

Interpretation

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Volume 45 Issue 2

- 155 Ian Dagg Natural Religion in Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* and *The Spirit of the Laws*
- 179 David N. Levy Aristotle's "Reply" to Machiavelli on Morality
- 199 Ashleen Menchaca-Bagnulo "Deceived by the Glory of Caesar": Humility and Machiavelli's Founder
- 223 Marco Andreacchio **Reviews Essays:**
Mastery of Nature, edited by Svetozar Y. Minkov and Bernhardt L. Trout
- 249 Alex Priou *The Eccentric Core*, edited by Ronna Burger and Patrick Goodin
- 269 David Lewis Schaefer *The Banality of Heidegger* by Jean-Luc Nancy
- 291 Victor Bruno **Book Reviews:**
The Techne of Giving by Timothy C. Campbell
- 297 Jonathan Culp *Orwell Your Orwell* by David Ramsay Steele
- 303 Fred Erdman *Becoming Socrates* by Alex Priou
- 307 David Fott *Roman Political Thought* by Jed W. Atkins
- 313 Steven H. Frankel *The Idol of Our Age* by Daniel J. Mahoney
- 323 Michael Harding *Leo Strauss on Nietzsche's Thrasymachean-Dionysian Socrates* by Angel Jaramillo Torres
- 335 Marjorie Jeffrey *Aristocratic Souls in Democratic Times*, edited by Richard Avramenko and Ethan Alexander-Davey
- 341 Peter Minowitz *The Bleak Political Implications of Socratic Religion* by Shadia B. Drury
- 347 Charles T. Rubin *Mary Shelley and the Rights of the Child* by Eileen Hunt Botting
- 353 Thomas Schneider *From Oligarchy to Republicanism* by Forrest A. Nabors
- 357 Stephen Sims *The Legitimacy of the Human* by Rémi Brague

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Angel Jaramillo Torres's *Leo Strauss on Nietzsche's Thrasymachean-Dionysian Socrates: Philosophy, Politics, Science and Religion in the Modern Age* comes at an auspicious time for those interested in Strauss and Nietzsche. While debate has raged about just how Strauss is related to Nietzsche, or understands Nietzsche, or is secretly Nietzschean (whatever that might mean), relatively little of Strauss's own thought on Nietzsche has been available to the public. Torres's book began life as a doctoral dissertation on Strauss's understanding of Nietzsche, written with the aid of then-unpublished lecture transcripts from the Strauss Center at the University of Chicago.¹ Torres asks us to consider Strauss's reading of Nietzsche. One thing we might note at the outset is that the book's title is slightly misleading: *Leo Strauss on Nietzsche's Thrasymachean-Dionysian Socrates* leads one to think the book will be concerned with Strauss's understanding of Nietzsche's understanding of "the problem of Socrates." This proves, however, not to be the case. The book is not so much concerned with Strauss on Nietzsche's Socrates as it is with Strauss on Nietzsche, and more precisely, on Nietzsche as political philosopher. Secondarily, it uses elements of Strauss's own teaching to elucidate what Nietzsche is doing. So the book is less about Strauss than it is about how Strauss's reading of Nietzsche clarifies Nietzsche's own philosophical

¹ Now available, as readers of this journal know, as *Leo Strauss on Nietzsche's "Thus Spoke Zarathustra,"* ed. Richard L. Velkley (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

activity. Secondly, Torres intends to show that Strauss is engaged with Heidegger on how we ought to understand Nietzsche, and he hopes his work fosters “a prejudice in favor of Strauss’ position” (154).²

Torres’s account is broken into four sections: the first is concerned with Nietzsche’s impact on Strauss. The second focuses on the will to power and how it relates to the philosophers of the future. The third focuses on philosophy and “the natural right of the eternal return of the same.” The last division is concerned with the eternal return as an antitheological religion. In what follows, I will provide a brief overview of Torres’s claims, raise some questions about them, and suggest an alternative way of approaching certain elements.



The book is broken into four main divisions. The first division is concerned with Strauss’s *Bewegung*, or movement, in light of Nietzsche. It aims to show how Nietzsche inspired Strauss’s thought; Torres claims that “Strauss developed his main theme—the theologico-political problem—as a result of his dialogue with Nietzsche. This dialogue, in its turn, allows Strauss to understand Nietzsche as a philosopher along Platonic lines” (1). The first division works from Strauss’s youthful encounter with Nietzsche, through his political Zionism, and argues that his early work on Hobbes and Spinoza is grounded in the same motive “which Nietzsche had inspired in him in the early 1920’s, namely, the clarification of the aims and presuppositions of revealed religion as opposed to philosophy, and whether Spinoza’s radical critique of the Bible was successful” (18). Torres identifies the correlations between Strauss’s Hobbes and Strauss’s Nietzsche as manifesting themselves less in the question of power than in the question of “*die große Politik*” understood as “a war against revealed religion.” The difference is that Nietzsche, as an heir of the self-subverting Enlightenment, “has to wage war against revealed religion *and* against the Enlightenment” (23). Torres’s Strauss finds two elements in Nietzsche’s thought—the polemical element, which takes aim at revealed religion and Enlightenment, and the “un-polemical philosophy,” which “seeks to return to the original Socratic question of what virtue is” (23–24). Crucially, Torres engages in dialogue with Lampert—this is, on occasion, explicit, but also seems implicit, as much of the book can be read as a response to Lampert’s important work on Strauss and Nietzsche. Torres characterizes his own work as both following Lampert and deviating from him; he claims that Strauss, as “a political philosopher...created a prejudice in some of his

² Parenthetical page numbers should be understood to refer to the book under review.

readers against a *hubristic* Nietzsche, while nevertheless espousing a portrait of the *real* Nietzsche as a sober political teacher” (37). It is in this that he characterizes his break with Lampert. Strauss’s approach, then, recognized the danger in Nietzsche’s rhetorical prowess, and in particular saw “Nietzsche’s grandiose political pronouncements” to be a “permanent menace to young minds living in liberal democracies” (37). Accordingly, Strauss distinguishes between a vulgar sense of the will to power as presented in his public writings on Nietzsche, and a “noble and philosophical notion” (37).³

This first chapter helps to inform the entire work. If one wants to quibble with it, a methodological issue could be raised: Torres draws on multiple sources from different times in Strauss’s life, all aimed at different audiences. Why does this matter? One small observation might suffice. The famous letter from Strauss to Karl Löwith comes from 1935. The lecture course on which Torres grounds much of his argument comes from 1959 (24 years later). The “Note on the Plan of Nietzsche’s *Beyond Good and Evil*” comes from 1973 (14 years after the lecture course). There are two reasons to consider this issue significant: first, there are tensions between these three presentations; second, these presentations are intended for different audiences. In the 1935 letter, Strauss characterizes the eternal recurrence as something Nietzsche discovers “in the search for a strong and courage-producing myth.”⁴ This is a letter written to a friend and colleague. In the 1959 lecture course, the eternal return “appears to Nietzsche as a moral postulate, not a cosmological doctrine”;⁵ Strauss immediately thereafter notes that the relation between the doctrine as a moral teaching and as a cosmological teaching is “very dark.”⁶ Later, Strauss notes “the principle of Nietzsche is the finiteness of possible combinations, contrasted with the infinity of time.”⁷ But, Strauss emphasizes, Nietzsche conceives of the doctrine *prior* to the theoretical (as distinguished from moral) justification of it: “Nietzsche wanted to study theoretical physics in his later years because he wanted to give the theoretical truth for that

³ In passing, we might note that Torres does not cite Rosen’s essay “Nietzsche’s Revolution,” in *The Ancients and the Moderns: Rethinking Modernity* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine’s, 2002), 189–208. This essay might be useful for thinking through the difficulty. There, Rosen suggests that Nietzsche is *deliberately* cultivating two different groups of followers—one, in the near-term, which misunderstands him, and one in the long-term, which does not.

⁴ Leo Strauss to Karl Löwith, June 23, 1935, in “Correspondence: Karl Löwith and Leo Strauss,” trans. George Elliot Tucker, *Independent Journal of Philosophy* 5–6 (1988): 183.

⁵ *Leo Strauss on Nietzsche’s “Zarathustra,”* 74.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 166.

doctrine.”⁸ These comments are all made in the context of a public presentation for students. The “Note on the Plan” was published in 1973, and has a less intimate audience, that is, it goes beyond friends and students. While Torres rightly draws on all three, it would have been helpful to see a thematic discussion of how these three texts, and others, are related in light of their rhetorical circumstances, and how such considerations would affect the argument he advances in the book.

The book’s second chapter is arguably the most important, as it deals with the fundamental ground of Nietzsche’s thought. Nietzsche’s main intention was not, according to Torres, the liberation of mankind from “the shackles of nihilism,” nor was he interested in offering “a new morality to replace a previous” one, nor was he attempting to “replace philosophy with art” (46). Rather, “Nietzsche’s *main* intention” is Thrasymachean—that is, he is engaged in a philosophical politics (46–47). Nietzsche’s project, for Torres’s Strauss, is to return philosophy to its rightful and deserved place “at the top,” and consequently Nietzsche’s intention entails a reconsideration of what philosophy is (48). On this account, all previous philosophers were “artists and commanders,” and their philosophical activity was really, albeit unknowingly, a creative act (49). Torres notes that Strauss distinguishes between Platonism and Plato, but omits mention of Nietzsche’s own intimations of the same distinction (50). “Nietzsche’s polemic,” he writes, “is not so much against Plato as it is against Platonism” (53). Torres characterizes Strauss as viewing Plato and Nietzsche as in agreement about what philosophy *is*, that is, “a natural desire of the best of men” (54), but in disagreement about the ground of it—that is, *eros* or will to power. (Given the sense in which the book can be read as a reply to Lampert, it might have been valuable to address Lampert’s provocative claims regarding *eros* and will to power [54]). The will to power is the ground of knowledge as prescription, that is, it tells the world what it will and must be (56). Torres is less than clear, however, about what *power* means in the term “will to power.” Following Strauss, he links Nietzschean will to power with power in Hobbes, while identifying two important differences: Hobbes’s power aims at self-preservation rather than at enhancement, and Nietzsche’s notion of power “does away with the sphere of prudence” (57). One might note in passing that these differences can be explained by the fact that Nietzsche attempts to think the world devoid of anthropocentrism while Hobbes, perhaps, does not. This is the key to understanding the will to power, which, Strauss notes, “is both the world of any concern to us and the world in

⁸ Ibid., 169.

itself.”⁹ How are we to understand this? The will to power, claims Nietzsche, is a “pre-form of life.”¹⁰ This does not mean that all existing things possess will, but rather that the fundamental underlying principle of all things is that which manifests itself in and through the will. It is this consideration that leads to one of the difficulties with Torres’s book: the will to power is a notoriously difficult teaching, and Torres’s account would be stronger if he dealt directly with Nietzsche’s presentation of the teaching more thoroughly before engaging Strauss’s understanding of it. What would it mean if the world were will to power, and nothing but will to power? Torres notes that the will to power is “a theoretical explanation of the most fundamental fact: the instincts,” which in turn are “the basis of the ‘self.’” The will to power is said to “fulfill the criteria allowing any philosophical system to be able to claim a whole or complete explanation of reality,” but Torres’s presentation of how the will to power does what he claims it does proves unsatisfactory (63). This may seem a churlish objection, forgivable insofar as the goal of the chapter is to present Strauss’s understanding of Nietzsche’s teaching on the will to power. Nonetheless, the comparison of the will to power and Platonic metaphysics leaves the reader desirous of more. According to Torres, the will to power is, for Strauss, susceptible of two different understandings: “the will to power leads to a notion of philosophy as *zetetic*,” but there is, also, “a political understanding of the will to power that portrays philosophy as commanding and legislating” (45). The will to power is, per Torres’s Strauss, *the* replacement for metaphysics and traditional philosophy. On this account, Nietzsche’s engagement with Platonism is motivated by the “de-naturalization of man that has historically taken the form of Christianity and of certain modern ideas. . . . Nietzsche’s intention is to naturalize man by showing that the highest man (the philosopher) is the peak of human existence,” but is nonetheless also a part of the whole, that is, “non-human nature” (46). Torres leaps too easily from the claim that the will to power is Nietzsche’s alternative to Platonic metaphysics to the claim that philosophy is the highest expression of the will to power. There is much more to be said to clarify the relation between will to power and Thrasymachean philosophy understood as commanding and legislating. The will to power is linked to knowledge through the act of prescription—the philosopher is no disinterested contemplator of eternal forms or ideas, but instead the creator of the categories of being, by and through

⁹ Leo Strauss, “Note on the Plan of Nietzsche’s *Beyond Good and Evil*,” in *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 192.

¹⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Judith Norman, ed. Judith Norman and Rolf-Peter Horstmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), §36.

which the world comes to be understood. This act of prescription is ultimately what it is for the philosopher to be commander and legislator, that is, the one who tells the beings in the world what they are and must be.

The third chapter takes up what Torres calls, in the chapter title, “the Natural Right of the Eternal Return of the Same.” Here, Torres is interested in showing how Strauss’s Nietzsche faces up to nihilism and historicism, how “Nietzsche sought to *integrate* history into nature,” and how, through an embrace of “the ineluctable *erotic* character of philosophy” the “Thrasymachean philosopher of the future is ‘overcome’ by the Socratic-Dionysian pure philosopher” (76). Torres claims that through the overcoming of “modern nihilism, historicism, and proto-existentialism, Nietzsche founded ‘natural right’ in quasi Socratic-Platonic lines” (76–77). In the chapter, Torres identifies Zarathustra (the figure, not the text) as “the means Nietzsche uses to solve the problem of the tension between a ‘free project oriented toward the future’ and ‘nature.’” Nietzsche, per Torres’s Strauss, seeks to “ascend from Jerusalem to Athens,” and ultimately to “re-found political philosophy by following the same path thread [*sic*] by Socrates. The only difference in their foundations of political philosophy is that, while Socrates dealt with the opinions of the city, Nietzsche dealt with the opinions of revealed religion” (79). Of course, Nietzsche deals with much more than the opinions of revealed religion—the larger point is that both Nietzsche and Socrates are alike in pitting a *zetetic* philosophy against authoritative dogmatic opinions that are incompatible with the philosophic life. Nietzsche, then, writes and thinks and acts at a time similar to that of Socrates. The old dogmas have seeped into the soul and reshaped us. But they are collapsing. Socrates saw well that the challenge of the pre-Socratics and the Greek enlightenment needed an answer. It was not enough to do away with the old gods. The practices of virtue needed to be put on a new footing, and the opportunity, taken by thinkers such as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, to improve the understanding of human excellence had presented itself. Secondly, Socrates, like Nietzsche, foregrounds the incompatibility between *zetetic* philosophy and all dogmatism (civil, religious, etc.), while a Plato or an Aristotle—that is, Thrasymachean philosophers in the sense intended by Torres—obscure it, tentatively accepting it, at least superficially, while also engaging in subtle acts of command and legislation.

Nevertheless, Torres is quite helpful on one of the less clear elements of Nietzsche’s thought, the free *Geist*, which proves to be a liminal sort, between the dogmatism of the past and the philosophers of the future. The free *Geist* emerges from “the self-criticism of modernity,” which rejects the legitimacy of

any morality. The consequence of this is that the free *Geist* has an “inability to set standards” (85). The movement from previous moralities, to the free *Geist*, to “the rule of the philosophers of the future is a transition from conventional right to natural right” (86). The philosophers of the future, of course, will be commanders and legislators, and their commanding will be creation based on a recognition of the ground of all value as the will to power. Thus, for Torres’s Nietzsche, “the genealogy of morals culminates in the establishment of ‘natural right’ by virtue of a decision or choice taken by the figure who incarnates the peak of humanity—the philosopher” (88). What is this decision or choice? It is the willing of the eternal return. The willing of the eternal return is the act of creative contemplation, because it unites the commanding and the contemplating senses of philosophy into one (92–93). Nietzsche, per Torres, “does not commit himself” to a particular theoretical or philosophical understanding of justice, but instead proposes a political teaching, that is, “a notion of ‘natural justice’ that can offer an exit to the dilemmas of the nihilistic age”; this is to be accomplished by “putting philosophy or science at the top of the hierarchy” (99). For Torres’s Strauss, this is because Nietzsche is a political philosopher with an interest in political affairs “primarily for the sake of philosophy and secondarily for the sake of the human race” (110). The “pure philosophy” of the will to power gives rise to the Thrasymachean philosophy of the eternal return, explicitly for the good of philosophy and only secondarily for the good of humanity.

The fourth chapter takes up the eternal return once again, presenting it as an “ironically” founded religion (117). It is here, where Torres discusses the eternal return thematically, that he takes the most risks. He rightly notes that Nietzsche distinguishes between “pure religion...and impure religion,” though it would be better to say that he distinguishes between religion as autonomous (“pure,” according to Torres) and as a tool used by the philosopher to shape human beings (117). The difficulty here is that religion, either autonomous or under the direction of the philosopher, has the effect of shaping the human soul. The *genuine* philosopher, not merely the philosopher of the future, uses religion as one among many resources for shaping the soul.¹¹ Religion is a means by which the commanding and legislating function of the philosopher is carried out. Torres identifies, then, the eternal recurrence as a new religion created by Nietzsche. It is “compatible with the ‘new’ philosophy of will to power because” it “is a by-product of it”; philosophy, on this account, “wills religion,” yet it presumably does so ironically, since Torres’s

¹¹ Cf. *Beyond Good and Evil*, §61.

Strauss's Nietzsche only "ironically founded a religion" (119, 117). The eternal return, however, is not just religion for Torres—it is also the titular *fröhliche Wissenschaft* of Nietzsche's *Joyful Science*. It will take its bearings from "the willingness to let nature and 'homo natura' be what they are" (127). It is through the eternal return and the willing thereof that the creative and contemplative aspects of Nietzsche's thought come to be reconciled or combined: willing the eternal return is creative in that it is an act of will, but it is contemplative in that it lets beings be what they are. It is the reconciliation of history and nature, as well as the elevation of nature to the level of eternity.



There is much to like in Torres's book. Readers interested in Strauss, in Nietzsche, and in both thinkers will find in it something of benefit. The central question of the book, really, concerns the relation of will to power and eternal return. Torres claims that as philosophy is to religion, so the will to power is to the eternal return (74). Alternatively, for Torres, as will to power is to Dionysian-Socratic philosophy, so is the eternal return to Thrasymachean philosophy. This is unobjectionable, in that the eternal return is meant to function as a public teaching, that is, a religious teaching, ironic or otherwise.

Philosophy, per Torres, is for Strauss a way of life, and Nietzsche exemplifies the philosophic life in the late modern period. Torres characterizes Strauss's reading of Nietzsche as one through which Nietzsche engages in a kind of Socratic second sailing—a transition from pure philosophy (Dionysian-Socratic), to political philosophy (Thrasymachean), and back to pure philosophy (Dionysian-Socratic). This is "a movement from an exclusive interest in cosmological questions to a predominant interest in human affairs" (157). Torres claims to show how this transition takes place, on the basis of the relation between the will to power and the eternal return. The will to power, on this account, is "Thrasymachean philosophy that takes its bearings from politics" and is "an effort to both defend philosophy from its subordination to revealed religion, and to emancipate mankind from the shackles of ecclesiastical tutelage" (157). This leads us to the first significant difficulty with the book: what, precisely, the will to power *is* for Torres or Torres's Strauss, is obscure. Anyone familiar with the relevant secondary literature on Nietzsche will know that the meaning of will to power is not clear, and is, in fact, a subject of great controversy, as is the role it plays in Nietzsche's thought. Torres's account would have benefited from a thematic discussion of (a) how he thinks Nietzsche understands this and (b) how he thinks Strauss understands this. Torres claims that the will to power as

Thrasymachean philosophy aims at political philosophy, that is, at the political defense of philosophy. How does the will to power do this? It is unclear, because there is no thematic account of what the will to power *is*. Torres also claims that the movement from the will to power to the eternal recurrence of the same provides an account of the philosophic way of life. While Nietzsche surely *does* have an account of the philosophic life in his work, providing that account does not seem to be the aim or purpose of either of the specific teachings addressed by Torres.

In the fourth chapter of the book, Torres presents the eternal return as an antitheological religion. This is, in itself, unobjectionable, but Torres's account of the eternal return seems somehow incomplete. Nietzsche famously tells the world that "God is dead," but he takes only a partial joy in the pronouncement, because he recognizes the dangers it presents as well as the opportunities.¹² Unlike our contemporary village atheists, Nietzsche knows what is at stake in the demise of God. He recognizes a crisis for his age just as surely as Plato (or Plato's Socrates) recognized one in antiquity.¹³ Nietzsche's turn to the eternal recurrence is born of his recognition of the requirements of the age. It is, in Torres's words, an antitheological religious teaching. But it is more precise to say that it is (a) a teaching suited to the dogmas of a post-theocide world, and (b) explicitly a "eugenic doctrine" that is meant to function religiously and compel the revaluation of values. In fact, if there is a blind spot in Torres's account, it concerns the question of the transvaluation of values and how it relates to the eternal return. Values, claims Nietzsche, are conditions for the "preservation and enhancement of forms of life within the context of becoming."¹⁴ Nietzsche's objection to Platonism, Christianity, and modernity in general stems from the fact that the values they promote have become harmful, though they were once necessary.¹⁵ This recognition, that is, of the contingency of all doctrinal teachings, applies also to the eternal recurrence, which becomes apparent when one looks at the discussions of the doctrine in the *Nachlass*. Torres does not pay sufficient attention to Nietzsche's

¹² Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Josefine Nauckhoff and Adrian del Caro, ed. Bernard Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), \$125; consider also *Twilight of the Idols*, in *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols and Other Writings*, trans. Judith Norman, ed. Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), "Skirmishes of an Untimely Man," §5.

¹³ Cf. *Twilight of the Idols*, "The Problem of Socrates."

¹⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), \$715.

¹⁵ See especially *Twilight of the Idols*, "The Problem of Socrates."

thinking about the eternal return. Nietzsche intends it as a eugenic doctrine, but Torres reads it as merely an ironically founded philosophic religion. For Nietzsche it is the means by which the coming of the last man may be avoided, and the transvaluation of values may be effected. Nietzsche's concern is with philosophy and philosophers, of course, but he is not thereby unconcerned with humanity. Recall Zarathustra's own admitted philanthropy ("*Ich liebe die Menschen,*" he says to the hermit as he descends from his cave on high) and the way in which Nietzsche admits that "Zarathustra Platonizes."¹⁶ The eternal return is a religious teaching for the future, grounded on the atheistic assumptions of modern materialist science. More importantly, Nietzsche does not conceive of it as a sempiternal or final teaching; it too must, necessarily, be overcome. This is confirmed by a note in the *Nachlass*, in which Nietzsche sketches a plan for a (never written) work called *The Eternal Recurrence: A Book of Prophecy*.¹⁷ The third section of the unwritten book would have been concerned with two questions: first, how the doctrine of the eternal return is to be endured; and second, how it is to be disposed of or overcome. Nietzsche considers it an effectual teaching, meant to respond to a particular problem in a particular time and place. (This is indicated in the fact that the fourth section of the proposed book would have presented the doctrine as a midpoint in history and something to be overcome). It will be overcome *by* and *through* the transvaluation of values.¹⁸ Nietzsche and his Zarathustra both are skeptics—though Nietzsche perhaps more so than his Zarathustra.¹⁹ Nietzsche, as Torres notes, "wants to foster love of the world," but how, precisely, this is to be accomplished is left unclear (131).

Overall, Torres's book is valuable. Torres claims that Strauss's Nietzsche ultimately embraces contemplation, but that this turn toward contemplation is "perhaps tainted by creativity or practicality." To understand this "creative contemplation" as described by Torres's Strauss, "we need to understand that 'creativity' is linked to the notion of the will to power and 'contemplation' with the thought of the eternal return"; for Torres's Strauss, "'contemplation'

¹⁶ Cf. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, I, Prologue, §2; also Nietzsche to Franz Overbeck, October 22, 1883, cited in Thomas Brobjer, *Nietzsche's Philosophical Context: An Intellectual Biography* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 28.

¹⁷ *Will to Power*, §1057. The composition of the note stretches from 1883 to 1888; the idea of the eternal return occurs to Nietzsche in 1881.

¹⁸ Cf. *Will to Power*, §1059.

¹⁹ We can recall *The Anti-Christ*, §54, in this regard, where Nietzsche notes that "all great thinkers are skeptics" and "convictions are prisons" (in Ridley and Norman, *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols and Other Writings*, 3–67).

as the noun takes precedence over 'creative' as the adjective" (xiii). Torres provides a valuable analysis of Strauss's reading of Nietzsche, and in doing so provides an alternative to the groundbreaking works of Laurence Lampert on the same question. His work contributes to a clarification of Strauss's various presentations of Nietzsche, and an understanding of the effect of Nietzsche on Strauss's thought as a whole. Torres's Strauss presents Nietzsche as overwhelmingly concerned with philosophy and the problem of philosophy. His Nietzsche has recognized the ruins of Platonism, and seeks to revivify philosophy over and against the dogmatism of revealed religion and late modernity. With this view, one imagines, many readers of Nietzsche would agree. But does Nietzsche—the world-historical Nietzsche who says history will be divided into a pre- and post-Nietzschean world—intend "merely" a defense of philosophy? It seems not. His goal is grander than that. He seeks to prevent the degeneration of humanity:

There are few pains as intense as ever having seen, guessed, or sympathized while an extraordinary person ran off course and degenerated: but someone with an uncommon eye for the overall danger that "humanity" itself will *degenerate*, someone like us, who has recognized the outrageous contingency that has been playing games with the future of humanity so far—games in which no hand and not even a "finger of God" has taken part!—someone who has sensed the disaster that lies hidden in the idiotic guilelessness and credulity of "modern ideas," and still more in the whole of Christian-European morality: someone like this will suffer from an unparalleled sense of alarm.... The *total degeneration of humanity* down to what today's socialist fools and nitwits see as their "man of the future"—as their ideal!—this degeneration and diminution of humanity into the perfect herd animal (or, as they say, into man in a "free society"), this brutalizing process of turning humanity into stunted little animals with equal rights and equal claims is no doubt *possible*! Anyone who has ever thought this possibility through to the end knows one more disgust than other men,—and perhaps a new *task* as well!²⁰

Preserving philosophy is inseparable from preserving humanity—the Thrasymachean defense of philosophy necessarily involves a consideration of what humanity must be. The preservation of the possibility of the highest human type involves an avoidance of the degeneration to which the contemporary crisis points. Nietzsche's teaching is not merely about the philosophers of the future, but the *humanity* of the future: he seeks to give the species a new *wohin* (whither) and *wozu* (what for) in order to avoid the disastrous

²⁰ *Beyond Good and Evil*, §203.

consequences for humanity if the spiritual forces unleashed by Platonism remain unsubdued.²¹ In this regard, Nietzsche, like other Thrasymachean philosophers, seeks to defend and preserve philosophy while improving humanity. Just as earlier practitioners of philosophic politics made “use of the prevailing political and economic situation,”²² so too will Nietzsche, in defense not only of philosophy, but the improvement of humanity.

²¹ Ibid., §211.

²² Ibid., §61.