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Nietzsche's Frames Esotericism and the Art of the Preface

Much has been made of Nietzsche's esotericism, or the extent to which he tried to hide his true teaching Nietzsche himself is unclear on the subject he writes in Theay Science, "one does not only wish to be understood when one writes; one wishes just as surtelybeot understood.¹ There are countless such quotationst inscribed at the outset of Ecce Hornis intellectual autobiography, is this rather startlingtement: "Here meters" I am such and such a person. Above all, do not mistake me for someone ellectrone is anything but clear on the extent to which he wants to be understood.

Before examining the nature of Nietzsche's esotericism, it is necetescarrysider what is meant by the term, irrespective of lphilosophyFirst, it is important to note that I do not mean esoteric in the historical sense of Western esoterictisant is, Rosicrucianism, Freemasonry, Kabbalant, Nietzsche does not speak our of his writings, and would probably be hostile to these mystical traditionevertheless, esotericism has another strain, one related to a particular style of writing, and it is from this perspective that we should consider him. As a trained philologist, he was a close reader of texts, and consequently, he became a careful writer.

Strauss, the writenesponsible for most of the current discourse on esotericism, has done much to detail what it means and the circtanses under which it is partised. Esotericism, or "writing between the lines," occurs in times that are less free, Strauss propulations that an esoteric book contains two separate and distinct teachings: one obvious, popular, and more traditional teaching and the one, which is hiddleto all but the most careful readers⁴. Since the true teaching is often controversial or even incendiary, it is not typically found in obvious places, such as introductions or conclusions

According to Heidegger, Nietzsche's "grand style" empleasinge will to power, artistry, and the necessity of creation every great thinker always thinking jump more originally however, is less persuasive or every great thinker always thinking jump more originally than he directly spece," Heidegger writes"Our interpretation must therefore try to say what is unsaid by him.⁶ Heidegger's reading is fairly simple great writers are esoteric; Nietzsche is a great writer; therefore, Nietzsche an esoteric writer.

Since Heidegger, Nietzbe's esotericism has mostly betaken for grantedo the extent that Nietzsche might call it a scholarly, if not philosophic, prejudikehemas, who wrote one of the only booklength treatments offietzsche's manner of philosophig, refers to "Nietzsche's selfaggrandizing, aristocratic, esoteric manner," without giving an adequate explanation as to while seets in as an esoteric write⁸. The best Nehemas can do is suggest that his use of aphorisms proof of his esotericism. But brevity is not, pesarily, ambiguity or obfuscation.

Note, however, that though Derrida mostly agrees with Heidegger on Nietzsche manner of philosophizinge

whereas Derrida is sceptical about whether any intentions extinuite generations that speak for Nietzscherrida suggestus at interpreters speak in place of him becauseve would be ident or confounded otherwise ven those who agree on Nietzsche's esotericism disagree as to what it means for readers and boe inderpreters.

Lampert, a careful reader of Nietzsche (and Sti)a**ass** roaches the question more directly. Lampert agrees in Strauss's definition of esotericishout claims that the tradition of esotericism ends with Nietzschen,5 0 Td1DC 5004 Tc 0 f)3 ofJ [(q0 Tda-1(us(p)-4(r1([(t)-(ugge N)2(i)-2

The Birth of the Preface

The preface to The Birth of Trageistya dedication of sorts, in that it names Wagner as its recipient Nietzsche's excitement at the work is relatedeast in part, to Wagner receiving it. The Birth of Tragedy is more than just an ode, however, for "a seriously German problem is faced here.^{1,7} It is not directed at everyone, but to serious readeneBirth of Tragedywas written with Wagner in mindWagner is Nietzsche's principal audience, for he is perhaps the only one able to understand the book, Nietzsche sugtheestishis does not mean that Nietzsche intendsto exclude all othersThe preface also contains a brief statement on the book's, thesi that "art represents the highest task and the truly metaphysical activity of this life, in the sense of that man to whom, as my sublime predecessor on this path, I wish to dedicate thils¹⁸ deseay, Nietzsche introduces the theme of the text and his debt to Wagner in the same sentence.

The strikingly traditional nature of the original preface is matched by the peculiarity with which Nietzsche amended The Birth of Trageddy added to it "An Attempt at a SeOfriticism" when it was republished in 1886, the same year in wBrieyfond Good and Evfiltrst appeared The addition serves, in effect, as a second prefaces obtietzsche calls it, a "belated preface (or postscript)"¹⁹ Walter Kaufmann writes that new preface "is among the finest things [Nietzsche] ever wrote. Perhaps no other great writer has written a comparable preface to one of his own works. Certainly this selfcriticism is far superior to most of the criticisms others have directed against The Birth of Tragedy²⁰

Nietzsche uses the first phoof "An Attempt at SelfCriticism" to perform two general functions First, it allows him to explain his dissatisfaction with the original text. "Whatever may be at the bottom of this questionable book," he writes nust have been an exceedingly

significant and fascinating question, and deeply personal at ²thete goes on to describe The Birth of Tragedyas a "strange and almost inaccessible" b²collietzsche admits that his first book confuses even him

The second, and perhaps more interesting tracking tracking the reason why The Birth of Tragedy is found so wanting by its authorappears, Nietzsche confesses, that he was too far removed from world events while he was writing it. He calls the Francossian War (18704) an "exciting time," but lanents that while it was going on, he had been sitting "somewhere in an Alpine nook."²³ TheBirth of Tragedywas, he confesses, written "in spotte its time. Moreover, he explains that he finished The Birth of Tragedy only after having recovered infridences that had plagued him throughout the course of the project thesis of ThBirth of Tragedyand the remedy it proposes namely, Wagner-cannot reflect a concern for the health of a culture, for they emergedrom a sick and solitary mathoreover, Nitezsche lamentsphilosophy is a task best left to those with greater experience and a greater perspective from which to work, philosophy is not a proper vocation for the young.

Nietzsche also uses this occasion to note the relative successinst bisodk. However much he would later find The Birth of Trageodynting, "the best minds of the time" found it agreeable when it was publish²⁴df his first book is valuable at all, he suggests, it is its glimpse into the minds that find it agreeableagain, Wagner It is not, however, of much use in understanding how Nietzsche thinks, unless we are chartsingteilectual developmentele has surpassed the teaching found in his first book and, with it, the greatest minds of his time.

Nietzsche ends this section by referring to this change in his philosophere TheBirth of Tragedywas an attempt to examine science through art, his later philosophy, he suggests, treats art with the same suspicion and jesdig according.²⁵ Because "the problem of sciewn

cannot be recognized in the context of science," Nietzsche had originally used art to examine it Having discovered, through his familiarity with Wagntant artists too can be corrupted, Nietzsche turned to lifes the standard by which science and and philosophy, too, for that matter—ought to be judged.

In addition to its message and its style, Nietzsche also disparagBirtThef Tragedy for its intended audiencelle "sought to exclude right from the beginning," he admits, "the [profane crowd] of 'the educated' even more than 'the mass' or 'for court intellectuals or to see theme potential followers, he treatelednost everyone, with the obvious exception of Wagner, with equal disdaTin is strategy, corrected in his later works and dramatised in the Prologue to Zarathustra, meant that Nietzsche was able to speak in an elevated tone, hone his message, and treat the greatest subjetected fear of being misunderstood. For Nietzsche, philosophy means attending to his philosophy, knowing full well that, if done properly, an audience would find him.

Although Nietzsche admits to paying too much attention to his audience, this is one of the areas where the Birth of Tragedy succeededt had, he claims, "a knack for seeking out fellow rhapsodizers and for luring them on to new secret paths and dancing" plades tinterested readers, he determined, was the fact that there lay underneath the text some "unknown God" his Dionysus It was the fact that there lay underneath the text some "unknown God"

However much Wagner is Nietzsche's intended target, Nietzsche is by no means angry with his friend and former teachel/When in this essay I assert the proposition that Wagner is harmful," Nietzsche writes, I"wish no less to assert for whom he is nevertheless indispensable for the philosophet³⁹ If Wagner is modernity, then a philosopher needs to overcome him Nietzsche is grateful, for Wagner is pure in his decadence and his representation of all that is modern. If Wagner is a sickness, then Nietzsche knows the cure, for Nietzsche **bereisc**ied with himself And Nietzsche could heal us, too, if we let hil/Wagner is a placeholder for modernity, but Nietzsche is irreplaceable. We should be grateful to Nietzechienself suggests, for he has shown us the path from Wagner, from the decead modernity, a means to escape our own decaden/we "must first become a Wagneriärquity then can we become Nietzschearl⁴⁰ The difficulty of Nietzsche's break with his former teacher is indicated by the manner in which he conclud@se Case of Wagnehe ends it with two postscripts and an epilogue It is a short book, and these pages are nearly half of it.

Nietzsche ends the main text of The Case of Wagritera defense of art and, with it, a defence of what he calls philosophologut Nietzsche doessot end her.eThePostscript begins with him referring to (et)-6(z)-10iex8rscap(y)20(,bf 0.30 Td t3 8.04-2(o oTv3 8.(z)-100-4f 0.39 0 Td [((y)20(,

on a repetition of wordsin its first and second usage, it is the Germans who have paid for their discipleship Although they had initially resisted Wagner, the Germans, "the delayers par excellence in history, are today the transfarded civilized nation in Europe⁴¹ If they are to be admired at all, it is for their youth, not their overall health or character

What of Wagner's influence on culture? It too has suffered. Wagner brought forth "the presumption of the layman, the-**aut**ot."⁴² Similarly, Wagner made others view education and training as superfluous or even harm**f**ulwas replaced with a "faith in genius or, to speak plainly, by impudent dilettantism⁴³. Worse yet, Wagnerianism meat**h***é*atrocracy–the nonsense of **æ**fth in the

Preface. When writing of Wagner's Parsif**a**lietzsche remarks that he had written it.⁴⁵ Nietzsche can be grateful, but everyone else should be **anget**y is something that should not be forgotten—to the extent that Nietzs**abkest** it on to the end of the main text

Nietzsche recognizes that the tone of the Postscript iT /TT1 1 -4(t) Po/P v-1(o)-1be, -2(f)-2(alor

If two postscripts were not enough, Nietzsche adds an epil@geærly, The Case of Wagnerfinds Nietzsche not knowing how to say farewlelis an opportunity, he notes, for us to "recover our breath" and for him to "wash his hands," after having dealt with someone such as Wagner⁵¹ For Nietzsche, taking a step bated wagner means first summaining what he means by the term moder embraces thetwizes of ascent or decline, he explained modernity is an age of weakness and dec interwhere is this more evident than when examining Christianity and its opposite Vagner's fault is his inability to appreciate the difference between Christianity and master morality Noble morality, master morality, conversely, is rooted in a triumphant Yes said to oneselft is self-affirmation, self -0.002 (.)Tj04 Twh

to be no doubt that, however much The Birth of Tragedoyd as a testament to agree and the second seco

Moreover, Nietzsche illustrates that his break with Wagner was anything but recent, noting that it began shortly after the initial publication of The Birth of TragestyR. J. Hollingdale points out, this would have marked 1878 as the year of the breakedireebefore Wagner died, instead tifve years after his death. In the Preface to Nietzschertara Wagner Nietzsche writes: "All of the following chapters have been selected, not without caution, from my older writings—some go back all the way to 1877—perhaps clarified here and there, above all shortenedRead one after another, they will leave no doubt either about Richard Wagner or about myself: we are antipodes

The Epilogue to Nietzsche Contra Wagissealso rather revealing the first part, he details that his philosophy is the result of amor, **faits** "inmost nature"⁵⁸ It is this natue, Nietzsche lauds, that has taught hime suggests that, although he has heralded Wagner as his teacher, he alone is responsible for **hisg**her health" and indeed his philosoph? Wagner was his teacher only insofar as he brought with him sickness and **Tipae** rescond part of the Epilogue begins as a reflection on the first r Nietzsche, Wagner is the abyss out of which he must emerge⁶⁰ In the next part, Nietzsche attacks modernity and its reliance on **retester** we find Wagner as modernity incarnate contrast, it concludes in praise of the GreetRe/agner is modernity, then the Greeks are the c^û Relietzsche Contra Wagner asmuch a break with Wagneras it is a turn to the Greeksa lesson not to be lost on Nietzsche's audience

Zarathustra's Frame

As Nietzsche makesæar, all of his books are mefæotnotes to Zarathustra. This is especially true of The Gay Science, for it was the book Nietzsche completed before beginning his magnum opus It was reworked and republished followiBegyond Good and EviConsequently, The Gay Science has the distinction of being the prelude and postlude to Zarathaustriaserves as an indispensable frame to understanding Nietzsche's most important, and most difficult, work.

The original publication of The QaScience included an epigram on its title page, which Nietzsche had adopted from Emerson: "To the poet, the sage, all things are friendly and hallowed, all experiences profitable, all days holy, all men divIñ elietzsche had elsewhere remarked of his foodness for Emerson, so this passage hardly seems out of place, particularly since itis quite Nietzschea⁶³ What is noteworthyhowever, is that Emerson himself had used the term "joyful science" in his writings and lectures fact that Nietzsche never acciwledged. It is quite possible that Nietzsche did know of Emerson's use of this phTaseTomb Song" from Zarathustra contains a paragraph with reference to "gay wisdom" and another paraphrase of Emerson–"All days shall be holy to melit is not proof that Nietzsche took the "gay science" from Emerson, but it would be a great coincidenticelitetsche had lifted Emerson's concept for his own book, it is fitting that Emerson should be placed at the oPtesetaps more interesting is that the epigram is removed for the second publication of The Gay Science and replaced with something from Nietzschealso in German

I live in my own place, have never copied nobody even half, and at any master who lacks the grace to laugh at himself-I laugh. Over the dooto my house⁴. Lines 3 and 4 reiterate the theme of the book, but that can be said only incidentally of the first two. Regardless of whether Nietzsche borrowed "joyful science" from Emerson, he defiantly claims ownership of it on the title page when t**bel**bis revised. The last half of the new epigram may be philosophical, but the first half is territorial.

The original version of The Gay Science did not include a prefraed dition to the nod to Emerson, it included a "Prelude in German Rhymes," which Nietzsche called "Joke, Cunning, and Revenge." It is a collection of sixed pree poetic aphorism to assure the only book with "science" in its title to begin like this This is especially true because none of the verses seem to take science or know ge as their theme. Whatever his intention, Nietzsche's fröhliche Wissenschaft oes not begin with science.

When The Gay Sciences republished in 1887, Nietzsche added a new frame. The book, he admitted, "may need more than one prefaction of the end," Nietzsche continues, "there would still remain room for doubt whether anyone who had never lived through similar experiences could be brought closer to the experience of the book by means of prefaces language, and perhaps the theme, of The Gay Science is such that it will have to be lived if it is to be understoodn effect, the new preface serves as a guide to those not needing one.

The remainder of the first s 0 Tc 0ndccfectt effecectt f-6(s)-5(i)3(h)-4(e r)-4(i)-2(h)-6(ie) ehensì

convalescencë.

It is only in the concludig part of the new preface thatetzsche introduces the subject of the book. No, this bad taste, this will to truth, to 'truth at any price,' this youthful madness in the love of truth, have lost their charm for us: froattwe are too experienced, too serious, too merry, too burned, too profound," he writësoday we consider it a matter of decency not to wish to see everything naked, or to be present at everything, or to understand and 'know' everything"⁷³ Nietzsche ensithe preface by offering the Greeks as an example of his teaching.

Nietzsche did more than tweak The Gay Science for its second publication; he returned to it in a substantive way, adding an entire cha**ptes** certainly the longest of his revisions, dwarfing even the weighty "An Attempt at a **Self**iticism." The original ending of The Gay Science, section 342 of Book IV, entitled "Incipit tragoedia," parallels the beginning of Zarathustra. It is, with one minor change, the first section of what would become "Zarathustra's Prologue." Nietzsche clearly intended The Gay Science to frame Zarathustra.

His revision only emphases this fact Added to it was Book V, entitled "We Fearless Ones."⁷⁴ The epigram for the addition is a quotation from Turenne, at Greench gneral: "You tremble, carcass? You would tremble a lot more if knew where I am taking youThe epigram introduces the major theme of Book V: cour bigetzsche returns to this theme often in the book, most notably in section 355. "Is it the instinct of feathat bids us to know?" Nietzsche ask⁵⁵. His gay science demands, above all, fearless practition best is philosophers or "free spirits" with courage enough to live in an uncertain world. To follow Nietzsche requires bravery of aliteiry sort.

The first aphorism of Book V details Nietzsche's "cheerfulness" at the fact that "the belief in the Christian god has become unbelieväble he "greatest recent event" the reason that Zarathustra fled into solitude,

Ecce Homo

The prefaces of 18867 are not the final word that Nietzsche had on his books; they all reappear

in Ecce Homowhere Nietzsche reviews, and indeed critiques, his previous.books

The reference to "Wagner in Bayreuth" foreshadows what comes next: Nietzsche's treatment of Untimely Meditations which the Wagner essay was a pathe first section of this chapter merely summariss the arguments contained in the four flike" essays in the middle section Nietzsche remarks that only the essay on David Strauss had any⁹⁰ Uncoress Nietzsche, success meant strong sales and developing a reputation as an intellectural force. sum, it gave Nietzsche the freedom to develop **t** hinker.

In the concluding section, however, Nietzsche returns to the theme he initiated in the essay on The Birth of Tragedy(s)-5(w)-2(h)-r[(e)4(s)-1(s)-6 626.4 T wh.h2m(r)-1(ene)4(de)4(de)4(d(T))-1(ene)4(de)4(de)4(de)4(d(T))-1(ene)4(de)4(de)4(de)4(d(T))-1(ene)4(de)4(de)4(de)4(d(T))-1(ene)4(de)4(de)4(de)4(d(T))-1(ene)4(de)4(de)4(de)4(d(T))-1(ene)4(de)4(de)4(de)4(d(T))-1(ene)4(de)4(de)4(de)4(d(T))-1(ene)4(de)4(de)4(de)4(d(T))-1(ene)4(de)4(de)4(d(T))-1(ene)4(de)4(de)4(d(T))-1(ene)4(de)4(de)4(d(T))-1(ene)4(de)4(de)4(d(T))-1(ene)4(de)4(de)4(d(T))-1(ene)4(d(T))-1(ene)4(d(T))

Nietzsche's earlier, quasicademic works shoul be contrasted with his later books, particularly Thus Spoke Zarathustra. Nietzsche reveals here that The Gay Socie monitten in the time between his discovery of eternal recurrence and composing Zarathustra. Nietzsche then quotes at length from anplaorism entitled "The great health," from Book V of The Gay Science, the chapter added aftZarathustra had been completendetzsche presents Zarathustra as the

make them perfect, for that is an impossible and undesirable **ngste** ad, Nietzsche reframed them to effect the new perspective he **handpuired** by having gone past them.

Notes

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, The Gay Science, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York, NY: Vintage Book)s, 19

^{§381.} ² Friedrich Nietzsche, Ecce Homtoans. Walter Kaufmann (New York, NY: Vintage, 19,899 reface §1; emphasis remove Cf. Ibid., Books §1, where Nietzsche alludes to the fact that his time has not come yet—that is, that he is not ready to **bre**derstood. ³ Leo Strauss, Persecution and the Art of Writ(**Gb**icago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 24, 22. ⁴ StraussPersecution36.

⁵ StraussPersecution 32. Nowhere in his essay on Nietzsche does Strauss mark (w)131u3St(oooaz)-12(s)5o30(a)-8(o)-

⁸⁰ Ibid., §125. ⁸¹ Ibid., §382. ⁸² Ibid., §383. ⁸³ Ibid., Preface §1. ⁸⁴ For example, Nietzsche, Gay Science, §381. ⁸⁵ Nietzsche Ecce Homo'Birth' §1. ⁸⁶ Ibid. ⁸⁷ Ibid. ⁸⁸ Ibid., §2. ⁸⁹ Ibid., §4. ⁹⁰ Ibid., 'Untimely' §2. ⁹¹ Ibid., §3. ⁹² Ibid. ⁹³Nietzsche,Good and Evil §211. ⁹⁴ Nietzsche Ecce Homo'Zarathustra' §6. ⁹⁵ Ibid., §8. ⁹⁶ Ibid., 'Good and Evil' §1. ⁹⁷ Laurence LamperNietzsche's Teaching: An Interpretation of Thus Spoke Zarathustra (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), 258. ⁹⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Moratens. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage, 1989), §2.25. ⁹⁹ Nietzsche Good and Evil§56. ¹⁰⁰NietzscheEcce Homo'Birth' §3; cf "Zarathustra" Vision and Riddle. ¹⁰¹ Georg Stauth and Bryan S. Turner, Nietzsche's Dance: Resentment, Reciprocity and Resistance in Social Life (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 25. ¹⁰² Thomas Steinbuck Commentary on Nietzsch Esce Homo (Lanham, MA: University Press of America, 1994), 3, ¹⁰³ Kaufmann says Ecce Horficontains all too many references to Zarathustraest of them embarrassing." "Editor's Introduction," Ecce Hon205.

¹⁰⁴NietzscheEcce HomoPreface §4.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., Books §1.

¹⁰⁶Nietzsche,Good and Evil§30.

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