

## Philosophy – Nietzsche – Philosophy

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One of the distinguishing characteristics of philosophers of the modern period was the effort made by many of them to constitute their own philosophies as turning points. Not only did they see themselves in terms of the tradition of philosophy, but they also, in complete self-consciousness, saw themselves as agents in the transformation to future philosophy. Descartes, Kant, Hegel, to mention only the most obvious examples, saw their own respective works not only as coming to terms with philosophy that had preceded their own, but as establishing the direction that philosophical thought that came after them would have to go, both methodologically and substantively. Friedrich Nietzsche's work should be reflected upon in this context since he sought to approach the enterprise of philosophy with an attitude very different from that of modern philosophers who came before. This difference can be articulated by considering the relation to the philosophical past, to the philosophy of the future, and the philosophical assignment to himself that is to be found in his work.

### 1. The philosophical tradition

Gradually it has become clear to me what every great philosophy so far has been: namely, the personal confession of its author and a kind of involuntary and unconscious memoir; also that the moral (or immoral) intentions in every philosophy constituted the real germ of life from which the whole plant had grown.<sup>1</sup>

Nietzsche rails against philosophy and often makes sport of the greatest philosophers. But he also praises philosophy, and of course, is engaged with it himself. It is not immediately clear then what philosophy means for Nietzsche. He attends to the tradition of philosophy; he examines it, criticizes it, ridicules it – but he also uses it, admires it, and depends upon it in giving himself the task of overcoming it. As is clear from the above quote, for Nietzsche one cannot really speak about philosophy without speaking about philosophers and their intentions. And Nietzsche sees himself as having a special place in that line of thinkers within the tradition that is called philosophy. It is he who is bursting asunder, who creates a crevice which is the opening necessary for distinguishing the philosophers of the past from those of the future. It is intriguing – and necessary if one wants to learn to read the movements within Nietzsche's thought – to understand how *he* saw the future and the past of philosophy, for only thereby can it become clear what he is doing through his own philosophizing.

Nietzsche divides the history of philosophy first of all by quality. There are philosophers – those who are original, resourceful, forceful thinkers – and then there are scholars and critics, derivative thinkers who don't really deserve to be called philosophers at all. Among this second group he includes his contemporaries in general, researchers, writers of detailed commentaries who seek to explain prior philosophers, and sceptics, since they all manifest a spiritual sickness, "... they no longer know independence of decisions and the intrepid sense of pleasure in willing ..."<sup>2</sup> In short, it is only those who have the will to express a "moral or immoral" intention who are to be considered philosophers, not the will-less who seek objectivity, or who seek to have a comprehension grounded on the thought of others.

The chronological division of the history of philosophy is casually two-fold: the Greeks of antiquity – those who have the "Greek spirit" (among whom he sometimes ambivalently includes the stoics and from whom he excludes Aristotle), and the moderns – more or less everyone after Plato. Nietzsche's interest in the great philosophers of modernity is pretty straightforward; he uses them as foils to be reduced to lame culture-carriers by his rapier wit, his irony, or his condescension as he shows them to be

carrying out the fundamentally wrong-headed notions of the post-Platonic era. But even as he contests their doctrines, here and there one finds a word of admiration for most of the great ones: Descartes, Spinoza, Hegel, even sometimes Kant, whom he at other times classifies with the “critics.” It is an admiration accompanied by a literary shaking of his head. What he admires the most is their audacity in asserting their philosophies at all. Even the philosopher who had the most direct influence on his own ideas, Schopenhauer, falls to the harvest of the field of modern philosophy that Nietzsche conducts by way of generalities. He contends, good naturedly enough, that too many of the thinkers of modernity have simply not been able to free themselves from “the seduction of words.” Many of modernity’s key phrases, “immediate certainty,” “absolute knowledge,” “thing-in-itself,” he observes, “involve a *contradictio in adjecto*.”<sup>3</sup>

It is only the Continental – really the German – philosophers that Nietzsche finds at all interesting; his highest praise of British philosophers is that they are of “respectable but mediocre” spirit. His less congenial judgement is well summarized in the statement:

They are no philosophical race, these Englishmen: Bacon signifies an *attack* on the philosophical spirit; Hobbes, Hume, and Locke a debasement and lowering of the value of the concept of ‘philosophy’ for more than a century.<sup>4</sup>

The project of thinking which develops out of the classical British philosophers becomes characterized as “positivism,” and in so far as it reduces itself to being a philosophy of knowledge, is something which Nietzsche holds in complete disdain. For him that constitutes a mockery of what there was to be admired in philosophy. He finds it not only insipid, but worse, *wanting* to be insipid.

Through the *cogito*, Descartes brought modern philosophy to birth, for he concluded from it that, “I am a thinking thing,” thereby opening the realm of subjectivity. In being one of the first thinkers to reflect on the conjuncture of the systems of language structure, i.e., grammar, as a determinant of thought, Nietzsche subverts the certainty of Descartes’ assertion of the pronoun “I” in the *cogito* by remarking that this supersitition of

logicians that there must be a subject, an “I” of the *cogito*, has been perhaps brought about by having been tricked by grammar. So much for Descartes and the certainty of subjectivity.

Kant appears periodically in Nietzsche’s work only to disappear quickly after a thrust, a question, a snicker. Scattered throughout Nietzsche’s texts are cavalier assaults not on the arguments in, but rather on the *bases* of, each of Kant’s three great critiques, often by turning the question addressed to a different or more fundamental one. For example:

... it is high time to replace the Kantian question, ‘How are synthetic a priori judgments possible?’ by another question, ‘Why is belief in such judgements necessary?’<sup>5</sup>

For a considerable time Nietzsche took Schopenhauer as his philosophical mentor. What was appealing in that philosophy for Nietzsche was the opposition to Hegelian thought, the aesthetic justification of existence, and, most of all, the notion that it is not reason but the *will* that is the preeminent force in living. But in the end Nietzsche came to reject Schopenhauer’s philosophy as too superficial and too traditional. His rejection of modern philosophy in general is pinpointed in the remark he makes about Schopenhauer’s teaching on the will, that it is simply “the exaggeration of a popular prejudice.”<sup>6</sup> His more encompassing view is presented through Zarathustra in the speech “On the Famous Wisemen”:

You have served the people and the superstition of the people, all you famous wisemen — and *not* truth. And that is precisely why you were accorded respect. And that is also why your lack of faith was tolerated: it was a joke and a circuitous route to the people. Thus the master lets his slaves have their way and is even amused by their pranks.<sup>7</sup>

Is it really possible to think this idea, that what is reputed to be the most obscure, the most abstract, the most *uncommon* thinking is ultimately nothing other in result than a confirmation of the most widely held prejudices and opinions of people? Consider what, in the *final* analysis, are the positions put forth through the

most subtle, strict, profound reasoning of those important philosophers of the modern period: Descartes, Hume, Kant, Hegel. Descartes, who calls everything into question by way of radical doubt, in the end confirms as certain all that had been called into doubt. Through “scepticism” Hume undercuts any possible challenge to custom as a philosophical foundation on the basis of its lack of grounding by declaring such a ground to be impossible. Thus, custom remains its own justification. Kant’s scholarly trek brings him to assert a categorical imperative that is simply very much in keeping with the Biblical injunction to “do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” Even the dialectician Hegel winds up at the “common sense” position of asserting the importance of adherence to the family, religion, and the state. Perhaps by focusing simply on the results of these philosophies and their accord with popular thinking, Nietzsche has earned the title suggested by Paul Ricoeur: “master of suspicion.”

Nietzsche also presents a second factor that would account for the similarity of philosophies in modern times, an insight that he perhaps gained through his philological training: that the similarity of language structures determines the similarities of what is thinkable.

The strange family resemblance of all Indian, Greek, and German philosophies is explained easily enough. Where there is affinity of languages, it cannot fail, owing to the common philosophy of grammar – I mean owing to the unconscious domination and guidance by similar grammatical functions – that everything is prepared at the outset for a similar development and sequence of philosophical systems; first as the way seems barred against certain other possibilities of world-interpretation.<sup>8</sup>

On the basis of at least this common language structure root, philosophizing is seen by Nietzsche as a sort of “reversion to type.” Thus in the end Nietzsche would go a long way with Whitehead’s remark that Western philosophy exists as a series of footnotes to Plato.

Nietzsche, like Heidegger after him, is particularly enthused by the pre-Socratic thinkers. For him it is Heraclitus who is the

greatest of the Greeks because he affirmed life and its contradictions. But further, Heraclitus, whom Nietzsche takes as his guide in this matter, introduced the distinction of esoteric and exoteric in regard to his own teaching. Not for everyone is the thought of Heraclitus – he disdained universal appeal. But Nietzsche interpreted even this distinction in an unconventional way; not as the contrast between initiated and uninitiated is the esoteric-exoteric distinction to be understood, rather “the exoteric approach sees things from below, the esoteric looks *down from above*.”<sup>9</sup>

When reflecting on Greek philosophy Nietzsche, like everyone, must come up against Socrates as well as Plato. He has a deeply ambivalent regard for these two giants of Greek philosophy. He both admires and has contempt for them as two separate instances of the institution of a new kind of spirit in Greek culture. Nietzsche’s critique of Plato is that he contributed to the decadence of the Greek spirit, that he helped to undermine the instinct that had originally formed that high spirit by an inability to accept those kinds of contradictions of life that Heraclitus had embraced with such vigor as being the very meaning of life and thus the foundation of his thought. For Nietzsche the basis of Plato’s philosophy is very clear: “... Plato is a coward in the face of reality – consequently he flees into the ideal ...”<sup>10</sup>

There is no question but that in regard to what Nietzsche holds as *the* most fundamental issue, and where he aligns himself with Heraclitus, Plato had overturned the position taken by Heraclitus. Plato devalued the notion of “perspective” in order to assert the primacy of *Eidos*, the forms. It is Nietzsche’s contention that Plato asserted the primacy of the forms precisely in order to avoid having to acknowledge the primacy of perspective in both being and knowledge. Nietzsche detests Plato’s denial of the sensual life, his placing of the ideal in the supersensible realm, and his identification of truth with the universal. Yet Plato is also worthy of a grudging respect because he constructed such a tremendously powerful system of thought – one that came to dominate. In the same passage in which he states his complete contempt for the teaching of Plato, Nietzsche also acknowledges his admiration for that creative force which Plato was: “... How could the most beautiful growth of antiquity, Plato, contract such a disease? Did the wicked Socrates corrupt him after-all?”<sup>11</sup>

What does Nietzsche think of Socrates, that traditional personification of philosophy? How does Nietzsche deal with, as he named one section of *Twilight of the Idols*, “the problem of Socrates”?

There are four assertions that seem to capture the essence of Socrates’ philosophizing:

1. The unexamined life is not worth living.
2. Know thyself.
3. No one does wrong knowingly.
4. Philosophy, properly understood, is preparing for death.

Summed up, Socrates philosophized against life, against the instincts, and for the domination of reason. In the Socratic enterprise is found the elevation of reason to the position of master over and against the instincts. For Nietzsche, Socrates in his person and his thought represents the defeat of what was greatest about the Greek spirit: the strength and vitality of which Greek culture was an expression, and which had been represented philosophically by Heraclitus. At one point Nietzsche succinctly described this transformation as the ascendance of the Apollonian over the Dionysian spirit, the triumph of decadence. What made this problematic, however, is that Socrates was not the simple antithesis of that spirit which Nietzsche so admired, for he was neither weak nor uncertain. His life and his teaching were of self-mastery. What is intriguing about Socrates for Nietzsche is precisely his resoluteness, his strength, his self-assurance. But from what, out of what source, did this self-mastery come? And how is it that this vitality that is Socrates came to serve death?

What the suspicious Nietzsche sees is that philosophizing too is a way of living life, and is therefore subject to all of the conditions of life and forces of life. From this comes its possibility as a movement of self-mastery, for “every drive wants to be master -- and it philosophizes in that spirit.”<sup>12</sup>

The philosopher, even the ambassador of reason Socrates, is not, as Hegel would have it, “a disinterested spectator of the Idea.” Every philosopher is really an *advocate*; it is not the love of wisdom, but the love of *his* wisdom that moves one to philosophize, according to Nietzsche. Socrates told us that philosophy is

seeking for truth, for wisdom. That is, that thinking is justification of life. Nietzsche affirms, however, that thinking is just the relation of instinctual drives to one another, and that our entire instinctual life has one basic form:

Suppose, finally, we succeeded in explaining our entire instinctive life as the development and ramification of *one* basic form of the will – namely, of the will to power, as my proposition has it; suppose all organic functions could be traced back to this will to power and one could also find in it the solution of the problem of procreation and nourishment – it is *one* problem – then one would have gained the right to determine all efficient force univocally as – *will to power*. The world viewed from inside, the world defined and determined according to its ‘intelligible character’ – it would be ‘will to power’ and nothing else –.<sup>13</sup>

So, according to Nietzsche even Socrates lived out the will to power. But how? Didn't he speak directly against instincts, against the body, and against life? How could this be viewed as a manifestation of the will to power?

*Ressentiment*, rancor, teaches Nietzsche, is nothing other than the will to power turned against itself since “a living thing seeks above all to *discharge* its strength – life itself is the will to power.”<sup>14</sup> If out of impotence a being cannot discharge its strength in the direction of the world, it will do so *against itself* by mastering its own drive to life and then acting out of rancor. Socrates, as he himself had predicted, had his revenge; with Plato he created philosophy as something that needs to be overcome if it is to serve life. As the most rarified and refined manifestation of the will to power, philosophy has nonetheless served as its opposite; it is the very antithesis of an advocate of life. Given a meaning different from what he intended, Wittgenstein's dictum that “philosophy is the disease of which it ought to be the cure,” would be appropriate. Philosophy has been neurosis, a drive turned against itself. It is not because it is “merely” thought that philosophy is impotent; it is so because it is thought turned against life. Thus it is not as a healthy, joyous exercise of instinct that philosophy plays itself out, but as a rancorous foe of instinct. Thereby, it struggles



against its own ground and its own healthy inclinations.

This coming to the core of the drive that philosophy is brings the focus very clearly on the meaning of what is most often misunderstood in Nietzsche's thought – the will to power. It is not at all a drive to attain a *position* of power, nor even a tendency to hold or to have power. At bottom each of these would be a self-constraining, an in-gathering, an assembling, i.e., a restrictive effort which would require an attempt at calculation and a controlling of life. For Nietzsche the will to power, as life itself, is the seeking to discharge strength, not the seeking to stockpile it. Even if one were to read the will to power as simply the will to mastery, it would still have to be understood that mastery is attained through self-overcoming. To understand mastery as control over things or over others is already a perversion of the will to power since that would involve, as Hegel has shown us, a dependence upon that over which one is master. *Genuine* mastery is living oneself out as the will to power, that movement of self-overcoming which is the flow and vigor of life.

For Nietzsche it is because Socrates masters by means of dialectic, because he becomes a tyrant, even over himself, through reason, that Socrates lives a life of revenge. Socrates does not overcome himself. He *controls* himself. That is, he is a decadent. And Socrates stands as the epitome of that tradition of philosophy which has played its significant part in bringing Europe to the unfortunate spiritual condition in which it finds itself. To this condition Nietzsche gives the name – nihilism. He specifically rejects the suggestion that philosophy has somehow been opposed to or above this condition:

It is a self-deception on the part of philosophers and moralists if they believe that they are extricating themselves from decadence when they merely wage war against it. Extrication lies beyond their strength: what they choose as a means, as salvation, is itself but another expression of decadence; they change its expression, but they do not get rid of decadence itself ... To *have* to fight the instincts – that is the formula of decadence: as long as life is ascending, happiness equals instinct.<sup>15</sup>

## 2. The philosophy of the future

Philosophy then has both perpetuated and fallen victim to decadence. From Socrates and Plato through the modern epoch philosophy has invoked the tyranny of reason. Thereby it has worked against the world of appearances, against what Nietzsche names "perspective," the "basic condition of life."<sup>16</sup> Philosophy has engaged in a struggle against itself and has thus been party to its own destruction. Through its dedication to the will to truth it has revealed, and thus helped to bring about, the death of God – which has left all values without foundation. Classical philosophy has lived itself out in announcing nihilism. Nonetheless, Nietzsche continually returns to a consideration of philosophy because, as he sees it, it is now possible, on the groundless ground of nihilism, that philosophy can overcome its "death wish."

For all that Nietzsche denounces the decadence of philosophy, he does not overlook that it is the "most spiritual will to power," and thus entitled to a circumspect respect.<sup>17</sup> By means of bringing nihilism to clarity philosophy could effect a transvaluation of values. Philosophy could, *in the future*, be a type of self-overcoming. It would be by raising the question of the *value* of truth that this over-coming of philosophy by itself could occur. But this would be a dangerous, radical undertaking for it would question precisely what has served as the unquestioned assumption for the justification of philosophy:

But who has the will to concern himself with such dangerous maybes? For that, one really has to wait for the advent of a new species of philosophers, such as have somehow another and converse taste and propensity from those we have known so far – philosophers of the dangerous 'maybe' in every sense.

And in all seriousness: I see such new philosophers coming up.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, in the concept of philosophy Nietzsche includes not only what has been, but also that which *will be*. He gives those who are of this new species of philosophers a name: *Versucher* (at-tempter, experimenter, seeker).<sup>19</sup> Certainly since at least the time of the later Greeks the popular conception of "living ph-

losophically” has meant living prudently, living in control, by way of reason, of “temptation” in self, in life, in thought. The philosophical life as the contemplative life, as consolation, as disinterested spectator. This meaning is challenged by Nietzsche:

But the genuine philosopher — as it seems to *us*, my friends — lives ‘unphilosophically’ and ‘unwisely’, above all imprudently, and feels the burden and the duty of a hundred attempts and temptations of life — he risks *himself* constantly, he plays the wicked game.<sup>20</sup>

Kierkegaard had also wanted to reintroduce philosophy as passion, and there is sometimes a common spirit that is shared by the two thinkers. But in the end Nietzsche would surely have thought that Kierkegaard too had not escaped the tricks of grammar nor the thoughtlessness of thought when he declared that “truth is found through subjectivity.” According to Nietzsche the new philosophers will not carry the ballast of this Cartesian notion of subjectivity nor the classical notion of truth. Rather, they will go forth as philosophers to take on a creative function, “... this task itself demands something different — it demands that he *create* values.”<sup>21</sup> Socrates described himself as a midwife; Nietzsche demands that the philosopher give birth.

It is through the creation of values that the age of nihilism will be overcome, and the philosophers who are not yet are central to this overcoming of nihilism. But it will certainly not be by taking up the project of philosophy in the same way, since its orientation has been toward the *past*; it has been the project of the conservation of *former* values by means of forming them into formulae which became designated as “truth.” The new philosophers will not be oriented toward the past however since:

*Genuine philosophers however, are commanders and legislators: they say, ‘thus it shall be!’ ... Their knowing is creating, their creating is a legislation, their will to truth is — will to power.*<sup>22</sup>

Modern philosophy is characterized by the seriousness, the difficulty, the ponderousness of its thought. Philosophical thinking

has proudly taken upon itself the designation of toil, and of having a way of proceeding which grinds out analyses, connections, conclusions as response to (logical?) necessity, a necessity which compels thought to be cautious, slow, perhaps even tedious. Such a vision of philosophy could not even suspect that genuine philosophy, done boldly and with exuberance, is “something light, divine, closely related to dancing and high spirits.”<sup>23</sup>

The new philosophers then will be those who think in the spirit, the rhythm of dancing and laughter, those who philosophize in joy. If philosophy can be characterized as “the search for truth,” then these new philosophers too will search for truth. But in contrast to classical philosophers, they will not invoke the criterion of universality. These thinkers will precisely *not* seek “truth for everyone,”<sup>24</sup> since their fundamental insight is that such a notion of truth contests what is most characteristic of life — perspective. It is through embracing perspective that these “attempters” will proceed; “‘my judgement is *my* judgement: no one else is easily entitled to it’ — that is what such a philosopher of the future may perhaps say of himself.”<sup>25</sup>

### 3. The task of philosophy in the present age

Because the division that Nietzsche makes between traditional philosophy and the philosophy of the future is so clear and distinct, it brings with it a problem: where does Nietzsche himself fall? The subtitle of *Beyond Good and Evil*: “Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future” addresses the matter directly. Nietzsche does not identify himself as one of the philosophers of the future. It is equally clear however that he does not consider himself at one with the tradition of philosophy. How then is one to understand *Nietzsche’s* enterprise and his relation to philosophy? Put more generally, what does philosophy mean now, in the Nietzschean age?

Nietzsche’s *Twilight of the Idols* is subtitled: “How to Philosophize with a Hammer.” This phrase needs to be understood in order to comprehend what it is that Nietzsche, as the philosopher between past and future, seeks to do by philosophizing. In the foreword to that book he states:

Another form of recovery, in certain cases even more suited to me, is to sound out idols ... There are more idols in the world than there are realities: that is my 'evil eye' for this world, that is also my 'evil ear.' ... For once to pose questions here with a *hammer* and perhaps to receive for answer that famous hollow sound which speaks of inflated bowels ... This little book is a grand *declaration of war*; and as regards the sounding out of idols, this time they are not idols of the age but *eternal* idols which are here touched with the hammer as with a tuning fork – there are no more ancient idols in existence ... also none more hollow ... This does not prevent their being the most *believed in*; and they are not, especially in the most eminent cases, called idols.<sup>26</sup>

It should be clear that the hammer is not a sledge; it is not a question of smashing idols. On the contrary, for it to be used as a tuning fork requires that the hammer-stroke be light, quick, and never a smashing blow. How is it that a light tap of a hammer can shatter? That is suggested by the old saying, "idols have feet of clay." Tapping a clay idol is sufficient to disintegrate it, to see its cracks flow into one another until its entire texture gives way, just as a glass, tapped in just the right way, will shatter into a network of spider-web-like designs. The tuning fork metaphor also insinuates that this tapping is a test to see if the idols ring true. And carrying the metaphor still further, it determines whether or not they are in tune. But in tune with what? In tune with being, existence, life. This testing and shattering of idols is then the task that Nietzsche sets for himself. But other than the philosophers of the past, what are these idols? In the preface of *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche says of himself:

I am a disciple of the philosopher Dionysus; I should prefer to be even a satyr to being a saint. ... The last thing I should promise would be to 'improve' mankind. No new idols are erected by me; let the old ones learn what feet of clay mean. Overthrowing idols (my word for 'ideals') – that comes close to being my craft.<sup>27</sup>

What idols are is clear – the entire conceptual apparatus of Western ideals that has been constructed since the tragic age of the Greeks.<sup>28</sup> Taking the hammer to them serves a double function. First, it is an act of demystification, an action in part necessitated because until now philosophy has been a *part* of the process of mystification, of the covering over of what is by means of the erection of idols: “One has deprived reality of its value, its meaning, its truthfulness to precisely the extent to which one has mendaciously invented an ideal world.”<sup>29</sup> Secondly, it is the announcing of the hollowness of those ideals as well as the shattering of them. Nietzsche has the insight that the completion of demystification hangs on the telling of it. The shattering of idols leaves a necessary complement to be achieved – the telling of the tale.

That bringing word of the deed is as important as the deed itself is made clear in many of Nietzsche’s texts, but particularly so in the celebrated passage in which the madman announces the death of God to those who have done the deed themselves.<sup>30</sup> The same theme appears again as Zarathustra’s surprise that the old saint of the forest had not yet heard of the death of God.<sup>31</sup> It is in removing the veil from the era of nihilism and in the proclamation of nihilism that philosophers of the Nietzschean period do their tasks. This is the work of the preparation for the coming of the new philosophers – the attempters – who will create new truths and new values.

The overcoming of morality, in a certain sense even the self-overcoming of morality – let this be the name for that long secret work which has been saved up for the finest and most honest, also the most malicious consciences of today, as living touchstones of the soul.<sup>32</sup>

Nietzsche identifies those who are the “heralds and precursors” of the philosophers of the future – explicitly including himself – as “free spirits.”<sup>33</sup> Free spirits are those who have freed themselves from and for something. Or, better said perhaps, they are those who are constantly freeing themselves. He sketches a picture of free spirits by contrasting them with those intellectuals of the period for whom he had the greatest contempt, the so-called “free thinkers.”

What has been characteristically called a free thinker has been someone who was not free at all. Identifying their central doctrines as “equality of rights” and “sympathy for all that suffers,” Nietzsche associates them with the herd of men that wishes only for happiness and an escape from all suffering. That is, an escape from what brings about growth. These “free thinkers” do not really think freely since they are still imprisoned by and in the old ideals; they agree fundamentally with the old moral valuations. One of the typical stances of the free thinker is a simple opposition to hypocrisy; another is the optimism that good will triumph over evil, that “good” and “progress” are soulmates. Nietzsche sees this sort of thinking as particularly shallow since it assumes that only good, and not evil, develops, advances, the human condition, and that the triumph of good *is* freedom. In contrast, the free spirit takes as the beginning of freedom the need to be “beyond good and evil.”<sup>34</sup>

Genuine free spirits are not “free” thinkers; they are *radical* thinkers because they understand the need to reach the source of all evaluation. This task requires being hard, foremost on oneself, in order to see that optimism about the good does not justify existence, and that it is not general agreement but rather solitude that is the mantle demanded for the completion of any thinking that might be genuinely free. Not to flee pessimism but to embrace it, is the call to those who would get beyond good and evil.

My first solution: Dionysian Wisdom. Joy in the destruction of the most noble and at the sight of its progressive ruin: in reality joy in what is coming and lies in the future, which triumphs over existing things, however good. Dionysean: temporary identification with the principle of life (including the voluptuousness of the martyr). My innovations. Further development of pessimism, intellectual pessimism; critique of morality, disintegration of the last consolation.<sup>35</sup>

To unearth, pessimistically, what is — that is the task of the contemporary philosophers, but to do so *joyfully*, with exuberance, with no other justification than the task itself and the nearness it brings to the flow of becoming. This is the grand demystification the philosopher must engage in to prepare the way for the philosopher of the future.

In order to come to grips with philosophy Nietzsche engages in a deconstruction of philosophy. Nietzsche de-centers philosophy and brings about disruptions based on temporality. Thereby he transforms the discourse of philosophy. He works out a genealogy of its concepts – even the concept of philosophy, that most fundamental of philosophical concepts. With this approach he unfolds the old meaning of the term and instigates new meanings, but new meanings which are (still) conditioned by the old. What Nietzsche has to say, philosophically, about philosophy, therefore, can be understood only in light of the context in which he discusses it.

First, philosophy has disguised itself – before both itself and before those who found it suspect. It has masked its double character: it reveals itself as “the obedience to reason,” without revealing the *drive* to philosophy as will to power.

Second, by evoking a distinction of rank, that is character, among philosophers of the past and present according to their goals and their wills – their spirits – Nietzsche finds the name “philosopher” designates very different meanings: scholars, critics, or genuine philosophers.

Last, by not including himself among the creative philosophers of the future, while also distinguishing himself and those of his epoch from the dogmatic philosophy of the past (although drawing consequences from it), Nietzsche is brought to designate the stance and the task of philosophers in the present age as “being the bad consciences of their time.”<sup>36</sup>

By attempting to come to terms with the philosophy of the past, Descartes hoped to give a firm foundation for the method and content of that branch of knowledge which he saw as truly the most fundamental. But it did not escape him that the architect who lays out the foundation determines the dimensions of the structure. The old edifice had been raised, and the outlines of the new were set.

Through the transcendental turn, Kant sought to work out the necessary constraints for future philosophy. On the basis of a critical position *vis-à-vis* traditional thought he would determine, in the double sense, the conditions of future philosophical thought. For Hegel, traditional philosophy and its relationship to himself were clear; the historical self-conscious manifestation of Reason



had reached its apex in the philosopher who could engage in “the disinterested contemplation of the idea.” Hegel, by having thought the Absolute, had circumscribed future philosophical thought. In contrast, Nietzsche, by his deconstruction of the philosophical tradition, sought to disentangle philosophy from its past, including his own efforts, in order that there be freedom for the undetermined new.

## Notes

1. F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (BGE), # 6.
2. BGE, # 208.
3. BGE, # 16.
4. BGE, # 252.
5. BGE, # 11.
6. BGE, # 18.
7. F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (TSZ), “On the Famous Wisemen.”
8. BGE, # 20.
9. BGE, # 30.
10. F. Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols* (TWI), “What I owe the Ancients.”
11. BGE, “Preface.”
12. BGE, # 6.
13. BGE, # 36.
14. BGE, # 13.
15. TWI, “The Problem of Socrates,” # 11.
16. BGE, # 10.
17. BGE, # 9.
18. BGE, # 2.
19. BGE, # 42.
20. BGE, # 205.
21. BGE, # 211.
22. Ibid.
23. BGE, # 213.
24. Ibid.
25. BGE, # 43.
26. TWI, “Forward.”
27. F. Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, # 2.
28. BGE, “Preface.”
29. E.H., # 2.
30. F. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, # 125.
31. TSZ, “Prologue,” # 2.
32. BGE, # 32.
33. BGE, # 44.
34. Ibid.
35. F. Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, # 417.
36. BGE, # 212.