



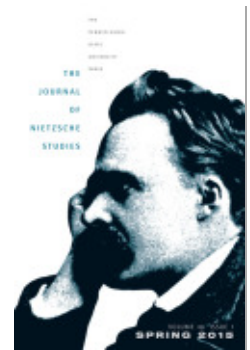
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Reply to Graham Parkes

Nietzsche as Zebra: With both Egoistic Antibuddha
and Nonegoistic Bodhisattva Stripes

BRET W. DAVIS

Baltimore, February 28, 2014

One must stop feeling oneself as a phantastical ego! Learn step by step to get rid of the supposed individual! To detect the errors of the ego! To see through egoism as an error!

—KSA 9:11[7]; trans. Parkes¹

—in other words the infinite worth of the *individual person* as bearer of the life process and, *consequently*, his or her highest right to egoism. [. . .] In fact, anything “unegoistic” is a phenomenon of *décadence*.

—eKGWB/NF-1888, 22[22]

Against mediators. [. . .] Seeing things as similar and making them the same is the mark of weak eyes.

—GS 228

It is *not at all* necessary, and not even *desirable*, to side with me: on the contrary [. . .] an ironic resistance would seem an incomparably *more intelligent* attitude toward me.

—Nietzsche, letter to Carl Fuchs, July 29, 1888²

In one’s friend one should have one’s best enemy. You should be closest to him in your heart when you strive against him.

—ZI: “On the Friend”

While I remain confident that Nietzsche's ideas come closer to certain types of Zen thinking than Japanese philosophers are willing to admit, I still believe that Nishitani's mature thought, with its emphasis on the field of emptiness, may indeed comprehend and in some respects go beyond what Nietzsche has wrought. In view of the difficulty of carrying out the comparison between Nietzsche and Nishitani on these core issues—and of my expectation that the comparison will yield some nourishing fruits philosophically—I should like to finish by calling for more workers to enter this potentially fertile field of research.

—*Graham Parkes, 1993*³

Dear Graham,

Thank you first of all for, more than twenty years ago, calling on younger scholars such as myself to pursue a comparison of Nietzsche and Nishitani (and East Asian thought more broadly); and thank you, secondly, for your thoughtful and provocative critique of my essay in which, ten years ago, I attempted to do just that.⁴

An “open letter” is a strange genre. In these letters we are at once addressing each other and a public forum, in this case, readers of Nietzsche. I would like to begin by informing the latter of how much you have meant to me, not only as a trailblazing scholar in the endeavor to bring Western (especially nineteenth- and twentieth-century Continental) philosophy into dialogue with traditional East Asian thought and modern Japanese philosophy (especially Daoism, Zen, and the Kyoto School), but also as a friend whose generosity I first experienced when, nearly two decades ago, you responded to an out-of-the-blue email (luckily there were no spam filters at the dawn of the email age!) by offering to introduce me to one of Nishitani's last students, Professor Tsutomu Horio, who in turn generously opened university and monastery doors for me in Kyoto. Since the time we first met in person a year later at a “Zen Symposium” in Arashiyama, I have always appreciated the fact that you have always treated me, not merely as a younger scholar walking through doors that you helped open but also as a companion philosopher on the path of bringing these Eastern and Western traditions of philosophical thinking and living into dialogue and diapraxis. I would also like to inform readers that the disagreement that will be aired here takes place in a much wider field of philosophical agreement, agreement especially about what is most inspiring in Nietzsche, in Daoism and Zen, and in Kyoto School philosophers such as Nishitani. We share a list of favorite philosophers and philosophies, even if we sometimes read them a bit differently—especially, perhaps, with regard to the manner and extent to which we read them critically as well as sympathetically.

Does the fact that we are engaging here in open (frank, as well as public) criticism of one another's writings mean that we value truth even more than

friendship? Your letter does indeed exude an air of *Amicus Bret, sed magis amica veritas de Nietzsche*. Yet surely both of us, along with Nietzsche, would laugh at the idea that one should not disagree with friends. And so, although it was tempting to limit my reply to a single quote from Nietzsche—"I do not want to accuse; I do not even want to accuse those who accuse. *Looking away* shall be my only negation" (*GS* 276)—instead, the following response to your critique is written in the spirit of trust, trust that we are the kind of friends and the kind of philosophers who can learn from their disagreements and in the process become all the better friends as well as philosophers.

I have spoken of truth and friendship. Yet Nietzsche suggests that "a refined concept of friendship" goes together with a "necessity for having enemies" (*BGE* 260), and indeed that "One should honor even the enemy in one's friend" (*ZI*: "On the Friend"). He also questions the value the "will to truth" has for life (see *BGE* I; *GM* III:24), and understands life as nothing but the will to power (*ZII*: "On Self-Overcoming"; *BGE* 36; *KSA* 11:38[12]). In our disputation, then, maybe it is at bottom neither truth nor friendship but rather power that we really want—the power of interpretation. I do understand that, for Nietzsche, will to power is an interpreting force ("Letter on Egoism," 48–49). "The will to power *interprets*. [. . .] In fact, interpretation is itself a means of becoming master of something."⁵ Yet I doubt that the motivation for all interpretation and seeking understanding can be reduced to a matter of will to power as drive to mastery. I don't think we always seek to understand something or someone only because we will to have power over them and to be their master. And I doubt that true friendship and the love of truth are best understood as species of the will to power.

A Zebraic Rather Than an Elephantic Reading

In the beginning of your letter, you express puzzlement over, and dissatisfaction with, the number of question marks in my essay: so many questions "often make it difficult to determine what you really want to say about the relations between Zen and Zarathustra" ("Letter on Egoism," 42). After expressing approval of my treatment of the relevant Buddhist and Zen ideas, you say that my essay itself, especially its interpretation of Nietzsche as being in "confrontation" with Buddhism, is questionable. The third paragraph of your letter clarifies how you yourself view the relation between Nietzsche and Buddhism. In that paragraph you also reveal how you have, unfortunately, misunderstood the basic intent of my essay and the overall sense of my interpretation of Nietzsche.

You say that, among the many interpretations of Nietzsche to be found, there are "Nietzsche A (short for Nietzsche as the Antibuddha), and Nietzsche B (Nietzsche as advocate of the Bodhisattva ideal)" ("Letter on Egoism," 42–43). Then you write, "The multiple pairs of questions your essay keeps posing—Is Nietzsche A? or is he B?—tend to come down on the side of A, dismissing the

B-like aspects as peripheral or insignificant.” No! Both A and B are central to my reading. For me, it is not a question of either/or but rather of both/and. You may side, as you say, with B instead of A. But when I read Nietzsche, with both eyes open, that is to say, both sympathetically and critically, I see double: I see A/B, and I see a great and finally unresolved tension in that slash. And so, all the question marks, all the ambiguity, ambivalence, and wavering back and forth in my essay are not simply rhetorical. Nor is it the case that I am simply not sure what I want to say about Nietzsche. Rather, what I want to say is that it is *Nietzsche himself* who is wavering, ambivalent, ambiguous, and thus questionable—question-worthy!

But who, after all, is “Nietzsche.” Is he a self-composed author communicating to us his system of ideas piece by piece, pieces that we must figure out how to smoothly fit together like a jigsaw puzzle—of a gray elephant, perhaps? Is he the actor behind his many masks, a substance-subject behind his many appearances? Surely not. You would probably agree with me that “Nietzsche” is better understood a mobile field of heterogeneous forces, a field shaped by various collaborations and antagonisms among these forces, and that this context and contestation of forces produced the texts, the life, and perhaps even the eventual decent into madness, of a brilliant philosopher. Perhaps we might even agree that he was never, at least for any length of time, a composed soul who, like a Daoist sage, lived a life of natural spontaneity in harmony with the world, entwined in love with all things. At the end of his productive life, after having told us in *Ecce Homo* (“Why I Am a Destiny” 1) that he is dynamite, his identity apparently exploded out into “every name in history,”⁶ including presumably not only the Crucified and all Antichristians, but also all Buddhas and Antibuddhas. Perhaps the best single name for this soul of exploding or decomposing multiplicity is, after all, Dionysus. But who is Dionysus? The questions redouble. At the end of *Composing the Soul* (381), you suggest that, in the end, Nietzsche succumbed to “the collapse of the boundaries that prevent cataclysmic identification with all those names.” However, having quoted earlier an important note in which Nietzsche suggests that one can save others without being able to save oneself (362), you conclude that he successfully showed us a way of harmoniously composing our souls so as “to be fruitfully multiple without following Nietzsche over the edge of the Dionysian abyss” (381). I would like to say that not only do I find your philosophical psychology very compelling, I also find much of your Nietzsche interpretation very persuasive and instructive. However, in order to respond to your critique of my interpretation of Nietzsche, I must concentrate on our differences. Please bear this in mind, along with the fact that, in order to counterbalance your Nietzsche B reading, I may appear to be leaning farther than I actually do in the direction of Nietzsche A.

You do indeed have a much longer and more impressive record than I (or anyone, for that matter) of “advocating Nietzsche B” (“Letter on Egoism,” 43); but I don’t agree at all with the claim that I “consistently overlook or ignore

key aspects of [Nietzsche's] thinking that are consonant with Buddhist ideas" ("Letter on Egoism," 43). I do not advocate a Nietzsche A reading and deny the validity of a Nietzsche B reading. Rather, I think that the identity of Nietzsche is more complicated than either simply Nietzsche A or simply Nietzsche B.⁷ In "Zen after Zarathustra" I tried to explicate and investigate this complexity, beginning with an examination of Nietzsche's striking claim: "I could become the Buddha of Europe: yet this would of course be a counter-image [Gegenbild] of the Indian Buddha" (*KGW* VII.1, p. 111; see "Zen after Zarathustra," 90–93). I cannot attempt to summarize my analysis of this statement—which would in effect require a summary of my entire essay—without betraying its complexity. In light of that complexity, I can at least agree with you that "confrontation" may not have been the best word to use in the subtitle of my essay. In the text of my essay I generally used *Auseinandersetzung* and should have perhaps used this more nuanced expression in the title rather than the English word, which does carry a more antagonistic sense of either/or. Ironically, it is precisely the either/or approach I find in *your* letter that I disagree with: *either* Nietzsche's thought is compatible with Zen *or* it is not. For you it is the former. But for me it is not simply the latter. As I have said, for me it is not an issue of either/or but rather of both/and. I am interested *both* in the aspects of complementarity/convergence *and* in the aspects of divergence/dissonance. And so, we disagree about what it is that we disagree about. You think our disagreement is a matter of A versus B, but I disagree with this either/or approach to the issue and think rather in terms of A/B. We largely agree, I think, on the most important things, that is to say, on the philosophies that best guide our lives, philosophies we both find in Zen and in (at least parts of, in my case) Nietzsche. We disagree, however, on whether *all* of the main lines of thought in Nietzsche are compatible with Zen. And we disagree on whether Nietzsche is always in agreement with himself.

I agree with you that there are many Nietzsche interpretations out there. However, I don't agree with the metaphor you use to depict this state of affairs, when you say that "he must be regarded as one of the larger elephants in philosophy, and we blind men consequently give many differing accounts of how he really is" ("Letter on Egoism," 42). This metaphor suggests that Nietzsche is a great organically connected whole, and that the contradictions among the variety of interpretations are the fault of the interpreters' blindness or myopia; we puny interpreters disagree because we are each getting a hold of only one piece of the whole. Before embarking on your critique of my reading of Nietzsche—which you feel favors Nietzsche A—you remind us that you have "published a fair amount advocating Nietzsche B, not claiming that's the whole or only Nietzsche, but presenting a coherent view of Nietzsche that's in the spirit of what we know of the man's life as well as his work" ("Letter on Egoism," 43). You seem to be admitting here that your Nietzsche B reading is partial, that it focuses on and favors one part of the elephant, not the whole. But, then again, you are also

saying that it is an account that takes into account the whole of what we know of Nietzsche's life and work, and you proceed to argue that it is a more coherent account of the whole than is an account that favors Nietzsche A. Perhaps you think that you have gotten a hold of the trunk or the head of the elephant, parts that give a fuller and better perspective on the whole, whereas other interpretations, such as Nietzsche A, give a mistaken or at least less coherent sense of the whole because they start with the tail or maybe even just a toenail. In any case, you cite the many publications in which you have made the case for Nietzsche B, most of which I have at some point read and greatly profited from. The fact is that I don't simply disagree with your Nietzsche B. Indeed, as I have said publicly and will now put in writing, your Nietzsche B may well be my favorite Nietzsche! I like your version of Nietzsche even better than—Nietzsche. That is to say, I like your selective emphasis and coherent interpretation of Nietzsche at his best better than the more unwieldy whole of Nietzsche, which I find to be less cohesive and more ambivalent, less attractive even if more provocative. You have tamed an elephant! But, alas, I think the wilder beast of Nietzsche is still on the run.

So, one way to clarify our disagreement—starting with a clarification of how it is that I disagree with you about what it is that we disagree about—is to say that I don't accept the metaphor of the elephant.⁸ If I may offer a substitute zoological metaphor, I think Nietzsche is better pictured as a *striped zebra* rather than a *monochromatic elephant*. You tend to read me as taking sides, whereas what I am interested in is showing both sides—both stripes—and the tension between them. I am not saying that the elephant is a different color; I am saying that it is a zebra. I think there are real and finally unresolved tensions between different aspects of Nietzsche's thought. Specifically, we can find evidence of both Nietzsche A and Nietzsche B in his texts without being able to seamlessly connect them, without being able to reduce one to the other or derive one from the other. Rather than one ruling line of thought in Nietzsche's texts, here too, to borrow your phrase, we find that "Plurality, or multiplicity, rules" ("Letter on Egoism," 45).

Wuwei as a Radical Negation—Not a Higher Affirmation— of the Will to Power

What you mean by saying that plurality rules is that, for Nietzsche, "the I must disappear in the face of the God of radical multiplicity" ("Letter on Egoism," 47). But should one then not write a book called *Decomposing the Soul*? No, you will say, because this dissolution of the ego does not lead to a "bad multiplicity." But how, by what force, is the soul of multiplicity composed? You will say initially through "serial tyranny by committee," but ultimately "the regime

can be relaxed and the will unharnessed, so that protracted self-discipline gives way to a ‘natural’ spontaneity” (“Letter on Egoism,” 45). Speaking of “natural spontaneity” does begin to sound like Lao-Zhuang Daoism and Chan/Zen (see “Zen after Zarathustra,” 99–101). Although this term is not Nietzsche’s, you provide us with some evidence of similar ideas in his texts. As in your review of the work of another younger scholar, you direct our attention to sections 48–49 of *TI* “Expeditions of an Untimely Man,” where Nietzsche uses Goethe as an exemplar of someone who managed to “come back up to the naturalness of the Renaissance” by going through a discipline of self-mastery to the point where, like a Japanese master of a fine or martial art, he could “relax the discipline and trust to natural spontaneity.” “The eventual relaxation takes daring,” you go on to say, “because the ego, which would otherwise control the process, has been overcome—dissolved into a plurality of drives—in the course of the protracted discipline. . . . [T]he discipline is no longer necessary because these various groups have learned to live in harmony with each other.”⁹ I find this account of the dissolution of the ego into a harmonious coexistence of drives quite compelling—though less so if we must persist in interpreting that harmony and all those drives in terms of the will to power.

Keep in mind that mine is a zebraic reading, and I think there is plenty of evidence for both stripes. We agree on much, including the importance of the section in *Zarathustra* where he speaks of the “over-hero” with “relaxed muscles and unharnessed will” (*Z* II: “On Those Who Are Sublime”; see “Zen after Zarathustra,” 116). You say, “this high point of Zarathustra’s teaching invalidates your reading of will to power as ego-driven” (“Letter on Egoism,” 47). In point of fact, I did not and would not say that for Nietzsche the will to power is “ego-driven” but rather that it drives the ego; the ego does not stand behind the will to power, but is produced by it—or rather by “them,” since the will to power is always a plurality of competing and allying forces. In any case, the real question for me is not whether there are inspirational suggestions of a non-egoistic natural spontaneity to be found in Nietzsche’s texts—I agree with you that there are—but rather whether such a way of being is best understood as a higher form of will to power, or whether it is attained only by way of a radical negation of the will to power.

I assume that with the expression “natural spontaneity” you are referring to the Daoist (and Zen) ideas of *ziran* (natural[ness] or “self-so[-ing]”) and *wuwei* (non[artificial]-acting or non[willful]-doing), ideas that are often conjoined in East Asian thought, as we see in the Japanese phrase, *mui-jinen* (see “Zen after Zarathustra,” 100–101).¹⁰ With regard to *wuwei*, we agree that it is important to stress that this is not a negation of any and all action, that it connotes rather a kind of spontaneous action in harmony with the natural way (*dao*) of things. But it is also important to stress what it denotes, namely, a radical negation (*wu*) of a certain kind of action (*wei*), namely artificial and *willful* action. To be sure, the

notion of *wuwei* can be and has been co-opted as a technique of manipulation for the “art of governance,” as it was in the quasi-Machiavellian Legalist philosophy of Han Feizi. But this reinterpretive appropriation of the idea goes against the grain of the nonegoistic natural spontaneity stressed in the *Laozi* (*Daodejing*) and the *Zhuangzi*. The Chan/Zen tradition wedded this original Lao-Zhuang Daoist idea of *wuwei* with Buddhist concepts and concerns, such as karma (willful, egoistic action) and *karunā* (compassion). *Wuwei* in Zen is enabled by what Nishitani calls a “cutting off the root” of “the fundamental willful-desire [*konpon-iyoku*],”¹¹ a severing the “infinite drive” of “self-will” that keeps us bound to *samsara*, the karmically driven wheel of egoistic existence (see “Zen after Zarathustra,” 109–11).

Thus, I cannot agree with your suggestion that when Nishitani refers to the “field of emptiness” as a “field of force,” this can be equated with what Nietzsche means when he speaks of the world as a “monster of forces” that are all defined by the “will to power” (“Letter on Egoism,” 53).¹² Nishitani in fact says that “the standpoint of emptiness is first established at a bottomless place that *exceeds by way of absolute negation all standpoints of any kind related to will.*”¹³ And he explicitly includes Nietzsche’s “will to power” among the standpoints that need to be “absolutely negated.” While he acknowledges that Nietzsche’s notion of the *Unschuld des Werdens* approaches the “pure activity beyond the measure of any teleological gauge,” which takes place on the field of emptiness, in the end Nietzsche is said to remain still tethered to a “standpoint of will.”¹⁴ The standpoint of play reached by Heraclitus and Nietzsche, Nishitani says, falls short of what Zen calls the “*samādhi* of play” (*yuge-zammai*), insofar as “it does not include the other-centeredness in which the self becomes ‘empty’ and makes all others its master,” and therefore does not “attain to the true self-centeredness of an absolute emptiness that, in supporting all things, becomes [as Zen master Linji says] a master wherever it may be and makes true wherever it may stand. However one looks at it, the standpoint of Heraclitus and Nietzsche remains a standpoint of ‘will,’ not the standpoint of emptiness.”¹⁵

According to Mahāyāna Buddhism, there are two heterogeneous kinds of forces that can unify the life stream of an individual: egoistic craving or altruistic vow; blinding passions or liberating wisdom; selfish karma or selfless compassion. Here we are confronted with an either/or, one that indeed defines the basic teachings of Buddhism.¹⁶ There is a discontinuity, a leap, a conversion or “overturning of the base” (as the Yogācāra tradition puts it), between the one and the other that must happen “suddenly.” This does not necessarily mean that it happens once and for all, but the notion of “sudden enlightenment” (*tongo*) implies that there is no “continuity” from one to the other; there is no “continuum” that connects delusion and enlightenment. This is perhaps the crux of the issue in dispute. You write of “a *continuum* of forms of power, from brute force at one end to philosophy at the other” (“Letter on Egoism,” 52–53, emphasis added). While

I largely agree with you that “Nietzsche deprecates the former and advocates the latter,” for me, the real question is whether there is in fact a *continuum* between the meaner, courser forms of the will to power and the kinder, gentler ones. Can one get to a “bestowing virtue” (which Nietzsche’s Zarathustra calls the “highest virtue,” Z I: “On the Three Metamorphoses” 1) that is equivalent to Buddhist “generosity” (the first of the Bodhisattva Perfections) by way of self-overcoming *as* will to power? Or does one have to twist free of the will to power? For Buddhism, in order to attain true wisdom and compassion, a radical negation is required, a break with, an overturning of willful, karmic existence.

I have suggested that one path to this break can perhaps be found in Nietzsche, insofar as it would be possible to find in his thought what I call a movement of “the self-overcoming *of* the will to power” wherein the subjective genitive gives way to the objective genitive (see “Zen after Zarathustra,” 115–19). You flatly reject the possibility of this reading (“Letter on Egoism,” 54), even though you recognize that, after the last mention of “the will to power” in “On Redemption,” there is a shift of focus in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* from it to “the eternal recurrence” (“Letter on Egoism,” 52). Whereas you seem to agree with Heidegger that will to power and eternal recurrence are two sides of the same coin of Nietzsche’s teaching (even though you strongly disagree with Heidegger’s interpretation and critique of this sameness), I find a tension, perhaps a *decisive* one, between the two ideas.¹⁷ As you note, the idea of will to power comes back at the beginning of *Beyond Good and Evil*, “the book Nietzsche wrote to explain the ideas of *Zarathustra* (though in the mode of No-saying, as you say, rather than Yes-saying)” (“Letter on Egoism,” 52). But you might agree with me that this No-saying explaining is a move backward rather than forward on the path of Nietzsche’s thought; and there are good reasons to think that Nietzsche held *Zarathustra* to be not only his favorite but also his most far-reaching book.¹⁸ Nevertheless, you hold fast to the idea that all existence is “the will to power—and nothing besides.”¹⁹ You write, “there’s no such thing in Nietzsche as ‘Zarathustra’s self-overcoming of the will to power’ (“Zen after Zarathustra,” 90) because will to power *is* the whole world” (“Letter on Egoism,” 54).²⁰

The Egoism of the Will to Power

In order to affirm the whole elephant of Nietzsche, you need to affirm the often repeated doctrine of the will to power, even if Nietzsche’s meaner, courser formulations of the idea clash with your kinder, gentler Nietzsche B interpretation. It would no doubt be easier to simply ignore the following passage (as you did in *Composing the Soul*), which you gloss in your letter as “notorious”: “Life itself is *essentially* appropriation, injury, overpowering what is alien and

weaker, suppression, hardness, imposition of one's own forms, incorporation and at least, at its mildest, exploitation. [...] Life simply *is* will to power" (BGE 259; "Letter on Egoism," 45). Your damage control begins by questioning my interpretation: "the will to power [is] an egoistic force that expands the domain of the ego by subjugating others to its rule" ("Zen after Zarathustra," 113). You write that this characterization, "while it has some support in the text, is misleading in its introduction of the ego" ("Letter on Egoism," 45). You argue not only that Nietzsche consistently rejects the existence of a substantial ego (something we entirely agree about, and so I am not sure why you belabored the point) but also that Nietzsche never affirms "egoism" in the sense of (1) the construction of an ego by means of a ruling will to power (or coalition of wills to power, a "tyranny by committee" as you put it) and (2) the self-assertion of that constructed ego over others. Here we disagree. In support of your claim that Nietzsche rejects egoism along with the ego you quote a less notorious, yet more anomalous and thus more controversial among Nietzsche scholars, notebook entry from 1881: "*One must stop feeling oneself as a phantastical ego! Learn step by step to get rid of the supposed individual! To detect the errors of the ego! To see through egoism as an error! Not to understand its opposite as altruism! That would just be love of other supposed individuals! No! Get over 'me' and 'you'! Feel cosmically!*" (KSA 9:11[7]; "Letter on Egoism," 46). I too find this passage inspiring. Moreover, I agree with you that it is not a mere aberration in Nietzsche's corpus, and I appreciate your demonstration of how it corresponds well to some other passages, especially the passage from *Zarathustra* that you end with, which speaks of all things being "chained together, entwined, in love" (ZIV: "The Drunken Song" 10; "Letter on Egoism," 58). Indeed I celebrate your work on Nietzsche as unparalleled in the compelling manner in which it tells this side of the story of Nietzsche. It is a good story, and it is a true story. But, alas, it is not the whole story. It is the truth, but not the whole truth about Nietzsche.

I noticed that, when you quote and flatly reject—"No, no, and no" ("Letter on Egoism," 44)—passages in my essay where I speak of the will to power as an "egoistic force," you simply pass over in silence most of the passages from Nietzsche's text that I quote in support of this interpretation. As I demonstrate, Nietzsche's call for an affirmation of egoism is very often quite clear.²¹ To be sure, the ego itself is a composite of multiple drives, but each of these is a force of will to power that can well be characterized as egoistic in the sense of self-centered and self-assertive over others: "every drive is a kind of lust to rule [...] each one has its perspective that it would like to compel all the other drives to accept as a norm."²² The ego is thus composed, when it *is* successfully composed, by what Nietzsche calls "the great egoism of our dominating will."²³ This is first and foremost a matter of self-domination, that is, of the dominating will exerting its control over other competing drives within the composite of

the ego; this it must do if it is to successfully reach out and extend its rule over its environment and over other composite egos.

My concerns are not allayed by your assurances: “There’s no need to worry that a strong will in this context will harm others, since all the commanding and obeying are going on *within* the individual” (“Letter on Egoism,” 44). And: “Will isn’t individual, but collective; not a people’s domination of others, but its mastery of itself” (“Letter on Egoism,” 49).²⁴ No, for Nietzsche, the commanding and obeying are going on *between* as well as *within* individuals and societies; both domination of others and mastery of self are instances of the will to power. Indeed, as you recognize, there is no absolute ontological divide between individuals and collectives: they are merely different formations of the will to power as a multiplicity of drives competing with one another for dominance. So it does not make sense to say that the drive to dominate is only directed inward as opposed to outward. In fact, Nietzsche writes,

Every living thing *reaches out as far from itself with its force as it can*, and overwhelms what is weaker: thus it takes pleasure in itself. The increasing “humanizing” of this tendency consists in this, that there is an ever subtler sense of how hard it is really to incorporate *another*: while a crude injury done him certainly demonstrates our power over him, it at the same time estranges his will from us even more—and thus makes him less easy to subjugate.²⁵

And the “notorious” section 259 of *Beyond Good and Evil* begins,

Refraining mutually from injury, violence, and exploitation and placing one’s will on par with that of someone else—this may become, in a certain rough sense, good manners among individuals if the appropriate conditions are present (namely, if these men are actually similar in strength and value standards and belong together in *one* body). But as soon as this principle is extended, and possibly even accepted as the *fundamental principle of society*, it immediately proves to be what it really is—a will to the *denial* of life, a principle of disintegration and decay.

In *The Joyful Science*, Nietzsche ascribes the “conscience” that is offended by “egoism” to the “herd instinct” of bygone days, and says, “There is no point on which we have learned to think and feel more differently” (*GS* 117).²⁶ In an aphorism called “Natural Value of Egoism” in *Twilight of the Idols*, he tells us that “Selfishness [Selbstsucht] is worth as much as the physiological value of whoever is exhibiting it.” It can be “worth a great deal” or be “worthless and contemptible” depending on whether the person “represents the ascendant or descendant line of life.” Since there is no isolated individual, the “totality of life” either “takes a step further” with the individual or he is “merely a parasite” who is “worth little, and in all fairness he should detract as little as possible from those who turned out well” (*TI* “Expeditions of an Untimely Man” 33).²⁷ The strong individual thus has “the highest right to egoism” (eKGWB/NF-1888,22[22]; see also eKGWB/NF-1888,14[29]), whereas the weaker individuals are destined to be subservient parasites.

The ego, for Nietzsche, is not a substance. We entirely agree on that, and we agree that there are significant resonances with Buddhism in this regard. But the construction or fabrication of an ego (the individual as a collectivity more or less unified by a dominating drive or set of drives) that asserts itself over against others is unquestionably one form of the will to power, and it is a form that Nietzsche, unlike you, quite often unabashedly affirms. In “Zen after Zarathustra” I write,

“The ‘ego’ subdues and kills,” writes Nietzsche in his notebooks, “it operates like an organic cell: it is a robber and is violent. It wants to regenerate itself—pregnancy. It wants to give birth to its god and see all mankind at its feet” (*WP* 768). The “noble soul,” he tells us in *Beyond Good and Evil*, “accepts this fact of its egoism without any question mark” (*BGE* 265). (“Zen after Zarathustra,” 113)

If one wishes to argue that Nietzsche restricts his affirmation of violence, injury, domination, and exploitation of whatever or whomever is weaker to operations *within* the individual, and that he consistently counsels against egoistic assertion vis-à-vis other individuals, then it is indeed best to simply ignore such passages as the many I am quoting here (and, again, I quote them not to reject but to counterbalance your Nietzsche B reading), despite their abundance in both his published writings and unpublished notes. Perhaps it is sometimes better to studiously ignore than to try to interpretively tame. Nietzsche would no doubt consider all the good-natured and scholarly tamers of his thought to have given in to “sentimental weakness” (*BGE* 259). “At the risk of displeasing innocent ears,” he writes, “I propose: egoism belongs to the nature of the noble soul—I mean that unshakable faith that to a being such as ‘we are’ other beings must be subordinate by nature and have to sacrifice themselves” (*BGE* 265). “‘Thou shalt not rob! Thou shalt not kill!’ [. . .] [But] [d]oes all life not itself comprise—robbing and killing?” Thus too spoke Zarathustra (*Z* III: “On Old and New Tablets” 10).

Still Zen after Zarathustra

After quoting what you call the “notorious” passage from section 259 of *Beyond Good and Evil* where Nietzsche says that life “simply *is* will to power,” which he defines as a force of “overpowering what is alien and weaker” and “exploitation” and so on, I go on to say,

If this is *das letzte Faktum* to which Nietzsche’s thought comes down,²⁸ then what would be an inalterable reality for him is akin to the alterable condition of existence for Buddhism—the willful [egoism of life in samsara]. The will to power, as an egoistic force which expands the domain of the ego by subjugating others to its rule, is the root that needs to be cut [says Nishitani and Zen] in order to make possible a fundamental conversion of life to a radically other way of being-in-the-world. The radical step back to this other, more originary way of being is

thought of in Buddhism not only as a recovery of a natural spontaneity, but also as a re-tapping of an aboriginal wellspring of an active compassion (Sk. *karunā*) that is radically other than the will to appropriation, injury, and overpowering what is alien and weaker. (“Zen after Zarathustra,” 113)

In other words, the Buddhist tradition suggests that all desire is not reducible to egoistic desire or will to power. And so a “cutting off the root” of “the fundamental willful-desire,” as Nishitani puts it, does not lead to a lifeless desert but rather clears the ground for the seeds of a radically different motive to sprout and flourish. D. T. Suzuki writes that “with the human passions, the first work is to destroy the root of ignorance and egoism. When this is thoroughly accomplished, the Buddha-nature which consists in *prajñā* [wisdom] and *karunā* [compassion] will start its native operation.”²⁹

Let me stress that this is neither the end of the story nor the only side of the story I tell in “Zen after Zarathustra.” Indeed I immediately go on to say that “to end a confrontation between Nietzsche and Buddhism by concluding that the former is nothing more than a ‘willful nihilist’ . . . would be as rash as it would have been to accept Nietzsche’s judgment that Buddhism is nothing more than a passive nihilism” (“Zen after Zarathustra,” 113). Nietzsche’s path does not end with provocative overturnings of our traditional moral sensibilities. To be sure, some No-saying Nietzscheans may want to revel in this overturning, perhaps ironically venting their own *ressentiment* and spirit of revenge against Platonic and Christian morality, just as some Yes-saying Nietzscheans may want to scurry quickly past this point, in effect defanging Nietzsche, neutralizing the shock and the force of his provocations. But I think we should neither revel in nor skip gingerly over the cruder formulations and provocative affirmations of the will to power in Nietzsche’s texts. Rather, we should critically and self-critically follow Nietzsche’s attempt to show how an affirmation of life as the will to power would ultimately lead to an elevated form of egoism, which he sharply contrasts with baser forms of selfishness. “In ordinary ‘egoism,’” Nietzsche writes, “it is precisely the ‘non-ego,’ the profoundly average creature, the species man, who desires to preserve himself.” But this, he claims, is precisely a “misunderstanding of egoism—on the part of common natures who know nothing whatever of the pleasures of conquest and the insatiability of great love, nor of the overflowing feeling of strength that desires to overpower, to compel to itself, to lay to its heart—the drive of the artist in relation to his material.”³⁰ This is what I call his “elevated egoism.” Nietzsche calls it a “whole and holy [. . .] selfishness” whereby “[y]ou compel all things toward you and into you, that they may flow back out of your wells as gifts of your love” (Z I: “On the Gift-Giving Virtue”; see also Z IV: “On the Higher Man” 11). Does Nietzsche here move into proximity to Zen Buddhism? To an extent, I concur with you that he does indeed.

But can we get all the way to a Buddhist nonegoism by way of affirming egoism? For that matter, can we get to the over-hero of unharnessed will, or

to “the Roman Caesar with Christ’s soul,”³¹ by starting with and staying with the hypothesis that the world is nothing other than a struggle between wills to power, where will to power is defined as a drive to appropriate, injure, overpower, impose one’s own forms on, and at least exploit what is alien and weaker? If anyone can do it, Nietzsche can; and if anyone can show that he does do it, you can. You will say that you already have. I have carefully read your letter as well as many other things you have written on the topic, and, while I have learned a great deal from and agree with so much of your interpretation, I remain unconvinced on this crucial point. For me, the contrasting aspects cannot be dismissed or sidelined by claiming that they derive merely from the fact that Nietzsche lived and wrote in a “quite different historical, cultural, philosophical, and personal situation from that of, say, Dōgen or Nishitani” (“Letter on Egoism,” 42); nor do they pertain merely to political issues that do not bear on the question of how to live one’s life (“Letter on Egoism,” 58).

I continue to be struck by the basic contrasts between a path that at least begins by accepting “without any question mark” that “egoism belongs to the nature of a noble soul” who thinks that “other beings must [. . .] sacrifice themselves [to me]” (*BGE* 265) and a path that begins with Noble Truths that reject not only the metaphysics of the substantial ego but also egoistic craving as a primal cause of suffering. Whereas Nietzsche rejects the metaphysics of the ego but at best equivocates over the value of egoism, Buddhism more consistently rejects egoism along with the ego. Whereas Nietzsche thinks that things can arise from their opposites, including altruism from egoism (*HH* “Of First and Last Things” 1), the Buddhist path starts off with repentance of egoism and vows of altruism. I do not think that we can dismiss or sideline the significant contrasts between a path that begins by affirming, with the Homeric Greeks, “jealously, grudge, and envy” as part of the “good Eris” that goads men into competition with one another and hence creates strong individuals and societies (“Homer’s Contest”),³² and a path that sees “envy” and “jealously” (*īrṣyā*), along with “pride” (*māna*) and “enmity” (*īpanāha*), as “defilements” (*kleśa*), as the root causes of suffering that need to be uprooted, not fostered and cultivated. Among the Four Great Vows chanted daily by Zen practitioners is the vow to endlessly cut off such unwholesome defilements. This vow comes second only to the great altruistic mantra: “However innumerable sentient beings are, I vow to save them all.”

If one searches Nietzsche’s published and unpublished writings, one will find over two hundred passages in which he speaks of “egoism.” He says many—not always compatible—things about egoism.³³ We often find him affirming egoism and criticizing what he sees as the hypocrisy or incoherence or decadence of the morality of altruism. In section 20 of the *Antichrist(ian)*, Nietzsche claims that “[i]n the Buddha’s doctrine, egoism becomes a duty,” revealing not only how he (mis)interprets the early Buddhism with which he was familiar, but also his

total ignorance of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Nevertheless, I agree with you that Nietzsche's thought is most interesting and most compelling in those places where he comes into proximity to Mahāyāna Buddhism, and Zen in particular, and I think you would agree with me that those places include certain gestures beyond the very opposition of egoism and altruism. Here there is perhaps an ultimate point of convergence with Mahāyāna Buddhism, according to which the "perfection of giving" involves the nonduality of self and other (*jita-fūni*), and benefitting oneself is at once connected to benefitting others (*jiri-rita*). I agree with you that there is a real point of connection when Nietzsche speaks of learning to "feel cosmically" that "all things are . . . entwined, in love," such that one experiences oneself both as and as a part of the interconnected whole. However, I think Nietzsche's thought often disagrees with Mahāyāna Buddhism on whether an affirmation of egoism or of altruism is the best path to get to that experience, and on whether there is a continuity or a break between even an elevated form of egoism and nonegoism. Moreover, they differ with regard to whether the interconnected whole is best understood as a mutual struggle between competing drives of will to power, and nothing besides. They differ over whether even the love that entwines us is best understood in terms of the dominating and exploiting force of will to power.

So we agree on much, but there remains a point of apparently intractable disagreement. I agree with you that there is a lot of love and generosity and—even if he generally derides what he calls *Mitleid*—compassion to be found in Nietzsche. And I agree that the comparison with Zen can help us draw out these neglected themes in Nietzsche ("Letter on Egoism," 58). In section 8 of the early text, *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, Nietzsche says of his otherwise favorite Presocratic philosopher, Heraclitus, that he exhibits "no powerful feeling of compassionate stirrings, no desire to help, heal and save." By contrast, Zarathustra's going under to share his overflowing wisdom, his teaching of the bestowing virtue as the highest virtue, and all his declarations of love to which you refer us, are certainly key themes in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. The question is, are these affirmations of love and generosity and compassion compatible with, or they at odds with, his hypothesis that the world is the will to power and nothing besides? Are love and generosity and compassion really best understood as forms or species of the will to power? Can all Nietzsche's affirmations of egoism be reconciled with all his rejections of egoism? Is "Nietzsche" a monochromatic elephant, or is he a stripped zebra?

I find the zebra to be a more compelling image of the whole of Nietzsche, both the meaner, courser stripes and the gentler, kinder ones. To some extent, in some respects, I can understand how these stripes overlap and blend into one another. But not completely. I do not think that Nietzsche ever completely resolved the great tensions in his life and in his work,³⁴ but that is precisely what makes him so interesting and instructive—as long as we don't succumb to the temptation

to become Nietzschean apologists who refuse to read him with the appropriate “ironic resistance” he himself recommends. “I want no ‘believers’; I think I am too malicious to believe in myself” (*EH* “Why I Am a Destiny” 1). I think that *it is precisely the great tensions in Nietzsche*—his maliciousness and his love, his No-saying and his Yes-saying, his renunciation of the spirit of revenge and what sometimes seems to be his spirit of revenge against renunciation, what some see as his contradictory struggle for redemption from redemption,³⁵ what I see as his deeply ambivalent affirmations and negations of egoism—that propelled him along his path of life and thought, a path that left us with such illuminating and provocative texts. Even though I find Nietzsche the monochromatic elephant a more peaceful and friendly creature, in the end I find Nietzsche the zebra not only a more complete (which is not to say more coherent) account of the whole of his texts, but also a more challenging and thought-provoking philosopher. While I learn much from a sympathetic study of the elephant, I learn even more from a critical engagement with the zebra. The whole turbulent and ambivalent dynamic of Nietzsche—Nietzsche as an untamable zebra on the run—may be less likable, less uniformly kind and gentle, but he compels us to think more critically and more deeply.

You end your letter by admitting that you have “neglected the contrastive aspects of the comparison, since [I] have outlined them well and in exhaustive detail” (“Letter on Egoism,” 58). And yet, you don’t seem to agree with the way I have drawn the contrasts, namely with regard to the egoism of the will to power. How, then, would you draw them? You state that you still believe that “Nishitani’s mature thought . . . may indeed comprehend and in some respects go beyond what Nietzsche has wrought” (“Letter on Egoism,” 58). In which respects? If you don’t agree with the manner in which I view “Zen after Zarathustra” or “Nishitani after Nietzsche,” how do you view this going-beyond? It has been more than twenty years since you originally made this remark, years in which you have pioneered and championed a “way of comparison” that focuses exclusively on the deep congruences between Nietzsche and Zen. But how long do we have to “refrain from confrontation and follow instead the way of comparison” before we are ready to “discern the genuine differences between the two sides” (“Letter on Egoism,” 59)?

Let me close by thanking you again for inviting me to discuss the colossal elephant standing between us in the room. Only now I hope you have come to see that it is better viewed as an untamed zebra running by outside. There is probably not much chance of that, since you were convinced neither by my lengthy essay itself nor by my oral responses to your critique on two occasions. But I hope to have at least clarified for you the nature of my zebraic reading of Nietzsche, and perhaps to have conveyed a sense of why I think it is important to reflect more critically than you do on Nietzsche in relation to, and from the perspective of, Zen Buddhism. Most of all, I hope that our friendly philosophical

disputation in these open letters, and in any future exchanges, serves to deepen both our philosophical thinking and our friendship.

Sincerely,

Bret

PS to readers: If you have found this exchange of open letters engaging, please consider reading or rereading the texts that gave rise to it. Also, while I appreciate the fortuitous coincidence of this exchange with the tenth anniversary of my “Zen after Zarathustra,” please join me in celebrating the twentieth anniversary of a classic in the field of Nietzsche studies, Graham Parkes’s *Composing the Soul*.

NOTES

1. For citations of Nietzsche’s texts, I use Graham Parkes’s translation of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). In addition, I cite, sometimes with modifications, the translations by Walter Kaufman in *The Portable Nietzsche* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1982) and *Basic Writings of Nietzsche* (New York: Random House, 1968), and by Walter Kaufman and R. J. Hollingdale in *The Will to Power* (New York: Random House, 1967). In a few places I have used the translations in *The Nietzsche Reader*, edited by Keith Ansell Pearson and Duncan Large (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006). Translations from the *Digitale Kritische Gesamtausgabe Werke und Briefe* (eKGWB) are my own.

2. As quoted in Graham Parkes, *Composing the Soul: Reaches of Nietzsche’s Psychology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 16. Yet in this book and, as far as I know, elsewhere in your writings on Nietzsche, you defer a critical engagement and pursue an almost exclusively sympathetic presentation and interpretation of his thought.

3. Graham Parkes, “Nietzsche and Nishitani on the Self-Overcoming of Nihilism,” *International Studies in Philosophy* 25.2 (1993): 59.

4. Bret W. Davis, “Zen after Zarathustra: The Problem of the Will in the Confrontation between Nietzsche and Buddhism,” *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 28 (2004): 89–138. Graham Parkes, “Letter on Egoism: Will to Power as Interpretation,” *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 46.1 (2015): 42–61.

5. *KSA* 12:2[148]; translated as *The Will to Power* 643.

6. Letter to Jacob Burckhardt, January 6, 1889, quoted in Parkes, *Composing the Soul*, 381.

7. Allow me to reproduce the following note from “Zen after Zarathustra.” “On the one hand, it is far too limited an approach to ‘evaluate the Buddha by way of Nietzsche,’ to ‘attempt to understand the Buddha’s teachings in the light of Nietzsche’s philosophy,’ and then to simply conclude that ‘Nietzsche and the Buddha are thinkers who stand in direct opposition to one another.’ (Yutaka Yuda, *Budda vs. Niiche* [Buddha vs. Nietzsche] [Tokyo: Daitōshuppansha, 2001], pp. 2, 5, and 220.) While certain passages and moments of Nietzsche’s text can indeed be employed to support such a clear-cut antithesis, the movement of Nietzsche’s thought and the complexities of his view of Buddhism do not allow us to rest assured with this ‘faith in opposite values’ (*BGE* 2). On the other hand, however, to anyone who would gloss over the confrontation altogether by paying exclusive attention either to the errors in Nietzsche’s understanding of Buddhism, or to the ironic affinities between his thought and Buddhism correctly understood, Nietzsche would likely [respond with] the following aphorism: ‘*Against mediators*. . . . Seeing things as similar and making things the same is the sign of weak eyes’ (*GS* 228)” (“Zen after Zarathustra,” 130 n. 9).

As I indicate throughout my essay, in the wake of Nishitani many important Japanese philosophers, such as Ryōgi Ōkōchi, Shizuteru Ueda, and Ryōsuke Ōhashi, have fruitfully explored both the resonances and the dissonances between Nietzsche and Buddhism.

8. Admittedly, the most serious challenge to my zebraic reading is the fact that, while to my knowledge Nietzsche nowhere refers to himself as a zebra, in *Ecce Homo* he does say that the eighteen-month pregnancy between the conception of the kernel idea of eternal recurrence and the birth of *Zarathustra* “might suggest, as least to Buddhists, that I am really a female elephant” (*EH* “Z” 1). In the spirit of generosity and for the love of the whole truth, I offer you this unassailable source of textual support for your elephantic reading.

9. Graham Parkes, “Nietzsche and Early Buddhism: A Review of Nietzsche and Buddhism: Prolegomenon to a Comparative Study, by Freny Mistry, and Nietzsche and Buddhism: A Study in Ironic Affinities, by Robert G. Morrison,” *Philosophy East and West* 50.2 (2000): 264. This is the argument of chapter 9 of *Composing the Soul*. In your “Reply to Robert Morrison” (*Philosophy East and West* 50.2 [2000]: 282), you cite in this regard a passage from Nietzsche’s notebooks where he speaks of “subjecting [the affects] to a protracted tyranny” to the point where “they are confidently granted freedom again: they love us as good servants and go voluntarily wherever our best inclines [wo unser Bestes hin will]” (*KSA* 12:1[122] = *The Will to Power* 384, trans. Parkes). But this sounds more like an achievement of self-mastery rather than a going beyond the project of self-mastery. As Nietzsche writes in another note that you cite elsewhere (*Composing the Soul*, 355), “The greater the will’s power of mastery [*die Herren-Kraft des Willens*], the more freedom may be given to the passions” (*KSA* 12:9[139] = *The Will to Power* 933, trans. Parkes).

10. See also my “Natural Freedom: Human/Nature Non-Dualism in Japanese Thought,” in *The Oxford Handbook of World Philosophy*, ed. Jay Garfield and William Edelglass (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); and my “Naturalness in Zen and Shin Buddhism: Before and Beyond Self- and Other-Power,” in *Contemporary Buddhism*, 15/2 (July 2014), 433–447.

11. *Nishitani Keiji chosakushū* [The collected works of Keiji Nishitani] (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1986), 11:190–91.

12. See also Graham Parkes, “Nietzsche and Nishitani on the Self through Time,” *Eastern Buddhist* 17.2 (1984): 63–64.

13. *Nishitani Keiji chosakushū*, 10:276, my translation; cf. *Religion and Nothingness*, trans. Jan Van Bragt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 251, emphasis added, quoted in “Zen after Zarathustra,” 122.

14. *Nishitani Keiji chosakushū*, 10:285, 292; *Religion and Nothingness*, 258, 265, quoted in “Zen after Zarathustra,” 104. See also Bret W. Davis, “Nishitani after Nietzsche: From the Death of God to the Great Death of the Will,” in *Japanese and Continental Philosophy: Conversations with the Kyoto School*, ed. Bret W. Davis, Brian Schroeder, and Jason M. Wirth (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 82–101; the original Japanese version of this essay was published in 2005.

15. *Nishitani Keiji chosakushū*, 10:292, my translation; cf. *Religion and Nothingness*, 265. On Nishitani’s nonegoistic conception of the interpersonal relation on the field of emptiness, see my “Kū ni okeru deai: Nishitani Keiji no Zen tetsugaku ni okeru ‘ware to nanji’ no ego-teki kankei” [Encounter in emptiness: The mutually circulating I-thou relation in the Zen philosophy of Nishitani Keiji], *Risō* 689 (2012): 114–31; an English version of this essay is in progress.

16. None of the Mahāyāna talk of the nonduality of such things as samsara and nirvana, or blinding passions and liberating wisdom, makes any sense unless one begins, and ends, with an ability to clearly distinguish them, in practice as well as in thought. The mountain is finally a mountain, not a river, and sexual coercion is wrong, especially if you purport to be a Zen master. The Zen tradition is quite clear about the pitfalls of collapsing nonduality into the “emptiness sickness” (*kūbyō*) of indistinction, just as it is about conflating natural spontaneity with what Dōgen, following his teacher Rujing, calls the “heresy of [licentious] naturalism” (*jinen-gedō*).

17. See “Zen after Zarathustra,” 123–25; and also my *Heidegger and the Will: On the Way to Gelassenheit* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 154–55, 341–42. I do not

entirely agree with Heidegger's critique of the eternal recurrence as manifesting a "form of ill will *against* sheer transiency and thereby a highly spiritualized spirit of revenge," though I do not think Heidegger's critique is simply "perverse" or "insane" ("Letter on Egoism," 52). I do suggest the following: "Would not a philosophy of impermanence (Jp. *mujō*) without return—perhaps together with an attunement to the 'pathos of things' (Jp. *mono no aware*) that compassionately embraces the beauty of flowers that fall and smiles that fade, never to return exactly the same—express an even greater willingness to radically affirm this world of becoming?" ("Zen after Zarathustra," 124).

18. "Among my writings my *Zarathustra* stands to my mind by itself. . . . This book . . . is not only the highest book there is . . . it is also the deepest" (*EH* P:4). We might do well to ponder the fact that Nietzsche begins the section on *Zarathustra* in *Ecce Homo* by telling us that the fundamental conception of the work is the idea of eternal recurrence (*EH* "Z" 1), and in the entire section he does not once mention "will to power." At the beginning of the following section of *Ecce Homo*, the section on *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche tells us that "[a]fter the Yes-saying part of my task had been solved, the turn had come for the No-saying, *No-doing* part" (*EH* "BGE" 1). So, there is some reason to view the "will to power," which returns to play such a key role in *Beyond Good and Evil*, as a predominantly No-saying teaching that prepares the way for Yes-saying teachings, such as *amor fati*. The thought of the eternal recurrence could be understood as the gateway test that must be passed in order to move from the one to the other. Does this test demand the greatest strength of will to power, or does it require a relinquishing of will to power that gives way to a nonwillful way of being in and as the interconnected whole? That is the question.

19. *KSA* 11:38[12]; translated as *The Will to Power* 1067.

20. In *Nietzsche and Zen: Self-Overcoming without a Self* (Lanham, MD: Roman & Littlefield, 2011), after discussing my "Zen after Zarathustra," André van der Braak writes, "Perhaps any comparative effort between Nietzsche and Zen that continues to give the will to power this central place in Nietzsche's thought . . . is bound to conclude that there remains an unbridgeable gap between Nietzsche and Zen" (155). However, in contrast to you, he goes on to argue that Nietzsche in fact abandoned the teaching of the will to power, or at least relegated it to an "exoteric" teaching (162–64), which he compares to the Buddhist notion of *upāya* (skillful means) (169). Yet, while this interpretation would lend welcome support to my suggestion that we can detect a movement of "self-overcoming of the will to power" (objective genitive) in Nietzsche's thought, the evidence van der Braak cites for this view refers to places where Nietzsche is denying "the will," not the "will to power," and it is crucial to distinguish between these two ideas in Nietzsche's thought. Nietzsche consistently denies the causality of "the will" along with his denial of the substantiality of the "I" or ego. But his denial of "the will" entails a denial of "will to power" even less than his denial of the substantial ego entails a denial of egoism. Indeed, he denies "the will" precisely by means of his teaching of the will to power: "There is no will: there are only punctuations of will [*Willens-Punktationen*] that are constantly increasing or losing their power" (*KSA* 13:11[73]; translated as *The Will to Power* 715).

21. And it is not at all, as you imply, confined to his unpublished notes ("Letter on Egoism," 49). Let me reign in that red herring before it leads us off track. Some of the passages I cite are indeed from unpublished notes. But so is the passage on "feeling cosmically" and many other passages you cite in your writings. (In "Nietzsche and Nishitani on the Self through Time," for example, you cite more passages from *The Will to Power* than from any text that Nietzsche himself published.) In general, I would say that we use the same approach to the *Nachlass*, namely, we use passages from notebooks and letters insofar as they are compatible with and help illuminate or elaborate on ideas that can also be found in published texts. That is the case here.

22. *KSA* 12:7[60]; translated as *The Will to Power* 481.

23. *KSA* 13:14[27]; translated as *The Will to Power* 426.

24. I am also puzzled by your suggestion that the best way to distinguish between Jesus, Socrates, and perhaps Nietzsche on the one hand, and Hitler, Stalin, and Mao Zedong on the other, is to view them on “a continuum of forms of power, from brute force to philosophy” (“Letter on Egoism,” 53). Nietzsche’s attitude toward Socrates is of course deeply ambivalent, and while he does tend to exempt Jesus from the slave morality of Christians, he is much more unequivocally critical of Paul, who has nevertheless exerted a great deal of influence for two millennia. Nietzsche tends to hold Napoleon in high regard, or at least to consider him to be a “synthesis of *Unmensch* and *Übermensch*” (*GM* II:16), but he was arguably less of a philosopher than even Mao. And the influence exerted by Hitler, Stalin, and Mao hardly “ended abruptly with their own deaths”; nor did that of any number of other influential yet ethically suspect or deplorable figures in history. Do we really want to measure human worth on a continuum of power, and to measure power in terms of influence? Surely Hitler continues to exert more influence on the world than does my dearly departed grandmother, but I would hardly want to say that he was a more worthy human being—unless exerting power over and influence on others were my only ethical measure, and will to power my only ontological predicate.

25. *KSA* 10:16[26]; translated as *The Will to Power* 769, emphasis added.

26. Translation from *The Nietzsche Reader*, 222–23.

27. Translation from *The Nietzsche Reader*, 478.

28. Elsewhere Nietzsche writes, “the will to power is the ultimate fact [das letzte Faktum] to which we come down” (*Grossoktavausgabe*, 14:327).

29. Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, *Mysticism Christian and Buddhist* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2002), 74.

30. *KSA* 11:26[262]; translated as *The Will to Power* 873.

31. *KSA* 11:27[60]; translated as *The Will to Power* 983.

32. Translation from *The Nietzsche Reader*, 97.

33. Here is a notebook entry that I would have recommended as epigraph for your letter: “The ‘I’ (which is *not* the same as the unitary administration of our being!) is indeed only a conceptual synthesis—and so there is no such thing as acting on the basis of ‘egoism’” (eKGWB/NF-1885, 1[87]). This one, however, written later in the same year, would not work so well for you: “There is no such thing as an egoism that remains within itself and doesn’t encroach. [. . .] One always promotes one’s ego ‘at the expense of others’; Life lives always at the expense of other life. —Whoever who doesn’t grasp that hasn’t taken the first step towards honesty with himself” (eKGWB/NF-1885,2[205]).

34. I concur in this regard with Wolfgang Müller-Lauter, *Nietzsche: His Philosophy of Contradictions and the Contradictions of His Philosophy*, trans. David J. Parent (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999; original German edition 1971); see “Zen after Zarathustra,” 124–25. I did not find any reference to this landmark study in *Composing the Soul* or in your articles with which I am familiar, but would be interested to know what you think of it, since it too challenges your elephantine reading with a zebraic reading.

35. In his own kind of zebraic reading, Bruce Ellis Benson has more recently argued that Nietzsche’s desire for “redemption from redemption” in the end leaves him caught in the No-saying “logic of *ressentiment*.” See his *Pious Nietzsche: Decadence and Dionysian Faith* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), esp. chap. 10.