

## NIETZSCHE CONTRA ILLUSIONEM

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A few misguided words on Twilight of the Idols, Beyond Good and Evil and some other works of Nietzsche

*For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.*

***Romans*** viii:13

*If wine disappeared from human production, I believe there would be, in the health and intellect of the planet, a void, a deficiency far more terrible than all the excesses and deviations for which wine is made responsible.*

***Baudelaire***

### I. A Rather Wordy Introduction

To me, the most difficult part of reading Nietzsche has to do with the richness of his expression. This poses an obstacle not so much to the spontaneous understanding but rather to the written interpretation of his books – every quote from Nietzsche one decides to employ to illustrate a concept, inevitably branches out to a multitude of ideas and symbols and it seems to be rather hard not to digress from the concept under examination, not only for Nietzsche’s interpreters but for Nietzsche himself.

This however, I believe, is quite natural – after all, how many straight lines can we observe in nature? Can we then possibly expect thought to be a straight line, let alone the thought of a genius?

In order to fully experience (let it be just that, I don’t feel brave enough to say “understand”) Nietzsche, one has to be kin to solitude; not just to know about it from textbooks, encyclopedias or novels, but to have let it be one’s constant companion as it was for Nietzsche; as sickness, nausea, migraine, bad sight and cramps were for him – inseparable from his being; really – his very being.

In order to fully experience Nietzsche, one has to know the rough beauty and cold loneliness of Sils im Engadin – the icy slopes of the mountain and the crystal-clear water of its lakes. One must be able to see the whole region, country, Earth, universe from a bird’s eye view (and not just any kind of bird but surely of an eagle, with its boldness, courage and love of freedom) – only this way can one realize what Nietzsche means when he talks about the overflowing of the overman, the fallacy of opposition and contrast, etc. Only thus can one perceive the whole picture and not just blurry shreds of its corners, and find out that in our world, it is not just the most incorporeal ideas, feelings and notions that are interconnected and do not have a clear-cut way of distinguishing between one-another, of determining where one ends and the next one begins, but also those most tangible entities in the material nature that have, at least at some point of their existence, constituted a heterogeneous amalgam of indeterminate human (or divine?) plans and bodies. What can we say about humans then – those enigmatic points of tangency between the visible and the invisible world, Nietzsche’s greatest proof of the imaginary reality of the latter and the supremacy and factuality of the former.

Indeed, to experience Nietzsche, one has to possess a germ of his chaos in one’s soul – the chaos of the world where beast and human, horror and joy, desolation and fecundity exist together – sometimes in conflict and sometimes in harmony, but never separated.

## **II. First Level of Interpretation.**

*Beyond Good and Evil* begins with Nietzsche’s questioning of human inquisitiveness – why do we insist on finding the truth? What is so special about it, why don’t we “prefer untruth”<sup>1</sup> instead? What is it that requires us to always seek the truth? In the Second section of the book, Nietzsche continues his argument by raising the question of the possibility of something arising from its opposite. Furthermore, he maintains that this “fundamental belief”<sup>2</sup> of metaphysicians, “the belief in the opposition of values”<sup>3</sup>, may be fallacious because even the very existence of opposites is questionable. Besides, even if they really did exist, our explanation of them would be bound to be one-sided, thus incomplete, thus wrong, because they would never be able to make claim to universality; they are nothing more than personal value judgments, temporary beliefs

and perspectives. Hence, the connection between the things that we are used to calling “opposites” must be deeper than just a sign for “not equal to”; the two must be interconnected. However, this “dangerous Perhaps”<sup>4</sup> should wait for the new kind of philosophers in order to take its due place in human life.

In the chapter “Reason in Philosophy”<sup>5</sup> of *Twilight of the Idols* Nietzsche talks about another trait humans share that is by no means less dangerous and decadent than the will to evaluate and categorize everything: the wish to grasp being. And because any such attempts are doomed to failure, people start convincing themselves that “[t]here must be mere appearance, there must be some deception which prevents us from perceiving that which has being.”<sup>6</sup> Our senses are accused of being “the deceiver”<sup>7</sup>. Thus, the division between the actual and the real world that Nietzsche explains by means of the four propositions in Section 6 of the same chapter. He states that the only real world is the apparent one precisely because of the reasons why we call it apparent, i.e. our instincts and senses that the pious among us consider beastly and debasing because they prevent us from ascending to the higher world. He then states that this ideal, “real” world is nothing more than a “moral-optical illusion”, because it is the contradiction, the opposite of the actual world, and since the actual world contains all life, the other one must be comprised of emptiness and nothingness. The hope for a higher, better world, is called by Nietzsche a “phantasmagoria” because it is a product of our thirst for revenge against life and the world we live in. In his fourth proposition Nietzsche suggests that any attempt to distinguish between the two worlds is a sign of decadence, a “symptom of the decline of life.”<sup>8</sup>

### III. Interpreting the Passages in a Broader Context

Quite a few examples closely corresponding to the passages from *Twilight of the Idols* and *Beyond Good and Evil* we are interested in in this paper can be found in both his earlier and later works.

For instance, a parallel can be drawn between the chapter on *The Belief in the Opposition of Values* from *Beyond Good and Evil* and the opening passage of the first chapter of *Human, All Too Human* called “Of First and Last Things”:

“*Chemistry of concepts and feelings.* In almost all respects, philosophical problems today are again formulated as they were two thousand years ago: how can something arise from its opposite—for example, reason

from unreason, sensation from the lifeless, logic from the illogical, disinterested contemplation from covetous desire, altruism from egoism, truth from error? Until now, metaphysical philosophy has overcome this difficulty by denying the origin of the one from the other, and by assuming for the more highly valued things some miraculous origin, directly from out of the heart and essence of the “thing in itself.” Historical philosophy, on the other hand, the very youngest of all philosophical methods, which can no longer be even conceived of as separate from the natural sciences, has determined in isolated cases (and will probably conclude in all of them) that they are not opposites, only exaggerated to be so by the popular or metaphysical view, and that this opposition is based on an error of reason... All we need, something which can be given us only now, with the various sciences at their present level of achievement, is a chemistry of moral, religious, aesthetic ideas and feelings, a chemistry of all those impulses that we ourselves experience in the great and small interactions of culture and society, indeed even in solitude.”<sup>9</sup>

Here, again, the metaphysical view of the separate existence of opposite values and concepts is refuted. Moreover, it is called “an error of reason”. The following segment can prove to be an invaluable bridge between the passage from BGE and the one from TI: “... by denying the origin of the one from the other, and by assuming for the more highly valued things some miraculous origin, directly from out of the heart and essence of the “thing in itself.””<sup>10</sup> – On the one hand, it argues that the two “opposites” are interrelated and that if we should look deeper into their origins, we may find out that they are common, that one may have originated from the other. But, by so doing, Nietzsche also implicitly talks about the false belief of humans in a higher world, because he denounces the possibility of a higher world of ideas in which the ideal good creates itself from out of its own essence. In section 29 he once again discusses this issue:

*“Intoxicated by the blossoms’ fragrance. The ship of mankind, it is thought, has an ever greater draft, the more it is laden; it is believed that the deeper man thinks, the more delicate his feelings; the higher he esteems*

himself, the farther his distance from the other animals (the more he appears as the genius among animals), the nearer he will come to the true essence of the world and knowledge of it. This he does indeed through science, but he thinks he does it more through his religions and arts. These are, to be sure, a flower of civilization, but by no means nearer to the root of the world than is its stem. One does not understand the essence of things through art and religion, although nearly everyone is of that opinion. Error has made man so deep, delicate, inventive as to bring forth such blossoms as religions and arts. Pure knowledge would have been incapable of it. Whoever revealed to us the essence of the world would disappoint us all most unpleasantly. It is not the world as a thing in itself, but the world as idea (as error) that is so rich in meaning, deep, wonderful, pregnant with happiness and unhappiness. This conclusion leads to a philosophy of the logical denial of the world, which, by the way, can be combined just as well with a practical affirmation of the world as with its opposite.”<sup>11</sup>

Several themes and ideas common for Nietzsche can be traced in this passage, for instance – the futility of the search for essence, hence – the non-existence of a “real world” (TI), and also his concept of error and experience. The latter idea is particularly intriguing because it demonstrates a clear dissonance of one of the main influences on the (early) philosophy of Nietzsche – Wagner. In *The Art-Work of the Future*, (Richard Wagner, 1849, Translated by William Ashton Ellis) the great composer states: “But Error is the mother of Knowledge; and the history of the birth of Knowledge out of Error is the history of the human race, from the myths of primal ages down to the present day.”<sup>12</sup>

In his book, *Nietzsche: The Man and His Philosophy*, R. J. Hollingdale observes the opening passage of *Human, All too Human* as “a definitive breakaway” from Wagner’s ideology: “Wagner never asks himself how it can happen that continual error leads finally to knowledge...”<sup>13</sup> As we can see in Sections 1 and 29 of HATH, and also the passage from *Beyond Good and Evil*, perpetual erring can never amount to something more than an even deeper self-deception, thus no experience is gained for the one making the mistake, at least not a positive one. Indeed, the experience, Nietzsche seems to imply,

really is there but it is dangerous in the sense that continual error reinforces the fallacy and petrifies our reason and senses.

On the other hand, an interesting way of reading the quote from TI is through the interpretation of the section *The History of an Error* from the chapter “How the “True World” Finally Became a Fable”:

“1. The true world — unattainable but for the sage, the pious, the virtuous man; he lives in it, he is it.

(The oldest form of the idea, relatively sensible, simple and persuasive. A circumlocution for the sentence, “I, Plato, am the truth.”)

2. The true world — unattainable for now, but promised for the sage, the pious, the virtuous man (“for the sinner who repents”).

(Progress of the idea: it becomes more subtle, insidious, incomprehensible — it becomes female, it becomes Christian.)

3. The true world — unattainable, indemonstrable, unpromisable; but the very thought of it — a consolidation, an obligation, an imperative.

(At bottom, the old sun, but seen through mist and skepticism. The idea has become elusive, pale, Nordic, Königsbergian)

4. The true world — unattainable? At any rate, unattained, and being unattained, also unknown. Consequently, not consoling, redeeming, or obligating: how could something unknown obligate us?

(Gray morning, The first yawn of reason. The cockcrow of positivism)

5. The “true” world — an idea which is no longer good for anything, not even obligating — an idea which has become useless and superfluous — consequently a refuted idea: let us abolish it!

(Bright day; breakfast: return of bon sens and cheer-fulness; Plato’s embarrassed blush; pandemonium of all free spirits.)

6. The true world — we have abolished. What world has remained? The apparent one perhaps? But no! With the true world we also have abolished the apparent one.

(Noon: moment of the briefest shadow; end of the longest error; high point of humanity; INCIPIT ZARATHUSTRA.)”<sup>14</sup>

This description of the evolution of human thought by depicting it as a cycle analogous to the cycle of the day provides a key to the interpretation of the TI quote because it reveals Nietzsche's attitude towards each of the steps along the way of Western civilization. The first stage, Platonism, is marked by the contrast between the state of becoming (corresponding to the actual world) and the state of being (the ideal world). Although just a handful of lucky chosen ones have a chance to achieve it, at least the prospect of attaining life in this higher world is there and is real. As civilization proceeds to embracing Christianity, the prospect grows more and more narrow – now the promised better world is possible only after death. Then comes the Kantian method according to which the “real” (TI) world will remain incomprehensible to us but the very idea of it can serve certain goals, for instance moral development. The “cockcrow of positivism” is for Nietzsche the first step in the right direction, hence it denotes early morning. According to it, something that can never be comprehended or attained cannot possibly obligate us in any way. An even stronger critique of the ideal world follows – it is time for definitive action – the fallacious concept must be abolished in order to free humanity of its heavy load. The last stage marks the period after the battle with illusion. Is the last stage in which, together with the “real” world the “actual” one has been destroyed again, a promise for a fresh start, for Nietzsche's favorite *re-valuation of all values*,<sup>15</sup> or is it just the end, the end of everything, including man?

I know from experience that when such gloomy thoughts start knocking on the door of one's mind (“So pocht das Schicksal an die Pforte”<sup>16</sup>, Beethoven would say and assertively but at the same time worriedly, press the piano keys), it is time to turn to *Zarathustra*. In my reading of Nietzsche's masterpiece, I am specifically looking for passages that can be related to the suggested passages from *Twilight of the Idols* and *Beyond Good and Evil*. Not surprisingly, a whole myriad of them can be found: ~ BGE:” The hour when you say: “What good is my virtue! As yet it hath not made me passionate. How weary I am of my good and my evil! It is all poverty and pollution and wretched self-complacency!””<sup>17</sup>

“Man is a rope stretched between the animal and the overman –  
a rope over an abyss.

A dangerous crossing, a dangerous wayfaring, a dangerous  
looking-back, a dangerous trembling and halting.

What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not a goal: what is lovable in man is that he is an over-going and a down-going.”<sup>18</sup>

“MANY lands saw Zarathustra, and many peoples: thus he discovered the good and bad of many peoples. No greater power did Zarathustra find on earth than good and bad.

No people could live without first valuing; if a people will maintain itself, however, it must not value as its neighbour valueth.

Much that passed for good with one people was regarded with scorn and contempt by another: thus I found it. Much found I here called bad, which was there decked with purple honours.

Never did the one neighbour understand the other: ever did his soul marvel at his neighbour’s delusion and wickedness.

A table of excellencies hangeth over every people. Lo! it is the table of their triumphs; lo! it is the voice of their Will to Power.

It is laudable, what they think hard; what is indispensable and hard they call good; and what relieveth in the direst distress, the unique and hardest of all,- they extol as holy.

Whatever maketh them rule and conquer and shine, to the dismay and envy of their neighbours, they regard as the high and foremost thing, the test and the meaning of all else...

Verily, men have given unto themselves all their good and bad. Verily, they took it not, they found it not, it came not unto them as a voice from heaven.

Values did man only assign to things in order to maintain himself – he created only the significance of things, a human significance! Therefore, calleth he himself “man,” that is, the valuator.

Valuing is creating: hear it, ye creating ones! Valuation itself is the treasure and jewel of the valued things.

Through valuation only is there value; and without valuation the nut of existence would be hollow. Hear it, ye creating ones!

Change of values- that is, change of the creating ones. Always doth he destroy who hath to be a creator...

Older is the pleasure in the herd than the pleasure in the ego: and as long as the good conscience is for the herd, the bad conscience only saith: ego...

This somnolence did I disturb when I taught that no one yet knoweth what is good and bad:- unless it be the creating one!...

And I bade them upset their old academic chairs, and wherever that old infatuation had sat; I bade them laugh at their great moralists, their saints, their poets, and their saviours.”<sup>19</sup>

In this, perhaps longest, quote in the present paper, I believe the most thorough explanation of the problem Nietzsche sees in humanity's notion of good and evil can be found. He maintains that it is foolish to rely on any doctrines of what is good and what is bad because they are not stable concepts – rather, they are socially conditioned and depend on the region and time in which they exist. They vary from place to place and from age to age but the human deception regarding their validity remains the same – a blind belief in the distinction between the moral and aesthetic categories of good and evil. The passage also makes it clear, why Nietzsche is so concerned about this millennia-long lie we live in – because the valutors are also *creators* – they create the value they ascribe to objects and ideas but what is even worse in this case – they also create and determine the degree of deception – the stronger the contrast between good and evil -> the deeper the deception -> the more difficult it is for humans to realize that monstrous mistake and get back onto the right track. In this quote one can even find an example of Nietzsche's idea of the master and slave morality – Western civilization turns herd mentality into a cult and designates it as *the good conscience*, whereas anything that has to do with the ego, with strong individuality and independence, according to Nietzsche, is deemed by it *guilty conscience*.

Another metaphor I consider particularly important is the one about the dragon versus the lion:

“What is the great dragon which the spirit is no longer inclined to call Lord and God? “Thou-shalt,” is the great dragon called. But the spirit of the lion saith, “I will.”

“Thou-shalt,” lieth in its path, sparkling with gold- a scale-covered beast; and on every scale glittereth golden, “Thou shalt!”

The values of a thousand years glitter on those scales, and thus speaketh the mightiest of all dragons: “All the values of things- glitter on me.

All values have already been created, and all created values- do I represent. Verily, there shall be no ‘I will’ any more. Thus speaketh the dragon.

My brethren, wherefore is there need of the lion in the spirit? Why sufficeth not the beast of burden, which renounceth and is reverent?

To create new values- that, even the lion cannot yet accomplish: but to create itself freedom for new creating- that can the might of the lion do.”<sup>20</sup>

The weapons of the dragon, his impenetrable scales, are not simply “the values of a thousand years”, the “Thou-shalt”-s, but rather the “Thou-shalt”-nots, the moral, ethical, religious, cultural and social constraints that have turned man into a prisoner to artificial societal and communal norms that are meant to guarantee peace and order but what they really do is mutilate the human spirit and body. That is why freedom for new creating is so important to Zarathustra – one should first be freed of all constraints, prejudices and deceptions before one is ready to create new values.

As for TI, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* also provides a wide variety of aphorisms and stories that can be analyzed for the sake of a more thorough understanding of the passage from *Twilight of the Idols*. Here are some examples:

“I conjure you, my brethren, remain true to the earth, and believe not those who speak unto you of superearthy hopes! Poisoners are they, whether they know it or not.

Despisers of life are they, decaying ones and poisoned ones themselves, of whom the earth is weary: so away with them!

Once blasphemy against God was the greatest blasphemy; but God died, and therewith also those blasphemers. To blaspheme the earth is now the dreadfulest sin, and to rate the heart of the unknowable higher than the meaning of the earth!

Once the soul looked contemptuously on the body, and then that contempt was the supreme thing: - the soul wished the body meagre, ghastly, and famished. Thus it thought to escape from the body and the earth.

Oh, that soul was itself meagre, ghastly, and famished; and cruelty was the delight of that soul!" <sup>21</sup>

"... there is nothing of all that whereof you speak: there is no devil and no hell. Your soul will be dead even sooner than your body; fear, therefore, nothing anymore!" <sup>22</sup>

"Good and evil, and joy and woe, and I and thou- coloured vapours did they seem to me before creative eyes. The creator wished to look away from himself, - thereupon he created the world.

Intoxicating joy is it for the sufferer to look away from his suffering and forget himself. Intoxicating joy and self-forgetting, did the world once seem to me...

Suffering was it, and impotence- that created all backworlds; and the short madness of happiness, which only the greatest sufferer experienceth...

But that "other world" is well concealed from man, that dehumanised, inhuman world, which is a celestial naught; and the bowels of existence do not speak unto man, except as man." <sup>23</sup>

All these assertions can be used to portray Nietzsche's philosophy on an even larger scale - namely, not just in the context of his own philosophy but in a more general sense viewed from the perspective of art and art history for example. That is exactly what I'd like to do in the next section of this paper.

#### **IV. Nietzsche in an Even Larger Context.**

The Book of Anthony Mario Ludovici, *Nietzsche and Art*, 1911, offers brilliant insights into the process of transformation of art from a set of Pagan cultural and aesthetic traditions to a reflection of the Christian creed with all its dogmas and moral codes.

He opens his work thus: "Following Nietzsche closely, I have sought to demonstrate the difference between art which comes of inner poverty (realism, or democratic art) and that which is the result of inner riches (Ruler Art)" <sup>24</sup>. He proceeds by suggesting that the former kind of art, democratic art, is composed of "reflex actions which respond to external stimuli... slavishly dependent upon environment for its existence" <sup>25</sup>. Here, another reference to Wagner can be made. According to him, all great art is created not so much by the individual, but by the Spirit of the masses that transcends from one place and century to the next, combining the beliefs, hopes, wishes and values of the people (das Volk) and turning them into a common set of rules and expectations, a common frame in which art functions. Nietzsche, of course, is against that, which immediately transforms Ludovici's proposition about the inferiority of democratic art (= art that is created not on an individualist, but on a common basis) into a perfect example of slave morality. Its opposite, Ruler Art, he associates with the overman, "with Nature's rare and lucky strokes among men" <sup>26</sup>, thus - with the master morality of the Strong and Powerful Individual.

One of the most interesting observations in his book is the following statement:

"The pendulum of Life swung back with a force so great to the opposite extreme that the Pagan world was shaken to its foundations and in its death-agony stretched out its arms and embraced the foreign creed which said -

'Flesh is death; Spirit is life and peace. The body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.'" - "a totally novel outlook upon the world of men"; "some extraordinary magnetic creator of values had spread his will over an empire, and stamped his hand upon a corner of the globe." <sup>27</sup>

This new creed, Christianity, according to Ludovici, knew of no better way to overcome the flesh than to cut it "right away and for ever". Thus, it eliminated all chances for inner harmony - moreover - it created an imbalance: "And if thy right eye offends thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell." (Matthew, 5:29)

Except for some extremely rare cases (for example the tarsiers who, at a certain point of their life, experience an inexplicable desire to literally jump off a cliff for no obvious

reason) nature does not seem to be familiar with the idea of self-inflicted pain or self-punishment. Hence, any attempt to restrict and punish the human body is unnatural, ergo – as Nietzsche might say, the Christian doctrine inevitably signifies a decline of life. The Spirit in the holy scripts is spelled in capital letters, while the body – “the great obstacle to salvation”<sup>28</sup> (N&A) is written small. Ludovici suggests that the Church had made one ideal prevail: it ascribed all good qualities like *noble, beautiful, merciful, intelligent* to the soul and left the body to the decay of plagues and leprosy.

“The Pagan type was... the first thing to be assimilated and absorbed, and in the early Christian paintings of the catacombs you must not be surprised to find the Saviour depicted with all the beauties and charms of the classical god or hero... His gait is free, his carriage majestic.”<sup>29</sup>

This manner of appropriating the Pagan ideal in Art was by no means a way to glorify the traditions of the ancient empires but rather to overthrow and obliterate them; thus, as Ludovici writes, we can “see the classic features and form of body surely and permanently vanishing from the wall decorations of the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries A.D., and the Christian type asserting itself with an ever greater assurance.”<sup>30</sup> (N&A)

The images above are a good example of the transformation of art under the influence of Christianity: starting with the depiction of Dionysus on the obverse of the ancient Greek coin on the left (notice the vitality, ecstasy and joy that his proud and careless posture emit; notice the comfortable nakedness and the power and energy of his body), the art of coin mintage proceeds to the Roman era in which the emperor is glorified as a God – look at the laurel wreath adorning his head, at the masculine beauty and strength his face conveys. Now look at the Byzantine coin on the right. Nakedness is nowhere to be seen anymore – it is considered sinful, just like adoration, overabundance, power and control over other human beings. The very shape and form of the coins seem to have adjusted to the meager way of life of pious Christians – the coins are not the glorious symbols of wealth and wellbeing anymore, rather they illustrate the abstinence of the good Christian.

Nietzsche sees in this idea a negative attitude of Christianity to Life and to the body, the mortification of the deeds of the body through the spirit, the guilty self-consciousness before the nakedness of Adam and Eve – the first sinners whose descendants we all are, hence the body must be ugly and sinful, after all this is the most obvious attribute in all depictions of the first woman and the first man – their nakedness. As we mentioned already, it had been prevailing in the art of ancient Greece and Rome for centuries; furthermore, it was also one of the most important characteristics of the depiction of Dionysus, together with his posture – often resting on a Kline (a combination of a sofa and a bed in Ancient Greece), half-naked, with a rhyton in his hand.

This is what Nietzsche's Zarathustra has to say about nakedness and vitality:

“-Out into distant futures, which no dream hath yet seen, into warmer souths than ever sculptor conceived, - where gods in their dancing are ashamed of all clothes... Where all becoming seemed to me dancing of gods, and wantoning of gods, and the world unloosed and unbridled and fleeing back to itself:-

-As an eternal self-fleeing and re-seeking of one another of many gods, as the blessed self-contradicting, re-communing, and refraternising with one another of many gods... Where I also found again mine old devil and arch-enemy, the spirit of gravity, and all that it created: constraint, law, necessity and consequence and purpose and will and good and evil:

-For must there not be that which is danced over, danced beyond? Must there not, for the sake of the nimble, the nimblest,- be moles and clumsy dwarfs?” (TSZ)<sup>31</sup>

It seems as though the most memorable images in Christianity around which the whole religion has been built – especially the events in the life of Christ – images that have long ago turned into phraseological units deeply rooted in the culture of the Western world, are in their essence signs of suffering, agony, mourning, death, hence – promoters of the decline of the body (and thus – of Life – Nietzsche might point out). Expressions and symbols like: *the Agony in the Garden*, *the Garden of Gethsemane*, *the Last Supper*, *the Crucifixion*, *Christ on the Cross*, *the Pietà*, etc. Even the *Eucharist*, the *Holy Communion*, that we receive or celebrate, that is meant to bring the Christian

community together and unite its members, is a form of dissociation, dismemberment of the body of Jesus. Even this holy occasion for “celebration” is not full of spotless joy and euphoria because it contains at its heart the pain, distress and ultimately – the death – of someOne else, of the One. Wouldn’t the ancient world consider such rituals deriving holiness and a promise for salvation from someone’s suffering an example of sadomasochism? There has been death and pain in Nietzsche’s Greece as well, undoubtedly. However, the cycle of suffering has always been shorter than the one of joy. Nowhere in the Greek mythology can we find stories of decades of oppression and exile followed by a short period of peace after which humanity has plunged back into its usual course of life – agony and hope for a better future that is always in progress, always ahead of us, on the horizon of the world – that will never occur in our lifetime but rather when we cross the border and step into the higher realm of eternity.

For the Greeks life was a celebration of the spirit through the perfection of the body, not vice-versa as in Christianity. The body had to be stimulated and catered to because its wellbeing was considered to be in close relationship with the performance of the mind.

The apotheosis of the bodily cult – the Panhellenic Games that include the Olympic, Pythian, Nemean and Isthmian Games – were not just the ultimate celebration of the Greek gods but also an act of coming closer to those deities – the winners were not simply adorned with a crown of laurels – they were proclaimed invincible among the rest of the humans which would inevitably give them a peculiar status of overmen.

Logically, the question of overabundance and overflowing in Nietzsche’s work follows:

“The richest creature, brimming over with vitality,—the Dionysian God and man, may not only allow himself to gaze upon the horrible and the questionable; but he can also lend his hand to the terrible deed, and can indulge in all the luxury of destruction, disaggregation, and negation,—in him evil, purposelessness and ugliness, seem just as allowable as they are in nature—because of his bursting plenitude of creative and rejuvenating powers, which are able to convert every desert into a luxurious land of plenty. Conversely, it is the greatest sufferer and pauper in vitality, who is most in need of mildness, peace and goodness—that which to-day is called humaneness—in thought as well

as in action, and possibly of a God whose speciality is to be a God of the sick, a Saviour, and also of logic or the abstract intelligibility of existence even for idiots... (*Nietzsche Contra Wagner*)”<sup>32</sup>

After all, some of the first words Zarathustra utters are these:

“Only a person whose riches are overflowing can give away without losing anything: “Behold, I am weary of my wisdom, like a bee that has gathered too much honey; I need hands outstretched to receive it. I would give away and distribute, until the wise among men find joy once again in their folly, and the poor in their riches.””<sup>33</sup>

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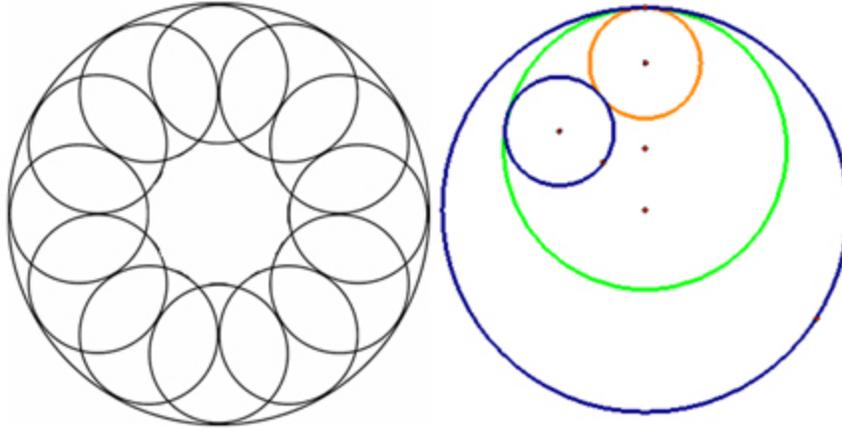
“Bless the cup that is about to overflow, that the water may flow golden out of it, and carry everywhere the reflection of thy bliss!”<sup>34</sup>

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“Verily, a polluted stream is man. One must be a sea, to receive a polluted stream without becoming impure.

Behold, I teach you the overman: he is that sea; in him can your great contempt be submerged.”<sup>35</sup>

Only someone who has an overabundance of something can give away without experiencing loss of their riches. Christianity on the other hand, is trying to turn people into givers by *diminishing* instead of increasing their resources of joy and vitality. Nietzsche believes that this is contra-natural and outwardly wrong and dangerous. Man, unprejudiced by the Christian dogmas and the fears religion is trying to instill in them, is naturally longing for happiness and vitality; for the ascending direction of life. By this token I’d like to conclude this attempt at an analysis with the following idea (or rather, question): Can we depict life according to Nietzsche like any of the two images below?



That is, would we be justified in saying that most likely, our lives consist of many ups and downs marking the development of the numerous projects we involve ourselves in throughout the time of our existence, and that the outer surface of these circles forms the bigger circle of our life, the one that is the arc of our creations – our strife for self-perfection that is never quite completed, at least not before the moment of death? Zen Buddhism calls this circle “Enso”<sup>36</sup>...

1. Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. *Beyond Good and Evil*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann. Random House Digital, Inc., 1989. p. 5.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid, p. 6.
5. Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. *Twilight of the Idols*. Hackett Publishing Company, 1997. p. 49.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. *Human, All Too Human*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. p. 9.
10. Ibid.,
11. Ibid., p. 33
12. Hollingdale, R. J.. *Nietzsche: The Man and His Philosophy*.. Cambridge University Press. p. 61
13. Ibid.
14. Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. *Twilight of the Idols*. Hackett Publishing Company, 1997. p. 60

15. “Umwertung aller Werte” – for a fuller description, see “The Antichrist”
16. Beethoven, Ludwig van. Sinfonie Nr. 5 (c-Moll) op. 67
17. Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Random House, 1974. p. 5
18. Ibid., p. 6
19. Ibid., p. 62.
20. Ibid., p. 18.
21. Ibid., p. 6
22. Ibid., p. 11
23. Ibid., p. 11
24. Ludovici, Anthony. *Nietzsche and Art*. London, 1911. p. 5
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. bid.
29. Ibid.
30. bid.
31. Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Random House, 1974. p. 68
32. Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. *Nietzsche contra Wagner*. Library Reprints (January 2001). p. 7
33. Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Random House, 1974. p. 90
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. For more information, see: Hristov, Vladislav. *Enso*. Sofia: Ergo, 2012

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