The Naïveté of a Strong Heart: Nietzsche's Antipodal Theology as a Response to Nihilism

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ABSTRACT
Friedrich Nietzsche, like all great writers, but even more than most, challenges. He is, one could say, provocation itself. And of course Nietzche is, or rather *was*, an atheist—perhaps the key figure in the formidable group of late 19th-century God-killers such as Darwin, Marx and Freud. Yet Nietzsche's work has always been of great value to religious folk, especially Christians, and perhaps more so in our own day then in his, when he was, like the madman of his famous parable, before his time. Christians cannot ignore Nietzsche—they may revile him, but they may not forget him, however much they would like to echo his own felicitous remark that they "have a lot to be silent about on this matter." In this essay I draw a rough portrait of Nietzsche's thought vis-à-vis his critique of Christianity. While spatial constraints restrict a deeper contextualization of this critique within the complex whole of his work (if, indeed, there is such a whole), I draw out several key Nietzschean tropes in my analysis and exhume several key figures of 19th-century literature in order to set the stage for a fuller understanding of the problems, possibilities, and paradoxes of Nietzsche's writings *vis-à-vis* the Christian religion, and the postmodern age.

Unmoved is my depth: but it sparkles with swimming enigmas and laughter.
– Nietzsche's Zarathustra

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) wrote in such a readable and stylish manner, and with such verve, that he often lulls us into thinking that what he is saying may be readily understood. It is not—witness the plethora of Nietzsches scholars have handed to us in the past century: proto-fascist, aesthetic humanist, existentialist, anarchist, nihilist, psychoanalyst… or any combination or the above. One must constantly check oneself when reading Nietzsche, evaluating and re-evaluating the richness and subtlety of his work, which speaks on many levels. Not only in style and force does Nietzsche resemble his Danish precursor Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), but also in the foundations and aims of their work do these two meet, arising as they do out of remarkably similar environments.[1] One difference *is,* however, apparent: Nietzsche was not attempting a new Christian Reformation; unlike the author of *Fear and Trembling*, he did not wish to salvage Christianity from "Christendom" but to lay both to rest in the dustbin of history. Nietzsche's battle cry was the heralding of the Death of God in 1882—a proclamation much misunderstood by Christians and atheists alike, one century ago and in our own era.

God Killing

At the beginning and end of every word on Nietzsche and Christianity lies the infamous parable of the madman, in *The Gay Science* (§125). This evocative and controversial parable is Nietzsche's most famous extract. Unfortunately, it is too often "extracted"—both the words "God is dead" from the rest of the parable, and the parable itself from the author's larger critique of Christianity and analysis of nihilism. For those who approach Nietzsche with preconceived ideas (often either dismissive or naively favorable), there are some surprises here. Most striking, perhaps, is, one the one hand, the *despair* of the madman, who is in some degree Nietzsche himself, and the contrasting self-satisfaction and glibness of the crowd. Who are these people? Not Christians, but rather Schleiermacher's "cultured despisers" or "salon atheists"—pompous and assured skeptics who do not see the ramifications, both positive and negative, in the death of God, an act in which, it seems, they have played a decisive role.

The question of God, it must be underscored, is for Nietzsche less a metaphysical problem than a psychological one. God as a psychological fact, may once have been very much alive, but he—his factuality—has been *killed* by moderns.[2] Christians and Jews, in particular, or anyone conversant with the Judeo-Christian Bible, will recognize Nietzsche's use of religious language: not only does he utilize Jesus' favorite pedagogical tool, the parable, but his madman evokes Isaiah or Jeremiah, Hebrew prophets who rebuke the people for their indifference, and lament the fate that awaits them if they do not make amends for their ways.[3] As Walter Kaufmann says, "Nietzsche is not saying… you have been told that there is a God, but verily I say unto you, There is no God" (Kaufmann 100). What he does say is something quite different: "God is dead… *we have killed him!*" Nietzsche was not concerned with the existence of God—he would probably have agreed with Protagoras that one can say with certainty nothing on this matter—but he was concerned with the *use,* or one could say, the *abuse* of God, both when "alive" and when "dead." In short, Nietzsche's proclamation is an attempt at a diagnosis of contemporary civilization; it is not a metaphysical speculation about ultimate reality.

The Specter of Nihilism

Without the Christian faith, you, no less than nature and history, will become for yourselves un monstre et un chaos.
– Blaise Pascal

The Death of God is a momentous event, fraught with ambivalence and ambiguity. As mentioned above, Nietzsche's was not the fashionable atheism of the salon culture of his day, nor one (like Sartre's) that is meant to ensure human responsibility; neither is it the one-sided scientism which refuses to give any room to the spiritual dimension of human existence. He was deeply aware of the specter of nihilism—formulated best in Dostoevky's (or, Ivan Karamazov's) grand dictum that if God does not (or ceases to) exist, then *everything is permitted*.

This brings us to what Kaufmann has called "Nietzsche's greatest and most persistent problem"—the channeling, or sublating of nihilism. God is dead; but, as the madman wails, *how are we to live in such a wake*? how are we, "the murderers of all murderers" to "comfort ourselves" now that we have "unchained this earth from its sun?"

Nietzsche saw both the value and the dangers of nihilism, which in denying God seems to rob everything of meaning and value. But this conclusion, according to Nietzsche, is in fact a fallacy: the assumption that if some single standard is not good for everyone and for all time, then no standard is good for anyone at any time. (Nehamas 70-71) Nietzsche calls this "weak nihilism"—i.e., an appraisal of nihilism from the eyes of epistemological absolutism, the mode of knowing under the eyes of God, where the choice is stark: God or *nihil*—and where nothing, being not–God, is "evil." Now that God is dead, Nietzsche insists, we do not need to maintain such a view. Dostoevsky (once again, via Ivan Karamazov) says, "those who do not believe in God will bring in socialism, anarchy, and the re-organization of society according to a new scheme. But… it really boils down to the same damned thing—they're all the same old questions, they're just approached from a different angle" (*Karamazov* 281). Nietzsche would concur, but for him this is, if a possible and unfortunate consequence of disbelief, hardly a *necessary* one. There can also be such a thing as "strong nihilism," or, more properly, the "nihilism of a strong heart."

Nietzsche is a proponent, in some ways the father of perspectivism—as epistemology, method of inquiry, and way of life. Perspectivism is not to be confused with relativism, which tends to fall prey to self-contradiction in some form of the Liar's Paradox. Rather than being a call to abandon valuation, perpectivism gives impetus to *new valuations* that do not *deny* but *sublate,* or, in terms less Hegelian and more Nietzschean, *transvalue* the authority of the old valuations. For Nietzsche, this is obvious: all "free spirits" will recognize that "all is in fact interpretation, and yet… in this realization [is found] not an obstacle to producing new ideas and values but a spur toward it" (Nehamas 5). Let me sum up the impact for Nietzsche of the death, or better, the "killing" of God: the deicide is both a tragic event and a precondition for the possibility of new, higher existence, a life of "joyful wisdom." Nietzsche hopes, as Ofelia Schutte says, to "reverse the values of nihilism in favor of an affirmation of life" (Schutte 3). Like the prophet Isaiah, he wishes to find greatness out of pain and anxiousness, to redeem and give hope. Out of the ashes of the dead deity will rise a new perspective on values set deeply within the immanence of the world—one which is a celebration of the earth, the body, and the human capacity for creative activity.

Nietzsche and Christianity: Four Levels of Critique

In order to come to grips with Nietzsche's many and often contradictory comments on Christianity—comments which, true to his penchant for aphorism, are scattered throughout all of his books (though most abundant in the tetrad of *Thus Spake Zarathustra, The Genealogy of Morals, Beyond Good and Evil, and The Anti-Christ*)—I would like to put forth a loose schematization of these in terms of four levels. In this I borrow from R. J. Hollingdale, after Kaufmann the foremost commentator on Nietzsche. But where Hollingdale sees three levels of the Nietzschean critique, I add a fourth. These are, briefly: 1) **Christendom**—Christianity as institution, as church-in-the-world; particularly exemplified in the idea of the Christian nation (of Nietzsche and Kierkegaard's day); 2. **Christian belief**—the dogma and beliefs contained in and perpetuated by the church, and accepted, for the most part, by believers; 3. **Christianity**—the religion of Paul and the Gospels (or, at least, John), which centers on the death and resurrection of the Messiah, the Christ as Son of God; and 4. **Jesus the Evangel**—what Hollingdale calls "Christianness"; i.e., Heidegger's *Christlichkeit*, the mode of being manifested in the life of Jesus of Nazareth, which comes to us primarily through the Synoptic Gospels.

On Christendom

Of the church in the world, Nietzsche has little to say. He is, it would seem, unconcerned with the more obvious failings of Christendom; he sought to go much deeper than Voltaire's childish cry of "Écrasez l'infâme!" Nietzsche's infamy is not simply or even primarily the Church. This level, of what Paul Tillich might call "empty theism," is left for Marx and Kierkegaard to defame. If anything, Nietzsche saw the church of his day as little more than a shadow; nihilism had, for all intents and purposes, already conquered. The problem lies not in the abuses of the church so much as the abuses of the Christian conscience in the wake of God's death.

On Christian belief

This is the realm of Christian belief and dogma as developed over the 2000-year history of the church—particularly since that fateful day at Milvian Bridge in 312 CE when the emperor Constantine chose a Christian symbol to assure victory over his pagan enemies. Nietzsche begins his critique at this level, flatly denouncing Christian belief as the fluff of overt political scheming, nothing but "lies and deception" (*Will* 159) used as a means of religious imperialism—a way for Christianity, a Judaic sect, to gain credence and eventual domination in the pagan Greco-roman world of the Gentiles. Eventually, "absurdities" such as "belief in God, soul, sin, redemption, grace, punishment, spirits, the kingdom of God, the Last Judgement, eternal life" (*Anti-Christ* 15)—the fabrications of Christian proselytizers—actually came to be believed, even by the Christian leaders themselves. These comments are the least ambiguous of the Nietzschean critique, and also the least interesting, because they ultimately rest on very little, save Nietzsche's loathing for St. Paul and the hegemony of Christian belief in European history. He sees duplicity in the "creator" of Christianity, the Pharisee from Tarsus: "[T]he genius of Paul," he remarks, "consists [in the realization] that to disvalue 'the world' he *needed* the belief in immortality, that the concept 'Hell' [would] master even Rome" (*Anti-Christ* 58).

On Christianity

Nietzsche could not be satisfied with this rather unfounded historical interpretation of early Christian misdoing. After all, he was not doing history but rather "genealogy," which in his definition leaves more room for a discussion of the mythological and psychological origins and developments within the growth of particular ideas and beliefs. Nietzsche goes beyond Feuerbach, Marx, and even Kierkegaard in focusing his critique on the heart of Christianity—the religion born out of certain elements long latent in Judaism, but only brought to frui-

tion with Paul and other New Testament scribes, who fused these with certain Hellenistic tendencies, particularly (Platonic) dualism.

Nietzsche draws the origins of Christianity out of a level of resentment (or, more properly, the French *ressentiment*) felt, he says, among the Jews as an oppressed and long-suffering people. Hating with simmering bitterness the power of their oppressors—whether Egyptian, Babylonian, or Roman—while at the same time envying them their power, there arose among the Jews a view of life as suffering and guilt, the origins of what Nietzsche labels (with undisguised contempt) the "slave morality." *Ressentiment* was most pronounced among the lowest of the low, finding a voice in Jewish apocalyptics and radical sects preaching revenge and retribution, against not just the Romans but also the Jewish elite who had turned away from their God. For Nietzsche, these words of Paul sum up Christianity as the religion of the herd: "God hath chosen the *weak* things of the world, the *foolish* things of the world, the *base* things of the world which are despised" (*Anti-Christ* §51). Out of this comes the invention of sin and the establishment of a Zoroastrian/Manichaean dichotomy of Good and Evil.[4] Thus, says Nietzsche, Christianity perpetuates its power by purporting to be the principal (or sole) purveyor of healing and forgiveness of sin—which it had in fact invented and bequeathed to the "fallen world."

Thus, Nietzsche's polemic against Christianity—as the religion of sin and redemption—is based in his distaste for the "slave revolt in morality" inaugurated by Jews but fulfilled (literally) with a vengeance in the Christian heresy.[5] It is with this trope, of slave or herd morality that Nietzsche connects all those social movements he so despises—the French Revolution, democracy, socialism, anarchism—all of which, he claims, are not rejection of but rather culminations of the Christian spirit of ressentiment: a unique and powerful blending of hostility, animosity, and revenge, fuelled by apocalyptic yearning and a recognition of one's own present impotence. This is not to say, as many have claimed, that Nietzsche is an "immoralist" or hedonist. He insists that, just as he denies morality he also rejects immorality ("there is no *reason* for it," is his rather off-hand conclusion). Furthermore,

> It goes without saying that I do not deny–unless I am a fool–that many actions called immoral ought to be avoided and resisted, or that many called moral ought to be done and encouraged–but that I think the one should be enouraged and the other avoided *for other reasons than hitherto.* (*Dawn* §103)

Nietzsche's critique of Christianity is not so much against the particular norms involved (though there is some of this), but the absolutization of these and the way they are expressed; his remarks reach beyond the purely ethical realm to the level of epistemology.[6] As Kaufmann points out: "Nietzsche's repudiation of Christ—as distinguished from Jesus—is not tempered by reverence or restraint. In the past his vehement opposition to Christian morality has distracted attention from his equally impassioned critique of Christian 'faith'." (Kaufmann 342). It is not, for Nietzsche, simply that Christendom or Christian belief has erred since the days of the early Church or Augustine, as sundry revisionists (particularly liberation theologians) and Christian apologists proclaim in our own day—but rather it is Christianity at its very *heart*—belief in Christ as the Son of God who died for our sins and is raised as the Son of God who died for our sins and is raised from the dead to come again in glory—that is what is inherently wrong, and degrading to human existence. Again, Paul is Nietzsche's foil; as "*the first Christian*," the Pharisee who invented faith as a remedy against our inability to act rightly, Paul set the seeds for Augustine's "Love God and do what you will," which for Nietzsche is nothing less than an apologia for Christian hypocrisy. In effect, Paul substituted faith in Christ for the Christ-like life, a *reversal* furthered by Augustine and culminated in Luther's *sola fides*—justification by faith alone. One recalls Erasmus contra Luther; the former's "philosophy of Christ," which for Erasmus was the meaning of the *living* Christ, fulminating against the excesses of the cult of Jesus' death—*Crucifix*-ation—whether in Pauline or Lutheran forms. For Erasmus, as for NIetzsche, Jesus is neither judge nor mediator, but *model.*

On Jesus the Evangel

Even those who have renounced Christianity and attack it, in their inmost being still follow the Christian ideal, for hitherto neither their subtlety not the ardour of their hearts has been able to create a higher ideal of man and of virtue than the ideal given by Christ.
– Father Zosima (Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*)

Nietzsche's lifelong love of Erasmus seems less odd when we come to the fourth level of critique. Why is the Christianity of Paul, Augustine, and Luther a *reversal*? Whereas Kierkegaard—as Christians must do if they are to remain (calling themselves) "Christians"—would have conflated what we have called here level three: the faith in the resurrected Messiah and the duality of Good and Evil, sin and retribution; and four: the teachings and life of Jesus of Nazareth, Nietzsche makes a clear distinction between these two. In discussing the person of Jesus, we encounter a great change in Nietzsche's tone; the former severity with which he rebuked Christianity is lost. For Nietzsche the carpenter's son is *neither* the Christ of Paul *nor* the *Logos* of the Johannine gospel. In fact, Christendom, Christian belief, and Christian faith are *all* antithetical to what Nietzsche calls "Christianness," but which might be more adequately termed "Jesusism"—what Nietzsche refers to, most often with great respect, as the life of the Evangel, or the "glad tidings."

> I shall now relate the *real* history of Christianity. – the word 'Christianity' is already a misunderstanding – in reality there has only been one Christian, and he died on the Cross. The 'Evangel' *died* on the Cross. What was called 'Evangel' from this moment onwards was already the opposite of what *he* had lived: '*bad* tidings', a *dysangel.* It is false to the point of absurdity to see in a 'belief', perchance the belief in redemption through Christ, the distinguishing characteristic of the Christian: only Christian *practice,* a life such as he who died on the Cross *lived,* is Christian… Even today *such* a life is possible, for *certain* men even necessary: genuine, primitive Christianity will be possible at all times… *Not* a belief but a doing, above all a *not*-doing of many things, a different *being*... To reduce being a Christian, Christianness, to a holding something to be true, to a mere phenomenality of consciousness, means to negate Christianness. *In fact there have been no Christians at all.* (*Anti-Christ* §39)

Nietzsche becomes here, of all things, an "evangelist"—though not of Christ, but of Jesus.[7] Jesus the Evangel would have been appalled to learn, not just of the church or "Christendom," but also of the basis of the entire "religion" established in his name—a faith *in himself,* rather than the faith he shared and practiced with others. Jesus is, for Nietzsche, in some sense, the Anti-Christ. What were his glad tidings? Jesus died "not to 'redeem mankind', but to demonstrate how we ought to live." He bequeathed his life (not his death, which for Nietzsche was an accident) to humankind as an example, a *practice*—one of the overflowing love that comes not from weakness but from strength, and has nothing to do with the tawdry doctrinal litany of triumph, guilt, sin, redemption, punishment, or atonement. Jesus is, above, or rather *beyond* enmity, he is not concerned with justice; in fact he transcends the duality of Good and Evil—he *abolishes sin* precisely by negating the distance between the poles of God and humanity, which Christianity later widened.

Having provided the above sketch in order to redress the balance and make clear the distinction between levels three and four, let me add that even Nietzsche's comments about Jesus are not unequivocally positive. For one, Jesus is *not* an Overman; he *did* die on the cross, however he may have regretted his own "forsakenness," and Nietzsche cannot forgive this error, this flight from the world. For all his strength of character, Jesus for Nietzsche clearly lacks the masculinity of the Greek ideal as embodied in Caesar and Napoleon (at one point, Nietzsche cites his ideal man as one with the courage of Caesar and the soul of Christ). Whatever the case, the Nietzschean hero is clearly something other than Jesus: "a combination of spiritual superiority with well-being and excess of strength" (Kaufmann 362).[8]

Finally, there is also the fact that Nietzsche could not speak of either Jesus or God without a certain amount of envy. André Gide says: "Nietzsche was jealous of Christ, jealous to the point of madness" (Perez-Esclarin 129). This monomaniacal anxiety is reflected in a comment of Zarathustra: "But that I may reveal my heart entirely to you my friends: if there were gods, then how could I endure it to be no God! *Therefore* there are no Gods" (*Zarathustra* 2.4). One can, and should, read this with the humor that was no doubt intended—a parodic reversal, perhaps, of the various so-called "logical proofs" of God's existence—but Gide's comment has some weight, I think, and Nietzsche, whether intentionally or not, reveals himself here as we get a glimpse behind the mask.

The Role of the Overman

I say I'd rather not know about their damned good and evil than pay such a terrible price for it.
– Ivan Karamazov (Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*)

I have already mentioned Nietzsche's critique of Christian dualism; this, I think, grounds his whole critique of Christian religion. The death of God is not simply an end of the Master of the slave morality, it also heralds the demise of a great symbol of dualism and thus of human alienation. When all of human goodness is projected onto a transcendent divinity, a split is perpetuated, a rift between the divine/heavenly/Good and the human/earthly/Evil. This is an unfair split, which results in Tillich's "theological theism"—under the gaze of such a powerful separate being the alienated and dwarfed human is deprived of freedom and creativity. Such a dichotomy, Nietzsche says, becomes engrained in Western philosophy and the whole Western mind-set and *Weltanschauung,* and is re-evoked in both the mind-body split of Descartes and the subject-object division perpetuated in modern (Baconian) science. The task? To overcome such divisions—to go "beyond good and evil"—but not just good and evil, also spirit and matter, mind and body, and the entire lexicon of Either/Or.

> No longer joy in certainty but in uncertainty; no longer 'cause and effect' but the continually creative; no longer will to preservation but to power; no longer the humble expression, 'everything is *merely* subjective', but 'it is also *our* work – let us be proud of it.'[9]

Who is to lead us? The *Übermensch.*

Nietzsche's Overman[10] is the harbinger of self-overcoming—the end of dualistic values, dichotomous logic, and absolutist thinking. His Will to Power[11] liberates, establishing, for the first time since the Greeks, the possibility of human integration, what Nietzsche might call the ultimate fusion of Dionysian energy, Apollonian form, and Socratic reason. Zarathustra is the prophet of the Overman, but he is not himself an Overman. "He is," Nietzsche confesses, "merely an old atheist: he believes neither in old gods or in new gods"—a remark he makes directly after his own contrary proclamation: "How many new gods are still possible!" (*Will* §1038).

Hegel Agonistes

Here we come to a crucial point in the study of Nietzsche, one that has led to much confusion and is the basis of this author's critique of Nietzsche and Nietzscheanism. Despite his hatred for Hegel, Nietzsche cannot escape what literary critic Harold Bloom calls the "anxiety of influence" of the *doyen* of German academia—like Kierkegaard, he subsumes Hegel, and as a result we often hear Hegel in Nietzsche's terms and assumptions.[12] In particular, all life is for Nietzsche a struggle—a conflict or *agon*—and though he rejects both the natural selection of Darwin and the progressivism of the Social Darwinists and others, he continues the praise of opposition which is a bulwark of 19th-century thought. This leads him to trouble, of the same sort that Marxism gets into when it prolongs the "antithesis"—in Marxism the Dictatorship of the Proletariat: in Nietzsche the stage of the "higher man"—confusing the necessary critical reaction for the eventual affirmation of both sides of the dialectic in the Hegelian *aufhebung*. The "higher man" is simply the "immoralist" who comes to clear away the debris left after the death of God. The Overman, by contrast, is filled not with the spirit of revenge and destruction but with, in one of Nietzsche's more poignant phrases, the "innocence of becoming." Whereas "[t]he *Übermensch* stands for will to power as creativity, the higher man stands for will to power as power" (Schutte 127).

Confusingly, Nietzsche sometimes uses "power" in one sense, sometimes in the other. In his early days, under the influence of his friend and mentor Jakob Burckhardt, Nietzsche clearly disdained "worldly power" and its pursuit ("*power*," he exclaims in *The Birth of Tragedy,* "which is always evil…." (*Birth* §3.282). Worldly power and social success corrupt in the worst way—they are destructive to one's destiny; they engender conformity; they hinder the cultivation of *physis.* Yet Nietzsche is not always so condemnatory, for there were aspects of worldly power that he could not help but admire: the

Napoleonic grandeur of victory clouded his early anti-power polemic. This lack of clarity; this confusion of "powers" not only ion the work of his many commentators but oft-times within Nietzsche himself, leads to the "bad" version of Nietzsche, the one who advocates slavery, misogyny, subjugation, and war.

"And a child shall lead them…"
The above distinction is best expressed in the animal imagery used by Nietzsche with respect to the three "metamorphoses of the human spirit." Zarathustra speaks first of the *camel,* who is representative of the most servile and bestial level of human existence. The burdened camel is the Christian soul, and particularly the Christian soul after the death of its Master, upon which event it runs to the desert in fear and loneliness. From the camel, out of nihilism comes the *lion,* whose task it is to create for itself the freedom from all alienating values. If, to borrow from Hindu imagery, which Nietzsche loved, the camel is Vishnu the preserver, the lion is Shiva the destroyer—he clears the space for the coming of Brahma the creator, in this case the Overman, by subjugating the beasts of burden. But the lion cannot, Nietzsche insists, create *new values.* (*Zarathustra* §1.1). The lion has the power of negation, it can defeat the "Thou shalt," but it does not have the power of affirmation, until, that is, it becomes… *a child*.

"Why has the preying lion still to become a child?" Zarathustra asks. Because "[i]nnocence is the child, and forgetfulness, a new beginning, a game, a self-rolling wheel, a first moment, a holy Yes… a 'Yes to life,'" which, he remarks, is necessary to the "game of creating" (§1.1). The child embodies the self-overcoming of the dualism between Good and Evil. The child sublates the camel as well as the lion, the so-called "higher man." In short, the child is the *Overman*—an embodiment of the wholeness of spirit that need not stoop to conquer by the use of power in the political sense of mastery and domination. What is precisely noble about the Overman is, as Alfonso Lingis tells us, is "the ability to forget: not merely to *forgive* one's hurts and humiliations, one's impotencies, but what is more to *forget* them, to be able to pass over the past and welcome the rushes of what comes in the present" (Lingis 59). Such, again, is the innocence of becoming, echoed in the cryptic command of the Gnostic Jesus in the *Gospel of Thomas*: "You must become passers-by" (§42).

Unfortunately, or perhaps inevitably, Nietzsche abandons the child and reverts to the lion, particularly in *Beyond Good and Evil,* where he descends from the heights of the Overman to the human all-too-human realm of "higher" and "lower" men. Zarathustra was meant to be *inspiration,* not *domination*; he could say, like William Blake's Jesus—who "acted from impulse, not from rules" ("Marriage")—and the American Bard Walt Whitman: "I and mine do not convince by arguments, similes, rhymes, We convince by our presence" ("Song"). Schutte takes Nietzsche to task for not following his Dionysian philosophy, or his *Übermensch,* to their conclusions:

> [Nietzsche] failed to… retain faith in his theory of instinctual liberation…[he] did not take his own advice regarding the liberation of life from the power of a punitive ego. He failed to consider the ultimate implications of the death of the patriarchal God. Because he still believed in the great patriarchal myth of Man as creator, judge and hangman of humanity, Nietzsche did not see that the higher man, as described by him, is a sham. (Schutte 159)

Nietzsche failed, in the end, to take heed of one of Blake's "Proverbs from Hell": "One Law for the Lion and the Ox," warns the English poet-prophet, "is Oppression." That is, the lion, too, is enslaved by the rhetoric of power and control (whether we call such rhetoric Christian, Baconian, patriarchal, or simply "Western"). At what point, we are tempted to ask of Nietzsche and Zarathustra, does the lion lie down next to the child?

Towards a Nietzschean Soteriology
This question brings us back to Nietzsche's image of Christ, or rather, of Jesus the Evangel; at this point I would like to examine this further in terms of Nietzsche's "schizophrenia," with the aid of the two foremost Russian novelists of his day: Leo Tolstoy and Fyodor Dostoevsky. It has been said (by Merleau-Ponty) that "there are two Hegels," and we have seen the many faces of Marx and Christ, but Nietzsche has perhaps the most multiple personalities of any major historical presence; hailed by some as a prophet of radical humanism and human freedom and by others as at worst a proto-Nazi, at best an apologist of domination and cruelty, Nietzsche himself perpetuated such wide usage by through both complexity and carelessness. The Janus-faced Nietzsche seeps into his critique of Christianity, which is not fully explained in terms of the various levels I have presented above, as useful as these may be at a rudimentary explanatory level.

I would like to delve somewhat deeper now, and to do so will invoke several figures from the world of literature.[13] Besides the two Russian novelists, I will invoke the American essayists Emerson and Thoreau, the poets Whitman and Rilke, and Don Quixote, hero of the Cervantes's Erasmus-inspired novel of the same name. These choices are not completely arbitrary. Nietzsche loved very few precursors his whole life (early mentors like Schopenhauer and Wagner were eventually cast aside), but one can name a handful of these, whom Nietzsche consistently invoked with praise and gratitude: Erasmus, Emerson, Stendhal, Hölderlin, Montaigne, Pascal, and Don Quixote being the foremost; Dostoevsky, like Kierkegaard, was brought to his attention too late, but can certainly be included in this pantheon of Nietzsche's Brothers of the Free Spirit.

Nietzsche's Jesus is fashioned by the Jesus of Erasmus and of Emerson, and also, no doubt, by the Lutheran faith in which he was raised. It is interesting to wonder, as with fellow 19th-century God-killers Kierkegaard and Marx, what their visions of Christ and Christianity would have been like had they been raised in and/or exposed to a Christianity and a God other than that of Lutheranism—in, for instance, the baroque world of Spanish Catholicism, like the Nietzschean Unamuno, or within Russian Orthodoxy, like Dostoevsky and Tolstoy. The madmans's query, "Must we ourselves not become gods?" is a idea that certainly sits better with Russian Orthodoxy—with its trope of Godmanhood—than with the norms of Western Christendom. Along these lines, Hollingdale points out that "Nietzsche had no piercing-eyed Christs to give him nightmares [though his own madman is 'piercing-eyed'], or any horrific pictures of a possible hellish afterlife to keep him awake. God was like his father, the pastor of Röcken" (31)—the perfect model of a country parson. Disregarding the many

Freudian conjectures that could be raised here, it certainly plausible that this rather benign image of Jesus and God shaped Nietzsche's critique. He did not reject God for his harshness (his Overman *can* be just as harsh) but for the opposite—for his we*akness*. Jesus can be redeemed as a "free spirit," but his failing remains, as we have seen, his humility, his death and his suffering.

Between Tolstoy and Dostoevsky

To get a clearer view of the character of Nietzsche's image of Christ, it may be useful to situate such an image between the contrasting Christs of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky[14]—two strong Christians with very different visions of Jesus (and each, in his own way, an unorthodox Orthodox, though only Tolstoy was excommunicated from the Russian Church). At times, Nietzsche speaks of the suffering and humble Jesus as a strong-hearted "overcomer"—one who is beyond enmity and retribution, and one who "died as he had lived." This is a favorite trope of Dostoevsky, that lover of paradox who glories in the image of a "God on the cross"—a God naked, humiliated, bruised, bleeding, but infinitely redemptive, not in spite of, but *because of these things*. Dostoevsky once remarked, "The Saviour did not descend from the cross because he did not wish to convert men through the compulsion of an outward miracle, but through freedom of belief" (Steiner 262).

For Tolstoy this is precisely the failure of Christ. In that refusal came the chaos and blindness that has afflicted human beings since his time: "Christ had infinitely complicated the task of those who would establish his kingdom by placing the enigma of his silence across the straight path of reason." Tolstoy chastises Christ for not fully revealing Himself (if, indeed, he even *was* God) in messianic splendor, for though human belief might have been in some sense constrained, doubt would have been removed and evil vanquished, allowing for an immediate Kingdom of God upon the earth. George Steiner adequately sums up Tolstoy's feelings in this regard: "He could not love a prophet who declaimed that his kingdom was not of this world. The aristocratic temper of the man, his love of physical energy and heroism, rebelled at Christ's meekness and pathos." For Tolstoy, Christianity is ultimately neither a divine revelation nor a historical phenomenon but a teaching which gives the meaning of life. As such, there can be no meaning to that which destroys or abrogates life, except the meaning of negation. Nietzsche would concur here with the author of *War and Peace*; he could not love such a Jesus as that of Dostoevsky, who embodies too-readily the weakness inherent in the reversal of aristocratic virtue found in slave morality. So Nietzsche pulls back from the author of *The Idiot* (whose hero, the Quixotesque Prince Myshkin, is, with Alyosha Karamazov of *The Brothers Karamazov,* Dostoevsky's Christ-figure); Nietzsche's Christ is the one of High Renaissance portraiture rather than mediaeval iconography—i.e., the triumphant conqueror who "conquers" pain and suffering by transcending it rather than going through it.

Yet Tolstoy's rationalistic Arianism would have offended Nietzsche, whose temperament, in many respects, more closely resembled that of Dostoevsky, the heir to Pascal and Kierkegaard's "fideism." One could also draw parallels between Nietzsche and Ivan Karamazov, the atheist Karamazov brother and author of the sublime Grand Inquisitor parable. But Ivan is, ultimately, like Tolstoy, a Schopenhaurean "weak nihilist"—i.e., an intellectual rationalist with socialistic tendencies who rejects, not so much God, but the world of suffering created by God; the irrational world where children are tortured and horses beaten to death.[15] Ivan is, like the Grand Inquisitor himself, more Tolstoy than Nietzsche, who *affirms* the world in all its beautiful and ugly facets, but rejects God as the embodiment of hypocrisy, dualism, and misguided sentimentality in the face of suffering. Ivan says to his brother, the saintly Alyosha: "It is not that I reject God; I am simply returning Him most respectfully the ticket that would entitle me to a seat." Nietzsche also returns his ticket, but without much respect, for his is the ticket that exploded.

***The Naïveté of a Strong Heart*: Don Quixote as Archetype**

What brings Nietzsche back from the Tolstoyan brink, and away from the "weak nihilism" he purports to despise, is his faith in Don Quixote, whom he commends as archetype over the more Goethean/Tolstoyan (i.e., "pagan") Odysseus: "Whoever has attained intellectual freedom even to a small extent cannot feel but a wanderer upon the face of the earth – and not as a traveller *toward* some final destination; for that does not exist" (*Human* 1.638). The Knight of La Mancha, chaser of windmills, has become an icon for many thinkers and poets of the modern age—Dostoevsky, Unamuno, Kafka, Borges, Milan Kundera, Carlos Fuentes. Cervantes's (who, incidentally, was a dedicated Erasmian) hero, reviled by the rationalist fundamentalists who populate the dawning modernity of *Don Quixote,* converts his skeptical sidekick Sancho Panza, as well as the reader, who cannot help but feel the knight's eventual conversion to rationalism and reality a great and tragic loss. Nietzsche exclaims, with anger, that Cervantes could "not even spare his hero the dreadful illumination about his own state at the end of his life" (Kaufmann 40)—an illumination that is, in effect, a form of self-denial on a par with Jesus' own "My God, why hast thou forsaken me!" Nietzsche concludes, by way of warning: "Mankind is ever threatened by this ignominious *denial of oneself* at the *end* of one's striving" (*Dawn* §10.413). Of course, there *cannot be an end to striving*—that, in a sense, is the whole of Nietzsche's argument.

Without belaboring the point, it is clear that Don Quixote is the heroic soul of Cervantes' novel, whatever the author himself may have intended. The ideals he sticks to until the end, though far-fetched, allow him to be a much purer, a much better man in most respects than all the other allegedly "sane" characters. Quixote embodies Nietzsche's "innocence of becoming" like no other. In *The Art of the Novel*, contemporary author Milan Kundera speaks of the Hidalgo of La Mancha as a harbinger of the plight of "modern man" and laments his "depreciated legacy": "To take, with Cervantes, the world as ambiguity, to be obliged to face not a single truth but a welter of contradicting truths… to have as one's certainty only the *wisdom of ambiguity,* requires (great) courage" (Kundera 6-7).[16] Nietzsche would no doubt have concurred; in *The Gay Science,* he proclaims "*The attraction of imperfection*–"

> Here I see a poet who, like many a human being, is more attractive by virtue of his imperfections than he is by all the things that grow to completion and perfection under his hands. Indeed, he owes his advantages and fame much more to his ultimate incapacity than to his ample strength. His works never wholly express what he would like to express [cf. Gadamer's "surplus of meaning"] and what he would *like to have seen*: it seems as if he had the fore-

> taste of a vision and never the vision itself; but a tremendous lust for this vision remains in his soul, and it is from this that he derives his equally tremendous eloquence of desire and craving. By virtue of this lust he lifts his listeners above his work and all mere "works" and lends them wings to soar as high as listeners had never soared. Then, having themselves been transformed into poets and seers, they lavish admiration upon the creator of their happiness, as if he had led them immediately to the vision of what was for him the holiest and ultimate—as if he had attained his goal and had really *seen* and communicated his vision. His fame benefits from the fact that he never reached his goal. (§79)

This is not only a description of the story of Don Quixote, but also conceivably of the drama of Jesus and Christianity, as well a motto for a revivified Christian ethic, supported by the Anti-Christ himself, Friedrich Nietzsche.

Sons of Emerson: Using Nietzsche Against the Age

The nihilism that Nietzsche uncovered roughly one hundred years ago is still with us today, both in the form in which he observed it and in more intensified forms.
– Ofelia Schutte

We have now covered Nietzsche's image of Jesus *vis-à-vis* Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, as well as his ideal in terms of Don Quixote and the Erasmian Cervantes. To finish this section on literary connections, I will speak to the prospects of Nietzschean "beatitude" with regard to his single most beloved precursor: Ralph Waldo Emerson. Nietzsche adds Emersonian theodicy to Kierkegaardian angst; his brothers are Walt Whitman and Henry David Thoreau, Emerson's firstborn American sons, who exemplify in different ways certain features of Emersonianism: Whitman the excesses of exuberance and overcoming, and the willful and continual creation of Selfhood vis-à-vis an overflowing love and a radical immanence; Thoreau the ascetic but guilt-free rejection of concupiscence, in terms not of sexuality so much as material possessions and the pursuit of wealth and political power.

In *Zarathustra,* Nietzsche identifies nihilism as an emptiness that devours increasing amounts of life, while failing to be satisfied with living. This sounds remarkably akin to Augustine's concupiscence, and in this sense one of Nietzsche's condemnations of Christianity is mirrored in the consumerism of our own day: needs are created, then satisfied (or, nearly satisfied), while new "needs" are manufactured, creating a web of dependence and addiction that is both self-perpetuating and difficult to escape. Whether this connection is causal, i.e., whether there is a direct link between consumerist mentality and the Western mode of thinking steeped in dualism, the similarities are apparent. Thus, perhaps Nietzsche can be used against the age, not as a Christian spokesperson, surely, but in concert with a Christian ethic in the spirit of the sons of Emerson, wielding a critical sword contra the servility of lapsed Christianity and its bastard child: *homo oeconomicus.* The Almighty Contract is shattered by these figures, who, in different ways, preach a love that is gratuitous and overflowing, and a self-critical humility that questions any and all beliefs while affirming life as (Rilke's) "superabundance of being." Perhaps Nietzsche can be, as Giordano Bruno proclaimed himself: *dormitantium animarum excubitor*—an awakener of sleeping souls.

Freedom, following both Dostoevsky and the Buddha, is *not* an endless pursuit of need-satisfaction. The more are satisfied; the more are created to be satisfied. True freedom is to evaluate and question one's needs and concomitant dependencies. It is to be free from the master-slave dialectic (to vanquish the ghost of Hegel), *above* or *beyond* the Good that is merely good because there is an equal and opposite Evil; and above or beyond the need to exercise (political) power. Such freedom is "power" in Nietzsche's most positive sense—the power of self-overcoming that we find in the child/Overman, the Whitman of *Leaves of Grass* and the Jesus of Mark, Emerson, and occasionally Nietzsche himself. In short, it is the power of one who exudes "the naïveté of a strong heart."

> It is richness in personality, abundance in oneself, overflowing and bestowing, instinctive good health and affirmation of oneself, that produce great sacrifice and great love: it is strong and godlike selfhood from which these affects grow, just as surely as do the desire to become master, encroachment, the inner certainty of having a right to everything. What according to common ideas are opposite dispositions are rather *one* disposition; and if one is not firm and brave with oneself, one has nothing to bestow and cannot stretch out one's hand to protect and support— . (*Will* §388).

For all his sensual affirmation, Nietzsche proclaims a strong asceticism with respect to material possessions. He is, after all, a brother of Thoreau and a disciple, in some respects, of Dostoevsky's Father Zosima, who asks: "who is more likely to conceive of a great idea an serve it: the isolated rich man or the man *freed* from the tyranny of habits and material goods?" (*Karamazov* 380). We can imagine Nietzsche bowing to the old monk, and replying with a line from the *Genealogy of Morals*: "I have great respect for the ascetic ideal so long as it really believes in itself and is not merely a masquerade" (*Genealogy* §3.25). Nietzsche in effect calls us to prayer, in the Whitmanian sense of praising life; he says, "men have to learn to pay homage… [a]nyone who breaks new paths and who has led man others onto new paths, discovers with some amazement how clumsy and poor these people are in their capacity for expressing gratitude—and how rarely gratitude achieves expression at all" (*Gay* §100). One must *spend* oneself, in praise and gratitude—this is the "will to power" of the "noble soul" and the "free spirit." For Nietzsche, as with Whitman, "the degree to which one loves, spends oneself, proves the degree of individual power and personality" (*Will* §969). As Ofelia Schutte argues, Nietzsche is not a prophet of nihilism so much as a *potential healer* of nihilism. Perhaps we can use Nietzsche in these regards, by re-establishing his connection with the family of Emerson.

Conclusions

returning home / from the lands of enemies /
from beyond anguish to hope revived
vision is your reward / there is new life for your labor…/
in the presence of children, eyes wide open
turning to the future / that is also yours /
within the borders of a reality and beyond them
your descendents / are walking freely /

by the strength of an unfailing imagination
… a listening dedicated /
to the words that bade them live.
– Jeremiah (Rosenberg's translation, 307-308)

Maxim Gorky said of Tolstoy that he was born with the soul of a pagan, and thus his attempts to reformulate Christianity were inevitably tinged with heresy. I would suggest that Nietzsche was born with the soul of a Christian, and thus his paganism cannot escape the relapse into polarity—into the dualistic way of thinking and valuing which he tried so hard to subvert.[17] His Overman was eventually, in *Beyond Good and Evil,* conflated with the lion, the "higher man" who is a reprehensible fanatic, devoid of innocence, love, and that prized Nietzschean characteristic, humor. There is no joy in the land of the lion, as countless victims of 20th-century totalitarianism can testify. Nietzsche was no fascist, but he leaves himself wide open to co-optation because of this muddle.

Yet Nietzsche also gives us his own personal beatitude, his own Erasmian-Emersonian soteriology—a song of praise worthy of Whitman (his brother) or Rilke (his disciple); praise for life in its superabundance, which "suffers no constraints, and must no longer be conceived on the basis of injustice, lack, servility, and unhappiness" (Birault 217–218). The innocence of becoming, embodied in the child-Overman, stands in awe of the superabundance of being. Nietzsche looks towards a true *nobility / nubility / new-ability* of the soul and the body, re-united. The problem in a nutshell, is this. Like Whitman, Nietzsche admits, even lauds contradiction, but at times he seems to try to fit these multitudes inside him into one single channel; he attempts, against his own better judgment, to "will one thing."

Thus, while Nietzsche should not be canonized, neither can he be ignored. I have balanced my appraisal with a critique of his failings in terms of a reluctance to take his own conclusions to their full expression, but I am comforted by Nietzsche's insistence on our not being afraid to *use* him, building with whatever parts of his work we choose, provided we try to stay true to these in themselves. "The philosopher," he says, "supposes that the value of his philosophy lies in the whole, in the structure; but posterity finds its value in the stone which he used for building, and which is used many more times after that for building — better" (*Genealogy* §201). This, Nietzsche says, is "the philosopher's error." But then again, Nietzsche is not a "philosopher," and neither, for that matter (*pace* George W. Bush), is his would-be rival, Jesus Christ. Hollingdale says quite rightly that "there can be no neutral expounder of Nietzsche," but neither can there be a neutral expounder of Christianity, or anyone or anything that has the capacity to transform and reorder our deepest beliefs. As Nietzsche once said (of his love/hatred of Renan): "It is so pleasant, so distinguishing, to possess one's own antipodes!" In our day, perhaps even *necessary.*

> *It is true we love life; not because we do want to live, but because we do want to love. There is always some madness in love. But there is always, also, some method in madness.*
>
> *And to me also, who appreciates life, the butterflies, and soap bubbles, and whatever is like them among us, seem most to enjoy happiness. To see these light, foolish, pretty, lively little sprites flit about—that moves Zarathustra to tears and songs.*
>
> *I should only believe in a God that would know how to dance. And when I saw my devil, I found him serious, thorough, profound, solemn: he was the spirit of gravity—through him all things fall. Not by wrath, but by laughter, do we slay. Come, let us slay the spirit of gravity!*
>
> *I learned to walk; since then I have let myself run. I learned to fly; since then I do not need pushing in order to move from a spot.*
>
> *Now I am light, now I do fly; now I do see myself under myself. Now there dances a God in me.—*
>
> – Nietzsche *Zarathustra* §1.7

Appendices

A – The Madman Parable, from *The Gay Science* §125

The madman.— Have you not heard of that madman who lit a lantern in the bright morning hours, ran to the market place, and cried incessantly: "I seek God! I seek God!" —As many of those who did not believe in God were standing around just then, he provoked much laughter. Has he got lost? asked one. Did he lose his way like a child? asked another. Or is he hiding? Is he afraid of us? has he gone away on a voyage? emigrated?— Thus they yelled and laughed.

The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his eyes. "Whither is God?" he cried; "I will tell you. *We have killed him*— you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how did we do this? How could we drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there still any up or down? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not night continually closing in on us? Do we not need to light lanterns in the morning? Do we hear nothing as yet of the gravediggers who are burying God? Do we smell nothing as yet of the divine decomposition? Gods, too, decompose. God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him.

"How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it? There has never been a greater deed; and whoever is born after us — for the sake of this deed he will belong to a higher history than all history hitherto."

Here the madman fell silent and looked again at his listeners; and they, too, were silent and stared at him in astonishment. At last he threw his lantern on the ground, and it broke into pieces and went out. "I have come too early," he said then; "my time is not yet. This tremendous event is still on its way, still wandering; it has not yet reached the ears of men. Lightning and thunder require time; the light of the stars requires time; deeds, though done, still require time to be seen

and heard. This deed is still more distant from them than the most distant stars—*and yet they have done it themselves*."

It has been related further that on the same day the madman forced his way into several churches and there struck up his *requiem aeternam deo*. Led out and called to account, he is said always to have replied nothing but: "What after all are these churches now if they are not the tombs and sepulchers of God?"

B – Nietzsche on the Bible, from *Genealogy of Morals* §3.22

The reader may have guessed already that I have no fondness for the New Testament. I admit that I am somewhat ill at ease to stand so entirely alone in my judgment of this most esteemed, overesteemed, document… The Old Testament is another story. I have the highest respect for that book. I find in it great men, a heroic landscape, and one of the rarest things on earth, the naïveté of a strong heart. What is more, I find a *people*. In the New Testament, on the other hand, I find nothing but petty sectarianism, a rococco of the spirit, abounding in curious scrollwork and intricate geometries and breathing the air of the conventicle; to say nothing of that occasional whiff of bucolic mawkishness which is characteristic of the epoch… and which is not so much Jewish as Hellenistic. Here humility and braggadocio are bedfellows; here we find a stupendous volubility of feeling; the trappings of passion without real passion; an embarrassing amount of gesturing: obviously there is a lack of good breeding all the way through. Think of the tremendous fuss these pious little people make over their little trespasses! Who cares? Certainly God least of all.

Notes

1. Apparently, Nietzsche had no knowledge of Kierkegaard prior to 1888, a year before he went incurably insane. This is not improbable, due to Kierkegaard's obscurity outside of, and even within Denmark in the decades following his death in 1855. When Georg Brandes brought Nietzsche's attention to Kierkegaard's work, Nietzsche was intrigued, finding (as in his slightly earlier discovery of Dostoevsky) a kindred spirit; he wrote in a letter to Brandes that he would like to write a "psychological profile" of the Dane. Alas, this project was never to transpire, and Nietzsche was never able to acquire Kierkegaard's *oeuvre* to allow for a more systematic study.
2. This recognition of the possible one-time existence of God, even as a psychological rather than a metaphysical fact, causes Nietzsche some ambivalence, as is evident in the waning pages of *Zarathustra*, where, upon returning to his cave to find his followers once again worshipping God, Zarathustra, like a reverse Moses, rebukes them, only to receive, first an evasive reply from "the Wanderer and Shadow," then a surprisingly cocksure rebuttal from "the ugliest man," whom the others say is responsible for re-awakening the old God (*Zarathustra* §IV.78). This is a delicious example of Nietzschean self-criticism, which we sometimes wish he had practiced more often when speaking of Christianity and the Will to Power. The "ugliest man" is clever, and Zarathustra cannot respond except with fulmination.
3. David Rosenberg, biblical commentator and translator of *A Poet's Bible*, says: "In a central metaphor for prophecy, Isaiah represents self-knowledge as a light to others… *Isaiah* becomes a testament to self-consciousness… There is a broad emotional range to the Isaiah poets, from… fierce satire… to tender consolation. *A desire to transform loss into creative vision prevails*" (223–224, my emphasis). This passage can easily be applied to Nietzsche's madman, without loss. The passion of the Isaiah poets, says Rosenberg, is "devoutly self-critical." This connection may not be arbitrary—see *On the Genealogy of Morals* (§3.22) for Nietzsche's comments on the Old Testament.
4. Nietzsche subscribed to the legend/theory that morality, or dualistic morality, at any rate, was the invention of Zoroaster (Lat. Zarathustra), the Persian prophet and reputed founder of Zoroastrianism. Though scholars disagree widely on his dates, the historical Zoroaster may predate Moses; his "reform" was based on a rejection of sacrifice and the establishment of a rigid dichotomous *Weltanschauung,* involving conflicting forces of Good and Evil. Some Zoroastrian elements seeped into Christianity, largely by way of Manichaeaism (Augustine, of course, was a lapsed Manichee). Nietzsche thus found in Zarathustra his redeemer; as he was the begetter of dualistic values, he should be their destroyer, or at least the prophet of their destruction. Nietzsche's Zarathustra has seen the light—he has returned to repair his wrongs, which (for Nietzsche) have done untold harm to millions over the past three millennia.
5. A word is warranted regarding Nietzsche's supposed anti-Semitism—a charge, though less frequent today than in the past, still crops up. A close reading, in fact, even a cursory reading of Nietzsche's work belies this claim. Indeed, at times Nietzsche's virulence *against* anti-Semites reaches a fever pitch (they should all, he says in fury, be strung up). (Also see Appendix B, below, where Nietzsche lauds the Jewish Bible while disdaining its "weak sequel," the New Testament). To *whom* Nietzsche was speaking is relevant, as well: many of the "cultured Christians" of his day, including his sister's husband and Richard Wagner, were fierce anti-Semites. Part of Nietzsche's deconstruction of Christianity was to show these people, in particular, that their faith was not only inextricably "Jewish," but was even based in, and developed out of, the *worst* elements of Judaism (mixed with the *worst* elements of Hellenism, i.e., "Platonism for the People").
6. "The difference between Nietzsche's ethics and what he himself took to be Christian ethics is not ultimately reducible to different forms of behavior or divergent tables of virtues: it revolves primarily around the agent's state of mind, more basically, his state of being" (Kaufmann 374).
7. A point of clarification: Nietzsche, an avowed anti-systemist, was often (in this regard, he resembles his nemesis, the epistolary Paul) rather careless in his use of terms—a carelessness no doubt partly deliberate, but nonetheless confusing and even dangerous. In this passage we see him refer to Jesus as the *only* Christian, whereas in an earlier quoted passage *Paul* was "the first Christian." The first sense, with regard to Paul, is clearly meant as a rebuke—it is the negative Christianity of levels one to three; the second, what is more aptly called "Jesusism." As much as Nietzsche may have admired the noble soul of Jesus, Nietzsche was *not* a Christian in any sense. Elsewhere, Nietzsche's carelessness in the double use of certain key words (particularly "power" and the "Will to Power") has more sinister repercussions, as we shall see below.
8. For Heinrich Heine this would be Shakespeare; for Harold Bloom, commentator on Rosenberg's translation of *The Book*

of J, such characterizes none other than J's Yahweh, the greatest of all literary creations. Bloom would no doubt concur with Nietzsche as to the degeneration of the "God-type" from this wild and energetic "Yea-sayer" to the Christian "God as spider."

9. From an unpublished note from 1888, quoted in Schutte (6).

10. I have used "Overman" (following Kaufmann), rather than "Superman" as a translation of Nietzsche's *Übermensch* for two reasons: 1) it conveys more adequately the transcendent quality of his work (albeit an immanent transcendence)—i.e., tied into the process of (self-) overcoming; 2) I do not think Nietzsche would have been pleased to have his image-ideal envisioned as a man flying about tall buildings in blue pyjamas—though perhaps he would be amused to note the power of pop culture to reinscribe our words via iconic images.

11. "Will to Power" is a notoriously sticky term. Like the famous example of the "Holy Roman Empire," it is actuality none of its constituent parts. Nietzsche did not mean, or at least did not *always* mean, will as *volition* (as in Schopenhauer's will-to-live) or power as *mastery*. Michael Haar, in an essay on "Nietzsche and Metaphysical Language," says that we must "discard from the very start, as a gross misconception, any interpretation of the Will to Power that is *solely* psychological or anthropological… [it] is something much different from the psychological relationship between a subject *qua* will and an object *qua* power… [each term loses] its habitual meaning [in their locution]" (quoted in Allison 8–9). Will to Power was a favorite trope of Frau Förster-Nietzsche, Nietzsche's unfortunate sister and proto-Nazi ideologue, who "edited" his disjointed notebooks and proclaimed them his "masterpiece." For Schutte, the Will to Power is nothing more or less than the "process" of life as it is manifested in one's body and total experience—in other words, it is the Nietzschean "self." (46)

12. Nietzsche would no doubt have concurred with Kierkegaard's wonderfully caustic comment on their mutual philosophical forbear: "If Hegel had written the whole of his *Logic,*" says the Dane, "and then said… that it was merely an experiment in thought… then he would certainly have been the greatest thinker who had ever lived. As it is, he is merely comic" (from his *Journals*, quoted in Kaufmann [265]). Strong words, but perhaps Hegel, like God, cannot be so easily mocked: his specter haunts both of these anti-Hegelians, as it does the third of their trio, Schopenhauer.

13. The use of literature as a tool of investigation makes sense with regard to the study of Nietzsche, for whom, like early Wittgenstein, "aesthetics and ethics are one." His work involves a call to "give style to one's character"—to live, as Alexander Nehamas puts it in his fascinating study of Nietzsche, *Life as Literature.* Nietzsche's work is literary in the fullest sense of that term, and cannot be properly understood without a certain literary slant, not least of which a recognition of the centrality of metaphor and style to Nietzsche's *oeuvre.* Schutte, like Nehamas, gives equal weight to the poetical and polemical sides of Nietzsche, whose metaphors, like those of the Bible, are potential bearers of truth. They may, as Michael Harr says, betoken the "health of the future."

14. The contrast between these two Russian literary giants is sometimes exaggerated, but their is little doubt that, in terms of the meaning and significance of key tropes like freedom and suffering, particularly with regard to their respective images of Christ, the two writers diverge significantly.

15. The image of a horse being beaten to death by its master, while crowds laugh and cheer, is one that is curiously central to both the lives of Dostoevsky and Nietzsche—a coincidence that I find both striking and evocative. As a youth, Dostoevsky witnessed such an event, and he was haunted by the image of mindless cruelty towards a suffering and defenseless beast, using it as the most vivid and visceral memory of his anti-hero Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment,* as well as in *Karamazov,* where Ivan uses it to justify his own "ticket-return" to God. Nietzsche went mad on April 26, 1889, and the event that precipitated his breakdown, was, interestingly, a man beating his horse in the streets of Turin. In apparent agony, Nietzsche rushed to the horse and leapt upon its neck. As legend has it, he never recovered, dying incurably insane eleven years later.

16. *Don Quixote* tells us that being modern is *not* a question of sacrificing the past in favor of the new (and not of re-invoking a purified past), but of maintaining, comparing, and remembering values created by our forebears, *making* them modern so as not to lose the value of the modern. At heart, as Carlos Fuentes suggests, *Don Quixote* outlines a possible reunion of love and justice, a utopia found not in a nihilistic sweeping away of the past, nor of rejecting the present in favor of the past, near or remote, but in a fusion of the values that come to us from the past and those we are capable of creating in the present. Specifically, in Cervantes's case, the values of an age of chivalry acquire a democratic resonance, while the values of democratic life acquire the resonance of nobility.

17. Perhaps Nietzsche would have liked to say, with Ivan Karamazov: "I've long since stopped worrying about who invented whom—God man or man God." But he was not so able. God haunted him as a real presence, as a force at once near and far, with whom he must necessarily engage in *agon*. Like Tolstoy (as noted, again, by Gorky), when he spoke of God it was like "two bears in a den"—or, perhaps, two *lions*.

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