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# Love-Hate and War: Perfectionism and Self-Overcoming in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

**Abstract:** This essay investigates the thought of self-overcoming (*Selbst-Überwindung, sich überwinden*) in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and its relation to Nietzsche's Emersonian perfectionism in *Schopenhauer as Educator*. It is a conceptual study focused on key passages on self-overcoming in *Zarathustra* and related problems – most notably how to combine the demand for boundless affirmation with the demand for total critique in Nietzsche's project of critical transvaluation. The main thesis is that Zarathustra's response depends on his addressees: with regard to the mob, the rabble or *Gesindel*, he advocates a limit in negation under the sign of mildness (*Milde*); with regard to others engaged in self-overcoming, he advocates a limited negation in the form of love-hate. Connections with the perfectionism of *Schopenhauer as Educator* are made throughout the essay, which then draws them together in a comparative analysis of self-overcoming in *Zarathustra* and Nietzsche's untimely perfectionism. The essay closes with some methodological reflections on the risks and benefits of its “prismatic” approach, focused on key passages in relation to other works in abstraction from the overall composition and narrative of the book.

**Keywords:** Self-overcoming, Perfectionism, Total critique, Life-affirmation, Rabble

## Introduction

Without question *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883–85) stands alone among Nietzsche's works, anomalous in its style, composition and vocabulary. On the other hand, it contains some of the most powerful and brilliant formulations of thoughts and problems that traverse Nietzsche's work, both before and after *Zarathustra* was written. *Zarathustra* works like a prism at the centre of Nietzsche's work, whose various facets absorb and refract searing lines of thought in all directions. One of those lines concerns the thought of “overcoming” and “self-overcoming” (*Selbst-Überwindung, sich überwinden*), a persistent thought and recurrent expression throughout *Zarathustra*, and what has been called Nietzsche's “perfectionism” by several American scholars – Stanley Cavell, Dan Conway and James Conant – and others.<sup>1</sup> In *Schopenhauer as Educator* (1874),

<sup>1</sup> Stanley Cavell, “Aversive Thinking: Emersonian Representations in Heidegger and Nietzsche,” in *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome: The Constitution of Emersonian Perfectionism*, Chicago 1990, 33–63; James Conant, “Nietzsche's Perfectionism: A Reading of *Schopenhauer as Educator*,” in Richard Schacht

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Nietzsche's untimely or aversive thinking aims at the perfection (not transcendence) of humankind, at the completion (not the reversal) of the transition from natural into human animal. Nietzschean perfectionism is purged of any finality in a predetermined telos of perfection or completion (*Vollendung*), designating instead an open-ended process of self-overreaching or self-overcoming.

We owe it to Cavell to have clearly distinguished the *ethical* perfectionism that Nietzsche draws from Ralph Waldo Emerson in *Schopenhauer as Educator* from the political perfectionism that Rawls misread into the text and dismissed from his democratic theory of justice.<sup>2</sup> As I will try to indicate, Nietzsche's ethical perfectionism in *Schopenhauer as Educator* shares important features with the theme of self-overcoming in *Zarathustra*. But there are also significant differences and discontinuities. For one, the ethical-cultural register of Nietzsche's perfectionism in *Schopenhauer as Educator* gives way in *Zarathustra* to the ontological register of life, in which self-overcoming names the dynamic principle of life as will to power. *Zarathustra* is divided from the programme of cultural reform in *Schopenhauer as Educator*, with its lingering Greco-manian and metaphysics of nature, by the intervening years of "subterranean" labour recorded in the late *Preface to Daybreak* (1881): the critical interrogation of morality, both before the Greeks, in the pre-history of human civilisation designated as "*die Sittlichkeit der Sitte*," and in the intervening period of European, i. e., Christian-Platonic values. And with the critique of life-negating Christian-Platonic values comes an increasing concern with life and the problem of the affirmation of life. By the time of *Zarathustra*, the practice of *unzeitgemäße* critique or "aversive thinking" (Emerson) in the name of cultural reform has been radicalised into the philosophical project of critical transvaluation (*Umwertung*) in the name of life: the total critique of all life-negating regimes and forms of life spawned and cultivated by Christian-Platonic civilisation in the name of life-enhancement and life-affirmation. In *Zarathustra*, self-overcoming is the signature form taken by the demand for life-enhancement.

In this essay, I ask what we can learn from *Zarathustra* about the existential imperative of self-overcoming and its philosophical correlate of critical transvaluation. The essay takes the form of a conceptual study based on a close reading of key passages on self-overcoming and related problems in the book. Connections with Nietzsche's perfectionism in *Schopenhauer as Educator* will be pointed out where they arise, followed by some reflections on the transformation of perfectionism into the thought of self-overcoming in *Zarathustra*. I close by considering some objections to the approach taken to *Zarathustra* in the essay.

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(ed.), *Nietzsche's Postmoralism*, Cambridge 2001, 181–256; Daniel W. Conway, *Nietzsche and the Political*, London 1997; and David Owen, "Nietzsche's Freedom: The Art of Agonic Perfectionism," in Keith Ansell-Pearson (ed.), *Nietzsche and Political Thought*, London 2013, 71–82.

2 John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Oxford 1971, section 50.

## I Of Self-Overcoming, Life-Negation and Life-Affirmation

“Overcoming” and “self-overcoming” (*Selbst-Überwindung, sich (selber) überwinden*) come up time and again in *Zarathustra*, especially in parts one and two, where they also appear as the title of one section. “Self-overcoming” occurs in both prescriptive and descriptive registers, it is axiological and ontological, a demand on us, or a commitment to be made, and a name for the dynamic principle of life. The demand to overcome ourselves is made at the level of the species or concept “human” (*Mensch*) when Zarathustra states: “The human is something that ought to be overcome [*Der Mensch ist Etwas, das überwunden werden soll*]” (Z I, Preface 3).<sup>3</sup> And at the species level, the ontological claim takes the form: every species or kind (*Art*) is in the process of becoming an over-species (*Über-Art*): “Upwards goes our way, from species to over-species [*Aufwärts geht unser Weg, von der Art hinüber zur Über-Art*]” (Z I, Bestowing Virtue 1). Or, as Nietzsche already put it in *Schopenhauer as Educator*:

Actually it is easy to grasp that there where a species or kind reaches its limit and its transition to a higher kind or species, is where the goal of its evolution lies.

Eigentlich ist es leicht zu begreifen, dass dort, wo eine Art an ihre Grenze und an ihren Übergang in eine höhere Art gelangt, das Ziel ihrer Entwicklung liegt. (UM III, SE 6, KSA 1.384)

Nietzsche’s perfectionism in *Schopenhauer as Educator* is often mistaken for an exclusive concern with one or a few other(s), conceived as an exclusive, intrinsic good.<sup>4</sup> Certainly, individuals with exceptional capacities are of exceptional value for Nietzsche, but this does not exclude the intrinsic value of each and every individual as a living “Unicum” or one-off multiplicity, announced in the opening lines of *Schopenhauer as Educator*.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, as the lines quoted above indicate, the metaphysics of nature behind his perfectionism also operates at the generic level of the species or kind (*Art*), the human as such, or humankind, and individuals are valued not just as ends, but also as means: for what they can do to extend the range of human capacities and thereby drive “the transition to a higher species or kind.” If Nietzsche legislates in favour of great individuals, it is on behalf of humankind; for it is rare, exemplary individuals who

<sup>3</sup> Nietzsche translations are mine, although I have drawn extensively on Graham Parkes’ translation of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Oxford 2005) and Roger Hollingdale’s translation of *Schopenhauer as Educator* (Cambridge 1983).

<sup>4</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 328, according to Cavell, “Aversive Thinking,” 49 ff.

<sup>5</sup> “In his heart every man knows quite well that, being unique, he will be in the world only once and that no imaginable chance will for a second time gather together into a unity so strangely variegated an assortment as he is [*Im Grunde weiss jeder Mensch recht wohl, dass er nur einmal, als ein Unicum, auf der Welt ist und dass kein noch so seltsamer Zufall zum zweiten Mal ein so wunderbar buntes Mancherlei zum Einerlei, wie er es ist, zusammenschütteln wird*]” (UM III, SE 1, KSA 1.337).

expand the range of human powers and perfections, re-defining the horizon of human perfectibility.

In *Zarathustra*, “self-overcoming,” like Nietzsche’s perfectionism in *Schopenhauer as Educator* (but without his metaphysics), operates in both ontological and normative registers, at both the level of the species and the individual. And like his perfectionism, self-overcoming can only be engaged as a task, a demand or commitment addressed to us at a radically individual level: self-overcoming is an activity that comes from within each one of us as a living “Unicum,” confronting Zarathustra with his impossible task, that is, to teach others a movement or initiative that can only come from within them. In this sense of activity from within, we can say that self-overcoming presupposes autonomy. At this level the ontological claim is that every form of life is engaged in the process of self-transformation into higher forms, what Zarathustra variously calls *über sich hinausbauen*, *sich hinaufpflanzen* or *einen höheren Leib schaffen*: “And this secret life itself spoke to me: ‘Behold,’ it said, ‘I am that *which must always overcome itself*’ [Und diess Geheimniss redete das Leben selber zu mir: ‘Siehe, sprach es, ich bin das, was sich immer selber überwinden muss’]” (Z II, Self-Overcoming, KSA 4.148). Zarathustra’s demand to overcome the human in favour of the *Übermensch* can therefore be taken to stand for a demand on each of us readers to engage in our own dynamic of self-overcoming.

But why demand of us what we are anyway? What is the sense of a commitment to what we already are? I take the key critical-diagnostic claim of the book to be that as a consequence of Christian-Platonic civilisation we have become estranged or alienated from our being-as-humans, from our human being, a condition which is tracked through the series of deformations elaborated in Zarathustra’s various speeches, especially in the first two parts of the book. The presupposition of the book, indeed the reason it was written, is that the human condition in modernity is one of *Entartung*, deviation from our proper *Art*, which is precisely: to be overcoming ourselves into an *Überart*.

All creatures so far created something beyond themselves; and you want to be the ebb of this great flood and would even rather go back to animals than overcome the human?

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? (Z I, Preface 3)

Tell me, my brothers: what do we regard as bad and worst? Is it not *Degeneration*? – And we always suspect degeneration where the bestowing soul is absent. Upward goes our way, over from species to over-species. But a horror to us is the degenerating sense which speaks: “Everything for me.”

Sagt mir, meine Brüder: was gilt uns als Schlechtes und Schlechtestes? Ist es nicht *Entartung*? – Und auf Entartung rathen wir immer, wo die schenkende Seele fehlt. Aufwärts geht unser Weg, von der Art hinüber zur Über-Art. Aber ein Grauen ist uns der entartende Sinn, welcher spricht: “Alles für mich”. (Z I, Bestowing Virtue 1)

We have become locked in certain fundamental forms (*Grundformen*)<sup>6</sup> of life, certain affective economies bound up with our prevailing values – what Nietzsche decries in *Schopenhauer as Educator* as our conformism to the idols and opinions of the day, our “submissiveness [*Unterthänigkeit*] towards certain ruling persons, castes, opinions, churches, governments,” to “the moment, the opinions and the fashions [*Sklenen der drei M, des Moments, der Meinungen und der Moden*]” (UM III, SE 6, KSA 1.395, 392). Zarathustra’s demand for self-overcoming is therefore a call for us to *recapture* or *re-incorporate* our proper ontological dynamic as humans, from which we have been estranged by the fundamental forms and values of Christian-Platonic civilisation – estranged because their basic characteristic is to negate life.

The demand for self-overcoming is, then, driven by a life-affirmative impulse polemically opposed to the life-negating regimes and life-forms of European culture, a demand to affirm and recapture our ontological dynamic of self-overcoming. But affirmation can never be partial or selective; it must embrace all of existence in what Zarathustra calls “the immense unlimited Yes and Amen-saying [*das ungeheure unbegrenzte Ja- und Amen-sagen*]” (Z III, Sunrise, KSA 4.208), a thought most succinctly put in a later note:

NB. In order to be able to value and love *anything at all*, I must grasp it as absolutely necessarily bound up with everything that is – so for *its sake* I must *approve of all of existence* and be able to to thank chance, in which such precious things are possible.

NB. um irgend Etwas schätzen und lieben zu können, muß ich es begreifen als absolut nothwendig verbunden mit allem, was ist – also um *seinetwillen* muß ich alles Dasein gut heißen und dem Zufalle Dank wissen, in dem so kostbare Dinge möglich sind. (Nachlass 1884, 26[117], KSA 11.180)

At the very end of *Zarathustra*, this line of thought is placed under the sign of pleasure as the thought that “[a]ll pleasure wants the eternity of all things [*Alle Lust will aller Dinge Ewigkeit*]”:

Have you ever said Yes to a single pleasure? Oh my friends, then you also said Yes to *all* woe. All things are enchained, entwined, enamored, – / – if you ever wanted one time two times, if you ever said “you please me, happiness! Whoosh! Moment!” then you wanted *everything* back! / – All anew, all eternal, all enchained, entwined, in love, oh thus you *loved* the world, – / – you eternal ones, love it eternally and for all time: and say to woe also: pass, but come back! *For all pleasure wants – eternity!*

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6 Nachlass 1884, 26[180], KSA 11.197: “Es giebt Grundthaten, auf denen überhaupt die Möglichkeit des Urtheilens und Schließens ruht – Grundformen des Intellekts. Damit aber sind es Wahrheiten, – es könnten Irrthümer sein.” In Nachlass 1885, 40[34], KSA 11.645, Nietzsche writes of “Grundformen” as “die frühesten und längstens einverleibten Formen.”

Saget ihr jemals Ja zu Einer Lust? Oh, meine Freunde, so sagtet ihr Ja auch zu allem Wehe. Alle Dinge sind verkettet, verfädelte, verliebt, – / – wolltet ihr jemals Ein Mal Zwei Mal, sprach ihr jemals “du gefällst mir, Glück! Huch! Augenblick!” so wolltet ihr Alles zurück! / – Alles von neuem, Alles ewig, Alles verkettet, verfädelte, verliebt, oh so liebte ihr die Welt, – / – ihr Ewigen, liebt sie ewig und allezeit: und auch zum Weh sprecht ihr: vergeh, aber komm zurück! Denn alle Lust will – Ewigkeit! (Z IV, Drunken Song 10)

As these lines show, the realisation that the affirmation of life must be unlimited is at the centre of the eternal return with which Zarathustra struggles in parts three and four. But it is at work throughout *Zarathustra*, and the striving for affirmation without limits brings a number of problems with it that bear on the demand for self-overcoming. Most obviously: how can one affirm life, and affirm life boundlessly, if the dominant forms in the purview of western civilisation have been life-negating? As life-negating they must somehow be negated, but if we negate them, we fall short of unlimited affirmation; if, on the other hand, we affirm them, we partake of their negation of life. Furthermore, if life-negating regimes have been as dominant as Nietzsche sometimes says, if life-negation has all but colonised human life itself, from which standpoint can life be affirmed? It can only be a standpoint outside life as it has become, that is, an “after-worldly” life-negating standpoint – to be occupied in the name of life-affirmation? Nor is it clear what resources there are *within the human* that the affirmative project can draw on if life-negation with its debilitating consequences has taken over human life. Perhaps the most acute problem stems from the negativity intrinsic to life’s dynamic of self-overcoming. If life has the character of self-overcoming, and if we understand this as self-transformation, there is necessarily a moment of self-destruction or life-negation in the dynamic of life. To affirm life necessarily includes the affirmation of life-negation / -destruction. Indeed according to *Ecce Homo* (1888), negativity and destruction have a privileged place in the affirmative project: “For a dionysian task belong in a decisive way the hardness of the hammer, the pleasure *even in destroying* as preconditions [Für eine dionysische Aufgabe gehört die Härte des Hammers, die Lust selbst am Vernichten in entscheidender Weise zu den Vorbedingungen]” (EH, Z 8). Or again: “The affirmation of passing *and destroying*, the decisive element in a dionysian philosophy, the yes-saying to opposition and war, *becoming*, with a radical refusal of even the concept ‘being’ [Die Bejahung des Vergehens und Vernichtens, das Entscheidende in einer dionysischen Philosophie, das Jasagen zu Gegensatz und Krieg, das Werden, mit radikaler Ablehnung auch selbst des Begriffs ‘Sein’]” (EH, BT 3).<sup>7</sup> The problem here is how the affirmation of life and life’s negativity, indeed: the *performance* of life’s negativity in the hammer’s “pleasure even in destroying” are to be distinguished from the negativity that rejects life on account of its negativity.

7 For *Vernichten*, see also EH, Books 1, KSA 6.300: Zarathustra as “*Vernichter[] der Moral*”; EH, BT 3; EH, BGE 1; and EH, Fate 1–2, 4 and 8.



These problems become all the more acute if we translate the dynamic of self-overcoming, of (self-)destruction and creation, into the philosophical register of critical transvaluation (*Umwertung*); that is, the project to create new, affirmative values on the basis of the “critique of moral values [*Kritik der moralischen Werthe*]” (GM, Preface 6). Nietzsche’s critique mirrors the demand for unbounded affirmation in its scope: it is the demand for a total critique of values. The critic encounters forms of life bent into various forms of life-negation. In the name of life-affirmation, he is bound to subject them to total critique, but how does his form of critical negation differ from the forms of life-negation he is criticising? If boundless affirmation requires that everything be affirmed as it is and has been, does total critique, as a negation of life-negating forms of life, not risk repeating what it criticises in them: life-negation? So how can the critic offer genuine resistance to life-negating forms of life in the name of life, how can he subject them to critical negation that does not simply repeat what it criticises? Or, as Zarathustra puts the problem in addressing the sky: “And whom did I hate more than passing clouds and everything that taints you? And I hated my own hatred, because it tainted you! [*Und wen hasste ich mehr, als ziehende Wolken und Alles, was dich befleckt? Und meinen eignen Hass hasste ich noch, weil er dich befleckte!*]” (Z III, Sunrise, KSA 4.208).

The passing clouds are those – the life-negators – who rob Zarathustra and the sky of what they have in common: “the immense unlimited Yes and Amen-saying [*das ungeheure unbegrenzte Ja- und Amen-sagen*].” Zarathustra hates them for obstructing boundless affirmation, but then he hates himself more for this hatred, for it too obstructs life-affirmation. How, then, can he negate life-negators in the name of life-affirmation without falling into life-negation? And if, as these lines suggest, self-hatred is inescapable, how can it be made into an affirmative, creative power – and not just a destructive, self-deprecating force? The viability of self-overcoming as the signature demand or task of the book depends on a response to this problem. In broad terms, I will argue that Zarathustra reiterates the response first voiced in relation to critical history in HL 3, a response repeated and modulated across Nietzsche’s writings – “to find a limit in the negation of the past”:

For since we are the outcome of earlier generations, we are also the outcome of their aberrations, passions and errors, and indeed of their crimes; it is not possible wholly to free oneself from this chain. If we condemn these aberrations and regard ourselves as above them [free *[enthoben]* of them], this does not alter the fact that we stem from them.

Denn da wir nun einmal die Resultate früherer Geschlechter sind, sind wir auch die Resultate ihrer Verirrungen, Leidenschaften und Irrthümer; ja Verbrechen; es ist nicht möglich sich ganz von dieser Kette zu lösen. Wenn wir jene Verirrungen verurtheilen und uns ihrer für enthoben erachten, so ist die Thatsache nicht beseitigt, dass wir aus ihnen herkommen. (UM II, HL 3, KSA 1.270)

What is philosophically valuable in *Zarathustra*, uniquely valuable, is the concrete, dramatic form it gives to this problem. In *Zarathustra*, as Nietzsche writes in EH, Z 6, the



problem of affirmation is treated as a “psychological problem.” I read “psychological” as “sociological,” “inter-personal” or “relational,” as one must in Nietzsche’s case. For in this text, the problem is discussed by Zarathustra, and at the same time enacted by him, as the question of how the one engaged in self-overcoming is to relate to others. And Zarathustra’s response is two-fold, depending on who the others are: with regard to the masses, the mob, the herd, the rabble or *Gesindel*, he advocates a *limit in negation* under the sign of *mildness* (*Milde*); with regard to others equally engaged in the task of self-overcoming, he advocates a *limited negation* in the form of *love-hate*. (Even this, as we shall see, oversimplifies the matter). It is largely in the language of wrenching affects – love, hatred, enmity, envy, contempt and revulsion – that the problem of our relation as self-overcomers to others is treated, and in this relation, as I will show, the notion of love-hate plays a pivotal role, just as it does in our relations to others at the heart of Nietzsche’s perfectionist project in *Schopenhauer as Educator*. In what follows, I will examine some of Zarathustra’s speeches in which these problems are developed and addressed.

## II The Problem of Affirmation (I) (*Of the Backworldsmen, On the Despisers of the Body*)

In the speeches on the *Backworldsmen* (*Von den Hinterweltlern*) and the *Despisers of the Body* (*Von den Verächtern des Leibes*), we get a first glimpse of the problem of affirmation in relation to life-negation. At issue in these speeches is life-negation in the form of metaphysics (including Nietzsche’s own metaphysics in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872)) and the contempt for this world and the body that goes with it. Zarathustra responds to this from the standpoint of radical immanence, where radical immanence entails radical heteronomy in the sense that metaphysics, contempt for the body, indeed all forms of life-negation have their sources in, and are determined by, the body and the (one and only) reality of this world, or the earth:

It was the sick and the dying-out who despised the body and the earth and invented the heavenly and its redeeming drops of blood. But even these sweet and shadowy poisons they took from the body and the earth! [...] Now they fancied themselves detached from their body and this earth, these ingrates. But whom did they have to thank for the fits and bliss of their detachment? Their body and this earth.

Kranke und Absterbende waren es, die verachteten Leib und Erde und erfanden das Himmlische und die erlösenden Blutstropfen: aber auch noch diese süßen und düstern Gifte nahmen sie von Leib und Erde! [...] Ihrem Leibe und dieser Erde nun entrückt wähten sie sich, diese Undankbaren. Doch wem dankten sie ihrer Entrückung Krampf und Wonne? Ihrem Leibe und dieser Erde. (Z I, Backworldsmen, KSA 4.37)

Here, radical heteronomy means that the negation of the body is not just an ideal, belief or value; but rather, that the body is the ground of the negation of the body in thought, that the earth is the ground of otherworldly earth-negation, and that life the ground of life-negation in all its forms. In these terms, the problem of life-affirmation can be put as follows: to affirm life-negation is to negate life. Yet, life-negation has life as its only source or ground. Hence, to negate life-negation is to negate (the sources of life-negation in) life; that is, to repeat life-negation. So what attitude *can* we take to life-negation in the name of life-affirmation? Or, to put it in the dramatic-performative terms of the text itself: what attitude should Zarathustra take to the life-negators who despise the body, the *Verächter des Leibes*? “Zarathustra is gentle to the sick. Indeed, he is not angered by their ways of comfort and ingratitude. May they become convalescents and overcomers and create for themselves a higher body! [*Milde ist Zarathustra den Kranken. Wahrlich, er zürnt nicht ihren Arten des Trostes und Undanks. Mögen sie Genesende werden und Überwindende und einen höheren Leib sich schaffen!*]” (Z I, Backworldsmen, KSA 4.37). Zarathustra’s response here, for the first time, is to avoid repeating the life-negating gesture, to find a limit in the negation of life-negators – the despisers of the body – through what he calls *Milde*: not to scold or scorn them, not to act in judgement. In this passage, *Milde* includes the wish that they may be included in the project of self-overcoming, that they may incorporate self-overcoming and create for themselves a higher body. What this means, we learn from the speech on *The Child and Marriage*, is the capacity for continuous self-creation symbolised by the child as a self-propelling wheel (*aus sich rollendes Rad*).<sup>8</sup>

In this speech, “the truth” of marriage is identified with a splitting of the will in two, becoming “the two-fold will [*den Willen zu Zweien*] to create the One that is more than those who created it” (Z I, Child). Playing on the Platonic connection between eros and procreation, Zarathustra embeds the creative moment of self-overcoming (*Über dich sollst du hinausbauen*) in a disjunction of the will across difference, a two-fold will joined together by a love “like a lantern that lights the way for us to higher paths,” as the condition for creating a third that exceeds them both. Yet this is a very un-Platonic third, not the eternal stillness of the “vast ocean of beauty” (*Symp.* 210), but the spontaneous, self-propelling creative force embodied in a child. And it is a very un-Platonic love, a self-love marked by bitterness and negation, a love that remains unsated by two and becomes a thirst, a longing to overcome the two of us: *Über euch hinaus sollt ihr einst lieben!*

But there is a difficulty with Zarathustra’s inclusive gesture. It is already implicit in the contrast Zarathustra draws between the “truth” of marriage, described above, and

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8 “Über dich sollst du hinausbauen. Aber erst musst du mir selber gebaut sein, rechtwinklig an Leib und Seele. / Nicht nur fort sollst du dich pflanzen, sondern hinauf! Dazu helfe dir der Garten der Ehe! / Einen höheren Leib sollst du schaffen, eine erste Bewegung, ein aus sich rollendes Rad, – einen Schaffenden sollst du schaffen” (Z I, Child).

the false marriage that comes from poverty (*Armut*), and it becomes explicit when Zarathustra focuses on the despisers of the body in the subsequent speech. Here, Nietzsche sharpens the heteronomy thesis when Zarathustra tells us: the Self that is the self-organising multiplicity of the body does not say I but *does* I; that is, it constitutes the self-conscious, thinking I. The body is the I's ruler (*Beherrscher*) and it dictates what the I ought to think about: *wozu es denken soll*. But if the I serves the body / Self in everything, then the Self / body must have an interest in the I that despises the body and negates life; it must be a life-negating body, a dying body:

Even in your folly and your contempt, you despisers of the body, you serve your Self. I say to you: your Self itself wants to die and turns away from life. / No longer is it capable of that which it wants most: – to create beyond itself. This it wants most of all, this is its entire fervor. / But now it is too late for that: – and so your Self wants to go under, you despisers of the body. / Your self wants to go under, and for this reason you became despisers of the body! For you no longer are capable of creating beyond yourselves. / And that is why you are angry now at life and earth. There is an unknown envy in the looking askance of your contempt.

Noch in eurer Thorheit und Verachtung, ihr Verächter des Leibes, dient ihr euren Selbst. Ich sage euch: euer Selbst selber will sterben und kehrt sich vom Leben ab. / Nicht mehr vermag es das, was es am liebsten will: – über sich hinaus zu schaffen. Das will es am liebsten, das ist seine ganze Inbrunst. / Aber zu spät ward es ihm jetzt dafür: – so will euer Selbst untergehn, ihr Verächter des Leibes. / Untergehn will euer Selbst, und darum wurdet ihr zu Verächtern des Leibes! Denn nicht mehr vermögt ihr über euch hinaus zu schaffen. / Und darum zürnt ihr nun dem Leben und der Erde. Ein ungewusster Neid ist im scheelen Blick eurer Verachtung. (Z I, Despisers)

Here, the problem is the ontological alienation mentioned at the start: a kind of paralysis or calcination that inhibits the fluid dynamic proper to the body – self-overcoming or *über sich hinaus schaffen*. But whereas before (*Backworldsmen*) Zarathustra's *Milde* was inclusive of the despisers of the body – that they might incorporate self-overcoming and create for themselves a higher body – this is no longer possible: the body-despiser's body cannot engage in self-overcoming, even though it is its innermost longing, since it is a dying, life-negating body. The despisers of the body are therefore rejected by Zarathustra as useless for the project of self-overcoming: "I will not go your way, you despisers of the body! You are not my bridges to the overman! – [*Ich gehe nicht euren Weg, ihr Verächter des Leibes! Ihr seid mir keine Brücken zum Übermenschen!* –]" (Z I, Despisers).

Zarathustra's gesture of rejection points to the third and most fundamental difference between the (self-)love that begets a "higher body" or Self, and Platonic eros. It is hard to read Zarathustra's words to the despisers of the body: "your Self itself wants to die and turns away from life" and not to think of the defining moment in the history of philosophy when it chose death over life: "the practice of dying" advocated by Socrates as the best life in the *Phaedo* (*Ph.* 81), the desire for wisdom as the soul's longing for death and the union with the forms thereafter, and an ascetic, intellectual practice of contempt for the "prison-house of the body" during life (*Ph.* 82). Socrates' body in the hours before his death, as dramatised in the *Phaedo*, is indeed the life-negating, dying

body of the despisers rejected by Zarathustra. Nor can the reference to Plato's *Symposium* be missed in *The Child and Marriage*, when Zarathustra speaks of false marriage as coming from poverty (*Armut*). Poverty or Πενία is the mother of Eros in Diotima's speech (*Symp.* 203), and, as poverty or lack, determining for Plato's negative conception of desire or love – including the love of wisdom. Desire is the lack of the object of desire, whose attainment spells the death of desire; the gods do not philosophise, since they do not lack wisdom and cannot therefore desire it. In this light, Zarathustra's rejection of the body-despisers is an affirmation of excess as the only "path" (*Weg*) for self-overcoming, the only "bridge to the *Übermensch*." For Nietzsche, contra Plato, the gods do philosophise (BGE 295), and desire as excess is celebrated as *Rausch* both early and late, in *The Birth of Tragedy* and *Twilight of the Idols* (1888).<sup>9</sup>

### III The Problem of Affirmation (II) (*On the Rabble*)

The sharpest formulation of the problem of affirmation in relation to life-negation comes in Zarathustra's speech *On the Rabble* (*Vom Gesindel*). The topic of this speech is life, understood as the source of pleasure, and the problem is given by the *Gesindel*, whose characteristic is to be a form of life that is life-poisoning: they poison sources of pleasure. The problem Zarathustra struggles with in the face of the rabble is that of life giving rise to life-negators and the question of whether they are somehow necessary for life:

And the bite I gagged on most was not the knowledge that life itself needs enmity and dying and torture crosses: – / Instead I once asked, and almost choked on my question: What? Does life also stand in *need* of the rabble?

Und nicht das ist der Bissen, an dem ich am meisten würgte, zu wissen, dass das Leben selber Feindschaft nöthig hat und Sterben und Marterkreuze: – / Sondern ich fragte einst und erstickte fast an meiner Frage: wie? hat das Leben auch das Gesindel nöthig? (Z II, Rabble, KSA 4.125)

When Zarathustra speaks of life needing enmity or *Feindschaft*, we might think of his dynamic ontology of power as self-overcoming through differential antagonistic relations with others, what he calls *Steigen*: "And because it needs height, it needs steps and contradiction of steps and ciphers! Life wills to climb and in climbing to overcome itself [*Und weil es Höhe braucht, braucht es Stufen und Widerspruch der Stufen und Steigenden! Steigen will das Leben und steigend sich überwinden*]" (Z II, Tarantulas, KSA 4.130).<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> See Robert Rethy, "The Tragic Affirmation of *The Birth of Tragedy*," *Nietzsche-Studien* 17 (1988), 1–44: 27.

<sup>10</sup> "Gut und Böse, und Reich und Arm, und Hoch und Gering, und alle Namen der Werthe: Waffen sollen es sein und klirrende Merkmale davon, dass das Leben sich immer wieder selber überwinden muss! /

But in *On the Rabble*, Zarathustra's concern is not with power-relations, but with death and the Christian ideal of self-sacrifice. That is to say, enmity here signifies the opposition to life within life, so that Zarathustra's bitter realisation is that life needs life-negation. But worse than that, he wonders whether life needs the *Gesindel*. The thought that there is a necessity in life to produce the life-poisoning attitudes of all those who negate life is too much for Zarathustra to bear and he succumbs to disgust (*Ekel*), a revulsive rejection of life on the grounds that life necessitates life-negating attitudes:

Not my hatred but my disgust fed hungrily on my life! Oh, I often grew weary of the spirit when I found even the rabble had spirit! [...] And holding my nose I walked annoyed through all yesterday and today; truly, all yesterday and today smell foul of the writing rabble!

Nicht mein Hass, sondern mein Ekel frass mir hungrig am Leben! Ach, des Geistes wurde ich oft müde, als ich auch das Gesindel geistreich fand! [...] Und die Nase mir haltend, gieng ich unmuthig durch alles Gestern und Heute: wahrlich, übel riecht alles Gestern und Heute nach dem schreiben den Gesindel! (Z II, Rabble, KSA 4.125)

Zarathustra's disgust at life is provoked by the realisation that life-poisoning attitudes are somehow necessary for life: not a contingent, localised pathology that can be safely isolated or ignored, but all-pervasive and seemingly inescapable. If life stands in need of the life-poisoning attitudes it produces on a mass scale, is life not somehow poisoned in its very sources? How can we turn against the life-negating attitudes that have virtually colonised life, without turning against life?<sup>11</sup> How is it possible to redeem ourselves from this disgust and to affirm life? Zarathustra's immediate response is escape: to escape from the rabble, so as to affirm life in solitude or in a community of solitary self-overcomers; to escape the present and the past, so as to "build our nest on the tree of the future." The necessity of solitude or solitude-in-community is an important theme to which I will turn. But ultimately, it is inadequate as a solution to the problem of affirmation: Zarathustra must still communicate with the present, with the rabble, for in his own words: "if you want to be a star, you must shine for them no less brightly on that account" (Z I, Creating, KSA 4.82). And even here, in his longing for solitude in the section *On the Rabble*, he reluctantly concedes that in his solitude he must still communicate with them, not exactly by addressing them, but acting like a wind, to unsettle them, to take their breath away: "And like a wind I want at one time to blow them asunder and with my spirt take their spirit's breath away: thus wills it my future [*Und*

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In die Höhe will es sich bauen mit Pfeilern und Stufen, das Leben selber: in weite Fernen will es blicken und hinaus nach seligen Schönheiten, – d a r u m braucht es Höhe! / Und weil es Höhe braucht, braucht es Stufen und Widerspruch der Stufen und Steigenden! Steigen will das Leben und steigend sich überwinden" (Z II, Tarantulas, KSA 4.130).

11 "Und Mancher, der sich vom Leben abkehrte, kehrte sich nur vom Gesindel ab: er wollte nicht Brunnen und Flamme und Frucht mit dem Gesindel theilen" (Z II, Rabble, KSA 4.124). This seems to be a reference to Schopenhauer and a diagnosis of his advocacy of life-negation as falling into the trap faced by Zarathustra: mistaking his rejection of the rabble for a rejection of life.

*einem Winde gleich will ich einst noch zwischen sie blasen und mit meinem Geiste ihrem Geiste den Athem nehmen: so will es meine Zukunft!]*” (Z II, Rabble, KSA 4.126). Solitude is no escape from the rabble, nor will it enable Zarathustra to overcome his disgust at life. His solution (Z III, Other Dance Song), as I shall argue, is to transform his disgust (*Ekel am Leben*) into a relation of love-hate (*Liebe-Hass*) towards life, as the only viable form of life-affirmation.

## IV On the Necessity of Solitude (*On the New Idol, On the Flies of the Market-Place*)

Like *Schopenhauer as Educator*, *Zarathustra* belongs to the long line of philosophical texts, both ancient and modern, preoccupied with the phenomenon of the rabble, the masses, the crowd, the multitude, the mob (Emerson) and mob rule (ὄχλοκρατία, *ochlocratia*, *Pöbelherrschaft*).<sup>12</sup> The problem of Zarathustra’s relation to the crowd or masses is first raised towards end of the *Preface*, where Zarathustra makes it clear that he will be no shepherd to the herd:

Zarathustra seeks fellow creators, Zarathustra seeks fellow harvesters and fellow celebrants: what has he to do with herds and shepherds and corpses! [...] I shall be no shepherd, nor grave digger. I do not even want to speak to the people again; this was the last time I spoke to a dead man.

Mitschaffende sucht Zarathustra, Miterntende und Mitfeiernde sucht Zarathustra: was hat er mit Heerden und Hirten und Leichnamen zu schaffen! [...] Nicht Hirt soll ich sein, nicht Todtengräber. Nicht reden ein mal will ich wieder mit dem Volke; zum letzten Male sprach ich zu einem Todten. (Z I, Preface 9)

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<sup>12</sup> The term “ochlocracy” (ὄχλοκρατία) stems from Polybius (*Histories* 6.4.6), but the concern with mob rule already exists in Plato (*Stat.* 302c) and Aristotle (*Politics*, Bk IV, Part IV). See also Joseph Femia, *Against the Masses: Varieties of Anti-Democratic Thought Since the French Revolution*, Oxford 2001. On the irrationality of mobs in nineteenth-century mass psychology, see Christian Borch, *The Politics of Crowds: An Alternative History of Sociology*, Cambridge 2012. John Adams, Matthew Arnold, William James, Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, John Stuart Mill, Alexis de Toqueville, Thoreau and Emerson are among those who were concerned with the debasement of democracy at the hands of “the mob,” as Emerson puts it: “The mob is man voluntarily descending to the nature of the beast. Its fit hour of activity is night. Its actions are insane like its whole constitution. It persecutes a principle; it would whip a right; it would tar and feather justice, by inflicting fire and outrage upon the houses and persons of those who have these. It resembles the prank of boys, who run with fire-engines to put out the ruddy aurora streaming to the stars” (Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Compensation,” in *The Complete Essays and Other Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 2nd ed., ed. Brooks Atkinson, New York 1950, 184).

Because it is impossible to teach self-overcoming to the people, Zarathustra breaks with the people and chooses solitude instead, but a solitude in friendship or community with other solitaries engaged in self-overcoming:

I will join the creators, the harvesters, the celebrants as companions: I will show them the rainbow and all the stairs to the overman. / I will sing my song to solitary and twofold hermits; and for him who still has ears for the unheard of, I will make his heart heavy with my happiness.

Den Schaffenden, den Erntenden, den Feiernden will ich mich zugesellen: den Regenbogen will ich ihnen zeigen und alle die Treppen des Übermenschen. / Den Einsiedlern werde ich mein Lied singen und den Zweisiedlern; und wer noch Ohren hat für Unerhörtes, dem will ich sein Herz schwer machen mit meinem Glücke. (Z I, Preface 9)

The *locus classicus* of the necessity of solitude for the task of self-overcoming is *On the New Idol (Vom neuen Götzen)* and its sequel *On the Flies of the Market-Place (Von den Fliegen des Marktes)*. These speeches insert a radical disjunction, a disconnect between the task of self-overcoming and the state, political life, political thinking and public discourse. It is here, if anywhere, that *Zarathustra* shows itself to be a profoundly anti-political text in the sense that it deprives political life in general of any constructive potential for what it takes to be the essential task for humankind in the present. The state is described as a mendacious, destructive monster that claims to be the people but is in fact the death of peoples. If a people is a life-affirmative unity that hangs the mores and laws it creates above itself as the table of its self-overcomings,<sup>13</sup> the state is the sepulchre of peoples, which are no more. The modern state, Zarathustra claims, has its *raison d'être* not in any living people but in the masses – what he variously calls the superfluous, *das Überflüssige*, the far-too-many (*die Viel zu Vielen*), whose basic characteristic is uniformity, replaceability, loss of difference and individuality, loss of human-ness.

Zarathustra's disconnection of self-overcoming from the state is clean and clinical. At issue in self-overcoming, as we know, is the human: *der Mensch*, as *etwas, das überwunden werden soll*. But: "There, where the state ends, only there begins the human who is not superfluous; there begins the song of necessity, the unique and irreplaceable melody. [*Dort, wo der Staat aufhört, da beginnt erst der Mensch, der nicht überflüssig ist: da beginnt das Lied des Nothwendigen, die einmalige und unersetzliche Weise*]" (Z I, Idol, KSA 4.63). A thought that culminates in the demand for solitude, as the *sine qua non* for self-overcoming: in a parting of ways (as in the section on *The Despisers*) between the state and political matters on one side, and the path of self-overcoming as a path of solitude on the other: "There, where the state *ends* – look there, my brothers! Do you not see it, the rainbow and the bridges of the overman? – [*Dort, wo der Staat aufhört, – so*

13 "Eine Tafel der Güter hängt über jedem Volke. Siehe, es ist seiner Überwindungen Tafel; siehe, es ist die Stimme seines Willens zur Macht" (Z I, Goals). On Nietzsche's concept of *Volk* and the *Völker* of Europe, see Gerd Schank, "Rasse" und "Züchtung" bei Nietzsche, Berlin 2011, 51–149.



*seht mir doch hin, meine Brüder! Seht ihr ihn nicht, den Regenbogen und die Brücken des Übermenschen? –]*” (Z I, Idol, KSA 4.64).

The necessity of solitude is then made explicit in *On the Flies of the Market-Place*, which posits the necessity of breaking with state and politics for sake of *Selbst-Überwindung*, followed by the necessity of breaking with public discourse:

Flee, my friend, into your solitude! I see you dazed by the noise of the great men and stung by the stings of the little. [...] Where solitude ends, there begins the market place; and where the market place begins, there begins too the noise of the great actors and the buzzing of poisonous flies. [...] Away from the market place and fame all greatness takes place; away from the market place and fame the inventors of new values have lived all along. [...] Flee, my friend, into your solitude: I see you stung by poisonous flies. Flee where raw, strong air blows! Flee into your solitude! You have lived too long near the small and the pitiful. Flee their invisible revenge! Against you they are nothing but revenge. / Do not raise your arm against them anymore! They are innumerable, and it is not your lot to be a fly-swatter.

Fliehe, mein Freund, in deine Einsamkeit! Ich sehe dich betäubt vom Lärme der grossen Männer und zerstoichen von den Stacheln der kleinen. [...] Wo die Einsamkeit aufhört, da beginnt der Markt; und wo der Markt beginnt, da beginnt auch der Lärm der grossen Schauspieler und das Geschwirr der giftigen Fliegen. [...] Abseits vom Markte und Ruhme begiebt sich alles Grosse: abseits vom Markte und Ruhme wohnten von je die Erfinder neuer Werthe. [...] Fliehe in deine Einsamkeit! Du lebstest den Kleinen und Erbärmlichen zu nahe. Fliehe vor ihrer unsichtbaren Rache! Gegen dich sind sie Nichts als Rache. / Hebe nicht mehr den Arm gegen sie! Unzählbar sind sie, und es ist nicht dein Loos, Fliegenwedel zu sein. (Z I, Flies, KSA 4.65–6)

Even if the creation of new values requires isolation from the public sphere, it is inseparable from the total critique of values, including the values in circulation in the market place. But (once again) Zarathustra issues a call for measure, for a limit in the negation of opinion-formers<sup>14</sup> and their followers, so as not to replicate their own attitude of vengeance and hatred towards outsiders. Indeed, the demand for solitude culminates in a call not just for mildness, *Milde*, but for *justice* that would prevent the replication of their injustice towards self-overcomers: “Because you are mild and of just temperament, you say: ‘They are not guilty of their petty existence.’ But their narrow souls think: ‘All great existence is guilty.’ [Weil du milde bist und gerechten Sinnes, sagst du: ‘unschuldig sind sie an ihrem kleinen Dasein.’ Aber ihre enge Seele denkt: ‘Schuld ist alles grosse Dasein’]” (Z I, Flies, KSA 4.67). In the end, however, Zarathustra concedes that *Milde* fails to resolve this problematic relation, for it will not diminish their hatred: self-overcomers are condemned to be hated by the crowd. “Even when you are mild towards them, they still feel despised by you; and they repay your benefaction with

<sup>14</sup> The rule of public opinion (*öffentliche Meinungen*) is a major concern behind Nietzsche’s perfectionism in *Schopenhauer as Educator*, as one of three “M’s” enslaving us: “des Moments, der Meinungen und der Moden.” He writes of the “Ketten der Meinungen und der Furcht,” of our “Knechtschaft unter öffentlichen Meinungen und die Gefahr der Freiheit,” and equates “die öffentlichen Meinungen” with “die privaten Faulheiten” (UM III, SE 1, KSA 1.338; SE 2, KSA 1.348; SE 6, KSA 1.392; SE 8, KSA 1.425).

hidden malefactions. [Auch wenn du ihnen milde bist, fühlen sie sich noch von dir verachtet; und sie geben dir deine Wohlthat zurück mit versteckten Wehthaten]" (Z I, Flies, KSA 4.67).

## V Affirmation (III): From Disgust to Love-Hate (*The Dance Song, The Other Dance Song, On Self-Overcoming*)

In *On the Rabble*, as we saw, the problem of affirmation is dramatized as Zarathustra's disgust (*Ekel*) at life for producing life-poisoning attitudes that are seemingly all-pervasive, inescapable, even somehow necessary for life. Zarathustra's first response is precisely to escape, to isolate himself from political life, but also to exercise *Milde* in his critique of the rabble, so as not to replicate their life-negating hatred. But none of this helps to understand how one can affirm life, when life has been virtually swallowed up by life-poisoning attitudes. In what follows, we will see Zarathustra's response to the problem of affirmation: to transform disgust (*Ekel am Leben*) into a relation of love-hate (*Liebe-Hass*) towards life.

The importance of love-hate for life-affirmation is first made clear in Zarathustra's *Dance Song* (*Das Tanzlied*), in which for the first time he addresses Life: "At bottom I love only life – and verily, most when I hate it! [*Von Grund aus liebe ich nur das Leben – und, wahrlich, am meisten dann, wenn ich es hasse!*]" (Z II, Dance Song) – a thought that returns in *The Other Dance Song*, when Zarathustra says to Life:

I fear you up close, and I love you from a distance; your flight lures me, your seeking compels me: – I suffer, but suffer gladly for you any day! / You whose coldness ignites, whose hate seduces; whose fleeing binds, whose scorn is – moving: / – who would not hate you, you great binder, and winder, temptress, attemptress, and finder! Who would not love you, you innocent, ardent one, wind-bride and child-eyed sinner!

Ich fürchte dich Nahe, ich liebe dich Ferne; deine Flucht lockt mich, dein Suchen stockt mich: – ich leide, aber was litt ich um dich nicht gerne! / Deren Kälte zündet, deren Hass verführt, deren Flucht bindet, deren Spott – rührt: / – wer hasste dich nicht, dich grosse Binderin, Umwinderin, Versucherin, Sucherin, Finderin! Wer liebte dich nicht, dich unschuldige, ungeduldige, windseilige, kindsäugige Sünderin! (Z III, Other Dance Song 1)

In both passages, the affirmation of life is described as a love of life, but a love that is inseparable from hatred. In the second passage, we can begin to see why, because for the first time love (seduction) and hatred are inscribed *within* life as the key to her affective economy. It is because love-hate is bound up with life's economy that the affirmation of life, from a radically immanent standpoint in life, takes the form of love-hate towards life. This suggestion is made explicit in Zarathustra's speech *On Self-Overcoming* (*Von*

*der Selbst-Ueberwindung*), where, as we saw at the start, self-overcoming is ascribed to life as her dynamic principle: “And this secret life itself spoke to me: ‘Behold,’ it said, ‘I am that *which must always overcome itself*. [Und diess Geheimniss redete das Leben selber zu mir ‘Siehe, sprach es, ich bin das, was sich immer selber überwinden muss]” (Z II, Self-Overcoming, KSA 4.148).

In this speech, Zarathustra treats life in terms of his dynamic ontology of will to power. And as the dynamic principle of will to power, self-overcoming implies struggle and enmity, as Life says:

“That I must be struggle and becoming and purpose and the contradiction of purposes – alas, whoever guesses my will guesses also on what *crooked* paths it must walk! / “Whatever I may create and however I may love it – soon I must be its opponent and my love’s opponent, thus my will wants it.

“Dass ich Kampf sein muss und Werden und Zweck und der Zwecke Widerspruch: ach, wer meinen Willen erräth, erräth wohl auch, auf welchen *krummen* Wegen er gehen muss! / “Was ich auch schaffe und wie ich’s auch liebe, – bald muss ich Gegner ihm sein und meiner Liebe: so will es mein Wille. (Z II, Self-Overcoming, KSA 4.148)

Life is struggle, or *Kampf*, because life is will to power, and power is self-overcoming and intensification (*Steigen*), which can only occur through differential antagonistic relations with others (Z II, Tarantulas, KSA 4.130). But here, *Kampf* comes into life because life is power, and power can manifest itself in an indeterminate number of different ways, especially in “crooked ways.” Where life is power, everything is ambivalent (love can be an expression of power or weakness, and so can hate), and everything is liable to turn into its opposite, so that what I love in one moment, I must oppose or hate in the next. As a principle of creativity, will to power is bound up with the dynamic of self-overcoming, so that values born of love must eventually submit to destruction:

Truly, I say to you: good and evil that would be everlasting – there is no such thing! They must overcome themselves out of themselves again and again. [...] But a stronger force grows out of your values and a new overcoming; upon it egg and eggshell break. / And whoever must be a creator in good and evil – truly, he must first be an annihilator and break values.

Wahrlich, ich sage euch: Gutes und Böses, das unvergänglich wäre – das giebt es nicht! Aus sich selber muss es sich immer wieder überwinden. [...] Aber eine stärkere Gewalt wächst aus euren Werthen und eine neue Überwindung: an der zerbricht Ei und Eierschale. / Und wer ein Schöpfer sein muss im Guten und Bösen: wahrlich, der muss ein Vernichter erst sein und Werthe zerbrechen. (Z II, Self-Overcoming, KSA 4.149)

In this way love-hate, as the affective signature of the affirmation of life in *Zarathustra*, is inscribed in the dynamic character of life as will to power. If the problem of affirmation was posed by Zarathustra’s disgust, his *Ekel am Leben*, his affirmative response is to adopt a radically immanent standpoint in life under the sign of love-hate: affirmation as love-hate towards life, where love-hate is taken to be intrinsic to the affective economy

of life. In the following section, I turn to Zarathustra's most sustained discussion of love-hate in *On War and Warrior-Peoples* (*Vom Krieg und Kriegsvolke*). Once again, his thought is motivated by the problem of the affirmation of life, and here Zarathustra explores the implications that affirmation, as a "love for life" (Z I, War), has for our relation as self-overcomers to others.

## VI Love-Hate and War (*On War and Warrior-Peoples*)

Despite its title, Zarathustra's subject-matter in this speech is in fact love (*Liebe*):

We do not want to be spared by our best enemies, nor by those whom we love thoroughly. So let me tell you the truth now! / My brothers in war! I love you thoroughly, I am and I was your equal. And I am also your best enemy. So let me tell you the truth now!

Von unsern besten Feinden wollen wir nicht geschont sein, und auch von Denen nicht, welche wir von Grund aus lieben. So lasst mich denn euch die Wahrheit sagen! / Meine Brüder im Kriege! Ich liebe euch von Grund aus, ich bin und war Euresgleichen. Und ich bin auch euer bester Feind. So lasst mich denn euch die Wahrheit sagen! (Z I, War)

Already in these opening lines, Zarathustra sets out the conditions for (real) love. They are: 1. *equality*: to be like one another, to be alike or, in dynamic terms: to be of approximately equal power (*Euresgleichen*); 2. *commonality*: to share a certain familiarity (*ich kenne euch*), and 3. *enmity* (*Feindschaft*). To these must be added 4. *plurality* or *difference*, when Zarathustra later on distinguishes warriors from soldiers: "I see many soldiers: Let me see many warriors! 'Uni-form' one calls what they wear: let it not be uniform what they thereby conceal! [*Ich sehe viel Soldaten: möchte ich viel Kriegsmänner sehn! 'Ein-form' nennt man's, was sie tragen: möge es nicht Ein-form sein, was sie damit verstecken!*]" (Z I, War). This distinction serves to insert radical individualism as a necessary moment into the concept of love-enmity, which can only arise when one seeks out and finds one's own enemy (*eurem Feinde*). To engage in love-enmity like a warrior requires the exercise of discipline, but it presupposes human plurality: uniform in discipline, pluriform in reality. But what is Zarathustra's motivation for this conflictual notion of love? What is love-enmity for?

It is important to see that this is not simply warfare for the sake of power. The four conditions of love – equality, commonality, enmity and plurality – are also the conditions for the Greek *agon*, as described by Nietzsche in his early text *Homer's Contest* (1872). Zarathustra's agonal warfare is for knowledge (*Erkenntnis*), for thought (*für eure Gedanken*). Indeed, it is for "the highest thought of life" – affirmation of life or love for life – that one ought to seek out one's enemy:

Let your love for life be love for your highest hope, and let your highest hope be the highest thought of life! / But you shall have your highest thought commanded by me – and it says: the human being is something that ought to be overcome.

Eure Liebe zum Leben sei Liebe zu eurer höchsten Hoffnung: und eure höchste Hoffnung sei der höchste Gedanke des Lebens! / Euren höchsten Gedanken aber sollt ihr euch von mir befehlen lassen – und er lautet: der Mensch ist Etwas, das überwunden werden soll. (Z I, War)

Affirmation or *Liebe zum Leben*, Zarathustra tells “us,” must respond to the demand or “command” to overcome the human as it is, that is, to overcome our estrangement from being human by recuperating the dynamic of self-overcoming through agonal relations of love-hate towards our chosen enemies: “Overcome yourself even in your next of kin [*Überwinde dich selber noch in deinem Nächsten*],” as Nietzsche puts in the speech *On Old and New Tablets* (Z III, Tablets 4).

But in the course of the speech *On War*, Zarathustra suggests two more concrete answers to the question of love-enmity. The first clue comes when he says to his (imaginary) brothers: “I know of the hate and envy of your heart. You are not great enough to not know hate and envy. So at least be great enough to not be ashamed of them! [*Ich weiss um den Hass und Neid eures Herzens. Ihr seid nicht gross genug, um Hass und Neid nicht zu kennen. So seid denn gross genug, euch ihrer nicht zu schämen!*]” (Z I, War). The problem here concerns the violent, destructive passions and aggression on the ground of human existence, and the question: how best to deal with them? Zarathustra’s response is the same as Nietzsche’s in his early study of the contest or *agon* in archaic Greek culture, and already intimated in the conditions for love in the opening lines of *On War*: not to condemn, negate or destroy these passions (as in Christian morality as anti-nature: “il faut tuer les passions,” TI, Moral 1), not to suppress them in favour of neighbourly love and compassion, but to affirm them as human and provide an outlet for their limited, non-destructive expression or discharge.<sup>15</sup> If Zarathustra’s problem is how to provide an outlet for hatred and envy that limits and contains their destructiveness, the answer developed in the course of the speech is by way of agonal love-hate, love-enmity.

Everything in this speech turns on enmity, *Feindschaft*. Knowledge is a waging of war, (short) peace is “a means to new wars,” “probity” (*Redlichkeit*) is a “triumph,” “work” (*Arbeit*) should be a “struggle” (*Kampf*), peace should be a “victory” (*Sieg*), and it is the manner of conducting war that sanctifies a cause, not a “good cause” that sanctifies war. The question is: why this insistence on war where love is Zarathustra’s subject matter? The answer comes when he says: “War and courage have done more great things than neighbourly love. Not your compassion but your bravery has rescued the casualties so far. [*Der Krieg und der Muth haben mehr grosse Dinge gethan, als die Nächstenliebe. Nicht euer Mitleiden, sondern eure Tapferkeit rettete bisher die Verunglückten*]” (Z I, War). Here war and courage are placed in polemical opposition to the Christian values

15 See Nachlass 1875, 5[146], KSA 8.78.

of neighbourly love (*agape*) and compassion (*Mitleid*). But war is not blindly opposed to love as the absence of love; for in this section, as we saw, enmity is one of the conditions for love, so that Zarathustra's "war" signifies war-in-love, a warring love.

The lines quoted above give a third answer to the question of love-enmity. The problem (3) of this section is how to overcome the Christian values of love and compassion in the process of self-overcoming, and Zarathustra's response is to develop a counter-concept of love that is *inclusive* of what Christian love denies: enmity-in-love or hatred in love. Indeed, these displacements – war for neighbourly love, courage for compassion – are just two in a series of anti-Christian displacements performed in the speech *On War: Übermut* for *Schwäche*, *Flut* for *Ebbe*, *Erhabenheit* for *hübsch zugleich und rührend*, *Gehorsam* for *Auflehnung*, *Kampf* for *Arbeit*, *Sieg* for *Friede*.

Even if enmity and hatred seem to extend to everything in this speech, there is an important qualification, which Zarathustra introduces under the sign of ugliness:

You are ugly? Very well, my brothers! Take the sublime mantle about you, the mantle of the ugly! / And when your soul grows great it grows arrogant and in your sublimity there is wickedness. I know you well. In wickedness the arrogant one encounters the weakling. / But they misunderstand one another. I know you well. / You may only have enemies to hate, but not enemies to despise. You must be proud of your enemy: then the successes of your enemy will be your successes too.

Ihr seid hässlich? Nun wohl, meine Brüder! So nehmt das Erhabne um euch, den Mantel des Hässlichen! / Und wenn eure Seele gross wird, so wird sie übermüthig, und in eurer Erhabenheit ist Bosheit. Ich kenne euch. / Aber sie missverstehen einander. Ich kenne euch. / Ihr dürft nur Feinde haben, die zu hassen sind, aber nicht Feinde zum Verachten. Ihr müsst stolz auf euern Feind sein: dann sind die Erfolge eures Feindes auch eure Erfolge. (Z I, War)

The opening words "You are ugly?" just raise the question: who calls the warriors ugly? It can only be the same ones who ascribe "wickedness" or "malice" (*Bosheit*) twice over to the warriors. For the connection between ugliness and wickedness we need to go back to the etymological connections between ugliness and hatred, on which Nietzsche is drawing: *hässlich* as *hassenswert* as *böse*; that is, "ugly" in the sense of "hateworthy," often *morally* hateworthy or wicked.<sup>16</sup> This connection is made in the next line, where the warrior's arrogant wickedness is located in his encounter with the weakling (*Schwächlinge*). It is, in other words, when judged from a position of weakness that the warriors of knowledge are deemed to be ugly, hateworthy and wicked. The "ugliness" of the warriors says nothing about the warriors; instead, it signifies the hatred felt from a position of weakness towards those who have the strength to overcome themselves, a hatred couched in moral condemnation.

These judgements raise once again the problem of the relation between those engaged in self-overcoming and the mob, the masses, the herd. If the herd will always

<sup>16</sup> For a detailed discussion of the etymological and semantic relations between ugliness and hatred, see Herman W. Siemens, "Nietzsche's Philosophy of Hatred," *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie* 77/4 (2015), 747–84.

hate and condemn the solitary engaged in self-overcoming, what attitude should the latter take to the crowd? The temptation is of course to reciprocate and thereby repeat their own resentful hatred, but Zarathustra puts a stop to this by carefully limiting enmity: “You may only have enemies to hate, but not enemies to despise. You must be proud of your enemy: then the successes of your enemy will be your successes too. [*Ihr dürft nur Feinde haben, die zu hassen sind, aber nicht Feinde zum Verachten. Ihr müsst stolz auf euern Feind sein: dann sind die Erfolge eures Feindes auch eure Erfolge*]” (Z I, War). In these lines, we could say, Zarathustra reinterprets the warriors’ ugliness from a position of strength. Drawing on another etymological relation between ugliness and hatred, where ugliness signifies the first-person expression of hatred (rather than the second-person: you are hateworthy), Nietzsche is in effect asking: what form does hatred take when it is hatred, not from a position of weakness, but from a position of strength? Zarathustra’s answer is that hatred, from a position of strength, takes the form of pride in one’s enemy and in the successes of one’s enemy. This hatred does not reject its object as hateworthy and condemn it as wicked; on the contrary, it is attracted by the other’s achievement, drawn to take on its standard of excellence and match it, thereby limiting its negation of the other through an erotic, joyful affirmation that would enhance and share in its power. To hate one’s enemy from a position of strength does not mean to distort and condemn him, but to rejoice in his strength and achievements, to stimulate and enhance his power in an agonal dynamic of self-overcoming with and against one’s chosen enemies.

The notion of hatred-among-those-of-equal-power or agonal hatred introduced in these lines is the correlate and condition of the love for equals (*Euresgleichen*) declared in the opening lines; like love, it entails a profound affirmation of the other, a pride in the enemy that rejoices in its successes. By the same token, however, those who are not equal in power, the weaklings, should not be hated, but only despised (*Verachten*). In that case, Zarathustra says, they should not be treated as enemies at all. In response to the problem of the crowd, then, Zarathustra advocates agonal relations of love-hate among equals for fellow warriors of knowledge, but relations of a completely different order for the mob or masses. What these relations look like is clarified later in the book, when, in *On Old and New Tablets*, Zarathustra returns to this topic:

I love the brave, but it is not enough to be a fierce combatant – one must also know whom to combat! / And often there is more bravery in someone controlling himself and passing by, *so that* he saves himself for the worthier enemy! I should have only those enemies to be hated, but not enemies to despise; you must be proud of your enemy: this I taught you already once before. / For the worthier enemy, my friends, you should save yourselves: and therefore you must pass many by – / – especially pass by much rabble that thunders in your ears about folk and peoples. / Keep your eye clear of their pros and cons! There is much justice, much injustice here; whoever watches becomes angry. / To see into them and see through them – it’s all the same here; therefore go away into the woods and lay your swords to sleep! / Go *your* ways! And let folk and peoples go theirs! – dark ways, to be sure, on which not a single hope flashes anymore!



Ich liebe die Tapferen: aber es ist nicht genug, Hau-Degen sein, – man muss auch wissen Hauschau-Wen! / Und oft ist mehr Tapferkeit darin, dass Einer an sich hält und vorübergeht: damit er sich dem würdigeren Feinde aufspare! / Ich sollt nur Feinde haben, die zu hassen sind, aber nicht Feinde zum Verachten: ihr müsst stolz auf euren Feind sein: also lehrte ich schon Ein Mal. / Dem würdigeren Feinde, oh meine Freunde, sollt ihr euch aufsparen: darum müsst ihr an Vielem vorübergehn, – / – sonderlich an vielem Gesindel, das euch in die Ohren lärmt von Volk und Völkern. / Haltet euer Auge rein von ihrem Für und Wider! Da giebt es viel Recht, viel Unrecht: wer da zusieht, wird zornig. / Dreinschaun, dreinhaun – das ist da Eins: darum geht weg in die Wälder und legt euer Schwert schlafen! / Geht eure Wege! Und lasst Volk und Völker die ihren gehn! – dunkle Wege wahrlich, auf denen auch nicht Eine Hoffnung mehr wetterleuchtet! (Z III, Tablets 21)

With these words, Zarathustra goes beyond the exercise of *Milde* and justice as ways to limit his negation of the rabble (or put his sword to sleep); the only way he finds open to him is to “pass by” them: *vorübergehen*. From the section by the same name, *On Passing-by (Vom Vorübergehen)*, we learn why he chooses this path. Most of this section concerns Zarathustra’s encounter with his so-called ape by the gates of a big city. This character reiterates much of Zarathustra’s (and Nietzsche’s) own critique of newspaper culture and public discourse, moralistic hypocrisy, sycophancy etc. But at a certain point Zarathustra stops him and shuts him up with the words: “*Ich verachte dein Verachten*”: “I despise your despising; and when you warned me, why did you not warn yourself? / Out of love alone ought my contempt [*Verachten*] and my warning bird take off: not out of the swamp” (Z III, Passing-by, KSA 4.224).<sup>17</sup>

The problem is not that the ape is wrong. Even if what he says is right (and it is, as Zarathustra indirectly concedes, because he is aping him), he is in the wrong because his discourse expresses utter contempt (*Verachten*) for the rabble.<sup>18</sup> But this is not contempt without enmity from a position of strength; it is a frog-like croaking from the swamp, or the pig-like grunting of one who seeks vengeance.<sup>19</sup> And so Zarathustra turns the

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17 “Ich verachte dein Verachten; und wenn du mich warntest, – warum warntest du dich nicht selber? / Aus der Liebe allein soll mir mein Verachten und mein warnender Vogel auffliegen: aber nicht aus dem Sumpfe! –” (Z III, Passing-by, KSA 4.224).

18 “Aber dein Narren-Wort thut mir Schaden, selbst, wo du Recht hast! Und wenn Zarathustra’s Wort sogar hundert Mal Recht hätte: du würdest mit meinem Wort immer – Unrecht thun!” (Z III, Passing-by, KSA 4.225).

19 “Warum wohntest du so lange am Sumpfe, dass du selber zum Frosch und zur Kröte werden musstest? / Fließt dir nicht selber nun ein faulichtes schaumichtes Sumpf-Blut durch die Adern, dass du also quaken und lästern lerntest? / Warum giengst du nicht in den Wald? Oder pflügtest die Erde? Ist das Meer nicht voll von grünen Eilanden? / Ich verachte dein Verachten; und wenn du mich warntest, – warum warntest du dich nicht selber? / Aus der Liebe allein soll mir mein Verachten und mein warnender Vogel auffliegen: aber nicht aus dem Sumpfe! – / Man heisst dich meinen Affen, du schäumender Narr: aber ich heisse dich mein Grunze-Schwein, – durch Grunzen verdirbst du mir noch mein Lob der Narrheit. / Was war es denn, was dich zuerst grunzen machte? Dass Niemand dir genug geschmeichelt hat: – darum setztest du dich hin zu diesem Unrathe, dass du Grund hättest viel zu grunzen, – / – dass du Grund hättest zu vieler Rache! Rache nämlich, du eitler Narr, ist all dein Schäumen, ich errieth dich wohl!” (Z III, Passing-by, KSA 4.225).

ape's contempt on itself with the words: "I despise your contempt [*Ich verachte dein Verachten*]." As always, Zarathustra is mindful of how to engage in the critical negation of life-negators in a way that would allow for unbounded affirmation, and unbounded contempt is not the way. Instead, he proposes, once again, to find a limit in negation by couching it in love, exclaiming that his contempt should (*soll*) come "out of love." At the end of the section, however, Zarathustra concedes that he cannot do as he should, since he cannot love the big city and its *Gesindel*. And the lesson he leaves his ape is to "pass by": "This teaching I give unto you, you fool, on departing: where one can no longer love, one ought to – *pass by!*: – [*vorübergehen!*]" (Z III, Passing-by, KSA 4.225). "Passing by" is, then, the only recourse for limiting critical negation, when one cannot muster the affirmative counter-force of love. In this way, Zarathustra at least avoids reciprocating the hatred of the crowd for solitaries and succumbing to revenge, as does his ape. But "passing by" cannot be the final word or gesture. For one, as we saw, Zarathustra (and Nietzsche) cannot avoid communicating with the present and participating in public discourse, whether as a star that shines on the rabble, or a wind that unsettles them. But there is also a critical deficit in this gesture, a failure to acknowledge his complicity in the rabble, namely that he is part of the problem and not somehow exempt. Both of these points are taken up in the section *On the Way of the Creator*.

## VII On Creative Self-Contempt (*On the Way of the Creator*)

In Zarathustra's discourse *On the Way of the Creator* (*Vom Wege des Schaffenden*), it is the very gesture of "passing by" that raises the problem of contempt (*Verachtung*) – this time on the part of the Many towards the One:

Do you know the word "contempt" yet, my brother? And the torture of your justice, to be just to those who despise you? / You compel many to relearn about you; they hold that strongly against you. You came near to them and yet passed by: they will never forgive you that. / You pass over and beyond them: but the higher you climb the smaller the eye of envy sees you. But the one who flies is the one most hated.

Kennst du, mein Bruder, schon das Wort "Verachtung"? Und die Qual deiner Gerechtigkeit, Solchen gerecht zu sein, die dich verachten? / Du zwingst Viele, über dich umzulernen; das rechnen sie dir hart an. Du kamst ihnen nahe und giengst doch vorüber: das verzeihen sie dir niemals. / Du gehst über sie hinaus: aber je höher du steigst, um so kleiner sieht dich das Auge des Neides. Am meisten aber wird der Fliegende gehasst (Z I, Creator, KSA 4.81).

Here, it is clear to Zarathustra that "passing by" only exacerbates the alienation of the solitary by stoking contempt and hatred in the rabble. But Zarathustra's speech opens on a different note altogether, one that displaces the meaning of his problematic relation to the rabble. At issue in the opening lines is once again the longing for solitude

(*Vereinsamung*). But solitude is never solitary – “we are always among many” (*wir sind immer unter Vielen*),<sup>20</sup> and Zarathustra cautions: “The voice of the herd will also still resound in you” in solitude. You may wish to break from the herd, but you still share “One conscience” with them, they are part of you, so that you are part of them, and in breaking with them you feel their pain. In these lines, the would-be solitary is denied any critical distance or privilege and is situated squarely in the herd, as its present and provenance, so that the problem of solitude becomes, in Cavell’s words: how to come out of the mob?<sup>21</sup> But the mob is not just outside Zarathustra. Following Emerson and the opening gambit of *Schopenhauer as Educator*, the problem is focused on our conformism, our self-satisfaction and complicity in the opinions and values of the day,<sup>22</sup> so that the problem of how to relate to the mob or herd is displaced within the solitary. With this shift, the problem of contempt and hatred by the rabble becomes a problem of self-contempt and self-hatred.

Throughout the book, Zarathustra places remarkable importance on self-contempt (*Selbstverachtung*). Already in the *Preface*, he says: “What is the greatest thing that you can experience? That ist the hour of great contempt [*der grossen Verachtung*]. The hour in which even your happiness becomes repulsive to you [*zum Ekel wird*] and just so your reason and your virtue” (Z I, *Preface* 3). Self-contempt is seen as the indispensable source or incentive for the desire for self-overcoming, so that Zarathustra can say: “I love the great despisers, because they are the great reverers and arrows of longing

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20 “We direct all the good and bad habitual drives against ourselves: in thinking about ourselves, in feeling for and against us [*Empfinden für und gegen uns*], the struggle in us – we never treat ourselves as an individual, but as a twosome or multiplicity; we exercise towards ourselves all social practices (friendship revenge envy) properly. The naive egoism of the animal has been completely altered by our *social integration*: we just can no longer feel a singularity [*Einzigkeit*] of the ego, *we are always among many*. We have split and continue to divide ourselves again and again. The *social drives* (like *enmity envy hatred*) (which presuppose a plurality) have transformed us: we have displaced ‘society’ within ourselves, compressed it, and to retreat into oneself is not a flight from society, but often a discomfoting *dreaming-on and interpreting* of the processes in us according to the scheme of earlier experiences” (Nachlass 1880, 6[80], KSA 9.215–6). Not only do the moral judgements of the social organism in-form our moral sentiments; our very self-relation is constituted by social drives and practices: “We treat ourselves as a multiplicity and bring to these ‘social relations’ all the social habits which we have towards humans animals things” (Nachlass 1880, 6[70], KSA 9.212).

21 See Cavell, “Aversive Thinking,” 47. For Emerson on the mob: “But now we are a mob. Man does not stand in awe of man, nor is his genius admonished to stay at home, to put itself in communication with the internal ocean, but it goes abroad to beg a cup of water of the urns of other men” (Emerson, “Self-Reliance,” 159).

22 “A traveller who had seen many lands and peoples and several of the earth’s continents was asked what quality in men he had discovered everywhere he had gone. He replied: ‘They have a tendency to laziness.’ To many it will seem that he ought rather to have said: ‘They are all timid. They hide themselves behind customs and opinions’” (UM III, SE 1, KSA 1.337). This theme is ubiquitous in *Schopenhauer as Educator*, e. g., SE 7, KSA 1.410: “If a man perceives himself by means of the opinions of others, it is no wonder if he sees in himself nothing but the opinions of others!”

for the other shore [*Ich liebe die grossen Verachtenden, weil sie die grossen Verehrenden sind und Pfeile der Sehnsucht nach dem andern Ufer!*]” (Z I, Preface 4). Self-contempt is also seen as part of a self-destructive dynamic, and one of the most recurrent refrains in *Zarathustra* is that creation, novelty and (self-)transformation presuppose, as their necessary condition, destruction of existing forms (*Grundformen*) and values. Thus, the figure of the Last Human, *der letzte Mensch*, utterly barren and satisfied with its existence, is called “the most contemptible human,” precisely because it is incapable of self-contempt: “Woe! The time is coming of the most contemptible human, who can no longer despise himself [*Wehe! Es kommt die Zeit des verächtlichsten Menschen, der sich selber nicht mehr verachten kann!*]” (Z I, Preface 5). Nonetheless, from the point of view of life-affirmation, self-contempt, contempt for the rabble “within,” houses dangers no less than contempt for the rabble “without.” What, after all, is to distinguish this form of self-contempt from the profoundly life-negating self-contempt of the despisers of the body, or from the pale criminal’s *große Verachtung*, who suffers from himself and condemns himself (Z I, Criminal)? Here, too, we hear Zarathustra recommend *Milde*, restraint in one’s self-contempt: “‘enemy’ you ought to say, but not ‘evil-doer’; ‘sick man’ you ought to say, but not ‘scoundrel’; ‘fool’ you ought to say, not not ‘sinner’ [*‘Feind’ sollt ihr sagen, aber nicht ‘Bösewicht’; ‘Kranker’ sollt ihr sagen, aber nicht ‘Schuft’; ‘Thor’ sollt ihr sagen, aber nicht ‘Sünder’!*]” (Z I, Criminal).

But the key question is: what is to distinguish creative and affirmative self-hatred from sterile and life-negating self-annihilation? And as its title indicates, this is at issue in the discourse *On the Way of Creator*. It is not enough for the would-be solitary to break with the rabble in order to attain the freedom to think and create. “Freedom from”: the negative freedom of contempt and self-contempt for the rabble does not interest Zarathustra. Freedom begins with a creative project or direction, a *Wozu?*, and it is only within a positive, creative process that the negation of the rabble makes any sense. But in a way, this just restates the problem. For the problem is how to create, and how to distinguish creative from (self-)destructive (self-)contempt. This problem is dramatized by Zarathustra as the moment of self-critique, when it dawns on the solitary that contempt for and from and the rabble is a conflict with himself:

But the worst enemy whom you can encounter will always be yourself; you lie in wait for yourself in caves and woods. / Solitary one, you go the way to yourself! And past you yourself leads your way and past your seven devils! / To your own self you will be heretic and witch and soothsayer and fool and doubter and unholy man and villain. / You must want to burn yourself up in your own flame: how could you become new if you did not first become ashes!

Aber der schlimmste Feind, dem du begegnen kannst, wirst du immer dir selber sein; du selber lauerst dir auf in Höhlen und Wäldern. / Einsamer, du gehst den Weg zu dir selber! Und an dir selber führt dein Weg vorbei und an deinen sieben Teufeln! / Ketzer wirst du dir selber sein und Hexe und Wahrsager und Narr und Zweifler und Unheiliger und Bösewicht. / Verbrennen musst du dich wollen in deiner eignen Flamme: wie wolltest du neu werden, wenn du nicht erst Asche geworden bist! (Z I, Creator, KSA 4.82)

Curiously, the solitary's inward way, in "going past" the self (*vorbeiführen*) and the devilish problem of contempt, seems to replicate the outward way of "passing by" (*vorübergehen*) the rabble, which, as Zarathustra has made clear, only exacerbates the problem of contempt. But this would be to miss Zarathustra's point, which concerns the conditions of possibility for creation, *Schaffen*. Drawing once again on the Platonic figure of eros, Zarathustra casts the solitary as a lover (*Liebende*), whose love is great only in bearing and giving birth to something that exceeds, "goes past" and "beyond" the self-that-was, the attained self, letting it "go to ground":

Soitary one, you go the way of the lover: you love yourself and that is why you despise yourself as only lovers despise. / The lover wants to create because he despises! What does he know of love who did not have to despise precisely what he loved! With your love go into your isolation and with your creativity, my brother; and only later will justice hobble after you. / With my tears go into your isolation, my brother. I love him who wants to create over and beyond himself and thus goes to ground. –

Einsamer, du gehst den Weg des Liebenden: dich selbst liebst du und deshalb verachtest du dich, wie nur Liebende verachten. / Schaffen will der Liebende, weil er verachtet! Was weiss Der von Liebe, der nicht gerade verachten musste, was er liebte! / Mit deiner Liebe gehe in deine Vereinsamung und mit deinem Schaffen, mein Bruder; und spät erst wird die Gerechtigkeit dir nachhinken. / Mit meinen Thränen gehe in deine Vereinsamung, mein Bruder. Ich liebe Den, der über sich selber hinaus schaffen will und so zu Grunde geht. – (Z I, Creator, KSA 4.82–3)

When couched in the love of self, self-contempt becomes a creative force, since it redirects our love towards that which we create, allowing our self-that-was to perish for the sake of something that exceeds it, our attained self for an "unattained but attainable self."<sup>23</sup> Such is the logic of self-overcoming, advanced by Zarathustra as the path towards the love of life and unbounded affirmation. Yet, as we know from the speech *On Self-Overcoming*, it is a "crooked path" without a final destination, satisfaction or resting place, one that is marked by "struggle" and "becoming and goal and the contradiction of goals,"<sup>24</sup> a path on which we will inevitably become "opponents" of what we create and love and will subject our love, once again, to our contempt.

"That I must be struggle and becoming and purpose and the contradiction of purposes – alas, whoever guesses my will guesses also on what *crooked* paths it must walk! "Whatever I may create and however I may love it – soon I must be its opponent and oppose my love, thus does my will will it.

<sup>23</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, "History," in *The Complete Essays and Other Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 125.

<sup>24</sup> The teleology and counter-teleology of Life in *Zarathustra* mirrors quite precisely that of Nietzsche's metaphysics of nature in SE 5, KSA 1.380, who, in the face of exemplars of human perfection, "*fühlt sich zum ersten Male am Ziele, dort nämlich, wo sie begreift, dass sie verlernen müsse, Ziele zu haben und dass sie das Spiel des Lebens und Werdens zu hoch gespielt habe.*"

“Dass ich Kampf sein muss und Werden und Zweck und der Zwecke Widerspruch: ach, wer meinen Willen erräth, erräth wohl auch, auf welchen k r u m m e n Wegen er gehen muss! / “Was ich auch schaffe und wie ich’s auch liebe, – bald muss ich Gegner ihm sein und meiner Liebe: so will es mein Wille (Z II, Self-Overcoming, KSA 4.148)

## VIII Reflections on Perfectionism and Self-Overcoming

I turn now to some reflections on perfectionism and self-overcoming. For preliminary orientation, it is important to see that the task of becoming-human, of *Menschwerdung*,<sup>25</sup> as something yet to be attained, is central not just to *Zarathustra*, but also to *Schopenhauer as Educator* and to Emerson’s writings. For Emerson,

History has been mean; our nations have been mobs; we have never seen a man: that divine form we do not yet know, but only the dream and prophecy of such: we do not know the majestic manners which belong to him, which appease and exalt the beholder.<sup>26</sup>

In the idiom of Nietzsche’s metaphysics of nature in *Schopenhauer as Educator*, there are moments when “we see that we, together with the whole of nature, strive towards the human being [*zum Menschen hindrängen*], as something that stands higher over us” (UM III, SE 5, KSA 1.378). At issue for both in these ontological formulations – the non-being of the human or “a man” – is the problem of the *quality* of human life, of human *perfectibility*; for, even if “[h]istory has been mean,” “quality atones for quantity.”<sup>27</sup> The not-yet-being of the human should not, however, be taken to mean that human existence, as it is, is somehow insufficient. On the contrary, *Schopenhauer as Educator* begins by taking up Emerson’s reference to the “divine form” of human existence that would “exalt the beholder.” The divinity or “miracle” of human existence is located by Nietzsche in each and every human being as “Unicum,” which artists alone know how to exalt. For they alone remind us,

that every human is a unique miracle, they dare to show us the human being just as it is, uniquely itself down to every last movement of its muscles, more, that in being thus strictly consistent in its singularity, it is beautiful and worthy of contemplation, new and unbelievable like every work of nature, and not at all tedious.

<sup>25</sup> In SE 5, KSA 1.382, Nietzsche writes of “*jenes Wunder der Verwandlung [...], jene endliche und höchste Menschwerdung, nach welcher alle Natur hindrängt und -treibt, zu ihrer Erlösung von sich selbst.*”

<sup>26</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Character,” in *The Complete Essays and Other Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 378–9.

<sup>27</sup> Emerson, “Character,” 378.

dass jeder Mensch ein einmaliges Wunder ist, sie wagen es, uns den Menschen zu zeigen, wie er bis in jede Muskelbewegung er selbst, er allein ist, noch mehr; dass er in dieser strengen Konsequenz seiner Einzigkeit schön und betrachtenswerth ist, neu und unglaublich wie jedes Werk der Natur und durchaus nicht langweilig (UM III, SE 1, KSA 1.337–8).

But the most direct and succinct formulation of the sufficiency of human nature is Zarathustra's, when he exclaims in the *Preface*: "Not your sins – your sufficiency cries out to heaven, your parsimony of sins cries out to heaven! [*Nicht eure Sünde – eure Genügsamkeit schreit gen Himmel, euer Geiz selbst in eurer Sünde schreit gen Himmel!*]" (Z I, *Preface* 3). Leaving the metaphysics of nature in *Schopenhauer as Educator* behind, Zarathustra radicalises the task of becoming-human as a problem of life, not just culture. The "true human being" (*wahrhafte Mensch*) is now identified, not with the philosopher, artist or saint,<sup>28</sup> but with the dynamic of self-overcoming intrinsic to all forms of life, from which we alone have deviated (*entartet*) and lost our way.

The task of becoming-human is fuelled, not by the insufficiency intrinsic to human nature or to humans as we are, but by conditions under which we live: by an ontology of the present that prevents us from becoming-human and has made us lose our way. Emerson, Nietzsche of *Schopenhauer as Educator* and Zarathustra are all in agreement on this, and there are striking similarities in their diagnoses of the present, how they respond to it, and their proposals for transforming the status quo.

1. All three share a negative gesture as their starting point, a hatred of moralism, of conformism and self-satisfaction (*gegen sich bequeme sein*: UM III, SE 1, KSA 1.337–8). It is expressed in a pathos of disgust (*Ekel*) and contempt (*Verachtung*) for the present – a pathos that is at the same time a pathos of critical hostility, feeding a practice of untimely or "aversive thinking" and a demand for transformation. In *Zarathustra*, as we have seen, all of this is radicalised: the ethical-cultural horizon of *Schopenhauer as Educator* and Emerson has been shattered and opened up to the problem of life; critique has become the total critique of life-negating values, Nietzsche's contempt in *Schopenhauer as Educator* has become "the great contempt" (*die große Verachtung*), and his disgust for literary journals of the day, scholars and the so-called educated (*Gebildeten*) (UM III, SE 8, KSA 1.425; SE 3, KSA 1.358) has become a disgust (*Ekel*) at life: a revulsion-rejection of life for producing life-negating attitudes and the life-poisoning attitudes of the rabble or masses. But the "great contempt" Zarathustra prizes is before all else *self-contempt*, and this touches on a second important connection between Emerson, *Schopenhauer as Educator* and Zarathustra.

2. Zarathustra's contempt is specifically *not* that of his ape, a contempt for the masses from a safe distance, because he acknowledges his complicity in the masses and herd values. The problem of conformism complicates our relation to the *Gesindel*, which stands for a relation we bear to others and to ourselves; we are part of the problem, not

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28 "Das sind jene wahrhaften Menschen, jene Nicht-mehr-Thiere, die Philosophen, Künstler und Heiligen" (UM III, SE 5, KSA 1.380).



the solution. This is also clear in Emerson,<sup>29</sup> for whom, as we saw, history has produced mobs, never a man. From this it follows that we are now “a mob” that looks to others for guidance, rather than communing with “the internal ocean” in each of us: “But now we are a mob. Man does not stand in awe of man, nor is his genius admonished to stay at home, to put itself in communication with the internal ocean, but it goes abroad to beg a cup of water of the urns of other men.”<sup>30</sup>

In all three cases, then, contempt for others is bound up with self-contempt, critique of others with self-critique, so that the problem for each of us becomes: how to come out of the mob? How to free ourselves from the chains of conformity and recover our uniqueness as individuals? As Nietzsche puts it in SE 1:

The person who does not want to belong to the mass need only desist from being complacent towards himself; let him follow his conscience, which calls to him: “Be yourself! What you now do, believe, desire, none of that is you.”

Der Mensch, welcher nicht zur Masse gehören will, braucht nur aufzuhören, gegen sich bequem zu sein; er folge seinem Gewissen, welches ihm zuruft: “sei du selbst! Das bist du alles nicht, was du jetzt thust, meinst, begehrst.” (UM III, SE 1, KSA 1.338)

For Emerson, as much as for Zarathustra and Nietzsche in *Schopenhauer as Educator*, our only recourse is a practice of critical, untimely or aversive thinking towards our conformity, for the sake of transforming it. But negation alone is insufficient for the perfectionist project they share, and it harbours the danger of descending into utter self-contempt, a barren and destructive self-hatred. In all three cases, the practice of critical destruction is animated by a profoundly affirmative impulse, expressed most beautifully in the metaphysical idiom of *Schopenhauer as Educator*:

For this reason the one who is truthful feels the sense of his activity to be metaphysical, explicable from the laws of an other and higher, profoundly affirmative life: however much all that he does appears as a destroying and shattering of the laws of this life.

Deshalb empfindet der Wahrhaftige den Sinn seiner Thätigkeit als einen metaphysischen, aus Gesetzen eines andern und höhern Lebens erklärbaren und im tiefsten Verstande bejahenden: so sehr auch alles, was er thut, als ein Zerstören und Zerbrechen der Gesetze dieses Lebens erscheint.” (UM III, SE 4, KSA 1.372).

3. The third important connection between Zarathustra and the perfectionism of Emerson and *Schopenhauer as Educator* concerns this affirmative impulse, which they invest in an affirmative relation of love, an erotic attraction to an image or “shadow” of

<sup>29</sup> Emerson, “Character,” 378.

<sup>30</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Self-Reliance,” in *The Complete Essays and Other Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 159.

human perfection: the *Erzieher*, the *Übermensch*,<sup>31</sup> Emerson's "representative men."<sup>32</sup> For only where an exemplar of perfection is nonetheless "representative" of oneself, can it act as an incentive to perfectionist self-transformation. It is this moment of love, Nietzsche insists in *Schopenhauer as Educator*, that makes self-contempt creative:

for it is love alone that can bestow on the soul, not only a clear, discriminating and self-contemptuous view of itself, but also the desire to look beyond itself and to seek with all its might for a higher self as yet still concealed from it. Thus only he who has attached his heart to some great man receives thereby the *first consecration to culture*; the sign of that consecration is that one is ashamed of oneself without any accompanying feeling of distress, that one comes to hate one's own narrowness and shrivelled nature.

denn in der Liebe allein gewinnt die Seele nicht nur den klaren, zertheilenden und verachtenden Blick für sich selbst, sondern auch jene Begierde, über sich hinaus zu schauen und nach einem irgendwo noch verborgnen höheren Selbst mit allen Kräften zu suchen. Also nur der, welcher sein Herz an irgend einen grossen Menschen gehängt hat, empfängt damit die erste Weihe der Kultur; ihr Zeichen ist Selbstbeschämung ohne Verdrossenheit, Hass gegen die eigne Enge und Verschrumpftheit. (UM III, SE 6, KSA 1.385)

These lines mirror Emerson's "representative men," whose practice of aversion warns against complacency and the temptation to conform to the idols of the day, while their pursuits of self-reliance remind us of our unattained, but attainable selves. "So all that is said of the wise man by Stoic or Oriental or modern essayist, describes to each reader his own idea, describes his unattained but attainable self."<sup>33</sup> As images of perfection, our chosen "representative men" – or women, we might add – act as an incentive to collective self-transformation (the "circle of culture" or *Kreis der Kultur*),<sup>34</sup> yet this is

31 In a note, Nietzsche describes the *Übermensch* as the shadow of a perfection yet to come: "Perfection throws its shadow ahead: I call this shadow *beauty* – the lightest and stillest of all things came to me as a shadow of the *Übermensch*. [Voraus wirft die Vollendung ihren Schatten: *Schönheit* heisse ich diesen Schatten – das Leichteste und Stillste aller Dinge kam zu mir als Schatten des *Übermenschen*]" (Nachlass 1883, 13[1], KSA 10.427).

32 The book of essays *Representative Men* (1850) was based on lectures given by Emerson in the 1840s, and includes essays on Plato, Goethe, Montaigne and Shakespeare. It is a recurrent notion in Emerson's writings. See, e. g., Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Poet," in *The Complete Essays and Other Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 321; "Experience," in *The Complete Essays and Other Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 359; and "Nominalist and Realist," in *The Complete Essays and Other Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 435. On "representativeness," see Cavell, "Aversive Thinking," 52–3, 58–9.

33 Emerson, "History," 125.

34 UM III, SE 6, KSA 1.385: "Mit diesem Vorhaben stellt er sich in den Kreis der Kultur; denn sie ist das Kind der Selbsterkenntnis jedes Einzelnen und des Ungenügens an sich. Jeder, der sich zu ihr bekennt, spricht damit aus: 'ich sehe etwas Höheres und Menschlicheres über mir, als ich selber bin, hilft mir alle, es zu erreichen, wie ich jedem helfen will, der Gleiches erkennt und am Gleichen leidet: damit endlich wieder der Mensch entstehe, welcher sich voll und unendlich fühlt im Erkennen und Lieben, im Schauen und Können, und mit aller seiner Ganzheit an und in der Natur hängt, als Richter und Werthmesser der Dinge.'"

a relation governed by a complex reciprocity of difference – one that brings us into the region of Zarathustra's relations of love-hate. Like the agonal relations of love-hate among equals described by Zarathustra in *On War*, the love of our chosen exemplar in *Schopenhauer as Educator* is agonal through and through: a relation of love and hate, bound together in the reciprocity of play (*Spiel, Nachahmung des Kriege*s), where each antagonist encounters the other as both a stimulant to deeds (a provocation, seduction: *Reiz*) and a resistance (or limit: *Grenze des Maßes*) to their destructive potential.<sup>35</sup> Cavell has described this relation so well in his account of Nietzschean-Emersonian friendship as one constrained by “recognition and negation.”<sup>36</sup> My chosen exemplar can only be “representative” for me if I am attracted or drawn by it to recognise my own thoughts, my desires for a possible but unattained self in it. Yet, this “higher self” is also feared and hated for the severity of the demand it makes on me, and I negate it: I reject it in favour of a comfortable acceptance of my present, attained self. My (agonal) resistance to self-recognition in the other can only be broken by negation: the exemplar's enmity towards my present attainments and his (agonal) provocation in contesting them. Only then will “we recognize our own rejected thoughts” in our exemplar's, so that “[t]hey come back to us with a certain alienated majesty.”<sup>37</sup>

It would be worthwhile (but beyond the scope of this essay) to pursue Cavell's analysis of friendship further to the figures of the friend-enemy and the *Übermensch* in *Zarathustra*. It is, however, also important to keep in mind what divides this text from *Schopenhauer as Educator* and Emerson's work. As I have tried to show, the problem of life-negation and the task of life-affirmation are central to *Zarathustra* and its notion of self-overcoming. Love-hate is not just the affective signature of agonal relations among warriors of knowledge; it is intrinsic to the affective economy of life herself, and so becomes the affective signature of life-affirmation from a radically immanent standpoint, and the key to overcoming Zarathustra's disgust at life. In *Schopenhauer as Educator*, by contrast, where the question of the affirmation of life arises, it is subject to an unresolved equivocation. On the one hand, Nietzsche rejects Schopenhauer's practical inference from the meaninglessness of life to the negation of life or the will (*nicht sein sollen*). Instead, Nietzsche asks the prior question concerning the standpoint

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35 On love and hate in *Schopenhauer as Educator*: “Erst wenn wir, in der jetzigen oder einer kommenden Geburt, selber in jenen erhabensten Orden der Philosophen, der Künstler und der Heiligen aufgenommen sind, wird uns auch ein neues Ziel unserer Liebe und unseres Hasses gesteckt sein, – einstweilen haben wir unsre Aufgabe und unsern Kreis von Pflichten, unsern Hass und unsre Liebe” (UM III, SE 5, KSA 1.383). On the archaic Greek *agon* as a competitive play of forces (*Wettspiel der Kräfte*), see CV 5, KSA 1.789: “daß, in einer natürlichen Ordnung der Dinge, es immer mehrere Genies giebt, die sich gegenseitig zur That reizen, wie sie sich auch gegenseitig in der Grenze des Maaßes halten.” See also Nachlass 1871/72, 16[26], KSA 7.404: “Der Wettkampf entsteht aus dem Kriege? Als ein künstlerisches Spiel und Nachahmung?” See also Herman W. Siemens, “Review of D. Conway: *Nietzsche and the Political*,” *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 36 (2009), 207–16.

36 Cavell, “Aversive Thinking,” 59.

37 Emerson, “Self-Reliance,” 145.

of judgement, and argues that a *gerechtes Urteil*, a just judgement, requires first a transformation of the evaluating perspective and a transformation of life itself into something better (UM III, SE 3, KSA 1.363). On the other hand, his untimely critique of the times spills over into a metaphysical rejection of time itself and becoming (*Werden*), as “hollow, deceptive, superficial and worthy of our contempt,” in favour of being (*Sein*).<sup>38</sup> By the time of *Zarathustra*, this equivocation has been overcome. Affirmation or the love towards life, Zarathustra tells us, presupposes overcoming the human as it is, that is: overcoming our estrangement from being human by recuperating the dynamic of self-overcoming through agonal relations of love-hate towards our chosen “shadow” of perfection.

## Epilogue

In this essay, I have tried to understand the thought of self-overcoming as it is thematised in *Zarathustra*, and the key problems with which it is bound up, in relation to Nietzsche’s Emersonian perfectionism in *Schopenhauer as Educator*. It is what I would call a “prismatic reading” of the book, in line with my opening metaphor, rather than a “narratological reading.” Echewing an overall interpretation of the book, and the ways in which the thought is inflected by the narrative, a prismatic reading attends instead to relations between *Zarathustra* and other texts in Nietzsche’s oeuvre and asks how a given thought – self-overcoming in its “perfectionist” incarnation in *Schopenhauer as Educator*, in our case – is taken up from elsewhere and refracted in the idiosyncratic style of *Zarathustra*. It makes perfect sense for a prismatic reading to focus on key parts of *Zarathustra* where the concept of self-overcoming and related problems are thematised. But abstracting from their place in the narrative-dramatic unfolding of the book, and how this is to be understood, is clearly questionable. What if, for example, thoughts presented in a rather doctrinal manner in the early parts of the book are complicated, even undermined in the fourth part? What if part four is a satyr-play, the fourth and closing drama to the “tragic-seriousness”<sup>39</sup> of the first three parts? What if, in the course of the narrative, Zarathustra’s “teachings” turn out to be “anti-teachings”?<sup>40</sup> A prismatic

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38 “Jener Heroismus der Wahrhaftigkeit besteht darin, eines Tages aufzuhören, sein Spielzeug zu sein. Im Werden ist Alles hohl, betrügerisch, flach und unserer Verachtung würdig; das Räthsel, welches der Mensch lösen soll, kann er nur aus dem Sein lösen, im So- und nicht Anderssein, im Unvergänglichen. Jetzt fängt er an, zu prüfen, wie tief er mit dem Werden, wie tief mit dem Sein verwachsen ist – eine ungeheure Aufgabe steigt vor seiner Seele auf: alles Werdende zu zerstören, alles Falsche an den Dingen an’s Licht zu bringen” (UM III, SE 4, KSA 1.374).

39 See Z I, Reading: “Wer auf den höchsten Bergen steigt, der lacht über alle Trauer-Spiele und Trauer-Ernste,” also cited as the epigraph for Part III of *Zarathustra* (KSA 4.192).

40 Werner Stegmaier, “Anti-Lehren: Szene und Lehre in Nietzsches *Also sprach Zarathustra*,” in Volker Gerhardt (ed.), *Friedrich Nietzsche: Also sprach Zarathustra*, Berlin 2000, 191–224.

approach is warranted only if, in abstracting from the complexities of Nietzsche's narrative in favour of a laser-like focus on key passages, it provides fresh perspectives on the issue in question and its relation to sustained lines of thought across his oeuvre. But the danger of misapprehension remains.

The supposition behind prismatic readings of *Zarathustra* is that they are what makes the book most fruitful for understanding Nietzsche's thought. They also avoid overly "internalist" readings and discussions about who or what the various figures represent and what their interactions mean. As some have argued, part of the charm and enchantment of narratives is how they draw us to confabulate, to draw on our own life stories to make sense of them.<sup>41</sup> Narrative therefore hardly invites agreement, and this is even more the case for *Zarathustra* which is supremely playful and treacherous at the same time. A good measure of these interpretative difficulties is the chasm dividing (mostly anglophone) "tragic" readers like Paul Loeb,<sup>42</sup> for whom Zarathustra performatively instantiates the life-affirmative counter-ideal to the ascetic dispositions he teaches, from (mostly German) readers like Claus Zittel,<sup>43</sup> who emphasise the parodistic and, above all, *self*-parodistic implications of the book's composition, especially in part four. Without doubt, the parodistic reading presents the most powerful challenge to the interpretations proposed in this essay, since, when taken to the extreme, it undermines Zarathustra's teachings with nihilistic consequences that point to the implosion of Nietzsche's philosophical project in failure.<sup>44</sup> Without attempting to engage with this reading, or its tragic opposite across the divide, much less offering a counter-interpretation of the narrative, I will hazard a few remarks in support of the prismatic approach taken in this essay.

It is hardly unique to *Zarathustra* for Nietzsche to throw into question positions and arguments he has advanced. This is what Eric Blondel has aptly called the movement of "saying and unsaying" (*dire et dédire*)<sup>45</sup> characteristic of Nietzsche's texts: contesting a position and then retracting his contention, opposing a claim only to undo his counterclaim, positing and then throwing his posit in question. But this is by no means a self-destructive procedure. At stake for Blondel is Nietzsche's vocation to make his texts be the saying and yes-saying of life, and this movement enables him to hold a philosophical discourse, while undoing its claim to closure, which is always a closure against the surge of life. As Blondel sees it, Nietzsche's texts contain, yet exceed philosophical discourse, and it is this excess or "rest" that often performs the movement of unsaying. The "rest" stands for everything that resists discursive analysis and synthesis, "what inside Nietzsche's text remains outside discourse, whatever we call it, be it drives, rhetoric,

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<sup>41</sup> Stegmaier, "Anti-Lehren," 195.

<sup>42</sup> Paul S. Loeb, *The Death of Nietzsche's Zarathustra*, Cambridge 2010.

<sup>43</sup> Claus Zittel, *Das ästhetische Kalkül von Friedrich Nietzsches "Also sprach Zarathustra"*, Würzburg 2011.

<sup>44</sup> Zittel, *Das ästhetische Kalkül*, 126–8, 223.

<sup>45</sup> Eric Blondel, *Nietzsche: The Body and Culture*, trans. Sean Hand, London 1991, 29–30, 248.

breaks, incoherences, Versuch, music, comedy, solemnity, art, allusions or language games.”<sup>46</sup> Narrativity, parody, self-parody: these too belong to “the rest,” especially in *Zarathustra*, and can perhaps be understood along the lines of GS 107. Nietzsche there describes flights into mockery and self-mockery:

looking at and down at ourselves and, from an artistic distance, laughing *at* ourselves or crying *at* ourselves; we have to discover the *hero* no less than the *fool* in our passion for knowledge; we must now and then take pleasure in our folly in order to be able to stay pleased with our wisdom!

aus einer künstlerischen Ferne her, über uns lachen oder über uns weinen; wir müssen den Helden und ebenso den Narren entdecken, der in unsrer Leidenschaft der Erkenntnis steckt, wir müssen unsrer Thorheit ab und zu frohwerden, um unsrer Weisheit froh bleiben zu können! (GS 107)

The fool’s cap (*Schelmenkappe*), despite its “exuberant, floating, dancing, mocking, childish, and blissful art,” does not invalidate knowledge or the insights gained. It is rather what makes it possible to devote one’s life to “the passion for knowledge” and endure the contradiction between life (conditioned by “erring in the most fundamental sense”<sup>47</sup>) and the knower’s truthfulness or probity (*Redlichkeit*) without “disgust or suicide as a consequence,” without even bitterness. Self-parody here does not oppose, exclude or annul the tragic, anymore than the laughter it provokes smothers our tears; we remain “at bottom weighty and serious beings and more weights than humans.” The art of parody is to pinpoint the place where the tragic hero and the fool in us collide, the point of ambivalence from which the tragic and the comic both come to life.<sup>48</sup> And when it succeeds, parody gives us – and Zarathustra – the distance to endure the passion for knowledge without going to ground. Parody does not negate or annul the tragic but lends it a different pathos through laughter and the distance it affords. It is a “leave

<sup>46</sup> Blondel, *Nietzsche*, 5, 7.

<sup>47</sup> “Life is the condition for knowing. Erring is the condition for life, indeed erring in the most fundamental sense. Knowing about the errors does not cancel them! That is nothing bitter! We must love and cultivate erring, it is the womb of knowing. Art as the cultivation of delusion – our cult. To love and advance life for the sake of knowing, to love and advance erring deluding for the sake of life. To give life an aesthetic significance, *to develop our taste for it*, is the fundamental condition for the passion for knowledge. In this way we discover here as well a night and day as a condition of life for us: Wanting-to-know and wanting-to-err are ebb and flow. If *one* rules absolutely, the human being goes to ground; and with it the capacity [for knowledge]” (Nachlass 1881, 11[162], KSA 9.504).

<sup>48</sup> In Nietzsche’s early notes and *The Birth of Tragedy*, we see him looking for the common source of tragedy and comedy. See, e.g., Nachlass 1869, 1[67], KSA 7.30, and BT 7, KSA 1.57. Also BT, Attempt 4: “Und welche Bedeutung hat dann, physiologisch gefragt, jener Wahnsinn, aus dem die tragische wie die komische Kunst erwuchs, der dionysische Wahnsinn?” In the lecture course *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur I* (1874), Nietzsche writes of Greek parody: “Das Parodische wird sofort gefühlt, momentan der Unterschied im ἥθος der Tragödie u. Komödie bedeckt” (KGW II 5.160). See also Werner Stegmaier, “Nietzsches Zukunft,” in *Europa im Geisterkrieg: Studien zu Nietzsche*, ed. Andrea Christian Bertino, Cambridge 2018, 549–80: 563–4 on this point.

taking” (*Abschied nehmen*) from tragedy and tragic seriousness – the “earth-bound seriousness and earth-bound misery of aforesaid [Erden-Ernst und Erden-Jammer von Ehedem]” (GM III 3) – not their dissolution. The same must surely apply to part four, if it is read as the satyr-play, closing the tetralogy with the first three parts or tragic-plays. Little is known about the satyr-play in ancient Greek tragedy, even less in Nietzsche’s time,<sup>49</sup> but it is unthinkable that it somehow invalidated or annulled the tragedy staged in the other plays, rather than giving the public a way to live with it.<sup>50</sup>

The dynamic of saying and unsaying can also be cast as a strategy of “agonal critique,” in which the moment of unsaying, far from undermining Nietzsche’s critique of a given value or position, is the summit of critique where it recoils upon the critic, throwing his standpoint and his form of questioning into question.<sup>51</sup> It is not therefore clear how Zarathustra’s self-parody, especially in the *Eselfest* of part four, should be taken. Could it be the moment in the book where the critiques in the earlier parts recoil upon him, implicating the critic in his critiques and complicating the project of transvaluation – without, however, invalidating them? Throughout the book, Zarathustra’s failure to incorporate and enact his teachings is repeated,<sup>52</sup> so much so that one could say that teaching is the central problem of the book. In the case of self-overcoming: how to teach an activity that can only come within each of us? As I have tried to show, the problem of teaching is bound up with the question of the “us,” the teacher’s addressees and how he treats them. Thus, Zarathustra reprimands his ape, not because he is wrong,

49 See Richard Seaford, “Satyric Drama,” in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, Oxford 2012 (retrieved 24 June 2022). Loeb, *The Death of Nietzsche’s Zarathustra*, draws on late 20th century research on the satyr-play for his account without, however, asking what Nietzsche could (not) have known, given the philology of his time.

50 Concerning the satirical verses of the Demeter-cult, Nietzsche makes the remark: “dieser Cult wie der des Dionysus hatte auch ein doppeltes Gesicht: Lachen und Spotten als Gegenmittel gegen eine ekstatische Trauer,” and adds the note: “Die Griechen hielten es für nöthig, sich förmlich von Zeit zu Zeit von allem Muthwillen Bosheiten und Unanständigkeiten zu entladen; auch dies war religiös festgeordnet. Und gerade in den Zeiten der ekstatischen Erregungen kam die Natur so wieder ins Gleichgewicht. In Tragödie und Satyrspiel ein Nachklang” (*Geschichte der griechischen Litteratur I*, KGW II 5.147). See Loeb, *The Death of Nietzsche’s Zarathustra*, 96–7 and 112, on this point. According to Seaford, however, Greek tragedy lost its original connection with Dionysian themes, and the satyr-plays served to “reconcile the audience to the loss of Dionysiac content from tragedy” (Richard Seaford, *Dionysos*, Oxford 2016, 88–9). He also warns that “it is too simple to see the function of satyric drama as merely to alleviate the effect of the seriousness of tragedy with comic relief, which could after all have been provided by comedy” (Seaford, “Satyric Drama”).

51 See Herman W. Siemens, *Agonal Perspectives on Nietzsche’s Philosophy of Critical Transvaluation*, Berlin 2021, esp. 27–8, 106 ff.

52 For example: “Then a laughter broke out around me. Alas, how this laughter tore my guts and slit open my heart! And it spoke to me one last time: ‘Oh Zarathustra, your fruits are ripe but you are not ripe for your fruits! [Da geschah ein Lachen um mich. Wehe, wie diess Lachen mir die Eingeweide zerriss und das Herz aufschlitzte! / Und es sprach zum letzten Male zu mir: ‘Oh Zarathustra, deine Früchte sind reif, aber du bist nicht reif für deine Früchte!’]” (Z II, Hour, KSA 4.189–90).



but because he treats the mob with contempt. The problem of teaching is further complicated by the teacher's implication in the problem of the mob, which then becomes a problem of our self-relation, not just our relation to others: how to come out of the mob? But none of this invalidates the thought of self-overcoming or Zarathustra's critique of the mob (within). If self-parody can be seen as a form of self-contempt, the Nietzschean-Emersonian question remains open: is it the prelude to creative self-transformation or just self-destructive?

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