

sacrifice, self-formation and self-overcoming in nietzsche

venessa ercole

Nietzsche's emphasis on self-overcoming and self-mastery in the higher type and the figure of the overman are usually associated with aristocracy, rank and the sacrifice of others in the pursuit of personal excellence. Indeed, Nietzsche's discussion of the "lower types," "slave morality" and "master morality" lends itself to an elitist misreading. However, Nietzsche's opposition to democracy and equality stems from his endorsement of differentiation and particularly his concern with life-affirmation and life-denial. That is to say, Nietzsche's seeming regard for the "higher type" comes from its status, for Nietzsche, as more life-affirming than the herd. However, contrary to popular readings, Nietzsche's aim is not for a world of noble masters who obtain their rank at the expense of the lower types. Ultimately, as a close reading of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* reveals, even the higher type must be sacrificed in pursuit of Nietzsche's ultimate goal, of saying yes to life. The question which then arises is this: what role does self-sacrifice play in Nietzsche's thoughts on the self in formation—in becoming what one is?

Sacrifice has not yet been satisfactorily discussed in the expansive commentary on Nietzsche's philosophy. The majority of what has been said on Nietzsche's views of sacrifice paint Nietzsche in an elitist light. It is no wonder, given Nietzsche's aphoristic style, that he has been interpreted in such a way. However, these readings fail to see how Nietzsche's views of sacrifice are intrinsically tied to his notion of self-overcoming, forming an important component of his vision of

the Dionysian man. A close reading of Nietzsche's works reveal a link between Nietzsche's dislike for self-preservation and the cultivating force of life affirmation. This article seeks to explore the relationship between sacrifice in the Nietzschean self-formation of the higher type and the Dionysian man. Close exegesis of Nietzsche's work, in particular *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, shows that there is a subtle but important element of the sacrificial in Nietzschean self-overcoming which has been largely overlooked. I will argue that Nietzsche advocates a certain type of non-ascetic self-sacrifice in becoming what one is, which is exemplified by the self-overcoming of the "Dionysian man."

1. SELF-FORMATION WITHOUT A SELF

It is essential at the outset to address the seemingly paradoxical nature of a discussion on self-formation in Nietzsche when it is widely accepted that he does not believe in a "self" to be formed. However, Nietzsche's non-essentialist view of the self is the very thing which opens such possibilities for self-formation.¹ If the self is not an essence, then it is not fixed or pre-determined and it is not even something we can "discover." The self is, for Nietzsche, continuously in formation, as becoming. As Nietzsche succinctly puts it: "there is no 'being' behind doing, effecting, becoming; 'the doer' is merely a fiction added to the deed—the deed is everything."² Nietzsche's ideas on the subject are very much tied to his view of the world as becoming. The Dionysian man, for Nietzsche is thus the manifestation of life itself. He is a reflection and an affirmation of *this* life, of becoming. However, it is important to note that the concept of the Dionysian for Nietzsche underwent many transformations throughout his writings, from the Dionysian as contrasted to the Apollonian in *The Birth of Tragedy*, to the amalgamation of both, representing a kind of passion controlled, which he names Dionysian. I will be using the terms Dionysian and Dionysian man in the sense which it came to have for Nietzsche in his final writings, as the ultimate symbol of self-overcoming.³ The emblem of Dionysus as the suffering God who is killed and reborn is a fitting one for Nietzsche's Dionysian man and in particular, as we shall see, for the sacrificial element it contains.⁴ Furthermore, the "higher type" must not be confused with Nietzsche's concept of the Dionysian man (or overman) as they are not one and the same. As Fink argues, Zarathustra "...honours the higher men as a bridge to the overman."⁵ Thus while the "higher men" are distinguished from the herd, each in his own way, none are yet the Dionysian man. We will return to this later; however, Nietzsche's views on sacrifice must be understood first.

2. THE PARADOX OF NIETZSCHEAN SACRIFICE

The Christian faith is from the beginning sacrifice: sacrifice of all freedom, all pride, all self-confidence of the spirit; at the same time enslavement and self-mockery, self-mutilation.⁶

Remarks such as these can, at first glance, lead us to conclude that Nietzsche views sacrifice negatively. Yet sacrifice in the work of Nietzsche is paradoxical in nature. On the one hand, Nietzsche abhors the ascetic self-sacrifice of the Christian. On the other hand, his own philosophy recommends a type of self-sacrifice that can be viewed as a highly-disciplined refinement of the self. This is perhaps why so many different interpretations of Nietzschean sacrifice have emerged. I argue that Nietzsche views sacrifice as necessary to the persistence of mankind. However, he despises the transformation of its value into the pointless self-sacrifice upheld by Christianity. This transformation from the fundamental and useful notion of sacrifice which Nietzsche endorses to the life negating and fruitless self-sacrifice he abhors is effected by what Nietzsche calls slave-morality.

In slave-morality, *ressentiment* brews because the slave cannot act on his instincts. This *ressentiment*, according to Nietzsche, ultimately leads to an inversion of the violence the slave cannot act upon others onto himself instead. The master's values of confidence, vigour, selfishness, and abundance are transformed into selflessness, self-denial and self-sacrifice. However, we must not mistake Nietzsche's Dionysian man as a man free of all negativity. Nietzsche acknowledges that while all emotions (or reactive states) are natural and indeed necessary, what sets the Dionysian man apart from the lower type is his ability to use them in the service of life—to creatively sublimate them into something productive and affirmative. In slave-morality the negative feelings are turned into *ressentiment*, which are then used against life, to affirm something beyond this life. Thus Nietzsche connects the self-sacrifice founded on slave-morality to a life-negating “No” to life, while he associates the sacrifice of the overman with self-overcoming:

Through Christianity, the individual was made so important, so absolute that he could no longer be sacrificed: but the species endures only through human sacrifice... Genuine charity demands sacrifice for the good of the species—it is hard, it is full of self-overcoming, because it needs human sacrifice. And this pseudo-humaneness called Christianity wants it established that no one should be sacrificed.⁷

However, perhaps the most telling section on sacrifice comes from *Beyond Good and Evil*. While the famous Nietzschean proclamation that “God is dead” is well known, the reasons for why he claims “we killed him” are perhaps less known. For Nietzsche, this involves sacrifice, and more specifically, a kind of sacrifice man has a propensity for, even a need or an instinct for. Nietzsche describes three “rungs of sacrifice” in *Beyond Good and Evil* and suggests that sacrifice underwent several transformations throughout human history:

There is a great ladder of religious cruelty with many rungs; but three of them are the most important. First people sacrificed human beings to their gods, perhaps the very ones whom they loved best. Here belong the sacrifices of the first born in all prehistoric religions, also the sacrifice of Emperor Tiberius in the grotto to Mithras on the island of Capri, that most terrible of all Roman anachronisms. Then, in the moral ages of humanity, people sacrificed to their gods the strongest instincts which man possessed, his ‘nature.’ This celebratory joy sparkles in the cruel glance of the ascetic, of the enthusiastic ‘anti-natural man.’ Finally, what was still left to sacrifice? Did one not finally have to sacrifice everything comforting, holy, healing, all hope, all belief in a hidden harmony, in future blessedness and justice? Did one not have to sacrifice God himself and, out of cruelty against themselves, worship stone, stupidity, gravity, fate, and nothingness? To sacrifice God for nothingness - this paradoxical mystery of the last act of cruelty is saved for the generation which is coming along right now. We all know something of it already.⁸

First, we sacrifice those we love for religion. Nietzsche gives the example of Abraham asked to sacrifice his only son Isaac to please God. Then we sacrifice ourselves, our very own nature, to God. Nietzsche is now referring to the ascetic ideal, to the giving up of one’s natural instincts to appeal to God. This is the second rung on the ladder. Finally, with nothing else left to sacrifice, we sacrifice God himself. We sacrifice God for nothing. Keenan argues that, “to sacrifice God for nothing reveals the concealed truth of sacrifice itself.”⁹ This means that we sacrifice the very thing which we sacrifice for, and when we sacrifice the very thing which gives us redemption for our sacrificing we sacrifice economical sacrifice—we literally sacrifice for nothing. This passage shows, as Lampert argues, that a “...profound force in the human soul demands sacrifice.”¹⁰ Although sacrifice is a natural aspect of human nature, it has undergone transformations in Christianity that work against life.

The main approach to Nietzsche's views on sacrifice in the literature highlights the difference between slave and master morality.¹¹ For example, Siemens and colleagues argue that, for Nietzsche, sacrifice is healthy so long as it is "sacrifice as *affirmation*" as seen in master morality.¹² They suggest that this healthy sacrifice is transformed into the unhealthy self-sacrifice of the Christian through the reversal of values promulgated by slave morality.

Nietzsche sees slave-morality, therefore, as central to the deterioration of a healthy notion of sacrifice. Nietzsche first distinguishes between "master morality" and "slave morality" in section 260 of *Beyond Good and Evil*, arguing that from the standard of "slave morality" what is "good" is that which benefits the community (of slaves). For example: sympathy, kindness and humility are praised as valuable while those traits associated with the master were deemed as "evil" by the slaves. Logically, from the standards of "master morality" values are reversed. Nietzsche thus argues that "slave morality" is born out of the unconscious resentment and vengeance of the slave who, powerless in his condition, has no choice but to render the attributes of the master as universal vices. In regards to sacrifice, therefore, we first begin to see its transformation here in the importance given to sacrifice in slave morality. However, it is not until Christianity, which Nietzsche argues is slave morality manifest, that we see the value of sacrifice completely transform into the Christian self-sacrifice Nietzsche opposes so much.

Bubbio agrees that Nietzsche's account of sacrifice operates on three distinct definitions. The first is the sacrifice of master morality and the second is sacrifice in slave morality. This is congruent with other interpretations which note the distinction between master and slave sacrifice. However, Bubbio adds a third and different distinction - the sacrifice which belongs to active nihilism. Bubbio connects Nietzsche's definition of sacrifice to the Dionysian, and to the loss of identity which is so central to the Dionysian man. He shows how after the death of God, concrete notions of the Self and of the World begin to crumble. However, this paves the way for active nihilism and Dionysian sacrifice of the self. As Bubbio puts it: "it seems that the ultimate sacrifice of the overman...is the abandonment of consciousness, the loss of individual identity."¹³

Bubbio rightly identifies sacrifice as a core part of the Dionysian and shows how Nietzsche sees active nihilism as a step beyond passive nihilism, because active nihilism is destructive. It has the power to destroy and the destruction of old values is a necessary step. However, active nihilism is not enough. Active nihilism

is still, after all, nihilism, and this too must be overcome. For example, in the late notebooks Nietzsche claims that nihilism “represents a pathological *intermediate state*.”¹⁴ Bubbio’s concern is with the nature of sacrifice in Nietzsche and he focuses predominately on the overman in defining Nietzschean sacrifice. However, a full discussion of Nietzsche’s views on sacrifice should include his account of the “higher men” in the fourth book of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, which we will come back to.

Hedley’s discussion of sacrifice in Nietzsche brings our attention to the similarities of the sacrificial theme in both Dionysus and Christianity.¹⁵ Hedley notes that both Dionysus and Jesus are violently sacrificed. The difference, however, and the reason why Nietzsche accepts only Dionysian sacrifice, is that the latter is a “promise to life.” It is affirmative and yes-saying. In contrast, Christian sacrifice is not:

The Christian says No to even the happiest earthly lot: he is weak, poor, disinherited enough to suffer from life in whatever form...‘the God on the cross’ is a curse on life, a signpost to seek redemption from life; Dionysus cut to pieces is a promise of life: it will be eternally reborn and return out of destruction.¹⁶

We can see that Nietzsche views Christian self-sacrifice as a negation of life. However, Nietzsche is also suggesting that we are not to do away with sacrifice altogether. It is a human need after all, and, applied properly, in the service of life, will aid in the cultivation of humanity’s highest potential.¹⁷

In *Nietzsche and Political Thought*, Ansell-Pearson argues that Nietzsche’s views on sacrifice are aimed at elevating humanity. He reads Nietzsche as saying that we need to overcome our pity in order to be able to sacrifice others so that we may enhance and allow the higher human types to emerge. Ansell-Pearson likens Nietzsche’s hierarchical theory to that seen in plants, whereby the creeper must sacrifice others along the way as it grows higher. This is as necessary for the higher type as it is for the plant. Ansell-Pearson argues that Nietzsche’s theory of the higher type ultimately requires the sacrifice of the “lower strata” in order for the higher types to flourish. However, although Nietzsche accuses the lower strata of decadence and decay, he also points to their necessity. For Nietzsche, that there are strata at all is essential to his philosophy, as hierarchy *is* what distinguishes the higher type from other types. Without the “lower types” there can be no “higher

types.” Not everyone can be a higher type. This is the privilege of the few and it must remain that way. The masses, therefore, despite their decadence, have their purpose for Nietzsche. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, under the rubric of “What is Noble” Nietzsche discusses the need for differentiation between strata for a higher culture to flourish. As Nietzsche puts it:

Every enhancement of the type ‘man’ has so far been the work of an aristocratic society—and it will be so again and again—a society that believes in the long ladder of an order of rank and differences in value between man and man, and that needs slavery in some sense or another.¹⁸

Other interpretations of Nietzsche’s sense of sacrifice have continued in a similar vein. For example, Campolo notes that the Sermon on the Mount is of particular hatred to Nietzsche because this is the passage which praises the sacrifice of one’s riches to the poor.¹⁹ For Nietzsche, to sacrifice for the preservation of the “unsuccessful specimens” is an error which suppresses the cultivation of higher types. Rather, Nietzsche advocates allowing “higher types” to strive for the fulfilment of their potential through a kind of “tough love.” Pity which leads to self-sacrificial giving to the poor actually does them the disservice of removing their basis for action.

All of this paints Nietzsche in a rather elitist light. Yet there is a kind of sacrifice which Nietzsche promotes which is not merely about enhancing the great at the expense of the weak. Sacrifice is also a requirement of Nietzsche’s higher men. Benson in particular shows how sacrifice remains a part of Nietzsche’s philosophy. Nietzsche still requires sacrifice—the sacrifice of one’s comfortable notions. For example, “The True World” and “morality,” “Good and Evil,” these ideas must all be sacrificed in order to achieve greatness. The first thing the higher type must sacrifice is comfortable metaphysical notions. They keep us warm, secure, they are sweet lies we tell ourselves to make the world more palatable, but Nietzsche wants us to dispense with them. *This* is sacrifice. Dispensing with these notions is no easy task, because even if one no longer believes in God, Christian values permeate the everyday in ways we are largely unaware of. Even science and the pursuit of truth is not unaffected, since this pursuit is itself rooted in the metaphysical-Christian will to truth.

In this connection, Lemm provides an interesting interpretation of “the honey sacrifice” in Nietzsche’s Zarathustra.²⁰ Lemm argues that one of the reasons Ni-

etzsche dislikes Christian self-sacrifice so much is because of its selflessness. However, if self-sacrifice is selfless then it is meaningless as one has nothing to give. Instead, Zarathustra recommends that “your self be in your deed as the mother is in her child—let that be your word concerning virtue.”²¹ The type of sacrifice that Zarathustra advocates here is described as a “gift.” This is a real “giving” because this type of amoral sacrifice is full up with one’s self. Zarathustra recommends we place our entire selves in every act.²² And in this sense, perhaps sacrifice is “present in every action that is done with deliberation, in the worst as in the best.”²³

3. THE FOURTH PART OF *ZARATHUSTRA*

There is debate surrounding Nietzsche’s fourth section of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Some argue that the first three sections constitute an obvious beginning, middle and end, leaving the relevance of Nietzsche’s fourth and final section contestable.²⁴ Additionally, Nietzsche wrote the fifth part of *The Gay Science* after completing the first three sections of *Zarathustra* and later returned to write the fourth part of *Zarathustra*.²⁵ He published the fourth part at his own expense and distributed a mere forty copies to his close friends and later attempted to retract them. In addition to the continuity observed throughout Zarathustra’s first three sections this adds to the mysterious status of the fourth. Nonetheless, Zarathustra’s fourth part sheds some illuminating light on the current discussion, particularly on the “higher men,” as this section deals with the topic in detail. It will become clear that the higher men are not yet what Nietzsche is after but only an intermediary, albeit necessary, state between man and overman, just as active nihilism is also only a stage to be overcome. This is because while the higher men can destroy, what is still needed is the creation of *new* values. This is not dealt with in the first three parts of *Zarathustra* and could be a reason why Nietzsche released the fourth part later on in order to show that what is needed is the creation of new values. This paves the way for his next book, *Beyond Good and Evil*, which in this light can be seen as Nietzsche’s handbook for creating new values. Most importantly, I will now show how the sacrifice of men is not in the service of rank and aristocracy, but a gift in the service of life, for “man” himself must be overcome—not only the worst but the best of men.

While there are many themes that run through *Zarathustra*, the two most prevalent themes in the fourth part are the problem of pity and the de-deification of nature after the vanquishing of the otherworldly. The higher type and the prophecy of the overman are also core themes of the fourth part.

The fourth part begins with “The Honey Sacrifice,” which is relevant to our discussion of sacrifice as seen in Lemm’s description above. Years have passed, and Zarathustra is described as old and full of happiness. Surrounded by his animals, he tells them he is no longer concerned with happiness but with his work. Zarathustra describes himself as full of honey: “What is happening to me, happens to every fruit when it grows ripe. It is the *honey* in my veins that makes my blood thicker and my soul calmer.”²⁶ The animals suggest a mountain ascent and Zarathustra agrees, telling them he wishes to “offer the honey sacrifice.” However, when they reach the top of the mountain Zarathustra sends his animals back and once alone talks to himself. Rosen argues that the animals represent the animalistic nature of man which cannot be present at Zarathustra’s revelation of the truth of human existence. Their absence signifies Zarathustra transcending “the merely animal.”²⁷ Rosen astutely points out that the honey is associated with bees which are associated with work which has replaced happiness as Zarathustra’s chief concern. The honey, in its sweetness, represents happiness; however, it must be gathered by work, which now concerns Zarathustra more than the sweetness itself. The animals, however, are only attracted by the honey’s sweetness, pointing towards an important difference between animal and man. The symbolism of the animals returns in Nietzsche’s passage on “The Ugliest Man,” which will be analysed below. Zarathustra reveals he has lied to the animals about the sacrifice; he is overflowing with honey and will use it as a lure. This is consistent with Lemm’s analysis that, for Nietzsche, healthy sacrifice comes from overfullness rather than lack. Once alone on the mountain Zarathustra waits for men to come to him there. The imagery of fishing with bait is used here, as Zarathustra is described as a fisherman using his “honey” or happiness as a lure.²⁸

The next day Zarathustra is described as being in front of his cave with his animals. He has used all his honey and they are now helping him collect more. Zarathustra is visited by a soothsayer who tells him that the world is without meaning and nothing is worthwhile. They hear a cry and the soothsayer tells Zarathustra the cry of distress is for him: “The cry is for you. It calls you: Come, come, come! It is time! It is high time!... It is *the higher man* that cries for you.”²⁹ The theme of overcoming pity also appears in this passage. Pity is described as Zarathustra’s “final sin” with which the soothsayer attempts to seduce Zarathustra. Thus as Zarathustra hears the higher man’s cry he decides to search for the higher man and answer the call of distress. An analysis of each of the higher men will illustrate that despite their status as “higher,” they each have something yet to be overcome. In contrast to elitist readings of Nietzsche’s notion of sacrifice, we shall see

that it is not the lower types that must be sacrificed for the sake of the higher men, but the higher men for the sake of the overman.

4. ZARATHUSTRA'S HIGHER MEN

On his search for the higher man Zarathustra encounters seven characters. The first of these are two kings riding an ass on the road. For Deleuze, the two kings represent morality and customs and “the two extremities of culture,” which are the dissolution of authoritative values and the victory of the mob that no longer care to be ruled.³⁰ Nietzsche-Zarathustra admires the nobility which the two kings represent. Like Nietzsche, they are anti-democratic and have overcome egalitarian values, seeing the value of natural rank. However, the mob has no need for kings and lack of differentiation reigns among the herd, thus the kings react with nausea and pity. For Nietzsche, both self-pity and nausea must be overcome and this is a failing of the kings (and, as we shall see, Zarathustra too, who also suffers from nausea and pity for a large part of the fourth book).

Secondly, Zarathustra stumbles across a man attaching leeches to himself. The consensus in the literature is that the man represents a scholar, focused on his narrow field, he is described as devoting his life to studying the brain of the leech. He has similarities with many of Nietzsche's scholarly friends, for example, Erwin Rhode or Overbeck and could perhaps represent one of them.³¹ Yet Young notes that he may just as well represent “Nietzsche himself, a professor of classics for ten long years.”³² In part three of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* Nietzsche says: “the parasite is the lowest species; but whoever is of the highest species will nourish the most parasites.”³³ It is clear that the bleeding man is, for Nietzsche, a “high soul.” He represents a scientist and the search for knowledge and truth. While this is a step higher for Nietzsche than those who wish not to know, the bleeding man lacks gaiety. Nietzsche prefers a *gay science* and the bleeding man has yet to learn how to dance.

Later, Zarathustra comes across a man moaning in pain and distress. After watching the man for a while, Zarathustra has enough, and demands he stop the charade while beating him with his stick: “Stop it, you actor! You counterfeiter! You liar from the bottom! I recognize you well!”³⁴ Zarathustra asks him who he was pretending to be and the magician answers “*the ascetic of the spirit.*” The magician's desire for greatness is admirable and so too is his honesty and ability to discern that he is not great. The exchange is symbolic of Nietzsche's disillusionment with

Wagner who he once thought great.³⁵ Thus, while he is admirable, the magician has yet to overcome Wagnerian romanticism. The magician needs to embrace the earth as it is; both the beautiful *and* the ugly.

Zarathustra then encounters a retired Pope, mourning the death of God. The retired Pope has searched for the most pious amongst believers but after the death of God finds none and now searches for the most pious of the non-believers which he deems is Zarathustra. The Pope explains God died from pitying mankind. Zarathustra replies that “when gods die, they always die several kinds of death.”³⁶ Throughout Nietzsche’s writings, he frequently accuses modernity of still holding onto Christian values despite the death of God. As we have seen, even in the sciences or the pursuit of truth, the ascetic ideal remains. The retired Pope is thought to symbolise what remains of Christian morality after the death of God.³⁷ Zarathustra and the pope are both pious and this is a venerated quality: “I love all who are pious.”³⁸ While piety is a strength, the retired Pope is also admired for his ability to acknowledge the death of God. However, while this is an important step forward for Nietzsche, one must not just acknowledge the death of God but respond to it in affirmation. For the retired Pope this is an event worth mourning and he wishes it was not so. He lacks *amor fati* (love of fate) and has yet to learn affirmation.

After the Pope, Zarathustra meets the man who killed God—“the Ugliest Man.” Importance is again placed on the theme of pity as Zarathustra experiences pity for the ugliest man and his pity appears to demobilise Zarathustra for a moment. Eventually, however, Zarathustra overcomes his pity and invites the ugliest man to his cave. Santaniello argues that the man represents Socrates.³⁹ This is because in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche accuses Socrates of expelling Dionysius from Greek tragedy. Furthermore, Socrates was famously ugly. Young disagrees, arguing that as it has already been revealed that God has died from pitying mankind, this pity is for mankind’s “ugliness.” The ugliest man therefore represents the “human-all-to-human” ugliness of mankind. As the man who killed God and is responsible for this great event, he is admirable. Unfortunately, however, the ugliest man has killed God out of revenge and for this reason has yet to overcome his revengeful spirit.

After his encounter with the ugliest man, Zarathustra comes across a “voluntary beggar,” a rich man grown weary of rich people who voluntarily becomes poor. Unfortunately, he is just as nauseated by the poor, and has now learned to cud

from the cows and found his cure for nausea. The dominant interpretation of the voluntary beggar in the literature is that he represents Jesus or a messiah figure of some kind. Kaufmann, in a footnote of his translation suggests that the figure is Moses. Kellenberger argues that “while the voluntary beggar is not named, it is clear beyond a shadow of doubt that Nietzsche has in mind Jesus.”⁴⁰ Similarly, Lampert states that the figure is most likely Jesus.⁴¹ Seung, however, offers a different interpretation, viewing the voluntary beggar as a kind of “Spinozian superhero.”⁴² The voluntary beggar is one who looked for happiness in both the poor and the rich and could not find it and so now looks to find the secret of happiness from the cow. Seung argues that the voluntary beggar’s quest was established on other-worldly delusions. Having found only disgust in humans of any class (rich or poor) he turns to find “a new mode of life (cow-life) that will both preserve itself and also be happy because unconscious of disgust, and will finally thus be conducive to the other-worldly.”⁴³ He also notes that the herd of cows may represent a joke on resurrection. The voluntary beggar has learned to overcome nausea and for Nietzsche this is no small feat. However, he is praising the herd-like qualities and egalitarian principles which the cow represents, and this still needs to be overcome.

Zarathustra has been persistently followed by his shadow. As his shadow calls to him, he is annoyed and tries in vain to outrun him. Eventually, Zarathustra realizes his folly and stops to confront his shadow. The shadow reveals he is a wanderer looking for his homecoming. He is described as tired “so thin, swarthy, hollow, and outlived.”⁴⁴ Zarathustra invites the shadow to the cave to rest there and he continues his journey finally alone. Scholars are in agreement that the shadow represents the positivist Nietzsche. This is because the shadow is described as a “wanderer” and “homeless,” sharing obvious similarities to Nietzsche’s book *The Wanderer and his Shadow* from his positivist period. However, little is said as to why Nietzsche/Zarathustra casts his positivist self away and continues his journey alone. As this is the seventh character, I suggest that this represents Nietzsche’s journey of self-overcoming, and the shadow is the final overcoming before we are left with the current Nietzsche, the author of Zarathustra represented by the character of Zarathustra himself. The shadow represents nihilism and is important to Nietzsche because it is the last of the higher men he meets. Nihilism in Nietzsche’s eyes can be positive or negative. As Nietzsche runs from his shadow, the scene portrays the shadow running after Zarathustra, who is running after the voluntary beggar. This is not insignificant. The voluntary beggar and the shadow represent two different consequences of Zarathustra’s teaching: the two poles of

active and passive. Thus when Zarathustra finally faces his shadow he not only overcomes his pity but points towards the overcoming of nihilism.

Kaufmann notes that each of the characters also represents something of Nietzsche himself, an allegorical personage. Each of these men, therefore, represent “higher men” and each have something of the spirit of the overman. However, it is essential to note they are not yet the overman and neither is Zarathustra. This becomes apparent when Zarathustra returns to his cave, and following a welcome, enjoys “the last supper” with his guests.

5. ZARATHUSTRA AND THE CHARACTERS IN THE CAVE: “THE LAST SUPPER”

In Zarathustra’s cave, the men prepare for a dinner with wine and lamb. The voluntary beggar is the only one to refuse the meat and wine and Zarathustra drinks only water. Scholars agree that “the last supper” is a parody of the Biblical last supper, lending again to the religious theme of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Throughout the dinner they speak of only the higher men. In the section that follows the last supper, “On the Higher Man,” Zarathustra recounts his early days when he visited the mob in the marketplace. Now more wise, he has lost concern with the herd of the marketplace and warns the men assembled in his cave, who he now refers to as “higher men,” to stay away from the marketplace where they believe that all men are equal and do not believe in “higher men.” Zarathustra then gives the higher men an illuminating speech which sheds light on their place in Nietzsche’s philosophical vision, and which is worth quoting in full:

Before God! But now this god has died. You higher men, this god was your greatest danger. It is only since he lies in his tomb that you have been resurrected. Only now the great noon comes; only now the higher man becomes—lord.

Have you understood this word, O my brothers? You are startled? Do your hearts become giddy? Does the abyss yawn before you? Does hellhound howl at you? Well then, you higher men! Only now is the mountain of man’s future in labor. God died: now we want the overman to live.⁴⁵

The most concerned ask today: ‘How is man to be preserved?’ But Zarathustra is the first and only one to ask: ‘How is man to be overcome?’ I have

the overman at heart, that is my first and only concern—and not man: not the neighbour, not the poorest, not the most ailing, not the best.⁴⁶

The above two passages are particularly important because they show not only that the higher type is not the overman. They also show that the overcoming of man (or the sacrifice of man) is not about aristocracy or rank, but a testament against self-preservation in the name of a sacrifice as a gift in the service of *this* world. Furthermore, we can see here that the death of God does not leave us with rank, as some of the literature suggests, but rather we are left with possibility; in particular the possibility of the overman and the creation of new values. The higher men can thus be seen as stuck in a state of active nihilism as described in the late notebooks.⁴⁷ They each have something of the destroyer, of the negator or the no-sayer, about them and Zarathustra admires this, which is why they are invited to his cave. The destruction of old values is a necessary step to the creation of the new. However, though the day has come the higher men are not the solution. Nietzsche requires the creation of new values and for this he needs *both* no-sayers and yes-sayers. In the *Antichrist*, Nietzsche sums this up poignantly when comparing modern man's happiness to what a higher type requires: "In our atmosphere was a thunderstorm; the nature we are became dark—for we saw no way. Formula for our happiness: a Yes, a No, a straight line, a goal."⁴⁸

This goal is the overman. The higher men represent an intermediary state and are thus necessary, but nonetheless must themselves be overcome. When Nietzsche calls for the overcoming of man he does not wish to merely sacrifice the herd type. This is not about rank or aristocracy. In pursuit of the overman, Zarathustra has only this in his heart, and not man, not even "the best."⁴⁹ After all, for Nietzsche there is no doer behind the deed and to make such an assumption would be to fall into the belief in "being" where there is only becoming: "It is belief in the living and thinking as the only effective force—in will, in intention—it is belief that every event is a deed, that every deed presupposes a doer, it is belief in the 'subject.'"⁵⁰ Nietzsche, however, wants to overcome this dichotomy of "being" and "becoming."

6. CONCLUSION

Nietzsche's dislike for the "pity, self-abnegation and self-sacrifice" underlying Christian values is well-known. For Nietzsche, they represent self-denying and life-negating values which ultimately destroy the human spirit and hinder the cul-

tivation of greatness. However, there is a kind of sacrifice that Nietzsche *does* advocate. We can see a self-sacrifice that Nietzsche admires in the Dionysian man because unlike its counterpart in the ascetic man this type of self-sacrifice is life affirming. For Nietzsche, the overman is not a goal to be realised, there is no end-state. However the process of continual self-overcoming itself is what Nietzsche argues allows for life-affirming creativity, as seen most evidently in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. And self-overcoming always involves a kind of self-sacrifice:

The difference between the self-sacrifice of the overman and the Christian self-sacrifice is that the overman does not sacrifice himself in the herd's stead, but in order to emerge from it. Or, better, he sacrifices himself by emerging from it, for the overman, if he really is an overman, cannot avoid his own sacrifice.⁵¹

Christian self-sacrifice, therefore, is a kind of renunciation because its goal is to gain access to the "other-worldly." The self-sacrifice characterised by the overman's self-overcoming, on the other hand, is life-affirming because it accepts the "death of God" and sacrifices only for this world, thus affirming it and ultimately giving it meaning: "The overman is the meaning of the earth. Let your will say: the overman *shall be* the meaning of the earth! I beseech you my bothers, *remain faithful to the earth*, and do not believe those who speak to you of otherworldly hopes!"⁵²

While the self-sacrifice of the ascetic man can be differentiated from the self-sacrifice of the overman, the necessity of self-sacrifice becomes clearer when compared to what Nietzsche calls the "last man." The "last man" does not sacrifice anything. The last man risks nothing, seeking only comfort in the logic of the same. He seeks pleasure and avoidance of pain. Conversely, Nietzsche's Dionysian man seeks risk in the creation of the new. Rather than avoid pain, he affirms life in its entirety, including its suffering.

The Dionysian man's affirmation of life in its entirety shows an acceptance and love of life and all that comes with it. In the Nietzschean view, life is becoming, which includes constant generation and degeneration, continual coming to be and passing away. The Dionysian man turns his Dionysian principle towards creative projects but as one who affirms the entirety of life he understands that degeneration is just as much a part of life as creation. He sees destruction as an opportunity to create something new, despite the natural pain or suffering de-

struction might bring:

A coming to be and passing away, a building and destroying without any moral valuation, in eternal selfsame innocence, belong in this world only to the play of the artist and the child. And as the artist and the child play, so the eternal living fire plays, builds up and destroys in innocence—and this game the *aion* plays with itself. Transforming itself into water and earth it piles up sandcastles like a child beside the sea, piles up and tramples down: and from time to time begins its game anew.⁵³

While Nietzsche is actually referring to Heraclitean flux here, it is not difficult to imagine that the Dionysian man is a spirit akin to an innocent child creating sandcastles by the sea while knowing they will be swept away and destroyed—only to start his game anew. Sacrifice can be seen as a kind of surrender to the innocent becoming of this world. There can be strength in surrender, insofar as it is a type of surrender which is life-affirming and symbolises a “fullness of life.” As Nietzsche puts it:

He that is richest in the fullness of life, the Dionysian god and man, cannot only afford the sight of the terrible and questionable but even the terrible deed and any luxury of destruction, decomposition, and negation.⁵⁴

While Nietzsche began by thinking in terms of the dichotomy of vitality and decadence, he soon overcame this duality, as he so often did. Nietzsche realises that vitality is dependent upon some forms of non-vitality. That is to say that vitality arises from suffering, decadence and decay which, in the truly great, is used to refine the spirit and to add style to their character. In this sense, sacrifice plays an important role along the way towards self-mastery. For Nietzsche, growth is never attained by peace and good fortune, but by conquest, striving and continual overcoming. Indeed, self-overcoming cannot be performed without sacrifice, although as seen in the instance of slave morality, not all sacrifice leads to self-overcoming. There are thus both healthy and unhealthy forms of sacrifice. Nietzsche views sacrifice as he views all things. Nothing is good or bad in and of itself, but a thing's value is judged on whether it leads to enhancement or decay. Christian self-sacrifice is an example of the type of sacrifice which leads to decadence. In the higher type, however, healthy sacrifice is necessary in order to achieve self-advancement. But in the Dionysian man, sacrifice is for affirming life; it is solely a Yes to life as becoming and becoming as life. Like Dionysus, Nietzsche's Dionysian man forms

himself in a continuous process of self-overcoming, whereby he constantly sacrifices himself. This is not an elitist sacrifice of the lower for the sake of higher humanity. Rather, it is self-giving from an overabundance of life; a healthy consequence of the Dionysian man's affirmation of life in its entirety.

Griffith University

NOTES

I would like to thank Gideon Baker for comments on an earlier version of this paper. I am also grateful to two anonymous readers for Parrhesia for their thoughtful reports.

1. I am using the term self-formation to signify the kind of artistic self-creation Nietzsche often advocates when he encourages one to “make poets of ourselves,” “become who we are” and in particular “giving style to one’s character.” See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1974, \$290, p.232 for the best illustration of Nietzsche’s views on self-formation.
2. Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1967, First Essay, §13, p.45.
3. Nietzsche’s notion of self-overcoming is complicated. As Conway rightly points out, Nietzsche’s “account of the process of self-overcoming remains disappointingly vague and underdeveloped. He spends very few sentences explaining what he actually means by ‘self-overcoming,’ and he generally deputizes his readers to furnish the details of its operation.” See Daniel W. Conway “Life and Self-Overcoming” in *A Companion to Nietzsche*, ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2006, p.539. Katsafanas concurs, adding “it is not even clear what is meant by self-overcoming. The notion is deliberately vague: self-overcoming can be manifest in a wide variety of activities.” See Paul Katsafanas, *The Nietzschean Self: Moral Psychology, Agency, and the Unconscious*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, p.225. When used as personal self-overcoming, I agree with Conway, that Nietzsche sees self-overcoming as “a complex process of destruction and creation” which aims, “despite its undeniably destructive connotation, to convey a sense of generative power and promise”. See Daniel Conway, *Nietzsche and the Political*. London, Routledge, 1997, p.67.
4. For this reason, I will be using the term “Dionysian man” instead of Nietzsche’s “overman.”
5. Eugen Fink, *Nietzsche’s Philosophy*. Trans. Goetz Richter, London: Continuum, 2003, p.105.
6. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1966, \$46, p.60.
7. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J Hollingdale. New York: Vintage Books, 1968, \$246, p.142.
8. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §55, p.67.
9. Dennis Keenan, “Nietzsche and the Eternal Return of Sacrifice.” *Research in Phenomenology* 33:1 (2003, p.168).
10. Laurence Lampert, *Nietzsche’s Task: An Interpretation of Beyond Good and Evil*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008, p.115.
11. This is based mainly on the distinction Nietzsche sketches out in *On the Genealogy of Morals*. For example he argues in slave morality “...an attempt is made to employ to block up the wells of force; here physiological well-being itself is viewed askance, and especially the outward expression of this well-being, beauty and joy; while pleasure is felt and sought in ill-constitutedness, decay, pain, mischance, ugliness, voluntary deprivation, self-mortification, self-flagellation, self-sacrifice.” See Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Third Essay, §11, p.118.
12. Paolo Diego Bubbio, “The Sacrifice of the Overman as an Expression of the Will to Power: Anti-political Consequences and Contributions to Democracy.” In *Nietzsche, Power and Politics: Rethinking Nietzsche’s Legacy for Political Thought*, edited by Herman W. Siemens and Vasti Roodt, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008, p.274.

13. Paolo Diego Bubbio, *Sacrifice in the Post-Kantian Tradition: Perspectivism, Intersubjectivity, and Recognition*. New York: Suny Press, 2014, p.131.
14. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nietzsche: Writings from the Late Notebooks*. Trans. Kate Sturge. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, §9[35], p.146-147.
15. Douglas Hedley, *Sacrifice imagined: Violence, Atonement, and the Sacred*. New York: Continuum, 2011.
16. Nietzsche, *The Late Notebooks*, §14[89], p.250.
17. This is the overcoming of man. As Zarathustra says, "Man is something that must be overcome..." See Friedrich Nietzsche, "Thus Spoke Zarathustra." *The Portable Nietzsche*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Penguin Books, 1978, §"On Enjoying and Suffering the Passions", p.149.
18. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, §257, p.201.
19. Tony Campolo, *Partly Right: Learning from the Critics of Christianity*. Texas: Word Publishing, 1985.
20. Vanessa Lemm, *Nietzsche's Animal Philosophy: Culture, Politics, and the Animality of the Human Being*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2009.
21. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, §"On the Virtuous", p.208.
22. Nietzsche views egoism like he views sacrifice; neither good nor bad in and of themselves but as healthy (life-affirming) or unhealthy (life-denying). For example, Young notes "Nietzsche repeatedly described the beneficial effects for others that emanate from the self-realized individual who pursues a noble egoism in terms of 'overflowing' or well-being from the self-contained individual to those around him." See Julian Young, *Individual and Community in Nietzsche's Philosophy*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015, p.171.
23. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits* Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, §34, p.223.
24. As Laurence Lampert puts it "...for the existence of a fourth part violates the ending of part III. Everything points to the end of part III as The End." See Laurence Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teaching: An Interpretation of Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986, p.287.
25. Philip Pothen, "Art and Atheism: Nietzsche, Zarathustra, and the 'Godless' Work." *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, (April: 1, 2000, p.56).
26. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, §"The Honey Sacrifice," p.349.
27. Stanley Rosen, *The Mask of Enlightenment: Nietzsche's Zarathustra*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004, p.209.
28. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, §"The Honey Sacrifice," p.351.
29. Ibid, §"The Cry of Distress," p.354.
30. Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006, p.156.
31. See Weaver Santaniello, *Zarathustra's Last Supper: Nietzsche's Eight Higher Men*. Gower Publishing, Ltd., 2005 and Young "Zarathustra's Last Supper: Nietzsche's Eight Higher Men." *Ars Disputandi*, (7:1 2007) for an excellent review of that book.
32. Young, *Zarathustra's Last Supper*, p.113.
33. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, §"On Old and New Tablets," p.320.
34. Ibid, §"The Magician," p.367.
35. Bruce Ellis Benson, *Pious Nietzsche: Decadence and Dionysian Faith*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007, p. 211.
36. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, §"Retired," p.373.
37. Abed Azzam, *Nietzsche Versus Paul*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2015.
38. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, § "Retired," p.374

39. Weaver Santaniello, *Zarathustra's Last Supper: Nietzsche's Eight Higher Men*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005.
40. James Kellenberger, *Kierkegaard and Nietzsche: Faith and Eternal Acceptance*. New York: St Martin's Press, 1997, p.68.
41. Lampert, *Nietzsche's Task*, p.127.
42. Thomas K Seung, *Nietzsche's Epic of the Soul: Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2005.
43. Ibid, p.178.
44. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, §"The Shadow," p.385.
45. Ibid, §"On the Higher Man," p.398.
46. Ibid, §"On the Higher Man", p.399.
47. Nietzsche, *The Late Notebooks*, §9[35], p.146-147.
48. Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Antichrist." *The Portable Nietzsche*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Penguin Books, 1974, §1, p.570.
49. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, §"On the Higher Man", p.399.
50. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §550, p.295.
51. Bubbio, *Sacrifice in the Post-Kantian Tradition*, p.125..
52. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, §First Part: 3, p.125.
53. Friedrich Nietzsche. *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*. Trans. Marianne Cowan. Regnery Publishing, 2012, §7, p.62.
54. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §370, p.328.