

BOOK REVIEW

Hutter, Horst, and Eli Friedland (eds.), *Nietzsche's Therapeutic Teaching for Individuals and Culture* (New York: NY: Bloomsbury, 2013), 264 pp., \$ 130, 978-1-4411-2533-0.

Friedrich Nietzsche notoriously eschewed conventional use of stable categories like truth and falsity or good and evil in his writing, and is commonly thought to have reduced human agency to the operation of complex material causes. As a result, Nietzsche's cultural criticism is thought to be little more than an aristocratic jeremiad occasioned by the nihilistic tendencies of his age. But are there any principles or concepts that allow us to make sense of Nietzsche's recommendations for individuals and culture, beyond the coordinates of truth and falsity, or the dictates of custom? The collection *Nietzsche's Therapeutic Teaching*, edited by Horst Hutter and Eli Friedland, pursues the lines of thought surrounding the prognostic, diagnostic, and therapeutic claims within the Nietzschean corpus. Generally, this line of thought extends through the major works to aphorisms scattered in unpublished notebooks, to letters and biographical details; reinforced by references to Nietzsche's reception of Hellenistic philosophy, with representative thinkers like Hippocrates, Epicurus, Empedocles as well as figures like Asclepius and Eris. The collection explores an emergent field of inquiry in Nietzsche's philosophy that seeks to explain how concepts like agonistics, care of the self, askesis, and nihilism shape his thought on themes like suffering, pedagogy, training, regimen, responsibility, and self-cultivation. A common outlook among the authors of *Nietzsche's Therapeutic Teaching* is that Nietzsche adheres to a general notion of philosophy as a practice to be cultivated—or, a way of life. Essays in this vein are more or less indebted to *Shaping the Future*, where Hutter argues that ascetic practices for reshaping life on the individual and collective register are a prescriptive focus for Nietzsche, with a mind to both present culture and the formative potentials lurking in the pathological depths of the human psyche. As such a general account of the collection risks misattributing an author's positions, I will now turn to a closer reading of the individual essays.

The initial essays in the collection focus on Nietzsche's future-oriented philosophy, placing him as a successor to Hellenistic schools of thought that centered on philosophy as a central practice for life. Horst Hutter offers a perspective on Nietzschean therapy as an etiological diagnostic practice that aims to interrupt pathologies of thought and action by calling for new forms of political and social organization. According to Hutter, Nietzsche's perspective on the history of philosophical and religious movements demonstrates that "the human soul has revealed itself as a

most complicated structure of command / obedience [...] with a strong tendency toward chaos" (9). In Nietzsche's specific cultural moment, with the popularization of democratic and humanist sentiments, powerful spectacles of violence and other methods of ruling through fear needed suitable replacements. Nietzsche is known to have drawn on his study of Hellenistic philosophy and advocated small communities fashioned after the model of Epicurean "garden communities" (10). As Martine Béland argues, Nietzsche's Hellenistic studies resulted in a "conflict between his profession and his vocation" (14). Béland positions Nietzsche's retirement not as required due to his health, but rather a choice made for therapeutic reasons, he "quit the profession for the vocation;" a biographically verifiable point that is often lost in purely exegetical readings of the philosopher (25). Nathalie Lachance also combines biography with exegesis, positing that "Nietzsche's whole philosophical project itself can be interpreted as his own education and emancipation—and those of the reader—through and against the great opponents that are Socrates, Jesus, Schopenhauer, Kant and Wagner, to name a few" (32). His treatment of these "great opponents" can be situated within the struggle between three opposing philosophical concerns; that of the transmission of tradition and the deconstructive and creative drives that animate his reception of this tradition. Also drawing on Nietzsche's criticisms of institutional instruction, where students are "prepared for the world as it is" under the "safe weight of tradition," Lachance presents aphoristic style as a pedagogical strategy aimed at putting envy to use, guiding students to overcome those that they respect. Or, as José Daniel Parra articulates, Nietzsche's philosophy of the future aims "to conceive of ways of living shaped by the incorporation of both cyclical, erotic, eternal recurrence and linear, spirited, willful self-overcoming" (54). From this we can discern that a Nietzschean academy would need to include spiritual healing, self remembering and self care.

The subsequent essays converge on the themes of agonistic tension, community, and the therapeutic convictions that guide Nietzsche's thought on these topics. Willow Verkerk writes about social relationships of Zarathustra; why Zarathustra is weary of his disciples, his concerns or fears about having too loyal friends or followers. He argues that Nietzsche's understanding of friendship is a representative example of agonistic social relationships, arguing further that many worthwhile friendships are "cruel" in the sense that they include discomfort, competition and duplicity. Verkerk argues that Nietzsche advocates two forms of friendship: "one of the warrior of the agonistic, lion-hearted, and the other of the master, of the nobler type of self-affirming, bestowing person" (63). However, Nietzsche also refers to friendship disparagingly, this "lower category of human relationships" includes "usury, comradeship, and erotic love and involved relations of convenience, servitude, and tyranny," but given the former, preferred archetypes, it cannot be said that he is equivocal about the topic of friendship (63). Friendships or communities that include discomfort, competition, and struggle are valued by Nietzsche for the way they include the potential for self-improvement or self-regulation, but friendship and community are not valuable in their own right. Readers familiar with *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* will recall that Zarathustra often retreats into solitude for his own benefit. Verkerk argues that Zarathustra disparages those sorts of relationships that allow "weakness of the will, narcissism and self-delusion" to flourish,

and enacts the bestowing and agonistic roles as a therapeutic reprisal to the former concerns. Bela Egyed tackles Nietzsche's two-faced claim that *Zarathustra* is a book "for everyone and no one" (73), arguing against the interpretation that he is simply an "elitist" or an "aristocratic radical;" he is also a deeply apolitical thinker. Egyed writes, "Nietzsche is not interested in educating the masses. He thinks that they are just fine as they are, with their morality and their religion. His main fear is that the higher types will be brought down to the same level" (74). Egyed offers the perspective that Nietzsche's teaching advocates "critical freedom" – the freedom to change as an apolitical answer to the stultifying effects of culture and custom. Yunus Tuncel focuses on the agonistic elements of Nietzsche's writing, arguing that they comprise a therapeutic technique. Tuncel traces the influences of Nietzsche's understanding of agonistics in order to draw the ancient connections between agonistic tensions, contests, pedagogy, justice, and festival. While these themes are present in his early work, Tuncel argues that Nietzsche's understanding of power, which is "about obeying and commanding; that is, it is about hierarchy whether it is within the individual or within a community" (85). Such an articulation of power certainly runs counter to democratic or humanist sentiments (which would ostensibly connect power, sovereignty, and justice with the virtues of equal participation, not competition); Tuncel argues that from Nietzsche, Foucault, and Deleuze, power is inalienable, arguing further that "many of our social ills stem from shunning power and not developing healthy forms and exercises of power" (89). Or, put another way, we commonly tend to think of exercises of power in an individualistic sense that de-politicizes their potential. Tuncel argues that it is not the individualistic aspects of agonal culture in ancient Greece that attracted Nietzsche's eye, but rather "the agonal culture of ancient Greece offered a different paradigm of communal assembly, a paradigm that helps heal the soul of individuals and culture at the same time" (89). After tracing the origins of agonistics in Nietzsche's work, Tuncel argues that the bellicose rhetoric of Nietzsche's polemics should be seen as an agonistic praxis with the goals of rehabilitating the individual (author/reader) as well as culture (in terms of the targeted causes and ideas which presumably have wide effects). Keith Ansell-Pearson focuses on Nietzsche's relationship with Epicurean philosophy in its manifestations in Nietzsche's thought on care of the self and of the world. Nietzsche's reception of Epicurean philosophy centers on the insight that an explanation of the causes and effects that comprise nature can free us from fear and superstition, or, put otherwise, that physics grants therapeutic knowledge. Further, many tropes within Nietzsche's writing associated with therapeutic or prognostic claims follow Epicurean principles. Tracing the complex relationship between Nietzsche and Epicurus from the early to middle period of his writing, Ansell-Pearson connects the care of the self with ecological concerns that animate the writings of his middle period. Nietzsche turns to Epicurus in the middle period, where his writings shift inwards, reliant on the "patient labor of self analysis and self-cultivation as a therapy of the body and soul" (111). There are several analogs that Ansell-Pearson points to that connect Nietzsche and Epicurus, they share the tendency to "demythologize nature, embrace human morality, and accept human nonexceptionalism" (111). In the later writings, these analogs are not enough to spare Epicurus from falling out of Nietzsche's favor, but the connection does identify a Hellenistic source for his free spirit period.

The subsequent essays converge on uncovering the practical dimensions of Nietzschean therapy; identifying a set of practices that he adapts from Hellenistic sources. Michael Ure also connects Nietzsche to the Hellenistic notion of philosophy as a way of life. Instead of focusing on the demythologizing effects of philosophy, Ure draws our attention to the harmful and cruel origins of demythologizing knowledge, delight in malice, and *schadenfreude*. Scientific knowledge, if it is to liberate us from fear of the natural world, must be able to reframe the world. As the science of his time demonstrated that biological life was both a rare and contingent phenomenon, Ure argues that, like the Stoic philosophers, Nietzsche sought to rehabilitate the anthropocentric views that permeated this period. What Ure calls Nietzsche's 'view from above' is meant to encapsulate 1) the absurdity of such insignificant beings seeking significance by way of interpreting their own suffering developing into 2) an "Olympian attitude toward [human] suffering" (125). Ure characterizes the Olympian 'view from above' as something which "elevates [free spirits] above distress so that they can enjoy nature as a spectacle," a trope that Nietzsche develops from the Stoic tradition (125). By developing a distance from emotions like compassion, which place individuals into the drama of human suffering, individuals can "attain greatness" through their detachment to the distress of those that they harm or sacrifice in the pursuit of knowledge. Ure's account does not fully elaborate precisely how "harm" or "sacrifice" are meant here (does Nietzsche intend to suggest that we literally should sacrifice other people for the sake of knowledge?) but instead argues that the sort of emotional distance that Nietzsche proposes is realistically more effective in practical care. Whereas emotions like pity risk "doubling" the suffering of the sufferer, the 'view from above' allows one to set an example that others can follow in order to 'overcome' the stultifying effects of human suffering.

Rainer J. Hanshe focuses on Zarathustra's practice of incubation, an oneiric state that leads to philosophical revelations. Hanshe connects this practice to the examples of Parmenides and Empedocles, who were thought to formulate their teaching in accordance with the wisdom gained from dreamlike states "as opposed to developing it abstractly" (142). In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, the prophet's sleep is often a turning point in the action of the story, where new insights are gleamed, connecting the notions of stillness and communicative silence. Highlighting the centrality of stillness and still hours to the text, Hanshe's work positions the ancient Greek practice of incubation as an alternative to abstract thought in the formulation of new truths.

Babette Babich draws our attention to Nietzsche's attempt to draft a drama "titled after Holderlin's *Death of Empedocles*" and connections between the work of Lucian on Empedocles titled "Journey to Hell" and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (157). Babich argues that the similarities between the two stories "permits us to read Zarathustra as an explicitly Empedoclean figure" in the sense that Empedocles famously rejected tyrannical power, and that Zarathustra too has no desire for worldly supremacy (158). Graham Parkes combines the biographical with the exegetical, arguing that Nietzsche's life long affinity with unhewn stone is an undercurrent of his thought that manifests in the imagery of his works. By connecting stone with the themes of self fashioning, fate, and eternity in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Parkes offers an unusual reading of Nietzsche that

serves as a foil for the contemporary fascination with tropes of movement, fluidity, and flux in his work.

Lawrence J. Hatab connects Nietzsche's understanding of consciousness and language to contemporary findings in developmental psychology. Hatab presents a number of congruous moments in the speculative anthropological or psychological claims of Nietzsche and findings in developmental psychology about the effects of private speech in the development of self-consciousness; connecting the commanding/obeying structure of Nietzsche's psychology to the role of private speech in a child's development "toward independent functioning" (194).

Nandita Biswas Mellamphy focuses on Nietzsche's diagnostic claims, analyzing his 'political physiology' as "a politics of the transformation of the Human into the Overhuman directly within the context of the immanent intensification of nihilism" (206). Directly approaching the apparent lack of grounding concepts like "truth" or "good," Mellamphy focuses on the difference between "health" and "illness" as an "*intensive not substantial*" difference that animates the diagnostic moments of Nietzsche's thought (what she terms Nietzsche's 'Experimental ontology'). Mellamphy identifies the context of nihilism as a central reason as to why he does not proceed either "by dialectics or by fascism," proposing a non-anthropological agency that animates politics and results in memory making political subjects (209). Mellamphy writes, "in the politics conditioned by nihilism but which seeks to overcome nihilism by activating the potency on nihilism, the philosopher-physician must be a *homeopathic* toxicologist governed and guided by the principle of "*like cures like*" (*simili similibus curentor*)" (214). Whatever curative agency there is for the philosopher-physician requires an eye for the intensive differences within the political, even those which "may be considered by the majority as signs of 'health'" (214).

The final essays focus on theological strains in Nietzsche's thought. Béatrice Han-Pile draws on the work of Anders Nygren in order to attempt to discern what sort of love Nietzsche advocates in the formulation *amor fati*. Han-Pile presents Nygren's view as though it typified the distinct senses of love within the Christian traditions in an uncontroversial way, and that these categories would also be shared by Nietzsche. While it may be the case that Nygren and Nietzsche were both born into the same faith tradition, and from that perspective it may be less controversial to rely on Nygren's divisions, it is not the case that Nygren's views are widely accepted to be representative of other Christian traditions (like those of Augustine) from which the author draws. Eli Friedland explores the soteriological elements of Nietzsche's thought, drawing the explicit connection that *hyperanthrpos* was translated into German as *Übermensch*, a connection that positions Nietzsche as a prophet meant to fulfill the law, a 19th century foil for Christ. This claim is further supported by his use of the term "antichristian," where "in Greek," anti "is to be standing directly before another, facing him or her" (242).

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