

The Duplicity of Singularity

How does one read Nietzsche? Is there a way to remain faithful to Nietzsche's thought? In what ways is one a "Nietzschean"? In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche depicts noon as the time "when man stands in the middle of his way between beast and overman."¹ Noon is the period of transition between many things; one is neither one or the other but a multiplicity. This idea of the "Great Noon" runs throughout Nietzsche's writings and presents a lens through which Nietzsche can be understood. Throughout his writings, Nietzsche presents a multiplicity of singularity where a person is never exactly one thing but always in the state of becoming. It is through this lens that Nietzsche will be read because it gives Nietzsche a level of clarity that is generally missed on a casual glance of his writings. This lens should not be seen as a looking-glass to understand Nietzsche completely; Nietzsche's philosophy has made it impossible to view from some kind of "objective" point of view.

Just as Nietzsche's genealogies trace the presuppositions of a concept, we can also trace the presuppositions of his writings and philosophy; and sometimes these are contradictory. One cannot read his critique of morality without also seeing his defense of morality; it is not "Dionysius *versus* the Crucified" as a battle of two different things but rather a struggle of two extremes of the same thing within a person. This is how he paints his

1 F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (TSZ) I, "On the Gift-Giving Virtue," 3 in W. Kaufmann, *The Portable Nietzsche*.

concept of the overman—Dionysius *and* the Crucified. It is this concept that undergirds the framework of inconsistencies, contradictories, and duplicities that is Nietzsche's philosophy. Most interpretations have subsumed this concept according to other concepts in Nietzsche: self-overcoming, progress, eternal recurrence, etc. Instead of this, we shall attempt to flesh out the labyrinthine framework of multiplicities and contradictions of Nietzsche. In the end, it will be shown that for one to accept Nietzsche's philosophy, one must reject it; one must overcome it. It is through this way that one does not succumb to the systemization of Nietzsche.

Critiquing Truth

One focus of Nietzsche's thought is that of truthfulness. It is sometimes deeply buried within Nietzsche's works and often missed on casual readings. Yet he begins the preface to *Beyond Good and Evil* with the question “Supposing truth is a woman—what then?”² He also hints at his take on her: “What is certain is that she has not allowed herself to be won”³-- truth is to be pursued, but it is a difficult task. This is because truth is a multiplicity—between two extremes of the same concept. In a rudimentary sense, this multiplicity of truth is Nietzsche's “epistemology.” As such a concept, Nietzsche's philosophical undertakings build from this—as well as others—in a complex array of becoming.

Nietzsche consistently affirms truth and knowledge. He thinks that he

2 F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (BGE), Preface in W. Kaufmann, *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*.

3 BGE Preface.

has found a radically new view of truth: “Perhaps nobody yet has been truthful enough about what 'truthfulness is.'”⁴ So, what has he found that no other philosopher has found before? One extreme of truth that he sees is the idea of a transcendent, objective, universal truth—the “truth” of science. All philosophers have treated their discoveries as this great “truth”: “They all pose as if they had discovered and reached their real opinions through the self-development of a cold, pure, divinely unconcerned dialectic.”⁵ For Nietzsche, it is clear that none have truly plumbed the depths of knowledge and found any kind of truth fit to be called transcendent. These philosophers have instead “[stood] truth on her head and [denied] *perspective*, the basic condition of all life.”⁶ Ironically, however, Nietzsche claims his own critique of this inversion to be “objective”!⁷ This is because of the opposite extreme, perspectivism: “Supposing that this also is only interpretation—and you will be eager enough to make this objection—well, so much the better.”⁸ This is an instantiation of truth as an individual's truthfulness, which Nietzsche ultimately affirms as the highest virtue, and it is through truthfulness that one overcomes “morality.”⁹

This analysis of truth now exposes “everything that has hitherto been called 'truth'...as the most harmful, insidious, and subterranean form of lie.”¹⁰

4 BGE 177.

5 BGE 5.

6 BGE Preface.

7 F. Nietzsche, *The Antichrist* (AC), 20 in W. Kaufmann, *The Portable Nietzsche*.

8 BGE 22.

9 F. Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo* (EH), “Why I Am a Destiny,” 3 in W. Kaufmann, *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*.

10 EH, “Why I am a Destiny,” 8.

Here, Nietzsche begins to unearth the myth—the stories—behind all things held as “true.” Truth cannot be anything objective because that concept involves *a contradictio in adjecto*—these “immediate certainties” are subject to an unquestioned *I* that performs the thinking. Nietzsche's response to such a thought is “it is improbable that you are not mistaken; but why insist on the truth?”¹¹ All truth is in reality an interpretation of truth, which Nietzsche implies in his fragment “On Truth and Lie in an Extramoral Sense”:

*What, then, is truth? 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.*¹²

We can see here Nietzsche's one extreme of perspectivism in its full splendor. As metaphor, truth is unable to be transcendent because it is bound by human language and experience. It is Nietzsche's perspectivism that implies “everything is permitted” because anything is possibly good.

Critiquing Morality

A second focus noticeable in Nietzsche is that of morality. This one concept is integral to Nietzsche's thought: “Even then my real concern was

¹¹ BGE 16.

¹² F. Nietzsche, “On Truth and Lies in an Extramoral Sense” (TL) in W. Kaufmann, *The Portable Nietzsche*.

something much more important than hypothesis-mongering, whether my own or other people's, on the origin of morality... What was at stake was the *value* of morality."¹³ He gives many names for the same multiplicity which all relate to master and slave moralities. It would be a misinterpretation to think that Nietzsche favors one *over the other*. In fact, he remarks that "at times they occur directly alongside each other—even in the same human being, within a *single* soul."¹⁴ In keeping with this strand of multiplicity, Nietzsche yet again reveals the *mixture* of two things in a flux of becoming as reality. Before we examine Nietzsche's claim that "everything is permitted," we should expand on its basis: Nietzsche's critique of "morality."

Any casual reader of Nietzsche thinks that Nietzsche praises the noble morality over any kind of slave morality. In many ways, the entirety of *On the Genealogy of Morals* circles around this:

*The judgment good did not originate with those to whom 'goodness' was shown! Rather it was 'the good' themselves, that is to say, the noble, powerful, high-stationed and high-minded, who felt and established their actions as good, that is, of the first rank, in contradistinction to all the low, low-minded, common and plebeian.*¹⁵

Only the noble morality has the ability to forget and the power to act.¹⁶ It is by strength and its excesses that the ability to act can be displayed; these

13 F. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* (GM), Preface, 5 in W. Kaufmann, *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*.

14 BGE 260.

15 GM I 2.

16 GM II 1.

values are not found in slave morality. Ironically, however, Nietzsche says that the noble morality *is defeated by* slave morality.

It cannot be denied that in opposition to slave morality, Nietzsche prefers the noble morality; but this does not mean Nietzsche holds to this preference, as we shall see later. Slave morality is fueled by *ressentiment*—spiritual revenge—at its deepest levels. This was the first major reevaluation of values, but it was one towards decline and nihilism. Whereas the noble morality Nietzsche praises began with an affirmation (“we noble, powerful ones are good”) and its opposite (the negative) was just a consequence of this positive definition as a simple syllogism, the slave morality begins with a *negative* definition (“you noble, powerful ones are *evil*”).¹⁷ This origin is one of the issues Nietzsche rejects within slave morality. Slave morality is characterized by its own obsession with “truth,” an other-world (e.g. an afterlife), and a “morality” that goes against the natural order of things. Whereas the noble morality allowed the strong to be strong and create their own values, slave morality “demand[s] of strength that it should *not* express itself as strength, that it should *not* be a desire to overcome...”¹⁸ Slave morality seeks to weaken everything by appealing to an otherworldly life of reward and punishment. Through this appeal to asceticism, slave morality overpowers the noble morality.¹⁹

17 GM I 10.

18 GM I 13.

19 F. Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols* (TI), “Skirmishes of an Untimely Man,” 14 in W. Kaufmann, *The Portable Nietzsche*.

Contrary to this oppressive morality, Nietzsche takes up the Assassin's creed that "everything is permitted."²⁰ Yet, just as the title *Beyond Good and Evil* "does *not* mean 'Beyond Good and Bad,'"²¹ "everything is permitted" is not an allowance for *laissez-faire* ethics. Nietzsche clearly says that *ressentiment*-morality is bad, that the noble morality is affirmation and good, and that the self-overcoming of "morality" is one of the highest virtues. All of these valuations are to be understood within the scope of Nietzsche's perspectivism as for him, these values constitute a part of what he considers good. Everything is permitted only insofar as anything can enhance life.²² That is, only things which individually valued as good are permitted.

Critiquing Teleology

This is because the human will "*needs a goal*—and it will rather will *nothingness* than *not* will."²³ Nietzsche is obsessed with values; they are the beginning and end of life: "When we speak of values, we speak with the inspiration, with the way of looking at things, which is part of life: life itself forces us to posit values; life itself values through us when we posit values."²⁴ It is this concept of valuation that *drives* Nietzsche's writings.²⁵ However, we now turn to the *goals* of Nietzsche's writings. The casual observer often mistakes Nietzsche's methods for his conclusions. From

20 GM III 24.

21 GM I 17.

22 TI "Four Great Errors," 8.

23 GM III 1.

24 TI "Morality as Anti-Nature," 5.

25 GM Preface 5.

values, Nietzsche's path turns to the value of virtue and happiness. This is, as we shall see later, tied closely to the concept of eternal return as both have in their sights the goal of *redemption*.

Since Aristotle, philosophers and theologians alike have accepted happiness as the teleological goal of life; the method for reaching this was virtue. Kant, however, rejected this link between virtue and happiness when he formulated his categorical imperative. Nietzsche's formula for happiness is more teleological: "a Yes, a No, a straight line, a *goal*."²⁶ Nietzsche turns the Virtue-Happiness link on its head, claiming to right the inversion of unhealthy morality:

*A well-turned-out human being, a 'happy one,' must perform certain actions and shrinks instinctively from other actions; he carries the order, which he represents physiologically, into his relations with other human beings and things. In a formula: his virtue is the effect of his happiness.*²⁷

To tie these two strands together exposes Nietzsche's concept of ethics: virtue is the result of a happy person who creates values and upholds them as a teleological goal. Aristotle's error was inverting the correct formula that virtue stems from one's happiness. Not only does virtue stem from happiness, but happiness itself is the instinct of life.²⁸ This "good" virtue, the creation of values, is described as fulfilling instinct: "[Every healthy morality]

26TI "Maxims and Arrows," 44.

27TI "The Four Great Errors," 2.

28TI "Problem of Socrates," 11.

is dominated by an instinct of life; some commandment of life is fulfilled by a determinate canon of 'shalt' and 'shalt not.'"²⁹

Because good morality is instinct, how can one be responsible for one's actions? In other words, the goal of *bad* morality can now be exposed as the desire to fault one for doing what is natural—it is holding the “birds of prey” guilty for being birds of prey. To fight this, then, the goal of *good* morality is guiltless; the bird of prey should not be faulted for its instincts. We can finally see Nietzsche's goal of his revaluation: “We deny God, we deny the responsibility in God: only thereby do we redeem the world.”³⁰ This denial and death of God isn't an endpoint in Nietzsche's philosophy but rather a waypoint on the path towards redemption. Deeply embedded in Nietzsche's thought, through all the anti-Christian rhetoric is a soteriology. Nietzsche's critiques are only waypoints to his ultimate goal of redemption and overcoming. Without understanding this, one misses the subtle and not-so-subtle parts of Nietzsche's philosophy: his affirmation of the *bad* things (e.g., asceticism, resentment, etc).

Affirming resentment

While Nietzsche's perspectivism paves the path for a vigorous critique of what he sees as Christianity, it also brings him, interestingly, to an affirmation of morals, ethics, and even *resentment*. In *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche is straightforward about good morality: “What is good? Everything

²⁹TI “Morality as Anti-Natural,” 4.

³⁰TI “Four Great Errors,” 8.

that heightens the feeling of power in man, the will to power, power itself...not virtue but fitness (Renaissance virtue, *virtù*, virtue that is moraline-free)."³¹ Even though he derides Christianity for its inversion of morality and truth, he still admits that even this comes from the will to power.³² This is because even the will to power is a multiplicity. Nietzsche names this in *Ecce Homo: Dionysius versus the Crucified*.³³ It is clear that this is an opposition of forces for Nietzsche, but less clear that they are two perspectives of the same thing.

For Nietzsche, the Crucified represents Christianity in its fullest form. Yet its story begins in Judaism when it began to "interpret all happiness as a reward, all unhappiness as punishment for disobeying God, as 'sin.'"³⁴ The "morality" described by the priests is their own making and their own negation of values; "God" is merely a tool for this will, even in Christianity: "The 'God' whom Paul invented, a god who 'ruins the wisdom of the world' ... is in truth merely Paul's own resolute *determination* to...give the name of 'God' to one's own will."³⁵ The Jewish priests *negated* what was natural and noble to all other people. Through this, the Jewish priests formed Christianity to suit their own needs:

The 'holy people,' who had retained only priestly values...had distinguished all other powers on earth from themselves as

31 AC 2.

32 AC 9.

33 EH "Why I am a Destiny," 9.

34 AC 25.

35 AC 47.

*'unholy,' as 'world,' as 'sin'--this people produced an ultimate formula for its instinct that was logical to the point of self-negation: as Christianity, it negated even the last form of reality, the 'holy people,' the 'chosen people,' the Jewish reality itself.*³⁶

Christianity has become the ultimate form of Judaism in that it even rejects its own true self. The Crucified is the nihilistic will at its most extreme; it is the *dysangel* of Christianity.

Dionysius, on the other hand, represents the healthy morality and its “glad tidings”—the *evangel*. It is the proclamation that “‘sin’—any distance separating God and man—is abolished.”³⁷ This *evangel* is what Nietzsche sees in Jesus, who is not to be understood as a person who has come to redeem mankind but rather as the first to say No to the “whole Jewish *ecclesiastical* doctrine.”³⁸ The “glad tidings” were a way to “show how one must live” and Jesus' death is the *proof* of his doctrine, of his love.³⁹ It is love that is superior over *ressentiment*.⁴⁰ Love, in the form of mercy, is the “self-overcoming of justice” that “remains the privilege of the most powerful man, or better, his—beyond the law.”⁴¹ This self-overcoming of the “bad conscience,” of slave morality, is what he means by going “beyond good and evil;” it means that one *affirms* morality, both good and bad:

My demand upon the philosopher is known, that he take his stand

36 AC 27.
 37 AC 33.
 38 AC 33.
 39 AC 35, AC 40.
 40 AC 40.
 41 GM II 10.

*beyond good and evil and leave the illusion of moral judgment beneath him. This demand follows from an insight which I was the first to formulate: that there are altogether no moral facts.*⁴²

As it was mentioned above with the assassin's creed, this is not license to universalizing relativism. Rather, this critique of "morality" is intrinsically tied to the affirmation of morality. Dionysius versus the Crucified is not simply a battle between opposing forces but rather an ebb and flow of becoming within the same person.

This is Nietzsche's "revaluation of all values": to become one extreme, one must become the other extreme as well. His formula for this revaluation is the embrace the multiplicity of creation and annihilation: "whoever must be a creator in good *and* evil, verily, he must first be an annihilator and break values. Thus the highest evil belongs to the highest goodness."⁴³ To love requires one to have *ressentiment*. It is here that we finally see Nietzsche's duplicity of singularity: Dionysius *and* the Crucified; this is perhaps one of Nietzsche's most subtle concepts.

Affirming the Past

To affirm *ressentiment* is to affirm nihilism, seen by Nietzsche as the goal of Christianity. Yet, he places this as one extreme of life. The other extreme of life is that of redemption. One is the ultimate *negation* of life while the other is the ultimate *affirmation* of life. In other words, life is "*that*

42 TI "The 'Improvers' of Mankind," 1.

43 TSZ II "On Self-Overcoming," Emphasis mine.

which much always overcome itself" through negation and affirmation.⁴⁴

This self-overcoming of life reveals itself as the redemption of the past into the future: "To redeem those who lived in the past and to recreate 'all it was' into a 'thus I willed it'--that alone should I call redemption."⁴⁵ Here we catch a glimmer of the eternal return.

It is Nietzsche's *amor fati* that underlines eternal return: "I come again...*not* to a new life or better life or a similar life: I come back eternally to this same, selfsame life."⁴⁶ Eternal return can be seen as the *affirmation* of everything in order to create the particular. This affirmation comes first as the negation of everything through nihilism. This is the one thing in redemption that nauseates Zarathustra.⁴⁷ Nietzsche even writes that the eternal return is "the most extreme form of nihilism."⁴⁸ Yet, it is because of this that "nihilism no longer expresses itself as the conservation and victory of the weak but as their destruction, their *self-destruction*."⁴⁹ Through the eternal return, nihilism becomes the affirmation of life as the will to nothingness is negated in its repetition. By affirming nihilism and even *ressentiment*, one can truly affirm the past and redeem one's world. This meeting of the opposites is the eternal return of the same:

Two paths meet here; no one has yet followed either to its end.

44 TSZ II "On Self-Overcoming."

45 TSZ II "On Redemption."

46 TSZ III "The Convalescent," 2.

47 TSZ III "The Convalescent," 2.

48 F. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* (WP), 55 quoted in G. Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (NP), 69.

49 NP 70.

*This long lane stretches back for an eternity. And the long lane out there, that is another eternity. They contradict each other, these paths; they offend each other face to face; and it is here at this gateway that they come together. The name of the gateway is inscribed above: 'Moment.' But whoever would follow one of them, on and on, farther and farther—do you believe, dwarf, that these paths contradict each other eternally?*⁵⁰

The Moment here is the Great Noon where “the world [becomes] perfect” and multiplicity and singularity both merge and diverge, depending on one's perspective.⁵¹

To return eternally is the path of the overman. Man is a bridge, “an *overture* and a *going under*;” he lives so that the overman can come into existence.⁵² It is the going under and overcoming that is the eternal return; it is the affirmation and negation of life. Man is something to be overcome; but by going under, one becomes man.⁵³ Here is the multiplicity of the eternal return; it a repetition—not a simple cyclical repetition but a repetition that inhabits difference. Man always returns as man, but a different man that is the repetition of the same. Time itself is changed: “the present and future are in turn no more than dimensions of the future: the past as condition, the present as agent.”⁵⁴ This is the real redemption, not a

50 TSZ III “On the Vision and the Riddle,” 2.

51 TSZ IV “At Noon.”

52 TSZ Preface 4.

53 TSZ Preface 1, TSZ Preface 3.

54 G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 93.

synthesis of opposites as in the manner of Hegel but a pure repetition of the same that produces difference. Thus, the overman is born.

Affirming Reality

The birth of the overman is intrinsically tied to the death of God. The duplicity of life and death is, for Nietzsche, tied together at their roots. The first time Nietzsche writes about the death of God, the news is delivered by a madman to the marketplace; yet the more shocking part is that God was *murdered by men*.⁵⁵ Ironically, however, the madman never answers his questions as to how or why men killed God. The answers to these questions are the ugly truths which only truthful men can bring.

The death of God is something that must be overcome not synthesized into a Hegelian dialectic. It is not a singular point of objective, transcendent truth; it is a multiplicity. God dies many kinds of deaths, as is fitting for all gods.⁵⁶ First and foremost, “God died of his pity for man.”⁵⁷ Later in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Zarathustra expands upon this while talking to the retired pope: pity strangled God because God could not bear the sight of man hanging on the cross.⁵⁸ This may answer *how* God has died, but it does not yet face the ugly truth of *why* God has died. For this, Nietzsche returns again to morality: “I have already in the fourth act killed all the Gods—for the sake of morality!”⁵⁹

55 F. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (GS), 125.

56 TSZ IV “Retired.”

57 TSZ II “On the Pitying.”

58 TSZ IV “Retired.”

59 GS 153.

It is not enough to see the death of God as an act *against* Christianity for it must also be seen as the capstone in the revaluation of all values. The death of God is so the overman can live; it is the symbol of truthfulness, of morality, and of redemption. Nietzsche's revaluation of values is a new creation that stands in contrast to the old values: "We free spirits are nothing less than a 'revaluation of all values,' an incarnate declaration of war and triumph over all the ancient conceptions of 'true' and 'untrue.'"⁶⁰

Nietzsche's new values are found in what he calls the Dionysian, the artistic and anti-Christian manner of valuing life.⁶¹ It is in Greek tragedy that Nietzsche finds the supreme affirmation and valuation of life which has been perverted and inverted in Socratic and Christian thought. Within tragedy, Nietzsche sees the duplicity of the Apollonian and Dionysian forms of art. Here, the truth of reality is portrayed as "the Dionysian chorus which ever anew discharges itself in an Apollonian world of images."⁶² Greek tragedy transforms the man into a satyr and is able to experience the wisdom of nature.⁶³ Nietzsche's new values are in reality the oldest values of the earth.

The fall of Greek tragedy developed through the New Comedy in which the access to the *divine* truth of reality was replaced with a mirror that displayed "the painful fidelity that conscientiously reproduces even the botched outlines of nature."⁶⁴ This began the distortion of reality into an

60 AC 13.

61 F. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* (BT), Attempt at Self-Criticism (ASC) 5.

62 BT 8.

63 BT 9.

64 BT 11.

apparent world with exaggerated features and a “true” world different from this “apparent” one. The real world is hidden by the nihilistic will of Christianity. It is Nietzsche who, by perceiving the truth with all of its beauty and ugliness, rediscovers this and fights to bring truth back into philosophy and morality. Where is it that Nietzsche finds this lost truth? Within himself: “*Revaluation of all values*: that is my formula for an act of supreme self-examination on the part of humanity, become flesh and genius in me.”⁶⁵

Duplicity of Singularity

Through his self-examination, Nietzsche finds not a being or any agent of action but a flux of becoming. It is not a self that is unified through time—a *transcendent* self—but a self that is always between multiplicities. He sees himself in multiple ways as different selves that are the same: “I am a *Doppelgänger*, I have a 'second' face in addition to the first. *And* perhaps also a third.”⁶⁶ This is the multiplicity of becoming that any conception of “being” in the former sense loses meaning because “whatever has being does not become; whatever becomes does not have being.”⁶⁷ Nietzsche is the first philosopher to fully reject the task of ontology and transvalue all ontological philosophy into the philosophy of becoming and multiplicity.

By now, the answer should be obvious as to how one should read Nietzsche. His writings are full of multiplicities and contradictions. He cannot be read as a coherent singularity that revolves around one focus; it is

65 EH, “Why I am a Destiny,” 1.

66 EH “Why I am so Wise,” 3.

67 TI “‘Reason’ in Philosophy,” 1.

always many, five or six, three or two, but never one. In between these points, however, Nietzsche's *sense* becomes apparent and felt. His destiny is that of Zarathustra's: to "[break] the history of mankind in two. One lives before him, or one lives after him."⁶⁸ Nietzsche's contradictions form the basis of his thought; they cannot be explained away in the service of a systematic Nietzschean thought. His immorality is a method of returning to morality. His affirmations are negations and his negations are affirmations. Nietzsche's singularity is in his duplicity. Nietzsche is not to be followed at all: "I want no 'believers'; I think I am too malicious to believe in myself; I never speak to masses.— I have a terrible fear that one day I will be pronounced *holy*: you will guess why I publish this book *before*; it shall prevent people from doing mischief with me."⁶⁹ To truly follow Nietzsche means that one must reject him and lose him.⁷⁰ Only then can one affirm his philosophy. To accept Nietzsche without rejecting him, without overcoming him, is to misread Nietzsche and live before him. We hyperboreans live after him.

68EH "Why I am a Destiny," 8.

69EH, "Why I am a Destiny," 1.

70TSZ I "On the Gift-Giving Virtue," 3.

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