Ja-Sagen![1]

Iconoclastic Perspectives in Metaphysics

From That of a Frog to the Little Boy on the Asteroid

Great Books 2020

Dr. Jim Garrison

Pedro Carta

PhD. Wisdom Studies

pdcarta@gmail.com

---

[1] German translation for 'say yes!'

ABSTRACT:

It is in the position where one stands that the world reveals itself. All of humanity exists within the species' taxonomy, yet each individual creates a unique set of experiences within their kind. Some forces are beyond our control, but our views, impressions, beliefs, and sense of reality are shaped by perspectives that belong solely to us as individuals. Friedrich Nietzsche's[2] *Beyond Good and Evil* (Nietzsche, 2020) is a masterpiece of iconoclastic thought, expanding philosophy's broad wings to examine its individual components closely. Similarly, *The Little Prince* (Saint-Exupéry, 1943) by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry[3] presents a story of iconoclasm from a different angle.

This paper will argue that while Nietzsche dismantles the values and paradigms of his own time, his observations come from the same viewpoint as those he criticizes. This viewpoint, known as 'the frog perspective,' is a concept Nietzsche adopts from contemporary painters of his time (Nietzsche, 2020, p. 10) in his critique of philosophers' prejudices. This low-lying perspective can be attributed to a fixed point in place and time, leading to a narrow scope of understanding. In contrast, Saint-Exupéry's multi-dynamic perspective illustrates a cosmic journey from naivete to knowledge and its subsequent rebirth.

I will also explore Nietzsche's systematic 'will to change,' serving as an agent of doubt, alongside Saint-Exupéry's 'will to dream,' which reveals truth through subconscious revelation. Both methods aim to uncover a deeper understanding of truth.

---

[2] **Friedrich Nietzsche** was a German classical scholar, philosopher, and critic of culture, who became one of the most influential of all modern thinkers.
[3] **Antoine de Saint-Exupéry** was a French writer, aviator, poet and author.

Introduction

It is wise to approach Nietzsche with an understanding of his historical context. By the mid-1800s, Germany was still a confederation on the verge of unification, a process that took most of the century to accomplish. The Congress of Vienna established thirty-nine German states, the Deutscher Bund[4] (German Confederation, n.d.), to replace the Holy Roman Empire in 1815. Following a conflict between Prussia and Austria in 1848, the North German Confederation was formed in 1866. It was not until 1871 that Germany was entirely unified, with Wilhelm I[5] of Prussia as its emperor. German nationalism had been brewing since the end of the Napoleonic French Empire in 1814, focusing on developing a common language and fostering artistic and philosophical independence from France (von Werner, n.d.). Here, a picture of Nietzsche's character emerges in this political theater. We start to see a man grappling with his identity and the complexities of a new nation—one filled with skepticism and chaos, while a frenzied determination marks the other.

Drawing upon the works of Immanuel Kant[6], who is often regarded as one of the greatest philosophers of the Enlightenment period[7], we see the development of a balanced philosophical system that bridges rationalism and empiricism. This synthesis culminated in formulating the

---

[4] At the Congress of Vienna in 1815, the allied forces decided to dissolve the Confederation of the Rhine. They wanted to eradicate the memory of French occupation. The German states now formed the German Confederation, also known as the Bund. It aimed to protect its members and give them a stronger voice in Europe.

[5] **William I** was a German emperor from 1871, as well as king of Prussia from 1861.

[6] **Immanuel Kant** was a German philosopher whose comprehensive and systematic work in epistemology (the theory of knowledge), ethics, and aesthetics greatly influenced all subsequent philosophy.

[7] **The Enlightenment** was an intellectual movement in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that sought to improve society through fact-based reason and inquiry.

categorical imperative[8], which he proposed as the ultimate principle of morality (Johnson &

Cureton, 2004). Following Kant, Arthur Schopenhauer[9] presented a more pessimistic yet

comprehensive philosophical framework in his two-volume work from 1818, *The World as Will*

and Representation (*The World as Will and Presentation*, 2017). By combining ideas from

Eastern and Western philosophies, he expressed a pessimistic worldview in which humans suffer

from a lack of joy and satisfaction and are doomed to experience this unless they give up their

desires to lessen their suffering (*Introduction to Schopenhauer – The World as Will*, 2013). In

1859, one of the most significant works in biology was published, which also influenced

Friedrich Nietzsche's views: Charles Darwin's[10] *On the Origin of Species* (Darwin, 1859). This

groundbreaking research provided scientific evidence regarding the purpose and origin of

organisms, challenging the notion of a divine creator and presenting humankind as a terrestrial

phenomenon. From this sobering fall, perceptions would now be considered from the vantage

point of a frog, close to the ground. The scope of Nietzsche's observations and the

two-dimensional surface where he would put his thoughts to paper would be supported by his

experience from the time allotted to him in history.

The aerial philosophical perspective from a pilot, Antoine Saint-Exupéry, brought us a

very different approach to truth with his work, *The Little Prince*. Based in part on a real-life

event, his airplane crash in the Sahara desert in 1935 and his desire to have been a father,

Saint-Exupéry offers his readers a multi-dimensional approach to truth by creating a philosophy

---

[8] **categorical imperative**, in the ethics of the 18th-century German philosopher Immanuel Kant, founder of critical philosophy, a rule of conduct that is unconditional or absolute for all agents, the validity or claim of which does not depend on any desire or end.

[9] **Arthur Schopenhauer** was a German philosopher, often called the "philosopher of pessimism," who was primarily important as the exponent of a metaphysical doctrine of the will in immediate reaction against Hegelian idealism.

[10] **Charles Darwin** was an English naturalist whose scientific theory of evolution by natural selection became the foundation of modern evolutionary studies.

that explores the realms of fantasy to reflect on humanity's most fundamental conditionings. This story is grounded in friendship, love, and age difference nuances that can lead to awakenings of frame of reference and self-introspection.

The Little Prince's iconoclasm involves gradually shedding innocence to gain wisdom. However, this process also illustrates how growing up can lead to losing logical reasoning. Adults tend to focus on trivial matters, ultimately losing meaning and a sense of joy in life. This paradox highlights the complexities of existence, where gain often accompanies loss, and loss can lead to gain.

This deeply personal journey transcends both heart and mind. It reveals what is fundamental within the soul by wrapping basic emotions and presenting them as cherished gifts to hold for a lifetime. It is also intriguing and telling that it takes an outsider, an alien, to articulate human behavior so clearly. The Little Prince and the inhabitants of the other planets he visits are anthropomorphized, showcasing the universality of human behavior that stretches beyond earthly boundaries. Each planet and its residents are caught in the cyclical nature of their orbits, reflecting habits that are difficult to break.

Analyzing these two literary works to identify similarities may seem counterintuitive at first. However, this is often a focus of philosophical inquiry. Reality and fantasy do not compete in pursuing a common goal; neither element dilutes or intensifies the essence to approach meaning. Regardless of the perspective taken in the search for truth, philosophy can reveal unique insights that enhance our understanding.

One perspective is from the ground level, akin to frogs trying to comprehend their surroundings in a 19th-century European pond. The other is from a little boy who travels from his asteroid to Earth to soothe his heartache and seek understanding. Both narratives suggest that what one seeks is closer than it seems, but it takes effort and curiosity to see what unfolds.

Supposing that truth is a woman…

Nietzche's first line in the preface of *Beyond Good and Evil* is em dashed, "Supposing truth were a woman— then what (Nietzche, 2020, p.5)?" The long pause in the use of this sentence is very descriptive. It is as if he were daring the reader to think long and carefully about the answer, especially to have one doubt their answer because it is likely incorrect. On one hand, the concept of mystery in a woman is likely understood by every man. All the characteristics of a woman, their beauty, sensuality, passion, and hypnotizing force, to name but a few, renders the male a mesmerized fool. There is no doubt that Nietzche asks the question knowing of the likelihood that every man would buckle at the knees in an astounding fog of catatonic confusion, likely responding, "What?" as if repeating the question would facilitate a more straightforward answer. On the other hand, there is truth, of possibly equal mysterious value, that represents not only the enygma as multi-faceted but also impossible to solve. If truth drives humanity to attain wisdom and satisfy the thirst for meaning, then the challenge is astronomical yet worth pursuing.

After an em dash, it is important to mention a significant person in Nietzsche's life—Lou Salomé. Through a friend, Paul Rée, an empiricist thinker and supporter of Darwinism, Nietzsche befriended a beautiful young Russian woman named Lou Salomé. The three

developed an intellectual relationship, during which Nietzsche proposed marriage to Salomé at least twice, while Rée did so once. This situation created a complex dynamic for Nietzsche, resulting in an embarrassing disaster when Rée and Salomé abandoned him to pursue their relationship together, effectively dismantling their trio. Adding to the feminine drama, Nietzsche's sister, Elizabeth Foster, had her own opinion about the relationship and did everything she could to keep the two apart (Nietzche, 2020, p xiv).

We can feel the reverberations of this tumultuous relationship to have added a veil of bias in Nietzche towards women. The absolute resignation of reason to the commands of the heart is a force that should be subject to scrutiny to open the doors of philosophy for intrusive surgery. Such examinations are more than mere intellectual exercises. Nietzche's blood must have boiled over with such inquireries, likely adding to his illnesses in life and posing such a question that amalgamates truth and women as a single entity for all philosophers to ponder. So, supposing truth is a woman— then what? First, how does one feel or accept the desire to seek truth when the failure in understanding women is so prevalent and inevitable? How would this translate in his efforts to seek truth? Most importantly, if seeking answers from the truth, what can one learn from women?

Please… draw me a sheep.

The first words spoken by the Little Prince to the narrator are straightforward and aimed at addressing a problem. The reader is left unsure how long the Little Prince has been wandering the desert before encountering the pilot and his wrecked airplane. We cannot help but smile as we read about the little blonde boy asking the pilot to draw him a sheep. While this request might

seem odd, it feels entirely reasonable coming from a child, even though it is unusual to see a child in the middle of a desert. After several unsuccessful attempts to draw a sheep that satisfies the boy, the pilot cleverly sketches a box and tells him that the sheep is safely inside it (Supersummary, 2019, p. 6). Only later do we learn that the boy needed the drawing of the sheep to take back to his home so it could eat the roots of the troublesome baobab trees.

The boy's request has a philosophical dimension. Problems must be addressed early, or the consequences could be severe. If he allows the baobab trees to take root, they could overrun his entire planet, leaving little room for anything else and making it impossible to remove. Previous analyses of the book have interpreted the baobabs as a symbol of Nazism (Supersummary, 2019, p. 11). This perspective may be relevant given Saint-Exupéry's background as an Air Force pilot during World War II and the devastating effects this period had on humanity. However, one could also view this request as an introduction to the idea that the Little Prince is responsible and understands the importance of caring for his possessions. This theme is further illustrated in the story when he carefully rakes his volcanoes to ensure they burn slowly without erupting (Supersummary, 2019, p. 14) and in the delicate relationship with his flower.

I believe that the concept of responsibility is the most important theme in *The Little Prince*, if not one of the most significant themes in the entire book. Responsibility is a key characteristic that sets the tone for the story. Each relationship among the characters exemplifies dignity and respect, and all their actions reflect a deep understanding of their consequences.

To me, responsibility is a sign of maturity and an expression of kindness. The Little Prince's actions illustrate this virtue of care. His home requires maintenance and tidiness, so he understands the importance of keeping things organized and anticipates the consequences of neglect.

A responsible person is someone who commands respect and can be taken seriously. Even though the Little Prince is a child and sometimes feels frustrated by how adults perceive the world, I find his thoughts to be intelligent and insightful. The relationship he has with his flower ultimately defines his character. It is a deep friendship marked by an open heart. Even when he does not receive kindness in return, he understands the need to nurture the flower and protect her from the elements. He cares for her well-being and worries about her needs.

I believe that this sense of responsibility serves as the bond connecting all the characters with the Little Prince, including the reader, who cannot help but relate this nurturing attitude to what defines a truly remarkable person.

Will to End Passivity

Friedrich Nietzsche begins his book by criticizing passivity. He highlights several key points in this critique. First, he argues that philosophers' search for truth is influenced by their inherent biases. This insight is valid but can also apply to anyone speculating on any topic. It is reasonable to assume that everyone sees the world through a biased lens; therefore, what is crucial for any argument is that it must be supported by empirical observations or rational justifications that lead to evidence when possible or that require further contemplation if

necessary.

Nietzsche appears frustrated with philosophers' methods of inquiry, but his criticism seems overly personal and lacks room for counterarguments. His assertion that 'untruths' can aid human survival or self-enhancement (Nietzsche, 2020, p. xvii) does not carry sufficient weight to be convincing. People generally do not seek untruths, as it is human nature to seek certainty. There are no truths in uncertainty; thus, an investigation into untruths fails to satisfy or fulfill the quest for knowledge.

To illustrate this with a practical example, consider the scenario of a person, individually or collectively, trying to determine where food is plentiful before the winter season arrives. They would strive to uncover the truth to meet their needs. If there are false beliefs about this issue and the person recognizes those beliefs as untrue, the only advantage in that knowledge is understanding what is untrue.

Nietzsche primarily critiques the notion of a passive 'Will.' He challenges the ideas of Spinoza[11] and Schopenhauer, arguing that they fail to acknowledge the importance of human agency and determination. Schopenhauer's concept of the 'Will to live' (Nietzsche, 2020, p. xvi) explains that all living organisms possess a will to survive. This idea is reflected in Spinoza's term *conatus*[12], which he discusses in his *Ethics* (Spinoza, 1996). Conatus refers to the striving for perseverance in both existence and thought (LeBuffe, 2001).

---

[11] **Benedict de Spinoza** (born November 24, 1632, Amsterdam—died February 21, 1677, The Hague) was a Dutch Jewish philosopher, one of the foremost exponents of 17th-century Rationalism and one of the early and seminal figures of the Enlightenment. His masterwork is the treatise *Ethics* (1677).

[12] In the philosophy of Baruch Spinoza, **conatus** is the tendency of a thing to strive to continue to exist and improve itself. The word comes from Latin and means "endeavor," "impulse," or "striving".

However, Nietzsche believes these explanations for the will to live are insufficient. He argues that what is truly needed is an embodiment of the will—a proactive assertion of control that surpasses the expectations imposed by external factors that shape one's identity. If an individual is merely subject to the causations of their environment, then they lack free will. Only 'Will to Power' can empower people to overcome passivity and take charge of their destiny.

It is very important to understand Nietzsche's iconoclasm. He sees philosophers and the world in general as being lazily preoccupied with entrenched ideas that are difficult to uproot. I like to compare this to the Little Prince, who removes the roots of the baobab trees. However, in Nietzsche's view, the problem has already taken root in humanity, and everyone seems to have accepted it as a part of life.

As I read *Beyond Good and Evil*, I feel Nietzsche's energy and determination to start from scratch. He wants to erase all the events that led to the status quo and build a solid and robust foundation of human ingenuity, using a different set of raw materials. I can almost envision him, animated and passionate, his mustache vibrating with intensity as he roars like a lion to capture everyone's attention.

In a sense, Nietzsche's approach encourages people to wipe their slates clean of preconceptions and realize their value is greater than others have led them to believe. This 'call to awakening' ultimately culminates in his 1883 masterpiece, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Nietzche

2006), where he introduces the concept of the *Übermensch*[13] as the next stage in the development of a higher humanity.

Serious Men

In *The Little Prince*, the young and reflective protagonist serves a critique of the 'seriousness' that characterizes the adult world. The narrative is rich with examples illustrating how adults often appear absurd, trapped within a narrow mindset of understanding. At the story's beginning, the narrator presents a drawing resembling a hat; however, it soon becomes clear that this representation is of a boa constrictor that has consumed an elephant (Supersummary, 2019, p. 5). This clever illustration is significant as it highlights a perspective that is often inconceivable to most adults, inviting readers to embrace a broader and more imaginative view of the world. It underscores the endless creativity and open-mindedness inherent in childhood, contrasting with the constrained, frog perspectives commonly held by adults.

The narrator explains that adults assigned the name Asteroid B-612 to where he believes that the Little Prince came from, purely because they see numbers as symbols for solid facts, which reflects their limited capacity to appreciate beauty beyond what is quantifiable. When adults speak of the aesthetic appeal of a house, their focus is solely on its market value, reducing its significance to just a mere financial proposition (Supersummary, 2019, p. 9). This theme of superficiality and materialism weaves through the Little Prince's encounters with the inhabitants of different planets during his journey to Earth (Supersummary, 2019, p. 18) and in specific

---

[13] The **Übermensch**:('Overman' or 'Superman') is a concept in the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche.The *Übermensch* is someone who has "crossed over" the bridge, from the comfortable "house on the lake" (the comfortable, easy, mindless acceptance of what a person has been taught, and what everyone else believes) to the mountains of unrest and solitude.

conversations with the narrator.

In his journey, he first meets a king on a planet who believes himself omnipotent, possessing the authority to condemn or pardon nonexistent subjects—an exercise in futility that serves no real purpose. Similarly, the 'vain man' on the following planet is entirely preoccupied with securing the admiration of others, highlighting the emptiness of vanity. The 'drunkard' slumped over a table is perhaps the most tragic figure. He drinks heavily to escape the painful reality of his condition, thereby entrenching himself in a cycle of self-destruction and despair.

Further in his voyage, he encounters a businessman, and this meeting is particularly revelatory. This character obsessively counts the stars, claiming ownership over them simply because no one else has laid claim, believing that his ability to accumulate wealth is a testament to his worth. The businessman embodies impatience and greed, representing the archetype of an adult who has forfeited the capacity for playfulness and joy. His self-imposed adherence to a serious demeanor perpetuates a laughable notion regarding the priorities and values adults hold dear, ultimately questioning what it means to lead a fulfilling life. Through these encounters, the Little Prince poignantly critiques the adult world, advocating for the wonder and imagination that often wane with age.

The perspective of a boy leaving his asteroid to begin a journey of scrutiny and observation suggests that the reader open their heart to see what really is, that by tearing down the labels we adopt for ourselves, we can see a broader picture that can bring more clarity of purpose and how all of these labels being self imposed, can easily be removed by an act of self-care and love. By no means is this easy; each passing of time calcifies us to an identity that

traps us into believing that we are confined to what we have determined to be who we are.

Christianity, Stoicism, and Democracy

One of the criticisms that Nietzsche directs at the Stoics[14] revolves around their interpretation of 'living according to nature.' He argues that adopting indifference is not truly living (Nietzsche, 2020, p. 16). The Stoics assert that to live in accordance with nature, one must understand the distinction between what is within one's control and what is not. What one can control includes thoughts, desires, and actions, while everything external to oneself is beyond one's control. As a result, the Stoics view the external world as indifferent, suggesting that they should not dwell on those external factors or allow them to disturb their peace.

Nietzsche sees this perspective as a sort of evasion—he believes it is an inadequate way of engaging with life because it suggests that one can avoid the mental distress that suffering brings. He posits that experiencing suffering and grappling with life's challenges are essential to living fully. While his argument is valid in highlighting that adversity can teach us about humanity, it overlooks the Stoics' core principle of living in accordance with nature.

For the Stoics, living according to nature does not mean avoiding suffering. They recognize that suffering is inherently part of life. Instead, their philosophy advocates for acceptance of what life presents and making the best of it. For instance, if someone feels unfortunate due to an external event, the ideal response would be one of indifference. Since one cannot change external circumstances, getting upset is unproductive. The Stoic approach

---

[14] **Stoics:** a member of a school of philosophy founded by Zeno of Citium about 300 b.c. known as Stoicism, holding that the wise man should be free from passion, unmoved by joy or grief, and submissive to natural law.

encourages focusing on what is within one's control—seeing the situation for what it is and adopting a mindset of acceptance. This attitude helps neutralize any anxiety toward the event or circumstance.

I find it humorously ironic that Nietzsche criticizes the Stoics, as his advocacy in the book aligns closely with the Stoic view of living in accordance with nature. Nietzsche argues that philosophers and moralists perceive life through a biased lens shaped by their flawed preconceptions, which distorts their search for truth and understanding of reality. Similarly, the Stoics maintain that nothing is inherently good or bad; instead, our judgments assign those values (*Epictetus[15] Quotes: Over 200 Inspiring Thoughts From a Slave*, n.d.). This perspective reinforces the idea that our judgments contribute to our biases, and we have some control over whether we choose to categorize a situation in one way or another. Ultimately, our view, shaped by our judgments, reflects our reality.

I noticed another critique in Chapter II directed towards the Stoics or the Epicureans. Nietzsche explains that a person who seeks a citadel to avoid crowds and does not take on the world's burdens is not destined for true knowledge (Nietzsche, 2020, p. 38). If he refers to the Epicureans[16], he likely alludes to the Epicurean garden. Followers of Epicurus[17] would retreat to this garden to lead a life free from suffering and to avoid involvement in societal issues (*The Garden of Epicurus,* n.d.).

However, the Stoics had a different understanding of the concept of the citadel. They

---

[15] **Epictetus** was an exponent of Stoicism who flourished in the early second century C.E. about four hundred years after the Stoic school of Zeno of Citium was established in Athens.

[16] **Epicureanism** is a system of philosophy founded 307 BCE based upon the teachings of Epicurus, an ancient Greek philosopher.

[17] **Epicurus** was a Greek philosopher, author of an ethical philosophy of simple pleasure, friendship, and retirement. He founded schools of philosophy that survived directly from the 4th century bc until the 4th century ad.

believed it was our responsibility to decide what misfortunes we allowed into our lives. Each person has an inner citadel where they control what can disturb their peace of mind. Importantly, Stoics do not blame external circumstances for their distress. If the citadel crumbles, it is solely the inhabitants' responsibility. The weakening of one's citadel is caused by one's mental faculties, which may lead to its destruction from within. It seems pointless for Nietzsche to launch verbal attacks against the Stoics. He cannot disrupt their equanimity if his goal is to vilify them. If his intention is to tarnish their image in the eyes of the average reader, such bias may only encourage readers to educate themselves about Stoicism.

When it comes to Christianity, I agree with Nietzche to the extent that he is talking about the church's hierarchical mind-control tactics. Religion does not cause a herd mentality; the abusive power of authority leads people astray from their thinking, leading them to submit their judgements to a corrupted fallacy. Unfortunately, Christianity allows for enough ambiguity for it to be diseased by greed. Whether it is the Vatican authority or the gospels concerning the protestants, the human ease of letting go of control by submitting to fear and bullying is an unfortunate consequence of our conditioning. It is not surprising that a religion that promises an afterlife by meeting criteria will be subject to manipulation, without mentioning the fact that religion is also a societal element; there is no such thing as a religion of one, even protestants whose relationship to god is direct without any mediums in between are essentially part of a community and therefore subject to influences, biases and mimecry of eachother.

One could argue that the Spartans exhibited a herd mentality. However, in this context, Nietzsche would likely approve, as their mindset was characterized by the "will to power."

Nevertheless, this mentality was also shaped by societal and cultural influences, which were often subordinated to the worship of polytheistic deities.

What, then, is the essence of Nietzsche's criticism of this concept? I would argue that it fundamentally distinguishes between weakness and strength. Therefore, Nietzsche would likely accept a form of herd mentality that represents strength and embodies the 'Will to Power.' This brings us to his disdain for democracy. Nietzsche detested all forms of democracy, not only in a political sense; for him, democratic values reflected weakness (Cunningham, 1919, pp. 185-197).

If we were to apply Nietzsche's philosophy to a non-democratic system, it is evident that the Übermensch would need to emerge from an aristocracy, totalitarianism, or dictatorship. It seems peculiar that Zarathustra descended from the mountain to address a royal court or government parliament, seemingly disregarding the populace altogether. Alternatively, it could be argued that the 'Will to Power' is a call for rebellion against democracy, wherein an individual's ambition to achieve a higher sense of humanity can only develop outside of democratic structures. I am not sure how this would look, but it does not seem too different from where capitalism is heading by the increasing economic inequality gap.

Ephemerality

The geographer on the last planet visited by the Little Prince suggested that his flower was unimportant because he considered it ephemeral (Supersummary, 2019, p. 23). This caused the Little Prince to regret leaving her alone on his asteroid and highlighted a central theme of the book: impermanence. A flower, a friendship, and even material possessions are all transient.

What truly matters is the time spent with something and the meaning one derives from it.

Although the prince refers to the flower as his, he acknowledges that he intentionally left her to take a temporary break from her companionship. This decision did not weaken his connection to her; instead, it emphasized that true value lies not in ownership—as illustrated by the businessman who counted 'his' stars—but in the bond one creates. Friendship transcends time and even lasts longer than a lifetime. It becomes an integral part of a person, contributing to their personal growth.

The Little Prince learns this through his friendship with the fox. The fox explains that the time he has spent with the flower makes her unique (Supersummary, 2019, p. 31). The fox also asks the prince to 'tame' him, implying that a meaningful friendship requires investment; without this bond, the time spent together may feel fleeting. What prevents the flower from fading into obscurity is the prince's love for her, and what keeps the friendship with the fox from diminishing is the intentional focus on the quality of their time together. Though everything is ephemeral in its material essence and often taken seriously by adults, as the fox told the prince, "One sees clearly only with the heart" (Supersummary, 2019, p. 30). In my opinion, a lifetime is ephemeral enough to appreciate everything in it. The Little Prince's subsequent death, as a means of returning home, essentially reveals the meaning of their friendship to the narrator. The realization of a time well spent rekindles the spirit to feel the love left behind. To an extent, then, love transcends death.

I prefer to view the death of the Little Prince as his return home and a shift back to a

cosmic perspective after experiencing the earthly perspective. While on Earth, he came to understand love in a profound way, and this knowledge is not fleeting; it is both enduring and applicable, regardless of his location in spacetime. In a biblical context, the snake may symbolize the acquired knowledge that the Little Prince receives in exchange for his life. Death holds little significance if life does not impart knowledge. We find value in life because it is an adventure, and our experiences contribute to the knowledge we gain from it.

All connections, interactions, and shared love give meaning to death, allowing it to hold value. The snake serves as a conduit, bridging the two worlds and transforming the body into pure knowledge, enabling transcendence to a different realm. This represents the final iconoclasm for the Little Prince. This knowledge exists everywhere: with those who remain in this realm and throughout the universe, viewed from a cosmic perspective.

Nihilism

Nietzsche's concepts of nihilism are complex and warrant an extensive study. I will focus on a few key examples and share my interpretations based on his 'will to power' theory. Nietzsche argues that modernity has lost meaning in its values. He uses examples from his critiques of Christianity and Plato to illustrate his point: If one relies on God for happiness and sustains their life according to that belief, what happens if, through self-discovery or evidence, that belief is proven false (Creasy & Dresser, 2023)? This scenario contradicts the 'will to power' because it embodies passivity and dependency, which hinder personal growth and diminish one's appreciation for life.

In opposing the herd mentality, which entails placing faith and belief outside oneself and relying on external authorities, Nietzsche contends that such dependence drains an individual's life force and negates their 'will to power.'

Plato's example is somewhat more abstract. In his allegory of the cave[18], Plato portrays humanity as living in an illusion, where everything experienced is merely shadows projected from the source of reality. Nietzsche sees this as a manifestation of nihilism because it removes the 'will' from earthly matters. He argues that this perspective diminishes the significance of life and meaning, leading to nihilism (Rafik, 2023). Plato's theory of forms[19] is also relevant here. According to Plato, since the world as we perceive it is changeable, it is, therefore, unreliable. He posits that an archetypal form exists independently of the mind in a different realm (Plato: A Theory of Forms | Issue 90, n.d.) In this view, what we see are not mere projections but rather ideas—copies of an archetype, which is the true form of a thing. Nietzsche interprets this stance as eliminating agency and value from an organism's will, defining it as passive and mediocre, ultimately leading to nihilism.

To understand Nietzsche, one must adopt a frog's perspective, remaining close to the ground to perceive humanity's trajectory toward nihilism. People overly fixate on morality and external influences that detract from their individuality. If they allow themselves to be misled by

---

[18] **Allegory of the Cave** is a concept devised by the philosopher to ruminate on the nature of belief versus knowledge. The allegory begins with prisoners who have lived their entire lives chained inside a cave. Behind the prisoners is a fire, and between the fire and the prisoners are people carrying puppets or other objects. These cast shadows on the opposite wall. The prisoners watch these shadows, believing this to be their reality as they've known nothing else.

[19] **The theory of Forms or theory of Ideas** is a philosophical theory, concept, or world-view, attributed to Plato, that the physical world is not as real or true as timeless, absolute, unchangeable ideas. According to this theory, ideas in this sense, often capitalized and translated as "Ideas" or "Forms", are the non-physical essences of all things, of which objects and matter in the physical world are merely imitations.

such influences, they relinquish their 'will to power' and permit others or external forces to dictate their will. Nietzsche viewed nihilism as an existential condition (Michels, 2004), suggesting that it is impossible not to be a nihilist. His vigorous call for the 'will to power' seeks to challenge established ideas and encourages humanity to engage in an instinctual, almost primal drive toward genuine self-realization.

Conclusion: Ode to Philosophy

In this paper, I analyze Friedrich Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil* and Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince* as two literary works that express metaphysical concepts from different philosophical perspectives. I focus on iconoclasm as an abstract concept to illustrate how both writers dismantle or deconstruct their characters (in Nietzsche's case, society, institutions, and humanity) to reveal the core of transformation towards individual self-realization.

I portray Nietzsche's perspective as that of a frog, borrowing this imagery from an artist's painting style that depicts such a viewpoint. This choice emphasizes Nietzsche's raw and aggressive force, coming from a low and terrestrial position. In contrast, the Little Prince possesses a more dynamic and aerial perspective. He is an anthropomorphic alien who travels from his asteroid to Earth, motivated by his feelings of discontent toward the behavior of his cherished flower. He ultimately realizes that love has its complications that require care and attention.

The iconoclasm the Little Prince experiences is intellectual in nature but resonates with

emotional truth, requiring clarity of thought and humility. As if guided by a life force throughout the story, the Little Prince discovers purpose through adventures, friendships, and ultimately, his own mortality. His journey represents a search for truth from the inside out and serves as a testament to the complexities of love, emphasizing the importance of experiencing life with an open heart.

If we define philosophy as the love of wisdom, one must navigate through various concepts and observations to seek answers. However, answers do not always reside at the end of a search or the birth of a discovery; they can often be found in nuances and intrinsic details. Philosophy encompasses alchemy and emergence, revealing truths that can lead in different directions. It fosters creativity, allowing it to manifest through art, emotions, and intellectual reasoning. Philosophy acts as a wide net, capturing meaning and releasing understanding.

We all possess this capacity—the 'will to know,' the 'will to belong,' and the desire to admire the beauty and joy of a universe that constantly inspires and glorifies itself.

References

Barkin, K. (2025, February 10). *William I | German Unification, Prussian King & Emperor*.

    Britannica. Retrieved March 4, 2025, from

    https://www.britannica.com/biography/William-I-emperor-of-Germany

Bedard, M. (2025, January 27). *Plato's Allegory of the Cave — Summary & Meaning Explained*.

    StudioBinder. Retrieved March 6, 2025, from

    https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/platos-allegory-of-the-cave/

Categorical imperative | Definition & Examples. (2025, February 27). Britannica. Retrieved

    March 4, 2025, from https://www.britannica.com/topic/categorical-imperative

Conatus. (n.d.). Wikipedia. Retrieved March 3, 2025, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conatus

Creasy, K., & Dresser, S. (2023, April 5). *For Nietzsche, nihilism goes deeper than 'life is*

    pointless'. Psyche. Retrieved March 6, 2025, from

    https://psyche.co/ideas/for-nietzsche-nihilism-goes-deeper-than-life-is-pointless

Cunningham, G. W. (1919). NIETZSCHE ON DEMOCRACY. *Texas Review*, *4*(3), 185-197.

    http://www.jstor.org/stable/43465312

Darwin, C. (1859). *The Project Gutenberg eBook of On the Origin of Species, by Charles*

    Darwin. Project Gutenberg. Retrieved February 27, 2025, from

    https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1228/1228-h/1228-h.htm

Desmond, A. J. (2025, February 18). *Charles Darwin | Biography, Education, Books, Theory of*

    Evolution, & Facts. Britannica. Retrieved March 4, 2025, from

    https://www.britannica.com/biography/Charles-Darwin

Diano, C., & von Fritz, K. (2025, February 15). *Epicurus | Greek Philosopher & Hedonist*.

    Britannica. Retrieved March 4, 2025, from

https://www.britannica.com/biography/Epicurus

Drew, R. (n.d.). *Epicureanism*. Wikipedia. Retrieved March 4, 2025, from

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epicureanism

Epictetus. (n.d.). Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Retrieved March 4, 2025, from

https://iep.utm.edu/epictetu/

Epictetus Quotes: Over 200 Inspiring Thoughts From a Slave. (n.d.). Via Stoica. Retrieved

March 4, 2025, from https://viastoica.com/epictetus-quotes/

Frisch, S., & Norton, W. (n.d.). *Übermensch*. Wikipedia. Retrieved March 4, 2025, from

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%9Cbermensch

Garden of Epicurus, The. (n.d.). Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Retrieved March 4, 2025,

from https://iep.utm.edu/garden/

German Confederation. (n.d.). Wikipedia. Retrieved February 27, 2025, from

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Confederation

Hübscher, A. (2025, February 18). *Arthur Schopenhauer | German Philosopher, Pessimist &*

Writer. Britannica. Retrieved February 27, 2025, from

https://www.britannica.com/biography/Arthur-Schopenhauer

Immanuel Kant | Biography, Philosophy, Books, & Facts. (2025, February 10). Britannica.

Retrieved February 27, 2025, from

https://www.britannica.com/biography/Immanuel-Kant

Introduction to Schopenhauer – The World as Will. (2013, November 23). Academy of Ideas.

Retrieved February 27, 2025, from

https://academyofideas.com/2013/11/introduction-to-schopenhauer-the-world-as-will/

Johnson, R., & Cureton, A. (2004, February 23). *Kant's Moral Philosophy (Stanford*

Encyclopedia of Philosophy). Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Retrieved February

27, 2025, from https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-moral/

LeBuffe, M. (2001, October 23). *Spinoza's Psychological Theory (Stanford Encyclopedia of*

Philosophy). Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Retrieved March 3, 2025, from

https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/spinoza-psychological/

Michels, S. (2004, 10). Nietzsche, Nihilism, and the Virtue of Nature. *Sacred Heart University*

DigitalCommons@SHU.

https://digitalcommons.sacredheart.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1015&context=gov_f

ac

Nietzche, F. (2020). *Beyond Good and Evil*. Capstone Wiley.

Nietzsche, F. W. (2006). *Thus spoke Zarathustra* (A. Del Caro & R. Pippin, Eds.; A. Del Caro,

Trans.). Cambridge University Press.

Plato: A Theory of Forms | Issue 90. (n.d.). Philosophy Now. Retrieved March 6, 2025, from

https://philosophynow.org/issues/90/Plato_A_Theory_of_Forms

Popkin, R. H. (2025, February 17). *Benedict de Spinoza | Biography, Ethics, & Facts*. Britannica.

Retrieved March 3, 2025, from

https://www.britannica.com/biography/Benedict-de-Spinoza

Rafik, A. (2023). *Why did Nietzsche call Plato a nihilist who hates life?* Journal. Retrieved 3 6,

2025, from

https://vocal.media/journal/why-did-nietzsche-call-plato-a-nihilist-who-hates-life

Saint-Exupéry, A. (1943). *The Little Prince*. One More Library. Retrieved February 27, 2025,

from

https://onemorelibrary.com/index.php/en/?option=com_djclassifieds&format=raw&view

=download&task=download&fid=14329

Spinoza, B. d. (1996). *Ethics* (E. Curley, Ed.; E. Curley, Trans.). Penguin Publishing Group.

STOIC Definition & Meaning. (n.d.). Merriam-Webster. Retrieved March 4, 2025, from

https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/stoic

Supersummary. (2019). *Study Guide: The Little Prince by Antoine de Saint-Exupery*

(SuperSummary). Independently Published.

Theory of Forms. (n.d.). Saylor Academy. Retrieved March 6, 2025, from

https://learn.saylor.org/mod/book/tool/print/index.php?id=30538

von Werner, A. (n.d.). *German Unification | World Civilizations I (HIS101) – Biel*. Lumen

Learning. Retrieved February 27, 2025, from

https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-fmcc-boundless-worldhistory/chapter/german-un

ification/

What Is the Enlightenment and How Did It Transform Politics? (2023, February 17). CFR

Education. Retrieved February 27, 2025, from

https://education.cfr.org/learn/reading/what-enlightenment-and-how-did-it-transform-poli

tics

The World as Will and Presentation. (2017). Early Modern Texts. Retrieved February 27, 2025,

from https://earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/schopenhauer1818.pdf