

Fourth Section:

Nietzsche's Art of Living in the United States Today

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In the 21st century, we increasingly live in a Nietzschean world. What was once feared as 'nihilism,' the loss of all final certainties and absolutes, or 'relativism,' that everything relates to a standpoint, has become a lived reality for many people today. Especially younger generations have learned to affirm the living conditions of uncertainty and temporality by eclectically adopting ways of life, routines, and orientations in individual ways for only certain periods of time. Digital technologies, especially the smart phone, have widened our horizons permitting immediate access to different cultures and orientation worlds. Never before have we lived in a world that is as multi-perspectival, fast-paced, and uncertain, while never before have there been so many opportunities for actions. At the same time, people increasingly orient themselves in similar ways to a dominant morality that abbreviates reality and narrows down opportunities of action according to the guiding values of equality and reciprocity, as Nietzsche predicted it. Under these conditions, Nietzsche's art of living is particularly relevant in many orientation worlds today, especially those of entrepreneurship, business, and our everyday life.

I will narrow my focus on three aspects of Nietzsche's art of living that have become relevant today especially in the United States (but not only here): first, regarding some facets of the economic-political conditions of any contemporary art of living; second, the widespread adoption of Nietzsche's notion of self-overcoming and artistic self-design in entrepreneurship and individual's lives;

and third, how his notion of ‘incorporation’ has been further developed in current approaches to habit design. Eventually I will show via the example of Anthony Robbins that some notions of Nietzsche’s art of living have become most popular outside of academia, namely in the commercial industries of what has been called ‘self-growth’ or ‘self-development.’

1. The Economic, Political, and ‘Spiritual’ Conditions for an Art of Living Today

An art of living (and orientation) is possible only within leeways, within certain societal conditions. These conditions have crucially changed since Nietzsche’s time: Through a globalized economy and digital technologies, we orient ourselves in ever-growing horizons and perspectives, can immediately communicate across the globe, and learn about major events anywhere on earth, and we compete with our orientation skills on a global marketplace. These conditions manifest what Nietzsche anticipated philosophically: our horizons and perspectives have multiplied and keep changing and expanding ever-more rapidly; we are forced to shift between orientation worlds and must be willing to adapt and grow in an ever-faster and ever-more complex economic environment. In Nietzsche’s terms, our current world requires continual self-overcoming and growth, if we want to orient ourselves successfully. This means for an art of living that career and life paths have become less linear, that we tend to orient ourselves in life stages; individuals must live with more uncertainty; our identities become more malleable and changeable. A contemporary art of living needs to find its way with the guiding values of today, which Werner Stegmaier calls “time values”; these are: innovation, creativity, efficiency, mobility, flexibility, resilience, and an appetite for risk.¹ They all manifest that economic demands and values increasingly permeate all our orientation worlds.²

Especially in recent decades, corporations have grown to such a vast degree that many of them are more powerful than nations. For example, the market capitalization of Apple (\$2.1tn) is larger than that the GDP of Italy, Microsoft’s (\$1.9tn) larger than that of Brazil, and Amazon’s (\$1.7tn) larger

1 Werner Stegmaier, *What is Orientation? A Philosophical Investigation*, transl. Reinhard G. Mueller, Berlin/Boston 2019, 263 f.

2 See also, in critical perspective regarding the spread of entrepreneurial values, Ulrich Bröckling, *The Entrepreneurial Self: Fabricating a New Type of Subject*, Los Angeles et al. 20.

than that of South Korea.³ And behind these are huge investment companies such as Blackrock or Vanguard Group with, respectively, almost \$10tn and \$9tn of assets under management, which is each more than double the GDP of Germany (\$4.3tn).⁴ These corporate giants tend to develop their own functional differentiations and into small countries of their own, including their own self-designed 'corporate cultures,' including values and ideals.

The *political* landscape of past decades has likewise, at least in the West, become more shaky; moral or ideological grounds have lost their immediate plausibility and grown more controversial. The post-1945 world, based on liberal democracy, the values of equality and freedom, under U.S. hegemony, seems to lose its dominance, facing China's economic growth and a multi-polar world. The *Geisterkrieg* ("spiritual war") that Nietzsche anticipated for the 20th century – "there will be such wars as there have not yet been on earth" (EH, *Destiny* 1, transl. Carol Diethe / Duncan Large / Adrian Del Caro / Alan D. Schrift) – may now in fact reemerge with regard to the very foundations of our political orientation. And within Western countries, key words of fundamental moral conflicts are 'culture wars,' 'cancel culture,' and the 'wokeness' debate, which depict a polarization where the opposing standpoints rely on different 'truths,' plausibilities, and values. Economically, politically, and morally, there is no longer an absolute foothold — instead, to use Nietzsche's metaphor, it is a matter of antagonistic wills to power where everything engages with everything else.⁵

Beyond economics, politics, and morals, our "spiritual" or rather basic philosophical worldviews have likewise become 'nihilistic' and 'relativistic' in Nietzsche's sense; this means: we less seek final spiritual certainties, but eclectically orient ourselves to various orientation worlds in individual ways: one may practice a Buddhist meditation and yoga exercise in the morning, engage in science during the day, attend a Taoist Kung Fu class in the evening, and then go to a Catholic Church on Sundays. Countless authors of popular literature prepare originally religious or philosophical content for 'everyday use' to help people be more successful in their everyday art of living (for instance, authors like Deepak Chopra, Jay Shetty, Wim Hof, concerning Indian thinking

3 <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/the-tech-giants-worth-compared-economies-countries/> accessed on April 18, 2023.

4 <https://www.thebalancemoney.com/which-firms-have-the-most-assets-under-management-4173923> accessed May 1, 2023.

5 For Nietzsche's concept of wills to power, see Werner Stegmaier, *An Orientation to the Philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche*, Nashville 2022, p. 118.

and practices, or Ryan Holiday regarding Stoicism). The perception of the simultaneous diversity of orientation worlds is amplified when we are trying to orient ourselves in the digital realm to ever-more possibilities. Art of living today means mastering the ever-increasing simultaneity of opportunities for action for one's individual life.

2. Self-Overcoming, Self-Design, and Identities in Institutions and Everyday Life

The future is always unknown. We orient ourselves toward the future by imagining and expecting probable future events or outcomes. We expect that footholds of orientation remain in the future as well. For Nietzsche, "it is the future that gives the rule to our present" (HH I, pref. 7, my transl.). And "If you have your *why?* of life, you can put up with almost every *how?*" (TI, Sayings and Arrows 12, transl. Carol Diethe, Duncan Large, Adrian Del Caro, and Alan D. Schrift).⁶ The core idea of the art of living is to design and thus create one's own life and future based on one's own decisions; in Nietzsche's terms: "*to create ourselves, to sculpt* a form out of all elements – is the task! Always that of a sculptor! Of a productive human being" (N End of 1880, 7[213], my transl.).

Nietzsche's notion of "permanent individual self-transformation" (Günter Götde) is popular in everyday life today, especially among younger generations, whose individual future tends to be more open. In the fast-paced business world it is more relevant than in politics, education and academia; here, it is most clearly visible in entrepreneurship, particularly in the start-up environment, which operates under great uncertainty and the pressure of time. As Eric Ries puts it in *The Lean Startup: How Today's Entrepreneurs Use Continuous Innovation to Create Radically Successful Businesses* (New York 2011): "A startup is a human institution designed to create a new product or service under conditions of extreme uncertainty." (27) They most clearly adopt a core value of what Manuel Knoll calls Nietzsche's "heroic art of living," namely to "*live dangerously!* Build your cities on the slopes of Vesuvius!" (JS 283, transl. Adrian Del Caro) And their task is, as Peter Thiel lays out in his *Zero to One: Notes on Startups, or*

⁶ The quote continues: "The human being does *not strive* for happiness; only the Englishman does that." Today, the popular psychologist Jordan B. Peterson has picked up this idea of Nietzsche's and made it a key aspect of his "rules for life," namely that we find meaning in life not in happiness, but rather in responsibility: "the willingness to take on that responsibility is identical to the decision to live a meaningful life." (see Jordan B. Peterson, *12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos*, Toronto 2018, p. xxxv).

How to Build the Future (London 2014) to fundamentally “question received ideas and rethink business from scratch” in order “to build a different future” (10 f.). Start-ups are an extreme case of self-transformation. To survive, they must quickly adapt to a constantly changing environment, react to customers’ feedback, and redefine their roles, systems, processes, and strategies as they grow and compete. As such, they need to permanently re-design their identity and values – although most do not survive the competition (over 90% of startups fail).

Not only organizations self-design their identities, but we also do so in our everyday life as individuals. Identities do not simply exist as objects in the world, but rather we identify with certain identifications of ourselves. One can, for instance, identify with one’s nationality, one’s company, one’s sports team, with being a father, a mother, etc. – or not. An identity is a foothold in our mutual orientation that helps us navigate ever-new situations in an uncertain world, not more, not less. And within certain leeways, we are able to design an identity of ourselves and of who we want to be, like artists of our lives.

Identities need not be defined in words; we mostly “stick to vague *images*” of ourselves.⁷ Neither are they fixed; rather, we *perform* our identities via actions and behaviors, as Judith Butler showed with regard to sexual identities. When we are with other people, we are always more or less concerned about the impression we make on them. For Nietzsche, “we are like shop windows in which we are continually arranging, concealing or illuminating the supposed qualities others ascribe to us – in order to deceive *ourselves*.” (D 385, transl. R. J. Hollingdale). Erving Goffman adopted this idea in the 20th century and elaborated how we constantly engage with our “impression management” regarding others and how we always ‘play-act’ by presenting a certain self that we mostly believe to be our authentic self.⁸ Identities thus provide various leeways for an art of living today: we can identify with identifications and thus choose among different identities; we can perform our identity in individual and unique ways, or imitate others, and thus play-act in this or that way.

However, the conditions for people to design or create their identities have changed over time and differ across cultures. For Hans-Georg Moeller and Paul D’Ambrosio, there are three “identity technologies”: “authenticity,” “sincerity,” and “prolificity.” “Sincerity” is historically the oldest, relating to our roles in

⁷ Stegmaier, *What is Orientation?*, 151.

⁸ *Ibid.*

family, groups, and society, e.g., in ancient or medieval Europe and traditional China: “sincerity demands commitment to roles. The outside is real, and the inside must back it up honestly.” “Authenticity” is younger; its focal point is originality and one’s true interiority, as especially highlighted in Protestantism and Romanticism: “authenticity demands the pursuit of originality.” Here, the inside is considered as real and true core, and the “outside must be an accurate representation of it.” The most recent identity technology, which is as old as modern mass media and which comes to the fore especially through digital technologies, is that of “profificity,” which “demands the curation of profiles. The outside is real, and the inside must be truly invested in it.”⁹ The three regimes are not mutually exclusive, but rather coexist with each other, and oftentimes older identity modes are “put into the service of newer identity paradigms” such as authenticity into that of profificity.

Today, all three identity technologies impact our everyday life; they all offer footholds for orientation, including limitations and coercions regarding who we ought to be. Each “identity regime” provides different leeways for creative self-design: while in “sincerity” the group’s or society’s roles rather constrain freedom for self-creation, “authenticity” emphasizes it through the paradoxical notion of self-actualization, which is at the same time discovery and invention of one’s self. “Profificity” foregrounds artistic self-creation because each profile must be designed or ‘curated,’ less so for specific individuals, but rather for the ‘general peer’ of the respective social media platform, including different purposes and aims, e.g., for Facebook, LinkedIn, dating apps, or Academia.edu. But paradoxically, these curated profiles will only be convincing, if they appear authentic. And the profific lens in turn shapes how we view our everyday lives: “Today people are increasingly speaking, dressing, and acting as if a video of them might, at any moment, be uploaded for dozens, hundreds, thousands, or even millions to view.”¹⁰ On Instagram, for instance, every post and every story is an artistic creation, and by curating our profile in this way, we indeed

9 Hans-Georg Moeller / Paul J. D’Ambrosio, *You and Your Profile: Identity After Authenticity*, New York 2021, 253. See also Hans-Georg Moeller / Paul J. D’Ambrosio, “Orientation to Profiles: Identity in a Digitized World,” in: Reinhard G. Mueller / Werner Stegmaier (ed.), *How Does the Digitization of Our World Change Our Orientation? Five Award-Winning Essays of the Prize Competition 2019-21 Held by the Hodges Foundation for Philosophical Orientation* (Nashville 2023), 23-70, where they applied their distinction of the three identity regimes to the prize question regarding the digital transformation of our world and emphasized that of profificity in the digital age.

10 *Ibid.*, 254.

become artistic creators of our (prolific) lives. Art of living then means, in an “age of prolificity,” that we are also coerced to be artists of our lives.

3. Incorporation and Habit Design

As became clear throughout this volume, art of living is for Nietzsche not merely a theoretical enterprise, but it involves our whole body, including what we eat and drink, what we read, hear, and mentally ‘digest,’ whom we are spending time with, and in principle all our activities and everything we do. He is interested in ideas and habits through which we can orient ourselves more successfully in life. In this sense, he quotes Goethe at the beginning of *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*: “In any case, I hate everything that merely instructs me without augmenting or directly invigorating my activity.” (HL, pref., transl. R. J. Hollingdale) For him, as Johannes Heinrich highlights, body and mind go hand in hand: “the metabolism stands in direct relationship to the fleetness or lameness of the spirit’s *feet*; for the spirit is just a form of this metabolism” (EH, Clever 2, transl. Carol Diethe / Duncan Large / Adrian Del Caro / Alan D. Schrift). An overview of the broad variety of how Nietzsche’s ideas have been adopted in dietetic, metabolic, physical, and athletic concerns would require a separate chapter; I will here focus only on his notion of ‘incorporation.’

In this holistic sense, Nietzsche uses the concept of ‘incorporation’ for something that becomes routine and thus instinctive or natural in our entire orientation. Both our physiology and our thinking are for him the result of evolutionary processes of incorporation. And consciousness is here only the “final and latest development of the organic” (JS 11, transl. Adrian Del Caro). Something is incorporated by means of orientation processes that have become routine. When something becomes routine, it becomes, as it were, instinctive. We do it without thinking; it becomes automatic and something like “self-forgotten knowledge.”¹¹ As far as our incorporated routines also set limits to our thinking, then it is the philosopher’s task to experimentally incorporate “unusual and unheard-of orientations” and that means, making “them routine and thus bearable.”¹² By incorporating new and different habits, philosophers become, as Nietzsche writes, “experimental stations of humanity” (N Beginning of 1880, 1[38], my transl.; see also D 453).

¹¹ Stegmaier, *What is Orientation?*, 84.

¹² Stegmaier, *An Orientation to the Philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche*, 100.

Today, Nietzsche's notion of incorporation has been widely adopted, less so in terms of philosophical experiments for the sake of truthfulness, but with regard to a self-directed art of building habits, especially in the genre of 'self-growth' or 'self-development.' For instance, Stephen R. Covey presents *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (London et al. 1989) under the headings "be proactive," "begin with the end in mind," "put first things first," "think win/win," "seek first to understand, then to be understood," "synergize," and "sharpen the saw." Especially in recent years, highly popular habit approaches include new research from cognitive and behavioral studies that show orientation tools for effective "habit design." For example, James Clear, *Atomic Habits: An Easy and Proven Way to Build Good Habits and Break Bad Ones* (New York 2018), argues that "your identity emerges out of your habits" and "every action is a vote for the type of person you wish to become" (41). He proposes a two-step approach – "1. Decide the type of person you want to be. / 2. Prove it to yourself with small wins" (39) – and breaks down the "neurological feedback loop" (50) of the habit building process in order to show how each element can be influenced: 1. Cue, 2. Craving, 3. Response, 4. Reward. New habits can be implemented through four laws, which he expounds with great detail: 1st "make it obvious" (e.g., put healthy food in your surroundings); 2nd "make it attractive" (e.g., put fresh healthy food in an appealing place); 3rd "make it easy" (e.g., easily accessible); and 4th "make it satisfying" (e.g., highlighting the benefits of the new behavior).

B. J. Fogg, who founded and directed the "Stanford Behavior Design Lab" (formerly: "Stanford Persuasive Technology Lab") that famously impacted the development of Instagram, Facebook, and Clubhouse, and who reportedly worked with "40,000 people during years of research and refinement," further develops the minutiae of habit design in his *Tiny Habits: The Small Changes that Change Everything* (New York 2020).

As Johannes Heinrich shows, Nietzsche connects the art of living with regard to managing one's drives with the metaphor of the gardener: "One can handle one's drives like a gardener and [...] cultivate the shoots of one's anger, pity, musing, vanity as fruitfully and advantageously as beautiful fruit on espaliers" (D 560, transl. Brittain Smith). Both Clear and Fogg likewise base their habit theories on this metaphor. Clear writes:

the seed of every habit is a single, tiny decision. But as that decision is repeated, a habit sprouts and grows stronger. Roots entrench themselves and branches grow. The task of breaking a bad habit is like uprooting a powerful oak within us. And the task of building a good habit is like cultivating a delicate flower one day at a time.¹³

Fogg argues that we can design our life by cultivating our garden of habits:

Cultivating habits – good or bad – is a lot like cultivating a garden. [...] You could stand on your back porch and wish that your scraggly yard would somehow become beautiful. As the weeks go by, weeds begin to grow. You pull a few out here and there, but this becomes laborious so you stop. But you keep wishing that beautiful things grow instead.

A much better approach is to *design* the garden (habits) you want. You identify what vegetables and flowers you'd love to have in your garden (motivation), you choose plants you can easily support (ability), and you consider which spot in the yard is best for each plant (finding a place in your routine).

It takes a bit of planning and care in the beginning to get those delicate little sprouts up and out of the ground, but you've made sure the roots are strong by celebrating your tiny successes. Soon it's time to let your rooted habits do their natural thing — grow bigger.¹⁴

Fogg's key concept is that a "new tiny behavior" is added right after an "anchor moment," which is part of an "existing routine," and then you "celebrate immediately after doing the new Tiny Behavior" by means of a celebratory gesture, which he calls "shine" (12). Celebrating is, for Fogg, a way to "hack" your brain (140) because doing so spurs the production of dopamine and thus the brain's reward system: "with the help of dopamine, the brain encodes the cause-and-effect relationship, and this creates expectations for the future" (136). Overall, he argues that habits can be incorporated most successfully when they are "tiny" and we enjoy doing them.

¹³ Clear, *Atomic Habits*, p. 22.

¹⁴ B. J. Fogg, *Tiny Habits: The Small Changes that Change Everything*, Boston / New York, 2020, 165.

Indeed, many apps, like Instagram or Facebook, have utilized such “hacking” mechanisms by offering small rewards of dopamine to the brain that make us continue using the apps and in a sense ‘get addicted’ to them. When we create a post on Instagram we feel like artists of our lives, and this new routine then easily becomes part of our habit garden, possibly against our will. Since behavior design is a powerful tool that may be used for ‘good’ and ‘evil,’ Fogg says that with this “awesome potential” comes “awesome responsibility” (270).

If our everyday orientation gains its “main foothold” in our routines, including our “bodily routines,” “routines of actions and work,” as well as “highly controlled social routines,”¹⁵ then the notion of an art of living becomes most tangible here: through habit design we can change who we are. By gardening our own habits we can become artists of our life. But at the same time, institutions and mass media may create habits for entire societies.

4. Nietzsche’s Art of Living in the Popular Field of ‘Personal Growth’: the Example of Anthony Robbins

As far as art of living in Nietzsche’s sense is also an “art of orientation” and thus an art of “mastering life,” then living successfully is at its core about finding one’s ways in ever-new situations in life. If it aims, as Jörg Zirfas puts it, at “the expansion and intensification of life possibilities” to make life “richer and more colorful, but also riskier and more dangerous,” then we need to take risks and in this way grow our ability to orient ourselves more successfully. These ideas, including that of living dangerously, have been picked up less in academia; but they are at the heart of the “personal development” or “personal growth” industry, which eclectically combines various therapeutic models, especially cognitive behavioral therapy and positive psychology (Martin Seligman) with training models used for top level athletes and performers. As an example, I will zoom in on one of the most influential proponents in this field: Anthony Robbins (*1960), who adopts many ideas of Nietzsche’s notion of an art of living and explicitly bases a key aspect of his work on him: “To paraphrase the philosopher Nietzsche, he who has a strong enough why can bear almost any how. [...] If we gather a set of strong enough reasons to change, we can change in a *minute* something we’ve failed to change for years.”¹⁶ Robbins is of course

¹⁵ Stegmaier, *What is Orientation?*, 83.

¹⁶ Anthony Robbins, *Awaken the Giant Within: How to Take Immediate Control of Your Mental, Emotional, Physical*

neither an academic nor a philosopher, but rather a commercial “success coach” whose service lies in helping people orient themselves more successfully in their everyday and professional lives. Given his business interests and success he has hardly been studied or taken seriously in academic discourses.

However, his models and concepts regarding an art of living can indeed be viewed as results from Nietzsche’s philosophical reorientations. Similar to Nietzsche’s holistic notion of healthy growth, Robbins defines “success” as “the ongoing process of striving to become more”: “to continually grow emotionally, socially, spiritually, physiologically, intellectually, and financially while contributing in some way to others.”¹⁷ We may compare his own work to that of the sophists in ancient Greece, who were “*professional teachers of orientation*.”¹⁸ And just as they did in their time, so has Robbins coached or given advice to many famous people, such as Bill Clinton, Nelson Mandela, Mikhail Gorbachev, Princess Diana, and François Mitterand, to only mention a few. He is not a philosopher of orientation, but rather someone who prepares and abbreviates pragmatic orientation tools and models with the aim to quickly help people orient themselves successfully with regard to their own goals.

Just as Nietzsche proceeds from a fundamental perspectivism, where “it could even be part of the fundamental character of existence that someone would perish from complete knowledge of it” (BGE 39, transl. Adrian Del Caro), Robbins argues: “You would probably go stark raving mad if you consciously had to make sense of thousands of stimuli ranging from the pulse of blood through your left finger to the vibration of your ear.”¹⁹ But we can indeed direct our perspectives with regard to our goals. Learning to live within nihilism means for Nietzsche that you learn how to live a self-directed life, according to goals and values that you take responsibility for yourself, and that you learn how to

become master of yourself and master of your own virtues as well. Previously they were your masters; but they should simply be tools among your other tools. You must acquire power over your For and Against and learn how to take them out and hang them back up according to your higher aim. You must learn

and *Financial Destiny*, London 1991, 126. Robbins does not mention Nietzsche anywhere else.

17 Anthony Robbins, *Unlimited Power: The New Science of Personal Achievement*, London et al. 1986, 4.

18 Werner Stegmaier, *Courageous Beginnings: 25 Situations of New Orientations in the History of Philosophy*, Nashville 2019, 7.

19 Robbins, *Unlimited Power*, 41f.

how to grasp the perspectival element in every valuation — the displacement, distortion, and seeming teleology of horizons and everything else that pertains to perspectivism. (HH, pref. 6, transl. Gary Handwerk)

For Robbins, too, we can only perceive reality via “generalization, distortion, and deletion,”²⁰ and we therefore must learn the art of choosing our perspective and the meaning we give to it: “we don’t experience life. You and I experience what we focus on and the meaning we give to it – so choose well.”²¹ Since, he argues, “an undirected mind tends to go to fear” – because “we have a two-million-year-old ‘fight or flight’ brain that evolved to protect us from saber-toothed tigers” – it is “critical that we learn to direct and control our own minds.”²²

We always already, Robbins argues, make three perspectival decisions that we are mostly unaware of: first “what we decide to FOCUS on”; second “what does this [what we focus on] MEAN”; and third “What am I going to DO?”²³ His guiding distinction is, in a Nietzschean sense of “autosuggestion” (see Kristina Jaspers in this volume), the question whether a perspective or thought is ‘empowering’ or ‘disempowering’ for an orientation. If you “focus on the worst-case scenario, you’re going to feel fearful and sick to your stomach,” whereas “if you focus on the best case, you’re going to feel confident.” Robbins seems to pick up Nietzsche’s art of perspectivizing, the mastery ‘over your For and Against’ and the meaning we give to them: “we are the creators of our own meaning . . . if we take control. Otherwise we let the external world tell us what is good, bad, terrible, or horrific” – the external world is not only other people, but also mass media and social media.²⁴ Relying on oneself, and setting values and ideals oneself vs. letting others and the world tell us what to do is also how Nietzsche provocatively distinguished between ‘master morality’ and ‘slave morality.’²⁵

20 Robbins, *Unlimited Power*, 41.

21 Tony Robbins / Peter H. Diamandis / Robert Harari, *Life Force: How New Breakthroughs in Precision Medicine can Transform the Quality of Your Life and Those You Love*, New York 2022, 581.

22 Robbins et al., *Life Force*, p. 574f.

23 Robbins et al., *Life Force*, p. 580f.

24 Robbins et al., *Life Force*, 580f.

25 Regarding Nietzsche’s provocative distinction of “*master morality* and *slave morality*,” see Stegmaier, *An Orientation to the Philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche*, 136 f.

Mastering the art of perspectivizing, in accordance to our individual higher goal, also involves, for Robbins, the art of mastering our emotions. Just as we are 'thrown' into certain habits of dieting, moving, thinking, speaking, and of perspectivizing reality, so are we thrown into what Robbins calls our individual "emotional home," where each of us feels 'at home' and we return to again and again, even if we know it may be a problematic place: When faced with an irritation or a strong stimulus, people tend to turn "to their emotional home, to the place they went out of habit";²⁶ for some, this is moral outrage, for others theoretical seriousness, for yet others it is sadness, or concern, determination, anger, frustration, enthusiasm, calmness, drama, etc. We connect with this emotion a certain habitual view and interpretation of life and our role in it (for Nietzsche: our morality and its limits). If you feel emotionally at home in theoretical seriousness, then you may view life as a difficult task that you need to solve; if you tend toward enthusiasm, then life may appear as a place of excitement and your role may be that of cheering others up. If it is moral outrage, then the world is a place of scandals and violations that must be judged by you and others. In addition, "our emotional home shapes our relationships, our careers, our parenting styles, even the level of intimacy we accept or reject."²⁷ But just as all our habits, our emotional homes can likewise be changed and even shaped, within leeways, and we are also able, Robbins argues, to "upgrade" them.

Just as Nietzsche, according to Marco Brussoti, strives for a festive mood in everyday life and even, according to Renate Reschke, for "highest moods" and a "yes-saying world- and self-relation," Robbins proposes the ideal of a "peak state": "if you keep yourself in a high energy or 'energy-rich' state, you'll deal with problems so much more easily and find solutions more quickly."²⁸ Putting yourself into a peak or high-energy state is a skill that Robbins says he, too, has trained himself like a top athlete or artist does. We can, according to him, train ourselves to (almost) always be in this state, firstly, by disciplining our physiological routines, such as movement and exercise, diet, sleep, breathing techniques, a cold plunge, or by using our voice and posture in energetic ways,²⁹

26 Robbins et al., *Life Force*, 585.

27 Robbins et al., *Life Force*, 586.

28 Robbins et al., *Life Force*, 602.

29 In their famous study at Harvard University, Dana R. Carney, Amy J. Cuddy, and Andy J. Yap, "Power Posing: A Brief Nonverbal Displays Affect Neuroendocrine Levels and Risk Tolerance," in: *Psychological Science* 21, 10 (September 20, 2010), 1363-8, confirmed that even short 'power poses' elevate testosterone, decrease cortisol, and increase both feelings of power and tolerance for risk.

secondly, by consciously setting our focus on the respective goals (‘where focus goes energy flows’) and utilizing meditation and gratitude exercises, and thirdly by controlling the communication we have with ourselves internally (e.g., to ‘discipline your disappointment’).

Mastering the art of living means, for Robbins, that we need to “master” “the *science* of achievement and the *art* of fulfillment.”³⁰ While the first relates to building habits for achieving the rather objective skills for success in professional and personal life, the second refers to living in “an extraordinary mental and emotional state,” which is an art rather than a science, because one’s success does not guarantee a positive mental state. This art of fulfillment adopts in an abbreviated and pragmatic sense Nietzsche’s *amor fati*: “my formula for greatness in humans is *amor fati*: that you wish nothing different, neither in the future, nor in the past, nor in all eternity. Not just bearing necessity, still less concealing it — all idealism is hypocrisy in the face of necessity — but *loving* it . . .” (EH, Clever 10, transl. Carol Diethe, Duncan Large, Adrian Del Caro, and Alan D. Schrift) Robbins puts this idea into the context of an everyday art of living: “life is always happening for us, not to us. [...] Trade your *expectations* for *appreciations* and in that moment, your whole life will change.” And to do so, one must “believe something simple — that whatever happens, including the toughest challenges and problems, it’s meant to serve a purpose. And it is our responsibility to find that higher purpose, and use it.”³¹

Eventually Robbins likewise uses the metaphor of gardening for the art of living:

Life is like a river. It’s moving, and you can be at the mercy of the river if you don’t take deliberate, conscious action to steer yourself in a direction you have predetermined. If you don’t plant the mental and physiological results you want, weeds will grow automatically. If we don’t consciously direct our minds and states, our environment may produce undesirable haphazard states. The results can be disastrous. Thus it’s critical that — on a daily basis — we stand guard at the door of our mind. [...] We must daily weed our garden.³²

³⁰ Robbins et al., *Life Force*, 601.

³¹ Robbins et al., *Life Force*, 606-609.

³² Robbins, *Unlimited Power*, 46.

Successful and fulfilled artists of life must, according to Robbins, grow in all their orientation abilities. For him, there are “two fundamental truths” in the universe: “Everything in the universe either grows or it dies . . . and everything in the universe either contributes or it’s eliminated by evolution.”³³ Since, for him, we will always do more for others than we will ever do for ourselves, he summarizes his ethics: ‘you must grow in order to give,’ which means that we are most alive when we give or contribute — and thereby in a pragmatic way adopts the motif of giving that Nietzsche connects with Zarathustra’s art of living, now without its philosophical background.

To come back to the guiding question of these concluding essays — SO WHAT? What now? —, Nietzsche shows that a philosophy of an art of living begins with our bodies, our daily routines and our habits, with what we eat and drink, how we move and what we do and think. Our lives are not pre-set or a matter of theoretical insight; rather, our philosophy is to a great extent an expression of our bodily conditions. And within leeways, we can indeed become artists of our lives by means of gardening our daily habits, influencing our moods and emotions, and changing our thinking routines. For Nietzsche philosophy is less about what “is” but about how we live, not about the truth, but about life: “What was at stake in all philosophizing hitherto was not at all ‘truth’ but rather something else – let us say health, future, growth, power, life . . .” (JS, pref. 2, transl. Josefine Nauckhoff).

33 Robbins et al., *Life Force*, 604.