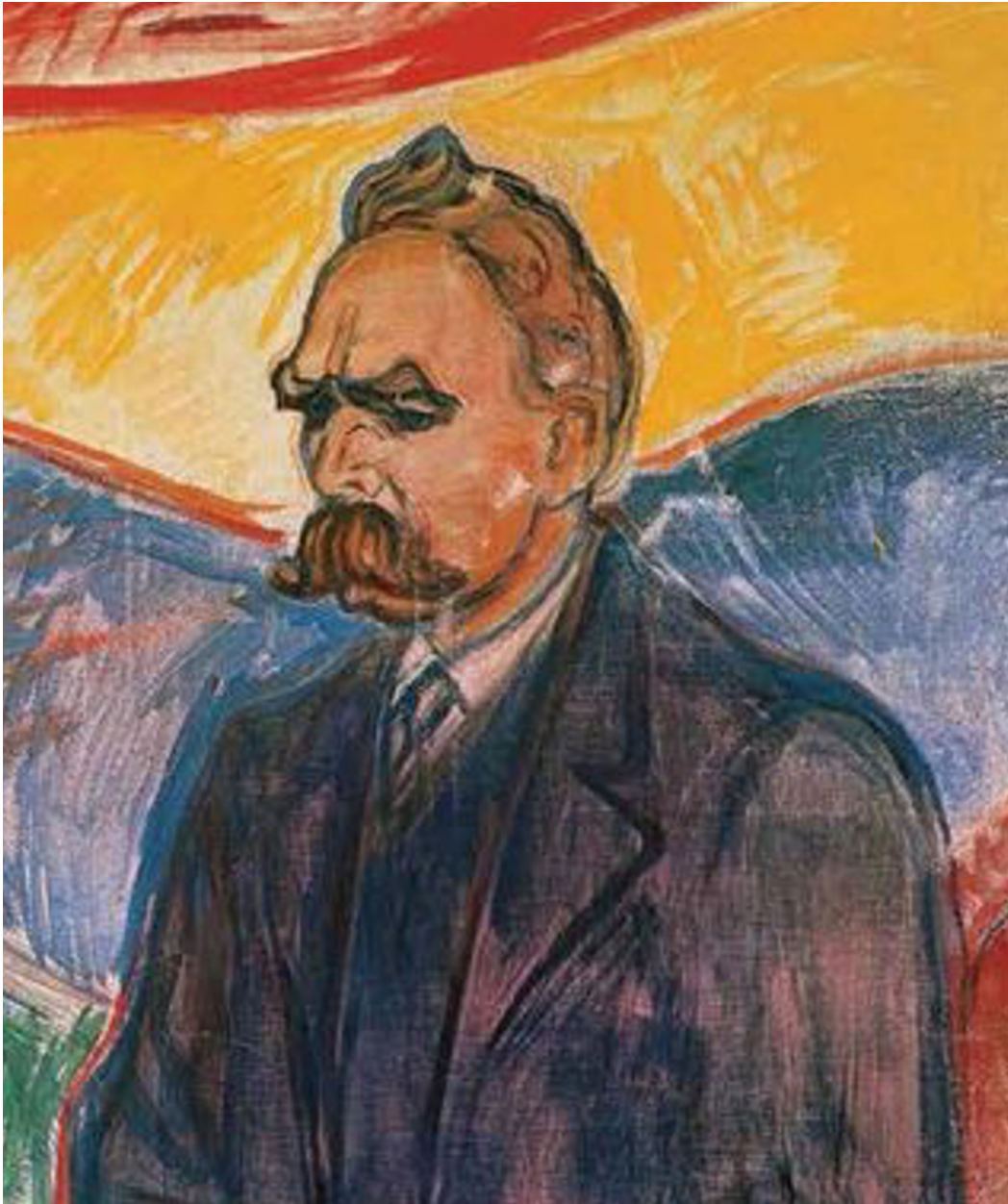




# NIETZSCHE

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) was a late 19th Century German philosopher whose writings have had a profound influence in our time, influencing developments in philosophy, literature, drama, and the visual arts. He is one of the important thinkers in Existentialism, a philosophical movement that rose to prominence in the mid-20th century, especially in France, in the works of thinkers such as John-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and Albert Camus. Later in the 20th century, his work would influence another generation of French philosophers, notably Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and Gilles Deleuze, in the development of what has come to be known as Postmodern philosophy. Nietzsche has thus been considered a postmodern prophet, the beginning point of postmodern thought.



*Nietzsche*, detail, Edmund Munch, 1906.

# Nietzsche's Influence on Modern Culture

## Novelists

Hermann Hesse, Thomas Mann, Franz Kafka, D.H. Lawrence, James Joyce, Henry Miller, André Gide, André Malraux, Maxim Gorky, and Nikos Kazantzakis

## Poets

Rainer Maria Rilke, Stefan George, William Butler Yeats, and Paul Valéry

## Dramatists

August Strindberg, George Bernard Shaw, and Eugene O'Neill

## Painters

Henri Matisse, Max Ernst, Max Beckmann, Erich Heckel, Gustav Klimt, Edvard Munch, Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Francis Bacon

## Sculptors

Auguste Rodin, Aristide Maillol, and Otto Dix

## Composers

Bela Bartok, Alban Berg, Richard Strauss, Frederick Delius, Gustav Mahler, and Alexander Scriabin

## Architecture

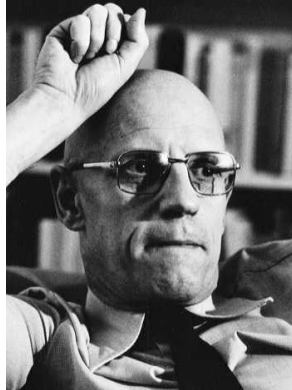
Le Corbusier and Walter Gropius

## Theologians

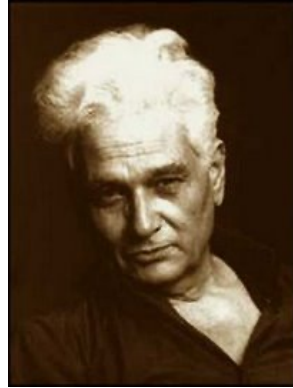
Martin Buber and Paul Tillich.

## Psychology

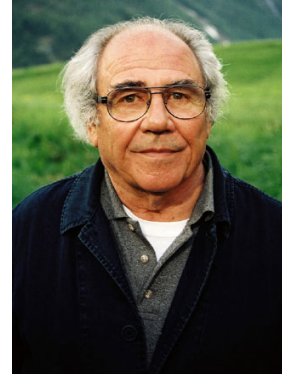
Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung



Michel Foucault (1926-1984)



Jacques Derrida (1930-2004)



Jean Baudrillard (1929 – 2007)



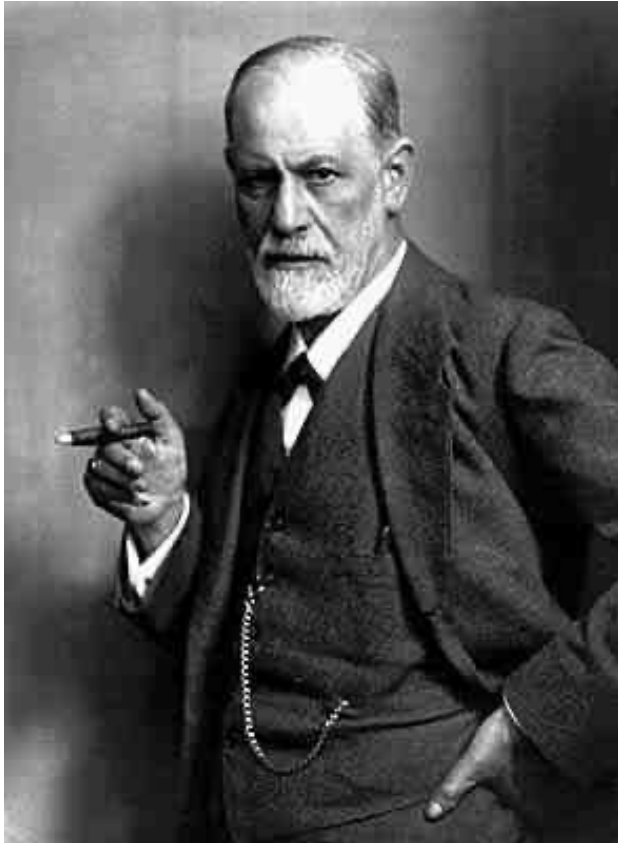
Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980)

## Nietzsche's influence on 20<sup>th</sup> Century French Philosophy

Sartre was an important Existentialist Philosopher

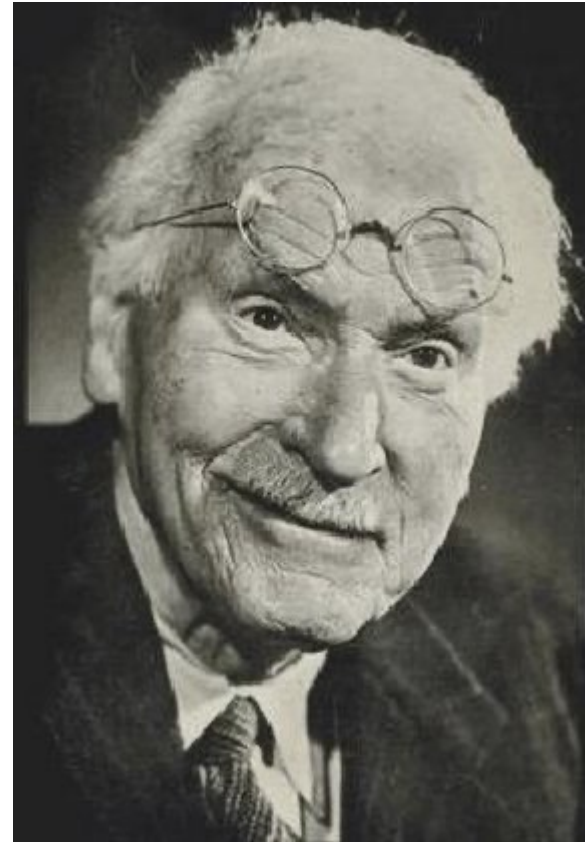
Foucault, Derrida, and Baudrillard are associated with Postmodern Thought

# Nietzsche's influence on Psychoanalysis

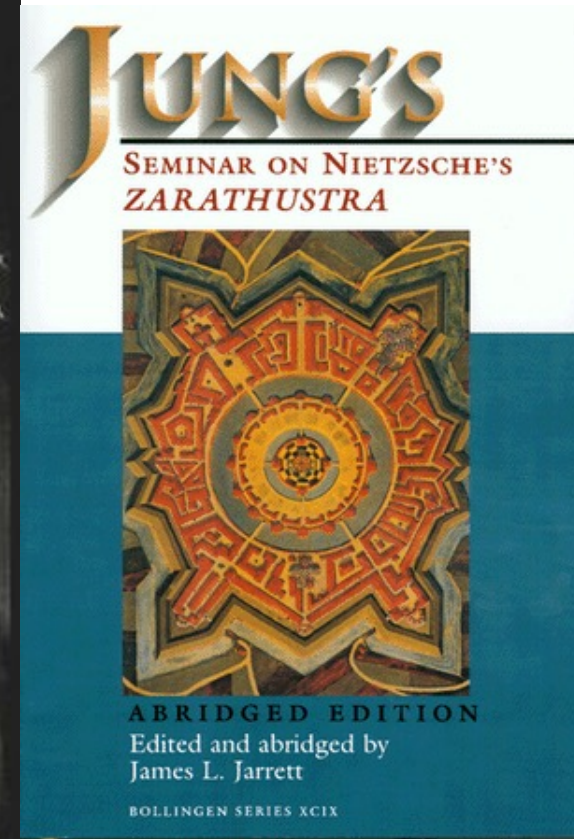


“Nietzsche had more penetrating knowledge of himself than any man who ever lived or was likely to live.”

Sigmund Freud  
(1856-1939)



Carl Jung (1875-1961)



“Out of life’s school of  
war:

What does not destroy  
me, makes me  
stronger!”

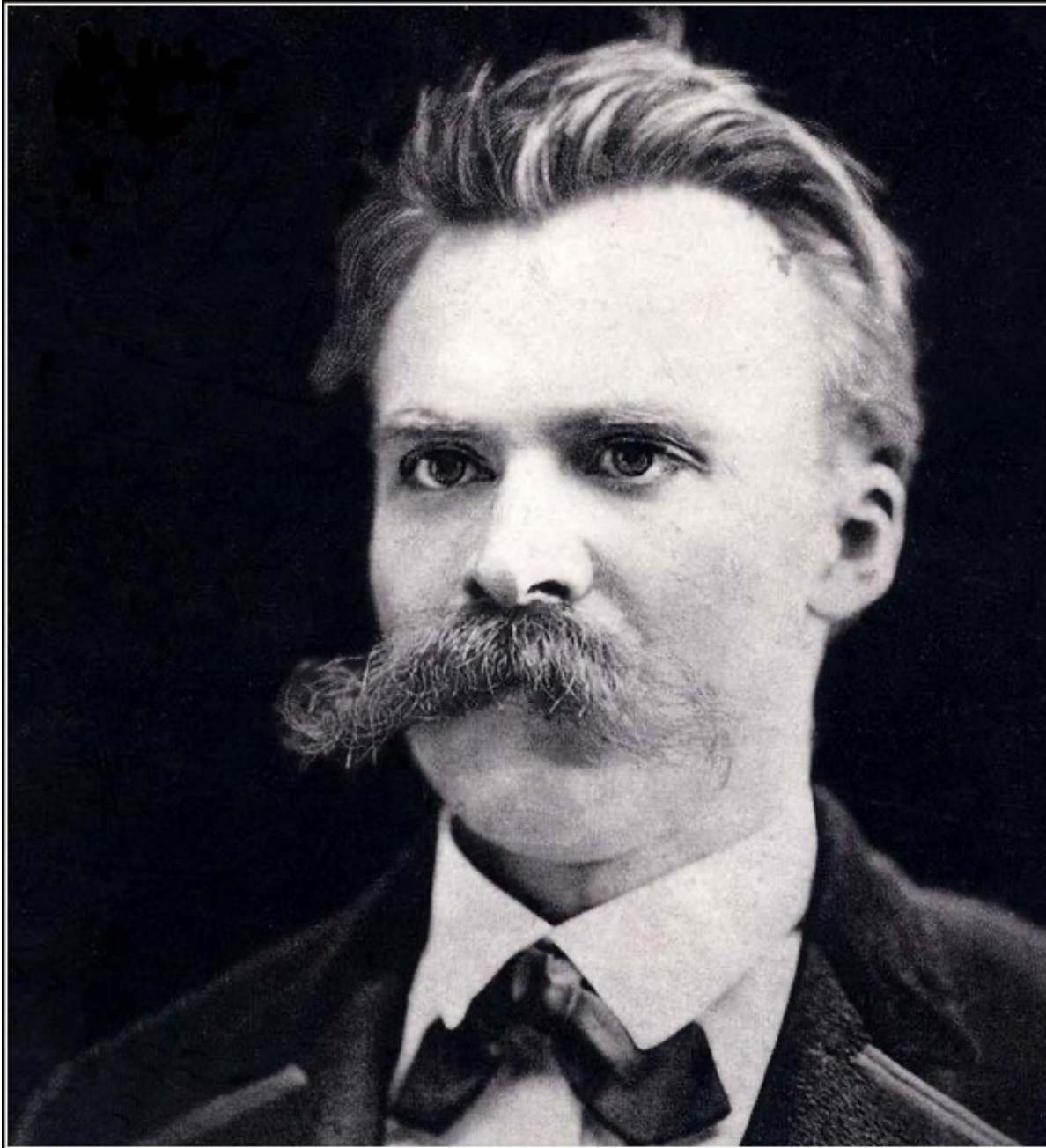
*Twilight of the Idols,*  
“Maxims and Arrows” §8





“he who has a  
why to live for  
can bear  
almost any  
how.”

*Twilight of the Idols*, “Maxims and  
Arrows” §12



“Convictions are more dangerous enemies of truth than lies.”

*Human, All Too Human, §483*



“Whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster.

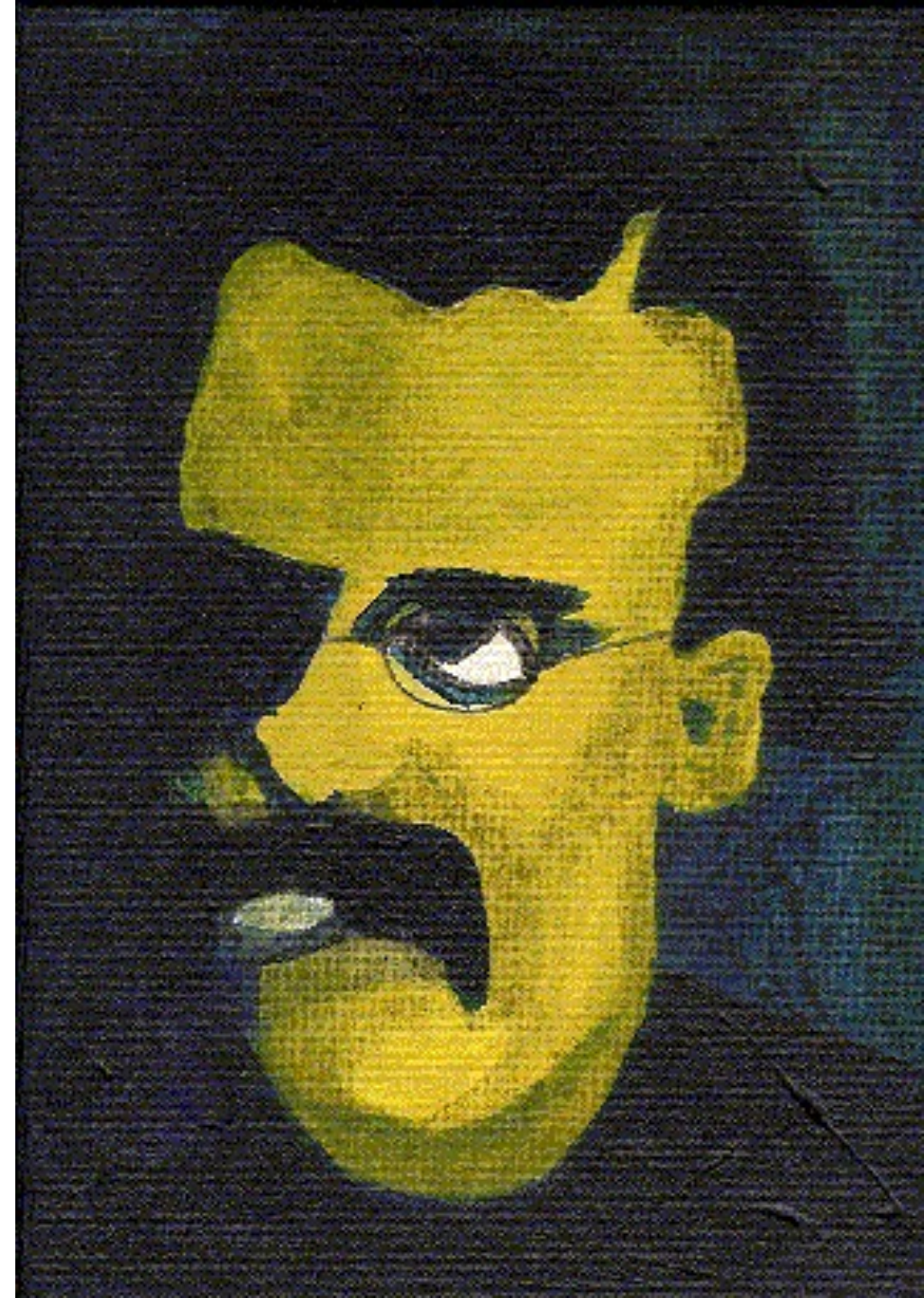
And when you look into the abyss, the abyss also looks into you.”

*Beyond Good and Evil §146*



“Which is it, is man one  
of God's blunders  
or is God one of man's?”

*Twilight of the Idols*  
“Maxims and Arrows” §7





For believe me— the secret for harvesting from existence the greatest fruitfulness and the greatest enjoyment is to *live dangerously!* Build your cities on the slopes of Vesuvius!

*The Joyous Science*, §283

*The Eruption of Mount Vesuvius*, detail, Pierre-Jaques Voltaire, 1777.

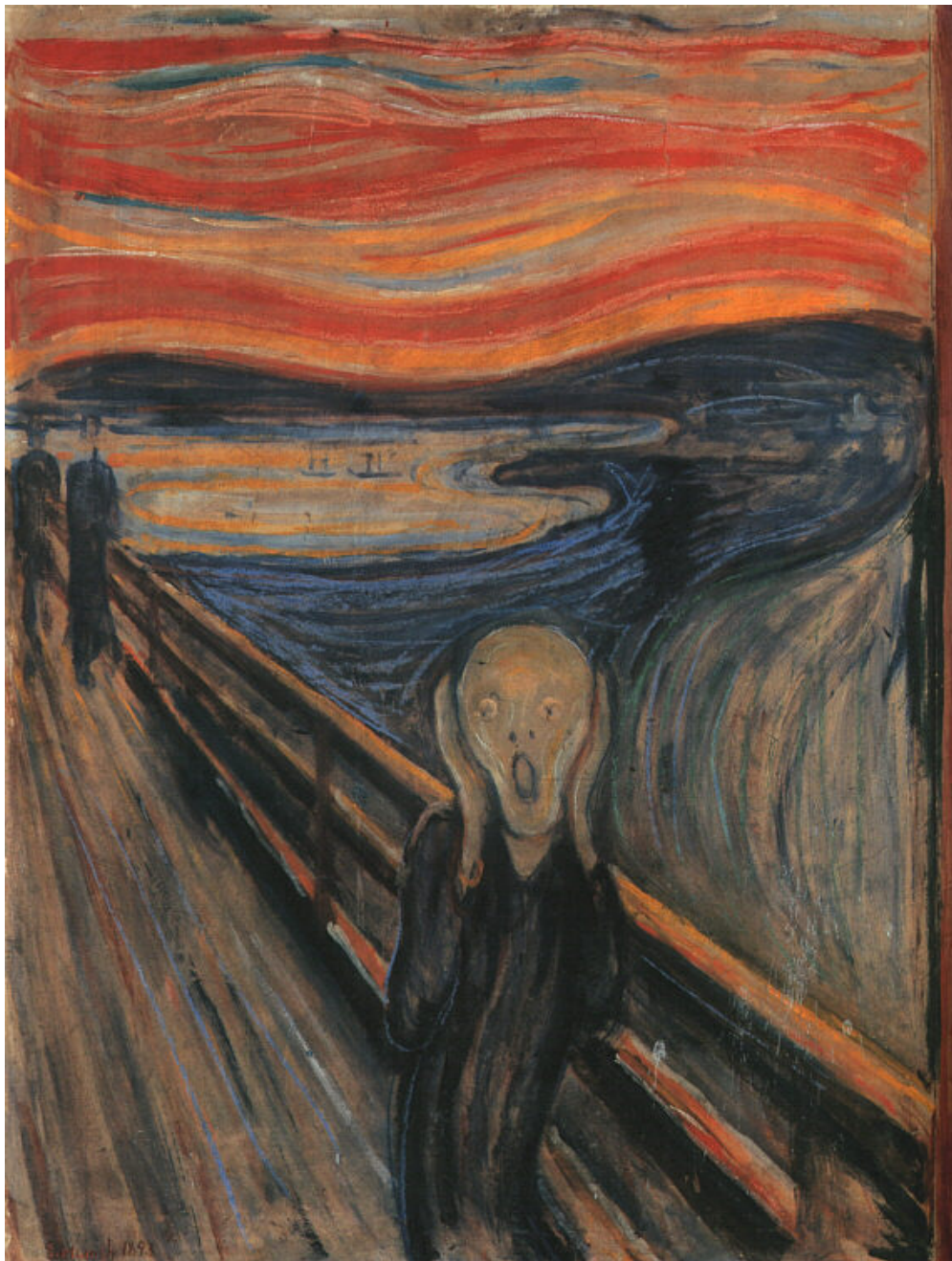


*The Sower*, Vincent Van Gogh, oil on canvas, 1888.

## Remaining Loyal to the Earth Nietzsche's Revaluation of All Values

Remain loyal to the earth, my brothers, with the power of your virtue. Let your gift-giving love and your knowledge serve the meaning of the earth. Thus I beg and beseech you. Do not let them fly away from earthly things and beat with their wings against eternal walls. Alas, there has always been so much virtue that has flown away. Lead back to the earth the virtue that flew away, as I do—back to the body, back to life, that it may give the earth a meaning, a human meaning.

*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, "On the Gift-Giving Virtue," 76.

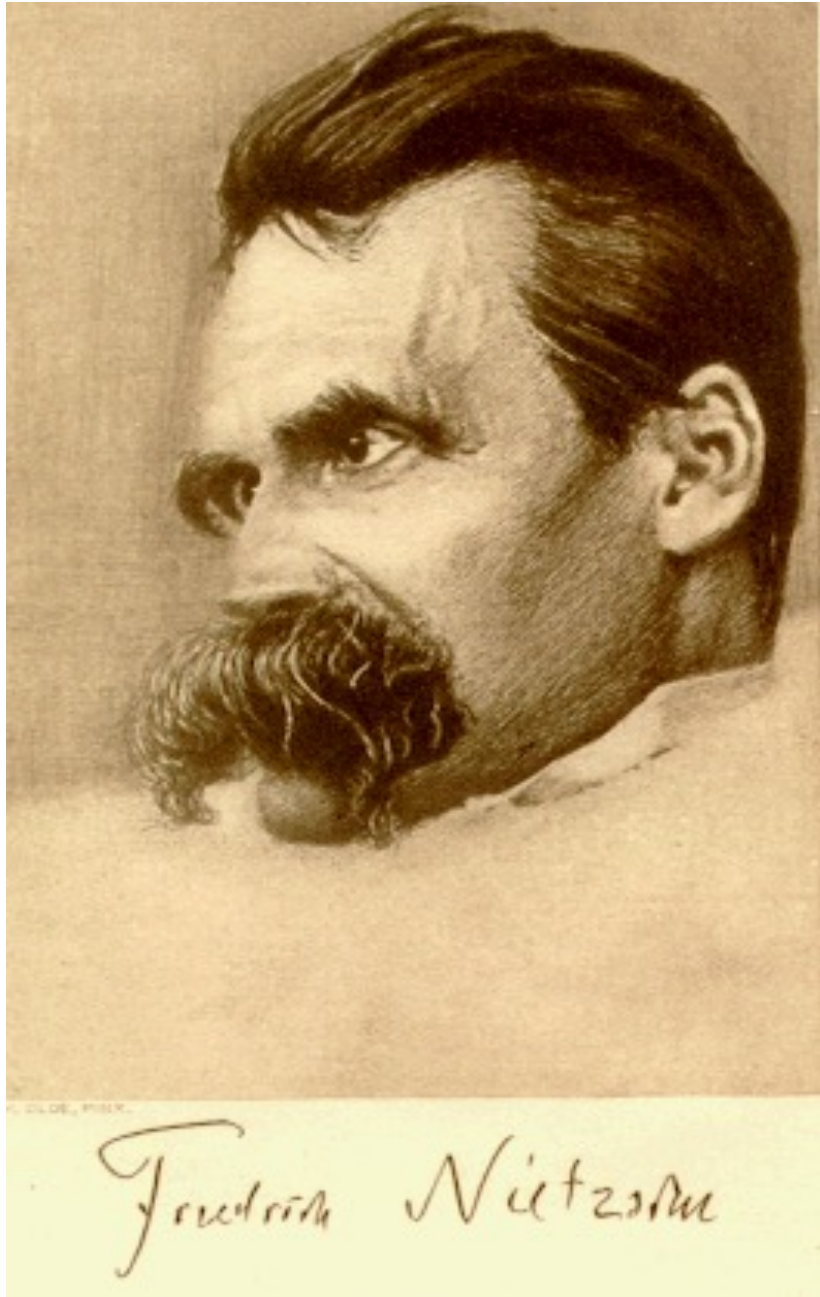


## The Crisis of Modernity

What I relate is the history of the next two centuries. I describe what is coming, what can no longer come differently: *the advent of nihilism*. This history can be related even now; for necessity itself is at work here. This future speaks even now in a hundred signs, this destiny announces itself everywhere; for this music of the future all ears are cocked even now. For some time now, our whole European culture has been moving as toward a catastrophe, with a tortured tension that is growing from decade to decade: restlessly, violently, headlong, like a river that wants to reach the end, that no longer reflects, that is afraid to reflect.

*The Will to Power, Preface, §2*

*The Scream, Edvard Munch, 1893.*



I know my lot. Some day my name will be linked to the memory of something monstrous, of a crisis as yet unprecedented on earth, the most profound collision of consciences, a decision conjured up against everything hitherto believed, demanded, hallowed. I am not a man, I am dynamite.

*Ecce Homo*, IV §1

# The Death of God



*Crucifixion with Darkened Sun*, Egon Schiele, oil on canvas, 1907

*The Madman*. . . . The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his eyes. "Whither is God?" he cried; "I will tell you. *We have killed him*—you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how did we do this? How could we drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there still any up or down? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is not night continually closing in on us? Do we need to light lanterns in the morning? So we hear nothing as yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God? Do we smell nothing as yet of the divine decomposition? Gods, too, decompose. God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him.

*The Joyous Science*, §125

# An Eclipse of the Sun

*The meaning of our cheerfulness.* —The greatest recent event—that "God is dead," that the belief in the Christian god has become unbelievable—is already beginning to cast its first shadows over Europe. For the few at least, whose eyes—the *suspicion* in whose eyes is strong and subtle enough for this spectacle, some sun seems to have set and some ancient and profound trust has been turned into doubt; to them our old world must appear daily more like evening, more mistrustful, stranger, "older." But in the main one may say: The event itself is far too great, too distant, too remote from the multitude's capacity for comprehension even for the tidings of it to be thought of as having arrived as yet. Much less may one suppose that many people know as yet what this event really means—and how much must collapse now that this faith has been undermined because it was built upon this faith, propped up by it, grown into it; for example, the whole of our European morality. This long plenitude and sequence of breakdown, destruction, ruin, and cataclysm that is now impending—who could guess enough of it today to be compelled to play the teacher and advance proclaimer of this monstrous logic of terror, the prophet of a gloom and an eclipse of the sun whose like has probably never yet occurred on earth?

*The Joyous Science, §343*



*Dionysius the Areopagite Converting the Pagan Philosophers, Antoine Caron, c. 1570.*

# Philosopher at Sea



*Seascape at Saintes-Maries*, Vincent Van Gogh, Arles, early June 1888.

*The meaning of our cheerfulness.* .—Even we born guessers of riddles who are, as it were, waiting on the mountains, posted between today and tomorrow, stretched in the contradiction between today and tomorrow, we firstlings and premature births of the coming century, to whom the shadows that must soon envelop Europe really should have appeared by now—why is it that even we look forward to the approaching gloom without any real sense of involvement and above all without any worry and fear for ourselves? Are we perhaps still too much under the impression of the initial consequences of this event—and these initial consequences, the consequences for ourselves, are quite the opposite of what one might perhaps expect: They are not at all sad and gloomy but rather like a new and scarcely describable kind of light, happiness, relief, exhilaration, encouragement, dawn.

Indeed, we philosophers and "free spirits" feel, when we hear the news that "the old god is dead," as if a new dawn shone on us; our heart overflows with gratitude, amazement, premonitions, expectation. At long last the horizon appears free to us again, even if it should not be bright; at long last our ships may venture out again, venture out to face any danger; all the daring of the lover of knowledge is permitted again; the sea, *our* sea, lies open again; perhaps there has never yet been such an "open sea."—



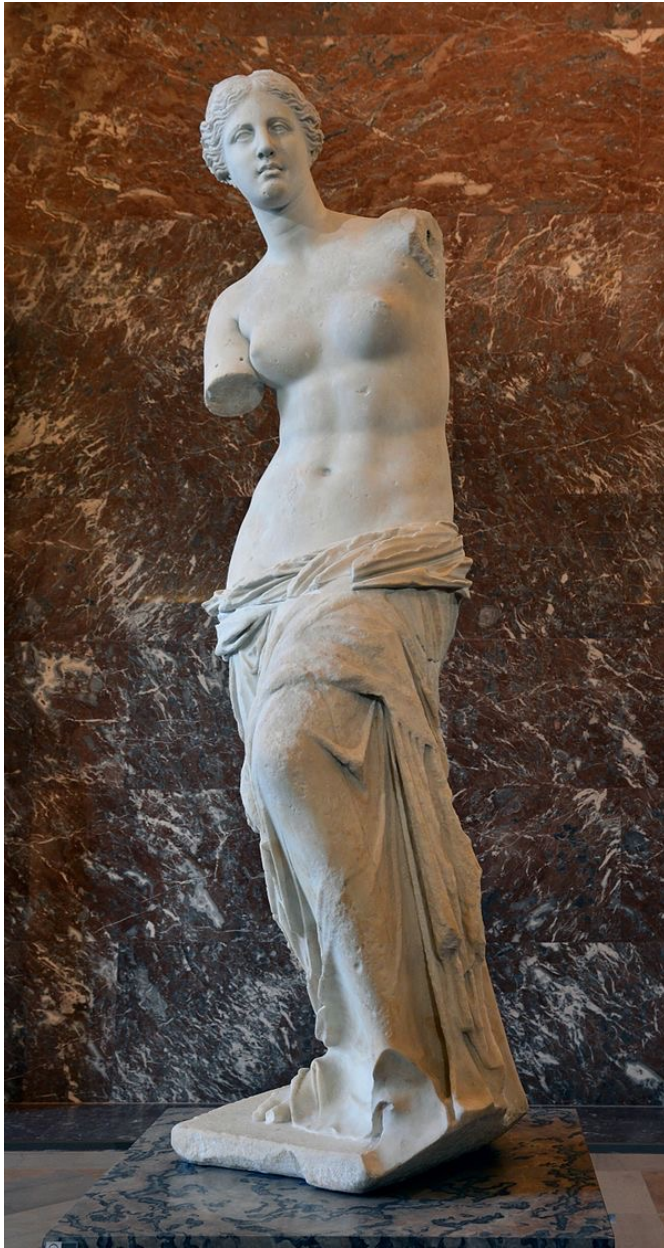
# Greek Tragedy

Nietzsche thought the high point of Greek culture was not Socrates and Plato, but Aeschylus and Sophocles. What intrigued Nietzsche about the tragic poets is that they did not have the optimistic view of Socrates and Plato that if we just had reason, we would have virtue and happiness too. In Nietzsche's view, Socrates and Plato lacked the courage for the hard truths faced by the Tragic Poets. In Nietzsche's text, *The Birth of Tragedy*, he recounts the story about Silenus, a dem-god, who is captured by King Midas and then forced to tell what he thought was the best thing for human beings:



Stiff and unmoving, the daemon remains silent until, forced by the King to speak, he finally breaks out in shrill laughter and says: ‘Wretched, ephemeral race, children of chance and tribulation, why do you force me to tell you the very thing which it would be most profitable for you not to hear? The very best thing is utterly beyond your reach not to have been born, not to be, to be nothing. However, the second best thing for you is: to die soon.’

*The Birth of Tragedy*, §3



# Philosophers of the Future

And as for our future, one will hardly find us again on the paths of those Egyptian youths who endanger temples by night, embrace statues, and want by all means to unveil, uncover, and put into a bright light whatever is kept concealed for good reasons. 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: for that we are too experienced, too serious, too merry, too burned, too profound . . . We no longer believe that truth remains truth when the veils are withdrawn; we have lived too much to believe this. Today 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.

"Is it true that God is present everywhere?" a little girl asked her mother; "I think that's indecent"—a hint for philosophers! One should have more respect for the *modesty* with which nature has hidden behind riddles and iridescent uncertainties. Perhaps truth is a woman who has reasons for not letting us see her reasons? Perhaps her name is to speak Greek *Baubo*?

Oh, those Greeks! They knew how to *live*. What is required for that is to stop courageously at the surface, the fold, the skin, to adore appearance, to believe in forms, tones, words, in the whole Olympus of appearances. Those Greeks were superficial *out of profundity*. And is not this precisely what we are again coming back to, we daredevils of the spirit who have climbed the highest and most dangerous peak of present thought and looked around from up there we who have looked *down* from there? Are we not, precisely in this respect, Greeks? Adorers of forms, of tones, of words? And therefore—*artists*?

*The Joyous Science, Preface*

# The Philosopher as Artist

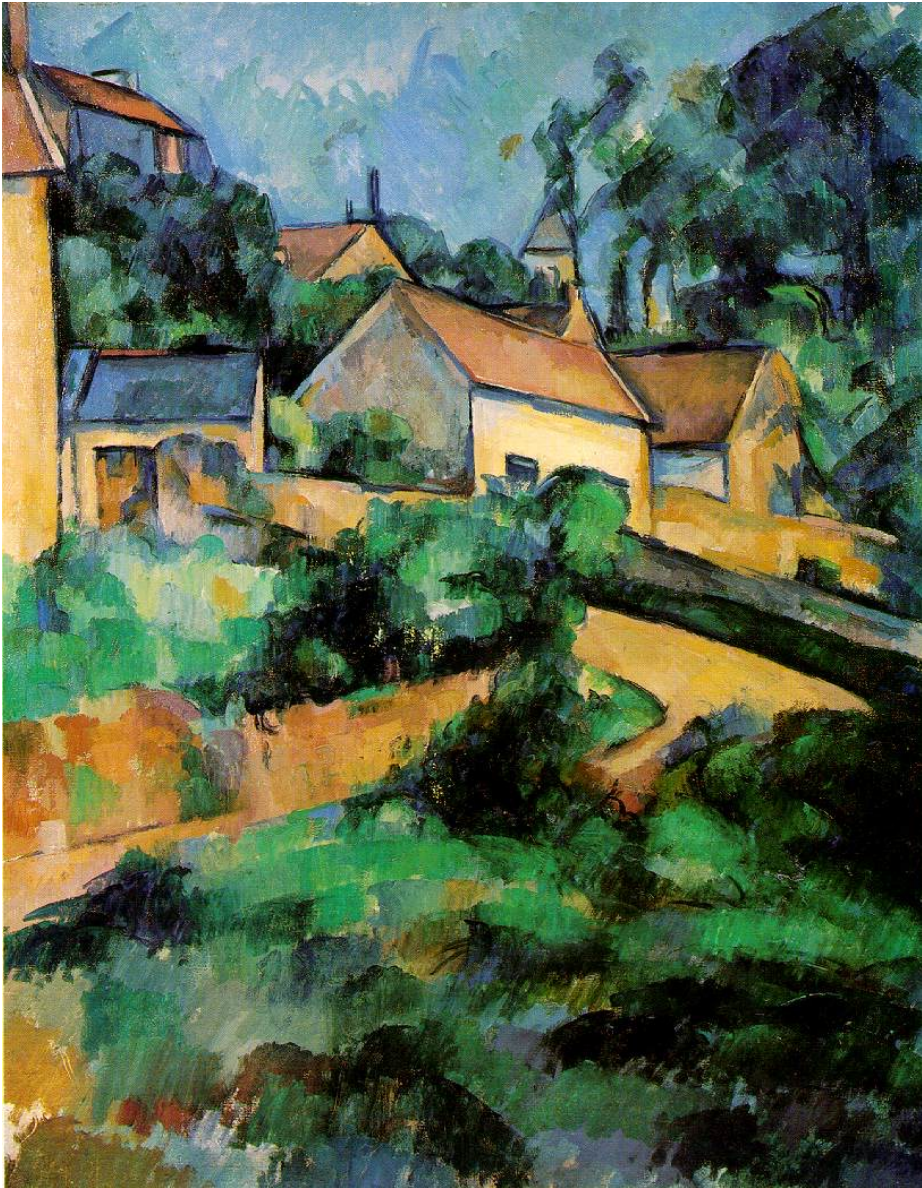


*Mount Saint-Victoire*, Paul Cézanne, 1904-06.

## *To the Realists*

“You sober men [. . .] you call yourselves realists, and imply that the world actually is the way the world appears to you; before you alone does reality stand unveiled [. . .] But when you yourselves are unveiled, are you not, unlike the cold-blooded fish which see in every water, still extremely passionate and blind? Are you not still too much like enamored artists? And what is reality to an enamored artist! You still carry about with you judgements which had their origin in the passions and infatuations of earlier centuries! Your sobriety still partakes of a hidden and ineradicable drunkenness! Your love of ‘reality’, for example—oh, that is an old an immemorial ‘love’! In every perception, in every sensation, there is a bit of this old love; and similarly also some kind of fantasy, prejudice, folly, ignorance, fear, and everything else that has worked on it and been woven into it. That mountain there! That cloud there! What in them is ‘real’? Subtract for once the phantasm and every human *addition* from them, you sober men! As if you could to that!”

*The Joyous Science*, §57



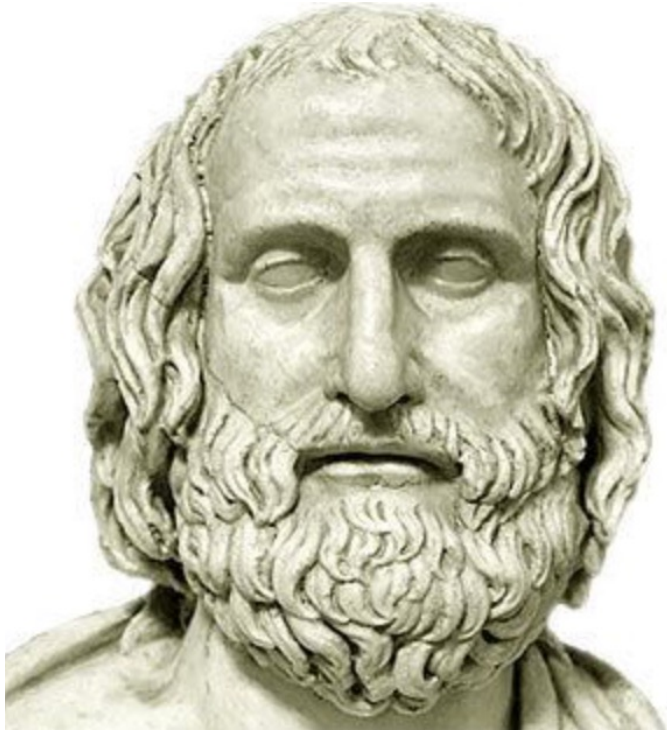
*Turning Road at Montgeroult*, Paul Cézanne, 1898.

# Perspectivism

Let at least this much be admitted: there would be no life at all if not on the basis of perspective estimates and appearances; and if, with the virtuous enthusiasm and clumsiness of some philosophers, one wanted to abolish the "apparent world" altogether well suppose *you* could do that, at least nothing would be left of your "truth" either. Indeed, what forces us at all to suppose that there is an essential opposition of "true" and "false"? Is it not sufficient to assume degrees of apparentness and, as it were, lighter and darker shadows and shades of appearance different "values," to use the language of painters? Why couldn't the world *that concerns us* be a fiction?

*Beyond Good and Evil*, §34

# Perspectivism



Protagoras

*"Man is the measure of all things."*

How far the perspective character of existence extends or indeed whether existence has any other character than this; whether existence without interpretation, without "sense," does not become "nonsense"; whether, on the other hand, all existence is not essentially actively engaged in *interpretation* that cannot be decided even by the most industrious and most scrupulously conscientious analysis and self-examination of the intellect; for in the course of this analysis the human intellect cannot avoid seeing itself in its own perspectives, and *only* in these. We cannot look around our own corner: it is a hopeless curiosity that wants to know what other kinds of intellects and perspectives there *might* be . . . But I should think that today we are at least far from the ridiculous immodesty that would be involved in decreeing from our corner that perspectives are permitted only from this corner. Rather has the world become "infinite" for us all over again, inasmuch as we cannot reject the possibility that *it may include infinite interpretations*.

*The Joyous Science, § 374*

Against positivism, which halts at the phenomena—"There are only facts"—I would say: No, facts is precisely what there is not, only interpretations. We cannot establish any fact "in itself": perhaps it is folly to want to do such a thing. . . .

In so far as the word "knowledge" has any meaning, the world is knowable; but it is interpretable otherwise, it has no meaning behind it, but countless meanings.—  
"Perspectivism."

*The Will to Power, § 481*



# The Open Sea

## *In the Horizon of the Infinite*

We have left dry land and put out to sea! We have burned the bridge behind us—what is more, we have burned the land behind us! Well, little ship, look out! Beside you is the ocean. True, it does not always roar, and sometimes it is spread out like silk and gold and a gentle reverie, but there will be hours when you realize that it is infinite, and that there is nothing more terrible than infinity.

*The Joyous Science, §124*



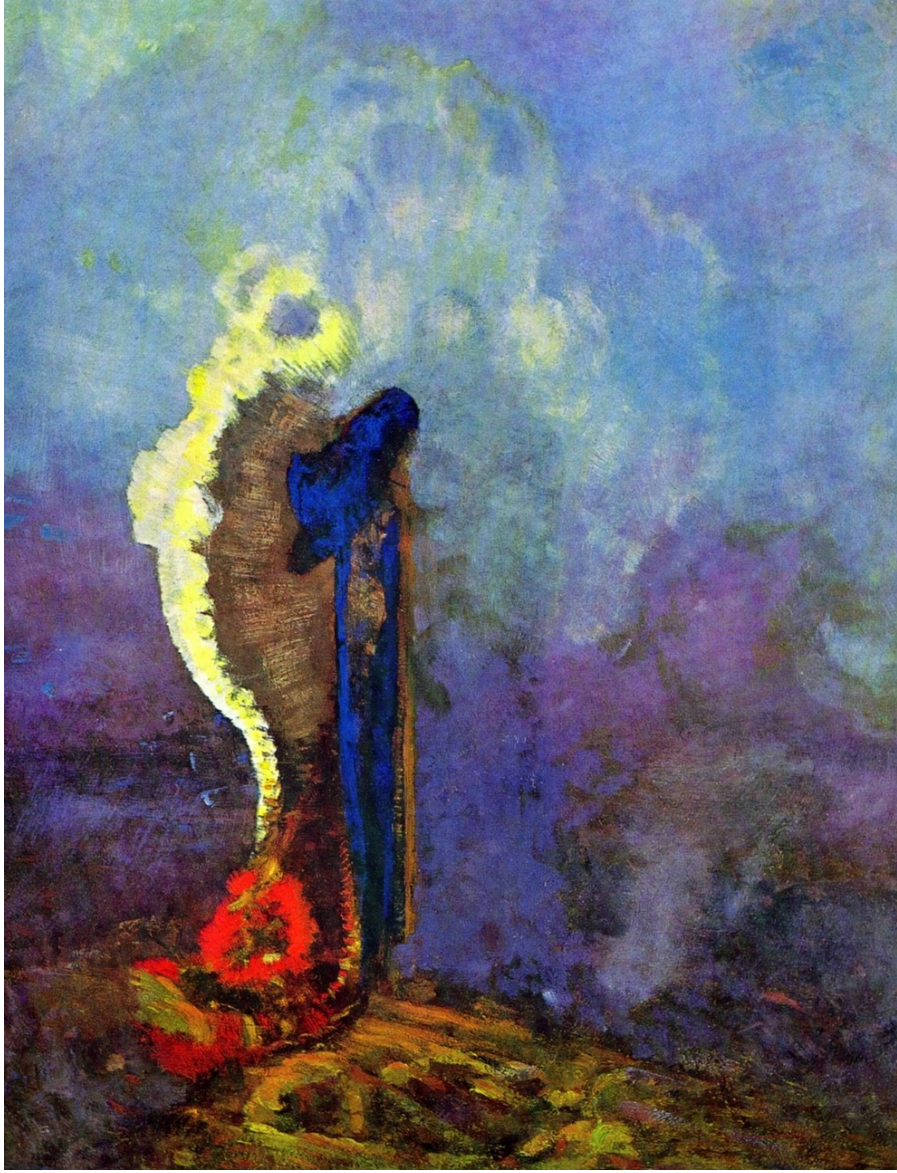
*Madonna*, Edvard Munch, Oil on canvas, 1894.

# Truth is a Woman

Supposing truth is a woman—what then? Are there not grounds for the suspicion that all philosophers, insofar as they were dogmatists, have been very inexpert about women? That the gruesome seriousness, the clumsy obtrusiveness with which they have usually approached truth so far have been awkward and very improper methods for winning a woman's heart? What is certain is that she has not allowed herself to be won—and today every kind of dogmatism is left standing dispirited and discouraged. *If* it is left standing at all! For there are scoffers who claim that it has fallen, that all dogmatism lies on the ground—even more, that all dogmatism is dying. . . .

Let us not be ungrateful to it, although it must certainly be conceded that the worst, most durable, and most dangerous of all errors so far was a dogmatist's error—namely, Plato's invention of the pure spirit and the good as such. But now that it is overcome, now that Europe is breathing freely again after this nightmare and at least can enjoy a healthier—sleep, we, *whose task is wakefulness itself*, are the heirs of all that strength which has been fostered by the fight against this error. To be sure, it meant standing truth on her head and denying *perspective*, the basic condition of all life, when one spoke of spirit and the good as Plato did. Indeed, as a physician one might ask: "How could the most beautiful growth of antiquity, Plato, contract such a disease? Did the wicked Socrates corrupt him after all? Could Socrates have been the corrupter of youth after all? And did he deserve his hemlock?"

*Beyond Good and Evil*, Preface



Odilon Redon, *Le Rêve (The Dream)*, 1905.

# The Philosopher as Lucid Dreamer

## *The Consciousness of Appearances*

Knowing what I know, how wonderful and new, and yet how disturbing my situation is with respect to the whole of existence! I have *discovered first-hand* that human and animal nature, indeed the whole history and prehistory of feeling within me, continues to love, hate, concoct and conclude—I have suddenly awakened in the middle of this dream, but only to the consciousness of dreaming, and that I *must* continue to dream lest I perish, just as the sleepwalker must continue to dream lest he slip and fall. What is ‘appearance’ to me now! Surely not what is in opposition to some essence—what can I attribute to any essence other than the predicates of its appearance! Surely not a dead mask that conceals the face of some unknown variable, and which might be torn off it! To me, appearance itself is alive and effective, and it goes so far in its self-mockery as to give the impression that it is appearance and will-o’-the-wisp and dance of spirits and nothing more—and that I too among all these dreamers, I the ‘knowledge-seeker’, also dance my dance, that the knowledge-seeker is a means of prolonging this worldly dance, and it to that extent one of the stewards of life’s festival, and that the sublime consistency and consilience of all that we know is perhaps the best means of *preserving* the community of reverie, *preserving* the perfect intelligibility of all the dreamers to one another, and in so doing *preserving the continuity of the dream*.

*The Joyous Science*, §54





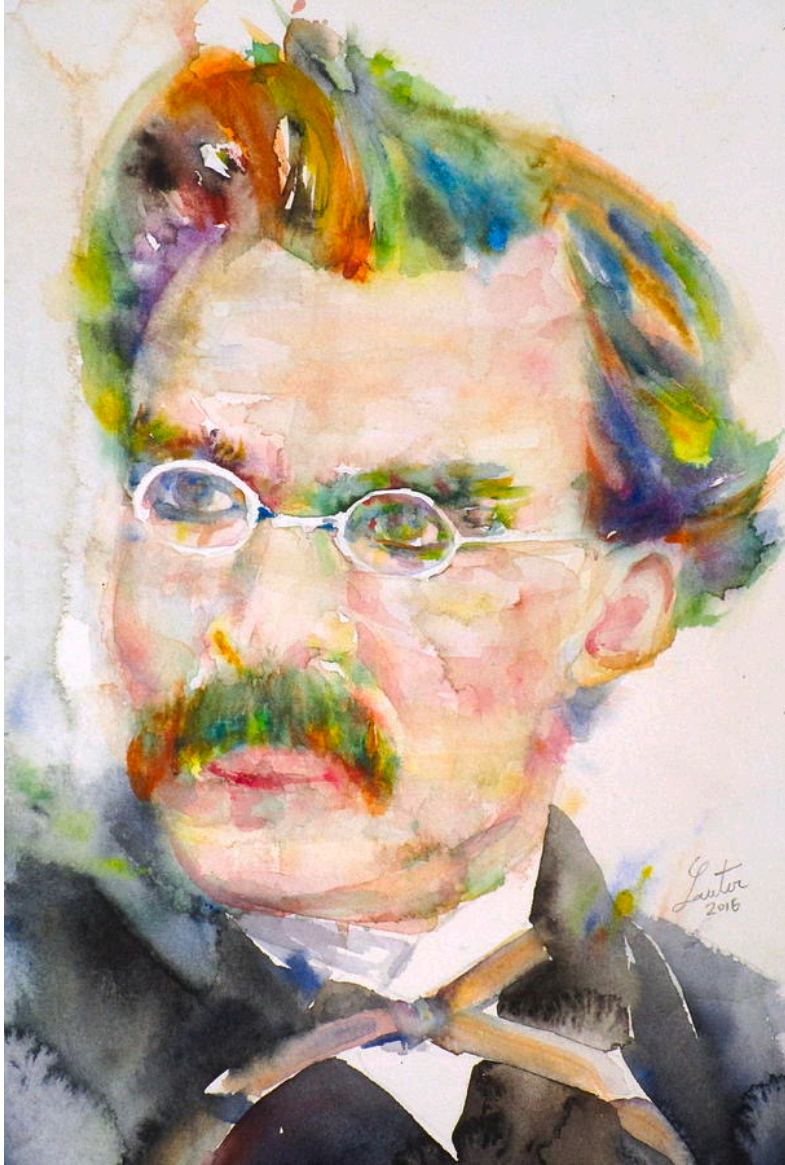
Socrates, fresco from Ephesus, c. 60-80 CE.

# Socrates

*The dying Socrates.*—I admire the courage and wisdom of Socrates in all that he did, said—and did not say. This mocking and enamored rogue, this Pied Piper of Athens who made even the most wanton youths tremble and sob, was not only the wisest chatterer that ever lived; he was just as great in his silence. I wish that he would also have been silent in the last moment of his life—perhaps then he would have belonged to an even higher order of spirits. Whether it was death, or poison, or piety, or sheer malice—something loosened his tongue at that moment, and he said: ‘Oh Crito, we ought to offer a cock to Asclepius.’ For those who have ears, these ludicrous and terrible ‘last words’ mean: ‘Oh Crito, *life is a disease!*’ Is it possible that a man like him, who had lived cheerfully and to all appearances like a soldier—was a pessimist? He had merely adopted a cheerful demeanour towards life, and all along concealed his ultimate judgement, his innermost sentiment! Socrates, Socrates *suffered from life!* And he still took his revenge on it—with those veiled, horrible, pious and blasphemous words! Did Socrates *have* to avenge himself? Despite the fact that he possessed an abundance of virtue, was he not quite magnanimous enough to resist this temptation?

Oh my friends! We have to surpass even the Greeks!

*The Joyous Science*, §340



Friedrich Nietzsche, Fabrizio Cassetta, watercolor portrait, 2016

# Amor Fati

*For the new year.*—I am still alive, I am still thinking; I must remain alive, for I must continue thinking. *Sum, ergo cogito: cogito, ergo sum.* Today everybody is allowed to express their fondest thoughts and wishes; well, I too want to say what it is that I have wished for myself today, what thought first crossed my mind at the beginning of this year—a thought with which I may justify, and to which I shall pledge, the rest of my life, a thought to render my life sweet! I want to come to regard everything necessary as beautiful—so that I will become one of those who makes everything beautiful. *Amor fati:* from now on, let that be my love! I do not want to wage war against the ugly. I do not want to accuse anyone, I do not even want to accuse the accusers. May *averting my eyes* be my only negation! All in all, and on the whole, some day I hope to be an affirmer.

*The Joyous Science, §276*

# Thus Spoke Zarathustra



*The Zarathustra Stone at Lake Silvaplana, Sils-Maria Switzerland, Tim Freeman, 2019.*

When Zarathustra was thirty years old he left his home and the lake of his home and went into the mountains. Here he enjoyed his spirit and his solitude, and for ten years did not tire of it. But at last a change came over his heart, and one morning he rose with the dawn, stepped before the sun, and spoke to it thus:

"You great star, what would your happiness be had you not those for whom you shine?"

*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Prologue  
opening lines of the text

*Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is Nietzsche's philosophical-literary masterpiece. Nietzsche develops in this text his most important ideas, but he does so by embedding them in a fictional story. Thus, in this text we find the most powerful expression of his idea of presenting philosophy as fiction. Nietzsche names the central character after the founder of the ancient Persian religion known as Zoroastrianism. Nietzsche traces the error of Western culture all the way back to the Persian prophet—he was the first to portray the entire cosmos as a conflict between good and evil gods, and the first to conceive of a judgment day at the end of the world when the good will be rewarded with eternal life. Nietzsche brings Zarathustra back to atone for his mistakes by teaching a new teaching. As the drama of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* unfolds three important, much discussed, and often greatly misunderstood Nietzschean ideas are presented: the overman (*übermensch*), the *will to power*, and the *eternal recurrence*.



*Sunset over Montblanc*, Wenzel Hablik, 1906

# The Overman

*I teach you the overman.* Man is something that shall be overcome. What have you done to overcome him?

All beings so far have created something beyond themselves; and do you want to be the ebb of this great flood and even go back to the beasts rather than overcome man? What is the ape to man? A laughing-stock or a painful embarrassment. And man shall be just that for the overman: a laughing-stock or a painful embarrassment. You have made your way from worm to man, and much in you is still worm; Once you were apes, and even now, too, man is more ape than any ape. [...]

Behold, I teach you the overman. The overman, is the meaning of the earth. Let your will say: the overman *shall* be the meaning of the earth! I beseech you, my brothers, *remain faithful to the earth*, and do not believe those who speak to you of otherworldly hopes! Poison-mixers are they, whether they know it or not. Despisers of life are they, decaying and poisoned themselves, of whom the earth is weary: so let them go.

Once the sin against God was the greatest sin; but God died, and these sinners died with him. To sin against the earth is now the most dreadful thing, and to esteem the entrails of the unknowable higher than the meaning of the earth.

*Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Prologue*



# The Will to Power

Zarathustra saw many lands and many peoples: thus he discovered the good and evil of many peoples. And Zarathustra found no greater power on earth than good and evil.

No people could live without first esteeming; but if they want to preserve themselves, then they must not esteem as the neighbor esteems. Much that was good to one people was scorn and infamy to another: thus I found it. Much I found called evil here, and decked out with purple honors there. Never did one neighbor understand the other: ever was his soul amazed at the neighbor's delusion and wickedness.

A tablet of the good hangs over every people. Behold, it is the tablet of their overcomings; behold, it is the voice of their *will to power*.

*Thus Spoke Zarathustra, 'On the Thousand and One Goals'*

Zarathustra, Deron Graham, 1990s.

# The Eternal Recurrence



*The greatest weight.*—What if one day or night a demon came to you in your most solitary solitude and said to you: "This life, as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live again, and innumerable times again, and there will be nothing new in it; but rather every pain and joy, every thought and sigh, and all the unutterably trivial or great things in your life will have to happen to you again, with everything in the same series and sequence—and likewise this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and likewise this moment and I myself. The eternal hourglass of existence will be turned over again and again, and you with it, you speck of dust!"

Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke to you thus? Or was there a time when you a tremendous moment in which you would answer him: "You are a god, and I have never heard anything so divine!" If that thought took hold of you as you are, it would transform you and perhaps crush you; the question with regard to each and every thing, 'Do you want this again, innumerable times again?' would weigh upon your actions with the greatest weight! Or how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life, that you might *long for nothing more* than this final eternal confirmation and seal?

*The Joyous Science*, §341

# The Eternal Recurrence



An ouroboros in a 1478 drawing in an alchemical tract.

"Stop, dwarf!" I said. "It is I or you! But I am the stronger of us two: you do not know my abysmal thought. That you could not bear!"

Then something happened that made me lighter, for the dwarf jumped from my shoulder, being curious; and he crouched on a stone before me. But there was a gateway just where we had stopped.

"Behold this gateway, dwarf!" I continued. "It has two faces. Two paths meet here; no one has yet followed either to its end. This long lane stretches back for an eternity. And the long lane out there, that is another eternity. They contradict each other, these paths; they offend each other face to face; and it is here at this gateway that they come together. The name of the gateway is inscribed above: 'Moment.' But whoever would follow one of them, on and on, farther and farther—do you believe, dwarf, that these paths contradict each other eternally?"

"All that is straight lies," the dwarf murmured contemptuously. "All truth is crooked; time itself is a circle,"

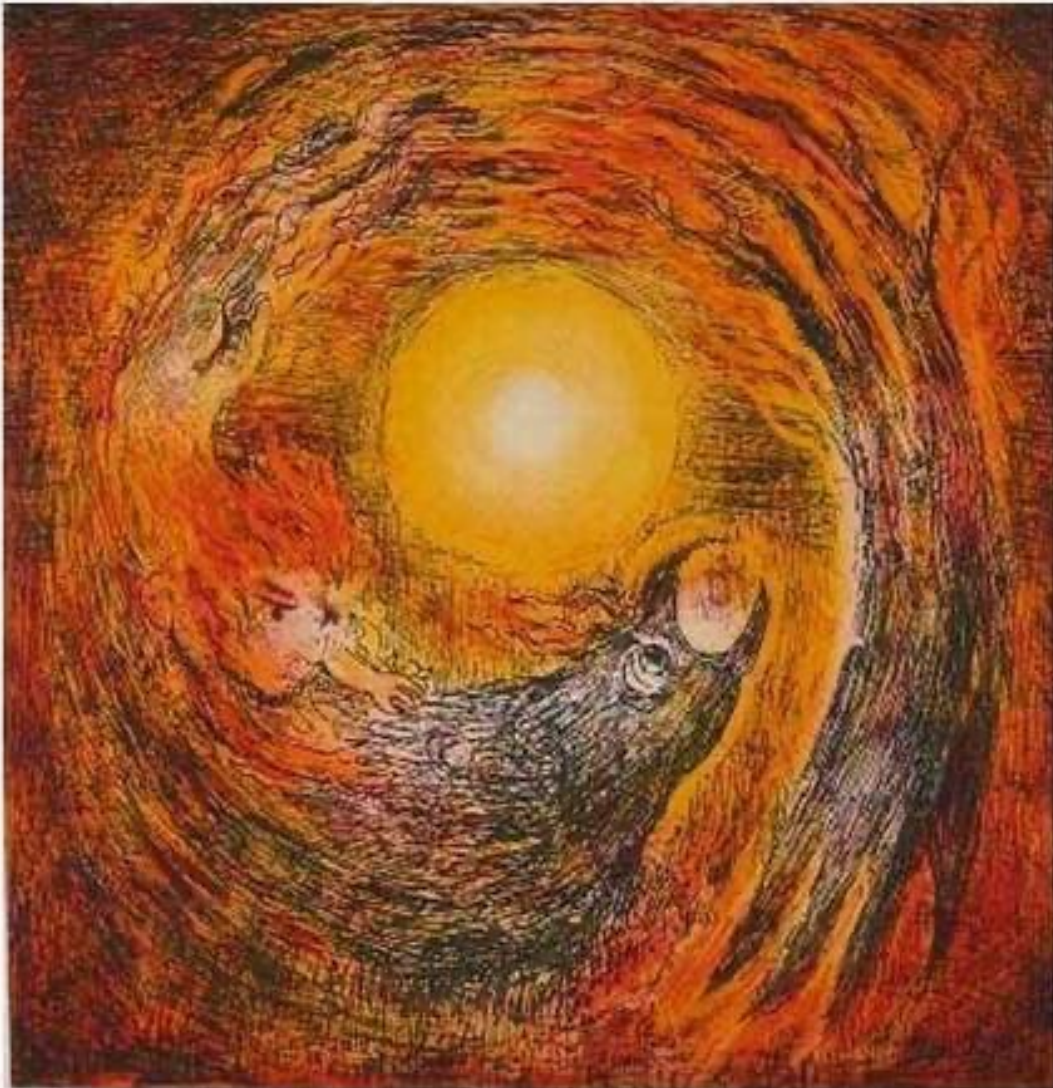
"You spirit of gravity," I said angrily, "do not make things too easy for yourself! Or I shall let you crouch where you are crouching, lamefoot; and it was I that carried you to this height.

"Behold," I continued, "this moment! from this gateway, Moment, a long, eternal lane leads backward: behind us lies an eternity. Must not whatever can walk have walked on this lane before? Must not whatever can happen have happened, have been done, have passed by before? And if everything has been there before—what do you think, dwarf, of this moment? Must not this gateway too have been there before? And are not all things knotted together so firmly that this moment draws after it all that is to come? Therefore—itsself too? For whatever can walk—in this long lane out there too, it must walk once more."

"And this slow spider, which crawls in the moonlight, and this moonlight itself, and I and you in the gateway, whispering together, whispering of eternal things—must not all of us have been there before? And return and walk in that other lane, out there, before us, in this long dreadful lane—must we not eternally return?"

*Thus Spoke Zarathustra, "The Vision and the Riddle"*

# The Eternal Recurrence



Thus I spoke, more and more softly; for I was afraid of my own thoughts and the thoughts behind my thoughts. Then suddenly I heard a dog howl nearby. Had I ever heard a dog howl like this? My thoughts raced back. Yes, when I was a child, in the most distant childhood: then I heard a dog howl like this. And I saw him too, bristling, his head up, trembling, in the stillest midnight when even dogs believe in ghosts—and I took pity: for just then the full moon, silent as death, passed over the house; just then it stood still, a round glow—still on the flat roof, as if on another's property—that was why the dog was terrified, for dogs believe in thieves and ghosts. And when I heard such howling again I took pity again.

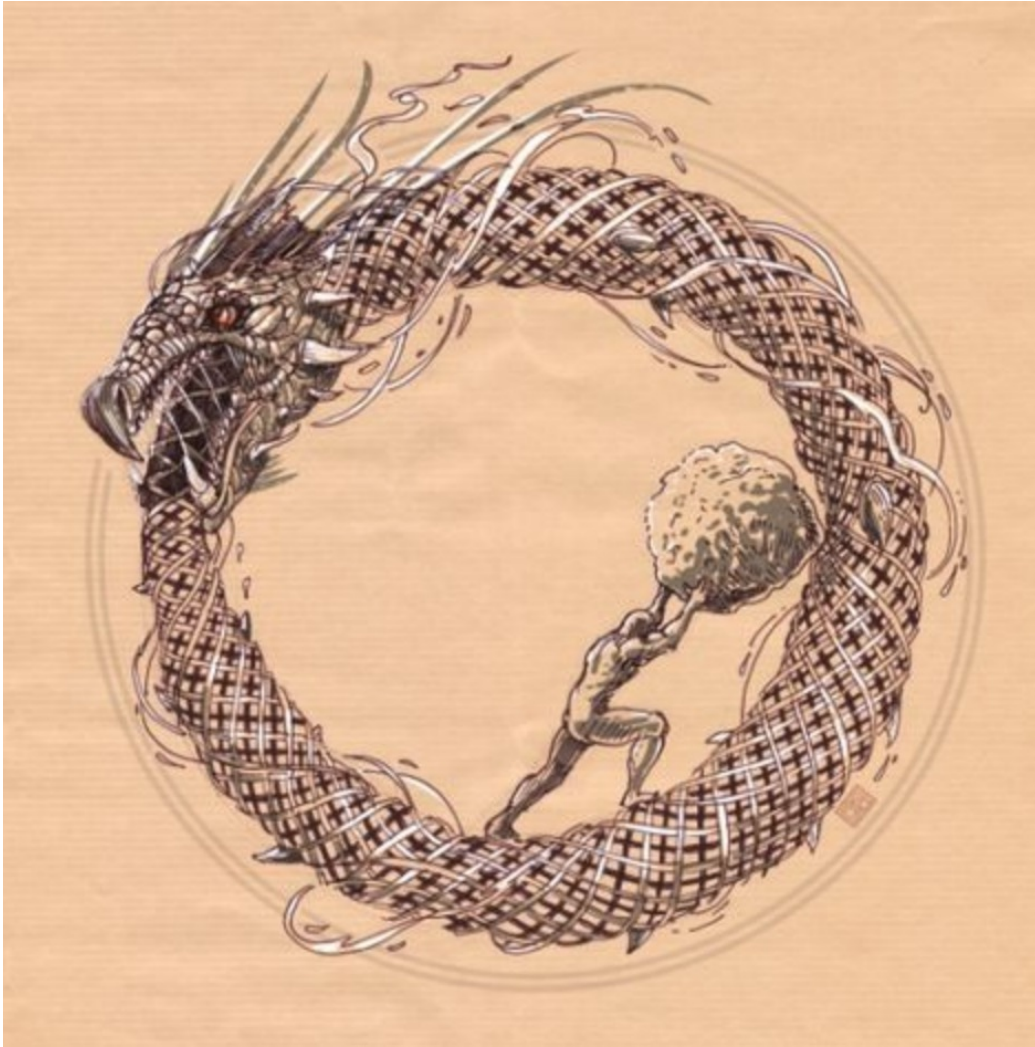
Where was the dwarf gone now? And the gateway? And the spider? And all the whispering? Was I dreaming, then? Was I waking up?

Among wild cliffs I stood suddenly alone, bleak, in the bleakest moonlight. *But there lay a man.* And there—the dog, jumping, bristling, whining—now he saw me coming; then he howled again, he *cried*. Had I ever heard a dog cry like this for help? And verily, what I saw—I had never seen the like. A young shepherd I saw, writhing, gagging, in spasms, his face distorted, and a heavy black snake hung out of his mouth. Had I ever seen so much nausea and pale dread on one face? He seemed to have been asleep when the snake crawled into his throat, and there bit itself fast. My hand tore at the snake and tore in vain; it did not tear the snake out of his throat. Then it cried out of me: “Bite! Bite its head off! Bite!” Thus it cried out of me—my dread, my hatred, my nausea, my pity, all that is good and wicked in me cried out of me with a single cry.

*Thus Spoke Zarathustra, “The Vision and the Riddle”*



# The Eternal Recurrence



An ouroboros and the myth of Sisyphus

You bold ones who surround me! You searchers, researchers, and whoever among you has embarked with cunning sails on unexplored seas. You who are glad of riddles! Guess me this riddle that I saw then, interpret me the vision of the loneliest. For it was a vision and a foreseeing. *What* did I see then in a parable? And who is it who must yet come one day? *Who* is the shepherd into whose throat the snake crawled thus? *Who* is the man into whose throat all that is heaviest and blackest will crawl thus?

The shepherd, however, bit as my cry counseled him; he bit with a good bite. Far away he spewed the head of the snake—and he jumped up. No longer shepherd, no longer human—one changed, radiant, *laughing!* Never yet on earth has a human being laughed as he laughed! O my brothers, I heard a laughter that was no human laughter; and now a thirst gnaws at me, a longing that never grows still. My longing for this laughter gnaws at me; oh, how do I bear to go on living! And how could I bear to die now!

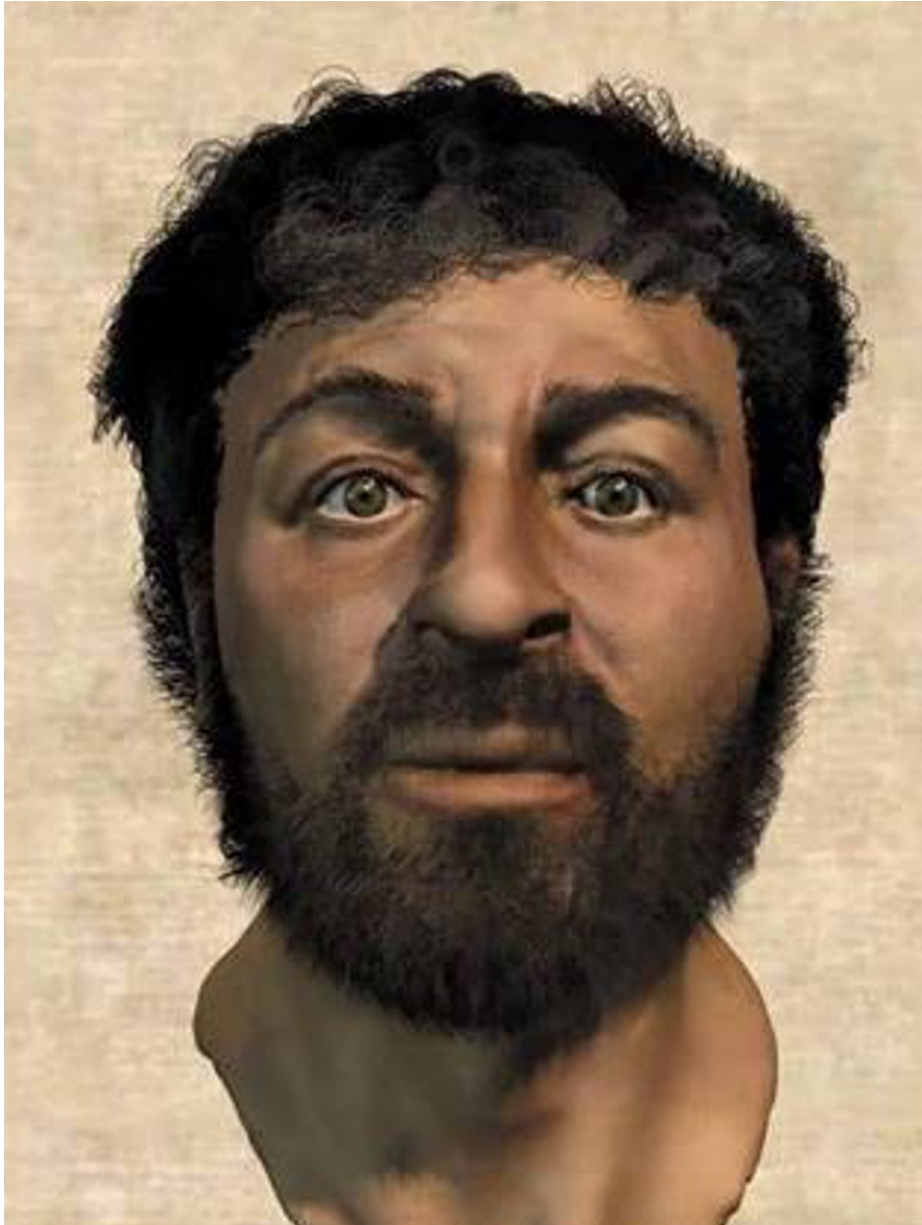
*Thus Spoke Zarathustra, “The Vision and the Riddle”*



The “kingdom of heaven” is a state of the heart—not something that is to come “above the earth” or “after death.” The whole concept of natural death is lacking in the evangel: death is no bridge, no transition; it is lacking because it belongs to a wholly different, merely apparent world, useful only insofar as it furnishes signs. The “hour of death” is no Christian concept—an “hour,” time, physical life and its crises do not even exist for the teacher of the “glad tidings.” The “kingdom of God” is nothing that one expects; it has no yesterday and no day after tomorrow, it will not come in “a thousand years”—it is an experience of the heart; it is everywhere, it is nowhere.

*The Antichrist*, §34

*Christ Interrogated by The Grand Inquisitor*,  
Ilya Glazunov, oil on canvas, 1985.



An artist rendering of the 'genuine' face of Jesus

I go back, I tell the *genuine* history of Christianity. The very word “Christianity” is a misunderstanding: in truth, there was only *one* Christian, and he died on the cross.

It is false to the point of nonsense to find the mark of the Christian in a “faith,” for instance, in the faith in redemption through Christ: only Christian *practice*, a life such as he *lived* who died on the cross, is Christian.

Such a life is still possible today, for certain people even necessary: genuine, original Christianity will be possible at all times. Not a faith, but a doing; above all, a *not* doing of many things, another state of *being*.

*The Antichrist*, §39

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