

Chapter One: Nietzsche's Devaluation of Poetry and Philosophy

Among canonical philosophers Nietzsche is one of only a few to value poetry nearly as much as philosophy. Many philosophers dismiss the value of poetry entirely. Plato famously believed that poetry is a kind of sophistry and wanted poets to have as limited a role as possible within his Republic. Freud often likened poetry to an immature and shallow dream realm in which poets could fulfill their desires. Likewise many poets have low opinions of philosophers. Nietzsche's writings are therefore a rare opportunity to examine the relative value of philosophy and poetry for someone who considers both of them highly.

As it turns out, Nietzsche's dual interest in philosophy and poetry has major ramifications for the both the style and content of Nietzsche's philosophy. Though most modern philosophical texts consider clarity of argument to be a prime philosophical virtue, Nietzsche consciously evades recognizable methods of argumentation. His writing style is even more subversive. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is written almost entirely in a kind of prose poetry, riddled with aphorisms and paradoxes, and Nietzsche clearly had his ear attuned to the musicality of his prose. His very approach to writing calls into question the discipline divides between philosophy and poetry, as well as the long and mutual mistrust between poets and philosophers.

Though there are many possible interpretations of Nietzsche's magnum opus, some hermeneutics are much more valuable than others. In Chapter One, I examine *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and argue that Nietzsche can and should be interpreted as an advocate for a particular approach to what has been called the quarrel between poetry and philosophy. Throughout the text, Nietzsche devalues both poetry and philosophy. The philosophical method, with its focus on the discernment of truth and falsity, is not the healthiest or most effective approach to organizing earthly meaning. Likewise, Nietzsche takes a skeptical stance concerning the value of poetry. Nietzsche's deflationary outlook on both poetry and philosophy allows him to pursue a hybrid method that takes what Nietzsche sees to be the strengths of both disciplines. This approach satisfies neither the standards for beauty of most aesthetically driven poets nor the standards for truth of most epistemologically rigorous analytic philosophers. Yet, working with both simultaneously, Nietzsche creates a procedure that promotes their reconciliation.

The Philosopher as a Grotesque

Over the course of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Zarathustra repeatedly belittles philosophers. Academic philosophers are painted as one-dimensional men who sublimate all of their energies to the pursuit of truth. The cautious and highly analytic approach to knowledge that scholars consider to be a high virtue, Zarathustra compares to the pursuit of "understanding as a form of nut-cracking" (Z 108). Philosophers devote extraordinary time and effort in the pursuit of what Zarathustra deems to be small truths: they pursue one or two questions about life with extraordinary passion at great expense to other aspects of existence. While philosophers believe that their pursuit of knowledge is noble—prompted by a willingness to sacrifice in order to see the world more clearly—Zarathustra believes that the desires of most philosophers are less noble than they appear.

Given Nietzsche's own commitments to philosophy and given that *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is at least partially a book of philosophy, it is no simple task to explain Zarathustra's evaluation of philosophers. In this section I will argue that Zarathustra believes that the philosophers of his time are not yet capable of defending humanity against what he views as the major looming problem of the modern world: the threat of nihilism. Philosophers are too ascetic: they too readily deny the world and worldly pleasures in order to view the world in ways less obscured by sentiment. Philosophers have also become overspecialized in the avoidance of error, and this skill in navigating away from error is much less valuable from the vantage of Zarathustra's perspectivism. Zarathustra diagnoses the philosopher as obsessed with the dream of a singular and permanent Weltanschauung that splits the world into truth and falsehood. As a result, Zarathustra advocates for a new type of philosopher who does not shy away from rhetoric in order that he might be able to affirm life and create goals for mankind.

Nietzsche depicts turn-of-the-20th century Europe as in the midst of a crisis of values. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (and elsewhere) he famously proclaims, "God is dead" (Z p. 11). By this Nietzsche means that the Christian God no longer provides meaning and direction for mankind. Since Christian values had dominated Europe for centuries, he believes that the consequences of their diminishing role will be pervasive. Like Dostoevsky, Nietzsche worries that there is nothing available in his contemporary Europe other than God that can establish meaning for human beings: "Humanity still has no goal," Zarathustra claims (Z p. 52). Though Nietzsche is an ardent atheist, he recognizes that the weakening of the structure of Christian values is likely to lead to human beings who care mostly about pleasure and the satisfaction of their immediate needs. Zarathustra calls these humans "last humans" because he thinks that in the absence of God and any other human goal the pursuit of commodious living—as little suffering as possible—will become the prime motivator for human beings and humankind will eventually return to a beastlike existence. For the last humans questions such as "What is love? What is creation? What is yearning?" will only be blinked at; work will have become merely a source for entertainment; and the even the best human beings will settle for "one's little pleasure during the day and one's little pleasure for the night" (Z p. 16). In the place of religion, political states and the marketplace will take central roles in guiding human existence, and the "nimblest of apes" will clamor for economic and political security (Z p. 44). A society for which the highest form of culture is a massive centralized shopping mall isn't an inaccurate picture of Zarathustra's last humans.

Throughout *Zarathustra* the highest pursuits of human beings are to either become the person who can provide new sources of meaning and serve as a role model in the absence of God or to support the birth of the person who can. Zarathustra names the person who will provide direction for mankind the Overhuman¹ and Zarathustra frequently depicts himself as being

¹ Other translators prefer to keep the German *Übermensch* or to translate the word to Overman or Superman. Throughout this thesis I will stay honest to the translation of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* into English by Graham Parkes since his was the translation I read most frequently in my study of the text. I should also note that I am not able to read German, so I am relying on English translations. This practice has many flaws—especially when it comes to interpretations of Nietzsche's difficult-to-translate poetic utterances. I do not think that these flaws undermine the value of the thesis, though it is worth keeping in mind throughout the text. Individual English words may not have the same resonance as they did in German, and many of the cultural-historical references of Nietzsche's German may have been lost in translation.

devoting his entire energy to the Overhuman's eventual existence. It is against this background that Zarathustra applauds or condemns the lives of human beings, and Zarathustra's critiques of scholarly philosophers make much more sense in the context of framework of the need to enliven humans against the threat of nihilism: philosophers do not seem up to the task of creating new possibilities for earthly meaning.

Zarathustra regularly equates philosophers with ascetics. Like most Christian ascetics, philosophers value mental activity much more highly than all other bodily activity. Whereas monks and religious hermits spend most of their time and energy contemplating God, philosophers spend their time contemplating abstract concepts. Though contemplation is not itself a problem for Zarathustra—Zarathustra is a very contemplative person—he harbors great distaste for the ascetic and the philosopher's dualist tendency to view the mind and concepts as separable from the human body and human pursuits. "From the earth they imagine themselves transported, these ingrates," Zarathustra says in "On the Believers in a World Behind" (Z p. 29). As monks sometimes believe that they can purify themselves by forgetting their bodily needs and remaining in dutiful contemplation of God, Zarathustra pictures philosophers as people who wish to escape from their bodies into the rarefied realm of ideas.

There is evidence that when Zarathustra compares philosophers and ascetics he is thinking especially of Plato, Kant, and Schopenhauer. Nietzsche would have known about Plato's many damning remarks about the human body, which Iris Murdoch overviews in her essay, "The Fire and the Sun":

There is in all of [Plato's] work, and not only in the later dialogues, a recurring tone of sometimes almost vehement rejection of the joys of this world. Human life is not *μεγα τι*, anything much (*Republic*, 486 A). The flesh is mortal trash (*Symposium*, 211 E). We are shadows (*Meno*, 100 A), chattels of the gods (*Phaedo*, 62 B)... Plato's own austere observations have an unmistakably personal note. This is most evident in the *Laws* where we are told that men are sheep, slaves, puppets, scarcely real, possessions of the gods, lucky to be their toys. Human affairs are not serious, though they have to be taken seriously. We exist for the cosmos, not the cosmos for us (Murdoch p. 396-397).

Zarathustra is in opposition with Plato on every one of these points. He chastises humans who "bury [their] head[s] in the sand of heavenly things" (Z p. 28). For Zarathustra, it is not a sign of greatness that a person lowers himself while worshipping the cosmos: Plato has buried his head out of disgust of worldly things. He wants only to see the immortal aspects of life that appear beyond human frailties. What Plato calls "mortal trash" is all that Zarathustra believes humans have. There is no escaping the body and earthly, human perspectives. For Zarathustra, cosmos worship is a sign of "sickness and a sick body"—a body that dreams to escape itself (Z p. 29). And in a world where there are no Gods, it is a great mistake to believe that men need to be sheep, slaves and puppets. Zarathustra does not believe that humans exist for the cosmos: rather the will to explore and understand the cosmos only arises as the result of human needs. Even the joy of examining the moon through a telescope is a joy of *this world*, a joy of the body. Zarathustra might as well be speaking directly to Plato when he says of wise men, "You still want to create the world before which you can kneel: that is your ultimate hope and intoxication"

(Z p. 98). Simply put, Plato and comparable ascetics so desperately desire a world cleansed of “mortal trash” that they displace the human realm in order to look for consolation in the heavens.

Rather than understand the cosmos, Zarathustra wants philosophers to compose a direction for human beings. In the section “On the Believers of a World Behind,” Zarathustra consciously reverses Plato’s depiction of the body in *Timaeus* in order to place the body on equal footing with abstract realms.² In the *Timaeus*, Plato speaks of a divine craftsman who creates the human head as the holiest aspect of the body and creates a trunk and limbs mostly for the purpose that the head would not go rolling on the earth (Z p. 292). On the contrary, Zarathustra teaches human beings to carry “an earthen head, that creates sense for the earth!” (Z p. 28). Zarathustra’s “earthen head” is the exact opposite: he does not want the head to be seen as transcendental. Thirty pages later, Zarathustra repeats the sentiment: “Lead, as I do, the flown-away virtue back to the earth—yes, back to body and life: that it may give the earth its sense, a human sense!” (Z p. 66). Human sense is what Zarathustra believes is of utmost importance in order to combat the threat of nihilism, and it is clear that part of his anti-Platonism stems from Plato’s virtue having “flown away” from the realm of human beings.

As mentioned earlier, it is not only Plato that Zarathustra has in mind when he critiques philosophers. Kant can be said to have similar tendencies as Plato, valuing reason (the head) above the body and placing a high value on the analytic, *a priori* (non-earthly) pursuits of the moral law. Kant, too, is victim a kind of body-head dualism, attempting to order his body entirely in the service of his reason. For Zarathustra there is no singular moral law that can be reasoned out if only one has sufficient analytical prowess. The Nietzschean picture of humankind and the human body is much more Darwinian. “Thus the body goes through history, becoming and fighting,” Zarathustra says in the section “On the Bestowing Virtue,” “And the spirit—what is that to the body? The herald, comrade, and echo of all its conflicts and victories” (Z p. 66). Nietzsche envisions humans as bodies first and foremost and spirit/reason at most as the “herald, comrade, and echo” of the body. He flips the emphasis of Aristotle’s idea of humans as rational animals such that humans are animals that have happened to develop reason.

Even though Nietzsche greatly respects Schopenhauer as a philosopher, Schopenhauer is regularly used as an opponent against whom Zarathustra teaches. Nietzsche admires Schopenhauer for many reasons including his relentless criticism of Kant’s belief in the possibility of a priori moral laws. Moreover, Schopenhauer, like Nietzsche, does not believe in the idea of mind-independent objects of thought beyond human experience. But Schopenhauer, maybe most among Nietzsche’s German contemporaries, recognizes and lauds the ascetic lifestyle as the ideal, and Zarathustra opposes Schopenhauer’s asceticism.

In *The World as Will and Representation*, Schopenhauer praises beauty for producing moments when the passions are lessened and one has “true heavenly peace” from the “restless and turbulent pressures of life” (Schopenhauer p. 247). For Nietzsche, Schopenhauer’s pursuit of calmness through art is escapist. Zarathustra readily acknowledges that life is filled with suffering and pressure. His response to that suffering, however, is opposite to Schopenhauer’s.

² For this point I am indebted to Graham Parkes, who noted the direct reference to Plato’s *Timaeus* on page 292 of his explanatory notes.

He does not attempt to find lasting release from the pressures of life. He does not want inner peace. Peace is associated with a kind of deadened contentedness. In the Prologue, Zarathustra lauds the person who asks, “What good is my happiness! It is poverty and filth and wretched contentment. But my happiness should justify existence itself!” (Z p. 12). Zarathustra doesn’t evaluate happiness as a final goal. He’d rather be unhappy in the pursuit of a meaningful cause. He would like happiness but not at the expense of life. Schopenhauer’s peace, by contrast, comes at the expense of life: it is the release from life that provides inner peace. To put it metaphorically, Schopenhauer has found an eddy in the river of life and called it his happiness, whereas Zarathustra wants the happiness of the whitewater rafter who uses the power of the currents for his own affirmative purposes.

With the figures of Plato, Kant and Schopenhauer in mind, Zarathustra’s enigmatic remarks in the section “On Immaculate Perception” are more intelligible. Zarathustra lambasts philosophers (here: ‘pure perceivers’) for their lack of self-knowledge concerning the escapism of their desire for truth. He speaks to an imagined audience of philosophers when he says:

‘This would be for me the highest thing’ — thus your lying spirit talks to itself — ‘To look upon life without desire and not like a dog with its tongue hanging out’

‘To be happy in looking, with a will that has died, without the grasping or greed of selfishness — the whole body cold and ashen, but with drunken moon-eyes!’

‘This would be for me the dearest thing’ — thus the seduced one seduces himself — ‘To love the earth as the moon loves her, and to touch her beauty with the eye alone

‘And let this be for me the *immaculate* perception of all things: that I want nothing from things, except that I may lie there before them like a mirror with a hundred eyes.’ —

Oh, you sentimental hypocrites, you lechers! You lack innocence in your desire, so now you slander desiring itself! (Z 106)

It’s a strange and heavily metaphoric passage, but all of its metaphors pursue parallel paths to the arguments that Zarathustra uses against Plato, Kant, and Schopenhauer. Zarathustra believes that wisdom (here: cleansed vision) is of merely instrumental value. It is valuable to the extent that it allows for improved living. Philosophers make the mistake of valuing wisdom (vision) more than earthly life (that which vision aims at). He is therefore considered as a type of “lecher” in the sense that his desire for distant vision dominates over the desires of the rest of the body. To take the passage’s sexual metaphors to their logical conclusion, there is no consummation for the philosopher’s desire. He continues to look at life and even seduces himself into believing that it is best to look than to consummate, and, as a result, he never touches what he wants. While the philosopher looks, the rest of the body remains cold and unused. Like the moon orbiting around the earth, the philosopher maintains his distance from the earth and his earthly desires while all of his movements are dominated by its presence.

For Zarathustra, the philosopher’s escapism from earth is further complicated because the idea of immaculate perception is an illusion. In Nietzsche’s perspectivist universe, there are no

permanent universal truths. Objectivity does not exist, and truth is an invented concept. As Nietzsche writes in the essay “On Truth and Lies in the Non-Moral Sense,” truth is:

A mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms—in short, a sum of human relations which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are; metaphors which are worn out and without sensuous power; coins which have lost their pictures and now matter only as metal, no longer as coins (On Truth p. 4).

In the passage, Nietzsche makes it clear that he believes that words are not objective markers of things as they are in the world. Rather they are human creations that have happened over time in order that certain distinctions could be made. Words are tools in the same way that an axe or a spear are tools: words allow people to better control and have power over their environment.

Likewise there is no single correct perspective. As Zarathustra says in “The Convalescent,” “every soul belongs [to] another world” (Z 190). There is not one (true) world because there is no one permanently justifiable perspective with which to consider the world. Each person sees a different world because he or she has different experiences, sets of values, attention patterns, and vocabulary with which to consider his or her world. These different worlds can never be finally reconciled. The idea that there is one true worldview out there that can be described so long as one has the right tools and framework is, for Nietzsche, a side effect of human beings’ desire to completely control their environment. Even the most even-handed descriptions of the world rely on language, and human beings have created all language for their own purposes. The means with which to judge between competing perspectives are inextricably anthropomorphic, and there is no objective external means with which to validate perspectives.

For Nietzsche, the philosopher has made an historical error when he says a sentence or an idea is true even when these “truths” seem tautological or true by definition. He recasts a vision of language such that Kant’s distinction between synthetic and analytic propositions is an unnecessary dualism. Nietzsche constantly reminds his readers that language has been and continues to be made by human beings, that it has no meaning outside of its genealogical history. There can be no truths independent of experience. All words are events—historical markers of the way that human beings have created to make distinctions in the world³. To call a sentence true by definition would be, for Nietzsche, akin to saying that an historical event was true by definition. All knowledge is *a posteriori*. When the philosopher says that the sentence “a bachelor is unmarried” is true by virtue of the definitions of the very words, Nietzsche would likely respond: No! You consider the statement true because you were taught what a bachelor was in your youth and all of your experience so far has confirmed that you have been using the word in a way that is accurate to how others use it. What seems like an *a priori* truth happens only because of an inherited vocabulary, learned by experimentation, and it is a mistake to believe that the word is somehow true or truly defined outside of the context in which it is spoken and taught and learned.

³ Nietzsche’s philosophy of language can and should be compared and distinguished from 20th century thinkers like W.V.O. Quine and Ludwig Wittgenstein, though this topic is well beyond the scope of this paper.

I believe that Zarathustra has a similar distaste for the possibility of permanent, knowable truths throughout his conversation with a disciple in “On the Poets.” Zarathustra begins:

‘... all “permanence”—that is also only is an allegory.’

‘I heard you say that once before,’ answered the disciple; ‘and at that time you added: “But the poets lie too much.” Why then did you say that the poets lie too much?’

‘Why?’ Zarathustra said. ‘You ask me why? I do not belong to those whom one may ask about their Why.’

‘Would I not have to be a vat of memory if I wanted to carry my grounds with me too?’ (Z p. 110)

I believe Zarathustra has made a very radical claim. He is not only claiming that he cannot explain the reasons for why he said a statement against poets. He is saying that he cannot answer his Why for *any* of his statements. Why would Zarathustra say such a thing? I think Zarathustra has said that he has forgotten the experiences that led him to use the language and to think in the way that he has in order to gain the framework that he previously had in order to make the claim about poets. All questions of Why, for Zarathustra cannot be answered honestly without looking at the events which brought certain beliefs into his worldview and for Zarathustra to do that he does not have memory enough. When the philosopher assumes that he can answer a Why in a way that fits in a permanent framework of truth and falsehood, for Zarathustra, he has not been honest enough about the contingent arrival of his way of thinking and of the very language that he uses. In other words, the philosopher cannot escape the contradictoriness of the world by escaping to the realm of language. All grounds for knowledge are inextricably historical, impermanent, and human.

For Zarathustra the concepts of truth and objectivity have been severely overvalued, and, as a result the philosopher’s will to immaculate perception can be interpreted in a new, unflattering light. What seemed like a noble wish for errorless vision about the workings of a small part of ‘reality’ now looks instead like an unconscious wish by the philosopher to re-affirm that *their* perspective—*their* truth—is the right and necessary truth. And when stripped of the metaphysical punch of the philosopher’s claim to objectivity, the small statements about the world that academic philosophers make are neither very insightful nor very meaningful. “Like mills they work and like pounders,” Zarathustra says in “On the Scholars,” “One only has to throw them some seed-corn! — they surely know how to grind corn small and make white dust out of it” (Z 109). The scholars believe that by taking a logical, epistemologically rigorous approach when it comes to a particular issue (here: mill-grinding), they will add to the body of human knowledge and that their small addition will be worthwhile. But for Zarathustra what is needed isn’t cleansed knowledge about a very specific aspect of the world. Humanity needs human beings who are able to create meaningful lives for themselves and others.

As should now be evident, aspects about the world that can be understood through the filter of arguments that are falsifiable, systematic, logical, and testable according to the scientific method do not encompass, for Nietzsche, the sum of relevant human understanding. In

Zarathustra, philosophers (as well as scientists) are often depicted as over-specialists in the arena of clear vision who, for their specialty, are blind to many important human experiences:

Decked out with ugly truths, spoils from his hunt, and rich in torn garments; many thorns hung on him, too—yet I saw no rose there.

Laughter he still has not learned, nor beauty. Gloomily this hunter came back from the forest of understanding (Z 101).

Again it is not pursuit of understanding itself that Zarathustra dislikes: it is the reckless pursuit of small and (here) ugly truths by philosophers who do not recognize the ethical and aesthetic opportunity costs to their studies (e.g. laughter and beauty). Though bedecked with knowledge, the man described here is not yet capable of loving life—he returns gloomily from the forest of understanding. The philosopher—like the ascetic and the immaculate perceiver—can be understood as a psychological grotesque for his capacity to discern truth from falsehood is so much more developed than her capacity to recognize other qualities and perspectives let alone reinvent those perspectives.

In *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche depicts Socrates as a prime example of the philosopher grotesque. Nietzsche writes, “Everything in [Socrates] is exaggerated, *buffo*, a caricature; everything is at the same time concealed, ulterior, subterranean” (*Twilight* p. 475). Socrates had faith in “rationality at any price” and for his faith he was rewarded with a life that Nietzsche terms, “bright, cold, cautious, conscious, without instinct, in opposition to the instincts” (p. 479). His genius is entirely reactive: he can show others where they have erred but he does not have the strength to affirm life on his own terms. Nietzsche paints Socrates’ extraordinary logical faculty as a necessary salve for Socrates to overcome his overwhelming dissatisfaction for life. Nietzsche’s Socrates made the furious search for improved reason the dominant virtue of his life, and, having achieved greater reason than any other human being to live before him, comes to view life as unworthy of living. He *chooses* the hemlock (p. 479).

So far both Zarathustra and Nietzsche have painted a dismal picture of canonical philosophers. In their pursuit of wisdom, philosophers lose their love of life, shame their bodies, attempt to cleanse their perception to an almost compulsive degree, and make unfounded distinctions between truth and falsehood. But if Zarathustra is to avoid having a merely reactive philosophy (as Socrates does) he needs to have an affirmative vision of what philosophers can become or he needs to provide alternative professions that will more likely succeed in overcoming the threat of nihilism that he is so worried about. In the next few paragraphs, I’ll sketch a preliminary account of Zarathustra’s vision of life-affirmative philosophers, which will be further nuanced throughout the rest of the paper.

Zarathustra advises philosophers to use the word truth in a way that is not defined reactively. In the section “Upon the Isles of the Blest” Zarathustra says to his followers:

Let will to truth mean this to you: that everything be transformed into what is humanly thinkable, humanly visible, humanly feelable! Your own senses you shall think through to the end! (Z p. 73).

Truth here is not something external to human beings—truths are the most tested thoughts of individuals. The search for truth is the attempt to think through one’s own senses “to the end,” where here the end is one’s personal vision for the sense of the earth. One’s truth is therefore sought after in an active rather than reactive process: a person *selects* his or her truths. As Zarathustra says, “What you have called world, that shall be created only by you: your reason, your image, your will, your love it shall itself become!” (Z p. 74). Zarathustra calls on individuals to find their truth and affirm life as a result of their truth. Whereas scientists and most philosophers treat truths in the sense of the double negative—what is *not false* is true and is true only in a preliminary, tentative sense—Zarathustra is in search of reliable, testable, active, enlivening virtues with which to navigate life.

Since Zarathustra wants philosophers to be experimenters and life-affirmers, he is much more interested in writing that emboldens and inspires other creations than he is in writing that instructs and methodically analyzes⁴. I agree with Graham Parkes when he notes in his introduction to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* that Nietzsche probably had one of Goethe’s famous quips in mind while he wrote: “I hate everything that merely instructs me, without amplifying or directly enlivening my activity” (Z p. ix). Zarathustra provides his own twist on Goethe’s quote in the section “On the Way of the Creator.” “Ah there are so many great thoughts,” Zarathustra says, “that do no more than a bellows: they just inflate and make emptier” (Z p. 55). Zarathustra wants great thoughts to be greatly styled: he wants the presentation of the thought to equal the greatness of the thought. The vast majority of the writers that Nietzsche upholds as exemplary are thinkers who are simultaneously great writers, including Montaigne, Bacon, Heraclitus, Goethe, and Shakespeare⁵. It’s an urge that most academic philosophers tend to care little about in their pursuit of clean, clear and logical communication.

Similarly Zarathustra urges his followers to avoid using reason and logic as a crutch whenever possible. In “On the Vision and Riddle” Zarathustra speaks in heroic terms of men who might as well be called philosopher-adventurers: “You, bold searchers, tempters, experimenters, and whoever has embarked with cunning sails upon terrifying seas— ... you do not want to grope along a thread with cowardly had; and where you can *guess*, you hate to *deduce*—” (Z p. 134). Deduction for Zarathustra should only be used as a last resort. Logicians here are painted as cowards holding onto the thread of logic, whereas Zarathustra wants to overcome logic and comparable Socratic ideals. Zarathustra would rather have his followers guess—and risk error and danger—than stay within the safe harbor of logic and reason. They are thus conceived of as “searchers, tempters, and experimenters”: they explore and test new and unpracticed versions of values. Zarathustra suggests that there are good reasons to believe that

⁴ Zarathustra would probably dislike this very essay for not being sufficiently encouraging. Of Nietzsche scholars, Deleuze’s *Nietzsche and Philosophy* might be the book that best parallels Nietzsche’s own wishes about both style and content.

⁵ Nietzsche has a complicated relationship with Shakespeare, though he clearly admires his work. He, like some others, seems to have believed that Sir Francis Bacon authored Shakespeare’s works under a pseudonym. Nietzsche also tends to prefer Greek tragedy to Shakespearian tragedy for reasons beyond the scope of this essay.

there are new continents of healthier human living that are possible in absence of God, and he seems to want philosophers to become Ferdinand Magellan's of the spirit⁶.

Nietzsche describes his vision of explorer philosophers most eloquently in the last aphorism of *The Gay Science* called "The Great Health." He writes:

Whoever has a soul that craves to have experienced the whole range of values and desiderata to date, and to have sailed around all the coasts of this ideal "mediterranean"; whoever wants to know from the adventures of his most authentic experience how the discoverer and conqueror of the ideal feels, and also an artist, a saint, a legislator, a sage, a scholar, a pious man, a soothsayer, and one who stands divinely apart in the old style—needs one thing above everything else: *the great health*—that one does not merely have but also acquires continually, and must acquire because one gives it up again and again, and must give it up.

And now, after we have long been on our way in this manner, we Argonauts of the ideal, with more daring perhaps than is prudent, and having suffered shipwreck and damage often enough, but are, to repeat it, healthier than ones like to permit us, dangerously healthy, ever again healthy—it will seem to us as if, as a reward, we now confronted an as yet undiscovered country whose boundaries nobody has surveyed yet, a world so overrich in what is beautiful, strange, questionable, terrible, and divine ... —alas nothing will sate us anymore (*GS* p. 346).

It's a beautiful passage with more than is easy to unpack. Nietzsche's healthy souls have or are in the midst of acquiring *the great health*: an organization of the self such that one is capable of affirmation and is able to search for truths in the manner of these adventurers. The health is not something that stays, but must constantly be fought for. The explorers are, tellingly, more idealistic than they are prudent. They seem youthful, Dionysian, affirmative, curious, raucous and joyous. Their virtues are more Homeric than they are Christian, and yet they understand or at least attempt to understand the inner lives of pious men, soothsayers, sages, and saints. They do not specialize: they learn from most if not all of the high-ranking members of German society. It's no easy ideal to match up to, and, if possible, it's only possible for a few.

Zarathustra's method—so far only hurriedly explained—begs many questions. What stops one of Nietzsche's philosophers from making unhealthy or misguided guesses about his truth? Is there any method with which to navigate the seas, and, if not, why be so reckless with one's life? Is, as Dostoevsky worries, everything permitted on the seas? If so, what tempers inappropriate desires, pushes the individual to self-overcoming, and controls decadence? What suggestion is there that there will be, after searching, a new continent of health for human beings? What evidence is there that the idea of the Overhuman or of the new country isn't merely a fantasy of a sick man?

⁶ There is a very good essay on Nietzsche called "The Philosopher at Sea" by Karsten Harries, which describes in better detail than I can the spirit of Nietzsche's seafaring philosophers.

Before tackling these problems about the feasibility of Nietzsche's ideal philosophers, it'll be helpful to consider the major alternative profession in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: the poets. Poets do not fall prey to most of the critiques that Zarathustra lays against philosophers. They are creative rather than reactive. They tend to glorify the body rather than dismiss it. They pursue wisdom widely and in all corners of life. They don't tend to view truth and falsehood in strictly dualist terms (or at least not nearly as much as Socrates and Plato do). Nietzsche has already picked out both Shakespeare and Goethe as prime examples of excellent rhetorical thinkers. In the next section I will address what stops Nietzsche and Zarathustra from merely choosing poets over philosophers. Zarathustra, it turns out, has nearly as many criticisms of poets as he does philosophers, and his critiques of poets provide an important foil for his ideal philosophers.

Obscurantist Poets

Two sections after "On the Immaculate Perception"—in a section called "On the Poets"—Zarathustra critiques poets in a tone with just as much distaste as he had for the immaculate perceivers. "They all muddy their waters, that they might appear deep," Zarathustra says, condemning poets' obscurantism (Z p. 111). But unlike in the immaculate perceivers section, Zarathustra includes himself among those whom he is scolding: "Zarathustra too is a poet"; "who among us poets has not adulterated his wine?" (Z p. 110-111). As a result, the section has added interpretative difficulties. It's not immediately clear whether Zarathustra is genuinely and solemnly self-critical or if his speech is ironic or if it is a kind of humorous, self-loathing performance for the sake of the disciple. Likely all three are present. The section can also be interpreted as a moment in *Zarathustra* when Nietzsche has ironic distance from his hero: Nietzsche could be using Zarathustra as a mouthpiece for his worries about Zarathustra.

Interpretative difficulties aside there is a lot in this section that helps to explain Zarathustra's (and Nietzsche's) evaluation of poets. It's clear that Zarathustra is at least somewhat in agreement with Plato's damning remarks concerning poets in *The Republic*. Both believe that the poets have not been sufficiently critical of their own desires and beliefs and that, as a result, their poems are misleading. Both consider poets to be a brand of sophists. "[Poets] have never taken their thought deep enough: therefore their feeling never sank to the grounds" (Z p. 111). But notice how Zarathustra has twisted the Platonic line: he does not say that poets lead away from the truth or from the good. He says that poets have not sufficiently challenged their *feeling* to sink to the grounds. Zarathustra is more upset at the poets for having made their audience believe they feel more deeply than could be honestly portrayed. They have not felt deeply enough and if they have, their feelings are too frequently out of proportion with the extent of the problems they are writing about. Feeling is not the problem—as it is for Plato, who would have reason dominate the sentiments—it is the *exaggeration* of feeling.

By the end of the section, it becomes clear that the poets have not sufficiently tested their feelings. Zarathustra goes so far as to claim, "we also know too little and are poor learners: so we are obliged to lie" (Z p. 110). Though the remark may be somewhat tongue-in-cheek, it suggests that the poet's emotions are not sufficiently checked by their audience and by their reason so they can get away with beautiful statements of very little wisdom. They have not earned the

authority to speak their poems⁷. They are not humble about what they do and do not know, what they can and cannot write about responsibly. “The small human being, and especially the poet—how eagerly he accuses life in words!” Zarathustra says in “The Convalescent.” The poet’s eagerness to accuse life is, for Zarathustra, a trait that works against the affirmation of earthly life—not for it.

The poets have many unreconciled desires but they conceal their disproportionality when they write their poems. As Zarathustra observes, poets “pose as reconcilers: but mediators and mixers they remain for me, and half-and-halfers and unclean, too!” (Z p. 112). They, like the last humans, have yet to organize their lives in line with dominant virtues. Rather, they dream, lie in the grass and prick up their ears, hoping to here something of Heaven and earth (p. 111). They live life without over-seriousness and have developed enough vulnerability to write poems in response to suffering. But their knowledge of the world is portrayed as reactive rather than active: they notice and write about what is around them rather than what is distant. Only a few search for new meanings for mankind (i.e. the Goethe’s and Shakespeare’s). Most seem to use the trials and tribulations of their life as fodder for poems concerning the whole of mankind, without much attention to the differences in human perspectives.

Throughout *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Zarathustra suggests that it is *very* important to avoid thinking that one knows more than one knows. In “On the Tree and the Mountainside,” Zarathustra listens to a young man who recognizes his own rash desire to claim to know more than he does know. The young man says, “I transform myself too fast: my today refutes my yesterday. I often skip over steps when I climb—no step forgives me that” (Z p. 37). Zarathustra agrees with the young man has been too hasty in his pursuit of knowledge. The young man quickly and naively believes that every new thought or principle will set him free of his sufferings, but he has neither sufficiently thought through his ideas, nor has he set his body in a position to uphold the principles that he creates. “You aspire to the free heights, you soul thirsts for stars,” Zarathustra says in response to the young man. “But your wicked drives, too, thirst for freedom.” It is not enough for a person to create a thought that is higher than they are: in order to overcome oneself—to transform oneself in pursuit of that ideal—it is necessary to have de-habituated oneself from one’s other, dissonant drives. The young man does not have the patience yet to make his thoughts incarnate: instead he skips over steps—jumping from one high thought to an even higher thought without having practiced the first.

Zarathustra recognizes that transformations of character take an extraordinary amount of effort and time, and it often seems that the poet does not have sufficient self-knowledge and self-motivation in order to overcome himself. He speaks to the necessity of waiting for transformations of the self in the section “On the Spirit of Heaviness”:

Verily, I learned too how to wait, and from the ground up—but only to wait for *myself*.
And above all I learned how to stand and walk and run and jump and climb and dance.

⁷ One possible interpretation why Zarathustra includes himself among the rank of poets throughout this section is that Zarathustra has been, throughout Part Two of *Zarathustra*, coming to grips with the idea that even he is not able to live up to the doctrines that he is preaching to his disciples.

But this is my teaching: whoever wants to learn to fly must first learn how to stand and walk and run and climb and dance:—one cannot fly into flying! (Z p. 169).

Part of the capacity to climb to higher perspectives is the capacity to recognize the stage at which one currently is at when it comes to the heights of things. It is in this context that the poet's exaggerations become unhealthy in the eyes of Zarathustra. The poet, like the young man, believes himself running and dancing while he is often only at the standing or walking stages. In "On the Poets" I think Zarathustra means something similar when he says, "Verily, we are drawn ever upward—but simply to the realm of the clouds: upon these we place our motley manikins and call them Gods and Overhumans" (Z p. 111). Poets dream of flying⁸ beings—Gods and Overhumans—but they themselves are dreaming of the possibility of flying beings: they themselves have yet to learn how to fly and they have yet to actually see a flying being.

The opposite of exaggeration of one's capacities is humility, and Zarathustra lauds humility with some of the highest praise of any virtue. In "On the stillest Hour," Zarathustra hears a voice from his mistress (likely the female incarnation of Life) who says to him, "You are not yet humble enough for me. Humility has the toughest hide" (Z p. 127). It's the kind of statement that one might expect to hear said about Job—not Zarathustra. Zarathustra responds to the mistress by asking: "What has the hide of my humility not already endured! I dwell at the foot of my heights: how high are my summits? No one has yet told me. But my valleys I know well" (Z p. 127). Again there is a Job-like tone to this conversation, and there is the same power-relationship: the persecuted (Job/Zarathustra) vs. the persecutor whom the persecuted nevertheless loves (God/Life). On both accounts it is humility that is the prime virtue that allows the persecuted to remain in love with the persecutor.⁹

For Zarathustra, many of the poet's exaggerations come about because the poets want to appeal to their audience and to themselves. Again, they want to "appear deep." Zarathustra blames this on vanity: "Spectators the poet's spirit wants, even if they only be buffaloes!" (p. 112). The poets are also the creators of all of the Gods of history, which, for Zarathustra, are both their highest achievements and their biggest deceptions (p. 111). But Zarathustra grows weary of the poets for their dishonesty, and by the end of the section he is hopeful for a new brand of poets that are "penitents of the spirit" (p. 112). Presumably, with penitence, the poets will write poems with less exaggeration and with feeling brought closer to the "grounds."

It's important to mention that Zarathustra rarely if ever commends poets merely for having created works of beauty. Like Plato, Zarathustra seems wary of things that are beautiful

⁸ Flying here is meant in the sense that Zarathustra had used it in the other passage: flying as the stronger and more powerful state of being than dancing. Zarathustra calls himself a dancer and he dances throughout *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

⁹ One doesn't easily associate humility with Nietzsche. Nietzsche tends toward behavior and writing that, by the time he writes *Ecce Homo*, looks like megalomania. But it's important to differentiate meekness from humility. While Nietzsche is the opposite of meek, there are ways in which he can be viewed as humble (*Ecce Homo* excluded). OR one could say that Nietzsche recognized the value of humility and gave the virtue to Zarathustra, but never fully attained it himself.

to senses only. Likewise, in *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche argues directly against the idea of art for art's sake, suggesting that the value of an artwork is not based on its beauty. For Nietzsche beauty is not something of great value. "Nothing is more conditional—or let us say, narrower—than our feeling for beauty," Nietzsche writes. "[Man's] lowest instinct, that of self-preservation and self-expansion, still radiates in such sublimities" (*Twilight* p. 535). Again, Nietzsche's view of the value of humanly produced sensual representations of beauty is every bit as meager as Plato's dismal opinion of painters and poets. For Nietzsche, an artwork is valuable only to the extent that it encourages. The great tragic artist communicates "the state *without* fear in the face of the fearful and questionable," and that state of fearlessness is worth emulating to such an extent that it justifies the artwork even without considerations of beauty (*Twilight* p. 530).

For all of his misgivings about poets, it is clear that Zarathustra still believes that poets are very important. In a witty turn of Hamlet's famous one-liner to Horatio, Zarathustra proclaims, "Ah there are so many things between Heaven and earth of which only the poets have let themselves dream" (Z p. 111). Poetry here is directly opposed to philosophy¹⁰: the former allows itself to dream beyond of the constraints analysis. And when Zarathustra says that the poets are liars, it is likely that he does not mean the poet lies in the moral sense of the word. As made clear in his essays before *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*—especially "On Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense"—Nietzsche believes that it is a mistake to moralize truth and falsity.

So long as it is able to deceive without *injuring*, that master of deception, the intellect, is free; it is released from its former slavery and celebrates its Saturnalia. It is never more luxuriant, richer, prouder, more clever and more daring. With creative pleasure it throws metaphors into confusion and displaces the boundary stones of abstractions, so that, for example, it designates the stream as "the moving path which carries man where he would otherwise walk." The intellect has now thrown the token of bondage from itself (On Truth p. 7).

The act of creation is one of the highest life-affirmative actions for Zarathustra, and even creations out of exaggeration are validated at least in part by their affirmative quality. The poet is also commended here for having displaced "the boundary stones of abstractions," which again is something that poets do better than philosophers. Even if the poet speaks from an exaggerated claim to understanding, the poet has unsettled static perspectives.

So far we have considered Zarathustra's devaluation of both poets and philosophers. By now it should be evident just how high Zarathustra has set the standards for healthy living. Only a few poets and a few philosophers have ever reached states similar to what Zarathustra would call the Great Health. It is not sufficient to be either a philosopher or a poet in the standard sense: one must also have undergone a long process of self-overcoming, helped in part by being extraordinarily humble. Zarathustra proclaims the difficulty of his vision for man when he says: "The daring risk, the long mistrust, the cruel Nay, sheer satiety, the cutting into the living—how seldom does *that* come together! But it is from such a seed that—truth is engendered" (Z p. 174).

¹⁰ The line in *Hamlet*, to emphasize the contrast: "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,/ Than are dreamt of in your philosophy" (*Hamlet* Act 1, scene 5, 166-167).

The now overwhelming question is: how could one possibly attain such strengths and is not that kind of vision for a human being merely a fiction? The task of the second chapter is to explain Zarathustra's vision for the proper pursuit of Great Health. Though his seafarers are certainly at sea, there are at least a few guiding stars—especially the accumulation of plastic power and the concept of eternal recurrence—with which to navigate.

Chapter Two: Nietzsche's Rhetorical Philosophy

I have spent the previous chapter outlining how Nietzsche aims beyond the expected discipline boundaries of both poetry and philosophy, and I have tried to make that aim seem sensible given some of Nietzsche's other commitments. Philosophers aim at objectivity, which is not nearly as compelling in a world in which there are no final truths. From Zarathustra's perspective, philosophers have overvalued wisdom in comparison to life. Philosophers too readily dismiss their bodies and too eagerly attempt to construct a world with immaculate vision. Philosophers have specialized in a very narrow way of explaining the world, and this has cost him greatly in other areas of their lives. Most of all, philosophers are less able to affirm. Meanwhile poets skim too readily on the surfaces of emotions, exaggerating their sentiments such that their poems appear more profound in the eyes of others. Poets have not been properly watchful against their own sophistry. They focus too much on beauty and too easily lament their fate when Zarathustra would prefer their art to encourage life.

In this chapter, I will attempt to present how Zarathustra develops a rhetorical philosophy. I'll first present Zarathustra's vision of reconciliation and why reconciliation is considered to be instrumental in the seafaring philosopher's pursuits of health and affirmation. Once the philosopher has reached the limits of the value of reconciliation, the philosopher creates and is guided by a particular brand of metaphoric ideas that I call poetic concepts. One of these poetic concepts is Zarathustra's eternal recurrence, which I try to explain in the minimal terms necessary to appropriate it to its proper position in Zarathustra's pantheon of ideas¹¹. Finally, I examine the text of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as a prime exemplar of the very rhetorical philosophy that Zarathustra pursues. Nietzsche's critiques of philosophy and of poetry are made all the more plausible given that Nietzsche has, to use common idiom, put his money where his mouth is. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* steps outside standard philosophical analysis—moving toward poetry and aphorism—in order to lay claims against both philosophy and poetry from outside their boundaries.

Accumulation of Plastic Power

Zarathustra often reconciles separable human desires so as to find proportionality. Overspecialization—the dominance of one perspective of how to live, act, think or find beauty—is something that Zarathustra finds both ethically and aesthetically disgusting. In the section “On Redemption” Zarathustra describes with terror his sightings of “human beings who are nothing

¹¹ I am more interested in how Nietzsche uses the concept of eternal recurrence than what the eternal recurrence necessarily means for Nietzsche or for us. More later.

more than a large eye, or a large mouth, or a large belly, or anything at all large—inverse cripples I call such beings” (Z p. 120). Zarathustra means this metaphorically¹²—each body part represents a type of desire that has become hypertrophied (e.g. a painter might be a human that is nothing more than a large eye). They are to Zarathustra the psychological equivalent of physiological grotesques. From his perspective, grotesques are not rare: they are the norm. “Verily, my friends, I walk among human beings as among fragments and severed limbs of human beings,” Zarathustra proclaims. Only a few humans have reconciled their various drives sufficiently into a hierarchy such as to avoid becoming fragmentary, and even these, Zarathustra seems to suggest, have been misguided: “In a hundred ways up to now has the spirit as well as virtue experimented and gone astray. Yes the human has been an experiment. Ah, much ignorance and error has become body in us!” (Z p. 67). Zarathustra’s dream of the Overhuman can be understood, in part, as a wish for a human who has found bodily and psychological wholesomeness.

In Chapter One I argued that Zarathustra considers both poets and philosophers as not yet sufficient to pursue the very difficult standards for health that are laid out in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Among other problems, philosophers tend to be too specialized in the evaluation of arguments in terms of the logic of truth and falsehood: poets are too specialized in the production of beauty and not sufficiently able to discipline themselves toward deep understanding. Both poets’ and philosophers’ perspectives are too narrow. In this section I will argue that the path to of reconciliation that Zarathustra extols is marked by increases in plastic power. The process of accumulating plastic power instills in the philosopher the greatest arsenal of potential actions in order to actively affirm life. Positions of high plastic power are the strongest perspectives, as they have been repeatedly tested and proven victorious over other strong perspectives. I will also argue that Zarathustra does not view plastic power as a goal but rather as a means for higher purposes such as *amor fati* and acknowledgement of the eternal recurrence.

Zarathustra regularly imagines his way into other perspectives so as to look back on and extend his own perspective. The entire first half of *Zarathustra* is filled with speeches on the character flaws of particular types of persons: the “pale criminal” (p. 33); the “believers in a world behind” (p. 28); the easy-sleepers (p. 25); and body-despisers (p. 30). As is common in Nietzsche’s philosophical works, Zarathustra provokes his audience by criticizing well-respected members of society in his diatribes¹³. In these instances, Zarathustra is not merely trying to

¹² Throughout *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche uses metaphors from nature and the body to describe psychological capacities. Just to name a few: “his head is simply the entrails of his heart” (Z 14); “the Belly of Being” (Z 28); “it speaks from the belly of things” (Z 115).

¹³ I’ve already mentioned how Zarathustra attacks both poets and philosophers—people who Zarathustra likely has more respect for than most of the rabble yet attacks nonetheless.

degrade these ways of living, he is also explaining to his audience (and to himself) the ways in which he has reconciled his existence in relationship to theirs.

For Zarathustra, the process of coming to an individual perspective does not require countless hours of introspection and deep exploration of oneself nearly as much as it requires outward empathetic attempts to understand the lives of other human beings. Zarathustra puts it nicely when he says of the sublime man: “And only when he turns away from himself will he leap over his own shadow—and verily! into his own sunlight” (Z 101). The formerly introspective sublime man is able to transform himself and find ‘his own sunlight’ by virtue of his turning away from his own thoughts and beliefs to consider those of others. Similarly, many of Zarathustra’s epiphanies occur when he realizes that his new relationship to others’ way of being—e.g. “Zarathustra is no longer a scholar” (Z 108). Most of Zarathustra’s self-knowledge is knowledge that he learned by comparison with others.

Zarathustra’s method for self-knowledge relates to types of dialectical reasoning promoted by many philosophers including Aristotle and Hegel but also Socrates, Heraclitus and many Eastern religious figures. But Nietzsche’s version of dialectical reasoning—if it is even appropriate to call it such—is notably different. As already mentioned, Zarathustra often attempts to find a reconciled viewpoint with which to overcome positions of two extremes. Like Socrates, it often seems that Zarathustra has searched for professions that have knowledge that he does not have, though after going through all of the options, he becomes disappointed with how most people live. But unlike most philosophers who advocate for dialectical reasoning, Nietzsche neither advocates that the reconciled position is *true* nor does he argue for an *ethics* of moderation. In order to have a better picture of how reconciliation and the dialectical competition of perspectives functions in Nietzsche’s philosophy, it will help to examine Nietzsche’s concept plastic power.

In his essay “The Uses and Abuses of History for Life,” Nietzsche puts forth the following definition of plastic power: “Plastic power is the capacity to develop out of oneself in one’s own way, to transform and incorporate into oneself what is past and foreign, to heal wounds, to replace what has been lost, to recreate broken molds” (HL p. 62). Things that are plastic are powerful to the extent that they respond flexibly to stresses (e.g. a bridge that sways in a storm rather than stay rigid will more likely withstand). Plasticity also refers to a person’s capacity to change the way he or she acts given new information or stronger arguments or different circumstances (i.e. plasticity is related to other concepts such as reasons-responsiveness and learning ability). Nietzsche’s definition of plastic power also includes preemptive strengthening measures; he implies that it is beneficial to look toward history and foreign perspectives in order to buffer oneself against likely problems and build an arsenal of successful historical means of mitigating those problems. Finally Nietzsche includes elements that relate to one’s ability to provide self-therapy after difficulties: one’s psychological plasticity.

As already hinted at, one of the major methods for accumulating plastic power is to attempt to understand as many foreign perspectives as possible so as to 1) better understand one's own perspective and 2) test oneself against opponents. In the aforementioned aphorism from *The Gay Science* called "The Great Health" these foreign perspectives are those of religious figures, politicians, artists, scholars and wise men. These are, for Zarathustra, worthy enemies. As more and more plastic power is accumulated, the search for foreignness is not limited to people of one's own country and time period, and Zarathustra regularly competes with foreigners and historical figures such as Plato and Kant.

In order to understand how the accumulation of foreign perspectives might allow for increased plastic power, it will help to first explain a metaphor. The simplest metaphor I can summon is from the game of basketball: the triple-threat position. When a basketball player is in a triple-threat position, the ball is kept at one side of the player's hip. From this position the player can decide to dribble, to shoot or to pass, and the player can access each of these moves quickly and easily. Defenders cannot tell which of the three potential moves the ball-handler will perform. The triple-threat position is not the optimal position with which to perform any one of the three moves,¹⁴ but it is a prudent compromise between the urges to dribble, shoot and pass. It allows for flexibility in response to the contingencies of gameplay and, for that level of flexibility, it offers the minimal necessary sacrifice to any one movement. As a result, almost all professional basketball players will start in and return to the triple-threat position many times during the course of a game. For his willingness to compromise on the optimal position for each individual movement, the player has greater plastic power relative to defenders in the midst of unpredictable gameplay.

The triple-threat metaphor can help elucidate Zarathustra's pursuit of reconciled positions. Rather than adopt a single specialized approach to any situation, Zarathustra always has an arsenal of different practiced responses from which he can decide how to act. His speeches can be spoken or sung. He can analyze like a philosopher or lament like a poet. He can dance; he can remain silent. He can attend to the negative aspects of life as the nihilist does or he can focus on the pleasurable aspects of life as the hedonist does. As is true of the basketball player in the triple-threat position, Zarathustra is willing to sacrifice the confidence and rigor he would have if he specialized in the practice of any one of these possible response-pathways—he is not specialized in any one—in order to have greater plasticity. Zarathustra is neither the most specialized poet nor the most specialized philosopher, and yet, his dual-status allows him to react-as-poet when it is proper and to react-as-philosopher when he believes it is appropriate.

¹⁴ If the player knew that he wanted to shoot, he could hold the ball higher in order to shoot more quickly. If the player knew that he wanted to pass, he could hold it higher and slightly closer to his navel in order to pass with more force. If the player knew that he wanted to dribble, he could hold the ball lower and slightly further away from the hip in order to have a faster first-step.

It is the difference in the degree of plastic power that separates the person who Zarathustra would call powerful from the person Zarathustra would call mediocre. In the section “On the Virtue that Makes Smaller,” Zarathustra explains the predicament of the common people he is surrounded by:

Virtue is for them whatever makes one modest and tame: with that they have made the wolf into a dog and the human being itself into the human’s best domestic animal.

‘We have set down our chair in the middle’—that is what their smirking says to me—
‘And equally far from dying swordsmen and contented sows.’

This, however, is—*mediocrity*: even though it be called moderation— (Z 147).

The commoner is comfortable in the middle position and will never reach the extremes of ‘dying swordsmen’ and ‘contented sows’. This is the opposite of the triple-threat position: there is not even a threat of that the commoner will take on extremes’ perspectives. The ‘dying swordsmen’ and ‘sows’ are used in a way that more resembles how the captain of a sailboat might navigate between buoys at a regatta: they are not viable positions but dangers to avoid. The commoner’s position is therefore not a position from which one can access different moves but a position of continued avoidance of those spaces. The commoner hasn’t gone through the process of understanding why humans would decide to occupy the extreme positions, and, as a result, those positions are viewed as dangerous without an empathetic understanding of their perspective.

In contrast to the commoner’s mediocrity, Zarathustra’s reconciled position is analogous to a person standing on the top of a hill looking down at possible valleys to which he can descend. It is, as the triple-threat position is, a position of the *highest* potential to use various perspectives. He has already occupied the perspectives of the extreme positions, if not because he has already practiced those perspectives then by virtue of a kind of dialectical reasoning, and Zarathustra is free to enter any of those psychological spaces at will. Of course, as with the triple-threat, as soon as Zarathustra moves to occupy one of those perspectives, his freedom to move into other perspectival positions is dramatically decreased. To move into those spaces would first require rebuilding potential energy (to continue the analogy: a return to the triple-threat position)¹⁵.

It will be useful to compare Zarathustra to chameleon-like people who he calls *last men* so as to better elucidate what plastic power is and is not for Nietzsche. A person who has extensive plastic power is not merely someone who is able to do many things and hold many

¹⁵ It is worth pointing out that the triple-threat analogy breaks down when compared rigorously to Nietzsche’s thought. To name a few differences, unlike basketball there are no rules to the game in Nietzsche’s world. There are no divine referees, and it’s not clear what the goal is (there is no obvious hoop). It’s not clear who one’s opponents are, and it’s often not a team sport.

beliefs. If it were true that plastic power consisted merely of having attained a large arsenal of possible responses and beliefs, to be used whenever best aligned with one's self interest and whenever most socially appropriate, then the common people would have high levels of plastic power. Zarathustra speaks of the rabble's multiplicity of belief as showing that they are not capable of belief. He says:

You colorfully sprinkled creatures! — You who are paintings of all that has ever been believed!

Walking refutations are you of belief itself, and a limb-breaking of all thought. Unworthy of belief: thus I call you, you actual men! (p. 104).

The average person, for Zarathustra, uses what seems like a multiplicity of beliefs as an excuse to not harbor any central and guiding principles. Again mediocrity substitutes for reconciliation. Positions of mediocrity tend to be positions that conform to what is least likely to stand out in a crowd (least likely to provoke violent response). Plastic power is therefore *not* best represented by the metaphor of the chameleon who changes with response to anything and whose response is entirely dependent on blending in with its environment. On the contrary, the chameleon has no guiding principle, nothing *for which* plastic power can be harnessed. The chameleon creates nothing. The chameleon doesn't act: it *re-acts*. Zarathustra, by comparison, has actively sought out opposing perspectives with which to test and strengthen his dominating values. To return to the triple threat metaphor, the basketball player uses the triple threat not for its own sake—not for the sake of having multiple approaches—but in order that one can respond properly such that the player *most effectively plays offense*.

Height Metaphors and the Ultimate Summit

Nietzsche frequently uses words that refer to height in order to connote Zarathustra's plastic power. At the very beginning of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Zarathustra descends “into the depths” from his position at the top of a mountain (p. 9). He does this in order to “become human again” (p. 9). What is implied here is that Zarathustra had been occupying a perspective of such high potential energy that the wide array of perspectives of human beings composed only some of Zarathustra's potential psychological spaces. To become human again is to re-enter the perspective of human beings, relinquishing the position of height and many sightlines. Notice that the Overhuman implies exactly this type of acquired perspectival superiority. To be Overhuman then is nothing metaphysically or supernaturally peculiar. An Overhuman is able to imagine and occupy perspectives that are beyond those of one's contemporaries while also being able to occupy the perspective most if not all of his/her contemporaries.

Height words are scattered throughout Zarathustra's poetic and ecstatic utterances, and their function in terms of Nietzsche's philosophical project will now make more sense. Some of the best examples come from the section "The Wanderer":

But you, O Zarathustra, wanted to see the grounds of all things and their backgrounds: so you must now climb over yourself—onward, upward, until you have even the stars *beneath* you!

Yes! To look down upon myself and even upon my stars: that alone would I call my *summit*; that is still left for me as my *ultimate* summit (p. 132).

Zarathustra, in order to achieve his ultimate height (his ultimate position of plastic power) must climb over himself: he must achieve a vantage point that beyond his current perspective. Nietzsche illustrates this poetically: Zarathustra wishes to look down even upon the stars¹⁶. The "ultimate summit" mentioned here serves as a premonition for one of Zarathustra's highest teachings: eternal recurrence.

Of course, Zarathustra descends as often if not more often than he ascends, which now seems counterintuitive if he's interested in height. It is not a paradox. In order to explain what I think Nietzsche means here, I'll use an image. Imagine a misty room filled with various sized ladders. You can't see the tops of any of the ladders. You want to go as high as you can, but you don't know which ladder to choose. You choose one of the ladders based on your various wills. You find at the top of that ladder that there are ladders that go higher. Now if you want to go higher, you have to descend the ladder that you are on and then ascend the other ladder. It might turn out that the top of that ladder shows that yet another ladder to be higher. Therefore, in search of height, one constantly returns down the ladder.

Back to the text. Zarathustra spends most of his time on mountaintops, but he descends from the mountaintops when he imagines higher perspectives than the one he currently occupies. He is therefore willing to sacrifice his high perspective to seek even higher perspectives, knowing that there may not be a perspective higher than the mountain he had just left. I think this is what Zarathustra means when he uses the phrase "going under," and this may also help elucidate Nietzsche's picture of the temporariness of health even for his seafaring philosophers. Remember that he said in *The Gay Science*: "*the great health*—that one does not merely have but also acquires continually, and must acquire because one gives it up again and again, and must give it up." For Nietzsche it is a sign of health to become less healthy in pursuit of higher healthiness. As Zarathustra says in the section "On Reading and Writing": "In the mountains the

¹⁶ Over the course of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, stars (especially the sun) are often used as symbols of old Gods. So when Zarathustra says that he wishes to have a vantage even above the stars, he may also be referring to a vantage over and above the religious worldviews.

shortest way is from summit to summit, but for that you must have long legs” (Z p. 35). What is implied here is that even the strongest mountain climber must descend from his peak to reach another peak—to forgo one’s perspective for the sake of another higher perspective. Through this repeated process one becomes a stronger and more hardened climber (one has accumulated plastic power), and this allows one to climb higher and higher summits.

By the third part of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Zarathustra has a new conception of the world’s ultimate height, and he becomes less interested in the accumulation of plastic power. On the very first page of the third part, Zarathustra says (speaking to himself), “I stand before my last summit.... Summit and abyss—they are now joined in one!” (Z p. 131). Given the use of height imagery up to this point, Zarathustra has said something very radical. He has recognized that the process of climbing his highest summit will also mean entering the lowest abyss¹⁷. It’s described in language not unlike the temptations of Christ in the New Testament, and both Zarathustra and Christ have been called to overcome the most abysmal human tendencies. In the same section Zarathustra says (again speaking to himself), “Where do the highest mountains come from? I once asked. Then I learned that they come from out of the sea” (Z p. 132). Zarathustra the longtime mountain climber must become a seafarer in order to climb higher mountains¹⁸. He must recognize that mountains are not highest because they project highest in the sky but because they have the most depth beneath them. The idea of the mountain in the sea also summons the images of volcanoes and other powerful, fiery, abysmal, depths of the earth.

One more note about the mountain-climbing aspects of Zarathustra before I discuss what Zarathustra expects to find at his ultimate summit. First, it seems likely to me that Nietzsche expected the image of the ultimate summit—the highest mountain—to function as a parallel to the setting of Christ’s last temptation. For Christ’s final temptation, Satan grabs Christ and flies him to the top of a very high mountain—the highest in the world—where all of the kingdoms of the world can be seen. Satan says to Jesus that he can have all of what can be seen from the highest summit if he only agrees to bow down to him in worship. Christ rejects Satan’s offer and stays loyal to God.

It’s possible to read the third part of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as a parallel narrative to Christ’s third temptation. Accumulated plastic power helps Zarathustra fly to the highest summits (remember that he has walked, then ran, then danced and finally learned to fly). But, like

¹⁷ I can’t help but think that Nietzsche consciously echoed one of Heraclitus’ most famous aphorisms: “The way up and the way down are the same” (Heraclitus A108).

¹⁸ As a neat aside, this happens to have some geological validity as well. Mt. Everest is widely considered to be the tallest mountain, but it is actually only the mountain with the highest altitude. The tallest mountain is Mauna Kea, which rises out of ocean floor to stand over 1000 meters taller than Everest.

Christ, Zarathustra has found new divinities to value above wisdom. As Zarathustra says, looking heavenward, in “Before the Sunrise,” “all my wandering and mountain-climbing, that was mere necessity and a help in my helplessness:—to fly is alone what my entire will wants, to fly far into *you!*” (Z p. 142). Even the perspective of the highest mountain is viewed as something that is not finally satisfactory. Zarathustra wants to fly heavenward, and he names of the glory of his heaven with secular mystical terms: “Over all things stands the Heaven Accident, the Heaven Innocence, the Heaven Contingency, the Heaven Exuberance” (Z p. 143). His heavens are atheist concepts depicted using Christian divinity rhetoric, and each of the four stands in for central elements of Zarathustra’s value system. Respectively, the heavens represent: 1) the acceptance of chance as necessary, inextricable, and unconquerable 2) the need for victory over the reactive spirit of revenge 3) acknowledgment of the inescapable contingency of one’s drives and 4) affirmation of Dionysian life energy and creative force¹⁹. In parallel to the New Testament vision of Christ, Zarathustra stays loyal to these higher values even when tempted to worship perspectival superiority as an end in itself.

Eternal Recurrence

By the end of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Zarathustra subsumes all four heavens into one concept: eternal recurrence. Over the next few paragraphs I’ll provide a brief examination of eternal recurrence’s place within Nietzsche’s thought. Many different scholars have interpreted eternal recurrence in many different ways. Unlike some others, I don’t take eternal recurrence to be a statement that Nietzsche has made about how the world is—i.e. Nietzsche doesn’t think or doesn’t need to think that eternal recurrence is metaphysically ‘true’ or ‘real’. As I’ve already argued, Nietzsche doesn’t view words and concepts as true or real in the sense with metaphysical oomph. Rather my account is that eternal recurrence is more properly viewed as something that humans use in order to allow more healthful living on Nietzschean terms.

In section 10 of “The Drunken Song” Zarathustra provides what may be his most direct explanation of the ethical ramifications of the eternal recurrence. ER begins to sound like a litmus test with which an Overhuman can test whether or not he has been sufficiently loyal in his love of Life and love of Fate. He asks:

Did you ever say Yes to a single joy? Oh, my friends then you said Yes to all woe as well. All things are chained together, entwined, in love—

If you wanted one time a second time, if you ever said ‘You please me, happiness! Quick! Moment!’ then you wanted it all back!

¹⁹ This is given other names in Nietzsche’s work including the will to power and primordial music.

All anew, all eternally, all chained together, entwined, in love, oh then you *loved* the world— (Z p. 283).

The idea might be more easily explained in a metaphor. Let's say I really enjoyed a tuna sandwich today and I wanted to experience that moment a second time. On Nietzsche's view, if I say yes to my love of the tuna sandwich, I also say yes to the circumstances that happened prior to the eating of tuna sandwich. I, for example, say yes to driving to the sandwich shop, the money I spent on the sandwich, the time I spent earning the money for the sandwich, the time I spend training in order to work the job that allowed me to earn money for the sandwich ... etc. etc. back until not only one's whole life but the entirety of history is involved in the becoming of the moment in which I eat my sandwich. I say yes to my parents' having birthed me, and their parents and their parents etc. etc. because without that chain of becoming this moment of enjoying the sandwich would not happen. Knowing that the sandwich moment is contingent on the rest of human history, Zarathustra would claim that one can only honestly say yes to the sandwich while also saying yes to history as well.

It's an admittedly strange way to look at things. In our everyday lives we tend to cordon off events as if they happened in a non-temporal context. We distinguish events from the greater history of our lives and the history of humankind. The view that the sandwich-joy requires acceptance of all of life and the conditions for human life seems somewhat absurd, and it's unclear why that kind of belief would be a healthy doctrine to uphold. But seen from another angle, it's not all that unusual. Imagine that you died immediately after eating the tuna sandwich and you, in some sort of heaven, are looking back on the sandwich eating moment and wondering if it was the best way to have spent that moment. Let's say that in hindsight in heaven you really wish you had called your mother instead of eating the tuna sandwich. Whether or not it is your conscious decision to have acted in the sandwich way instead of the call-your-mother way or any other preferable option, it's clear that in hindsight one might wish that one had acted otherwise. And not only the sandwich moment is in question: all of the time that it took to drive to the sandwich shop and the time you spent making money to buy the sandwich led you to be in that sandwich moment is implicitly negated when one wishes to negate the sandwich moment. One would have to have been otherwise for *at least one moment* back stream in the causal chain of one's life so as not to eat the tuna sandwich. So by saying no to one moment one says no to at least one moment in the past. The opposite is true for saying yes to the sandwich moment from the position of heaven. In order to say yes, one necessarily says yes to all of the moments in one's life because without those moments the sandwich moment would not have happened.

The sandwich example helped explain why Zarathustra believes that individuals have to say yes to their entire lives in order to say yes to a single joy. But the yes saying is not limited to one's own life. For Zarathustra, one needs to affirm the entirety of the world and its history in order to affirm any one joy. In the sandwich scenario, one has to affirm the lives of the people

who made the sandwich at the sandwich shop, the regulations that allowed the shop to be open, the production of the food that is being sold there, etc. etc. back all the way such that nothing in the whole of history could be different if one wanted to experience the sandwich joy moment again.

If those are the conditions for saying yes and Zarathustra wants his followers to be yes-sayers, then many people would refuse to say yes. Any one person's love of life is then inextricably linked with countless horrors: the Holocaust, the death of children, sickness, disease, suffering, weakness, etc. In Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov*, Ivan prefers to refuse the ticket—to say no to life and its requirements, to refuse to love life in the face of its evils. Zarathustra's requirements are even harsher than those facing Ivan—because Ivan was asked only about this life and not of the possibility of this life and the world before it being repeated *ad infinitum*—and yet he still wants humans to be able to say yes. As already explained, Zarathustra teaches that the healthiest response to affirm life even in the face of this horrible test, and that the best way to strengthen oneself in order to make that affirmation is to pursue the accumulation of plastic power for higher perspectives and yet value life more than the possibility of perspectival superiority.

Poetic Concepts and Rhetorical Philosophy

Nietzsche works to make explicit the implicit value system of philosophers. Philosophers, especially analytic philosophers, evaluate statements, ideas, and concepts based on a rubric that commends the logical validity, avoidance of error, and resistance to empirical falsification. This rubric has proven very valuable. But there are at least two problems with it for Nietzsche. His solution is to move toward a style of philosophy that is significantly more rhetorical and more metaphorical than analytic.

The first problem is that analytic philosophy does not seem to be the best method when dealing with ethical issues of existential weight. When it comes to affirmation of life, the philosophical method is less inspirational and less persuasive than other creative methods of communication such as poetry, music, and dance. The Socratic and Platonic equation that implies that more knowledge and more wisdom lead to more happiness and more virtue is not a valid equation for Nietzsche. Though Socrates seems like the wisest person who has lived for his skill at philosophical argument, he is, on Nietzsche's terms, not nearly as wise as people believe him to be. Socrates is purely reactive, and he cannot affirm value in life. Zarathustra often advocates that one needs to sacrifice understanding to live more affirmatively and more healthfully. If philosophy aims not merely knowledge for the sake of knowledge or wisdom for the sake of wisdom but for the creation and stimulation of healthier human lives by virtue of that knowledge/wisdom, then philosophy begins to look much more like poetry.

The second problem is that the analyst's method is, for Nietzsche, not the most efficient way to accumulate the perspective needed to deal with the major problems of human life. He much prefers the method of reconciliation used so as to accumulate plastic power. His method is much less tied to the philosopher's armchair, and he doesn't think that thinking in isolation a very practical method to pursue earthly wisdom. The philosopher is too interested in the cleanliness of his thinking and that reactive mindset cautions him or her from pursuing more radical and experimental forms of life.

As a result, Zarathustra's method of philosophy is almost completely anti-analytical. Many of Nietzsche's most central concepts—the Overhuman, will to power, eternal recurrence, health, perspectivism and amor fati—do not claim metaphysical correctness. They are unfalsifiable on the logician's and the empiricist's terms. There is no way to either prove or disprove the possibility of eternal recurrence: there can be no test that questions whether or not the universe will cycle ad infinitum such that all of the world will come back into being just as it was again eternally. There has never been an Overhuman, so the feasibility of the existence of an Overhuman is always in question²⁰. The very concept of health, which so often sounds like it is of utmost importance for Nietzsche's ethics, never gets defined in a way that would come close to a declaration of necessary and sufficient conditions. Nietzsche claims that will to power is the fundamental force in the world, but he defines will to power so as to be all-encompassing by definition. There is nothing that could be found or explained that would suffice to falsify Nietzsche's claim about the role of will to power. Nietzsche regularly admits that his perspectivism is only a perspective—i.e. even his concept of perspectivism is only one way of viewing the world.

He's not a relativist. Nietzsche believes his way of looking at things is better than others'. But his means of evaluating 'better' and 'worse' perspectives are *not* based on analytic philosopher's values of falsifiability, objective empirical evidence, and logical validity. And he believes that using his concepts will be better than using his competitors' concepts (e.g. Plato and Socrates). But he does not believe that his concepts are the necessary and final ways in which the world can or will or should be understood. So how does Nietzsche claim to believe that his concepts are worthwhile concepts? Why should we believe Nietzsche's perspective? Zarathustra provides a very strong answer to those questions in "On the Spirit of Heaviness":

By many different paths and ways have I come to my truth; not on one ladder alone have I climbed to the heights from which my eye now roams into my distances.

²⁰ Possible candidates for historical Overhumans that Nietzsche admires greatly include Napoleon, Goethe, Christ, Siddhartha Gautama, the Persian Zarathustra, and Socrates, but none of these seem to live up to the vision of the Overhuman Zarathustra portrays in the beginning of the text. There is some suggestion that by the end of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Zarathustra either does not believe in the possibility of an Overhuman or takes on the role of Overhuman himself. The line of thinking, however, is beyond the scope of this essay.

And only with reluctance did I ever ask the way—that always went against my taste!
Rather I would question and try out the ways themselves.

A trying and a questioning was all my going: and verily, one must also *learn* how to
answer such questioning! But this—is my taste:

—not good, not bad, by *my* taste, about which I am no longer secretive or ashamed.

‘This—is just my way—where is yours?’ Thus I answered those who asked me of ‘the
way’. For *the* way—does not exist! (Z p. 169).

Zarathustra and Nietzsche both believe that ethics is a realm in which there is no final answer: ethics requires endless experimentation of the part of human beings. Zarathustra does not call upon his competitors to *disprove* his perspective. He calls upon them to provide a way of examining the world that is more powerful and more persuasive than his. He does not claim to a truth that is anything other than *his* truth, *his* perspective. But Zarathustra believes that he has seen enough of mankind to know that his perspective is superior to all of the others that he has come in contact with—and this verdict rests on Zarathustra’s experience tested out different forms of life and his own personal taste.

In many ways, Zarathustra resembles a physician more than he does a philosopher. His skill the expert diagnosis of psychological frailties, those of his peers as well as those of the larger cultures, and he is able to conceive replacement methods that promote healthier living. But just as no doctor would claim to know what health is in terms of any analytic definition or claims to have the best and most lasting curative methods, Zarathustra never claims that his way is the ultimate way to health. He claims that it helps people more than his competitors. Nietzsche’s philosophy doesn’t aim to be *the* philosophy: it claims to be the best live option (to use William James’ term) for his contemporaries.

In order to imagine how Nietzsche envisions how philosophers’ work should be valued and compared with each other’s in a perspectivist universe, it will be useful to look outside of the academy and examine the art world. Why is Picasso considered to be a great painter? He is considered to be a great painter because he invented a new style that artists and spectators around the world found to be a compelling and enlivening form of art. He was able to reinvent his style countless times and he performed many of his styles so well that it is likely that nobody ever will succeed at those styles as well as Picasso did. Picasso’s strength is that he sets up perspectives—artistic styles—that are compelling and then he’s better at portraying those perspectives than anybody else in his time period²¹. He is not great because his paintings are the most ‘true’ or

²¹ I seem to be missing the claim that Picasso is great because he made the *most beautiful* art of his time period. But if we take a Nietzschean genealogical analysis of the Picasso’s greatness, beauty is not a necessary concern. Just like

‘errorless’. Those values make very little sense in the context of art. Art is a competition for compelling perspectives of what is worth looking at, hearing, understanding, tasting, and touching. The old guard is never disproven: they are overshadowed. Other types of art become more convincing in their stead.

Likewise, Zarathustra judges philosophies and religions by the greatness and healthiness of the human beings who follow the respective philosophy. An excellent Nietzschean philosophy will produce men and women who have more powerful perspectives and who more readily affirm life, though the philosophy need not include Nietzschean concepts. The competition between philosophies is not won on the basis of truth and falsehood but on the quality of life they can produce. Concepts are of only instrumental value for Nietzsche: the goal is improved living, not the proliferation and production of concepts. Zarathustra explains his evaluation of the value of concepts in the final scene of the third part when he says:

There is no above, no below! Throw yourself around, and out, and back, you who are light! Sing! Speak no more!

—Are all words not made for those who are heavy? Do all words not lie for one who is light! Sing! Speak no more! — (Z p. 203).

Even the concepts that he has spent so long explaining over the course of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (e.g. height words) have little value for those who have already overcome heaviness and the threat of nihilist thought. When he says that all words lie for someone who is light, he means that the light person understands that all words are fabrications—potentially helpful fabrications but nothing to be necessarily convinced by. Instead of speaking, Zarathustra lauds the value of singing for the light person because singing is more affirmative than speaking and speaking has lost most of its value.

Since Nietzsche does not believe that there are firm, secure, final foundations with which to start a philosophy, all philosophies and all concepts must be fabrications. Zarathustra attempts to create a philosophy that is honest about its fabrications as much as possible. His concepts—like many religious concepts—are consciously created to be unfalsifiable, wholly inconsistent with analysis, and anti-scientific. They are inextricably rhetorical. Instead of saying that Zarathustra has found *the* grounds, he says that he has taught his soul to “persuade the grounds themselves over” (Z p. 194). He has created names and new perspectives for things that he believes are powerful enough to redirect the methodology and framework against which humans test their thoughts.

truth is perspectival, beauty is perspectival. So Picasso was great because his perspective inspired and compelled others to appreciate his craft, not because of some exterior and definition-less phenomenon called beauty.

Zarathustra's rhetorical philosophy grows out of a system of valuation in which life is more valuable than wisdom, the distinction between truth and falsity has been blurred, and nihilism is the major problem facing Europe. Nietzsche's style has been reconciled with the content of his philosophy. For Nietzsche, his rhetorical philosophy is a new ladder on which the limitations of philosophy and poetry can be overcome in the service of life.

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