TRANSVALUATION AND THE PRACTICE OF METAPHYSICS

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to develop transvaluation as a practice of metaphysical thinking. Jesus, Anselm, Nietzsche, and Deleuze have been selected and juxtaposed, for all their contrasts, as paradigmatic thinkers of transvaluation. Jesus offers the best paradigm for transvaluing what matters, what is sincere, and what is trustworthy: his response to a dispute among his disciples poses the problem that changes the signification, value, and binding force of thought. The metaphysical purport of Jesus's problem is clarified by Anselm's restatement of it, set against the backdrop of the contemplative spirituality expressed in the first chapter of Anselm's *Proslogion*. Anselm leaves us with a pair of problems: what is that than which none greater can be conceived? What is that whose very thought involves existence? These problems provide a context for rethinking the paradigms of transvaluation presented in Nietzsche's writing. Yet it was Deleuze who first presented transvaluation as an explicit method in his interpretation of Nietzsche, describing a metaphysics arising in and through critique. His method may itself be given a transvalued significance oriented, in turn, by the problems presented by Jesus and Anselm.

I. TOWARDS A TRANSVALUED METAPHYSICS

I understand metaphysics to be the study of the substance of things: what matters, what is sincere, and what is trustworthy in them.[1] Such substance is implicit: it requires comprehension of something beyond appearances. The task of metaphysics is determined by problems: to distinguish the significant from the insignificant, the essential from the metaphorical, the grounded from the ungrounded. This task is never complete. After consideration of such problems, one expresses what is significant, essential, and grounded—and yet what has been comprehended, more or less adequately, of the reason for its significance, essentiality, or grounding remains implicit, exceeding what has been expressed. Metaphysical problems are never fully resolved. The great metaphysicians and scholastics have always posed problems;[2] we err if we believe these problems to be fully grounded or fully resolved. For a change in perspective may disclose a new aspect of each problem.

On this account, the practice of metaphysics, like life itself, demands continual transformation. Certain assumptions about metaphysics may be laid aside after having served their time: metaphysics, after modern critiques,[3] is no longer a matter of considering being separately from beings, or being *qua* being; it is no longer a matter of considering objects in themselves or subjects for the sake of others or for themselves: the metaphors of 'separation', 'as', 'in', and 'for' have lost their currency; each belies the nature of thought and being. For one never considers what matters, what is sincere, and what is trustworthy 'in' isolation, for that would separate an abstract meaning apart from purport, thinking from being. Instead, grounded thought expresses substance through its genesis, relations, and orientation. Nor can metaphysics progress through

argument alone, for arguments express the strife of opinions; they do not serve to formulate problems. With a suitable method, metaphysical thinking may produce a profound transformation in what had formerly been taken for granted: certain guiding metaphors lose their meaning, certain tasks lose their value, certain obligations their binding force, while others gain an enriched sense, value, and binding force. The everyday presuppositions that determine what we notice, count as real, record, represent, and by which we give ourselves orientation may be changed at the roots. Another world comes into sight; another life is lived. This is the spirituality required for metaphysics. Let us call this essential reorientation *transvaluation*.

If metaphysical thinking effects a transvaluation, transvaluation in turn may be deployed as a method for the practice of metaphysics. The aim of this article is to lay bare the philosophical method I have practised throughout my publications. While I deploy here episodes of thinking from Jesus, Anselm, and Nietzsche as sources and exemplars, Deleuze offered the first explicit thematisation of transvaluation and I therefore outline what I have drawn from him. The following principles for a method of transvaluation catalyse changes in perspective:

1. *Provoke thinking about what is significant, essential, and grounded by posing substantial problems*. Problems themselves may be distinguished: there are those which give something to be understood about arising, intrinsic relations, and orientation; and there are those which take something from thought, demanding an image, hypothesis or projection to cover a lack of intrinsic comprehension. Transvaluation distinguishes between substantial and insubstantial problems.
2. *Consider matters in juxtaposition*: what is significant, essential, and grounded may be illuminated by the differences and intrinsic relations between things. Just as two eyes enable three-dimensional vision, juxtapositions and disparities present matters in depth.
3. *Repeat the problems and transvaluations thought through by others*. Those who have sought what matters, what is sincere, and what is trustworthy have left records of their problems and reorientations. To inhabit and appropriate their insights constitutes a formative tradition: thinking is effective in reorienting when it is a rethinking, repeating the problems, rather than the solutions or opinions, of those who have gone before. This involves:
   a selecting those whose thought shows signs of having undergone a profound transvaluation;
   b repeating their problems and episodes of thinking, even, if helpful, quoting their words for meditation; since each meditation takes place after previous reorientations, according to a unique spiritual biography, it inevitably produces some degree of divergence from the thinker upon whom one meditates;
   c seeking to think through what is of substance in this prior transvaluation: what matters, what is sincere, and what is trustworthy; this metaphysical reading differs from interpretation of the text or the author's intentions.

In short, this is a spirituality of thoughtfulness: it seeks *metanoia*, a change of heart and mind, rather than persuasion of others to share in one's view. Transvaluation, as a metaphysical method, is at once a traditional and familiar practice and yet always fresh.

The ladder of ascent to metaphysics proposed here consists of four stages:

1. To present examples of transvaluations drawn from Jesus, Anselm, Nietzsche, and Deleuze.
2. To transvalue their thought: that is, by raising the problem of the implicit metaphysics deployed in their transvaluations, I rethink their problems by taking selected ideas to the limit of what they can do. This produces a forced reading, one that ought not to be encountered in the secondary literature, but nevertheless belongs to the essence of their thought as disclosed in conversation with my own.[4]

3. To transvalue metaphysics itself by assembling a set of problems and concepts that transforms the sense, value, and binding force of metaphysical thinking.
4. To assemble, as a conclusion to the inquiry, an account of metaphysics that differs markedly from anything explicitly proposed by Jesus, Anselm, Nietzsche, or Deleuze yet still remotely belongs to the essence of their thinking practice.

II. THE PROBLEM OF GREATNESS: A DISPUTE

> A dispute also arose among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest. But [Jesus] said to them, 'The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the one who serves. For who is the greater, the one who is at table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves.'
> (Luke 22:24-26)

Who is the greater? Such is the problem which had given shape to pagan political life through the desire for glory and the estimation of excellence. The aspiration for comparative greatness may motivate and structure an entire field of endeavour: individual behaviours and collective institutions crystallise around competition. If it is overall victory that is truly desired, then all but one of the disciples would be frustrated; if it is a structured and competitive life of aspiration that is truly desired, then even the ultimate loser might yet be satisfied. For competition is at once a cooperative activity and an individual aspiration: one cannot compete unless others rise to the challenge. There is more signified by the disciples' question than at first appears: it is possible to distinguish between the individual drive for victory, a drive that presupposes a competitive field, and a tendency to structure life as competition, a tendency that grounds individual drives. A drive for individual greatness could hardly arise without a collective tendency towards competition, nor a collective tendency without individual drives.[5] In this respect, the explicit statement of the problem, 'who is the greater?' may evoke the drive for greatness. Stating the problem crystallises, communicates, invests, propagates, and evokes the tendency towards competition. A problem such as this may be at once metaphysical and transformative: if collective tendencies may give structure and significance to existence, expressing them explicitly may form and transform individuals and collectives.

Transvaluation is brought about through the transformation of the problem. Jesus did not altogether repudiate his disciples' desire for greatness. Instead, he transvalued the problem by considering it in their concrete situation: who is the greater, the one at table or the one who serves? If the disciples had sought greatness for the sake of sitting at table, they also expected that Jesus himself would occupy the highest position. Jesus's performance of the functions of a servant at their last supper defied their expectations: if the disciples were not to abandon their faith in Jesus they would have to transform their understanding of what it is to be great. The problem is no longer a matter of simply discerning who is great; alongside that, one must discern the trustworthy grounds by which greatness is judged. The implicit metaphysical problem raised could be this: what is true greatness? Even if the one at the table might seem greater in appearance, the one who serves might be greater in substance.

It is notable that Jesus did not formulate or answer the Socratic problem: what is true greatness? Instead of demanding a definition or a principle, Jesus indicated his own life as a parable: 'I am among you as the one who serves.' Likewise, the evangelists sought to portray true

greatness through a narrative of Christ crucified. In such concrete, embodied thinking, ideas of who is great and the nature of greatness crystallise in reciprocal presupposition: who or what is that than which none greater can be conceived? This metaphysical problem motivates transvaluation.[6] Yet it remains implicit: it is the pearl of great price for which one sells all one's treasures. It is the principle of chiasmic inversion, such that the first shall be last and the last shall be first. It took centuries to be made explicit, initially as a focal problem within Christology and a focus for expressions of Christian worship: what did it mean to praise a God revealed in the unexpected form of Christ crucified? It later began to impinge more broadly on Western ethics as the desire for the Good (in Augustine), on Western metaphysics in the delicate passage from thinking to existence (in Anselm), on Western politics as the master-slave dialectic (in Hegel), and on modern critique as the revaluation of values (in Nietzsche). Transvaluation raises thought from judgements to grounds, and from grounds to problems that are at once metaphysical, ethical, epistemological, political, and existential.

III. A CALL TO CONTEMPLATION

Transvaluation as a metaphysical method demands that philosophy is grounded in spirituality: experiences of *metanoia* or reorientation, such as that which Jesus offered to his disciples, affect the sense, value, and orientation precomprehended prior to any argument. This is what one finds in the crucial first chapter of the *Proslogion*, expressed as a prayer after the manner of Augustine's *Confessions*, prior to the discussion that follows. Anselm outlined a theological problem: how is one to contemplate the face of God if one has never seen it nor knows where nor how to seek it? How may one understand anything divine if one has no direct knowledge of divinity? This theological problem symbolises others that recur in the consideration of any metaphysical concept, whether greatness, time, space, causality, or subjectivity: how may these be understood or verified if one does not, in some sense, already grasp them?

Anselm appealed to faith: what the human mind cannot achieve through its reasoning alone may be undertaken by God:

> Teach me to seek You, and reveal Yourself to me as I seek, because I can neither seek You if You do not teach me how, nor find You unless You reveal Yourself. Let me seek You in desiring You: let me desire You in seeking You; let me find you in loving You; let me love You in finding You.[7]

Anselm immediately proceeded to express the faith that God had already planted an image within so that Anselm might remember, think of, and love God. Implied is a further twist, for this image, alluding to Augustine's account in *De Trinitate IX*, would be nothing other than the capacity itself to remember, think of, and love God. The believer seeks God through the image; an image which is an activity, that of seeking God. The love for God images the love that is God. Anselm confesses that this image 'is so effaced and worn away by vice, so darkened by the smoke of sin, that it cannot do what it was made to do unless You renew it and reform it.' Such a renewal would be a complete reformation of desiring and seeking; it changes what is remembered, what is comprehended, and what is loved. After such a renewal, the sense, value, and binding force of phenomena will have changed once they have been viewed in the light of the love of God. Insofar as such a renewal is conceived as clarifying the reflexive image of the love of God it has been termed sanctification; insofar

as it gives a new sense, value, and binding force to all phenomena seen in its light, one may adopt the term transvaluation. Sanctification and transvaluation may be used to refer to the same process of renewal seen from different perspectives: in relation to divine grace, as a desired outcome, renewal is sanctification; in relation to the world, regarded in hindsight, renewal is transvaluation: all things are made new.

To transvalue Anselm's thought it is sufficient to pose this problem: can thinking itself ever become a means of grace? Anselm appears to take the opposite approach: only if Anselm could gain access to divine grace and renewal through faith and love would he have the capacity to see matters in the light of divine truth. Anselm's famous principle has an apparently divisive corollary: 'For I do not seek to understand so that I may believe; but I believe so that I may understand. For this I believe also, that "unless I believe, I shall not understand" [Isaiah 7:9].' This principle contrasts starkly with modern conceptions and practices of reason:

- In place of the universality of reason, it institutes a distinction between the 'wise', who are characterised less by prudence than by belief in and love for God, and the 'fool', who says in his heart 'there is no God'. Consequently, unbelievers may understand the words of the discussion which follows but do not feel the force of the reasoning, having no grasp of its intrinsic grounds.
- The principle that one may overcome self-deceptions by stepping into the shoes of another is devalued as merely the extrinsic constitution of worldliness. In its place, one's own intrinsic orientation to what is great, however corrupted, offers the only viable frame of reference. Consequently, the reasoning employed here is not a universal and necessary feature of human subjectivity as such for it may only be grounded in the renewed image of God.

In short, Anselm's faith evokes a transvalued conception and practice of reason where one's faith, orientation, perspective, or heart is decisive. To be reasonable is to be renewed, that is, to have undergone a change of heart.

It might therefore be tempting to conclude that Anselm has conceded that there is no rational, persuasive argument in the *Proslogion* concerning the existence of God but rather a set of directions for contemplative prayer. Nevertheless, what has been at stake in the debates over the so-called 'ontological argument' is whether it holds any dialectical or persuasive force for nonbelievers as well as believers—that is, whether considering it offers any possibility for transforming the 'fool' into the 'wise'. For once the problem of existence is posed specifically in terms of 'that than which *none greater* can be conceived', it becomes a live issue not just for believers alone but for all who pursue recognition or excellence, even those who simply seek to 'keep it real'. Thinking becomes reintegrated with being through living. Anselm's problem, of 'that than which none greater can be conceived', expresses the problem of how to orient a life.

To orient a life towards that which is actual, rather than that which might exist in the understanding alone, has seemed wise to some, whether believers or not, including positivist critics of metaphysics. Anselm leaves us with a second metaphysical problem: how to distinguish what is real from what exists in the understanding alone. This is the problem of *grounding*: after all, to prove the non-existence of a false and ungrounded notion of God establishes nothing; to prove the non-existence of the true and grounded notion of God is self-contradictory. Prior to any argument, a proper concept of God would need to be grounded in how things are.[8] While argument establishes what is the case, grounding expresses what is remembered, understood, and loved. While argument establishes how to follow consistently the rules of logic in particular cases, grounding determines which particular cases are significant, essential, and trustworthy.[9] Anselm offered a second transvaluation: he proceeded to argue that a God who exists is greater than a mere concept

in the understanding—after all, an existing God (or nature) creates (or grounds) the human mind and so is greater than it, whereas the human mind produces its notions of gods that do not exist, and so is greater than them.[10] It is necessary for a mind to be grounded to be wise, that is, we might say, to think itself in its genesis, relations, and orientation to what is actual. In this way, Anselm individuates and dramatises, in theological form, a problem of metaphysical significance: can a notion of reason as grounding be thought and practised as distinct from argument? This problem has a dialectical force: it may crystallise, communicate, invest, propagate, and evoke a tendency or desire towards grounding thought. It affects believers and nonbelievers alike. 'What is that than which none greater can be conceived' becomes 'What is grounded thought?' It offers a context for turning to Nietzsche: how might his paradigms of transvaluation ground thought?

IV. REVALUATION OF ALL VALUES: THREE PARADIGMS

Amor fati

Nietzsche sought to offer a profounder affirmation of actuality than he was able to discover in theism. Yet his thought remained implicitly oriented by the two problems we have encountered in Anselm: what is that than which none greater can be conceived? What is that whose essence involves existence? For New Year's Day 1882, Nietzsche penned the aphorism that opened Book Four of *The Gay Science* and signalled a decisive change in the direction of his quest for nobility of thought:[11]

> Today everyone allows himself to express his dearest wish and thoughts: so I, too, want to say what I wish from myself today and what thought first crossed my heart—what thought shall be the reason, warrant, and sweetness of the rest of my life! I want to learn more and more how to see what is necessary in things as what is beautiful in them—thus I will be one of those who make things beautiful. *Amor fati*: let that be my love from now on! I do not want to wage war against ugliness. I do not want to accuse; I do not even want to accuse the accusers. Let *looking away* be my only negation! And, all in all and on the whole: some day I want only to be a Yes-sayer.[12]

This announcement addresses our problems with a decisive appearance of a concept of *transvaluation*: the greatest and most actual is *amor fati*. It takes the form of a desired interpretation of the necessary as beautiful. This *tragic* sensibility no longer condemns things for their ugliness, their causing of suffering, or their production of mere appearances. For each of these, when regarded as necessary, that is, as knotted and interwoven into a complex weave of conditions and consequences, has a beauty, not in themselves alone, but in their relations to the antitheses that they make possible. Ugliness is a condition for beauty, suffering is a condition for joy, appearance is a condition for reality, cruelty is a condition for higher culture, denigrating reality is a condition for truth—these are the intuitions which Nietzsche sought to explore in hundreds of minute and detailed discussions throughout his work. This capacity for transvaluation, in his own estimation, is what made him so great. When Nietzsche transvalued phenomena, he opened up a depth of significance, meaning, and value in things which had been concealed when they were considered alone.

Implicit within Nietzsche's thought may be discerned a faint after-image of Anselm's problems thought in conjunction:

• What is that than which none greater can be conceived? A tragic sensibility which is sufficiently rich to affirm life despite its horror and intolerability.
• What is that whose essence involves existence? Beauty conjoined with necessity.

In short, transvaluation is a metaphysical method: it is the power to disclose the depth of things through their mutual relations. Nevertheless, just as Kant's ideas of pure reason are 'problematic', that is, not things in themselves but ideas to guide the orientation of thought, so also here transvaluation is presented as a problem, that is, as an ideal to be accomplished. Transvalued reason asks: what is the relation which, when fully understood, enables one to affirm the beauty and value of each thing?[13]

On the one hand, transvaluation is a matter of perspective, finding the place from which beauty is no longer concealed—such a perspective merely sees what is there. On the other hand, transvaluation is a creative exercise since it chooses the relations under which the sight of the apparently ugly may be affirmed, even if those relations belong to the sight seen as much as to the perspective which discloses them. This duality has a subtle metaphysical significance. For Nietzsche's perspectivism has apparently radicalised Kant's critical turn to the subjective constitution of all knowledge: we never encounter things-in-themselves but only appearances as interpreted by the understanding. Yet whereas for Kant, the transcendental categories and intuitions of space and time through which experience is interpreted were imagined to be universal and necessary, for Nietzsche, the very categories through which we interpret experience depend on a perspective formed by language, culture, and even physiology. Nietzsche fractures the unity of Kant's transcendental subject; there are now many possible perspectives and rational interpretations of phenomena. In other words, each subjective perspective has a determinate location and orientation: what it sees, understands, and interprets is dependent on that location and orientation. It is as though all thought is subjectively-constituted, but the subject itself wanders within a metaphysical topography of height and depth, like Nietzsche's character Zarathustra, where what is seen depends upon the place and height at which one stands. To philosophise, then, is to embark upon a journey to encounter different experiences, perspectives, and problems. Yet this journey is oriented towards a summit: the site from which the necessary becomes perceptible as beautiful and is affirmed.

Zarathustra's redemption

Devaluation and revaluation, for Nietzsche, are metaphors drawn from currency:

> *To the preachers of morals*.—I do not want to moralize, but to those who do, I give this advice: if you want eventually to deprive the best things and situations of all their worth, then keep talking about them the way you have been! Place them at the top of your morality and talk from morning till night about the bliss of happiness, the tranquillity of the soul, about justice and immanent retribution—the way you carry on, all these good things will finally attain a popularity and street-clamour of their own, but at the same time all the gold that was on them will have worn off through handling, and all the gold *inside* will have turned to lead. Verily, you know the art of alchemy in reverse, the devaluation of what is most valuable![14]

A moral concept that can be employed by anybody, in any sense, for any purpose, loses whatever distinctive quality gave it sanctity, authority, and reverence alongside any distinctive meaning or definition: it enters into any relation whatsoever. It becomes ineffective in cultivating the mind or interpreting experience. The transvaluation of values, by contrast, involves thinking things in their proper relations. If Anselm had conceived greatness as being actual rather than imagined, Nietzsche added a further reflexive twist: greatness also consists in facing up to reality in all its intolerability. His character Zarathustra delineates reality as it is. That is, Zarathustra 'is strong

enough for it—he is not estranged from or entranced by it, he is *reality itself*, he still has all that is fearful and questionable in him, *only thus can man possess greatness…*'[15]

Zarathustra presents the condition for doing so: he conceives things in relation rather than as ideals or things in themselves. Transvaluation is introduced into his preaching under the name of 'redemption':

> Truly, my friends, I walk among men as among the fragments and limbs of men!
> The terrible thing to my eye is to find men shattered in pieces and scattered as if over a battle-field of slaughter.
> And when my eye flees from the present to the past, it always discovers the same thing: fragments and limbs and dreadful chances—but no men!
> The present and the past upon the earth—alas! my friends—that is *my* most intolerable burden; and I should not know how to live, if I were not a seer of that which must come.. . .
> I walk among men as among fragments of the future: of that future which I scan.
> And it is all my art and aim, to compose into one and bring together what is fragment and riddle and dreadful chance!
> To redeem the past and to transform every 'It was' into an 'I wanted it thus!'—that alone do I call redemption![16]

On this account, every thought, action, or text is a mere fragment when interpreted outside of the relations and context that might give it sense. Fragmentation is reinforced when each individual fragment is judged as 'good' or 'evil' according to some extrinsically applied system of values. Zarathustra's burdensome task is to find the perspective that might illuminate the relations and context in which each fragment makes sense. His heroic strategy invokes the strife of opposites for these are the hardest to reconcile: injustice is related back to the justice it makes possible, while justice is related back to acts of injustice. What is affirmed is the reality of the relations rather than the existence of the fragments. Of course, it is far easier to give coherence to philosophical texts than it is to a battlefield of slaughter: this is why Zarathustra's task and burden is truly intolerable. *Amor fati* is an ideal rather an achievement. It is the perspective of Krishna rather than Arjuna on the battlefield.

Revaluation or transvaluation

The problem of how to transvalue daily experience was revisited for a final time in *Ecce Homo* when Nietzsche announced his own task by asserting the existence of a metaphysical, inner nature:

> That one becomes what one is presupposes that one does not have the remotest idea *what* one is. From this point of view even the *blunders* of life—the temporary sidepaths and wrong turnings, the delays, the 'modesties', the seriousness squandered on tasks which lie outside *the* task— have their own meaning and value.. ... The entire surface of consciousness—consciousness *is* a surface—has to be kept clear of any of the great imperatives. Even the grand words, the grand attitudes must be guarded against! All of them represent a danger that the instinct will 'understand itself' too early——. In the meantime the organizing 'idea' destined to rule grows and grows in the depths—it begins to command, it slowly leads *back* from sidepaths and wrong turnings, it prepares *individual* qualities and abilities which will one day prove themselves indispensable as means to achieving the whole—it constructs the *ancillary* capacities one after the other before it gives any hint of the dominating task, of the 'goal', 'objective', 'meaning'.[17]

Each moment of Nietzsche's life is transvalued, here, by its incorporation into a higher task where it gains a different sense, value, and necessity. Such transvaluation is performed by a providential unconscious: this is what organises and directs. It thinks, it reasons, and it makes

careful choices unbeknown to Nietzsche himself, as if a guiding spirit or Socratic daemon. Whether it is itself conscious, Nietzsche might consistently doubt; nevertheless it substitutes for the image of God and the work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian. It has a final purpose: the conscious reconciliation of necessity with beauty. Whether itself conscious or not, it remains a rational, metaphysical entity—despite all that one might otherwise have learned of Nietzsche from his critical thought.

Nietzsche, here, identified his actual task with a 'revaluation of all values': 'in an escape from all moral values, in an affirmation of and trust in all that has hitherto been forbidden, despised, accursed.'[18] Such a statement refers to a means, the consideration of the forbidden, despised, and accursed, as if it were an end, an object of affirmation and trust. One may therefore entertain some doubt as to whether this formula for *revaluation* does not conceal, or potentially even displace, a more profound task of *transvaluation*, better described in the long quote above on the work of an organising 'idea'.[19] Nietzsche's texts enable us to distinguish between concepts of revaluation and transvaluation (both translate *Umwertung*):

- Revaluation of all values: this is conceived by Nietzsche as the replacement of anti-natural moral values with evaluations arising from and affirming nobility.[20]
- Transvaluation: this may be conceived as the reinterpretation of the sense, value, and binding force of phenomena when placed in the context of a new problem or in the coming-to-oneself of a commanding drive.[21]

In accordance with such a distinction, the revaluation of all values may be conceived as a derivative phenomenon arising from transvaluation. A change in the live problem that provokes thought, or in the 'coming-to-oneself of the commanding drive', produces a devaluation of what had formerly appeared valuable by contrast with the deeper grounding of what now appears valuable.

V. DELEUZE'S NIETZSCHE: METAPHYSICS THROUGH CRITIQUE

The project of transvaluation as a determinate philosophical method was first properly announced by Gilles Deleuze in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1962). Its principal thesis is this: 'If we do not discover its target the whole of Nietzsche's philosophy remains abstract and barely comprehensible.'[22] Thought is grounded in its problems; it may be transvalued by reformulating or rethinking those problems. Deleuze transvalued Nietzsche's thought by giving a new articulation of its target— Hegelian dialectic—in place of the rather more obvious target of Schopenhauer's philosophy of will.[23] The purport of an episode of thinking is given by the problem it seeks to resolve. Such a method only becomes truly metaphysical when conjoined with a second insight that Deleuze published soon afterwards: a problem 'no longer designates a provisional state of our knowledge, an undetermined subjective concept, but a moment of being, the first pre-individual moment'. Problems are the actual causes specific to thought; they are the grounds, the guiding ideas—the metaphysical landscape consists in problems. In Nietzsche, Simondon, and Deleuze, the problematic replaces the negative: thought and reality are individuated as resolutions for systems or situations that are 'objectively problematic'.[24] Transvaluation becomes a metaphysical method when it addresses problems inherent in things themselves.

For Deleuze's Nietzsche, greatness is understood as difference. What a noble will wants is to affirm its distance, that is, its difference in value from what it opposes; it does not seek to negate its opponent but affirms it:

> Difference is the object of a practical affirmation inseparable from essence and constitutive of existence. Nietzsche's 'yes' is opposed to the dialectical 'no'; affirmation to dialectical negation; difference to dialectical contradiction; joy, enjoyment, to dialectical labour; lightness, dance, to dialectical responsibilities. The empirical feeling of difference, in short hierarchy, is the essential motor of the concept, deeper and more effective than all thought about contradiction.[25]

Philosophy is pursued by grounding rather than by argument. Just as greatness cannot be achieved by dismissing others, substance cannot be thought by refuting the formulations of others. What is significant about Deleuze's Nietzsche is less its revaluation, in this case its antagonism to the dialectical method, than its transvaluation, its relation of concepts to grounds or problems as their 'essential motor'.[26] Deleuze's crucial point is that evaluation, by itself, introduces a critical reversal or transvaluation:

> On the one hand, values appear or are given as principles: and evaluation presupposes values on the basis of which phenomena are appraised. But, on the other hand and more profoundly, it is values which presuppose evaluations, 'perspectives of appraisal', from which their own value is derived. The problem of critique is that of the value of values, of the evaluation from which their value arises, thus the problem of their *creation*. Evaluation is defined as the differential element of corresponding values, an element which is both critical and creative. Evaluations, in essence, are not values but ways of being, modes of existence of those who judge and evaluate, serving as principles for the values on the basis of which they judge.[27]

In this formulation of 'ways of being', one may almost hear the clamour of Jesus's disciples. Problems, and the ways of being they individuate, replace the metaphysics of substances. Ideas are at once problems, aspirations, manners of ethos, sensibilities, compulsions, ways of life as well as opportunities for transformation. 'Ways of being' have also been alluded to in Anselm's Augustinian account, condensed into and derived from what one remembers, loves, and understands. Nietzschean ways of being, or perspectives, are far more substantial than mere words:

> *The words get in our way!*—Wherever primitive humans set forth a word, they thought they had made a discovery. But in truth, how different the situation was!—they had hit upon a problem and in presuming to have *solved* it, they had created an impediment to its solution.—These days, with every act of knowing one has to stumble over perpetually petrified words, and in the process one is more likely to fracture a leg than a word.[28]

This, in essence, is his critique of prior metaphysics: one is more likely to damage real life when pursuing knowledge than to modify a concept. The operative pathos of distance is between content and style: amidst such a critical, tragic, disabling conclusion, Nietzsche's style is leaping and laughing, for words may be transvalued back into problems that provoke thought rather than pacify it. At the very least, the task of transvaluation is 'not to suffer more from thinking about one's disease than from the disease itself.'[29]

Deleuze explains Nietzsche's transvaluation as a *reversal* (echoing chiasmic inversion rather than negation or subsumption) of 'Platonism': here, understood as the supposition that values are transcendent, independent of the ones who judge, even if judgement according to values involves participating in those values. In this scheme, metaphysical reality is conceived through the way in which values are 'beyond'. This scheme is as disabling as it is enabling: at the same time as one gives grounds for moral judgements, by invoking words

such as form, beauty, justice, and unity, one takes away the specificity of actual evaluations, and with them, the meaning of these criteria, since words alone are insufficient to evoke recollection of their true meaning or grounds. What is 'beyond' is strictly speaking unthought, lacking meaning; it is an uninhabitable perspective. Just as Augustine had proposed a reversal of Platonism through the incarnation of Christ,[30] Deleuze proposes an ontological reversal, that is, a different metaphysical scheme. Values are now conceived as products rather than as metaphysical criteria. They arise from the perspectives of evaluation which they express. There is no longer any attempt to transcend the limits of one's own perspective, nor any effort to participate in understanding an abstract and remote reality. Modes of life are metaphysically more substantial than values.

At stake, here, are contrasting metaphysical schemes: whereas pure value holds ontological substance in the Platonic, what holds substance in the Nietzschean is a mode of existence, perspective or will. The Socratic question, 'what is.. .', institutes a Platonic scheme wherein beautiful things are distinguished from beauty. The Nietzschean question, 'which one.. .', by contrast, seeks a determinate will and perspective. Indeed, it could be deemed more suitable for questions of who is the greatest, for problems in Christology, for grasping the image of God within, or for 'that than which none greater can be conceived' than the question 'what is?' Deleuze explains a decisive difference in perspective:

- Any event, action, interpretation, or relation may be seen from the first-person perspective of the being who engages in it.
- Any event, action, interpretation, or relation may be seen from the perspective of a third-party who represents it and seeks to profit from it.[31]

This intersubjective contrast is now applied within the mind. Thought itself is a product of the forces and situations that generate thought—sensations, wonder, disparities, concerns, problems encountered, or organising ideas in the depths. These are objectively problematic, just like 'who is the greater?': they instigate and organise a way of life. Insofar as such thought intervenes and acts, it is creative. But insofar as a third-person perspective on what has occurred is adopted, consciousness is merely reactive. 'Platonism', in a betrayal of Plato's own thought, appeals to a third-person perspective: it imposes an abstract resemblance upon things as a measure, so lacking the genetic power to generate thought, the 'essential motor' of the concept. It substitutes abstract meaning for purport, values for perspectives, solutions for problems, words for the substance that matters. For Deleuze's Nietzsche, first-person thinking lies beneath consciousness: there is a thought within things and their interactions, whether between human, organic, inorganic or symbolic beings – as problems, these active relations exceed consciousness. When it comes to representing such thought in consciousness, however, in relation to the static sense of words, then a third-party perspective is adopted by consciousness on the agent's own action. For where thought is formed in concrete circumstances, with their real relations, actions, problems, and investments, consciousness is formed by the habitual usage of language introjected from society with its generalisations on the basis of resemblances. Such consciousness is typically 'bad conscience' in that it largely condemns on the basis of a generality or rule rather than offering an instrument, tool or catalyst to enhance thought and action. It seeks to separate a force from what it can do. What has previously been called 'reason' is such a reactive perspective:

> Reason sometimes dissuades and sometimes forbids us to cross certain limits: because it is useless (knowledge is there to predict), because it would be evil (life is there to be virtuous), because it is impossible (there is nothing to see or think behind the truth). —But does not

critique, understood as critique of knowledge itself, express new forces capable of giving thought another sense? A thought that would go to the limit of what life can do, a thought that would lead life to the limit of what it can do? A thought that would *affirm* life instead of a knowledge opposed to life. Life would be the active force of thought, but thought would be the affirmative power of life. Both would go in the same direction, carrying each other along, smashing restrictions, matching each other step for step, in a burst of unparalleled creativity. Thinking would then mean *discovering, inventing, new possibilities of life.*[32]

There is a fundamental dissymmetry between these metaphysical schemes of transcendent value or immanent perspective. For, as Deleuze adds, our beliefs, feelings, and thoughts arise from our evaluations, which in turn arise from 'our way of being or our style of life'. Evaluations are not products of the will alone; they arise from a determinate situation, a perspective that is adopted, one consisting of an entire mode of existence. In other words, an evaluative perspective is *grounded* in reality whereas a Platonic value is projected up into the sky. An evaluative perspective is available for experimentation, modification, and enrichment whereas a Platonic value requires a stripping away of determinate content in the hope of participation. Evaluative perspectives are there to be discovered and inhabited: they are the metaphysical constitution of reality.

> Essence, being, is a perspectival reality and presupposes a plurality. Fundamentally, it is always the question, 'what is it *for me*?' (for us, for everyone that sees etc.) What we ask [when we ask] what beauty is we ask from what standpoint things appear beautiful: and something which does not appear beautiful to us, from what standpoint would it become so? And for a particular thing, what are the forces which make or would make it beautiful by appropriating it, what are the other factors that yield to these or, on the contrary, resist them. The pluralist art does not deny essence: it makes it depend, in each case, on an affinity of phenomena and forces, on a coordination of force and will.[33]

The standpoint in coordination with each essence is termed a differential element: it constitutes the 'essential motor' of concepts, the *ground* of evaluations, the genetic condition of real thought. Far from abolishing metaphysics, Deleuze's Nietzsche adds further key concepts: that of a perspective and that of a ground or element. This is by no means a refutation of Platonism—unlike the dialectic, it affirms the Platonism that it opposes—but an attempt to give more dimensions, more substance, to thought by re-establishing a relation with the problems that form thought. The metaphysical scheme of Deleuze's Nietzsche is more complex and determinate than the Platonist scheme: it demands a fundamental reorientation. What it deliberately lacks, to be found merely schematically in the Platonic scheme of love of the Good, is a sense of direction for this reorientation. This sense of direction may be restored, despite Deleuze, by raising our previous problems: who is the greater? What is that than which none greater can be conceived? What is grounded thought? How might beauty be reconciled with necessity? Together, these point in the direction of what I have called substance—problems that implicitly define Jesus's thought but were never raised by Deleuze: what matters, what is sincere, and what is trustworthy.

VI. CONCLUSION

The disciples' problem, 'who is the greater?', had evoked and propagated an entire way of life. It functioned metaphysically as a ground, even if its meaning had been taken for granted

as entirely unthought. The claim that problems can condense a metaphysical, ethical, epistemological, political, and existential formation of life and thought, is itself a key conclusion of this study. It demands a complete transvaluation of the practice of metaphysics: a transformation of what it means to explain, to reason, and to evaluate. Some concepts are devalued or abandoned, while others are invested with a new sense and significance. Some tasks are set aside as empty or meaningless, while other problems require continual restatement and repetition. Metaphysics is manifest yet concealed in the way in which problems impinge upon everyday life; metaphysics may then be transvalued by reformulations of these problems.

The point of this narrative of four episodes of thought may now be explained: it was to show how this transformed practice may be achieved through a series of transvaluations and reformulations, each seeking to lend specificity to what matters, what is sincere, and what is trustworthy. This brief narrative has only been able to hint at the transvaluations that are possible. 'Who is the greater?' becomes 'what is that than which none greater can be conceived?' Wise thinking becomes consideration of what is actual and grounded instead of being lost in the representations and obligations produced by the mind. What is to be understood becomes the intrinsic relations between things rather than things considered in themselves. What is necessary becomes what is beautiful. What is valuable is expressed in perspectives of evaluation rather than abstract criteria. The simple is understood and explained in terms of the complex; the complex cannot be explained by the simple. Metaphysical realities are expressed in acts and episodes of thinking rather than in the represented content of thought. For reality itself is a complex weave of tendencies, intrinsic relations, perspectives, interactions, and problems—it is essentially thoughtful, even where there is no creaturely consciousness to reflect upon that complexity. Thinking is called into existence by problems. Concrete and embodied problems offer more substance to comprehend than purely abstract ones. The task of philosophy is to discover and formulate the problems that express substance: those that matter, are sincere, and are trustworthy.

Such a practice of metaphysical reasoning might seem alien to the Western tradition of philosophy. Nevertheless, one might catch glimpses of it whenever there have been fundamental shifts and transformations. Jesus, Anselm, Nietzsche, and Deleuze are exemplars who demand and demonstrate fundamental reorientations for the sake of showing what matters, what is sincere, and what is trustworthy. They are great metaphysicians who offer us problems to think through for ourselves.

Endnotes

[1] This is clearly an innovative account of the metaphysical task; it is the outcome of a transvaluation of the concept of substance. For an exploratory account, see Philip Goodchild, *The Metaphysics of Trust: Credit and Faith III* (Rowman and Littlefield International, 2021).

[2] See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Beta.

[3] I note the contributions of Hume, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Husserl, Rosenzweig, Heidegger, Levinas, Derrida, Agamben, feminist thought, the retrieval of Buddhist thought, and others to the critique of metaphysics.

[4] This is precisely what Deleuze does to Nietzsche: 'I saw myself as taking an author from behind and giving him a child that would be his own offspring, yet monstrous. It was really important for it to be his own child, because the author had to actually say all I had him saying. But the child was bound to be monstrous too, because it resulted from all sorts of shifting, slipping, dislocations and hidden emissions that I really enjoyed.' Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations*, trans. Martin Joughin (London: Athlone, 1995), 6.

[5] Note that it is through analogous considerations, across a wide range of natural and social phenomena, that Gilbert Simondon was motivated to make a decisive break with Presocratic conceptions of substance as a principle for individuation: see Gilbert Simondon, *Individuation in Light of Notions of Form and Information*, trans. Taylor Adkins (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2020).

[6] Martin Luther gave expression to transvaluation with his 1540 *Disputation on the Divinity and Humanity of Christ*: 'None the less it is certain that with regard to Christ all things receive a new signification, though the thing signified is the same. . . . Thus it must be that the words man, humanity, suffered etc., and everything that is said of Christ are new words. Not that it signifies a new and different thing, but it signifies in a new and different way.' https://www.leaderu.com/philosophy/luther-humanitychrist.html

[7] Anselm, *Proslogion* I, in Anselm of Canterbury, *The Major Works*, ed. Brian Davis and G. R. Evans (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 86-7.

[8] This notion of grounding derives from Plato rather than Anselm: the most sovereign part of the soul 'raises us up away from the earth toward what is akin to us in heaven, as though we were plants grown not from the earth but from heaven. In saying this, we speak absolutely correctly. For it is from heaven, the place from which our souls were originally born, that the divine part suspends our head, i.e. our root, and so keeps our whole body erect.' (Plato, *Timaeus*, 90a).

[9] Even Aristotle, who subordinated metaphysics to logic, conceded that treatment of mindset is needed rather than argument with vexatious opinions; to seek compulsion in argument is 'asking for the moon'. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1009a, 1011a.

[10] For 'if some intelligence could think of something better than You, the creature would be above its Creator and would judge its Creator—and that is completely absurd.' St Anselm of Canterbury, *Proslogion*, III in *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works*, ed. Brian Davies and G.R. Evans (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 88.

[11] For this event as a decisive turning point and the surrounding circumstances, see Laurence E. Lampert, *What a Philosopher Is: Becoming Nietzsche* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 203-210.

[12] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, ed. Bernard Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), §276, 157.

[13] As a problem guiding the practice of Nietzsche's thought, this is not reducible to the metaphysical assertion about 'all things as will to power' around which Heidegger built his famous interpretation of Nietzsche as a metaphysician.

[14] Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, §292, 165-6.

[15] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 1979), 'Why I am a Destiny', §5, 130.

[16] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 1969), 'Of Redemption', 160-61.

[17] Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 'Why I am so Clever', §9, 64-5.

[18] Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 'Daybreak', §1, 96.

[19] I have yet to encounter a commentator on Nietzsche who dares draw such a distinction. Nevertheless, such a notion of transvaluation is partially developed by Deleuze, as discussed below.

[20] For an effective overview, see Manuel Dries, 'On the Logic of Values', *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 39, no. 1 (2010): 30-50. Note Nietzsche's earlier statement of this task: 'We return to humanity the healthy courage for, and the good cheer of, those actions decried as egoistical and restore to them their *value—we deprive them of their evil conscience!* And because till now these actions have been by far the most frequent sort and will continue to be so for all time to come, we thus relieve the entire tableau of actions and existence of its *evil appearance.*' Friedrich Nietzsche, *Dawn: Thoughts on the Presumptions of Morality*, trans. Brittain Smith (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), §148, 114.

[21] 'We must *learn to think differently*—in order finally, perhaps very late, to achieve even more: *to feel differently.*' Nietzsche, *Dawn*, §103, 71.

[22] Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans Hugh Tomlinson (London: Athlone Press, 1983), 8.

[23] It is Schopenhauer's appropriation of Kant, metaphysics of the will, aesthetics of music, ethics of pity, and will to self-denial which form the lens through which Nietzsche interpreted Christianity, the metaphysics of Plato, morality, the ascetic ideal, and even the pre-Socratic alternative of strife. Note this summative statement: 'This sole morality which has hitherto been taught, the morality of unselfing, betrays a will to the end, it *denies*

the very foundations of life.' (Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 'Why I am a Destiny', §7, 132)—while applicable to Schopenhauer, this is *not* a fair summary of the moralities taught by Moses, Plato, Aristotle, Confucius, Jesus, Manu, Augustine, Mohammed, or Aquinas, for example.

[24] Gilles Deleuze, *Desert Islands and Other Texts: 1953-74*, trans. Michael Taormina (New York: Semiotext(e), 2004), 88.

[25] Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 9.

[26] For the importance of the concept of 'grounding' for Deleuze in this period, see his 1955 lectures, *What is Grounding?*, trans. Arjen Kleinherenbrink (Grand Rapids, MI: &&& Publishing, 2015).

[27] Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 1.

[28] Nietzsche, *Dawn*, §47, 38.

[29] Nietzsche, *Dawn*, §54, 41.

[30] Augustine, *Confessions*, VII.9.

[31] Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 74. This distinction between thought as act or representation is the defining gesture of French spiritualist philosophy since Maine de Biran, epitomised in Louis Lavelle, *The Dilemma of Narcissus*, trans. W. T. Gairdner (London: Allen & Unwin, 1973).

[32] Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 101. Deleuze's formula for an active force, thought or life, that it 'goes to the limit of what it can do', was actually drawn from Kierkegaard's journals (via Camus) rather than Nietzsche: see Deleuze, *What is Grounding?*, 62. It distinguishes the authentic from the inauthentic, the grounded from the thematic, the concrete from the hypothetical.

[33] Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 77.