

Conversation on Nietzsche and *Zarathustra*

between Horst Hutter and Graham Parkes

Vienna, June 2006

HH: What I like very much about your translation of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and your introduction is the emphasis on the importance of the musical aspect of Nietzsche. The fact that he thought of his writings as musical compositions. He would read them to friends, would read them aloud, and he would select the many notes that he had that not only fit in terms of themes, but also in terms of musical structure, the sound and the rhythm, etc. So I thought that was really very, very good.

GP: I think we tend to forget that. I don't know if I mentioned it in the introduction, but certainly when you look at Nietzsche's life, and you think of those many weekends he spent at Tribschen with the Wagners, that was the standard thing they did after dinner: read some work of literature, or something that Wagner or Nietzsche was working on at the time. One or another would read it out loud. And Cosima would be there too, and whoever else was visiting. Better than radio or television.

HH: Right, right, a much more active form of entertainment.

GP: Yes. When we're writing something nowadays, and we have colleagues who could help, we tend to print it out and send it to them, or give it to them. But it's rare that we *read* it to them.

The musical structure is interesting, but there's something puzzling about Nietzsche's not only saying that *Zarathustra* needs to be understood under the rubric of music, but that it has the structure of a *symphony* in particular. So why a symphony when the text is so dominated by a single voice—Zarathustra's. Who else do we hear? I mean, we hear a few of the disciples now and then, his animals the eagle and serpent, and a number of other characters, especially in part four. So why not an oratorio, or a concerto, where there's the main instrument and then the rest of the orchestra?

But then when Mahler says that *Zarathustra* has a symphonic structure, you have to take that seriously, because few people have understood the structure of the symphony better than Mahler. And in fact you can actually see how it might work: if you think the book ends at the culmination of part three, you have the early symphony in three movements up to Haydn, and if you include part four, then you have the four-movement symphony of Mozart, Beethoven, and Brahms. You can

see the first part as a classical first movement in sonata-allegro form, the second part as an adagio, and so on.

If you spelled it out, it would help give us a sense of what Schumann called the *grosse Form* of the work. It could help answer the questions of why this particular chapter comes at this point in the book.

HH: Yes, why it comes after the previous chapter.

GP: I think of Laurence Lampert's *Nietzsche's Teaching*: one of the great virtues of that book is that he shows how, why certain chapters are grouped together. I think to understand the symphonic structure would help us with that even more in seeing "OK now we're at the Coda," or whatever.

HH: Do you know Lawrence Hatab's recent book, *Nietzsche's Life Sentence*?

GP: No, I don't. I saw it discussed in the Nietzsche Circle. But I haven't read it, no.

HH: He makes two points about that. He also makes the symphony point. But he thinks it's more like an opera, like Wagner's music drama. And behind Wagner's music drama is Greek tragedy so there are the three tragic plays, and part four is a satyr play. That's the point he makes.

GP: Gary Shapiro, I think, has pointed the latter out as well.

HH: Yes, he quotes Shapiro on that. But I wanted to also bring up a point about the rhetorical structure of the—you sort of put it from the performance point of view. But I think I also take a look at Nietzsche's composition of his books in terms of shaping the reader, having an impact on the reader. Right? For example as Lampert points out in his book, *Nietzsche's Task*, which he picks up from Leo Strauss' essay on Nietzsche's the "Note on the plan of *Beyond Good and Evil*." What Strauss says is why does the aphorism, the grave aphorism, I forget what number, follow on the light-hearted aphorism? Why? If you try to raise that question what becomes operative here is the response of the reader. So Nietzsche's books in a way are written so that the reader continues writing them, as it were, in his or her soul. By continuing to write it the reader transforms himself, or herself. So reading Nietzsche is already an engagement, a serious engagement, it's an act of self-transformation. You won't come out unharmed.

GH: (laughs) You certainly won't come out the same.

HH: Not the same. You won't come out the same. So that's what I also think is important to consider in terms of the rhetoric. The rhetorical structure.

One thing that has struck me in reading the early lectures on rhetoric, the Greek rhetoric, the *Beredsamkeit* where Nietzsche really makes two points. First of all; all language is rhetoric. Every utterance is a rhetorical exercise. It's always the attempt to influence somebody, and so language itself is rhetorical. You can't get around this. What that means then is—because that brings out the whole relationship between sophistry and philosophy which is so prominent in the Platonic Dialogues, because what the Platonic Socrates accuses the sophists of doing is just wanting to have an effect. Not considering what the consequences of having an effect will be. So what counts then is how can I figure to make that guy move the furthest and the quickest and in whatever direction I want him to move in. That is highly unethical, can be highly unethical. Sheer sophistry. I mean, the example in the *Phaedrus* that Socrates uses is supposing someone doesn't know the difference between donkeys and horses and then his tribe is being threatened by a cavalry tribe that comes on horseback. And you have a salesman of donkeys who sells the tribe the donkeys as horses, saying that these are the most efficient fighting animals. So imagine an army of donkeys running against an army of horses. The sophist would do that as long as he could run away afterwards. This brings up the whole relationship of sophistry to philosophy because many people have accused Nietzsche of being a Sophist.

GP: I remember. That's an interesting point. As we were saying yesterday, the customary alternative to mere sophistry is philosophy as something that gets to the truth. And then the philosopher is apparently able to write up the truth in a book, and the rest of us can get the truth from the book. And clearly that's not what Nietzsche ...

HH: Completely not.

GP: The other extreme would be the kind of deconstructionist who says that Nietzsche isn't interested in ...

HH: Conveying anything.

GP: ... conveying anything, let alone influencing anyone, which I think is just clearly wrong. When you look at his letters and so on—I mean he was ...

HH: Oh, oh, absolutely, he was dying to have an effect.

GP: Then it became clearer and clearer to him that the effect was almost nonexistent because nobody was buying his books. I think that's what ultimately drove him over the edge. "This is never going to happen while I'm alive"—a grim thought for an author and an artist. To have to give up hope with your contemporaries altogether.

HH: I quote a letter from 1886 where he says this to Overbeck; he is just dying for someone to listen to him and Nietzsche said it's so hard for me to be so full of vision, and wanting to communicate it to some one, and there's nobody. Nobody at all.

GP: That was what made the Lou Salomé affair so painful for him. He saw her as someone he could talk to. She would understand him.

HH: I make a big point about him wanting to found a philosophical school on the lines of the Platonic Academy and the Epicurean Garden. That would be the transmission belt.

GP: Yes, because I think that even after his ten years of teaching at Basel he didn't give up trying to be a teacher. He loved to teach: *Zarathustra* is clearly the teacher in Nietzsche. I think that's why *Zarathustra* is such a personal book for him: he has *Zarathustra* failing miserably with successive groups of potential disciples, and potential students and listeners, and ending up still thinking "This isn't working."

HH: Yes. But I'd like to go back to the point where you asked me about the Platonism of Nietzsche. It hinges upon a question of the one and the many. It's the problem of the one and the many. So how can you have both a

message for all and for nobody. You don't seem to agree with Heidegger's interpretation of that sub-title of *Zarathustra*. Where Heidegger says, well you say how many of us reach the level where we are the essential, the authentic self and who can know? Not many, right?

GP: In general I'm a great admirer of Heidegger, but when it comes to interpreting Nietzsche, he's often very insightful, but then when he tries to push Nietzsche back into being not quite the end of metaphysics, he seems to miss the point. I think Heidegger can do that only because he ignores Nietzsche's rhetoric and styles.

HH: That's true.

GP: For someone who's written as illuminatingly as Heidegger has about poetry—how can he miss the poetry of Nietzsche? That's always struck me as perverse!

HH: I think it's the influence of Husserl. Because Husserl in the *Logische Untersuchungen* tries to find a rhetoric free language. And there is no such thing.

GP: Right. That Heidegger reading of the *for Nobody* ... was that what you meant?

HH: But how many of us become that for ourselves? That is, as one becomes for oneself worthy of thinking about in one's essential nature. I would say I think that one of the objectives of Nietzsche's is precisely to do that, to create free spirits who become worthy of thinking of themselves in their essential nature. Because what is opened up thereby is that which goes through us which is not willed by anybody, which is not subject to human volition, not subject to human doing, which is just the God within, let's say. For example, Rosen makes a big point of that in his *The Mask of Enlightenment* I believe.

GP: Yes. Although, you know, for me the important preposition there is *through*. That these forces work *through* the locus of the body.

HH: Yes, the *Leib*.

GP: That preposition "in" suggests that we have in us some divine power or force or whatever. But I think this is a somewhat different tradition. That's to put Nietzsche too much into, say, the Christian contemplative tradition, or the Judaeo-Christian tradition, where you feel the god within. Whereas it seems to me, on the understanding of will to power that I have, that really the best preposition is *through*. That these forces work *through* us,

and that Apollo or Dionysus is not in you or me *but rather works through us*.

HH: O, yes, I would go along with that. One of the things that I think is important in Nietzsche is, he says that in the early work, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, no, in one of the *Untimely Meditations* that the distinction between *Seele* and *Körper* is useless. He is through using the word *Körper* and he prefers the word *Leib*.

GP: Right. I noticed, and you have a discussion of that in your book [*Shaping the Future: Nietzsche's New Regime of the Soul and its Ascetic Practices*].

HH: About *leib*: *Am Leitfaden des Leibes*. **Thread of life**, which is taken from Nietzsche, the guiding thread of the body, which incidentally is both Platonic and Hippocratic. It's Hippocratic through Plato to Nietzsche. Behind that, the Protestant tradition. The tradition, I believe, of the *Geistleib*, the body as the spirit, and the spirit as the body. The whole separation is a fiction. To begin with, it is a fiction which is poetical and a political fiction because it creates a dualistic structure where the individual controls himself, we create the inner policeman so to speak, which is the cultural control factor in each of us. This is I think what Nietzsche wants to do, first to undo that fiction, and then to open the way

for the construction of new fictions, which however he can't foresee. Because the future does not yet exist, right?

But I want to bring it to your point about the will to power, which I thought was very good; your interpretation of will to power. You know of course the book by Wolfgang Müller-Lauter: not *Nietzsches Philosophie der Gegensätze und die Gegensätze seiner Philosophie*, but a later one called *Der Wille zur Macht*.

GP: No, I haven't read that one.

HH: He says it's a mistake to talk about *Wille*. It's really a plural. A plurality, a multiplicity. What I like about that was your reference to the way you see that, but that brings up the whole question of truth. I just read a doctoral dissertation from the University of Toronto that I thought was very, very good. An analysis, a very close textual analysis, very Straussian of *The Birth of Tragedy*, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, and *Beyond Good and Evil*. Just those, with some references to *Zarathustra*. This person she wants to answer the question that Nietzsche poses in *Beyond Good and Evil*: What is noble? What is the new aristocracy going to be like? And she makes a point, which I think was wrong, but it is a good point she raises. She tries to make a distinction between fact and interpretation and I think Nietzsche collapses that distinction. She makes the point, OK, I cut myself with a knife, I have a flesh wound, that's the fact and the pain I feel is my

interpretation of that fact, right? It enables her to make the distinction between that fact and interpretation. I think Nietzsche goes beyond that because he would say the flesh wound itself is also an interpretation. It's an interpretation at a deeper level. Because obviously if I cut part of a portion of a crocodile, the crocodile will interpret the wound very differently. It will be a completely different—"fact". I thought your way of dealing with Will to Power left open that possibility. It points to "truth." But you don't deal very much with the notion of truth in Nietzsche.

GP: No, it's too difficult for me. And I'm always suspicious if there's only one of it: that too easily gets you into dogmatism, or even fundamentalism. I'm more comfortable with that idea, in the fifth book I think of *The Joyful Science*, where Nietzsche says that all existence is interpretation: *Alles Dasein ist interpretierendes*.

HH: Exactly. It's all the interpretation

GP: It's all wills to power interpreting other wills to power: interpretations all the way down.

HH: The crocodile is an interpretation. The kangaroo is an interpretation.

GP: Right. They are also centres of interpretation, configurations of interpretive forces or energies. And that kind of monism of will to power as interpretation undercuts—he says that explicitly—the traditional oppositions between realism and idealism, or materialism and idealism. There is only one force—not a categorical statement of fact, but as an experimental “What if?” to be tested in our experience.

HH: Right, I thought that was very good. The hypothetical nature of that what if?

GP: This gets back to your point about rhetorical force. With the thought of eternal recurrence too: he’s pretty sure that if some of us can entertain that “What if?” in our experience, in our lives, it will transform them. And that “Supposing that” in *Beyond Good and Evil* 36, where it says “Supposing that” drives (*Triebleben*) are all there is? Clearly, it’s an invitation to understand ourselves that way and the consequences of doing so are pretty interesting. People have generally underestimated the importance of the drives for Nietzsche—but you don’t. And didn’t I read in your book that the drives are always engaged in *mentation*?

HH: That’s my word for interpretation: *mentation*.

GP: Well, whatever it is that they’re doing, they’ve been doing it for millennia. That’s for me the other fascinating aspect of Nietzsche’s ideas about the

drives: that our interpreting right now, our talking right now, everything we do is coming from long ago ...

HH: From way back, from way back ...

GP: And through the medium of the inherited body ...

HH: that each one of us is.

GP: And that idea exerted an enormous influence on people like Freud and Jung, who developed more comprehensive ideas about the “archaic heritage” of the contemporary psyche.

HH: You’re right. One other reason I find very significant *Daybreak* 453, called “Moral interregnum,” in that respect which is “each one of us is an interpretation, is an experiment. So let us be our own regents called moral interregnum. We live in a moral interregnum. We have the choice of a postliminary or preliminary existence. Let us be our own *Reges*, be it postliminary or preliminary. He of course chose preliminary existence. And so in that, we are really free to become our own kings, so to speak. I think I found that to be very important in regard to what we were just talking about.

GP: Yes, right. And another thing that it seems to me most readers tend to overlook is Nietzsche's insistence that almost all of our drive-life, which is the largest part of our psychical life, goes on *beneath the threshold* of awareness.

HH: Off the web, completely.

GP: And the enormous contribution of unconscious phantasy, for Nietzsche, all those passages about sleepwalking in *The Joyful Science* [aphorisms 54-63] and so on.

HH: Phenomenal. And *Erleben ist ein Erdichten*.

GP: Yes, and so, these issues come up in similar ways in both Buddhism and Daoism, for example. This friend of mine I think I mentioned to you at Brock University, Hans-Georg Moeller, who does wonderful work on Daoism, is always trying to get me to read Niklaus Luhman, because his ideas about systems theory put individual agency, human agency, in question in a similar way. But we persist in thinking—even though Nietzsche, the depth psychologists, the Buddhists, the Daoists, the systems theorists, and heaven knows who else are arguing the opposite—against that we're really in control.

HH: That we think that we are in charge. Yes.

GP: And I think that the Buddhists see through that in an interesting way. I mean the idea of a karmic cycle of control: that we try to bolster our sense of agency by controlling, and the more we think we're gaining control the more there is that which seems to need to be controlled, and so we have to try even harder to control everything—and it just leads to one disaster after another. But if you can ...

HH: Take seriously criminal justice?

GP: Right (laughing). If we take seriously for a moment the possibility that there's all this stuff coming through us that we aren't even aware of, then we might well divert some of that control energy to listening and looking more, to paying more attention to what's going on inside, outside, and in between. It makes a difference if you can shake some of that arrogant self-confidence that the "I" knows perfectly well what it's doing.

HH: Yes. The illusion. But of course, I try to look at it from the view point of those people that Nietzsche attacks, or that configuration of vision that Nietzsche attacks; the Christian self, let's say. It is very frightening. It's very frightening to realize for someone, that he or she is not in charge. That things just happen, you know, and that many of the things that

happen are bad, are painful. And so the idea of trying to avoid that, and so it's very tempting, to fall into the egotist illusion.

GP: Yes. But suppose that when a so-called accident happens, some stroke of fate that hurts, we ask—instead of just being confirmed in our belief that the world is a nasty place and is out to get us—“So why did just that kind of accident happen to me, at that particular point in my life? What’s going on, what’s the message here?” A little karmic reflection might be in order. Freud certainly doesn’t believe in mere accidents either—and I’ll bet he gets that from Nietzsche’s talking about accidents and “fate.” That illusory opposition between *ego* and *fatum*. The Japanese philosopher Keiji Nishitani has an excellent discussion of that issue [in his book *The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism*], which approaches it from the standpoint of karma. What I tend to see as a stroke of fate, coming out of the blue, coming out of nowhere, is actually *me* in the larger sense of the self: it’s really *I* who is happening to *me*. It reminds me of something you cite in your book in connection with the Stoics and Epicureans, about the need to become a certain kind of physicist if you’re going to be able to live well. They’re saying let’s try to understand how the world works, and what these slates that fall off roofs onto people’s heads are doing—just what’s going on here? How does all this fit together? Again this move of expanding one’s focus on the particular event to include the broadest appropriate context is something that’s always been emphasized in the

East Asian traditions. And an acquaintance with those ideas, I think, helps one to see the extent that similar things are going on in Nietzsche. There are definitely resonances between several of those non-Western non-metaphysical philosophies and certain side-currents, marginalized strains, in the western tradition. But now I've forgotten where that one was going.

HH: Where *you* wanted to go?

GP: Right (Laughs).

HH: I was thinking, yes, go ahead.

GP: Hmm ... but *where* to?

HH: The problem of, I forget which number, *The Antinomy of Pure Reason*, in Kant, you know, everything is determined, but everything is free at the same time.

GP: Well I think there's a similar paradox in the philosophies I was talking about: that in some sense a dissolution of the "I" and an expansion of the sense of self ultimately have similar effects. You can see it in Nietzsche's equation of ego with *fatum*. He's suspicious of that natural tendency to say "No, these things that I'm determined by are not me, these people I don't

like, that I hate, you know, the “shadow figures” in Jungian terms, all the people who obstruct me and get in my way and make things so difficult: I have a stake in regarding them as *other*. Those bricks falling off buildings, those cars smashing into me on my bicycle, and so on. If I can begin to see those as parts of me happening to me, I get a better sense of how the whole thing might hang together. The task is to understand all those others as being actually self, and so once you expand the idea of the self in that way, it comes to the same thing as reducing the I. That’s surely one of the most important themes in *Zarathustra*—which you talk about too—the difference between the *Ich* and the *Selbst*.

HH: Right. And that brings me to a point; I think Nietzsche would agree, that philosophy is not for the many, it’s for the few. He is writing for free spirits whom he wants to create and to whom he wants to provide the tools to shape themselves, and some of them will become philosophers. So, if we assume that, there is still the Platonist aspect of finding a rule for living, for the many. For creating a new political order, a new society—the political Nietzsche, which I think that you don’t emphasize very much.

GP: No, I don’t. You’re right.

HH: But I think it's an important aspect, because you can say, or somebody can say: 'Ok, this is all fine and good what you guys are talking about, but how many people does that concern?' Isn't the Pope, let's say, more important in that respect, because the Pope at least has a rule of living, which touches hundreds of millions? And there is the Islamic tradition, you know, where they say 'do this, don't do that', and they structure the soul in a very particular way—and that's very necessary too. Because what are these people going to do? Because not everybody can become philosophers, not everybody can become enlightened. Even the Buddhists have created the Church. I mean there's Theravada, and Hinayana, Mahayana Buddhism, and Tibetan Buddhism, and these are different structures of ways of life. So what do we do about that? What do we?

GP: Yes, that's a good question. You are right, I have shied away from it, because I don't know. I mean, it's sometimes hard for me to see what Nietzsche really wants to say about that. And then sometimes I fear that what he wants to say about that is a little too shocking, a little too difficult (laughs). I think that if you look at Zarathustra, for example, there is definitely a sense in which his suffering, to a large extent, is self-inflicted. I mean he talks about the cruelty that is necessary to exert upon one's self, on the way to self overcoming, you know. If you are going to find yourself, you go through your own misery. But there is also a sense in Zarathustra—the hard side of Zarathustra—that he may have earned the

right through being hard on himself for so long, to be hard on some of the rest of us. And that's to me is what is the interesting question. So what would that consist in? Nietzsche says enough about that in terms of relationships, and friendships so on, but in terms of the politics of how that would work. How would the philosophers of the future actually rule?

HH: Yeah, well I see friendship as much more political than perhaps you do. And I am sort of more on Aristotle's side in that friendship is a profoundly political relationship. I mean, the other book I wrote is *Politics as Friendship*. And it is an exposition on Plato, Aristotle, and Epicurus on friendship. So, I see in the conception of friendship in Nietzsche, the germ of a new kind of political order. I discuss it in my second chapter, on Agonistic friendship. Another aspect I want to bring up you've mentioned to me the background in Nietzsche of Luther, the German translation of the Bible. And that linguistically, rhetorically it is very much present. You suggested Nietzsche may have known the Luther Bible by heart.

GP: Right.

HH: Which is entirely possible from his background. Now, could you say something about how this works, how you see this working in terms of Zarathustra. And you mentioned an internet site where you can access biblical translations, German translations of Luther. You know, quotations

from Luther, the exact source, et cetera. You obviously linked it to certain passages in Zarathustra which you then translated in this. It must have been a lot of work.

GP: It was a lot of work. You see, any time I had the least suspicion of a biblical allusion I would check one of the “Search the Luther Bible in German” websites (there are several of them!), and the search would almost always come up with at least one passage. You simply put in a word or phrase and it would then give you chapter and verse. In the endnotes I used the King James Version to quote a sentence or two to give the context, but that often didn’t work because Nietzsche was specifically echoing Luther’s language, and often the King James Version would use different equivalents in English.

I believe there are more allusions to the New Testament than to the Old, and since Zarathustra is so often echoing or parodying Jesus, I thought the image on the book’s front cover should be somewhat reminiscent of Christ. But quite a few people apparently thought ...

HH: Jesus. Too much Jesus.

GP: Right. Yes. But it shouldn’t be too much Jesus.

HH: No. I think that's just fine. When Rainer J. Hanshe said that he thought, he thinks that other people might think the image of Jesus is on there and that Nietzsche wants to get away from that. I said no, this is just fine. Because dialectically he relates to the past and looks forward to the future.

GP: Although it's true that he shouldn't look too Christ-like. The composition was based on that magnificent self-portrait by Dürer—the one where he looks like Jesus.

HH: Right, well, we don't know exactly what Christ looks like. That's a big contentious issue. A racist issue. It's a big issue. Someone will say, you know, make this an Aryan prophet.

GP: I have to tell you in the development of the image I had to keep asking for the figure to look more Persian, so he gradually became darker-skinned and thicker-bearded as the painting progressed. And those end-curls of the hair are typically Persian. And that's the Bay of Rapallo, by the way, in the background, where Nietzsche says the figure of Zarathustra first came to him.

But to go back to the Bible: in those days devout Pietists like the Nietzsches spent a large amount of time reading the Bible out loud, as a family. And so there must have been hundreds of passages that Nietzsche

heard over and over again as he was growing up—at home, in church, at school.

HH: It was all around his innocent mind.

GP: Right. And given how fast he says the writing of *Zarathustra* was—the first three parts in ten days each—he must have been working at a fever pitch of inspiration, so that the allusions to the Bible weren't deliberately chosen ...

HH: That they just came out of him. It's like what you said before about the past shaping us in the present without our being aware of it. Yes.

But I'd like to get back to the implications of *Zarathustra* for the political future. Because I can say then: "Very good, I can appreciate all of that. But then, I have to live my life, I am a teacher, or I have children. How do I raise my children? What are the perspectives in terms of which I want to emphasize?" Because if I think of the three transformations—the camel, the lion, and the child—it's easy to see the camel stage, it's easy to see the lion stage, but I can't stay with the lion stage. I have to at some point move on to the child stage, and I have to realize that the child is a completely open creature, a self-propelled wheel. But then, how do I form the child? What do I do? Is there anything there in Nietzsche, or is Nietzsche useless for that?

GP: Well, let's break the cardinal rule and take this literally for a moment—and ask how we educate our flesh-and-blood children. How do we raise them?

HH: Because that requires a whole society. As they say, it takes a village to raise a child.

GP: Right, and it seems to me that there's a fair amount in *Zarathustra* that's relevant to this task. We can say to the child, for example, if asked about the world beyond: don't believe those who tried to convince you that there is a world behind this one, and don't believe in the despisers of the body. Here's why people tend to think that way. There's a lot of advice on things that are good to avoid.

HH: Yes, but then the question is: can you avoid it? Because we are surrounded by societies which are based on despising the body, which are based on puritanical moralism, which are filled with puritans who have wild, suppressed hungers (GP Laughing), and who are very aggressive, and who won't let you alone either, who will come after you.

GP: But, surely there's a lot in this book that would help a young person stand firm on that. I find, for example, that students find what Zarathustra says

about friendship illuminating and encouraging—not just letting it all hang out, but rather looking good for one’s friend, so as to stimulate a striving to do better. Chapters such as “On the New Idol” and “On the Flies of the Marketplace” seem especially relevant these days. As I was translating, there were numerous places where I thought that Zarathustra’s excoriations of modernity and late 19th-century bourgeois society are even more relevant to some of the things that are going on today.

HH: Oh yes! I mean the whole system of criminal so-called justice is all based on revenge and punishment.

GP: Right. He really sees that one clearly. But another thing, when you talk about education: there is in *Zarathustra* that very simple admonition to “Stay true to the Earth!” Many people don’t see it, and think that a philosophy of will to power must encourage domination of the earth, but I see a reverence for the earth running all through Nietzsche’s work. If you look at his life it’s clear that he was someone who drew considerable nourishment for the soul from the natural world. That very palpable presence of natural phenomena throughout *Zarathustra*, that natural backdrop for the whole action, is clearly an important thing for him, and we’ve removed ourselves so much farther away from the natural since Nietzsche’s time and are now in great danger of losing it completely. That’s one thing I’ve started to work on recently, a book called *Returning*

to Earth that elaborates Zarathustra's admonition to stay true to the earth. It would outline an alternative worldview to the still predominant Cartesian-Newtonian view that has now become globally accepted because it has allowed humans to dominate the earth—to the point now where we're about to destroy it.

HH: Yes. I mean, you could sort of say that there is the main movement of society as a whole which is towards auto-destruction. I believe that it is headed moving towards a great cataclysm, an ecological collapse and also a political collapse, but at the same time the great danger for the survival of the human species—and I think Nietzsche takes the notion that the human species might not survive. Seriously, sometimes the earth has a skin, and one of the diseases is the human species, the proud Adam who invented knowledge and then the planet earth turned cold, and that was the end of that. So that might very well be the case, but at the same time I'm be tempted to quote Holderlin "*Wo Gefahr ist, da wächst das Rettende auch*"—and that would be in terms of returning to the earth: what are the things that we find today, concretely, actually, where people actually take that seriously and do it. How do people return to the earth?

GP: Well, not very many, and I think it's because of a pervasive resentment against that Dionysian ability of the natural world to regenerate itself, to be constantly going through birth and rebirth,

HH: Death as life's way of having more life.

GP: Right. And that if you can't accept that, it seems the resentment kicks in, and you say "Damn it, we'll show that life which keeps regenerating itself, and we'll kill it, we'll put a stop to the whole damned thing." That seems to be a powerful implication in *Zarathustra*, but how do you get that across to people? And that's why I like your emphasis on ascetic practices: you see it in *Zarathustra* you see it in Nietzsche's life. But how do you get across to people that they can do better with much less?

HH: Not to the powerful. I don't think that the powerful would do any such thing.

GP: And this is connected with Nietzsche's fascination with nutrition—you have an excellent discussion of that—and with climate and the weather, which so few philosophers have thought worthy of their attention. All these things hang together: the addiction to fast food and the alienation from the earth that our neglect of food implies—that goes together with that wonderfully modern conceit that "We can live anywhere, we Americans: there's no part of the country that we can't make habitable for ourselves. Doesn't matter what the weather is like, what the local conditions are like, what the soil is like, we can do it." And for Nietzsche,

place is of paramount importance—and I think he has a lot to teach us on that score.

HH: Yes, but you see, it mustn't just remain an intellectual teaching. That is why I like your angle with East Asian thought so much. Because in East Asian thought, what is emphasized is the practice, the theory of Feng Shui, and it's the same attitudes towards myths and theories that Nietzsche has, or similar attitudes. You know, the propositional content is of secondary importance, what counts are the practices, because the propositional content comes out of the practice anyhow, and the practice needs to be changed. The Christian practice needs to be changed, the mortification of the flesh and all of that kind of *Askesis*, that denial of certain things, which is part of ancient ascetic practices also but, they didn't emphasize that so much. There is an aphorism in *The Joyful Science*, I forget which number: 'In so far as we do, we let go'. So instead, he counters the Christian *Askesis* which tries to deny certain aspects, and diabolizes them, makes them into that *Verteufelung*, a pawn of the devil, right? And then, there is another *Askesis* where you say that you are aware of this, you take consciousness of this, and where you engage in a practice where this is acknowledged and then you don't have to fight anymore, it goes away but itself, it becomes less important. I mean I am sort of aware of it through the practice of martial arts, and that to me has given me the kind of practical knowledge of that.

GP: Right. There's a lot to be said about those issues from the East-Asian point of view.

HH: So I think that, to get back to your translation of *Zarathustra*, in the introduction and especially the notes, I think it's a very very good thing to come on the market now, to make it available for English reading students. I mean, you do as much as possible to imitate the musicality of the German text, and I think it's very important.

GP: Yes. I hope that has worked, because I always felt it to be a lack in the previous translations, which don't make much of an effort to ...

HH: No, Kaufmann performed a useful service in de-nazifying Nietzsche; that was very useful. But he's not a very good interpreter. His translation of *Beyond Good and Evil*: introducing paragraphs where Nietzsche has no paragraphs.

GP: I think it's in his translation of *Beyond Good and Evil* that he has a footnote talking about the importance of tempo in Nietzsche—but then he himself is often so deaf to Nietzsche's tempos in his translations!

HH: Well, exactly, yes.

GP: Zarathustra's speeches for example are—you can see this so clearly in the original—are usually set in three line paragraphs.

HH: Like the Zarathustran Gathas.

GP: Exactly. And Kaufmann will sometimes compress several of those into one bigger paragraph, and then when you have a stretch of narrative Nietzsche uses much longer—which Kaufmann then unhelpfully breaks up. Hollingdale is much better on that issue. But it seems to me that there's something about those 2-line – 3-line thought-breaths as it were, that they after a while begin to have a cumulative effect on you. Like music—something to do with brain-waves, I suspect. I think it's because Kaufmann, my impression of him is that—I never had an opportunity to meet him, but—he knows what Nietzsche means, and so he's concerned with giving us that meaning. I know there's always interpretation involved, but I much prefer to try keep it on the precise and literal side, and let the reader figure out what it means.

HH: Exactly! Yeah. But you see, again, you know, because, Nietzsche wants to have an effect on the reader, he is writing with blood; he only likes that which is written with blood. And he wrote with his blood, and he wants to change the reader; he wants to have an impact. And if you don't pay

attention to the rhetorical structure, you falsify that, and you simply are not true to Nietzsche if you distort the translation—I mean any translation is a distortion already, that can't be helped. But still, I mean the duty of the translator is to be as close to the original, as is possible.

GP: Right. And if you try to reproduce the music, or if you've approached this as a musical text, then what is basic to music I think—and certainly all the music that I've come across in the world—is repetition. The ear hears: This is the same rhythm as before, this is the same note, the same melody—it hears repetition. And there's a lot of repetition in *Zarathustra*: Nietzsche repeats single words, he repeats syllables, he repeats phrases. He sometimes repeats whole long paragraphs. And I think it's important for the English reader to hear those repetitions, and to see them. I know it goes against what you're taught in creative writing classes—that you shouldn't repeat, you should use a different word the second time. But I think that if a stylist as good as Nietzsche chooses to use the same word again, that the translator ought to give us the same word.

HH: Exactly. He means something by that, with using the same word.

GP: And we ought to hear it.

HH: Yes. But of course they have a different—Kaufmann and Hollingdale—have a different approach to what is philosophy. It is propositional, it is doctrines framed propositionally. And so they want to render Nietzsche's doctrines and they know that.

GP: Right; I think so.

HH: Well, I mean maybe there are no doctrines in that sense, except, kind of tempting suggestions. Because it would be completely counter to a philosopher that de-emphasizes conscious thinking, and the *I*, to then emphasize the doctrinal aspect which is based on the rational intellect, which requires the rational intellect. You can formulate it in a finite set of sentences.

GP: Exactly, and again that's such an important part of the impact of *Zarathustra*: it comes through the music of it, which hits us at a deeper level. We don't think it; we feel it, through the language.

With thanks to the Nietzsche Circle, New York City, for the transcription:

http://nietzschecircle.com/Conversation_on_Nietzsche_and_Zarathustra.pdf