

Afterthought: Reflecting on Lightning Strikes

Cadell Last

I open and close this anthology with a simple message: let us not only reflect on the explicit message within *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, that of his message to humanity about the meaning of the Earth as the Overman, but also, its implicit message, that involves the becoming of Zarathustra himself. What a rare treat to receive such an *intimate* message. And at the same time, this intimate message helps us to, not *deconstruct* Christianity, but rather to *sublate* Christianity. The sublation of Christianity is a difficult task, and perhaps I have not succeeded, perhaps I am a tremendous failure, but it is nevertheless a challenge well worth striving and failing for. The resources to think about the sublation of Christianity are there in the history of modern philosophy, and this brings us, not to scientific materialism, but to a type of spiritual science (fiction) that can engage a universe of dialectical materialism.

I do not hope to contain the many voices in this anthology, or claim that they point in the same direction. Indeed, Nietzsche seems to open a multiplicity along a singular crack. And that is precisely how it should be, as far as I am concerned. Daniel Garner of O.G. Rose invites us to think along the philosophical line that runs from Plato to Nietzsche. With great skill and exhaustive reflection which leaves little doubt as to the thoroughness of his investigation, we see a central distinction: that between bestowing and becoming (which mirrors his own philosophical treatise, *Belonging Again*, which shifts our attention from givens qua bestowing to releases qua becoming). In the mode of a release towards becoming, we are left thinking the mystery of intrinsic motivation, and wondering, did Plato's famous Cave allegory really

overlook this dynamic? If so, what does it mean for not only the history of philosophy, but the future of consciousness in the digital age? Can we really leave Plato's Cave and become Zarathustra's Children?

Layman Pascal, someone who embodies the Child spirit as well as anyone, offers us Saint Nietzsche, but not the Saint whom Zarathustra laughs away at the beginning of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, rather the Saint of a tragic temporality, who intentionally embraces dark affect, comedy, and serious play. For what? For the emergence of post-relativistic (absolute?) communities inspired by psychedelic big history visions of cosmology and our place in the story as related to the drive of the will to power testing ourselves against the "background" of the eternal recurrence. Whoa. Sounds like not only a worthy goal, but a type of worthy meta-goal capable of inspiring, at the same time, a common drive and many different islands of life to flourish well into the deep future of the anthropocene.

But if we are striving for a post-relativistic community, we should spend some time reflecting on Thomas Hamelryck's message to think about the relation between sacred and profane times. For Hamelryck, Nietzsche on his own is an anthropological disaster leading to psychotic sacrifice, transgression, and intoxication for its own sake, disconnected from any meaningful historical tradition. That is why Hamelryck so strongly emphasises that we also consider Rene Girard's anthropology of the profane, which grounds Nietzsche in relation to prohibition, asceticism, and renunciation. In such a move, we are not only invited to think about the decoupling between our historical religious traditions and some ecstatic individualistic adventure, but rather invited to think the (very creative) tension between the two. That is, for Hamelryck, where true creativity is found in the relation between the sacred and the profane. In commitment to establishing such a relation, we are

opened to what Hamelryck calls “anthropological pragmatism,” which accepts what many of us may not want to accept, that *we are* “human, all too human,” and that imagining that we are not, will only lead us to embody the worst “devils” of our nature, namely mimetic escalation and violence that reveals the truth of culture: *that it is based on primal murder.*

Well then, why not get out the knife? With the work of Owen Cox, we are confronted with a message that many simply do not want to hear, that is: *a message from hell.* All too often we can become pathologised by our own superegoic injunction to obey the morality of our time. This is true whether one is identifying as religious or not. For Cox, Nietzsche stands for the inner core of Western thought, that is a radical discontinuity that does not fit in any space or time. Thank goodness we have spirits like Cox who can remind us of this fact of Nietzsche’s importance. Nietzsche is the drunk madman of philosophy who, while certainly not offering us a complete system, does offer us a prophetic and poetic vision of what it means to be alive in this world. If we do not listen deeply to that message, all the discipline in the world will not be able to save us from our own private inner nightmare, our own immanent madness. Why not, then, listen to Cox’s message and unleash the angel of death that calls us to new life, visions, and dreams of what we might become in this world?

If we are listening, we will need some tools to mediate such madness. Luckily Max Macken offers us a method he calls “Blood Writing.” Max is the first in this anthology to really pick up the meta-challenge of Philosophy Portal and work the overlooked connection in the history of philosophy between Hegel and Nietzsche. He tells us that Blood Writing can not only be connected to Nietzsche’s philosophical method of writing, but also to the journey

Hegel leaves us with in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, which is that of a purification towards philosophical knowing. However, Hegel's purity is a strange kind of purity. It is not a purity that leaves us stainless. Max reminds us that it is the paradoxical purity of a stain that we may well die for. In other words, real philosophy leaves us stained in such a way that all hopes for a comfortable academic job, resting on abstract theory, go out the window, and we are opened to writing in our own blood. I will leave the methodological details up to Max, but he emphasises that Blood Writing is a scream, a demand to open your insides and vomit out who you are, pain and disorientation included. If your body does not choke up and shake, if the tear's of one's own life do not erupt to the surface, then you are not Blood Writing.

Dimitri Crooijmans writes in blood, but it may well be because he found a way to write with a knife. Pay attention or you'll miss it. Crooijmans tells us that Jesus, Hegel, and Zarathustra have similar end games, beyond shame and heaviness, the end game of the Spirit Child. Does not Christ tell us: we must become like Children to enter the Kingdom of Heaven? And yet, the crucial dialectical trick, clearly visible in Hegel and Zarathustra, is that that does not mean we should remain children. We must "fall" into the camel and the lion, and we must supersede or sublimate both the camel and the lion. This is the work that Crooijmans calls the "work and education of spirit," which is nothing but dedicated practice to the life of the spirit for the birth of the child that is not an immediacy, but rather, a mediation.

The one and only, musician, and (bad!) guru wrapped into one, Alex Ebert, excessively continues this theme of the Spirit Child. Ebert offers us, in vivid prose, the idea that the excess of our self is also the place where we are "absent." Following Crooijmans insistence that Jesus and Nietzsche/Zarathustra should be thought together, Ebert

tells us that Jesus, Nietzsche (and Ebert himself) have the same message: *the mask of the child is the apex of spiritual development*. In other words, we should abandon all ideas of the spiritual depths versus the vain surface of the mask. We should rather, invert this relation, and bring the depths (with all of our infantile baggage) to the surface for the mediation that results in the Child. In this movement, we find that we are ALL categories, and therefore, NO categories. Ebert leaves us with the clever little axiom that “to identify is to mischaracterise.” Is not one of the problems with adult human beings an all too strong (reactionary) identification? But what is an entity that is all categories (excess) and no categories (absence) at the same time? Ebert tells us it is a “hyperobject.” At the same time, there is a riddle in Ebert’s work, and that riddle does not so much involve the Child qua result of proper spiritual process, but rather, *the riddle of Children*, i.e. *a community of spiritual children*.

One thing is for sure, if the relation between the Child and Children is a mystery, we better bring Chetan Anand along for the ride. Anand not only puts his finger on some precise philosophical mysteries in Nietzsche (and Deleuze) via the work of Zupančič, but also shows us how these mysteries can help us mediate some core concepts in psychoanalysis, namely the concepts of death drive and jouissance. In his contribution to this anthology, Anand brings out in a masterful way, what is at stake in the difference between Deleuze’s Nietzsche and Zupančič’s Nietzsche, where we see a Nietzsche not as a figure of positivist multiplicity, but rather as a figure of the two as real tension. From this angle he invites us to reflect on a devastating question: what is it about our base/stupid enjoyments that prevent us from changing? From this uncomfortable space, he reflects on the weird ways in which our jouissance (deadly enjoyment) is wrapped up in the union of the id and the superego. He offers us a few

strange examples where human beings seem to get a perverse joy in (for example) killing or raping, which is not only a transgressive violation of the superego as moral prohibition, but rather a *superegoic injunction to enjoy*. It is in this frame that Anand correctly suggests that our contemporary notion of politics totally misses a notion of jouissance, how our enjoyment is tied up in our own destructive and even genocidal tendencies, which is relevant for analysis of today's turn to authoritarianism and fundamentalism.

For those of you who have read *Sex, Masculinity, God*, we are then offered a return of the triad. Kevin Orosz and Daniel Dick join me for, not so much a reflection on God, but more of a reflection on the Overman. You might call it *Sex, Masculinity, Overman*. In this meditation we are offered reflections on the movement to solitude which is provoked by the rabble, the difficulties of returning to the human world, and the distinctions that appear here at the level of friendship, sexuality and family life. In the spirit of this anthology, we conclude with not only reflections on leadership from the standpoint of a leader, but also reflections on what we might offer as advice to those younger spirits, who may be struggling to sense-make in the insanity that is the contemporary world. If you enjoyed *Sex, Masculinity, God*, I am sure this meditation will be a welcome recapitulation of our triadic discursivity.

There are only a few men today that I would say give the appearance of a spirit committed to spiritual leadership in the highest communal sense. Tim Adalin of Voicecraft is surely one of them. Adalin offers us a reflection on what is at stake in the distinctions between spirituality, religion and leadership today, with the central distinctions of dynamism and stasis at the core of the whole effort. At the same time, Adalin emphasises a more critical reflection on the position and relation to Nietzsche in this mix. For Adalin, Nietzsche

is often a hammer to humans as nails, and perhaps he is right to remind us that there is little space in Nietzsche for transformative dialogue. In this spirit, we are reminded that spiritual leadership is first and foremost about how we treat others, and that real spiritual leaders are found in how we address in our actual context, a form of communication that is grounded in the beating heart of real relation. We would do well to answer Adalin's call.

Jyoti Dalal gives the impression that she has not only heard this call, but has also started mobilising the theoretical forces that would be needed to embed it at the foundation of our educational systems. Like Daniel Garner, Dalal sees an important philosophical fissure in the crack between Plato's Cave and Nietzsche's Zarathustra. Here Dalal emphasises the stakes for both the future of philosophical education and political engagement. Whereas Plato's philosophical foundations allow a separation between philosophy and politics, between the thinker of truth and the messiness of the world, Nietzsche Zarathustra leaves us with no such separation. With Zarathustra, we must rather conceive of a philosophical truth that is capable of "getting messy" and directly engaging with the concrete world, even if it involves our own down-going.

From there we can only go deeper into this truth, as it relates to the body and the Earth. Here Jason Bernstein tells us that pain is a privileged point in the becoming of the spirit, not something to run away from, but rather something that represents the function of the spirit body which tells us what it is like to be evolution itself. He specifically draws on the evolutionary aspect of Nietzsche's work, and connects it to the radical teleological evolutionary work of Terrence Deacon's *Incomplete Nature*. With Bernstein, we face the challenge of thinking an *ontological reflexivity*, not only an evolutionary process "in-itself" but also an evolutionary process that is becoming "for-itself."

This is a very lively and important intellectual intersection, which has mega implications for both the future of philosophy, the future of science, and (why not?), the future of religion as well.

If that is true, the future needs thinkers like Quinn Whelehan. Whelehan brings our attention to something very painful in the form of the *primordial contradiction*. Here we are asked to reflect on the tendency in our thought, which avoids contradiction, to demand a return to a complete and whole primordial Other, whether that is Nature, God, Paradise... a Mother, all of which, for Whelehan, represent fantasies of a future reconciliation with what we (think we) lost. What is so hard, and yet what Whelehan insists we must do, is love the heart as contradiction as such. He insists this all the while sharing his own life lessons, that is learning about contradictions through romantic loss and health loss. Here he brings his reflection back to one of the central core messages of Nietzsche: do not jump out of your body. However, in order to stay with the body, we must embrace amor fati, the love of fate, and in that process, the love of a type of splitting which refreshes and imbues spirit with new life.

Wild. Wild enough for James Wisdom to share his wisdom with us. James focuses on the metamorphoses of spirit, that is, between the figures of the camel, the lion, and the child. Such metamorphoses teach us the metaphorical truth of women: *that our spirit is a pregnancy for the child*. In order to facilitate that pregnancy, we must bear the hardest thing to bear, that is the challenge of creating meaning where there is no meaning, to know that nothing matters, but to understand how to use the active power of forgetting that nothing matters. One is here reminded of the becoming that can contain being-nothing, and as such, really create. This “wild wisdom” is what sets us free, and allows us to, in the footsteps of Zarathustra, die at the right

time, with a goal and an heir. In “The Speeches of Zarathustra” there are many gems, but this specific gem certainly stands out, and James Wisdom makes sure we don’t forget it.

From there we get a double team: Filip Lundström and David Högberg, who offer us an extremely important reinterpretation of the metamorphoses of the spirit for our age, that is the age of individuals in networks (as opposed to individuals in communities). For Lundström and Högberg, we have entered the “digital desert” (or it has entered us), where humans are becoming increasingly replaced by machine intelligence, leading to the collapse of the old paradigms of the human world (where the collapse of a paradigm is equal to the Death of God). Here we need to think about Nietzsche’s distinction between “the last man” who numbs himself to the pain of the dying world, and the “overman” who is capable of rising to the historical occasion. When we think of the intellectual circles that emphasise our time as a meaning crisis, Lundström and Högberg emphasise that this is a symptom of maladaptation to a novel technological circumstance. If we heed their call to new adaptation to a new environment via building out a new paradigm (qua rebirth of God?), our new world can be birthed in individual networks, where we must practise and embody both profane time (with forms of renunciation and restriction), and ritual time (where we have transgression and intoxication).

I am drunk. Good thing reality is a Bacchanalian Revel in which “no man is not drunk.” The perfect person to read and re-read in such a condition is Daniel Fraga, whose design-centred work offers us a creative explosion putting Zarathustra into a Lacanian lens. For Fraga, the proper name for *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* would be *Thus Zarathustra Was Spoken*, not by this or that big Other qua linguistic system of values, but by the embodiment of

discourse as such. In other words, Zarathustra is the truth of the symbolic order. In Fraga's creative terms: Zarathustra is the fictional apex helping us orient in language (irrespective of historical condition). Consequently, Zarathustra is like a "third pill" (beyond the overused blue-red dichotomy) that helps us restructure pyramids qua hierarchies of history differently via the open concept of the Overman, which functions as both object-cause of desire and model-obstacle for becoming.

Towards an Overbecoming? The ingenious Carl Hayden Smith's contribution to this anthology engages an absolutely essential and complex debate with tremendous clarity. Smith's intervention involves reframing concepts like The Last Man and Overhuman vis-a-vis contemporary ideas of humanism, metahumanism, transhumanism, and his preferred concept: hyperhumanism. For Smith, if Nietzsche lived today, he would be one of the fiercest critics of transhumanism as an embodiment of The Last Man, a movement which obfuscates the true struggle of becoming with technology, and who labours under the hypothesis of uploading consciousness to supercomputers, without even knowing what consciousness is. Differentiating from this movement, Smith outlines the idea of hyperhumanism under the axiom that, while we cannot predict the future (as The Last Man may want to do), we can invent it. This requires that we get used to a type of hyperhumanist ontological design, which emphasises our spirit as a process of adaptation, as opposed to being passively adapted to a new technological environment. But to be realised, Smith outlines the necessity of a regenerative imagination through perceptual flexibility, unity in diversity (not just diversity of thought but diversity of *umwelts*), as well as an "over-becoming" that is capable of navigating unfamiliar territory, integrating and working with different points of view, and openness to perceptual augmentation expanding our capacity to inhabit the world.

That seems like quite a monstrous task. Yet we find ourselves in a monstrous situation. For Samuel Barnes, that monstrous situation is none other than the “death of God,” where we face the problem of valuation: from wrestling with God to wrestling without God. While those wrestling with God may be in a relation with the ultimate ontological value, those who wrestle without God are in a situation of “blank slate re-evaluation.” While the New Atheists understand the Death of God as the death of the ultimate ontological value, they do not understand what is involved in this struggle of “blank slate re-evaluation.” Perhaps we could say that the New Atheists are still performatively and unconsciously nested within the big Other. For those who follow their footsteps the challenge is much more difficult: what will replace the Idols of Fate, God, Reason, State, Science? Barnes asks us to dwell in this meta-questioning space: *what can you not question?*

From large scale social reflections on the paradigmatics of our technological age, we shift to themes of the family. In this spirit, Joris de Kolver brings us from thinking of the Death of God as a paradigm, to the personal phenomenal experience involved in the “Death of Dad” and the “Death of Mom.” Kolver sees such experiences as the catalyst for self-discovery, which triggers peeling off layers of identity. From this vulnerable space, Kolver asks us to entertain a strange yet, for those who have read *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, extremely sensible question: is Zarathustra trying to be a male mother for the higher men? This question floats in the background of Kolver’s thought as he explores the emotional source of wisdom, the dimensions of the inner feminine, and its role in constituting the relational spaces which become so essential for the development of the story in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. What we are left with is this feeling that, to give birth to the

Overman, we need others, we need to think of ourselves in a deeper relational sense.

This sets the stage for an extended conversation between O.G. Rose, both Daniel and Michelle Garner, and myself. In this conversation, we explore Zarathustra as a model for the family. Our hypothesis is that, while Zarathustra does not go into great detail about the family, about fathers, mothers, and children, there is a lot in Zarathustra that can be creatively engaged on this level. In other words, Zarathustra lends himself to spiritual knowledge and wisdom on the topic of family. We play with the spiritual metamorphoses (camel, lion, child), and we apply it to many different dimensions and topics: sexual energy and marriage, state/market dynamics, as well as the extended family. For anyone thinking about embedding their creative and personal development in a familial context, you do not want to miss this conversation.

As we work towards the close of the anthology, we start to hear a new voice, not so much a voice of overpowering and overcoming, as a voice of letting. Thomas Winn is a deep reader of philosophy, and has a special way of relating to the lineage of modern philosophy, inclusive of Hegel, Nietzsche, and Heidegger. For Winn, letting beings be inverts both seeing and knowing towards the actuality of phenomena. In other words, letting is a key to beingness, a beingness, not of staticness, but of infinite dancing paths, a movement from nothingness to openness. Here we get a distance from the wise men of history and their sinking boats. Nietzsche is here framed as a philosopher who saw the destiny of this shipwreck, the shipwreck of Western metaphysics (which bestows evaluations as if they were truth in and of themselves). In the emptiness, for Winn, Nietzsche dances, and inversion of the absolute negativity that is the Death of God, and the opening to beingness, that is the movement of life. Earth becomes a spiritualised

open space of new light: the overhuman achieves nothingness.

Finally, we close with the ever-thoughtful Andrew Sweeny. Sweeny is here to remind us that symbolism and magic are undervalued heuristics, not confined to new age parlour games. He makes an impressive and strong case. Through the triadic symbolism of the Hanged Man, The Hermit, and The Dancing Star, Sweeny explores how each symbol relates to interpretations of Zarathustra's philosophy. The Hanged Man is about man between worlds, about death and rebirth as joyful sacrifice and rosy crucifixion; The Hermit is Zarathustra himself who carries a dancing star, and becomes a gift of a life fully lived, the intermixing of Earth and divinity; and The Dancing Star is simultaneously our highest hope and greatest potential, born in the very struggle of paganism and Christianity. For Sweeny, we are left with a triad of these three figures that reflects both the Tarot arcana and the Christian trinity: The Hanged Man is Jesus, The Hermit is The Father, and The Dancing Star is the Holy Ghost. What both the Tarot arcana and the Christian trinity share in this magical symbolism, is a vortex of meaning with suggestive power, a way for the human being to discover the unconscious mind.

Interspersed throughout these chapters, there are also special treats in the Interludes. Here I join Owen Cox, Objet lil a, George Dyck, Pamela von Sabljar, Joel Dietz, and Michelle Garner of O.G. Rose in an offering of everything from poetic musings to self-reflections, to the voice of the body itself. These chapters and interludes can be read in the linear form dictated by the necessity of text, but they can also be read in non-linear-relation to where you are in your spiritual becoming.

Dance, Sing, Fly!⁵⁴²

Thus Spoke (Reflections on) Zarathustra.⁵⁴³

⁵⁴² As Daniel Garner notes in his Editor's Note, with Zarathustra we must think of the human as a dancing star as opposed to a head on a stick. Perhaps this is a good model for thinking about the future of the liminal web.

⁵⁴³ With blessed tears of joy.