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The Body, the Self, and the Ego

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In Zarathustra's fourth speech, entitled "On the Despisers of the Body" ("Von den Verächtern des Leibes"), we find the formula of the "*great reason*" of the body. Although this turn of phrase has never quite achieved the popularity of some others, such as the will to power, the eternal return of the same, the re-valuation of all values, or "*amor fati*," it stands at the undeclared center of Nietzsche's experimental philosophy and bears all the promise connected with these other formulae. Now, there is a certain suspicion that these and other programmatic slogans coined by Nietzsche are ultimately only designed for their emotional and rhetorical effect. What I wish to show here is that this suspicion may only be met by showing *how* the body may be understood as "great reason." I propose to undertake a philosophical interpretation of this formula. In the first part of this essay (section 1) I will begin by analyzing its apparent triviality. In so doing, I will argue that the sense of this formula seems rather to be at odds with the practical relationship between reason and the body – not just on the interpretation of this relation which we find in the tradition of the philosophy of reason, but also in our everyday intuitions about this relation. This picture of the relation between the body and reason, founded upon the assumed dominance of reason, is portrayed in section 2. With that we gain a point of departure for Nietzsche's programmatic slogans which is in keeping with their paradoxical character: the "great reason" of the body can be understood as both provocative *and* uncontroversial; and it can have both a *polemical* and a *systematically foundational* sense. This is the object of section 3. This result is applied to a reading of Zarathustra's speech in sections 4, 5, and 6. First we will inquire as to the status of those "despisers of the body" whose life-contradiction is mentioned in Zarathustra's third speech (section 4). Then we turn to our main topic and interpret the brief passage in which Zarathustra speaks of the "great reason" in the body (section 5). Following this, I shall treat the problematic relation between "body" and "ego" (section 6). It is in this context that the difficulties connected with speaking of the "great reason" of the body and the "small reason" of consciousness become clear. If one wished to take this manner of speaking literally, the only way to make sense of it would be by way of an aesthetic interpretation, which I shall give.

Zarathustra speaks not only of "body" and "ego," but also of "self." This is natural, but also puzzling. Of course, there could be no room for the concepts of "body" and "ego" without some sort of self-relation. The self-organization of the body and the

self-reflection of the ego make self-reference unavoidable whenever they are expressed. But is this not simply a crutch of language? Couldn't Nietzsche have treated the "self" just as he did "substance" or "God"? These are both supposed by him to be grammatical illusions with no real reference (see *HH* 18; *TI*, "Reason" in Philosophy," 5). In the case of the body's "self," however, things seem to stand differently. "Self" is treated as if it had the same ontological dignity as "body." In fact, the "self" proves to be the thoroughly real mediator between body and ego. As will become apparent, in the end it is nothing other than the *self* that holds body and soul, or body and ego, together. This insight will permit us to derive another, systematic insight from the formula of the "great reason" in the body (section 7).

Many Nietzsche interpreters doubt he had a conception of reason. Yet it is ineluctably clear from his texts that – at least as critic and free spirit – he did have such a conception at his disposal. At any rate, it is only under the assumption of a certain conception of reason that it is possible to attribute to Zarathustra's speeches some reconstructable sense.

1 Reason as an Organ of the Body

At first glance, the formula of the "great reason" of the body seems to express something obvious and thoroughly natural. All human functioning is the expression or work of the human body. Since we know reason – if at all – as a specifically human function, then it too must be connected with the human body. In any case, body and reason are not mutually exclusive; even more: if it is indeed the body which hosts reason, it will not do to pose just any kind of connection or compatibility between the two. One must rather assume that reason belongs to the very blueprint of the body. In order to develop as a bodily capacity in and with the body, reason must somehow inhere in the body. But that means that the body must already contain reason in some way. The organization of the body is such that it leads to the capacities which we know belong to reason, and which we expect from it. Consequently, the body should contain not only reason, but also that which reason serves. For – barring disease, handicap and atavism – a bodily organ is not present without its function. We speak of eye or ear, and we understand these organs in reference to the functions of seeing and hearing. In the case of reason things are a bit more difficult, insofar as we already know its functions, and must draw conclusions on what articulates itself in these. In so doing, we seek to find reason as an organ.

The particulars in the process of inferring an organ from its functions need not detain us here. For the present argument it will suffice to simply ascertain that the capacities of reason also belong to the function of the body, which themselves are present in the organization of the body if they are not implanted from without. And this is evidently not the case, though the development of reason does require certain interactions such as respiration, the use of things, and social activity. Even if all the particular capacities of reason were learned in interaction with the world, its bodily component would still have to be present. The very fact that reasoning can be learned speaks for a certain disposition to its use in the organization of the human body, and this fact makes the superiority of the body apparent: whatever happens, it can always

develop itself according to the possibilities inherent in it. That reason should be conceived of as an organ and understood upon the basis of its capacities sounds odd, particularly since we primarily think of things such as lungs, liver, and the gallbladder when we think of organs. Yet this oddness is quickly dispelled when we lengthen the list of organs to include the hand, the voice, or – quite generally – the senses. In fact, reason is generally understood as the “sense” which makes us able to understand. And yet: how could reason ever produce anything which itself is not rational? As we know no answer to this question and can only infer reason from reason, as its “cause,” we are compelled to admit reason as the *ground* for reason. It is this very admission which is contained in Zarathustra’s formula of the “great reason” of the body: since reason is only found in a certain substrate, namely the body, this substrate must itself be seen as capable of reason. And since the substrate is prior to, and more extensive than, the “rational” capacity it supports, it can indeed be said to be “greater.”

In comparison to that substrate, the reason with which we consciously and explicitly understand things is indeed “small.” The competence of this kind of reason is limited to what it is conscious of. It is thus consistency that leads Zarathustra to speak of human “spirit” as “small reason.” This “small reason” is for him an “instrument” of the body and thus the “tool and plaything” of the “great reason” of the body. We shall speak more of this later.

2 The Body as the Instrument of Reason

So much for that which at first sight might appear self-evident and natural. We know, however, that things are not quite so simple – even barring the questions which must be posed when “reason” is assumed to be “natural.” If we recall the tradition from which the concept of reason arose, or even just the manner in which reason appears to us in its use, then there seems to be precious little which would speak for its integration in the organic functions of the body. To the contrary, one could easily understand the formula of the “great reason” of the body as an intended provocation, directed against both the philosophical concept of reason and the concept as it is used in everyday language. For if the body were always rational in all it does, we could leave everything to the body – we would no longer need our “small faculty of reason.”

Of course, the body does not prepare us for all eventualities in this way. It is also apparent that we cannot automatically follow many of the momentary inspirations which the body provides. For this reason we cannot leave things to the supposedly “greater” reason in the body. Rather, we are existentially dependent upon the “small reason” of conscious deliberation. Only with the help of “small reason” are we able to consciously know, to distinguish precisely, to exactly define, to deduce consistently, to imagine things in a way comprehensible for others, and to make decisions on grounds accessible to others. Thus reason seems to be a capacity which far exceeds the capabilities of the body: reason goes beyond the body *in principle*. In this way, reason is not simply an extension of bodily capabilities, nor does it consist in an improbable widening of the radius of bodily activity. Reason makes a step *in another dimension*, so to speak. And this dimension seems, in a fundamental way, to no longer be a bodily or physical one. This is especially clear in those cases in which the activity of reason is

directed against the activity of the body. When, for example, the body tires of work, rational insight is in certain circumstances necessary, in order that the powers required for the completion of work are mobilized. If pain briefly prevents us from continuing to clean the wound, reason advises us to bear the pain. If pleasure or pain entice us to break a promise, reason tells us that we are to keep our word.

This is not to say that we follow reason in all cases. But, for the purposes of my argument, it is sufficient that reason only hold sway occasionally. In each of these cases – be they ever so rare – reason designs ends for the “entire” body. Even when reason merely advises us seriously, there is a certain assumption that it would be possible to obey it. Even here reason seems more extensive than the body, for it recommends a course of action that affects the body as a whole. Assuming we overcome our fatigue, which is always also a fatigue of the body, it is reason that compels the body as a whole to complete the task at hand. When we resist fear or pleasure and hold our word, then the body “wholly” does reason’s bidding. In such cases the manners of speaking in classical ancient philosophy and in everyday language correspond: reason and purpose are said to “rule,” and the meaning which reason may justify as rational supplies the goals for the body as a whole. “End,” “goal,” or “meaning” are *concepts of reason*, even when their extension is modest and their instantiations seem unsound.

From this perspective, it is reason that seems to be “greater” than the body. Reason can expressly exercise power over the body, whereas the body seems only to use its own weakness in order to exercise influence. Though we must not neglect the original, causal role of the body, which carries reason as an organ, one could nevertheless say that body rides, so to speak, on the back of reason. Body supplies the fundament upon which reason rests, and sets the conditions and bounds for that which reason considers meaningful, consistent, or satisfying. But whenever the body expresses itself in passions, feelings, and moods, it is already in a dimension of meaning created by reason; for in these things too there are intuitions, consequences, insights, and deductions: reasonings, in which reason is always involved. Reason rules in the sphere of sense, wherever we are engaged in the processes of perceiving and understanding. In these cases reason is manifestly not the “instrument” of the body, but rather the inverse: Reason rules over the body. Reason provides for the protection and maintenance of the body, gives it poisons (and this not only always against better judgment), puts the body in danger, and can, in extreme cases, arrange for the death of the body, with which reason too will perish. Seen from the vantage point of such capabilities, it is reason which dominates the body, as much as the body may determine the conditions for reason’s manifestation. The body may support, underlie, and maintain the faculty of reason, but as soon as the latter is active, it puts the body in its service. By reason’s demand to have the body at its disposal, body becomes the instrument of reason.

It is this understanding of the relationship between body and reason that is implicit in all practical and theoretical processes. In distinction from the *intuitive* and *natural* interpretation of this relationship, we may speak here of the *conceptual* relation posed between body and reason. The practical fundament of the conceptual interpretation of this relation brings with it the assumption that reason is to be seen, as a matter of principle, as superior, the body being not just a means to reason’s ends, but sometimes indeed an impediment to these. With this interpretation reason becomes so important

that, “in the face of” reason, there is occasion to be ashamed of the body. For it is the weight of the body which seems to bring reason back onto the ground of pure factuality. The body distracts reason with its pleasures and fears, and forces it into the yoke of its own habits.

Assuming that one understands the relationship between body and reason in this everyday manner – one characteristic, also, of the philosophical tradition – then it is immediately understandable how one may easily come to despise the body; according to this theory, the body inevitably appears to be the antagonist of reason. And in this role, the body is a hindrance for reason’s ends, it is simply a distracting bother, and it makes the grand plans of reason impossible. In this antithesis, the body is the downward falling antipode set over and against an ever upward-striving faculty of reason. And so one wants to see things from the “higher” position of reason, and to look down with contempt upon the “lowering” pull of the body. The low seems so lowly that one can only fend it off with disgust.

3 The Paradox of Aesthetic Concepts

No doubt, it is the second concept of reason which Zarathustra assumes among his listeners. As I have said, this concept fits with a certain commonsense understanding of reason; it also happens to be the concept of reason which is associated with both Platonism and Kant’s critical philosophy. In order to upstage this philosophical tradition, Nietzsche counters it with an ancient Persian wise man. For he had already realized, by that time, that the pre-Socratics were also Socratic in their thinking. The logical domination of the world which, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche had once attributed to Socrates, he later came to see as beginning with Thales and Anaximander, and being perfected early by Parmenides (see PTAG). Nietzsche must have recourse to an even older wise man, in order that he may produce an authority for a true alternative to Platonism. There seems to be not a single genuine counter-program to Platonism within the entire European tradition. In *Zarathustra* Nietzsche makes it clear that he knows of no European passage which might finally lead beyond metaphysical territory.

There is little need to argue that Nietzsche’s construction of the hatred of the body is historically problematic. In fact, in the European tradition there are other perspectives on the relationship between reason and its bodily substrate – such as Kant’s well-known metaphor in which he compares reason with a dove which deludes itself into thinking it could fly better in a vacuum (Kant 1950: B8). Nietzsche surely did not forget how closely Plato connects the productivity of body and soul, and not only in the *Symposium*. These finer historical shades are, however, not to the philosophical point of interest here. That point is rather the paradox involved in the conceptual construction of the “great reason” of the body – a paradox which is evident as soon as we try to conceive of the natural interpretation of the relationship between body and reason from the vantage point of the conceptual interpretation of this relation. For this is exactly what Nietzsche’s formula demands.

This is a rather extreme demand, but it is not made on a whim; it lies rather in the nature of the problem. Even if reason were nothing but an organ of the body, as

portrayed in section 1, we would only be able to comprehend this state of affairs by means of reason. Yet reason has its main function in the comprehension of its relationship to the body, as argued in section 2; and this is a function in which reason rules all else – including the body. This means that reason rules quite generally, even on the thesis according to which reason is dependent upon the body as an organ is. Reason is the authority before which every possible claim must be justified. We have a paradox which is thoroughly inescapable. *For we cannot abandon the position of the dominance of reason, even if we wish to accept the total dominance of the body.* In order for the position stating the dominance of the body to become intelligible we must first have not just an understanding of reason, but also some consciousness of its rule-abiding application. After all, the claim that reason is an organ of the body can only be arrived at by means of rational argument. “Little reason” is required in order to transform “great reason” into an intelligible expression. Yet even here “little reason” proves to be so dominant that it determines our attention and interest fully. And our attention also includes our senses, at the very least. Thus “little reason” rules the body, even on the thesis that the body is its own “great reason.” Whatever magnitude we may ascribe to “great reason,” already in the determination of the possible greatness of “great reason” it is under the direction of “little reason.”

This paradoxical state of affairs need not make the formula of the “great reason” of the body completely senseless, however. There are many examples of paradoxical expressions which make the context of human experience systematically accessible. Indeed, in one of the areas of human experience which is particularly important for Nietzsche, this theory seems to be forced into a paradoxical formulation if it is to be able to provide a sufficient description of given impressions. Since Nietzsche sees himself closely attached to this realm of experience, it is unavoidable to see some connection here.

It is the experiential context of art to which I refer; and it is a *philosophical* aesthetics which seeks to approach its object in the seemingly contradictory terms we have discussed. This could be shown with reference to Plato, who often repeated the early Greek view that “all things beautiful are difficult” (Greater Hippias I. 304e; cf. *Republic* 435c, 497d; Cratylus 384a). Plato traces this view to Solon, the reformer of old Athens and one of the “seven wise men” of Greek antiquity. We do not know how Solon meant this; it might have been a sigh of dismay, or even a kind of warning. For Plato it is a paradoxical expression. For he knows of the lifting weightlessness in the enjoyment of the beautiful; he refers to this in his definitions, and ironizes the self-deception of the ingenious man who is obsessed with art (*Ion* 534b). He also makes plain, in the mythical portrayal of the *Phaedrus*, to what extent the contemplation of the beautiful is dependent upon the mastery of contradictory human powers. The ascent to beauty requires the greatest effort of all. Yet at the summit of this journey into light, which may be undertaken only through the utmost self-control, the beautiful offers itself to that soul capable of recognizing and knowing it.

It is to this very passage that Nietzsche refers when he has Zarathustra depict the experience of the beautiful:

To stand with relaxed muscles and unbridled wills: that is the most difficult thing for you all, you sublime ones!

When the power grows gracious and descends into the visible: Beauty do I call such a descension. (Z II, "Of the Sublime Ones")

In all things, Plato is for Nietzsche the most important source. Yet with regard to the paradoxical description of aesthetic experience there is another author who is no less important for Nietzsche. That author is Kant. It is Kant who places his aesthetics in the context of a theory of life and living things. As is well known, the second part of the *Critique of Judgment* contains a theory of the organic. Yet even the first part, in which the experience of the beautiful and the sublime are described and related to the faculties of reason, is contained within a philosophy of life. In fact, Kant founds his aesthetics upon a form of life which animates itself. Spirit (*Geist*), which is as much at work in artistic genius as in the purely receptive judgment of a work of art, is – from the perspective of aesthetics – “the animating principle in the soul.” Kant refers to a “power of imagination” which keeps the powers of the soul “purposively in motion” and functions as a kind of “game [. . .] that keeps itself going.” Thus an aesthetic experience always coincides with an “animation” of the powers of cognition. And from this follows that through such experience all the life powers of man come “into motion” (Kant 1987: §49). “Animation” is something which, from the perspective of an animated being, can only be experienced as something psychic, i.e. mental. For it is something “internal,” something which does not simply warm, accelerate the pulse, or create goose bumps. It is rather the person as a whole who is gripped and affected. It is, above all, the “mental powers” which are involved, since only these may experience “animation” as a kind of mood or mental state, and express it as such. And yet “animation” could never be conceived without a living body as its subject. Even “enthusiasm” is something which could only properly belong to a living body. “Animation” and “enthusiasm” are thoroughgoing expressions of the living body and what makes the physiological constitution of a living being appear comprehensible: mood or attitude, which only the mind and spirit can grasp, consist in a certain tuning and disposition of the body. For Kant it goes without saying that only the life-powers of the individual are meant here – i.e. the powers of the human “subject” who seeks to become active through his or her “communication” with others. Kant’s theory of aesthetics clearly bears witness to the “reason of the body.”

Kant speaks of four “moments” of the beautiful. Of course the origin of this word – from the Latin verb *movere* (to move) and the substantive *momen*, *mominis* (movement) – was present in his mind. In the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant had used this term specifically for designating the causes of sensations (1950: B254). In the *Critique of Judgment* “moments” denote the causes for changes which are both sensory and mental, and which occur in subjective consciousness under the impression of the beautiful. In order of their occurrence, we find them listed there as *disinterested pleasure*, *universality without concept*, *purposiveness without purpose*, and, finally, *subjective necessity*. From the point of view of the faculty of understanding all these formulations contain a manifest contradiction. And yet they are not devoid of sense, for – from the perspective of a kind of reason which embraces man as a whole – they express a change originating in the opposite and opposed powers which take part in such reason. From the conflict of these powers comes a kind of balance which reconciles the antagonists; the seriousness of the opposition between sensory stimulus and mental impulse becomes a

game which ensures a dynamic balance. Movement and tension both remain intact; they produce a self-moving unity. The individual, finally, experiences this balancing reconciliation of his best powers, which occurs without conscious effort, as an expansion of his possibilities. His life grows through a contradiction which may be contemplated without constraint. In this entire process the physiological, sensory, and cognitive powers are activated. Yet they do not lead to an inner conflict, but rather – on the contrary – to an increase of individual dispositions through the awareness of their resonance. Thus from contradiction comes the medium of harmony. What is experienced as opposition, both conceptually and in the *modus* of practice, is in aesthetic experience complementary. What is more: the opposing powers which are first created by the organization of life prove to be “favorable” in their organized interaction: in the ever-increasing competition of individual psychic, sensual, and cognitive capacities, the individual becomes open for experiences which seem to come to him from without. The beautiful arises from the “favor” of nature – a favor for which one must be properly disposed.

All that which, in the final passages of the second *Untimely Meditation*, Nietzsche dared to hope in regard to culture as a “new and improved physis,” is found prefigured in aesthetic experience. In his concept of culture Nietzsche seeks a “harmonization of life, thought, seeming and willing”; the difference between “without and within” is to be eliminated; there is to be no more “deception” or “convention”; no “ornament hides that which is adorned”; “truthfulness” is the binding moment of both “moral nature” and “true education” (*UM II*, 10). Nowhere else is Nietzsche truer to his formula concerning the “great reason” of the body. One might not be surprised if he had spoken of culture as the great reason of nature in this context. Yet the phrase which we actually find in *Zarathustra* sharpens his older position by means of individualization: the conception of culture found in the second *Untimely Meditation* – a conception already completely centered upon the individual – was later to be radicalized. It is no longer education which forms the individual after the fashion of a social reason; it is rather the living body of the individual person, the very bodily organization of the individual, which underlies all living things, which figures as “great reason.”

4 Hatred of the Body

Zarathustra’s fourth speech stands under the heading “On the Despisers of the Body.” Who these despisers are is not specified, and there are only hints as to what their hatred consists in. And yet we immediately think we know who they are: the world-weary ascetics, the “backwoodsmen” to whom the preceding speech refers – these life-weary “preachers of death” who have become tired and thus seek to make one final “leap to the end.” The despisers of the body, we learn, wish to “re-learn and re-educate.” Accordingly these are people who seek to educate themselves and nevertheless would like, at the same time, to teach others. If their teaching consists in a hatred of the body, as one might reasonably assume, then their “re-learning” would imply that they originally lived in respect for the body, a respect they seek to rid themselves of.

Though this may sound trivial, it is of some import for the systematic content of Nietzsche’s critique. Every man exists, originally, in positive acknowledgment of his

body; he respects his body, and not only that: through his body he has respect for himself. Because Zarathustra preaches on behalf of this original relationship to the body he speaks of the despisers of the body in the past tense:

Sick and dying ones were they, who despised body and earth and invented the heavenly and redeeming drops of blood . . . (Z I, "On the Backwoodsmen")

Zarathustra seeks to illustrate the inconsistency of their flight into the heavens beyond:

They sought to escape from their misery, and the stars were too far off for them. Then they sighed: "Oh, if only there were heavenly ways to glean some other existence and happiness!" – and they invented their little tricks and bloody potations.

They thought they had escaped their bodies and the earth, those ungrateful ones. Yet to what did they owe the pain and joy of their escape? To the body and the earth. ("On the Backwoodsmen")

The despisers of the body remain within the body's sphere – and yet they do not understand "the meaning [*Sinn*] of the earth." This they could only understand through a "healthy body": only the "honest and pure" "voice of the healthy body" may speak of the "meaning of the earth" ("On the Backwoodsmen"). Respect for their own body is not possible for them, because they lack health.

A condition for knowledge is introduced which is by no means unproblematic: only the healthy can escape the "preachers of death"; these are able to ignore the "backwoodsmen" and can let the "meaning of the earth" speak for itself through their very own bodies. In the following paragraph Zarathustra thematizes this condition. He speaks of the child whose health we simply assume, the child which says what it thinks in all "innocence." We already know what importance Zarathustra assigns to the child's innocence from his first speech. There, it is the child which, after the camel and the lion, comes as the third form of spirit. The child is the primally natural "wheel rolling out from within itself" and stands for the creative "forgetting" which makes a "new beginning" possible. In the childish "Yes" to life, unfettered by any kind of doubt, spirit finds its way back to the "game of creating" and regains for itself that world which was lost under the weight of obligation and the strenuous one-dimensionality of willing (Z I, "The Three Metamorphoses"). Already in his first speech Zarathustra assumes an interplay between spirit and body: a child is, at first, nothing more than a young body. Through the body of the child, life – which arises from the conditions of the earth – rejuvenates itself through the interplay of two older bodies, those of the parents. It is this rejuvenation upon which the hope in the third metamorphosis of spirit is founded. In the young body, spirit seems to be reborn, free of the weights and cramps of its older form, and careless enough to simply start again, just as every child is a bodily beginning.

In order to maintain this hope one must have deep trust in life's power of regeneration. Since life is only manifest as body, all trust in the future is in fact invested in the body. Whenever we place our trust in a "rational" development (however the term "rational" be construed), we place our trust in the body. It is impossible to conceive of "spirit," or even of that faculty of "reason" which is associated with it, as anything

other than alive: in these a *beginning* is made again and again, and both constantly seek to *create something* which is then to be brought to a certain *goal* and *end*.

The expectations which are raised time and again in connection with spirit and reason are shown to have their source in life itself, which renews itself in ever-new individuals. Spirit and reason can only be conceived as living; and living things only occur in the form of living bodies. Thus both occur in connection with the body, but not just externally (and accidentally); rather, they belong originally to it, i.e. already in their most elementary, intelligible functioning. The power of the mind to comprehend problems and solve them; its power to grasp something as present, which underlies all explanation; its capacity, expected in all things, to reach a conclusion through insight and knowledge – all this depends upon the paradigm of the body. If the living body did not provide the determined form which ceaselessly practices its organization, then it would not be in all things the initiator, the process itself, as well as the endpoint of the process. And if there were not the full spectrum of epistemic states between the extremes of *desire* and *satisfaction*, we would have not even a vague idea of what mind and reason could accomplish.

For those who have considered all this, the hatred of the body no longer requires refutation. Such hatred is the expression of a fundamental contradiction of human existence – though it is not a contradiction between mind and body which might be reconciled under other conditions. It is, rather, a contradiction in which the mind catches itself, because it cannot be separated from the physical conditions of its functions.

5 The Meaning of the Body

Once Zarathustra has given the despisers of the body the only advice which they could follow with any consistency, namely to be “dumb,” he then cites the speech of a child, though he is well aware that the child’s speech is that of most adults, too:

“Body am I, and soul” – so saith the child. And why should one not speak like children?
(Z I, “Despisers”)

The distinction between body and soul is thus portrayed as the expression of a naive kind of consciousness. Children speak in this way, and an adult could only adopt this manner of speaking if he were to speak of himself as an artist does – as someone not so much interested in self-knowledge as self-encouragement. The awakened and knowing speaks of himself in a different way:

Body am I entirely, and nothing more; and soul is only the name of something in the body. (Z I, “Despisers”)

In the awakened light of mature consciousness and the perspective of knowledge, the difference between body and soul is evidently no longer defensible. It is important to see that Nietzsche seeks to place himself in the standpoint of a *knower* here. The statements which follow are made from the vantage point of a kind of consciousness the

limitations of which he would like to show. A heightened and advanced understanding will recognize that there is only the body – “and nothing else.”

Living body is a *totality* beyond which there is nothing else with comparable status. If, in the child's mind, there appears to be something besides the body which is of equal ontological order, i.e. the *soul*, then this is only by way of a misunderstanding: The child interprets an *attribute* of the body as an independent *substance*. In fact, the “soul” should properly be simply a “word” for “something in the body.” In a later speech, Zarathustra mentions in passing what such a “something” might be. It is the “courage” with which man, “the bravest animal,” lives his life (Z III, “On the Vision and the Riddle,” 1). Just as Plato shows in the *Laches* that there are more forms of courage (*andreia*) than the mere physical advantages of the warrior, so too does Nietzsche invoke a specific kind of human behavior in order to make an example of this certain “something in the body.”

At first, this kind of talk seems strange. “Something in the body” could be a piece of clothing, a ring, a watch, or an artificial limb. It certainly could also be a humpback, a sore, or some hair. Is “courage” comparable to these? Perhaps not; but if we recall that a certain manner in one's gait, laugh, or speech is often said to be in one's “flesh and blood,” then Zarathustra's manner of speaking becomes immediately comprehensible. The characteristic behavior of a person – otherwise known as *habitus* – can and indeed must be seen as something which belongs to “flesh and blood.” Derived from the Latin verb *habeo* (I have), *habitus* originally denotes a certain posture and position of the body; it then comes to mean the body's appearance and form, from which the meanings clothing and cloak are derived. Finally, by way of metaphor, the word came to refer to the body's disposition, general state, nature, and character. *Habitus* is thus indeed “something in the body.” Zarathustra's phrase happens to approach a formulation found in Aristotle, as well: *sôma gar ouk esti, sômatos de ti* ([the soul] is not a body, but something of the body': *De anima* I. 414a).

The constitution of a living thing is manifest nowhere else than in its body. Even if we recognize courage in a candid remark, or perhaps in the flashing of the eyes, and even if someone's behavior – as manifest in a laugh or witty remark – seems to be spiritual, all these things nevertheless remain “something in the body.” But are they therefore “nothing more”? This is an enormous question which Zarathustra would like to answer by simple authority. And yet the argumentative effort which this costs him suggests that there is more to this “nothing more.” For it is evident that reason, which itself must be something in or of the body, has to do primarily with this certain “nothing” – not least on account of the fact that reason must give an account of the meaning of that mere “word” which it uses to refer to the soul.

Yet before Zarathustra comes to mention the type of reason which provides explicit meaning – “little reason” – he introduces “great reason.” This he does in the most simple way: by *identifying* it with the body. Body is a “*great reason*”:

The body is a great faculty of reason, a plurality with one sense, a war and a peace, a flock and a shepherd. (Z I, “Despisers”)

It should be noted that Nietzsche does not speak of *the* “great reason” of the body, but rather of *a* “great [faculty of] reason” – one among many. A plurality of “great

[faculties of] reason” is thus not excluded. To the contrary: it is suggested that the plurality of bodies corresponds to a *plurality of reason*. For if there is nothing other than the body, and the body is only one among many, then the body’s faculty of reason must also be one among many. The question which arises at this point is this: under these conditions, what could “reason” possibly be? For reason can only be *one* – at least insofar as its *use* is concerned, i.e. its manner of manifestation in the body. If this were not so, then there would be a true plurality of reason (i.e. not just various substrates of reason, but truly different functions and instances of it), and one could no longer speak of reason in any particular case. For it is only meaningful to speak of the faculty of reason in a particular person under the condition that this person has the very same faculty which others have at their disposal.

According to a claim made by Zarathustra, reason creates *unity* where there is *plurality*. More specifically, reason gives plurality a *meaning*. What might this mean in relation to the body? Perhaps this question is best addressed with recourse to the vectorial connotation of the German word *Sinn*: in German, the *Uhrzeigersinn* or “clockwise direction” indicates in which *direction* something moves.¹ Thus the specific direction of a body may indicate the particular *Sinn* or “direction” in which a “plurality” may be related to a certain point. One need only think of the endless variety of impulses of motion necessary for one single step in a certain direction in order to immediately apprehend what a “plurality with one sense [*Sinn*]” means in the case of a bodily act. The connection which might be made to the traditional understanding of the faculty of reason is also manifest: assuming that a living body were incapable of following its own sense of direction, and assuming that it would collapse, tumble, spin, or flail at the slightest movement (without, of course, being naturally predisposed to doing so). In that case the body would be, *qua* body, an impossibility, for there would be nothing with which it could orient itself; it could neither find nourishment nor protection, nor could it fight or flee. Its existence would lack the directedness (or *Sinn*) which is contained in its natural processes, and without which the body could not be considered to be such. A body which could not unite the plurality which it contains in a unity of processes – such a body would be quite impossible.

With this step we are already quite close to the classical understanding of reason: the body’s sense of direction is the sense of action in the entire being, the sense in which a being first attains its processual unity. If the body is a thing which is “*organized and self-organizing*” (Kant 1987: §65), then it is first and foremost nothing other than a *self-producing unity*. Accordingly, it must, in all its processes, be oriented towards itself, and by itself. This is the bare minimum of “sense” for every movement and action of a body. Thus we arrive at a determination of the body as the whole of a plurality which finds its own unity in the harmony of internal and external movement. Seen in this way, the “reason” of the body lies in the consistency of its processes. To rephrase a well-known definition of reason: the body is the “power to reason deductively” (Kant 1950: B355/A299).² Depending upon the perspective taken, this deductive reasoning may be considered “mediated” or “immediate.” “Mediated” is such reasoning insofar as it is mediated by a plurality of participating organs; “immediate” is such reasoning which the body produces itself in the “conclusions” which it draws in every act of its existence.

This *formal* connection between body and reason is supported by the *material* expectations which are always in play when we speak of reason: for both in everyday usage and in philosophical theories we expect reason to accomplish something in accord with some good or value. Such value may be so conceived that only *God* could cash it in. This is surely the oldest option among the theories of reason, and one which Nietzsche thinks is historically overcome. The value associated with reason may also be conceived in such a way as to coincide with a certain *natural order*, or so as to be intimately tied to *the whole of human existence*. It is in this last sense that Kant and Hegel sought to tie reason and reality together.

Nietzsche puts no stock in this scheme of the connection between rationality and reality, a scheme in which these are mediated by a *concept*. For he rightly suspects that here, too, the assumption of a divine being is in play. Thus he calls for another, sensually present reality with which reason may be supported, in order that reason may meet the material condition for rationality. This reality is the *body*. Body is the fully present actuality which realizes itself in its own sense of direction and action. From a systematic perspective, the identification of body with reason fills the gap created by the "death of God." Once the death of God has been declared, all appeals to cosmically given orders, or even to those which have grown historically, are discredited. If we cast a comparative glance at the various functions of the concept of God, the reasons for speaking of the *great* reason of the body become plain. Greatness is, in this case, not simply a comparative adjective, i.e. a magnitude defined in reference to "little" reason; in this attribution there remains something of the old metaphysical claim of reason: that reason be not just *formally* empowered to conceive the whole, but that it also stand *materially* for a divine, natural, and historical whole. With Nietzsche, the body becomes the administrator of this totality; accordingly, the body is "great reason."

Although this might sound far-fetched, it is not. On the one hand, the body is indeed dependent upon, and determined by, the natural and historical conditions from which it comes and by which it necessarily remains bound. On the other hand, the body determines *solely by itself* the beginning and end of the sense and senses at its disposal; through the particular configuration of its organization the body determines the *rhythm* and *time* of the activity it pursues. What stimulus and reaction, desire and satisfaction is determined by the body's organic constitution; and what may be conceived of as a "whole" or some "part" is necessarily related to the body and its constitution. Thus it is in fact the body which provides the order in which the sense of a living existence is attained.

One need not fear that, in this way, the body might become some kind of idealistic consciousness, isolated from the conditions from which it arose and by which it is determined. For living bodies always remain bound to the consistency and regularity of the material body of which they are constituted and with which their metabolism is supported; the body is seamlessly connected with nature, in which it maintains itself. What is more, both the body's physiological constitution and the rhythmical cycles of its organization are connected with the elemental regularity of its environment: the change from day to night and from summer to winter; the supply of nourishment; the size of a certain population; the number and particular character of natural enemies; or – not least – the element in which the organism lives: all these conditions of organic

life and living things are given by the earth, and thus also by the particular place which a given living body occupies. True, every living body moves according to its own law, and in this way each body does possess its own faculty of reason. Yet this individual law can only come into being under the mundane conditions determined by its terrestrial environment. The *sense of the body* is thus originally and primarily oriented towards the *earth*, which lets this sense develop. It is on account of this relationship that Zarathustra speaks of the “sense of the earth.”

In the course of this brief explanation it will have become clear that the “sense of the earth” is not an alternative to the “great reason” of the body. Rather, the “sense of the body” obtains only under the conditions of terrestrial influence, and it can assert itself only in congruent correspondence with a “sense of the earth.” On the other hand, talk of the “sense of the earth” only has meaning if there is sense in the body. Strictly speaking, sense is something exclusively “in the body”; sense can be associated with the earth only insofar as there is something which corresponds to the sense in embodied beings. The sense of the earth refers us back to the reason in the body.

6 The Living Body and its Ego

The extension of the “great reason” in the body, which cannot be meaningfully subsumed under anything else, makes it clear from the very start that everything else in the body necessarily appears “small.” It is either a particular organ and part of the total organization of the body or it is an effect and consequence of the body’s sense of activity. Whether physical strength, courage, the harmonious flow of motion, or intellectual presence: everything is a certain “something in the body.” For the *spirit*, which we habitually conceive as the *totum* of some sort of unity, this insight may amount to a kind of insult. That seems to be of some import for Nietzsche. When he designates the spirit as a kind of mere “instrument,” or even “plaything,” then he necessarily slights those who would think of themselves as spiritual beings. Those, at least, who justify their actions in terms of reasons, place their own proper *insight* and *intelligence* to the fore, and employ their bodies as the *means* to the ends of their mental faculties. This order, so ineluctable for thinking beings, is inverted by Zarathustra:

An instrument of thy body is also thy small reason, my brother, which thou callest “spirit”
– a little instrument and plaything of thy great reason. (Z I, “Despisers”)

Here we find one of the refined mechanisms of Zarathustra’s speeches: an abrupt switch into direct address. The employment of this strategy here coincides with a shift of thematic focus onto the individual consciousness which is capable of saying “ego.” The ego becomes intelligible by way of distinction from some Other. In order to articulate the meaning of “ego,” some reference to Thou is inevitable. In direct address, the second person singular is of course already present. In employing this form of address, the new theoretical focus is anticipated, in a kind of prolepsis, by the underlying concepts of the language employed.

Spirit – which comes into the center of focus at this point, and remains there for the rest of Zarathustra’s speech – can develop itself only through a relation to a certain,

other, ego. By addressing another person as "brother," an accent is placed not only upon a communality founded in embodiedness, but also upon immediate mutual understanding. In connection with such a kind of understanding, particularly among brothers, one is prone to think of a certain feeling or emotion; but if this understanding is to be reliable and founded upon the exact designation of some state of affairs, then it will require the use of a concept. In this connection, a certain restricted concept of spirit – i.e. spirit as the faculty of the Understanding – is indispensable; here, too, is it first required. If there were no concepts, mutual understanding of one and the same thing could never be attained. It is thus the difference between ego and thou which makes spirit – understood as the medium of concepts – necessary.

Spirit in just this sense is the "little faculty of reason" to which Nietzsche refers. He calls it an "instrument" of the body; it is thus supposed to assume a merely subsidiary and instrumental function. However, as the body does not explicitly and unambiguously reveal the ends of its actions, we also do not know what purposes are served by its means. That is why the "instrument" is also a "plaything." It exists for the sake of something which does not persist without it, and which seems to be somehow meaningful in and of itself. As an "instrument" or "plaything" it abides by the rules of the game, the perpetuation of which it helps to support. With regard to game or play, "little reason" is of obvious value; and it proves itself to be useful, even when no purpose above and beyond the perpetual cycle of play can be named. Thus, this instrument is purposive even in the absence of a purpose. The well-known ascription "purposiveness without a purpose" is natural, and suggests itself. In referring to spirit as the "plaything" of the body we find an immediate reference to an *aesthetic relation*.

Spirit is strictly dependent upon the ego. Since Descartes' *cogito* we know this much regarding the knowledge of the understanding; and Kant followed suit in positing the phrase "I think" as one which must be able to accompany all our representations. The ego is already present in the need for coherence and completeness; it organizes both the capacity to deduce and the faculty of understanding; and it cannot be conceptually detached from insight, for the simple reason that it must indicate the satisfaction which comes with knowledge of reason. One could adapt Kant's slogan here and make the claim that all the capacities of reason must be able to be accompanied by the phrase "I understand."

The ego is therefore present in the very "sense" which the spirit "knows." The ego is required in both of these fundamental capacities of the spirit. As it is always present when anything at all is known or recognized, the ego also has a certain pride. Those human capacities which reach farthest, including those with which we regulate ourselves, are not possible without the ego. This is evidently recognized by Zarathustra where he has "spirit" be "proud" of its "ego"; but disillusionment follows closely upon the heels of this recognition. For pride cannot be a sufficient indication of the independence of spirit. To the contrary: pride is rather an expression of the self-deception of the spirit. In spite of self-consciousness, the self-sufficiency and independence felt by the spirit only conceals its dependency upon the body.

Decisive is the fact that Nietzsche does not put the ego at the body's immediate disposal, but rather places the "great reason" of the body between these. *This* is what serves as agent, and not the body, which requires its own "great reason" in order to act in a unified, coherent sense:

“Ego,” you say, and are proud of that word. But the greater thing – in which you are unwilling to believe – is your body with its great faculty of reason; it does not say “ego,” but does it. (Z I, “Despisers”)

From this passage it is clear that Nietzsche’s formula does not entail any kind of reductionism. He easily could have claimed that it is the body which says “ego.” Are they not *bodily* instruments which produce those sounds which become intelligible as language? Is it not the lips, tongue, larynx, and vocal cords which work in concert with other organs in order that a person may speak? Certainly. Yet the physical movement of the organs of the human voice do not, by themselves, make any sort of *sense* – nothing which could be *understood*.

The sort of sense which is intelligible requires a specific organ, and for Nietzsche – as for Plato, Kant, or Hegel – this organ is the faculty of reason. Though he does call this organ the “great reason” of the body, he does not equate it with the body, as one might assume on the basis of a casual or superficial analysis. The passage cited above shows, to the contrary, that Nietzsche is at pains to specify the author of the ego as precisely not the *body*, but its own proper *sagacity* or *reason*. It is not at all the case that the body produces referential meaning or intelligible sense *locally*: understanding and reason are faculties which in some way express the *whole of the body*. They are not “something in the body,” such as blushing or a sound. Though they are connected to bodily expressions, their particular character lies in the “sense” which they convey. And it is this sense which the body initiates in the modus called *action*. In action, in which a *whole* is always established, it is the body as a whole that is actualized.

A further differentiation is to be found in the circumstance that the reason of the body does not function as the “speaker,” but rather the “doer” of the ego: body’s reason “does not say ego, but does ego.” Here, too, a direct physical or physiological relation is avoided. The competence involved in doing and action is both more profound and more extensive than the competence at play in the spoken word. All speaking can be understood as action; but not all action is spoken word. In this we find a manifest relativization of the foundational character of language. It is a strategy which Nietzsche pursues further in a later speech, “On the Pale Criminal”: here the “act” is the actual event, which is to be distinguished both from the “image” which follows upon it, and from the “thought” which accompanies it.³ The actual event, elsewhere portrayed as originally creative potential,⁴ is not the word, but action, the deed. And this is not attributed to the ego, but to the body; more precisely, to the reason of the body. When it is said that the “great reason” of the body has no need to say “ego” because it “does” ego, there is an emphasis of its creative capacity in play. Soon afterwards we find Nietzsche speaking of the “creative self.” It creates “for itself respect and spite,” “pleasure and pain,” “value and the will” and, in all this, also “spirit.” Indeed: “most of all” it would like to create “beyond itself” – “that is its only desire” (Z I, “Despisers”). It is thus quite certain that the body is here conceived in analogy to the *artist*. Body is conceived as the creative ground from which all initial energy, all formative power, and, finally, all sensitivity to pleasure and pain spring. The body is *the* instance of creativity; from it come all things capable of having any sense or meaning.

The analogy to the artist also clarifies the distinction between the body and its own proper reason, a distinction which Nietzsche fails to fully elucidate. In his theory of

aesthetics, Kant refers to the artist as “nature.” Yet the power of nature, which is ultimately expressed in a kind of productivity that is not regulated by conscious rules, is expressly distinguished from the physical and physiological powers of nature. Here, nature expresses itself in “genius,” i.e. in a form of *spirit* that is evidently prior to reason, which proceeds by certain rules. When we see that it is the genius of the artist which is to be seen as the original creator of the unity of a given work of art, then the analogy to reason suggests itself: the totality which creative genius produces as a “wheel rolling out from within itself” corresponds to the unity developed by reason, which proceeds consciously and with rules, but upon the basis of its own requirements. The multivalence of a work of art, of which the “aesthetic idea,” according to Kant, “provides much material for thought,” is inexhaustible. Despite its bound and determined form it contains an infinite *variety of sense* which exceeds the concept of reason. For though the concept of reason also aims at a kind of totality – a totality for which it strives under the constrictions of stringency, consistency, and rigor – it is far excelled by the artwork’s never-ending processuality, as well as by its sensible and intellectual abundance.

With this we come to the conclusion that the formula concerning the “great reason” in the body is constructed in parallel to the aesthetic concept of genius. It is a connection which draws on reference to art, a connection in which the concept in the “great reason” of the body has a certain tradition and in which we may appreciate the paradoxes involved in this formula. The body is understood on analogy to a “great artist.” If we wish to understand the attribution of “great reason” to the body, we would do well to think of the “greatness” of the great artist’s work. It is a greatness which supersedes its author, which is more expansive and inclusive than the artist, and which cannot be simply reduced to him, his origin, his training, or his technique. A great work by a great artist has, at the same time, a kind of unity which escapes all flat attempts at conceptual reduction: as self-contained and complete as it may seem, it nevertheless contains such an endless variety of meanings that it makes its unity seem paradoxical.

The “great reason” in the body is thus to be understood as an aesthetic concept. It is much more than a mere metaphor for the wonderful stringency and succinctness of bodily processes. If one were modest, one could of course leave the interpretation of this formula at that. Yet there is more to it: in the aesthetic concept, the difference between creator and product is also contained. The regular and self-consistent activity of the body becomes distinguishable from the particular forms of activity it occasions. With that we have a true analogy to the specific capacities of reason, which engages in deductions and insights, and which in this way may be compared to the internal consistency of a work of art. Both reason and art have their origin and goal in the senses, though neither may be reduced to these. Thus the paradoxical aesthetic concept of the “great reason” of the body has the merit not only of illustrating the proximity of body and intellect, but also of showing their difference, which begins in the act of production and is actualized in a certain form. Nietzsche does not equate body with reason. Reason is that which makes itself manifest in the expressions of the body – just as the beautiful does in art. Reason is thus only present in the presence of an *observer*.

This means that the reason of the body is established merely as one perspective in a world of multiple perspectives. It occurs as the individual expression of a body,

and only for such embodied individuals as are receptive to its impression. A sphere of perception is required in which an expression corresponds to a certain, other, impression. The necessarily individual reason of the body can develop itself only in that space which exists between other individuals. Here, too, the analogy to art holds, which can be received as art only by individuals – and nevertheless only in such space as is accessible to others. In this connection it is no accident that Kant sought in his aesthetics to give the expression *sensus communis* a new twist (Kant 1987: §40). Accordingly, the “great reason” of the body is bound to a kind of sense which is as embodied as it is communal.

7 An “Unknown Wise Man” between Body and Ego

With this demonstration of the independence of body’s reason as construed on analogy to art we could end our investigation of the “great reason” of the body. For all that follows in Zarathustra’s fourth speech serves, on the one hand, to illustrate the character of consciousness as “instrument and plaything,” while providing on the other hand a diagnosis and prognosis for the despisers of the body. These have lost the artistic impulse “to create beyond themselves,” and thus have lost trust in the reason of their own bodies. They choose to despise that which they can no longer stand to acknowledge: the body. Their rage towards “life” and “earth,” and their “envy” towards every creative engagement with existence, have no future. In the words of Zarathustra: “You are not bridges for me to the overman” (Z I, “Despisers”) – a clear sign that this questionable concept, too, is best defined and defended as an aesthetic term.

Besides “body” and “ego” Zarathustra uses another, inconspicuous word to which he assigns an importance which can hardly be ignored. It is the pronoun “self” (*Selbst*), which appears only as a substantive in this speech, and which evidently refers to something between “body” and “ego”:

Sense and spirit are instruments and playthings: behind them there is still the Self. The Self seeks with the eyes of the senses, it listens also with the ears of the spirit.

Ever listens and seeks the Self; it compares, masters, conquers, and destroys. (Z I, “Despisers”)

This is a confusing speech: after all that has been said, one would have expected that there be only body “behind” sense and spirit. Body, we were told, “creates” for itself its own “great reason,” of which the “instrument” and “plaything” is the “ego” of “small reason.” Yet here we find “behind” the ego the very word which, in common usage, serves as a pronoun for the ego. The “self” is, in everyday language, an expression for persons who can say “me”: the consciousness of the *ego* is that of the *self*. The pronoun may be used only metaphorically in the case of those unities which are active in analogy to self-consciousness – which function “by themselves” and thus “automatically.” Seen in this way, everything which transpires or happens without an external cause happens “by itself.”

Yet this is obviously just a circumlocution for the assumed originality and primality of the integrity of a certain unity grasped from without, and nothing more. The “self”

indicates the spontaneity of a totality – and thus abbreviates a figure of speech which would have to be much too long if the process were to be described in its actual complexity. And so we say that the larva in metamorphosis moves “by itself,” and that in this way a butterfly comes into being. The phrase “by itself” indicates that no immediate, external influence is at work, though we certainly know that many external factors are involved in the metamorphosis which transpires within the cocoon. The opening of the cocoon is easily explained as the consequence of the biting activity originating from the developed butterfly within it. It would be absurd to attribute to this process some “self” which would have to be conceived in the manner of a real subject.

Yet there are two borderline cases in which we use the pronoun without being able to explicitly describe the process that we thus assign. The first of these cases is present in the *ego*. We may be able to describe a process involving some ego in many different ways; yet the ego remains irreplaceable, and with the *ego* also the *self*, which is the ego’s linguistic surrogate. Whenever someone consciously does something of his or her own accord, then there is no avoiding the ego and the word “me.”⁵ The second borderline case is that of the *body*, and of organisms in general. The spontaneity of the processes which occur in organisms endogenously are to this very day only conceivable as self-production (*autopoiesis*) and reflexive activity (*self-organization*). This does not alter the fact that all the materials of metabolism have their origin outside the organism, which is dependent in all its processes upon the homeostatic exchange with its environment. Those processes which are essential, i.e. specific and particular, to a certain organism are the ones which originate in the organism *itself*. The organism is what it is by and through its own activity. Whoever seeks to describe an organic process will not be able to do so without some reference to the whole of an organism, which moves “by itself.”

It is certainly no accident that Zarathustra introduces the *self* in the transition of those two fields of activity, a place in which the pronoun is indeed semantically unavoidable: in the transition between *ego* and *body*. Even if one were not disposed to comprehend this usage of the term, one could still take it as further evidence for the human configuration of all knowledge, a point Nietzsche returns to again and again. Everything refers back to man – himself: “We always can only *know ourselves*” (KSA 9, 6[419]). This is the case in particular when a process strikes us as particularly familiar, and we can conceive of its originality only in terms of the spontaneity which we experience in ourselves. Herein lies the particular epistemic status of the body, a status from which we can never escape: the body’s processes, in which the body finds expression as a whole and as an original unity, can only be understood in analogy to our experience of ourselves. And this means that we understand by analogy to our self: “We have borrowed our concept of unity,” we read in Nietzsche’s posthumous works, “from our concept of the self – our oldest article of faith” (WP 635).

However, this relation will not suffice to explain the appearance of a substantivized self between ego and body. Nothing suggests that Zarathustra seeks to illustrate an epistemological insight. He seems rather to want to make a claim concerning the *real relation of cause and effect* between the body and the ego. It is of little avail if we assign new names to the self, which appears here as an independent agent; in this way we would only give the impression of making this term more intelligible. Of course, there

are certain similarities to Schopenhauer's "will," and these might prompt one to understand the "self" which Nietzsche speaks of here as the "will to power." This would fit well with the ruling and commanding functions of the "self," but not so well to the fact that the self "listens," "laughs," and "creates." In his very first speech Zarathustra denies the will the ability to be creatively productive. But "will to power" must, according to Nietzsche, be present in each and every activity. For this reason one cannot deny that the self is active as will to power – if, that is, the self can be thought of as active at all. But this is certainly not the *proprium* of the self. Naturally, we cannot reject out of hand the claim that this usage of the term "self" might refer to that authority which Sigmund Freud referred to as the "subconscious."⁶ Yet what does this mean for the "brother" whom Zarathustra addresses and who is not at all familiar with Freud? Before elucidating this term by means of historical parallels, one is well advised to attempt to explain it on the basis of the context in which it is found. Let us hear Zarathustra's speech once again:

Behind thy thoughts and feelings, my brother, there is a mighty lord, an unknown sage – it is called Self; it dwells in your body, it is your body. (Z I, "Despisers")

The self is, then, a "mighty lord" and "unknown sage." This stands in agreement with the claim that it has "ends," that it keeps the ego on a "leash" and "secretly feeds it" concepts, even tells it when it should feel pain or pleasure. Finally it is the self which has the power to induce "respect and hate," "pleasure and harm." It is thus not merely the expression of the productive function of the body, but also the product of the body's reduced liveliness. It is, after all, the self which seeks to "die" and which "has turned itself away from life" (Z I, "Despisers"). Even so, the ego must follow the self, in order that Zarathustra may tell the despisers of the body that their hatred is only the expression of their life-weary self, itself the expression of a weakened body. They despise the very thing they obey, and in so doing they reveal the most profound contradiction in their form of life. They are caught in this contradiction because they do not know how they are connected with their body – that it is by way of their self.

What, then, is the self? What is this authority which is hardly extractable from the body, but which nevertheless manages its productivity and even its decay and decline? How can the self be grasped, assuming it is no longer mere body and manifestly more than mere consciousness, upon which it nevertheless seems to depend? The affinity between body and self is most apparent; a "creative self" and a "creating body" work hand in hand. A difference or even an opposition between the two seems inconceivable. The self appears to be an *expression* of the body, a *form* which the body may give itself in its dealings with itself and its own kind. The self communicates a (perhaps particular) change in the body in a feeling which becomes an expression of the entire body:

The Self says to the ego: "Feel pain!" And thereupon it suffers, and thinks how it might put an end to its suffering – and for that very purpose it is *meant* to think.

The Self says to the ego: "Feel pleasure!" Thereupon it rejoices, and thinks how it may often rejoice – and for that very purpose it is *meant* to think. (Z I, "Despisers")

Feeling and thinking are the functions of the *ego*. In relation to the ego, the *self* functions as an amplifier in matters which, under certain circumstances, affect the body – matters which may be influenced by means of a change or reinforcement of sensibility. It is striking to what extent the self is charged with concepts, though it of course does not have concepts at its disposal: it has the wisdom of a wise man, exhibits the prudence of an educator (bearing a “leash”), has the intentions of a speaker, possesses ends as a commander might, and is, as the “creative self” of the body, hardly distinguishable from an artist.

In all these relations, the self stands on the threshold of consciousness, a threshold which it – “by itself” – cannot cross. In order to formulate conscious statements and to achieve logically consistent reflection, the self requires the “instrument” and “plaything” of “small reason.” The self can and must give “small reason” impulses and commands, though it does not “itself” have any concepts at its command. The feelings and concepts of the ego evidently are related to circumstances in which body finds itself as a whole, and in which it must also be engaged as such. The self shows the body such circumstances; and it does so from within the body. It forms the impulsivity which affects the body as a whole, in order to make this disposition receptive for the condition of the body as a whole.

We can now provide an answer to the question as to the particular characteristic of the self that distinguishes it from body and ego: the self is an *expression of the body understood as a unity*. It is the active configuration of the entire body, and enables the body to *present itself as a unity*. In the self the body creates for itself a form in which it makes understanding of the body as a whole possible. As manifest in such a form, the body is not simply activity or an event; through this form the body translates itself into a meaning which it may have, and which it may share with others of its own kind. This meaning concentrates the sensibility of the organism in such a way as to enable the organism to be perceived, individuated, and controlled in its own “sense.” Put simply: *the self transposes the body into a possible sense*. It represents the direction in which the body moves itself. In the self the body possesses a unity which can mean something, and which is thus accessible to conceptual understanding, though the self as such is not a source of concepts. In the self the body is concerned with the communication of its position and condition insofar as the body is disposed to possess a faculty of control which affects it as a whole. Such control, which is explicitly exercised over the body in this way, is exercised in the name of the ego.

It is in this sense that the self stands for “wisdom.” It is deceptively similar to the reason of the body. When Zarathustra states that “the creating body [. . .] creates the spirit as a hand of its will” (ZI, “Despisers”), we may take this as a suggestion, at least, of how the body attempts to go beyond itself as a whole by means of the self. We may recognize the integrative and representative function of the self in connection with “great reason.” The self enables the body to perform symbolically in situations in which the body acts as a kind of substrate, and in which it may express something only when it is affected as physical body *itself* – i.e. from a *unified perspective*, however that perspective may be conceived. The body finds comprehensible expression only through the authority of the self, which represents the body. It is the body which speaks, and not – as emphasized above – the lips or vocal cords; the author of the spoken word is

the person as a whole – the man *himself*. The self is the author of sense and thus most intimately related to “great reason.”

Zarathustra is concerned above all with distinguishing the *self* as the author of sense from the *ego*. For this we may give a reason: whereas the self merely supplies the conditions for meaning, the ego is already articulated in a concept. The ego is connected with expressible feelings and thoughts; it is associated with understanding and thinking. Thus it stands in a concrete relation to the use of language; it is – as we can now understand more precisely – an “instrument” and “plaything” of the self. The ego always has the body at its disposal in a certain way; it has an intention to command which is given by its involvement in concepts, and also limited by this involvement. Even when it undertakes an action which affects the body as a whole (such as, for example, when it prescribes some medicine), it remains limited to the perspective of concepts. “Small reason” says “me” because it is embedded in certain communicative relations. The body, on the other hand, “does me” by producing the very self which makes communication possible.

Unfortunately, we learn much too little from Zarathustra regarding the *ego*. He is preoccupied with a critique of the overvaluation of the consciousness of the ego: that is why he refuses to even provide an account of the ego’s tasks. But it is quite clear that one cannot do without the “small reason” of the ego, i.e. the conscious functions of concepts and judgments. All of the demands placed on the ego by the self must be fulfilled somehow. Through these demands the ego stands in mediated service of the body. And so it does indeed seem as though the ego could actually serve the body actively, by feeling and thinking. For in this way the ego not only makes the sensibilities of the entire body explicit, it also applies, under certain circumstances, a treatment or action to them which can benefit the body as a whole. The ego “is meant” to think, in order that it may appropriate and name constellations in which the body can develop itself. The ego is most certainly a part of the self. It is the authority of explicitness and of conscious, deductive reasoning. As soon as the ego disregards its integral relation to the body, however, it turns away from life. An ego which denies its bodily duty and raises itself to an authority *sui generis* can only operate with dead concepts. It perceives things all wrong, as the young Nietzsche noted (“On the Pathos of Truth,” 65).

If we wish to guard against this mistake, we must admit the active impulses of the self, in which the body enables an expression capable of making a unified impression. Even if the ego cannot avoid appearing self-conscious, it must be cognizant of its position as “instrument” and “plaything” of the body. This is not acknowledged by the despisers of the body. That is why Zarathustra warns against the hubris of self-consciousness, which cuts itself off from the conditions of productivity and thus becomes unfit for life. Nietzsche does not simply aim to show that the despisers of the body are caught in contradiction with their own premises and stuck in opposition with their own bodies. He pursues a more inclusive goal. He seeks to show these despisers that they do not understand themselves properly when they fail to respect the integral relation of body and spirit. The denial of the body necessarily becomes self-denial: here, too, the coherence between body and ego makes itself known, a coherent whole mediated by the self.

See also 4 "Nietzsche on Individuation and Purposiveness in Nature"; 6 "Nietzsche's 'Gay' Science"; 26 "Nietzsche on Geophilosophy and Geoaesthetics"

Notes

- 1 The German word *Sinn* has an exceptionally wide semantic field, which covers such meanings as "meaning," "sense" – both as the capacity to distinguish stimuli, and as discursive content – "thought," "consciousness," "understanding" of something. In the plural (*Sinne*) the word may also refer to sexual desire.
- 2 In regard to its formal (i.e. logical) use, Kant defines reason as the "power to deduce."
- 3 There we read: "The wheel of ground does not roll between them" (Z I, "On the Pale Criminal"). This means that thought and images are linked with action neither by causes nor through necessary conditions. The actual event, which is in fact the act, is accompanied by thoughts, words, and images – without being strictly connected to these. Nietzsche's further reflections on the function of the self, which mediates between – among other things – body and ego, show how the coherence between the act and its conceptual entourage is to be conceived.
- 4 The child's "creating" is his doing (Z I, "The Three Metamorphoses"). Here too we find a "wheel." It does not stand still, but is in active, spontaneous, and self-created motion.
- 5 In anticipation of possible objections I would like to emphasize that for the sake of the present argument I assume normal speech practices in Indo-European languages. I do not deny that a stand-up comic may succeed in delivering his routine without saying the word "me." However, it will suffice if I refer only to the language in which Nietzsche has Zarathustra deliver his speeches.
- 6 On this plausible interpretation, which, however, reveals more about the possible origin of Freud's term than it does about Nietzsche's intended meaning in this context, see Conway 1997: 246ff.

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