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An Untimely Co-Arising:

Friedrich Nietzsche, the Presocratic Greeks, and Taoist Thought

Deborah Theodore

A Thesis in the Field of Foreign Literature, Language, and Culture

for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies

Harvard University

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Abstract

For most of the century following his death in 1900, the three things most people knew about Friedrich Nietzsche were false: that he "killed God"; that his work was a blueprint for Nazi ideology; and that he died a madman of peretic syphilis. These distortions originated with the ignorant, were embraced by the vindictive, and then persistently reiterated by the misled, including some of Nietzsche's most prestigious admirers.

At the heart of everything Nietzsche has written is a profound awareness of the inseparability of all apparent contradictions and the rejection of dualistic split thinking, whether it is the Platonic ideal, Kant's subject/object dichotomy, or any other of the absolutes put forward by philosophers since the beginning of Western philosophy in Presocratic Greece. When Nietzsche writes that he prefers to be misunderstood, it is because *he* understands the fluidity of language and meaning, the multiplicity of perspectives, and the inescapable subjectivity of human thought.

This thesis views the often enigmatic nature of Nietzsche's words and ideas through the twin lenses of Taoist philosophical thought and the systems of the Presocratic *physikoi*. I do not claim that Nietzsche thought himself a Taoist. My methodology, described in some detail in Chapter I, is a blend of scholarly research and creative intuition, a formula that enables me to understand my subjects on their terms. One way to explain the congruency of ideas between Nietzsche, the Presocratic Greeks, and Eastern philosophy is to ask whether there was a migration of ideas from China to ancient Greece

and from there into the mind of Nietzsche. But another way of viewing such a congruency is to ask whether these are ideas that arise naturally when, in any time and in any space, we look beyond the limitations of dualistic thinking: hence the "untimely co-arising" in the title of this work.

These are times when we are uncertain about nearly everything, when we are as quick to condemn a "lie" as we are reluctant to accept the "truth." "Why not untruth instead?" Nietzsche asks in *Beyond Good and Evil*.

When we begin with uncertainty, we are in reality.

Dedication

Virtus junxit mors non separabit

This thesis is dedicated to my first teachers:

Mary X. Theodore

and

Peter J. Theodore,

who taught by example.

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I owe grateful thanks to my teacher and thesis director John T. Hamilton, William R. Kenan Professor of German and Chair of the Comparative Literature Department at Harvard University, who set me on this path and then helped me to complete the journey.

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Chapter I

Methodology

Gather what you can from coincidence.
~ Bob Dylan, "Desolation Row"

Truth to Poets

David Potter, writing on the subject of narrative validity and historiography in the Classics, cites Pliny the Younger recounting a story heard at a dinner party,

> I trust the person who told it, although what is truth to poets? Still, the person who told the story is one of whom you might think well if you were to write history. (9.33.1, qtd. in Potter 5)

Pliny's good-natured remark seems to question the truthfulness of poets while at the same time crediting this particular poet with a kind of cultural reliability.

What is poetic truth, anyway? In "Ode on a Grecian Urn" John Keats equates truth with beauty (Ferguson et al. 939). Shelley, of course, famously claims in the last line of *A Defence of Poetry* that "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world" (568). In "Asphodel, That Greeny Flower," William Carlos Williams claims that poetry contains truth essential to our survival: "It is difficult/to get the news from poems/yet men die miserably every day/for lack of what is found there" (Ferguson et al. 1283). Taoists say that "knowledge of Tao lodges in the same part of the mind as poetry," which is why ancient Taoist texts like the *Tao te Ching* are often written in verse: "There is the same quick perception" (Deng, *365 Tao* 63).

In *Poetics,* Aristotle judges poetic truth to be superior to historical truth because it is not bound as history is to a particular time and place, and therefore possesses timeless and universal value.[1] Aristotle uses the same criteria to evaluate truth in poetry as in rhetoric: the ability to arouse passion in an audience by inspiring trust in the moral character (*ethos)* of the poet or the rhetorician.

All of this implies a synergy that goes beyond beauty or truth or even language and history—a whole greater than the sum of its parts. Perhaps the similarity between truth and poetry is most apparent in their similar reception, which, for poetry as for truth, is often as not disbelief and ridicule. D.H. Lawrence declared: "Never trust the artist, trust the tale" (Cargill 5).

With his Pliny the Younger story, Potter introduces the issues of subjectivity and language in the writing of history and acknowledges "the inherent contradiction between the desire for accurate representation and the impossibility of absolute certainty" (6) because of subjective judgment and expression. The resulting tension is what gives history its "abiding fascination" (9). I would add that the resulting tension is what gives both history and life, their truth *and* their poetry.

In his late notebooks Nietzsche has this to say about the tension between facts and subjectivity:

---

1. *Poetics IX:* "It is, moreover, evident from what has been said, that it is not the function of the poet to relate what has happened, but what may happen—what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity. The poet and the historian differ not by writing in verse or in prose…. The true difference is that one relates what has happened, the other what may happen. Poetry, therefore, is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history: for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular…." (Aristotle 429-430)

> 'There are only facts' – I would say: no, facts are just what there aren't, there are only interpretations. We cannot determine any fact 'in itself': perhaps it's nonsensical to want to do such a thing. 'Everything is subjective,' you say: but that itself is an *interpretation*, for the 'subject' is not something given but a fiction added on, tucked behind…. Inasmuch as the word 'knowledge' has any meaning at all, the world is knowable: but it is variously *interpretable*; it has no meaning behind it, but countless meanings. 'Perspectivism'. (*Writings from Late Notebooks* 7[60], 139)[2]

My research methods for this thesis are based on principles expressed by the subjects of my thesis—Friedrich Nietzsche and Taoist philosophy. These principles include the pursuit of an encompassing whole that embraces contradiction; the acknowledgment and acceptance of shifting perspectives; a respect for creative intuition, independent thought, and what Nietzsche refers to as the Greek skill in "the art of fruitful learning" (*PTAG* 30).

The text I have selected to unlock and illuminate my thesis--my 'source book'-- is Nietzsche's *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* (*PTAG*),[3] a long essay that Nietzsche wrote in 1873 on the pre-Socratic philosophers of the 6th and 5th centuries BCE during the same period as *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) and *Untimely Meditations* (1873-1876)[4]. In the essay Nietzsche expresses an innovation that translator Marianne Cowan describes as his "intuitive certainty, resting on a numinous, incontrovertible source in his

---

2. "Notebook 7, end of 1886 – spring 1887" (139)

3. *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* was never completed and only posthumously published but Nietzsche had a clean copy of it made with the intention of expanding it into a book for publication according to Cowan (*PTAG* 4-5). The essay is based in part on the "pre-Platonic" lecture series Nietzsche delivered at the University of Basel between 1872 and 1876 (Whitlock xiv).

4. All citations from *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* are from Marianne Cowan's 1962 translation.

own being, that the Greeks had achieved the highest type of culture that the world had seen" (2). Cowan cites from the Naumann edition of *Nietzsche's Werke*[5] that for Nietzsche the Presocratics were "the collective representatives of the eternal intuitive type, the discoverers of 'the beautiful possibilities of life'" (2-3).

According to Cowan, intuitive certainty encompasses intuition—an immediate, that is, non-mediated sensation—as well as the cognitive mediation that certainty rests upon.[6] In other words, intuitive certainty relies on a pairing that appears contradictory. The very concept of contradictoriness, as we shall see, is not only important but central to Nietzsche, the Presocratics, and Taoist thought alike.

Quellenforschung

Historically, the approach to researching texts in literature and philosophy since the nineteenth century begins with "source research" (*Quellenforschung)*. Potter, who refers to the study of sources as "lion taming" (90), offers a useful outline of its goals and processes. Briefly, traditional source research attempts to reduce a number of parallel accounts to a single event; to explain why an author of an account is not necessarily a witness to the event; to locate sources for texts written centuries after events; to reveal how parts or elements of research are composed to tell a story; and to enable reconstruction of a narrative from fragments (91).

Clearly, researching contextual material such as biography, history, secondary

5. Leipzig, 1894ff

6. John Hamilton comments that the phrase "intuitive certainty is almost oxymoronic: a non-mediated mediation" (thesis note 26 January 2016).

sources, and chronology is a valuable technique for corroborating and establishing the authenticity and genealogy of ancient texts from Homer to the Old Testament. As a sole methodology, however, this approach ends by focusing excessively on pedigree and not enough on the content of the work itself. Nietzsche translator J.M. Kennedy makes this point in his introduction to the 1964 edition of *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*:

> The standard of culture to be aimed at by the man of genius Nietzsche had in mind was to be found in the model literary and artistic works which have come down to us from ancient Greece. To understand these works, of course, the classical authors had to be studied in the original, and the methods of teaching then in vogue paid too much attention to inconsequential points (e.g. variant readings) instead of dealing with the subject in a broad-minded philosophical spirit. Nietzsche endeavored to counteract this tendency…by outlining a much vaster conception of philology…laying stress upon the *artistic* results which would accrue if the science were applied on a wider scale—results which would be of a much higher order than those obtained by the narrow pedantry then prevailing. (viii, emphasis added)

It is not that validating source material is not desirable but that it may also be necessary to go beyond a need for rigorous validation to derive *substance* from the ideas contained in the texts themselves however fragmentary and, possibly impossible to authenticate. Sometimes a leap of faith may be required to achieve intuitive certainty.

It is no coincidence that out of "an infinite desire to resist final answers" Friedrich Schlegel[7] deliberately mimicked the incomprehensibility of fragmentary ancient texts in *Critical Fragments* (Hamilton, "European Romanticisms" 2). As Hamilton says:

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7. Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1859) German poet, literary critic, philosopher, philologist, "Indologist"--one of the main figures of the early German Romantics centered in Jena.

> The reader of the fragments must deal with a profound irony: often an interpretation of one fragment would contradict an interpretation of another. The fragments, taken as a whole, frequently appear to work at cross-purposes with each other . . . as an incentive [and] as a strategy to keep the reader reading, to make the text as indispensable as a classical work . . . the absolute can never be reached because if it is reached, it is determined, and therefore not the absolute. (5)

We may be better able to comprehend the ancient fragments *as a whole* using a similar technique. Rather than seeking to establish a definitive, "absolute" interpretation based on endless authentication, it might be more *fruitful* to keep the door open to a more intuitive approach.

In response to the limitations of source research, the New Critics of the mid-twentieth century proposed divorcing ancient texts from "extrinsic considerations" and instead concentrating on the work itself. Taken to extremes, a more serious error sometimes ensues, "that of ignoring any information not in the work itself" (Guerin 16). In response to the New Critics, Kenneth Burke[8] in 1946 called for "a criticism as capacious as the object it criticizes" (Leitch et al. 1270). "The greater the range and depth of considerations the more the task of the critic is fulfilled" Burke asserts, provided writers are explicit in stating their motives (1272). This is a rare acknowledgment of the cultural, academic, and professional biases that sometimes play a part in scholarly research.

Not as provocative (nor as well-known) as Burke, Oscar Cargill spent a long yet modest career during the first half of the twentieth century chairing New York University's English department, writing and teaching literature. Cargill came relatively

---

8. Burke is described as a "wild and wooly autodidact" (*Norton Theory and Criticism* 1269).

late to the controversy of the eclectic approach that Burke stirred up twenty years earlier but he spent that time giving the idea serious consideration and, in my view, expresses it better. He surely draws on American pragmatism, a movement originating in the United States around 1870 that rejected all forms of absolutism in favor of valuing ideas in terms of their functionality and fruitfulness in "lived experience."

In his considered response to the New Critics, Cargill published a collection of critical essays, *Toward a Pluralistic Criticism* (1965) that begins with this opening sentence:

> The function of the critic is to make the past functional, for unless it can be used, it is deader than death itself. (3)

"What is the past?" Cargill goes on to ask. "Where does it begin and where does it end?" The past is time," he offers, "or what we live in." We live in all of it, all at once, Cargill asserts, making no distinction between what we ordinarily view separately as the past, the present or the future. To illustrate his point, Cargill points out that the great masterpieces of literature, regardless of when, where, or in what language they are produced, give him the impression of being "companion works." The reason for this impression, says Cargill, is continuity, "the most valuable element in time." The task of critics, then, is to trace that continuity in a "pluralistic universe, a universe without stability" and to approach every work of art "with every faculty, with every technique, with every method" we can command" (14).

Nietzsche's notion of time is also one of "utter continuity" (Bishop et al. 55). This sense of continuity explains the proximity--one might even call it companionship—that Nietzsche experienced with the Presocratics. Such an understanding of time is found throughout Taoist philosophy that also views time as a continuum.

In Nietzsche's foreword to "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life" in *Untimely Meditations*, he writes:

> We need history, certainly, but we need it for reasons different from those for which the idler in the garden of knowledge needs it…. We need it…. for the sake of life and action, not so as to turn comfortably away from life and action, let alone for the purpose of extenuating the self-seeking life and the base and cowardly action. We want to serve history only to the extent that history serves life.[9] (59)

Nietzsche insists "that we can never be free from the past. Its timelessness will never cease to be a power for the times" (Hamilton, *Soliciting Darkness* 61). Similarly, in philosophical Taoism[10] the past, the present, and the future are all part of a circular continuum. Choose any point or event on this circle and you will find that it has the qualities of being, of having been, and of what will be—regardless of where you find yourself on the circle.

Long before the twentieth and twenty-first century critics of *Quellenforschung*, Nietzsche argues against the tradition that has its roots in his own century when he scoffs at those "who prefer to spend their time on Egyptian or Persian philosophy rather than on Greek, on the grounds that the former are more 'original' and in any event older." The "quest" for beginnings is "idle" Nietzsche insists because what we are seeking is not found at the earliest point but at the *highest* point. The origins and beginnings of philosophy are not the point. The point is how much higher you can go: "What matters in

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9. Nietzsche's foreword opens with a reference to Goethe from *Dichtung und Wahrzeit* (*"Poetry and Truth"*): "In any case, I hate everything that merely instructs me without augmenting or directly invigorating my activity" (59).

10. Philosophical Taoism sometimes called *tao-chia* or *tao-jia*--as distinguished from religious Taoism: *tao-chiao* or *tao-jiao*--is the original form of Taoist thought and is the subject of this thesis.

all things is the higher levels" (*PTAG* 30). Anything less is pedantry, learning for learning's sake, a kind of intellectual materialism; the perils of "an unrestrained thirst for knowledge for its own sake," which "barbarizes" men as surely as a hatred of knowledge.

In Nietzsche's inaugural lecture at Basel in 1869 he cites Seneca's Epistle to Lucillius in *Epistulae Morales* on the subject of learning for learning's sake:

> 1. … this eagerness to learn … should be regulated, so that it may not get in its own way. Things are not to be gathered at random; nor should they be greedily attacked in the mass; <u>one will arrive at a knowledge of the whole by studying the parts</u>. (Epistle 108:1, 231, emphasis added)

And so we return to fragments. Rolf-Peter Horstman reminds us: "…given our situation, every truth is defined by [a] necessarily incomplete context. Thus every truth is a partial truth or a perspectival fiction" (Horstmann 192-193).

Every truth is a fragment and every fragment of the truth is also true. This is the great correspondence of Nietzsche, the Presocratics, and Taoist thought. Every part is part of a whole. There is no truth without untruth and so the same may be said of untruth—both are contained in the greater whole. "The truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth" of sworn testimony is a statement in opposition to itself because if it is "nothing but the truth" it cannot be the "whole truth."

Fruitful Learning

Of the Presocratics, Nietzsche says, "Whatever they learned, they wanted to live through, immediately" (*PTAG* 31). Nietzsche may have been thinking of these words of Seneca's further on in Epistle 108:

> 37. … my advice is this – … that we should not hunt out archaic or far-fetched words and eccentric metaphors and figures of speech, but that we should seek precepts which will help us, utterances of courage and spirit

> which may at once be turned into facts. We should so learn them that words may become deeds. 36. … I hold that no man has treated mankind worse than he who has studied philosophy as if it were some marketable trade, who lives in a different manner from that which he advises….A teacher like that can help me no more than a sea-sick pilot can be efficient in a storm….what good is a frightened and vomiting steersman to *me*? And how much greater, think you, is the storm of life than that which tosses any ship! One must steer, not talk….I shall show you how men can prove their words to be their own: it is by doing what they have been talking about. (Seneca 253-55, emphasis added)[11]

For Nietzsche too, philosophy is living inevitably; living through, immediately is a fair description of philosophical Taoism as well. Taoism is all about what can only be known by living it.

What were Nietzsche's own resources for the pre-Socratic Greeks he writes about in *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* in 1874—Thales, Anaximander, Heraclitus, Parmenides, Anaxagoras? The problem we encounter with a reliance on 'later' philosophers and commentators is neatly summarized in Kirk & Raven (*The Presocratic Philosophers*, 1957) who report that Plato was "notoriously lax in his quotations from all sources," frequently mixing "quotation with paraphrase" with an attitude toward his predecessors that was more frequently ironic than objective (1); Aristotle's judgements were "often distorted by his view of earlier philosophy as a stumbling progress towards the truth Aristotle himself revealed" (3). It was not until a full millennium later that the Neoplatonist Simplicius[12] felt the need to set the words of the Presocratics down in detail and at great length, in order to preserve them (1). We

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11. Seneca himself may have been thinking of the Presocratics.

12. Simplicius of Cilicia (c. 490 – c. 560 CE) the last of the Neoplatonist philosophers. The 2010 edition of Richard McKirahan's *Philosophy Before Socrates* reports that new discoveries and scholarship suggest that it was Theophrastus who was the ultimate source for Simplicius (6).

might safely assume that Nietzsche's own sources in 1874 included Simplicius as well as Plato (Brobjer, *Nietzsche's Philosophical Context* 27) and Aristotle (57).

In *PTAG,* Nietzsche writes that while the Greeks of the pre-Socratic age found a great deal to learn from the Orient they did not merely import the ancient philosophies of the East into Greece. Rather, they made it their own by applying it to their own place and time. For the most part, pre-Socratic philosophers did not become followers of Zoroaster or of Buddha; instead, they mastered the ability to "absorb other living cultures" and to "pick up the spear and throw it onward from the point where others had left it" whereupon it becomes a Greek spear. This is what Nietzsche calls the Greek "art of fruitful learning" (*PTAG* 30). The Greeks did not try to reinvent what they borrowed from others, but were interested in "fulfilling, enhancing, elevating and purifying" these elements. We should develop this skill ourselves, Nietzsche advises, and learn to use what we can "find and learn abroad" as footholds to climb higher. According to Nietzsche, what the pre-Socratic Greeks produced with their philosophy was no less than "the archetypes of philosophic thought" (31).

We can see how Nietzsche applies fruitful learning by his assessment of Thales. It is an idle quest for beginnings, he writes, when what you are really looking for are not simply the physical facts about a mathematician from Miletus called Thales--where he traveled or did not travel; what he may or may not have said, discovered, or written—but rather the ideas that persist and endure. *This* is the spear we are obliged to pick up, examine, and weigh, right here where we find it, in the present, however long ago it fell. We don't really need to know the precise provenance of the spear, who made it, who it belonged to, what the battle was about—to use the spear ourselves.

In the course of source research over the ages many discoveries and insights are both attributed to Thales and denied Thales—on navigation, on the measurement of the Pyramids, in mathematics, and astronomy. Kirk & Raven conclude that "there was profound doubt in antiquity about Thales" (85) and that in all probability Thales "did not write a book"—noting, however, that it is still possible that just such a book *may* have been destroyed in the fire at the Alexandrian library (86). Simplicius flatly states that Thales "left nothing behind" (84). Nevertheless, the importance of the ideas correctly or incorrectly attributed to Thales--the ability to accurately predict eclipses (79) and to measure the pyramids by their shadows (83)—is what provides the means to go further. If what we really want is "truth," Nietzsche insists, it does not consist of correct facts about Thales' life. If all we are seeking are facts, then "why not untruth instead? And uncertainty? Even ignorance?" Is truth the problem or are we the problem, he asks (*BGE* 2003 5).

In the first Preface to *PTAG*, Nietzsche rejoices in an era where such philosophical systems, "even if erroneous" existed at all: "So this has existed—once, at least—and is therefore a possibility, this way of life, this way of looking at the human scene" (*PTAG* 24). For instance, Thales' cosmological proposition "that *water* is the primal origin and the womb of all things" was clearly a preposterous and superstitious idea in nineteenth century Europe. Nevertheless, Nietzsche writes:

> Is it really necessary for us to take serious notice of this proposition? It is, and for three reasons. First, because it tells something about the primal origin of all things; second, because it does so in language devoid of image or fable, and finally, because contained in it, if only embryonically,[13] is the thought, "all things are one." (38)

13. Note that the term for amniotic fluid in German is *Fruchtwasser* ("fruit water").

For Nietzsche, the idea that all things are one is the "higher" idea that survives and it is Nietzsche's emphatic embrace of this idea that gives my thesis its footing. It is not Thales' superior skills as a scientist but this idea that makes Thales "the first Greek philosopher":

> Thales did not overcome the low level of empiric insight prevalent in his time. What he did was to pass over its horizon…. What drove Thales to it was a metaphysical conviction which had its origin in a mystic intuition. We meet it in every philosophy . . . this proposition that 'all things are one.' (39)

Whether Aesop's fables[14] or Thales, it is philosophy, according to Nietzsche, not science (nor religious belief), that "legislates greatness." It is philosophy that is "ever on the scent of those things which are most worth knowing, the great and the important insights," insights that Nietzsche characterizes as "the unusual, the astonishing, the difficult and the divine" (43).

Intuition & Intellect

To describe the advantage that philosophy has over science and reason Nietzsche uses the metaphor of a leap:

> Philosophy leaps ahead on tiny toeholds; hope and intuition lend wings to its feet. Calculating reason lumbers heavily behind, looking for better footholds, for reason too wants to reach that alluring goal which its divine comrade has long since reached. (40)

Why does philosophical thinking arrive so much more quickly to its goal than thinking that calculates and measures? Is it simply a difference in measuring progress or is it a

14. A former Greek slave, the fabulist Aesop is thought to have lived from 620 to 560 BCE.

difference in kind? Nietzsche answers that it is "the special strength of imagination…its lightning-quick seizure and illumination of analogies…an alien, illogical power," that propels philosophical thought, a faculty that goes beyond what the senses and reason alone can tell us. This implies that philosophical thought is capable of an immediate grasp of things as they are, a grasp that is freed from the constraints of time as well as reason. This immediacy implies timelessness which in turn implies eternal, that is, without beginning and without end, like the Taoist circle referred to earlier.

What is being grasped is what Kant refers to as "the thing in itself" (*Ding an sich*); this is the Greek *noúmenon*, independent of a subjective, sense-mediated version of physical and temporal phenomena. For Kant, such an objective, unmediated reality is an unknowable impossibility. In contrast, Nietzsche argues that Kant's *Ding an sich* is simply not available to logic (*logos*, that is language) alone (83). In ancient Greek, the root of *noúmenon* is *nous*, the mind, which pairs intellect with intuition. *Nous* is a faculty that is not dependent on interpretation by the senses nor on comprehension through the medium of language.

In *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* Nietzsche writes of Heraclitus that this philosopher's great strength was "his extraordinary power to think intuitively" as opposed to relying on "logical combinations." For Heraclitus, opposites exist *together* because in reality they are *one thing*: "Everything forever has its opposite along with it." Intuitive thinking also embraces two things: the present, changing world of a multiplicity of experiences--the flowing stream we step into, changing with every moment—*as well as* the unchanging conditions that make any experience of this world possible: time and space." These, according to Heraclitus,

> may be perceived intuitively, even without a definite content, independent of all experience, purely in themselves. (52)

This is the Greek *nous*: intellect *and* intuition. If we are indeed endowed with this pairing, this *nous*--this intuitive knowledge--then why not use it to to reach beyond the limits of time and space and culture to understand what we see and hear, what we know, what we live?

Contemporary critics of the source research methodology emerge, not surprisingly, in the fields that depend on it the most—Greek and Latin classics and Jewish and Christian religious studies. In her 2012 book on the legendary nature of the life of the a fifth century BCE fabulist (and possible fable himself…) named Aesop, Leslie Kurke offers a respectful yet full-throated critique of source research and begins her critique by pointing out that traditional *Quellenforschung* does not necessarily represent an impartial scholarship and does not always make its biases and motives plain. For instance, Kurke questions the assumption that,

> . . . influence or borrowing only ever goes one way—from the top down; from the products of elite culture to the popular….That is to say, this model recognizes no dialectic between the common culture and elite culture, or between oral traditions and textual instantiations. . . . (27)

Instead, Kurke says, "we must imagine the Aesop texts we have as emerging from a constant, ongoing set of exchanges—a dialogue or conversation between different traditions taking place over a long period of time, of which our texts represent the sedimented residue" (27-28).[15]

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15. These are ideas linked to German philosopher (1900-2002) Hans-Georg Gadamer's "fusion of horizons" (*Horizontverschmelzung*) in the study of human understanding and interpretation; author of *Truth and Method.*

The use of imagination and dialogue are elements that can infuse life into ancient texts and bring the researcher closer to their true source—the human imaginations and conversations from whence they originally spring. Kurke's research on the anonymously sourced *Life of Aesop* uses imagination and, she acknowledges, even fantasy and "biased, interested reporting"—in other words everything at her disposal—to go beyond source research to present a compelling and credible picture of Greek popular culture in the time of Aesop, whether he existed as a man or as a legend. Within this dynamic context subsequent scholars may also go further, agreeing or disagreeing with Kurke's conclusions.

On the one hand, we have *Quellenforschung*. On the other hand, we have everything else. This is why it is easier to do things with two hands and why, perhaps, we should endeavor to use every means available to pick up a spear. A conversation between ourselves and Nietzsche and ancient Greeks and Taoism does not seem an impossibility if we use eclectic means to develop "the ears to hear what is no longer here" as Hamilton writes in "Extemporalia" (26).

A conversation between ourselves and Nietzsche and pre-Socratic Greeks and Taoism does not seem an impossibility if we use a pluralistic, capacious criticism based on the technique of fruitful learning and on the principle of time as a continuum to apply intuition and imaginative writing that is truly disinterested, in order to mine any text or human thought for its inherent qualities and to consider the ideas that may "co-arise," however incongruously across even great expanses of time and space.

Chapter II

What is Tao?

You don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows.
~ Bob Dylan, "Subterranean Homesick Blues"

Those not aware of being Taoist may be most Taoist of all.
~ Ming-Dao Deng, *Scholar Warrior* 246)

The term *tao-chia* distinguishes philosophical Taoism from religious Taoism (*tao-chiao*), and is the original form of Taoist thought as expressed in the writings attributed to Laozi (ca 605 - 531 BCE) in the *Tao te Ching* and later in the *Basic Writings* or *Zhuangzi* attributed to Zhuangzi (370 – 287 BCE).[16] The focus of *tao-chia* is based on inner wisdom accessed by observing the natural flow of events in the physical world, and unity with the *Tao* as a way of life.

Cultural & Historical Context

The *Norton Anthology of World Religions* reports that Taoism has its roots in "a dense religious landscape" and is first recorded in Hindu texts written in Sanskrit dating back to 1500 BCE; the oral transmission of Taoist philosophy predates written texts by as much as 3500 years (Miles et al. 1473). Both Taoism and Confucianism[17] are indigenous

16. Note that the Norton Anthology states: "only in the hands of Western polemicists did these terms have the power to separate philosophy from religion" (1475).

17. Based on the teachings of Confucius (551-479 BCE) – philosopher, political figure, educator whose teachings addressed the ideal education and comportment of the individual in society; his influence in China is compared with that of Socrates in the West. After his death, the ethics and moral teachings of Confucius were written down by his students to become the Lun-yü, or *Analects*.

to China, while Buddhism[18] developed in India from Hinduism evolving and adapting as it moved through Central Asia, China, and Japan.[19] The first (known) written text of Taoism is Laozi's *Tao te Ching*,[20] which emerged out of its unwritten origins in response to Confucianism. There are many apocryphal stories in Taoist literature of meetings between Laozi and Confucius who were in fact contemporaries. One story from the *Basic Writings of Zhuangzi* captures the tone of Taoism's response. In it Zhuangzi[21] describes a Taoist named Dao Zhi scolding Confucius:

> The more you talk, the more nonsense you utter. You get your food without plowing and your clothes without weaving…. You arbitrarily decide what is right and wrong, leading princes astray and distracting scholars from their proper business. You recklessly set up filial piety and fraternal duty, and curry favor with the feudal princes, the wealthy, and the noble. Your offense is great; your crime is extremely heavy. Go home at once! (Deng, *Lunar Tao* 187)

Both Laozi and later Zhuangzi represent the Taoist way as a carefree, even casual life of

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18. Based on the teachings of Buddha (566 BCE – 486 BCE).

19. In Japan, the influence of Taoism distinguishes Zen Buddhism from Indian Buddhism.

20. The *Tao te Ching* is attributed to the Chinese writer and philosopher Laozi and is often referred to simply by his name: *Laozi*. Both author and text are variously transliterated from the Chinese—Lao Tzu, Lao Tsu, Lao-tse etc. that translates as "Master Lao." "Tao" is also sometimes spelled "Dao" and pronounced "dow" in any case.

21. Scholars cannot agree on whether the author Zhuangzi is an actual person or whether the *Zhuangzi* is a composite text assembled from many contributors in the character of the "witty philosopher" or "simply a person following Taoist philosophy of self-effacement and modesty." The *Basic Writings of Zhuangzi* offers "pseudo-autobiographical sketches" of a vagabond everyman finding humor and lessons in everyday life" (Deng, *Lunar Tao* xxxi). Note that "vagabond" comes from the Latin *vagary* to wander, from *vag*, way (also *weg* in German) and means "way-bound" or "bonded to the way."

nonconformity that looks to nature as an ultimate authority rather than to human rulers. Obviously, this message held particular appeal to non-conformists of all stripes--mystics, creatives, herbalists, recluses--anyone looking for an alternative to the strict hierarchy and rules of the sanctioned conventions of Chinese society advocated by Confucius at the time (*Lunar Tao* 398). Deng observes that Taoism is the least popular of the spiritual traditions because it does not offer much to its followers—no heaven, no forgiveness, no ecstasy, no assurances, no comfort, no community, no social status:

> You have to be tough to follow Tao . . . rewards will come in slow and subtle ways. Tao offers only three things: sound health, a way through the bewilderment of life, and liberation from the fear of death. (*365 Tao* 57)

The *Norton* tells us that "Daoism cannot claim the large numbers that other religions enjoy," noting that it is a challenge to accurately estimate the number of Taoists or to decide who even counts as a Taoist:

> For much of its history…Daoism remained an invisible religion…The problem of who counts as a Daoist confounds…even today. (Miles et al. 1494)

I would suggest that there are many who "count" as Taoists who don't know that they are (like Nietzsche, according to my thesis). While available to anyone, Taoist thought does not appeal to everyone. It remains an open yet secret source of knowledge that identifies the vicissitudes of human life as part of the pattern of nature, imbued with the cyclical movement that makes life possible and death inevitable, and that animates the cosmos.

What *is* Tao?

The Chinese word *tao* is translated as way or path. In the context of Taoist philosophical thought *Tao* refers to 'way' in the sense of a method of living life, in accord with a changing and, at the same time, eternal reality.[22] The first written text for Taoism, the *Tao te Ching*, begins:

> The way that can be spoken
> [*Tao k'o tao*]
> is not the constant way
> [*fei ch'ang tao*] (Lau, *Tao te Ching* #1, 5; Wade-Giles transliteration of the Chinese)

Taoist philosophy teaches that there is "a Way that all of nature and all human endeavors follow" and that every individual has a personal way as well (Deng, *Lunar Tao* xx). In Chinese *tao* is represented by a pictograph composed of two images: 道, on the left a human figure takes a step forward and on the right a human head faces forward. The human meaning of Tao is simply movement forward and awareness of that movement. In the second line, Laozi challenges this simple interpretation of the tao that can be spoken by negating it with "not" (*fei*)[23] and modifying it with "constant" (*ch'ang*).[24]

With these two lines, Laozi indicates that Tao is both knowable--as the ground at our feet is knowable--and unknowable; both nameless (nonbeing) and named (being).

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22. In ancient Greek, co-incidentally, metá (μετά) + hodós (ὁδός) translates as "along the path" implying a systematic pursuit of knowledge or some other inquiry.

23. The character for *fei,* 非 is an ideogram of the two wings of a bird; wings that 'oppose' each other but work together for flight. (Star 273)

24. Sometimes translated as "eternal," "unchanging," or "absolute."

> Within the depths of Tao, existence and nonexistence come together; no distinctions exist. Time becomes circular or even irrelevant. (Deng, *Scholar Warrior* 181)

Taoists consider the knowable and the unknowable a pair that define one another, much as the two wings of a bird in the character for *fei* can only work as a pair. Deng acknowledges that the human mind cannot function in the nondualistic realm of the Tao: "We cannot see where there is no contrast" (181). We need to name things; we need black to see white and light to see dark. In other words, Tao is a constant and recurring mystery, a word that derives from the Greek *myein:* to shut or close the mouth and be mute.[25] Thus, we might paraphrase the first two lines of the *Tao te Ching* this way: "to speak (read, write, perceive) of the Tao is to be mute (neither hear nor see the Tao)."

When Zen masters are asked, "What is Tao?" they demonstrate the inadequacy of logical reasoning by offering nonsense replies like, "A dragon singing in the ancient forest!" or "Go away!" or no reply at all. A paradox expressed as a question like this is called a "koan," and is used both as a teaching aid in meditation to provoke enlightenment, and as a way to evaluate both masters and students. Frequently, the question is turned back on the questioner. The only reply worthy of the question "What is Tao?" is, traditionally, "Who are you?" Such a reply points out that the student already has, indeed, <u>is</u> the answer. Starting with this, the aim of Taoist thought is to develop a

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25. A student of German literature may be reminded of Friedrich Schiller's poetic lament:

> Why can't the living spirit manifest itself to the spirit?
> *Warum kann der lebendige Geist dem Geist nicht erscheinen?*
> If the soul *speaks*, alas, it is no longer the *soul* that speaks.
> Spricht *die Seele, so spricht ach! schon die* Seele *nicht mehr.*
> [Schiller, "Sprache" Tabulae Votivae Xenien, 1797] (Bertram 300 Fn.58)

personal philosophy of self-knowledge and self-reliance and then to learn to live by living.

Wu wei

A central concept of Taoist thought is *wu wei*, pairing action and non-action. *Laozi* #37 sums up this concept: Tao does not act, yet there is nothing that it does not do. Action without doing does not mean refraining from action but acting as nature acts, without intellectual intent or desire (Deng, *Lunar Tao* 215). Nature and the universe do not "act" in the sense of being motivated, intentional, or intellectual nevertheless action inevitably results from their existence. *Wu wei* characterizes the movement of *Tao* and serves as a model for human endeavor. It is not a prescription for thoughtlessness, ignorance, or selfishness but the result of understanding, insight, and skill. Deng likens *wu wei* to the effortlessly correct, spontaneous creative action of a fully-developed artist or musician who has mastered their craft (*Scholar Warrior* 186).

A story from *Zhuangzi* is illustrative: an old Taoist sage sits in the sun with his long freshly washed hair flowing over his shoulders; his students ask him what he is doing and how they can help him. The sage replies: 'What is there that needs to be done? My hair is being dried by the sun, and I am resting at the origin of all things.' This is the Taoist concept of *wu wei:* even when nothing is done, nothing is left undone; the dichotomy between being and doing, something and nothing, is resolved.

"Give up learning," *Laozi* #20 advises,[26] meaning: do not allow education to "become the tool of selfish egotism;" do not use knowledge to "take advantage of

26. Various translations.

others;" do not venerate the old simply because they are old, but "value wisdom" (187). The aim of a Taoist life, is to generate "life and not misery for others" almost unconsciously. Deng offers the example of heaven and earth that "do not think about creating the weather, the seasons, and the cycles of growing" but merely revolve "according to their nature… the rest is generated without any thought or work on their part" (Deng, *365 Tao* 68).

> When [Taoists] say to eliminate benevolence, righteousness, and morality, they mean that we should not adhere to the empty and phony forms of these things [but] to enter into a creative state in which actions are deeply intuitive and correct. This 'correctness' is the correctness of Nature. (Deng, *Scholar Warrior* 187)

Does a similar intuition about the correctness of spontaneous action in harmony with the essence of human and cosmic creativity inspire Nietzsche and drive his passionate demand for a "transvaluation of all values" (*AC* #13, 35)? In the First Proposition of his "Decree Against Christianity" he will write that "every form of anti-nature is depraved" (Shapiro 212).[27]

Inherency

In the same way that Buddhism teaches that "Buddha nature" is inherent in every being, knowledge of Tao—the forces and patterns found in nature and the cosmos--is inherent in humanity. Along with the knowledge and awareness gained by experience of the outer physical universe (phenomena) and the inner universe of the self (noumena), is

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27. *The Antichrist* (1888) is the last book Nietzsche writes before his breakdown, published in 1895. Nietzsche's *Gesetz Wider Christentum* ("Decree against Christianity") is a section added by Nietzsche but according to Shapiro removed by his literary executors (212) and customarily excluded from Anglophone translations (Conway 220).

an inherent awareness of *Tao*--it may never become conscious but it is there--the overarching reality behind everything: motion, flow, stasis, and change

Modern Taoists consider that every aspect of the universe exists within the purview of Tao—the inner and outer life of human society and individual life forms as well as cyberspace and dark matter—are all subject to the same patterns and laws. The inherent process of growing awareness may be compared to natural science, what the Greeks call *physis*. This is the uniquely human attempt to capture and to understand both the laws of nature and the ineffable. "Heraclitus first indicated that knowledge of the soul was relevant to knowledge of the structure of the cosmos" Kirk & Raven write in *The Presocratic Philosophers* (8).

The inherency of wisdom and enlightenment, what the Sufi mystic Rumi calls "the essential intellect in all existence" (Barks 56), is the Taoist view. Individual identity—from one's mental and biological make-up to the conditions and realities of one's everyday life—shares the same properties, patterns and behaviors found on the microcosmic level of atoms, molecules, and cells as on the cosmic levels of the universe. In other words, the individual cannot be understood apart from the whole and the whole cannot be understood apart from the individual. These patterns are, in effect, the natural order of things and the Chinese word for this kind order is *li*. There is another word, *tsu* that refers the order of things as they are spoken or written down; *tsu* might be said to be roughly equivalent to *logos*, the logic required to describe the natural order of things. *Tsu* is a quality unique to humans.

Laozi is said to have written the *Tao te Ching* in verse because "knowledge of Tao lodges in the same part of the mind as poetry" (Deng, *365 Tao* 63). There is "a vast

difference between the words of scholars and the words of a practitioner, just as the words of academics differ from the words of poets" (63). Nietzsche makes a very similar observation speaking of early *Presocratics* in *PTAG:*

> What verse is for the poet, dialectical thinking is for the philosopher. He grasps for it in order to get hold of his own enchantment, in order to perpetuate it. And just as for the dramatist words and verse are but the stammering of an alien tongue, needed to tell what he has seen and lived, what he could utter directly only through music or gesture, just so every profound philosophic intuition expressed through dialectic and through scientific reflection is the only means for the philosopher to communicate what he has seen. But it is a sad means; basically a metaphoric and entirely unfaithful translation into a totally different sphere and speech. Thus Thales had seen the unity of all that is, but when he went to communicate it, he found himself talking about water! (44-45)

Making a similar point, Richard Wilhelm[28] writes in his 1925 Commentary on the *Tao te Ching*:

> One cannot gain an understanding of Lao Zi's thought by a process of abstraction; instead, a primal view from one's inner depths will produce these images for oneself. These images or forms are non-corporeal, not spatial. They are like fleeting images passing over the smooth surface of a mirror. These 'images of things' are the seeds of reality. Just as the acorn contains the oak, ungraspable, invisible and yet completely distinct as an entelechy, so the 'things of reality are contained in these seed-images. (72-73)[29]

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28. Richard Wilhelm (1873 – 1930) Swiss sinologist who translated the *Tao te Ching* into German in 1910. In 1924 Wilhelm also translated and wrote extensively on the classic Chinese text of divination and moral decision-making, the *I Ching* ("Book of Changes") from the Zhou Period 1000–750 BCE, informed by both Taoism and Confucianism.

29. Entelechy: the realization of potential; the supposed vital principle that guides the development and functioning of an organism or other system or organization. From the Greek *entelḗs*: complete, finished, perfect; *télos*: end, fruition, accomplishment; and *ékhō*: to have. Note the similarity to Anaxagoras who theorizes at roughly around the same time a similar origin to the cosmos: void followed by spontaneous movement leading to the creation of all things where "all Things were present in the Whole that contains the "seeds infinite in number" of "all Things" (Freeman & Diels, *Ancilla* 59:4 83). Wilhelm uses very similar language here.

Taoist philosophy has its origins in an agrarian perspective on the world based on the cycles of night and day and of seasons, forging a philosophy based on experience that combines pragmatism and mysticism. Simply put, Taoism looks to the physical, phenomenal world for answers to spiritual, noumenal questions and vice versa: "The spirit is wrapped in reason and reason is wrapped in spirit" (Deng, *Lunar Tao* 31).

Qi

A Taoist relationship to the divine is one in which there is no division and in Taoism the divine[30] is not an external entity or an entity at all but a pervasive life force called *qi*[31]. *Qi* is also the Chinese word for breath, which generates energy in everything that lives and is the primary indication of life. If we mean to study life, therefore, it makes sense to study the breath (Deng, *Everyday Tao* 14). The most ancient character in Chinese for *qi* is three horizontal lines, an image depicting the mist that rises from the warm earth into the cool atmosphere or the vapor of exhalation of a living being on a cold day. "As we breathe, so too does the universe breathe" (Deng, *365 Tao* 351). We should note here that in Latin the word for "breath" has the same derivation as the word for "spirit": *spiritus.* The very act of breathing, being alive, is itself a spiritual act.

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30. Deities exist in Taoism but they represent "the enormous diversity of existence" and embody virtues and values viewed as "a necessary part of human experience." These include wisdom, compassion, humor, and patience but do not exclude the aggressive and warlike qualities that are also a part of life. The function of prayer is not to seek outside help, but to help the seeker discover and develop their own capacity to use these qualities (Deng, *Lunar Tao* 35).

31. Sometimes spelled *chi* and pronounced "kee."

In Taoist meditation, the exchange of breath with the outside makes concrete the notion that there is no separation between the individual and the world. A similar lack of separation between the individual and the world exists when sound waves enter an individual's ear and affects the emotions or a scent enters the nose or mouth and triggers a memory. Taoists frequently point to fish in the water to illustrate this undivided relationship saying that *Tao* is knowable to an individual as water is knowable to a fish. Each individual's *tao* belongs to that individual just as the water passing through a fish's gills belongs to that fish, until it returns to its universal nature in an ongoing and constant exchange of life force and energy.

Taoist, Buddhist, and the Hindu Yogic traditions all incorporate conscious, unforced breathing, as well as guided breathing techniques as a way to connect the spirit to the mind and the mind to the body. Breathing is physical and it is spiritual–everything inside a living being changes when a breath is taken. Contemplating the breath in meditation (what is a breath but itself a tiny representation of void?) puts an individual in harmony with the physical world that also breathes.[32] Meditation is both an act and a metaphor for the marriage of inner and outer, conscious and unconscious. It is a way for the human mind, filled with its own countless creations,[33] to periodically empty itself. "The more subtle truth," Deng writes, is that the world changes the individual as much as the individual changes the world and meditating on this exchange increases awareness that goes beyond individuality to the true nature of that relationship (*Lunar Tao* 27).

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32. See Appendix Chapter II for *Neijing tu* ("World in the Body") illustration.

33. What Deng refers to as being "lost in the vastness of our own uncharted minds" (*365 Tao* 101).

When the wind blows or waves roll through the ocean, a Taoist is reminded of how the world breathes as one and how connected human existence is to this universal breath.

Chaos & Creative Void

Where did everything come from, according to Taoist thought? Curiosity about the origin of the universe is commonly satisfied with creation myths and legends but prehistoric Taoists, like modern physicists[34] and the pre-Socratic Greeks, are not satisfied with these stories. In *Tao te Ching* #25, Laozi places Tao in the context of the beginning of the universe:

> There was something chaotic yet complete here
> before heaven and earth were born.
> How silent and still it was, how singular and unaltered,
> turning without stop.
> Perhaps it was the mother of all under heaven.
> I do not know its name,
> but it must be given a word, *call it Tao*.
> (Deng trans. *Lunar Tao* 330, emphasis added)

The word chaos, from Greek *khaos* (*Χάος*) means gaping void or chasm. According to the poet Hesiod,[35] chaos was the first thing to exist. Modern physicists use the term to refer to the formless matter out of which the universe is thought to have been formed. The *Norton Anthology of World Religions* uses similar language:

> The Dao referred to a unified universal principle preceding the origin of the universe which set into motion the process of creation and was the

34. Arguably, quantum physics is an attempt to discover what Taoists began to intuit five thousand years ago.

35. Hesiod was active circa 750 and 650 BCE around the same time as Homer. He is credited with works including the *Theogony*, a cosmological work describing the origins and genealogy of the gods, and *Works and Days*, on the subjects of farming, morality and country life. https://www.britannica.com/biography/Hesiod

> cause of its enduring transformation. The Dao is the unchanging reality behind a chaotic and ever-shifting plurality of transformations. (Miles 1483)

As with *Tao*, there is clearly a struggle to define the nothingness that precedes everything else, "Void is not something, but there is void" James Porter writes in *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future* (86). Yet the concept of the creative potential of emptiness is central to Taoist philosophy as well as in Nietzsche. In Taoism, this void is *Tao* and the mother of all things:

> Tao gave birth to One,
> One gave birth to Two,
> Two gave birth to Three,
> Three gave birth to all the myriad[36] things.
>
> All the myriad things carry the *Yin* on their backs and
> hold the *Yang* in their embrace,
> Deriving their vital harmony from the proper blending
> of the two vital Breaths. (Wu, *Tao Teh Ching* #42 87)[37]

Deng writes that Taoists claim "that the source of all things is an even greater emptiness…. Nothing precedes nothingness, so it is logically the beginning point" (*Scholar Warrior* 183). This is what the Greeks will call *apeiron.*

The iconic symbol for Taoist philosophy is the *taijitu,* a closed circle representing the limitless potential of Tao before duality, encompassing two contrasting, interlocking spirals, *yin* and *yang* ("dark-bright") each containing the seed of its opposite.[38]

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36. The word "myriad" comes from the Greek *murioi* meaning 10,000, a figure frequently used in Taoist texts to denote innumerable or endless.

37. Richard Wilhelm's translation of the end of this verse: "All things have darkness at their back and strive towards the light and the flowing power gives them harmony." (Wilhelm 46)

38. ☯ - such a diagram was first introduced by Song Dynasty philosopher Zhou Dunyi (1017–1073). See Appendix Chapter II for illustration.

> Yin and yang can be light and dark, hard and soft, outer and inner, male and female, hot and cold, positive and negative…. Neither could exist without the other: they define each other….. The entire universe, with its constant and dynamic motion, is an ongoing play between yin and yang. Since the universe is infinite and has no fixed points, there is no absolute point of view…only an observer whose observations must forever be considered subjective. (189)

Yin-yang symbolizes the spontaneous and continuous flow of the movement of opposites becoming. For Taoists, balance is never achieved for long, as that would be stasis and "Taoists do not observe stasis anywhere in the universe" (190).

The Taoist premise is that everything in the universe comes out of nothing, the void preceding the creation of the cosmos. Void, having no beginning and no end, is what each individual and the universe itself will return to in a cycle that is, in effect, endless. A creative void creates and that which is created eventually returns to its source, the void. The idea of creative void is commonly represented by a large, empty circle, like the *ensō*[39] of Zen Buddhism or (arguably) "First Day of Creation" from the *Nuremberg Chronicle*[40] a universal image of wholeness as well as nihility. The circle is a multipurpose visual metaphor for the life cycle, for timelessness, for the bowl of the sky, the shape of the earth, the sun, the four directions, and the whirling wind--the everyday things that humanity from its earliest beginnings experiences, observes, and periodically is compelled to think and speak about.

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39. In Zen Buddhism, an *ensō* is a circle that is hand-drawn in one or two uninhibited brushstrokes to express a moment when the mind is free to let the body create. See Appendix Chapter II for illustration.

40. See Appendix Chapter II for illustrations.

Because of their common origin, it follows that everything in the universe is related, and the common material of cosmic kindred are the atoms of their physical material, the patterns of their design and behavior, and the energy and character of their movement. Movement originates in the void and this movement results in material creation, decay, and eventual disintegration back to the unknowable, pre-creative void from which everything emerges in a timeless cycle. In the West, "void" often assumes a negative, even a menacing, existential connotation: empty, lacking, and lifeless. Arthur Schopenhauer's response to the emptiness of the void was to conclude that life is meaningless suffering and the only way to avoid it (so to speak) is to deny life through desirelessness. This describes nihilism. Nietzsche will acknowledge the fearsomeness of *khaos* but is himself characteristically fearless in exploring the enormous implications of its potential. He will recognize that not everyone in his own time and culture will be up to redefining the value and meaning of life in the face of it (the void). He writes in *Beyond Good and Evil*:

> Whoever fights with monsters should see to it that he does not become one himself. And when you stare for a long time into an abyss, the abyss stares back at you. (Norman, *BGE* 4:146 69)

In striking contrast to this dark perspective, Taoists are apt to compare the void to a fertile valley, open to the accumulation of water and sun and hospitable to life; offering not only a broad view but also a returning echo of our own existence. Taoists, in other words, find the idea of the void a comforting and constant companion, similar to the comfort that derives from the awareness of being a part of nature. The Taoist embrace of a creative void is apparent in many examples of positive emptiness in everyday life: the womb where life begins, the human chest where the heart beats, or the hollow base of a

living tree. This kind of emptiness is a tangible part of all reality and since there is "no separation between void and phenomena," Taoists are encouraged to "delight in life but never see more than void" (Deng, *365 Tao* 156).

Rather than cautioning us about the effects of staring into the void, as Nietzsche does, Taoism suggests:

> Be void contemplating void … to be void is the only true mode of meditation…void is not the *object* of meditation—to pair meditator and object creates a dualistic relationship that leads one astray. In meditation we are searching for unity. The only true meditation is one that does not put us into a relationship of viewer and object. Any object, no matter how holy, reinforces the illusion that there is a reality outside of ourselves…the true interior view [is that] there is no difference between our inner and outer realities…nothing to contemplate, nothing to think about. (221)

In Taoist meditation, the true interior view is the realization that our sense of identity is only the result of dualistic thinking. An awareness of the void is to understand that there is really nothing to contemplate, we are the void. This nondualistic outlook leads to an interpretation of divinity that includes all of existence:

> If there were an absolute god, there could not be anything separate from god. Everything is god. We are also god but fail to realize this. Why? Because we look for god outside of ourselves. We make the mistake of taking ourselves as the viewer and then seek god as the object of our examinations. Unfortunately, everything we perceive is tainted by our subjectivity, and anything that we define as god "out there" cannot be god because it is not absolute. All you've found is something that exists in relation to your perceptions. (211)

While Deng is writing about a philosophy with roots in an ancient Chinese past, the concepts of duality, subjectivity, and perspectivism evoke the themes and issues in this thesis that we will explore further in subsequent chapters.

Taoists, true to their receptive, skeptical, inquiring style (and not unlike the Presocratic Greeks) borrow freely from any source if it advances their inner development

and life skills. It is clear that many have borrowed from Taoism in turn. Geographically, the Presocratic Greeks were extremely well-placed to be exposed to all the best ideas originating both to the East and West of them and well-disposed to avail themselves of those ideas.

Chapter III

The Presocratics

It may not be logical, but it certainly is human…
~ Nietzsche (*PTAG* 46)

Between the sixth and fifth centuries BCE, Greek scientist philosophers[41] began to emerge in the small cities and towns clustered around the Mediterranean from the southern Ionian coast of Asia Minor (Miletus, Ephesus, Clazomenae) to the *megálē hellás* ("greater Greece") of Greek colonies in Southern Italy and Sicily (Elea and Acragas).

Open to trade and ideas from the ancient civilized world from the Near East to the Far East,[42] the Presocratics are first generation of Greeks to separate their intellectual and political lives from their religious beliefs and practices; they also freely personalize the ideas of others and absorb them into Greek culture. "It has been pointed out assiduously how much the Greeks were able to find and learn abroad in the Orient and it is doubtless

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41. Aristotle called the pre-Socratics *physikoi* ("physicists", after physis, "nature") because they sought natural explanations for phenomena, as opposed to the earlier *theologoi* (theologians), whose philosophical basis was supernatural. Curd, Patricia, "Presocratic Philosophy", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2012 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (editor). http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2012/entries/presocratics .

42. Note that these terms date from British colonial times and are coined from a Western perspective. "Near East" and "Middle East" have come to overlap in modern times and refer geographically to southwest Asia: Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, Israel, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and other nations of the Arabian Peninsula, including ancient Mesopotamia, a word that in ancient Greek means "between rivers" referring to the Tigris and the Euphrates or modern-day Iraq. "Far East" and "Orient" refer to the Asian continent and subcontinent.

true that they picked up much there," Nietzsche writes, "…the very reason they got so far is that they knew how to pick up the spear and throw it onward from the point where others had left it" (*PTAG* 29-30).

The Presocratics are the key to the connection between Nietzsche and Taoist thought. We must try to understand them as Nietzsche did in order to reveal his connection to Taoist thought. In *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, Nietzsche credits the *physikoi* with being the first to realize and acknowledge that there is a correlation between nature and the mind of man and to consider this correlation in scientific and human terms. In *PTAG* he reflects on Thales, Anaximander, Heraclitus, Parmenides, and Anaxagoras in turn; with particular attention to what he calls "the personal element" (25). The key word here is 'personal.' It is the shared understanding of Nietzsche, the Presocratics, and Taoist thought that philosophy is personal; a philosophy that is purely intellectual and not lived, is divorced from life itself and has little relevance. Since life itself is part of the greater cosmos, the laws that govern nature (*physis*) inevitably apply—down to the smallest units of life and matter; and including actions, thought, and intuition.

In *Philology of the Future* Porter rests his view of Nietzsche on the premise that the Presocratics remained constant "frames of reference…from 1867 down to his last jottings in 1889" (20). It is these ancient philosophers that Nietzsche feels closest to in temperament and philosophy and who ground him in "the inescapability of metaphysical thinking" (21) throughout his lifetime. It is the Presocratics, I believe, who also reveal to Nietzsche, from the beginning of his intellectual life, the inherent fallacy of dualistic thinking in the subject-object problem: "It is absolutely impossible for a subject to see or

have insight into something while leaving itself out of the picture, so impossible that knowing and being are the most opposite of all spheres" (*PTAG* 83). Nietzsche calls knowing and being 'opposites' with a full awareness that opposites are always two halves of a whole with a tendency to lead one to the other and back again. This nondualistic stance is the Greek in Nietzsche, and the Taoist as well.

The best and closest of friends are also often the sharpest observers of their companions' true natures and intentions. In Nietzsche's early lectures at Basel he points out that "the Greeks borrowed whatever they needed from the Orient" and elaborates, "That the Greeks became more serious and profound did not come from within: for their true talent was, as Homer shows, ordering, making beautiful and more superficial, playing and *eu skolakein*"[43] (Brobjer 11). Brobjer adds that "Most about Eastern thought can be found in two lecture series that [Nietzsche] gave during the winter semester of 1875/76, *Der Gottesdienst der Griechen* and *Geschichte der grieschischen Litteratur III"*[44] and cites from Nietzsche's notes:

> In the 6th century [BCE] came another great wave of Asian influence, the seeds of tragedy, philosophy and science came along with it…. During the 6th and 5th centuries [BCE] in faraway India the feeling of the seriousness of life became overpowering…. The last waves of this profound movement reached Greek soil. (Brobjer 11; fn45: KGW II.5, 310f)

The 'seriousness of life' is also a Greek concern. In his 1886 preface to the second edition of *The Gay Science* (*Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*), Nietzsche writes: "Those

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43. *Eu skolakein* denotes people who are good at being leisurely in the sense of having the leisure to study and contemplate. John Hamilton notes: "*Scholē* essentially means leisure or rest while *ascholia* is the common word for business" [in the sense of busy-ness]. Nietzsche's remark, therefore, is both a criticism and a back-handed compliment.

44. Respectively: "How the Greeks Worship" and "History of Greek literature, Lecture 3" – Trans. Deborah Theodore.

Greeks were superficial—*from profundity!*" (8). What Nietzsche refers to in 1876 as "superficial," H.D.F. Kitto elucidates in *The Greeks* as simplicity, "a permanent feature of Greek thought":

> . . . the universe, both the physical and moral universe must be not only rational, and therefore knowable, but also simple; the apparent multiplicity of physical things is only superficial . . . the Greek dramatist thinks in precisely the same way: 'Don't bother about the apparent variety and richness of life: get down to the simple truth.' (179)

Across the ages, this is the ancient Greeks' response to accusations of excessive Greek cheerfulness and apparent superficiality: that what is truly and fatally superficial is the inability to perceive the *unity* of all things. "The most typical feature of the Greek mind," Kitto writes, "is a sense of wholeness of things" and he cites Homer who "for all his love of the particular detail and the individual character, yet fixes it firmly into a universal frame; [in the way that] so many Greeks are several things at once" (169). Kitto illustrates Greek mind-body-moral wholeness in a line from Homer's *Iliad* describing Achilles' mental and emotional state as he is poised to kill a man: "His heart within his shaggy breast was torn, whether he should…slay Atreus' son, or put away his wrath." It is typical of Homeric verse, Kitto writes, to refer simultaneously to the inner and the outer man in a line that "sees the whole man at once" (172).[45]

Thales of Miletus (625-546 BCE)

Nietzsche traces the unifying theme of wholeness back to Thales of Miletus, whom we have discussed in the Introduction. Before Thales and the other Milesian

45. See Appendix Chapter III *Aóristo*s: the grammar of Greek wholeness.

philosophers,

> Greeks believed only in the reality of men and gods, looking upon all of nature as but a disguise, a masquerade . . . Man for them was the truth and the core of all things; everything else was but semblance and the play of illusion. (*PTAG* 41)

It is Thales, the "first philosopher" who "suddenly" looks beyond man, his anthropomorphic gods, and his mythological fables to say: "'Not man, but water is the reality of all things.' He begins to believe in nature,[46] by believing at least in water" writes Nietzsche (42).

Nietzsche's own intuition tells him the same thing: that the only way to account for the seamless, interlocking patterns of the natural physical world is a unifying principle, an *arkhe.*[47] What led Thales to this insight was, Nietzsche writes, "a metaphysical conviction which had its origin in a mystic intuition. We meet it in every philosophy…this proposition that 'all things are one'" (39).

Anaximander of Miletus (610-547 BCE)

Much is attributed to Anaximander but very little remains. What we know of him comes from the testimony of others. Reporting on a fragment that Theophrastus was said to have seen,[48] Simplicius records that Anaximander was "the first to call the substratum of opposites, *arkhe*" (Kirk & Raven 108), which implies that in the beginning there was

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46. In Greek, *physis.*

47. *arkhe* (ἀρχή): the Greek word for 'beginning,' both in a temporal sense and in the sense of a first principle or cause" (Warren 3).

48. See Chapter I, footnote 12.

only wholeness giving rise to diversity in the form of opposing forces or elements. Simplicius records that Anaximander is also the first to use the term *apeiron* (the boundless) to describe "the origin and nature from which come all the heavens and all the cosmoses within them" (Warren 29). *Apeiron* is formed from the negating prefix: *a-* and *peirata:* end, limit, boundary. By implication, this is to say that this beginning is unknowable since something without limits cannot be known; to know it would be to impose limits (*peirata*) for the sake of knowing it. We find a clear echo here of *Laozi* #1, "The Tao that can be spoken is not the eternal Tao" and of Schiller ("The soul speaks…").[49]

Anaximander and his interpreters and translators grapple with the same mute mystery as Taoist sages not so far away to the East, along the so-called "silk routes"[50] also characterize the indescribable beginning of the cosmos as the boundless and indefinite *Tao*, the ultimate source of all things, which are numberless.

Of the five brief first-hand fragments that do survive from Anaximander himself three are remarkable for their singularity. The first one describes the origin of the universe in terms of morality—justice and injustice, necessity and reparation:

> 12:1: The Non-Limited is the original material of existing things; further, the source from which existing things derive their existence is also that to which they return at their destruction, according to necessity; for they give justice and make reparation to one another for their injustice, according to the arrangement of Time. (Freeman & Diels 19)

In *PTAG,* Nietzsche's translates this fragment himself from the Greek:

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49. See Chapter II, footnote 25.

50. Formerly known as the Persian Royal Road established during the Achaemenid Empire (500-330 BCE) and dubbed *Seidenstrassen* by the geographer and traveler F. von Richthofen in 1877 (Joshua J. Mark, "Silk Road," Ancient History Encyclopedia, last modified March 28, 2014, http://www.ancient.eu

> Where the source of things is, to that place they must also pass away, (according to necessity for they must pay penance and be judged for their injustices,) in accordance with the ordinance of time.' (45)[51]

Because it mentions justice and refers to judgment, Richard McKirahan suggests that this fragment of Anaximander's "contains the beginning of the idea of a *law of nature* which operates uniformly and impersonally and also holds inevitably ('according to necessity'): things not only do happen in accordance with this law, they *must* (McKirahan 44). Or do Anaximander's fragments suggest rather that the injustice of man's very mortality is the reason for the injustices he both suffers and commits in his life?[52]

Nietzsche is sympathetic to Anaximander's dilemma: "the moral value of existence" on the one hand, and the seemingly 'unjust' inevitability of death on the other.

> It may not be logical, but it certainly is human, to view now, together with Anaximander, all coming-to-be as though it were an illegitimate emancipation from eternal being, a wrong for which destruction is the only penance. Everything that has ever come-to-be again passes away, whether we think of human life or of water or of hot and cold. (*PTAG* 46)

Men cannot accept death, Nietzsche suggests, because dying requires justifying ones existence; Anaximander's moralistic response to death is an escape "into a metaphysical fortress" (48). If the question is: 'What is your existence worth? And if it is worthless, why are you here?' Anaximander's reply is that man is unworthy of existence; he can

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51. In *tao-chia* movement from the source (life) and back (death) is called Return, or the "Tao Axiom." See Appendix Chapter II: *Laozi* #14.

52. Nietzsche cites Arthur Schopenhauer's *Parerga and Paralipomena* "Additional Remarks on the Doctrine of the Suffering of the World") in this passage: "'We do penance for having been born, first by living and then by dying'" and refers to him as "'a man who has heard 'upon the heights of Indian's clear air' the holy word of the moral value of existence—such a man will find it difficult to keep from indulging in a highly anthropomorphic metaphor. He will extract that melancholy doctrine from its application to human life and project it unto the general quality of all existence" (*PTAG* 46).

only expiate the guilt of his unworthiness by ceasing to exist. (49)

Nietzsche's contention with Anaximander on the topic of death becomes clearer if we consider Taoist thought, where the problem of death is a man-made problem: only man laments his own death, in advance. Therefore, this is a thinking problem, like narcissism or greed or envy. Only man thinks: if it is inevitable that I should die then why am I alive? Only man thinks in terms of individual mortality. Reproduction, food, security, all come down to *individual* survival. This is out of balance with nature. Other creatures living in nature do not have the same interest in death that man does. If there is any comfort to be found in the idea of dying, Taoism teaches, man must find it in the idea of returning to the creative void from which he came, or not at all. The point of Tao is to live in accordance with nature, not to seek an afterlife other than the cycle of life. For Taoists death is a natural part of life, a return to the source of life.

Ultimately, like Thales, Anaximander redeems himself from his seemingly narrow moralistic stance on death as penance for existence by not wavering on *arkhe*: that the original material of everything that exists is unlimited and that while individual lives may cease "no end can be envisaged from the womb of the 'indefinite'" (*PTAG* 50). Neither Nietzsche nor a Taoist would argue with that.

Heraclitus of Ephesus (584-484 BCE)

In *Ecce Homo*,[53] Nietzsche writes that he feels "altogether warmer and better than anywhere else…in the vicinity of Heraclitus" (*EH* "The Birth of Tragedy" 51). Greg

53. *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is*--a hybrid 'autobibliography' of Nietzsche's life and works written between his birthday on October 15 and November 4,

Whitlock, who translated and introduced Nietzsche's 1869 to 1876 lecture series on the Presocratics at the University of Basel refers to Heraclitus as the "pre-Platonic Nietzsche" (Whitlock xxxvii). If the Presocratics (or pre-Platonics)[54] are the key to the connection between Nietzsche and Tao, Heraclitus is the key turning in the lock. It is Heraclitus who truly breaks free of dualistic thinking and would be supremely comfortable with Taoist ideas about relative truth and absolute truth. Relative truth, Taoists say, is reached by means of reason—observation, science, and discussion (language!). The absolute truth, however, can only be reached by mystical perception (Deng, *Lunar Tao* 31).

"Heraclitus' regal possession is his extraordinary power to think intuitively," Nietzsche tells us, describing intuitive thinking this way:

> Intuitive thinking embraces two things: one, the present many-colored and changing world that crowds in upon us in all our experiences, and two, the conditions which alone make any experience of this world possible: time and space. For they may be perceived intuitively, even without a definite content, independent of all experience, purely in themselves. (*PTAG* 52)

Heraclitus accepts the coexistence of a (relative) physical world of the senses and a (absolute) metaphysical world and does not distinguish between them, "I see nothing other than becoming" he declares and "Everything forever has its opposite along with it." For this position, Aristotle will later condemn him for sinning against "the law of contradiction" (52).

For Taoists too, these so-called opposites--the relative truth and the absolute truth-

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1888, shortly before his breakdown in 1889; it was published posthumously in 1908 (1979, xviii).

54. Whitlock discusses the reasons for the disparity in the terms "pre-Platonic" and "pre-Socratic" in his preface to *Pre-Platonic Philosophers* (Nietzsche 2006 xiv-xix). Since *PTAG* ends before Nietzsche discusses either Socrates or Plato, this thesis stays with 'Presocratics.'

-are offspring of the same source, Tao, and emerge from it together. The relative truth is what we see before us, everyday life. The phenomena of everyday life are an echo, if one can but hear it, of an absolute truth: that every being is on a path that leads continually between nothing to something and back again. Through Nietzsche we can see that some Presocratics, like Taoists, perceive the everyday phenomenal world not in opposition to the metaphysical world but as a link to it, translated into a language the senses can comprehend.

In contrast to Anaximander's judgment of unworthy lives and perpetual atonement, Nietzsche writes that Heraclitus intuitively finds "wonderful order, regularity and certainty" in the constant change of coming-to-be and passing away (71). In this sense, one might say that Heraclitus is inherently Taoist. Irreverent, proud, contrary, and yet profoundly serious,[55] Heraclitus walks "straight at that mystic night" (50) that shrouds Anaximander's "problem of becoming," and illuminates it with the "lawful order" and unity of opposites:

> [Heraclitus] no longer distinguished a physical world from a metaphysical one, a realm of definite qualities from an undefinable 'indefinite.' And after this first step, nothing could hold him back from a far bolder negation: he altogether denied being… Heraclitus proclaimed: 'I see nothing other than becoming…be not deceived…. You use names for things as though they rigidly, persistently endured; yet even the stream into which you step a second time is not the one you stepped into before.' (51-52)

Freeman translates the last part of this fragment from Heraclitus (B22:49a) this way: "In the same river, we both step and do not step, we are and we are not" (Freeman & Diels

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55. Heraclitus was called by Socrates "the weeping philosopher" according to Seneca. *Moral and Political Essays.* Translated by John M. Cooper; J.F. Procopé. Cambridge University Press. 1995. Page 50 note 17.

28).[56]

It is the naming of things says Nietzsche that leads us into darkness. Naming and distinguishing is not "of the nature of things" but leads to the confusion of separating opposites from each other (*PTAG* 52). One can search in vain through all of Nietzsche's published and unpublished works and not find a single label that he affixes to himself, except perhaps for 'free man' or 'free spirit' and even then usually indirectly or in the third person. *Tao-chia* Taoists often will not identify themselves with the name Tao, saying that to do so defines them in contrast to the whole and separates them from *Tao*:

> Reject labels…identities…conformity…convention…definitions.
> Reject names. (Deng, *365 Tao* 232)

If we must focus on a single thing, Nietzsche says of Heraclitus, let it be that ever-present moment between each moment's death and each future moment. The only constant is change.

Kirk & Raven make the assertion that "only a very limited understanding" of Heraclitus is possible because of the confusion he created in his wake by not using "the categories of formal logic [and being] more of a metaphysician than his Ionian predecessors, less concerned with the mechanics of development and change than with the unifying reality that underlay them" (186).[57] However, Heraclitus himself addresses this 'confusion' which is, he plainly states, not in the ideas themselves but in the minds of

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56. This is a fine example of Taoist enigma: "True words are as if contrary" (*Laozi* #78). It also brings to mind the many ways Nietzsche writes and expresses the same idea, e.g. 'Why not untruth, instead?'

57. This view is taken from Aristotle who was notoriously skeptical about all philosophers who preceded him. One is reminded of the same accusation of "confusion" often leveled at the works of Nietzsche's, in their entirety.

men, who willfully obfuscate and deny the things they know intuitively to be so. Ironically, it is knowledge itself, *Logos* in the form of human language that makes knowledge invisible to the human mind.

> 22:1: The Law[58] (*of the universe*) is as here explained; but men are always incapable of understanding it, both before they hear it, and when they have heard it for the first time. For though all things come into being in accordance with this Law, men seem as if they had never met with it…. As for the rest of mankind, they are unware of what they are doing after they wake, just as they forget what they did while asleep. (Freeman & Diels 24)

This is another way of saying: "…Something known by all but practiced by none." (Wu, *Tao teh Ching* #78 159). The following fragment expands on the idea that while knowledge of how things really are is common to all living creatures, only the mind of man can obscure it from himself.

> 22:2: Therefore one must follow (the universal Law, namely) that which is common (*to all*). But although the Logos is universal, the majority live as if they had understanding peculiar to themselves. (Freeman & Diels 24-25)

As Nietzsche says in the Preface to *On the Genealogy of Morals*:

> We are unknown to ourselves, we men of knowledge [Logos]—and with good reason. We have never sought ourselves—how could it happen that we should ever *find* ourselves? (16).[59]

Further on in 22:72, Heraclitus also puts it another way, "The Law (*Logos*): though men associate with it most closely, yet they are separated from it, and those things

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58. "*Logos*, the intelligible Law of the universe, and its reasoned statement by Heracleitus" (Freeman & Diels 24 fn1).

59. In *The Birth of Tragedy,* Nietzsche describes how knowledge violates nature in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* in which acts of parricide and incest reveal the "unnatural crime" of wisdom—how knowledge violates nature. ("The Birth of Tragedy" §9, John Hamilton *Securitas* Lecture 1 Dec. 2014)

which they encounter daily seem to them strange" (Freeman & Diels 29). One might add, in man's defense, that of all things living or dead, only man is required to seek this knowledge, by virtue of having the ability to do so!

Heraclitus concludes in 22:50: "When you have listened, not to me but to the Law (*Logos*), it is wise to agree that all things are one" (Freeman & Diels 28; Kirk & Raven Fr. 196 187). To a student of Tao, Heraclitus could *only* be referring here to natural law, and perhaps confusion arises because Heraclitus uses *Logos* in two different senses, and the fragments do not distinguish between these. Indeed, in Kirk and Raven's Fragment 196 of Heraclitus, the sense of "Logos" is not the same as in the preceding fragments; in context, it refers to *natural* law and *not* to the law of knowledge, reason, and language.

Kirk & Raven themselves, in their summary of Fragment 196, define "Logos" as "the underlying coherence of things…the formula or element of arrangement common to all things" (186, emphasis added). This sense of Logos corresponds closely to the Chinese word *li,* "organic pattern," which Alan Watts translates as "the actual order of nature" as distinguished from the Chinese word *tsu*, which refers to the order of things as measured or written and corresponds to *Logos* used in the sense of knowledge, reason, or language (Watts, 61). The noun *logos* is derived from the Greek verb *legein* that primarily means to gather and accumulate one's words "in accordance with an organizing idea in order to speak."[60]

"Experience," Watts writes, "is altogether something different from words. If you have tasted a certain taste, even the taste of water, you know what it is. But to someone

60. John Hamilton thesis note 29 November 2016.

who has not tasted it, it can never be explained in words because it goes far beyond words" (59). Watsuji Tetsuro,[61] the Japanese Nietzsche scholar, moral philosopher, and intellectual historian echoes this view, writing:

> True philosophy is not simply the accumulation and organization of concepts but the ideational expression of the most direct inner experience. Direct pure inner experience signifies *living* as the essence of existence… If we refer to direct inner experience as intuition, this intuition *lives* as 'life itself.' 'Cosmic life' is of course ceaseless creation, accordingly, direct inner experience, too, operates creatively. Self-expression is this creative activity. The arts and philosophy all derive from this. (Magnus and Higgins 364-65).

Nietzsche writes that Heraclitus is "cool, insensitive, in fact hostile" to reason, logic, and conceptual thought and that he even "seems to feel pleasure whenever he can contradict with an intuitively arrived-at truth" (*PTAG* 52). Filmmaker Woody Allen expresses a similar idea in the words of the character of Isaac Davis in the 1979 film *Manhattan*: "Nothing worth knowing can be understood with the mind. Everything really valuable has to enter you through a different opening…." (Act I: Scene 1).

Parmenides of Elea (515-450 BCE)

Parmenides' single known work, *On Nature,* also survives only in fragments.[62] As with the other Presocratics, what interests Nietzsche most is the personality of Parmenides and how it is reflected in his thinking and in his philosophy. Because

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61. Watsuji Tetsuro (1889 – 1960) - Japanese Nietzsche scholar, moral philosopher and intellectual historian. Author of *Nichie kenkyu*, in Watsuji Tetsuro zenshu [Tokyo, 1961], vol. I, 41. Translation by David Gordon. (from Parkes' footnote 19, *Nietzsche and East Asian Thought* p364).

62. Reportedly the original text had 3,000 lines; approximately 160 lines of the poem remain today.

Parmenides is a man who craves and requires absolute and unquestionable certainty, he is tormented by the idea that the senses distort and taint our perception of reality. In contrast to Heraclitus, who is about the "truth grasped in intuitions," and who "knows but does not calculate," Parmenides seeks to attain truth "by the rope ladder of logic" (*PTAG* 69). Nietzsche describes Parmenides as "a nature wholly petrified by logical rigidity and almost transformed into a thinking machine" (70), whose method "exhibits a defiant talent for abstract-logical procedure, closed against all influences of sensation" (72).

In *On Nature*, Parmenides contrasts two views of reality: the way of truth, whole and unchanging, timeless, uniform, and necessary; and the way of opinion based on the world of appearances, in which one's senses lead to misconceptions of what is real. Pondering the issue of coming-to-be and passing away, or what he calls the existent and the non-existent, Parmenides puts himself in the impossible position of refusing, logically, to acknowledge the existence of non-existence. In spite of this, faced with the indisputable fact of both, Parmenides forces himself to make an intuitive leap which, "for natures such as Parmenides'…constitutes a kind of falling."[63]

In order to reconcile being and nonbeing, Parmenides resorts to "*qualitas occulta*" (a hidden quality) and "even, just a little, [to] the realm of mythology" (73). In order to reconcile life with death, Parmenides, the self-styled empiricist, that thinking machine writes—to his credit--a poem to define reality; but in the end he falls back on mythological imagery--"the power of Aphrodite" to explain "the mystic tendency of opposites to attract and unite" (73). What Parmenides really cannot reconcile is the

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63. In Laurie Anderson's lyrics for "Walking and Falling" she observes that walking *is* falling, then catching yourself from falling. See Appendix Chapter III.

conflict within himself between the pursuit of truth and the need for certainty. Nietzsche writes that Parmenides is "driven to fury" by propositions like Heraclitus' that "'We are and at the same time are not'" (77).

How do Taoists view the conundrum that gives Parmenides, as Nietzsche puts it, such a massive philosophical headache? Typically, they embrace Heraclitus' "being and nonbeing at the same time the same and not same" (77):

> Every soul is but a part of an infinite, cosmic soul. You could subtract numerous souls from the world and the number of souls would not be diminished. Numerous souls could be born, and the number of souls would not be augmented. Nothing is truly destroyed, and nothing is truly born. Only appearances change. Therefore, people of composure [those who follow Tao] view the transformations of the world calmly. They know that these [the different permutations of phenomena] are merely outer manifestations of an indefinable, unlimited, and infinite reality. (Deng, *365 Tao* 219)

Taoist thought holds that there is no division between reality and appearance, the reality one senses within and the phenomena that appear to our senses are all manifestations of Tao:

> Tao is within us; Tao surrounds us.
> Part of it may be sensed,
> And is called manifestation.
> Part of it is unseen,
> And is called void.

"Our normal minds," writes Deng, "are incapable of perceiving where there is no contrast." The only way to truly comprehend and grasp Tao, the "colorless infinity that is the underlying reality to life" is to "plunge into the mystery itself" (222). This is what Heraclitus has done when he walks 'straight into the mystic night,' and this is where Nietzsche is philosophically most comfortable.

Parmenides makes the usual error that the reasoning mind tends to make: mistaking "opposites" for mutually negating forms of being, in other words, seeing conflict where there is no conflict, confusing difference with opposition. Inevitably this leads to the no exit dead end of dualistic thinking. It takes a fearless, supple mind to acknowledge that things are and are not what they seem, are and are not true. By requiring certainty, Parmenides forfeits suppleness and fearlessness and, unlike Heraclitus, is unable to find it in things both as they are and as they appear to be.

> By wrenching apart the senses and the capacity for abstraction, in other words by splitting up mind as though it were composed of two quite separate capacities, [Parmenides] demolished intellect itself, encouraging man to indulge in that wholly erroneous distinction between 'spirit' and 'body which, especially since Plato, lies upon philosophy like a curse … When one makes as total a judgment as does Parmenides about the whole of the world, one ceases to be a scientist, an investigator into any of the worlds' parts. One's sympathy toward phenomena atrophies; one even develops a hatred for phenomena including oneself . . . (*PTAG* 79-80, emphasis added)

Nietzsche attributes the abstraction[64] of the reasoning mind from the senses and intuition to the wrong-headedness of Plato, Aristotle, and subsequently the Christian church, implying that this is the source of all human suffering both spiritually and physically. In Taoism, dualistic thinking is considered a natural human tendency that, once identified, can be amended with a small course correction that broadens as life goes on.

Nietzsche refers to Parmenides' doctrine of being as "the rigor mortis of the coldest emptiest concept of all" (80) and in a subtle reference to Kant describes it as "schematism" and "a terrible energetic striving for *certainty* in an epoch which otherwise

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64. Abstraction comes from the Latin *abs*, meaning *away from* and *trahere*, meaning *to draw*.

thought mythically and whose imagination was highly mobile and fluid" (81). Parmenides' schematic, abstract approach to the concept of being and the essence of all that is, using reason, conceptual thought and language alone, concludes that we know existence by being able to *think* about it; that we have an "organ of knowledge…independent of experience" that gives us direct access through *thinking* to "the essence of things" (82) without relying on those errant dissemblers--the five senses. By his (often sarcastic) tone and his language, Nietzsche makes clear that he thinks Parmenides' system of logic manages to achieve neither certainty nor truth. Despite these failings, for Nietzsche Parmenides' real accomplishment is to represent "the immensely significant first critique of man's apparatus of knowledge" (79).

Parmenides' concept of the Infinite has more merit than his doctrine of Being (84) and Nietzsche credits his student Zeno of Elea[65] for skillfully illustrating the infinite by offering examples of apparent contradictions —giving the example of an arrow in motion, which is also, at any given moment, at rest in that moment.[66] Can we say that the sum of an infinite number of positions of rest is identical to motion? If we consider an infinite number of positions as a catalyst of reality (the arrow in flight) then the 'reality' of an arrow in flight disappears in the face of infinity; in fact, it never really lands either…

If rest is not motion, then the arrow never really leaves the bow and time itself is

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65. Aristotle refers to Zeno of Elea (c. 490 – c. 430 BCE) as the inventor of dialectic, known for taking contradictory arguments to their absurd conclusions (*reductio ad absurdum*).

66. Think of the frozen action of individual frames of a moving picture film, for instance.

also negated. This leads Nietzsche to conclude that "all our conceptions lead to contradictions" (86). What Nietzsche seems to be leading up to here, at Parmenides' expense, is an overarching concept of Nonduality where all contradictions are pairs of opposites that belong together and continually flow one into the other.

Nevertheless,[67] Nietzsche credits Parmenides by his manner of reasoning, for exposing "the falsehood inherent in the absolute separation of senses and concepts, and in the identity of being and thinking" (89). Yet it is the fixed stance of Parmenides that provides Nietzsche with a great insight of his own:

> If thinking in concepts, on the part of reason, is real, then the many and motion must partake of reality also, for reasoned thinking is mobile [moving] from concept to concept. It is mobile, in other words, within a plurality of realities. (88)

And if the senses themselves are a part of the semblance they create, then:

> …to whom do they dissemble? How, being unreal, can they deceive? Nonbeing cannot even practice deceit. (88-89)

We cannot attack the senses and we cannot doubt thinking, insists Nietzsche; we must accept them both together. On top of that, we must accept that motion has being. In Taoist terms, the senses are part of the whole and cannot be separated from reality, and thinking is not a rigid, singular act but flows from one idea to the next. No one, unless they are truly broken in mind, has a single thought.[68]

Generously, as with Thales' unifying principle about water, Nietzsche is able to

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67. It is revealing that Nietzsche devotes twenty pages of his essay on the Presocratics to Parmenides whose fragment of 160 lines seems to contain as many missteps as there are gaps, and whose fear of uncertainty became an obstacle to the clarity he was seeking.

68. A terrible irony is that this is exactly what did happen to poor Nietzsche after his mental breakdown in 1889.

see infinite value in Parmenides' blindness. It is a Taoist principle to see an important opportunity in every mistake. Nietzsche simply picks up the spear where Parmenides dropped it and throws it further to conclude:

> …what we have now is a multiplicity which has true being; all the properties [including the senses] have true being, as has motion. About each and every moment of this world, even if we choose moments that lie a millennium apart, one would have to be able to say: all true essences contained in the world are existent simultaneously, unchanged, undiminished, without increase, without decrease. A millennium later exactly the same holds true; nothing has meanwhile changed. If, in spite of this the world looks totally different from time to time, this is not an illusion, not mere semblance, but rather the consequences of everlasting motion. True being is moved sometimes this way, sometimes that way, together asunder, upwardly downward, withinly [sic] in all directions. (*PTAG* 89-90)[69]

This is where Nietzsche the philosopher scientist, as well as Joan Stambaugh's "other Nietzsche," the poetic mystic (Stambaugh 135), and Nietzsche the *tao-chia* thinker converge. Because what we are left with is "a game of dice: The dice are always the same, but falling now this way, now that, they signify different things" (91). While previously Thales and Heraclitus had theorized a primal element (to which all things returned), Anaxagoras will add that the primal element never changes and that "matter itself contains true being" (91). It remains what it is, unchanged but like a pair of dice, taking on different qualities with each throw. Like cannot produce unlike and "the world is…full of many different qualities." These qualities, although they appear to our senses differently and appear to be constantly changing are also "uncreated, imperishable and always simultaneously existent" (92).

What Parmenides dismisses as mere appearance to our unreliable senses are

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69. What Nietzsche in essence describes in this passage is the concept in modern physics of 'spooky action at a distance'…

actually qualities of the primal element in motion. The simple observable proof of this is in the constant fluctuation of our own thoughts. While the older philosophers sought "to simplify the problem of coming-to-be by positing a single substance (water, air, fire…) it is now clear that all substances are original, neither created nor destroyed, which sounds a great deal like the first law of thermodynamics in modern physics, the law of conservation.[70] Parmenides' false "appearances" are simply the patterns achieved by the tumbling of dice into new patterns; all variations of the same whole. "The inert, stable dead being of Parmenides has been disposed of" declares Nietzsche, introducing Anaxagoras (92).

Anaxagoras of Clazomenae (500-428 BCE)

A *physikoi* from the Ionian coast in Asia Minor, Anaxagoras moved to Athens where he lived for thirty years until he was condemned for impiety because his theory of the cosmos involved no divinities. Nearly 100 years after Thales of Miletus broke away from mythological explanations of the cosmos, the secular position is once again out of favor, in Athens.[71] Unlike Socrates,[72] who will later be sentenced to death by his own hand for the same crime, Anaxagoras manages to leave Athens and live out his life in

70. Physicist Albert Einstein: "Energy cannot be created or destroyed, it can only be changed from one form to another."

71. Such is the effect of the conventions of power--religion and government--concentrated in the metropolis.

72. It is not certain that Socrates (469 - 399 BCE) and Anaxagoras were acquainted.

exile. Anaxagoras' surviving fragments[73] are all from a single book, *On Natural Science*, a scientific work in prose on nature and the cosmos.

From watching his own thoughts—"the indubitable succession of ideas in our thinking" (92) and the ordering of their constantly changing myriad forms, Anaxagoras concludes:

> There is something that carries in itself the origin and the beginning of motion and moves not only itself but something quite different from itself. It moves the body" (98).

This something is *nous*,[74] unlimited, whole, free of fate (*moira)* and of agency (the gods). The ordering force of *nous* is alone capable of initiating movement independently and the motion originating in *nous* animates all change, creating the dynamics of cause and effect and the permutations and patterns that those in turn create.

> …a substance whose motion does not come from outside and does not depend on anything else. (100-101)

In Fragment 59:4, Anaxagoras envisions an origin to the universe where "all Things were present in the Whole that contains the "seeds infinite in number" of "all Things" (Freeman & Diels 83)[75] before they are separated off by the centrifugal force of spiraling movement initiated by *nous*.

In *PTAG,* Nietzsche seizes on the significance of this version of Anaxagoras' *arkhe*:

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73. These fragments survive mostly as quotations in the writings of later philosophers—Simplicius, Plutarch, and Sextus Empiricus (Giannis P. Stamatellos, Bryn Mawr Classical Review 2008.05.11) http://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2008/2008-05-11.html

74. In German *nous* is *der Geist,* variously translated as mind or spirit.

75. Also referenced in Chapter II, footnote 29.

> Anaxagoras could now assume a *first* moment of motion in primeval time, as the germination point of all so-called 'becoming,' i.e., of all change, i.e., of all displacement and shifting of the eternal substances and their particles…there was a time…when *nous* had not yet influenced [matter], when matter was still inert…the period of Anaxagorian chaos. (*PTAG* 101)

Verse #25 of Laozi's *Tao te Ching* makes nearly exactly the same observation about "the beginning of all we know"--

> There was something chaotic yet complete here before heaven and earth were born. How silent and still it was, how singular and unaltered, turning without stop. Perhaps it was the mother of all under heaven. I do not know its name, but it must be given a word, call it Tao. (Deng, *Lunar Tao* 386)[76]

An earlier section of the 59:4 fragment describes this chaotic completeness, the mother of all things this way:

> Before these things were separated off, all things were together, nor was any colour distinguishable, for the mixing of all Things prevented this, (*namely*) the mixing of moist and dry and hot and cold and bright and dark, and…seeds infinite in number, not at all like one another. (Freeman & Diels 83)

The *Laozi* #14 also describes the ancient beginning of everything as colorless, noiseless, and formless. As a *physikoi* Anaxagoras would know that individual colors are only visible when they are dispersed and separated from light by means of a prism. He also has the Greek grasp of complementary opposites.

Nietzsche devotes the whole last quarter of *PTAG* to Anaxagoras. It is worthwhile to cite Anaxagoras' fragments 59:11 and the lengthier 59:12 for these are the heart of the matter: where Greek *physis,* Anaxagorian *nous*, Nietzschean spirit (*Geist*), and the *Tao* all converge--

> 59:11: In everything there is a portion of everything except Mind; and some things contain Mind also.")

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76. See Appendix Chapter III for Wilhelm translation of *Laozi* #25.

> 59:12 (part): Other things all contain a part of everything, but Mind is infinite and self-ruling, and is mixed with no Thing, but is alone by itself. … [For] the things mixed (*with Mind*) would have prevented it, so that it could not rule over any Thing in the same way as it can being alone by itself. For it is the finest of all Things, and the purest, and has complete understanding of everything, and has the greatest power. All things which have life, both the greater and the less, are ruled by Mind. (Freeman & Diels 84)

Like Parmenides, Anaxagoras separates Mind from what Mind has created as well as from the source of Mind, which is the brain and Nietzsche argues with this concept. As we have learned by now, when Nietzsche expresses an opinion about a Presocratic, he reveals as much or more about his own point of view:

> Empirically speaking, it seems curiously eccentric, in fact, to separate the 'spirit' [*nous*], the brain-product, from its *causa* and to imagine its continued existence after such separation. But that is what Anaxagoras did; he forgot the brain, its astonishingly elaborate refinement, the delicacy and convolutedness of its labyrinths, and instead decreed the 'spirit as such'. (*PTAG* 100)

Nietzsche invariably insists on wholeness, often at the expense of logic. Wholeness is his guide. He never fails to identify the common human error of thinking dualistically. Nietzsche calls this way of thinking, common as it is, "logically highly suspect" (105). Fragment 59:12 continues,

> Mind took command of the universal revolution, so as to make (*things*) revolve at the outset. And at first things began to revolve from some small point, but now the revolution extends over a greater area, and will spread even further. And the things which were mixed together, and separated off, and divided, were all understood by Mind. And whatever they were going to be, and whatever things were then in existence that are not now, and all things that now exist and whatever shall exist—all were arranged by Mind, as also the revolution now followed by the stars, the sun and the moon, and the Air and Aether which were separated off. It was this revolution which caused the separation off. And dense separates from rare, and hot from cold, and bright from dark, and dry from wet. There are many portions of many things. And nothing is absolutely separated off or divided the one from the other except Mind. Mind is all alike, both the

> greater and the less. But nothing else is like anything else, but each individual thing is and was most obviously that of which it contains the most. (Freeman & Diels 84-85)

And finally, 59:13:

> And when Mind began the motion, there was a separating-off[77] from all that was being moved; and all that Mind set in motion was separated; and as things were moving and separating off, the revolution greatly increased this separation. (Freeman & Diels 85)

The Anaxagorian concept that "*everything originates from everything*" (*PTAG* 102) implies that a mind resembles the universe and the universe resembles a mind. In terms of mankind, every individual is a whole being part of a Whole Being, that is, the cosmos.

The last two lines of *Laozi* #14 say almost the same thing:

> Know That which is beyond all beginnings
> and you will know everything here and now
> Know everything in this moment
> and you will know the Eternal Tao. (Star trans. 27)

Anaxagoras' 'proof' for his hypothesis is based on the movement of opposites and in *PTAG* Nietzsche offers the example of white snow turning into black water, solid to liquid: to illustrate that they must already possess a portion of the others' qualities (*PTAG* 103).

Another way to visualize this proof is the Taoist image of yin-yang described in Chapter II: ☯ a circle split into a swirl of black and a swirl of white each containing the

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77. Freeman adds a footnote here about the translation: "Diels-Kranz make *Nous* the subject, and translate: 'Mind severed itself from the moving Whole.' But the reference is to three events: the starting of the revolution by Mind; the separation of a portion from the Whole; and the internal sifting under the revolution" (85). She may be referring to the *aóristos* the Greek indefinite or "middle" voice. See Appendix II for the Aorist Greek Middle Voice.

seed of its opposite. These are the seeds of transformation and movement, eternal balancing and ordering—cosmos out of chaos--contained in the figure of a spiral. Nietzsche is specific about the kind of motion that Anaxagoras attributes to *nous*, calling it "a definite and a wisely instituted motion" demonstrating a "marvelous efficiency." This circular movement begins as a small turn "at some random point in the chaotic mixture" spiraling in "ever greater orbits" and "by its centrifugal force pulling out all likes to join their likes" (108). Everything follows from this creative process…just as it does in philosophical Taosim (*tao-chia*).

"Is it not a sublime thought," Nietzsche enthuses,

> to derive the magnificence of the cosmos . . . from a single, simple, purely mechanical movement, from a mathematical figure in motion…a type of oscillation which, once having begun, is necessary and predictable in its course [attaining] effects which are the equal of the wisest calculations…and of the utmost planning of purposefulness—but without being them. (*PTAG* 109-110)

Anaxagoras concludes that the nature of the force or element that creates the mind that asks what it is, *is* Mind (*Nous*). And the expression of the nature of that force or element is matter. As Nietzsche puts it,

> …we must presuppose that the impelling *nous* starts suddenly, with frightful force—so fast that we must call its motion a 'whirl.' This is how Democritus,[78] too, described it…[79] Hence we get, for the beginning, a point rotating about itself with an infinitely small material content…[and] the first movement describes a circle whose radius is randomly larger that a single point (111-112).

Nous--spirit, mind, faculty of ideas, faculty of understanding. Nietzsche seems to say

78. Democritus c. 460 – 370 BCE.

79. Today, physicists might call it a 'Big Bang.'

that, in fact, this *nous* could be anything. It could be what Taoists call *Tao.* And if the one and the many are the same thing, it is in everything and so it could be said that the whole universe, the cosmos, is *nous*. The motion that sets itself in motion. The eye that sees itself. From the perspective of some, the first mind or a divine intelligence; from the perspective of others, an arbitrary point in a random chaos.

As Anaxagoras does, so does Taoist thought envision the beginning of everything as a single point that begins to turn. Moreover, Taoist thought incorporates this "still point of existence" (Deng, *365 Tao* 117) and its spinning, spiraling movement as a point of departure for meditation practice. This still point is the creative source for humans as well as for the universe:

> The mind is in spinning wheels at the navel, heart, throat, head. The connecting shaft is emptiness. Without an unobstructed route, energy cannot flow…if we want simplicity and tranquility, we need only go to the center of the spinning mind where it is empty and still. Thus it is said that diversity comes from the revolving of the wheels and origins come from the central void. (181)

A single point of departure--in the mind of man as well as in the Mind of the universe. The key to meditation, Taoist thought advises, is to "make the mind a single point," and thus take on the attributes of the creative void and the expanding universe. On a cosmic scale—whether in Taoist thought, the pre-*nous* "chaos" of Anaxagoras, or in quantum physics--it is the emptiness of the void that makes motion possible, which in turn results in the diversity of the universe.

Sometimes the world as we see it and the world as it is, coincide. This was particularly so for the Presocratics, when each one grasped a piece of a greater whole that they intuitively understood from the fragment that they held. For Thales, it was the insight of a single source; for Anaximander, a source that is boundless and unlimited; for

Heraclitus, the mystical perception of the interplay of opposites and the certainty of constant change; for Parmenides, the limits of logic and abstraction; and for Anaxagoras the conclusion that the one and the many are the same thing and that all things contain *nous.*

The Tao is what these first (Western) philosophers--these *physikoi*--had got a hold of and attempted to define from their own perspectives—instinctively or scientifically, broadly or narrowly, often from an either/or-ness. "The Tao that can be spoken, is not the Tao." The plurality of these perspectives on the eternal *Tao* is expressed in *Laozi* #14:

> From nothingness to fullness and back again to nothingness
> This formless form
> This imageless image cannot be grasped by mind or might
> Try to face it
> In what place will you stand?
> Try to follow it
> To what place will you go? (Star trans. 27)

As in the ancient parable of the six blind sages describing an elephant,[80] Nietzsche navigates through the Presocratics to assemble an intuitively arrived-at picture of the whole. Viewing the Presocratics through the lens of Nietzsche's mind continually points to a *tao-chia* perspective.

Random Free Choice

Near the end of *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* Nietzsche writes that the inception of movement in the creative void, the beginning of everything, is at the same time voluntary and random: "a voluntary act of *nous*" upon a random physical point

80. See Appendix II Chapter III for the Parable of the Elephant.

out of "an enormous number of points" (112). Everything that exists follows from this, just as it is described in the *Tao te Ching* #42.

> Tao produces one.
> One produces two.
> Two produces three.
> Three produce myriad things
> Myriad things, backed by yin and embracing yang
> Achieve harmony by integrating their energy. (Lin trans. 85)

Lin's commentary on this verse describes *Tao* as "the pregnant void—an infinite field of nothingness bursting with potentialities," which gives birth to an embryonic universe with no opposites that in turn splits into yin and yang (Lin 84). The dynamic interaction of two—the yin-yang—is what gives rise to the multiplicity and variety of all things. This view is not uncommon in most ancient cosmologies. What distinguishes both the *tao-chia* perspective and Nietzsche's perspective on the Presocratics is the idea of randomness absent divinity, design, or metaphysical agency.[81]

Why, Nietzsche then asks, should *nous* choose a random[82] material particle, and set it in motion "in a whirling dance" (*PTAG* 112)? Nietzsche begins his answer with Anaxagoras, and finishes with Heraclitus:

> Anaxagoras would say that *'Nous* has the privilege of free random choice…has no duty and hence no purpose or goal to pursue. Having once started with its motion, and thus having set itself a goal, it would be…To

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81. The notion of randomness (one of the key themes of this thesis) will become part of the materialist tradition later associated with Epicurus (341 – 270 BCE) and even later with Lucretius (99 -55 BCE).

82. Note the definition of random: to have no definite aim or purpose (1650s); at great speed, i.e. carelessly or haphazardly (1560s). From an alteration of the Middle English *randon*: impetuosity, speed (c. 1300); from Old French *randon*: rush, disorder, force, impetuosity; from *randir*: to run fast; from Frankish *rant*: a running; from Proto-Germanic *randa*, also the origin of Old High German *rennen*: to run, and Old English *rinnan*: to flow, to run. Source: http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=random

> complete this sentence is difficult. Heraclitus did; he said, '…a game.' (*PTAG* 112)

Anaxagoras' *nous* is not a static objective or end result (*causa finalis*)—a 'what'--but an active expression of 'how' the world works (*causa efficiens*). Not thought, but the whirl of thought—a spiraling motion, a way, an action, a direction, a turn and a return—not an intellectual interpretation or analysis but the action of thought *itself.* This is *nous*.

> All its acts, including that of primal motion, are acts of 'free will,' whereas the entire remainder of the world grows under strict determination—mechanical determination in fact. But absolute free will can only be imagined as purposeless, roughly like a child's game or an artist's creative play-impulse. (*PTAG* 116)

In Anaxagoras, Nietzsche recognizes a naturally rational idea embodying the coexistence of the random motion of free thought with the inherent pattern and order of life. This is Taoist thinking, pure and simple. It is also a reflection of the dynamic balance of the Dionysian (free and random) and Apollonian principles (logic and order) that Nietzsche articulates in the *Birth of Tragedy* (1872): a fusion of apparent opposites that represents a restoration to wholeness and, at the same time, the open-ended cycle of continuous change and renewal.

Free Will & Fate

The concept of 'free, random choice' is a compelling one for Nietzsche. Can one choose one's "fate" by accepting random occurrence as a singular event, eternally and uniquely one's own alone? What is fate? In Greek mythology fate is *moira* personified in the three Fates (*Moirae*)[83] who do not determine fate but only supervise it. Nietzsche

83. They are the spinner, Clotho, who spins the thread of life; the measurer, Lachesis, who draws lots to determine the length of each life; and the inevitable, Atropos, who

embraces his own fate because it is his, because it is the natural order of life, and because he has the freedom to respond as he wishes to it:

> My formula for human greatness is *amor fati*: that one wants nothing to be different, not in the future, not in the past, not for all eternity. Not only to endure what is necessary, still less to conceal it — all idealism is falseness in the face of necessity — , but to love it. . . . (*Ecce Homo* "Why I Am So Clever" §10 37)

No event in life is predetermined but as soon as it happens, it is done—*fatto*--and there is no turning back; it is only possible to move forward and make other choices. There is a strong element of time in fate so-called, usually determined by the work of single moments and split-second decisions; subject to the most fleeting of human emotions and decisions—our own and others'--in conjunction with random events and chance. Couples meet and have children or they don't. Children grow up or they don't. In the end all of life is a series of random, yet choice-filled events with consequences that unfold over a long period of time.

Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks concludes by describing the error of those who explain phenomena by the purpose we assign to them rather than by the emptiness from which they originate. This, Nietzsche writes, is

> the ordinary confusion of teleologists who in their admiration…of the marvelous agreement of the parts with the whole [in nature] assume that whatever exists for the intellect originated with the intellect, and whatever the intellect manages to do under the guidance of purpose must also have been created in nature by thoughtfulness and a concept of purpose. (117)

This passage ends with a parenthetical reference to Schopenhauer: "(Schopenhauer, WWR, Vol. II, Book 2, Chapter 26 on Teleology)" (117). The misapprehension of an

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chooses the manner and moment of death when she cuts the thread of each life with her shears.

apparent contradiction between the mechanical orderliness of nature and "the free, arbitrary choice" of the spirit (*nous)* often leads to confusing results with causes (116) but as Schopenhauer writes in *On the Will from Nature*:

> It is not the intellect that has produced nature, but nature that has produced the intellect. (51)

Confusion and contradictory language are unavoidable in attempting to describe how, out of emptiness and chaos, a universe arises where the blind mechanical movement *and* purposeless free will envisioned by the Presocratics results in order and efficiency. Nietzsche ends the essay by reasserting:

> …a free undetermined *nous,* dependent on itself alone…. [with] its quality of randomness, hence its ability to activate unconditionally, undeterminedly, guided by neither causes nor ends. (117)

The universe is a patterned sequence of events begun randomly. And nature is orderly and efficient because it operates as a whole, not for any other reason than that it *is* a whole and every part of the whole has a common source.

Chapter IV

Shared Perspectives

You are the only student you have. All the others leave eventually. Have you been making yourself shallow with making others eminent?
~ Rumi (Barks 64)

As we have seen with Nietzsche's considered appraisal of Parmenides, much can be learned from taking a wrong turn, turning a blind eye, or being consumed with a fixed idea. The same can be said about the effect of the influence of Arthur Schopenhauer on Nietzsche. For what it reveals, it is worthwhile to take a closer look at his shifting assessment of Schopenhauer and how it opened up Nietzsche's own vistas and perspectives.

Part One – Nietzsche and Schopenhauer

Nietzsche's most important intuitions and insights coalesced in response to his intense early interest in Arthur Schopenhauer,[84] whose nihilistic view of the hollow reality behind the subjective experience of phenomena helped crystallize Nietzsche's own (opposing) views on the creative void and the will.

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84. 1788-1860 – German philosopher best known for *The World as Will and Representation*, (1818), among the first thinkers in Western philosophy to embrace and introduce the tenets of Eastern philosophy to Europe.

When Nietzsche came upon a copy of Arthur Schopenhauer's book, *The World as Will and Idea*[85] in the fall of 1865 he claims to have read it in one sitting. A.J. Hoover says, "Something clicked inside him…. It was like looking in a mirror" (Hoover 3). What 'clicked' exactly? What did Nietzsche see in the mirror of Schopenhauer? What Nietzsche saw was the courage and independence of Schopenhauer's rejection of social and academic security, and how he voluntarily accepted the suffering that resulted for the sake of remaining true to his convictions (*UM* III:4 152).[86]

Moreover, by publishing *WWR* Schopenhauer became the first post-Enlightenment German philosopher to publically express something that aligned with what Nietzsche had also intuited: that the values man places on morality and existence itself are inevitably subjective and therefore these values are merely representations with no fixed meaning. Schopenhauer calls this absence of meaning nihilism, a concept that Nietzsche will come to understand in a completely different way.

Schopenhauer also identifies the beginning point for which there is no cause, the underlying reality in an arbitrary universe--as a primordial "Will," reflected in mankind as an instinctive "will to power." For Nietzsche, the most compelling aspects of this doctrine are the concept of *apeiron,* and the qualities that Schopenhauer assigns to it: that it is experienced directly, in the body as well as in the mind, through the direct knowledge of pain, hunger, desire, suffering and despair; and that it is "intuitively accessible without the mediation of understanding or cognition."[87] These ideas held a

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85. More widely known as *The World as Will and Representation* (*WWR*).

86. This is almost exactly what Nietzsche himself will face in the calamitous wake of the publication of *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music* in 1872.

87. JH: *Life, Desire and Thought*, "In Exile from Reality" Lecture notes 9 Nov. 2015.

powerful appeal for Nietzsche just as he had admired Thales' conviction about a single original material of existing things and Anaximander's unifying principle of an arbitrary, primordial first cause.

When Nietzsche met the composer Richard Wagner in Leipzig in 1868,[88] the two men developed an immediate affinity around music, with a shared enthusiasm for Schopenhauer's doctrine that of all the creative arts music stands closest to the ultimate reality of existence, being not a representation but an unmediated experience of the Will itself, the one solace in a life of meaningless suffering:

> It stands quite apart from all the others. In it we do not recognize the copy, the repetition, of any Idea of the inner nature of the world. Yet it is such a great and exceedingly fine art, its effect on man's innermost nature is so powerful, and it is so completely and profoundly understood by him in his innermost being as an entirely universal language, whose distinctness surpasses even that of the world of perception itself… (*WWR* 256)

Nietzsche agreed completely since his own response to music had always been what Sigmund Freud describes as an "oceanic feeling" of "something limitless, unbounded" and a sense "of being one with the external world as a whole" (*Civilization and Its Discontents* 24).[89] Freud himself made a point of avoiding this kind of experience: "I have removed it, so to speak, from my path" he once wrote in a letter to his friend Romain Rolland.[90] But Nietzsche, like his 'untimely' friend Heraclitus, was fearless in

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88. Nietzsche is introduced by his doctoral advisor, Albrecht Ritschl, a close personal friend of the Wagners.

89. Freud's *The Future of an Illusion* (1927) deals exclusively with the idea that this sensation is the underlying basis of religious feeling.

90. Just before *Civilization and its Discontents* appeared, Freud wrote to Rolland: "Don't expect any assessment of the 'oceanic feeling.' I am doing my best, on the contrary, to distance myself from the feeling by analyzing it. I have removed it, so to

the face of mystery, uncertainty, and what his feelings could reveal to him; these things lay right in the center of his path.[91]

Untimely Meditations

In 1873, around the same time as he wrote *PTAG,* Nietzsche began to publish a series of essays he will call *Untimely Meditations* (1873-1876). It had been ten years since he was a university student in Bonn and in Leipzig and read Schopenhauer. By now, he had experienced the calamitous rejection of *The Birth of Tragedy*, a worsening state of health, and was no longer close to the Wagners (although his sister Elizabeth continued to trail after the celebrity couple).[92] Nietzsche changed because his own growing experience and intuition led him down a different path and to other conclusions. Merely reading Schopenhauer, who died in 1860, had not been enough for the mature Nietzsche who wanted, just as he had with the Presocratics, to "see through the book and imagine the living man" (*UM* 136). Every great philosophy is a personal confession, "a type of involuntary and unaware memoir" (*BGE* 1955, 1:6, 6). He writes in "Schopenhauer as Educator" (SaE):

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speak, from my path. How foreign the worlds in which you travel are to me! Mysticism is as closed to me as music." (JH: *Life, Desire and Thought*, "Love and Death" Lecture notes 2 Nov. 2015)

91. Ernest Jones, a close friend of Freud's writes that in a letter to Jones Freud claims that Nietzsche had a "more penetrating knowledge of himself than any man who ever lived or was likely to live" (Jones, 344).

92. Christopher Janaway cites the diary entry of Cosima Wagner on December 24, 1976: "Nice letter from Prof. Nietzsche, though informing us that he now rejects Schopenhauer's teachings!" (*Willing and Nothingness* 13). Nietzsche remained cordial with the Wagners but from a distance.

> I profit from a philosopher only insofar as he can be an example…this example must be supplied by his outward life and not merely in his books—[in the same way] in which the philosophers of Greece taught, through their bearing, what they wore and ate, and their morals, rather than by what they said, let alone by what they wrote. (*UM* 136-137)

To Nietzsche's mind a man's philosophy is not an abstraction but the man's life in whole. As a student looking for a master (in the sense of a model or guide) Nietzsche expected to learn to recognize and develop the strengths particular to his center as well as to cultivate his peripheral, potential strengths into "a harmonious relationship" (*UM* 130). The task of education then is "to mould the whole man into a living solar and planetary system and to understand its higher laws of motion" (131).

By higher laws of motion Nietzsche refers to the dynamics of opposing forces and the order and balance inherent in the open-ended cycle of change and renewal that he describes at the end of *PTAG.* It is a system in which no single force dominates indefinitely but inevitably flows into its opposite continuously in a pattern of ceaseless motion and harmonious balancing. He is quite simply applying the laws of the cosmos as he understands them to his own education and the development of his inner life. A basic principle of Taoist thought is that yin and yang may oppose one another and may blend, but they can never remain in a state of balance, which would be statis, and Taoists do not detect stasis anywhere in the universe. "There is always some very tiny bit that is off center, out of balance…it is this tension that allows for ongoing movement" (Deng, *Scholar Warrior* 190). This principle is particularly applicable applies to the dynamics of Nietzsche's intense connection to Schopenhauer.

In the first lines of the introduction to *Willing and Nothingness*, Christopher Janaway summarizes Schopenhauer this way:

> At the summit of Arthur Schopenhauer's philosophy in *The World as Will and Representation* stands a chilling verdict: that not being born would have been preferable to living, and that salvation can be attained only if the will to life within the individual turns and denies itself. (1)

Janaway compares Nietzsche without Schopenhauer to "*Hamlet* without the Ghost" wondering "how much of Nietzsche's thought" was shaped by his efforts to distance himself from his old exemplar and whether he would have arrived at 'saying Yes to life'" without first needing to say No to Schopenhauer (1). The answer simply lies in the fact that seeking such a teacher, Nietzsche found him. To paraphrase Emerson: we carry it with us or we find it not.[93]

In the *Untimely Meditations* Nietzsche does find the wherewithal to "'say No' to his age and to his fellow scholars, and hence to significant parts of his own self" (xxv-vi).[94] In "Schopenhauer as Educator" Nietzsche describes Schopenhauer's outlook and conclusions as pessimistic and life denying, and objects to Schopenhauer's version of Buddhism as a negative or 'passive' form of nihilism, no better than any other kind of religious escapism. Education, Nietzsche writes, is a process of liberating oneself from "those elements incompatible with one's true (future) self" (*UM,* xix). His view of Schopenhauer now is similar to his appreciation of Parmenides: fully embracing the contribution made by a "great thinking machine" while rejecting the dogmatic need for absolutes. Indeed, all four of the meditations and most of Nietzsche's subsequent works can be regarded as an ongoing "critique of man's apparatus of knowledge" (*PTAG* 79). In

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93. "Though we travel the world over to find the beautiful, we must carry it with us, or we find it not" (Emerson 278).

94. It may be interesting to note that Schopenhauer was thirty years old when he published *WWR* and that Nietzsche published the third essay in the *Meditations*, "Schopenhauer as Educator," on his own thirtieth birthday, October 15 1874.

the case of flawed heroes, the critique is usually accompanied by a simultaneous appreciation of that that hero's contribution. As far as Nietzsche is concerned uncertainty and contradiction must be embraced as parts of a whole; otherwise one only gets half the picture.

Schopenhauer & Buddhism

There is little discussion by Nietzsche in SaE of Schopenhauer's involvement with Buddhism other than crediting him for introducing "whole nations" to "the history of India" and "almost the history of Indian philosophy" (*UM* 137).[95] Brobjer tells us that Nietzsche had also read and written about Eastern philosophy and its cultural influences on ancient Greece and Europe beginning with his first philosophical essay at Schulpforta (Brobjer, 3). In *Nietzsche and Buddhism,* Freny Mistry writes:

> Explicit evidence of [Nietzsche's] positive concern with Vedantic studies is provided by his correspondence with Paul Duessen whom he befriended since his schooldays. It was Nietzsche, in fact, who introduced Deussen to Schopenhauer's writings, a circumstance, which eventually culminated in Deussen's intensive preoccupation with the Upanishads…" (Mistry 15-16)

Mistry argues that Nietzsche's often vehement objections to Buddhism[96] were "not so much directed against Buddhism per se, but were "'negative reactions to the cult of

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95. Note the qualifying "almost." If Schopenhauer did indeed introduce Eastern thought to the West, it was in the form of Theraveda Buddhism, which emphasizes individual salvation in contrast to Mahayana Buddhism, which suggests that all humanity rises and falls together. There is no real conflict between these schools—each is suited to the needs of those who are attracted to them. (Ryiuchi Abe, *Buddhism and Japanese Artistic Traditions* Lecture 06 Feb 2014)

96. Famously, Nietzsche writes in an unpublished notebook: "I could become the Buddha of Europe, which actually would be the opposite to the Indian one" (Braak 3; cited from *KSA* 10, 4[2]).

Buddhism as Nietzsche found it fostered by the worldview of a Schopenhauer or a Wagner" (Braak 13n6: Mistry 115). Even as he recognized the wisdom that they may have represented, the Buddhist practice or texts that Nietzsche was exposed to never offered a context that he could accept or embrace. Thinking perhaps of Schopenhauer or of his own contemporaries, he writes some years later (1878) in the fourth *Meditation*, "Richard Wagner in Bayreuth":

> Thus our contemporary scholars and philosophers do not employ the wisdom of the Indians and the Greeks so as to grow wise and calm within themselves: the sole purpose of their work is to create for the present day an illusory reputation for wisdom. (*UM* 220)

Perhaps it is noteworthy that Nietzsche considers the Greeks and Eastern philosophy together in this context.

It may be enlightening to consider the nature of Schopenhauer's actual relationship to Eastern philosophy since he claims his own philosophy to be deeply influenced by Buddhism, and that his doctrine of the will corresponds to the first three of the Buddhist Four Noble Truths (Janaway, *Self and World in Schopenhauer's Philosophy*, 28). The first three of these are that 1) life is suffering; 2) the cause of suffering is desire;[97] and 3) there is a way out of suffering. The fourth Buddhist Noble Truth is that the way that frees us from suffering is the "Noble Eightfold Path," which consists of right

97. "Desire" is shorthand for what is called the "Twelve Links of Causation": 1) ignorance, based on 2) mental formations, on which depend 3) consciousness, which depends on 4) mind and body, which depend on 5) the senses, which depend upon 6) contact, which is linked to 7) sensation, which leads to 8) desire or craving, which lead to 9) attachment, which follows from 10) becoming, which results from 11) birth, which leads inevitably to 12) old age and death, sorrow, misery, grief, and despair. (Mitchell 40)

view, right aspiration, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right thinking, and mindful concentration or meditation. (Mitchell, 19).[98]

It is significant that Schopenhauer's way to freedom from suffering deviates from the fourth noble truth's way to freedom from suffering. Right acting, right thinking, and their accompanying virtues have no place in Schopenhauer's amendment. In their place Schopenhauer puts the negation of the self and the will—the will that he has already asserted is inextricably bound to the life force itself. Therefore, the originating "Will" and the corresponding will in man lead inevitably to a life of suffering for which Schopenhauer's remedy is to renounce the will entirely and to seek relief in desirelessness. This doctrine is in effect a closed system—a far cry from, indeed antipodal to Nietzsche's deep sense of an open-ended cycle of continuous change and renewal.

If anything, the path of someone following Buddhism's fourth noble truth sounds a great deal more like Nietzsche's Presocratics, i.e. "engaged in philosophy, as in everything else, as civilized human beings, and with highly civilized aims" (*PTAG* 31) than the direction taken by Schopenhauer in *WWR.* In spite of his self-avowed Buddhist beliefs, Schopenhauer's elimination of the fourth noble truth suggests that his belief in these principles is superficial and selective, in order to accord with the points he wishes to make about his own philosophy. Although Nietzsche loudly rejects the 'passive nihilism' of Buddhism, his own life exhibits a great deal more congruity with the principles of right living than Schopenhauer's, as Mistry and others have pointed out.

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98. Ryiuchi Abe, *Buddhism and Japanese Artistic Traditions* Lecture 06 Feb 2014.

Buddhism & Nihilism

Burton Watson,[99] translator of the third century Mahayana Buddhist text *The Lotus Sutra* defines the Mahayana Buddhist concept of emptiness or void (*shunyata)* in nearly a *tao-chia* way:

> The world perceived through the senses, the phenomenal world as we know it, was described in early Buddhism as 'empty' because it was taught that all such phenomena arise from causes and conditions, are in a constant state of flux, and are destined to change and pass away in time. . . changing as they do from instant to instant. But in Mahayana thought it became customary to emphasize not the negative but rather the positive aspects or import of the doctrine of Emptiness. If all phenomena are characterized by the quality of Emptiness, then Emptiness must constitute the unchanging and abiding nature of existence, and therefore the absolute or unchanging world must be synonymous with the phenomenal one. Hence all mental and physical distinctions that we perceive or conceive of with our minds must be part of a single underlying unity. (Watson xv, emphasis added)

Again, Schopenhauer deviates considerably from this more or less neutral, almost Presocratic concept of the void, assigning a negative almost a menacing, existential connotation to it: a great empty abyss of depression and misery, lacking and lifeless. Is it possible that Schopenhauer's particular conception of Buddhism—his negative perspective, one might say—is what leads him to the view that being born in the first place is *a priori* a failure to have reached enlightenment in the previous life? According to this view, if you are born at all, then you have obviously already failed.

In stark contrast, Watson's description of the Buddhist void is a positive one and shares an affinity with the Presocratic concepts of unity and wholeness. In it,

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99. Burton Watson (1925-) first visited Japan in 1945 and has lived there since 1973. He is a translator and student of both Japanese and Chinese poetry and texts, and practices in the Zen Buddhist tradition.

subject/object distinctions melt away and such dualities are simply the appearance of a whole that is in a state of constant transformation and change. This may be how to interpret Nietzsche's own positive view of nihilism, in stark contrast to Schopenhauer's negative nihilism. For Nietzsche, life is a positive reality, born out of a creative void; he is all the more appreciative of it because of—not in spite of--his personal experience with frequent illness and great suffering. The positive embrace and acceptance of nihilism is literally a precondition for any kind of creative growth.

Buried deep in *The Will to Power,*[100] Elizabeth Förster's posthumously edited selections often lifted out of context from her brother's unpublished notebooks,[101] Nietzsche may refer to Schopenhauer's negative nihilism when he writes:

> Man seeks 'the truth': a world that is not self-contradictory, not deceptive, does not change, a *true* world—a world in which one does not suffer…. (*WP* 316)
>
> Why is it that [man] derives *suffering* from change, deception, contradiction? and why not rather his happiness?—
>
> [The view that] change and happiness exclude one another…the world as it ought to be exists; this world, in which we live, is an error—this world of ours ought not to exist… <u>What kind of man reflects in this way? An unproductive, suffering kind, a kind weary of life… They posit it as already available, they seek ways and means of reaching it. "Will to truth"—as the impotence of the will to create.</u> The fiction of a world that corresponds to our desires [is] a psychological trick… (*WP "*585 Spring-Fall 1887; rev. Spring-Fall 1888" 317, emphasis added)
>
> A nihilist is a man who judges of the world as it is that it ought *not* to be, and of the world as it ought to be that it does not exist. According to this view, our existence (action, suffering, willing, feeling) has no meaning:

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100. Published posthumously in 1908.

101. Nietzsche translator and biographer Walter Kaufman points out in a footnote that these notes are compiled from often widely separated sections of Nietzsche's notebooks, and the subsequent "inadequacy [of] the systematic arrangement of *The Will to Power*" (*WP* fn 39, 318).

> the pathos of 'in vain' is the nihilists' pathos — at the same time, as pathos, an inconsistency on the part of the nihilists. (318)

Förster's inane editing aside, we can interpret these words to our own ends, just as others have done. My interpretation is that Nietzsche rejects this other world, this paradise, this heaven, this reward for a life of suffering and renunciation, self-abnegation and virtue—as fictional 'values' that to the son and grandson of Lutheran pastors, sound a little too familiar. Change and happiness are not mutually exclusive; on the contrary, as Heraclitus insists, this is what makes the game of life delightful.

What Nietzsche comes to recognize in nihilism—just as he does with the reality of suffering--is an opportunity, not only for progress but for creation itself. The world as it ought to be does exist, says Nietzsche, and it is not a fiction created by people who simply want to leave the only life we have, and find salvation and reward in another world. Rather, the world that ought to be is *this world* and being in it is our greatest gift.

For Nietzsche, the object of being is not to cultivate a *desirelessness* smacking of late Stoicism, but to cultivate a healthy desire for life *as it is* and to live productively—that is, creatively--in concert with everything else in it.[102]

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102. The cultivation of a healthy desire for life reminds us of the ancient debate between Stoics and Epicureans – Stoics opting (like Schopenhauer) for a kind of impassive desirelessness to find happiness and the Epicureans' assertion that man has free will in order to live life to the fullest. Partly for this reason and partly because, based on the theories of Democritus and Leucippus, Epicureans held that all thoughts are merely atoms swerving randomly in the empty space of the void, Nietzsche opted for the Epicureans. (JH comments 24 Jan. 2017)

Part Two – The Liberated Nietzsche

"We are responsible to ourselves for our own existence…" Nietzsche writes in SaE (*UM* 128). The teacher Nietzsche was seeking was not Schopenhauer but himself.[103] A teacher who has always been with him, both at his center and all around him as he moves forward on a path that is increasingly his own and increasingly in touch with the world around him:

> There exists in the world a single path along which no one can go except you: whither does it lead? Do not ask, go along it….Your true educators and formative teachers reveal to you that the true, original meaning and basic stuff of your nature is something completely incapable of being educated or formed.…your educators can only be your liberators. (*UM* 129)

Real freedom and true wisdom come with this increasing self-awareness and from 1873 forward, when both *PTAG* and the *Untimely Meditations* were written, we begin to hear the voice of an increasingly liberated Nietzsche. Liberation for Nietzsche, in contrast to Schopenhauer, was not liberation from desire or suffering but <u>liberation from the desire to be liberated</u> from these things. By willingly--voluntarily--accepting the random events that make up every life as well as the consequences of his own decisions Nietzsche became free to seek his own nature and his own path. In *The Poet's Self and the Poem* (*PS*) Erich Heller[104] cites Schiller's essay "On Naïve and Reflexive Poetry" writing that "Schiller says of all things in Nature that they *are* what we *were* . . . but also what we ought to become by way of <u>reason and freedom</u>" (*PS* 46, underline emphasis added).

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103. And he says as much in *Ecce Homo* "The Untimely Essays" (*EH* 58): "'Not "Schopenhauer as Educator' but his *opposite*, 'Nietzsche as Educator'."

104. Erich Heller (1911 – 1990) Czech-born British essayist on German philosophy and literature and author of *The Importance of Nietzsche* (1988).

The Birth of Tragedy

The publication of *The Birth of Tragedy* in 1872 changed Nietzsche's life forever. The first half of the book is a bold and original treatise on the aesthetics and implications of Greek tragedy; the second half is a call for a renewal of this aesthetic in terms of the music and ideas of Richard Wagner, almost to the point of obsequiousness many of the book's critics felt at the time. (Breazeale, *UM* ix). Inspired by Schopenhauer and stimulated by the Wagners, Nietzsche had blindly left himself open to public ridicule and a scornful and vilifying attack by a competitive former fellow philology student at Bonn.[105]

The seemingly 'tragic' consequences of his first book, however, contributed to releasing Nietzsche from all social and professional obligations and allowing him to align himself with a commitment to live and continue to think independently and creatively. What artist, poet, or true philosopher would not welcome the chance? This was freedom, random choice, and fate all at once.

Nietzsche must have felt that he was on the right path at last when his own life began to reflect Anaxagoras' theory of the birth of the universe—that sublime moment both voluntary and random when a single point begins to turn--the inception of movement in the creative void (112). In a sense, Nietzsche stepped outside of causality[106] and aligned himself with the arbitrary will of Nature at this point:

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105. Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Möllendorff (1848 – 1931) may have been partly motivated by professional jealousy. Nietzsche was offered a full professorship at Basle when only twenty-five (1869) while Wilamowitz at twenty-five (when he launches his attack) is still a student.

106. Recall that "desire" is shorthand for the Buddhist Twelve Links of Causation, the causes of all suffering. See "Buddhism & Nihilism" above (footnote 102).

> We speak of Nature, and in doing so forget ourselves: we ourselves are Nature. (*HATH* Pt2 II:327 465)

To echo Heller, this is not only to understand and harness natural forces, but to *be* a natural force. Nietzsche has become aware of his own inherent knowledge, his *nous*--the spirit's intuitive certainty that we can and will find ourselves by looking within, and we can and will understand the true nature of life by observing the phenomenal world without prejudice.

No one can argue that *The Birth of Tragedy* was not heavily influenced (if not somewhat disfigured) by Schopenhauerian views and Wagnerian encouragements. But the Greeks were not influenced by Schopenhauer and they viewed tragic drama as an educational tool that was entertaining as well as aesthetically pleasing, a combination that may be narrowly interpreted as solace.

There is a deeper and more enduring theme to *BoT* that goes far beyond Schopenhauer's philosophy of asceticism and the aesthetic solaces of Wagner's music. For Nietzsche, "the Apolline and its opposite, the Dionysiac, [are] artistic powers which erupt from nature itself, *without the mediation of any human artist*" (19). One might add, without the mediation of any other outside influences either. In the *Poetics,* Aristotle refers to tragedy as "'the imitation of nature'" (*BoT* 19 fn 34: *Poetics* 1447a16). I maintain that Nietzsche's underlying theme is always nonduality, the pairing of opposites, wholeness, and an unmediated natural source.

Nietzsche identifies tragedy with what Heraclitus and Anaxagoras had conceptualized as the play of continuous change and renewal in the cosmos. The same dynamic balancing that is illustrated in the whirling dance of yin-yang. In *BoT* it is the interplay of Apollonian reason and logic (*Yang*) with the instinctual desires and emotions

of the Dionysian (*Yin)* that creates great plays. Here, Nietzsche is writing about much more than the poetics of Sophoclean[107] Greek tragedy. He is also writing about how the universe works and how cosmic qualities manifest in the lives of humans as they attempt to balance their natural instincts with human reason and science to cultivate the inherent faculty of *nous,* Anaxagoras' unlimited and self-ruled Mind (and another name perhaps for the unnameable *Tao*).

This attempt is nowhere more in evidence than in the creative process—whether the creator is Nietzsche or Sophocles--and in the creation: Oedipus of the Theban tragedies being a prime example. As Katrin Froese points out, "There can be no self-creation without also allowing oneself to be created" (93).[108] For a true work of art to emerge there must be "that mysterious unity" of the Apollonian and the Dionysian (*BoT* 28). Nietzsche argues that in order to experience the larger process of life (30) authors as well as characters must surrender their individual subjectivity to the Dionysian.

In *BoT*, Nietzsche fully grasps the (Taoist) concepts of inseparability (wholeness), the preeminence of the natural, and the inevitability of a return to the source:

> Not only is the bond between human beings renewed by the magic of the Dionysiac, but nature, alienated, inimical, or subjugated, celebrates once more her festival of reconciliation with her lost son, humankind. (18)

This renewed bond erases the separation of subject and object: "Man is no longer an

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107. Sophocles (497 - 496 BCE) poet and playwright of the Archaic Age (Nietzsche's "tragic age of the Greeks") whose plays over the course of fifty years for the Dionysian festival competitions are the primary subject of *The Birth of Tragedy*.

108. Froese's 2006 book on Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Taoist thought, which I discovered late in the writing of this thesis, is knowledgeable and well-articulated but the conclusions of our arguments do not agree.

artist, he has become a work of art: all nature's artistic power reveals itself here…" (18).

The Greeks accepted such reciprocity between opposites as the norm. The imperatives of 'Know thyself' and 'Not too much!' appear, of course, above the entrance to the Temple of Apollo at Delphi where a priestess in a natural gas induced ecstatic state offered pronouncements. For the Greeks, the contradictions of contrasting opposites were not mutually exclusive. There is always middle ground, there is always a blurring at the shadow edge where light meets dark; for the Greeks, as for Taoists, this is where the truth lies.

For Nietzsche, contemplating the fifty years of the tragic age of Sophocles, the universe becomes the stage where inherent order and randomness create and drive the action and shape the lives of the characters in what is appropriately called, a play.[109]

Nietzsche's perfect formula for the best Greek tragedy in *BoT* is one that requires a deeper understanding of the true relationship of opposites to make any sense. It is a secret hidden in plain sight: tragedy is something that every human being recognizes immediately, innately. It is the push and pull of a desire for wholeness and a simultaneous sense of separation from the whole.[110] Or it may be the inverse: the sense of wholeness and the desire for individuality. The point is, nothing can be left out.

> The metaphysical solace which, I wish to suggest, we derive from every true tragedy, the solace that despite all changing appearances, life is

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109. The dual meaning is the same in German: *ein Spiel* is "a play," and "a game." We are reminded here again of Heraclitus.

110. Aristophanes (446 – c. 386 BCE) in contrast a comedic playwright of the Classical Age (480 BCE - 323 BCE) made a bawdy spoof of tragedy reported in Plato's *Symposium* wherein he concludes that "the desire and pursuit of the Whole is called love" referring as well perhaps to Empedocles' poem *On Nature* in which Empedocles also attributes the push and pull of opposites to the tensions between Love and Strife. (Trepanier)

> indestructibly mighty and pleasurable, [that] appears with palpable clarity in the chorus of satyrs, a chorus of natural beings whose life goes on ineradicably behind and beyond all civilization, as it were, and who remain eternally the same despite all the change of generations and in the history of nations. (*BoT* 39)

This chorus of 'natural beings' may as well be a chorus of Taoist sages, observing and explaining, helping the audience to both understand and to participate in life more fully, singing--to paraphrase *wu wei*--without changing the action.[111]

In *BoT*, Nietzsche writes that Socrates "aimed to achieve the disintegration of Dionysiac tragedy" (71) and in *Twilight of the Idols or How to Philosophize with a Hammer,* that Socrates needed "to make a tyrant of reason" (I:10 43). He speculates with some irony whether Socrates,[112] before ending his own life, might have had second thoughts and told himself:

> …things which I do not understand are not automatically unreasonable. Perhaps there is a kingdom of wisdom from which the logician is banished. Perhaps art may even be a necessary correlative and supplement of science. (*BoT* 71)

In *Poet's Self* Heller refers to the "parting of the human mind from Mind" and traces it back to Plato's ideas, "a descent into darkness only dimly illuminated by what little transpired of the Idea's light" (*PS* 46).[113] Indeed, that kingdom of wisdom is where Nietzsche wished to live and did live because it was a whole kingdom, not a divided one.

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111. Froese's definition of *wu wei* works well here: not the cessation of activity, but rather acting in a way that nothingness becomes part of the action (Froese 149).

112. Socrates (469-399 BCE) Greek philosopher who developed the dialectic style of teaching. He is portrayed in Plato's *Dialogues* and also by Xenophon.

113. Heller also compares the splitting of the mind and the spirit to the Christian doctrine of 'original sin': the curse described in Genesis when, in defiance of his creator, the first man ate from the Tree of Knowledge (*PS* 46).

Like the Greek *physikoi* Heraclitus and Anaxagoras, he did not fall back in the face of paradox as many others had done, say Parmenides or Kant or Schopenhauer.

Being whole in a divided world is, at best, an alienating experience and, at worst, an annihilating one. Or might it be the other way around? As Nietzsche suggests in *BoT* perhaps it is necessary to annihilate oneself in order to become whole. Was Oedipus whole when he was blind to the truth, or did he become whole when he saw the truth and blinded himself? Can this image work as a metaphor for what happened to Nietzsche in the wake of publishing *The Birth of Tragedy*?

Human, All-Too-Human: A Book for Free Spirits

In the Preface to Part I of *Human, All-Too-Human* (1878)[114] Nietzsche embraces the loneliness to which his "*difference of outlook*" condemned him.[115] Perhaps compared to Oedipus it did not seem so terrible a punishment. In his subsequent isolation, after what he describes as his "*great emancipation"* he dedicates this book to 'free spirits' (7-8). By 1879, Nietzsche was too ill to work and had resigned from his professorship at Basel with a modest pension. Despite being assailed by illness and real physical suffering from agonizing migraines and acute stomach problems, he writes that it is:

> …a radical *cure* for all pessimism…to become ill…remain ill a good while, and then grow well (I mean 'better'). (11)

114. Bertram notes that the Preface to the first edition of *HATH* was dedicated to Voltaire, "'one of the greatest liberators of the spirit'" (301). Heller describes the book as Nietzsche's "great experiment in spiritual defiance" (*PS* 36).

115. Nietzsche had become a virtual exile, not unlike Socrates and Anaxagoras.

Typically for Nietzsche, a step backward represents a running start. He did not merely accept and adjust to pain and suffering but came to view their presence in his life objectively, even to welcome them and promote their benefits to others. Later in life, in the summer of 1887, he will make this note:

> The metaphysicians' ***preoccupation with suffering****:* very naïve. 'Eternal bliss': psychological nonsense. Brave and creative men *never* see pleasure and suffering as ultimate questions of value—they are accompanying states. One must *want* both to *achieve* anything. (*Writings from the Late Notebooks* 142; underline emphasis added)[116]

Suffering, like happiness, is an accompanying state; it is, like every random event in life, an opportunity to become wiser, better, more evolved.

The man who knows himself better than anyone Freud ever met, now reflects on how reversals may in fact be a way forward:

> Cannot *all* valuations be reversed? And is good perhaps evil? And God only an invention and artifice of the devil? Is everything, perhaps, radically false? And if we are the deceived, are we not thereby also deceivers? (*HATH* 9)

Indeed, in *BGE* Nietzsche writes this aphorism: "'What? Isn't he going—backwards?' – Yes! But you understand him badly if you complain about it. He is going backwards like someone who wants to take a great leap—" (Norman, *BGE* 9:280 169).

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116. There is also famous passage in *Will to Power* attributed to Nietzsche's notebooks during the same period that reads: "To those human beings who are of any concern to me I wish suffering, desolation, sickness, ill-treatment, indignities—I wish that they should not remain unfamiliar with profound self-contempt, the torture of self-mistrust, the wretchedness of the vanquished: I have no pity for them, because I wish them the only thing that can prove today whether one is worth anything or not—that one endures" (*WP* 910 481). One wonders whether both of these citations are partially a response to Schopenhauer's very different stance on the subject of suffering, i.e. something to be avoided at all cost.

In Part II of *HATH* Nietzsche begins to write aphoristically and to challenge his own previous assumptions. A free spirit, Nietzsche will write in *Beyond Good and Evil*, is willing to say "To hell with good taste!" and take on the effort and pain of being an outsider, otherwise "he is not made for knowledge" (Norman, *BGE* 2:26 27). No longer under obligation to convention, historicity or dogma, we see a resilient, even an ebullient Nietzsche emerge. Not a victim to random circumstance but a man capable of turning anything, however random, however cruel as nature can be cruel, into opportunity and growth; free now to exercise his will, a volunteer for eternal recurrence. The Judaeo-Christian "Thy will be done" has metamorphosed to a neutral, universal 'will be done'--without the metaphysical ballast.[117]

Part Three - *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886)

In the Introduction to her translation of *Beyond Good and Evil* (in German: *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*), Marianne Cowan writes that this is,

> …a book about morality…. At the onset of the twentieth century Nietzsche sees humanity at the end of a long experiment with morality. We have defined and refined our ideas of good and evil so long [Nietzsche] says, that they are all worn out. They slip through our fingers and have a disconcerting way of turning into their opposites without notice. (Cowan, *BGE* v)

Cowan elaborates on Nietzsche's metaphor of an experiment by comparing the scientific process to moral process. Cowan observes that in scientific process when "two opposite hypotheses meet head-on," scientists wait for one to be better substantiated than the other, or they reformulate the problem or contradiction to be solved from another point of

117. Thanks to John Hamilton for the term 'metaphysical ballast.'

view (vii). In moral process, on the other hand, philosophers are generally not willing either to wait or to reformulate. They feel bound to define absolutes and to overcome or ignore any evidence that contradict them. "'Must we give up morality when our present goods and evils fail us?'" asks Nietzsche (vii).

In "We scholars" Nietzsche laments yet another oppositional break-up of a perfectly matched pair, displaying his "wounds" to "speak out against an inappropriate and harmful shift in the rank order between science and philosophy" (Norman, *BGE* 6:204 93). This split he argues is an unfortunate departure from the Greek example and philosophy has become the poorer for it. He blames "the generalized ill will against all philosophy" for alienating young scientists (94). And he envisions a return to wholeness with the arrival of a new, free-thinking kind of philosopher who can think both scientifically and intuitively—that is, non-dualistically.

As a preposition or an adverb in German, *jenseit* ("beyond") can mean 'on the other side of' as well as 'over and above' as in across the sea or beyond our dreams or imagination. As a proper noun, *Jenseit* refers to another kind of world entirely, a hereafter, in some future time or state. It may be the world Nietzsche describes allegorically in *Zarathustra: A Book for All and None* (1883-1885), the philosophical novel that Nietzsche considered his masterpiece, his attempt to describe the evolutionary journey of this "new species of philosopher coming up over the horizon" (Cowan, *BGE* 2:42 48) and whom he often refers to as a superior kind of human being in the same way—to my mind—that the *I Ching* often refers to those who are wise and enlightened in

their approach to living and thinking.[118] In *Zarathustra* and in all of his subsequent works, Nietzsche insists on nothing less than an evolutionary change, an advanced state of being and consciousness that leaves dualistic thinking behind and lives with an innate sense of how to live morally without absolutes, of how to weather change and uncertainty without fear, to welcome the experience of suffering for the wisdom it will bring, and to embrace the comfort of the void (a distinctly *tao-chia* comfort).

In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche envisions and then coins a new name for this new species of "free, *very* free thinkers" who are "not merely free thinkers but something more, something superior, greater, and thoroughly different, something that does not want to be misjudged or mistaken for something else" (Cowan, *BGE* 2:44 49). He combines the verb "to seek" (*suchen*) with the prefix *ver* to dub the new philosophers *Versucher*: "experimenters" (48).[119] Such a word might include not only philosophers and scientists, but poet/philosophers and, for that matter, why not anyone else engaged in the 'experiment' of living?

The way of the new philosopher cannot be taught, it can only be learned through experience. It is intuitive; its "tempo is *presto*;" it combines "exuberant spiritedness" with "dialectical rigor and necessity which never makes a misstep" (Cowan, *BGE* 6:213 138).

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118. The "superior man" or the "great man" is a familiar figure in the Taoist oracular text of the I Ching, and represents a man who lives in harmony with the Tao, acting spontaneously out of a state of inner calm. These traits define the quintessential qualities of an individual who follows the Taoist way of life.

119. There is a hidden pun in the coinage that Nietzsche uses implicitly here and explicitly elsewhere (Cowan, *BGE* 2:42 48 fn2). Horstmann notes that, "Nietzsche uses the German word *Versuch* (attempt, experiment) in a broad way which makes that term cover the connotations of *Versuchung* (temptation) and *Versucher* (tempter) as well" (Horstmann 189 fn18).

Nietzsche suggests that artists may have the advantage as *Versucher*:

> They know only too well that only when they do nothing 'willfully' and everything 'of necessity" does their feeling of freedom, subtlety, full powers, of creatively placing, disposing, and forming, reach its height. In short, that necessity and 'freedom of the will' are one and the same when they create. (138)

Has Nietzsche just given us another way to define Taoist *wu wei*?

Versucher, just like experimenters in the sciences, must also be willing to question every conventional assumption:

> …first, whether opposites even exist and, second, whether the popular valuations and value oppositions that have earned the metaphysicians' seal of approval might not only be…provisional perspectives. (Norman, *BGE* 1:2 6)

…and risk the provisional aspects of the world of appearances:

> It could be possible that appearance, the will to deception, and craven self-interest should be accorded a higher and more fundamental value for all life. It could even be possible that whatever gives value to those good and honorable things has an incriminating link, bond, or tie to the very things that look like their evil opposites; perhaps they are even essentially the same. Perhaps! – But who is willing to take charge of such a dangerous Perhaps! For this we must await the arrival of a new breed of philosophers, ones whose taste and inclination are somehow the reverse of those we have seen so far—philosophers of the dangerous Perhaps in every sense. – And in all seriousness, I see these new philosophers approaching. (6)

The danger is all in the 'perhaps,' in German *zufällig,* which is also the word for 'random'; for philosophers of the dangerous, there are no certainties—there are only random chance, free choice, and the courage to act intuitively.

Nietzsche uses strong language to describe life as a "real philosopher":

> To the rabble, wisdom seems like a kind of escape, a device or trick for pulling yourself out of the game when things get rough. But the real philosopher lives 'unphilosophically,' 'unwisely,' in a manner which is above all *not clever*, and feels the weight and duty of a hundred

> experiments and temptations of life: -- he constantly puts *himself* at risk, he plays *the* rough game (Norman, *BGE* 6:205 96)

"You have to be tough to follow Tao…" (Deng, *365 Tao* 57).

Nietzsche's Philosopher of the Future: *Physikoi*

Whitlock reminds us that at the University of Bonn Nietzsche faced a "tortured decision" between the sciences—particularly atomism and chemistry—and philology. He settled on the latter, sponsored by his teacher and sponsor Friedrich Ritschl, who helped launch him into a professorship in philology at the University of Basel in 1869 (Whitlock xxxvi-xxxvii).

"We are but atoms"[120] Nietzsche writes in his inaugural address at the University of Basel on May 28th 1869, after he had opted for philology over science knowing full well that his lectures on the "pre-Platonics" would be replete with science (Nietzsche, *Complete Works* Vol. 3 169). For Nietzsche the materialist atomist view (associated with Empedocles and Democritus and later developed by Epicurus[121] and then Lucretius) always represented a far more palatable version of cosmology than any kind of abstract spiritualism: an ever-present void where he could thrive as a being created and creating until his atoms parted and returned to their source to begin again.

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120. "We demand *thanks*—not in our own name, for we are but atoms—but in the name of philology itself, which is indeed neither a Muse nor a Grace, but a messenger of the gods." He closes with "By this I wish to signify that all philological activities should be enclosed and surrounded by a philosophical view of things, in which everything individual and isolated is evaporated as something detestable, and in which great homogeneous views alone remain." (Nietzsche, *Complete Works* Vol 3. 169.)

121. Epicurus, whose work exists only in fragments and second-hand accounts, insisted that the mind was an organ in the body, and that when the body disintegrated so did the mind. The atoms are eternal, says Epicurus, but the mind like the body is not.

In notebook entries during the summer of 1872 and winter of 1873, Nietzsche writes about the philosopher's nature and the philosopher of the future:

> The philosopher alongside the man of science and the artist.
> Restraining the drive for knowledge by means of art, the religious drive for oneness by means of the concept.
> The strange juxtaposition of conception and abstraction
> Significance for culture.
> Metaphysis as vacuum. (*Early Notebooks* 19[72] 115)

This becomes a never-ending theme for Nietzsche who, like philosophical Taoists and some Presocratics, came to see the everyday phenomenal world not in opposition to the metaphysical world but as a link to it, translated into a language the senses can comprehend. Ballast for one another, in a creative void.

In *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future* James Porter sees in atomistic theory not only an account of how nature works but also "an account of ourselves" (89). Indeed, Porter seems to make nearly the same claims for Nietzsche's interest in Democritus[122] and atomism as I make for Nietzsche and Taoist concepts.

> Nietzsche's rediscovery of Greek atomism is of the greatest moment. His completion of Democritus' project, which involved rounding out the missing contours and absorbing atomistic thinking into his own his own evolving perspectives, would affect all his future undertakings… (82)[123]

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122. Democritus (c. 460 – c. 360 BCE) born in Thrace (modern day Bulgaria), was an extensive traveler with impressive knowledge gleaned from the great centers of learning in the ancient world about natural phenomena. He formulated an atomic theory of the universe based on the ideas of his teacher, Leucippus. Diogenes Laertius quotes Democritus as saying, "I came to Athens and nobody knew me"—but reports that Plato knew enough about him to wish all of his books burned.

123. Brobjer notes that Nietzsche's interest shifted from Democritus to Heraclitus in 1869 (57); Porter's assessment of Nietzsche's notes for his Pre-platonic lectures at the University of Basel "presuppose a thorough familiarity with the physical theory of Democritus" (Porter 85).

Citing from Nietzsche's notes and *HATH*, Porter writes that "in Nietzsche's eyes: 'Democritus [is] in a battle with his times'; he is one of the *'forerunners of a reformation of the Greeks*'" (91, fn23). Nietzsche in his own 'un-timeliness' was also embattled.

Arguments about randomness and will, positivism and nihilism, materialism and spiritualism will abound as long as there are minds to puzzle over these issues. Consider theoretical astrophysicist Robert O. Doyle[124] who observes in *Free Will: The Scandal in Philosophy* (2011) that the term "free will" is misleading: "The will itself is indeed not 'free' (in the sense of uncaused), but we are free" (28). Doyle points out that the element of randomness doesn't make *us* random, it simply affords our will the freedom to choose from among an array of thoughts and actions. Doyle concludes: "Chance only generates alternative possibilities for thought and action . . . [w]e are free, in control, and morally responsible for our choices and actions" (29). Free will is a combination of random elements and free choice, just as implied by the Presocratics and Taoist thought.

What seems perfectly clear is that the application of the natural science of physical phenomena to human concerns was something that Nietzsche always searched for, experimented with, and was tempted by--not so much a search for meaning as an explanation of the universe that his keen, creative, scientific mind could accept, even if it sometimes required a leap of creative intuition. What drew Nietzsche to Democritus' atomic theory, Porter continues,

> . . . is the space it affords to collision and opposition, its flouting of commonplace intuitions and of popular and philosophical beliefs, and its assault on the very structures of representation. In all of this N. detects

124. Doyle, with a Ph.D in astrophysics at Harvard and an associate in the department of astronomy, refers to himself as an "Information Philosopher – beyond logic and language." We might refer to him as a twenty-first century *physikoi*, a Nietzschean thinker, or a Taoist. Or we might reject labels.

> what he calls the *dichterischer Schwung*, "poetic abandon" with which Democritus retails the story of mankind's irretrievable fragility (Porter 83-84).

Poetic abandon sounds a great deal like Dionysus in *BoT*, a way perhaps of reaching through the chaos of the void to find beauty, and make sense out of the inevitable human tragedies of human life. (Why do humans believe they must only be happy?)

Throughout his life Nietzsche was invigorated by the dynamism and apparent conflict he saw in his own life and in the world around him. All of his work arose out of this chaos and from the emptiness he saw behind it. In an early essay written in 1864 while still a student, Nietzsche observes:

> Conflict is the constant nourishment of the soul and the soul knows how to extract from it much that is sweet and fine. The soul destroys and thereby gives birth to new things, it fights energetically and yet gently draws the opponent over to its own side for an intimate union. (Ansell-Pearson, *Nietzsche Reader* "On Moods" 22)

Once again we see Nietzsche's confluence with yet another pre-Socratic philosopher/poet far removed from him in time and space, Empedocles,[125] who writes in verse in *On Nature* that the conflict between Love and Strife is at the heart of an endlessly repeating cosmic cycle. (Which is yin and which yang in this formula?—we can take our pick.)

"There's a paradox at the heart of our understanding of the physical world" Carlo Rovelli writes in *Seven Brief Lessons on Physics*. He then describes two theories that are each not merely adequate but remarkably and convincingly comprehensive: two separate and equal theories that appear to refute and oppose each other (41).

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125. Empedocles (c.490 – c. 430 BCE) author of *On Nature* that anticipates the later development of atomic theory by Democritus and who wrote in verse as Lucretius does later, in *De Rarum Natura.*

The first theory is the theory of general relativity in which the universe is a curved space, continuous and dynamic, and moved by waves "similar to those of the sea, sometimes so agitated as to create the gaps that are black holes" (29):

> . . . a kind of immense, mobile snail shell in which we are contained—one that can be compressed and twisted. (42-43)

Rovelli's imagery recalls Anaxagoras' spiraling movement; or the spinning of the twin helixes around a central void that Laozi describes in the *Tao te Ching*. Astrophysics, gravitational waves, black holes, and much more developed out of the theory of general relativity (39).[126]

The second theory is particle or quantum physics in which there is also motion but in a space that is neither continuous nor infinitely divisible but made up of particles "a billion billion times smaller than the smallest atomic nuclei" (43). In quantum theory there is no real void, no complete emptiness but a space that "just as the calmest sea…sways and trembles," in which particles continually come to be and pass away in response to that constant motion (33).

In effect, the conflict between these two theories poses the same duality that Presocratics wrestled with—how to reconcile a singular, unified source that gives rise to and encompasses infinite variety? Modern physicists, like the first philosophers Rovelli points out, delight in contradictory theories: "A physicist is only too happy when s/he finds a conflict between successful theories" as it represents "an extraordinary

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126. Werner Heisenberg (1901 – 1976), pioneering German theoretic physicist, claimed that the central ideas of his quantum theory were inspired by a close reading of Plato's *Timaeus* in which Plato explains that order and beauty in the universe is the handiwork of a divine *dêmiourgos*, a rational, purposive, and beneficent being responsible for its creation. (Zeyl, "Plato's Timaeus," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014 Edition).

opportunity" (41).

The current opportunity is called "loop quantum gravity" in which the quanta of physical space are linked to one another,

> like the rings of a finely woven, immense chain mail. Where are these quanta of space? Nowhere. They are not in space because they are themselves the space. Space is created by the linking of these individual quanta of gravity. (43)

In loop quantum theory, both time and space disappear but "change is ubiquitous":

> At the minute scale of the grains of space, the dance of nature does not take place to the rhythm of the baton of a single conductor, at a single tempo: every process dances independently with its neighbors, to its own rhythm. The passage of time is internal to the world, is born in the world itself in the relationship between quantum events that comprise the world and are themselves the source of time. (44)

The universe: free and random, and also linked. Rovelli's brief exposition of contemporary physics suggests that freeing ourselves from dualistic thinking and seeking a perspective from the middle of an apparent contradiction, may give us the best view of reality.

Chapter V

Speech & Silence

This is my way, what is yours?
~ Nietzsche, *Zarathustra* Part 3:55 "The Spirit of Gravity"

We need speaking and words, and we need to perceive the constant Tao that has no description for its eternal character. We cannot discard either side of the equation.
~ Deng, *Lunar Tao* 53

Taoists say that the best perspective is from the middle. With this in mind, I stand on an island in the middle of the river of time--this moment--and turn around in a circle to look: at Taoist thought as it originated in ancient China, at the Presocratic Greeks in the sixth and fifth centuries BCE, at Nietzsche in the long nineteenth century that began with the Enlightenment in Europe, and back to where we find ourselves today. From this perspective, the past, the present, and the future are joined like the headwater, channel, and mouth of river; they cannot be divided (Deng, *365 Tao* 15).

This indivisibility has guided my attempt to write about subjects that mostly resist certainty, language, or even understanding except intuitively. These are the qualities that characterize Nietzsche, Taoist philosophy, and, only partly because of their fragmentary nature, the Presocratics. My thesis hews to the positive side of Nietzsche—his positive view of the emptiness behind everything, of randomness and uncertainty, of the will to life and the intense suffering and joy that accompany living. One might call this his profoundly superficial side, as he said of the Greeks in the Preface to *The Gay Science* (or

The Joyful Science—Die fröhliche Wissenschaft): "Those Greeks, superficial—from *profundity*!" (8)

Speech: Language & Truth

Because we equate it with fact and with science, perhaps we invest[127] too much value in the idea of truthfulness, expecting the same graven words throughout time instead of relying on what is not fixed, our intuition in the moment. As Deng says, "You could tell the secret of life ten times over, and it would still be safe" (*365 Tao* 286). How, then, are we to live, to know right from wrong, to keep our sanity in this constant flux? How are we to understand our world and our universe and our place in it not as a thing apart but as a part of it? The perceiver as well as the perceived? These are the questions Nietzsche poses in "On the Prejudices of Philosophers":

> . . . that *we* should finally learn from this Sphinx to ask questions, too? *Who* is it really that puts questions to us here? *What* in us really wants 'truth'?
>
> Indeed we came to a long halt at the question about the cause of this will—until we finally came to a complete stop before a still more basic question. We asked about the *value* of this will. Suppose we want truth: *why not rather* untruth? And uncertainty? Even ignorance?
>
> The problem of the value of truth came before us—or was it we who came before the problem? Who of us is Oedipus here? Who the Sphinx? (Kaufmann, *Basic Writings BGE* 1:1 199)

Add to these, another: will we understand the answers when we hear them?

Nietzsche, the Presocratics, and those who follow Taoist philosophy all arrive at answers by observation, personal experience, and creative intuition—this last variously

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127. From *investire* (Latin): to clothe. Indeed, like the twins that they are, we do dress up the truth just as we do an untruth, usually to suit our own ends.

dubbed the eternal *Tao* (unnameable and unspoken, it should be noted), the "Will", or *nous*. All these conventions (*topoi* in Greek) invariably accompanied by their opposites: the *tao* that can be spoken, the random, unwilled nature of the cosmos, and the logic of *logos*, respectively.

One of the great shortcomings of *logos* is language itself. Our thoughts make the world but how do we articulate and then interpret these thoughts? We know our thoughts intuitively but most of the time what motivates our actions is language. Language is not truth but a tool we use to point at the truth, like the Sphinx's riddle. More than a mere designator, in the hands of a poet or an intuitive thinker like Nietzsche, language possesses a revelatory quality that can disclose the truth both to the author[128] and the audience.

Nietzsche understood and appreciated the poetry of the scientific theory of the cosmos presented in fragments by the Presocratic atomists and *physikoi*; and he would have understood Taoist cosmology in the same way. Poetry, the Taoists say, lodges in the same part of the brain as *Tao.* Only in poetry does language become intuitive and therefore a more reliable source for true action, which Taoists call *wu wei.* Willful, arbitrary, random, and in perfect harmony with a cosmos that has no goal other than to act according to its nature. The tension and variance between opposites—what Heraclitus considered a 'game' and that Anaxagoras developed into scientific theory—is what animates us as well; it is the preeminent quality of life itself.

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128. From the Latin *augeo*: to increase and originate. Certainly Nietzsche increased and originated a great deal with his use of language.

No one reading and writing about Nietzsche can fail to realize that whatever position one takes can be supported by a selection from his works, published and unpublished. For a vivid example of the unreliability of language and meaning, we need look no further than the posthumous publication of *The Will to Power* (1908), a book selectively compiled by Nietzsche's sister Elizabeth Nietzsche-Förster from his unpublished notebooks. Among its many incomprehensibilities is the misrepresentation of Nietzsche's view of the will to life as Schopenhauer's "will to power."

Think about how window glass distorts an image even as it provides the means for looking at an image; or how a mirror provides a *reverse* image of the self. Even the eye sees things upside down.[129] This is the difference between ontology--knowing how things really are--and epistemology: how we perceive things through the filters of our cognition (*logos*). In the same way, it is difficult—if not impossible--to put mental or spiritual concepts like *nous* or *tao* into words, and the more words we use the more obscure the original insight becomes. "The text has finally disappeared under the interpretation," Nietzsche writes in *Beyond Good and Evil* (Norman, *BGE* 2:38 37).

Nietzsche understood all of this, intuitively and from experience, knew this perhaps both in his reasoning lifetime and his mute lifetime… He certainly knew it in 1873 when he wrote "On Truth and Lie in an Extra Moral Sense" an essay on the nature of truth and language arguing that truth and the concepts that try to convey it are:

> 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

129. The images we see with the cornea are made up of light reflected from the objects we see; because the cornea is curved, it bends the light, creating an upside down image on the retina that is then put right by the brain.

> 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. (Kaufmann, *Portable Nietzsche* 46-47)

In his attempt to foil its inherent limitations,[130] Nietzsche uses language creatively and in every style and genre—essay, fiction, verse, polemic, aphorism, parable--to surprise the reader with a burst of felt meaning, not unlike the effect of music in the ear.[131] The short form aphorisms and maxims for which he is well-known may also have developed out of expediency so that he could work despite his impaired eyesight and severe headaches.

It is not only thinking dualistically but language itself that is the 'author' of myriad misapprehensions. Deng writes in *Scholar Warrior*:

> The ultimate nature of Tao itself is not possible for us to grasp because our minds are inherently dualistic. We are children of beauty and ugliness; we dwell in the midst of the nameable, we gravitate toward what we can identify. The Tao, however, is <u>both</u> nameless (no being) and named (being). Within the depths of Tao, existence and nonexistence come together; no distinctions exist. Time becomes circular and even irrelevant. Our minds cannot function in such a realm… (181)

It seems that Nietzsche's mind could and did function in such a realm.

Nietzsche is as careful with language as a sailor is wary of the sea.[132] One could say (and he did say more than once) that he would rather not be understood at all than to

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130. Another great irony in Nietzsche's journey is that much as Oedipus' attempt to thwart the Delphic Oracle's prophecy lead him to actions that fulfill the prophecy, Nietzsche's attempts to avoid being understood by the 'wrong' people through the enigmatic nature of his work became, after his death, a tool for others to achieve an entirely 'antipodal' result.

131. Jacques Derrida the great postmodern deconstructionist devotes a book to the topic of Nietzsche's writing styles, *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*. See Works Consulted.

132. In *Shipwreck with Spectator* Hans Blumenberg calls the "sea-faring metaphor" for life "a model open to multiple possible actualizations" (2). This is the case for language as well. Nietzsche uses the metaphor of the sea in *Gay Science* when his "madman" laments the death of God wondering how it was possible to *swallow the sea*—

be misunderstood. Through the use of brevity, ambivalence, and frequent contradiction Nietzsche attempts to circumvent the limitations of language, often successfully. He devises ways to get around those limitations in order to encompass a whole, non-dualistic reality that would encompass all contradictions. "I obviously do everything to be 'hard to understand' myself," Nietzsche writes in "The free spirit" (Norman, *BGE* 2:27 28).

> Every philosophy *conceals* a philosophy too: every opinion is also a hiding place, every word is also a mask…. Every profound thinker is more afraid of being understood than of being misunderstood. ("What is noble?" 9:289-290 173)

Clearly doubting the ability of language to be up to the task of communicating the ineffable, Nietzsche expresses disdain for "things that *let* themselves be written":

> —what are the only things we *can* paint? Oh, only ever things that are about to wilt and lose their smell! Only ever storms that have exhausted themselves and are moving off, and feelings that are yellowed and late! …We only immortalize things that cannot live and fly for much longer, only tired and worn-out things! (9:296 177)

Such observations on the limitations and expediencies of language resonate markedly with Taoist philosophy. J.J. Clarke says in *The Tao of the West* that Taoist texts play with the unreliable, mediated nature of language to communicate the opposite of the meaning of their words; other times what is written or said is contained in what is not said or written, or only by inference or implication. All of this to "deliberately thwart attempts to pin down their teaching" (17-18).

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a miraculous impossibility (79). Then Nietzsche describes the world after God's death as an 'open sea,' open as never before, a horizon of the infinite (131)--very reminiscent of the Taoist creative void and the Presocratics' unlimited *nous.* "Tao may be known as directly as water is knowable to a fish" writes Deng (*365 Tao* 319). The sea also figures in the soteric imagery of both Theraveda (rafts) and Mahayana (a ship) Buddhism.

There is an extraordinary verse in the *Tao te Ching* attributed to Laozi in the fifth century BCE that captures in an uncanny way the spirit and reality of Nietzsche's life and work and times:

> Between 'definitely' and 'probably':
> what difference is there?
> Between 'good' and 'evil':
> what difference is there?
> What men honour one must honour.
> O loneliness, how long will you last?
> All men are so shining-bright
> as if they were going to the great sacrificial feast,
> as if they were climbing up the towers in spring.
> Only I am so reluctant, I have not yet been given a sign:
> like an infant, yet unable to laugh;
> unquiet, roving as if I had no home.
> All men have abundance,
> only I am as if forgotten.
> I have the heart of a fool: so confused, so dark.
> Men of the world are so clever, alas, so clever;
> only I am as if locked into myself,
> unquiet, alas, like the sea,
> turbulent, alas, unceasingly.
> All men have their purpose,
> only I am futile like a beggar.
> I alone am different from all men:
> But I consider it worthy
> to seek nourishment from the Mother.
>
> (*Laozi* #20 Wilhelm trans. 35, emphasis added)

In its specificity, this verse could almost be one of Nietzsche's philosophical poems describing his own life and experience, yet with the quality of having been written retrospectively, after his own death and from a perspective not entirely his alone, and not only of this world--a timeless and untimely perspective.

Silence: The Soul Wearies

Let us end with the apocryphal tale that in Turin in 1889, when Nietzsche is said to have witnessed a man beating a horse that has collapsed on the street. It was reported that Nietzsche ran up to the horse and attempted to shield the animal from the blows raining down upon it by clasping it around the neck with his arms. This traumatic event has been posited as signaling the beginning of a complete breakdown and the end of Nietzsche's working life. In a 2011 film, *The Turin Horse*, filmmaker Béla Tarr begins with this introductory intertitle:

> In Turin on 3rd January, 1889, Friedrich Nietzsche steps out of the doorway of number six, Via Carlo Alberto. Not far from him, the driver of a hansom cab is having trouble with a stubborn horse. Despite all his urging, the horse refuses to move, whereupon the driver loses his patience and takes his whip to it. Nietzsche comes up to the throng and puts an end to the brutal scene, throwing his arms around the horse's neck, sobbing. His landlord takes him home, he lies motionless and silent for two days on a divan until he mutters the obligatory last words, 'Mutter, ich bin dumm!'[133] And lives for another ten years, silent and demented, cared for by his mother and sister. We do not know what happened to the horse. (Petkovic)

Tarr's film is entirely about the horse and its owner after these events, sidestepping the issue of historical veracity and taking it directly from his own imagination: Why not 'untruth' instead?

Scholars generally dismiss the story of the horse of Turin as a sentimentalized or mythologized version of events, but what is truly remarkable about the story that is told of what happened to Nietzsche in Turin—true or not-- is that it describes a spontaneous act, effortlessly correct, unintentional without desire or motive, in such a way as Froese puts it so well, that 'nothingness becomes part of the action.' It illustrates the congruence

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133. "Mother, I am dumb!" meaning "mute."

I have attempted to show in this thesis between Nietzsche's spirit and the quality of someone who follows Taoism: that to be truly alive in the world, one must knowingly respond to every opportunity to act and conform to every situation, from the mind and from the spirit.

From a Taoist perspective, seeing the horse being beaten may have simply impelled Nietzsche to act without thinking; or, he may have identified with the horse and moved to defend it as himself. It is a Taoist practice to learn from watching animals. Deng describes the practice of meditation as "a cat sitting motionless in the sun or a turtle who stretches her head upward in a still pose." Animals know how "to be still and…not dissipate themselves in useless activity but instead withdraw into themselves to recharge" (*365 Tao* 294).

Cowan tells us that Nietzsche once wrote in a letter "that everything he ever wrote came to life for him only after the final dash—everything before it was merely scenery" (*BGE* Cowan, ix). She illustrates the point with this citation from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* Part 3:46 "The Vision and the Riddle":

> To you alone, you bold seekers, tempters, experimenters, and to all who ever went out on the terrible sea with cunning sails—
> To you alone, who are riddle-drunk and twilight-happy, whose souls are lured by flutes to any treacherous chasm—
> To you who do not like to grope for a clue with cowardly hands and who prefer not to deduce where you can intuit—
> To you alone I shall tell the riddle that I saw…. (ix-x)

We don't know what really happened that January day in Turin in 1889—the text, if one ever existed, has surely gotten lost in the interpretation. Neurological explanations aside, Nietzsche's spirit may have simply withdrawn, become still, and returned, speechless, to his source, his mother Franziska: "Mother, I am dumb!" Like a Taoist, perhaps he knew

that those who know do not speak and those who speak do not know (Wilhelm, *Laozi* #56 52). He surely knew that as soon as the soul speaks, it is not the soul that speaks.[134]

Perhaps his soul finally wearied of the task of explaining itself.

134. Spricht *die Seele, so spricht ach! schon die* Seele *nicht mehr*. (Schiller)

Appendix I

from Chapter II "What is Tao?"

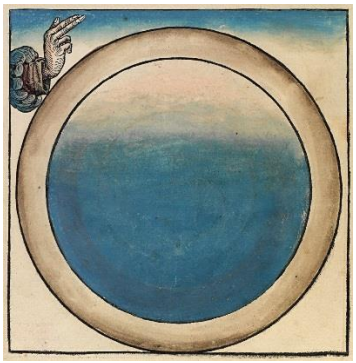
1. *Taijitu* or Yin-Yang Symbol, meant to convey the notion that all apparent opposites are complementary parts of a non-dual whole.



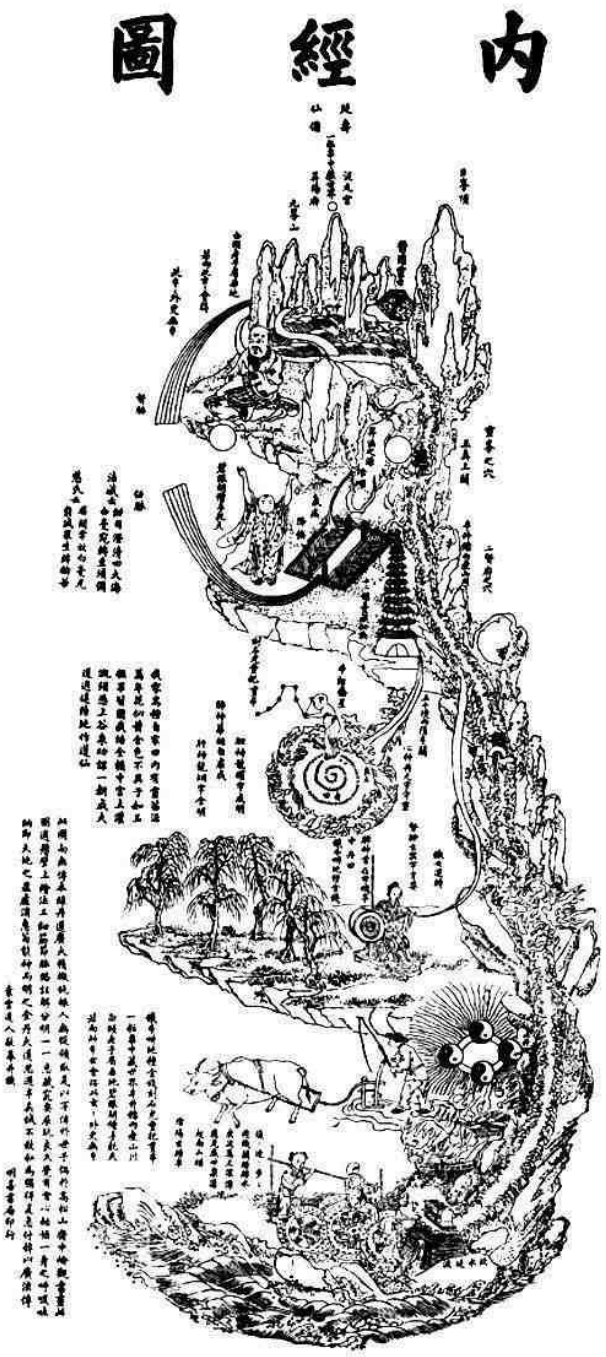
2. *Ensō* (c. 2000) by Kanjuro Shibata XX. Some artists draw *ensō* with an opening in the circle, while others close the circle.



3. First Day of Creation – Note that a large hand, presumably of "God" is poised outside the circle, perhaps to give it its first spin.



4. The World in the Body from the *Neijing Tu*.



Appendix II

from Chapter III "The Presocratics"

1. *Aóristos*: the grammar of Greek wholeness

In early Greek grammar, there originally existed a "middle voice"--the *aóristos* or Greek "indefinite" is "a class of verb forms that generally portrays a situation as simple or undefined, that is, as having perfective aspect."[135] The indefinite tense removes polarity and expands meaning to include both object and subject. It is an intuitive voice, based on context, perspective, and awareness. Among other things, the middle voice is used for "undivided events" such as timelessness—single future, present, and past events, repeated. Kitto notes that the Greek word for wholeness, *sôphrosynê*--literally 'whole-mindedness' or 'unimpaired-mindedness,' meaning 'wisdom,' 'prudence,' temperateness,' 'chastity,' 'sobriety,'' 'modesty,' or 'self-control'—is, in fact untranslatable because it is not one thing or another, nor even an intermediate thing. Rather, it is all at the same time: "something entirely intellectual," "something entirely moral," and, as well, "something intermediate" (Kitto 171). No modern language today has a middle voice.

The indefinite describes an action "pure and simple." One might say, the action itself and not the act of the action. In Taoism, "those who attain the middle dominate the whole" Deng, *365 Tao* 183).

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135. The aoristic aspect is a grammatical aspect used to describe an action viewed as a simple whole—a unit without interior composition. Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aorist_(Ancient_Greek)

2. *Laozi* #14 (Lin translation)

In Taoist thought movement away from Tao and back to Tao is called the "Tao Axiom of Return" or simply, "Origins:"

> Look at it, it cannot be seen
> It is called colorless
> Listen to it, it cannot be heard
> It is called noiseless
> Reach for it, it cannot be held
> It is called formless
> These three cannot be completely unraveled
> So they are combined into one
> Above it, not bright
> Below it, not dark
> Continuing endlessly, cannot be named
> It returns back into nothingness
> Thus it is called the form of the formless
> The image of the imageless
> This is called enigmatic
> Confront it, its front cannot be seen
> Follow it, its back cannot be seen
> Wield the Tao of the ancients
> To manage the existence of today
> One can know the ancient beginning
> It is called the Tao Axiom

3. "Walking and Falling" lyrics by Laurie Anderson

> I wanted you. And I was looking for you.
> But I couldn't find you.
> I wanted you. And I was looking for you all day.
> But I couldn't find you. I couldn't find you.
>
> You're walking. And you don't always realize it,
> but you're always falling.
> With each step, you fall forward slightly.
> And then catch yourself from falling.
> Over and over, you're falling.
> And then catching yourself from falling.
> And this is how you can be walking and falling at the same time.
>
> (*Big Science*)

4. *Laozi* #25 (Wilhelm translation)

There is one thing that is invariably complete.
Before Heaven and Earth were, it is already there:
so still, so lonely.
Alone it stands and dos not change.
It turns in a circle and does not endanger itself.
One may call it ‘the Mother of the World’.
I do not know its name.
I call it DAO.
Painfully giving it a name
I call it ‘great’.
Great: that means ‘always in motion’.
‘Always in motion’ means ‘far away’.
‘Far away means ‘returning’.
Thus DAO is great, Heaven is great, Earth is great,
and Man too is great.
There are in space four Great Ones,
and Man is one of them.
Man conforms to Earth.
Earth conforms to Heaven.
Heaven conforms to DAO.
DAO conforms to itself.

5. The Parable of the Elephant

The parable of the blind men and an elephant originated in the Theravadan Buddhist tradition, as preserved in the Pāli language (Sanskirt) in India. Sometimes there are six blind sages and sometimes three. Sometimes they are not blind, but simply in the dark and unable to see the entire elephant. The Sufi master Jalal'ud-din Rumi (1207-1273) made the fable famous in his poetic collection, the *Mathnawi*, Book III, Story V:

> Once there was a poor Persian village where all were blind. One day a strange new creature called an elephant appeared at the village wall. Since no one in the village had ever heard of an elephant, the three wisest of the blind villagers went out to discover what the new creature was like. They all felt the creature. The first blind sage felt the tail and said, 'This creature cannot be an elephant, this is a rope!' The second blind sage felt the leg and said, 'No, this is a tree!' The third blind sage felt the side and said, 'No, you fools, this is a wall!'

In some versions of the ending, a sighted man or a king informs them of their error; or another blind man, who is not a sage, realizes he can mount the elephant and simply rides away.

http://www.mythfolklore.net/3043mythfolklore/reading/rumi/pages/01.htm Accessed 31 March 2017

Appendix III

from Chapter IV "Shared Perspectives"

1. *Aristophanes' Speech* from Plato's *Symposium*

Aristophanes (c. 446 – c. 386 BCE) was a poet, playwright, and jokester who liked to poke fun at convention, at the prominent, and even at the gods, all under the cloak of entertainment. He made brilliant use of a trope of Greek drama, εἰρωνεία (eirōneía), or irony, which was a way of saying or showing one thing but meaning its opposite.

In this speech, recounted in Plato's *Symposium,* Aristophanes describes primeval humankind:

> The original human nature was not like the present, but different…there was man, woman, and the union of the two, of which the name survives but nothing else. Once it was a distinct kind, with a bodily shape and a name of its own, constituted by the union of the male and the female: but now only the word 'androgynous' is preserved, and that as a term of reproach. (Jowett, *Collected Works of Plato* 520)

Aristophanes pretends in his speech to refer to sex and gender—always good for a laugh in the theater--and describes a peculiar and someone repulsive roundish beast with two backs, the sexual organs of both male and female, as well as four arms and four legs--able to walk upright, both backwards or forwards and, terrifyingly, able to roll and turn at enormous speed.

> Terrible was their might and strength, and the thoughts of their hearts were great, and they made an attack upon the gods; of them is told the tale of Otys and Ephialtes who, as

> Homer[136] says, attempted to scale heaven, and would have laid hands upon the gods. (520)

The gods felt so threatened by this uniquely endowed, united, and intelligent human beast that they considered annihilating the new race entirely. It was Zeus who came up with an elegant way to neutralize mankind's power: split the beast in two and it would no longer be able to compete with the gods. And so, mankind was cut down to size and split not only into two sexual halves but split internally as well, filled with doubt, contradiction, fear, envy, lust, and absent a natural ability to temper greed with generosity, aggression with peaceful acceptance, and so forth. Instead, these traits would forever reside in the human spirit in unequal measures, dividing rather than uniting. (*Collected Works* Sections 189c-193e pages 520-525)

136. Homer (circa 8th – 7th c. BCE) to whom the epic poems the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are attributed.

Glossary of Greek and Chinese Terms

wu wei (Chinese) – acting without acting, that is spontaneous action in harmony with the essence of human and cosmic creativity and the result of understanding, insight, and skill.

arkhe (Greek): 'beginning,' both in a temporal sense and in the sense of a first principle or cause" (Warren 3).

apeiron (Greek) - the boundless or unlimited, used to describe "the origin and nature from which come all the heavens and all the cosmoses within them" (Warren 29).

nous (Greek): the mind, which pairs intellect with intuition for intuitive knowledge.

physikoi (Greek): physicists. Aristotle called the pre-Socratics *physikoi* after *physis* the Greek word for nature because they sought natural explanations for phenomena, as opposed to the earlier *theologoi* (theologians), whose philosophical basis was supernatural.

tao-chia - philosophical Taoism as distinguished from religious Taoism (*tao-chiao*), the original form of Taoist thought as expressed in the writings attributed to Laozi (ca 605 - 531 BCE) in the *Tao te Ching* and later in the *Basic Writings* or *Zhuangzi* attributed to Zhuangzi (370 – 287 BCE). The focus of *tao-chia* is on unity with the *Tao* as a way of life and inner wisdom accessed by observing the natural flow of events in the physical world. Note that the *Norton Anthology* states: "only in the hands of Western polemicists did these terms have the power to separate philosophy from religion" (Miles et al. 1475).

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