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LEAVING THE GARDEN: AL-RĀZĪ AND NIETZSCHE AS WAYWARD EPICUREANS

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In Plato's *Sophist*, the Stranger recounts a mythic battle between the giants and the gods, presenting it as a philosophical dispute over what ultimately exists.¹ The giants—or “earthborn,” as he calls them—insist on locating being only in physical or material nature.² For them, what *is* is always a corporeal body. They deny the reality of that which cannot be seen or touched and thus “drag everything down to earth from the heavenly realm of the invisible” (*Sophist* 247c; 246a).³ The gods or “friends of the forms,” however, recognize the more fundamental reality of the supersensible and noetic. Historically, the giants and the gods can be seen as representing two philosophical lineages: on the one hand the tradition of natural philosophers (culminating in the atomistic materialism of Leucippus and Democritus), and on the other thinkers of metaphysical transcendence who posit some changeless, intelligible reality (e.g., the Pythagoreans, Parmenides, and, of course, Plato).⁴ Yet, according to the Stranger, the dispute is a “never-ending battle” that is “always going on between these two camps” (246c). It is thus less about the history of Presocratic intellectual conflicts than it is about two living, recurring, antagonistic philosophical temperaments. Indeed, despite Plato's best efforts, post-Socratic philosophy would continue to produce its share of earthborn giants, even if they were usually a marginalized minority.⁵

Perhaps the most significant and influential of these giants is Epicurus (341–270 B.C.E.), born just a few years after the death of Plato. His school, The Garden, offered a this-worldly alternative to Plato's heavenly orientation, and his philosophy laid the groundwork for what Laurence Lampert has called the “subterranean tradition” of philosophical naturalism in the West.⁶ Indeed, it would not be inappropriate to call Epicurus the “anti-Plato.”⁷ Plato, of course, has long been established as the paradigmatic canonical hero of the Western tradition, while Epicurus was until recently relegated to its outermost fringes as a pariah.⁸ Yet, like Plato, Epicurus gave rise to his own philosophical progeny.⁹ This essay offers up a comparative examination of two of his more unusual intellectual descendants: Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Zakariyā' al-Rāzī and Friedrich Nietzsche.

At first glance, these figures may seem to have little in common. Al-Rāzī was a Persian physician-philosopher of the late ninth and early tenth centuries, a remarkable period of cultural cross-pollination and intellectual fruition in the Islamic world.¹⁰ Nietzsche, of course, inhabited a very different world: nineteenth-century Europe—the decline of Western modernity—in which the ambitions of the Enlightenment had begun to turn on themselves and throw themselves into question. Yet relative to their

respective cultural and historical contexts, al-Rāzī and Nietzsche were heretical, subterranean thinkers, with antagonistic relations to the traditions in which they worked. Both were committed to questioning some of the most fundamental presuppositions of their forebears and contemporaries, and were oftentimes reviled for it.

In this essay, I shall make the case that the peculiar nature of al-Rāzī's and Nietzsche's philosophical heresies affiliates them strongly with the lineage of Epicurus.¹¹ By this I do not mean that their thought is somehow reducible to Epicureanism, or that they necessarily subscribe to every Epicurean doctrine, or that either thinker explicitly and uniquely identified with that particular Hellenistic school. My claim is rather that each in his own way appropriates distinctly Epicurean themes, concerns, and insights, even as he puts them to work in very different ways. They are best understood as "wayward" Epicureans. By examining the ways in which al-Rāzī and Nietzsche take up the earthborn philosophy of Epicurus—sometimes supplementing it, sometimes qualifying it, sometimes radicalizing it—I aim to illuminate the kindred spirit and elective affinities in their philosophies, as well as the essential tensions between them.

Such a comparative analysis has two benefits. First, it gives us a clearer sense of the historical trajectory of naturalism as a philosophical project and so can put us in a better position to evaluate its resources and limitations. This is important, I think, because while naturalism has effectively become the dominant philosophical orientation of late Western modernity, much contemporary discourse regarding its prospects tends to be historically myopic. Second, by initiating a dialogue between figures like Nietzsche (who arguably represents the most ambitious and uncompromising form of modern Western secularism) and al-Rāzī (a formative, albeit heretical, figure within the Islamic tradition), we can better understand the antagonisms and shared concerns between these two worldviews—as well as the ambiguities and self-questioning that occur within them.

Garden-Variety Epicureanism

Before examining al-Rāzī and Nietzsche as wayward Epicureans, I will first very quickly sketch out the general doctrines that I am associating with this school.¹² As I understand it, the most striking and unique characteristic of Epicureanism is its rejection of Socrates' paradigmatic "second sailing" (*deuteros plous*).¹³ That is to say, it resists the powerful impulse, whether intellectual or emotional, to move above and beyond the explanatory resources of the material world—the natural realm of generation and destruction—and posit some more fundamental, timeless, changeless, supersensible reality that serves as the ultimate basis of all being, value, and intelligibility. Interpreted in this broad sense, the "second sailing" can be understood as the drive toward some kind of transcendent metaphysics or theology. Historically, this has manifested itself in a number of different ways: in Socrates' autobiographical discussion in the *Phaedo* it takes shape as Plato's Forms, but it could also find expression as the abstract, intellectualized "God of the Philosophers" (a kind of causal anchor we might posit in order to explain the temporal origin, sustained existence, or

apparent teleology of the natural world), or the more personalized transcendent creator God of Judaism, Christianity, or Islam. Epicurus and his followers preemptively resist this move in all its forms and attempt to offer us instead a purely naturalistic interpretation of the world.¹⁴ Positing only material atoms and the void, the Epicureans attempt to account for all being, knowledge, and value without relying upon any “supernatural” explanatory entities.¹⁵ In effect, Epicurus and his progeny endeavor to explain all phenomena through some combination of natural necessity and chance, without any reference to preexisting intelligence or design.¹⁶

Given the systematic spirit of Epicurus’ thought, it is perhaps no surprise that his philosophical anthropology is tightly interwoven with his materialistic physics. As a part of nature, the human being is a physical phenomenon through and through: a plant whose roots are in the earth, not in the heavens.¹⁷ The soul (or mind) is thus not an ontologically independent, incorporeal entity as it is for Plato; rather, it is simply a modification of unintelligent elements, entirely physical and inescapably dependent upon the more fundamental processes of the body.¹⁸ This means that when the body dies, the soul dies with it: the remarkable physical organization that makes possible one’s thoughts and experiences breaks down, leaving its atomic components to be scattered and recycled in the endless natural flux of generation and destruction.¹⁹

In accordance with this model of the human being, all knowledge claims must ultimately be rooted in bodily sense experience, and value categories must somehow be traced back to embodied, tactile sensations triggered by physical contact.²⁰ The Epicureans are thus materialists with respect to the question of being, empiricists with respect to the question of knowledge, and hedonists with respect to the question of value. Just as corporeality is for them the criterion of reality, and sensation the criterion of truth, feelings of pleasure and pain are ultimately the criteria of good and evil.²¹

As a practical philosophy, Epicureanism has long been caricatured in the popular imagination as the indulgent pursuit of sensuous pleasure, but Epicurus and his followers of course never actually advocated this strategy themselves—indeed, they saw it as excessive and doomed to failure.²² They privileged only natural and necessary desires and ranked stable katastematic or “state-based” pleasures over kinetic ones.²³ Recognizing the interconnectedness of pleasure and pain, they understood the highest pleasure (*hēdonē*) in negative or privative terms, as freedom from bodily pain (*aponia*) and tranquility or equanimity of the soul (*ataraxia*, lit. “unperturbedness”).²⁴ For them, the good life was a quiet one that shunned the vicissitudes of the public eye and political strife: a key Epicurean maxim was “live inconspicuously” (*lathe biōsas*).²⁵ They avoided extremes, advocating a life of simple, moderate, natural pleasures, illuminated by reason and protected from ignorant superstitions and the powerful, irrational, painful passions they stir up (most notably, the fear of death and afterworldly punishment). Epicurus and his followers were for this very reason merciless debunkers of religio-metaphysical interpretations of the world, which they thought moralized nature and reinforced ignorance and suffering.²⁶ Accordingly, they offered a kind of naturalistic, this-worldly therapy, best summed up by the *tetrapharmakos* or “four-part cure”: “Don’t fear god, don’t worry about death; what is

good is easy to get, and what is terrible is easy to endure."²⁷ This spiritual medicine is for Epicurus the chief purpose of philosophy. "Empty is that philosopher's argument by which no human suffering is therapeutically treated," he is reputed to have said, "For just as there is no use in a medical art that does not cast out the sickness of bodies, so too there is no use in philosophy, unless it casts out the suffering of the soul."²⁸

Al-Rāzī's Platonic Epicureanism

Al-Rāzī was himself a well-regarded physician, dedicated to healing both the body and the soul, so it is perhaps no surprise that he eagerly seized upon the ostensibly Epicurean ideas he encountered through the pivotal Graeco-Arabic translation project of the eighth to tenth centuries.²⁹ Yet while he was lauded within the Islamic tradition for his medical prowess, he was also generally branded as a dangerous freethinker and heretic (*zindīq*). The reasons for this are many, and arguably have much to do with the Epicurean temperament of his philosophy. Like many other classical Islamic philosophers, al-Rāzī believed that reason (*'aql*) constituted a sufficient means to knowledge of the highest practical and theoretical matters, and he rejected the idea that its legitimacy was ultimately grounded in divine revelation. But whereas most *falāsifa* typically saw intellect as a rare commodity possessed only by the elite few, he held that reason is universally and equitably distributed among all people.³⁰ Further, whereas most classical Islamic philosophers saw reason and revelation as mirror images of each other (or at least harmonious and complementary), al-Rāzī saw them as starkly opposed. He denounced all revealed religion (including Islam) as fanatical, provincial, intolerant, and divisive, leading to pointless bloodshed over dogmatic and picayune absurdities. He rejected the traditional hierarchical structures of religious authority as arbitrary, self-serving, tyrannical, and ultimately unnecessary. He denounced prophecy as the fraudulent work of ignorant, malevolent spirits still bound up with the corporeal world. He rejected the possibility of miracles. Nor did he couch his views in some bland, exoteric, protective orthodoxy.³¹ His criticisms of these claims—all of them crucial to Islam—were quite forthright and unapologetic, and they earned him the abiding enmity of most thinkers within the Islamic tradition, even those who respected his scientific and medical achievements.

The concrete particularities of al-Rāzī's attack on religion have been discussed in great detail elsewhere and I will not address them here.³² Suffice to say that although they go beyond the letter of Epicurus' own critique, his heretical views regarding revelation, religious authority, prophecy, and miracles are strikingly Epicurean in spirit.

The theoretical heart of Epicurus' philosophy is of course atomism, and al-Rāzī adopts this model extensively, if not completely. At first glance, this may not seem remarkable, since a robust strain of atomism flourished within the Islamic tradition during the classical period, independently of Greek sources. This is most notable in the theology of the early Mu'tazilite and Ash'arite *mutakallimūn*. However, al-Rāzī's atomism is of a strikingly different character than that of his theological predecessors

and contemporaries, and remains essentially unique within that milieu. Early *kalām* atomism analyzed all worldly phenomena into atoms (sing: *juzʿ*, *jawhar*) and accidents (sing: *ʿaraḍ*), which, it was maintained, have no spatial or temporal extension (i.e., the basic constituents of the natural world cannot in themselves subsist beyond an instant of time). From the ephemerality of the world's basic components they derived the temporal finitude of the world as such, a model that lent itself quite usefully to proofs of the existence of God, as necessary temporal originator of the world. It also provided a springboard of sorts for a particularly ambitious conception of God as a multitasking, micromanaging deity who perpetually creates and recreates the world, providing it with the existence, order, stability, and causal efficacy that it intrinsically lacks.

Kalām atomism is thus very closely bound up with a variety of occasionalist metaphysics, in which God is seen as the direct cause of every entity and event, even the continued existence of a single atom from one moment to the next. Al-Rāzī's atomism, on the other hand, is much more Greek—and specifically Epicurean—in character. Atoms, although indivisible, possess magnitude, and bodies comprise both atoms and void, which accounts for their diversity in weight and density. As will be discussed presently, matter (*hayūla*) is in fact one of al-Rāzī's five basic independently existing principles of reality, and as such is eternal and ontologically self-subsistent. Material atoms thus stand shoulder to shoulder with God in Rāzian metaphysics.³³ Indeed, the prominent role that Epicurean atomism played in al-Rāzī's philosophical system earned him a notorious reputation as the definitive Islamic materialist.³⁴

Al-Rāzī certainly appears to be an unabashed materialist when it comes to questions of perception and sensation: in accordance with Epicurus, he explains them purely in terms of physical contact between bodies. Accordingly, his theory of knowledge is basically empiricist and his ethics are thoroughgoingly hedonistic.³⁵ Pain is the impinging of a perception or sensation upon the perceiver such that it removes him from the delicate natural equilibrium upon which life depends. What we typically think of as pleasure is simply the return to that state of nature. In al-Rāzī's words,

[it] consists simply of the restoration of that condition which was expelled by the element of pain [*adhā*], while passing from one's actual state until one returns to the state formerly experienced. . . . Those who have no training suppose that this has happened without any prior pain; they imagine it as a pure and solitary phenomenon, wholly dissociated from pain. Now this is not really the case at all; there cannot in fact be any pleasure [*ladhdha*] expected in proportion to a prior pain, that of departing from the state of nature.³⁶

If this account is true—and al-Rāzī stakes its veracity on his own considerable experience as a physician, rather than on appeal to any traditional or philosophical authority—then it has an important bearing on how we ought to conceive of the good life. Those who pursue a multitude of kinetic pleasures—the more intense, the better—have not recognized the extent to which they are parasitic upon some

previous disturbance from the natural state. Put simply, the opportunity cost of pleasure is pain. If we want to minimize pain (the ethical imperative in al-Rāzī's philosophy) we must restrain and suppress passion (*hawā*), which agitates the soul and goads us on to the irrational pursuit of excessive, unnatural, and unnecessary pleasures, seeking only what it dimly perceives as the immediate good.³⁷ We must subordinate passion to reason, the God-given faculty by which we realize our highest purpose.³⁸ The wisest and healthiest person achieves the best of all pleasures, which al-Rāzī understands (again, in privative Epicurean terms) as the katastematic absence of pain and anxiety. Thus, the good life consists not in some ham-fisted maximization of pleasure (which condemns its practitioners to a violent oscillation of sensations) but rather a certain calm repose or tranquility: the Epicureans' *ataraxia*.

So far, al-Rāzī seems like a garden-variety Epicurean. However, his praise of reason and disparagement of the passions sometimes seems uncharacteristically excessive, particularly in one of his most influential books, the *Spiritual Medicine*. There, for instance, he urges the reader

to suppress his passion in many circumstances, even when he foresees no disagreeable consequence of indulgence . . . in order to train and discipline his soul to endure and become accustomed to such denial (for then it will be far less difficult to do so when the consequences are bad), as much as to prevent his lusts getting control of him and dominating him.³⁹

Al-Rāzī's point has as much to do with the importance of habituation as it does with tolerance and addiction: "You must know also," he adds, "that those who persistently indulge and gratify their appetites ultimately reach a stage where they no longer have any enjoyment of them, and are unable to give them up."⁴⁰ For instance, those who regularly indulge in intercourse, or drinking, or listening to music enjoy them less and less, because these pleasures become increasingly commonplace and habitual. "Nevertheless," he observes, "it is not within their power to leave off these pursuits because they have turned into something of the nature of a necessity of life for them, instead of being a luxury and a relish. . . . In the end they find they are miserable where they expected to be happy, that they are sorrowful where they expected to rejoice, that they are pained where they expected to experience pleasure."⁴¹ The tone in such passages seems downright ascetic, and as anyone familiar with the *Spiritual Medicine* text knows, his rather hyperbolic chapters on carnal love and sexual intercourse show how much closer in spirit he is on this point to the Platonic Socrates than to Epicurus or Lucretius (who conversely advocated a cool, detached, reasoned polygamy).⁴²

At the same time, we must bear in mind that Rāzian prescriptions of this sort are never proffered in a moralistic spirit—his approach is always a prudential one, aimed at an ethics of moderation, the amelioration of unnecessary suffering, and the attainment of psychic repose. Indeed, in a later autobiographical text, *The Book of the Philosophical Life*, al-Rāzī explicitly distances himself from the austere, otherworldly self-denial that Socrates had come to exemplify for so many of his contemporaries, who saw him as a proto-Cynic.⁴³ He does this by identifying both upper and lower

ethical limits to the properly philosophical life.⁴⁴ In short, he acknowledges that one can be excessive not only in the pursuit of sensual pleasures, but also in the denial of bodily needs and desires. He is thus critical of anything stronger than a temperate, instrumental asceticism, which would be irrational and contrary to the will of God, insofar as it causes unnecessary pain. Note that robust asceticism is irrational and contrary to the will of God *because* it causes pain, and not vice versa; as Lenn E. Goodman elegantly puts it, for al-Rāzī, “pleasure [is] the judge of reason, not reason of pleasure.”⁴⁵

Yet he ultimately subscribes, as many early Islamic philosophers did, to the idea that philosophy is “making oneself similar to God . . . to the extent possible for a human being.”⁴⁶ It is perhaps no coincidence that this Platonic maxim dovetails so harmoniously with the philosophy of Epicurus, who accepted the existence of *this-worldly* gods and valorized them as tranquil, distant ideals for human life. For al-Rāzī, the imitation of God involves not only knowledge, justice, mercy and benevolence, but also a life of painlessness and tranquility—to whatever extent possible for a finite, embodied creature.

So far, I have primarily emphasized the continuities between Epicurus’ and al-Rāzī’s philosophies. Yet already it will be clear that al-Rāzī’s worldview is ultimately quite different from that of his naturalistic predecessor. For throughout the preceding discussion we have had to make reference to God several times in order to present what would seem to be even the most straightforwardly Epicurean aspects of his thought: (1) matter possesses an ontological autonomy that rivals the aseity of God, (2) reason is a divine gift equally distributed throughout the human race by a God who does not want us to suffer unnecessary pain, and (3) God is in fact the paradigmatic exemplar of our ethical and intellectual life. Al-Rāzī’s moral philosophy is thus undergirded by a generic but clearly personalistic monotheism (God exists, is person-like, wise, just, and benevolent, and supplies human beings with the necessary faculties for living a good life). What’s more, he will ultimately reject Epicurus’ insistence on the complete materiality and mortality of the human being. For al-Rāzī’s epistemology and ethics are interwoven with a Platonic psychology, according to which the soul is ontologically independent of the body and deathless. He even eschews the Islamic eschatological doctrine of the “return” or hereafter (*mā’ād*) in favor of the Platonic doctrine of metempsychosis.⁴⁷ In reintroducing God and the soul as supersensible explanatory principles, he departs radically from the austere naturalism of his predecessor. Why does he adopt so much of Epicurus’ naturalistic model, yet qualify it by reintroducing such stock metaphysical entities? To better understand this, we need to consider al-Rāzī’s cosmology, where his appreciation for both the potential resources and limitations of Epicurean naturalism is most evident.

Like other classical Islamic thinkers, al-Rāzī was troubled by the question of whether the universe had a beginning in time (as the Qur’anic creation *ex nihilo* model seemed to indicate) or whether it was eternal and uncreated (as most of the Greeks had argued). Each of these positions was compelling and resourceful in its own way, but also raised serious conceptual problems.⁴⁸ In an attempt to navigate a middle path between the problematic extremes of Islamic creationism and

Aristotelian-Neoplatonic eternalism, al-Rāzī articulated what might be seen as a loosely Platonic *formatio mundi* model, which appropriates but supplements Epicurean atomism.⁴⁹ In short, he posited five eternal principles (*qadīm*), each of which is ontologically self-subsistent: time, space, matter, God, and soul.⁵⁰ The first three he understands in atomistic terms, in accordance with Epicurean naturalism. The latter two, as we have noted, constitute a radical departure from this model.

At the heart of this peculiar ontology is al-Rāzī's myth of "the fall of the soul." An intellectual adversary, the Ismā'īlī missionary Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī, records his account as follows:

I hold that five things are eternal, but that the world has an origin. The cause of its origination was the longing of Soul to be incarnated in this world. It was this passion that moved her, and she did not know what disastrous consequences would befall her as a result of her embodiment. She thrashed about in giving rise to the world and set Matter into a turmoil of chaotic and disordered motion, unable to accomplish what she had intended. But the Creator, glory and exaltation be to Him, had pity on her and helped her to bring this world to its inception and to impose order and stability on its motions. He did so out of mercy for her, knowing that once she had tasted the troubles she had gotten herself into she would return peaceably to her own world; her thrashing about would cease, and her passionate yearning for embodiment would be calmed. Thus she began the world, with the help of the Creator. Without that help she could not have done it; but without this cause the world would not have begun.⁵¹

The philosophical core of this myth, as I understand it, is that the world comes to be out of preexisting matter, within a framework of absolute time and space, as a result of the pre-rational, spontaneous urge of some immaterial life-force and the compensating design of some divine, benevolent intelligence. The introduction of God and soul as immaterial, non-atomistic entities seems intended to account for three crucial phenomena: (1) the intelligible formation of the world (out of preexisting matter), (2) motion within the natural world (which is, contra Aristotle, not coextensive with time), and (3) the apparent purposiveness and design of natural phenomena. Even in its demythologized form, al-Rāzī's account would seem to have drifted quite some distance from the ostensibly naturalistic worldview of Epicurus.⁵²

As we have seen, al-Rāzī's philosophical affiliations with Epicurus are striking: his hostility toward the pretenses of organized religion, his egalitarian insistence on the potential equality of human intellectual capacities, his emphasis on the irreducible importance of empirical inquiry into the natural world, his atomistic materialism, and his mildly ascetic but prudential hedonistic ethics. In this respect, he can be understood as an earthborn "giant" with strong ties to the subterranean naturalistic tradition. Yet, while al-Rāzī clearly recognized the power and resourcefulness of the Epicurean philosophy, he also saw it as in need of qualification—or at least supplementation. In short, he was not willing to go along with Epicurus all the way in his radical rejection of the divine Plato. Indeed, what is particularly striking about al-Rāzī's Epicureanism is the reintroduction of Platonic elements: the return to metaphysics and theology in positing the existence of an immaterial, eternal soul and God

(the latter serving as a transcendent principle of intelligibility and value, if not of being itself), the low estimation of material existence (recall that the formation of the universe out of preexisting matter and the embodiment of the soul turns out to be something of an impulsive mistake), and the antagonistic opposition between the soul's divinely given reason and the dangerously powerful bodily appetites (the only question here being how severe a strategy is called for in the overcoming of the passions).

Historically, Epicurus' self-proclaimed followers have tended to be rather conservative about innovations, hewing closely to the original doctrines of their progenitor. Al-Rāzī presents us with a striking exception to this trend. Yet we should not be surprised by his seemingly antithetical qualifications. For he never explicitly identifies himself as an Epicurean—indeed, he seems not to have had any direct, firsthand familiarity with Epicurus' actual writings.⁵³ And in the spirit of his predecessor al-Kindī, he is happy to take truth wherever he finds it, whether it is from quarreling ancients or his own empirical studies and reflection. Hence the syncretic nature of his philosophy. The deeper question, however, is: why did al-Rāzī feel compelled to supplement the naturalistic model he found so appealing with metaphysical explanatory principles like God and the soul? Certainly this was not due to any timidity of intellect or spirit. It may be that within the Islamic milieu in which al-Rāzī lived and worked and wrote, the venerable theses of God and soul were simply non-negotiables—truths that seemed so self-evident that no other legitimate possibility existed. It is indeed striking that although al-Rāzī is generally considered the most radical freethinker in the Islamic tradition, he still retains these two articles of faith.

Or perhaps they were not articles of faith for him at all. Perhaps he admired the Epicurean ideas he inherited, and recognized their great explanatory power, but ultimately saw them as insufficient in and of themselves. He would not have been the first philosopher to be drawn in by the elegance and economy of Epicurus' naturalistic model, only to retreat to metaphysics and theology at the very last moment out of sheer intellectual desperation.⁵⁴ On this reading, we might see al-Rāzī as lingering a good long while with the garden philosopher, but ultimately heeding Socrates and Plato's call for a "second sailing."⁵⁵ Yet even if this is so, al-Rāzī's reenactment of the metaphysical turn is markedly different from Socrates'. For, in al-Rāzī's second sailing, supersensible entities do not entirely displace the naturalistic etiological paradigm, or even demote it to a lower explanatory status. Atomistic materialism continues to play an irreducibly central role in his thought, standing side by side with entities like God and the immortal soul. Al-Rāzī thus offers us an odd hybrid in the history of naturalism: a kind of Platonic Epicureanism. As we shall see, Nietzsche also appropriates Epicurean naturalism, but will take it in an entirely opposite direction.

Nietzsche's Dionysian Epicureanism

Nietzsche is notoriously uncharitable toward his predecessors, even those to whom he is deeply indebted. It should come as no surprise, then, that he has some incisive

but unflattering observations to make about Epicurus.⁵⁶ Perhaps the most familiar of these is his psychological portrait in the first part of *Beyond Good and Evil*, where he casts Epicurus as a malicious, resentful also-ran in the ancient pantheon of philosophers: “that old schoolmaster from Samos,” he writes, “who sat, hidden away, in his little garden at Athens and wrote three hundred books—who knows? Perhaps from rage and ambition against Plato?”⁵⁷ Yet this same aphorism also suggests that Epicurus’ full value and import have yet to be grasped: “It took a hundred years until Greece found out who this garden god, Epicurus, had been.—Did they find out?—” (*BGE* 7).⁵⁸ Nietzsche himself must have seen something more in his predecessor, since he often speaks highly of him in his personal correspondence and private notes, as well as in his published works.⁵⁹ “Eternal Epicurus,” as he calls him (*WS* 227), was “one of the greatest of human beings” (*WS* 295), one of a small elect group of dead thinkers whose thought is still “so alive,” more alive than the living themselves. “Upon these [figures] I fix my eyes,” he says with uncharacteristic reverence, “and see theirs fixed on me” (*AOM* 408).⁶⁰

Indeed, Nietzsche in many ways views Epicurus as a philosophical progenitor and kindred intellectual spirit. In an aphorism titled “Why we look like Epicureans,” Nietzsche explicitly identifies in his own thought “an almost Epicurean bent for knowledge . . . that will not easily let go of the questionable character of things; . . . an aversion [*Widerwille*] to big moral words and gestures; a taste that rejects all crude, four-square opposites and is proudly conscious of its practice in having reservations” (*GS* 375). Nietzsche’s “Epicureanism” consists in his own cautious mistrust for the “enchantments and deceptions of . . . every strong faith,” as well as his “jubilant curiosity” as a free mind or spirit.⁶¹ One particular thing for which Nietzsche praises his predecessor is the “wonderful insight, which is today so rarely to be discovered, that to quiet the mind [*Gemüth*] it is absolutely not necessary to have solved the ultimate and outermost theoretical questions” (*WS* 7). Epicurus consoles us, he points out, not by definitively refuting the gloomy, moralistic, pseudo-scientific worldviews that trouble people’s minds (worldviews Nietzsche describes as “belonging half to physics and half to morals”), but rather simply by showing the possibility of multiple hypotheses, and thus the *optionality* of such worldviews.⁶² In this way he “[tears] up the roots” of the belief in hell (*D* 72), and fights against “the corruption of souls by the concepts of guilt, punishment, and immortality” (*AC* 58).

Indeed, on Nietzsche’s reading, “The struggle against the ‘old faith’ as undertaken by Epicurus was, in a strict sense, a struggle against preexisting Christianity—a struggle against the old world grown senile and sick, already gloomy, moralized, soured by feelings of guilt” (*KSA* 13:16[15]/*WP* 438).⁶³ Not surprisingly, Epicurus’ “heroic-idyllic mode of philosophizing” (*WS* 295), and the naturalistic worldview he disclosed, anticipates in many ways Nietzsche’s own halcyon vision of the innocence of becoming, particularly as exemplified in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.⁶⁴ And indeed, it is no coincidence that when Zarathustra casts the soul as a perishable entity born of the earth, he frames his teaching in Epicurean terms: “all that of which you speak does not exist,” he says by way of consolation to the dying tight-rope walker; “there is no devil and no hell. Your soul will be dead even before your body:

fear nothing further" (*Z Prologue*, 6).⁶⁵ In many ways, it would seem that Nietzsche views Epicurus as a rare exemplar who remained "true to the earth" when others allowed themselves to be seduced by otherworldly hopes (*Z Prologue*, 3).⁶⁶

Nietzsche also recognizes, as did many of his predecessors, that the spirit of Epicureanism, which lay dormant for so many centuries, was a crucial force in the emerging scientific worldview of modernity and the problematizing of Christian faith in the West. "So far as superior truth is concerned," he points out, "it is enough to observe that the awakening sciences have allied themselves point by point with the philosophy of Epicurus but point by point rejected Christianity" (*HH* 68).⁶⁷ In particular, "Epicurus triumphs anew" as modern science reconquers the doctrine of the immortal soul and afterlife (*D* 72). One might sum this up by saying that when Nietzsche proclaims the death of God (*GS* 108, 109, 125), he is in effect acknowledging the immanent victory of the Epicurean worldview. For the death of God symbolizes in Nietzsche's thought the loss of faith in the possibility of any supersensible world, the lack of any abiding rational, moral, or aesthetic order to existence and the absence of any overarching design or meaning. It signals the exhaustive explanatory power of chance and necessity, the absolute sovereignty of generation and destruction, the inescapable fact of our radical finitude, and the new reality of a world without the possibility of transcendence. All of these insights are indisputably and uniquely Epicurean. After almost two and a half millennia, it seems the giants have finally triumphed over the gods.

If Nietzsche has any reservations about his predecessor's naturalism, it is that it doesn't go far enough. For having proclaimed the death of God, he quickly adds that we still have to vanquish God's "shadow," in order thoroughly to "de-deify" nature and "naturalize" the human being (*GS* 108, 109; cf. *BGE* 230).⁶⁸ These odd expressions point up the failures of various forms of philosophical and scientific naturalism, that is, the ways in which their accomplishments have fallen short of their ambitious goal of disclosing an entirely de-deified, dehumanized world (*GS* 109). For even as naturalists purport to eliminate metaphysical and theological postulates from our understanding of nature, time and again they unwittingly reinscribe "God" back into the picture by positing some overarching source of order or a stable, timeless, changeless reality. The atomistic materialism that Nietzsche's naturalistic predecessors inherited from Epicurus is one example of this.

Despite Nietzsche's this-worldly orientation, he was an implacable critic of materialism, which he saw as too reductive (because it divests existence of its "rich ambiguity" and multiply interpretive character) yet at the same time inadequately naturalistic (because its singular interpretation of reality is so obviously shaped by basic human needs).⁶⁹ But there is something even more problematic about the idea of matter itself as the foundation of reality: its ontological aseity and indestructibility. "There are no eternally enduring substances," he ventures; "matter is as much of an error as the God of the Eleatics" (*GS* 109). The "God of the Eleatics" here is presumably being (*Sein*; Gr: *to on*), conceived as the stable, unchanging, supersensible reality behind the flux and multiplicity of phenomenal nature. The notion of matter, as an "eternally enduring substance," is thus one more way in which "God" is given a new

lease on life, by being surreptitiously reimported into the very constituent building blocks of an ostensibly de-divinized, scientific view of nature: atoms. “Even the opponents of the Eleatics still succumbed to the seduction of their concept of being,” Nietzsche observes, for example “Democritus, among others, when he invented his atom” (*TI* “Reason’ in Philosophy,” 5).⁷⁰ Accordingly, in Nietzsche’s lexicon, “atomism” comes to signify the metaphysical need to believe that *something* stands fast, that not *everything* is subject to generation and destruction—a myth that, as good naturalists with a more sharply attuned intellectual conscience, we can presumably no longer bring ourselves to believe. For by the latter part of the nineteenth century, atomism was on the wane. Nietzsche characterizes it—perhaps somewhat hastily—as one of the most thoroughly refuted theories:

[I]n Europe perhaps no one in the learned world is now so unscholarly as to attach serious significance to it . . . thanks chiefly to the Dalmatian Boscovich. . . . [W]hile Copernicus has persuaded us to believe, contrary to all the senses, that the earth does *not* stand fast, Boscovich has taught us to abjure the belief in the last part of the earth that “stood fast”—the belief in “substance,” in “matter,” in the earth-residuum and particle-atom: it is the greatest triumph over the senses that has been gained on earth so far. (*BGE* 12)⁷¹

Why did Epicurus ultimately recoil from a completely de-deified and de-humanized worldview, having come so close? Here Nietzsche takes a more psychological—and, ultimately, physiological—approach to Epicurus’ philosophy, reading it as if it were a “personal confession” or an “involuntary and unconscious memoir” (*BGE* 6).⁷² “I am proud of the fact that I experience the character of Epicurus quite differently from perhaps everybody else,” Nietzsche writes, and he elaborates:

Whatever I hear or read of him, I enjoy the happiness of the afternoon of antiquity. I see his eyes gaze upon a wide, white sea, across rocks at the shore that are bathed in sunlight, while large and small animals are playing in this light, as secure and calm as the light and his eyes. Such happiness could only be invented by a man who was suffering continually. It is the happiness of eyes that have seen the sea of existence become calm, and now they can never weary of the surface and of the many hues of this tender, shuddering skin of the sea. Never before has voluptuousness been so modest. (*GS* 45; cf. *WS* 295)⁷³

In his later writings, Nietzsche expresses the poignant ambiguity of this passage in somewhat less flattering terms: “Was Epicurus an optimist,” he asks, “precisely because he was afflicted?” (*BT* P4). Here Nietzsche takes up Epicurus’ emphasis on the essential relation between health and philosophy, but turns the tables on his forebear. For he poses the question whether Epicurus’ “cheerful” and “scientific” philosophical temperament was an expression not of true joy, strength, and health but rather of deficiency, privation, pain, declining strength, and physiological weariness. Nietzsche’s judgment as a philosophical physician here is in no small part informed by his own experiences of sickness, suffering, and convalescence, which he disclosed in the prefaces of 1886. In the autobiographical Preface to *The Gay Science*, for instance, he discusses the relation between health and philosophy in general terms, which nonetheless seem directly applicable to the case of Epicurus:

After such self-questioning, self-temptation, one acquires a subtler eye for all philosophizing to date; one can infer better than before the involuntary detours, side lanes, resting places, and *sunny* places of thought to which suffering thinkers are led and misled on account of their suffering, for now one knows whether the sick *body* and its needs unconsciously urge, push, and lure the spirit—toward the sun, stillness, mildness, patience, medicine, balm in some sense. (GS P2)

In his other late period writings, Nietzsche regularly portrays Epicurus as an afflicted sufferer, and Epicurus' philosophy as a symptom of this suffering.⁷⁴ He also increasingly emphasizes the structural similarities rather than the differences between the practical aims of Epicureanism and Christianity. In the *Genealogy*, for example, after discussing various "innocent" ascetic strategies for combating suffering in Christianity and Vedānta (i.e., those that don't involve the concept of guilt), he notes:

[W]hat is expressed here is merely the same appraisal as that of the clear, cool, Hellenically cool, but suffering Epicurus: the hypnotic sense of nothingness, the repose of the deepest sleep, in short *absence of suffering*—sufferers and those profoundly depressed will count this as the supreme good, as the value of values; they are *bound* to accord it a positive value, to experience it as the positive as such. (GM III.17)⁷⁵

In *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche even casts Epicureanism as a pagan anticipation of the Christian doctrine of redemption:

The instinctive hatred of reality: a consequence of an extreme capacity for suffering and excitement which no longer wants any contact at all because it feels every contact too deeply.

The instinctive exclusion of any antipathy, any hostility, any boundaries or divisions in the human being's feelings: the consequence of an extreme capacity for suffering and excitement which experiences any resistance, even any compulsion to resist, as unendurable *displeasure* (that is, as *harmful*, as something against which the instinct of self-preservation *warns* us); and finds blessedness (pleasure) only in no longer offering any resistance to anybody, neither to evil nor to him who is evil—love as the only, as the *last* possible, way of life.

These are the two *physiological realities* on which, out of which, the doctrine of redemption grew. I call this a sublime further development of hedonism on a thoroughly morbid basis. Most closely related to it, although with a generous admixture of Greek vitality and nervous energy, is Epicureanism, the pagan doctrine of redemption. Epicurus—a *typical decadent*—first recognized as such by me. The fear of pain, even of infinitely minute pain—that can end in no other way than in a *religion of love*. (AC 30)⁷⁶

Thus, in spite of its this-worldly virtues, Epicureanism remains a philosophy of those whose experience of reality is fundamentally one of suffering. As such, it is part of the problem Nietzsche diagnoses rather than a potential solution.

Of course, in Nietzsche's account *all* philosophy is a product of suffering, as well as "a remedy and aid in the service of growing and struggling life" (GS 370).⁷⁷ "But there are two kinds of sufferers," as Nietzsche points out:

first, those who suffer from the over-fullness of life—they want a Dionysian art and likewise a tragic view of life, a tragic insight—and then those who suffer from the impoverishment of life and seek rest, stillness, calm seas, redemption from themselves through art and knowledge . . . anaesthesia, . . . Thus I gradually learned to understand Epicurus, the opposite of a Dionysian pessimist. . . . (GS 370)⁷⁸

The big question for Nietzsche as a cultural physician is, therefore: “Is it hunger or superabundance that has become creative?” (GS 370). The former he generally associates with the desire to fix, to eternalize [*verewigen*], the desire for being, while the latter involves the desire for change, becoming, generation, and destruction.⁷⁹ Epicurus ultimately privileges ontological stasis and ethical repose over flux and strife, and thus, in Nietzsche’s typology, is a “typical decadent” (AC 30). And insofar as his philosophy seeks to minimize suffering, it contributes to the stultification and enfeeblement of humanity, since suffering has “created all enhancements of the human being so far” and is a condition for the possibility of human greatness (BGE 225).⁸⁰ “There are,” Nietzsche observes, “higher problems than all problems of pleasure, pain, and pity; and every philosophy that stops with them is a naïveté” (BGE 225).⁸¹

One of these “higher problems” is the project of human perfectibility. Since genuine philosophers are “commanders and legislators,” their true task is the experimental cultivation (*Züchtung*) of a new type of person—one who is healthy and strong enough to affirm the natural world as it is, in all its tragic, joyful, amoral flux (BGE 211, cf. 203).⁸² This is the crux of Nietzsche’s “great politics”: the legislation of new values and the consequent determination of the future of the human being (BGE 208).⁸³ The goals that Nietzsche posits for humanity are resolutely this-worldly, just as Epicurus’ were. Yet the particular virtues and ways of life exemplified, for example, by the *Übermensch* and the “blessed and indestructible animal[s]” that Epicurus calls the gods seem in many respects diametrically opposed.⁸⁴ Further, the very fact that Nietzsche engages in politics at all—even if it is a “great” (*grosse*) rather than a petty politics—is profoundly un-Epicurean.⁸⁵ On one level, he is clearly sympathetic to the Epicurean credo of *lathe biōsas*, yet he cannot resist attempting to intervene in the grand politics of philosophical legislation.⁸⁶ Nietzsche’s middle-period works are actually more Epicurean in this respect than his later writings, for while they have a good deal to say about human perfectibility, they tend to emphasize pluralistic experimental *self*-cultivation and transfiguration on a *personal* level, and in a way that is easily reconcilable with the admonition to live secretly or unobtrusively.⁸⁷

In *Zarathustra* and subsequent works he becomes increasingly obsessed with the more ambitious task of imposing a new form on the raw, ugly stone of humanity (Z II, “Upon the Blessed Isles”; cf. BGE 225). Perhaps he can no longer passively observe the diminution of the human being with “the mocking and aloof eyes of an Epicurean god” (BGE 62):

Anyone . . . who approached this almost deliberate degeneration and atrophy of the human being represented by the European Christian . . . feeling the opposite kind of desire, not in an Epicurean spirit but rather with some divine hammer in his hand, would

surely have to cry out in wrath, in pity, in horror: "O you dolts, you presumptuous, pitying dolts, what have you done! Was that work for your hands? How you have bungled and botched my beautiful stone! What presumption!" (BGE 62)⁸⁸

Here we see a surprising inversion. Nietzschean naturalism effectively *requires* the creation of new values, as well as a decisive intervention in the grand politics of shaping the future of the human. From an Epicurean perspective, the desire to transfigure and redeem humanity is itself no more natural or necessary than amassing wealth, or earning public honors, or gaining power over one's fellow citizens, and to exchange the equanimity of the soul for such conceits is a bad trade indeed. For better or worse, then, Epicurus will not be vulnerable to the pain and anxiety that Nietzsche experiences when he witnesses "that gruesome dominion of nonsense and accident that has so far been called 'history'" (BGE 203). This may constitute the greatest difference between them as fellow naturalists. Epicurus and Nietzsche are of course both anti-teleological thinkers who recognize that there is no overarching intelligence or purpose at work in the various productions of nature. There is no one at the wheel, so to speak. The crux of their difference lies in this: Epicurus is content to leave natural history without a driver; Nietzsche is not.

Nietzsche's relationship to Epicurus is thus complex and ambiguous. As we have seen, he tends to privilege him over most other Greek and Hellenistic philosophers. He admires him for his robust anti-supernaturalism and his bold, preemptive war on Christian morality and metaphysics. His doctrines of the mortal soul, the purposelessness and amorality of nature, and the sovereignty of generation and destruction anticipate crucial aspects of Nietzsche's thought. Nietzsche shares important aspects of Epicurus' philosophical temperament and appropriates his experimental, anti-dogmatic strategies for combating metaphysico-moralistic opponents (WS 7, GS 375). In short, Epicurus' philosophy represents a "live option" that Nietzsche to a great extent embraced. Indeed, one would be hard pressed to identify a philosophical predecessor with whom Nietzsche has a closer, more substantive kinship.⁸⁹ And yet for Nietzsche, Epicurus' naturalism is insufficiently radical. His atomistic materialism ultimately retreats to metaphysics, privileging ontological petrification over flux and thus reinscribing God (or being) into nature. His hedonistic ethics privileges repose over activity, self-overcoming, and agonistic growth, encouraging us to recoil from suffering. This contributes to the diminution of the human being. His call to "live unnoticed" leads him to abdicate his responsibility as a philosophical legislator. Consequently, garden-variety Epicureanism cannot constitute an adequate engagement with, and genuine affirmation of, Nietzsche's tragic, de-deified nature. He articulates this point most concisely in a short notebook entry from spring, 1884: "I have presented such terrible images to knowledge that any 'Epicurean delight' is out of the question. Only Dionysian joy is sufficient: *I have been the first to discover the tragic*" (KSA 11 : 25[95]/WP 1029).

Within a few years, Nietzsche would frame this shortcoming in terms of a stark opposition between Epicurean optimism and Dionysian pessimism (BT P4, cf. GS 370). But Nietzsche's ostensibly neat and clean distinctions between the Epicurean

and the Dionysian, optimism and pessimism, the scientific and the tragic, hunger and superabundance, and delight and joy are ultimately misleading if we want to understand the conflicted relation between him and his “garden god” predecessor. For they create the illusion of stark, qualitative opposition where there are only subtle degrees of differentiation. In his more thoughtful moments, Nietzsche himself rejects such oppositional thinking, and indeed prides himself on sharing—with Epicurus—“a taste that rejects all crude four-square opposites” (*GS* 375; cf. *HH* 1 and *BGE* 2).

Must the “cheerfulness” of Epicureanism always be a symptom of sickness and pain? Must it always be a mask of lack and incapacity? I would suggest that, despite Nietzsche’s anxiety of influence and various ad hoc attempts to differentiate himself in some essential way from his naturalistic forebear, he himself represents a this-worldly philosophy born of superabundance—in effect, a Dionysian Epicureanism.

We Epicureans

Although both al-Rāzī and Nietzsche are deeply indebted to Epicurean thought and affiliated with it in substantive ways, neither of these earthbound “giants” is content to dwell indefinitely within Epicurus’ Garden. For al-Rāzī, Epicurean naturalism is a useful resource, but is ultimately inadequate: he finds it necessary to posit the existence of God and an immaterial, immortal soul, adds a more ascetic edge to Epicurus’ prudential hedonism, and ultimately rejects the material world as an appropriate abode of human happiness. Nietzsche, on the other hand, concludes that Epicurus’ Garden is, as it were, not natural enough: his ontology seems to acknowledge the sovereignty of generation and destruction but ultimately reinscribes God (or Being) within the indestructible atom, while his ethics recoils from the natural world of change, conflict, and suffering instead of joyfully affirming it. Does al-Rāzī’s stance amount to a sound anticipatory assessment of the resources and limitations of naturalism, or are his reservations more a failure of nerve and imagination? Is Nietzsche’s demand for a new, entirely de-deified and dehumanized nature a matter of intellectual integrity or a reckless commitment to a bankrupt, incoherent and self-destructive worldview?

In an aphorism titled “The Meaning of our Cheerfulness [*Heiterkeit*],” Nietzsche writes:

Indeed, we philosophers and “free spirits” feel, when we hear the news that “the old god is dead,” as if a new dawn shone on us; our heart overflows with gratitude, amazement, premonitions, expectation. At long last the horizon appears free to us again, even if it should not be bright; at long last our ships may venture out again, venture out to face any danger; all the daring of the lover of knowledge is permitted again; the sea, *our* sea, lies open again; perhaps there has never been such an open sea. (*GS* 343)⁹⁰

The question al-Rāzī and Nietzsche pose to us as wayward Epicureans is whether their predecessor’s philosophy goes too far or not far enough. Insofar as Epicurus is in many ways the paradigmatic philosophical naturalist, to pose this question is to

ask about the prospects of naturalism as an overall philosophical worldview (and, perhaps more generally, to ask about its prospects as the gradually but seemingly inexorably unfolding worldview of modernity). Will we ourselves ultimately be forced to undertake Socrates' second sailing, as al-Rāzī did, once again setting out in search of some stable, eternal source of being, value, and intelligibility above and beyond the natural realm of generation and destruction? Or will we attempt to find that stability within this world by "deifying" nature and thus calming the "sea of existence" (GS 45), as Nietzsche believes Epicurus did? Or will we instead, perhaps, risk setting sail on Nietzsche's "new seas," exploring an as yet unknown world without the possibility of transcendence? In short, if we are all becoming Epicureans now, what kind of Epicureans should we be?

Notes

Earlier versions of this essay were presented at the Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy / Society for the Study of Islamic Philosophy and Science conference (Fordham University, 2004), a Society for Asian and Comparative Philosophy panel at the American Philosophical Association (San Francisco, 2005), and the Nietzsche in New York circle (Hunter College/CUNY, 2005). I would like to thank the participants of these conferences/panels, as well as the anonymous reviewers for *Philosophy East and West*, for their valuable questions, criticisms, and suggestions.

- 1 – Plato, *Sophist* 246 a–b; cf. Aristophanes' retelling of this myth in *Symposium* 189d–193e, as well as the earliest extant version of the titanomachy in Hesiod's *Theogony* 617–820.
- 2 – The Greek expression is *spartoi te kai autochthones*, lit. "sown men and earth-born," a phrase evoking the myth of Cadmus, who slew a dragon and sowed its teeth, which then grew into his fighting companions.
- 3 – *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper, trans. Nicholas P. White (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 1997), p. 267. Cf. *Theaetetus* 155e, where Socrates calls materialists the "uninitiated" (*amuētōn*, which can also mean "leaky") (cf. *Gorgias* 493a–494a). In the *Sophist* myth, the implication seems to be that although the giants cling steadfastly to earthly, material objects such as trees and rocks and claim that only that which can be grasped is real, being itself slips through their fingers because of their refusal to acknowledge the supersensible.
- 4 – There has been a good deal of disagreement as to who exactly the giants are. I adopt Cornford's position on this question: they represent a broad intellectual orientation rather than any one specific school (ranging from simplistic, popular materialism to the most sophisticated varieties of Presocratic atomism). See Francis M. Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge* (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merill, 1957), pp. 231–232.

- 5 – Aristoxenus reports in his *Historical Notes* that Plato intended to burn all the writings of Democritus, but was prevented by some Pythagoreans, who convinced him that the books were already too widely circulated (Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, IX.40).
- 6 – Laurence Lampert, *Nietzsche and Modern Times: A Study of Bacon, Descartes, and Nietzsche* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 444.
- 7 – Tim O’Keefe, *Epicureanism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), p. 3. Cf. Rémi Brague, *The Wisdom of the World*, trans. Teresa Lavender Fagan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 39, where he characterizes Epicurus’ magnum opus *On Nature* as an “*Anti-Timaeus*” (the *Timaeus* being the key expression of Plato’s cosmology).
- 8 – This was especially so during the medieval period, when the Epicurean philosophy was routinely caricatured, despised, and marginalized. The reasons for this are many, but a short list would include his atomistic materialism, his hedonism, his radical empiricism, his positing of an infinite (and rather inhuman) universe, his critique of religion, and his denial of divine providence, teleology, the immortality of the soul, and reward/punishment in an afterlife. He was, one might say, a philosophical “heretic” in a tradition that ostensibly permitted any conclusion arrived at through reason or experience. Even after the resuscitation of atomism in early modernity, Epicurus continued to be seen as a controversial philosophical outsider within the tradition. For an extensive treatment of the reception of Epicureanism from antiquity to early modernity, see Howard Jones, *The Epicurean Tradition* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989).
- 9 – It should be noted that Epicureans have sometimes needed to be discreet about their true lineage because of the considerable animus directed at their forebear, yet they are more numerous than one might think and crop up in diverse historical and cultural contexts. For a genealogy of Epicurean thinkers, see Jones, *The Epicurean Tradition*; Catherine Wilson, *Epicureanism at the Origins of Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); and the first three chapters of James Warren, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Epicureanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). However, none of these treatments goes chronologically beyond the impact of Epicureanism on modern natural philosophy. Michel Onfray perhaps has come closest to offering a more expansive account of the Epicurean spirit throughout the course of the Western philosophical tradition (continuing well into late modernity), with his ongoing seminars on the history of philosophical hedonism, serially published as the multivolume *Contre-histoire de la philosophie* (Paris: Grasset, 2006–).
- 10 – For excellent short overviews of al-Rāzī’s life and thought, see Paul Kraus and Shlomo Pines, “Al-Rāzī, Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Zakariyā,” in *E. J. Brill’s First Encyclopaedia of Islam 1913–1936*, ed. M. Th. Houtsma, et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1993), Vol. VI, pp. 1134–36, and the entry of the same name by Lenn E. Good-

man in the new edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, eds. P. J. Bearman et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1960–2005), Vol. VIII, pp. 474–77.

- 11 – This is true as a more general ground of dialogical connection between Nietzsche and any number of other Islamic philosophers from the classical period. What sets them apart from many of their contemporaries and binds them together across historical, cultural, and linguistic boundaries is the unique way in which they appropriate the resources of classical Greek and Hellenistic thought in the construction of their own particular worldviews. For other comparative engagements between Nietzsche and classical Islamic philosophers, see Peter S. Groff, “Al-Kindī and Nietzsche on the Stoic Art of Banishing Sorrow,” *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 28 (Fall 2004): 139–173, and “Wisdom and Violence: The Legacy of Platonic Political Philosophy in al-Fārābī and Nietzsche,” in *Comparative Philosophy in Times of Terror*, ed. Douglas Allen (Lexington Books, 2006), pp. 65–81.
- 12 – Few of Epicurus’ original writings remain; his chief work was *On Nature*, of which we now only have scraps. The following discussion draws on the usual extant fragments: the biography, three letters, and collections of fragmentary principle doctrines provided in Diogenes Laertius’ *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, the *Vatican Collection of Epicurean Sayings*, the more extensive explications of Epicurus’ philosophy from the Hellenistic period (most notably, Lucretius’ *On the Nature of Things* and Cicero’s *On Ends*), and the assorted fragments cited in various other texts. These sources are collected in Cyril Bailey, *Epicurus: The Extant Remains with Short Critical Apparatus and Notes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926), as well as in Brad Inwood and L. P. Gerson, eds., *The Epicurus Reader: Selected Writings and Testimonia* (Indianapolis: Hackett 1994). All references to these works will simply be cited by English translation of original title, chapter (if relevant) and section, maxim or line number. Titles of Epicurus and Lucretius are abbreviated (i.e., Epicurus’ *Letter to Herodotus*, *Pythocles*, and *Menoceus* are *LH*, *LP*, and *LM*, respectively; the *Principle Doctrines* is *PD*; the *Vatican Collection* is *VC*; and Lucretius’ *On the Nature of Things* is *ONT*).
- 13 – See *Phaedo* 96a–100b. The *Phaedo* is Socrates’ death dialogue and revolves around the question of whether the soul is immortal. The famous “second sailing” passage occurs in the context of an autobiographical digression in which Socrates recounts his early attraction to “investigation into nature” (*periphuseōs historia*). It describes his eventual dissatisfaction with naturalistic (i.e., materialistic-mechanistic) explanations, as well as with Anaxagoras’ teleology (which, despite its putative concern with mind and the good, turns out to be etiologically indistinguishable from materialism). Recognizing the failure of such accounts to shed light on the true causes of generation and destruction, Socrates undertakes a “second sailing” (99d), which abandons this general approach and instead examines the truth of beings indirectly through *logoi* (99e), positing the Forms or Ideas (*eidē*) as the ultimate causes of things. Much ink has

been spilled in an attempt to discern the precise nature of Socrates' methodological shift here; for some particularly illuminating discussions, see John Sallis, *Being and Logos: Reading the Platonic Dialogues* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975); Ronna Burger, *The Phaedo: A Platonic Labyrinth* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), pp. 135–160; Seth Benardette, *Socrates' Second Sailing: On Plato's Republic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 1–5; Giovanni Reale, *Toward a New Interpretation of Plato*, trans. John R. Catan and Richard Davies (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1997), pp. 95–107; and Francisco J. Gonzalez, *Dialectic and Dialogue: Plato's Practice of Philosophical Inquiry* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998), pp. 188–208. In the present essay, I follow Giovanni Reale in interpreting Socrates' "second sailing" as marking the decisive shift from the Presocratics' naturalistic inquiries to metaphysics. Reale writes, "it is the first rational search for and demonstration of the existence of a transcendent and supersensible reality. . . . [I]t could even be said that this passage is . . . the Magna Carta of Western metaphysics" (p. 95).

- 14 – Epicurus emphasizes this especially with regard to meteorological phenomena in *LP* passim; cf. *LH* 76–77. Lucretius expresses the idea in a broader, more ambitious way in *ONT* I.1011–1048, II.168–184, IV.820–853, V.195–234, and VI passim.
- 15 – Epicurus, *LH* passim.
- 16 – The hypothesis of the "atom swerve" (*clinamen*) plays a crucial role in this account. See Lucretius, *ONT* II.216–225, 251, and 284; cf. Cicero, *On Ends* I.18–20 and *On Fate* 18–19, 22, 46–48.
- 17 – Cf. Plato, *Timaeus* 90a.
- 18 – Cf. Socrates' arguments for the deathlessness of the soul in *Phaedo* 70c–107a.
- 19 – Epicurus, *LH* 63–67 and *LM* 124–125; cf. Lucretius, *ONT* III passim.
- 20 – Epicurus, *LH* 38–39 and 46–63; Lucretius, *ONT* II.409–444, IV passim.
- 21 – Epicurus, *LM* and *PD* passim; *VC* 4 and 33; Lucretius *ONT* II.1–61.
- 22 – Epicurus, *LM* 126–132; *PD* VIII–X, XX, XXV–XXVI; *VC* 33, 59, 67, 68.
- 23 – Kinetic or "moving" pleasures involve the repair of some problem in the body, and hence the pleasurable return from a state of relative pain, upon which they are contingent (e.g., the pleasure of eating when hungry). Katastematic or "state-based" pleasures are those that come with having a satisfied desire, for example the pleasure of no longer being hungry after having eaten. See Lucretius, *ONT* II 963–966 and IV 858–876, as well as Cicero, *On Ends* I.37–38 and II.28–35.
- 24 – Epicurus, *LM* 131, *PD* III; Lucretius, *ONT* I.44–49, II.1–54, 646–651, 1093–1094. *Aponia* and *ataraxia* are understood by Epicurus as katastematic rather

than kinetic pleasures. One might say that the latter in particular is the katastematic pleasure *par excellence*.

- 25 – For a detailed treatment of this motto, see Geert Roskam, *'Live Unnoticed' (= Lathe Biōsas): On the Vicissitudes of an Epicurean Doctrine* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007).
- 26 – The best expression of this sentiment is probably Lucretius, *ONT* 1.62–79.
- 27 – Philodemus, *Herculaneum Papyrus* 1005, 4.9–14.
- 28 – Porphyry, *Letter to Marcella* 31 (Usener 221), in A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley, eds., *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 155 (25 C). Cf. Epicurus, *VC* 54, and Lucretius, *ONT* 1.919–948.
- 29 – Lenn E. Goodman has argued resourcefully, and in my view persuasively, for the Epicurean character of al-Rāzī's thought. See "The Epicurean Ethic of Muḥammad Ibn Zakariyā' ar-Rāzī," *Studia Islamica*, 34 (1971): 5–26, "Rāzī's Psychology," *Philosophical Forum*, 4 (1972): 26–48, "Muḥammad ibn Zakariyā' al-Rāzī," in Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (eds) *History of Islamic Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 198–215, and "Rāzī and Epicurus," in *Jewish and Islamic Philosophy: Crosspollinations in the Classical Age* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999), pp. 35–67. My characterization of al-Rāzī as a "wayward Epicurean" assumes that Goodman's account is at least in part correct. This view, however, faces certain challenges. First, al-Rāzī himself never actually attributes his ideas to Epicurus. Rather, he explicitly affiliates himself with Socrates and Plato, and indeed, his texts are shot through with a variety of Platonic ideas—a noteworthy fact in a tradition that valorized Aristotle as "The Philosopher" (*al-faylasuf*). For this reason, Majid Fakhry dubs al-Rāzī "the outstanding Platonist of Islam" and characterizes his ethical thought as steadfastly anti-hedonist, even though he elsewhere categorizes him as a "naturalist" and acknowledges the materialistic dimension of his thought (which Fakhry traces to Democritus rather than Epicurus). See Majid Fakhry, *Ethical Theories in Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), pp. 70–77 and *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, 3rd ed. (New York: Columbia, 2004), pp. 95–106. Thérèse-Anne Druart's work on al-Rāzī strongly emphasizes his Platonism as well; see her "Al-Rāzī (Rhazes) and Normative Ethics," in *Tradition and Renewal: Philosophical Essays Commemorating the Centennial of Louvain's Institute of Philosophy*, Vol. 2, ed. David A. Boileau and John A. Dick (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1993), pp. 167–181, "Al-Razi's Conception of the Soul: Psychological Background to his Ethics," *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 5, no. 2 (1996): 247–250, and "The Ethics of al-Razi (865–925?)," *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 6, no. 1 (1997): 47–71. Second, there is no evidence that al-Rāzī had any direct acquaintance with Epicurus' writings as such. In fact, Epicureanism seems to have been little known in the Arabic-speaking world at that time. Any familiarity al-Rāzī had with Epicurean theories and arguments would thus most likely have

come indirectly through secondary sources (possibly Galen). For an informative discussion of transmission questions along these general lines, see Dmitri Gutas, "Pre-Plotinian Philosophy in Arabic (Other Than Platonism and Aristotelianism): A Review of the Sources," in *Greek Philosophers in the Arabic Tradition*, ed. Dmitri Gutas (Aldershot, Burlington, Singapore, Sydney: Ashgate, 2000), pp. 4939–4973. Third, the primary source of al-Rāzī's "replenishment" theory of pleasure seems ultimately to be Plato's *Timaeus* 64a–65a by way of Galen, a fact pointed out by Paul Kraus in "Raziana I," *Orientalia* 4 (1935), pp. 300–334 (see p. 307) and acknowledged by virtually every major al-Rāzī commentator, including Goodman himself (see his "Rāzī's Psychology," p. 28). For an extensive discussion of the Platonic-Galenic origins of al-Rāzī's ethical theory, see Meir M. Bar-Asher, "Quelques aspects de l'éthique d'Abū Bakr al-Rāzī et ses origines dans l'œuvre de Galien," *Studia Islamica* 69 (1988): 5–83 and 70 (1989): 119–147. Most recently, Peter Adamson has forcefully challenged Goodman's Epicurean account on both textual and conceptual grounds. See his "Platonic Pleasures in Epicurus and al-Rāzī," in *In the Age of al-Fārābī: Arabic Philosophy in the Fourth/Tenth Century*, ed. Peter Adamson (London: Warburg Institute Colloquia, 2008), pp. 71–94. Adamson agrees with Bar-Asher regarding the centrality of Plato and Galen as the actual historical sources, but argues that al-Rāzī himself offers us a severe anti-hedonism that is ultimately neither Epicurean nor Platonic. It is beyond the scope of my broader comparative discussion here to determine whether there are elements of al-Rāzī's ethics that are nonetheless unmistakably Epicurean. Suffice it to say that I side primarily with Goodman on this issue, but also think that the question of al-Rāzī's "Epicureanism" has to do with more than just his account of pleasure. The other similarities between al-Rāzī and Epicurus' philosophies (e.g., their critique of religion, materialistic atomism, account of sensation, therapeutic arguments against the fear of death based on the absence of sensation/pain, etc.) seem to me to be underdetermined by any explanation that attempts to derive them purely from Platonic sources.

- 30 – The *mashshā'ī* philosopher al-Fārābī and the Ismā'īlī missionary Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī are two contemporaneous examples of this tendency during al-Rāzī's time. The notion that some people either by nature or divine choice are uniquely suited to lead is, in al-Rāzī's view, incompatible with God's wisdom and benevolence.
- 31 – On the question of al-Rāzī and dissimulation (*taqiyya*), see Charles E. Butterworth, "The Origins of al-Rāzī's Political Philosophy," *Interpretation* 20, no. 3 (Spring 1993): 239.
- 32 – For a useful overview of al-Rāzī's heretical views concerning revealed religion, prophecy, and miracles, see Sarah Stroumsa, *Freethinkers of Medieval Islam: Ibn al-Rāwandī, Abū Bakr al-Rāzī, and Their Impact on Islamic Thought* (Leiden, Boston, and Köln: Brill, 1999), pp. 87–120. I follow Stroumsa in emphasizing

the radicality and marginality of al-Rāzī's views, and their accurate portrayal by his opponents. For a view that qualifies the freethinking, "heretical" nature of al-Rāzī's thought, see Paul Walker, "The Political Implications of al-Rāzī's Philosophy," in Charles E. Butterworth, ed., *The Political Aspects of Islamic Philosophy: Essays in Honor of Muhsin S. Mahdi* (Cambridge, MA: Center for Middle Eastern Studies of Harvard University; distr. by Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 61–94.

- 33 – For the classic discussion of Rāzian atomism, see Shlomo Pines, "The Atomic Theory of al-Rāzī," in *Studies in Islamic Atomism*, trans. Michael Schwarz (Jerusalem: Magnus Press 1997), pp. 41–107. The rest of the book contains a still valuable treatment of *kalām* atomism. On this topic, see also Harry A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), and Richard Frank, *Beings and Their Attributes: The Teaching of the Basrian School of the Mu'tazila in the Classical Period* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1978).
- 34 – As Shlomo Pines points out, both Nāsir-i Khusraw and al-Shahrestānī identify al-Rāzī as the most prominent of the "exponents of matter" (*aṣḥāb al-hayūlā*), and a book attributed to him defends this position against the *mutakallim* al-Misma'i (Pines, "The Atomic Theory of al-Rāzī," p. 41).
- 35 – I shall set aside any detailed examination of al-Rāzī's theory of knowledge, since this is of least interest in a three-way comparison between him, Nietzsche, and Epicurus. Instead, I will focus here on his practical philosophy. The following account of al-Rāzī's ethics is indebted to the work of Lenn E. Goodman.
- 36 – Al-Rāzī, *Al-Ṭibb al-rūḥānī*, in Paul Kraus, ed., *Rasā'il falsafiyya li-Abu Bakr Muḥammad ibn Zakarīya al-Rāzī* (Cairo: Imprimerie Paul Barbey, 1939), pp. 15–96. This was translated by Arthur J. Arberry as *The Spiritual Physick of Rhazes* (London: John Murray, 1950), p. 39. See also the extant fragment from al-Rāzī's treatise on pleasure in Kraus, *ibid.*, pp. 148–155, parts of which are translated as "The Nature of Pleasure," in Franz Rosenthal, ed., *The Classical Heritage in Islam* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), pp. 103–106. The preceding passage is clearly a description of the nature of kinetic pleasure, and merely points toward the possibility of more stable, katastematic pleasures such as freedom from bodily pain and unperturbedness of the soul.
- 37 – Medhi Mohaghegh points out that "al-Rāzī uses the word *hawā* more than any other Muslim moral philosophers" and draws attention to the forcefulness of his language: he speaks of "suppressing" (*qam*), "restraining" (*rad*), "overcoming" (*mughālabah*), and "reigning" (*zamm*) passion. See M. Mohaghegh, "Notes on the 'Spiritual Physic' of al-Rāzī," *Studia Islamica* 26 (1967): 10.
- 38 – As mentioned earlier, according to al-Rāzī the divine gift of reason is universally and equitably distributed. The apparent inequity of intellectual

capacity is in his account a function of interest and effort rather than natural potential.

39 – Al-Rāzī, *Spiritual Physick*, p. 24.

40 – Ibid., p. 25.

41 – Ibid.

42 – Although, as Pierre Hadot points out, Epicurus himself advocates an “askēsis of desire,” it seems significantly less repressive than al-Rāzī’s. See Pierre Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?* trans. Michael Chase (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 115–117.

43 – For a discussion of the figure of Socrates as it was appropriated in the Islamic tradition, see Ilai Alon, *Socrates in Medieval Arabic Literature* (Leiden-Jerusalem: E. J. Brill, 1991), and Charles E. Butterworth, “Socrates’ Islamic Conversion,” *Arab Studies Journal* 4, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 4–11.

44 – Al-Rāzī, *Kitāb al-sīrat al-falsafīyya*, in Kraus, *Rasā’il falsafīyya li-Abu Bakr Muḥammad ibn Zakarīya al-Rāzī*, pp. 99–111; trans. Charles E. Butterworth as “The Book of the Philosophical Life,” *Interpretation* 20, no. 3 (Spring 1993): 227–236 (see esp. pp. 232–234).

45 – Goodman, “The Epicurean Ethic of Muḥammad Ibn Zakariyā’ al-Rāzī,” p. 17. For more Platonic interpretations of al-Rāzī’s account of pleasure, see Fakhry, *Ethical Theories in Islam*, pp. 70–77, Druart, “The Ethics of al-Rāzī (865–925?),” pp. 47–71, and Adamson, “Platonic Pleasures in Epicurus and al-Rāzī,” pp. 71–94.

46 – Al-Rāzī, “The Book of the Philosophical Life,” p. 234. The locus classicus of this idea of becoming like God so far as it is possible (*homōsis theōi kata to dunaton*) is Plato, *Theaetetus* 176b–c; cf. *Symposium* 207e–209e and *Timaeus* 90a–d. For a discussion of the various ways in which this definition of philosophy has been interpreted within the Islamic philosophical tradition, see Lawrence V. Berman, “The Political Interpretation of the Maxim: The Purpose of Philosophy is the Imitation of God,” *Studia Islamica* 15 (1961): 53–61.

47 – On al-Rāzī’s rejection of the materiality of the soul in favor of a Platonic emphasis on its self-subsistence and survival after death, see Druart, “Al-Razi’s Conception of the Soul: Psychological Background to his Ethics,” pp. 247–250. It should be noted, however, that he employs both Socratic/Platonic and Epicurean arguments against the fear of death in the final chapter of the *Spiritual Physick* (XX). While it would seem that the Socratic/Platonic strategy (don’t fear death because the soul is deathless, and if you care for the health of the soul you’ll be all right) is his preferred therapy, he recognizes the force of the Epicurean argument (don’t fear death because the soul is mortal, and the death of the

body is the cessation of any possible experience) for those who do not yet accept the ontological independence of the soul.

- 48 – The creationist model faced the paradoxes that Aristotle had identified in positing an absolute beginning to time. See Aristotle, *Physics* 8, 1 (251b 10–25); cf. *Physics* 1, 7 passim for a similar argument regarding the coming into being of underlying matter or substratum. It also implied some awkward conclusions about divine causality that inadvertently attributed mere potentiality (rather than pure actuality) to God. Worse, by attributing the origin of the world to a divine creator (and thus positing a causal nexus between time and eternity), it threatened to infect God Himself with temporality, change, and multiplicity. See Proclus, *On the Eternity of the World (De Aeternitate Mundi)*, trans. Helen S. Lang and A. D. Macro (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), for some formative Neoplatonic arguments along these lines. The eternalist model, on the other hand, seemed to imply an actual infinite temporal regress, thus opening a Pandora’s box of logical contradictions. The Christian John Philoponus’ *reductio ad absurdum* argument against this possibility thus gave creationists ample resources to hold their own against the eternalists. See Philoponus, *Against Aristotle on the Eternity of the World*, trans. Christian Wildberg (London: Duckworth, 1988), and *Against Proclus’ On the Eternity of the World*, 3 vols. (bks. 1–5, 6–11, and 12–18), trans. Michael Share and James Wilberding (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005–2006). Further, the Neoplatonic cosmology that had become widely associated with Aristotelian eternalism suggested that the universe emanated timelessly, necessarily, and automatically as a function of God’s nature, rather than being deliberately produced by His free will. The most popular and robust version of that position thus appeared to place severe constraints on God’s presumed omnipotence. Finally, the originatedness of the world implied its existential contingency, which in turn pointed toward the need for God as a preexisting cause that would determine its existence over its nonexistence. The eternalist alternative, on the other hand, seemed to lead inevitably to atheism, for if the universe itself has not “become,” if (as a whole) it stands in no need of explanation, then it would appear to be necessary and self-sufficient, and thus not dependent upon God. For many of al-Rāzī’s contemporaries, the eternity of the world thus appeared to reduce God to an unnecessary hypothesis. For a more detailed overview of both creationist and eternalist arguments within the Islamic tradition, see Herbert A. Davidson, *Proofs for Eternity, Creation, and the Existence of God in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).
- 49 – Al-Rāzī’s general model for this seems to have been the myth of the demiurge in Plato’s *Timaeus*; see esp. 27c–92c.
- 50 – The following discussion is drawn from the famous debate between al-Rāzī and the Ismā’īlī missionary Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī, recorded in the latter’s *A’lām al-nubuwwa*. See Kraus, *Rasā’il falsafiyya li-Abu Bakr Muḥammad ibn Zakarīya*

al-Rāzī, pp. 291–316; partially translated in Lenn E. Goodman, “Razi vs. Razi—Philosophy in the *Majlis*,” in *The Majlis: Interreligious Encounters in Medieval Islam*, ed. Hava Lazarus-Yafeh et al. (Harrassowitz Verlag, 1999), pp. 84–107 (see esp. pp. 92–96). A full translation is now available in Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī, *The Proofs of Prophecy*, tr. Tarif Khalidi (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 2011). See also Jon McGinnis and David C. Reisman, eds., *Classical Arabic Philosophy: An Anthology of Sources* (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 2007), pp. 44–49, for comparable discussions of al-Rāzī’s views as recorded by al-Bīrūnī, al-Marzūqī, and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī.

- 51 – Goodman, “Razi vs. Razi,” pp. 96–97. For further discussion of this cosmological myth, see Majid Fakhry, “A Tenth-Century Arabic Interpretation of Plato’s Cosmology,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 6:1 (Jan. 1968): 15–22, Lenn E. Goodman, “Razi’s Myth of the Fall of the Soul: Its Function in his Philosophy,” in *Essays in Islamic Philosophy and Science*, ed. George F. Hourani (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975), pp. 25–40, Muhsin Mahdi, “Remarks on al-Rāzī’s Principles.” *Bulletin d’études orientales* 48 (1996): 145–153, and Druart, “Al-Razi’s Conception of the Soul,” pp. 245–263.
- 52 – And yet, curiously enough, even here al-Rāzī’s world-hypothesis is residually Epicurean, for the cogency of his whole account is predicated on a particular theory of the soul’s passion, which itself draws heavily from Epicurus’ notion of the spontaneous atom swerve. As al-Rāzī will explain, the fall of the Soul—that is, its desire to be embodied—is a *spontaneous* motion that is neither “innate” nor externally “constrained,” meaning it is a function of neither intelligent choice nor natural necessity. Rather, he understands it along the lines of Epicurus’ spontaneous atom swerve. In adopting the atom swerve hypothesis, al-Rāzī reinterprets it and arguably makes it more intelligible. He does so by linking it with what he understands as the “attractive force” of the void, which he posits in order to counterbalance the Epicureans’ lopsided emphasis on physical impact or “repulsion.” This is where al-Rāzī’s affiliation with the Epicurean tradition becomes more striking, because he applies this seemingly materialistic model to the individual, embodied soul. As Lenn Goodman points out, “al-Rāzī connects the attractive force of the void with his theory of *appetite*, and thus with his central idea that (kinetic) pleasures are the sensation of repletion. Appetites would result from the progressive *distension* of the relevant organs, presumably, from rarefaction. Sensuous desires would be the conscious correlate of a literal, physical, *lack*. And what is free in choice would correspond to the spontaneous movement of the organism to fill some specific void” (Goodman, “Muḥammad ibn Zakariyā’ al-Rāzī,” p. 205).
- 53 – As mentioned above (see Note 29), al-Rāzī actually affiliates himself first and foremost with Socrates and Plato, Epicureanism as such seems have been little known at that time in the Islamic world, and the replenishment account of pleasure and pain, which (following Goodman) I associate in part with al-Rāzī’s

“Epicureanism,” is preemptively explored in various Platonic dialogues, sometimes with alternately hedonistic and anti-hedonistic implications (e.g., *Gorgias* 491e–500e, *Phaedo* 60b–c, *Phaedrus* 258e, *Republic* 580d–587a, *Philebus* 31b–59d, and the afore-mentioned *Timaeus* 64a–69a). For an illuminating discussion of these sources, see Adamson, “Platonic Pleasures in Epicurus and al-Rāzī,” pp. 72–78. No doubt at least some of these passages were resources for Epicurus himself, as Adamson himself points out (pp. 78–79)—an unsurprising fact, given that Epicurus’ first teacher was the Platonist Pamphilus.

- 54 – Cf. Philo, in David Hume’s *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, who mercilessly critiques every possible argument for the existence of an anthropomorphic, intelligent God, and even powerfully argues on behalf of the Epicurean alternative (pt. VIII), but at the last minute (in pt. XII) concedes the force of the design argument, for lack of any cogent alternative. One wonders what Philo would have made of subsequent developments in biology, for example natural selection and random genetic mutation.
- 55 – On Socrates’ “second sailing,” again see Plato, *Phaedo* 96a–100b, and Note 13 above. In speaking here of a Rāzian second sailing I am not suggesting that he himself explicitly or intentionally calls for this. Rather, his supplementation of a fundamentally materialistic etiology with supersensible explanatory entities raises the question of why he ultimately eschews a thoroughgoing naturalism, and this is in my view one plausible interpretation.
- 56 – Nietzsche’s views regarding Epicurus have not generated much attention in the secondary literature. While Nietzsche’s relationship to Epicurus is sometimes acknowledged in passing (see, e.g., Walter Kaufmann’s translation of *The Gay Science* [New York: Vintage, 1974], p. 110 n. 37 and Lampert, *Nietzsche and Modern Times*, pp. 432 ff.), there are relatively few article-length discussions of Nietzsche’s view of Epicurus. This may be changing, however. A few recent pieces that deserve particular mention are Joseph P. Vincenzo, “Nietzsche and Epicurus,” *Man and World* 27, no. 4 (October 1994): 383–397; Marcin Milkowski, “Idyllic Heroism: Nietzsche’s View of Epicurus,” *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 15 (1998): 70–79, Howard Caygill, “Under the Epicurean Skies,” *Angelaki* 11, no. 3 (December 2006), pp. 107–115, Keith Ansell-Pearson, “True to the Earth: Nietzsche’s Epicurean Care of Self and World,” in *Nietzsche’s Therapeutic Teaching: For Individuals and Culture*, ed. Horst Hutter and Eli Friedland (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 97–116 and Keith Ansell-Pearson, “‘We Are Experiments’: Nietzsche on Morality and Authenticity,” in *Nietzsche and the Becoming of Life*, ed. Vanessa Lemm (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), pp. 277–299. Vincenzo’s article is a deeply thoughtful response to Nietzsche’s critique of Epicurus, which vindicates him on Nietzschean grounds. Milkowski’s article is a highly speculative but suggestive interpretation that distinguishes between an exoteric and esoteric Epicurus in Nietzsche’s texts (the former being the “idyllic,” decadent, vulgar image of Epicurus as a “modest”

hedonist whose hypersensitivity toward pain anticipates Christianity, utilitarianism, and modern democratic movements, and the latter being the more “heroic,” noble Epicurus). Caygill’s piece traces the ambivalence of Nietzsche’s Epicurus-interpretation to two different perspectives within his predecessor’s philosophy: the “medical” (i.e., his therapeutic concern with ameliorating suffering, which prefigures the reactive Christian doctrine of salvation) and the “meterological” (i.e., his anti-teleological, non-purposive and amoral understanding of this-worldly phenomena). Ansell-Pearson’s respective chapters focus (1) on Nietzsche’s middle-period interest in Epicurus, emphasizing the ways in which he takes up his predecessor’s therapeutic care of the self (and its implicit ecological concern) and (2) on Nietzsche’s *Daybreak* in particular, showing the ways in which Nietzsche’s emerging views on self-experimentation revitalize Epicurus’ philosophical therapeutics. I set aside any consideration of Nietzsche’s relation to earlier classical theorists of atomistic materialism here, for example Democritus, on whom he had done extensive early work. For a useful discussion of Nietzsche’s aborted “Democritus project” (which was paralleled but ultimately superseded by his study of Kant’s teleology), see J. I. Porter, “Nietzsche’s Atoms,” in Daniel W. Conway and Rudolf Rehn, eds., *Nietzsche und die antike philosophie* (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 1992), pp. 47–90. More recently Jessica N. Berry has addressed the specifically ethical dimension of this influence in “Nietzsche and Democritus: The Origins of Ethical Eudaimonism,” in Paul Bishop, ed., *Nietzsche and Antiquity: His Reaction and Response to the Classical Tradition* (Suffolk: Camden House, 2004), pp. 98–113.

- 57 – Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), sec. 7. Cf. Nietzsche’s complementary remark about Plato wanting to burn Democritus’ writings in a “private *auto-da-fé*,” an anecdote he picks up from Diogenes Laertius (*BAW* III, p. 347; cf. pp. 264, 278, 345, 347, and IV, p. 98). All references to Nietzsche’s works henceforth cited in the text are by abbreviation of the English title (i.e., *BT* = *The Birth of Tragedy*; *SE* = *Schopenhauer as Educator*; *HH* = *Human, All too Human*; *AOM* = *Assorted Opinions and Maxims*; *WS* = *The Wanderer and His Shadow*; *GS* = *The Gay Science*; *Z* = *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*; *BGE* = *Beyond Good and Evil*; *GM* = *On the Genealogy of Morals*; *CW* = *The Case of Wagner*; *TI* = *Twilight of the Idols*; *AC* = *Antichrist*; *EH* = *Ecce Homo*; *WP* = *The Will to Power*), followed by essay/chapter, section, and/or aphorism numbers. With the exception of occasional emendations in favor of greater literalness, I rely chiefly on Walter Kaufmann’s translations for Penguin/Vintage and R. J. Hollingdale’s translations for Cambridge University Press. Unpublished notes and fragments from the *Nachlass* are cited as *KSA*—i.e., *Friedrich Nietzsche: Sämtliche Werke, Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Einzelbänden*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1988)—followed by appropriate volume, notebook, and note numbers. Translations of *Nachlass* pas-

sages are my own unless collected in *The Will to Power*, or otherwise noted. Occasional references to *Friedrich Nietzsche, Werke und Briefe: Historisch-Kritische-Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Hans Joachim Mette and Karl Schlechta (Munich: Beck, 1933–), an earlier critical edition of Nietzsche's writings, are cited as *BAW*, followed by volume and page number.

58 – This applies to those who affiliate themselves with him as well: “Epicurus has been alive at all times and is living now, unknown to those who have called themselves Epicureans” (*AOM* 408).

59 – Nietzsche refers to Epicurus numerous times in his personal correspondence, for example his July 1, 1883, letter to Peter Gast: “I have once again contemplated Epicurus’ bust: strength of will and spirituality are expressed in the head to the highest degree” (Kaufmann, *The Gay Science*, p. 110 n. 37). Cf. Nietzsche’s letters to Gast dated January 22, 1879, and August 3, 1883, as well. Perhaps one of the most strikingly sympathetic appraisals of Epicurus in Nietzsche’s published texts ultimately leaves him unnamed, but it perfectly describes him, and serves as a good sketch of Nietzsche’s thought as well (or at least Zarathustra’s):

The three good things.—Greatness, repose, sunlight—these three things embrace everything a thinker desires and demands of himself: his hopes and duties, his claims in the intellectual and moral spheres, even in the way he lives day by day and the quality of the landscape where he dwells. They answer firstly to *elevating* thoughts, then to *quietening*, thirdly to *enlightening*—fourthly, however, to thoughts which participate in all three qualities, in which everything earthly comes to transfiguration: it is the kingdom where there reigns the great *trinity* of joy. (*WS* 332)

60 – Cf. Nietzsche’s description of Epicurus’ predecessor, Democritus, as “the philosopher who is still alive” (*BAW* IV, p. 84). This emphasis on the “eternal liveliness” (*ewige Lebendigkeit*) of Epicurus as an exemplary philosopher is especially noteworthy given Nietzsche’s subsequent prophecy of the death of God and his emphasis on the dynamic flux and historical contingency of all world interpretations and evaluations.

61 – It would be fascinating to hear what Nietzsche would have had to say about al-Rāzī on this point, since he shared with Epicurus and Nietzsche an almost impish delight in deflating the pretensions of religious, philosophical, and political authorities.

62 – His “two pacifying formulae,” reduced to their simplest form, are “firstly, if that is how things are they do not concern us; secondly, things may be thus but they may also be otherwise” (*WS* 7). As Hadot points out,

Above all we must not imagine Epicurean physics as a scientific theory, intended to reply to objective, disinterested questions. The ancients knew that the Epicureans were hostile to the idea of science studied for its own sake. Indeed philosophical theory is here merely the expression and consequence of the original choice of life, and a means of obtaining peace of mind and pure pleasure. . . . [F]or Epicurus there are two very

different areas of research on physical phenomena. On the one hand there is the indisputable systematic core, which justifies the existential opinion. For instance, there is the representation of an eternal universe constituted by atoms and the void, in which the gods do not intervene. On the other hand, there are investigations on questions of secondary importance—on celestial or meteorological phenomena, for instance, which do not involve the same rigor and which allow for multiple explanations. In both areas, research is carried out only to ensure peace of mind, either thanks to the fundamental dogmas which eliminate the fear of the gods and of death; or in the case of the secondary problems, thanks to one or more explanations which will suppress the mind's worries by showing that such phenomena are merely physical. (Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?* pp. 118–119)

Cf. Nietzsche on this point: "Philosophy as the art of discovering truth: according to Aristotle. Contradicted by the Epicureans, who made use of Aristotle's sensualistic theory of knowledge: they rejected the search for truth with irony; 'Philosophy as an art of living'" (KSA 12:9[57]/WP 449). In other unpublished notes from the late period, Nietzsche will sometimes accordingly cast Epicurus as actually opposing a scientific view of the world in the interests of morality (KSA 12:9[160]/WP 578; KSA 13:14[99]/WP 437; KSA 13:14[141]/WP 442).

63 – This note seems to be a rough draft of AC 58. Cf. KSA 13:11[295]/WP 196.

64 – WS 295 offers a beautiful portrait of the world of Epicurus, prompted presumably by Nietzsche's own rustic wanderings. After describing a lush nature scene that could have come straight out of Lucretius' epic poem, he adds,

The beauty of the whole scene induced in me a sense of awe and adoration for the moment of its revelation; involuntarily, as if nothing were more natural, I inserted into the pure, clear world of light (in which there was nothing of desire or expectation, no looking before and behind), Hellenic heroes; my feeling must have been like that of Poussin and his pupil: at one and the same time heroic and idyllic. And that is how individual human beings have actually *lived*, that is how they have enduringly *felt* they existed in the world and the world existed in them; and among them was one of the greatest of human beings, the inventor of the heroic-idyllic mode of philosophizing: Epicurus. (cf. WS 332 and GS 45)

The Epicurean mood in Z III, "Before Sunrise" and "The Convalescent," and particularly in IV, "At Noon" is striking. Heidegger's influential interpretation of Nietzsche emphasizes the differences between Nietzsche and Epicurus' "gardens" in the pivotal exchange between Zarathustra and his animals (Z III, "The Convalescent"):

In truth, of course, the world is no garden, and for Zarathustra it dare not be one, especially if by "garden" we mean an enchanting haven for the flight from being. Nietzsche's conception of the world does not provide the thinker with a sedate residence in which he can putter about unperturbed, like the philosopher of old, Epicurus, in his "garden." (Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. II, trans. David Farrell Krell [San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984], p. 52)

However, for a persuasively Epicurean reading of “At Noon,” see Vincenzo, “Nietzsche and Epicurus,” pp. 392–395.

- 65 – See also *BGE* 12 and *Z I*, “On the Despisers of the Body”; cf. Epicurus, *LM* 124–126, and Lucretius *ONT*. III *passim*, which presents numerous resourceful arguments for the maxim that “death is nothing to us.”
- 66 – Kaufmann’s widely adopted translation of this phrase as “remain faithful to the earth” puts a misleadingly religious spin on Zarathustra’s commandment. The word he uses is *treu*, which is better simply translated as “true” or “loyal.”
- 67 – As Porter points out, the phrase *Punct um Punct* is a pun on Epicurean atomism (Porter, “Nietzsche’s Atoms,” p. 86 n. 98). Again, cf. *KSA* 13:16[15]/*WP* 438, where Nietzsche speaks of Epicurus’ “struggle against preexisting Christianity.”
- 68 – On Nietzsche’s naturalism, see Richard Schacht, *Nietzsche* (London: Routledge, 1983), chaps. 5–7, as well as Schacht, *Making Sense of Nietzsche: Reflections Timely and Untimely* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1995), chaps. 11–13; Laurence Lampert, *Nietzsche and Modern Times: A Study of Bacon, Descartes, and Nietzsche* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), pt. III (particularly chap. 11); Brian Leiter, “The Paradox of Fatalism and Self-Creation in Nietzsche,” in *Willing and Nothingness: Schopenhauer as Nietzsche’s Educator*, ed. Christopher Janaway (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 217–257; Christoph Cox, *Nietzsche: Naturalism and Interpretation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Paul J. M. van Tongeren, *Reinterpreting Modern Culture: An Introduction to Friedrich Nietzsche’s Philosophy* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1999), pp. 174–249; Peter S. Groff, “*Amor Fati* and *Züchtung*: The Paradox of Nietzsche’s Nomothetic Naturalism,” *International Studies in Philosophy* 35, no. 3 (Fall 2003): 29–52; Lawrence Hatab, *Nietzsche’s Life Sentence: Coming to Terms with Eternal Recurrence* (London: Routledge, 2005); Christa Davis Acampora, “Naturalism and Nietzsche’s Moral Psychology,” in *A Companion to Nietzsche*, ed. Keith Ansell Pearson (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), pp. 314–333; and Christopher Janaway, “Naturalism and Genealogy,” in Pearson, *A Companion to Nietzsche*, pp. 337–352.
- 69 – For a more detailed development of this critique, see *GS* 373.
- 70 – Examining the virtual ubiquity of substance metaphysics in the Indo-European language family (e.g., the overwhelming emphasis on “unity, identity, permanence, substance, cause, thinghood [and] being” in both classical Greek and Indian philosophies), Nietzsche ventures his famous observation that “we are not rid of God because we still have faith in grammar.”
- 71 – Nietzsche goes on in this same passage to
declare war, relentless war onto death, against the “atomistic need” which still leads a dangerous afterlife in places where no one suspects it, just like the more celebrated

“metaphysical need”: one must also, first of all, give the finishing stroke to that other and more calamitous atomism which Christianity has taught best and longest, the *soul atomism*. Let it be permitted to designate by this expression the belief which regards the soul as something indestructible, eternal, indivisible, as a monad, as an *atomon*: this belief ought to be expelled from science.

Nietzsche, of course, recognizes Epicurus as an essential predecessor in this battle (*D* 72). Indeed, one could argue that in certain important respects, Epicurus anticipates Nietzsche’s naturalistic “new versions and refinements of the soul-hypothesis,” for example “mortal soul,” “soul as subjective multiplicity,” “soul as social structure of the drives and affects” (*BGE* 12).

- 72 – Cf. Nietzsche’s alternative psychological account in *BGE* 7, mentioned earlier, where he suggests that Epicurus’ productivity is rooted in his rage and malice toward the politically dominant Plato.
- 73 – Cf. *WS* 192, titled “The Philosopher of Sensuous Pleasure,” where Nietzsche recounts in a more appreciative light Epicurus’ modest hedonism: “A little garden, figs, little cheeses and in addition three or four good friends—these were the sensual pleasures of Epicurus.”
- 74 – See, for example, *BGE* 270, where he characterizes Epicureanism as one of the most “refined disguises” of the profound sufferer, and *GM* III.6, where Nietzsche quotes Schopenhauer’s reactive-nihilistic interpretation of Epicurean *ataraxia*: “This is the painless condition that Epicurus praised as the highest good and the condition of the gods; for a moment we are delivered from the vile urgency of the will; we celebrate the Sabbath of the penal servitude of volition; the wheel of Ixion stands still!” Cf. *KSA* 12:10[127]/*WP* 781 and *KSA* 13:14[94]/*WP* 435. There are anticipations of this interpretation in Nietzsche’s middle period writings, for example particularly where he examines Epicureanism alongside other Hellenistic schools of philosophy. See, for example, *HH* 275, where Nietzsche compares the Epicurean rather favorably to the Cynic (the emphasis here is on the augmented or enhanced suffering of the more highly cultivated person: Epicureanism uses high culture against itself, as it were, whereas Cynicism simply remains at the stage of negation). Or see *GS* 306, where Nietzsche considers Epicureanism and Stoicism as possible life strategies for different types of people in different circumstances: “The Epicurean selects the situation, the persons, and even the events that suit his extremely irritable, intellectual constitution; he gives up all others, which means almost everything, because they would be too strong and heavy for him to digest.” After acknowledging the advantages of Stoic therapy (making one’s stomach “ultimately indifferent to whatever the accidents of existence pour into it”), Nietzsche concludes, “anyone who foresees more or less that fate permits him to spin a *long thread* does well to make Epicurean arrangements. That is what all those have done whose work is of the spirit. For this type it would be the loss of losses to be deprived of their subtle irritability and be awarded in its place a hard Stoic hedgehog skin.”

- 75 – Here he hoists Epicurus on his own petard, simply by considering an alternative interpretive hypothesis regarding the meaning of *ataraxia* as a practical goal (as Nietzsche paraphrases Epicurus’ second “pacifying formula” in *WS* 7: “it may be thus, but it may be otherwise”). Elsewhere, he goes further and entertains a multiplicity of alternative symptomatological accounts regarding the significance of *ataraxia* or “peace of soul” [*Frieden der Seele*] (*TI*, “Morality as Anti-Nature,” 3).
- 76 – This interpretation should not be seen as a departure from, or rejection of, Nietzsche’s aforementioned reading of Epicurus’ philosophy as preemptively anti-Christian—indeed, observations along those lines can be found in *The Antichrist* itself, as well as unpublished notes from the same period (1888—Nietzsche’s last year of productivity). Such claims are not necessarily contradictory, especially given Nietzsche’s critique of oppositional thinking (*HH* 1 and *BGE* 2). Rather, accounts like these need to be seen as various transparencies laid atop one another to create a complex, nuanced, and ambivalent portrait of Epicurus as Nietzsche’s primary naturalistic predecessor.
- 77 – Again, Nietzsche is quite frank—if admittedly somewhat vague—about this in his 1886 prefaces (especially for *BT* and *GS*). Nietzsche mentions his health problems with direct reference to Epicurus in a letter to Peter Gast dated January 22, 1879: “My health is disgustingly rich in pain, as formerly; my life much more severe and lonesome; I myself live on the whole almost like a complete saint, but almost with the outlook of the complete, genuine Epicurus . . . with my soul very calm and patient and yet contemplating life with joy” (cited in Kaufmann’s translation of *GS*, p. 110 n. 37). For a more detailed discussion of Nietzsche’s numerous medical problems, see Julian Young, *Friedrich Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
- 78 – Nietzsche goes on again here to characterize the Christian as a kind of Epicurean; cf. *CW*, “We Antipodes,” a later emended version of *GS* 370. The opposition here, as in *BT* P4, is clearly between the reactive, negative happiness of Epicurean optimism and the overflowing joy of tragic Dionysian pessimism.
- 79 – Although, as Nietzsche points out, both of these types of desire are themselves ambiguous, because they can in turn be interpreted as an expression of either lack or superabundance.
- 80 – Cf. *KSA* 12:8[2]/*WP* 579, *KSA* 12:1[123]/*WP* 911, *KSA* 12:9[107]/*WP* 35, and *KSA* 13:11[104]/*WP* 790.
- 81 – I set aside the question of whether Nietzsche’s diagnosis of Epicurus is ultimately convincing. Vincenzo, “Nietzsche and Epicurus,” presents a very persuasive argument that Nietzsche did not do justice to Epicurus, and that his own art of living (especially as presented in *Zarathustra*) is itself quite Epicurean.

- 82 – See also *SE* 6; *BGE* 61–62 and pt. 9 (“What is Noble”) passim; *GM* I.12; and *AC* 3.
- 83 – See Groff, “*Amor Fati* and *Züchtung*” and “Wisdom and Violence.”
- 84 – Epicurus, *LM* 123. Although the *Übermensch* is usually taken as the definitive Nietzschean ideal, that particular figure is limited almost entirely to *Zarathustra*. Nietzsche experiments with various different kinds of exemplars over the course of his writings (e.g., the “genius” or “great redemptive human being” of *Schopenhauer as Educator*, the “*Übermensch*” of *Zarathustra*, the “sovereign individual” of the *Genealogy*, the “great human beings” of the *Twilight*, the “higher type” of *The Antichrist*, and the “synthetic human being” of the late *Nachlass* notes), but his legislation of a goal toward which humanity should strive and the particular characteristics of these exemplars (health, strength, activity, affirmation of fate/nature/reality, spontaneity, agonistic conflict, innocence, self-overcoming) remain fairly constant throughout his corpus. Vincenzo, however, cites a suggestive passage from *Die Unschuld des Werdens*, a selection of Nietzsche’s *Nachlass* fragments edited by Alfred Bäuml (Leipzig: Kröner, 1931), which reads: “—Types, how the overman must live: as an Epicurean god” (Vincenzo, “Nietzsche and Epicurus,” p. 391). This particular bagatelle is not to be found among the unpublished notebook entries in Colli and Montinari’s *Kritische Studienausgabe*, but one wonders whether this means a serene ironic distance from (and mocking aloofness toward) the suffering of “lower” types.
- 85 – Much has been written on Nietzsche’s general indifference and even hostility toward local and national politics. For a good overall treatment, see Peter Bergmann, *Nietzsche: “The Last Antipolitical German”* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).
- 86 – For examples of a Nietzschean version of the *lathe biōsas* doctrine, see, for example, *HH* 285, 291; *GS* 338; and *BGE* 25.
- 87 – For an excellent discussion of such strategies, see Graham Parkes, *Composing the Soul: Reaches of Nietzsche’s Psychology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), esp. pp. 157–203.
- 88 – Cf. *D* 150 and *GS* 277.
- 89 – The two most obvious alternate candidates would be Heraclitus or Spinoza, but too little is now known about the concrete particularities of Heraclitus’ philosophy to make a persuasive argument on his behalf, and Spinoza’s rationalism and pantheism ultimately set him too far apart from the substance of Nietzsche’s thought.
- 90 – For a more pensive and somewhat less celebratory anticipation of this same idea, see *GS* 124, which immediately precedes Nietzsche’s proclamation of the death of God (*GS* 125):

In the horizon of the infinite.—We have left the land and have embarked. We have burned our bridges behind us—indeed, we have gone farther and destroyed the land behind us. Now, little ship, look out! Beside you is the ocean: to be sure, it does not always roar, and at times it lies spread out like silk and gold and reveries of graciousness. But hours will come when you will realize that it is infinite and that there is nothing more awesome than infinity. Oh, the poor bird that felt free and now strikes the walls of this cage! Woe, when you feel homesick for the land as if it had offered more *freedom*—and there is no longer any “land.”

Cf. the song “Towards New Seas,” in the Appendix to the *Gay Science*.