kaum noch culpa, sondern nur noch felix."[188] In his short essay, *Mutmasslicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte*, Kant undertakes what he calls a "Lustreise,"[189] [190] using Genesis as map, as it were, in order to speculate about the history of emancipation. His treatment of the fall is as unorthodox as his theodicy. In Kant's interpretation, the voice of God becomes Adam's interior voice, the voice of his own instinct. This instinct keeps him, at first, from eating a certain fruit. Eventually, however, Adam's reason takes over and he eats the fruit (Kant does not explain or justify this move). With this act of disobedience, marking a transition from instinct to reason, Adam embarks upon a "Lebensreise"[191] which takes him "aus der Vormundschaft der Natur in den Stand der Freiheit."[192] This is a fall for man but a giant leap for humankind, in Kant's view. As man relied solely on his instinct, there was no need for prohibitions; man's reliance on reason then brought ills and vices along; the transition from instinct to reason could thus be seen, morally speaking, as a fall.[193] Kant writes thus: "Die Geschichte der Natur fängt also vom Guten

---

[187] Ibid., 57.

[188] Ibid., 58.

[189] Kant, "Mutmasslicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte," 85.

[190] Reinhard Brandt mentions that on Kant's manuscript, it is not clear whether Kant wrote "Lustreise" or "Luftreise," as the "s" and the "f" of the Sütterlin script are almost indistinguishable; Brandt makes a case for the latter, based on the context. See "Philologisch-philosophische Antithesen," *Kant-Studien* 96.2 (2005): 235-242.

[191] Kant, "Mutmasslicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte," 88.

[192] Ibid., 92.

[193] Ibid., 92-93.

an, denn sie ist das Werk Gottes; die Geschichte der Freiheit vom Bösen, denn sie ist Menschenwerk."[194] For the species, however, the increasing reliance on reason, as opposed to instinct, proves to be beneficial: it is, according to Kant, "ein *Fortschritt* vom Schlechteren zum Besseren."[195] "Kaum noch culpa, sondern nur noch felix:"[196] the story of Adam and Eve, which has been traditionally interpreted as the fall of man, becomes, in Kant's narrative, the first step of an enlightenment project, of a "*Fortschreiten* zur Vollkommenheit,"[197] which is, as Kant writes here, nature's plan for man, the purpose ("die Bestimmung"[198]) of the human species.

Kant's treatment of the fall is consistent with his depiction of the enlightenment process in his short essay *Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?* Again, it is necessary to outline briefly this seminal text of Enlightenment philosophy, in order to contextualize Nietzsche's own take on enlightenment and emancipation. Enlightenment is famously described by Kant, in this text, as "*der Ausgang des Menschen aus seiner selbst verschuldeten Unmündigkeit*."[199] Just as Kant's Adam, who was originally ruled by his instincts but whose reason eventually enabled him to master these instincts, humankind is slowly but surely making its way out of immaturity and subservience into maturity and self-determination. The enlightenment process is thus also a process of emancipation. It is an inevitable process which cannot be hindered lest it be "ein Verbrechen wider die

---

[194] Ibid., 93.

[195] Ibid., 92.

[196] Marquard, "Felix Culpa? – Bemerkungen zu einem Applikationsschicksal von Genesis 3," 58.

[197] Kant, "Mutmasslicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte," 92.

[198] Ibid., 92.

[199] Kant, "Beantwortung der Frage : Was ist Aufklärung?," 53.

menschliche Natur, deren ursprüngliche Bestimmung gerade in diesem Fortschreiten besteht."[200] To give up or renounce enlightenment would mean "die heiligen Rechte der Menschheit verletzen und mit Füßen treten."[201] Adam's transgression, his *going beyond*, is, in Kant's narrative, the inevitable exit out of a dark Garden (or of a cave, to speak with Plato), the first step of a linear journey into a light that just shines brighter and brighter.

Kant's unorthodox take on the myth of the fall remains, however, true to the Christian reading of the story of Adam and Eve in one key aspect: instincts are depicted as deficient impulses which ought to be replaced with other tools - obedience and faith in the case of Christianity, and reason in the case of Kant. In the context of Kant's belief in nature's plan for man, this negative assessment of man's natural impulses seems to be rather paradoxical.[202] On the one hand, Kant suggests in his essay *Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht* that nature reveals a certain design. He writes:

> *Die Natur hat gewollt: daß der Mensch alles, was über die mechanische Anordnung seines tierischen Daseins geht, gänzlich aus sich selbst herausbringe, und keiner anderen Glückseligkeit, oder Vollkommenheit, teilhaftig werde, als die er sich selbst, frei von Instinkt, durch eigene Vernunft, verschafft hat.*[203]

---

[200] Ibid., 58.

[201] Ibid., 58.

[202] As Andreas Urs Sommer remarks, there seems to be certain "Kompatibilitätsschwierigkeiten" in Kant's discussion of freedom and nature, see Andreas Urs Sommer, "Felix peccator? Kants geschichtsphilosophische Genesis-Exegese im *Muthmasslichen Anfang der Menschengeschichte* und die Theologie der Aufklärungszeit," *Kant-Studien* 88 (1997) 212.

[203] Immanuel Kant, "Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht," *Werke in sechs Bänden, Bd. VI*, Ed. W. Weischedel (Darmstadt : Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964) 36.

Kant speaks here of the will of nature. According to the philosopher, nature has willed man to free himself from his instincts. The depiction of instincts as something from which one ought to free oneself is a position with which Christians are familiar. Are instincts then so unnatural for Kant? Or did nature want man to get away from nature? Furthermore, should one not deconstruct here, or at least question, the old dualism of instinct and reason? Can one actually speak of a *transition* from instinct to reason, as Kant does in his treatment of the fall? This transition from instinct to reason remains unexplained, as Lämmerzahl points out in her study of Kant's treatment of the fall: in Genesis, the snake is responsible for this transition, whereas in Kant, it is as if the transition were a "Sprung über einen Abgrund."[204] Beyond this, what must be remembered, here, in the context of a study of Nietzsche, is that Kant does not challenge Christianity's negative assessment of human instincts, something which Nietzsche will not fail to notice and criticize.

To this opposition of instinct and reason corresponds another opposition, in Kant, namely that of nature and culture. In his treatment of the fall, Kant explains that, after having liberated oneself from one's instincts, one enters the world of culture – learning, developing and progressing "bis vollkommene Kunst wieder Natur wird: als welches das letzte Ziel der sittlichen Bestimmung der Menschengattung ist."[205] This nature, which one had to repress in order to progress, somehow (one is tempted to say: uncannily) returns as the ultimate goal, as the end of history, as *Übernatur*, as it were. All comes full circle: in Kant's *Geschichtsphilosophie*, the history of emancipation, which started with a

[204] Lämmerzahl, 19.

[205] Kant, "Mutmasslicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte," 95.

fall for man but a giant leap for humankind, culminates when the knowledge and freedom acquired thanks to humankind's giant leap redeems what was, for the individual, a moral fall. As Flahault writes in his discussion of Kant's treatment of the myth of the fall: "Si le péché originel est écarté, le Salut, lui, demeure, quitte à être projeté dans l'histoire."[206] For all its differences with the Christian reading of the fall, Kant's speculation about the history of emancipation does not challenge the Christian devaluation of instincts and/or nature, which here too must be repressed and redeemed by a higher power.

As mentioned above, Nietzsche never ceases to stress the similarities, such as the one just discussed, between the Christian religion and Kantian philosophy. Nietzsche criticizes Kant's own definition of his task, which Nietzsche formulates as follows: "dem Glauben wieder Bahn zu machen, indem man dem Wissen seine Gränzen wies."[207] [208] According to Nietzsche, Kant does this by distinguishing between true and apparent worlds. In the section "Wie die 'wahre Welt' endlich zur Fabel wurde," in *Götzen-Dämmerung*, Nietzsche draws a line, in this regard, from Platonism to Christianity and on to Kant. Quotes from this section were already given, in this chapter, with regard to the Platonic distinction between true and apparent worlds ("die wahre Welt erreichbar für den Weisen, den Frommen, den Tugendhaften,"[209] etc.), as well as with regard to the Christian's ("die wahre Welt, unerreichbar für jetzt, aber versprochen für den Weisen,

---

[206] Flahault, 129.

[207] Nietzsche, "Morgenröte," 172.

[208] Kant's actual words, in his preface to the second edition of his *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, are : "Ich mußte also das *Wissen* aufheben, um zum *Glauben* Platz zu bekommen." See Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft, Werke in sechs Bänden, Bd. II*, Ed. W. Weischedel (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1956) 33.

[209] Nietzsche, "Gözten-Dämmerung," 80.

den Frommen, den Tugendhaften,"[210] etc.). Nietzsche then goes on to describe the true world of Kantian philosophy as follows:

> Die wahre Welt, unerreichbar, unbeweisbar, unversprechbar, aber schon als gedacht ein Trost, eine Verpflichtung, ein Imperativ.
>
> (Die alte Sonne im Grunde, aber durch Nebel und Skepsis hindurch; die Idee sublim geworden, bleich, nordisch, königsbergisch.)[211]

This true world is that of *things in themselves*, which Kant calls *noumena*, which is opposed to the apparent world, that of *phenomena*, or things as they appear to perception.[212] When Nietzsche writes that this true world is *schon als gedacht ein Trost, eine Verpflichtung, ein Imperativ*, he stresses, first of all, what he sees as a negative assessment of the only world that there is, in his opinion. The apparent world must be redeemed, as Nietzsche reads in Kant, by the belief in another world, a true world – a belief which is to give solace to the wretched creatures trapped in the so-called apparent world. Secondly, Nietzsche indicates here that such a devaluation of the only world that there is, is already present in Christian thought, as is implied by the phrase *schon als gedacht*. Kantian thought is, in this regard, utterly Christian, according to Nietzsche, who feels justified in calling Kant a deceitful Christian.[213]

The distinction between true and apparent worlds undermines, in Nietzsche's view, the Kantian discourse on enlightenment and emancipation, by postulating that the true world is unattainable, a suggestion which may lead one to give up on the only world

---

[210] Ibid., 80.

[211] Ibid., 80.

[212] Paul Guyer, *Kant* (London, N.Y. : Routledge, 2006) 29.

[213] Nietzsche, "Götzen-Dämmerung," 79.

that there is, in Nietzsche's view, which suddenly appears as false. This false world might be deemed unworthy of human striving. Individuals confronted to such an idea may feel disempowered, according to Nietzsche, who gives, in *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, the example of Heinrich von Kleist, quoting at length a letter from Kleist in which the poet writes that reading Kant was, on an existential level, an earthquake which shattered his innermost convictions:[214]

> Der Gedanke, daß wir hienieden von der Wahrheit nichts, gar nichts, wissen, daß das, was wir hier Wahrheit nennen, nach dem Tode ganz anders heißt, u daß folglich das Bestreben, sich ein Eigenthum zu erwerben, das uns auch in das Grab folgt, ganz vergeblich u fruchtlos ist, dieser Gedanke hat mich in dem Heiligthum meiner Seele erschüttert – mein *einziges* u *höchstes* Ziel ist gesunken, ich habe keines mehr.[215]

After quoting this passage of Kleist's letter, Nietzsche asks: "Ja, wann werden wieder die Menschen dergestalt Kleistisch-natürlich empfinden, wann lernen sie den Sinn einer Philosophie erst wieder an ihrem "heiligsten Innern" messen?"[216] Nietzsche implies here that Kantian philosophy might be a threat or a danger, making readers feel as Kleist did, that is: as if all striving were *fruchtlos*. Readers of Kant ought to be careful upon reading him, so as to not be dispossessed of the convictions which make them *fruchtbar*.

That Kant might be a threat or a danger is reiterated by Nietzsche in *Der Antichrist* as Nietzsche discusses Kant's categorical imperative which he deems to be

---

[214] Nietzsche, "Schopenhauer als Erzieher," 355f.

[215] Heinrich von Kleist, *Briefe von und an Heinrich von Kleist 1793-1811*, Eds. K. Müller-Salget, and S. Ormanns (F.a.M. : Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1997) 207f.

[216] Nietzsche, "Schopenhauer als Erzieher," 356.

"*lebensgefährlich*;"[217] I must briefly present Kant's categorical imperative here before explaining Nietzsche's perspective on it. It may seem that I am straying a bit from fall narratives, here, but I am not: as shown previously, Kant interprets Adam's fall as the first step in humankind's enlightenment and emancipation process; his categorical imperative, however, undermines, to a certain extent, his narrative of enlightenment and emancipation, and, as such, must be briefly discussed here. Kant formulates his categorical imperative as follows: "*handle nur nach derjenigen Maxime, durch die du zugleich wollen kannst, daß sie ein allgemeines Gesetz werde*."[218] This imperative is a categorical one as it is "ohne Beziehung auf irgend eine Absicht, d.i. auch ohne irgend einen andern Zweck."[219] Kant ends his essay by writing that reason cannot grasp or apprehend an absolute practical law such as the categorical imperative: should one be able to justify it by founding it on a specific purpose or goal, it would cease to be a moral law.[220] There seems to be a paradox, here, which will not escape Nietzsche: the philosopher of enlightenment formulates a moral imperative which implies a certain leap of faith – the philosopher of emancipation declares that man ought, from reason (*aus Vernunft*), obey a moral law which he cannot grasp.[221]

Nietzsche questions the practicality of this absolute practical law which is Kant's categorical imperative. In *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, Nietzsche criticizes the

---

[217] Nietzsche, "Der Antichrist," 177.

[218] Kant, "Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten," 51.

[219] Ibid., 43f.

[220] Ibid., 101f.

[221] As Konrad Paul Liessmann puts it : "Die Pointe aller Moral ist – und auch dagegen wird Nietzsche rebellieren - , dass sie die Freiheit voraussetzt und gleichzeitig rät, sie nicht zu gebrauchen." See Konrad Paul Liessmann, *Philosophie des verbotenen Wissens. Friedrich Nietzsche und die schwarzen Seiten des Denkens* (Wien: Paul Zsolnay, 2000) 279.

idealism of Kant's position. The following is a long quote but it is worth quoting at length, as Nietzsche criticizes Kant's moral philosophy in a way that announces his own investigation of good and evil and revaluation of values:

> Die ältere Moral, namentlich die Kant's, verlangt vom Einzelnen Handlungen, welche man von allen Menschen wünscht: das war eine schöne naïve Sache; als ob ein Jeder ohne Weiteres wüsste, bei welcher Handlungsweise das Ganze der Menschheit wohlfahre, also welche Handlungen überhaupt wünschenswerth seien; es ist eine Theorie wie die vom Freihandel, voraussetzend, dass die allgemeine Harmonie sich nach eingeborenen Gesetzen des Besserwerdens von selbst ergeben *müsse*. Vielleicht lässt es ein zukünftiger Ueberblick über die Bedürfnisse der Menschheit durchaus nicht wünschenswerth erscheinen, dass alle Menschen gleich handeln, vielmehr dürften im Interesse ökumenischer Ziele für ganze Strecken der Menschheit specielle, vielleicht unter Umständen sogar böse Aufgaben zu stellen sein.[222]

Nietzsche insists here upon the fact that it is impossible for anyone to know whether one's actions are propitious for the whole species or not, thus stressing the rather abstract or theoretical aspect of Kant's moral philosophy. As mentioned above, it is the practicality of Kant's categorical imperative which Nietzsche questions here. One can very well imagine how one would feel if one were to ponder, upon having to make a decision, whether this decision would be beneficial for the whole of humankind – one would definitely experience the state of anxiety described by Kierkegaard. One would certainly feel disempowered by this most debilitating thought. Kant scholars might reject

[222] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Menschliches, Allzumenschliches," *KSA 2*, Eds. G. Colli, and M. Montinari (München : DTV, 1999) 46.

Nietzsche's objection to Kant's categorical imperative, indicating that Kant offers a theoretical law which is not meant to be put into practice. What is at stake here, however, is Nietzsche's reception of Kant's moral philosophy which he attacks on the very grounds of this theoretical nature.

The categorical imperative, decried by Nietzsche for its abstract and theoretical nature, poses a threat to the individual, in his view, because of its claim to universality. In *Der Antichrist*, Nietzsche writes:

> Eine Tugend muss *unsre* Erfindung sein, *unsre* persönlichste Nothwehr und Nothdurft: in jedem andren Sinne ist sie bloss eine Gefahr. Was nicht unser Leben bedingt, *schadet* ihm: eine Tugend bloss aus einem Respekts-Gefühle vor dem Begriff 'Tugend,' wie Kant es wollte, ist schädlich. Die 'Tugend,' die 'Pflicht,' das 'Gute an sich,' das Gute mit dem Charakter der Unpersönlichkeit und Allgemeingültigkeit – Hirnsgespinnste, in denen sich der Niedergang, die letzte Entkräftung des Lebens, das Königsberger Chinesenthum ausdrückt.[223]

After this passage, a seemingly bewildered Nietzsche exclaims: "Dass man den kategorischen Imperativ Kant's nicht als *lebensgefährlich* empfunden hat!"[224] Nietzsche cannot believe that life could ever be made fruitful by obeying a moral law such as the categorical imperative – an abstract, generic concept which leaves, in his view, no freedom of movement, that is little room for self-assertion, originality, invention, desire, passion, pulsions, etc. In *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, he can thus write that the categorical

[223] Nietzsche, "Der Antichrist," 177.

[224] Ibid., 177.

imperative "riecht nach Grausamkeit:"[225] it reeks of the cruel scent of Christian asceticism and self-mortification because it demands, just as Christian commandments do, that one sacrifice parts of one's own self for the sake of so-called universal values.

This chapter showed how fall narratives, from Plato's *Phaedrus* to his parable of the cave in *The Republic*, to Genesis 3 and its interpretations by Saint Paul and Saint Augustine, and on to Kant's treatment of the fall in *Mutmasslicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte*, share certain features which Nietzsche harshly criticized. They all postulate a true world of ideas and concepts, on the one hand, and an apparent world, on the other hand, praising the former and condemning the latter. Nietzsche elevates himself against this dualistic view which threatens to leave the individual at a loss, feeling disempowered, as the only world which this individual can, to a certain extent, grasp and shape, according to Nietzsche, is depicted as a false world. In Plato, this apparent world is depicted as a dark cave, a barbaric bog, which stands in opposition to Reality, which is beautiful and good. The Platonic texts, with their fall imagery, inspired early Christian readings of Genesis 3. In Genesis and its interpretations by Saint Paul and Saint Augustine, the apparent world is a fallen world which can only be redeemed by the Messiah. Nietzsche sees traces of Christian eschatology in Kantian philosophy, which must postulate a true world or, as Nietzsche writes, "ein logisches 'Jenseits'," [226] in order to make room for his moral philosophy, which rests upon an absolute practical law, the categorical imperative, which reason ought not grasp. Nietzsche decries Kant's categorical imperative with its claim to universality: just as Christian prohibitions and dogmas, Kantian imperatives leave little or no freedom of movement for the individual to

[225] Nietzsche, "Zur Genealogie der Moral," 300.

[226] Nietzsche, "Morgenröte," 14.

assert him- or herself. This authoritative pose was already present in Socratic dialectics, which disempowered its opponents by imposing a strictly logical method which negated all other kinds of knowledge.

In *Also sprach Zarathustra*, Nietzsche will offer a counternarrative to the fall narratives outlined above. Nietzsche will rewrite the fall in order to undermine the opposition between true and apparent worlds which is found in Platonic, Judeo-Christian, and Kantian texts and which has had dire consequences on humankind's relationship to knowledge, morality, emancipation, the body, etc. He will also do so in order to propose a new form or a new way to write about such issues: instead of using concepts, dialectics, prohibitions, dogmas, or imperatives, Nietzsche will devise a writing style (based on metaphors, irony, parodic moments, provocation, contradictions, etc.) that affords the reader a great(er) freedom of movement. Before I turn to Nietzsche, however, I wish to show how a few literary texts from the nineteenth century, texts by Schiller, Kleist, and Heine, offer fall narratives in order to address the question of emancipation in a way which anticipates Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra*.

Chapter 3. Emancipation in the Fall Narratives of Schiller, Kleist, and Heine

This chapter is to set the stage for my subsequent interpretation of Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra*. Friedrich Schiller, Heinrich von Kleist, and Heinrich Heine propose depictions of the fall which could be said to anticipate Nietzsche's treatment of it in *Also sprach Zarathustra*. I choose to focus here on literary texts, in order to see how texts that belong neither to the religious nor to the philosophical sphere and that do not rely on the forms seen previously (dialectics, prohibitions, imperatives, etc.), to see, then,

how such texts, that are much closer in terms of form to Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra*, depict, transform, criticize, and undermine fall narratives.

I will show how Schiller's theater play *Wilhelm Tell*, Kleist's short story *Das Erdbeben in Chili*, and Heine's poems "Hortense IV" and "Seraphine VII" propose fall narratives which address the question of emancipation by depicting situations in which characters try to emancipate themselves: by doing so, they show how complex the question of emancipation is when human beings of flesh and blood grapple with it. Schiller's play *Wilhelm Tell*, which owes much to Kant's narrative of emancipation, poignantly shows how difficult it is to reconcile ideals with a reality that is far from idyllic: the movement for emancipation of the Swiss people, which is also that of a fallen Tell (as the third act depicts his fall, as I will show), is coined by conflicts, betrayal, and murder. Kleist's story *Das Erdbeben in Chili* shows that the limited consciousness of a couple of fallen lovers, scorned by a pious and cruel society, affects their decision-making and ruins their movement for emancipation in a tragic way. As for the poems by Heine, "Hortense IV" and "Seraphine VII," they suggest that emancipation must be translated from the abstract, theoretical language of Idealism into the concrete, sensualistic language of materialism, in order to overcome old dualisms and redefine one's relationship to the body and immanence. Schiller, Kleist, and Heine, before Nietzsche, rewrite the fall, as it were, in ways that undermine the religious and philosophical (meta)narratives which have shaped our world and which were discussed in the previous chapter. Their texts anticipate Nietzsche's treatment – and critique – of fall narratives in *Also sprach Zarathustra*.

My interpretation of Schiller's play *Wilhelm Tell* will draw from his theoretical text *Über naïve und sentimentalische Dichtung*, but also from his essay *Etwas über die erste Menschengesellschaft nach dem Leitfaden der mosaischen Urkunde*, a text in which one readily notices the influence of Kant. It is important to show how Schiller wrote about emancipation on a theoretical level, before investigating his literary treatment of it in *Wilhelm Tell*. Schiller, as Kant, attempts to harmonize the biblical account of the fall with Enlightenment's "belief in freedom as the purpose of humankind."[227] In his essay, Schiller insists upon the dialectical aspect of the fall of man in a way which reminds us of Kant's own treatment of the fall. Schiller claims that the first human being, in his natural state, was perfect. As his reason developed, it liberated him from his natural instinct. This "Abfall von seinem Instinkte," however, is described by Schiller as "erste Äußerung seiner Selbsttätigkeit, erstes Wagestück seiner Vernunft, erster Anfang seines moralischen Daseins."[228] The fall may imply the loss of a privileged relationship to nature and that of a certain innocence, writes Schiller; it is, however, fated. It is man's task to recapture this lost innocence "durch *seine Vernunft*."[229] This paradise lost, he must now create it anew. The dialectical aspect of the fall, as seen by Schiller, is clear as he explains that postlapsarian man becomes "aus einem glücklichen Instrumente ein unglücklicher Künstler."[230] Schiller, as Kant, casts man in the role of creator, and, as

---

[227] Michael T. Jones, "From History to Aesthetics : Schiller's Early Jena Years," *German Studies Review* 6.2 (May 1983) 202.

[228] Friedrich Schiller, "Etwas über die erste Menschengesellschaft nach dem Leitfaden der mosaischen Urkunde," *Sämtliche Werke, Bd. 4, Historische Schriften* (München : Carl Hanser, 1966) 769.

[229] Ibid., 768.

[230] Ibid., 769.

such, this creator's newly acquired freedom (and the responsibility that goes with it), is, for Schiller, both a blessing and a curse.

Schiller's preoccupation with history is intrinsically tied with his later preoccupation with aesthetics, and his essay *Über naïve und sentimentalische Dichtung* could be called an aesthetic variant of his historical essay *Etwas über die erste Menschengesellschaft nach dem Leitfaden der mosaischen Urkunde*.[231] Schiller's concepts of the naïve and the sentimental are consistent with his treatment of the fall and his depictions of pre- and postlapsarian man. The naïve character shares key features with prelapsarian man. The naïve character is described as "das stille schaffende Leben, das ruhige Wirken aus sich selbst, das Daseyn nach eignen Gesetzen, die innere Nothwendigkeit, die ewige Einheit mit sich selbst."[232] A certain immediacy is thus a feature of both naïve character and prelapsarian man. The transition from a naïve to a sentimental disposition is depicted here, just as in the historical essay, as a consequence of the development of reason. Reason leads man away "von der Einfalt, Wahrheit und Nothwendigkeit der Natur."[233] The sentimental character will thus, on the one hand, be characterized by a longing for his previous (naïve, natural) state; on the other hand, the sentimental character is superior to the naïve one, as he is able "einen mangelhaften Gegenstand *aus sich selbst heraus* zu ergänzen, und sich durch eigene Macht aus einem begrenzten Zustand in einen Zustand der Freyheit zu versetzen."[234] The sentimental

---

[231] Jones indicates that Schiller's study of universal history gradually becomes aestheticized, see Jones, 196.

[232] Friedrich Schiller, *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung* (Stuttgart : Philipp Reclam, 2002) 8.

[233] Ibid., 33.

[234] Ibid., 77.

character, just as postlapsarian man, might long for his lost paradise, but his very fall implies that he has the tools to create it anew.

The character of Wilhelm Tell is described, before the *Apfelschuß* (when Tell shoots the apple off his son's head), as a prelapsarian, naïve man, who puts his trust in nature and in God. This is clear in the very first scene of the play, in which Tell tries to convince the ferryman Ruodi to dare cross a stormy lake in order to help Baumgarten, who flees the tyrannical Austrian governor Gessler: "Vertrau auf Gott und rette den Bedrängten. (…) Der See kann sich, der Landvogt nicht erbarmen."[235] Not only does he shortly thereafter reiterate his trust in God, as he agrees to help Baumgarten cross the lake, but he also indicates that he, himself, is at one with God. He tells Baumgarten, who wonders if it might be safer to just confront Gessler: "besser ists, Ihr fallt in Gottes Hand, / Als in der Menschen!"[236] It is clear, here, that Baumgarten would not fare well, were he to fall in Gessler's hands. When he chooses to flee, he puts his fate in God's hands, according to Tell. It is, however, Tell's hands who are steering the boat. The quote above opposes (a benevolent) God to (a tyrannical) man, whereby a prelapsarian Tell resolutely sides (or blends) with God, as if both were one, as if Tell's hands were God's.

Tell's manner of speaking, before the *Apfelschuß*, reveals that he has yet to be transformed into a man who reasons and reflects before making a decision. Before the third act, Schiller's character expresses himself by means of short, sententious sentences, which do not do justice to the complex political situation at hand. As some of his compatriots complain that they have to build a fort for the Austrian authorities, Tell

---

[235] Friedrich Schiller, *Wilhelm Tell* (Stuttgart, Düsseldorf, Leipzig : Ernst Klett, 1997) 20.

[236] Ibid., 21.

simply declares: "Was Hände bauten, können Hände stürzen. (*Nach den Bergen zeigend*) Das Haus der Freiheit hat uns Gott gegründet."[237] Tell seems to trivialize the fact that an oppressed people must build a fort for its oppressor, suggesting that true freedom is to be found in the realm of nature and God. When Stauffacher then tries to convince him of the necessity to rebel against Austria, it is thus not surprising to hear Tell reply: "Die einzge Tat ist jetzt Geduld und Schweigen."[238] He, the child who is at one with nature and God, is not touched by the common plight and by Stauffacher's call for solidarity, as his famous reply indicates: "Der Starke ist am mächtigsten *allein*."[239] He wants to be left out of political discussions, but then (surprisingly or paradoxically) assures Stauffacher that, should his people need him to accomplish certain deeds, he would gladly contribute to the fight for freedom. It is obvious, in view of the above, that he has not given the issue much thought. At this stage, Tell does not know what it means to be a citizen: he feels neither the need nor the duty to acquire information regarding political or societal matters, to carefully weigh various arguments, to form an opinion, and act accordingly. His speech reveals his kind, but immature nature: he is instinctively ready to help out, but is devoid of any analytical skills and can thus only act as instrument. The precariousness of Tell's naïve character is thus revealed "dadurch, daß er lediglich ein Produkt der Natur – und nicht des Willens und der Vernunft – ist,"[240] and his manner of speaking befits his naïve, natural, prelapsarian state.

---

[237] Ibid., 28.

[238] Ibid., 29.

[239] Ibid., 29.

[240] Ludwig Völker, "Tell und der Samariter. Zum Verhältnis von Ästhetik und Geschichte in Schillers Drama," *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 95 (1976) : 191.

Tell's fall is, as in Genesis 3, (partly) the consequence of disobedience: he fails to abide by the rule according to which one ought to greet a hat on a stick which symbolizes the Austrian hegemony over the Swiss cantons – a tyrannical and absurd rule which is called, by one character, a "Fallstrick,"[241] a felicitous, foreboding designation, as this *Fallstrick* will lead to Tell's fall. It was mentioned in the last chapter that many a Genesis commentator pointed out that Adam, in his prelapsarian state, could not begin to understand God's prohibition. Such a view implies that Adam did not sin out of an evil disposition, but rather naively or innocently. This is also the case of Tell, who explains, after being arrested for not greeting the hat, that it happened "aus Unbedacht, / Nicht aus Verachtung"[242] – a statement which indicates, again, that Tell is decidedly not the reflective type.

What follows, the *Apfelschuß* episode, evokes the fall of man in Genesis, giving it a Kantian twist, as Tell's fall is depicted as the beginning of his enlightenment process. After Tell gets arrested, the governor comes and asks Tell to shoot an apple off his son's head. The apple reminds the reader, of course, of the biblical apple and its role in the fall of man. The tyrant's demand goes against what Tell sees as the laws of nature: he, a loving father, must risk his son's life. Such a demand represents indeed, as Fritz Martini puts it, the "Klimax der Despotie."[243] Not only must Tell endanger his child's life but he must do so using the very tool with which he earns a living for himself and his family: his crossbow. Gessler stresses the cruel irony of his own demand by saying: "Gefährlich ists,

---

[241] Ibid., 28.

[242] Ibid., 70.

[243] Fritz Martini, *Geschichte im Drama. Drama in der Geschichte* (Stuttgart : Klett-Cotta, 1979) 293f.

ein Mordgewehr zu tragen."[244] The *Apfelschuß* is, for Tell, "a traumatic shock which forces him to take stock of his situation in a way to which he has not hitherto been accustomed."[245] This shock marks the transition between pre- and postlapsarian Tell, who, at this point, starts arguing with Gessler, who remarks: "Ei, Tell, du bist ja plötzlich so besonnen!"[246] The reader notices that Tell, after this "Begegnung mit dem Bösen,"[247] has entered "das Stadium der Reflexion."[248]

Schiller's depiction of the dialectic of the fall, in the previously discussed historical essay, is given an ironic twist in his theater play, adding a layer of complexity to Schiller's theoretical treatment of emancipation. As Gessler insists that Tell ought to show his skills by shooting an apple off his son's head, he promises Tell that he will let him go as soon as Tell performs the requested deed: "Und sieh, ich lege gnädig dein Geschick / In deine eigne kunstgeübte Hand. / Der kann nicht klagen über harten Spruch, / Den man zum Meister seines Schicksals macht."[249] The idea that Tell is the master of his fate as he is very obviously the victim of the whims of an absolutist power makes a mockery of the Enlightenment and Idealist (fall) narrative of emancipation, reminding us a paradox found in Kant's text *Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?* in which Kant advocates the individual's *Erziehung zur Mündigkeit* while simultaneously

---

[244] Schiller, *Wilhelm Tell*, 73.

[245] F.J. Lamport, "The Silence of Wilhelm Tell," *Modern Language Review* 76.4 (October 1981): 863.

[246] Schiller, *Wilhelm Tell*, 71.

[247] Erika and Ernst Borries, *Die Weimarer Klassik. Goethes Spätwerk. Deutsche Literaturgeschichte Bd. 3*, 4th edition (München : DTV, 2001) 248.

[248] Völker, 192.

[249] Schiller, *Wilhelm Tell*, 72.

sanctioning political obedience to the State.[250] Tell's innocent act of disobedience (when he ignored the hat) and his subsequent confrontation with Gessler causes him to fall. It is an experience which forms and educates him, forcing him to reflect and debate, but it is, one must admit, a most tragic experience. In this context, Safranski has a felicitous formulation regarding Adam's fall: "Wollte Gott einen Gehorsamstest durchführen und ist der verbotene Baum der Erkenntnis vielleicht eine Art 'Geßlerhut'?"[251] Gessler, as the biblical God, is a destructive force which paradoxically furthers emancipation while demanding obedience.

After the *Apfelschuß*, a postlapsarian Tell, now a remarkable orator, embarks on what one could call "den gefährlichen Weg zur moralischen Freiheit,"[252] as Schiller writes of a postlapsarian Adam in his historical essay. After his arrest and subsequent escape, Tell decides to hide and wait for Gessler, in order to murder him. Tell's famous soliloquy, long and eloquent, in which he announces and justifies his murder, could not differ more from his former concise manner of speaking made of short phrases and proverbs. Tell, in his postlapsarian state, is a self-reflexive man whose very existence is now defined by a wound, forcing him to consider in a very personal way issues of good and evil:

> Ich lebte still und harmlos – Das Geschoß
> War auf des Waldes Tiere nur gerichtet,
> Meine Gedanken waren rein von Mord –

---

[250] Kant, "Beantwortung der Frage : Was ist Aufklärung?," 55f.

[251] Safranski, 27.

[252] Schiller, "Etwas über die erste Menschengesellschaft nach dem Leitfaden der mosaischen Urkunde," 769.

Du hast aus meinem Frieden mich heraus
Geschreckt, in gärend Drachengift hast du
Die Milch der frommen Denkart mir verwandelt,
Zum Ungeheuren hast du mich gewöhnt –
Wer sich des Kindes Haupt zum Ziele setzte,
Der kann auch treffen in das Herz des Feinds.[253]

This soliloquy explains his murder of the tyrant, but it does not quite show how Tell could feel that this murder is justified. Whether it is or not has always been the subject of fierce debates in Schiller scholarship.[254] Tell, however, gives his own answer to that question twice. As Gessler dies, killed by Tell, the latter states: "Frei sind die Hütten, sicher ist die Unschuld / Vor dir, du wirst dem Lande nicht mehr schaden."[255] Tell thus interprets his murder as an act by which he reinstates the freedom and innocence which the Swiss people experienced before Austrian rule. Later, upon meeting Parricida, who killed his uncle, the emperor, out of ambition, Tell justifies his own murder further, perpetrated out of necessity:

Unglücklicher!
Darfst du der Ehrsucht blutge Schuld vermengen
Mit der gerechten Notwehr eines Vaters?
Hast du der Kinder liebes Haupt verteidigt?
Des Herdes Heiligtum beschützt? das Schrecklichste,

[253] Schiller, *Wilhelm Tell*, 91.

[254] Schiller himself declared that it was, see Friedrich Schnapp, "Schiller über seinen 'Wilhelm Tell.' Mit unbekannten Dokumenten," *Deutsche Rundschau* (Jan-March 1926) 108.

[255] Schiller, *Wilhelm Tell*, 98.

Das Letzte von den Deinen abgewehrt?

- Zum Himmel heb ich meine reinen Hände,

Verfluche dich und deine Tat – Gerächt

Hab ich die heilige Natur, die *du*

Geschändet – Nichts teil ich mit dir – Gemordet

Hast *du*, ich hab mein Teuerstes verteidigt.[256]

Here, again, Tell shows that he can now reflect, take a stand with regard to right and wrong, and explain his position in a logical, analytical way.

The reader cannot fail to see in *Wilhelm Tell* a much more differentiated, ambivalent depiction of the *Erziehung zur Mündigkeit* which Schiller, as Kant before him, celebrated in theoretical essays. In his first lecture as history professor, Schiller writes about modern man: "Die Gleichheit, die er durch seinen Eintritt in die Gesellschaft verlor, hat er wiedergewonnen durch seine weise Gesetze."[257] Schiller, as *Geschichtsphilosoph*,[258] realized that such a statement belonged to a narrative, the goal of which was to educate people. He believed that a philosophy of history had to link historical fragments together "durch künstliche Bindungsglieder," in order to turn "das Aggregat zum System, zu einem vernünfmäßig zusammenhängenden Ganzen."[259] This is a pedagogical endeavour, according to Schiller: the reader, confronted to such a narrative

---

[256] Ibid., 110.

[257] Friedrich Schiller, "Was heisst und zu welchem Ende studiert man Universalgeschichte? Eine akademische Antrittsrede," *Sämtliche Werke, Bd. 4. Historische Schriften* (München : Carl Hanser, 1966) 756.

[258] Scholars have noted that he was much more *Geschichtsphilosoph* than historian, see Otto Dann, Norbert Oellers, and Ernst Osterkamp, "Einleitung," *Schiller als Historiker*, Eds. O. Dann, N. Oellers, and E. Osterkamp (Stuttgart, Weimar : J.B. Metzler, 1995) 2.

[259] Schiller, "Was heisst und zu welchem Ende studiert man Universalgeschichte? Eine akademische Antrittsrede," 763.

of great deeds and accomplishments, which all point toward a better future for humankind, will feel endowed with the responsibility to help further the human(istic) project.[260] A philosophy of history must thus, because of its function, present views that are rather one-sided: it is not the place to question, challenge, or undermine certain concepts, ideas, or ideals.

As playwright, on the other hand, Schiller can and does undermine such a view of history which sublates the lost, the dead, the forgotten. In *Wilhelm Tell*, he depicts the darker side of a man's *Erziehung zur Mündigkeit*. Whereas Kant and Schiller, in theoretical writings, portrayed man's transition from instinct to reason as something *fated*, Tell's transformation is not: it is solely the result of a tyranny which has brought ills onto a people. Tell does, because of this, acquire analytical and rhetorical skills, but it is not these skills which enable him to free himself from the tyrant (a feat achieved, in contrast, by Goethe's idealized Iphigenie): *violence does*. Schiller's play, in spite of the fact that it is certainly informed if not inspired by an Idealist philosophy of history, reminds the reader of the famous statement by Walter Benjamin: "Es ist niemals ein Dokument der Kultur, ohne zugleich ein solches der Barbarei zu sein."[261] Whether Tell's murder of the tyrant is justified or not seems to be a moot point: what stays with the reader is that this postlapsarian world, which Schiller depicts, is a false world (to use a formulation by another member of the Frankfurt School, Adorno). It is a world of enmity, in which one man's dream of freedom is another man's nightmare.

Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell* thus gives us a differentiated, complex vision of emancipation, which contains elements which one will later find in Nietzsche. The

---

[260] Ibid., 767.

[261] Walter Benjamin, "Über den Begriff der Geschichte," *Illuminationen* (F.a.M. : Suhrkamp, 1977) 254.

narrative of emancipation coined by Enlightenment and Idealist philosophers, such as Kant for instance, has little to do with the only world which humankind can, to a certain extent, grasp and shape. It must be said again, as I did in the introductory chapter, that, had Tell lived in accordance with Kant's categorical imperative, a situation of tyranny would have endured. Schiller shows us the darker side of the human experience, as human beings of flesh and blood grapple with issues of knowledge, morality, and emancipation, that are far from being self-evident, absolute, and universal, that are always in the process of being constructed, defined, and revised. This resonates with the Nietzsche reader. Nietzsche's call for a revaluation of values rests on a conviction which he utters thus in *Also sprach Zarathustra*: "Wahrlich, die Menschen gaben sich alles ihr Gutes und Böses. Wahrlich, sie nahmen es nicht, sie fanden es nicht, nicht fiel es ihnen als Stimme vom Himmel. Werthe legte erst der Mensch in die Dinge, sich zu erhalten."[262] This is what the reader witnesses in Schiller's play: Tell's *Erziehung zur Mündigkeit* is coined by exterior forces which threaten him on a very basic and very real level and which lead him to define (his) good and evil, not only in order to save himself and his people… but also to justify his own murderous deed.

In Heinrich von Kleist's short story *Das Erdbeben in Chili*, good and evil are shown to be inextricably linked to the false consciousness of its inhabitants – a false consciousness which is defined in Kleist's text *Über das Marionettentheater*, which I will briefly present before moving on to the short story. In *Über das Marionettentheater*, a character called Herr C. claims that a return to paradise might cure that which was brought about by the fall, namely: the limited consciousness of man. Prelapsarian man

[262] Nietzsche, "Also sprach Zarathustra," 75.

was like a puppet, he explains: he had no consciousness whatsoever, and God acted as puppet master. Such puppets are graceful, he claims: they are "antigrav"[263] because the force that pulls them from above is greater than gravity. Postlapsarian man, in contrast, who abandoned God or whom God abandoned (in German, one would use the expression *fallen lassen*), is like a dancer: gravity is now the sole master against which he must elevate himself. This fall from grace is twofold: God's grace is no longer by him and because of that, man is no longer graceful. Body and soul are no longer one, explains Herr C., who gives the example of a dancer, personifying Paris, who, as he offers an apple (what else?) to Venus, reveals an utter lack of grace: "die Seele sitzt ihm gar (es ist ein Schrecken, es zu sehen) im Ellenbogen."[264] Postlapsarian man is now conscious, unlike the puppet, but this limited consciousness, as Herr C. depicts it, is a curse: it is too little or too much, as grace only belongs to those with either no consciousness, like puppets, or with an infinite consciousness, like God. The fall, for Herr C., is thus not a fortunate fall. The lost paradise, guarded by cherubs, ought to be regained: "Wir müssen die Reise um die Welt machen, und sehen, ob es vielleicht von hinten irgendwo wieder offen ist."[265] According to Kleist's character, it is thus better to be a puppet in the hands of God than a man left to himself.

In the short story *Das Erdbeben in Chili*, Kleist offers the vision of a couple's return to Eden as a result of the destruction of its postlapsarian world by an earthquake. Santiago, capital of Chile, is described here as a city in which the Catholic Church rules

---

[263] Heinrich von Kleist, "Über das Marionettentheater," *Werke in einem Band*, Ed. H. Sembdner (München : Carl Hanser, 1996) 805.

[264] Ibid., 804.

[265] Ibid., 804.

with an iron fist. The law, in collusion with the Church, sentences Jeronimo and Josephe (the said couple), who just had a child out of wedlock, to prison and death respectively. Sexuality, if it is not sanctioned by God (or his mediator, the Church), is interpreted as a sin. As his lover is about to be decapitated, Jeronimo decides to hang himself. In view of Kleist's text *Über das Marionettentheater*, this way of committing suicide could be interpreted as a way to conquer gravity once and for all, to leave the fallen world, and return to God: the hanged man reminds one indeed of a puppet, hanging by a string. Just as he is about to hang himself, however, the earth starts shaking, but paradoxically, it is "als ob das Firmament einstürzte."[266] The earthquake seems to come from above. It is as if Jeronimo's suicide attempt had awoken a (non-Christian) God from his slumber, causing him to realign the cosmos, destroying a cruel repressive order, in order to save a man accused of love – a sin that isn't one. Men who were in power die, buildings which stood for this power collapse: the cloister where Josephe had been sent by her angry father burns; the archbishop, who had made sure that Josephe was sentenced to death, is killed; the palace of the viceroy, who had not opposed Josephe's death sentence, is destroyed; the tribunal, where the sentence was passed, goes up in flames; the paternal home no longer exists; the prison, where Jeronimo was held captive, is now in ruins. Amidst all this, Josephe could not, of course, be executed, and she fled. It is as if God or nature were avenging the lovers for the ungodly, unnatural state of man's world, for the repression, by a postlapsarian society, of nature – in this case: of love, sexuality, pregnancy, birth.

---

[266] Heinrich von Kleist, "Das Erdbeben in Chili," *Werke in einem Band*, Ed. H. Sembdner (München : Carl Hanser, 1996) 689.

Thus saved, the lovers find each other in a valley described as a new Eden,[267] in which they enjoy an idyll reminding the reader of Rousseau's *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité*.[268] It is enlightening, for this study, to look briefly at what this implies, considering that Rousseau's vision of the fall differs greatly from Kant's, thus revealing Kleist's position vis-à-vis Enlightenment and Idealist fall narratives such as Kant's. Rousseau claims that the fall of man is a fall into civilisation. He praises man, as animal, and considers that man's transformation into a rational animal is not a transformation for the best: "J'ose presque assurer que l'état de réflexion est un état contre nature, et que l'homme qui médite est un animal dépravé."[269] In his natural state, man is good: he is naturally benevolent, peaceful, and compassionate; as he becomes rational, however, he turns into a greedy and oppressive being; this sorry transformation is responsible for the inequalities that now prevail amongst men. In conclusion, he writes:

> Il suit de cet exposé que l'inégalité, étant presque nulle dans l'état de nature, tire sa force et son accroissement du développement de nos facultés et des progrès de l'esprit humain et devient enfin stable et légitime par l'établissement de la propriété et des lois.[270]

---

[267] Ibid., 691.

[268] Siegfried Streller investigates the influence of Rousseau on Kleist in his article "Heinrich von Kleist und Jean-Jacques Rousseau," *Heinrich von Kleist. Aufsätze und Essays*, Ed. W. Müller-Seidel (Darmstadt Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967) 635-671. Bernhard Böschenstein does so as well in his article "Kleist und Rousseau," *Kleist-Jahrbuch* (1981-82): 145-156.

[269] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité* (Paris : Maxi-Livres, 2001) 189.

[270] Ibid., 265.

Rousseau's treatment of the fall is thus quite different from the rather positivistic interpretations by other Enlightenment and Idealist philosophers, like Leibniz or Kant: the fall into civilisation, for Rousseau, is truly a curse.

Santiago, as it is described in Kleist's short story, is a world that is ruled by a civilisation such as that described by Rousseau – a civilisation which, as in Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell*, is not the opposite of barbarism. For Kleist, civilisation is rather a clever varnish for barbarism. Law and Church work hand in hand to sanction each other's will to power, to use a Nietzschean formulation, while acting as if they were thus educating and enlightening the masses. The earthquake reveals, albeit briefly, the natural, benevolent core of what Rousseau would call human nature, as the lovers enjoy liberty, equality, and fraternity in the new Eden. These moments are described as follows (the passage is worth quoting at length):

> Und in der Tat schien, mitten in diesen gräßlichen Augenblicken, in welchen alle irdischen Güter der Menschen zu Grunde gingen, und die ganze Natur verschüttet zu werden drohte, der menschliche Geist selbst, wie eine schöne Blume, aufzugehn. Auf den Feldern, so weit das Auge reichte, sah man Menschen von allen Ständen durcheinander liegen, Fürsten und Bettler, Matronen und Bäuerinnen, Staatsbeamte und Tagelöhner, Klosterherren und Klosterfrauen: einander bemitleiden, sich wechselseitig Hülfe reichen, von dem, was sie zur Erhaltung ihres Lebens gerettet haben mochten, freudig mitteilen, als ob das allgemeine Unglück alles, was ihm entronnen war, zu *einer* Familie gemacht hätte.[271]

[271] Kleist, "Das Erdbeben in Chili," 693f.

It is as if the earthquake, which ruptured the ground but seemed to come from the heavens, had opened up the back door to paradise of which Herr C. speaks in *Über das Marionettentheater*, to the people of Santiago, causing them to fall back into innocence, which is depicted here as a fall back into nature.

Their limited consciousness will lead Jeronimo and Josephe to attribute a metaphysical significance to the earthquake, an interpretation which is undermined by the narration and which will ruin their movement for emancipation. Exhilarated by their rescue and smitten with the new Eden, Jeronimo and Josephe interpret the earthquake as proof that their love is blessed by God, and thus cast themselves in the roles of chosen ones. They think: "Wie viel Elend über die Welt kommen mußte, damit sie glücklich würden!"[272] It is as if the sole function of this devastating earthquake had been to rescue the couple, regardless of the countless deaths that it caused: the earthquake *had* to happen *in order* to rescue the couple.[273] They thus invent for themselves "eine ebenso universale wie private Teleologie."[274] Their rescue is, as Josephe believes, "eine Wohltat, wie der Himmel noch keine über sie verhängt hatte."[275] *Eine Wohltat* v*erhängen*? *Verhängen*: the

---

[272] Ibid., 692.

[273] This perverse teleology might be Kleist's ironic contribution to the philosophical debate about the Lisbon earthquake of 1755. Voltaire wrote a poem about the event, "Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne ou examen de cet axiome : 'Tout est bien'," in which he made a mockery of Leibnizian optimism, whereas Rousseau claimed that the earthquake was so devastating because of man's civilised ways (high buildings, dense population, the decision to try to save as many possessions as possible, etc.). See Voltaire, "Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne ou examen de cet axiome : 'Tout est bien'," *Œuvres complètes de Voltaire, Vol. 9* (Paris : Garnier, 1877) 465-480, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Lettre à M. de Voltaire. 18 août 1756," *Correspondance générale de J.J. Rousseau. Tome Deuxième*, Ed. T. Dufour (Paris : Armand Colin, 1924) 303-324.

[274] Friedrich A. Kittler, "Ein Erdbeben in Chili und Preußen," *Positionen der Literaturwissenschaft. 8 Modellanalysen am Beispiel von Kleists « Das Erdbeben in Chili,* Ed. D.E. Wellbery (München : C.H. Beck, 1985) 28.

[275] Kleist, "Das Erdbeben in Chili," 693.

word is a cognate of *hängen*, of course, and reminds the reader of the hanging of a puppet, as if Jeronimo and Josephe were now puppets in God's benevolent hands. *Verhängen*, however, is mostly used with the word *Strafe*, as if the lovers, unbeknownst to them, were actually being punished as they are being rescued: their kingdom, as chosen ones, might not be of this world. *Verhängen*, lastly, is also a cognate of *Verhängnis*, a noun which has a negative connotation, and which, before the *Aufklärung*, meant "Fügung Gottes."[276] In short: the reader cannot help but feel that it does not bode well for the couple – at least, in this world.

The narrator does not subscribe to the couple's teleological narrative: he is at pains to indicate that God has no say in the couple's fate, using the word *Zufall* repeatedly as various events are described. The *Zufall*-motif is here, as in all of Kleist's works, as Bernhard Greiner writes, "von einer insistierenden Präsenz."[277] Kleist undermines, with this motif, religious teleologies such as Christian eschatology. As Norbert Oellers writes in his study of the short story: "Der Himmel spielt in dieser Geschichte, trotz allen Anrufungen, keine nachweisbare Rolle."[278] In his works, Kleist rather satirizes the "belief in a benevolent, teleologically structured cosmos."[279] The world depicted by the narrator in *Das Erdbeben in Chili* is coined by *Zufall*. It is said, for instance, that Jeronimo finds Josephe, now in the cloister, "durch einen glücklichen

---

[276] "Verhängnis," *Kluge. Etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* (Berlin/N.Y. : Walter de Gruyter, 2002) 953.

[277] Bernhard Greiner, *Kleists Dramen und Erzählungen : Experimente zum 'Fall' der Kunst* (Tübingen, Basel : Francke, 2000) 369f.

[278] Norbert Oellers, "Das Erdbeben in Chili," *Kleists Erzählungen*, Ed. W. Hinderer (Stuttgart : Philipp Reclam jun., 1998) 98.

[279] Anthony Stephens, "On Structures in Kleist," *A Companion to the Works of Heinrich von Kleist*, Ed. B. Fischer (N.Y., Woodbridge : Camden House, 2003) 77.

Zufall."[280] When Jeronimo wishes to commit suicide in his prison cell, he finds "einen Strick, den ihm der Zufall gelassen hatte."[281] That the couple's rescue might not be a result of God's blessing is also hinted at by the narrator by means of several subjunctive (*als ob*) structures. As Josephe does not suffer any injuries as buildings around her are collapsing during the earthquake, it is "als ob alle Engel des Himmels sie umschirmten."[282] As previously quoted, as the couple finds itself in the valley, surrounded by caring, friendly people, it is "als ob das allgemeine Unglück alles, was ihm entronnen war, zu *einer* Familie gemacht hätte."[283] The idea that life in the valley is deceptive, as it leads the couple to believe that their enemies have been defeated or obliterated from the face of the world, is reinforced by the statement that life in this new Eden is "wie nur ein Dichter davon träumen mag."[284] If there is a teleology at work here, it is not Christian or Kantian, but Kleistian: it is a teleology which, by underscoring its fictive nature, undermines itself.

The couple's belief in a teleology that sanctions their love, a belief which is a result of their limited consciousness, is fatal. As Jeronimo and Josephe wonder if they should now flee Santiago, the text reads:

> In Jeronimos und Josephens Brust regten sich Gedanken von seltsamer Art. Wenn sie sich mit so vieler Vertraulichkeit und Güte behandelt sahen, so wußten sie

[280] Kleist, "Das Erdbeben in Chili," 688.

[281] Ibid., 688.

[282] Ibid., 691.

[283] Ibid., 694.

[284] Ibid., 692.

> nicht, was sie von der Vergangenheit denken sollten, vom Richtplatze, von dem Gefängnisse, und der Glocke; und ob sie bloß davon geträumt hätten?[285]

What kind of *thoughts* (*Gedanken*, in the quote above) are these? Are these not rather mixed feelings, feelings of exhilaration and confusion? Jeronimo and Josephe are not even sure whether events which took place *the day before* actually happened. Their feelings can be called *thoughts* only in a Kleistian world, a world in which one uses feelings as a means to knowledge, just as Rousseau did, whose "Hochschätzung des Gefühls als Wegweiser durch das Leben"[286] enabled Kleist to overcome, to a certain extent, the crisis induced by his reading of Kant. The non-rational part of the mind, however, revealed itself for Kleist, as one commentator remarks, "fraught with the same problems of subjective perception as is analytical thought."[287] In the story, the word *Gedanken* is used again, as Josephe, in reply to Jeronimo's suggestion that they remain in Santiago, because of their new found happiness in the valley, says "daß ähnliche Gedanken in ihr aufgestiegen wären."[288] The lovers are so eager to belong to a society in which their love is not a sin that they confuse thoughts and feelings, refuse to consider that their lives might still be in danger, and thus decide to stay in Santiago instead of escaping to the aptly named town of La Conception.

It is thus their limited consciousness which causes, after the idyll in the new Eden, a rebirth of tragedy. This limited consciousness could be said to be, for Kleist, the source

---

[285] Ibid., 693.

[286] Streller, 652.

[287] Alexandra Strelka, "Mystical Marionettes : Kleist's Shift in his Teleological View in *Über das Marionettentheater*," *Ein Leben für Dichtung und Freiheit. Festschrift zum 70. Geburtstag von Joseph P. Strelka*, Eds. K.F. Auckenthaler, H.H. Rudnick, and K. Weissenberger (Tübingen : Stauffenburg, 1997) 39.

[288] Kleist, "Das Erdbeben in Chili," 694.

of all human tragedies. I previously mentioned Kleist's reading of Kant: Kleist read Kant in such a way that he felt robbed of certainties which had been his and which had guided his life. What he took to be the thought that we can never know what truth is, and that truth might be different after death, shattered him to the core. It is thus not surprising that Kleist's character, Herr C., judges man's existence, with its limited consciousness, to be worst than a puppet's lot. In *Das Erdbeben in Chili*, the lovers experience this tragedy unbeknownst to them until the very end. Having a limited consciousness means being entangled in a mesh of desires, beliefs, assumptions, intuitions, pulsions, feelings – all of which impair the couple's judgment and decision-making. The lovers, for instance, are blind to the fact that the earthquake has spared the church of the Dominicans, the most repressive faction of the Catholic Church. How can they believe that God is on their side, knowing that this church was spared? Does this not contradict their narrative, their romantic teleology? Blinded by their eagerness to believe in an Eden here on earth, the lovers make the ill decision of remaining in Santiago. They could flee, they could emancipate themselves from the laws, rules, and moral codes which prevail in Santiago. They do not. As human beings of flesh and blood, their movement for emancipation is hindered by their limited consciousness, by the deceptiveness of their modes of knowledge, as one commentator writes: "Täuschbar und beständiger Täuschung unterworfen sind alle Erkenntnismodi: Wahrnehmung, Verstand und Logik, Gefühle, schon gar die Zuversicht in die Heilsverheißungen des christlichen Glaubens."[289] One might remember, here, was Nietzsche writes about consciousness and which applies to the fate of Jeronimo and Josephe: "Die Bewusstheit ist die letzte und späteste

[289] Hans-Jürgen Schrader, "Spuren Gottes in den Trümmern der Welt. Zur Bedeutung biblischer Bilder in Kleists 'Erdbeben'," *Kleist-Jahrbuch* (1991): 34.

Entwickelung des Organischen und folglich auch das Unfertigste und Unkräftigste daran. Aus der Bewusstheit stammen unzählige Fehlgriffe, welche machen, dass ein Thier, ein Mensch zu Grunde geht, früher als es nöthig wäre."[290] In Kleist's short story, as in Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell*, the path to freedom is thus depicted as being fraught with human, all-too human problems.

In contrast to Schiller and Kleist, Heinrich Heine will deal with the question of emancipation from a very different perspective: his poems "Hortense IV" and "Seraphine VII" propose a vision of the world in which emancipation has been translated into the concrete language of sensualism and materialism – a position which can be interpreted as his answer to a problem which he exposes in his short text *Verschiedenartige Geschichtsauffassung*, which must be presented here briefly in order to contextualize the poems and because it is pertinent to Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra*, as the reader will surely understand. In this text, Heine depicts conflicting views of history. He contrasts here the cyclical and the linear. Those who believe in a cyclical view of history tend to become fatalistic and thus indifferent (to existence, to their environment, etc.). Those who, in contrast, see history as a linear narrative, believe in the idea of perfectibility and are keen on setting goals for the future, as Heine explains:

> Das goldne Zeitalter, heisst es, liege nicht hinter uns, sondern vor uns; wir seien nicht aus dem Paradiese vertrieben mit einem flammenden Schwerte, sondern wir müssen es erobern durch ein flammendes Herz, durch die Liebe; die Frucht der Erkenntnis gebe uns nicht den Tod, sondern das ewige Leben.[291]

---

[290] Nietzsche, "Die fröhliche Wissenschaft," 382.

[291] Heinrich Heine, "Verschiedenartige Geschichtsauffassung," *Sämtliche Schriften, Bd. 3*, Ed. K. Briegleb (München : Carl Hanser, 1971) 22.

People who hold such a view, such as the Saint-Simonians, who, for a time, were a great influence on Heine,[292] risk, however, falling prey to utopian ideals. Both views are lacking, Heine believes: the former lacks a future, the latter, a present. He concludes:

> Das Leben ist weder Zweck noch Mittel; das Leben ist ein Recht. Das Leben will dieses Recht geltend machen gegen den erstarrenden Tod, gegen die Vergangenheit, und dieses Geltendmachen ist die Revolution.[293]

This does not solve the problem, however. A revolution causes a breach in time, and could be said to be putting an end to both the cyclical and the linear. It is, however, short-lived. It is, inevitably, the starting point of a new narrative, and, as such, one runs the risk of falling back on the views described above, that is: holding either a cyclical or a linear view of history, being either oblivious to the future or to the present.

Heine's treatment of the myth of the fall in his poem "Hortense IV" can be interpreted as an answer to this dilemma, as it suggests that love can reconcile the cyclical and the linear, as I will show in the next paragraphs, after quoting the poem in full here:

> (Sie spricht:)
>
> Steht ein Baum im schönen Garten
>
> Und ein Apfel hängt daran,
>
> Und es ringelt sich am Aste
>
> Eine Schlange, und ich kann
>
> Von den süßen Schlangenaugen

---

[292] See E.M. Butler, *The Saint-Simonian Religion in Germany. A Study of the Young German Movement* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1926).

[293] Heine, "Verschiedenartige Geschichtsauffassung," 161.

Nimmer wenden meinen Blick,

Und das zischelt so verheißend,

Und das lockt wie holdes Glück!

(Die Andre spricht:)

Dieses ist die Frucht des Lebens,

Koste ihre Süßigkeit,

Daß du nicht so ganz vergebens

Lebtest deine Lebenszeit!

Schönes Kindchen, fromme Taube,

Kost einmal und zittre nicht –

Folge meinem Rat und glaube,

Was die kluge Muhme spricht.[294]

The poem is a playful but nonetheless severe critique of Christian teleology. Heine revisits here the myth of the fall in order to correct a mistake. In Genesis, Eve eats from the tree of knowledge of good and evil – a moment which plays a crucial role in Christian teleology, as it causes the fall and makes the coming of Christ necessary. Heine's poem is a reenactment of the scene, but with a twist. Eve sees in the snake's eyes *une promesse de bonheur*. The tone of the first stanza is very sensual, the woman is seduced by the snake, but in this garden, morality does not get in the way, there is no mention of a prohibition. This Eve is free to experience (and give in to) her desire. The other voice, that of the snake, offers the woman, in the second stanza, from an oft

[294] Heinrich Heine, "Hortense IV," *Sämtliche Gedichte in zeitlicher Folge*, Ed. K. Briegleb (F.a.M. : Insel, 1997) 388.

forgotten tree: the tree of life. That the woman is called a *fromme Taube* by the snake may indicate that this Eve is not the Eve of the Garden of Eden but rather a Christian woman who has experienced the calamity brought onto her sex by Christian interpretations of the fall, that is: a woman whose sexuality has been repressed, whose menstruating and procreating body has been a source of shame, and who could never live up to Christianity's ideal woman, the ignorant adolescent Mary. Heine's Eve is likely his contemporary: she is a postlapsarian woman who has been taught to despise the body and celebrate the spirit, who has been taught to renounce earthly, material joys and live only for spiritual rewards to come.

The snake is depicted by Heine in a way that is typical of Romantic treatments of the biblical snake, that is: as a force which "galvanizes the protagonist into action."[295] Heine's snake, which is beyond good and evil, as it were, certainly anticipates Nietzsche's, as the following will make clear. Heine's snake is described as *die kluge Muhme*. In Genesis, the snake is described as the most cunning of animals – a description which expresses a fairly negative moral judgment on the snake. In Heine's poem, just as there is no mention of a prohibition, there is no moral judgment on the snake, which is plainly described as *klug*. This snake, as Nietzsche's (as I will show in the next chapter), is wise *because* of its knowledge of the earth, that is: of earthly life, of earthly pleasures. By eating from the tree of life, by trusting the snake and its earthly wisdom, Heine's Eve emancipates herself from what has hitherto been history (one could, in this case, use the feminist coinage: *herstory*). Just as Noah's dove brought back the glad tidings that earth

[295] Terry Otten, *After Innocence: Visions of the Fall in Modern Literature* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1982) 10.

was near, Heine's *fromme Taube* is the herald of a revolution that grounds a new order in earthly life, in immanence and sensualism.

This revolution cannot be short-lived as it grows out of the tree of life. The tree of life, in Heine's poem, offers Eve a world of sensual pleasures to be enjoyed here and now. In Genesis, it is, however, the tree which lends immortality. The verses "Daß du nicht so ganz vergebens / Lebtest deine Lebenszeit!" is certainly a suggestion to Eve to enjoy her present and not waste it away, waiting for a better afterlife, but it also implies, in this context, that love and sexuality are not, as the Church pretends, transient, that they partake in immortality (by leading to procreation, for example – not that Heine reduces the immortal power of love to this).

Heine's poem "Seraphine VII," from the same cycle of poems, depicts the logical outcome of the sensual revolution which is called for in "Hortense IV" as it speaks of the emancipation of two lovers who devise their own scriptures. I will quote this poem in full as well, before interpreting it in the following paragraphs:

Auf diesem Felsen bauen wir
Die Kirche von dem dritten,
Dem dritten neuen Testament;
Das Leid ist ausgelitten.

Vernichtet ist das Zweierlei,
Das uns so lang betöret;
Die dumme Leiberquälerei
Hat endlich aufgehöret.

Hörst du den Gott im finstern Meer?

Mit tausend Stimmen spricht er.

Und siehst du über unserm Haupt

Die tausend Gotteslichter?

Der heilge Gott der ist im Licht

Wie in den Finsternissen;

Und Gott ist alles was da ist;

Er ist in unsern Küssen.[296]

As the woman in "Hortense IV," the narrator and his lover in "Seraphine VII" are likely contemporaries of Heine who have experienced the Christian debasement of matter. They have been subjected to the Judeo-Christian dualism of matter and spirit – a dualism which lives on, as was previously shown in this study, in Idealist philosophy. The verb *betören* is, in this context, quite telling: it originally meant "zum Tore machen."[297] The dualism of matter and spirit has driven people mad. The fact that this dualism is over, in the poem at least, means that the sensualistic revolution, the emancipation of the flesh that has taken place is a kind of enlightenment. There are no more prohibitions, the sensual, loving man is truly emancipated, and thus divine, as Sternberger writes: "Nur Götter kennen keine Verbote, nur Götter sind wahrhaft

[296] Heine, "Seraphine VII," 363f.

[297] *Kluge. Etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*, (Berlin/New York : Walter de Gruyter, 2002) 116.

emanzipiert. Die Entsündlichung des Menschen muß seine Vergöttlichung bedeuten."[298] Beyond the metaphysical tone which one finds in Heine's poem and in this last quote, this erotic poem by Heine is actually, as Peters writes, the text "einer politischen Verkündigung."[299] A sensualistic revolution would have tremendous social and political repercussions, as alienation is portrayed in Heine's work as something that has been "spreading from the erotic to the political level, from the religious to the epistemological."[300] A sensualistic revolution would cause such a radical break with history that it would indeed be in need of wholly new scriptures, celebrating the reconciliation of matter and spirit.

A passage from Heine's text *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland* is worth investigating here as it reinforces his treatment of the fall in the previously quoted poems: here, Heine depicts a snake which is certainly not the snake of "Hortense IV" but rather a precursor of Hegelian philosophy. Heine, with his usual wit and irony, toys with the recuperation by Idealist philosophy of the myth of the fall by drawing a parallel between Hegel and the biblical snake, this *kleine Privatdozentin*, he calls it,

> die schon sechstausend Jahre vor Hegels Geburt die ganze Hegelsche Philosophie vortrug. Dieser Blaustrumpf ohne Füße zeigt sehr scharfsinnig, wie das Absolute in der Identität von Sein und Wissen besteht, wie der Mensch zum Gotte werde

---

[298] Dolf Sternberger, *Heinrich Heine und die Abschaffung der Sünde* (Hamburg, Düsseldorf : Claassen, 1972) 227.

[299] Paul Peters, "Der Fels der Küsse," *Gedichte von Heinrich Heine. Interpretationen*, Ed. B. Kortländer (Stuttgart : Philipp Reclam, 1995) 86.

[300] Nigel Reeves, *Heinrich Heine. Poetry and Politics* (London : Oxford University Press, 1974) 35f.

> durch die Erkenntnis, oder was dasselbe ist, wie Gott im Menschen zum Bewußtsein seiner selbst gelange.[301]

In Hegel's writing, as Lämmerzahl notes in her study of the myth of the fall and German Idealism, one finds a "klar hervorgehobene positive Bewertung des Sündenfalls."[302] Hegel portrays the natural harmony which man experienced in the Garden of Eden as a false harmony; it is man who has to create, for himself, a true harmony.[303] It would not be relevant here to investigate this at length. What matters is Heine's joint treatment of the fall and Idealism in this passage. By seducing Eve, the biblical snake, interpreted in Hegelian fashion by Heine (the last part of the quote, regarding God in man, will be ignored), is giving the impetus to the quest for knowledge and emancipation and can thus be seen as a true Idealist.

Heine, however, goes on to mock Idealist philosophy and its (Christian) celebration of the spirit by giving a materialistic spin to the story. As this Idealist snake tells Eve that by eating from the tree of knowledge, man can be as God,

> Frau Eva verstand von der ganzen Demonstration nur das eine, daß die Frucht verboten sei, und weil sie verboten, aß sie davon, die gute Frau. Aber kaum hatte sie von dem lockenden Apfel gegessen, so verlor sie ihre Unschuld, ihre naive Unmittelbarkeit, sie fand, daß sie viel zu nackend sei für eine Person von ihrem Stande, die Stammutter so vieler künftigen Kaiser und Könige, und sie verlangte ein Kleid. Freilich nur ein Kleid von Feigenblättern, weil damals noch keine

---

[301] Heine, *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland*, 150.

[302] Lämmerzahl, 107.

[303] Ibid., 107.

> Lyoner Seidenfabrikanten geboren waren, und weil es auch im Paradiese noch keine Putzmacherinnen und Modehändlerinnen gab – o Paradies! Sonderbar, so wie das Weib zum denkenden Selbstbewußtsein kommt, ist ihr erster Gedanke ein neues Kleid![304]

Heine subverts here the traditional philosophical take on the myth of the fall. He portrays Eve as a person who is oblivious to the snake's idealism. She eats the fruit *because* it is prohibited, as if she just had to assert herself, regardless of repercussions. Beyond this, Eve could not care less about her role in the *Bildungsroman* of knowledge and the narrative of emancipation. After eating the fruit, her first concern is a very basic, materialistic one: clothes. Some may read the above passage and judge that Heine is telling this story just for its punch line, making fun of women, such as his lover Mathilde, who loved to spend money on clothes. Such concerns, which a Christian society might deem mundane, were, however, of utmost importance to Heine, who did not recognize himself in the asceticism of some of his communist contemporaries,[305] as he writes later in the same text:

> Ihr verlangt einfache Trachten, enthaltsame Sitten und ungewürzte Genüsse; wir hingegen verlangen Nektar und Ambrosia, Purpurmäntel, kostbare Wohlgerüche, Wollust und Pracht, lachenden Nymphentanz, Musik und Komödien.[306]

Heine's depiction of a materialist Eve, whose first deed, after her self-assertive transgression, is to get clothes, is Heine's way of correcting the Idealist interpretation of

---

[304] Heine, *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland*, 150f.

[305] Kreutzer remarks that when Heine criticizes communists for their asceticism, he is referring to neo-Babouvists, see Leo Kreutzer, *Heine und der Kommunismus* (Göttingen : Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970) 12.

[306] Heine, *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland*, 570.

the fall: emancipation, here, as in the poems "Hortense IV" and "Seraphine VII" ought not be put in the service of an abstract and theoretical *Heilsgeschichte*, it must serve the real, basic needs of humankind, right here, right now.

Schiller, Kleist, and Heine thus recuperated the myth of the fall in the literary texts analyzed above in order to question and challenge the vision of emancipation proposed by German Idealism, a vision which is highly abstract and theoretical. Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell* relies heavily on the Kantian interpretation of human development as outlined above: Tell develops from child of nature to man of reason, a man who will start reflecting about his existence and morality. The fact that this *Erziehung zur Mündigkeit* happens because of the cruel rule of a tyrant, whom Tell then murders, shows how difficult it is to reconcile the ideals of progress and freedom with the so-called real world. The condemned lovers in Kleist's text *Das Erdbeben in Chili* are saved by the earthquake: the lovers interpret their fortuitous rescue as salvation, and instead of escaping the city, where their lives are still threatened, they stay – a decision which has dire consequences for them. The Idealist view of emancipation, which presupposes a rational agent who does not fall for any beliefs, assumptions, and desires, reveals itself for what it is: an ideal which has little to do with reality. The fall narratives by Schiller and Kleist, which reveal how violence is, in spite of all Enlightenment and Idealist narratives, still very much a part of the human experience, might very well announce what Odo Marquard calls "die Renegativierung des Sündenfalls" which will take place "unter dem Eindruck von Verlauf und Resultat der Französischen Revolution – in der Spätromantik."[307] Just as Schiller and Kleist, Heine challenges the Idealist view of

[307] Marquard, "Felix Culpa? – Bemerkungen zu einem Applikationsschicksal von Genesis 3," 62.

emancipation, albeit quite differently, by proposing that we translate our view of emancipation from the abstract language of Idealism into the concrete language of sensualism and materialism. Heine rewrites the fall in a way that celebrates sensualism and materialism, calling for humankind to free itself from the lofty ideals of religion and philosophy.

Nietzsche's treatment of the question of emancipation will encompass but also transcend these critiques, as I will now show. Nietzsche, as Schiller, Kleist, and Heine, will attack, in *Also sprach Zarathustra*, the content of fall narratives, underscoring the entanglements of reason, the paradoxes of the movement for emancipation, the destructiveness of dualisms which negate the body, amongst others. Schiller, Kleist, and Heine can thus be seen, here, as Nietzsche's precursors. Nietzsche will, however, also attack the forms of the Platonic, Christian, and Kantian fall narratives by devising a style which leaves much freedom of movement to the reader, in order to promote an ethics of reading which opposes that which grew out of the Platonic, Christian, and Kantian traditions.

Chapter 4. Emancipation in Nietzsche's Counternarrative of the Fall in *Also sprach Zarathustra*

Das Sitzfleisch – ich sagte es schon einmal –
die eigentliche *Sünde* wider den heiligen Geist.[308]

Keith Ansell Pearson claims, in his study *How to Read Nietzsche*: "Nietzsche makes an important contribution to a fundamental task of modernity that starts with Kant, namely, the project of developing and securing humankind's intellectual maturity."[309] As

[308] Nietzsche, "Ecce Homo," 281.

[309] Keith Ansell Pearson, *How to Read Nietzsche* (London : Granta Books, 2005) 115.

one begins to read *Also sprach Zarathustra*, one gets the impression that Zarathustra's *Übermensch* is a teaching devised with this very task in mind. As one reads on, however, as the *Übermensch* recedes into the background to leave room for the thought of eternal return, one begins to understand how radically unorthodox Nietzsche's contribution to modernity and to the Enlightenment project actually is. The function of the *Übermensch*, as this chapter will show, is indeed to promote intellectual maturity, an *Erziehung zur Mündigkeit* which implies a radical reassessment of one's relationship to authority, to knowledge, to the body, etc. Why must this teaching, then, (seemingly) lose ground to the thought of eternal return, the suggested fatalism of which seems to render moot the issue of intellectual maturity, by implying that all striving is in vain?

The chapter "Der Genesende" provides the reader with clues to answer this question, as it is the chapter in which the apparent transition between the teachings takes place. As mentioned in the introduction to the present study, the significance of this chapter, with its intertextual references to Genesis 3, cannot be underestimated: in Nietzsche's notebooks, the first recognizable narratorial passage written in preparation for what would become *Also sprach Zarathustra* is a narrative that sets the stage for this very chapter.[310] Nietzsche's text is thus not only a parody of the Bible: its whole conception stands in opposition to a very specific Judeo-Christian myth, that of the fall.

As I showed in the second chapter of this study, Christian interpretations of the myth of the fall were informed by Plato's narrative of the soul's ascents and falls, and influenced Enlightenment and Idealism, specifically Kantian, treatments of the fall. I explored their teleological views of history, their dualistic views of the world, but also their depictions of movements, whether of the body or of the mind, in order to show that

[310] Pettey, 65.

they all undermine the possibility of emancipatory movements – movements by means of which one could try to break free from teleologies and dualisms.

In *Also sprach Zarathustra*, the teaching of the *Übermensch*, in spite of its teleological aspect, praises the idea of emancipatory movements, as I will show; the teaching of eternal return, which, as mentioned, has been associated with a circular or cyclical notion of time which might connote a certain fatalism, will also be shown to advocate the idea of emancipatory movements. "Der Genesende," as the chapter which suggests a transition between the two teachings, reveals that neither the teaching of the *Übermensch* nor that of eternal return can be said to be the clearly definitive one,[311] that the two teachings are rather entwined, undermining and underpinning each other eternally, as it were – yet another way, for Nietzsche, I will argue, to promote movement, not only in Zarathustra's and the pupil's mind but also in the reader's.

The narrative style of *Also sprach Zarathustra*, its reliance on metaphors and on an entwinement such as the one mentioned above, makes it difficult for the reader, as Hans-Georg Gadamer writes, to identify a *conceptual* content in the book.[312] Instead of presenting Zarathustra's teachings as clear cut concepts which would restrain and restrict possibilities of interpretation, the mind's freedom of movement, Nietzsche prefers to use a metaphorical, intertextual, parodic and ironic language, which leaves much room for interpretation. The text, which for Gadamer is a provocation,[313] challenges the reader's

---

[311] As mentioned in the introductory chapter, my interpretation thus opposes that of Lampert, for instance, who interpreted eternal return as the "clearly definitive teaching," see Lampert, 258.

[312] Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Nietzsche der Antipode. Das Drama Zarathustras," *Gesammelte Werke, Bd. 4* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1987) 452.

[313] Ibid., 10.

interpretative skills, engaging him or her in a contest for meaning, as the author, here, does not serve meaning on a plate.

Martin Heidegger has underscored the complementarity of Zarathustra's teachings: "Zarathustra lehrt den Übermenschen, weil er der Lehrer der ewigen Wiederkunft des Gleichen ist. Aber auch umgekehrt: Zarathustra lehrt die ewige Wiederkunft des Gleichen, weil er der Lehrer des Übermenschen ist. Beide Lehren gehören in einem Kreis zusammen."[314] The image of the circle, however, even though it captures the complementarity of the teachings, neither conveys the interaction which exists between the two teachings nor the need to move, eternally, between the two. By presenting teachings that are interactive, i.e. between which one must eternally move, Nietzsche reminds the reader that truth ought not be understood as static: he reminds the reader of the constant need to challenge and revaluate values, and of the need to engage with a text in a dynamic way, as it were, constantly moving from one assertion to the next, never remaining long by one or the other. The suspicious reader will agonistically engage with the text, the movements of his mind performing an aesthetic shaping of that which the text evokes.

My interpretations of Zarathustra's teachings will include an investigation of the spirit of gravity and of its role in Zarathustra's catatonic state at the beginning of "Der Genesende." By means of this analysis, I will clarify the claim according to which Zarathustra's teachings ought to be thought together, not separately. The spirit of gravity, Zarathustra's enemy, induces stasis, as it tries to transform each teaching into an immutable truth, keeping the mind from moving freely from one to the other. It is the

[314] Martin Heidegger, "Wer ist Nietzsches Zarathustra?," *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (F.a.M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 2000) 118.

spirit of gravity which weighs down upon Zarathustra at the beginning of "Der Genesende." Here, Zarathustra falls (literally and metaphorically) and experiences stasis, spending seven days on the ground, unable to move. He will only come back to life upon realizing that he must eternally move between the two teachings, that he must eternally fight the spirit of gravity which wants to tie him down to one or the other.

The interaction between the two teachings will be interpreted as a narrative strategy which challenges both the content and the form of the fall narratives which have shaped the Western world, as presented in the second chapter of this study. This interaction suggests the need for a constant revaluation of values and a new ethics of reading. The creative tension which arises from the interaction between Zarathustra's teachings opposes rigid teleologies, destructive dualisms, and certain authoritative or authoritarian postures which are present in Platonic, Christian, and Kantian fall narratives. The *Übermensch*, as it is presented by Zarathustra in the prologue, suggests a linear progression that is based on a certain teleological belief, as an analysis of the imagery associated with it will show, whereas eternal return evokes the circular or cyclical. I will show, by an investigation of the spirit of gravity, that what seems to be clearly definitive here is the creative tension between the two teachings, the eternal movement between them. Nietzsche's parody of fall narratives is thus challenging the strictly linear and teleological views of history which prevail in Christian and Kantian thought, a challenge which involves a revaluation of values, a reassessment, as mentioned earlier, of our relationship to life, to knowledge, to the body, etc. The tension between Zarathustra's teachings, the movement it induces in the reader's mind, as I will show,

opposes the rather closed forms of dialectics, prohibitions, and imperatives, as they are found in Plato, Christianity, and Kant.

In this chapter, I will thus investigate, in turn, Zarathustra's teaching of the *Übermensch*, the tightrope walker episode and its vertical and linear imagery, the function of the spirit of gravity and of the spider in its service, the function of snakes and their earthly wisdom associated with eternal return, the significance of the chapter "Der Genesende" for Zarathustra's teachings, and the metaphor of dance in Nietzsche's text – dance being depicted here as the highest expression of a true affirmation of life's tensions, such as that between the *Übermensch* and eternal return. I will focus on how Zarathustra defines or depicts his teachings, showing that depictions and suggestions of movements abound in his speeches and utterances. Stuart Elden, in a recent article, has focused on the spatial metaphors which permeate Nietzsche's text: "What we find here is a particular geography – issues of depth and height, the outside and inside, distance and nearness. Constraint is looked at as particularly dangerous; flight and transgression valorised."[315] I do not wish to focus on these spatial opposites, but rather on the depictions of movements in space, showing indeed, as Elden points out, that flight and transgression are valorised in Nietzsche's text, and that constraint is dangerous inasmuch as it condemns humankind to stasis. The depictions and suggestions of movements in *Also sprach Zarathustra* will be shown to promote the idea of movements as emancipatory experiences, for both the body and the mind, thus opposing the fall narratives which have prevailed in Western thought.

---

[315] Stuart Elden, "The Convalescent. Geographies of Health and Illness," *Reading Nietzsche at the Margins*, Eds. S. V. Hicks, and A. Rosenberg (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2008) 208.

Zarathustra's teaching of the *Übermensch* is presented as a gift to a humankind which Zarathustra claims to love; some of his statements, however, undermine this claim. After ten years of solitude during which he did not speak to another human being, Zarathustra's first words, as he comes down his mountain and explains to a religious hermit why he is returning to the world of men, are: "Ich liebe die Menschen."[316] Surprisingly, he takes these words back as soon as the hermit questions this sentiment: "Was sprach ich von Liebe! Ich bringe den Menschen ein Geschenk."[317] On the one hand, he is quick to recant his statement, but on the other hand, his desire to join the world of men again and this gift that he has for them might indicate a certain love for humankind. Zarathustra thus gives the impression to be the kind of person who will do whatever is necessary, even recant a sincere statement, in order to please his interlocutor, making sure that the dialogue will go on, trying to appeal to his interlocutor by throwing an intriguing statement at him, in this case: *ich bringe den Menschen ein Geschenk*. Zarathustra does not reveal here what his gift is, but in the next section, his very first words to the people on the marketplace are: "*Ich lehre euch den Übermenschen*. Der Mensch ist Etwas, das überwunden werden soll. Was habt ihr gethan, ihn zu überwinden?"[318] This is a bold statement which can only arouse suspicion amongst the people on the marketplace - let alone amongst readers. Who is he to teach these people? Who is he to claim that man shall be overcome? Who is he to pass such a harsh judgment upon humankind, as a species, and upon these men in particular, whom he asks *was habt ihr gethan* almost as a

[316] Nietzsche, "Also sprach Zarathustra," 13.

[317] Ibid., 13.

[318] Ibid., 14.

reproach? Zarathustra's love for man seems to be of a peculiar kind. He loves man enough to deem him worthy of his teaching, but this very teaching undermines the worth of man – but then again, such sentences might be a rhetorical trick to capture people's attention.

In his speech on the marketplace, Zarathustra depicts the *Übermensch* as that which ought to be the next stage of humankind's development, using terms which remind one of Darwin's linear narrative of humankind's development, but which ultimately reveal that the *Übermensch* has nothing to do with natural selection.[319] He asks, for instance: "Was ist der Affe für den Menschen? Ein Gelächter oder eine schmerzliche Scham. Und ebendas soll der Mensch für den Übermenschen sein: ein Gelächter oder eine schmerzliche Scham."[320] Lampert states that the text's prologue depicts "evolution in a linear way, as the creation by each species of a species higher than itself"[321] and that eternal return contradicts this notion.[322] I will show later, upon discussing eternal return, that one ought not speak of a contradiction.[323] For now, I want to stress an important difference between Darwinism and the linearity implied in the idea of the *Übermensch*.

---

[319] Nietzsche mocked those who interpreted his *Übermensch* along Darwinian lines, see "Ecce Homo," 300. For discussions and debates regarding Nietzsche and Darwinism, see John Richardson, *Nietzsche's New Darwinism* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2004), and Patrick Forber, "Nietzsche Was No Darwinian," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* LXXV (2) (2007) 369-382. Forber criticizes Richardson for trying to make Nietzsche's use of teleological notions fit into a Darwinian framework.

[320] Nietzsche, "Also sprach Zarathustra," 14.

[321] Lampert, 19.

[322] Ibid., 21.

[323] To say that the teachings (or that any two things, Nietzsche might say) contradict each other seems to be a rash assessment and a gross underestimation of their complexity. Nietzsche warns the reader against such readings when he writes, for instance : "Die sogenannten Paradoxien des Autors, an welchen ein Leser Anstoss nimmt, stehen häufig gar nicht im Buche des Autors, sondern im Kopfe des Lesers." See Nietzsche, "Menschliches, Allzumenschliches," 163.

The linear evolution of species, as presented by Darwin, is based on *natural selection*. Zarathustra may use a vocabulary that reminds the reader of Darwin, but he suggests that the evolution which he is advocating does not belong to the realm of nature: it must be *willed* by man. Zarathustra tells his listeners: "Alle Wesen bisher schufen Etwas über sich hinaus: und ihr wollt die Ebbe dieser grossen Fluth sein und lieber noch zum Thiere zurückgehn, als den Menschen überwinden."[324] The will has nothing to do with natural selection: species have evolved without any say in their evolution. By using the modal verb *wollen* in the quote above, Zarathustra deviates from the scientific evolutionary discourse as if he wanted his listeners to realize or at least believe that humankind could shape its own fate, as it were, indicating that they have a certain freedom of movement when it comes to their own evolution, that they can choose to progress or regress.

Zarathustra's depiction of the last man further reinforces the idea that evolution must be *willed* and that the evolution he is advocating is a progression from *Mensch* to *Übermensch*. As he explains that men run the danger of turning into last men, Zarathustra suggests that it is nonetheless still possible for men to give birth to something higher: "Man muss noch Chaos in sich haben, um einen tanzenden Stern gebären zu können. Ich sage euch: ihr habt noch Chaos in euch."[325] It seems that danger is near, however: "Es kommt die Zeit, wo der Mensch keinen Stern mehr gebären wird."[326] This would be the consequence of the impoverishment of a human existence in which *striving* is absent. One begins to understand that the contemptuous love which Zarathustra has for man is

---

[324] Nietzsche criticized Darwin in *Götzen-Dämmerung*, for instance, claiming : "Die Gattungen wachsen *nicht* in der Vollkommenheit : die Schwachen werden immer wieder über die Starken Herr, - das macht, sie sind die grosse Zahl, sie sind auch *klüger*…" See Nietzsche, "Götzen-Dämmerung," 120.

[325] Nietzsche, "Also sprach Zarathustra," 19.

[326] Ibid., 19.

meant to spur man to action. In this section, Zarathustra explains that the most contemptible man is the man who can no longer feel contempt for himself.[327] This man is perfectly satisfied with his life: he no longer strives for anything, he no longer challenges himself. Such a life is an impoverished one, as one no longer learns and transforms by means of new experiences. It is then that Zarathustra describes the last man: this last man does not even know what *love*, *creation*, and *longing* mean, but claims to have invented happiness.[328] Zarathustra's depiction of the last man is an attempt to show his listeners the dangers of an all-too comfortable way of life. By depicting the last man after depicting the *Übermensch*, Zarathustra seems to show that both are potentialities which have to do with the will, thus reinforcing the idea that humankind is in charge of its own evolution, which, in his view, should take the form of the *Übermensch*, not of the last man.

A tightrope walker who is about to perform on the marketplace gives Zarathustra the opportunity to further suggest that humankind's evolution is in its own hands, that humankind can choose to progress or regress - or stand still, for that matter. As Zarathustra tells the crowd about the *Übermensch*, one man cries out: "Wir hörten nun genug von dem Seiltänzer; nun lasst uns ihn auch sehen!"[329] Zarathustra then integrates the character of the tightrope walker to his speech:

> Der Mensch ist ein Seil, geknüpft zwischen Thier und Übermensch, - ein Seil über einem Abgrunde.

---

[327] Ibid., 19.

[328] Ibid., 19.

[329] Ibid., 16.

> Ein gefährliches Hinüber, ein gefährliches Auf-dem-Wege, ein gefährliches Zurückblicken, ein gefährliches Schaudern und Stehenbleiben.
>
> Was gross ist am Menschen, das ist, dass er eine Brücke und kein Zweck ist: was geliebt werden kann am Menschen, das ist, dass er ein *Übergang* und ein *Untergang* ist.[330]

It is clear here that the rope or the bridge that is man enables one to move in two directions, towards animal or towards the *Übermensch*, or even to stand still. In the passage above, Zarathustra speaks of love again, claiming that man is worthy of love *because* he is both *Übergang* and *Untergang* (transition and downfall), yet another example of what one could call Zarathustra's contemptuous love, spurring man to action. Standing still is worthy of contempt: what is worthy of love relates to *movement* – to a transition which could end in a downfall.

The character of the tightrope walker hints at the dance metaphor, which will be explored in further details at the end of this chapter. For now, it can be said that the tightrope walker (in German *Seiltänzer*) is worthy of love because he *fights with* and *performs* his own limitations. He, a human being subjected to gravity, *resists* this gravity which weighs him down and ultimately causes his downfall. Without ever losing sight of the fact that he cannot escape gravity, he taunts it, he scorns it, he turns this struggle with his enemy into art. It must be said that without this enemy, without the gravity which he fights, the tightrope walker's art would not be possible at all. His movement is a performance born out of the spirit of the agon.

To the tightrope's walker experiment and performance of a linear progression which is possible because of earth's gravitational force, Zarathustra opposes Christian

---

[330] Ibid., 16f.

salvation, a narrative which, ultimately, robs man of the chance to shape his real, earthly existence. Zarathustra tells his listeners: "*bleibt der Erde treu* und glaubt Denen nicht, welche euch von überirdischen Hoffnungen reden!"[331] With this statement, Zarathustra sets himself apart from others whose teachings are based on contempt for earthly life, thus opposing his *Übermensch* to otherworldly hopes, even though they share the same prefix, *über*. Man, with his otherworldly hopes, an important feature of Christian discourse, of course, must be brought back down to earth, as it were: this movement downward, this reconciliation with earthly life, would, paradoxically, cause man to elevate himself, as the tightrope walker, one could say, and secure *by himself* and *for himself* the prefix *über*.

In the same section, Zarathustra describes the correlative of the otherworldly hopes of the Christian discourse, namely: ascetic ideals. The Christian discourse of salvation rests upon a debasement of earthly life and of the body, according to Zarathustra:

> Einst blickte die Seele verächtlich auf den Leib: und damals war diese Verachtung das Höchste: - sie wollte ihn mager, grässlich, verhungert. So dachte sie ihm und der Erde zu entschlüpfen.
>
> Oh diese Seele war selber noch mager, grässlich und verhungert: und Grausamkeit war die Wollust dieser Seele![332]

Zarathustra is describing here a moment in history which has passed, or so he claims. Man was made to believe then in the sinfulness of earthly life and of the body, and in the possibility of saving one's soul, which alone was worthy of salvation, by means of bodily

---

[331] Ibid., 15.

[332] Ibid., 15.

mortifications. Nietzsche explains in the third essay of his later text *Zur Genealogie der Moral* that the ascetic priest brought both a blessing and a curse onto humankind by means of ascetic ideals, the aim of which was to endow with meaning the unavoidable suffering which life entails. Nietzsche deems it a blessing insofar as it saved humankind from an utterly destructive nihilism; it has been a curse, however, as ascetic ideals circumscribe experiences which would be beneficial to one's greater health. It is not, as Zarathustra claims, the body which is pitiful, but the soul which looks down upon the body and wishes to punish it.

Upon reading the term *Grausamkeit* (cruelty) in the quote above, the reader might be reminded of the fact that Nietzsche, in *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, draws a direct line between Christian and Kantian thought in this matter. In the second essay of this text, Nietzsche explores the Christian concept of guilt. The ascetic priest's (re)direction of man's feelings of cruelty inwards, disempowering him as social animal, as it were, taming him so that he would not hurt his fellow citizens or threaten the state, is the origin, Nietzsche claims, of bad conscience. Instead of trying to identify exterior agents as the source of one's suffering, instead of making use of cruelty to punish these outside forces, one turns one's gaze inwards and punishes oneself. Nietzsche thus writes that the concepts of bad conscience and guilt have bloody origins: whereas man used to act upon his feelings of anger and resentment, punishing the one whom he saw as the culprit, the Christian is taught that he himself is at fault and that as such he should punish himself. Of course, the Christian is also taught to take pleasure in this self-loathing and self-deprecation, as this is his ticket of admission to heaven, as he is told "so werden die

Letzten die Ersten und die Ersten die Letzten sein."[333] Nietzsche then goes on to say that our own modern and so-called enlightened world has not yet freed itself from these bloody origins: he gives as example Kant's categorical imperative which smells of cruelty,[334] as previously quoted. Kant's categorical imperative and its claim to universality imply that individuals repress certain desires, pulsions, feelings, urges, for the greater, common good – for a salvation of some sort. When Zarathustra claims, as quoted, *Grausamkeit war die Wollust dieser Seele*, he is thus likely attacking both the Christian and Kantian soul.

The *Übermensch* is a teaching which is radically different from that of Christian and Kantian thought in this matter: whereas these both imply a disempowerment of man (of very different kinds, admittedly), Zarathustra's teaching seeks to empower him, as an analysis of the text's prologue reveals. As mentioned, "Der Genesende," as Nietzsche's counternarrative to Genesis, is a chapter in which Zarathustra finds himself in a garden which is reminiscent of the Garden of Eden. What led him there? In Genesis 3, it is man's fall which causes his expulsion from the Garden of Eden. In *Also sprach Zarathustra*, it is Zarathustra's own, willed movements which enable him to find the back door to paradise, to speak with Kleist. In the prologue, there are numerous mentions of downward movements which man ought to will in his quest to elevate himself. As Zarathustra depicts the man who is paving the way for the *Übermensch*, he repeatedly speaks of *willed downward movements*, beginning eighteen statements with the words:

---

[333] *Das neue Testament*, 28.

[334] Nietzsche, "Zur Genealogie der Moral," 300.

"Ich liebe Den, (…),"[335] statements in which he then explains who is worthy of his love, namely: someone who does not believe in otherworldly hopes, someone who lives to know, someone who chooses a virtue and lives and dies for it, someone whose soul squanders itself, someone who is a free spirit, etc. Most of the statements either end with a variant of the words "so will er seinen Untergang" or "denn er will zu Grunde gehen."[336] This brings to light an important feature of Zarathustra's teaching of the *Übermensch*, a feature which is at odds with Christianity, and, to a certain extent, as was shown, with Idealist philosophy, namely: the promotion of emancipatory movements. Downward movements, in the text's prologue, are not depicted as falls (which are not willed), they are depicted as moments in which one is deliberately endangering one's own self for the sake of a greater health. It must be said here that it is this very endangering which is healthy, as a greater health is, for Nietzsche, "eine solche, welche man nicht nur hat, sondern auch beständig noch erwirbt und erwerben muss, weil man sie immer wieder preisgiebt, preisgeben muss…"[337]

Before exploring the issue of the fall in Nietzsche any further, it might be useful to briefly summarize the main trends of modern interpretations and treatments of the myth of the fall, so that one might understand why Nietzsche offers a counternarrative to this myth in *Also sprach Zarathustra*. For Frederick Dillistone, who wrote the essay "The Fall: Christian Truth and Literary Symbol," the fall is one of those biblical stories to which "any poet or painter or dramatist who wished to appeal to the general conscience

[335] Nietzsche, "Also sprach Zarathustra," 17f.

[336] Ibid., 17f.

[337] Nietzsche, "Ecce Homo," 338.

of his contemporaries turned almost instinctively."[338] The fall has become, in his view, an archetypal symbol which seems to be indestructible.[339] Terry Otten, in his study *After Innocence: Visions of the Fall in Modern Literature*, writes, as previously quoted: "To be sure, every age consciously or unconsciously constructs in its literature and art its own paradigms of the Fall."[340] Otten notes that by the late eighteenth century, one was giving the myth of the fall a humanistic, secular twist, using it as an expression of the human condition.[341] The French Revolution then provoked a paradigm shift, or a "Renegativierung des Sündenfalls,"[342] as Odo Marquard explains: "Die 'terreur' problematisiert die menschliche Freiheit als Prinzip."[343] This problematization of freedom can be readily seen, as discussed earlier, in Schiller's play *Wilhelm Tell* and Kleist's short story *Das Erdbeben in Chili*. Schiller and Kleist were, of course, contemporaries of Robespierre and were well aware of the political situation in France. The Romantics would later redefine the fall "as establishing a dynamic process against a deistic universe reduced to a mechanistic, closed system of laws."[344] This is not to be (primarily) understood, however, along religious, social, or political lines. The Romantic paradigm offers the vision of a fall which is now located within the self, as Otten

---

[338] Frederick W. Dillistone, "The Fall : Christian Truth and Literary Symbol," *Comparative Literature : Matter and Method*, Ed. A. Owen Aldridge (Urbana, Chicago, London : University of Illinois Press, 1969) 145.

[339] Ibid., 156.

[340] Otten, 4.

[341] Ibid., 4.

[342] Marquard, "Felix Culpa? – Bemerkungen zu einem Applikationsschicksal von Genesis 3," 61.

[343] Ibid., 61.

[344] Otten, 10.

remarks: the paradigm "has become less communal, more personal and subjective."[345] Kierkegaard's text on the concept of anxiety, discussed earlier, is a good example of such a treatment of the fall. Upon exploring Nietzsche's own narrative, which grows out of existing fall narratives, it is necessary to keep in mind such paradigm shifts.

Nietzsche's counternarrative to the fall in *Also sprach Zarathustra* represents a paradigm shift within the fall discourse as it does not depict a fall but rather willed downward movements; as such, this counternarrative partakes in Nietzsche's philosophy of decadence which insists upon the dialectical nature of decadence. In the foreword to his text *Der Fall Wagner*, Nietzsche introduces the problem of decadence by claiming:

> Hat man sich für die Abzeichen des Niedergangs ein Auge gemacht, so versteht man auch die Moral, - man versteht, was sich unter ihren heiligsten Namen und Werthformeln versteckt: das *verarmte* Leben, der Wille zum Ende, die grosse Müdigkeit. Moral *verneint* das Leben…[346]

It is not the point of this paragraph to explore the significance of the claim regarding morality. What is relevant here is how Nietzsche will then assess the value of decadence. He will indeed criticize it, but he will also be quick to point out that the experience of decadence is of utmost importance, especially for a philosopher who wants to understand and overcome his time. Wagner is presented, in this foreword, as a modern decadent. Again, it would not be relevant, here, to investigate Nietzsche's critique of Wagner; suffice it to say that Nietzsche bemoans, amongst other things, the presence in Wagner's operas of Christian themes, like redemption, and Christian attitudes, such as acceptance

---

[345] Ibid., 4.

[346] Nietzsche, "Der Fall Wagner," 12.

and resignation, which are disempowering. The dialectical aspect of decadence is made clear in the very last lines of this foreword, as Nietzsche reveals why the case of Wagner is worth studying:

> Ich verstehe es vollkommen, wenn heut ein Musiker sagt "ich hasse Wagner, aber ich halte keine andre Musik mehr aus". Ich würde aber auch einen Philosophen verstehn, der erklärte: "Wagner *resümiert* die Modernität. Es hilft nichts, man muss erst Wagnerianer sein…"[347]

Wagner, Nietzsche explains, belongs to those illnesses with which the philosopher must inoculate himself if he wishes to overcome his time and attain what Nietzsche depicts as a greater health. The experience of illness is always, however, at one's own peril: "Die Krankheit selbst kann ein Stimulans des Lebens sein: nur muss man gesund genug für dies Stimulans sein!"[348] For a strong enough philosopher, the case of Wagner is, as stated in the very last sentence of the text's epilogue, a *Glücksfall*, as it enables him to catch a glimpse of the modern soul, as it allows him to overcome this modern soul within himself.

In *Also sprach Zarathustra*, Zarathustra endangers himself right at the beginning of the text. Downward movements are oft depicted by Zarathustra as movements which (also) enable one to elevate or overcome oneself. In the Christian tradition, the fall as downward movement is associated with decline and decay: man falls from grace and starts experiencing adversity, suffering, and illness. In contrast, Zarathustra suggests that such experiences, which cannot be avoided, ought not be seen as signs of decline and

---

[347] Ibid., 12.

[348] Ibid., 22.

decay but as opportunities to overcome oneself, as revealed by a statement such as: "Ich liebe Die, welche nicht zu leben wissen, es sei denn als Untergehende, denn es sind die Hinübergehenden."[349] *Die Hinübergehenden* are those who, like the tightrope walker, *go beyond* (beyond what they have been) by *going under*. The phrase which Zarathustra uses upon describing his journey down the mountain to join the world of men again is enlightening in this regard: Zarathustra says to himself that he must now "in die Tiefe steigen."[350] It is worth noting that the canonical translations by Kaufmann and Hollingdale as well as more recent translations by Del Caro, Parkes, and Wayne somewhat miss the mark here, maybe in an attempt to correct what they must deem a poetical *faux pas*: they all translate as "descend to the depths" or "descend into the depths" or "descend to the deep"[351] what should have been translated as "ascend to the depths," stripping the phrase of a layer which reveals the dialectical nature of this downward movement. The phrase *in die Tiefe steigen* suggests that Zarathustra's descent also involves an ascension.

In order to understand the nature of this elevation mentioned above, it is necessary to investigate the nature of the elevation experienced by Zarathustra as he dwells, for ten years, on the mountain: this elevation enabled him to attain an enviable state, similar to that of a dancer or a child. Zarathustra seems indeed to be on top of things, as the

---

[349] Nietzsche, "Also sprach Zarathustra," 17.

[350] Ibid., 11.

[351] See Friedrich Nietzsche, "Thus Spoke Zarathustra," Trans. W. Kaufmann, *The Portable Nietzsche* (N.Y.: Penguin Books, 1982) 122; Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Trans. R. J. Hollingdale (London : Penguin Books, 2003) 39; Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Trans. A. Del Caro (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2006) 3; Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Trans. G. Parkes (N.Y. : Oxford University Press, 2005) 9; Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, Trans. T. Wayne (N.Y. : Algora Publishing, 2003) 6.

comment by the religious hermit, whom Zarathustra meets on his journey downward, indicates:

> Ja, ich erkenne Zarathustra. Rein ist sein Auge, und an seinem Munde birgt sich kein Ekel. Geht er nicht daher wie ein Tänzer?
>
> Verwandelt ist Zarathustra, zum Kind ward Zarathustra, ein Erwachter ist Zarathustra: was willst du nun bei den Schlafenden?[352]

Zarathustra is compared here to a dancer and a child. In the section "Vom Lesen und Schreiben," Zarathustra notoriously claims: "Ich würde nur an einen Gott glauben, der zu tanzen verstünde."[353] When he himself is compared to a dancer, the reader gets the impression that Zarathustra is godly or godlike. In the section called "Von den drei Verwandlungen," the spirit that has become a child appears to be the kind of spirit which Zarathustra wishes onto humankind: "Unschuld ist das Kind und Vergessen, ein Neubeginnen, ein Spiel, ein aus sich rollendes Rad, eine erste Bewegung, ein heiliges Ja-sagen."[354] Later on, in "Vom Wege des Schaffenden," he will use similar formulations, referring to one's desire to break free from a yoke: "Bist du eine neue Kraft und ein neues Recht? Eine erste Bewegung? Ein aus sich rollendes Rad?"[355] When the hermit compares Zarathustra to a child, it is thus an indication that Zarathustra's spirit has attained enviable heights. Why must he, then, come down his mountain? What could he gain from this journey?

---

[352] Nietzsche, "Also sprach Zarathustra," 12.

[353] Ibid., 49.

[354] Ibid., 31.

[355] Ibid., 80.

Zarathustra's downward movement, in contrast to the Christian fall, is not to be thought in moral terms, it is beyond good and evil: it is, first and foremost, a *contest* between Zarathustra and gravity. Lampert writes that Zarathustra's descent is "a descent to the things of the earth that gives them weight and importance again."[356] The natural law of gravity turns into a trope which stands for that which defines humankind, namely this desire to give weight and importance to things, as Zarathustra claims in the section "Von tausend und Einem Ziele:" "Werthe legte erst der Mensch in die Dinge, sich zu erhalten, - er schuf erst den Dingen Sinn, einen Menschen-Sinn! Darum nennt er sich 'Mensch,' das ist: der Schätzende."[357] Zarathustra's stay on the mountain has lasted long enough. He realizes it and decides to join the world of men again, to reassess himself, his values and beliefs. He can only do this in dialogue with others. The religious hermit sees things differently (he is not ready to reassess his values and beliefs) and tries to convince Zarathustra to keep his solitary lifestyle. Upon seeing Zarathustra, he tells him: "Wie im Meere lebtest du in der Einsamkeit, und das Meer trug dich. Wehe, du willst an's Land steigen? Wehe, du willst deinen Leib wieder selber schleppen?"[358] The floating body does not seem to be subjected to gravity. If it lets go, if it does not resist, the sea carries it. The floating body has given in to a greater force. It is at peace because its salvation depends on its passive acceptance of this force that moves it. In contrast, the body which wants to climb ashore must fight and defeat this force, and so it becomes conscious of its own weight again. Zarathustra's solitude, which the hermit compares to a sea, was quite

---

[356] Lampert, 10.

[357] Nietzsche, "Also sprach Zarathustra," 75.

[358] Ibid., 12.

comfortable. Zarathustra will later praise solitude, but in this prologue, he declares that he must put an end to his solitude, stating "Zarathustra will wieder Mensch werden."[359] He also says that he has become weary of his wisdom, and indeed: what good is a wisdom which dwells on solitary heights? His descent to earth is a desire to put himself and his wisdom on the line. Zarathustra wants to become a human again and this means leaving the comfort of one's own lofty heights in order to enter into a dialogue, into a debate with others. This alone seems to give things weight and importance.

The spirit of gravity is Zarathustra's enemy because it hinders movement. The two are "todfeind, erzfeind, urfeind."[360] The spirit of gravity is described as "ernst, gründlich, tief, feierlich."[361] It is also said: "Durch ihn fallen alle Dinge."[362] In his study *Wider das Schwere. Philosophische Versuche über geistige Fliehkräfte*, Steffen Dietzsch defines this gravity as "das *Metaphysisch-Dogmatische*, das *Politisch-Ideologische*, das *Ewig-Gültige*, kurz: das *Ganze* (das angeblich das Wahre sei…) und das *Ganz-Gerade*."[363] In the previous paragraph, gravity stood for weight and meaning, but, carried to the extremes, this gravity can lead to stagnation and resignation, when weight and meaning turn into absolute truths. Human beings are weighed down by the gravity of dogmatic, ideological, and systematic thought. They are stuck in a world which is rigidly ruled by virtues and values, by concepts and ideals which are presented to them as immutable truths. It is interesting that Dietzsch ends his enumeration with the expression

---

[359] Ibid., 12.

[360] Ibid., 241.

[361] Ibid., 49.

[362] Ibid., 49.

[363] Steffen Dietzsch, *Wider das Schwere. Philosophische Versuche über geistige Fliehkräfte* (Magdeburg : Scriptum-Verlag, 2002) 7f.

das Ganz-Gerade. The teachings that have prevailed and that have weighed so heavily upon humankind have indeed taught human beings to think in linear terms, in terms of causes and effects, means and ends, in terms of causality and progress. In spite of the fact that the spirit of gravity cannot only be associated with linearity (as will be shown later), it is certainly this aspect of it which makes Zarathustra come down his mountain: his *Übermensch* teaching is associated with linearity and it is this teaching which must be confronted, for now, to the spirit of gravity. Zarathustra's downward movement is a declaration of war onto his enemy, the spirit of gravity. He must meet up with it where it dwells, that is: amongst men, subjecting himself to this danger which might induce stasis in him (and it will, for a while, as revealed in "Der Genesende").

The spider seems to be, in *Also sprach Zarathustra*, in the service of the spirit of gravity: an analysis of the spider's role helps the reader define the spirit of gravity. Nietzsche, in *Der Antichrist*, alternately refers to God, the priest, and Kant as spiders,[364] indicating that, in his view, they all spin webs to catch prey (this will be further explored in this study's last chapter). Zarathustra alludes to this very idea as he speaks, alternately, of a "Kreuzspinne"[365] and a "Vernunft-Spinne,"[366] which function quite similarly. Let us look at the former. *Kreuzspinne* translates as *garden spider* or *cross spider*. It is a spider which displays a cross-shaped design on its abdomen and which is mostly seen in gardens. Zarathustra speaks of this spider for the first time in the section "Von den Abtrünnigen." He addresses here people whom he sees as apostates: "Wahrlich, Mancher

[364] Nietzsche, "Der Antichrist," 178, 184, 210.

[365] Nietzsche, "Also sprach Zarathustra," 228.

[366] Ibid., 209.

von ihnen hob einst die Beine wie ein Tänzer, ihm winkte das Lachen in meiner Weisheit: - da besann er sich. Eben sah ich ihn krumm – zum Kreuze kriechen."[367] Zarathustra's apostates are thus people who *did not renounce*, but who rather *returned* to the comforting religious fold. It is amongst them that this spider dwells, which teaches: "Unter Kreuzen ist gut spinnen."[368] The apostates who have turned their backs onto Zarathustra to embrace religious beliefs again are held captive by the cross spider or garden spider.[369] One could say that the cross here rules over the garden which is the world. What does this mean for man? One cannot move when one is ensnared in a spiderweb. It is in that sense that the spider serves the spirit of gravity. The spiderweb spun by the Christian spider is designed with the aim of making movement impossible.

The web of its skin, the *Vernunft-Spinne*, also ensnares man and serves the spirit of gravity which turns everything into immutable truths. This rational spider is mentioned in the section "Vor Sonnen-Aufgang." Zarathustra, upon looking at the sky, cries out: "Oh Himmel über mir, du Reiner! Hoher! Das ist mir nun deine Reinheit, dass es keine ewige Vernunft-Spinne und –spinnennetze giebt."[370] Zarathustra is doubtlessly alluding here to Kant's notorious statement, in conclusion to his *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*:

---

[367] Nietzsche, "Also sprach Zarathustra," 226. Nietzsche uses a similar formulation upon describing Wagner, as author of *Parsifal* : "Richard Wagner, scheinbar der Siegreichste, in Wahrheit ein morsch gewordner verzweifelnder décadent, sank plötzlich, hülflos und zerbrochen, vor dem christlichen Kreuze nieder…" See Friedrich Nietzsche, "Nietzsche contra Wagner," *KSA 6*, Eds. G. Colli, and M. Montinari (München: DTV, 1999) 431f.

[368] Nietzsche, "Also sprach Zarathustra," 228.

[369] Sarah Kofman, in her study of metaphors in Nietzsche, calls God "l'araignée suprême," explaining: "L'homme-araignée transpose métaphoriquement sa causalité artisanale dans la Nature et il appelle solennellement Dieu, l'artisan producteur du monde." Kofman, however, does not devote any attention to the spider(s) of *Also sprach Zarathustra*. See Sarah Kofman, *Nietzsche et la métaphore* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1983) 103.

[370] Nietzsche, "Also sprach Zarathustra," 209.

> Zwei Dinge erfüllen das Gemüt mit immer neuer und zunehmenden Bewunderung und Ehrfurcht, je öfter und anhaltender sich das Nachdenken damit beschäftigt: *Der bestirnte Himmel über mir, und das moralische Gesetz in mir*.[371]

Whereas Kant uses terms such as *admiration* and *reverence* to describe his relationship to the starry heavens above and the moral law within him, terms which, one must admit, do not seem to agree much with the idea of critique or criticism, Zarathustra's sky is devoid of meaning. No spider ought to spin it into the dwelling place of Gods (as the *Kreuzspinne* does), nor can one spin it into an awe-inspiring natural phenomenon which robs man of his dignity – or, as Lampert puts it: "It neither commands nor annihilates, but in its depth and silence affords man the highest responsibility."[372] In neither commanding nor annihilating, the sky affords man indeed the highest responsibility, which is, one must add, *freedom* – the freedom of movement which the Christian spiderweb and its kin, the Kantian spiderweb, denied him.

Another spider can be said to serve the spirit of gravity, namely the tarantula, which does not ensnare men by means of its web, but rather by means of its poisonous bite. Zarathustra addresses the tarantula thus: "Rache sitzt in deiner Seele: wohin du beissest, da wächst schwarzer Schorf; mit Rache macht dein Gift die Seele drehend!"[373] The preachers of equality, as Zarathustra calls them, are such tarantulas. They poison the human soul with a teaching on the justice of equality, which is "a desire to do harm to

---

[371] Immanuel Kant, "Kritik der praktischen Vernunft," *Werke in sechs Bänden*. Ed. W. Weischedel (Darmstadt : Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964) 300.

[372] Lampert, 177.

[373] Nietzsche, "Also sprach Zarathustra," 128.

enemies, and thereby to protest life for being good to some, but stingy to most."[374] They are envious of others, but their envy is not the kind of envy which Nietzsche praises in *Homers Wettkampf*: it is a destructive envy out of which grows a desire for revenge. Zarathustra says: "Vergrämter Dünkel, verhaltener Neid, vielleicht eurer Väter Dünkel und Neid: aus euch bricht's als Flamme heraus und Wahnsinn der Rache."[375] One is reminded here of Nietzsche's essay *Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben*, in which he writes that one ought to have "die Kunst und Kraft *vergessen* zu können."[376] If one represses instead of forgetting (or consciously letting go, as the quote suggests), then there is a risk that revenge will haunt one. The thirst for revenge is an unhealthy assessment of the value of the past, of past deeds, of past injustices. It is itself a grave injustice to the present and the future which are not given their dues. Those who get stung by the spider of revenge are held down, they are just as incapable of movement, that is: of transformation, as those who get stuck in a spider's web. They are possessed by one grave thought which has become their own absolute truth. The poisonous bite of the tarantula serves the spirit of gravity, which engenders stasis.

In a story which he calls "unmoralisch,"[377] Zarathustra explains to his disciples how one ought to react to a bite, using this time the adder's bite as example: by means of this story, Nietzsche criticizes, once more, resentment. In the section "Vom Biss der Natter," Zarathustra relates the following story: he was sitting under a fig tree when an

---

[374] Lampert, 96.

[375] Nietzsche, "Also sprach Zarathustra," 129.

[376] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben," *KSA 1*, Eds. G. Colli, and M. Montinari (München : DTV, 1999) 330.

[377] Nietzsche, "Also sprach Zarathustra," 87.

adder came and bit him in the neck. This woke him up, he cried out, but as the adder was about to creep away, he said: "Nicht doch (…); noch nahmst du meinen Dank nicht an! Du wecktest mich zur Zeit, mein Weg ist noch lang."[378] At this point, the adder agreed to take its poison back by licking the wound it had just inflicted. Zarathustra explains that his reaction to the adder's bite ought to serve as model for his disciples: "So ihr aber einen Feind habt, so vergeltet ihm nicht Böses mit Gutem: denn das würde beschämen. Sondern beweist, dass er euch etwas Gutes angethan hat."[379] Lampert interprets this as follows: "Zarathustra's teaching on what is due one's enemies explicitly opposes the New Testament's justice of requiting evil with good, of disarming the enemy and ending enmity; instead, it arms the enemy and aims at enmity."[380] The last part of this statement is debatable. Is this really the message that comes across as the reader reads this section? Kaufmann seems to provide a fairer assessment of this section when he writes that the sections "Vom Biss der Natter" and "Von den Taranteln" both consist of attacks against *ressentiment*: "To have claws and not to use them, and above all to be above any *ressentiment* or desire for vengeance, that is, according to Nietzsche, the sign of true power; and this is also the clue to his persistent critique of punishment."[381]

When Zarathustra claims that his story is *unmoralisch*, it is because it suggests a model which radically departs from those put forward by the scriptures, namely that of the Old Testament (*an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth*) and of the New Testament (*love your enemies, be good to them*); it might also be *unmoralisch* because it shows

---

[378] Ibid., 87.

[379] Ibid., 87.

[380] Lampert, 70.

[381] Kaufmann, 372.

"opposition as something other than pure perverse evil,"[382] as Nickolas Pappas writes in his study "The Eternal-Serpentine." Moral(ising) models are quick to define things as good or evil, but such an attitude with regard to opposition hinders movement and transformation: one does not learn from or grow out of it, one is rather either paralysed by a desire for vengeance or by a numbing *ressentiment*. In contrast, Zarathustra suggests that one ought to be grateful to one's enemy, as he is to the adder, which, he claims, did a good deed. What good deed did it do? The adder, by biting him, woke him up, thus enabling him to pursue his journey – *du wecktest mich zur Zeit, mein Weg ist noch lang*. Instead of feeling vengeful or resentful, Zarathustra is thankful for this inimical deed which put an end to his slumber and enabled him to move on, turning his static state into a dynamic one. That, he suggests, is the healthy way to deal with enmity.

This adder which lingers around a fig tree belongs to a snake constellation which Zarathustra devises in opposition to the biblical myth of the fall. Pappas remarks that the Nietzschean snake has much in common with the biblical snake: "The general categories for understanding the serpent remain the categories of knowledge, concealment, fertility, and danger."[383] What differs here is the assessment of the snake and of these categories, which are scorned by Christian interpreters, whereas in *Also sprach Zarathustra*, the snake is depicted rather positively. Whereas the biblical snake is depicted as that which has inflicted a (mortal) wound onto the human species, Zarathustra celebrates its curative powers by carrying a staff, the handle of which depicts a snake curled around the sun: Asklepius, god of healing, possessed such a staff which was later given to Hermes, the

---

[382] Nickolas Pappas, "The Eternal-Serpentine," *A Nietzschean Bestiary : Becoming Animal beyond Docile and Brutal*, Eds. C.D. Acampora, and R.R. Acampora (Oxford : Rowman and Littlefield, 2004) 74.

[383] Ibid., 75.

herald of the gods.[384] Zarathustra seems to combine the attributes of Asklepius and Hermes, as he is the herald of a greater health. This greater health presupposes a completely different assessment of the categories named above, which have been associated with the snake and vilified by Christianity. The snake's wisdom is, for Christians, a source of scorn: its knowledge is "a serpentine knowledge that brought about alienation instead of deeper trust."[385] Interestingly, Werner Schmidt, in his study *Die Schöpfungsgeschichte*, writes that the biblical snake has an "übermenschliches Wissen"[386] as it does indeed know more than man. For Zarathustra, the snake's wisdom is rather to be envied. Whereas the biblical snake is deemed to be "listiger als alle Tiere,"[387] Zarathustra calls his snake: "das klügste Thier unter der Sonne"[388] (reminding one of Heine's *kluge Muhme*). There is no negative connotation to the term *klug*, as opposed to the biblical term *listig* which one can translate as *cunning* or *sly*. Zarathustra's snake, as its biblical kin, does seem to know more than man, as one understands when Zarathustra exclaims: "Möchte ich klüger sein! Möchte ich klug von Grund aus sein, gleich meiner Schlange!"[389] Here, again, one notices that Zarathustra assesses things in a way that radically differs from Christian interpreters: whereas, in the Judeo-Christian tradition, the snake's creeping on its belly and thus intimate contact with the earth is the result of a curse, Zarathustra's snake is deemed wise *because* of this intimate knowledge of the

---

[384] Lampert, 74.

[385] Martin Kessler and Karel Deurloo, *A Commentary on Genesis. The Book of Beginnings* (N.Y., Mahwah, N.J. : Paulist Press, 2004) 53.

[386] Werner H. Schmidt, *Die Schöpfungsgeschichte* (Neukirchen-Vluyn : Neukirchener Verlag, 1967) 211.

[387] *Das alte Testament*, 5.

[388] Nietzsche, "Also sprach Zarathustra," 27.

[389] Ibid., 27.

earth. Its wisdom is grounded, it is not an abstract wisdom dwelling on lofty heights (as opposed to that of Zarathustra, as he came down his mountain to speak to the men on the marketplace).

To the snake constellation belongs yet another snake by means of which Zarathustra introduces his second teaching, the thought of eternal return, to which this study now turns. In the section "Vom Gesicht und Räthsel," Zarathustra tells his disciples a riddle. A big black snake had crept in the mouth of a young shepherd, who could not at first free himself from this snake which was choking him. Finally, he found the courage to bite its head off. Having being able to free himself, he starts laughing, as no one has ever laughed before. At the end of the riddle, Zarathustra asks: "Wer ist der Hirt, dem also die Schlange in den Schlund kroch? Wer ist der Mensch, dem also alles Schwerste, Schwärzeste in den Schlund kriechen wird?"[390] This question remains unanswered until the section "Der Genesende" in which one learns that it was Zarathustra himself who had been choked by a heavy black snake, the significance of which he then explains as follows: "Der grosse Überdruss am Menschen – *der* würgte mich und war mir in den Schlund gekrochen: und was der Wahrsager wahrsagte: "Alles ist gleich, es lohnt sich Nichts, Wissen würgt."[391] It is not clear, at first, what kind of knowledge had such an effect on Zarathustra until he says:

> Mein Seufzen sass auf allen Menschen-Gräbern und konnte nicht mehr aufstehn; mein Seufzen und Fragen unkte und würgte und nagte und klagte bei Tag und Nacht:

---

[390] Ibid., 202.

[391] Ibid., 274.

- "ach, der Mensch kehrt ewig wieder! Der kleine Mensch kehrt ewig wieder!" -

Nackt hatte ich einst Beide gesehn, den grössten Menschen und den kleinsten Menschen: allzuähnlich einander, - allzumenschlich auch den Grössten noch!

Allzuklein der Grösste! - Das war mein Überdruss am Menschen! Und ewige Wiederkunft auch des Kleinsten! – Das war mein Überdruss an allem Dasein![392]

Zarathustra despairs of the thought that the small man will eternally return.[393] This realization almost proved to be fatal to Zarathustra, until he was able to overcome his weariness and master that thought, until he bit the head of that heavy black snake of a thought.

The snake constellation partakes in Zarathustra's teaching of the thought of eternal return as he can, by means of it, attack Christianity's linear conception of history which according to him devaluates life. Why does Zarathustra introduce the thought of eternal return by means of a riddle in which a heavy black snake is choking him? What could be the significance of this heavy black snake? Lampert claims: "The heavy black snake symbolizing Zarathustra's fear is clearly not Zarathustra's snake symbolizing his prudence and present later to sing of his redemption."[394] This is debatable. Lampert seems to reduce the term *klug*, used to define Zarathustra's snake, to the idea of

---

[392] Ibid., 274.

[393] This despair is shared by Nietzsche who claims in *Ecce Homo* that the deepest objection he had to the thought of eternal return was the existence of his mother and his sister, see Nietzsche, "Ecce Homo," 268.

[394] Lampert, 170.

prudence, whereas it also connotes ability, cleverness, intelligence, tactical efficiency, amongst others. As discussed in a previous paragraph, Zarathustra's snake is wise *von Grund aus*, its wisdom is a grounded wisdom which is due to its intimate knowledge of the earth. This is a feature that is common to all snakes, including the heavy black snake. How does this grounded wisdom serve snakes? Flahault, in his discussion of the biblical snake, might help the reader answer this question. Flahault asks a similar question with regard to Genesis and the character which has been in Christian interpretations associated with the devil, the snake: "Pourquoi faut-il que ce personnage soit un serpent?"[395] His answer: "Les serpents muent, ils font peau neuve."[396] Snakes periodically regenerate. It is in their nature to transform. The biblical snake, cursed because of its role in the fall of man, is, for Christians, the bearer of evil tidings which brought death onto humankind. The biblical snake is held responsible for a fall into history, as explained in a previous chapter, a history which follows a triadic, linear pattern, that of fall, banishment, and redemption. The birth of any given individual, in consequence of original sin, is a condemnation, an alienation ending with death. The biblical snake is thus demonized for its role in this calamity. The fact that the snake has been, elsewhere, "un emblème de vie et de guérison,"[397] is never evoked in a Christian setting, as this might lead one to question Christian interpretations of the fall: what if the fall of man had actually healed him, as a liberation from stasis, as an impetus to transform and regenerate? This is the crux of Zarathustra's own snake constellation. He attacks Christianity's devaluation of

[395] Flahault, 94.

[396] Ibid., 94.

[397] Ibid., 94.

life by redeeming the snake, as it were, by associating it to the thought of eternal return. The snake, may it be Zarathustra's own snake, with its enviable grounded wisdom, or the heavy black snake which illustrates eternal return, or even the adder (which sentences Zarathustra to death by biting him, only to agree to give him back his life and his freedom by biting him again), thus serves a new interpretation of life that is meant to heal a suffering, Christian humankind.

That the thought of eternal return is meant to heal the wounds inflicted by Christianity is evident in the section "Der Genesende." This section is laden with references to the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, making it clear that "Der Genesende" is Zarathustra's answer to Genesis. The two words look similar, however they are not related etymologically. The root *gen* in words such as *Genese* or *Genesis* (or in a word that is dear to Nietzsche, *Genealogie*) relates to the idea of *origin*,[398] whereas the Germanic word *genesen*, which has nothing to do with the Greek, relates to the idea of *überstehen* (which one can translate as *overcome*), *heimkommen* (*to come home*), and also *unbeschadet zurückkommen* (in the sense of *returning unharmed* or *intact*).[399] Nietzsche, as philologist, must have been aware of the etymological implications of the terms Genesis and *genesen*, as he poetically weaves these, in "Der Genesende." Here, Zarathustra recovers from a catatonic state which lasted seven days. As he wakes up, his animals tell him: "Willst du dich nicht endlich wieder auf deine Füsse stellen? Tritt hinaus aus deiner Höhle: die Welt wartet dein wie ein Garten."[400] The beginning of

[398] Kluge, 344.

[399] Ibid., 345.

[400] Nietzsche, "Also sprach Zarathustra," 271-272.

Genesis depicts the seven days of Creation, the fall of man, and God's curse onto man, forcing him to leave the Garden of Eden. In contrast, "Der Genesende" depicts seven days of fallenness (this is not a willed downward movement, *er stürzt nieder*[401]) at the end of which Zarathustra is told by his animals to get up on his feet and walk into the garden which is waiting for him, namely: the world. Whereas Genesis inflicts a wound onto humankind by interpreting the human condition as sinful, cursed, alienated and condemned to dwell in a godforsaken world, "Der Genesende" undermines these bad tidings by suggesting that humankind could be cured by embracing and discovering the world beyond good and evil, unspoiled by morality, that is: as if it were a (prelapsarian) garden.[402]

In the first part of "Der Genesende," in a scene which parodies a scene from Wagner's *Siegfried*, Zarathustra evokes his most abysmal thought (which, as one reads in the second part, is the dark side of eternal return, namely that the small man will eternally return). This scene parodies the scene in *Siegfried* in which Wotan summons the earth goddess Erda to ask her, in view of the pending twilight of the gods, "wie zu hemmen ein rollendes Rad."[403] In *Der Fall Wagner*, Nietzsche mocks this scene, claiming that its sole justification seems to be Wagner's wish to hear a woman's voice in an opera otherwise devoid of female characters: "Erda singt. Wagner's Absicht ist erreicht. Sofort schafft er

---

[401] Ibid., 271.

[402] The world as garden is an image which evokes both Voltaire's *Candide ou l'optimisme*, ending with the words "Il faut cultiver notre jardin," and of Rousseau's *Émile ou de l'éducation*, in which the tutor suggests that it might be wise to give a garden to tend to a child who is to become an ideal citizen. See Voltaire, 125; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile ou de l'éducation* (Paris :Garnier-Flammarion, 1966) 119.

[403] Richard Wagner, "Siegfried," *Wagner's Ring of the Nibelung : A Companion*, Eds. S. Spencer, and B. Millington (N.Y. : Thames and Hudson, 1993) 255.

die alte Dame wieder ab."[404] In contrast, Zarathustra, as he summons his most abysmal thought, exclaims: "Und bist du erst wach, sollst du mir ewig wach bleiben. Nicht ist das *meine* Art, Urgrossmütter aus dem Schlafe wecken, dass ich sie heisse – weiterschlafen!"[405]

This parodic moment, which could be dismissed as a rather harmless joke at Wagner's expense, epitomizes Nietzsche's critical stance with regard to Wagner's Schopenhauerian pessimism and resignation, an attitude which Nietzsche, who constantly praises combativeness, can only deplore. In *Der Fall Wagner*, Nietzsche criticizes the fact that Wagner, whose tetralogy *Der Ring des Nibelungen* had been conceived, originally, as an optimistic and revolutionary piece, translated it, as it were, "in's Schopenhauerische"[406] after reading Schopenhauer. When Wagner's Wotan, in *Siegfried*, realizes that the earth goddess will not give him answers, he gives up on her (she is sent back to her depths) and he gives up on himself: "Um der Götter Ende / grämt mich die Angst nicht, / seit mein Wunsch es – will!"[407] Such a will to nothingness contrasts sharply with Wagner's original vision, Nietzsche claims. Schopenhauer's philosophy was the reef which shipwrecked Wagner's original vision, a shipwreck which Wagner, in the end, embraced and staged, as Nietzsche writes: "Endlich dämmerte ihm ein Ausweg: das Riff, an dem er scheiterte, wie? wenn er es als *Ziel*, als Hinterabsicht, als eigentlichen Sinn seiner Reise interpretirte? *Hier* zu scheitern – das war auch ein Ziel."[408]

---

[404] Nietzsche, "Der Fall Wagner," 33.

[405] Nietzsche, "Also sprach Zarathustra," 270.

[406] Nietzsche, "Der Fall Wagner," 20.

[407] Wagner, 257.

[408] Nietzsche, "Der Fall Wagner," 20.

In contrast to Wotan's resignation and renunciation in the scene in which he evokes Erda, Zarathustra's attitude as he evokes his most abysmal thought is one of resolute combativeness. Lampert, in his interpretation of this part of "Der Genesende," writes that Zarathustra's summon of his most abysmal thought and his desire never to let it go again distinguish his teaching "from the Soothsayer's godless teaching, which also knows life to be suffering and time to be a circle."[409] The soothsayer's teaching was: "Alles ist leer, Alles ist gleich, Alles war!"[410] The "Schopenhauerian pessimism of the Soothsayer"[411] is also that of Wagner's Wotan who believes that nothing he could do would make any difference. Such a pessimism is utterly irresponsible. Wotan seems to be forgetting, here, that his past deeds have shaped his fate (his unfair dealings with the giants, his theft of the gold, etc.): why does he suddenly give in to fatalism now? It is enlightening to compare, here, Wotan's question to Erda, *wie zu hemmen ein rollendes Rad?*, to Zarathustra's description of the individual who has freedom of movement: this individual is described as "ein aus sich rollendes Rad."[412] Zarathustra is, indeed, wounded by the thought that "Alles geht, Alles kommt zurück; ewig rollt das Rad des Seins. Alles stirbt, Alles blüht wieder auf, ewig läuft das Jahr des Seins."[413] This thought makes Zarathustra shudder, as it implies that the small man whom he despises will eternally return: "Und ewige Wiederkunft auch des Kleinsten! – Das war mein Überdruss

---

[409] Lampert, 212.

[410] Nietzsche, "Also sprach Zarathustra," 172.

[411] Lampert, 136.

[412] Nietzsche, "Also sprach Zarathustra," 31, 80.

[413] Ibid., 272.

an allem Dasein!"[414] There is nothing he can do about it: eternal return implies the eternal return of both good and bad. As thought experiment,[415] eternal return is meant, however, to enable one to give shape to one's own fate, as the phrase *ein aus sich rollendes Rad* implies.

To give shape to one's own fate might be deemed contradictory. Robert C. Solomon investigates this seeming contradiction in a recent essay titled "Nietzsche's Fatalism." In this essay, Solomon argues that Nietzsche's fatalism and his promotion of self-creation are two sides of a same coin. He explains that, for Nietzsche, "character *is* agency and thus embodies both freedom and necessity,"[416] which means that one has certain talents, abilities, and possibilities, which require, however, development and training. Solomon thus writes that "Nietzsche embraces rather than dispenses with the notion of responsibility and, in particular, the responsibility for one's character and 'who one is'."[417]

That the teaching of eternal return does not partake in the fatalistic and nihilistic pessimism of a Schopenhauer or a Wagner, but is, on the contrary, a teaching which promotes freedom of movement and responsibility, is evident when one reads aphorism 341 from Nietzsche's text *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, which is titled "*Das grösste Schwergewicht*" and which must be quoted at length here:

> Wie, wenn dir eines Tages oder Nachts, ein Dämon in deine einsamste Einsamkeit nachschliche und dir sagte: "Dieses Leben, wie du es jetzt lebst und gelebt hast,

---

[414] Ibid., 274.

[415] As Ansell Pearson designates it, see Ansell Pearson, *How to read Nietzsche*, 78.

[416] Robert C. Solomon, "Nietzsche's Fatalism," *A Companion to Nietzsche*, Ed. K. Ansell Pearson (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006) 425-6.

[417] Ibid., 419.

> wirst du noch einmal und noch unzählige Male leben müssen; und es wird nichts Neues daran sein, sondern jeder Schmerz und jede Lust und jeder Gedanke und Seufzer und alles unsäglich Kleine und Grosse deines Lebens muss dir wiederkommen, und Alles in der selben Reihe und Folge – und ebenso diese Spinne und dieses Mondlicht zwischen den Bäumen, und ebenso dieser Augenblick und ich selber. Die ewige Sanduhr des Daseins wird immer wieder umgedreht – und du mit ihr, Stäubchen vom Staube!" Würdest du dich nicht niederwerfen und mit den Zähnen knirschen und den Dämon verfluchen, der so redete? Oder hast du einmal einen ungeheuren Augenblick erlebt, wo du ihm antworten würdest: "du bist ein Gott und nie hörte ich Göttlicheres!" Wenn jener Gedanke über dich Gewalt bekäme, er würde dich, wie du bist, verwandeln und vielleicht zermalmen; die Frage bei Allem und Jedem "willst du diess noch einmal und noch unzählige Male?" würde als das grösste Schwergewicht auf deinem Handeln liegen! Oder wie müsstest du dir selber und dem Leben gut werden, um nach Nichts *mehr zu verlangen*, als nach dieser letzten ewigen Bestätigung und Besiegelung?-[418]

The thought experiment of eternal return is not to be understood cosmologically but rather psychologically, existentially.[419] It is the measure of decisions and deeds that are yet to come. The question *willst du diess noch einmal und noch unzählige Male?* helps one orientate oneself when in doubt. Horst Hutter can thus write: "In its reconstructive aspect, Nietzsche's teaching of eternal recurrence is hence a counter-movement to

---

[418] Nietzsche, "Die fröhliche Wissenschaft," 570.

[419] Bernd Magnus has called it an "existential imperative," see Magnus, 139.

nihilism by pointing beyond it to the principle of responsibility."[420] The thought of eternal return, as experiment, gives weight to decisions and deeds, it endows them with the greatest meaning, which is, indeed, the greatest weight: would you want this again and again and again? As opposed to the soothsayer's teaching, *Alles ist leer, Alles ist gleich, Alles war*, the thought of eternal return teaches that everything is loaded with meaning, everything has repercussions, everything can be shaped and reshaped.

The spirit of gravity, Zarathustra's enemy, poses a threat to the teaching of eternal return because it turns it into an absolute truth, thus robbing it of its educational value. This is particularly evident in the section "Vom Gesicht und Räthsel." In the first part of this section, before the riddle about the shepherd and the heavy black snake, the spirit of gravity, which appears here as a dwarf, depicts Zarathustra's journey as follows:

> Oh Zarathustra, raunte er höhnisch Silb' um Silbe, du Stein der Weisheit! Du warfst dich hoch, aber jeder geworfene Stein muss – fallen!
>
> Oh Zarathustra, du Stein der Weisheit, du Schleuderstein, du Stern-Zertrümmerer! Dich selber warfst du so hoch, - aber jeder geworfene Stein – muss fallen!
>
> Verurtheilt zu dir selber und zur eignen Steinigung: oh Zarathustra, weit warfst du ja den Stein, - aber auf *dich* wird er zurückfallen![421]

One is reminded of Sisyphus, of course, condemned, for all eternity, to roll a stone up a hill, only to see it roll down again. The spirit of gravity, which was associated earlier with

---

[420] Horst Hutter, *Shaping the Future. Nietzsche's New Regime of the Soul and Its Ascetic Practices* (Lanham, MD : Lexington, 2006) 204.

[421] Nietzsche, "Also sprach Zarathustra," 198.

linearity (Dietzsch, as mentioned, called it "das *Ganz-Gerade*"[422]), that is with narratives, Christian and Kantian, for instance, which postulate a linear conception of time or history, is now associated with the circular, the cyclical. It is, after all, *Zarathustra's* spirit of gravity, and as such, it transforms as Zarathustra transforms himself. Zarathustra, in the first part of the book, comes down his mountain to confront his own teaching of the *Übermensch* to the spirit of gravity. In the second part of the book, Zarathustra's encounter with life teaches him that life is that "*was sich immer selber überwinden muss*."[423] In the third part, Zarathustra is learning to accept and affirm the implications of this, which is the thought of eternal return. It is this thought which now heavily weighs upon him. Whereas his journey down the mountain, in the first part, relied on images of linearity and suggested transformation, the dwarf's description of Zarathustra's journey, similar to that of Sisyphus, implies that any movement upward or downward belongs to a closed cyclical system and, as such, comes to naught. The dwarf claims indeed: "Alles Gerade lügt, (…). Alle Wahrheit ist krumm, die Zeit selber ist ein Kreis."[424] Alderman writes: "The dwarf opposes Zarathustra by saying that time is finite, it is a circle. But this is, of course, merely a variant of the voice of absolutism which seeks the security of a bounded and closed time – the time in which eternity becomes a perfect standing presence."[425] The spirit of gravity does not conceive of eternal return as an experiment, but rather as a truth, thus robbing it of its educational value, as experiments can lead to transformation, whereas truth cannot.

---

[422] Dietzsch, 8.

[423] Nietzsche, "Also sprach Zarathustra," 148.

[424] Ibid., 200.

[425] Alderman, 97.

The thought of eternal return, as thought experiment, cannot be dissociated from transformation; as such, it points to the future and partakes, to a certain extent, in a linear conception of time. It is not, as Arthur C. Danto calls it, "an eternally frozen mobility."[426] As Zarathustra reflects upon the dwarf's conception of eternal return, he is seized with disgust at the thought of an eternal return which would foreclose the possibility of transformation. It is then that he tells the riddle of the shepherd and the heavy black snake. The thought of eternal return can choke one if one understands it to mean that no deed will ever make any difference. The dwarf's conception of eternal return is absolute; the problem with absolutism, as Alderman points out, is that it "assigns to the thinker only the role of spectator and assumes that it is 'reality' alone that acts."[427] As the shepherd bites the head of the snake off, he is no spectator but an actor, one who acts, and a creator, one who creates a new future for himself. He will neither die nor suffer any longer because of the snake, he rather performs a liberating deed which opens up a myriad of possibilities, as he is now alive and kicking, and free to move on. It is especially enlightening to track the shepherd's position in space as the action unfolds. The shepherd was lying down, as the snake started choking him, and Zarathustra wonders: "Er hatte wohl geschlafen? Da kroch ihm die Schlange in den Schlund – da biss sie sich fest."[428] Upon biting the snake's head off, the text states: "Weit weg spie er den Kopf der Schlange -: und sprang empor.- "[429] Again, the spirit of gravity causes thoughts to weigh down upon one in a way that induces stasis (the shepherd's sleep). As opposed

[426] Arthur C. Danto, *Nietzsche as Philosopher* (NY: Columbia University Press, 2005) 193.

[427] Alderman, 160.

[428] Nietzsche, "Also sprach Zarathustra," 201.

[429] Ibid., 202.

to this, deeds that enable one to master these thoughts, to vanquish the spirit of gravity, induce movement and transformation: the shepherd, having vanquished the dark side of eternal return, jumps up in the air, *sprang empor*, he elevates himself above this thought. It is thus not surprising that Zarathustra ends this riddle on eternal return with a question which points toward the *Übermensch*: "Und *wer* ist, der einst noch kommen muss?"[430] The thought of eternal return, in spite of the fact that it evokes the circular and the cyclical, ought to be mastered and put to use in a narrative which postulates linearity and progress (a narrative which, in turn, must be kept in check by the thought of eternal return, and so on and so forth).

That the thought of eternal return ought not be dissociated from a linear narrative (such as that of the *Übermensch*) is further illustrated by the pairing of the snake with the eagle. As previously shown, the snake constellation, in *Also sprach Zarathustra*, is associated with the thought of eternal return, with notions of regeneration and healing, and, as such, opposes the linearity of Christian and Kantian narratives. When Lampert claims that the heavy black snake in the section "Vom Gesicht und Räthsel" is not Zarathustra's snake, he ignores their obvious kinship. The heavy black snake of a thought that is eternal return can choke one if it is not balanced by another teaching postulating the possibility of transforming that which shall eternally return. The grounded wisdom of the snake, this wisdom which knows life to be an eternal cycle of birth, growth, decay, and death, is a wisdom which can heal a humankind which has lost sight of this law of life, as it were, but it can just as easily weigh down upon one, causing stasis. Zarathustra's snake is thus paired with an animal which is associated with the air rather than with the ground, namely: an eagle.

---

[430] Ibid., 202.

As previously mentioned, the snake is called, in the prologue, "das klügste Thier"[431] whereas the eagle is described as "das stolzeste Thier:"[432] if the snake and its grounded wisdom illustrate one teaching, that of eternal return, the eagle certainly stands for the other one, that of the *Übermensch*. Pride is mentioned by Zarathustra as the men on the marketplace do not seem to understand what he himself sees as the greatness of his teaching. If they cannot understand this, then Zarathustra will go about it in a different way, and thus he thinks: "So will ich denn zu ihrem Stolze reden."[433] That is when he tells them about the last men, indicating that they should be proud enough to rise to the challenge that his teaching represents and that they should be too proud to choose a way of life that leads away from this teaching. The eagle and its pride thus certainly correspond to the teaching of the *Übermensch*. It is thus quite fitting that snake and eagle are paired here. Helga Thomas remarks that these animals were opposed in the *Edda*: "Dem himmlischen Adler, der zur Oberwelt gehört, steht auch hier die erdverbundene Schlange gegenüber, eine Tiergestalt der Unterwelt, die ganz zum Prinzip des Bösen wurde, wie im Alten Testament die Paradiesschlange."[434] In Nietzsche's text, however, such dualisms are overcome and both animals are thus paired. Thomas writes regarding Nietzsche's animals: "Immer wieder verkörpern sie das Grundprinzip des Lebens und können somit zu Symbolen der Macht werden."[435] The same can be said about

---

[431] Ibid., 27.

[432] Ibid., 27.

[433] Ibid., 19.

[434] Helga Thomas, "Beispiele der Wandlung. Adler und Schlange als Natursymbole," *Antaios* 12 (1970-71) : 49.

[435] Ibid., 55.

Zarathustra's teachings, which ought not be thought in isolation from each other.

That the circular or cyclical, on the one hand, and the linear, on the other hand, are not necessarily mutually exclusive is also evident in a section such as "Von tausend und Einem Ziele." Here, Zarathustra explains: "Eine Tafel der Güter hängt über jedem Volke. Siehe, es ist seiner Überwindungen Tafel; siehe, es ist die Stimme seines Willens zur Macht."[436] A tablet hangs above every people and indicates that which it must overcome – as people - in order to elevate itself: this tablet is "das Gesetz seiner Überwindungen" and it is described as the "Leiter zu seiner Hoffnung."[437] Such tablets, however, are to be overcome: "Wandel der Werthe, - das ist Wandel der Schaffenden. Immer vernichtet, wer ein Schöpfer sein muss."[438] In this section, which comes after Zarathustra's teaching of the *Übermensch* on the marketplace but before life's revelation (according to which it is that which must always overcome itself) and before Zarathustra's riddle on eternal return, one can already see the interaction of the two teachings. A tablet of good and evil hangs above a people as a goal toward which to strive, but it must be destroyed and replaced with a newer one, whenever stasis sets in, threatening the vitality of the people. In this section, it is evident that there is an interaction between the circular and cyclical, on the one hand, and the linear, on the other hand.

This section is also particularly enlightening as it reveals an important feature of linear narratives, such as that of the *Übermensch*, which is also a kind of tablet and goal

---

[436] Nietzsche, "Also sprach Zarathustra," 74.

[437] Ibid., 74.

[438] Ibid., 75.

toward which to strive, namely that they are exactly that: *narratives*. Zarathustra reminds his audience: "Wahrlich, die Menschen gaben sich alles ihr Gutes und Böses. Wahrlich, sie nahmen es nicht, sie fanden es nicht, nicht fiel es ihnen als Stimme vom Himmel."[439] Zarathustra praises peoples here for the creation of these tablets, saying that there has been, so far, a thousand goals for a thousand peoples. He bemoans, however, that humanity, as a whole, has failed at setting a goal for itself: "Noch hat die Menschheit kein Ziel. Aber sagt mir doch, meine Brüder: wenn der Menschheit das Ziel noch fehlt, fehlt da nicht auch – sie selber noch? – "[440] Zarathustra is spurring humankind to create a narrative for itself.

That tablets and goals rely on narratives is further suggested by the title of the section: "Von tausend und Einem Ziele." This reminds the reader, of course, of Scheherazade's storytelling. In a way that is consistent with what Zarathustra writes in this section, the title hints at the fact that goals are narratives created by men. When one reads the section, it becomes evident that morality itself is storytelling, in Zarathustra's view. Scheherazades's storytelling was a strategy for survival; the one thousand goals and tablets of the one thousand peoples had the same function: "Werthe legte erst der Mensch in die Dinge, sich zu erhalten."[441] One thousand nights of storytelling enable Scheherazade to survive; it is, however, only after one thousand and *one* nights of storytelling that she is saved, free not just to survive but *free to live* (to grow, to experience other things, to transform). As such, one thousand peoples have survived

---

[439] Ibid., 75.

[440] Ibid., 76.

[441] Ibid., 75.

thanks to one thousand goals, but it is not until they all, as a whole, create a narrative which sets *the one goal*, that they will be truly free to live.

It is obvious, here, that Zarathustra considers his teaching of the *Übermensch* to have the potential to be that one goal. The question *wenn der Menschheit das Ziel noch fehlt, fehlt da nicht auch – sie selber noch?* hints at the fact that the *Übermensch*, as goal, might enable man not just to survive but to truly live up to its potential. Alderman formulates it as follows: "In some sense or other, if man would become truly human he must become more than he is."[442] It must be mentioned here that in this very section, the people which has given the world both Zarathustra (Zoroaster) and Scheherazade, the Persian people,[443] is described as a people whose tablet reads: "Wahrheit reden und gut mit Bogen und Pfeil verkehren."[444] This seems to describe Zarathustra as educator, whose teaching of the *Übermensch* can be said to be true, from his perspective, as it serves life; as for the desire to overcome man, it is once described as "Pfeil und Sehnsucht zum Übermenschen."[445] Zarathustra is a philosophical Scheherazade whose storytelling is an arrow pointing beyond survival toward life.

Zarathustra's discourse on procreation, which partakes in his teaching of the *Übermensch*, is such an arrow. In the section "Von Kind und Ehe," Zarathustra explains his views on procreation, stating that the desire for a child must testify to one's strength and freedom. The desire for a child ought to be a desire for elevation: "Einen höheren Leib sollst du schaffen, eine erste Bewegung, ein aus sich rollendes Rad, - einen

---

[442] Alderman, 25.

[443] As per Lampert's interpretation, 62.

[444] Nietzsche, "Also sprach Zarathustra," 75.

[445] Ibid., 92.

Schaffenden sollst du schaffen."[446] Zarathustra gives his blessing only to those couples which come together in order to create a higher life: "Ehe: so heisse ich den Willen zu Zweien, das Eine zu schaffen, das mehr ist, als die es schufen."[447] Marriage is only justified if it is an arrow pointing toward a higher form of life. The phrase quoted in the previous paragraph appears in this section, as Zarathustra addresses those who might want to get together: "Durst dem Schaffenden, Pfeil und Sehnsucht zum Übermenschen: sprich, mein Bruder, ist diess dein Wille zur Ehe?"[448] Procreation, as the fruitful union of woman and man, is thus a feature of Zarathustra's linear narrative of the teaching of the *Übermensch*.

Woman and man, in *Also sprach Zarathustra*, seem to partake, respectively, in the teachings on eternal return and the *Übermensch*. Much has been written on the subject of Nietzsche and women[449] and I will not pretend here to have much that is original to contribute to this scholarship. I wish to point out, however, that women, as few as they are in *Also sprach Zarathustra*, play an essential pedagogical role in Zarathustra's development. Zarathustra's audience, the people whom he meets and with whom he journeys, are mostly men. He only meets a few women, one of them being the old woman in the section "Von alten und jungen Weiblein." He also meets life, which is depicted as a woman in the section "Das Tanzlied." Interestingly, these are the two sections in which

---

[446] Ibid., 90.

[447] Ibid., 90.

[448] Ibid., 92.

[449] I tend to side with the position expressed by Carol Diethe who writes that Nietzsche "was violently anti-feminist rather than crudely misogynic" and who vilipends the New Nietzsche of French Feminism, calling it a male construction perpetuating "woman's marginal position by finding good things to say about it." See Carol Diethe, "Nietzsche Emasculated: Postmodern Readings," *Ecce Opus. Nietzsche-Revisionen im 20. Jahrhundert*, Eds. R. Görner, and D. Large (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003) 56.

Zarathustra the educator gets educated. The old woman tells him: "Du gehst zu Frauen? Vergiss die Peitsche nicht!"[450] Zarathustra considers this saying to be a gift,[451] indicating that it is, indeed, a teaching, just as he presented his teaching of the *Übermensch* as a gift to humankind.[452] Later on, in the section "Das andere Tanzlied," Zarathustra uses his whip to dance with life who is depicted as a woman and who previously taught him that she is that "*was sich immer selber überwinden muss*,"[453] a teaching which he then makes his own. This life, who is a woman, belongs to Zarathustra's snake constellation, as three passages of the section "Das andere Tanzlied" indicate. In the first one, Zarathustra tells life that he has been trying to get away from her: "Von dir weg sprang ich und von deinen Schlangen: da standst du schon, halbgewandt, das Auge voll Verlangen."[454] Shortly thereafter, he says: "Oh diese verfluchte flinke gelenke Schlange und Schlupfhexe!"[455] Later on, life itself uses an expression which, as quoted before, was used by Zarathustra to describe his snake: she tells Zarathustra that they (Zarathustra and life) love each other "von Grund aus."[456] The reader thus understands that this woman, who is life, partakes in the teaching of eternal return.

As for men, their realm is that of linear narratives, religious and philosophical. The Judeo-Christian scriptures were written by men. Men penned Genesis, men founded

---

[450] Nietzsche, "Also sprach Zarathustra," 86.

[451] Ibid., 84.

[452] Ibid., 13.

[453] Ibid., 148.

[454] Ibid., 282.

[455] Ibid., 284.

[456] Ibid., 284.

the Church and devised a moral code which condemns sexuality, depicts the pangs of childbirth as a just consequence of original sin, and accuses women (and snakes!) of the ills of the human condition (it does not come as a surprise that the snake, in medieval representations of the fall, often sports a woman's head[457]). Men are responsible for the New Testament, for Christian eschatology. Philosophical narratives have also been constructs of men, from Ancient Greece to medieval Europe, from the Renaissance to Enlightenment, from Romanticism to Nietzsche himself. These narratives, including the teaching of the *Übermensch*, have been overwhelmingly teleological, linear.

Religious and philosophical narratives have made man sick, according to Zarathustra, who, ironically, comes down his mountain to cure the ills brought about by these narratives by means of a narrative, that of the *Übermensch*, which seems to be yet another linear narrative. In this respect, it is quite fitting that Zarathustra addresses mostly men. They are the sick ones and he is sick as well - hence the need for a section titled "Der Genesende." In *Also sprach Zarathustra*, women, on the other hand, seem to have been able to remain healthy or at least healthier, from the old woman who can teach Zarathustra a useful lesson, to the young girls dancing in "Das Tanzlied" - dancing being an artistic form which Zarathustra himself, in this section, is unable to master. Linear narratives do not seem to have affected women as much, maybe because they have been excluded from them or maybe because they can never cease to be conscious of the cyclical aspect of life, inscribed in their own flesh. Zarathustra can thus educate men but before doing so, he must be educated – and cured - by women, just as his teaching of the *Übermensch* can only come into its own by virtue of the teaching on eternal return.

---

[457] Flahault, 72.

One must also point out that the form of Zarathustra's teaching of the *Übermensch*, in the prologue, is also reminiscent of (or contaminated by) the typical forms of linear narratives, religious and philosophical. Higgins, who has interpreted Nietzsche's text as *Bildungsroman*, as stated in the introduction, has seen in Zarathustra's descent from his mountain a parody of the philosopher who descends into the cave, in Plato's parable, in order to share his insights.[458] If Nietzsche's text is a *Bildungsroman*, then it is a philosopher and an educator who must get educated. The form of Zarathustra's discourse, as he speaks to the men on the marketplace does share certain features with the Platonic philosopher *who knows best*. As Alderman remarks, in his study *Nietzsche's Gift*, Zarathustra teaches the *Übermensch* in a manner which "leaves no room for response,"[459] a pedagogical strategy which robs the pupil of the possibility to create meaning (just as the Socratic directed questions, which can only elicit the answers which Socrates wants to hear). Zarathustra's teaching of the *Übermensch* must not only undergo a transformation in terms of content, but also in terms of form: he cannot teach it the way he tried to teach it in the prologue. His early, sententious tone – abhorred by many a reader – can only fail to educate modern, godless men, but as Hans-Georg Gadamer writes: "Es ist eine hermeneutische Naivität, nur auf diese Reden, die Zarathustra seinen Jüngern oder sich selbst erzählt, zu hören, die es zu befolgen gelte, als ob nicht unmittelbar danach der tiefste Zusammenbruch und die langsamste Genesung folgte."[460] During and after his convalescence, Zarathustra will (un)learn much about teaching – it is

[458] Higgins, 73.

[459] Alderman, 39.

[460] Gadamer, 456.

in that sense that I remarked earlier that the text might not be so much of a *Bildungsroman* than a parody of it – there is no *telos* or redemption – or a precursor of the twentieth century's *Umbildungsroman* or *Entbildungsroman*. Zarathustra unlearns about teaching. A true educator ought not be a lawgiver. Ansell Pearson is right to point out that there is a dimension of Nietzsche's text that is oft neglected, namely that the book "dramatises the problem of the legislator, showing that the present suffers from a crisis of *authority*."[461] How could the educator, whose task is the *Erziehung zur Mündigkeit*, legislate autonomy, as it were? Zarathustra must find other pedagogical strategies.

In this regard, the old woman's teaching about the whip proves to be quite educational as it suggests the benefits of agonal education. The old woman's advice, "Du gehst zu Frauen? Vergiss die Peitsche nicht!,"[462] remains quite puzzling until one reads the section "Das andere Tanzlied:" here, it is used for an aesthetic shaping of the agon, the tension between Zarathustra and life. Here, Zarathustra describes his relationship to life as a difficult one. He can never grasp it. This is to be interpreted literally here: life is described, as quoted before, as a "Schlupfhexe."[463] Zarathustra calls it that because he is trying to dance with it, but life does not let itself be caught. Whenever Zarathustra comes near it, it flees, he bemoans: "Ich tanze dir nach, ich folge dir auch auf geringer Spur. Wo bist du? Gieb mir die Hand! Oder einen Finger nur!"[464] Life keeps getting away. When Zarathustra decides to use his whip, it is not to grasp life, as Lampert writes: "He does

---

[461] Ansell Pearson, *An Introduction to Nietzsche as Political Thinker*, 120.

[462] Nietzsche, "Also sprach Zarathustra," 86.

[463] Ibid., 283-284.

[464] Ibid., 283.

not whip Life into submission by imposing some virtue on her that is not her own, nor does he seek to alter Life's unalterable ways."[465] Lampert refers here to Zarathustra's previous dialogue with life, in the section "Das Tanzlied," in which life had told Zarathustra:

> "Aber veränderlich bin ich nur und wild und in Allem ein Weib, und kein tugendhaftes:
>
> "Ob ich schon euch Männern "die Tiefe" heisse oder "die Treue", "die Ewige", die "Geheimnisvolle."
>
> "Doch ihr Männer beschenkt uns stets mit den eignen Tugenden – ach, ihr Tugendhaften!"[466]

As he meets life again, in "Das andere Tanzlied," Zarathustra seems to realize what he can and must do. He remembers the old woman's teaching and tells life: "Nach dem Takt meiner Peitsche sollst du mir tanzen und schrein!"[467] Zarathustra can and must experience the tension which exists between life and himself as art, but not in a passive way, neither as a spectator, who only sits and stares, nor as an actor, who imitates and repeats the gestures and words of others. He must experience life as art from the perspective of a creator.

Art is, in Nietzsche's view, "die große Ermöglicherin des Lebens, die große Verführerin zum Leben, das große Stimulans des Lebens"[468] and, as such, Zarathustra experiences a moment of great health when agonistically dancing with life. One must

---

[465] Lampert, 239.

[466] Nietzsche, "Also sprach Zarathustra," 140.

[467] Ibid., 284.

[468] Friedrich Nietzsche, *KSA 13*, Eds. G. Colli, and M. Montinari (München : DTV, 1999) 521.

insist, here, upon the fact that Nietzsche was intent on considering art from the perspective of the creator, not from the point of view of the spectator, as philosophers had done before him, as he explains in *Zur Genealogie der Moral*.[469] In the first part of "Das andere Tanzlied," life is depicted as dancing and Zarathustra only follows in its footsteps, as his words *ich tanze dir nach* reveal, as previously quoted. At the end of this section, he uses his whip, providing "the new rhythm for the dance with Life, the new measure that binds even Life by giving her a tempo or a time to keep."[470] Whereas the first part of this section consisted in a monologue by Zarathustra, a dialogue is taking place in the second part, as life finally speaks to him – of love. The old woman's teaching is thus of utmost importance, as the whip enables Zarathustra to transform into a creator, and this transformation leads to a reconciliation, albeit a fugacious one,[471] with life.

Leading up to the section "Das andere Tanzlied," the many references to dance in the text indicate that Zarathustra considers it to be the highest expression of a true affirmation of life's tensions and conflicts. In his speech to the men on the marketplace, he tells them: "Man muss noch Chaos in sich haben, um einen tanzenden Stern gebären zu können."[472] He pronounces these words as he is depicting the last man, who prefers a comfortable, peaceful, uneventful life, away from tensions and conflicts. Such a man would be incapable of creating art or shaping life, as his lifestyle has made him static. Dance and stasis are opposed, and as such, dance represents a victory over Zarathustra's

---

[469] Nietzsche, "Zur Genealogie der Moral," 346.

[470] Lampert, 239.

[471] Both life and Zarathustra recognize that they will inevitably part, see Nietzsche, "Also sprach Zarathustra," 285.

[472] Ibid., 19.

enemy, the spirit of gravity, which induces stasis in anybody who falls prey to it. This is evident in the section "Vom Lesen und Schreiben," as the juxtaposition of the following statements suggests:

> Ich würde nur an einen Gott glauben, der zu tanzen verstünde.
>
> Und als ich meinen Teufel sah, da fand ich ihn ernst, gründlich, tief, feierlich: es war der Geist der Schwere, - durch ihn fallen alle Dinge.[473]

That dance opposes the spirit of gravity is indicated once again in the section "Das Tanzlied." This song which Zarathustra sings is described by him as "ein Tanz- und Spottlied auf den Geist der Schwere."[474] As previously discussed, the spirit of gravity is, in *Also sprach Zarathustra*, sometimes associated with a stasis induced by linear thinking, some other times with a stasis induced by circular or cyclical thinking. Dance, as a graceful arrangement of all kinds of movements - a dancer jumps up and down and spins around - thus suggests a skillful play with (and performance of) these seemingly conflicting thoughts, which, when turned into art, reveal their complementarity. One must note, however, that Zarathustra, himself, does not dance in "Das Tanzlied," as he has yet to reconcile with the idea that life is an agon which he must aesthetically shape. In the following section, he admits that there is a gap between what he knows and what he does, between theory and practice, as it were: "Nur im Tanze weiss ich der höchsten Dinge Gleichniss zu reden: - und nun blieb mir mein höchstes Gleichniss ungeredet in meinen

---

[473] Ibid., 49.

[474] Ibid., 140.

Gliedern!"[475] Until he embraces the tensions and conflicts within himself, Zarathustra will not be able to dance, to defeat the spirit of gravity.

The section "Das andere Tanzlied" depicts the moment in Zarathustra's life during which he defeats the spirit of gravity but most importantly, it reveals that this can only be a fleeting moment. As previously mentioned, Zarathustra and life finally enter in a dialogue here and speak of love. In spite of this, life knows that Zarathustra will not be faithful to it:

> "Oh Zarathustra, du bist mir nicht treu genug!
>
> Du liebst mich lange nicht so sehr wie du redest; ich weiss, du denkst daran, dass du mich bald verlassen willst.
>
> Es giebt eine alte schwere schwere Brumm-Glocke: die brummt Nachts bis zu deiner Höhle hinauf: -
>
> - hörst du diese Glocke Mitternachts die Stunde schlagen, so denkst du zwischen Eins und Zwölf daran –
>
> - du denkst daran, oh Zarathustra, ich weiss es, dass du mich bald verlassen willst!"- [476]

Zarathustra does not deny this and he then whispers into life's ear what Lampert suggests is very likely a variant of "I will eternally return."[477] The words *Nachts* and *Mitternachts* indicate that this heavy bell which strikes the hour resounds all the way up to

---

[475] Ibid., 144.

[476] Ibid., 285.

[477] Lampert, 238.

Zarathustra's cave every night, every midnight. The idea of an eternal return implies an eternal leave-taking. Zarathustra is now reconciled with this idea.

> The section "Das Tanzlied" ended on a sad note, as Zarathustra asked himself:
>
> Was! Du lebst noch, Zarathustra?
>
> Warum? Wofür? Wodurch? Wohin? Wo? Wie? Ist es nicht Thorheit, noch zu leben? –
>
> Ach, meine Freunde, der Abend ist es, der so aus mir fragt. Vergebt mir meine Traurigkeit!
>
> Abend ward es: vergebt mir, dass es Abend ward![478]

The evening here affects Zarathustra's mood, leading him to ask himself questions which he does not ask himself during the day. Answers to these questions would not express a truth about life, they would inevitably impose meanings onto it, as life decried in "Das Tanzlied." It is evident that Zarathustra, after his first encounter with life, still suffers from the ills brought on by the spirit of gravity, which still weighs upon him, as the verb *sinken* used in the following statement, after this encounter, reveals: "Und in's Unergründliche schien ich mir wieder zu sinken. - "[479] During his second encounter with life, however, the evening affects him differently. The heavy bell, the heaviness of which is repeated twice, will always strike at midnight, it is the spirit of gravity tempting Zarathustra all the way up to his cave, challenging him, every night, to leave his cave, descend from his mountain, and resume the fight. Instead of asking questions, which

[478] Nietzsche, "Also sprach Zarathustra," 141.

[479] Ibid., 141.

ought neither be asked nor can be answered, Zarathustra keeps silent and cries, together with life.

That life is eternally to be overcome is indeed tragic, but Zarathustra is now able to turn this insight into art. After dancing with life, he pens a song for it, a song which ends "Das andere Tanzlied" and which he will later call his "Rundgesang."[480] The evening, which in "Das Tanzlied'" had asked unanswerable questions through him, now sings through him (there are indeed quotation marks, in the second verse, which indicate that the voice is now that of the evening) and it sings a song which joyfully affirms eternity. The fact that the song follows the rhythm of the heavy bell indicates that this eternity consists of eternal return and eternal leave-taking, an eternal starting over. The eternal return implies a break, a rupture – providing the beginning of a new (linear) narrative.

This chapter showed how *Also sprach Zarathustra* offers a counternarrative to Platonic, Christian, and Kantian fall narratives. As Schiller, Kleist, and Heine before him, Nietzsche challenges, in his text, teleological and dualistic views of the world. Nietzsche's critique of the Platonic, Christian, and Kantian discourses, however, also challenges the form which these discourses privilege – a challenge which also implies a new way of writing and reading. In *Also sprach Zarathustra*, Nietzsche does not present Zarathustra's teachings as clear cut concepts, he does not use dialectics, imperatives, or prohibitions. He rather illustrates Zarathustra's teachings by means of metaphors, depictions and suggestions of movements, which all reveal, when one performs close readings of the text, that the two teachings are not opposed, but rather entwined. This interaction between the two teachings was interpreted here as a strategy to induce

[480] Ibid., 403.

movement in the reader's mind, which must constantly move to and fro Zarathustra's teachings. This suggests, on the level of content, the constant need to revaluate values. In terms of form, this functions as a challenge to the reader, who must (re)construct the connection between the two teachings, thus performing the movement which the text promotes. As Richard Schacht remarks, the real educator in *Also sprach Zarathustra* is the work itself.[481]

In the next chapter, I will further investigate Nietzsche's ethics of reading and its principles of suspicion, contest, and performance, turning to early texts in which he discusses language, education, and agonistics. These preoccupations inform his later work, his call for a revaluation and a new ethics of reading. I will show how these coalesce in *Ecce Homo*. I will look closely at passages in these texts in which Nietzsche addresses the reader, providing tips and warnings on how to read in general and how to read him in particular. This chapter will help support the claim according to which Nietzsche's narrative strategies are pedagogically motivated and provide us with an ethics of reading that partake in a narrative of emancipation.

Chapter 5. Nietzsche's Ethics of Reading and the Movement for Emancipation

Pilatus (…) hat das neue Testament mit dem einzigen Wort bereichert,
das Werth hat, - das seine Kritik, seine *Vernichtung* selbst ist:
"was ist Wahrheit!"…[482]

The previous chapters have revolved around fall narratives and Nietzsche's parody of Genesis in the chapter "Der Genesende" of *Also sprach Zarathustra*. This last

[481] Richard Schacht, "A Nietzschean Education : Zarathustra / *Zarathustra* as Educator," *Philosophers on Education. Historical Perspectives*, Ed. A. O. Rorty (London, N.Y. : Routledge, 1998) 323.

[482] Nietzsche, "Der Antichrist," 225.

chapter will end with readings of *Ecce Homo*. In *Also sprach Zarathustra*, Nietzsche parodies the myth of the fall, which stands at one end of the Christian eschatological narrative, in order to undermine its moral and philological implications. In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche further undermines this narrative by proposing a definition of health which overcomes the teleological postulates and destructive dualisms of the religious and philosophical (fall) narratives investigated earlier in this study. He also undermines the authoritative if not authoritarian form of the Christian narrative (and of philosophical narratives which betray this as well) by rehabilitating Pilate, as it were, this character from the New Testament - the other end of the Christian eschatological narrative – whom Nietzsche can recuperate for his ethics of reading and narrative of emancipation.

In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche reiterates the relationship between health and agonistics.[483] Nietzsche's discussion of health in *Ecce Homo* opposes teleology and dualism by reinstating the body and immanence. Nietzsche addresses issues which have been ignored or neglected in religious and philosophical writings, such as nutrition, for instance. Nutrition, for Nietzsche, has important philosophical implications – a fact which philosophers rarely, if at all, recognize. In *Ecce Homo*, body and mind are portrayed as a whole, the health of the body being depicted as a prerequisite to a healthy mind. Bad digestion, for instance, is held responsible for the *heaviness* of German philosophy.[484] In his text *Der Fall Wagner*, Nietzsche writes: "Das Gute ist leicht, alles Göttliche läuft auf zarten Füssen."[485] The body must be light in order to afford the mind a healthy freedom

[483] Let me quote again Nietzsche's definition of *die grosse Gesundheit*, as he defines it in *Ecce Homo*: this greater health is "eine solche, welche man nicht nur hat, sondern auch beständig noch erwirbt und erwerben muss, weil man sie immer wieder preisgiebt, preisgeben muss…" Nietzsche, "Ecce Homo," 338.

[484] Ibid., 280.

[485] Nietzsche, "Der Fall Wagner," 13.

of movement – a freedom of movement which is inextricably linked, in Nietzsche, to notions of suspicion, contest, and performance.

This chapter will start with readings of the early texts *Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten*, *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, *Ueber Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinne*, and *Homers Wettkampf*. In his study *Nietzsche and the Question of Interpretation*, Alan D. Schrift challenges the notion that Nietzsche's work can be strictly divided into phases - a scholarly phase corresponding to the early texts and a philosophical turn in the later ones, for instance: Nietzsche's views on language, for example, as expressed in early texts, "inform many of his later positions, insofar as several of Nietzsche's criticisms of the traditional problems of metaphysics and epistemology appear as consequences of some of his earliest insights into the nature of language and metaphor."[486] In an article on Nietzsche and the contest, Schrift also writes that, from beginning to end, Nietzsche "continued to appeal to the idea that competition and contestation – the *agon* – is necessary for the continued well-being of the individual and the community."[487] I will show how Nietzsche's thoughts on education, language, and agonistics inform his later text *Ecce Homo*, the undefinable genre of which (is it a philosophical text? an autobiography?) epitomizes Nietzsche's attitude with regard to the reader, who can no longer count on the author to provide him with ready-made answers and is thus called upon to partake in the creation of meaning.

---

[486] Schrift, *Nietzsche and the Question of Interpretation*, 123.

[487] Alan D. Schrift, "Nietzsche's Contest. Nietzsche and the Culture Wars," *Why Nietzsche Still? Reflections on Drama, Culture, and Politics*, Ed. A. D. Schrift (Berkeley, LA, London: University of California Press, 2000) 197.

Nietzsche's utterances on the subject of reading and writing abound in his work and enable us to reconstruct a Nietzschean ethics of reading. An analysis of these utterances brings to light Nietzsche's nuanced appraisal of his field of study: his ethics of reading could be said to reveal the uses and abuses of philology. On the one hand, he praises and promotes the rigorous approach of his field; on the other hand, he warns the reader against books, that is, sometimes against specific books, such as the Bible,[488] and at times against reading in general.[489] Nietzsche's warnings mostly pertain to certain ways of reading. In the preface to his polemic *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, Nietzsche famously suggests that his readers ruminate when reading his words.[490] The art of reading slowly is closely related to a certain suspicion of texts which prevails in Nietzsche's work. Nietzsche repeatedly pauses and ponders on his role as a writer, on the function of language and its shortcomings, and on what he expects from a reader. Nietzsche does not formulate an ethics of reading per se. He does not present the reader with a systematic reading theory consisting of well-defined principles and rules. Nietzsche does not write for readers who expect philosophers to expose their thoughts systematically, he does not write for "Tabellenfreunde."[491] As such, Nietzsche's ethics of reading must be (re)constructed by the attentive and critical reader by means of a careful examination of his scattered comments on the subject.

---

[488] Nietzsche, "Der Antichrist," 223.

[489] Young scholars, he claims, lose all ability to think for themselves when they read too much. See Nietzsche, "Ecce Homo," 292.

[490] Nietzsche, "Zur Genealogie der Moral," 256.

[491] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten," *KSA 1*, Eds. G. Colli, and M. Montinari (München: DTV, 1999) 648.

This chapter will thus provide an overview of Nietzsche's thoughts on reading and writing, by means of readings of texts and passages in which he tackles the issues of education, language, agonistics, but also of his own style. In *Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten*, Nietzsche opposes his vision of an emancipated reader to the 'timely' product of the German institutions of higher education of his time. In *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, Nietzsche reiterates his critique of these institutions, opposing to them his own experience of reading Schopenhauer, an emancipatory experience, he writes. Nietzsche's preoccupation with philology and philosophy leads him to question the very nature of language, which, he will claim in *Ueber Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinne*, is a spider's web - a supple but strong construct in which we are all entangled but from which we ought, nonetheless, try to break free. Nietzsche's suspicion of texts can be attributed to his fundamental scepticism regarding language, which, he claims here, is essentially metaphorical. This does not lead him to decry philology and the art of interpretation; it rather leads him to envision a reader who will pause and ponder every word, every punctuation mark, everything that is said and, just as importantly, everything that is left unsaid. At roughly the same time, Nietzsche writes *Homers Wettkampf*, a text in which he praises the agonal education which prevailed in the Hellenic world. As Schrift indicates, there is a remarkable continuity in Nietzsche's thoughts on language and agonistics, which inform and influence his positions on morality and knowledge, for instance. In this chapter, I want to offer readings of the early texts as the issues which Nietzsche discusses in the early texts coalesce in his call for a revaluation of values and a new ethics of reading, both of which define, as I will show, one of his last texts, *Ecce Homo*.

In order to impress upon the reader the urgency to try to break free from the spider's web that threaten his or her freedom of movement, Nietzsche devises a style which engages the reader in a contest for meaning, something which is evident in *Ecce Homo*. Here, Nietzsche constantly creates ruptures, interrupting the otherwise steady flow of a paragraph, catching the reader off guard, insisting on this or that, using italics and exclamation marks ("*Hört mich! Denn ich bin der und der. Verwechselt mich vor Allem nicht!*"[492]), provocative statements (such as the titles of the various chapters – "Warum ich so weise bin," "Warum ich so klug bin," "Warum ich so gute Bücher schreibe," "Warum ich ein Schicksal bin"), witty or arrogant remarks (regarding his text *Also sprach Zarathustra*, he writes "Ich habe mit ihm der Menschheit das grösste Geschenk gemacht, das ihr bisher gemacht worden ist,"[493]), but also by means of questions directed at the reader ("Hat man mich verstanden?"[494]). Nietzsche is no monologuist. The reader is constantly made aware and reminded of his or her own presence – of his or her task and responsibility - as addressee. The reader is never allowed to lose sight of the fact that Nietzsche expects him or her to put up a fight, so to speak. Agonistics ought not be underestimated as pedagogical strategy in Nietzsche's philosophy in general and in his ethics of reading in particular: Nietzsche's style and his incessant undermining of authority, first and foremost his own, opens up a space for his opponent, the reader, to occupy. This style clearly opposes that of religious and philosophical texts, with their prohibitions and imperatives. In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche reinvents the art of writing

---

[492] Nietzsche, "Ecce Homo," 257.

[493] Ibid., 259.

[494] Ibid., 374.

philosophy in order to impress upon the reader the need for a movement for emancipation – from all narratives including Nietzsche's own.

Nietzsche's preoccupation with the act of reading and its significance in the context of his pedagogical enterprise is already evident in his early text *Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten* (1872), which consists of five lectures. The young Basel professor casts here a damning light upon German institutions such as high schools (Gymnasien) and universities. He identifies two drives that are seemingly contradictory but that, however, merge or coalesce in the world of German education, namely: "der Trieb nach möglichster Erweiterung der Bildung" and "der Trieb nach Verminderung und Abschwächung derselben."[495] On the one hand, education is no longer the stronghold of a minority: the spreading of democratic ideals in nineteenth century Germany is transforming its educational establishments. On the other hand, the democratization of education leads not only to a lowering of academic standards, according to Nietzsche, but also to a deplorable revaluation of the very function of education and higher learning: "Jede Bildung ist hier verhaßt, die einsam macht, die über Geld und Erwerb hinaus Ziele steckt, die viel Zeit verbraucht."[496] The goal of these institutions seems to be, he writes, "möglichst 'courante' Menschen zu bilden, in der Art dessen, was man an einer Münze 'courant' nennt."[497] These institutions prepare their students for the world, that is, not for the world as it could or should be, but rather for the world as it is: "Dem Menschen wird nur so viel Kultur gestattet als im Interesse des Erwerbs ist, aber so viel wird auch von

[495] Nietzsche, "Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten," 647.

[496] Ibid., 668.

[497] Ibid., 667.

ihm gefordert."[498] It is quite clear, according to Nietzsche, why the education system is controlled by the state and why the state offers such an education in its institutions: in order to instill in students values that not only do not threaten the state, but that actually reinforce its hold on them.[499] Nietzsche thus envisions a time when it might become necessary to radically reform institutions of education, or even abolish them altogether,[500] in order to offer a completely different kind of education, namely one that would turn human beings into what he defines as truly practical human beings, "welche gute und neue Einfälle haben und welche wissen, daß die rechte Genialität und die rechte Praxis sich nothwendig im gleichen Individuum begegnen müssen."[501]

Against the backdrop of Nietzsche's critique of German institutions of education, it is interesting to analyze his preface to these lectures, a preface titled "Vorrede, zu lesen vor den Vorträgen, obwohl sie sich eigentlich nicht auf sie bezieht:" contrary to the author's suggestion, this preface has much to do with his subsequent critique of the German world of education. In this preface, Nietzsche outlines what he expects from his reader. This reader has not been corrupted by current educational tenets. He does not expect information to be fed to him, he does not want to learn by heart but is rather eager to reflect critically and creatively upon what he reads. Already in his introduction, he writes that his listeners (as these texts were firstly presented as lectures) will only understand him "wenn sie nämlich sofort errathen, was nur angedeutet werden konnte, ergänzen, was verschwiegen werden mußte, wenn sie überhaupt nur erinnert zu werden,

---

[498] Ibid., 668.

[499] Ibid., 710.

[500] Ibid., 649.

[501] Ibid., 673.

nicht belehrt zu werden brauchen."[502] The responsibility of Nietzsche's addressee is quite obvious here: Nietzsche's utterances are fragmentary, he leaves gaps, purposefully, as it were, challenging the reader to meet him half way, to do half the work - a strategy which, one must admit, leaves itself open to (or even invites) misunderstandings and misinterpretations. Reading Nietzsche can thus be a disconcerting experience, but it can be highly educational as well, as it leads the reader to reflexion and creativity – whereby it becomes obvious in this last quote that Nietzsche addresses a reader who is already prone to reflexion and creativity to begin with.

In the preface to his lectures, Nietzsche then goes on to describe his ideal reader as an untimely type: "Der Leser, von dem ich etwas erwarte, muß drei Eigenschaften haben: er muß ruhig sein und ohne Hast lesen, er muß nicht immer sich selbst und seine 'Bildung' dazwischen bringen, er darf endlich nicht, am Schlusse, etwa als Resultat, Tabellen erwarten."[503] This ideal reader can thus be said to be untimely in more than one sense: he goes against the grain of his times by making a different use of his time, as Nietzsche indicates: "Für die ruhigen Leser ist das Buch bestimmt, für Menschen, welche noch nicht in die schwindelnde Hast unseres rollenden Zeitalters hineingerissen sind."[504] The fast pace of timely men forces them to rely on tables and charts in order to acquire knowledge. Nietzsche's whole pedagogical endeavour opposes the very kind of knowledge that nicely fits into tables and charts. The new reader is someone who will bravely crave the freedom of thought and action that can only arise from that which

[502] Ibid., 644.

[503] Ibid., 648.

[504] Ibid., 649.

resists tables and charts: "Ein solcher Mensch hat noch nicht verlernt zu denken, während er liest, er versteht noch das Geheimniß zwischen den Zeilen zu lesen, ja er ist so verschwenderisch geartet, daß er gar noch über das Gelesene nachdenkt, vielleicht lange nachdem er das Buch aus den Händen gelegt hat."[505] Although he claims that his preface has nothing to do with his subsequent lectures, Nietzsche clearly opposes his new reader to the 'timely' product of the German education system, and, for that matter, he ends his description of the new reader in the following way: "Wir wünschen vielmehr, er möge gebildet genug sein, um von seiner Bildung recht gering, ja verächtlich zu denken."[506]

In his text *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, written two years after his lectures on education, Nietzsche reiterates his critique of institutions of higher learning and of the scholars who are responsible for educating the students attending these institutions; to these scholars and their methods, Nietzsche opposes Schopenhauer – or rather: his Schopenhauer *construct*. Nietzsche's portrayal of his Schopenhauer experience exemplifies his thoughts on reading and writing, acts which should aim at liberating the reader by revealing him to himself. Nietzsche starts by accusing humankind of laziness: it is out of laziness that people do not break their chains, the chains "der Meinungen und der Furcht."[507] It is obviously not institutional scholars who will encourage them to break these chains, but rather the true educators, as Nietzsche explains to his reader: "Deine wahren Erzieher und Bildner verrathen dir, was der wahre Ursinn und Grundstoff deines Wesens ist, etwas durchaus Unerziehbares und Unbildbares, aber jedenfalls schwer

[505] Ibid., 649.

[506] Ibid., 650.

[507] Nietzsche, "Schopenhauer als Erzieher," 338.

Zugängliches, Gebundenes, Gelähmtes: deine Erzieher vermögen nichts zu sein als deine Befreier."[508] This is, Nietzsche claims, what he experienced when he first read Schopenhauer: "Ich verstand ihn als ob er für mich geschrieben hätte."[509] This reminds one of Nietzsche's above-mentioned depiction of listeners, who "nur erinnert zu werden, nicht belehrt zu werden brauchen."[510] Nietzsche was receptive, when he first encountered Schopenhauer's philosophy, because he had already entertained similar thoughts. As he later writes in *Ecce Homo*: "Zuletzt kann Niemand aus den Dingen, die Bücher eingerechnet, mehr heraushören, als er bereits weiss."[511] This might explain why one learns very little about Schopenhauer in Nietzsche's text: Nietzsche's investigation reveals very much about him, little about Schopenhauer, a fact which he recognizes himself in *Ecce Homo*.[512]

What makes this text all the more enlightening for the present study is not the influence of Schopenhauerian concepts on Nietzsche's philosophy but rather Nietzsche's description and interpretation of Schopenhauer's *style* and *effect* on him. Nietzsche writes, amongst other things, that Schopenhauer is honest. This is one of the few instances in the text where Nietzsche quotes Schopenhauer, indicating that Schopenhauer's utterance on the subject of honesty can very well be applied to his (Schopenhauer's) style: "ein Philosoph muss sehr ehrlich sein, um sich keiner poetischen

---

[508] Ibid., 341.

[509] Ibid., 346.

[510] Nietzsche, "Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten," 644.

[511] Nietzsche, "Ecce Homo," 299.

[512] Ibid., 320. The same also applies to some of his writings on Wagner, as Nietzsche writes in "Ecce Homo," 314, 320.

oder rhetorischen Hülfsmittel zu bedienen."[513] The irony cannot escape the reader here. As Paul de Man writes about Nietzsche: "there hardly is a trick of the oratorical trade which he is not willing to exploit to the full."[514] A condemnation of these devices would be very dishonest on the part of the poet of *Also sprach Zarathustra*. It is thus important to try to define the Nietzschean concept of literary honesty. He claims: "Schopenhauer will nie scheinen." [515] What Nietzsche criticizes is a writer's desire to make a show of his or her brilliance and wit in a purely self-serving way,[516] in a way that does not serve the reader. One is reminded here of Nietzsche's attacks against Wagner's histrionics or *Schauspielerei*.[517] Apart from honesty, Nietzsche also admires Schopenhauer's cheerfulness, or, more precisely, his "erheiternde Heiterkeit."[518] Schopenhauer is cheerful, "weil er das Schwerste durch Denken besiegt hat,"[519] and this is what makes his reader cheerful, namely "den siegenden Gott neben allen den Ungethümen, die er bekämpft hat, zu sehen."[520]

This Schopenhauer construct brings to light the importance, for Nietzsche, of *living* philosophy, as opposed to just writing or reading philosophy. In Schopenhauer, Nietzsche claims to have found the philosopher he had been looking for, "zwar nur als

---

[513] Nietzsche, "Schopenhauer als Erzieher," 348.

[514] Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading. Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1979) 131.

[515] Nietzsche, "Schopenhauer als Erzieher," 346.

[516] Ibid., 347.

[517] It is his main accusation against Richard Wagner in his text *Der Fall Wagner*.

[518] Nietzsche, "Schopenhauer als Erzieher," 348.

[519] Ibid., 350.

[520] Ibid., 348.

Buch: und das war ein grosser Mangel."[521] One finds here a first remark hinting at the limits of the wisdom one can glean from books: "Das Beispiel muss durch das sichtbare Leben und nicht bloss durch Bücher gegeben werden."[522] Nietzsche will later in the text go as far as saying: "Ich ergötze mich an der Vorstellung, dass die Menschen bald einmal das Lesen satt bekommen werden."[523] The shortcomings of texts, when it comes to education, make the state of the German education system, as Nietzsche describes it, all the more deplorable, because it is based on those very texts, the content of which is ingurgitated and regurgitated, and not on exchanges, open discussions and debates with educators. At this point, Nietzsche repeats, word for word, a statement, already quoted above, from his critique of those institutions: "Jede Bildung ist hier verhasst, die einsam macht, die über Geld und Erwerb hinaus Ziele steckt, die viel Zeit verbraucht."[524] One might think that a field such as philosophy would be taught differently than, say, science, but according to Nietzsche, here too, a student is expected to cram information into his or her head thoughtlessly. They do not learn to philosophize, as it were, they rather learn the history of philosophy. This bewilders Nietzsche: "Was geht unsre Jünglinge die Geschichte der Philosophie an? Sollen Sie durch das Wirrsal der Meinungen entmuthigt werden, Meinungen zu haben?" The only question which one ought to ask regarding any philosophy is, according to Nietzsche: "ob man nach ihr leben könne,"[525] a question which is never discussed in universities. Philosophy students, confused by the

---

[521] Ibid., 350.

[522] Ibid., 350.

[523] Ibid., 363.

[524] Ibid., 388.

[525] Ibid., 417.

information they are forced to gulp down, are likely to think, he writes: "Gott sei Dank, dass ich kein Philosoph bin, sondern Christ und Bürger meines Staates!" And Nietzsche adds: "Wie, wenn dieser Stossseufzer eben die Absicht des Staates wäre und die 'Erziehung zur Philosophie' nur eine Abziehung von der Philosophie? Man frage sich."[526]

Nietzsche questions and criticizes his own discipline, that of philology, in a similar fashion. The methods of this field, reading slowly, carefully and closely, can only appeal to a philosopher who is so preoccupied with language, but philologists, he claims, are guilty of an all-too intense and intensive reading activity, as well as of taking themselves and their discipline all-too seriously: they are among the "gebildetsten und eingebildetsten aller Gelehrten,"[527] he writes. There is no doubt that Nietzsche holds philology – and a philological approach to reading - in high regard. He describes philology as "die Kunst, gut zu lesen, verstanden werden, - Thatsachen ablesen können, *ohne* sie durch Interpretation zu fälschen, *ohne* im Verlangen nach Verständniss die Vorsicht, die Geduld, die Feinheit zu verlieren."[528] He claims that "alle Wissenschaft hat dadurch erst Continuität und Stetigkeit gewonnen, dass die Kunst des richtigen Lesens, das heisst die *Philologie*, auf ihre Höhe kam."[529] Philologists, just as scientists and scholars, run the risk, however, of falling prey to these virtues of circumspection and patience, of seeing their task as an end, not a means, which is typical, Nietzsche claims, of (German) scholars, who think more "an die Wissenschaft als an die

---

[526] Ibid., 418.

[527] Nietzsche, "Jenseits von Gut und Böse," 130.

[528] Nietzsche, "Der Antichrist," 233.

[529] Nietzsche, "Menschliches, Allzumenschliches," 223.

Menschlichkeit,"[530] and indeed, Nietzsche portrays them often as beings who have lost touch with humanity or humaneness. As educator, for instance, the philologist "lehrt *ochsen*"[531] – a term which reminds one, of course, of cattle rather than of humans. A famous philologist is said to be endued "mit der ehrwürdigen Sicherheit eines zwischen Büchern ausgetrockneten Wurms."[532] Philologists have the tendency to become obsessed with their work, Nietzsche writes, sometimes handling (the term 'handling' here is probably more accurate than the term 'reading') two hundred books per day: "Das habe ich mit Augen gesehn: begabte, reich und frei angelegte Naturen schon in den dreissiger Jahren 'zu Schande gelesen'." [533]

Nietzsche himself seems to be, according to his self-portrayal, one of those young scholars. In *Ecce Homo*, he goes as far as claiming: "Meine Augen allein machten ein Ende mit aller Bücherwürmerei, auf deutsch: Philologie: ich war vom 'Buch' erlöst, ich las jahrelang Nichts mehr – die *grösste* Wohlthat, die ich mir je erwiesen habe!"[534] He seems to construct a relationship of cause and effect here (even though he is the first one to warn the reader against such constructions[535]): the nearly complete loss of his eyesight is depicted as an eye-opening experience. This experience, according to him, led him to revaluate the value of philology and of reading, and to disavow his decision to study philology, calling it a mistake, an instinctual aberration, wondering why he became a

---

[530] Nietzsche, "Schopenhauer als Erzieher," 344.

[531] Nietzsche, "Götzen-Dämmerung," 129.

[532] Ibid., 158.

[533] Nietzsche, "Ecce Homo," 293.

[534] Ibid., 326.

[535] Nietzsche, "Götzen-Dämmerung," 88.

philologist at all, "warum zum Mindesten nicht Arzt oder sonst Irgend etwas Augen-Aufschliessendes?"[536] Reading, by directing the reader's gaze to the page, blocks everything else from his or her view, making him or her lose sight of what is going on, all around. In this context, Nietzsche's statement from his text *Der Fall Wagner* might take on a new significance: "Womit kennzeichnet sich jede *litterarische* décadence? Damit, dass das Leben nicht mehr im Ganzen wohnt." Literary decadence could thus also be that of the reader blinded by books, the reader who only lives through his eyes, the reader who has become one big eye. Such a reader would be, for Zarathustra, "ein umgekehrter Krüppel (…), der an Allem zu wenig und an Einem zu viel habe."[537]

By enabling him to look at reading from a different perspective, or so he claims, Nietzsche's poor eyesight leads him to define an ethics of reading that is based on a certain suspicion of texts. Nietzsche certainly did not give up reading altogether because of his illness, but his condition seems to have radically transformed his approach to books. Whereas he claims, in *Ecce Homo*, as quoted above, that his condition allowed him to break free from the yoke of the book, he then writes that reading has now become his main recreational activity – a statement which comes quite as a surprise in view of his harsh critique of reading, as previously shown. It is then most certainly his own *attitude* toward reading which has changed. Reading, he writes, is something, "was ich nicht mehr ernst nehme."[538] Whereas the act of reading was interpreted as a sign of decadence, it is now the curative properties of reading which now come to the fore: "Lesen erholt mich

[536] Nietzsche, "Ecce Homo," 283.

[537] Nietzsche, "Also sprach Zarathustra," 178.

[538] Nietzsche, "Ecce Homo," 284.

eben von *meinem* Ernste."[539] It is thus clearly a certain usage of books which Nietzsche condemns. He writes as much when he claims that books are absent from his surroundings when he writes and that a reading room makes him feel ill.[540] It is of utmost importance to discriminate when it comes to books. There is a time to read and a time to leave books behind, for instance: "Frühmorgens beim Anbruch des Tags, in aller Frische, in der Morgenröthe seiner Kraft, ein *Buch* lesen – das nenne ich lasterhaft!"[541] As Nietzsche always prides himself on being untimely, his attitude toward new books will not come as a surprise: "Vorsicht, selbst Feindseligkeit gegen neue Bücher gehört eher schon zu meinem Instinkte."[542]

To discriminate is also to have a discerning eye when dealing with a text, as reading is much more than deciphering letters on a page. This fact, Nietzsche claims, seems to elude the German reader: "Wie faul, wie widerwillig, wie schlecht liest er! Wie viele Deutsche wissen es und fordern es von sich zu wissen, dass *Kunst* in jedem guten Satze steckt, - Kunst, die errathen sein will, sofern der Satz verstanden sein will!"[543] The fact that the poor reader is described as a reluctant one indicates, once again, that a certain receptiveness on the part of the addressee is a prerequisite to reading well. Receptiveness, however, does not suffice. Nietzsche describes his new reader as *handy*, that is: clever in using his hands, clever in the way in which he or she *grasps* Nietzsche's books: "Man muss sie sich ebenso mit den zartesten Fingern wie mit den tapfersten

---

[539] Ibid., 284.

[540] Ibid., 284.

[541] Ibid., 292.

[542] Ibid., 285.

[543] Nietzsche, "Jenseits von Gut und Böse," 189.

Fäusten erobern."[544] One is reminded here of Nietzsche's foreword to *Götzen-Dämmerung*, in which he explains that his hammer reveals the hollow sound idols make: the hammer in his fist, however, touches these idols as a tuning fork.[545] It is not sufficient to set eyes on a text, one must grasp it and shape it with one own's hands, as it were.

The phrase *mit den tapfersten Fäusten erobern*, in the last quote, conveys once again that Nietzsche likes to think of his writings as an impetus toward dialogue and debate, reiterating again his penchant for the contest as pedagogical strategy. The reader must thus not idolize Nietzsche, he must read him hammer in hand, as Nietzsche reads the old idols in *Götzen-Dämmerung*. Nietzsche's emancipated reader is by no means a disciple: "Wenn ich mir das Bild eines vollkommnen Lesers ausdenke, so wird immer ein Unthier von Muth und Neugierde daraus, ausserdem noch etwas Biegsames, Listiges, Vorsichtiges, ein geborner Abenteurer und Entdecker."[546] It has been said that the reader needs a discerning eye; it is tempting to add that he must also have an evil eye. The term *listig* is not used lightly by Nietzsche, who stems from the Lutheran tradition, and who carefully weighs his words: the connotations are biblical, alluding to the snake, typically seen as the representative of evil in Genesis 3. The snake is "listiger als alle Tiere"[547] and could be said to be the most flexible as well (the snake is indeed *biegsam*). Nietzsche also says of his reader that he must have "den Muth zum Verbotenen."[548] For all his receptiveness and openness, the reader discriminates when he reads, his is a certain

---

[544] Nietzsche, "Ecce Homo," 302.

[545] Nietzsche, "Götzen-Dämmerung," 57f.

[546] Nietzsche, "Ecce Homo," 303.

[547] *Das alte Testament*, 5.

[548] Nietzsche, "Der Antichrist," 167.

"Wille zur Ökonomie grossen Stils: seine Kraft, seine *Begeisterung* beisammen behalten."[549] To use a Nietzschean formulation: the new reader must know, instinctively, as it were, what is good for him, as reading certain books can prove to be detrimental to his overall health: "Es giebt Bücher, welche für Seele und Gesundheit einen umgekehrten Werth haben, je nachdem die niedere Seele, die niedrigere Lebenskraft oder aber die höhere und gewaltigere sich ihrer bedienen: im ersten Falle sind es gefährliche, anbröckelnde, auflösende Bücher, im anderen Heroldsrufe, welche die Tapfersten zu *ihrer* Tapferkeit herausfordern."

In his oeuvre, Nietzsche warns against specific texts, such as the Bible as well as Kant's writings: these texts resort to prohibitions and imperatives, of which the reader must be suspicious. Hutter remarks that Nietzsche's crusade against Christianity leads him to (also) attack the Christian *written* tradition.[550] Indeed, Nietzsche writes in *Der Antichrist*: "Das 'Evangelium' *starb* am Kreuz. Was von diesem Augenblick an 'Evangelium' heisst, war bereits der Gegensatz dessen, was *er* gelebt: eine '*schlimme Botschaft*', ein *Dysangelium*."[551] Nietzsche's critique of the Christian tradition must thus also involve a critique of its written tradition. Just as Nietzsche had to reinvent the art of reading, or, at least, approach it from a different perspective, as previously discussed, he also had to develop a writing style that avoids authoritative and universal statements, such as prohibitions (as in Genesis) or imperatives (as in Kant's work).

---

[549] Ibid., 167.

[550] Hutter, 6.

[551] Nietzsche, "Der Antichrist," 211.

The Christian and Kantian traditions are akin, in Nietzsche's view. He thus, in *Der Antichrist*, alternately refers to Kant, God, and the priest as spiders,[552] as previously mentioned. Schrift indicates that there is a progression from the positive to the negative in Nietzsche's references to spiders, that is from the image of "self-generating creation and predation" to an image of "cunning and capture."[553] In Nietzsche's essay on language, the spider's web of language is admired as a supple, strong, and, most importantly, man-made construct; later on, however, Nietzsche will recognize the threat which the spider's web represents when it is used to rob individual and reader of their freedom of movement. Nietzsche will increasingly mistrust the spider's web complex, systematic structure, as he mistrusts systems, as "der Wille zum System ist ein Mangel an Rechtschaffenheit."[554] To call Kant, the Christian God, and the ascetic priest *spiders* thus implies that their systems are webs of lies. As Christianity is also such a web, the New Testament represents a threat to one's health, and one must keep one's distance from it; Nietzsche thus provokingly writes "dass man gut thut, Handschuhe anzuziehn, wenn man das neue Testament liest."[555] As for Kant, Nietzsche finds him, as author, too loquacious - "aus einem zu grossen Vorrathe von Begriffsformeln."[556] Nietzsche bemoans the fact that the most famous of these formulas, the categorical imperative, which according to

---

[552] Ibid., 178, 184, 210.

[553] Alan D. Schrift, "Arachnophobe or Arachnophile? Nietzsche and His Spiders," *A Nietzschean Bestiary: Becoming Animal Beyond Docile and Brutal*, Eds. C.D. Acampora, and R.R. Acampora (NY: Rownan & Littlefield, 2004) 68.

[554] Nietzsche, "Götzen-Dämmerung," 63.

[555] Nietzsche, "Der Antichrist," 223.

[556] Nietzsche, "Die fröhliche Wissenschaft," 451.

him smells of cruelty,[557] is held in such high regard. He sees this as a sure sign of decadence on the part of the reader: "Dass man den kategorischen Imperativ Kant's nicht als *lebensgefährlich* empfunden hat!"[558] The idea that the reader should *feel* that a *text* is *life-threatening* reveals much about Nietzsche's attitude with regard to reading:[559] the text becomes, for him, an opponent challenging and engaging the reader in a most personal way, and one must thus be suspicious of it, and assert oneself against it.

Nietzsche's pedagogical strategies to educate the reader lead him to also warn the reader against his own work, and as such, there are many instances of self-criticism in Nietzsche's own work; his text "Versuch einer Selbstkritik" is an evident example of such warnings. Written in 1886 as a new foreword to *Die Geburt der Tragödie* (1872), this foreword serves to forewarn the reader with regard to the text he or she is about to read, an early text which, to a certain extent, now embarrassed Nietzsche. It is not only the content which he harshly criticizes in his new foreword (his praise of and belief in Wagner, as well as his *Artistenmetaphysik*, for instance), it is also – one is tempted to say mostly - the style of his early prose. Already in the foreword's first sentence, he speaks of his first book as a *questionable* book (*fragwürdig*)[560] – an interesting choice of word, illustrating to perfection the attitude which Nietzsche is trying to instill in the reader, namely: a prudently sceptical one. The reader ought to call a text into question. This seems to be all the more important here as Nietzsche describes his early opus as a book

---

[557] Nietzsche, "Zur Genealogie der Moral," 300.

[558] Nietzsche, "Der Antichrist," 177.

[559] Nietzsche even claimed that his own words had mortally wounded Wagner, for instance, see Bauer, "Strategies of Identity Construction in Nietzsche's Critique of Wagner," 298.

[560] Nietzsche, "Die Geburt der Tragödie," *KSA 1*, Eds. G. Colli, and M. Montinari (München: DTV, 1999) 11.

that is not easily accessible.[561] What makes it then so difficult? Its form, explains Nietzsche, who calls it "ein unmögliches Buch – ich heisse es schlecht geschrieben, schwerfällig, peinlich, bilderwüthig und bilderwirrig, gefühlsam, hier und da verzuckert bis zum Feminischen, ungleich im Tempo, ohne Willen zur logischen Sauberkeit, sehr überzeugt und deshalb des Beweisens sich überhebend (…)."[562] The book does have a redeeming quality, in spite of the fact that it is "mit jedem Fehler der Jugend behaftet,"[563] namely: a task is already at hand, which Nietzsche will never cease to perform, that is the formulation and promotion of a tragic philosophy.[564] His only regret is that he had not found the proper voice, his own voice, to express it then. He was trying to formulate thoughts that drastically differed from Schopenhauer's and Kant's, however, he expressed those thoughts with "Schopenhauerischen und Kantischen Formeln."[565] He wishes he had rather sung his thoughts, or written them as a poet or, at least, as a philologist.[566] How did he write, then? As a philosopher? After *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, it is thus evident that Nietzsche had to find a radically different way to write philosophy.

At this point, and before (re)turning to Nietzsche's style, it is necessary to discuss his early text *Ueber Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinne*, in which Nietzsche makes the reader aware of a spiderweb in which he or she is entangled: language.

---

[561] Ibid., 11. He qualifies it again of "fragwürdig" on page 19.

[562] Ibid., 14.

[563] Ibid., 13.

[564] Ibid., 19f.

[565] Ibid., 19.

[566] Ibid., 15.

Language is described as a supple construction seemingly made of "Spinnefäden."[567] The whole structure of concepts is referred to as a "Begriffsgespinnst."[568] The act of speaking and that of writing necessarily rely on a plethora of terms which are not "things-in-themselves" (which are not only inconceivable but not even worth conceiving, writes Nietzsche) but rather metaphors for those "things-in-themselves," conventions on which language speakers have agreed in order to communicate with one another.[569] What is truth, then, asks Nietzsche? "Die Wahrheiten sind Illusionen, von denen man vergessen hat, dass sie welche sind, Metaphern, die abgenutzt und sinnlich kraftlos geworden sind, Münzen, die ihr Bild verloren haben und nun als Metall, nicht mehr als Münzen in Betracht kommen."[570] As Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe expresses it in his essay "Le détour (Nietzsche et la rhétorique)," in which he investigates Nietzsche's early lectures and fragments (dating from 1872 to 1875) on language and rhetoric: "Le langage est donc originairement figuré, tropique, c'est-à-dire originairement métaphorique."[571] This metaphorical language is, however, the very tool used in the elaboration of discourses. Nietzsche's critique of language thus reveals the unstable foundations of all discourses, including philosophical and scientific ones.

Nietzsche's critique of language thus leads him to be suspicious of systems and texts, and his subsequent use of rhetoric in his own texts thus serves the following purpose, explains Lacoue-Labarthe: "Nietzsche cherchait à poser au langage de la

---

[567] Nietzsche, "Ueber Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinne," 882.

[568] Ibid., 887.

[569] Ibid., 879.

[570] Ibid., 880f.

[571] Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, "Le détour (Nietzsche et la rhétorique)," *Poétique* 5 (1971) : 64.

philosophie et de la science la question de sa prétention à la vérité, de son désir d'une pure et simple littéralité, de son vouloir-être propre, si l'on veut."[572] The reader must be aware of this web in which he or she is entangled. The reader must nonetheless resist, put up a fight and confront every word of a discourse – not that one could ever break free. There is no (metaphysical) truth to be found, admittedly, which is why Nietzsche disregards the thing-in-itself and focuses on the *effects* (*Wirkungen*) which the *awareness* of the spiderweb has on the reader.[573] When Nietzsche then writes, in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, "man sollte sich doch endlich von der Verführung der Worte losmachen!,"[574] he certainly does not claim that it is possible to break free from language itself, but only that resistance is necessary, that one ought not be language's willing executioner, as it were: one ought to put language on trial.

Nietzsche's study of language and rhetoric transformed his relationship to writing. Lacoue-Labarthe points out that it is after this period that one notices a certain fragmentation in his style.[575] Nietzsche is aware that his own work is entangled in the spiderweb, and, as such, might lull the reader, that is, seduce the reader into blindly believing what it suggests. Nietzsche wants a vigilant reader who keeps the text at a distance. Nietzsche's *pathos of distance* must also be that of the reader. Nietzsche is conscious of the fact that his words might be taken as gospel: "Ach, was seid ihr doch, ihr meine geschriebenen und gemalten Gedanken! (…) Schon habt ihr eure Neuheit

---

[572] Ibid., 53.

[573] Clark has investigated the question of truth in Nietzsche and came to the conclusion that Nietzsche does "reject the existence of metaphysical truth – correspondence to the thing-in-itself – but not truth itself." See Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy* (N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 21.

[574] Nietzsche, "Jenseits von Gut und Böse," 29.

[575] Lacoue-Labarthe, 57.

ausgezogen, und einige von euch sind, ich fürchte es, bereit, zu Wahrheiten zu werden."[576] Nietzsche's style after his study of language and rhetoric can be interpreted as an attempt to avert this danger. He is no Socrates, who dialectically renders his opponents harmless by substantiating his claims analytically, in a way that is, according to Nietzsche, "*absurd-vernünftig*."[577] Nietzsche prefers the style of Greek historian Thucydides, who, at some point in his life, constituted for him a "*Kur* von allem Platonismus."[578] One ought to read Thucydides, whom Nietzsche calls a kindred spirit, as follows: "Man muss ihn Zeile für Zeile umwenden und seine Hintergedanken so deutlich ablesen wie seine Worte: es giebt wenige so hintergedankenreiche Denker."[579] This description fits Nietzsche's own style, a style which suited his pedagogical enterprise, as indicated by one of his aphorisms of *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, titled "*Das Unvollständige als das Wirksame*," in which he insists on the educational benefits of letting a reader complete a thought by thinking it through, a task which would not be possible had the author exhaustively exposed his own views.[580]

As such, the aphorism as genre is to provide readers with a *cure* (just as the style of Thucydides offered Nietzsche a cure from Platonism). Much has been written on the topic of aphorisms in Nietzsche's work, as these epitomize his very style. What is especially relevant to the present study is the relationship, in Nietzsche's writing, between aphorism and health. Danto has reminded us of the relationship, in Greek

---

[576] Nietzsche, "Jenseits von Gut und Böse," 239.

[577] Nietzsche, "Götzen-Dämmerung," 72.

[578] Ibid., 156.

[579] Ibid., 156.

[580] Nietzsche, "Menschliches, Allzumenschliches," 161.

thought, between this genre and medicine. He explores this relationship in an essay on Nietzsche's text *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, explaining that the earliest collection of aphorisms is attributed to Hippocrates: they were maxims regarding health and well-being, maxims which were meant to be learned by heart by interns.[581] As Jill Marsden writes in her recent study on the art of the aphorism in Nietzsche: "It seems significant that the aphoristic style should be developed in Nietzsche's thought at a time when he is exploring the extent to which ideas can transform and redirect the energies of the body."[582] In order *to transform and redirect the energies of the body*, as Marsden puts it, Nietzsche devises a style which is to provide the reader with an impetus toward movement, a style which opposes stasis.

That the aphorism's function is to induce movement in the reader is explained by Zarathustra in the section "Vom Lesen und Schreiben" of *Also sprach Zarathustra*. "Im Gebirge ist der nächste Weg von Gipfel zu Gipfel: aber dazu musst du lange Beine haben. Sprüche sollen Gipfel sein: und Die, zu denen gesprochen wird, Grosse und Hochwüchsige." This partakes in what Gilles Deleuze calls the *déterritorialisation* in Nietzsche's work. Nietzsche's reader is a movable type, as it were, who must move beyond the text. Deleuze describes the Nietzschean aphorism as follows:

> Un aphorisme aussi est encadré. Mais cela devient beau à partir de quel moment ce qu'il y a dans le cadre ? À partir du moment où l'on sent que le mouvement, que la ligne qui est encadrée vient d'ailleurs, qu'elle ne commence pas dans la

---

[581] Arthur C. Danto, "Some Remarks on *The Genealogy of Morals*," *Reading Nietzsche*, Eds. R. C. Solomon, and K. M. Higgins (NY, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) 17.

[582] Jill Marsden, "Nietzsche and the Art of the Aphorism," *A Companion to Nietzsche*, Ed. K. Ansell Pearson (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006) 24.

> limite du cadre. Elle a commencé au-dessus, ou à côté du cadre, et la ligne traverse le cadre. [583]

Both Nietzsche and his reader partake in the drawing of this line; the reader's task is to (re)constitute a "Gedankenkette," as Nietzsche calls it, that is supplement the aphorism with his or her own "Beispiel, Erfahrungen, Geschichten."[584] What is meant by this becomes clear when a reader is confronted to Nietzsche's aphorisms which, at first glance, do not seem to relate to one another. How does one draw a line between the two? As the reader pauses and ponders, reads between the lines, and wanders from one aphorism to the other, he or she (re)constructs the relationship between them. One must remark that there are, of course, many paths leading from one mountain top to the next.

Aphorisms 7 and 8 from the section "Sprüche und Pfeile" of *Götzen-Dämmerung* may serve as examples of seemingly independent aphorisms which, however, reveal a close connection as the reader carefully and slowly moves from one to the other:

> Wie? ist der Mensch nur ein Fehlgriff Gottes? Oder Gott nur ein Fehlgriff des Menschen? –
>
> Aus der Kriegsschule des Lebens. – Was mich nicht umbringt, macht mich stärker.[585]

These aphorisms do not appear to be related, at first glance, however the reader can (re)construct the relationship between the two, in which case the second aphorism can be interpreted as Nietzsche's response to the reader's own response to the first aphorism.

---

[583] Gilles Deleuze, "Pensée nomade," 166.

[584] Friedrich Nietzsche, *KSA 8*, Eds. G. Colli, and M. Montinari (München: DTV, 1999) 361.

[585] Nietzsche, "Götzen-Dämmerung," 60.

What if God were but a mistake of men? This thought could very well frighten the reader, who might then feel vulnerable, who might indeed suddenly become aware of his responsibility in the shaping of his or her own life. When Nietzsche asks these questions, he does expect one to stop reading and ask oneself these questions, the reader must conduct a thought-experiment, at the end of which the dialogue can resume. Nietzsche's second aphorism does not provide an answer to these questions but is rather a statement that recognizes that the thought-experiment that was just performed by the reader (the thought that God may not exist) can either annihilate or exhilarate the reader, whereby the formulation seems to encourage one to see the exhilarating aspect of the thought. As Deleuze writes, the aphorism is framed, but this frame relates to a movement which comes from outside, this frame is "la mise en relation immédiate avec le dehors."[586] The aphorism thus opens up a space for the reader to occupy.

One could argue that this does not only apply to Nietzsche's aphorisms but to his other texts as well. For instance, Nietzsche hints at the fact that *Also sprach Zarathustra* must also be completed by the reader:

> Man muss vor Allem den Ton, der aus diesem Munde kommt, diesen halkyonischen Ton richtig hören, um den Sinn seiner Weisheit nicht erbarmungswürdig Unrecht zu thun. 'Die stillsten Worte sind es, welche den Sturm bringen, Gedanken, die mit Taubenfüssen kommen, lenken die Welt -'[587]

Anyone who has written anything, may it be just an email, knows very well that the tone of a written text is often the cause of much misunderstanding. The reader projects a

---

[586] Deleuze, "Pensée nomade," 166.

[587] Nietzsche, "Ecce Homo," 259.

certain tone onto a text, and when asked about it, will usually say that he or she can *read between the lines*, and indeed, Nietzsche seems to be drawing our attention to this very space when he writes "die stillsten Worte sind es, welche den Sturm bringen." The reader must read between the lines, and (re)construct that which is left unspoken – Nietzsche opens up a space for the reader, a reader who has hitherto been taught to blindly believe in the word, in the author.

Textual indeterminacy in Nietzsche's texts, which can puzzle or frustrate the reader, represents a whole new way of writing philosophy. In her study of Nietzsche's rhetoric, Katrin Kohl writes:

> Während die Philosophie tendenziell davon ausgeht, dass der Text eine stabile Wahrheit vermittelt, verwirklicht sich der rhetorische Text erst performativ im Dialog, wodurch er philosophisch extrem unstabil wird, andererseits jedoch enormes produktives Potential zu entwickeln vermag. Indem Nietzsche dieses Potential mittels der Widersprüchlichkeit seiner Aussagen noch verstärkt, konfrontiert er den Leser immer wieder mit der Leere des philosophischen Wahrheitsbegriffs.[588]

It is all the more enlightening, in this regard, to consider Paul de Man's differentiated interpretation of rhetoric in Nietzsche's work. Rhetorical figures do abound in Nietzsche's work. Nietzsche's critique of language, his interpretation of language as metaphorical, that is, as rhetoric, however, complicates the matter:

---

[588] Katrin Kohl, "Die Rhetorik ist das Wesen der Philosophie Nietzsches (Hans Blumenberg). Klassische Tradition moderner Wirkung." *Ecce Opus. Nietzsche-Revisionen im 20. Jahrhundert*. Eds. R. Görner, and D. Large (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003) 217.

> Nietzsche's final insight may well concern rhetoric itself, the discovery that what is called 'rhetoric' is precisely the gap that becomes apparent in the pedagogical and philosophical history of the term. Considered as persuasion, rhetoric is performative but when considered as a system of tropes, it deconstructs its own performance.[589]

Nietzsche's critique of language thus serves to undermine his own texts, leaving gaps that can only be filled from outside, by the reader. By pointing away from the text, Nietzsche wants to make sure that the reader does not become ensnared in his prose. Textual incompleteness, which is closely related to Nietzsche's critique of language, thus fosters suspicion and scepticism in the reader, who must emancipate himself from texts. Ansell Pearson can thus write that "the overriding aim of Nietzsche's philosophy is to promote autonomy in his readers."[590]

The promotion of autonomy requires, however, a further educational strategy: the contest. Reading Nietzsche ought not be just another leisure activity: it ought to be experienced as an attack or a provocation to which one must respond. In yet another instance where Nietzsche reflects upon his writing in a foreword, this time in his foreword to *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, he writes: "Man hat meine Schriften eine Schule des Verdachts genannt, noch mehr der Verachtung, glücklicherweise auch des Muthes, ja der Verwegenheit."[591] This quote implies that this school of suspicion and contempt is not meant to breed pessimistic fatalists who will criticize their world but in a

---

[589] De Man, 131.

[590] Ansell Pearson, *An Introduction to Nietzsche as Political Thinker*, 21.

[591] Nietzsche, "Menschliches, Allzumenschliches," 13.

resigned way, from a distance: this school is meant to breed readers who might be indeed suspicious and contemptuous, but who will take the world by storm, bravely and boldly - terms that attest to Nietzsche's predilection for martial metaphors.

As previously mentioned, in his early text *Homers Wettkampf*, Nietzsche promotes a healthy agon as pedagogical strategy. Nietzsche investigates here a text by Hesiod in which the poet explains that there are two kinds of envy, each represented by a different goddess, each called Eris. The one Eris, whom Hesiod describes as evil, instills an envy in men that leads them to enmity, to wars of annihilation, whereas the other Eris, the good one, instills an envy which will encourage men "nicht zur That des Vernichtungskampfes, sondern zur That des *Wettkampfes*."[592] Nietzsche explains that the Hellenic world was coined by competitiveness: poets envied each other and wanted to outdo each other; so did philosophers, politicians, singers, carpenters, and beggars. Nietzsche then reminds the reader of the former meaning of the term *ostracism*. The Ephesians once banned a member of their community, justifying this *Ostrakismos*, according to Nietzsche, as follows: "Unter uns soll Niemand der Beste sein; ist Jemand es aber, so sei er anderswo und bei Anderen."[593] Nietzsche explains that the Ephesians thus ensured that the contest would go on: if a contestant is overwhelmingly superior to all others, the contest loses of its relevance. The Hellenic state needed such contests, which, as stimulant, promoted development and excellence amongst its citizens, in order to thrive and flourish. Ostracism was thus a way to eliminate all-too powerful individuals who could, because of their superior qualities and talents, become a threat to the state.

---

[592] Nietzsche, "Homers Wettkampf," 787.

[593] Ibid., 788.

Nietzsche thus explains: "Das ist der Kern der hellenischen Wettkampf-Vorstellung: sie verabscheut die Alleinherrschaft und fürchtet ihre Gefahren, sie begehrt, als *Schutzmittel* gegen das Genie – ein zweites Genie."[594] The contest can thus be said to prevent the dictatorship of an exceptional individual by promoting the education of the many.

It must be underscored, here, that the contest between two opponents is not praised, by Nietzsche, for the potential victory it might bring one or the other: it is praised in itself, as it were, it is the contest as *movement* which Nietzsche praises. In the introduction to their essay collection *Agonistics: Arenas of Creative Contest*, Lungstrum and Sauer insist upon the fact that "it is in the nature of the agon neither to render its participants mute nor to attain the conquering finality of *telos*."[595] As Benjamin Sax indicates in an article published in that essay collection, the world, for Nietzsche, is "the play of oppositions; but it is the play itself and not the opposites that must be thought through."[596] [597] Wolfgang Müller-Lauter has brought to our attention that contradictions in Nietzsche's philosophy ought not be dismissed, that they are rather constitutive of his thought. He claimed, however, that Nietzsche's goal was to synthesize these opposites. By postulating this, he can only conclude that Nietzsche's "philosophy of contradictions

---

[594] Ibid., 789.

[595] Janet Lungstrum and Elizabeth Sauer, "Creative Agonistics: An Introduction," *Agonistics: Arenas of Creative Contest*, Eds. J. Lungstrum, and E. Sauer (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997) 25.

[596] Benjamin C. Sax, "Cultural Agonistics: Nietzsche, the Greeks, Eternal Recurrence," *Agonistics: Arenas of Creative Contest*, Eds. J. Lungstrum, and E. Sauer (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997) 62.

[597] As such, recent Nietzsche scholarship has looked at ways in which Nietzsche's thought can contribute to democratic politics, as Acampora explains: Nietzschean agonistics might prove useful and instructive in a the context of pluralist societies. See Acampora, 163.

leads to insurmontable contradictions in his philosophical thinking."[598] To synthesize opposites - to sublate, neutralize, or annul them – is not what Nietzsche advocates: opposites must be sustained at all costs, as "man ist nur *fruchtbar* um den Preis, an Gegensätzen reich zu sein; man bleibt nur *jung* under der Voraussetzung, dass die Seele nicht sich streckt, nicht nach Frieden begehrt…"[599]

The martial metaphors which abound in Nietzsche's work can thus be interpreted as a way to promote agonal education, a healthy contest. Nietzsche proclaims his admiration for this pedagogical strategy of the Ancients: "Jede Begabung muß sich kämpfend entfalten, so gebietet die hellenische Volkspädagogik: während die neueren Erzieher vor Nichts eine so große Scheu haben als vor der Entfesselung des sogenannten Ehrgeizes."[600] These modern educators, who dread the unbridling of envy in their pupils, stem from a tradition, the Christian tradition, in which envy is a deadly sin. Hellenic educators, in contrast, redeem envy, as it were, by stimulating it for what Nietzsche might call noble purposes, that is: for educational purposes. Pupils who are envious of their gifted peers feel challenged by these and work all the harder, hoping to surpass them, thus developing their own skills and talents. It is this kind of agonal education which Nietzsche praises, observing that, were one to remove the contest from the Hellenic world, one would be left with the abyss "einer grauenhaften Wildheit des Hasses und der Vernichtungslust,"[601] as envy would then be channelled into wars of annihilation. In

---

[598] Wolfgang Müller-Lauter, *Nietzsche. His Philosophy of Contradictions and the Contradictions of His Philosophy*, Tr. D. J. Parent (Urbana & Chicago : University of Illinois Press, 1999) 5.

[599] Nietzsche, "Götzen-Dämmerung," 84.

[600] Nietzsche, "Homers Wettkampf," 789.

[601] Ibid., 791.

Nietzsche's ethics of reading, this agonal education is also that of the reader, who is to educate himself *through* but also *against* texts, who is taught to be suspicious of them and to question and challenge whatever it is that a text is asserting. It is quite telling that Nietzsche claims, in *Ecce Homo*, that he himself does not read much, as previously mentioned, and that the only journal which he reads is called *Journal des Débats*, a title which captures the idea of agonal writing and reading.

The investigation of the agon as pedagogical strategy yields interesting results when one deals with Nietzsche's so-called autobiographical text *Ecce Homo*, but before going deeper into this text, it is necessary to discuss the question of the genre, which enables Nietzsche to challenge the reader by playing with the reader's expectations. In her exploration of the autobiographical genre, Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf notes that discussions as to the criteria according to which a text can be deemed to be autobiographical or not confront one with the "Relativität und den heuristischen Charakter von Gattungsbestimmungen."[602] Goethe, of course, famously blurred the line between autobiography and fiction in his text *Dichtung und Wahrheit. Aus meinem Leben*. Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo* then proceeds to blur the line between autobiographical and philosophical writing, an enterprise which will come as no surprise to the reader of *Also sprach Zarathustra*, the genre of which is still up for debate (is it a philosophical text or a novel?).

It is enlightening, when dealing with *Ecce Homo*, to read what Nietzsche has to say on what an author reveals or conceals of himself in his writings; he writes much about this in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* and *Zur Genealogie der Moral*. In the former,

---

[602] Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf, *Autobiographie* (Stuttgart, Weimar : J.B.Metzler, 2005) 7.

Nietzsche observes: "Allmählich hat sich mir herausgestellt, was jede grosse Philosophie bisher war: nämlich das Selbstbekenntnis ihres Urhebers und eine Art ungewollter und unvermerkter mémoires."[603] A philosophical text can thus be said to reveal, however unintentionally, much about its author. Paradoxically, Nietzsche writes, two hundred pages later: "Jede Philosophie verbirgt auch eine Philosophie; jede Meinung ist auch ein Versteck, jedes Wort auch eine Maske."[604] A philosophical text can thus conceal another philosophical layer, while at the same time, revealing its author. As Giorgio Colli indicates, when Nietzsche praises the mask, what he is telling readers is: "Nehmt mich nicht so wörtlich; es kann sein, daß das, was ich denke, das Gegenteil von dem ist, was ich sage."[605] Praising the art of concealment is thus revealing. It makes the reader aware of the fact that the author conceals something, challenging him or her to investigate further, to try to see beyond the words on the page; as such, Murphy calls masks, in Nietzsche, "tests of power, tests of autonomy."[606] In the text *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, Nietzsche denounces the fact that people cannot be truthful, neither with regard to themselves nor to others. He then mentions autobiographical writings by Lord Byron and Schopenhauer, which were apparently burnt because the content of some passages went against the moral values of their contemporaries. This leads Nietzsche to question the autobiographical genre: "Welcher kluge Mann schriebe heute noch ein ehrliches Wort

---

[603] Nietzsche, "Jenseits von Gut und Böse," 19.

[604] Ibid., 234.

[605] Giorgio Colli, Afterword, Friedrich Nietzsche, *KSA 5*, Eds. G. Colli, and M. Montinari (München : DTV, 1999) 420.

[606] Murphy, 66.

über sich?"[607] Regarding books in general, beyond all genres, he asks: "Schreibt man nicht gerade Bücher, um zu verbergen, was man bei sich birgt?"[608] Once again, Nietzsche's insistence on the art of concealment makes the reader aware of the veils, an awareness which drastically transforms the act of reading.

Thus forewarned, the reader can approach *Ecce Homo* in a way that makes the reading experience educational in a Nietzschean sense. The confusion of genres ensures that the reader will not know what to expect: an autobiographical or a philosophical text? This point is moot, as Nietzsche has been at pains to show. It seems as if it were necessary to curtail the reader's expectations when it comes to such categories: the reader who approaches a text without such expectations has lost his or her usual points of reference and could be thus said to be made vulnerable, a feeling that leads one to be all the more prudent, critical, suspicious. In a way, this confusion of genres enables Nietzsche to turn the tables on the reader, as if he were saying: "You will never really know what I am revealing or concealing here… so, ask yourself: what is this text all about, then?" *Ecce Homo*, this so-called autobiographical text, engages the reader in a very personal way, and as such, it is revealing that its subtitle is not "wie Nietzsche wurde, was er war" but rather "wie man wird, was man ist," indicating that this text is not (just) about Nietzsche, that it is about the reader (as well).

The deliciously ironic titles of the chapters of *Ecce Homo* are good examples of Nietzsche's use of the agon as pedagogical strategy. "Warum ich so weise bin," "Warum ich so klug bin," "Warum ich so gute Bücher schreibe," "Warum ich ein Schicksal bin:" how is one to react to such statements? They are as disconcerting as they are amusing.

---

[607] Nietzsche, "Zur Genealogie der Moral," 386.

[608] Nietzsche, "Jenseits von Gut und Böse," 234.

Could anybody take them seriously? They seem to have been written *in order* to be rebuked. Nietzsche's reader is certainly not expected to take these self-aggrandizing formulations at face value, especially not after having read Nietzsche's foreword, in which he writes: "Das Missverhältniss aber zwischen der Grösse meiner Aufgabe und der *Kleinheit* meiner Zeitgenossen ist darin zum Ausdruck gekommen, dass man mich weder gehört, noch auch nur gesehn hat." [609] In spite of being wise and clever, in spite of writing such good books, as he claims, nobody takes any notice of him, as he admits in the very first lines of his text. In view of this, the titles suddenly appear to be much more self-deprecating than self-aggrandizing. The inattentive reader can be oblivious to the irony behind the pose, but this irony is evident when one reads carefully. As previously quoted, Nietzsche speaks of the greatness of his task in the first few lines of *Ecce Homo*. He then explains: "Ich kenne keine andre Art, mit grossen Aufgaben zu verkehren als das *Spiel*: dies ist, als Anzeichen der Grösse, eine wesentliche Voraussetzung."[610] When Nietzsche uses irony or self-deprecating humour, he plays with his reader, but, as discussed in a previous paragraph (on Schopenhauer's honesty), Nietzsche does not approve of a writer's use of wit only for self-serving purposes. The amusing formulations of the titles thus very likely serve a different purpose. The titles all start with the word *warum* but are not formulated as questions. They are, however, certainly meant as questions to the reader: Am I really so wise, do you think? So clever? What is wisdom? Is cleverness different from wisdom? Are my books that good? What does good mean? What makes them good? Good *for what*? Do you really think that I am a destiny? I, the

[609] Nietzsche, "Ecce Homo," 257.

[610] Ibid., 297.

ignored philosopher – a destiny? I, the *Hanswurst*[611] - a destiny? In what sense? For whom? The contradictions arising from certain statements, on the one hand, and the titles of the chapters, on the other hand, are hints for the reader to carefully ponder these titles, instead of simply dismissing them as unworthy of further discussions.

Two further chapters were conceived but not added to *Ecce Homo*; they were aptly titled: "Kriegserklärung," and "Der Hammer redet." *Kriegserklärung* is a term which Nietzsche uses in the foreword to *Götzen-Dämmerung*, as he declares war against idols. "Der Hammer redet" is the title of the last page of *Götzen-Dämmerung* (a passage which is also one of Zarathustra's tables), where Nietzsche invites readers to proceed to the same kind of questioning, ending with the words: "*werdet hart!*" Nietzsche thus certainly invites his readers to make war on him as they would on other idols, for instance on Socrates (or Socratism) and Christ (or Christianity). Nietzsche's truth is to be tirelessly questioned by the reader.

In spite of all this posing, Nietzsche claims at the beginning of the chapter "Warum ich ein Schicksal bin," that he speaks the truth[612] – yet another statement which one must ponder carefully. Is one to believe this statement, from a writer who has coined the aphorism: "'Alle Wahrheit ist einfach.' – Ist das nicht zwiefach eine Lüge?"[613] The foreword to *Ecce Homo* ends with a long quote from *Also sprach Zarathustra* which reveals that Nietzsche does not want to be believed, even when he claims to be speaking the truth (a truth which is only *his* truth). Parts of the quote thus read: "Ihr hattet euch

---

[611] See the first few lines of "Warum ich ein Schicksal bin" in Nietzsche, "Ecce Homo," 365.

[612] Ibid., 365.

[613] Nietzsche, "Götzen-Dämmerung," 59.

noch nicht gesucht: da fandet ihr mich. So thun alle Gläubigen; darum ist es so wenig mit allem Glauben."[614]

As one reads the rest of this quote, one realizes that it is yet another parody, by Nietzsche, of a passage from the scriptures, a parody which reveals, once again, the extent to which Nietzsche's ethics of reading opposes the ethics of reading which biblical scriptures imply. The quote ends with the words: "Nun heisse ich euch, mich verlieren und euch finden; und erst, *wenn ihr mich Alle verleugnet habt*, will ich euch wiederkehren…"[615] Such a formulation may remind one of Christ's speech to his disciples, but Christ, as opposed to Nietzsche/Zarathustra, does not praise denial, he rather warns against it, according to Matthew: "Wer mich aber verleugnet vor den Menschen, den will ich auch verleugnen vor meinem himmlischen Vater."[616] For the writers of the New Testament, it is faith which must be praised. Nietzsche, upon discussing *Also sprach Zarathustra* in *Ecce Homo*, insists upon the fact that his text is not that of a preacher: "hier wird nicht *Glauben* verlangt."[617] This statement according to which Nietzsche/Zarathustra will return to us after we deny him points to the inherent paradox of Nietzsche's philosophy: in order to be truly Nietzschean, one must deny Nietzsche.

To impress upon the reader the need to contest (textual) assertions, Nietzsche, in *Ecce Homo*, repeatedly uses terms that evoke the agon or even warfare to describe his own philosophical undertakings. Tellingly, Nietzsche calls what he does a "Wanderung

---

[614] Nietzsche, "Ecce Homo," 261.

[615] Ibid., 261. See also Nietzsche, "Also sprach Zarathustra," 101.

[616] *Das neue Testament*, 14.

[617] Nietzsche, "Ecce Homo," 260.

im *Verbotenen*,"[618] an expression which captures the idea of reflection as movement and transgression. Nietzsche defines philosophy as "das Aufsuchen alles Fremden und Fragwürdigen im Dasein, alles dessen, was durch die Moral bisher in Bann gethan war."[619] The use of the term *fragwürdig*, which Nietzsche used to describe and criticize his early text *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, as previously mentioned, evokes the suspicious attitude which Nietzsche constantly promotes in the reader. To question and challenge that which has been considered a truth is to exert one's freedom of movement in a contest for meaning. Nietzsche also uses several martial terms to reflect upon his own work. Let me give a few self-explanatory examples. His four untimely considerations are described as "durchaus kriegerisch."[620] What the reader finds, in his text *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, "ist der Krieg, aber der Krieg ohne Pulver und Dampf, ohne kriegerische Attitüden, ohne Pathos und verrenkte Gliedmaassen."[621] About *Morgenröthe*, he states: "Mit diesem Buche beginnt mein Feldzug gegen die *Moral*."[622] The revaluation of values presented in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* is depicted as "der grosse Krieg."[623] Upon discussing *Der Fall Wagner*, he describes himself as "der grosse Artillerist."[624] The list could go on and on: suffice it to say that in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche functions as an agonal educator who constantly reminds the reader to be suspicious of texts, to engage with a text as if reading were a contest. He does so by offering himself as

[618] Ibid., 258.

[619] Ibid., 258.

[620] Ibid., 316.

[621] Ibid., 323.

[622] Ibid., 329.

[623] Ibid., 350.

[624] Ibid., 357.

example, by showing that he constructed his own identity in opposition to texts (such as Platonic, Christian, and Kantian texts, but also texts by Schopenhauer and Wagner, for instance).

To demonstrate this further, Nietzsche presents what he calls his "Kriegs-Praxis," which he deems to be inspired by gratitude. He explains this *Kriegs-Praxis* as follows:

> Erstens: ich greife nur Sachen an, die siegreich sind (…). Zweitens: ich greife nur Sachen an, wo ich keine Bundesgenossen finden würde (…). Drittens: ich greife nie Personen an (…). Viertens: ich greife nur Dinge an, wo jedwede Personen-Differenz ausgeschlossen ist, wo jeder Hintergrund schlimmer Erfahrungen fehlt.[625]

I do not wish to interpret these four principles in great detail; whether Nietzsche actually held by these principles or not is also a moot point. What interests me here is Nietzsche's interpretation of this agonal practice. He writes:

> Angreifen ist bei mir ein Beweis des Wohlwollens, unter Umständen der Dankbarkeit. Ich ehre, ich zeichne aus damit, dass ich meinen Namen mit dem einer Sache, einer Person verbinde: für oder wider – das gilt mir darin gleich.[626]

This reminds the reader of what Nietzsche wrote in his text *Der Fall Wagner*, in which he harshly criticizes the musician and former friend: "diese Schrift ist, man hört es, von der Dankbarkeit inspirirt…"[627] One must be thankful to one's opponents, to one's worthy opponents, as one can only construct one's identity in contest with them.

---

[625] Ibid., 274-75.

[626] Ibid., 275.

[627] Nietzsche, "Der Fall Wagner," 53.

Nietzsche ends *Ecce Homo* as he started it, that is: by referring to *Also sprach Zarathustra*: "Ich habe eben kein Wort gesagt, das ich nicht schon vor fünf Jahren durch den Mund Zarathustras gesagt hätte."[628] Nietzsche's critique of the Platonic, Christian, and Kantian devaluation of the worldly for the sake of the otherworldly, a critique found in *Also sprach Zarathustra*, as previously shown, leads him, in *Ecce Homo*, to reinstate the body and immanence as worthy subjects of inquiry for philosophy. As such, he gives advice regarding nutrition, for instance, showing the relationship between the health of the body and that of the mind: the movement for emancipation will be prevented if one does not think of the body as a whole and if one does not respect the body's needs in the here and now. On the level of form, *Ecce Homo* is a challenge to the reader who will not find in it the comforting forms of the religious and philosophical narratives which have shaped the Western world. Instead, the reader will be confronted to an undefinable genre, will not be offered prohibitions and imperatives, but will rather be constantly addressed and provoked by Nietzsche, and will be oft reminded to doubt textual assertions, especially the very assertions he or she is in the process of reading. The early texts by Nietzsche which were discussed above, on education, language, and agonistics, help us further define this reader, who will be an untimely, slow reader, who will be aware of his or her own entanglement in the spiderweb of language, but who will realize the need to put up a fight and to exert whatever freedom of movement is afforded by the web. From his early texts to *Also sprach Zarathustra* and on to *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche devises a narrative of emancipation which implies a revaluation of values and a new ethics of reading, and which offers the individual and reader a view of emancipation based on agonistics.

---

[628] Nietzsche, "Ecce Homo," 373.

To conclude this chapter, I would like to propose an interpretation of the title *Ecce Homo*. It is a statement by which Nietzsche yet again warns the reader against himself. It is, of course, a biblical reference, but tellingly, these are words spoken neither by the believers in Christ nor by the Jews who asked for him to be crucified. They are the words of Pontius Pilate, of whom Nietzsche writes in *Der Antichrist* that he "hat das neue Testament mit dem einzigen Wort bereichert, *das Werth hat*, - das seine Kritik, seine *Vernichtung* selbst ist: 'was ist Wahrheit!'…"[629] It is thus quite fitting that Nietzsche, who relentlessly attacks in his work not only Christians but believers of all faiths, would title his so-called autobiographical text *Ecce Homo*, thus quoting the one character of the New Testament who is depicted as a sceptic. By quoting Pilate, who coined the phrase *was ist Wahrheit!*, a phrase which subversively undermines the Bible from within, Nietzsche undermines the claims to truth which his own text could suggest. As for the expression *ecce homo*, it is pronounced by Pilate as he presents Christ to the crowd asking for his life. He famously washes his hands of Jesus, leaving the crowd the responsibility to judge and sentence him. By calling a text in which he portrays himself *Ecce Homo*, words uttered by Pilate, Nietzsche thus, firstly, calls the truth of his text into question, and, secondly, indicates that his fate as writer is in the hands of his readers.

Concluding remarks

So erkennt man die wirkliche *Unsterblichkeit*, die es giebt, die der Bewegung.[630]

Postmodern readings of Nietzsche have insisted upon the unreadability of his texts, upon elements in Nietzsche which they could recuperate for their own (deconstructive) approach to texts. Nietzsche's narrative strategies - his rejection of

[629] Nietzsche, "Der Antichrist," 225.

[630] Nietzsche, "Menschliches, Allzumenschliches," 171.

concepts, his use of metaphors, irony, parody, amongst others - function as devices by means of which he can challenge the notion of authority in a way which certainly announces or prefigures the postmodern poetics which were described by Linda Hutcheon, as discussed in the introduction.

What I wished to show, in this dissertation, against postmodern views of Nietzsche, is the pedagogical content and intent of his work. As I wrote in the introduction, in the wake of postmodern thought, the notions of *content* and *intent*, in Nietzsche, have been oft neglected and ignored. Nietzsche, from his early texts on education, language, and agonistics, to *Also sprach Zarathustra*, and on to *Ecce Homo*, gives us vital clues on how to read in general and how to read him in particular. His postmodern poetics combined to his many utterances and councils on the subject of reading led me to (re)construct a Nietzschean ethics of reading which is inextricably linked to Nietzsche's call for a revaluation of values. In the introduction, I wrote that the death of God and that of the author were correlates. These expressions respectively suggest a crisis of authority and a crisis of transmission: *how can one write* – and, in Nietzsche's case, I contend that this means *how can one teach* – if one wants to avoid authority, authoritativeness, authoritarianism? Nietzsche's narrative strategies, his statements about reading, and his exhortations addressed to the reader enable him to undermine his own authority as author. The pedagogical content and intent of his work serves the education of an emancipated reader, that is: a reader who will realize that (meta)narratives induce intellectual stasis, a reader who will understand that freedom and health are all about movement.

It is in that sense, I claim, that Nietzsche proposes a (counter)narrative of emancipation which opposes the Platonic, Christian, and Kantian traditions. As mentioned in the second chapter of this study, the Christian narrative cannot be said to promote the emancipation of individuals here and now; it is a narrative which disempowers individuals in order to assert its authority over them; an investigation of the interpretations of the myth of the fall, by Saint Paul and Saint Augustine, shows that Christian interpreters foreclose possibilities of interpretations, imposing upon the reader their teleological and dualistic views. The Platonic and Kantian texts investigated here do propose, in contrast to Christian scriptures, narratives of emancipation, which Nietzsche, however, opposes, underscoring the paradox of their methods: these narratives, by relying on dialectics and imperatives, rob the pupil and reader of a certain freedom of movement, they impose their own view of the world just as Christian texts and Christian interpreters do, and thus undermine, at least to a certain extent, their emancipatory impulse. Nietzsche responds with texts which, in the first place, oppose these narratives on the level of content. To these linear narratives based on teleological and dualistic postulates, for instance, Nietzsche opposes Zarathustra's teachings of the *Übermensch* and eternal return, the interaction of which suggests the need to emancipate oneself from truths which induce stasis. Whereas *Also sprach Zarathustra* is Nietzsche's counternarrative to the myth of the fall, *Ecce Homo*, with which I chose to end this study, strikes a final blow against religious and philosophical (fall) narratives, as shown in the last chapter of this study. The title *Ecce Homo* is, in the context, enlightening and felicitous: Nietzsche becomes Pilate, who washed his hands of Christ and who uttered the sentence: "Was ist Wahrheit?" Nietzsche who saw his own philosophical undertakings as partaking in a new

Enlightenment,[631] is suggesting that we wash our hands of metaphysics and of (meta)narratives.

Thou shalt not believe (me): Nietzsche's challenge to the reader is both threatening and exhilarating, because it is empowering. In *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, Nietzsche writes, as previously quoted: "deine Erzieher vermögen nichts zu sein als deine Befreier."[632] The content and intent of Nietzsche's philosophy, which is so consistent with its forms, aim at liberating the individual and reader. The movement for emancipation which Nietzsche promotes is also a movement by which one must emancipate oneself from Nietzsche himself. Nietzsche arms the individual and reader with the very weapons which are needed to dispose of Nietzsche himself, for the agon to resume on other, newer grounds. Nietzsche thus ends the preface to his lectures on education with the following statement and question to the reader:

> Seid wenigstens Leser dieses Buchs, um es nachher, durch eure That, zu vernichten und vergessen zu machen! Denkt euch, es sei bestimmt euer Herold zu sein: wenn ihr erst selbst, in eurer eignen Rüstung, auf dem Kampfplatz erscheint, wen möchte es dann noch gelüsten, nach dem Herold, der euch rief, zurückzuschauen?[633]

---

[631] Friedrich Nietzsche, *KSA 11*, Eds. G. Colli, and M. Montinari (München : DTV, 1999) 346.

[632] Nietzsche, "Schopenhauer als Erzieher," 341.

[633] Nietzsche, "Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten," 650.

Bibliography

Primary Literature

Das alte Testament. Transl. Martin Luther. Stuttgart : Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1999.

Das neue Testament. Transl. Martin Luther. Stuttgart : Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1999.

Kluge. Etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache. Berlin/New York : Walter de Gruyter, 2002.

Online Etymology Dictionary, http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?search=transgression&searchmode=none, July 16, 2008.

Benjamin, Walter. «Über den Begriff der Geschichte. » *Illuminationen.* F.a.M. : Suhrkamp, 1977. 251-261.

Heine, Heinrich. *Sämtliche Gedichte in zeitlicher Folge*. Ed. K. Briegleb. F.a.M.: Insel, 1997.

---. *Sämtliche Schriften*. München: Carl Hanser, 1974.

---. *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland*. Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1997.

Kant, Immanuel. *Werke in sechs Bänden*. Ed. W. Weischedel. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1956-1964.

v.Kleist, Heinrich. *Briefe von und an Heinrich von Kleist 1793-1811.* Eds. K. Müller-Salget, and S. Ormanns. F. a. M. : Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1997.

---. *Werke in einem Band*. Ed. H. Sembdner. München : Carl Hanser, 1996.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Kritische Studienausgabe*. München : DTV, 1999.

---. « Thus Spoke Zarathustra. » *The Portable Nietzsche*. Transl. W. Kaufmann. N.Y. : Penguin Books, 1982. 103-439.

---. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Transl. A. Del Caro. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2006.

---. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Transl. G. Parkes. N.Y. : Oxford University Press, 2005.

---. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Transl. R.J. Hollingdale. London : Penguin Books, 2003.

---. *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. Transl. T. Wayne. N.Y. : Algora Publishing, 2003.

Plato. *Complete Works*. Ed. J. M. Cooper. Indianapolis/Cambridge : Hackett, 1997.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. « Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité. » *Du contrat social. Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité.* Paris : Maxi-Livres, 2001. 153-280.

---. *Émile ou de l'éducation.* Paris : Garnier-Flammarion, 1966.

---. "Lettre à M. de Voltaire. 18 août 1756." *Correspondance générale de J.J. Rousseau. Tome Deuxième.* Ed. T. Dufour. Paris: Armand Colin, 1924. 303-324.

Schiller, Friedrich. « Etwas über die erste Menschengesellschaft nach dem Leitfaden der mosaischen Urkunde. » *Sämtliche Werke, 4. Bd., Historische Schriften.* München : Carl Hanser, 1966. 767-783.

---. *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung.* Stuttgart : Philipp Reclam, 2002.

---. « Was heisst und zu welchem Ende studiert man Universalgeschichte? Eine akademische Antrittsrede. » *Sämtliche Werke 4. Bd., Historische Schriften.* München : Carl Hanser, 1966. 749-767.

---. *Wilhelm Tell*. Stuttgart : Ernst Klett, 1997.

Voltaire. *Candide ou l'optimisme*. Paris : Maxi-Livres, 2001.

---. « Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne ou examen de cet axiome : 'Tout est bien'. » *Œuvres complètes de Voltaire, Vol. 9*. Paris : Garnier, 1877. 465-480.

Wagner, Richard. "Siegfried." *Wagner's Ring of the Nibelung : A Companion*. Eds. S. Spencer, and B. Millington. N.Y. : Thames and Hudson, 1993.

Secondary Literature

On Nietzsche

Acampora, Christa Davis. "Nietzsche's Agonal Wisdom." *International Studies in Philosophy*. 35:3 (2003) 163-182.

Alderman, Harold. *Nietzsche's Gift*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1977.

Ansell Pearson, Keith. *An Introduction to Nietzsche as Political Thinker.* Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1994.

---. *How to read Nietzsche*. London : Granta Books, 2005.

Appel, Fredrick. *Nietzsche contra Democracy*. Ithaca, NY : Cornell University Press, 1999.

Bauer, Karin. *Adorno's Nietzschean Narratives. Critiques of Ideology, Readings of Wagner*. Albany, N.Y. : State University of New York, 1999.

---. "Strategies of Identity Construction in Nietzsche's Critique of Wagner." *Seminar* 35:4 (November 1999). 295-307.

Cameron, Frank, and Dombowsky, Don, eds. *Political Writings of Friedrich Nietzsche. An Edited Anthology*. New York : Palgrave MacMillan, 2008.

Clark, Maudemarie. *Nietzsche on Truth and* Philosophy. N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Colli, Giorgio. Afterword. Friedrich Nietzsche. *KSA 5*. Eds. G. Colli, and M. Montinari. München: DTV, 1999. 413-421.

Danto, Arthur C. *Nietzsche as Philosopher*. Expanded Edition. NY: Columbia University Press, 2005.

---. "Some Remarks on *The Genealogy of Morals*." *Reading Nietzsche*. Eds. R. C. Solomon, and K. M. Higgins. NY, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988. 13-28.

Deleuze, Gilles. "Pensée nomade." *Nietzsche aujourd'hui? Tome 1*. Paris: UGE 10/18, 1973. 159-174.

de Man, Paul. *Allegories of Reading. Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust*. New Haven, London : Yale University Press, 1979.

Derrida, Jacques. *Éperons. Les Styles de Nietzsche*. Paris: Flammarion, 1978.

---. "Otobiographie de Nietzsche." *L'Oreille de l'autre*. Eds. C. Lévesque, and C.V. McDonald. Montréal: VLB, 1982. 11-56.

Diethe, Carol. "Nietzsche Emasculated: Postmodern Readings." *Ecce Opus. Nietzsche-Revisionen im 20. Jahrhundert*. Eds. R. Görner, and D. Large. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003. 51-63.

Elden, Stuart. "The Convalescent. Geographies of Health and Illness." *Reading Nietzsche at the Margins*. Eds. S. V. Hicks, and A. Rosenberg. West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 2008. 205-218.

Forber, Patrick. "Nietzsche Was No Darwinian." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* LXXV (2) (2007). 369-382.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg. “Nietzsche der Antipode. Das Drama Zarathustras.” *Gesammelte Werke, Bd. 4*. Tübingen : J.C.B. Mohr, 1987. 448-462.

Gilman, Sander L. *Nietzschean Parody. An Introduction to Reading Nietzsche*. Bonn: Bouvier Verlag Herbert Grundmann, 1976.

Hatab, Lawrence J. “Prospects for a Democratic *Agon* : *Why We Can Still Be Nietzscheans*.” *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 24 (2002). 132-147.

Heidegger, Martin. “Wer ist Nietzsches Zarathustra?” *Vorträge und Aufsätze*. F.a.M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 2000. 101-124.

Higgins, Kathleen Marie. *Nietzsche’s Zarathustra*. Philadelphia : Temple University Press, 1987.

Hutter, Horst. *Shaping the Future. Nietzsche’s New Regime of the Soul and Its Ascetic Practices.* Lanham, MD : Lexington, 2006.

Kaufmann, Walter. *Nietzsche. Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*. Princeton : Princeton University Press, 1974.

Kofman, Sarah. *Nietzsche et la métaphore*. Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1983.

Kohl, Katrin. “Die Rhetorik ist das Wesen der Philosophie Nietzsches (Hans Blumenberg). Klassische Tradition moderner Wirkung. » *Ecce Opus. Nietzsche-Revisionen im 20. Jahrhundert*. Eds. R. Görner, and D. Large. Göttingen : Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003. 205-225.

Lacoue-Labarthe, Philippe. « Le détour (Nietzsche et la rhétorique). » *Poétique* 5 (1971) : 53-76.

Lampert, Laurence. *Nietzsche’s Teaching. An Interpretation of Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. New Haven, London : Yale University Press, 1986.

Liessmann, Konrad Paul. *Philosophie des verbotenen Wissens. Friedrich Nietzsche und die schwarzen Seiten des Denkens*. Wien: Paul Zsolnay, 2000.

Magnus, Bernd. *Nietzsche’s Existential Imperative*. Bloomington & London: Indiana University Press, 1978.

Marsden, Jill. “Nietzsche and the Art of the Aphorism.” *A Companion to Nietzsche*, Ed. K. Ansell Pearson. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006. 22-37.

Müller-Lauter, Wolfgang. *Nietzsche. His Philosophy of Contradictions and the Contradictions of His Philosophy*. Tr. D. J. Parent. Urbana & Chicago : University of Illinois Press, 1999.

Murphy, Timothy F. *Nietzsche as Educator*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984.

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

Pappas, Nickolas. « The Eternal-Serpentine. » *A Nietzschean Bestiary : Becoming Animal Beyond Docile and Brutal*. Eds. C. D. Acampora, and R. R. Acampora. Oxford : Rowman and Littlefield, 2004. 71-82.

Pettey, John Carson. *Nietzsche's Philosophical and Narrative Styles*. N.Y.: Lang, 1992.

Richardson, John. *Nietzsche's New Darwinism*. NY: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Sax, Benjamin C. "Cultural Agonistics: Nietzsche, the Greeks, Eternal Recurrence." *Agonistics: Arenas of Creative Contest*. Eds. J. Lungstrum, and E. Sauer. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997. 46-69.

Schacht, Richard. « A Nietzschean Education : Zarathustra / *Zarathustra* as Educator. » *Philosophers on Education. Historical Perspectives*. Ed. A. O. Rorty. London, N.Y. : Routledge, 1998. 318-332.

Schrift, Alan D. "Arachnophobe or Arachnophile? Nietzsche and His Spiders." *A Nietzschean Bestiary: Becoming Animal Beyond Docile and Brutal*. Eds. C.D. Acampora, and R.R. Acampora. NY: Rownan & Littlefield, 2004. 61-70.

---. *Nietzsche and the Question of Interpretation*. *Between Hermeneutics and Deconstruction*. NY, London : Routledge, 1990.

---. "Nietzsche's Contest. Nietzsche and the Culture Wars." *Why Nietzsche Still? Reflections on Drama, Culture, and Politics*. Ed. A. D. Schrift. Berkeley, LA, London: University of California Press, 2000. 184-201.

Siemens, Herman. "Agonal Configurations in the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*. Identity, Mimesis and the *Übertragung* of Cultures in Nietzsche's Early Thought." *Nietzsche-Studien* 30 (2001). 80-106.

---. "Nietzsche *contra* Liberalism on Freedom." *A Companion to Nietzsche*. Ed. K. Ansell Pearson. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006. 437-454.

Solomon, Robert C. "Nietzsche's Fatalism." *A Companion to Nietzsche*. Ed. K. Ansell Pearson. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006. 419-434.

On Schiller

Borries, Erika, and Ernst Borries. *Die Weimarer Klassik, Goethes Spätwerk. Deutsche Literaturgeschichte Bd. 3.* 4th edition. München : DTV, 2001.

Dann, Otto, Norbert Oellers, and Ernst Osterkamp. Introduction. *Schiller als Historiker*. Eds. O. Dann, N. Oellers, and E. Osterkamp. Stuttgart, Weimar : J. B. Metzler, 1995. 1-3.

Jones, Michael T. « From History to Aesthetics : Schiller's Early Jena Years. » *German Studies Review* 6 (2) 1983 May : 195-213.

Lamport, F. J. « The Silence of Wilhelm Tell. » *Modern Language Review* 76 (4) (Oct. 1981) : 857-868.

Martini, Fritz. *Geschichte im Drama. Drama in der Geschichte.* Stuttgart : Klett-Cotta, 1979.

Schnapp, Friedrich. « Schiller über seinen 'Wilhelm Tell.' Mit unbekannten Dokumenten. » *Deutsche Rundschau.* Jan-March 1926. 101-111.

Völker, Ludwig. « Tell und der Samariter. Zum Verhältnis von Ästhetik und Geschichte in Schillers Drama. » *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 95 (1976) : 185-203.

On Kleist

Böschenstein, Bernhard. « Kleist und Rousseau. » *Kleist-Jahrbuch* 1981/2 : 145-156.

Greiner, Bernhard. *Kleists Dramen und Erzählungen : Experimente zum 'Fall' der Kunst*. Tübingen, Basel : Francke, 2000.

Kittler, Friedrich A. « Ein Erdbeben in Chili und Preußen. » *Positionen der Literaturwissenschaft. 8 Modellanalysen am Beispiel von Kleists « Das Erdbeben in Chili. »* Ed. D. E. Wellbery. München : C. H. Beck, 1985. 24-38.

Oellers, Norbert. « Das Erdbeben in Chili. » *Kleists Erzählungen*. Ed. W. Hinderer. Stuttgart : Philipp Reclam jun., 1998. 85-110.

Schrader, Hans-Jürgen. « Spuren Gottes in den Trümmern der Welt. Zur Bedeutung biblischer Bilder in Kleists 'Erdbeben'. » *Kleist-Jahrbuch* 1991 : 34-52.

Stephens, Anthony. « On Structures in Kleist. » *A Companion to the Works of Heinrich von Kleist*. Ed. B. Fischer. N.Y., Woodbridge : Camden House, 2003. 63-79.

Strelka, Alexandra. « Mystical Marionettes : Kleist's Shift in his Teleological View in Über das Marionettentheater. » *Ein Leben für Dichtung und Freiheit. Festschrift zum 70.*

Geburtstag von Joseph P. Strelka. Ed. K. F. Auckenthaler, H. H. Rudnick, and K. Weissenberger. Tübingen : Stauffenburg, 1997. 37-46.

Streller, Siegfried. « Heinrich von Kleist und Jean-Jacques Rousseau. » *Heinrich von Kleist. Aufsätze und Essays*. Ed. Walter-Müller Seidel. Darmstadt : Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967. 635-671.

On Heine

Butler, E. M. *The Saint-Simonian Religion in Germany. A Study of the Young German Movement*. Cambridge : Cambridge University, 1926.

Kreutzer, Leo. *Heine und der Kommunismus*. Göttingen : Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1970.

Peters, Paul. « Der Fels der Küsse. » *Gedichte von Heinrich Heine. Interpretationen*. Ed. B. Kortländer. Stuttgart : Philipp Reclam, 1995. 86-104.

Reeves, Nigel. *Heinrich Heine. Poetry and Politics*. London : Oxford University Press, 1974.

Sternberger, Dolf. *Heinrich Heine und die Abschaffung der Sünde*. Hamburg, Düsseldorf : Claassen, 1972.

Miscellaneous

Antal, Éva. "The Ethics of Reading – a Postmodern Theory?" *Pedagogy Studies (Pedagogika)* 71 (2004). 12-17.

Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence. A Theory of Poetry*. N.Y. : Oxford University Press, 1973.

Brandt, Reinhard. "Philologisch-philosophische Antithesen." *Kant-Studien* 96 (2) (2005). 235-242.

Cooper, John M. Introduction. *Plato. Complete Works*. Eds. J.M. Cooper, and D.S. Hutchinson. Indianapolis/Cmabridge: Hackett, 1997. vii-xxvi.

Culler, Jonathan. *On Deconstruction. Theory and Criticism after Structuralism*. Ithaca, NY : Cornell University Press, 2007.

Dietzsch, Steffen. *Wider das Schwere. Philosophische Versuche über geistige Fliehkräfte.* Magdeburg : Scriptum-Verlag, 2002.

Dillistone, Frederick W. « The Fall : Christian Truth and Literary Symbol. » *Comparative Literature : Matter and Method*. Ed. A. Owen Aldridge. Urbana, Chicago, London : University of Illinois Press, 1969. 144-157.

Evans, J. M. *Paradise Lost and the Genesis Tradition.* Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1968.

Flahault, François. *Adam et Ève. La Condition humaine*. Paris: Mille et une nuits, 2007.

Frye, Northrop. *The Great Code. The Bible and Literature*. N.Y., London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982.

Guyer, Paul. *Kant.* London, N.Y.: Routledge, 2006.

Hepburn, R. W. « Cosmic Fall. » *Dictionary of the History of Ideas. Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas. Vol. I*. Ed. Philip P. Wiener. N.Y. : Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973. 504-513.

Hutcheon, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism. History, Theory, Fiction*. N.Y., London : Routledge, 1988.

Kessler, Martin, and Karel Deurloo. *A Commentary on Genesis. The Book of Beginnings.* N.Y., Mahwah, N.J. : Paulist Press, 2004.

Kierkegaard, Søren. *The Concept of Anxiety. A Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation on the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin*. Transl. R. Thomte. Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 1980.

Lämmerzahl, Elfriede. *Der Sündenfall in der Philosophie des deutschen Idealismus.* Berlin : Junker und Dünnhaupt, 1934.

Lungstrum, Janet, and Elizabeth Sauer. "Creative Agonistics: An Introduction." *Agonistics: Arenas of Creative Contest*. Eds. J. Lungstrum, and E. Sauer. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997. 1-32.

Lyotard, Jean-François. *La Condition postmoderne. Rapport sur le savoir*. Paris : Les Éditions de Minuit, 1979.

Marquard, Odo. "Felix Culpa? – Bemerkungen zu einem Applikationsschicksal von Genesis 3." *Poetik und Hermeneutik. Text und Applikation. Theologie, Jurisprudenz und Literaturwissenschaft im hermeneutischen Gespräch.* Eds. M. Fuhrmann, H.R. Jauß, W. Pannenberg. München: Wilhelm Fink, 1981. 53-71.

---. *Schwierigkeiten mit der Geschichtsphilosophie*. F.a.M. : Suhrkamp, 1973.

Martin, Andrew. « The Genesis of Ignorance : Nescience and Omniscience in the Garden of Eden. » *Philosophy and Literature* 5 (1981). 3-20.

Mazzeo, Joseph Anthony. « Fallen Man : Forbidden Knowledge, Forgotten Knowledge. » *Notre Dame English Journal* 11 :1 (October 1978) : 47-65.

Miller, J. Hillis. *The Ethics of Reading: Kant, de Man, Eliot, Trollope, James and Benjamin*. N .Y .: Columbia University Press, 1987.

Otten, Terry. *After Innocence : Visions of the Fall in Modern Literature*. Pittsburgh : University of Pittsburgh Press, 1982.

Pagels, Elaine. *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent*. N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1989.

v. Rad, Gerhard. *Das erste Buch Mose. Genesis Kapitel 1-12, 9.* Göttingen : Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1949.

Ricoeur, Paul. "Le 'péché originel,' Étude de signification." *Le Conflit des interprétations. Essais d'herméneutique*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1969. 265-282.

Safranski, Rüdiger. *Das Böse oder das Drama der Freiheit*. 7th edition. F. a. M. : Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2007.

Schmidt, Werner H. *Die Schöpfungsgeschichte*. Neukirchen-Vluyn : Neukirchener Verlag, 1967.

Selbmann, Rolf. *Der deutsche Bildungsroman*. Stuttgart : Metzler, 1984.

Sommer, Andreas Urs. "Felix peccator? Kants geschichtsphilosophische Genesis-Exegese im *Muthmasslichen Anfang der Menschengeschichte* und die Theologie der Aufklärungszeit." *Kant-Studien* 88 (1997). 190-217.

Thomas, Helga. « Beispiele der Wandlung. Adler und Schlange als Natursymbole. » *Antaios* 12 (1970-1) 48-57.

Thulstrup, Niels. "Adam and Original Sin." *Theological Concepts in Kierkegaard*. Eds. N. Thulstrup, and M.M. Thulstrup. Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzels Boghandel, 1980. 122-156.

Tillich, Paul. *Systematische Theologie. Band II.* Transl. R. Albrecht, and G. Stüber. 3rd edition. Stuttgart : Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1958.

Wagner-Egelhaaf, Martina. *Autobiographie.* 2nd edition. Stuttgart, Weimar : J.B. Metzler, 2005.

Wiley, Tatha. *Original Sin. Origins, Developments, Contemporary Meanings*. N.Y./Mahwah, N.J. : Paulist Press, 2002.