

Julian Young

Nietzsche's Philosophy of Religion.

New York: Cambridge University Press 2006.

Pp. 242.

US\$80.00 (cloth ISBN-13: 978-0-521-85422-1);

US\$31.99 (paper ISBN-13: 978-0-521-68104-9).

Friedrich Nietzsche

Thus Spoke Zarathustra:

A Book for All and None.

Adrian Del Caro and Robert B. Pippin, eds.,

Adrian Del Caro, trans.

New York: Cambridge University Press 2006.

Pp. 316.

US\$65.00 (cloth ISBN-13: 978-0-521-84171-9);

US\$17.99 (paper ISBN-13: 978-0-521-60261-7).

Young's book is a highly persuasive presentation of Nietzsche as a religious communitarian. As such it takes issue with the common portrayal of Nietzsche as an irreligious, indeed atheistic, individualist. The book is therefore somewhat misleadingly titled, and in two respects. First of all, the focus is entirely on Nietzsche's *constructive* philosophy of religion, and not the more familiar negative aspects, in particular the critique of Christianity. Second, Young engages as much with Nietzsche's social and political thinking as with his philosophy of religion. Indeed, we often get much more of the former than the latter. This may in part be because the claim that Nietzsche is not the anti-social individualist of legend is more likely to provoke skepticism than the claim that he advocated a non-Christian religiosity. But questions remain about quite how the communitarianism and the religiosity are supposed to combine. Another topic which gets treated, if more tangentially, is art, the subject of Young's *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art* (1992). Readers of that book will want to consider Young's latest thoughts on the matter. (The new book has a very good index.)

As in his 1992 book, Young starts by giving us a brief account of Schopenhauer's thinking on the topic, then goes through Nietzsche's texts in chronological order, extracting and discussing relevant passages. The result is a book which is strong on the continuity of Nietzsche's thinking, but does not ignore the shifts and changes, in particular in relation to the mid-period 'positivist' works. It also seeks to locate Nietzsche within a wider tradition of German communitarian anti-modernism, one with roots in Herder and the romantics and represented in his own time by Richard Wagner. The book closes with a judicious consideration of the relation of Nietzsche's thought to Nazism.

According to Young, Nietzsche follows Schopenhauer in seeing religion as having two main functions. First, religion provides ways of dealing with the realities of suffering and mortality. Second, religion is required in order to bind a community together. This understanding of religion provides the basis

for Nietzsche's account of ancient Greek art in *The Birth of Tragedy* and his hopes for Wagner's Bayreuth project. The idea that 'that religion is essential to life' (34) is maintained in the *Untimely Meditations*, this time with greater emphasis placed on the absence of meaning and community in contemporary societies. Young finds these themes reworked in the mid-period works, from *Human, All-too-Human* to *The Gay Science* (first four books only), though obscured to a degree by the critique of Christianity inaugurated in them. In these works, Nietzsche backtracks from the Dionysianism he espoused earlier; for Young, this goes hand-in-hand with a 'shallow and inadequate' treatment of the problem of death (84, 102). With *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, the Dionysian pantheism returns, and returns for good, though this time without the metaphysical Schopenhauerian carapace of the *Birth* and initially without mention of the god himself. Dionysus is explicitly invoked in important sections of *Beyond Good and Evil*, Book 5 of *The Gay Science*, *The Genealogy of Morality*, *Ecce Homo* and *Twilight of the Idols*. What Young refers to as Nietzsche's 'compassionate conservatism' (163, 205) is further developed in these works. Young's commentary remains brisk, deft and entertaining throughout, and does not fail to deal with passages which might be thought to pose difficulties for his interpretation.

Young's case is on the whole very convincing, but a slight reservation remains. Given the recalcitrance of the modern world to his communitarian hopes, might not Nietzsche have been inclined to slip into *faute de mieux* individualism? (Young seems to hint at this at times, e.g. 79, 143.) If this were so, there might be some truth in the standard view of Nietzsche as an anti-social elitist, a truth, moreover, which would be compatible with the account Young provides. This would then enable us to make better sense of Nietzsche's regular disdain for the 'herd' than Young manages (95, 127).

More generally, what are we to make of Nietzsche's religious communitarianism? There are two problems with it. First, it makes Nietzsche just less interesting — we come to see him as just another German anti-modernist. No doubt there is this in him, but his philosophical interest surely rests on other aspects of his thought, in particular his critique of morality. Secondly, his religious communitarianism seems highly questionable. Young tells us that what Nietzsche wants is the rebirth of the medieval Christian church but with 'Greek' gods replacing the trinity and the saints (214), but completely fails to comment on how radically implausible this is — in so many ways! — as a recommendation for a solution to the ills of modernity. A relevant contrast here is with Heidegger, the subject of three previous books by Young (and a recurrent presence in this one). Both Nietzsche and Heidegger were attracted to grandiose plans for political-cultural-mythological revival, as both elicited by and projected onto the projects of Wagner and Hitler respectively. Both philosophers quickly became disillusioned, but in Nietzsche's case only with the representative of the ideal, not the ideal itself. Heidegger, on the other hand, changed tack more radically. Wherever else this took him, it could be argued that it enabled a more nuanced and plausible response to the perceived malaise of modernity.

And so from Nietzsche's 'philosophy of religion' to a new translation of the work he referred to (admittedly to his publisher) as 'a fifth gospel'. Notwithstanding its author's great claims for it, *Zarathustra* has always been his least popular work with philosophers. It now appears again in English as the tenth in Cambridge's set of Nietzsche translations, bringing, one imagines, this series to a close. This translation by Adrian Del Caro is crisp and clear; it respects Nietzsche's very short paragraphs (as for example Kaufmann did not) and the result is both more authentic and more readable. It is an attractive volume and one many will want to have on their shelves alongside the other Cambridge Nietzsche translations.

The editors have provided a scanty twenty-seven footnotes to Nietzsche's text, mainly dealing with issues of translation (sometimes merely pointing out mistakes in Kaufmann's 1953 version). Their practice is in striking contrast with that of *Zarathustra*'s other recent translator, Graham Parkes, who in his 2005 Oxford edition provides thirty-four *pages* of explanatory endnotes. The Cambridge approach is conveyed in the note advising the reader who wants the references to Nietzsche's many allusions to the Bible to consult volume fourteen of the German *Kritische Studienausgabe*, a suggestion which doesn't seem particularly helpful for a reader of an English translation, even one with access to a good library. (Parkes gives references for these allusions, and also the many allusions to Emerson, Hölderlin, and others.)

The respective utility of these translations can also be assessed in relation to a criticism Young makes of the older translations. The penultimate chapter of *Zarathustra* is, he says, called 'The Somnambulist [*Nachtwandler*] Song', but Kaufmann and Hollingdale render *Nachtwandler* (literally: night-wanderer) as 'drunken' and 'intoxicated' respectively. These are, Young says, 'radical departures' from the original (116). So what do the new translations do? Del Caro for Cambridge gives us 'The Sleepwalker Song', and Parkes for Oxford, 'The Drunken Song'. But only Parkes clarifies the issue, telling us in an endnote that the *Kritische Studienausgabe* text (used by Del Caro) relies on a later version of the manuscript, whereas the earlier version of the manuscript (used as the basis for the first printed editions, including the 1894 one Parkes uses) has '*Das trunkene* [drunken] *Lied*'. (See *Kritische Studienausgabe*, vol. 14, 343.) Young is therefore wrong in supposing Kaufmann and Hollingdale to be simply inaccurate. On this and similar issues the Oxford edition is demonstrably superior to the Cambridge one.

Further differences can be seen in relation to the issue of religion. Pipin, in his introduction to the Cambridge edition, says that *Zarathustra* 'has nothing to do with a "replacement" religion' (ix), whereas Parkes by contrast sees it as advocating 'a new kind of religion'. Readers of Young will be inclined to side here with Parkes. The Cambridge *Zarathustra* is in its own way very fine, but I imagine that the Oxford version will be more useful to many English readers. Ideally, of course, one will have both!

Meade McCloughan
University College London