Zarathustra, Zhuangzi and Zen: 
The Challenge of Remaining Loyal to the Earth in the Time of Climate Change

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Until the End of the World

So often these days it feels like that scene in Wim Wenders' Odyssean epic film Until the End of the World when, in the middle of a kiss, the engine suddenly cuts out in their small single engine plane, leaving Claire and Sam adrift over the Australian outback. "It's the end of the world," Claire concludes, understanding that the engine failure was likely the result of an electromagnetic pulse from the explosion of an out-of-control nuclear satellite.¹ Of course, it turned out not to be the end of the world. The apocalyptic setting of the famously long film just added a sense of urgency to Wenders' primary concerns in exploring the blinding power of images, the importance of dreams, and the search for love and the meaning of existence. Sam was able to bring the plane down, and at the end of the film, set sometime in the beginning of the 21st century, Claire is an astronaut, orbiting the earth as an ecological observer. Made in 1991 and set in the future of late 1999, the film anticipated some of the technology that has come to pass like wireless communication, video-phones and a GPS-like device. What the film did not anticipate, what perhaps only a few could have anticipated when the film was made, is what an ecological observer orbiting the earth would see today, and that is the dramatic loss of sea ice in the Arctic ocean. Climate scientists are most alarmed by what has been taking place in the Arctic—the dramatic increase in temperature, the loss of sea ice, and the release of vast quantities of methane—because they understand that these developments could signal a tipping point, beyond which climate change becomes unstoppable no matter what we do.² Some scientists think that we are already beyond the tipping point, and that ecological collapse is now inevitable, and that we really don't have much time left.³ When one really faces up to the monstrous widening gyre of the deepening ecological crisis, all the interrelated problems posed by the extraction of energy that drives human civilization and the disposal of the wastes of that civilization, and when one factors in the problem posed by the depletion of resources and burgeoning population growth, it becomes clear that, even if we have not yet passed that tipping point, there is a distinct, more palpable sense that we are perhaps like
Wender's protagonists, powerless and adrift, hurtling over a desolate landscape toward the end of the world.\textsuperscript{4}

It is from this perspective, facing up to the seriousness of the problem of climate change and the ecological crisis, that I wish to here reflect a little on the relevance of Nietzsche's thought for us today, and in particular on some of the themes of the work of Graham Parkes, who has been one of the most influential voices in drawing out both the relevance of Nietzsche's thought for environmental philosophy, and also the resonances between Nietzsche's thought and Asian philosophy, particularly Daoism and Zen. The relevance of Nietzsche's thought for environmental philosophy is perhaps best suggested in \textit{Thus Spoke Zarathustra}, in the protagonist’s exhortation to "remain loyal" or “stay true to the earth” (Nietzsche 2005, 66). Nietzsche's diagnosis of the crisis facing humankind is that it is rooted in a system of values that has its origins in a longing for another world. Nietzsche calls attention to the denial of this world in Socrates' last words, in Plato's portrayal of the body and the earthly realm as a prison from which the soul must be liberated. One of the major themes of Nietzsche's writings concerns how Christianity developed out of the same sickness expressed in Socrates' last words.\textsuperscript{5} The longing for another world is, for Nietzsche, a symptom of a deep psychological malady in human beings. This sickness, or weariness with life, led to life-denying values that shaped the development of Western culture. Modern civilization thus developed upon a misunderstanding of the relationship between spirit and nature, human beings and the natural world. Just as the soul had to be understood as fundamentally separate from the body, human beings had to be seen as completely different, and of a higher order, than all the rest of the natural world. Human beings came to have a poor understanding, not only of themselves, but also the natural world, not seeing the interdependence that makes life possible. It was just not understood how the earth could be our home.

From the early writings to the last, Nietzsche was highly critical of the anthropocentrism that separated human beings from the natural world, as well as the teleological understanding of nature as intended by God to serve human interests. In the last writings, Nietzsche asserts that the "human being is by no means the crown of creation: every creature is, alongside the human, at a similar level of perfection" (Nietzsche \textit{The Antichrist}, §14). Mocking the hubris of the view that humans are of a higher order, Nietzsche goes on to say that humans are, relatively speaking, the "sickest of animals," as Parkes explains, "for having strayed so far from the instincts, attempting to extirpate the natural drives and passions (Parkes 2005, 85). This sickness leads to the modern stance toward
nature that Nietzsche condemns in a passage, which Parkes finds to be especially "ecologically prescient," from *The Genealogy of Morals*: "Today our whole attitude toward nature is one of hubris, our violation of nature with the aid of machines and the thoughtless ingenuity of technicians and engineers" (Nietzsche 1996, 92).

Nietzsche's project of a revaluation of all values was expressed in Zarathustra's exhortation that human beings need to overcome the weariness with life and become capable of affirming life and remaining loyal to the earth. Zarathustra's teachings thus emphasize that the soul is really something about the body, and that human beings are part of nature, the product of a long evolutionary development like all living beings. Zarathustra's speeches to human beings focused on overcoming the values of the past, while his wanderings through the natural world and engagement with many animals, including his closest companions, an eagle and a serpent, suggest a new relationship to the earth.

Despite Zarathustra's intimate engagement with nature, Nietzsche has not often been thought of as an important environmental philosopher. The reason for this perhaps comes down to two main concerns. On the one hand, some find the key conceptions of the *Overhuman* and *will to power* to be incompatible with an environmental philosophy. Parkes calls attention to the widespread view "that Nietzsche is such a strong advocate of will to power as domination and exploitation that one cannot sensibly count him as a contributor to environmental philosophy" (Parkes 2005, 77). On the other hand, there is the argument that even though Nietzsche may have sought a perspective that is loyal to the earth, his critique of truth inevitably leads to a nihilistic relativism that undermines any basis for an ecologically sound philosophy. Parkes attempts to meet both these objections to a "green" reading of Nietzsche, and in drawing out the resonances between Nietzsche's thought and Daoism and Zen, Parkes suggests that "Nietzsche's philosophy of nature, his understanding of the natural world and human existence as interdependent processes and dynamic configurations of will to power, can contribute to grounding a realistic, global ecology that in its loyalty to the earth may be capable of saving it" (Parkes 1999, 185).
The Wandering Dance of Zarathustra and Zhuangzi

Parkes traces the development of Nietzsche's thinking about nature from an early Romanticist view emphasizing a mystical union with the natural world, through a "coolly scientific phase" of Nietzsche's thinking about nature, and then to the mature writings, culminating in Thus Spoke Zarathustra, which emphasize a loyalty to the earth, a reverence for the ultimately enigmatic nature of things, and "a profound and comprehensive vision of humanity and the natural cosmos as dynamic and interpenetrating configurations of what he called 'will to power'" (Parkes 1999, 168).

The early tendency to express a feeling of mystical union with the natural world, is most obvious in The Birth of Tragedy when Nietzsche describes the ecstatic Dionysian experience as one in which "each one feels himself not only united, reconciled, and fused with his neighbor, but as one with him, as if the veil of māyā had been torn aside and were now fluttering in tatters before the mysterious primordial unity" (Nietzsche 1967, 37). Along with this Romanticist conception of nature, Nietzsche's early writings also express a decidedly anti-anthropocentric view, as Parkes points out in calling attention to a note from the period in which Nietzsche "cites with approval the view of Heraclitus that 'the human being does not by any means occupy a privileged position in nature'" (Parkes 1999, 168).

In the middle period Parkes sees a tension developing in Nietzsche's thinking about nature. On the one hand, in Nietzsche writings at this time, there is a growing awareness of how our conceptions of nature are "conditioned by various kinds of fantasy projections" (Parkes 1999, 168). In contrast to this, however, there is also, according to Parkes, the need to withdraw these projections. "The tension," Parkes explains, "between a view that understands fantasy projection as an ineluctable (if occasionally see-throughable) aspect of the human condition and one that allows for a seeing of the world of nature as it is in itself, apart from human projections on to it, persists to the time of Zarathustra" (Parkes 1999, 170). In the key passage Parkes draws attention to in suggesting that Nietzsche allows for a "withdrawal of at least some kinds of projection," Nietzsche seems to suggest the task of renaturalizing the human being with a newly discovered nature:
The total character of the world, by contrast, is for all eternity chaos, not in the sense of a lack of necessity but a lack of order, organization, form, beauty, wisdom and whatever else our aesthetic anthropomorphisms are called. . . . When will we have completely de-deified nature? When may we begin to naturalize humanity with a pure, newly discovered, newly redeemed nature? (Nietzsche 2001, 110) (Parkes 1999, 169)

This task of renaturalizing the human involves a twofold process, as Parkes explains, "to strip away the fantastic metaphysical interpretations of human origins that have obscured human nature, and to confront human beings with nature itself, similarly stripped of human projections" (Parkes 1999, 179). The key passage in Zarathustra where Parkes also finds this suggestion in Nietzsche's thought is Zarathustra's blessing in "Before Sunrise":

But this is my blessing: to stand over each and every thing as its own heaven, as its round roof, its azure bell and eternal security. . . .
For all things are baptized at the fount of eternity and beyond good and evil. . . .
Verily, a blessing it is and no blasphemy when I teach: "Over all things stands the Heaven Accident, the Heaven Innocence, the Heaven Contingency, the Heaven Exuberance."
"Lord of Contingency"—that is the oldest nobility in the world, which I restored to all things when I redeemed them from their bondage under purpose. (Nietzsche 2015, 143)

As Parkes explains elsewhere: "'Before Sunrise' is of crucial importance since it seems to go beyond Nietzsche's customary perspectivism and allows for an experience of the world that is not merely 'from our little corner' but from a horizon that transcends anthropocentric views" (Parkes 2000, 192).

Ever since his seminal essay that introduced the theme of a "wandering dance" in both Zarathustra and Zhuangzi, Parkes has drawn attention to the resonance between Nietzsche's thought and Daoism in a common critique of anthropocentrism (Parkes 1983, 243-44). To begin with, it is worth noting that the sharp separation between human beings and nature, which is such a distinctive feature of Western thought, just doesn't arise in Chinese philosophy because of what Roger Ames has called the "assumed mutuality and collaterality" of the 'three powers' of Heaven (tian 天), Earth (di 地), and human beings (ren 人) in Chinese cosmology (Ames 2018, 259). The notion of Heaven, as Parkes explains, did not "signify a transcendent realm beyond this world, as in the dualistic metaphysics of the Platonist or Christian traditions, since the three powers were
always regarded as belonging together" (Parkes 2018, 66). The notion of Heaven evolved over time, as Parkes continues, "from originally meaning a sky god who ruled the cosmos, then fate in the sense of an all-encompassing power beyond human control, the sky (as in 'the heavens') . . . and eventually to an impersonal standard for human conduct" (ibid.). By the time of Confucius, the notion had become "a relatively impersonal force of nature that reigned over the worlds of Earth and humans beneath it" (ibid.). The phrase "the heavens and the earth" (tiandi 天地) is often used to refer to the 'whole world', or 'cosmos', and thus might be understood as 'nature' in the broadest sense of the natural world or universe. The Confucian sense of the Mandate of Heaven (tian ming 天命), which traditionally was used to justify the power of the ruler, came to suggest an awareness, that Confucius claimed he only achieved at age fifty, of seeing one's life, whether for Confucius as a teacher or the life of a ruler, in the broader context, as Parkes explains, "not just of social and historical strictures but also what's given by the natural world and the biological body" (Parkes 2018, 67).

Nevertheless, despite the awareness of this broader context, since Confucius emphasized that "it is the person (ren 人) who is able to broaden the way (dao 道), not the way that broadens the person" (Ames & Rosemont 1998, 190) there was always more of an emphasis on the human and the social in the development of Confucianism. For the Daoist philosophers, the Confucian focus on human beings was too narrow, and thus the Daoist texts, both the Daodejing (or Laozi) and the Zhuangzi, emphasize trying to take a wider view and see what is human in the perspective of the vast (da 大), the vastness of "the heavens and the earth" (tiandi 天地). As Parkes explains, "Whereas Confucius developed a comprehensive humanism aimed at the good of society as a whole, the Laozi advocates a distinctly non-anthropocentric political philosophy for the purpose of integrating human existence with the processes of the natural world, the energies of Heaven and Earth" (Parkes 2018, 78). As Parkes puts it, the Confucians lacked "a robust engagement with the natural world" while the Daoist philosophers focused on "the Way as the unifying pattern of all three realms" (Parkes 2018, 79).

Parkes draws an affinity between this Daoist view and Nietzsche's project of renaturalizing human beings with a newly redeemed, de-divinized understanding of nature. Both Nietzsche and the Daoist philosophers, as Parkes explains, "share the view that the major problem is anthropocentrism—as a cause and also a symptom of a relationship with nature that is out of joint"
(Parkes 1989, 80). In the Daodejing there is the remark that "the heavens and the earth are impartial in treating the myriad things (wanwu 萬物) as straw dogs" (Ames & Hall 2010, 84). Parkes draws a comparison with this view and Nietzsche's de-divinized understanding of nature as amoral (Parkes 1989, 81). In contrast to the view expressed in Genesis that the Earth and all of its creatures were created for human beings, Nietzsche shares the Daoist view that "Heaven and Earth" are not, as Parkes more recently puts it, "especially concerned with the human species" (Parkes 2018, 79). Parkes points out that this "transhumanist and un-anthropocentric" Daoist world view emphasizes that human beings are "irrevocably subject to the powers of Heaven and Earth" and thus, drawing attention to another famous passage in the Daodejing, must approach the task of governing by "following the ways of nature" (Parkes 2018, 79):

    Human beings emulate the earth,
    The earth emulates the heavens,
    The heavens emulate way-making,
    And way-making emulates what is spontaneously so (ziran 自然). (Ames & Hall 2010, 115)

Instead of merely exploiting nature for human purposes, this Daoist view would suggest, for example, that humans first understand the consequences upon the environment before even considering the massive burning of fossil fuels that powers our modern industrial society. Parkes suggests that Nietzsche's critique of the hubris of the modern stance toward nature resonates with this Daoist view. Parkes also draws attention to Zhuangzi's celebration of the value of uselessness, like a tree so gnarled and twisted it can never be cut down and used by a carpenter, comparing this with Nietzsche's critique of the teleological view of nature.

Parkes calls attention to a similar use of imagery drawn from the natural world, both in the Daoist texts and in Zarathustra. Though Nietzsche had jettisoned any vestige of Romanticist metaphysics, the Romanticist conception of nature as a place to go for healing, for overcoming the alienation of modernity is abundantly evident in Zarathustra's wanderings. Though Zarathustra does engage the people in the towns, he is always on the move, traversing a wide landscape, or on board a ship at sea, visiting blessed islands, and constantly returning to his home in the mountains.

Seven times in the course of the story Zarathustra returns to his mountain cave, which—in contrast to Plato's cave—will be a place where Zarathustra finds rejuvenation and wisdom. Parkes surveys
the various streams of imagery in Zarathustra and contends that the use of such imagery suggests that "the way to overcome the human is to acknowledge and emulate the nonhuman nature—mineral, animal, vegetal—of which we are composed and on which we depend" (Parkes 2005, 82).

In the *Daodejing* the majority of similes for dao, as Parkes observes, are drawn from nature; human beings are encouraged to be more like water, thawing ice, or an uncarved block of wood. Especially striking in the *Daodejing*, as Parkes notes, is the imagery that suggests the dao flows like water.

> The highest efficacy is like water.
> It is because water benefits everything (*wanwu*)
> Yet vies to dwell in places loathed by the crowd
> That it comes nearest to proper way-making. (Ames & Hall 2010, 87)

In "The Wandering Dance," Parkes emphasizes that *Zarathustra* and *Zhuangzi* are "first and foremost works of imagery" (Parkes 1983, 236). "Beyond being works of the philosophical imagination," Parkes continues, "both texts share the same kinds of images. The primary source of imagery is the natural world: the elements—sky, earth, fire, and water; the sun, moon, and stars; the climate, weather, and seasons; and the realms of plant and animal" (Parkes 1983, 237). The Daoist view, Parkes concludes in the recent essay, "is not only that human beings will flourish if they emulate natural processes, but also that this happens primarily because the best ruler is the most consummulate emulator—of water especially" (Parkes 2018, 82). Thus, just as the Daoists texts recommend emulating nature in a decidedly non-anthropocentric view, Parkes contends that Zarathustra's teaching of the *Overhuman* is "profoundly relevant for ecological thinking" since it "signifies a way of being that is attained by 'overcoming' the human, which, as the rest of *Zarathustra* shows, requires that one go beyond the merely human perspective and transcend the anthropocentric view" (Parkes 2005, 81).

Returning to 'Before Sunrise' in *Zarathustra*, Parkes finds that Zarathustra's blessing, in liberating all things from their bondage under purpose, "frees them from any universal teleology, whether stemming from divine providence or the projection of a scientific view of progress, in order to let them be—or rather, come and go—in what Nietzsche calls the 'innocence of becoming'" (Parkes 1999, 172). Parkes also finds Zarathustra's blessing to resonate with both Daoism and Zen in allowing things to be just as they are: "Just as the Daoist sage and the Zen master are able to
experience events in the "self-so-ing of their spontaneous unfolding, so Zarathustra's blessing lets each particular thing generate its own horizons, arising and perishing just as it does. In terms of environmental ethics, to experience in this way allows one to appreciate the intrinsic value of the natural world absolutely" (Parkes 2005, 89). Parkes finds the resonance especially in the Zhuangzi. In the 'Autumn Floods' dialogue in the Outer Chapters, there is a passage that suggests that even though, "Heaven and earth have supreme beauty but do not speak, the four season have clear standards but do not judge, the myriad things have perfect patterns but to not explain," somehow the sage is able to "penetrate the pattern of the myriad things" by "fathoming the beauty of heaven and earth." How is this so? The next line explains that because "the utmost man does nothing" and "the great sage does not imitate" he is able to have "a full view of heaven and earth" (Graham 1981, 148). Parkes finds a similarity here with Nietzsche's suggestion of a withdrawal of "the ego-generated anthropomorphic projections that vitiate our relations with natural phenomena" that would thus open up a full view of nature stripped of these projections (Parkes 1989, 80). There is also an important passage in the Inner Chapters where Zhuangzi suggests the importance of knowing the difference between the human and Heaven:

'To know what is Heaven's doing and what is man's is the utmost in knowledge. Whoever knows what Heaven does lives the life generated by Heaven. Whoever knows what a man does uses what his wits knows about to nurture what they do not know about. To last out the years assigned by Heaven and not be cut off in mid-course, this is the perfection of knowledge.' (Graham 1981, 84)

It is extremely difficult, as Zhuangzi goes on to explain, to really know the difference between Heaven and the human; but in another passage, Zhuangzi suggests the way to do this is by fasting of the heart-mind (xin 心): "Don't listen with your ears, listen with your heart-mind. No, don't listen with your heart-mind, but listen with your spirit (qi 氣). Listening stops with the ears, the heart-mind stops with recognition, but spirit is empty and waits on all things. The Way gathers in emptiness alone. Emptiness is the fasting of the heart-mind" (Watson 2003, 54). As Parkes explains, this fasting of the heart-mind "dissolves sedimented judgments and prejudices in the mind, and loosens habitual reactions in the body, so that the energies of heaven and earth can flow through unimpeded and keep the practitioner on course" (Parkes 2013, 13). Parkes draws the
comparison with Zarathustra's blessing: "Just as the Daoist sage (a precursor of the Zen master) is able to broaden his perspective to the point where he is able to 'illumine all things in the light of heaven,' and by acting in a way harmonious with heaven and earth can 'help the ten-thousand things by themselves', so Zarathustra's blessing lets each particular thing generate its own horizons and be (or, rather, become: arise and perish) just as it is" (Parkes 2000, 192-193).

Here we come to a crucial question raised in Parkes' attempt to defend Nietzsche as an ecological thinker and to draw resonances between Nietzsche's thought and Daoism, and it is a question that has profound implications for understanding both Nietzsche's thought and Daoism. To what extent do we really find, either in Nietzsche's thought or in Daoism, the notion that we can ever discover nature "as it is in itself" completely stripped of human projections? This would seem doubtful, at least in the case of Nietzsche, considering the role that art plays in his thinking throughout his writings and also the rather explicit rebuke of the notion of a 'naked truth' that we also find in his writings.

Playing on the fact that the Greek notion for truth [ἀλήθεια] is feminine in gender and also suggests an uncovering or revealing, Nietzsche looks forward to "philosophers of the future" who would be more modest with regard to the woman-truth. It is striking that appended to the work where Parkes finds the first hint of a withdrawal of human projections allowing for a view of nature as it is in itself, is the preface, completed in 1886 after the completion of Zarathustra, where Nietzsche describes the philosophers of the future as ones who "no longer believe that truth remains truth when the veils are withdrawn." There follows a little risqué joke about philosophers and their desire for the naked truth, a joke which includes this explicit recommendation: "One should have more respect for the bashfulness with which nature has hidden behind riddles and iridescent uncertainties" (Nietzsche 2001, 8). Of course, Nietzsche goes on in the preface to Beyond Good and Evil, written that same year, to make fun of the philosophers of the past, portraying them as lovesick suitors, clumsy in their pursuit of the woman-truth, and left standing around all "dispirited and discouraged" because they never understood the woman-truth, never understood that "she has not allowed herself to be won" (Nietzsche 1966, 2). In contrast to this, the philosophers of the future, returning now to the preface to The Joyful Wisdom, will be those who are coming back in a sense to the understanding of the Greeks who "knew how to live"—presumably those Greeks of the tragic age before Socrates and Plato, those who knew how “to stop bravely at the surface, the fold, the skin; to worship appearance, to believe in shapes, tones,

There is a tension in Nietzsche's thought, already in The Birth of Tragedy, between the recognition of the necessity of fantasy projections in the shining forth of the Apollonian and the tearing through or withdrawal of these projections in Dionysian ecstasies. As noted earlier, Nietzsche was close to Romanticism in suggesting that in the Dionysian experience the veil of māyā is torn aside revealing the deeper truth of a primordial unity behind the veil. And yet, if there is a preview of Nietzsche's mature thought in his first book, as John Sallis has argued, it is in the "shimmering shining" that results when the Apollonian and Dionysian are brought together in Greek tragedy. What this suggests is not a stripping away of all human projections revealing nature as it is in itself, but rather the more modest recognition that all of our 'truths,' including our views about nature, are the result of an artistic drive that is at work in all our attempts to make sense of existence.

To put the matter another way, if the task of philosophy since Plato was understood as the challenge of ascending out of the dream-world of the cave and awakening to the real world, Nietzsche counters with the notion of the lucid dream. If the Apollonian in The Birth of Tragedy is associated with dreaming, and the Dionysian with the shattering of the dream, when they are brought together, as in Greek tragedy, what results, Nietzsche suggests, is not an awakening from the dream, but rather the awareness that one is dreaming. The problem with the philosophers of the past, in addition to not understanding the woman-truth, Nietzsche suggests, is that they naively think that they have awoken from the dream. Thus, again in The Joyful Science, in an aphorism titled "The consciousness of appearance," Nietzsche takes up that courage to stop at the surface and, like the philosophers of the tragic age, adore the Olympus of appearances: "I suddenly woke up in the middle of this dream, only to the consciousness that I am dreaming and that I must go on dreaming lest I perish—as a somnambulist most go on dreaming lest he fall" (Nietzsche 1974, 116). The connection of art with lucid dreaming in Nietzsche's thought perhaps elucidates that much discussed line from the late notebooks: "We possess art lest we perish of the truth" (Nietzsche 1968, 435). This is, at least in part, why Nietzsche thought the high point of Greek culture was not Socrates and Plato, but rather Aeschylus and Sophocles. Socrates and Plato had a naively optimistic view that it was possible to awaken from the dream and discover the truth about
the nature of things, while Aeschylus and Sophocles had the courage to face the abysmal truth that there is no truth apart from our own artistic projections or interpretations; and that, in contrast to Socrates and Plato's dismissal of art, they understood this healing capacity of art that enables one to go on living. Returning now to the end of the preface to Beyond Good and Evil, this is why Nietzsche jokes that perhaps Socrates deserved the hemlock after all for corrupting the youth of Athens, since he led Plato astray in denying "perspective, the basic condition of all life" (Nietzsche 1966, 3). Considering all this, it is thus hard to see how Nietzsche ever withdraws from his customary perspectivism as Parkes sometimes suggests.

In his anticipations of a 'philosophy of the future' Nietzsche has often been considered something of a postmodern prophet. Of course, Lyotard once described the postmodern condition as an "incredulity toward metanarratives" (Lyotard 1984, ??). What Lyotard meant is a general suspicion regarding any attempts to tell the grand story, the 'ultimate and real' account of what it is all about, the meaning of existence, the final truth about reality. When Nietzsche raises the question, 'Why couldn't the world that concern us be a fiction?' he is raising that suspicion regarding metanarratives (Nietzsche 1966, 47). There is no ultimate, final, naked truth because we cannot look around our own corner. There is no 'pure reason' that could reveal a truth without veils because all knowing involves an active interpretation from particular perspective points of view. This is also what Derrida meant by the controversial phrase "il n'y a pas de hors-texte" (Derrida 1967, 159), often mistranslated as 'there is nothing outside the text' and thus misunderstood as the claim that there is nothing outside of language. What the phrase really says is that 'there is no outside-text' or, in other words, there is no truth without veils, no access to a reality that is not already a product of interpretation. The modesty of Nietzsche's 'philosophy of the future' is then to acknowledge that the world that concerns us is a fiction, a product of interpretation. There may be narratives, stories we tell ourselves about the point of it all and the nature of nature, but there is no 'ultimate and real' story or 'metanarrative.'

Steven Vogel addresses this and notes that there has been some anxiety among environmental philosophers since there is this "vague sense that 'postmodernism,' by turning the whole world into a text, denies the very existence of nature and therefore the significance of attempts either to understand the dangers to which it is currently exposed or to argue for the need to protect it" (Vogel 1998, 169). The postmodern, or poststructuralist 'critique of nature,' Vogel goes on to explain, targets the notion of nature as origin—the view that there is "nature" in the sense of "a stable world
that precedes humans, ontologically prior to human activity and to the social structures (and the language) within which that activity takes place" (Vogel 1998, 170). As Vogel puts it, the project of deconstruction that begins with Derrida "is a project of taking that which appears to be original, foundational—in a word: natural—and revealing the complex processes of linguistic and social construction required to produce that appearance" (Vogel 1998, 170).

To what extent does Parkes' attempt to pull Nietzsche back from his customary perspectivism amount to a return to this notion of nature as origin that is the target of the poststructuralist critique? Parkes seems to share the anxiety Vogel mentions when he addresses a recent essay, "Zhuangzi and Nietzsche on the Human and Nature," to the problem posed by the deconstruction of "nature" in which "nature is always socially constructed, so we can never reach anything like 'pure' nature in itself, apart from human factors that condition all experience of it" (Parkes 2013, 2). It is difficult to answer, however, whether or not, or to what extent, Parkes' position on Zhuangzi and Nietzsche on the human and nature ends up reverting to this view of nature as origin. On the one hand, Parkes responds to the view that "Nietzsche strongly emphasizes that we can only know interpretations of nature and never nature as it is in itself" by emphasizing that even though Nietzsche "is certainly concerned with our interpretations of and projections on to the natural world, but this does not mean that we can never know nature 'as it is in itself'" (Parkes 2005, 87). Parkes goes on to explain that Nietzsche acknowledges that "the way the drives interpret the world is naturally conditioned by culture," and that he also "emphasizes how much these projections have varied in different historical epochs, and under the sway of different cultures and religions," recognizing that "we are always interpreting, fantasizing, or 'dreaming' in this way" (Parkes 2005, 88). Emphasizing again the tension in Nietzsche's thought, Parkes reports that Nietzsche sometimes suggests that perhaps "the best we can do is to become aware of, and take responsibility for, this process"; and yet, at other times Nietzsche also "entertains the possibility of seeing things 'as they are'—a view Parkes compares, as we have seen, with Zhuangzi's emptying of the heart-mind allowing for a 'full view of heaven' (ibid). Parkes cites a brief note from the Nachlass in support of this contention: "The task: to see things as they are!" (ibid).

And yet, it turns out this 'seeing things as they are' is not a rejection of perspectivism, a seeing from no perspective, but rather an encouragement to expand one's horizons and see with as many perspectives as possible. As Parkes explains, "since there are multiple drives within each individual, one acquires a better sense of what is going on by entertaining as many different
perspectives, letting as many drives interpret as possible" (Parkes 2005, 87-88). The means to be able to see things 'as they are' it turns out, as Nietzsche explains in the note Parkes cites here, is "to be able to see with a hundred eyes, from many persons!" This echoes the passage from the *Genealogy* in which Nietzsche warns of the danger of the "old conceptual fiction that posited a 'pure wil-less, painless, timeless knowing subject'" as well as the "snares of such contradictory concepts as 'pure reason,' 'absolute spirituality,' 'knowledge in itself'" which always "demand that we should think of an eye that is completely unthinkable, an eye turned in no particular direction, in which the active and interpreting forces, through which alone seeing becomes seeing something, are supposed to be lacking." Nietzsche flatly states that these conceptions "always demand of the eye an absurdity and a nonsense" and then he goes on to emphasize:

There is only a perspective "knowing"; and the more affects we allow to speak about one thing, the more eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our "concept" of this thing, our "objectivity," be. But to eliminate the will altogether, to suspend each and every affect, supposing we were capable of this—what would that mean but to castrate the intellect? (Nietzsche 1967B, 119).

Now it turns out that in Parkes' initial essay comparing *Zarathustra* and *Zhuangzi*, we do not find the suggestion that there is ever any pulling away from perspectivism, either in Nietzsche or Zhuangzi. There we find Parkes drawing the connection between Nietzsche "who emphasizes experience is always necessarily perspectival" and Zhuangzi who "does not believe that we could ever attain a kind of 'perspectiveless seeing'" (Parkes 1983, 242-43). It turns out the problem arises, not because we see things from perspective points of view, but only "when we become fixated in a particular perspective" (Parkes 1983, 241). Parkes notes that both thinkers address this problem through the dream, calling attention to both Nietzsche's lucid dreaming in *the consciousness of appearance* and the famous butterfly dream in the *Zhuangzi*:

Once Zhuang Zhou dreamt he was a butterfly, a butterfly flitting and fluttering around, happy with himself and doing as he pleased. He didn't know he was Zhuang Zhou. Suddenly, he woke up and there he was, solid and unmistakable Zhuang Zhou. But he didn't know if he was Zhuang Zhou who had dreamt he was a butterfly, or a butterfly dreaming he was Zhuang Zhou. (Watson 2003, 45)
Parkes even calls attention to the passage in the *Zhuangzi*, just before the butterfly dream, a passage that perhaps makes clear the point of the butterfly dream, where Zhuangzi seems to suggest the notion of lucid dreaming. Whereas Confucius and the Mohists are dense for thinking they are awake when they are still dreaming, Zhuangzi is aware that he is dreaming:

He who dreams of drinking wine may weep when morning comes; he who dreams of weeping may in the morning go off to hunt. While he is dreaming he does not know it is a dream, and in his dream he may even try to interpret a dream. Only after he wakes does he know it was a dream. And someday there will be a great awakening when we know that this is all a great dream. Yet the stupid believe that they are awake, busily and brightly assuming they understand things, calling this man ruler, that one herdsman—how dense! Confucius and you are both dreaming! And when I say you are dreaming, I am dreaming, too. Words like these will be labeled the Supreme Swindle. Yet, after ten thousand generations, a great sage may appear who will know their meaning, and it will still be as though he appeared with astonishing speed. (Watson, 2003, 43)

Perhaps Nietzsche is the sage Zhuangzi anticipates coming after ten thousand generations (well it didn't take quite that long). But the postmodern position opened up in Nietzsche's lucid dreaming surely is thought of as the Supreme Swindle by many today; and it seems that perhaps this is what leads Parkes to attempt to pull Nietzsche and Zhuangzi back from perspectivism at least a little bit in the later essays. But in "The Wandering Dance," Parkes embraces the perspectivism in both thinkers and explains that Zhuangzi's butterfly dream makes the point, "relevant also to Nietzsche's perspectivism, that when one is in a certain perspective it is impossible to see it as a perspective. Only when we are placed in a different perspective can we appreciate the limitations of our former standpoint" (Parkes 1983, 242).

To return again to Nietzsche's thinking about Greek tragedy and the importance of art, in the Apollonian experience one is dreaming but not aware that it is a dream. It takes the shattering of the dream in the Dionysian experience to get one to realize that one is dreaming; but when the two are brought together, as in Greek tragedy, instead of waking up from the dream one continues to dream. The lucid dreaming in Nietzsche and Zhuangzi suggests there is no waking up to recover a conception of nature as origin. This suggests there is no access to a 'nature' prior to human interpretations, and thus, yes, 'nature' is a social construction. But this does not mean we have to remain stuck in the conceptions of 'nature' that have come down to us through this social construction. The task is not to discover nature as it is in itself apart from perspectives, but rather
to broaden our perspectives. Despite the places where Parkes seems to suggest that there is at least a hint of seeing nature as it is in itself apart from human projections in Nietzsche's thought, there are other places where he suggests otherwise: "This is not a transcending toward some God's eye perspective or view from nowhere, but rather a broadening of the human world view to include an appreciation of the perspectives of the natural phenomena with which we share the world" (Parkes 2005, 81). The problem is not that we are dreamers, but is rather, as Parkes explains, "the refusal to admit that we are dreamers, to become aware of the extent to which the 'real world' is projected by human needs and desires, and to celebrate this creative activity by both seeing through and playing with it at the same time" (Parkes 1983, 243).

This play with different perspectives is what the wandering dance is all about. Parkes draws attention to the notion of 'wandering' (yóu 游) in the title of the first chapter of the Zhuangzi, translated as "free and easy wandering" or "going rambling without a destination," and also points out a connotation with 'dance' in the cognate term (yóu 舞) meaning "to dance, float, swim about in water" (Parkes 1983, 243-44). The stories in the chapter, Parkes explains, "conduct the reader through a variety of perspectives ranging from the vegetative through the animal to the human, all point up the limitations of adopting a fixed standpoint" (Parkes 1983, 243). As Parkes understands it, Zhuangzi's perspectivism is not a pernicious relativism because there is a difference between the narrow and the broader perspectives, as is brought out in the story that seems to make fun of the short-lived perspective of the morning mushroom and summer cicada:

The morning mushroom knows nothing of twilight and dawn; the summer cicada knows nothing of spring and autumn. They are the short-lived. South of the Chu there is a caterpillar which counts five hundred years as one spring and five hundred years as one autumn. Long, long ago there was a great rose of Sharon that counted eight thousand years as one spring and eight thousand years as one autumn. They are the long-lived. Yet Pengzu alone is famous today for having lived a long time, and everybody tries to ape him. Isn’t it pitiful! (Watson 2003, 24)

Parkes explains, "Zhuangzi wants us to see that all value judgements are relative insofar as they are made from a particular perspective, and that particular perspectives are by their nature narrow and limited in comparison with the openness of heaven or the way" (Parkes 1989, 86). It is easy to see that our current predicament facing a collapse of our modern civilization due to the
ecological crisis is the result, at least in part, of the inability to see the human in the context of the vastness of "the heavens and the earth" and take up a long-term perspective Zhuangzi seems to recommend here.

Zarathustra is also a wanderer and a dancer, Parkes explains, pointing out that "at the very beginning of the Prologue where, on coming down from the mountain, he meets the old saint, whose first words to him are: 'No stranger to me is this wanderer . . . Zarathustra. . . . Does he not walk like a dancer" (Parkes 1983, 243-44). Zarathustra proceeds to wander, Parkes continues, "from place to place, trying out the perspectives of mountain top and valley, underworld and ocean" (Parkes 1983, 244). The position of humanity today in the crisis of modernity is suggested in the Prologue when a tightrope walker begins to make his way across the tightrope just as Zarathustra begins his first discourse to the people about the Overhuman. To get across that tightrope, the Overhuman "must be a dancer," Parkes explains, "because, through realizing the relativity of all perspectives, he knows that there is no longer any firm ground on which to take a stand" (Parkes 1983, 244). There is no firm ground but only an abyss below the tightrope dancer because there is no naked truth of nature as it is in itself apart from interpretation. As Parkes explains here, "every apparently firm ground (Grund) is, for Nietzsche, an abyss (Abgrund)" (Parkes 1983, 244). How can one make one's way on the tightrope over the abyss? Parkes points here to Zarathustra's answer to this question in the crucial section of Zarathustra titled "On the Vision and the Riddle": "Courage also slays dizziness at the edge of abysses: and where would the human being not stand at the edge of abysses? Is to see not itself—to see abysses?" (Parkes 1983, 244).

It seems that in order to respond to the charge that Nietzsche's perspectivism amounts to a nihilistic relativism that undermines an environmental philosophy, Parkes sometimes seems to want to pull Nietzsche back from the abyss, finding places where he thinks Nietzsche suggests that it is possible to "see things as they are" and confront nature "stripped of human projections" and that it is this aspect of Nietzsche thought that can "contribute to grounding a realistic, global ecology that in its loyalty to the earth may be capable of saving it" (Parkes 1999, 185, emphasis added). But this seems to be at odds with his understanding of will to power, since, as Zarathustra emphasizes, the voice of the will to power is in all the valuations of a people. In the same text Parkes admits, "it all comes down to a question of will to power, conflicts between competing interpretations and world-views" (Parkes 1999, 185). Perhaps the importance of Nietzsche's
thought for environmental philosophy is not in suggesting we can ever view 'nature' as it is, stripped of human projections, but rather in the transformation of humankind, and the social constructions of 'nature' that are the voice of will to power. And this seems to be what Parkes suggests in "The Wandering Dance": "Both Nietzsche and Zhuangzi are psychologically acute philosophers intent on effecting a transformation of our ideas of self and world—and thereby of ourselves" (Parkes 1983, 235). This can now be taken up in considering the resonances Parkes finds between Nietzsche's thought and Mahāyāna Buddhism, and especially Zen Buddhism.

*Zarathustra and Zen*

It is well known that Nietzsche appreciated the psychological acumen of the Buddha's teachings, but because he took the final goal of *nirvāṇa* to mean extinction, to be liberated from the wheel of *samsāra* and not have to come back to this world again, he concluded that Buddhism was also a world negating philosophy, the purest expression of "passive nihilism." In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche describes the thought of eternal recurrence as a joyful affirmation of the world as it is, and contrasts this with the "most world-denying of all possible ways of thinking" which he sees in the philosophy of Schopenhauer and the Buddha (Nietzsche 1966, 68). Despite Nietzsche's negative view of Buddhism, Parkes has drawn affinities between Nietzsche's thought and the Buddha’s central teachings of interdependence (*pratītyasamutpāda*), impermanence (*anitya*), and 'no-self' (*anatman*), and especially with Mahāyāna Buddhism, with which Nietzsche was unfortunately not aware. When *nirvāṇa* is understood, not as a liberation from this world, but rather as another way of being here, as expressed in Nāgārjuna's view that *nirvāṇa* is not fundamentally different from *samsāra*, there is, as Parkes puts it, a "consequential reverence for this world," and this is where "the interesting resonances with Nietzsche's thinking begin" (Parkes 1996, 373). Bret Davis has challenged Parkes' attempt to find a resonance between Nietzsche's thought and Mahāyāna Buddhism, and Zen in particular, finding Nietzsche's central idea of will to power to be incompatible with the 'standpoint of śūnyatā' in Zen. As Davis puts it: "In Nietzsche's affirmation of the egoism of will to power, then, we run up against a formidable limit to the search for 'ironic affinities' with Buddhism" (Davis 2004, 113). In sharp contrast to Nietzsche's assessment of Buddhism, Davis argues that it is the Buddhist path, particularly the way of Zen, which offers "a great affirmation of living otherwise than willing" (Davis 2004, 89). Parkes contends that Davis
has misunderstood Nietzsche "as advocating the 'egoism of will to power'' and that this misunderstanding has led him to "consistently overlook or ignore key aspects of his [Nietzsche's] thinking that are consonant with Buddhist ideas" (Parkes 2014, 42-43). In the background of the exchange between Parkes and Davis on Nietzsche and Zen is the long engagement with Nietzsche's thought by the Kyoto School philosopher Keiji Nishitani. Davis' echoes Nishitani's reading in *Religion and Nothingness*, which itself echoes Heidegger's reading that Nietzsche's thought, in remaining within the subjectivism of modern thought, falls short of overcoming nihilism. Parkes draws more attention to Nishitani's earlier work, *The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism*, which Parkes co-translated, and which was composed before Nishitani travelled to Freiburg in the late 30s to study with Heidegger. In that work, Nishitani found a close affinity between Nietzsche's thought and Buddhism, especially Mahāyāna Buddhism, "in such ideas as *amor fati* and the Dionysian as the overcoming of nihilism" (Nishitani 1990, 180). Davis calls attention to this passage, and remarks that there are "indeed profound points of resonance between Nietzsche and Buddhism, Zen in particular," but notes that Nishitani goes on to develop a "sympathetic critique" of Nietzsche, and for Davis the crucial issue "comes down to the question of the will, that is to say, to a confrontation between Nietzsche's radical affirmation and Buddhism's radical negation of the will" (Davis 2004, 89-90).

Davis notes that Nietzsche's understanding of *nirvāṇa* as extinction, the will to *nirvāṇa* as a will to nothingness, led to his diagnosis of Buddhism as another symptom of the ascetic ideal. Acknowledging that there are few indications of a positive sense of *nirvāṇa* in the early Buddhist texts, Davis points out that it is easy to understand how the early Western understanding of *nirvāṇa* would misunderstand it as a pessimistic doctrine of annihilation. But Davis contends that since what get extinguished in *nirvāṇa*, according to the Buddha's four noble truths, is willful craving or thirst (*taṇhā*), it is "not life as such" that gets extinguished, but rather "the life of cyclical birth and death of the ego" (Davis 2004, 94). There must thus be a positive sense of *nirvāṇa*, Davis explains, as another way of being-in-the-world, "a reaffirmation of life after the extinction of craving" (Davis 2004, 94).

Davis also notes how the Mahāyāna characterization of *nirvāṇa* as "a 'domain' or 'realm' that is 'unconditioned'" has been taken by some as a relapse into a metaphysical assertion of a transcendent world. Nietzsche would undoubtedly, Davis assures, have criticized the Mahāyāna depiction of the 'other shore' as "a nihilistic devaluation of this world" (Davis 2004, 97). But Davis
points out that Mahāyāna thought has many layers, "and the deepest of these layers" involves the "enigmatic teaching" of the relation between *nirvāṇa* and *samsāra*, and "between Bodhisattva wisdom and worldly passions, and between the eternal Buddha Land and the transitory here and now" (Davis 2004, 97). He goes on to note that the Buddha Lands referred to in *The Vimalakīrti Sūtra*, are not somewhere else. Just as Nāgārjuna had explained that *nirvāṇa* is not fundamentally different from *samsāra*, and thus not someplace else, Davis suggests that *nirvāṇa* "implies a different way of being-in-*this*-world" (Davis 2004, 98).13

Following closely Nishitani's engagement with Nietzsche's thought, Davis comes to the same conclusion Nishitani had arrived at in *Religion and Nothingness*: since Nietzsche's thought remains tethered to a "standpoint of will" (Nishitani 1982, 258 and 265), and thus remains only a standpoint of *relative absolute nothingness*" (Nishitani 1982, 66), it falls short of the "standpoint of absolute nothingness" that is the "standpoint of non-ego on the field of śūnyatā" (Davis 2004, 105). Davis notes that in the last line of *Religion and Nothingness*, Nishitani emphasizes: "Unless the thoughts and deeds of man one and all be located on such a field, the sorts of problems that beset humanity have no chance of ever really being solved" (Nishitani 1982, 285).

In the earlier text, Nishitani had noted Nietzsche's closeness to Zen in focusing on the thought of eternal recurrence, the notion of *amor fati*, and the importance of play in Nietzsche's thought and Zen. Nishitani had pointed out there that the "experience of the eternal recurrence of the same," as Davis explains, "threatens to crush the will with the weight of fatalistic necessity" (Davis 2004, 102). But with the notion of *amor fati*, the will undergoes a "'turn of need' (Wende der Not) whereby necessity (Notwendigkeit) becomes one with freedom" (Davis 2004, 102). As Davis notes, this "turn of need" into *amor fati* marks the point, for Nishitani, where one finds "the self-overcoming of nihilism itself in Nietzsche" (Nishitani 1990, 68). Nishitani also called attention in *The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism*, to the importance of laughter in Nietzsche and Zen. Davis thus recalls the passage where Nishitani observes: "when the world and its eternal recurrence become the laughter of the soul, not only the spirit of gravity but also nihilism as 'nihility or the eternal recurrence of what is meaningless' is for the first time shed from the base of the soul" (Nishitani 1990, 67). Nishitani remarks that this "most remarkable feature" of Nietzsche's thought can also be found in Zen, which he describes as "the unique religion that has attained the state of being capable of laughter" (Nishitani 1990, 67). Davis calls attention to the importance of laughter in *Zarathustra*, even noting the crucial passage in which a shepherd jumps up laughing. Davis notes
that Zarathustra yearns for this laugher, but then wonders whether Zarathustra every really learns this laugher.

It is here that Davis turns to the first use of the term 'will to power' in Zarathustra's teaching that the values of a people are the voice of the will to power. Davis wonders whether "nihilism can be 'overcome' by willing new values, by positing new goals" (Davis 2004, 103). The standpoint of will to power, Davis contends, falls short of standpoint of non-ego on the field of śūnyatā, which "requires breaking through all such transmutations of self-centered willing" (Davis 2004, 105).

Since Davis understands nirvāṇa as a 'blowing out of the flame of craving and attachment' (tanha), the standpoint of śūnyatā "demands first of all a radical negation of the will" (Davis 2004, 98). The crux of Davis' reading that Nietzsche falls short of Zen is his understanding of will to power as the willful craving that the Buddha had identified as the cause of suffering: "To the extent that the will to power could be understood as a form of tanha, a critique of the will to power would lie at the very heart of Buddhism" (Davis 2004, 108). Davis calls attention to Rahula's explanation in What the Buddha Taught tracing the world's problems back to this 'thirst' or 'craving' that the Buddha had identified as the root cause of suffering: "According to the Buddha's analysis, all the troubles and strife in the world, from little personal quarrels in families to great wars between nations and countries, arise out of this selfish 'thirst'" (Rahula 1967, 29-30). Whereas Buddhism aims at the cessation of this 'thirst', and thus the dissolution of the ego and it's willing, Davis understands will to power as this egoistic craving. He notes that Nietzsche denies that will to power could be understood as mere craving, and thus the will to power is not the will to exist or the will to live, but, citing from Zarathustra's speech in "On Self-Overcoming," it is the will to be master: "Where I found the living, there I found will to power, and even in the will of one who serves I found a will to be master" (Nietzsche 2005, 99). Thus, Davis concludes: "In short, while for Nietzsche there is no ego as a given, there is the task of constructing an ego, of organizing the plurality of disparate impulses by submitting them to the rule of a commanding will to power" (Davis 2004, 110).

Davis considers whether there is a self-overcoming of will to power in Nietzsche's thought, whether perhaps "Nietzsche's assertions of the crude egoism of the will to power" may be a preliminary stage on the way to the self-overcoming of the Overhuman, and thus merely the 'lion stage' of Nietzsche's thought (Davis 2004, 115). He acknowledges that Zarathustra's 'gift-giving virtue' sounds perhaps like "the first of the 'perfections' of the Bodhisattva, the 'perfection of giving'
without return" and then also wonders whether Zarathustra's 'going under' might be compared to the last of the Ten Oxherding Pictures, "where, in an outpouring of the emptying of emptiness, the old Zen recluse returns to the marketplace with outstretched hands?" (Davis 2004, 114). But, in the end, Davis concludes that whereas Zen aims at the dissolution of the ego, pointing to a way of being "other than willing," Nietzsche emphasizes the "gymnastics of the will" (Davis 2004, 116). At times this gymnastics of the will may seem like Zen training, Davis acknowledges, echoing Nishitani again in pointing to Nietzsche's closeness to Zen in the thought of eternal recurrence and *amor fati*. The ultimate test in this gymnastics of the will involves the thought of eternal recurrence. Davis calls attention to another line in Nietzsche's notebooks: "the highest state a philosopher can attain: to stand in a Dionysian relationship to existence—my formula for this is *amor fati*" (Nietzsche 1968, 536). Davis explains that the "experience of the eternal recurrence can be borne only if the will to power is transformed into a love of fate"; but then he goes on to question whether this love of fate is "the shattering transformation of the will to power or is it its consummation" (Davis 2004, 123). Following Heidegger and Nishitani's readings, Davis concludes that it is the latter. The thought of eternal recurrence is the consummation of the will to power and falls short of the standpoint of śūnyatā "insofar as the idea of eternal recurrence does not allow for the creation of something absolutely new" (Davis 2004, 111).

Calling attention to Nietzsche's confrontation with the problem of suffering in his preface to *The Joyful Wisdom*, Davis finds "a striking account of descending into the depths of the soul, sometimes pressing the limits of one's will, sometimes abandoning oneself to a silent resignation, and finally reemerging from these abysses with a different taste, a 'subtle innocence' that has perhaps begun to twist free of the dualism of will and resignation" (Davis 2004, 121). Davis finds this very close to Zen, but still falling short: "In some respects, it reads like an account of the struggles of a Zen iconoclast in the making. Yet, there remains at least one crucial distinction—a difference that, perhaps, makes all the difference" (Davis 2004, 121). According to Davis, Zen goes beyond Nietzsche in urging "one to proceed through 'the great doubt' (*daigi* 大疑) to the experience of what it calls 'the great death' (*daishi* 大死)" (Davis 2004, 121). The experience of 'the great death' emphasized by the Hakuin leads to a new way of being beyond all willing. The difference that makes all the difference, for Davis, is that in Nietzsche's thought the "standpoint of will' is not cast off," whereas Zen aims at "cutting the roots of the will" (Davis 2004, 122).
Parkes contends that Davis misunderstands Nietzsche in suggesting that he is advocating the "egoism of will to power." As Parkes explains, "a major theme of Nietzsche's psychology, from *The Birth of Tragedy* to *Twilight of the Idols*, is the rejection of the ego as a convenient but ultimately unnecessary fiction" (Parkes 2014b, 87). "Throughout his career," Parkes points out, "Nietzsche regards the I as something that stands in the way of one's becoming what one is" (Parkes 2014a, 44). The crude reading of will to power as a desire for power can be rejected because the 'will' in 'will to power' is not a self-conscious ego. Although he was concerned about the negative consequences, the decadence, that can result from the 'disintegration of the ego', Nietzsche "never talks about the task of constructing an ego" (Parkes 2014a, 43). As Parkes explains in an earlier essay, Nietzsche had "shown the human 'I' to be a fiction generated by the grammatical habit of positing a doer [behind] every doing", and thus, "far from being the 'will power' exerted by the human ego, the will of will to power is (as in Schopenhauer's conception of will) a cosmic force" (Parkes 2005, 84).

There is no point in even considering whether there is an overcoming of will to power in Nietzsche's thought, Parkes explains, because "the will to power is the whole world, and 'there is nothing outside the whole!'" (Parkes 2014a, 54). The phrase *will to power* (*Wille zur Mache*) does not refer to two things, a 'will' and the object of its desire, but rather is an expression for the basic character of existence. As Parkes explains, "the idea of will to power is in a sense the culmination of profound monistic tendencies in the tradition from Leibniz and Spinoza through the German Romantic thinkers" (Parkes 1999, 176). Perhaps most important among these Romantic thinkers in conceiving the will as primal being (*Wille ist Ursein*) is Schelling, although Nietzsche gets it, not from a close reading of Schelling, but Schopenhauer. In adding *zur Mache* to this notion of will as primal being, Nietzsche is emphasizing the dynamic character of existence. *Mache* might also be translated as 'force,' and in a well-known passage from the notebooks Nietzsche describes, here in Parkes' translation, the world as dynamic play of forces:

This world: a monster of forces, without beginning, without end, [. . .] forces everywhere, and as a play of forces one and "many" at the same time, accumulating here and at the same time decreasing there, an ocean of forces storming and streaming into themselves, eternally self-transforming, eternally rushing back [. . .] flowing out from the simplest forms into the most manifold, from the stillest, most rigid, and coldest into the most incandescent, wildest, and most self-contradictory, and then again returning from abundance to the simple, from the play of contradictions to the pleasure of harmony [. . .] this Dionysian world of mine,
Nietzsche's affinity with Heraclitus's conception of existence as an "ever-living fire" or as a continuously flowing river is evident. There are no unchanging, substantial entities in Nietzsche's conception of existence. Everything is in motion as the whole cosmos is an ocean of forces. Even within the soul Nietzsche finds, not a substantial entity, and not a single force, but waves of forces. This conception of the entire world as "will to power and nothing besides" is not "an instance of anthropocentrism," Parkes explains, "since Nietzsche has just desubstantialized the 'soul' into a configuration of forces ('a social structure of the drives and affects') [. . .] and demonstrated 'will' to be a complex function of forces issuing from a social structure of multiple 'souls' within the body" (Parkes 2005, 84). In undermining the concept of a substantial self Nietzsche echoes the no-self doctrine in Buddhism, as Parkes explains, "[a]ll this corresponds to the idea of 'no-self' (anatman) that is central to Buddhism and which, on the basis of a radically relational ontology, applies equally to the I and to things" (Parkes 2014a, 44). In Beyond Good and Evil, Nietzsche writes: A living thing seeks above all to discharge its strength—life itself is will to power; self-preservation is only one of the indirect and most frequent results" (Nietzsche 1966, 21). All living things, Nietzsche suggests, from the smallest organisms to the most complex like human beings are this play of forces. Nietzsche's suggestion that the whole cosmos is also this ocean of forces that is will to power might perhaps be compared with the jeweled net of Indra in the Flower Garland Sutra where the universe is described as a net of jewels, each one reflecting, like fractal patterns that repeat across scale, all the other jewels in the net.

In human beings, this play of forces that is will to power operates to a significant extent below the surface of consciousness, and thus is not the 'will' of a self-conscious ego. In Composing the Soul, Parkes explores in great depth this play of forces that compose the soul in Nietzsche's psychology. The conscious fictive 'I' is for the most part unaware of the multiple drives at work beneath the surface of consciousness. It is through the work of the drives that the world is interpreted. One might well ask what the drives interpret, but as Parkes explains, since all is a sea of forces, it can only be will in the form of other drives, not just fellow human beings, but animals, plants, and other natural phenomena. In The Joyful Science Nietzsche suggests that the world is perhaps "infinite" in the sense that "we cannot reject the possibility that it may include infinite
interpretations" (Nietzsche 1974, 336). Davis calls attention to this passage, noting the openness in Nietzsche's perspectivism, but then he points to another passage from the notebooks in which Nietzsche writes: "interpretation is itself a means of becoming master of something" (Nietzsche 1968, 342). Davis finds here an emphasis in Nietzsche's thought on will to power as domination in that "will to power demands that other perspectives be brought under the command of a ruling will" (Davis 2004 119). Parkes responds that Nietzsche is just calling attention to the fact that all of life is necessarily involved in interpretation. He points to the beginning of the passage from the notebooks, which reads, "The will to power interprets", and then concludes that Nietzsche is emphasizing "that will to power as self-overcoming is essentially a matter of interpretation and reinterpretation" (Parkes 2014a, 49).

The crux of the issue between Parks and Davis in their conflicting readings of Nietzsche perhaps comes down to their response to what is surely one of the most notorious passages in Nietzsche’s writings, one of the passages where he emphasizes that "life is will to power." Davis cautions against "any postmodern or comparative attempt to skip lightly over such passages" (Davis 2004, 113). One might, of course, simply dismiss the thought and focus on other passages as Nietzsche was certainly not a systematic thinker and was fond of exploring many dangerous thought experiments. One might do well to recall what he writes to a friend in the summer of 1888: "It is not at all necessary or even desirable to side with me; on the contrary, a does of curiosity, as if confronted with some unfamiliar plant, and an ironic resistance would be an incomparably more intelligent position to adopt" (Hayman 1982, 320). This stance makes Nietzsche a particularly difficult thinker to deal with. In reading most philosophical books one usually can assume that the author is trying to gain the reader's assent and is trying to marshal the best and clearest arguments to gain that assent. With Nietzsche one can't really make that assumption, as he is so often engaging in thought experiments, pursuing lines of inquiry in multiple directions, often questioning what has previously been unquestioned. He is often tempting the reader to take up these experiments in thinking, but he also frequently warns the reader that his thoughts are perhaps dangerous and need to be handled most carefully. How does one deal with a philosopher who writes:

The hermit does not believe that any philosopher—assuming that every philosopher was first of all a hermit—ever expressed his real and ultimate opinion in books: does one not write books precisely to conceal what one harbors? Indeed, he will doubt whether a philosopher could possibly have "ultimate and real" opinions, whether behind every one of his caves there is not, must not be, another deeper cave—a more comprehensive,
Nietzsche's frequent play with masking, so well illustrated here, keeps the reader at bay, so to speak, undermining the reader's confidence that he or she has really understood his "real and ultimate" opinions. Sure, there is the danger that Davis cautions against, of lightly skipping over disturbing passages and too easily agreeing with Nietzsche. But there is also the danger of too quickly thinking that one has unmasked Nietzsche and rejecting his thought in finding it disagreeable. In the autobiography Nietzsche cautions: "Those who thought they understood me have turned me into something else, in their own image—not uncommonly into an opposite of me" (Nietzsche 2007, 37). The danger in too easily dismissing Nietzsche's thought is in missing the challenge of his thought. Perhaps the best strategy in reading Nietzsche would be, to adopt a frequent Buddhist metaphor, to take up a "middle path" in remaining wary of his thought, modest in guarding against the overconfidence that one has unmasked him, and courageous enough to take up the challenge of his thought. Let us turn then to the notorious passage.

At the outset of the closing chapter of Beyond Good and Evil, titled "What is Noble", Nietzsche writes: "truth is hard" (Nietzsche 1966, 201). One might find what he says next too hard, too dangerous a plant to handle; nevertheless, one might easily provide an analysis explaining the whole climate catastrophe as the result of this hard truth: "life is essentially appropriation, injury, overpowering of what is alien and weaker; suppression, hardness, imposition of one's own forms, incorporation and at least, at its mildest, exploitation" (Nietzsche 1966, 203). He continues on to say that this 'exploitation' is not a character of primitive societies that humanity has evolved out of; nor is this true only of corrupt societies, aberrations from the refined norm of modern advanced civilization. This 'exploitation,' Nietzsche explains, "belongs to the essence of what lives, as a basic organic function; it is consequence of the will to power, which is after all the will of life." All of life, he explains, strives "to grow, spread, seize, become predominant" precisely because "life is will to power" (Nietzsche 1966, 201).

One might like to resist this thought and argue that Nietzsche was wrong in this supposition that all of life is will to power; but when one considers the totality of the human impact upon the
earth, it is hard to really avoid the conclusion that Nietzsche may have been right in this hard truth about life. When one considers the human impact upon the earth, it is easy to see that the life of human beings—the near exponential population growth, continual depletion of resources, the appropriation and overpowering of alien, i.e. non-human and weaker species for food and other resources, the constantly increasing need for energy, and thus the ever increasing release of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere—might be the perfect expression of this force of exploitation that Nietzsche describes here as will to power. In short, one might say that the very notion of the Anthropocene is a confirmation of Nietzsche's hard truth about life.

Perhaps one might like to think that Davis is right and that there is a way of being other than this will to power as he suggests is the point of Zen; but I think Parkes is right that this misunderstands will to power and thus doesn't quite meet the challenge of Nietzsche's thought. It is perhaps telling that Davis is able to see many layers in Mahāyāna thought, but then imposes such a flat reading of Nietzsche's thought, understanding will to power simply in terms of volition and thus missing the layers and thus the depth of Nietzsche's thinking concerning will to power. Will to power as interpretation is surely at work in Davis' interpretation of Nietzsche, just as it surely is in Heidegger's reading, and thus also in Nishitani's interpretation, especially in Religion and Nothingness, where the marks of Heidegger's interpretation are so evident. But if there is nothing besides will to power, and thus, as Parkes makes clear, no getting outside interpretation, then it doesn't make sense to suggest that Nietzsche ever considers it is possible to discover nature as it is in itself, stripped of human projections as Parkes sometimes suggests. To speak of nature as it is in itself seems to be clearly at odds with the relational ontology that Parkes argues is implied in both the Buddha's teaching of interdependence (pratītyasamutpāda) and Nietzsche's thought of will to power.

It also doesn't seem to really soften the hardness of Nietzsche's thought that life is will to power, at least in thinking through the problem posed by climate change, to reassure us that Nietzsche is not advocating the domination of a self-conscious ego. The problem of climate change might even be easier to deal with if all Nietzsche meant by the will to power was the ruthless egoism of a self-conscious subject. Then, perhaps, reason might really make a difference in pointing out the foolishness of such egoistic desire. But arguments clearly do not seem to be sufficient in meeting the challenge posed by climate change. It should be pretty obvious that an economy based on perpetual growth is simply incompatible with life on a finite planet with limited resources; but
most Americans, from Presidents down to the masses of working-class citizens cannot bring themselves to question the assumption that the success of the nation be measured by "economic growth." For years now scientists have been presenting very strong arguments backed by solid evidence that climate change is indeed happening and is caused by human activity, but these arguments fall on the deaf ears of climate change deniers, not only among the oil company executives and their enablers in government, but also among a pretty wide spectrum of the American people. It all leads one to wonder whether Nietzsche may have been right in this hard truth about life, no matter how unpalatable it seems. It is known that, even with a population less than five percent of the world population, America contributes more than a third of the greenhouse gasses that have led to climate change. One might even say, as Martin Schönfeld has observed: "Anthropogenic climate change is really Amerigenic climate change" (Schönfeld 2013, 6). Is this because Nietzsche was right after all—that deep beneath the surface of the self-consciousness of the people, so proud of their "freedom" and confident of their "goodness,” there lurks the force of a will to power so indomitable, so impervious to reason, that it is literally driving humanity toward the end of the world? Of course, it is not just an American problem; it is instead a fundamental problem concerning human existence. If life is will to power as Nietzsche describes in this passage, how does human civilization not inevitably end up causing a collapse of the global ecosystem leading to another mass extinction of life on earth? Another way to simply put the problem—how could it even be possible to heed Zarathustra's exhortation to remain loyal to the earth if Nietzsche was right that life is will to power as he describes it in this challenging passage?

Zarathustra’s Golden Sun

The answer to this involves thinking through Nietzsche’s thinking concerning the transformation of humankind that is suggested in Zarathustra’s teaching concerning the Übermensch. The Overhuman is not about an overcoming of will to power, but an overcoming of human being, or, in other words, a further evolution of humanity. Nietzsche’s idea of will to power is first introduced in Zarathustra’s teaching that the ‘tablets of good and evil’ of a people are the “voice of its will to power” (Nietzsche 2005, 51). Above all, Nietzsche is here demanding that human beings begin to take responsibility for their values. The tablets of good and evil do not come from a transcendent source, they are not merely discovered in ‘nature,’ but have an all-too-human source—they are
expressions of, the voice of, the will to power of a people. Zarathustra’s challenge that humankind must be overcome is the challenge that our values evolve, and this would imply that the will to power must evolve. As Parkes explains, since "nothing can twist free from the world 'as the will to power and nothing besides' and still be”, what is needed is "a transformation of the interpreting will to power" (Parkes 2014a, 51).

If one understands this point, it is clear that there cannot be an annihilation or overcoming of will to power such as Davis thinks is implied in the Zen “standpoint of śūnyatā” as Nishitani suggests in Religion and Nothingness. It is indeed challenging to grasp how this “absolute nothingness” that Nishitani describes as the “standpoint of śūnyatā” is not a nihilistic will to nothingness. What could be left standing on a standpoint of “absolute nothingness”? Sometimes I wonder whether this description of śūnyatā as a “standpoint of absolute nothingness” might simply be the result of something being lost in translation in comparing the Sanskrit and Chinese versions of The Heart Sutra. Whereas the Sanskrit text clearly says that the profound perfection of wisdom (prajñāpāramitā) that is the teaching of śūnyatā is the realization that all the processes of the self (skandhās), and indeed everything (all dharmas), are empty of ‘own-being’ (svābhava), the Chinese text simply says that they are all empty. In not saying what everything is empty of, the Chinese text might seem to suggest that śūnyatā implies that everything is literally empty in the sense of a complete void or vacuum. The Sanskrit text is more clear that everything is empty of independent or inherent existence, and thus, as Nāgārjuna had explained, this profound wisdom that is emptiness (śūnyatā) is really a restatement of the Buddha’s teaching of interdependence (pratītyasamutpāda). Thus, śūnyatā does not mean that nothing exists, but that everything exists in interdependence. It is clear that Nishitani doesn’t mean that nothing exists in this “absolute nothingness,” however paradoxical that sounds. As he describes it, this “absolute nothingness” does not mean an annihilation of existence, but rather a transformation of human existence: “The shift of man as person from person-centered self-prehension to self-revelation as the manifestation of absolute nothingness [. . .] requires an existential conversion, a change of heart within man himself” (Nishitani 1982, 70). This ‘change of heart’ is perhaps another way to put what Nietzsche is getting at in calling for a transformation of will to power in the self-overcoming of humankind.

Perhaps what leads Davis astray in his understanding of will to power is his contention that will to power is the willful craving (tanhhā) which the Buddha diagnosed as the cause of suffering. Perhaps a better analogy for will to power in the Buddha's teachings can be noticed in the third of
the Buddha's teachings, what is known as The Fire Sermon. The importance of fire imagery in Indian thought can be traced back to deepest antiquity, to the fire sacrifice in The Vedas, and to the characterization of samsāra in the Upaniṣads as a burning fire. Picking up on that theme, the Buddha seems to be saying to the assembled monks that to live is to burn. "All is burning," he tells the monks. "And what is the all that is burning?" he asks. The answer, he begins to explain, is that "the eye is burning, visible forms are burning, visual consciousness is burning. . . ." He goes on through all the sense faculties to explain that they are all burning, along with the mind and all the processes that compose the self. But what are they burning with, the Buddha asks, and the repeating refrain in his answer is that, at least for most people, caught up in the suffering of samsaric existence, they are all burning with the three poisons of ragā, variously translated as 'passion,' 'lust,' or 'greed,' and dosa, 'hatred,' 'aversion,' or 'anger,' and moha, 'delusion,' or 'ignorance.' The crucial question concerns what the point of the Buddha's teaching here is. The Buddha goes on to say that when a learned and noble disciple sees this, he becomes "dispassionate" or "disenchanted" (nibbindati) with regard to all these processes of the self, and through this disenchantment he becomes "detached" (virajjati) and through this detachment he becomes "liberated." In the PBS documentary, The Buddha: The Story of Siddhartha, two contrasting interpretations are offered, and in these two views perhaps the fundamental question concerning Buddhism is brought to light. Max Moerman, professor of religion, explains: "We're on fire. We may not know it, but we're on fire and we have to put that fire out. We're burning with desire, burning with craving, everything about us is out of control." The distinguished poet W.S. Merwin offers a different take on it: "The Buddha goes on to talk about the three poisons, greed, anger, and ignorance, and how the three poisons are what is making the fire, and the way out of doing this is, not to deny the three poisons, but to recognize that if you turn them around, you come to their opposites, instead of greed you have generosity, instead of anger you have compassion, and instead of ignorance you have wisdom." If to live is to burn and the point of The Fire Sermon is that we have to put the fire out, then Nietzsche may have been right in his pessimistic understanding of nirvāṇa as a will to nothingness. It is worth noting that, contrary to what Moerman’s statement suggests, the word taṇhā does not appear in The Fire Sermon. The fire is not identified as the craving that is the cause of suffering. Instead, what the Buddha seems to suggest is that it is the fuel with which we are burning that leads to suffering. Perhaps the point of The Fire Sermon is not that we have to extinguish the fire, but rather, as Merwin suggests, that we have to find a way to turn those poisons
around, and thus change the fuel with which we are burning. Perhaps will to power is analogous to the fire in *The Fire Sermon*, and the transformation of will to power involves changing the fuel with which we burn. In any case, *The Fire Sermon* seems particularly relevant today in thinking about climate change. Human beings are literally burning up the planet, burning down the forests which provide oxygen to breathe, and burning up so much fossil fuel that the very future of life on earth is imperiled. There is no doubt that if we are to survive, we do have to change the fuel with which we burn, both in the literal sense of the fuel that is powering modern industrial civilization, and also in the metaphorical sense of changing the fuel within, the fuel that drives the will to power in the depths of the soul, the fuel with which the heart is burning.

It is important to recall that *Zarathustra*, the book that focuses on this transformation of humankind, is first and foremost, as Parkes explained, a work of imagery. The importance of this characteristic of the text is that it has the potential to have an effect beyond mere argument. If the transformation that the book is concerned with concerns the will to power below the surface of consciousness, it has to do more than simply attempt to persuade the mind. As Parkes puts it: "a philosophy presented in images works on the reader's psyche by inviting the kind of participation in their play that effects a psychical transformation more radical than just a change of mind" (Parkes 1983, 239). There are many streams of imagery in the text, but none more important than fire imagery. It is the fire imagery that links Zarathustra with Dionysus, and thus through which the Dionysian power of transformation is evident in the text. The imagery of fire and lightning are prominent in ancient Greek narratives of Dionysus. Dionysus was the god born of fire and lightning. There is also the scene from Sophocles’ *Antigone* that connects Dionysus with fire and lightning. At the end when the chorus calls upon Dionysus to come and save Thebes, they call upon the god “whose torches of lightning storm the mountains,” the god who sets the hearts and minds of his followers “afame with ecstasy,” the “god of the heavens of fire-pulsing stars that throb like hearts.” In his classic book on Dionysus, Kerenyi explains: “Fire is a Dionysian weapon” (Kerenyi 1996, ??) What Dionysus does with this weapon, in setting hearts afame, in burning down to ashes whatever he touches with his lightning torches, is to bring about a transformation of the self. It is this Dionysian fire of transformation that Nietzsche points to, at the end of *The Birth of Tragedy*, as the highest aim of art. In that passage from the preface to the 2nd edition of *The Joyful Science*, which Davis calls attention to as coming close to Zen, Nietzsche describes
philosophy as an “art of transfiguration” from sickness to health. His own life long struggle with illness, he suggests, perhaps gives him an advantage:

A philosopher who has passed through many kinds of health, and keeps passing through them again and again, has passed through an equal number of philosophies; he simply cannot but translate his state every time into the most spiritual form and distance—this art of transfiguration is philosophy. We philosophers are not free to separate soul from body [. . .] we must constantly give birth to our thoughts out of our pain and maternally endow them with all that we have of blood, heart, fire, pleasure, passion, agony, conscience, fate, and disaster. Life—to us, that means constantly transforming all that we are into light and flame . . .” (Nietzsche 2001, 6).

Shining forth amongst the fire imagery in Zarathustra is the image the sun. The book begins with Zarathustra stepping out from his cave on the mountain and greeting the morning sun. The scene is repeated at the end of the text with Zarathustra again stepping forth from his cave and greeting the sun. In between these two scenes, the narrative of the story moves from morning to noon, afternoon, evening, the darkness of midnight, and then the dawning of morning again. The transformation of humankind is thus suggested in the imagery of the sun, in the transformation that takes place between the sunrise that opens the text to the closing dawn. If one attends closely to the fire imagery in the text it, becomes clear that the transformation of humankind that Zarathustra’s teaching concerning the Übermensch is about involves an alchemical transformation within the heart.

Returning again to that preface to The Joyful Science, actually written after the completion of Zarathustra, Nietzsche describes different ways of responding to pain, either with scorn or the withdrawal “into the Oriental Nothingness—called Nirvana—into mute, rigid, deaf self-surrender, self-forgetting, self-extinction” (Nietzsche 2001, 7). He goes on to describe this transformation in the “ultimate depths” of the soul, and perhaps provides a hint of the sickness that drove him to those depths:

[O]ne emerges from such dangerous exercises in self-mastery as a different person, with a few more question marks, above all with the will henceforth to question further, more deeply, severely, harshly, evilly, and quietly than one had previously questioned. The trust in life is gone: life itself has become a problem. Yet one should not jump to the conclusion that this necessarily makes one
sullen. Even love of life is still possible—only one loves differently. It is like the love for a woman who gives us doubts. (Nietzsche 2001, 7)

We know that in addition to the physical illnesses Nietzsche suffered—the headaches, burning fevers, and near blindness that left him sometimes almost completely incapacitated—he was also, through the time he was composing Zarathustra, struggling to overcome a sickness within his heart that was the result of a love for a woman. In the aftermath of his fateful encounter with Lou Salomé, he confides to a friend: “Unless I can learn the alchemist’s trick of turning this filth into gold I am lost.”

Alchemical imagery is prominent throughout Zarathustra, especially at the end of the first part of the text when Zarathustra put forth the image of a “golden sun” for the highest virtue, the “gift-giving virtue.” It is with this “gift-giving love” that Zarathustra implores one to remain loyal to the earth. It is perhaps interesting to note that the imagery of the golden sun in Zarathustra, connected with this theme of the gift-giving love, might be drawn from the medieval Persian poet Hafiz. In The Joyful Science Nietzsche writes very favorably of Hafiz, comparing him with Goethe, both of whom he suggests are examples of an affirmative art (Nietzsche 1974, 330). The way that Nietzsche uses the imagery of the sun in Zarathustra suggests he must have been familiar with this poem in a collection titled The Gift: “Even after all this time/The Sun never says to the Earth/’You owe me.’/Look what happens with/A love like that/It lights the whole Sky.” Perhaps this poem suggests another reason that Nietzsche chose Zarathustra, the ancient Persian prophet, to be the one who exhorts us to remain loyal to the earth with the gift-giving love.

The theme of the gift is actually introduced in the beginning of Zarathustra. The reason he comes down from his mountain solitude is because he has something to give. On his way down he encounters an old man who recognizes him, but recognizes that he has changed: “Then you were carrying your ashes to the mountains: would you today carry your fire into the valleys” (Nietzsche 2005, 10). The obvious implication is that Zarathustra has already experienced a transformation by fire in which something was burned to ashes and now he comes down with another fire. Later Zarathustra will caution those who wish to become creators of new values: “You must want to consume yourself in your own flame: how could you want to become new unless you have first become ashes!” (Nietzsche 2005, 56). Returning to the scene where Zarathustra meets the old man on the way down from the mountain, the old man asks why Zarathustra is coming down.
Zarathustra responds with a simple answer: “I love human beings.” The old man responds that he doesn’t love human beings for they are too imperfect. He loves God instead. The old man doesn’t love human beings because his love is not a gift, but an investment. He won’t get anything back on an investment in human beings, whereas his love of God will reward him with the greatest return. Zarathustra response suggests that he means something else by love: “I bring human beings a present” (Nietzsche 2005, 10). Zarathustra’s love is the gift that is given without an expectation of a return. Through an alchemical transformation the selfishness of a love that loves only upon the condition of receiving something back is transformed into a 'great selfishness' that is capable of the generosity of unconditional love. Instead of withdrawing into what he took to be a décadent self-extinction and denial of the will in Buddhism, Nietzsche emphasizes a transformation of the will, a new health, a 'great selfishness' that wants, as Parkes explains, "to embrace all things, so that it can bestow and contribute to the world with no egoistic thought of thanks or return" (Parkes 2014b, 87). Parkes compares this “bestowing love” of Zarathustra with the bodhisattva vow of giving without return: "It is the same with the bodhisattva: the attainment of wisdom, which involves the realization of emptiness of the self through its interrelatedness with all things, naturally leads to an abundant generosity and a re-engagement with the world" (Parkes 2000, 183).

Davis, however, thinks that Zen goes beyond Nietzsche in urging one to proceed through 'the great doubt' to the experience of 'the great death'. But Zarathustra’s overcoming (Übergang) also involves a going-under or death (Untergang). After announcing the goal of the gift-giving love, Zarathustra still has to undergo an alchemical transformation by fire to become capable of the gift. This is evident in second part of the text in a passionate poem titled “The Night Song.” Apparently, Nietzsche wrote the poem during the time he was trying to learn that alchemist trick of turning filth into gold, while looking down from his window into a springing fountain: “Night it is: now all springing fountains talk more loudly. And my soul too is a springing fountain. Night it is: now all songs of lovers at last awaken. And my soul too is the song of a lover” (Nietzsche 2005, 91). The rest of the poem seems to express the anguish of the sun in its solitude. Whereas the stars at night have each other, the sun is alone in the day: “Light am I: ah, would that I were night! But this is my solitude, that I am girded round with light. Ah, would that I were dark and night-like! How I would suckle at the breasts of light!” The song is a passionate lament expressing the anguish of love-sickness. Zarathustra’s going-under involves not the extinguishment of this passion but rather its alchemical transformation. Parkes sees a resonance between Nietzsche’s thought and
Rinzai Zen, the “most dynamic and wild” of the Zen traditions, in seeing a “common goal being transmutation of the passions rather than their annihilation” (Parkes 1996, 377).

Zarathustra’s alchemical transformation eventually leads to the thought of eternal recurrence. The most obvious resonance with Buddhism is that Zarathustra’s overcoming and going-under involves facing the problem of suffering, which turns out to be a problem of time. The problem is revealed in the chapter titled “On Redemption” in which we find Zarathustra again expressing a great lament: “‘Verily, my friends, I walk among human beings as among fragments and severed limbs of human beings! ‘This is to my eye the most terrible thing: that I find human beings in ruins and scattered as if over a battle and slaughter-field’” (Nietzsche 2005, 120). The reason human beings are in such ruins has to do with the will’s inability to deal with time’s passing: “‘Backwards the will is unable to will; that it cannot break time and time’s desire—that is the will’s loneliest sorrow’” (Nietzsche 2005, 121). A phenomenological description of suffering might suggest that suffering is the will’s inability to say ‘yes’ to the present moment. When one is suffering one longs to be somewhere else, either nostalgic for a time past or longing for a time yet to come. Zarathustra explains that the will is a liberator, but it is still in chains because of the inability to will backwards and change what has happened: “‘It was’: that is the will’s gnashing of teeth and loneliest sorrow. Powerless with respect to what has been done—it is an angry spectator of all that is past.” This inability to change the past and face the present moment leads the will to strike out in revenge and cause suffering: “‘Thus did the will, the liberator, take to hurting: and upon all that can suffer it takes revenge for its inability to go backwards. This, yes, this alone, is what revenge itself is: the will’s ill-will toward time and its ‘It was’” (Nietzsche 2005, 121).

The overcoming of the "will's ill-will toward time" and the spirit of revenge connects Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence with the notion of amor fati, and this connection recalls Nishitani's remark that "it was not in his nihilistic view of Buddhism but in such ideas as amor fati and the Dionysian as the overcoming of nihilism that Nietzsche came closest to Buddhism, and especially to Mahāyāna" (Nishitani 1990, 180). Nietzsche expresses the thought at the beginning of book four of The Joyful Science, the book that closes with the thought of eternal recurrence and the introduction to Thus Spoke Zarathustra:

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 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! (Nietzsche, 2001, 157).

The notion of *amor fati* suggests another interesting resonance with Daoism, particularly with Zhuangzi’s acceptance of fate or circumstance (*ming* 命), sometimes expressed as the 'destiny of heaven' (*tian ming* 天命), perhaps best understood as the 'circumstance decreed by the cosmos or the nature of things.' A number of Zhuangzi’s stories, often presented with a striking sense of humor, involve characters that have suffered some misfortune, but are shown to be wiser than even Confucius in the way they have accepted their circumstance. The secret to life, expressed by Zhuangzi, is to understand that "[l]ife, death, preservation, loss, failure, success, poverty, riches, worthiness, unworthiness, slander, fame, hunger, thirst, cold, heat" are all "the alterations of the world, the workings of fate (*ming* 命)" and in not allowing this to "destroy your harmony (*he* 和)" or "enter the storehouse of spirit (*qi* 氣)" one is able to make things beautiful, or as Zhuangzi puts it, "make it be spring with everything" (Watson, 2003, 70). Nishitani finds Dōgen expressing something similar to *amor fati* when he writes: "I now while away my time accepting whatever may come" (Nishitani, 1982, 189). To be capable of *amor fati* requires a transformation of the self, and as a catalyst for this transformation, Nietzsche introduces the thought of eternal recurrence:

*The heaviest weight*—What if some day or night a demon were to steal into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: "This life as you now live it and have lived it you will have to live once again and innumerable times again; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unspeakably small or great in your life must return to you, all in the same succession and sequence—even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and I myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned over again and again, and you with it speck of dust! (Nietzsche 2001, 194).

It is important to recognize that the thought is introduced, not as a truth about how time works, but as a thought experiment and a challenge, one that potentially has the transformative power associated with the lightning of Dionyus: "If this thought gained power over you, as you are it would transform and possibly crush you; the question in each and every thing, 'Do you want this
again and innumerable times again?' would lie on your actions as the heaviest weight!' (Nietzsche 2001, 194).

It is striking that Nietzsche follows this thought of eternal recurrence, closing the book that began with the thought of *amor fati*, with the same lines that open *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, appending to them the subtitle, "*Incipit tragoeedia,*" suggesting that *Zarathustra* is in some sense a tragedy (Nietzsche 2001, 195). This may seem puzzling as the book does not really have the form of a tragedy. Perhaps the reason Nietzsche suggests it is a tragedy is what connects Dionysus and Zarathustra's *Overhuman*—the lightning that has the power of transformation, the power that Nietzsche regarded as the highest aim of art. In other words, Nietzsche sets out to do in *Zarathustra* what he saw as the goal of Greek tragedy.

The decisive scene in *Zarathustra* in which the thought of eternal recurrence is introduced, in the section titled 'The Vision and the Riddle,' unfolds in a dream sequence. Zarathustra is trudging gloomily through a lonely desert; a dwarf or 'Spirit of Heaviness' sitting on his shoulder pours leaden thoughts into his ear. At the edge of the deepest abyss, Zarathustra summons the courage to call up the most abysmal thought. Zarathustra then confronts the 'Spirit of Heaviness' with the thought of eternal recurrence. The confrontation takes place under a gateway with the name of the gateway, "Moment," inscribed above it:

'Behold', I said, 'this moment! From this gateway Moment a long eternal lane runs backward: behind us lies an eternity.

Must not whatever among all things *can* walk have walked this lane already? Must not whatever among all things *can* happen have happened, and been done, and passed by already?

'And if everything has already been, what do you think, dwarf, of this moment? Must this gateway too not already—have been?

'And are not all things knotted together do tightly that this moment draws after it all things that are to come? Thus—itself as well?

'For whatever among all things *can* walk: in this long lane out, too—it *must* walk once more!—

'And this slow-moving spider, crawling in the moonlight, and this moonlight itself, and I and you in the gateway, whispering together, whispering of eternal things—must we not all have been here before?

'—and must come again and walk in that other lane, out there, before us, in this long and dreadful lane—must we not eternally come back again?—' (Nietzsche 2005, 136-37)
To be able to say 'yes' to the moment, to the eternal recurrence of the present moment, would require overcoming the will's ill-will toward time, transforming the spirit of revenge into one capable of the abundant generosity symbolized by Zarathustra's golden sun. It is not an overcoming of the will to a way of being beyond all willing. Just prior to introducing the image of the golden sun, Zarathustra explains when this shining is possible: "'When you are willers of one will, and this turning of need (Wende der Not) is for you called necessity (Notwendigkeit): there lies the origin of your [gift-giving] virtue" (Nietzsche 2005, 66). This turning of need into necessity, it is worth recalling, is that point, that Nishitani, prior to being led astray by Heidegger, suggested was the apex of Nietzsche's thought, the point where his thought was closest to Zen. For the 'need' here is obviously the want, desire, or need for things to be different than they are. Perhaps this 'need' is what is analogous to the thirst or craving (탄حā) the Buddha diagnosed as the cause of suffering. Turning the need into necessity, accepting all that happens and has happened, leads to the amor fati capable of making things beautiful.

Parkes notes that there is a sense of gratitude in Zarathustra, reminiscent of Epicurus, who once wrote: "One cultivates profound gratitude to nature for granting us the gift of life" (Parkes 2000, 195). Parkes goes on in explaining this gratitude to suggest the resonance with Mahāyāna Buddhism: "Zarathustra cultivates such gratitude by striving to live each moment (which for him, too, is unique and 'once only') as if it and the rest of the past were going to return eternally. A similar gratitude informs Mahāyāna Buddhist practice, which is also based on an understanding of the unique and radically contingent character of each and every moment" (Parkes 2000, 195). The focus on the present moment also draws a comparison with Dōgen, for whom, as Parkes explains, "the experience of the moment is crucial" (Parkes, 1996, 376). The 'as if' is perhaps crucial in understanding the thought of eternal recurrence. Davis, following Heidegger, and Nishitani after Heidegger, thinks Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence falls short of Zen in that it doesn't allow for the creation of something new. Perhaps they are all taking the thought a bit too literally and missing the character of the thought as a supposition, a thought experiment. They also miss the joke. Even though they call attention to the importance of laughter in Zarathustra, in focusing on the logical implications that the thought of eternal recurrence does not allow for anything new to happen, they miss the sense in which the thought of eternal recurrence is perhaps, itself, a joke.
At the end of *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche emphasizes the importance of laughter: "I should risk an order of rank among philosophers depending on the rank of their laughter—all the way up to those capable of golden laughter" (Nietzsche 1966, 232). One hears such laughter at the end of 'The Vision and the Riddle'. Zarathustra challenges the reader to guess the meaning of the vision and answer the riddle of "who it is that must yet come some day" (Nietzsche 2005, 138). The scene shifts suddenly and strangely like in dream imagery. A dog is howling and then a shepherd is seen writhing on the ground with a "heavy black snake hanging out of his mouth" (Nietzsche 2005, 137). Nietzsche likely borrows the image of the snake from the ouroboros image, the image of a snake biting its own tail, which was used in alchemical traditions as a symbol of eternal return. The shepherd chokes on the nauseating heaviness of the thought of eternal recurrence. Earlier Zarathustra had explained that the best way to deal with the heaviness of the spirit of gravity is through laughter: "Not with wrath but with laughter does one kill. Come, let us kill the Spirit of Heaviness" (Nietzsche 2005, 36). At the end of the "vision of the loneliest" Zarathustra tells the shepherd to bite through the snake, the nauseating heaviness of the thought of recurrence, and when the shepherd does this, he jumps up transformed "no longer human—one transformed" (Nietzsche 2005, 138). He is radiant like the golden sun and laughing. Davis notes that the passage ends with Zarathustra yearning for this laughter and wonders whether Zarathustra ever learns it. Although "The Vision and the Riddle" is a crucial turning point in the text, with Zarathustra calling up from the depths his abysmal thought of eternal recurrence, it is not the end of the narrative of *Zarathustra*. He still has to bite through the thought and affirm the eternal recurrence, which doesn't happen until the end of part three in "The Seven Seals" and then again, in the penultimate section of the book, "The Drunken Song." Aside from Zarathustra's laughter, there is the possibility that the thought of eternal recurrence was, for Nietzsche, something of a joke. It would be quite hilarious if the thought—which Nietzsche puts such great emphasis upon, touting its importance with the greatest hyperbole in the autobiography, identifying it as the key to the book that would divide humankind in two—was after all really a joke. If the problem of suffering is the will's ill-will toward time, the will's inability to change the past and affirm what happens now, Nietzsche counters with a thought that forbids the will's escape from the present moment and longing for another world. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, he describes the thought as a joyful affirmation of the world as it is, the conception of an "ideal of the most high-spirited, alive, and world-affirming human being who has not only come to terms and learned to get along with
whatever was and is, but who wants to have *what was and is* repeated to all eternity" (Nietzsche 1966, 68). But it might just be a joke—perhaps one of the "bad jokes" with which he says he is condemned, in one of his last mad letters, perhaps the last coherent thing he is able to write, "to while away eternity."^{15} Perhaps one really doesn't get Nietzsche if one doesn't get the joke.

Parkes calls attention to the "knotting together" of all things in the thought of eternal recurrence in Zarathustra's confrontation with the dwarf in the gateway of the moment, and then again in the culminating affirmation toward the end of the book: "Did you ever say Yes to a single joy? Oh, my friends, then you said Yes to *all* woe as well. All things are chained together, entwined, in love" (Nietzsche 2005, 283). Parkes sees a resonance here with the fundamental teaching of the Buddha, and, of course, the Mahāyāna teaching of the perfection of wisdom, which "similarly emphasizes the interconnectedness of all things and the consequent 'emptiness' of any 'self-nature' to them" (Parkes 2000, 190). For Parkes, the transformation of human being in the Overhuman opens up "the possibility of a radically new way of being for the human," and this Parkes emphasizes, "is profoundly relevant for ecological thinking" (Parkes 2005, 81). Nevertheless, it should be clear, that although Nietzsche is surely warning us to beware of the projections that philosophers have imposed on nature in the past, that becoming more aware of our projections, and thus bewaring some of them, is not necessarily discovering nature as it is apart from all projections. If there is a solution to the ecological crisis, it is not in discovering 'nature' outside of all human interpretations, but rather in transforming the will to power that shapes those interpretations, from a will to power driven toward constant growth, domination and exploitation of nature, to one capable of co-operation and a sustainable existence. Leopold was certainly right in calling for a new ethic that "changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it" (Leopold 1966, 240). Perhaps the transformation of humanity symbolized by Zarathustra's golden sun opens up such a way of being capable of remaining loyal to the earth.

It is certainly most challenging to face the circumstances of our time—to face the real dire threats to the future of life on earth as a result of such human failures of nuclear war and ecological collapse due to anthropogenic climate change. It is obvious that humankind must evolve and our whole civilization must change if we are to avoid the end of the world sometime in the near future. Even if there is enough time left for hope, the change in human civilization that would have to occur to avoid catastrophe is enormous. This is something that has been understood since the dawn
of the deep ecology movement; but unfortunately the prospects for such a change appear dim considering that so many people, especially among the most powerful in the world today, cannot even acknowledge the problem of climate change. When Zarathustra introduced the notion of the Overhuman, he contrasted it with the last human, the one who cannot take up the challenge of overcoming. If we don't take up this challenge then the day of the last human in a literal sense may indeed come. It should not be too difficult to see how our present circumstance brings out the most nauseating aspect of the thought of eternal recurrence. How could one want it all back again, this very same life, forever and ever, repeating eternally, if the whole of human history comes to an end as a result of stupidity, as a result of the obstinate refusal of the last human to evolve and overcome the values that have led humanity down this path toward extinction?

Nietzsche might remind us of the courage of the young Iphigenia, in the tragedy Iphigenia at Aulis. She must face the absurd, tragic character of existence after she realizes that she is to be sacrificed in the hope that the gods may allow the winds to blow so that the expedition to Troy may begin. At first she is having an understandably difficult time accepting the circumstance she is in. She curses Helen for her fate, and weeps in her mother's arms wondering why it is that somewhere in the world people are drowning because the winds won't stop, but she has to die because the winds won't blow. But Iphigenia undergoes a profound transformation—so well portrayed by the young actress in the 1977 Greek film by Michael Cacoyannis—after she realizes that Achilles was willing to die to save her.16 The transformative power of Dionysus is evident in her words in Euripides’ play: "For so long I thought, "What have I done to deserve this? What will become of me? Then something flashed into my mind like lightning, like a zigzag of fire, so that I couldn't doubt its rightness” (Euripides 1998, 300). Transformed by the lightning fire, Iphigenia bravely accepts her fate.

In The Birth of Tragedy Nietzsche had argued that Greek tragedy had died by suicide, at the hand of Euripides, as a result of the influence of Socrates. One of the most shocking and controversial aspects of Nietzsche’s book was the thesis that the high point of Greek culture was not Socrates and Plato, but Aeschylus and Sophocles. Socrates comes on the scene of The Birth of Tragedy as the murderer of tragedy through Euripides. What killed tragedy, Nietzsche thought, was the Socratic optimism that is evident in Socrates telling of the ‘myth of the cave’ in Plato’s Republic. When one makes it out of the cave the bright light of the Sun, representing the Form of the Good, the ultimate truth, is painful at first, but once the eyes adjust and the Sun can be seen it
is beautiful—it provides a ground, settling all disputes, and sets the soul free from its imprisonment in the body and the ephemeral world, promising eternal happiness. The Socratic optimism that reason leads to knowledge of virtue and thus to eternal happiness killed tragedy as it pulled the gaze of the Greeks from back from the abyss, from confronting the abysmal truth, from such absurdities as the circumstance Iphigenia faces. One can see what Nietzsche thought had killed tragedy at the end of Iphigenia at Aulis. After she is slain by Calchas’ knife, and the smoke from the sacrificial fire has cleared, Iphigenia has disappeared, replaced on the altar by a deer. Artemis, the goddess for whom the sacrifice was performed, substitutes the deer and takes Iphigenia with her to Olympus where she will live in eternal happiness among the gods. Nietzsche would likely have approved of the way Cacoyannis changed the ending in his film. After the smoke clears one doesn’t see Iphigenia or the deer, only the horror in Agamemnon’s face, and then—in such stark contrast to the countenance of Iphigenia who had ascended to the sacrificial altar so stoically and beautifully uttering her last words, “Farewell my beloved light”—we see in the final frame the anguished, fierce gaze of Clytemnestra, the fire of revenge burning in in her eyes as she looks out to sea upon the ships departing for Troy.
Sallis refers to as the "abysmal effect" that spaces Nietzsche's discourse further shining forth of images. Appearance, shattering the dream and its beautiful illusions. This, in turn, must inevitably be followed again by the nature of existence; and then the Dionysian insight is necessary in which the shining forth of beautiful illusions is necessary in order to deal with the Dionysian insight into the abysmal opposite of presence). For it is a matter of a disclosure of the abyss, of that which withdraws from any y a symmetrical opposite). For it is a matter of a disclosure in which, nonetheless, the unpresentable is brought so that the shining forth of the figure coming together of the Apollonian and Dionysian in to shine in the distance as sublime" (Sallis 1991, 100). I have earlier described this shimmering shining: "Tragedy Nietzsche is under way to a thinking of disclosure that would differentiate it decisively from mere uncovering (limited by a symmetrical opposite). For it is a matter of a disclosure of the abyss, of that which withdraws from any presentation, of that which cannot as such be present (or absent, as long as absence is considered merely the complementary opposite of presence). It is a matter of a disclosure in which, nonetheless, the unpresentable is brought to shine in the distance as sublime" (Sallis 1991, 100). I have earlier described this shimmering shining: "Thus, in the coming together of the Apollonian and Dionysian in Greek tragedy there is a continuous cycling reciprocal movement in which the shining forth of beautiful illusions is necessary in order to deal with the Dionysian insight into the abysmal nature of existence; and then the Dionysian insight is necessary in order to tear through those Apollonian veils of appearance, shattering the dream and its beautiful illusions. This, in turn, must inevitably be followed again by the further shining forth of images. . . . So there is in the work of art that was Greek tragedy as Nietzsche understood it, this repeating cycling of the two opposed movements of drawing and withdrawing, figuring and disfiguring—what Sallis refers to as the "abysmal effect" that spaces Nietzsche's discourse— so that the shining forth of the figure that comes forth is a shimmering shining" (Freeman 2013, 59).

2 (KSA, 9:11)
3 I have altered the translation here, combining Kaufmann's translation (Nietzsche 1966, 157), which Parkes uses here, slightly altered, and then Parkes own translation (Nietzsche 2005, 135).
In the Nachlass the notes is (KSA 11:38[12]) and translated as (The Will to Power, §1067).

This is the letter to his old friend and colleague at Basel, Jacob Burkhart: "Actually, I would much rather be a Basel professor than God, but I have not ventured to carry my private egoism so far as to desist from creating the world on his account. You see, one must make sacrifices, however one may be living, and wherever. . . . Since I am condemned to while away eternity with bad jokes, I have a writing business here which really leaves nothing to be desired—very pleasant and not at all exhausting. The unpleasant thing, which offends my modesty, is that fundamentally, I am every name in history. As for the children I have brought into the world, I have to consider with some suspicion, whether all those who enter the 'Kingdom of God' do not also come out of God" (Hayman, 1980, 335-336).

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