



## Book Review

*Nietzsche and Psychotherapy* by Manu Bazzano, Routledge, London & New York, 2019, 194 pp, ISBN-13: 9781138351257, price (paperback) £23.99

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### Soul Multiplicity

All things turn to fire, and fire  
exhausted, turns back into things

Heraclitus

*Nietzsche and Psychotherapy* invites us to boldly take up Nietzsche's challenge and 'stand firmly on the side of *becoming* against the entire canon of Western philosophy that has... .. posited the primacy of *being*' (p. 29). We are invited to see through and devalue nihilistic hopes of 'aim', 'unity' and 'the truth of being', of rationalism of religious and secular forms, and 'uphold and celebrate the world' (pp. 127–30).

Beginning with richly worked Nietzschean references to Greek Mythology (and the gods Dionysus and Apollo) we are invited to found our thinking upon Heraclitus (he of the 'you never enter the same river twice') rather than the idealism of Plato and 'uncontrolled rationalism' (p. 17) of Socrates and a philosophical tradition that demonstrates 'a profound mistrust in the intelligence of the emotions and the passions as

a whole, a fear of being taken over by them, and a clinging to reason as a last resort' (p. 42).

We are invited to consider Judaeo-Christian morality as promise of our suffering to be redeemed or 'compensated' with a 'happy ending' once we have regained the wisdom of the substantial, unified self through confession and eventual acceptance of the moral truth of God, dictated by the priest. We are invited to consider the dialectical struggle for 'truth' of the philosophical tradition, initiated by Socrates and exemplified by Hegelian dialectics. We are invited to consider metaphysical hopes of unveiling the truth of 'Being' of the philosophical tradition and the 'onto-theology' of Martin Heidegger (p. 129).

We are invited to the *counter*-tradition, and to imagine the drives, the forces, tensions and passions of the human organism, exposed to otherness and at constant playful conflict in the *creation of values* and our glimpse of the tragic, our suffering, exposed to the world. We are

invited to set aside our culturally embedded faith in rationalism and that the world has its equivalent thought, and any ‘truths’ to human existence and the evaluations of consciousness which ‘divest(s) existence of its rich ambiguity’ (p. 40 – Nietzsche 1882/1974, p. 335) and offer challenge to moral systems that ‘turn humans into the only animals... capable of turning against their own nature’ (p. 69).

We are invited to consider the Dionysian myth of the painful dismemberment of the (atomistic) self as ‘the tragic joy of existence’s inherent multiplicity’ (p. 18) and the *transformational* rather than redemptive power of suffering posited by the Christian faith, or faith in rational or metaphysical promise of happiness beyond this valley of tears by philosophy of traditional ontology, latent in science. We are invited to consider an *active*, vital, naturalistic appreciation of life and re-cognise human consciousness, to which we have given cultural primacy, as a *reactive* force – its origins in the adaptations of a weak animal to survival, but which ‘is in a servile position in relation to the body ...is (only) an aspect of the instinctual life (p. 107). We are invited to consider the changing forces of the body and of the world rather than hold to any hopes in ‘truth’, of *achieving* ‘the self-actualisation’, ‘unveiling of authentic Being’ or ‘making the unconscious conscious’ of humanism, existential-phenomenology and psychoanalysis respectively.

We are invited to consider the nihilistic spirit of revenge (ressentiment) of rational/religious/scientific ways of seeking to justify, amend and redeem life. We are invited to consider the human organism and the world as a ‘dynamic flux of becoming’ (p. 40) and our experience of ‘static’ being to Man as an illusion, as ‘distinct entities brought forth by temporary condensations and contractions of forces and materials’ providing ‘an illusion of transcendence’ (p. 41). We are invited to consider that these forces, most evident to us in life as emotions and feelings, *precede* any ‘apparent crystallisation as objects and subjects of our ordinary perception’ (ibid.).

Put in the grammar of being, what we *are* or seem to be (or as we might glance at ourselves captured in a mirror, perhaps), enshrined in the language of identity, of ‘self’ and ‘other’, “things” has been/ is/

will be nothing more than these ‘temporary condensations and contractions of forces and materials’. ‘Existence precedes essence’, as Sartre put it – although as this book in its entirety testifies, it is quite one thing to *know* this, and quite another to be alive to this in our daily lives and in our world. It is quite one thing to read that ‘life is both innocent and fair’ (p. 18) but quite another thing to *live* life as innocent and fair in a culture infused with metaphysical and rational fear and resentment towards the uncertainty and impermanence of life.

We are boldly invited to consider a *tragic* rather than metaphysical, rational or positivistic perspective in psychology and psychotherapy and static evaluations of life. We are invited to a psychology and a psychotherapy that would attend to our despairs and our joys and life’s dynamic flux, and *respond* to the emergent, changing phenomena of our experience, to the *immanent* experience ‘gleaming at the edge of consciousness’ (p. 61). A psychology and a psychotherapy that would challenge the ‘hubristic reductionism and positivism’ (p. 41) that believes reactive consciousness, servile to this dynamic flux and change of the plural human organism and plural world, has captured any ‘essence’ of what we or the other ‘is’ or ‘are’.

We are invited to consider a non-essential, non-substantive notion of human and world multiplicity in place of any ‘true’, solid, or ‘authentic self’ to be unveiled, discovered, achieved or found. We are boldly invited to consider that ‘self/doer/subject is, like consciousness, an afterthought, an arrogant seal of ownership’ (p. 119). We are invited to consider that the ‘self’ (and all other ‘things’) as we understand it (them) is (are) nothing but ‘the sum of their actions and passions’ (p. 120 – Cox, 1999, p. 126) and not any fixed or substantive entity to be weighed up, measured and evaluated empirically for the ‘benefit’ of psychology or psychotherapy.

We are invited as psychologists and psychotherapists to the ‘perspectivism’ of Nietzsche (see Chapter 8, pp. 159–63) and the groundless multiplicity of the human organism. We are invited to give greater emphasis to the *active* and expansive, ‘life-affirming’ forces that exist

alongside the individual, social and political *reactive* forces of adaptation and survival of ourselves, our clients, our culture, our world.

We are invited as psychologists and psychotherapists to consider the atomistic ‘self’ as sealing anxious, moralistic desires for ‘self-preservation’, for certainty in the uncertainty of our lives and our world. Whilst not neglecting values of ‘social and political responsibility... solidarity, compassion’ (p. 83) and seeking to deconstruct our culture out of any ‘fashionable appetite for destruction’ (p. 68), we are invited to see through the nihilism of our times and to imagine *transformation* for ourselves and for our clients and for our world.

We are invited to a Nietzsche-inspired psychology that would set aside metaphysical pretensions and hopes and all ‘scientific certainties and moral prejudices’ (p. 133). We are invited to a psychology that would set aside our need to ‘justify’, ‘redeem’ or ‘amend’ life, find aim or unity in *this* world or create another world beyond it to do so (see Chapter 6, pp. 128–30). We are boldly invited to create a psychology of the human viewed not as a substantial ‘subject’ or ‘self’, but as an interpretive, evaluative faculty, a ‘dividual self’, a multiplicity ‘that is not one but many’ (p. 160).

We are invited to the difficult but exhilarating task of creating a playful, creative and experimental psychotherapy in the healing of the labyrinthine psyche towards a psychotherapy in service of the active, life-expanding forces that ‘facilitate the coming into being of the human as dissonance, i.e. as a vibrant point of convergence where the uncertainties of life do not have to be resolved, but are allowed to be experienced’ (p. 133).

We are invited to create a psychology of the creative will and ‘the will to truth’ of the philosophical tradition revealed as ‘a will to overcome that has itself no end’ (p. 162 – Nietzsche, 1969, p. 268) and turn nihilistic ‘poison into remedy’ (ibid.). We are invited to view the multiplicity of self and world and a psychotherapy that sees its task as ‘self development, to develop herself into that which she is and not as in education... to be made into a good citizen, who

accepts the general ideals without contradiction and has no will of her own’ (p. 83 – Rank, 1978/1929, p. 20, translation modified).

Attending ‘The Mask and the Labyrinth’ course with Manu Bazzano, some time before the publication of *Nietzsche and Psychotherapy*, I remember myself now as a painfully ‘self-conscious’ man, prone to wild, creative (I like to think) but insensitive outbursts, especially in groups. As a kid in school I was much the same. I prized my creative writing and performance skills before, angry and embarrassed about school life, I settled for being a class clown and an uncreative (and largely unfruitful) relationship with science. At the end of our meetings in Harley Street I handed Manu a poem I had written, too embarrassed to sing it to the group as I had imagined I might. It was a dreamed-up interpretation of a section of the poetry of Arthur Rimbaud. Returning to it now I remember these lines,

I am all God’s holy love, gazing at this infinite sky, burning with desires unsatisfied I return to my empty room.

My little poem and the lines above (open to various interpretations) were a gesture of thanks towards a man I’ve met a few times and along the way projected various fantasies on to as ‘other’. It was a gesture of thanks but not, I came to realise later, an expression of any personal affection towards him (whom I barely ‘know’) but a first few tentative steps towards the birth of who I am in my *becoming*. It was, I feel now, some small effort to create a future.

*Nietzsche and Psychotherapy* by Manu Bazzano is, to paraphrase Nietzsche himself, ‘mighty dynamism’!

## Note

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