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The Transmutation of Emotion in Rinzai Zen and Nietzsche

GRAHAM PARKES

Only fools think that dead sitting and silent illumination suffice and that Zen consists in the source of the mind's being in tranquility.

This typically outspoken statement by Hakuin, intended surely to shock his contemporaries, would no doubt surprise a majority of readers in the West today, where the Sōtō School is still better known than the Rinzai tradition. One of the features that distinguishes Rinzai from the other schools of Zen is the role it accords to the emotions in the task of realizing one's true nature. If an appropriate comparison may help to introduce Rinzai Zen to a wider audience, the figure of Nietzsche suggest itself insofar as his views on the emotions are correspondingly distinctive in the Western historical context.¹ A further reason to compare the stances of these two vis-à-vis the emotions is that they have both been subject to misunderstanding. On the one hand, there is the stereotypical vision of the Nietzschean *Übermensch* overflowing with unbridled Dionysiac passion, and on the other the serene Zen master, sitting in dispassionate contemplation, unperturbed by anything.

¹ On a personal note, the idea of comparing Rinzai Zen with Nietzsche came out of the experience of spending the best part of a year working on a translation (with Setsuko Aihara) of *Nihirizumu* by Nishitani Keiji (*The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism* [Albany NY 1990]). Professor Nishitani counts Nietzsche as one of his major influences, along with figures such as Rinzai and Hakuin. The attempt to understand how it is that a thinker like Nishitani with such deep roots in his own tradition could have been so profoundly influenced by Nietzsche—to this day he speaks of how *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* was “like a Bible” to him—led to a closer look at the ideas of Rinzai and Hakuin. It turns out that their ideas on the emotions are an excellent place to begin in order to see what is distinctive about the Rinzai tradition.

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Both parties are reacting against the received views of the nature of emotion in their respective traditions. The role and function of the emotions and passions in the overall economy of the psyche have generally been neglected or denigrated in the Western tradition. The general disparagement of the affective side of life with which Nietzsche is faced has its roots in the ascetic parts of the teachings of Plato, who is perturbed by the way emotion tends to work counter to the proper exercise of reason. In his rejection of Platonic/Christian metaphysics, Nietzsche gave the emotions and passions an unprecedentedly important cognitive and hermeneutic role, seeing them as (in some cases the only) ways to certain truths concerning the human condition. Instead of pitting the intellect against the emotions, he encouraged the cultivation of a passion for knowledge and understanding (*eine Leidenschaft der Erkenntnis*).² The exercise of reason is seen as an accommodation among a variety of powerful drives and as a function of various motive forces (*GS* 333; also 307). The analysis of reason as a functional relationship among a plurality of passions led him to speak of the “quantum of reason” that is in every passion (*WP* 387).

While the East Asian philosophical tradition has not been informed by a comparable exaltation of the rational as the paramount principle, there is nevertheless in it a strong strain toward detachment from the affective sides of psychical life. Zen, however, generally distinguishes itself from most Western philosophies in disparaging purely rational or calculative thinking as much as it warns against the distracting power of the emotions. Part of the revolutionary force of Rinzai Zen in particular comes from its reaction against the more quietistic tendencies of the Ch’an Buddhism that preceded it.

In both Rinzai and Nietzsche is a sense that our ordinary way of being in the world is permeated by delusion, and that a more fulfilling way is possible. Zen speaks of a realization of oneself as the “true human of no rank,” and Nietzsche of a transformation that issues in

² *The Gay Science*, aphorism 374; see also *Beyond Good and Evil*, aph. 210. Nietzsche’s works will be referred to by way of the following abbreviations, followed by the number of the aphorism (preceded, where applicable, by the chapter or section number): *AC* - *The Antichrist*, *BGE* - *Beyond Good and Evil*. *GS* - *The Gay Science*, *HA* - *Human, All-too human*, *TI* - *Twilight of the Idols*, *WP* - *The Will to Power*, *Za* - *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

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the condition of the *Übermensch*. With respect to the emotions, we may distinguish three moments in the process, which concern how each side views their function in everyday, ego-centered awareness, the role of the emotions in attaining liberation, and their place in the constitution of the *Übermensch* or the “true human of the Way.”

I

Nietzsche would concur with many figures in the Buddhist tradition concerning the drawbacks of the ego-centered emotions: they tend to “blind” us by drastically narrowing our perspectives and obscuring our view of things, to carry us away in sometimes dangerous ways, so that we risk inflicting damage on ourselves or others—and in general they can move us to inappropriate behavior, making us later regret what we have said or done. This is perhaps more obviously a position held by Buddhism than by Nietzsche, insofar as one of the “Four Great Vows” is “to cut off all emotions and passions,” since only by eliminating “grasping,” or desire, can the false sense of the substantial self be dissolved. It is true that Rinzai too advocates “freeing ourselves from the bonds of the emotions,” and that even Hakuin speaks of the hindrances to enlightenment in terms of such traditional classifications as the “five desires,” the “five coverings,” the “seven misfortunes,” the “eight winds” (that fan the passions), and the “ten bonds”—with anger, envy, joy, grief, pain and pleasure figuring repeatedly among them. But for these thinkers this detachment, or circumvention of hindrances, does not—as we shall see—mean the extirpation of emotion.

The affective side of human experience is a topic Nietzsche discusses throughout his works, and with ever greater frequency toward the end of his career. While he tends to speak more often of the “passions” (*Leidenschaften*) than of the more episodic “affects” (*Affekte*), which are closer to what we refer to as the “emotions,” the force of his discourse about both is that it is impossible to fulfill the task of “becoming what one is” if the affects and passions are simply given free rein and allowed to dominate the individual’s being. For the tradition prior to Nietzsche, since certain kinds of emotions may be beneficial to others even though harmful to the individual moved by them, they come to be distinguished as “positive” in contrast with other, “negative” emotions. Whereas the ascetic in Plato condemned

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any situation in which emotions or passions are allowed to tyrannize the rational part of the soul, the Christian tradition tended to proscribe mainly the negative emotions—and to recommend *extirpation* as the way to deal with them. Nietzsche brands both the Socratic and Christian prescriptions for human well-being as symptoms of *décadence*, as a desperate response on the part of natures too weak to bring their emotions under control. This position is clearly articulated in a passage from *Twilight of the Idols*:

There is a stage during which all passions are simply damaging, when they drag their victim down with the sheer weight of their stupidity—while at a later, much later stage they are wedded with the spirit, and are “spiritualized”. . . To *annihilate* the passions and desires simply because of their stupidity and the unpleasant consequences of yielding to their stupidity appears to us now today as itself an acute form of stupidity. . . . The Church combats passion with excision in every sense: its practice, its “cure” is *castration*. They never ask: “how does one spiritualize, beautify, deify a desire?”. . . To attack the passions at their roots means to attack life at its roots: the practice of the Church is *hostile to life*. (TI 5/1).

This might appear to set Nietzsche against the Buddhist as well as the Christian position on this issue—especially since in another work from the same year he claims that Buddhism and Christianity “belong together as nihilistic religions, as *décadence* religions” (AC 20). He goes on, however, to distinguish Buddhism from Christianity as having “[put] the self-deception of moral concepts behind it” and thereby standing “*beyond* good and evil.” And indeed this marks an important feature that Nietzsche shares with Zen: that they reverse and then undercut altogether the distinction between positive and negative emotions.

While some forms of Buddhism may be open to the charge that they are life-denying in their stance toward the emotions, Zen is different thanks to its origins in the sinification undergone by Buddhism in its transplantation to China in the sixth century. There the soil was already rich in Taoist ideas, and thinkers like Chuang-tzu exerted a particular fascination on Rinzai. Of the texts of classical Taoism, the *Chuang-tzu* is richest in emotion—though the emotions celebrated

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there are perceptive ways of being open to the world rather than coarsely instinctual reactions to it. In the well known story of Chuang-tzu's being discovered after the death of his wife drumming on a pot and singing (chap. 18), his explanation is not simply that his detachment was such that he was not affected by the bereavement. Rather he prefaces the account of his realization that his wife had "gone over to be companion with spring and autumn, summer and winter, in the procession of the four seasons" by asking his interlocutor: "When she first died, do you really suppose that I was not able to feel the loss?" A little reflection shows that he was, deeply.

We find an explicit formulation of the Taoist attitude toward the emotions in a passage by the famous commentator Wang Pi:

That in which the sage is superior to ordinary people is the spirit. But what the sage has in common with ordinary people is the emotions. The sage has a superior spirit, and is therefore able to be in harmony with the universe . . . but he has ordinary emotions, and therefore cannot respond to things without joy or sorrow. He responds to things, yet is not ensnared by them.³

II

The major focus of the teachings of Rinzai was on the individual human being. The expression he uses most often for this is *mui no shinnin*, "the true human of no rank," a term that comes from the Taoist tradition. Rinzai's way of presenting the central idea of Mahayana Buddhism was shocking in its directness: the "true human" is not to be sought in the Buddhas and Patriarchs of the tradition, nor in some ideal to be attained in the future, but rather in the very persons of the individuals listening to his speeches. "Do you want to know the Patriarch-Buddha?" he asks, "He is none other than you who stand before me listening to my discourse."⁴ When Rinzai says of the "true

³ *San Kuo Chih*, ch. 28, Commentary; cited in Fung Yu-lan, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy* (New York 1948), p. 238.

⁴ *The Record of Lin-chi*, trans. Ruth F. Sasaki (Kyoto 1975), p.7 (hereafter abbreviated "RL" followed by the page number). This is a translation of the *Lin-chi lu* (Japanese, *Rinzai-roku*) which consists of the recorded sayings of Lin-chi I-hsuan (Rin-

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human of the Way” that “merely according with circumstances as they are, he makes use of his past karma” (*RL* 9–10), one can assume that such a person “sees through” the emotions in a way that allows things to present themselves as they are, while at the same time his “according” is informed by appropriate affect. He responds to things (to paraphrase Wang Pi) with joy and sorrow, but without ensnarement.

A striking feature of Rinzai Zen is the vehemence with which its founder inveighs against what he regards as the stultifying dogmatism and rigidity of the conventional Buddhists of his time. His language is often reminiscent—in tone as well as content—of Nietzsche’s diatribes against “the preachers of slow death” and advocates of “the world beyond”:

There are a bunch of blind shave-pates who, having stuffed themselves with food, sit down to meditate and practice contemplation: arresting the flow of thought they don’t let it rise; they hate noise and seek stillness. This is the method of the heretics. (*RL* 19)

Hakuin was faced with a corresponding degeneration of the Rinzai teachings, and his critique of the “Hinayanists of old” is similarly trenchant:

It was only because the direction of their practice was bad, because they liked only places of solitude and quiet, knew nothing of the dignity of the Bodhisattva . . . that the Tathāgata compared them to pus-oozing wild foxes and that Vimalakirti heaped scorn on them as men who would scorch buds and cause seeds to rot.⁵

Like Rinzai, Hakuin emphasizes that practice undertaken in peaceful seclusion, which he refers to contemptuously as “dead sitting,” is useless in comparison with what he calls “practice in the midst of activity.”⁶ People who practice in this way are contrasted with “those fools

zai Gigen, d. 866), the eponymous founder of a school of Ch’an (Zen) Buddhism that arose in the late T’ang dynasty.

⁵ *The Zen Master Hakuin; Selected Writings*, trans. Philip Yampolsky (New York 1971), p.35 (hereafter abbreviated “*ZMH*”).

⁶ *ZMH* 30–34. The Japanese term here is *naikan*, which means literally “within-looking”; Hakuin’s play on the words effects a significant shift of the meaning from

who starve to death on mountains, thinking that dead sitting and silent illumination suffice and that Zen consists in the source of the mind being in tranquility.” Such people, he says, “fail to see into their own natures” (*ZMH* 57).

Rinzai’s tactic of constantly focusing his listeners’ attention on their own immediate experience carries the implication that the goal of Zen practice is not a condition of *apatheia*, but rather one as vibrant with affective force as our liveliest everyday awareness.

The human being who is right now listening to my discourse . . . is without form, without characteristics, without root, without source, and without any dwelling place, yet is brisk and lively [*kappatsu patsuji*]. As for all his manifold responsive activities, the place where they are carried on is, in fact, no-place. (*RL* 15)

The term “brisk and lively” (used again at *RL* 29) comes from Chinese Buddhism and connotes the spontaneity of a leaping fish as well as a sense of being sharply focused. The “manifold responsive activities” of the true human will not exclude the appropriate emotional reactions. That they take place in “no-place,” however, means that the emotional responses have ceased—to speak in Nietzschean terms—to restrict or tie us down to any particular perspective.

In the context of the traditional Mahayana idea that nirvana is not different from samsara, Rinzai goes on to stress that the obstructions and ensnarements of the samsaric world can be turned around and utilized for the process of liberation. “Even though you bear the remaining influences of past delusions or the karma from having committed the five heinous crimes, these of themselves become the ocean of emancipation.”⁷ The important doctrinal shift effected by East Asian Mahayana Buddhism, to which Rinzai contributed, is especially well illustrated by the case of the “Ox-Herding Pictures” by the twelfth-century Chinese master Kakuan.⁸ Before Kakuan’s time there were ap-

something like “introspection” to “contemplation within [everyday] activity.”

⁷ *RL* 12. Discourse 21 ends with the statement: “Virtuous monks, by creating the karma of the five heinous crimes, you attain emancipation” (*RL* 35).

⁸ The finest version of these pictures with a commentary in a Western language is *Der Ochs und sein Hirte*, elucidated by Master Daizohkutsu R.Ohtsu, trans. Kōichi Tsujimura and Hartmut Buchner (Pfullingen 1958).

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parently only eight images, the last one being the empty circle representing the nothingness of *mu*. Kakuan added the ninth and tenth pictures which portray the mountains and rivers and the man's return to the marketplace carrying the wine-bottle, signifying the self's reintegration into the everyday world.

Hakuin expresses the necessity of this reintegration in terms of affects: "A person who fanatically avoids the objects of the senses and dreads the eight winds that stimulate the passions, unconsciously falls into the pit of the Hinayana and never will be able to achieve the Buddha Way."⁹ But before delusions and karma can be realized as "the ocean of emancipation," the barriers of the ego-centered self have to be broken down; and one of the reasons "the eight winds" are not to be shunned or stilled is that energy from the emotions may help to effect the breakthrough—and this in two rather different ways.

III

The student of Nietzsche who contemplates what has been aptly called the "psychodynamics" of Zen practice according to Hakuin¹⁰ will find strikingly familiar two contrasting yet complementary features there, both of which have emotional correlates. The first concerns the importance of *sickness*—suffering, incapacitation, lack of power—as a facilitating factor in the process; the other concerns the necessity of cultivating what Nietzsche calls "the *warrior* spirit."

Of the forces that move our souls, the emotions are among the somatically most significant, with the closest ties to the body. They also have a special connection with pathology, being capable themselves of engendering illness as well as participating in its cure. The similar estimations of the importance of sickness on the part of Hakuin and Nietzsche may be grounded in a similarity of physical and psychical make-up: like Nietzsche's, Hakuin's bodily constitution was initially

⁹ *ZMH* 35. For one on the way to enlightenment, "the very objects of the senses will be Zen meditation, and the five desires themselves will be the One Vehicle [of Mahayana]" (*ZMH* 36).

¹⁰ See T.P.Kasulis, *Zen Action/Zen Person* (Honolulu 1981), ch.8: "Hakuin: The Psychodynamics of Zen Training," which offers an excellent account of the essentials of Hakuin's aims and methods.

weak, and the intense demands he placed upon it in the relentless pursuit of Zen practice resulted in a series of “mental breakdowns” which brought him to the verge of complete despair and physical collapse. What is important is less the similarity of the somatic disturbances than the fact that both Hakuin and Nietzsche came to regard these incapacitations as instructive and beneficial for their respective tasks. Just as Nietzsche frequently expressed his profound gratitude to the illnesses that plagued him for the insights they afforded into life, so Hakuin in his well known “Letter to a Sick Monk” ascribes to his teacher Shōju Rōjin the avowal: “This severe illness of mine has been an honored good teacher.”¹¹ Here is an excerpt from one of Hakuin’s own accounts of the sufferings to be undergone on the Zen path:

[On my resolve to] stake my life [on assiduous practice] . . . fever rose above my heart, my lungs dried up, both hands and feet became cold as though plunged into ice and snow, and both ears roared as if I were walking between cataracts in the valley. My liver and lungs were completely enervated. Many anxieties beset me, my mind was depressed and exhausted. In sleeping and waking I saw a thousand phenomena. My arm-pits broke out in perspiration continuously and my eyes were constantly filled with tears.¹²

With a change in the opening line to “On my resolve to stake my life on writing yet another book,” this account could easily pass for a passage in one of Nietzsche’s letters to his friends concerning his physiological tribulations. For Nietzsche, such afflictions correspond to the psychological effects of abandoning the security of traditional ways of thinking and embarking upon the “vast ocean of becoming.” In Zarathustra’s words: “Now finally there comes the great terror, the great sickness, the great nausea, the great sea-sickness” (*Za* III.12 §28).

Similarly, what Hakuin calls “Zen sickness” may be seen as a physiological correlate to the “Great Doubt” (*daigi*) and the “Great Death” (*daishi*), stages that he insists must be undergone on the way

¹¹ *ZMH* 77. See also the section entitled “Zen Sickness” in the chapter on Hakuin in Heinrich Dumoulin, *A History of Zen Buddhism* (New York 1965).

¹² *Yasen Kanna*, cited in Dumoulin, p. 261.

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toward enlightenment. In another letter he offers the following rather understated remarks on the process:

When you call forth this great doubt before you in its pure and uninvolved form you may undergo an unpleasant and strange reaction. However, you must accept the fact that the realization of so felicitous a thing as the Great Matter . . . must involve a certain amount of suffering. (*ZMH* 145)

In order to drive through the Great Doubt to the Great Death and beyond, it is necessary to “cut off the root of life.” This may sound like a paradigm case of “attacking life at its roots,” but before we dismiss it as mere *décadence* we should listen to Hakuin’s explication of his exhortation.

Sometimes it is called illusory thoughts, sometimes the root of birth and death, sometimes the passions, sometimes a demon. It is one thing with many names, but if you examine it closely you will find that what it comes down to is one concept: that the self is real. (*ZMH* 134)

This passage prompts a brief digression before we look at the “warrior” spirit shared by Hakuin and Nietzsche. The diversion will also afford an opportunity to turn the tables on Nietzsche in order to put to him a Zen-style question.

Interlude

If in invoking the Buddhist exhortation to “cut off the passions” Hakuin means vanquishing them and leaving it at that, then the Nietzschean charge of *décadence* would hold. In fact Nietzsche sees this kind of move as symptomatic of a particularly dangerous form of degeneration, as is made clear in an early aphorism entitled “Overcoming the Passions.”

The human being who has overcome the passions has come into possession of the most fruitful soil . . . To sow the seed of good spiritual works on the ground of the subdued passions is then the urgent next task. The overcoming is only a means and not an end; if it is not so viewed, all kinds of weeds

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and devilish stuff will quickly spring up in this rich soil, and soon there will be more rank confusion than there ever was before. (*HA* II/2, 53)

While Hakuin might respond by saying that the springing up of weeds is an indication that the ground has not been properly cleared, that one has not yet reached the level of complete nothingness (*mu*), Rinzai Zen could surely endorse a certain kind of re-sowing and applaud the growth of radically new life.

Conversely, if Hakuin's "cutting off the root of life" has to do with getting rid of the idea of the "I" or ego, then Nietzsche, who sought constantly to expose the idea as a mere fiction, would for his part endorse the project. Not only is Hakuin's emphasis on "nourishing the body" and "the art of nurturing life" (*ZMH* 42–44) compatible with Nietzsche's idea that the true Self behind the ego is precisely the lived body (*Leib — Za* I.4), but it also deflects the accusation of *décadence*—and especially when we consider how Hakuin understands the process of "seeing through" the ego:

If you are not a hero who has truly seen into his own nature, don't think that [non-ego] is something that can be known so easily . . . you must be prepared to let go your hold when hanging from a sheer precipice, to die and return again to life. (*ZMH* 135)

This talk of "returning to life" evokes a pattern that is prefigured in the passage just quoted from Nietzsche on overcoming the passions, which itself anticipates some of his later notes on the appropriate stance toward the power of the affects.

Overcoming the affects?—No, not if that means their weakening and annihilation. *But to take them into service*: which involves tyrannizing them for a long time (not even as an individual, but as a community, a race, etc.). Eventually one gives them back their freedom with confidence: they love us like good servants and ultimately go where our best inclines. (*WP* 384)

Another note from this period speaks in the same vein about "being

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able to take into service the greatest natural powers—the affects” (*WP* 386).

This is the point at which we might ask Nietzsche a question from the Zen perspective, and in a typically Zen form that Nietzsche is in fact himself fond of employing—namely: “*Who* is it that overcomes the passions and does the new planting?” “*Who* is to tyrannize the affects and take them into service?”¹³

While it is clear that from the Zen perspective the answer to the “who?” question is “the true human without rank” who depends on nothing (*mu*), the response from the Nietzschean side is not immediately clear. There is, however, a thread running through Nietzsche’s writings that leads to the answer—if not to one unequivocal term or name. The theme first appears in *Dawn of Morning* where, in an aphorism whose title invokes the themes of self-mastery and moderation, he sketches a picture of the psyche as a field of drives (*Triebe*) striving for power (aph. 109). While we may have the impression, when the power of a particular drive is held in check, that it is the intellect that has subdued the importunate force, Nietzsche argues that this is an illusion, and that what has prevailed is simply “*another drive* that is a *rival* of the one whose violence has been tormenting us.” (Perhaps something like “the drive for peace and quiet” or “fear of shame” has prevailed.)

This radical decentering of the psyche is something Nietzsche worked at to the end of his career. He consistently deconstructs the opposition between reason or intellect and the passions or emotions by understanding the former as simply a configuration of the multiplicity of drives that constitute the psyche.¹⁴ He sometimes calls the “greater power” that masters the emotions “the will”; but as long as we bear in mind that will is for Nietzsche always essentially multiple, a play of interpretive forces, the resultant picture of the polycentric psyche remains compatible with the Zen idea of non-ego (*muga*).

¹³ This is a crucial question to keep asking in the context of Zen practice, in view of the Protean tenaciousness of the ego, which persists in representing itself in various guises and disguises.

¹⁴ See, for example, *GS* 333, *BGE* 36, *WP* 387.

IV

That Nietzsche himself had the strength and courage to break through to the stillness behind the drives and emotions to a perspective so similar to that of Zen is all the more surprising in view of the major difference between their *modi operandi*. While the practice of Zen involves interaction between master and student or master and master, Nietzsche was for most of his life more solitary and detached from human intercourse than any Zen master of the order of Rinzai or Hakuin. Indeed the Rinzai tradition was born out of an intensification of the relationship between two practitioners, and it was from the physical vitality of the engagements between master and pupil that the school's "warrior spirit" emerged.¹⁵ The major episodes surrounding Rinzai's enlightenment are characterized by frequent and sudden loud shouts, as well as by violent exchanges between Rinzai and his teacher Ōbaku and another master, Daigu, involving violent striking and jabbing with heavy sticks (*RL* 50–56).

But to return to Hakuin, whom we left hanging on the edge of a precipice: he was emphasizing the courage it takes to realize oneself as not-self.

Supposing a man should find himself in some desolate area where no one has ever walked before. Below him are the perpendicular walls of a bottomless chasm. His feet rest precariously on a patch of slippery moss, and there is no spot of earth on which he can steady himself. He can neither advance nor retreat; he faces only death. . . . His life hangs as if from a dangling thread. . . . Then when suddenly you return to life, there is the great joy of one who drinks the water and knows for himself whether it is hot or cold. . . . This is known as seeing into one's own nature. (*ZMH* 135)

One is reminded here of the crucial role that *courage* (*Mut*)—as well as

¹⁵ The shouting so typical of Rinzai practice was initiated by Ma-tsu, a master three generations back in Rinzai's lineage; but it was with Rinzai that the interactions took on a strikingly vital character.

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its concomitant affects of melancholic depression (*Schwermut*) and exuberance (*Übermut*)—plays in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, in the protagonist's final engagement with the thought of eternal recurrence.¹⁶ It is only through courage that Zarathustra is able to overcome his arch-enemy, the “spirit of gravity,” whose weight would drag him down into the depths of the abyss:

There is something in me I call courage . . . Courage that attacks: for in every attack there is ringing play. . . . Courage even slays dizziness at the edge of abysses: and where would human beings not be standing at the edge of abysses! Is seeing not itself--seeing abysses? (*Za* III.2)

The mood of the warrior (albeit complemented by certain “feminine” traits¹⁷) was initially encouraged by Zarathustra's realization that “[his] enemies too are part of [his] bliss”:

And when I want to mount my wildest steed, it is always my spear that helps me up the best . . . My spear, which I hurl against my enemies! How grateful I am to my enemies that I may finally hurl it! (*Za* II.1)

There is a suggestion that Zarathustra's enemies extend beyond those of his listeners who have distorted his teachings. In Hakuin's case the extension is perhaps even farther-reaching and couched in imagery resonant with Zarathustra's which serves to banish any misconceptions of the mood of Zen practice as apathetic:

¹⁶ There is something corresponding to this triad of courage, depression, and exuberance in the emotional swings undergone by Hakuin in the progress of his practice. At one point he reports on a breakthrough as follows: “I felt that I had achieved the status [of the former Masters] . . . My pride soared up like a majestic mountain, my arrogance surged forward like the tide” (*ZMH* 118). He then presents himself to his Master to have his “enlightenment” authenticated—upon which the Master laughs, tweaks his nose, and dismisses him with the exhortation to keep practicing. His subsequent practice involves a succession of further breakthroughs, each flanked by experiences of total despair and boundless joy.

¹⁷ Zarathustra's quasi heroic characteristics are complemented throughout by some quite anti-heroic traits, including a matrix of feminine images having especially to do with pregnancy and labor—which are again related to sickness and suffering.

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How does one obtain true enlightenment? In the busy round of mundane affairs, in the confusion of worldly problems, amidst the seven upside-downs and the eight upsets, behave as a valiant man would when surrounded by a host of enemies. Mount your steed, raise your lance, and, with a good showing of your courageous spirit, make up your mind to attack, destroy and annihilate the enemy. . . . At all times in your study of Zen, fight against delusions and worldly thoughts, battle the black demon of sleep, attack concepts of the active and the passive, order and disorder, right and wrong, hate and love, and join battle with the things of the mundane world. (*ZMH* 65)

Hardly what one would style a quietistic detachment from the world.

V

What the Zen and Nietzschean perspectives have in common is an appreciation of the vital power of the emotions and a refusal to let that power be lost through the reduction or extirpation of affect. There is a shared sense that the emotions constitute motive forces that can be channeled to effect a breakthrough in our normal ways of being in the world. The major difference may lie in Nietzsche's apparently greater concern with the cognitive powers of the emotions, with the emotions as movements of the psyche through which one comes to know things. More so than the Zen thinkers, he sees the emotions as ways of penetrating matters and opening them up, as arrows that pierce to the hearts of things and thereby bring our hearts closer to them. The opposition between this "Dionysiac" method, which takes joy in merging and abolishing boundaries, and the cool detachment of Apollo that characterizes the mainstream tradition of Western epistemology runs through Nietzsche's major works.¹⁸ A later formulation of the idea can be found in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, where he writes of preparing the intellect for a future "objectivity" that will consist in "the

¹⁸ A classic presentation of this opposition, couched in vivid procreative imagery, is to be found in the chapter "On Immaculate Perception" in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (II.15).

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ability . . . to employ the very variety of perspectives and affect-interpretations in the service of knowledge.”:

There is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective “knowing”; and the *more* affects we can let speak about a thing, the *more* eyes, different eyes, we can use to look at a thing, the more complete our “concept” of this thing, our “objectivity,” will be. But to eliminate the will altogether, to suspend each and every affect, supposing we were capable of this: would this not mean to *castrate* the intellect?¹⁹

With their relative indifference to epistemological issues, the major figures of the Rinzai tradition have less concern with “objectivity” as such; and while, on the other hand, they have no interest in “suspend[ing] each and every affect,” their aim is to open up a space for free play with the emotions rather than to pursue the Dionysian compounding of affect advocated by Nietzsche. The koan practice of the Rinzai school serves to constellate psychic energy and intensify its affective components, in such a way as to effect a kind of “short-circuit” of conceptual thinking. And yet, remarkably, this sort-circuiting results in neither the castration of the intellect nor the annihilation of emotion that Nietzsche sees as the death of the spirit and soul.

¹⁹ *GM* III.2; see also *BGE* 211, where Nietzsche writes of the desirability of being able to “see with many kinds of eyes and consciences.”