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Becoming Savage?

Nietzsche Versus Hegel (On Ancient Legacy)

Abstract

In sharp contrast to the material heritage, which is most often precisely determined and subject to distribution, spiritual heritage is reassessed again and again. Especially when it comes to valuation, we note remarkable aberrations and disagreements. What is for some an unchallengeable value, the pillar of European civilisation, for others is a fatal source of corruption, a deceiving inspiration of decay. By following the examples of Hegel and Nietzsche, we will also briefly show how the description of Hellenic inheritance changes depending on differing notions of history favoured by its inheritors. Hegel is full of confidence in the historical movement of reason, understood in terms of development and progress. According to Nietzsche, history should be considered as an abuse, as should the trust in tradition, which he views as a form of voluntary enslavement. For Hegel, history functions as a medium of emancipation and self-knowledge, whereas with Nietzsche, we are entering into troubled terrain, not only with history itself but with the shared past as well.

Keywords

legacy, Hellenic philosophy, Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, savage

I. Introduction

Hegel would probably comment with great astonishment on Eugen Fink’s idea that “to reflect on the Greeks means to dig out one’s own roots”¹ (“Die Griechen nachdenken heißt unsere eigene Wurzeln aufgraben”). When it comes to the history of philosophy, Fink is a consistent successor to Nietzsche. His starting premise is that we live in a self-evident understanding that prevents us from posing the ontological questions of the past. To pose these questions, for Fink, means to undermine this self-evidence, to challenge our ontological nihilism. From his perspective, this reflection has to produce the opposite effect. Instead of undermining our roots, historical-philosophical reflection nourishes them, and feeds and stabilises them. On the contrary, for Hegel, not thinking about the Greeks would mean remaining without roots, risking the collapse of the world spirit by cutting off what supports it and makes it stable. But from Nietzsche’s perspective, reflecting on the Greeks means abandoning classical stability and moderation, and coming into contact with “wild antiquity”. For this to become possible, one must give up the illusion of a “Greek miracle”: the alleged discovery of European rationality and the spirit of scientific explanation. The genuine Hellenic contributions would have to be sought

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Eugen Fink, *Grundfragen der antiken Philosophie, Eugen Fink Gesamtausgabe*, vol.

11, Simona Bertolini, Riccardo Lazzari (eds.), Verlag Karl Alber, Baden-Baden 2023, p. 27.

elsewhere. Not in an outburst of ascetic idealism, but rather in the tragic phenomena, in the wild, fertile manifestations of Dionysos, the god of dance, theatre, and wine, all of them media of transgression. Although Nietzsche would not have regretted the ruins of the world spirit, because he would have seen in it only a blow to the ascetic attitude towards the world, or simply a breakdown of a fatal idealistic project. If someone can lose his roots, then it is not about an ascetic construction, but it is, above all, for the sake of individual existence. Unlike Fink, for Nietzsche undermining one's own roots should not be a cause for concern, but rather a clear sign of intellectual honesty.

With that in mind, losing one's roots is not a dramatic experience, as Fink describes it, but rather a symptom of healing. What is rooted in us should be considered as various expressions of morality, Christian favouring of the spirit over the body, and an ascetic and rational attitude towards reality. The path to a free spirit cannot bypass liberation from each of them individually. If knowledge, according to Plato's Socrates, implies a specific type of *memory*, the Dionysiac madness, savagery, and exaltation stand for opposition to knowledge, because the one who is subjected to them "forgets", or "loses" oneself in a *bodily*, not a *cognitive* transgression.² Moreover, rooted freedom in Nietzsche is unimaginable, for its presumption is to become genuinely savage, and not only savage in demeanour or articulation:

"To lose firm ground for once! To float! To err! To be mad! – that was part of the paradise and debauchery of former ages, whereas our bliss is like that of a shipwrecked man who has climbed ashore and is standing with both feet on the firm old earth – marveling because it does not bob up and down."³

For Nietzsche, philosophy is first of all a life skill and not a theory of truth. Therefore, it does not require a rational and well-balanced foundation. Life is an endeavour to express thoughts uncensored by reason. Pursuing that path, the history of philosophy could not be considered as the development of truth. Nietzschean regard for the historically important chain of philosophers would disclose nothing more than a series of bad personality traits and indecent thinkers. As if only those devoted to scepticism would be worth mentioning, the others deserve only condemnation for being sick thinkers:

"I except a few sceptics, the decent type in the history of philosophy, but the rest do not know the first requirements of intellectual integrity. They are like a bunch of little women, all these visionaries and prodigies – they take 'beautiful feelings' for arguments, a 'heaving bosom' for the bellows of divinity, conviction for a criterion of truth."⁴

Despite that, the history of philosophy does not deserve to be forgotten. There is no doubt that Nietzsche sometimes does not hide his contempt for the philosophical heritage, naming it the "so-called" history of philosophy. At the same time, his entire work is nothing less than a constant polemical dialogue with the history of philosophy and European history in general.

II. A Rich Treasury

In both Hegel and Nietzsche, there is an undeniable parallelism between the concept of reality and the concept of history. For Hegel, reality is reasonably structured, since it rests on the historical development of the spirit. Hence, it is not possible to communicate with reason embodied in history in a positivist way, because speculation is the only tool that can recognise and depict inherent reason. As a historian of philosophy, Hegel shows us a rich treasury.

His legacy is unique, gathered around the idea of the self-development of the world spirit. Bearing in mind his basic premise, history and system are not mutually opposed and irreconcilable. The logic is quite simple: the more history, the more system.

What is not immediately visible to researchers and observers in historical development refers to the necessity of confrontation with previous philosophical viewpoints in order for any development to occur at all. If we ask ourselves whether such a diagnosis corresponds to historical facts, we will understand that it was after Hegel's philosophy that positivism appeared on the European philosophical scene. We can hardly imagine a greater contrast to Hegel's speculative philosophy than the positivist way of thinking, which seems to be the leading one even today. Therefore, considering the historical outcome, or the effectual history of his philosophical system, it would be highly unfair to object and say that Hegel's approach is completely without foundation and foreign to real events.

The dialectical background of historical inheritance is mirrored within the absolute knowledge of the science of logic. It is therefore of utmost importance that all the jewels of that heritage have been preserved. Hegel's historical collection would simply not be possible if some important moment were missing. Unlike the usual collection, in which the absence of an important piece would indicate a certain impoverishment, but in principle would not endanger the intrinsic value of the other items, Hegel's historical-philosophical collection looks like a set of high stairs where there could be no climbing if any of the steps were missing. Concerning the spirit, there is no skipping; what matters is only the unity of spirit and historical time, which means that the principle of preserving the Hellenic philosophical heritage is in full agreement with what should have been safeguarded.

Within these perspectives, for Hegel, any renaissance of a historically surpassed philosophical position is unthinkable. Unlike Nietzsche, Hegel would certainly assure us that the idea of *monumental history* has no meaning whatsoever. Hegel would probably just laugh at the thought of the eternal return of the same as a future repetition of ancient Dionysiac manifestation.⁵ An effort to return to some previous positions, to bring its "repetition" about, even if they were neglected and unfairly evaluated by its successors and interpreters, according to Hegel, would be doomed to failure in advance. From Hegel's perspective, an attempt to establish a dialogue with a singular philosophical system from the past that skips entire centuries in the first place necessarily marks an undesirable and unsuitable rupture from the overall development of the history of philosophy. But from Nietzsche's point of view, the history of philosophy embodies extremely slow progress, for each success in shaping a human being would have been undermined by the new innovative fissure.

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Dragan Prole, *Ničeovi trubaduri*, Novi Sad – Sremski Karlovci, IKZS 2021, p. 95.

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Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, transl. Josefine Nauckhoff, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2001, p. 48.

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Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is & The Antichrist: A Curse on Christianity*, transl. Thomas Wayne, Algora Publishing, New York 2004, p. 111.

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Werner Ross, *Lou Andreas-Salomé. Weggefährtin von Nietzsche, Rilke, Freud*, Siedler, Berlin 1992, p. 22.

The secret parallelism between the history of philosophy and the history of Europe seems to be hidden behind this strange dialectic of ups and downs. The crucial point of historical struggles was not related to geopolitics. The key was not to achieve world dominance. The materialist way of thinking, according to which the struggle between productive forces and productive relations is decisive, misses the point as well. The true historical collision is the one between different visions of what it means to be a human being. The outcome of those battles has been mostly devastating – starting with Socrates, the one who should be finally defeated has historically prevailed. Entire historical epochs, like Protestantism, for which Hegel expressed boundless admiration, were essentially involved in the struggle against establishing a higher form of human being, achieved thanks to the Renaissance. In short, Protestantism versus Renaissance: ascetic and religious individual versus artistically formed individual. The point of confrontation turned out to be related to the prevailing type of human existence. The background is quite simple: either a neutralised, predictable, average type or aristocratic, adventurous, creative articulation of human possibilities. With that in mind, Hegel's idea of historical and spiritual development and progress seemed like an idealistic hallucination to Nietzsche. That is why we are not privileged to gain access to and to grasp historical or philosophical time as a unique whole. By doing so, we would acknowledge and appropriate what we don't want – ideologies or movements organised only to suppress what was achieved in terms of exceptional, simply higher traits of human beings.

The opposition between the average and the extraordinary for Hegel represents a mere heteronomous interpretation of the world spirit, fundamentally alien to the logic of its development. The history of the spirit is not about the dispute between the masses and the aristocracy, the timid and the brave, but rather it is about the internal confrontation of the spirit with itself. Hegel's second critical remark would most probably be that what was torn out of context, thoughts of the past would necessarily be substantialised, by giving it a *quasi*-actual existence, and pretending that nothing has happened in the meantime. And finally, that chosen philosophy would be forcibly attributed to an originality that it does not historically possess, a kind of “mythologising of the beginning”⁷⁶ would inevitably occur, by assigning the status of a unique, incomparable source to a certain philosophy. This, according to Hegel, has value only as a “bead” in a series of dialectical encounters through which we find emerging mutually opposite philosophical standpoints.

In other words, something that is not a beginning would be declared as a kind of philosophical beginning. For him, Nietzsche's vivid picture, according to which the scenes of monumental history are like islands of meaning that stick out and remain above the water of time that flows and passes, would represent nothing. Hence, we can hardly imagine Hegel listening to these words without showing dislike and making a grimace of displeasure:

“... the past itself suffers wrong. Whole tracts of it are forgotten and despised; they flow away like a dark, unbroken river, with only a few gaily colored islands of fact rising above it.”⁷⁷

For Hegel, there is nothing more terrifying than the representation of a disfigured past from which many parts have disappeared, or have been deliberately pushed into oblivion:

“The abstract, intellectual point of view does put the first determination (*m*) in relation to other determinations (and also to the negation of *m*), but sticks thereby to the conviction that the

original determination is the true one. In contrast, the dialectical point of view recognises *m* as limited and insufficient if one wants to give a complete account of the concept of matter, and sees the limitation of *m* ‘for what it is’, namely the negation of *m*: in other words, if ‘matter is continuous’ does not give a full account of what pertains to the concept of matter, then the negation of *m*.⁸

III. Contemporary “Homelessness”

On the other hand, with Nietzsche, the idea of “existential” and life-tinged positivism prevailed: that reality should not be beautified and idealised, but should be properly prepared for its endurance. There, Nietzsche recognises an opportunity to introduce a genuinely scientifically irrelevant and unfamiliar figure into philosophy, the patron of Attic tragedy, the god Dionysos. The transition from the logic of positivism to the logic of “savage historicism”, which uses the opportunity for double seeing in the experience of strangeness, is extremely specific:

“Dionysos – more than any other ancient Greek deity – fills a modern need. He remains a symbol of something important that cannot be so effectively expressed in any other way.”⁹

That gesture is almost as dramatic and artistic as it is philosophical. On the one hand, Nietzsche calls for the joyful transformation of identity. On the other hand, there is no point in mentioning the revival of ancient cults and rituals. *Nietzsche’s Dionysos is actually not a forgotten figure of the past, but in the first place, the possibility of a fresh mental state achievable in the near future.* Or, to put it more precisely, a contemporary need for the constitution of a specific relationship between consciousness and the world:

“It is indeed necessary to have experienced being as a monstrosity. A life that is roused to consciousness should be wary of being. Being turns Dionysian when familiar things turn eerie. ‘Dionysian wisdom’ is the power to endure Dionysian reality. [...] Dionysian integration of the individual consciousness is a pleasure because the ‘bounds and limits of existence’ are eradicated. However, when this condition has passed and everyday consciousness has resumed its domination over thinking and experience, ‘disgust’ comes over the disillusioned Dionysian.”¹⁰

Dionysos was and still is the god who comes, and what makes him especially welcome in the contemporary world is the fact that Dionysos embodies a unique homelessness:

“... present everywhere, he had no home.”¹¹

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Roberto Charles Feitosa de Oliveira, *Das Denken der Endlichkeit und die Endlichkeit des Denkens. Untersuchungen zu Hegel und Heidegger*, Berlin, Duncker & Humblot 1999, p. 42.

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Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Use and Abuse of History*, transl. Adrian Collins, Indianapolis – New York, The Bobbs-Merrill 1957, pp. 15–16.

8
Elena Ficara, *The Form of Truth. Hegel’s Philosophical Logic*, Walter de Gruyter GmbH, Berlin – Boston 2021, p. 146.

9
Richard Seaford, *Dionysos*, London – New York, Routledge 2006, p. 5.

10
Rüdiger Safranski, *Nietzsche. A Philosophical Biography*, transl. Shelley Frisch, London, Granta Books 2002, p. 80.

11
Marcel Detienne, *Dionysos at Large*, transl. Arthur Goldhammer, Cambridge – London, Harvard University Press 1989, p. 5.

To be without a home in history implies avoiding historical determination and existing beyond historical flow. Nietzsche's vision of monumental history is also a lesson on metahistory, a way of being that long before *quantum mechanics* stood in favour of modernist ideals, which aimed to present unpredictable events, experiences that are independent of any imaginable historical conditions whatsoever. *Dionysos exemplifies the possibility of an intervention within the framework of history that actually frees us from history:*

"... both Hegel and Nietzsche are said to place on the role of great individuals. Both philosophers show that the historical 'greatness' of individuals resides in qualities which from a moral point of view can only be considered to be 'immoral' [...]. History in the view of Hegel and Nietzsche is not therefore arena where moral intention and action hold sway, but it is carried forward by personal ambition and passion."¹²

IV. The Existing Bridge Between Ancient and Modern

In Hegel's eyes, the home of any philosophically relevant character cannot be other than the entire history of the world spirit. Hence, there is no arbitrariness in philosophical inheritance. Hegel's understanding of philosophy as a totality of thinking forms simply does not allow any of them to be bypassed or sidestepped. Otherwise, the whole would be lost to the parts, and the philosophical performance would be unsatisfactory, a mere unproductive thinking expenditure, as in the case of a puzzle game in which some parts are missing. Consequently, the successors are obliged to reconstruct all the key ideas, the whole of the historical movement, bearing in mind the logic of a unique development and summarising all the valuable principles and texts in brief:

"To this point, the World-spirit has come, and each stage has its own form in the true system of Philosophy; nothing is lost, all principles are preserved since Philosophy in its final aspect is the totality of forms. This concrete idea is the result of the strivings of spirit during almost twenty-five centuries of earnest work to become objective to itself, to know itself."¹³

Hegel's most important historical-philosophical insight seems to be the extremely simple "nothing is lost; all principles are preserved". Nietzsche's reply to such an attitude would raise the question: Why should we preserve ideas that produce nothing but the narcosis of existence, put us to sleep, and make us anaemic? Hegel's answer would probably draw attention to how completely irrelevant it is to look for the effects of thought on individual life. The spirit has nothing individual in it, so it is completely beside the point what consequences the objective mind leaves on the psychological state of the individual. Furthermore, Hegel would most certainly reject Nietzsche's figure of the "sick thinker" by emphasising that the struggle of the spirit remains immanent and internal, completely independent of the character and moral traits of the individual thinkers who take part in it.

So, the first condition for the history of philosophy as a unique collection is only there when everything is preserved. A collection is considered relevant only when it contains everything necessary to maintain the perspective of the whole. Although the way of conceptually summarising the collection that was created over two and a half millennia seemed patient and tangible like the work of a treasurer, the logic in which it is expressed over time was not at all calm and peaceful. The first thought of complete collections points to restless times, the absence of conflict, to security and harmony. There is none of that in Hegel's collection. Unlike natural evolution, which is spontaneous

and predetermined, spiritual development is characterised by inner struggle. History is the only medium for the appearance of the spirit, and it is the scene of wars, conflicts, and disputes. The history of the spirit is not significantly different. The progress of the spirit is possible only as a historical development, and thereby it is not only the struggle of the spirit with irrational opponents, but above all the struggle of the spirit with itself:

“The development of natural organisms takes place in an immediate, unopposed, and unhindered fashion, for nothing can intrude between the concept and its realisation, between the inherently determined nature of the germ and the actual existence which corresponds to it. But it is otherwise in the world of the spirit. The process whereby its inner determination is translated into reality is mediated by consciousness and will [...]. That development which, in the natural world, is a peaceful process of growth -for it retains its identity and remains self-contained in its expression – is in the spiritual world at once a hard and unending conflict with itself.”¹⁴

There is no metahistorical appearance of the spirit. One way of describing its development is to gain insight into underlying phenomena, for there is no significant spiritual movement that happens overnight. The historical emergence and self-realisation of the spirit require time. That time is much longer, incomparably longer than its speculative reconstruction:

“What we pass in rapid review when we recall it, stretched itself out in reality to this great length of time [...]. It goes on and on, because spirit is progress alone. Spirit often seems to have forgotten and lost itself, but inwardly opposed to itself, it is inwardly working ever forward.”¹⁵

Where the spirit is most contested in history, there it is most vital and active. Periods of single-mindedness or a stable consensus are just other words for the lull of the spirit. When the fiercest thinking disputes are on the stage, when the dominant, current ideas are most denied and refuted, the most serious philosophical potential is being prepared. Paradoxically, where agreement, peace, and harmony reign, there is nothing spiritual. Where consensus is achieved, where one single way of thinking is at stake, there is no longer any talk of spiritual life.

Both Hegel and Nietzsche value the philosophical *agón* above all else, and the latter fired many poisonous arrows at St. Paul precisely because he recognised in him the ideologue of Christian consensus that not only lasted but dominated the thought stage for almost two millennia. Where the culture of discussion is no longer vital, where the temperature of publicity is extremely low because no diverse speeches have been made and no debate of any sort has taken place, as St. Paul appealed in the first letter to the Corinthians, the life of the spirit is suspended, temporarily extinguished, frozen. The natural life of the community is stabilised and assured; nothing prevents it from spontaneously unfolding, but in turn, the life of spirit is stopped and made impossible.

¹² Stephen Houlgate, *Hegel, Nietzsche and the Criticism of Metaphysics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge *et al.* 1975, p. 10.

¹³ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. III, *Medieval and Modern Philosophy*, transl. E. S. Haldane – Frances H. Simson, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln – London 1995, p. 546.

¹⁴ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History. Introduction: Reason in History*, transl. S. B. Nisbet, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge *et al.* 1975, pp. 126–127.

¹⁵ G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. III, *Medieval and Modern Philosophy*, p. 547.

Hence, it seems interesting to examine how, after Justinian's order in 529, the violence and persecution of the philosophers of the Athenian school affected the reception and further spiritual life of ancient philosophy in the hands of the heirs who had wanted nothing to do with it. If we look back at the principle of Hegel's collection "nothing is lost", we will understand that the terrible and devastating historical collision between Christian monotheism and Hellenic paganism did not have such a dramatic impact on the history of philosophy. It is not easy to understand how, given the instinctive, unconscious way in which Hypatia was savagely butchered and the Library of Alexandria was burned, essentially nothing was lost. For Hegel, it was not particularly necessary to clarify the paradox, thanks to which it is possible to disappear and exist at the same time, simultaneously to die out and continue to exist.

For example, according to Hegel, the philosophy of Proclus disappeared along with the entire pagan tradition, but it is also (without mentioning the extremely rich Byzantine heritage) supposedly preserved in the mystical tradition of Catholicism:

"In this fashion pagan philosophy in general perished – in this external fashion – although the philosophy of the Neoplatonists, in particular that of Proclus, persisted for a long time."¹⁶

It seems that external fashion is not decisive. Invisible, "underground" survival is much more important, on the other side of the proclaimed epochal divergences and distance. No matter how aggressively they rejected the pagan heritage, the Christians turned out to be its reliable heirs. In a word, for Hegel, there is no doubt that the Hellenic philosophical tradition has been perfectly preserved in modern philosophy, although it has been inevitably obliged to recompose itself according to the basic principles of modern thinking.

To whatever extent modern philosophy may rely on its principles of subjectivity and self-awareness, it is fundamentally a rich heir. It contains and preserves at least "in its internal fashion" the entire heritage of all the unavoidable stages of Hellenic philosophy. Hence, it is not unusual that the content of Hegel's lectures on the history of philosophy brings an almost equal volume of ancient philosophy, in relation to medieval and modern philosophy, taken together. So, if we look from the perspective of Hegel's history of philosophy, there is no need to build a bridge between our historical situation and ancient classicism. It seems that early Nietzsche follows that logic, claiming that the old Greeks had already discovered the main types of philosophical spirit, so that further generations could not have added anything to it:

"For they discovered the *typical philosopher's genius*, and the inventions of all posterity have added nothing essential."¹⁷

To be more precise, each one of the actual philosophical figures can only emulate some anciently acquired ways of living and thinking. To live the philosophical life of a contemporary human being to some extent presupposes a return to the past and appropriation of the ancient way of life. More so, insights and principles created in European antiquity have already been incorporated into the thinking, habitually disposed to disobedience and opposition. According to more radical readings, such as that of Franz Brentano, the entire modern ontology has not taken a single step beyond Aristotle's *prote philosophia*. To that extent, modern philosophy represents nothing more than a reduced metaphysical discussion that does not go beyond categorical analysis. Modern departure from Hellenic thinking is nowhere near as radical as we would tend to see it.

V. The “Underground” Bridge Between Ancient and Modern

A far more drastic shift from Hellenic thinking is revealed only from a perspective that evaluates every word addressed in public, mostly through the medium of *vital conditions*. For Hegel, such a starting point would seem extremely confusing; the only conditions that can be philosophically relevant for him have nothing to do with life or vitality. The only relevant conditions are conceptual or speculative. But when vital manifestations are established as a criterion, the most valuable classical works provided by Hellenic philosophy, such as Plato’s *Sophistes* and *Parmenides* and Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, come across as flagrant hallucinations. It seems that the once untouchable elite of Hellenic sages had lived a life intoxicated by conceptual illusions, in an effort to stabilize their finitude and mortality with false certainties. In relation to Hegel, the next generation of thinkers rejects the history of philosophy as a unique whole that rests on the historical exposition of a single spirit.

Following that premise, mature Nietzsche fiercely attacked the mere idea of the history of philosophy:

“The history of philosophy is a secret rage against the premises of life, against the feelings of life, against taking sides in favour of life. The philosophers have never hesitated to affirm a world, provided that it contradicts this world, that it provides a means of speaking ill of this world.”¹⁸

The deconstruction of the unique idea of the spirit as a historical phenomenon was oriented through two strategic questions. The first question concerned life consequences. It tries to reconstruct what that philosophy look like in practice. What kind of human being does it create? Does philosophy harm life or stimulate it, does it contribute to its health, or should it be considered guilty for any kind of illness? The leading question was: what way of life was shaped by the leading ancient thinkers?

The answer can already be read on the pages of *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music*. Philosophy and the sciences are unique in that they have Apollo as their leading figure and tutor. This means that they feed on the need for illusion, for the negation of being, for the projection of the eternal, metaphysical world beyond time and space.¹⁹ The legacy of Hellenic philosophy is therefore reduced to the technology of *dipsomania*, a strategy of diverting attention from life-important phenomena. Apollo’s lyre lulls and passivates; the historical mission of philosophy was, in the long run, to offer an analgesic against the pains of life. Since it is still the profession of the tiny educated minority, religion took care of the remaining work. Following that path of thinking, *the origin of Christianity is not religious and theological, but essentially philosophical*. Maybe that is despite Luther’s unambiguous curse against

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Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. II, *Greek Philosophy*, transl. R. F. Brown – J. M. Stewart, Oxford University Press, Oxford et al. 2006, p. 346.

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Friedrich Nietzsche, “Philosophy during the Tragic Age of the Greeks”, *Early Greek Philosophy and Other Essays*, transl. Maximilian Mügge, The Macmillan Company, New York 1911, pp. 70–160, here pp. 78–79.

18

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente: 1887-1889*, vol. 14, DTV – W. de Gruyter, München – Berlin – New York, fr. 134.

19

Pierre Montebello, *Nietzsche. Fidélité à la Terre*, CNRS, Paris 2019, p. 299.

philosophy as “devil’s whore”, and the hidden reason why Hegel appreciates Protestant Christianity that much. It is nothing but the translation of philosophy into religion, the projection of anti-life dreams about the true world, about a better and higher reality in which eternity reigns, trying desperately to win over the humiliating finitude of time. The first conclusion after such an interpretation is that there is no discontinuity between pagan and modern. Any talk of the chasm between ancient and modern is meaningless, the second great monotheism is the simplest translation of a philosophical idea into words understandable and acceptable to the prevailing masses of peoples. This is why Nietzsche claimed that Christianity is Platonism for the people. History is a great continuity, although not of progress and development, but of decay due to a great misapprehension.

In relation to the history of philosophy, there is an unexpected and unusual closeness between Husserl and Nietzsche. As for the thinker of joyful science, the strategy of bringing to light constitutive historical delusions tends to hold their biggest failures in high esteem and to glorify fatal misunderstandings. To that extent, *the modern historian of philosophy is the one who performs a kind of spy work, engages in denunciation, tries to uncover false values and identities*:

“Like the natural attitude itself, the cultural heritage of the philosopher can be deprived of its taken-for-granted status only if the philosopher raises it to the level of conscious awareness by reliving it and making explicit what was previously hidden.”²⁰

It seems that the decisive relationship is directed towards the appearance of the spirit, towards its materialisation in existing philosophies. Hegel is full of confidence in the historical movement of reason, understood in terms of development and progress. According to Nietzsche’s idea, history should be considered as an abuse and the trust in tradition as a form of voluntary enslavement. Therefore, for Hegel, history functions as a medium of emancipation and self-knowledge, and with it, for Nietzsche, we are entering into troublesome situations, not only with history but with the shared past as well:

“Nietzsche has a problem with the past. He thinks we all have a problem with it, indeed several interlocking problems, whose chief root he tries to identify. His repeated attention to this topic, coming at key points in his texts, amounts almost to a fixation.”²¹

The conception of history as the progress of the spirit camouflages the emerging ideological contents aimed at concealment and masking. It is nothing more than the proper technique for presenting the poison as a medicine. The spectacle of progress offers a rhetoric that hides nothing but the growth of decadence, the corruption of European humanity, and the great, threatening announcement of nihilism as an “uninvited guest”:

“Socrates was a misunderstanding; the whole morality of improvement, Christian morality included, was a misunderstanding [...] The most glaring daylight, rationality at all costs, a life clear, cold, careful, aware, without instinct, in resistance to the instincts, was itself just a sickness, another sickness.”²²

The bridge between past and present, ancient and modern, has long been established, but it does not extend over the historical flow of ideas. It could rather be said that this bridge dignifies an underground connection; it is “underneath” every phenomenon, every idea, or experience. Philosophy, science, and religion owe their origin to the spirit of opiates, their common task is to keep human vitality at a minimum. Europeans are therefore simply

“Hinterweltler”, whose frame of reference simply implies the perspective “behind world”, or better to say, “beyond world”:

“This world, the eternally imperfect, the mirror image and imperfect image of an eternal contradiction – a drunken joy to its imperfect creator: thus the world once seemed to me. So I too once cast my delusion beyond humans, like all hinterworldly. Beyond humans in truth?”²³

Europeans look only beyond life and body, gazing at the back of the earth, where the invisible gods, eternal souls, and spirits reside. Who lives beyond the world is capable of perceiving only one image of being, inevitably deformed by an ascetic philosophical view of the world. Modern men, despite all the illusions of fashion and modernity, notwithstanding their dedication to incorporating the latest developments and trends, are just a variation on the theme of an old disease, an ancient shock for which the greatest names among Hellenic philosophers are responsible.

VI. Disappearing Bridges

After the sobering insight that there is no world of ideas, that the endeavours to earn the blessing of salvation are futile, and that striving for the eternal is just an incredibly inflexible, immature, and naively unsuccessful escape from finitude, it was not enough simply to turn toward the transitory and finite. Nietzsche does not see the modern constitution of historical thought as a much-needed healing. On the contrary, an advanced historical sense also damages life by preventing creation, and keeping it in the already seen:

“It only understands how to preserve life, not to create it.”²⁴

Thanks to Nietzsche, Schiller’s and Hegel’s common *obsession with world history as world judgement was dismissed as nonsense*. Much more important to him was the sense of history, for the life instinct is driven by the need for historical fulfilment. Instead of the promised dedication to eternal being, which should indicate awakening and revitalisation, precisely such a meaning necessarily leads to destruction. Violent historicisation cannot build anything, it necessarily parasitizes on what has already been created. Its only possible effect is the total levelling:

“We moderns also run through art galleries and hear concerts in the same way as the young man runs through history. We can feel that one thing sounds different from another, and pronounce on the different ‘effects’. And the power of gradually losing all feelings of strangeness or astonishment, and finally being pleased at anything, is called the historical sense or historical culture.”²⁵

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David Carr, *Phenomenology and the Problem of History: A Study of Husserl’s Transcendental Philosophy*, Evanston, Northmodern University Press 1974, p. 239.

21

John Richardson, “Nietzsche’s Problem of the Past”, in: Manuel Dries (ed.), *Nietzsche on Time and History*, Berlin – New York, Walter de Gruyter 2008, pp. 87–112, here p. 87.

22

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols or How to Philosophize with the Hammer*, transl.

Richard Polt, Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis – Cambridge 1997, p. 17.

23

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, transl. Adrian Del Caro, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge *et al.* 2006, p. 20.

24

F. Nietzsche, *The Use and Abuse of History*, p. 20.

25

Ibid., p. 45.

There are many idioms through which Nietzsche attacks both sub specie aeternitatis and historical thinking. “The dead bury the living”, the inevitable “sinfulness” of an active human being, who must always, as a doer, be grazing some piety or other, “religion of historical power”, an excess sense of history that makes a “mummy” out of life, and finally “Egyptianism”. *Nietzsche’s overall resumé is paradoxical, neither should the historical be exaggerated, nor should a timeless approach be allowed.* Neither escape into eternity nor faith in historical genesis is acceptable. It is as if it does not work either with history or without it. Nietzsche does not doubt that “we are all suffering from a malignant historical fever and should at least recognize the fact”.²⁶ Similar to the case of fever, which is most often caused by infection, historical delirium is created by an oversaturation of historical knowledge, evolution, and development. It makes the present moment run out of air, that is to say, without an idea, lacking momentum, and space for fresh and innovative thought. Saturated with history, we can continue to think what has already been thought, to develop what has already been partially developed.

It seems that with Nietzsche, *a certain measure of becoming savage is crucial*; the optimal quantum of becoming is what we are looking for, since too much becoming burdens us and prevents creative achievement as such. It presumes total independence from the past. But, on the other hand, it implies over-exaggerated expectations from the future, a concept so alien to the ancient Greeks:

“Zarathustra is the ‘redeeming man of the future’, and Nietzsche’s whole philosophy is a ‘prelude’ to the future. No Greek philosopher thought so exclusively within the horizon of the future, and none took himself to be a historical destiny. All Greek myths, genealogies, and histories represent the past as an everlasting foundation.”²⁷

Obviously, the mentioned “optimum” could not have been predetermined since its roots are not in the rational calculation but in the embodied transgression. On the other hand, too little becoming brings us into the middle of the phenomenon of “Egyptianism”, another word for a stiff and petrified life that does nothing but erase time and ignore the change:

“You ask me what’s idiosyncratic about philosophers? [...] There is, for instance, their lack of a sense of history, their hatred for the very notion of becoming, their Egyptianism. They think they’re honoring a thing if they de-historicize it, see it *sub specie aeterni* – if they make a mummy out of it. Everything that philosophers have handled, for thousands of years now, has been conceptual mummies; nothing real escaped their hands alive. They kill and stuff whatever they worship, these gentlemen who idolize concepts – they endanger the life of whatever they worship.”²⁸

Although it is beyond dispute that Nietzsche was a kind of prophet of the philosophy of becoming, in matters of becoming, as well as in matters of history, we do more harm than good by providing “too much becoming”.

The solution is to remove the eschatological understanding of history, which sees its peak in the play about its end. There is no single, continuous historical flow. The peaks of history are also the highest expressions of individual existence. For that reason, Nietzsche exposes once and for all the life-denying ‘slave’ mentality underlying Hegel’s philosophy.²⁹ Hence, neither historical *a priori* nor any conceptual schematism holds up under scrutiny any longer. We no longer turn to ancient philosophy as heirs of a rich inheritance, but as self-aware individual existences. The problem is no longer related to deciphering the Pythian articulation of the divine language, so that in it man can find his reasons and his life.³⁰

The issue now is to approach the ancient philosophical heritage so that we find in it the impetus for our reasons and our lives. The bridge between modernity and the ancient Hellenic past is no longer a challenge of epochal proportions, but rather a link between individual existences. If the free spirit is a liberated spirit, our hermeneutics of ancient experience looks more like an experiment than a disciplined historical investigation. More Nietzschean than Hegelian, anyway. We could mark Nietzsche as the founder of contemporary bridge construction, since his bridges connect us only under the precondition that we can let them disappear. It is as if the real bridge toward the ancient heritage was the one that does not exist, but the connection still somehow turned out. The strongest connections are those that cannot be seen. They do not seem to exist, but they are very effective. And for those among us who think that nothing is lost, those bridges are a redundant, unnecessary burden, much like the idea of becoming savage: “a typical sign of a civilisation which no longer believes in itself”.

Dragan Prole

Postajući divljim?

Nietzsche protiv Hegela (o drevnom nasljeđu)

Sažetak

U dramatičnom kontrastu u odnosu na materijalno nasljeđe, koje je najčešće precizno definirano i distribuirano, duhovno nasljeđe se uvijek iznova sagledava i procjenjuje. Naročito kada je riječ o vrednovanju, uočavamo gotovo nevjerojatne aberacije i nesuglasnosti. Ono što je za jedne neupitna vrijednost, stup europske civilizacije, za druge je fatalni izvor korupcije, zavodljiva inspiracija propasti. Slijedeći primjere Hegela i Nietzschea ukratko ćemo prikazati kako se prikaz helenskog nasljeđa mijenja u skladu s različitim pojmovima povijesti, favoriziranim kod nasljednika. Hegel je pun povjerenja u povijesno kretanje uma, shvaćeno u terminima razvoja i progressa, pa otuda povijest kod njega funkcionira kao medij emancipacije i samospoznaje. Po Nietzscheovu mišljenju, povijest valja promatrati kao štetnu, kao povjerenje u tradiciju koje za rezultat ima dobrovoljno porobljavanje, pa nas ona otuda neizbježno uvodi u problematične situacije, ne samo kao povijest nego i kao prošlost koju zajedno dijelimo.

Ključne riječi

nasljeđe, helenska filozofija, Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, divlje

26

Ibid., p. 4.

27

Karl Löwith, *Nietzsche's Philosophy of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same*, transl. J. H. Lomax, University of California Press, Berkeley – Los Angeles 1997, p. 120.

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F. Nietzsche, *The Twilight of the Idols or how to Philosophize with the Hammer*, p. 18.

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Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche et la philosophie*, PUF, Paris 1962, p. 9.

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Dorian Astor, *Nietzsche. La détresse du présent*, Gallimard, Paris 2014, p. 20.

Dragan Prole

Wild werden?

Nietzsche gegen Hegel (über das antike Erbe)

Zusammenfassung

Im deutlichen Gegensatz zum materiellen Erbe, das zumeist präzise bestimmt und verteilt wird, unterliegt das geistige Erbe einer fortwährenden Neubewertung. Gerade im Hinblick auf die Wertung treten bemerkenswerte Abweichungen und Meinungsverschiedenheiten zutage. Was für einige einen unantastbaren Wert darstellt, die Säule der europäischen Zivilisation, gilt für andere als verhängnisvolle Quelle der Verderbnis – als trügerische Inspiration des Verfalls. Indem wir den Beispielen Hegels und Nietzsches folgen, zeigen wir zudem in aller Kürze, wie sich die Beschreibung des hellenischen Erbes je nach den jeweils bevorzugten Geschichtsauffassungen seiner Erben wandelt. Hegel ist voller Vertrauen in die geschichtliche Bewegung des Geistes, verstanden im Sinne von Entwicklung und Fortschritt. Nach Nietzsche ist die Geschichte als ein Missbrauch zu betrachten, ebenso wie das Vertrauen in die Tradition, das er als eine Form freiwilliger Versklavung ansieht. Für Hegel dient die Geschichte als Medium der Emanzipation und der Selbsterkenntnis, wohingegen wir uns bei Nietzsche in unruhiges Gelände begeben – nicht nur hinsichtlich der Geschichte selbst, sondern auch der gemeinsamen Vergangenheit.

Schlüsselwörter

Erbe, hellenische Philosophie, Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, wild

Dragan Prole

Devenir sauvage ?

Nietzsche contre Hegel (sur l'héritage antique)

Résumé

En contraste marqué avec l'héritage matériel, le plus souvent précisément défini et soumis à une répartition, l'héritage spirituel fait sans cesse l'objet de réévaluations. En particulier lorsqu'il s'agit de valeur, on observe des divergences et des désaccords remarquables. Ce qui constitue pour les uns une valeur incontestable, un pilier de la civilisation européenne, représente pour d'autres une source fatale de corruption, une inspiration trompeuse de décadence. En suivant les exemples de Hegel et de Nietzsche, nous montrerons brièvement comment la description de l'héritage hellénique varie selon les conceptions de l'histoire privilégiées par ceux qui s'en réclament. Hegel manifeste une confiance totale dans le mouvement historique de la raison, compris en termes de développement et de progrès. Pour Nietzsche, au contraire, l'histoire doit être envisagée comme un abus, tout comme la confiance dans la tradition, qu'il perçoit comme une forme d'asservissement volontaire. Chez Hegel, l'histoire fonctionne comme un médium d'émancipation et de connaissance de soi ; chez Nietzsche, en revanche, nous entrons dans un terrain troublé, non seulement celui de l'histoire elle-même, mais aussi celui du passé commun.

Mots-clés

héritage, philosophie hellénique, Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, sauvage