

## As Platonic as Zarathustra: Nietzsche and Gustav Teichmüller

Adam Foley

»Meine Philosophie umgedrehter *Platonismus*:  
je weiter ab vom wahrhaft Seienden, um so rei-  
ner schöner besser ist es. Das Leben im Schein  
als Ziel.« Nietzsche (DKG-1870,7)

### Introduction

After finishing the first installment of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche sent Franz Overbeck a postcard from Genoa on 22 October, 1883. From the postcard it seems that Nietzsche had begun to worry that, despite his best efforts, Zarathustra might still be laboring in the grip of Platonism. To his dismay, Nietzsche suddenly realized that Zarathustra's promise of the Overman along with his prophetic summons to self-overcoming, as I argue in this article, was little more than the old Platonic Soul and its rational ascent in new dress. The cause for his despair, as he writes, was stimulated by his reading of the German philosopher Gustav Teichmüller, Nietzsche's former colleague at the University of Basel:

My dear old friend, in my reading of Teichmüller I am increasingly transfixed with astonishment at *how poorly* I understand Plato and *how much* Zarathustra Platonizes (Nietzsche's emphases).<sup>1</sup>

On the postcard Nietzsche wrote out the verb "to Platonize" in Greek characters (πλατωνίζει). Despite a few efforts to explain what exactly Nietzsche meant by "Zarathustra Platonizes," the statement has remained as much a puzzle to modern commentators as Plato evidently did to Nietzsche. What precisely in Zarathustra's teaching Nietzsche believed merited the verb πλατωνίζειν has eluded

---

<sup>1</sup> See letter 469 in Friedrich Nietzsche: Briefe von Nietzsche. In: Digitale Kritische Gesamtausgabe Werke und Briefe auf der Grundlage der Kritischen Gesamtausgabe Werke, ed. Giorgio Colli und Mazzino Montinari (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1975): "Lieber alter Freund, beim Lesen Teichmüllers bin ich immer mehr starr vor Verwunderung, wie wenig ich Plato kenne und **wie sehr** Zarathustra πλατωνίζει." Briefe von Nietzsche will henceforth be designated as BVN and the Digitale Kritische Gesamtausgabe as DKG.

even the best efforts at clarification.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, no attempt has been made to collate the utterances of Zarathustra in book one (by this point Nietzsche had only finished the first installment) with Teichmüller's views on Plato. Seeing that Nietzsche, who famously styled his philosophy "inverted Platonism," makes an admission here that would challenge even the most responsible readings of Zarathustra's philosophical agenda, we would do well to dig a little deeper.

There are ultimately two criteria that must be fulfilled in order to understand what Nietzsche meant by "Zarathustra Platonizes." First, the meaning we fix for the verb *πλατωνίζειν* should have precedent and will be consistent with at least one other attested use of the word. The appendix includes a lexicographical study of the word based on its historical usages. I defend this approach on the grounds that, if Overbeck was going to understand what he meant by the word "to Platonize," Nietzsche would not have been able simply to invent a new meaning for the word, nor would he have been able to use it so idiosyncratically that Overbeck would not have easily known what he meant by it. For reasons shown below, Nietzsche could not have been resorting to what we might call a self-evident or com-

---

<sup>2</sup> The following scholars address this letter in their writings without going into the meaning of it in depth: Klaus Gerhard Lickint: *Nietzsches Kunst des Psychoanalysierens: eine Schule für Kultur- und geschichtesbewußt Analytiker der Zukunft* (Würzburg: Verlag Königshausen & Neumann GmbH, 2000) 208; Thomas Brobjer: *Nietzsche's Philosophical Context: An Intellectual Biography* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008) 28 and 122 n. 40 and 41; Leo Strauss: "Note on the Plan of Nietzsche's 'Beyond Good and Evil.'" In: *Interpretation 3* (1973) 981–§213. Strauss draws attention to the pervasive and at times uncomfortable presence of Plato in Nietzsche's writings, but the following remark suggests that he was not aware of the letter to Overbeck, as he claims that Nietzsche "Platonizes" in his own voice rather than, as Nietzsche claims, through the mouthpiece of Zarathustra: "In other words, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, in the only book published by Nietzsche, in the contemporary preface to which he presents himself as the antagonist of Plato, he 'platonizes' as regards the 'form' more than anywhere else"; see also Stanley Rosen: *The Mask of the Enlightenment: Nietzsche's Zarathustra* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 22 and 185. Rosen focused explicitly on the letter, offering the most convincing interpretation to date. In Rosen's view it was Zarathustra who "Platonized" and not Nietzsche. To "Platonize," for Rosen, amounts to a matter of style rather than substance; it is shorthand for the ventriloquism of mimetic speech. Zarathustra's Platonism, as Rosen says, consisted in his "politico-prophetic intentions," as he relied on allegory in presenting both an exoteric and esoteric message intended at once for the many and the few. Though this interpretation has some merit, it is unsatisfactory, insofar as it fails to account for Teichmüller's influence on Nietzsche. See also Laurence Lampert, *Leo Strauss and Nietzsche* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 27 f. 2: "In a postcard to Franz Overbeck (22 October 1883) written while he was working on Zarathustra, part 3, and reading a book about Plato, Nietzsche expressed astonishment at 'how much Zarathustra platonizes.'" Unfortunately, Nietzsche gave no explanation of just how he understood Zarathustra's platonizing." Lampert makes two errors in this note. First, Nietzsche was working on part 1 of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* not part 3. Second, it is more likely he was reading a book in which Teichmüller sets forth his own philosophical views than one of his works on Plato.

monplace meaning of the word either. By leaving the word in Greek letters – it is reasonable to assume – he was employing a meaning of the word attested in classical sources and one which he therefore would have expected Overbeck to comprehend. The second criterion is that the meaning chosen from the lexical possibilities in the appendix be consistent with Teichmüller’s views on Platonism. It was Nietzsche’s reading of Teichmüller, after all, that made him realize how poorly he understood Plato and how much Zarathustra “Platonizes.” Because he signals Teichmüller as the catalyst for his despair over the extent to which Zarathustra “Platonizes,” we are justified in assuming that by the word “to Platonize” he was intending not a general sense of the word – though a general sense is certainly not excluded – but a specific philosophical interpretation of Platonism associated with the work of Gustav Teichmüller. An exhaustive lexicographical study of the word has made it clear that the meanings offered in modern lexical aids are almost all circular. Furthermore, none of them conveys a philosophically nuanced sense of the word sufficient for this inquiry, and, therefore, they need to be supplemented with a study of how the word was actually *used* in the sources available.

### First Criterion – Lexical

The verb form of the proper name Πλάτων is only included in a small number of lexical aids, including German, Italian, French, modern Greek and English dictionaries pertaining to Classical, Patristic and Byzantine Greek, in addition to the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* and various specialized etymological dictionaries. When there is an entry for πλατωνίζειν it is consistently defined rather loosely in the commonplace sense of “to imitate Plato” or “to be a follower of Plato.”<sup>3</sup> This definition verges on tautology – one entry even defines it as *to Platonize!* – and in almost every case the lexicographers gathered it from one or two sources while neglecting the rest. Plato’s teachings are notoriously open to a wide range of interpretations. The precise conceptual content entailed in the idea of “following Plato” would certainly have been different for a Stoic philosopher than it was for a Christian mystic. The commonplace definition of πλατωνίζειν as “following” or “imitating” Plato presupposes that there is a set of Platonic doctrines, agreed upon in advance, which anyone who Platonizes “follows” or “accepts.” This is simply not the case. As the appendix makes clear, “to Platonize” has been used in many different and contradictory ways. It has been used for centuries by pagan philosophers, scholiasts and commentators, Christian clerics, mystics and one Protestant Reformer with a wide range of different applications.<sup>4</sup> Given such vari-

---

<sup>3</sup> See appendix.

<sup>4</sup> See appendix.

ety of philosophical commitments associated with the word, the entries in modern lexica fail to indicate *what* precisely in Plato one who Platonizes is imitating, and, therefore, they offer little to no help in figuring out what, in an exact philosophical sense, Nietzsche meant by “Zarathustra Platonizes.”

The lexicographical study included in the appendix is therefore necessary for fixing the meaning of the verb πλατωνίζειν. The appendix establishes all lexical registers of the word on the basis of its *usus loquendi*.<sup>5</sup> It is possible that the word was originally formed on the model of other nouns-turned-verb, such as Ἀττικίζειν (“to Atticize”), and therefore might mean by analogy something like “to take sides with Plato” or “to speak like Plato.”<sup>6</sup> It seems that verbs formed by adding the functional morpheme -ίζειν to a proper name were often applied pejoratively. For instance, “to Homerize” (Ὀμηρίζειν) meant to imitate Homer, to use Homeric phrases or even to act out scenes from Homer, but it also had the negative connotation of indulging in unnatural lust and was often used as a synonym for telling lies.<sup>7</sup> The word has obvious affinity with Σωκρατεῖν (“to Socratize”), which we first find in Aristophanes’ *The Birds* (v.1282). Like Σωκρατεῖν the verb πλατωνίζειν is doubtless caricature, meant to reveal, perhaps also to mock as in Aristophanes, the folly of a sage. But it also suggests that Zarathustra fell victim to the very elements of Platonism, which Nietzsche campaigned so vociferously against in his own voice.

As is evident from the lexical study below, the verb πλατωνίζειν has been applied in various contexts with quite divergent and even contradictory meanings. Concessions to its transparency can therefore be discredited immediately. The sense of the word maintained in this article was first used by Saint Jerome in the fourth century C. E. to describe the great Jewish syncretizer of the Hellenistic world, Philo of Alexandria (25 B. C. E. – 50 C. E.). In the *Life of Philo* included in his *De viris illustribus*, Jerome claims that Philo was so similar to Plato in “thought and manner of expression” (*sensus et eloquium*) that either Plato Philonizes or Philo Platonizes:

---

<sup>5</sup> This method of verbal analysis is the more fitting because it accords best with the semantic theory Nietzsche himself adopted – see Christian Benne: *Nietzsche und die historisch-kritische Philologie* (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2005) 75, where he analyzes Nietzsche aphorism “Sprachgebrauch und Wirklichkeit” in *Wanderer und seine Schatten*, in which Nietzsche attacks the “priests and metaphysicians” for having acclimated men to “a hypocritically exaggerated linguistic usage.”

<sup>6</sup> For an analysis of the word see Heinrich Dörrie: “Was ist ‘spätantiker Platonismus?’” In: *Platonica Minora* (1976) 508–523. Dörrie suggests that the Greek expressions Πλατωνισμός and Πλατωνίζεν were formed by analogy with ἀττικίζειν.

<sup>7</sup> The word is often used with intentional ambiguity, as in Achilles Tatius’ *Leucippe and Clitophon* (8.9): “καταλιπὼν γὰρ τὴν πατρῶαν οἰκίαν, ὀλίγον ἑαυτῷ μισθωσάμενος στενωπέϊον, εἶχεν ἐνταῦθα τὸ οἶκημα, ὀμηρίζων μὲν τὰ πολλά, πάντας δὲ τοὺς χρησίμους πρὸς ἅπερ ἤθελε προσηταιρίζετο δεχόμενος.”

It is commonly [vulgo] said among the Greeks: *either Plato Philonizes or Philo Platonizes*, that is, either Plato follows [sequitur] Philo or Philo Plato – that is how similar they are in thought and manner of expression [tanta est similitudo sensuum et eloquii].<sup>8</sup>

The use of the impersonal *dicitur* (“it is said”) along with the adverb *vulgo* (“commonly”) indicates that we are dealing with a commonplace of unknown provenience in antiquity. Unlike all the other lexical registers of the word, this usage of *πλατωνίζειν* was not limited to a single author in a single text but was circulated widely as common currency in the ancient world. We find it passed down by Jerome, Hesychius, Isidorus Pelusiota, Photios, the *Suda* and Theodoros Metochites.<sup>9</sup> For this reason I hesitate to associate it with any particular author, but instead I have decided to designate it as Conventional in the appendix (lexical register 3).

Nietzsche would have had many opportunities to encounter the dictum that either Plato Philonizes or Philo Platonizes, but the source that comes most readily to mind is Hesychius. Hesychius is the name of a fifth-century lexicographer to whom an alphabetically arranged glossary of the Greek language or *Συναγωγή* was attributed in antiquity. Nietzsche was quite familiar with Hesychius’ *Glossary*, which he had made abundant use of when writing his *Valediktionsarbeit* at Schulpforta and then, later, when writing his first article “Zur Geschichte der Theognideischen Spruchsammlung.”<sup>10</sup> Hesychius also played a pivotal role in Nietzsche’s argument about the redaction of Theognis’ writings into two separate genres, one poetic and the other gnomological.<sup>11</sup> Hesychius seems, in fact, to have

---

<sup>8</sup> Jerome, *De viris illustribus liber*, ed. Guilelmus Herdingius (Leipzig: Teubner, 1879) 17: «Sunt et alia eius monumenta ingenii, quae in nostras manus non pervenerunt. De hoc vulgo apud Graecos dicitur: ἢ Πλάτων φιλωνίζει ἢ Φίλων πλατωνίζει, id est, aut Plato Philonem sequitur aut Platonem Philo: tanta est similitudo sensuum et eloquii.»

<sup>9</sup> See appendix.

<sup>10</sup> His *Valediktionsarbeit* at Schulpforta was entitled *Über die letzte Redaction der Theognidea*, which formed the basis of his first lecture in the University Philological Association at the University of Leipzig on 18 January, 1865, entitled “Die letzte Redaction der Theognidea” (= BAW III, pp. 15§1–§273). See Anthony K. Jensen: “Nietzsche’s Valediction and First Article: The Theognidea.” In: Nietzsche as a Scholar of Antiquity, ed. Anthony K. Jensen and Helmut Heit (London/New York: Bloomsbury, 2014) 9§1–§214, here 109. For Nietzsche’s first article, published in 1867, see Friedrich Nietzsche: “Zur Geschichte der Theognideischen Spruchsammlung.” In: *Das Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 22 (1867) 16§1–§200, the first section of which is entitled “Die letzte Redaction der Theognidea.”

<sup>11</sup> See Nietzsche letter to Carl Dilthey from 1866 (BVN-1866, 499): “Hiernach haben wir zwei Theognisnotizen, von denen, wie ich vermüthe, die eine einer Dichtergeschichte (etwa der *ἱστορία μουσική* des Dion. v. *Halic*), die andre einer Philosophengeschichte entnommen ist. Daß Theognis als Philosoph behandelt werden konnte, werden Sie sogleich zugeben, daß er es bei Suidas oder vielmehr bei Hesychius worden ist, scheint Phocylides φιλόσοφος zu

been quoting Jerome when he wrote:

Philo the Hebrew was so similar to Plato in manner of expression and thought [κατὰ τε φράσιν καὶ διάνοιαν] that this has become a commonplace among the Greeks: *either Plato Philonizes or Philo Platonizes*.<sup>12</sup>

The expressions κατὰ φράσιν (“in manner of expression”) and κατὰ διάνοιαν (“in thought”) seem to be a direct translation of Jerome’s *eloquium* and *sensus*. Due caution, however, must be observed when trying to locate the precise testimony wherein Nietzsche would have found the word. The quotation in question does not occur in Hesychius’ *Glossary* which Nietzsche consulted on many occasions but in the *Fragmenta* (Fr. 7, 1033), to which Nietzsche does not make explicit reference in his published or unpublished writings. For this reason it should suffice to identify this usage of the verb, which I think is the most likely candidate, simply as the Conventional usage.

One further consideration about the meaning of πλατωνίζειν has been suggested to me by Professor James Porter. This usage occurs in the anonymous *Vita Aristotelis* at the Biblioteca Marciana in Venice.<sup>13</sup> This late and highly corrupt text comes down to us in only a few folio pages of a single manuscript from the thirteenth century (MS Marc. gr. 257). It is uncertain whether Nietzsche had access to it, though it had been edited and published in 1836 by Hermann Usener and Christian August Brandis in the fourth volume of their *Aristotelis Opera* which included the *Scholia* and other supplemental material.<sup>14</sup> Although the anonymous author of the *Vita* did not use the verb “to Platonize” with enough specificity to warrant its inclusion in the appendix, this usage deserves attention because it leaves open the possibility that one can disagree with certain doctrines of Plato, as Aristotle did, and still “Platonize”:

And yet we would still say that Aristotle Platonized [πλατωνίζειν] even when he was contradicting Plato [καὶ ἐν οἷς ἀντιλέγει Πλάτωνι]. For Plato is the one who said that he thinks little of Socrates and more of truth. I, too, do not readily

---

verbürgen.” He also relied on Hesychius in his article on “Danae’s Lament” by Simonides. In: “Beiträge zur Kritik der griechischen Lyriker I, Der Danae Klage” *Das Rheinische Museum für Philologie* 23 (1868) 4881–8289, where he corrects Hesychius’ etymological derivation of the verb κνώσσειν (“to slumber”).

<sup>12</sup> Hesychius: *Fragmenta* (Fr. 7, 1033): “Φίλων ὁ Ἐβραῖος τοσαύτην πρὸς Πλάτωνα ὁμοιότητα ἔσχε κατὰ τε φράσιν καὶ διάνοιαν, ὡς εἰς παρομιάν παρ’ Ἑλλησι τοῦτο χωρῆσαι ἢ Πλάτων φιλωνίζει ἢ Φίλων πλατωνίζει.

<sup>13</sup> I would like to thank Professor James Porter for reading a draft of this article and for offering very insightful feedback, especially about the importance of the *Vita Aristotelis Marciana*, which I had originally relegated to a footnote in the appendix.

<sup>14</sup> Christian August Brandis and Hermann Usener eds., *Aristotelis Opera*, Vol. 4: *Scholia in Aristotelem* (Berlin: Reimer, 1836).

trust any argument unless it seems the best one upon reflection.<sup>15</sup>

Whether Nietzsche had access to this text or not, this passage nonetheless offers evidence for an historically attested usage of the word which would allow Zarathustra to be at odds with Plato on many points but to do so in a Platonic way and thus “to Platonize.”

## Second Criterion – Philosophical

According to the second criterion the Conventional meaning of the verb established in the appendix must be consistent with Teichmüller’s views on Plato. Teichmüller exercised considerable influence on Nietzsche for many years, and he has only recently begun to receive recognition as a philosopher of the first rank.<sup>16</sup> His views on Plato were hardly orthodox. Teichmüller denied, against the scholarly consensus of the day, that Plato ever put forth a philosophical justification for the immortality of the soul. In Teichmüller’s account, a doctrine of immortality is not consistent with Plato’s theory of Forms. Since Plato was a philosopher of the highest caliber, his writings demand consistency of interpretation. Accordingly, the doctrine of the immortality of the soul presented with such colorful imagery in the *Phaedo* and at the end of *Republic* 10 must have been, according to Teichmüller, nothing more than a metaphor. In Teichmüller’s view, Plato’s soul was simply a vehicle for conveying the more abstruse doctrine of Ideas to the wider public in demotic form.<sup>17</sup> To “Platonize,” in this sense, was intimately connected with the dialogical form of Plato’s writings, his protreptic intentions and his abundant use of myth to pedagogical ends. Teichmüller thus presents us with both a stylistic (κατὰ φράσιν) and a substantive (κατὰ διάνοιαν) register of the verb πλατωνίζειν.

The task is to correlate Teichmüller’s understanding of Plato’s thought and style with the utterances of Zarathustra in book one. Insofar as Teichmüller’s singular contribution to Platonic scholarship was his explication of Plato’s doctrine of the soul, we would not be misled if we looked to Nietzsche’s statements about

---

<sup>15</sup> Vita Marciana of Aristotle (cod. Marc. gr. 257) (28.2): “ἤδη δὲ καὶ ἐν οἷς ἀντιλέγει Πλάτωνι πλατωνίζειν αὐτὸν φήσομεν. Πλάτων γάρ ἐστιν ὁ λέγων Σωκράτους μὲν ὀλίγον φροντίζειν, τῆς δ’ ἀληθείας πολὺ· καὶ Ἐγώ γε οὐδενὶ ἄλλῳ πρόθυμὸς εἰμι πείθεσθαι ἢ τῷ λόγῳ ὃς ἂν μοι λογιζομένῳ βέλτιστος καταφαίνεται.»

<sup>16</sup> For the most recent study on Teichmüller and an excellent monograph, see Heiner Schwenke: *Zurück zur Wirklichkeit: Bewusstsein und Erkenntnis bei Gustav Teichmüller* (Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2006); on his relationship with Nietzsche, see *idem*, 25§1–§23.

<sup>17</sup> Teichmüller articulated his ideas on Platonic psychology in numerous published works but perhaps most pointedly in: *Die Platonische Frage: Eine Streitschrift gegen Zeller* (Gotha: Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1876).

the self in the first book of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in order to ascertain what he intended by the word *πλατωνίζειν*. The argument of this article is that just as Socrates' disquisition on the immortality of the soul in the *Phaedo*, in Teichmüller's view, was simply an edifying mythos (φράσις) for luring the uninitiated to the more difficult doctrine of Forms (διάνοια), so Zarathustra's teaching on the self – particularly the Overman as metaphor for self-overcoming – was a simplified version of Nietzsche's more esoteric psychology of drives and affects. This doctrine of the self can be characterized by what Steven Hales and Rex Welshon have called a "Bundle Theory" of the self. In this theory the self is constituted by a "loosely organized confederation of functional states and dispositions" rather than by a diachronically identical substratum such as an "ego-substance" or "soul-atom."<sup>18</sup> As will be explained at greater length below, Nietzsche's "Bundle Theory" of the self was a corollary to his "Bundle Ontology," which was itself governed by the doctrine of the Will-to-Power. What this means is that the Overman was a "mythical expression" (φράσις) that helps to make Nietzsche's "philosophical conception" of the Will-to-Power (διάνοια) more accessible to the average reader.

There are thus two possible registers of the word: a weak (rhetorical) and a strong (philosophical) meaning.<sup>19</sup> "To Platonize" in a weak sense will here mean to use the device of mimetic speech, as in Plato's dialogues, in order to make *any* more complex philosophical doctrine accessible to one's audience by means of *any* myth. "To Platonize" in a strong sense will mean to use the device of mimetic speech to convey a *certain theory of reality* by means of a myth *specifically about the self or soul*. These two registers of the word are not mutually contradictory. The strong sense, in fact, presupposes the weak sense. While it is evident, as will become clear below, that Zarathustra "Platonizes" in a weak sense, this article attempts to make a case for a strong sense of the word as well. In the strong sense

---

<sup>18</sup> Steven Hales and Rex Welshon: Nietzsche's Perspectivism (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2000) 15§1–§282, here 159.

<sup>19</sup> There is one other usage of the word, as a verbal noun (*Platonisirung*), which must be accounted for. In section 496 of the first edition of Nietzsche's *Morgenröthe*, Nietzsche speaks of the "Platonizing of southern Europe," by which he means ancient Greece and Sicily, and its "principle of the Good" (*gute Princip*): "Ein paar Zufälle weniger und ein paar andere Zufälle mehr – und die Welt hätte die Platonisirung des europäischen Südens erlebt; und gesetzt, dieser Zustand dauerte jetzt noch fort, so würde muthmaasslich in Plato das „gute Princip“ von uns verehrt werden. Aber der Erfolg fehlte ihm: und so blieb ihm der Ruf eines Phantasten und Utopisten, – die härteren Namen sind mit dem alten Athen zu Grunde gegangen." Here he associates "Platonizing" with the "principle of the Good," which he localizes in southern Europe where, because it failed in antiquity to take root as a viable political option, it could only find expression as an imaginary utopist order in Plato's *Republic*. However, this passage occurs a while before Nietzsche read Teichmüller and discovered "how little" he knew about Platonism. Therefore, his usage of the word *Platonisirung* here remains outside the influence of Teichmüller and serves only to show how much his understanding of Platonism changed after reading Teichmüller more avidly.

of the word “to Platonize” means that the Overman was a mythos in the Platonic sense, insofar as it made Nietzsche’s more recondite “Bundle Theory” of the self and its corollary, the doctrine of the Will-to-Power, accessible to a wider audience. The Overman thus stands in the same relation to Nietzsche’s more recondite ontology as Plato’s Soul does to his theory of Ideas.<sup>20</sup> In other words, Nietzsche’s Overman is to the Will-to-Power as Plato’s Soul is to the doctrine of the Forms. This, I believe, is what Nietzsche meant by “Zarathustra Platonizes.” And it is in this sense that, as the *Vita Aristotelis Marciana* allows, Nietzsche was able to take exception with the basic tenets of Platonic philosophy and still admit that Zarathustra “Platonizes.”

### Nietzsche and Teichmüller

Teichmüller held quite controversial views on Platonism. In direct opposition to the orthodoxy of his day he claimed that Plato could never have espoused a doctrine of the immortality of the soul. According to Teichmüller Plato’s soul was only ever an allegory, an edifying fiction for the purpose of luring the uninitiated to his doctrine of Forms. The Christian concept of an individual soul belonging to a concretely existing person would have been alien to him. At the time Nietzsche penned his letter to Overbeck he was in the middle of reading Teichmüller’s *Die wirkliche und die scheinbare Welt* (1882). In the preface to this work Teichmüller says that:

Even Plato stands amidst the enchanting sphere of perspectives and for this reason it is evident that he wouldn’t have been able to imagine an immortality of the soul even if he were dreaming nor individual beings in general that aren’t simply appearances.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> This argument draws inspiration from James Porter, in particular, who treats Nietzsche’s relationship to Plato with the subtlety and nuance it requires – see “The Platonism of The Birth of Tragedy,” in Porter, *The Invention of Dionysus: An Essay on The Birth of Tragedy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000) 9§1–§205. Porter’s argument is that, despite Nietzsche’s outspoken critique of Platonism in *The Birth of Tragedy*, a distinctly Platonizing interpretation of Greek culture in general and of tragedy in particular “lies at the heart of Nietzsche’s text” and that Dionysus was “nothing less than a Platonic form” individuated on the tragic stage. Much of what Porter says about the figure of Dionysus in *The Birth of Tragedy* could have immediate bearing on the Overman in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

<sup>21</sup> Gustav Teichmüller: *Die wirkliche und die Scheinbare Welt: Neue Grundlagung der Metaphysik* (Breslau: Verlag von Wilhelm Koebuer, 1882) xix: “Mithin steht auch Plato mitten in dem perspektivischen Zauberkreise und schon aus diesem Grunde ist es auf der Hand liegend, dass er auch im Traume nicht an eine Unsterblichkeit der Seele und überhaupt an individuelle Wesen, die nicht etwa bloss Erscheinungen wären, denken konnte.”

In other words, the only individuated entities in the world for Plato are mere appearances. Reality (τὰ ὄντα) is reserved for abstract Ideas which remain unindividuated in substance. The abstract idea of the soul was thus eternal for Plato but the soul itself was not immortal nor even parceled out among distinct persons. When Plato had Socrates defend the immortality of the soul in the *Phaedo* as the condition for the possibility of philosophy, he was employing allegoresis in order to make a more recondite doctrine palatable to the average reader. It was not until the advent of Christian theology that, according to Teichmüller, the notion of personhood was introduced and, along with it, individual immortality.

Teichmüller's position on Plato's doctrine of immortality of the soul roused the criticism of his contemporaries. It meant that, despite centuries of exegesis, Plato had in fact held the belief that there is no soul in a personal sense. Teichmüller first presented these ideas in the third volume of his *Aristotelische Forschungen* (1873).<sup>22</sup> In this work, which there are reasons to believe Nietzsche had read, Teichmüller offered a history of the concept of παρουσία.<sup>23</sup> Here he repackaged the Aristotelian doctrine of immanent Forms, claiming that Platonic Ideas are not things which exist in some transcendent world, but rather properties that inhere in sensible appearances. In Teichmüller's account, Plato used the word παρουσία to convey the immanent presence of abstract Ideas in matter. Just as in Christian theology where the advent of Christ (παρουσία) is described in terms of divine immanence in the flesh, so in Plato ideas are always instantiated in the physical world. However, Teichmüller emphasized not the continuities between Platonism and Christianity, as Nietzsche was wont, but their differences. In Greek idealism, Teichmüller claimed, nothing can be immortal: "For even in Plato personal immortality is only a metaphor."<sup>24</sup>

In his *Ueber die Unsterblichkeit der Seele* (1874) Teichmüller discussed Plato's idealism again, reiterating that the notion of individual immortality would have been inconceivable to him:

If I also cite Plato for the denial of individual immortality, I am well aware that to many I'll appear to be expressing a paradox, since he entrenched this belief in the world so decisively in his *Phaedo*, so much indeed, that countless people maintain this belief, won over by Plato's eloquence alone. Yet a more rigorous scholarly knowledge of Plato must separate *mythical expression* [φράσεις] from *philosophical conception* [διάνοια] and then it will only find in him the belief in the eternity of ideas, but not in the immortality of any discrete existences which

---

<sup>22</sup> For my understanding of this work of Teichmüller's I draw on Schwenke: *Zurück zur Wirklichkeit* (2006) 6§1–§20.

<sup>23</sup> For Nietzsche's reading of this work, see Brobjer: *Nietzsche's Philosophical Context* (2008) 52.

<sup>24</sup> Schwenke (2006) 70.

could possibly come into being (my emphases).<sup>25</sup>

This is because Plato was innocent of the idea of individuated substance, and therefore the idea of the immortality of the soul-as-substance could never have occurred to him. By 1875 these ideas were subjected to critical review by the eminent historian of philosophy Edward Zeller, who defended the doctrine of immortality in Plato. Teichmüller responded by publishing a short treatise called *Die Platonische Frage: Eine Streitschrift gegen Zeller* (1876). With this work his reputation as an outsider was sealed, and he would spill a good deal of ink for the remainder of his life lamenting his isolation from the *globus intellectualis* of German philosophy.<sup>26</sup>

Nietzsche, however, took keen interest in Teichmüller's writings on ancient thought no less than in his own philosophical views. He had met Teichmüller at least as early as 1867 when it is quite likely he heard him deliver a lecture on Aristotle's distinction between epic and tragedy at a philology conference in Halle.<sup>27</sup> In 1869 and 1870, after first arriving at Basel, Nietzsche may have read the first two volumes of his *Aristotelische Forschungen*.<sup>28</sup> It was Teichmüller's chair of philosophy at the University of Basel that Nietzsche had sought unsuccessfully in 1872. After Teichmüller removed to Dorpat in Estland, Nietzsche kept abreast of his philosophical output by having Overbeck send him Teichmüller's newest publications. In 1879 Overbeck sent him Teichmüller's little work *Ueber die Reihenfolge der Platonischen Dialoge* (1879), which remained in his personal library until his death.<sup>29</sup> After Teichmüller published his "popular writing," *Darwinismus*

---

<sup>25</sup> Gustav Teichmüller: *Ueber die Unsterblichkeit der Seele* (Leipzig: Verlag von Duncker & Humblot, 1874) 12: "Wenn ich auch Plato für die Lägung der individuellen Unsterblichkeit anführe, so weiß ich wohl, daß ich Vielen eine Paradoxie auszusprechen scheine, da er ja so entscheidend durch seinen Phaëdon diesen Glauben in der Welt aufgerichtet hat, so daß Unzählige bloß durch Plato's Beredsamkeit gewonnen an diesem Glauben festhielten. Dennoch muß eine strengere wissenschaftliche Erkenntniß Plato's den mythischen Ausdruck von dem philosophischen Begriff trennen und wird dann bei ihm nur den Glauben an die Ewigkeit der Idee finden, nicht aber den an die Usterblichkeit etwaiger entstandener Einzel-existenzen."

<sup>26</sup> See Schwenke's short biography of Teichmüller. In: *Zurück zur Wirklichkeit ...* (2006) 2§1–§221.

<sup>27</sup> See Brobjer: *Nietzsche's Philosophical Context* (2008) 52.

<sup>28</sup> Brobjer (2008) 52.

<sup>29</sup> Brobjer (2008) 52 and Friedrich Nietzsche: *Nietzsches persönliche Bibliothek*, ed. Giuliano Campioni Vol. 6 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003) 590. However, the subject-matter bored Nietzsche, as he associated it with the idle speculation of academic philology; see NF-1869, 3 [92]: "The most "burning questions" of classical philology are unfortunately insignificant with respect to the central [questions], which we certainly see only rarely. How uninteresting in which order the Platonic dialogues were written! How fruitless the question of authenticity in Aristotle!"

und *Philosophie*, Nietzsche either read the actual work or a review of it by Otto Caspari in *Zusammenhang der Dinge* (1881).<sup>30</sup> It has even been suggested – I think erroneously – that Nietzsche developed his conception of the Eternal Return largely on the basis of this publication.<sup>31</sup> Two years later, in 1883, Nietzsche may have read the third volume of *Aristotelische Forschungen*, where he would have learned about Plato’s doctrine of *παρουσία* or the “immanent Forms.”<sup>32</sup>

Nietzsche was familiar with Teichmüller’s most original contribution to philosophy, *Die wirkliche und die scheinbare Welt*, if not immediately after it was published in May of 1882, then, as Thomas Brobjer claims, by the Autumn of 1883.<sup>33</sup> According to Brobjer, Nietzsche read this work three times.<sup>34</sup> He then began to copy out entire passages from it in his notebooks *in extenso*, and his subsequent formulation of epistemological perspectivism was derived from, adapted, and then critically applied to this work over the course of many years. In 1883 he wrote to Overbeck, informing him that “Teichmüller II has arrived.” Brobjer believes this was *Die wirkliche und die scheinbare Welt*. This hypothesis finds some support by the fact that the first quotations of this work which Nietzsche copied into his notebooks do not appear until the year 1883, when he received “Teichmüller II” from Overbeck. However, these quotations are dated to the Spring and Summer of 1883 by Colli and Montinari, while his letter to Overbeck is dated to 27 October. The most likely solution is that these passages should be re-dated to the Autumn of 1883 (after 27 October), or that Nietzsche had access to *Die wirkliche und die scheinbare Welt* well before this time and that “Teichmüller II” is a different book altogether.<sup>35</sup> Whatever the case, it was a mere five days after he admitted to Overbeck how much “Zarathustra Platonizes” that he then received

---

<sup>30</sup> Brobjer (2008) 52.

<sup>31</sup> Robin Small: “Zarathustra’s Gateway” *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 15 (1998) 7§1–§28, here 8§1–§29.

<sup>32</sup> Brobjer: Nietzsche’s Philosophical Context (2008) 52.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Brobjer (2008) 52 who claims that he was not in possession of the work until at least 1883.

<sup>34</sup> Brobjer (2008) 52.

<sup>35</sup> It could be that by “Teichmüller II” Nietzsche meant “Teichmüller [Bd.] II” or “Teichmüller [Heft] II.” The only books in multiple Volumes or Hefts Teichmüller published before 1883 were *Aristotelische Forschungen* (1869) and *Neue Studien zur Geschichte der Begriffe* (1878). Seeing that his work on Aristotle was a bit dated at this point and that Nietzsche was already familiar with it, it is possible that he was here referring to the second volume of his work on intellectual history. He was reading the third Heft of *Neue Studien zur Geschichte der Begriffe* entitled *Die praktische Vernunft bei Aristoteles* in the Summer of 1884. It is therefore reasonable, but not on that account more probable, to suppose that he had already read the second Heft when Overbeck sent it to him on 27 October, 1883. He refers to another volume of Teichmüller in 1885, which Overbeck had sent him and which he had left by mistake in his book chest back in Nice. Unfortunately, it cannot be identified from his description.

from him “Teichmüller II.”

Nietzsche’s familiarity with Teichmüller’s work was both broad and deep, but the extent of his influence on Nietzsche has yet to be examined satisfactorily. One thing is clear, at any rate: Nietzsche had abundant access to Teichmüller’s writings on Platonic psychology. In addition to the lexical study in the appendix, the other criterion for ascertaining precisely what Nietzsche could have meant by *πλατωνίζειν* is, as stated previously, that it must be consistent with Teichmüller’s views on Plato. Furthermore, Nietzsche expressed surprise – he was “increasingly transfixed with astonishment” – at how poorly he understood Plato before he read Teichmüller. This means we are dealing with a view of Platonism which was, if not contrary to Nietzsche’s understanding of Platonic doctrine up until 1883, then at least unconventional for the time. Seeing that Teichmüller’s singular contribution to Platonic scholarship was his controversial denial that Plato could have believed in the immortality of the soul, which he went to great lengths to defend in multiple writings, then it stands to reason that this was precisely the source of surprise to Nietzsche, as much as it had been to the rest of the scholarly world, which he expressed in his letter to Overbeck.

Teichmüller’s understanding of Plato crystallized around two poles. As shown above, he believed that, in order to attain rigorous scholarly knowledge of Plato’s philosophy, we must separate “philosophical conception” (*διάνοια*) from «mythical expression» (*φράσις*). Teichmüller claimed that the basic and most important philosophical conception in Plato’s dialogues was his doctrine of Forms, and that the mythical expression he used to inculcate this doctrine in his students was the metaphor of the immortality of the soul. This metaphor unfolded as a dynamic process whereby the rational soul ascends to its celestial beatitude, or the contemplation of the forms, through a successive purging of its material attachments. In Teichmüller’s view the immortality of the soul, as presented in Plato’s dialogues, is simply an allegory for the eternity of pure forms. Because the forms are abstract and universal, they do not partake of individuated entities, but rather individuated entities partake of forms. The doctrine of pure Forms is esoteric and difficult for the uninitiated to grasp. Therefore, it must be rendered more palatable by means of the myth of immortality.

If we turn to the lexical possibilities of the word offered in the appendix we find that Teichmüller’s exposition of Platonism conforms best with the Conventional usage (lexical register 3). Just as Jerome, Hesychius and many others defined *πλατωνίζειν* as a similarity to Plato in manner of expression and in thought, so in Teichmüller’s account, Platonism was a matter of “mythical expression” (*φράσις*) as much as of “philosophical conception” (*διάνοια*). The scholar’s task, as he claimed, is to distinguish carefully between the two. Thus we may say that according to Teichmüller to “Platonize” meant to adhere to a doctrine of pure

forms which precludes the belief in a discrete, substantial and eternally existing self, and to express through the mouthpiece of a character the belief in an enduring self *so as to* lead one's readers to a comprehension of the esoteric teaching. To "Platonize" therefore means to speak mythologically, particularly about the soul, so as to educate one's readers philosophically about the forms. From a letter Nietzsche wrote to Paul Deussen in 1868, it is clear that he associated Platonism with the use of myth for pedagogical purposes. Deussen had expressed in a previous letter that philology was the "daughter" of philosophy. Nietzsche responded by depicting philology as the monstrous abortion conceived by dame philosophy and an imbecile: "It's a shame that Plato didn't compose the same μῦθος; then you would believe him – and rightly so."<sup>36</sup>

But was Platonism *only* a stylistic matter for Nietzsche or did he view it, in the spirit of Teichmüller, as a vehicle for conveying his doctrine of Forms? The distinction between a weak and a strong version of πλατωνίζειν introduced above will be helpful in answering this question. In a weak sense «to Platonize» is merely a matter of style. It is the use of mimetic speech in order to make *any* more complex philosophical doctrine accessible to one's audience by means of *any* myth. In a strong sense "to Platonize" is the use of mimetic speech to convey a *certain theory of reality* by means of a myth *specifically about the self or soul*. If we accept a weak sense of the word, it is clear that Zarathustra "Platonizes" at great length. He relies heavily on metaphor, allegory and image in order to convey his teaching of the Overman and, later, of the Eternal Return. Once enucleated, Zarathustra's parables often yield the pith of philosophical beliefs, which Nietzsche attempted to substantiate with argument in his own voice. This much is certain, but in order to determine whether Zarathustra "Platonized" in the strong sense we must examine Zarathustra's claims about the self and compare them with Nietzsche's theory of reality.

Nietzsche articulated different philosophical conceptions of the self in a number of works both published and unpublished. Some of these formulations have led scholars to attribute to Nietzsche what Hales and Welshon have called the "No-Self" view. This is the belief that "there is nothing that corresponds to a substantial self, soul, ego, or I, and the common belief in these things is erroneous."<sup>37</sup> Other passages in Nietzsche's writings support a "Bundle Theory" of the self, or the belief that the self is "constituted wholly by experiences, actions, drives, impulses, and what is thought, wanted, and done."<sup>38</sup> As Hales and Welshon make

---

<sup>36</sup> BVN–1868, 596: "Soll ich mythologisch reden, so betrachte ich Philologie als Mißgeburt der Göttin Philosophie, erzeugt mit einem Idioten oder Cretin. Schade, daß Plato nicht schon denselben μῦθος erdacht hat: dem würdest Du eher glauben — und mit Recht."

<sup>37</sup> Hales and Welshon: Nietzsche's Perspectivism (2000) 157.

<sup>38</sup> Hales and Welshon (2000) 159.

clear, these two conceptions of the self are not only compatible but mutually reinforcing. A bundle-self entails the absence of a substantial “ego-substance” or “soul-atom.” However, such a view puts the burden of explanation on Nietzsche to account for exactly what it is that unites the various drives and affects into a single whole and, once they are united, precisely how they become individuated from other selves.

A number of candidates suggest themselves in Nietzsche’s writings as an individuating principle.<sup>39</sup> Foremost among these candidates is the body. To be sure, subjective unity for Nietzsche is dependent upon bodily unity, and the self, whatever might unify it, is constituted by psychological states no less than by physiological processes. However, this does not mean Nietzsche was willing to reduce mental states to physical operations. As Hales and Welshon demonstrate, his was a pragmatic unity, in which the self, as a bundle of drives and affects, was held together by whatever drive or drives are dominant at a given moment.<sup>40</sup> The remaining elements in the bundle then organize themselves around the dominant drive and work in service to it. The result is a self that is “stylized” and “eccentric,” in which the various components of the self work in concert with one another under the leadership of a single drive.<sup>41</sup> Thus unity of the self is achieved without the positing of a soul or substantial self *behind* or *independent* of the other drives and affects. Nor do the various drives and affects need to be conscious in order to bring about the individuation of the self. Furthermore, the self that results from this process of individuation maintains causal efficacy, not by being reduced to physiological states, but by being of the same type and quality as physical force itself.<sup>42</sup>

Nietzsche thus reduced both mental and physical states to the same kind of entity, and that was the quanta of force operative in his doctrine of the Will-to-Power. The denominations “mental” and “physical” therefore describe the same ontological category of thing, differing from each other not in quality but in degree of force and manner of expression. Though he equivocated on whether mental states and physiological processes were reducible to or should simply be replaced by quanta of force, it is evident that Nietzsche rejected traditional substance dualism of the self.<sup>43</sup> Like Plato, he often described this self in terms of social aggregation, as a “confederation” of drives and affects, an “aristocracy,” “communality” or “social structure.”<sup>44</sup> The body, for Nietzsche, was the starting

---

<sup>39</sup> The following discussion is indebted to chapter 7, “The Self.” In: Hales and Welshon (2000) 15§1–§282.

<sup>40</sup> For the term “pragmatic unity,” see Hales and Welshon (2000) 171.

<sup>41</sup> Hales and Welshon (2000) 17§1–§2.

<sup>42</sup> Hales and Welshon (2000) 177.

<sup>43</sup> Hales and Welshon (2000) 174 and 177.

<sup>44</sup> For a discussion of these various terms see Hales and Welshon (2000) 159. Some prominent passages are WP 490, 492, 600; BGE 12.

point for reflecting on the unity of the self, but in no way did he believe the self was identical with or reducible to the body. In this confederation of drives and affects, Nietzsche says, “the ruler and his subjects are of the same kind, all feeling, willing, thinking,” and “wherever we see or divine movement in a body, we learn to conclude that there is a subjective, invisible life appertaining to it.”<sup>45</sup> In this passage the realms of subject and object are not mutually distinct, self-contained spheres of being. Rather, they both belong to the same ontological category, and that is the Will-to-Power. This conception of the self is a corollary to what Hales and Welshon refer to as his Bundle Ontology. It would therefore not be inappropriate to call the Will-to-Power, like Plato’s doctrine of Forms, Nietzsche’s “esoteric” theory of reality.

Nietzsche presented a simplified version of this more abstruse doctrine of the self in the first installment of *Zarathustra*. Just as Plato used Socrates to convey the belief in a discrete and substantial soul which exists for eternity, so Nietzsche put in the mouth of Zarathustra a psychology considerably divergent from his own. At *Zarathustra* 1.4 Nietzsche had Zarathustra communicate what can only be regarded as an abbreviated form of his more complicated Bundle Theory of the self. After discoursing on the “Otherworldly,” Zarathustra comes to the realization that what the priests and metaphysicians despise, in the last analysis, is their own bodies. Turning to the “Despisers of the Body” Zarathustra says:

Instruments and playthings are sense and spirit: *behind* them still lay the Self. The Self seeks with the eyes of the senses, it also hears with the ears of the spirit. The Self ever hears and seeks; it compares, constrains, conquers and destroys. It commands and is even the I’s overlord. *Behind* your thoughts and feelings, my brother, there stands a mighty lord, an unknown sage – it is called Self. In your body it dwells, it is your body (my emphases).<sup>46</sup>

Here we have a crude form of physiological reductionism. Not only that, but the Self has many of the properties of the very soul-substance Nietzsche repudiated. It is substantial, insofar as it stands *behind* sense and spirit; it is unitary, as it is described with the definite article; and it is diachronically and synchronically self-identical, insofar as it remains the overlord of the ego and the principle of its unity.

Indeed, the exhortation to self-overcoming at the center of Zarathustra’s prophetic message in Book 1 seems to presuppose the very Self Zarathustra artic-

<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Hales and Welshon (2000) 179.

<sup>46</sup> DKG (1975). Also Sprach Zarathustra 1.4: “Werk- und Spielzeuge sind Sinn und Geist: hinter ihnen liegt noch das Selbst. Das Selbst sucht auch mit den Augen der Sinne, es horcht auch mit den Ohren des Geistes. Immer horcht das Selbst und sucht: es vergleicht, bezwingt, erobert, zerstört. Es herrscht und ist auch des Ich’s Beherrscher. Hinter deinen Gedanken und Gefühlen, mein Bruder, steht ein mächtiger Gebieter, ein unbekannter Weiser – der heißt Gebeiter. In deinem Leibe wohnt er, dein Leib ist er.”

ulates at 1.4. The Overman, it seems, is little more than an emblem for the process of self-individuation described above and therefore a mythos used to articulate a much more abstruse psychology of self-individuation. Nietzsche used Zarathustra to broadcast his own Bundle Theory of the self – specifically its individuation through the dominance of a single drive – by means of a prophetic exhortation to self-overcoming. As all myths, the Overman gave a name and a face to a more complicated state of affairs and therefore helped to convey the “truth” by means of “fiction.” The Overman thus represents the principle of individuation in Nietzsche’s Bundle Theory of the self. He is a personalized version of the triumph of one drive or set of drives over the rest of the bundle of functional states. As a symbol of the hard-won struggle of self-individuation, the Overman is short-hand, abbreviation, simplification and – in Nietzschean fashion – “falsification.” But more importantly the Overman is, just as Plato’s enchanting tale of immortality, a “mythical expression” (φρῶσις) intended to convey a more recondite “philosophical conception” (διάνοια) of reality.

An argument on behalf of a strong sense of the word “Platonize” draws further support from the many passages from Teichmüller’s writings which Nietzsche copied down in his notebooks from the spring of 1883 until the autumn of 1888. The content of these passages is largely devoted to Teichmüller’s critique of representationalist epistemology and formed the basis of Nietzsche’s critique of ego-substance in *Beyond Good and Evil*. Teichmüller attempted to establish an alternative theory of knowledge to what he saw as the inevitable skepticism of modern epistemology.<sup>47</sup> He did so by avoiding a representationalist theory of knowledge altogether. In his view modern epistemology would always fail to provide adequate criteria for evaluating the extent to which our representations correspond to the world, insofar as our only access to reality is always mediated by other representations.<sup>48</sup> He avoided this dilemma by grounding knowledge in the immediate certainty given in the non-reflective consciousness we have of ourselves. In his view, the soul’s activity – its acts of thought and sensation – possess real being. Furthermore, a substantially existing and individuated self or “I” always belongs to every act of thought or sensation. It was the content of this “I” – its substantial being and our access to an immediate reality through it – which supplied Teichmüller with a solution to the problem of representationalist epistemology and its inevitable collapse into skepticism.<sup>49</sup>

Nietzsche dismissed Teichmüller’s concessions to “immediate certainty” and eventually came to reject, along with it, the belief that consciousness yields any-

---

<sup>47</sup> The following discussion is indebted to chapter 2 “Der Rahmen: Das Scheitern des Repräsentationalismus und der Verlust der Wirklichkeit.” In: Schwenke (2006) 12§1–§257.

<sup>48</sup> Schwenke, *Zurück zur Wirklichkeit* (2006) 13§1–§2.

<sup>49</sup> Schwenke (2006) 261.

thing but appearances. By extending Teichmüller's phenomenism of the external world to the inner world as well, Nietzsche came to articulate a "perspectivist self," a loosely knit bundle of drives and affects, each of which has its own perspective on the rest and, as quantum of force, strives for dominance in an attempt to establish subjective unity. Where Teichmüller claimed that all of our knowledge of the external world is simply a subjective projection of the substantial ego, Nietzsche eventually claimed that this "ego substance" was itself a mere projection:

The "Subject" is nothing given, but rather something invented in addition to and hidden behind it. – Is it in the end necessary to place an interpreter behind the interpretation? This is already invention, hypothesis.<sup>50</sup>

It was not until he set to writing *Beyond Good and Evil* that Nietzsche was able to take off the mask of "Platonism" and do full justice to the complexity of his thoughts on selfhood. By "Zarathustra Platonizes" Nietzsche may have meant, in a weak sense, that Zarathustra embroidered a forbidding philosophical message with the colorful language of mythopoesis. In a strong sense, Zarathustra "Platonized" by luring his disciples to the more esoteric doctrine of the Will-to-Power by means of a myth of self-overcoming which, like Plato's rational ascent of the soul, leads to its own form of immortality through the Eternal Return of the same.

## Appendix

### *Lexicographical Study of the Verb πλατωνίζειν*

There is no entry for πλατωνίζειν in any of the nine editions of Liddell and Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon*, or in the *Supplement* (1968), or in the *Revised Supplement* (1996). The verb πλατωνίζειν appears in the entry under Πλάτων in Dr. W. Pape's *Wörterbuch der griechischen Eigennamen* (186§1–§2870), where it is defined as follows: "den Platon nachahmen, ihm ähnlich sein." Pape cites the entry under Φίλων in the *Suda*, along with Origen and Eustathios.<sup>51</sup> Franco Montanari's *Vocabolario della lingua Greca* includes the following entry: "πλατωνίζω [Πλάτων] imitare Platone, essere discepolo, sequace di Platone," for which only the letters of Isidorus Pelusiota (the abbot of Pelusium in 435 C. E.) are cited. When we turn

<sup>50</sup> Quoted in Schwenke (2006) 261: "Das 'Subjekt' ist nichts Gegebendes, sonder etwas Hinzu-Erdichtetes, Dahinter-Gestecktes. – Ist est zuletzt nötig, den Interpreten noch hinter die Interpretation zu setzten? Schon das ist Dichtung, Hypothese.

<sup>51</sup> Johann Georg Wilhelm Pape and Gustav Eduard Benseler, Dr. W. Pape's *Wörterbuch der griechischen Eigennamen*. Dritte Auflage neu bearbeitet von Dr. G.E. Benseler (Braunschweig: Friedrich Vieweg und Sohn, 186§1–§2870) 1208.

to Isidorus' letter addressed to the abbot Zosimus (*epist.* 3.81), we find that “to Platonize” is largely a matter of prose style. Most likely quoting Jerome or recycling the commonplace independently of him, Isidorus relates the famous quotation that either “Plato Philonized or Philo Platonized.” It seems, he writes, that “Plato was either a student or teacher of Philo because of *the sublimity of his style* [διὰ τὸ τῆς φράσεως ὕψος]” (my emphasis).<sup>52</sup>

Entries in other Greek lexica are far too vague, such as in E.A. Sophocles' *Greek Lexicon of the Roman and Byzantine Periods*, which reads: “πλατωνίζω, ίσω, to Platonize.”<sup>53</sup> A modern Greek lexicon defines it as being a “follower or imitator of Plato's philosophy” (ὄπαδός ἢ μιμητής τῆς φιλοσοφίας τοῦ Πλάτωνος), and to be “directly influenced by Plato's theories in one's own opinions” (εἰς τὰς ἀντιλήψεις μου ἔχω ἄμεσον ἐπίδρασιν τῶν θεωριῶν τοῦ Πλάτωνος).<sup>54</sup> For this definition he cites Origen, Eustathios and the *Suda*.<sup>55</sup> The *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* is no less vague. In the entry under Πλάτων it lists the verb form as simply “Platonem imitari, s. sequi,” citing Origen, Eustathios, the *Suda*, and remarking that the bit on Philo “Platonizing” is repeated in Theodoros Metochites and in Photios' *Bibliotheca*. Finally, the entry in Lampe's *Patristic Lexicon* has an asterisk next to it: \*Πλατωνίζω “to be a follower of Plato.” This is as vague as the other entries and his sources are limited to Origen, Isidorus Pelusiota and the fifth-century Byzantine hymn writer Romanos Melodos.<sup>56</sup>

The number of extant usages is nearly six times that. About nineteen passages have come down to us, largely post-classical, in which the word is used. From these nineteen passages I have identified eight discrete usages, five of which possibly have bearing on this discussion. We find it first used in the *Stoicorum veterum fragmenta* where, in the edition of Hans von Arnim, it is attributed to the philosopher Chrysippus and included in the edition of *Fragmenta moralia* (Fr. 161). The same quotation found its way into the *Scholiam vetera* on Plato's *Laws* where Chrysippus is numbered among the “Platonizing Stoics.” Commenting on the word κλέος (*Laws* 625a), the scholiast writes “Platonizing Stoics say that renown rightly comes to ambitious men, but glory is recognition that comes to those

<sup>52</sup> Sanctus Isidorus Pelusiota, *Epistolarum libri quinque*, in *Patrologiae Cursus Completus*, ed. J.P. Migne, Vol. 78 (Paris, 18581–827) 7881–828.

<sup>53</sup> E.A. Sophocles, *Greek Lexicon of the Roman and Byzantine Periods* (from B.C. 146 to A.D. 1100) (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1893) 894.

<sup>54</sup> “πλατωνίζω μτγν., μσν. κ. νεώτ. είμαι ὄπαδός ἢ μιμητής τῆς φιλοσοφίας τοῦ Πλάτωνος, εἰς τὰς ἀντιλήψεις μου ἔχω ἄμεσον ἐπίδρασιν τῶν θεωριῶν τοῦ Πλάτωνος.”

<sup>55</sup> D. Demetarakos, *Μέγα Λεξικόν της Ελληνικής Γλώσσης*, Vol. 6 (Athens: Plateia Synagmatos, 1936) 5864.

<sup>56</sup> G.W.H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961) 1091. He cites Origen, *Contra Celsum* (4.83), Isidorus Pelusiota, *Epistolarum libri quinque* (3.81) and Romanus Melodus, *Cantica* (47.15.8).

without ambition.”<sup>57</sup> Origen used it in his polemic against the doctor Celsus to describe anyone who supposes that “All of life is alike and that the soul of ants and bees is no different than that of man.”<sup>58</sup> Jerome was the first to record the commonplace among the Greeks that Philo the Alexandrian was so similar to Plato in thought and manner of expression that “Either Plato Philonizes or Philo Platonizes.”<sup>59</sup> Georgios Hamartolos, a Byzantine chronographer from the ninth century, known as Monachos, used the word in his *Chronicon* to refer to anyone who speaks elegantly but falsely.<sup>60</sup> Eustathios of Thessalonike used the word in his commentary on the *Odyssey* to describe one who “Ventures that he wise in the manner of Plato.”<sup>61</sup> Finally, there is Martin Luther, who transliterated the verb into Roman characters (*platonisare*) to describe the *curiositas* and *superstitio* of pagan philosophers.<sup>62</sup>

In addition to these passages, Jerome’s usage soon became a cliché, as it was repeated in five other sources, thus warranting the designation “Commonplace.”<sup>63</sup> An additional six use the word so generically that no concrete meaning can be drawn from the context.<sup>64</sup> The final two are applied theologically by Michael

<sup>57</sup> Fragmenta moralia (Fr. 161, line 1): “καὶ οἱ Στωϊκοὶ πλατωνίζοντες κλέος φασὶ τὸ ἐπὶ τῶν σπουδαίων γενόμενον δίκαιον, δόξαν δὲ τὴν ἐπὶ τῶν ἀσπουδῶν δόκησιν.”

<sup>58</sup> Origen: *Contra Celsum* (83.39): “Εἰ μὴ ἄρα διὰ τούτων λεληθότως βούλεται ὁ Κέλσος—καὶ γὰρ ἐν πολλοῖς πλατωνίζειν θέλει—ὁμοειδῆ εἶναι πᾶσαν ψυχὴν, καὶ μηδὲν διαφέρειν τὴν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου τῆς τῶν μυρμηκῶν καὶ τῶν μελισσῶν· ὅπερ κατάγοντός ἐστι τὴν ψυχὴν ἀπὸ τῶν ἀψίδων τοῦ οὐρανοῦ οὐκ ἐπὶ τὸ ἀνθρώπινον σῶμα μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ λοιπά.”

<sup>59</sup> Jerome, *De viris illustribus liber*, ed. Guilelmus Herdingius (Leipzig: Teubner, 1879) 17: «Sunt et alia eius monumenta ingenii, quae in nostras manus non pervenerunt. De hoc vulgo apud Graecos dicitur: ἢ Πλάτων φιλωνίζει ἢ Φίλων πλατωνίζει, id est, aut Plato Philonem sequitur aut Platonem Philo: tanta est similitudo sensuum et eloquii.»

<sup>60</sup> Georgios Monachos: *Chronicon* (§1–§2): “κρεῖσσον γὰρ μετὰ ἀληθείας ψελλίζειν ἢ μετὰ ψεύδους πλατωνίζειν. οὐχ ὅταν γὰρ ὁ λόγος ῥεῖ καὶ ἔξω τῶν ὄρων φέρεται θαυμαστός ἐστιν, ἀλλ’ ὅταν βραχὺς μὲν ἢ τῷ μήκει, πολὺς δὲ τοῖς ἐνθυμήμασι καὶ ἐν τῷ συντόμῳ τὸ ἀπαράλειπτον καὶ ἀτρεκέως ἔχων τῶν ἀναγκαίων καὶ ὀνησιφόρων ὑπὸ τοῦ καιροῦ μάλιστα καὶ τῶν βασκανίας καὶ πάσης ἐθελοκακίας ἀπηλλαγμένων ψυχῶθεις ζωτικώτερος ἀναδειχθήσεται.”

<sup>61</sup> Eustathios: *Commentarii ad Homerum Odysseam* (1.8.20): “ὡς γὰρ ὁ πλατωνίζειν ἢ δημοσθενίζειν φάμενος ἐμφαίνει θαρρόειν σοφὸς εἶναι κατὰ Πλάτωνα ἢ Δημοσθένην, οὕτω καὶ ὁ θεὸν προκαλεσάμενος ἀεΐδειν ἢ ἐννέπειν, ἐνθεάζειν οἷον τοῖς λόγοις ἐνέφηνη.”

<sup>62</sup> Martin Luther, *De captivitate Babylonica ecclesiae, praeludium*, in *Opera omnia domini Martini Lutheri* (Wittenberg: Iohannes Lufft, 1562 [originally published 1520]) 84 – Luther defines “Platonisare” in opposition to “Christianisare,” making the association with *curiositas* and *superstitio* quite explicit.

<sup>63</sup> It comes down to us by many avenues, including Jerome, *De viris illustribus*; Hesychius, *Fragmenta* (Fr. 7, 1033); Photios, *Bibliotheca* (Bekker page 86b); twice in the *Suda*, (alpha, entry 69 and phi, entry 448); Theodoros Metochites, *Γνωμικαὶ σημειώσεις* (16.1.4), “On Philo”; there is an echo of this adage in Theodoros II Ducas Lascaris (*Epist.* 94).

<sup>64</sup> For instance, the *Vita Marciana* of Aristotle (cod. Marc. gr. 257) (28.2): “καὶ φαίνεται

Psellos and Gennadios Scholarios amidst Trinitarian controversies with their Latin rivals and therefore have little bearing here.<sup>65</sup> We thus have eight different usages of the word:

1. To hold a set of beliefs compatible with the idea that renown is what justly befalls ambitious men but glory is what comes to those without ambition (*Scholiam vetera in Platonem*)
2. To hold a set of beliefs compatible with the idea that all lifeforms have the same kind of soul (Origen)
3. To be similar to Plato in manner of expression and thought (Conventional)
4. To speak elegantly but falsely (Georgios Hamartolos)
5. To venture that one is wise in the manner of Plato (Eustathios)
6. To prefer the idle speculation and superstition of paganism over Christianity (Luther)
7. To hold a set of beliefs compatible with the idea that the Holy Spirit is distinct in substance from the other persons of the Holy Trinity (Gennadios Scholarios)

---

ἐν ταῖς ἐπιστολαῖς θαυμάζων Πλάτωνα καὶ συνιστὰς τοῖς βασιλεῦσι τοὺς Πλάτωνι κατὰ γένος κοινωνοῦντας. ἤδη δὲ καὶ ἐν οἷς ἀντιλέγει Πλάτωνι πλατωνίζειν αὐτὸν φήσομεν. Πλάτων γὰρ ἐστὶν ὁ λέγων Σωκράτους μὲν ὀλίγον φροντίζειν, τῆς δ' ἀληθείας πολὺ· καὶ Ἐγωγε οὐδενὶ ἄλλῳ πρὸθύμος εἰμι πείθεσθαι ἢ τῷ λόγῳ ὃς ἂν μοι λογιζομένῳ βέλτιστος καταφαίνεται· καὶ Εἰ μὴ σὺ σαντοῦ λέγοντος ἀκούης, ἄλλον λέγοντος μὴ πιστεύσεις”; Cardinal Bessarion uses the verb twice in the same manner (one is simply a quotation of the other), but in both he is quoting his adversary George of Trebizond in a polemic, see *De natura et arte: Liber adversus Georgium Trapezuntium Cretensem* (3.7 and 10.5): “οὐ βουλόμεθά σε, φησί, φίλον ὄντα σφόδρα πλατωνίζειν, αὐτοὶ μὴδ' ὅλως πλατωνίζοντες”; Isidorus Pelusiota, *Epistolae* (1338): “Οἱ μὲν γὰρ Πυθαγόρειοι σιγὴν ἠσκηκότες τοὺς μέγα φρονούντας ἐπὶ εὐγλωττία ἀπεκήρυττον. Οἱ δὲ Ὀμηρίζοντες τοὺς Πλατωνίζοντας διέσυρον· οἱ δὲ Πλατωνίζοντες τοὺς Ὀμηρίζοντας ἀσεβείας ἐγράφοντο· καὶ οἱ μὲν Ἀριστοτελικοὶ πρὸς τοὺς Πλατωνίζοντας ἐπαπεδύσαντο· οἱ δὲ Στοϊκοὶ πρὸς τοὺς Ἀριστοτελικούς ἐφράξαντο”; Sophronius, *Laudes in sanctos Cyrum et Joannem* (24): “Ἐἴπωμεν δὲ καὶ τὴν ἐκεῖθεν ἐνταῦθα μετὰθεσις, καὶ τὴν αἰτίαν δι' ἣν ἡ μετὰθεσις γέγονεν. Μετὰ τὰς πολλὰς ἐκεῖθεν ἡμέρας, ἵνα τι καὶ Μωσαῖσωμεν, καὶ τοῦτο τοῖς μάρτυσιν χαρισώμεθα· ἀποδέξονται γὰρ ἡμᾶς ἐν τοῖς αὐτῶν ἐγκωμίοις Μωσαῖζοντας μᾶλλον ἢ Πλατωνίζοντας”; Romanos Melodos, *Cantica* (47.15): “οὐ θέλω σθένει νικῆσαι, διὰ τῶν ἀσθενῶν περιγίνομαι / οὐ χαίρω τοῖς πλατωνίζουσι· τὰ μωρὰ γὰρ τοῦ κόσμου ἠγάπησα / ὁ μόνος γινώσκων τὰ ἐγκάρδια”;

<sup>65</sup> Gennadios Scholarios: *Epitome primae partis Summae theologiae Thomae Aquinae* (Treatise 2.32): “Ἡμεῖς δ' οὐχ οὕτως ὑποτιθέμεθα τὰ θεῖα πρόσωπα ὡς τῇ οὐσίᾳ διαφέροντα· αὕτη γὰρ ἡ αἴρεσις Ὠριγένους καὶ Ἀρειανῶν πλατωνιζόντων ἐν τούτῳ.” Michael Psellos, *Theologica* (opusc. 113): “Ἐπεὶ δὲ ταῖς τοιαύταις προθέσεσι καὶ ἡ καθ' ἡμᾶς θεολογία ἐπὶ ταῖς θεαῖς ὑποστάσεσι κατεχρήσατο, Πλατωνιζόντες τινες τῶν δοκούντων ἀπὸ τῆς ἡμετέρας τυγχάνειν αὐλῆς, ἐπειδὴ φασὶ τὰ θεῖα λόγια ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς γεγενῆσθαι τὰ ὄντα διὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ, διὰ δὲ τῆς 'ἐξ' προθέσεως προοικειμένης τῷ πατρὶ ποιητικόν τοῦτον εἰσάγουσιν αἴτιον, διὰ δὲ τῆς 'διὰ' προοικειμένης τῷ υἱῷ εἰς ὄργανον μοῖραν ἀποκληροῦσι τὸν μονογενῆ λόγον, πέλκεκύν τινα τοῦτον (ἀλλ' ἴλεως ἡμῖν εἶης, λόγε θεοῦ) ἢ λαξευτήριον ἢ ἄλλο τι τῶν χαλκευτικῶν ὀργάνων κατονομάζοντες.”

8. To hold a set of beliefs compatible with the idea that scripture derives directly *from* the person of the Father but *through* the Son in the Holy Trinity (Michael Psellos)

A number of these lexical valences (4, 6, 7, 8) can be immediately ruled out, either because it is doubtful that Nietzsche was conversant in the sources (4), or because they are irrelevant to the context (6, 7, 8). Stanley Rosen's interpretation (as discussed above in footnote 2) seems to suggest something similar to 4, but it is hard to believe Nietzsche was familiar with the ninth-century chronographer Georgios Hamartolos. Furthermore, 3 and 4 are not incompatible. In fact, it is possible that Georgios Hamartolos was relying on the Conventional usage in his *Chronicon* insofar as he observes a sharp distinction between manner of expression ("to speak elegantly") and thought ("to speak falsely"). Of these sources there is direct textual evidence that Nietzsche had read two of them: the Conventional usage through Hesychius, the *Suda* or Photios on the one hand and Eustathios on the other. Reinforced by the foregoing historical and conceptual account of Nietzsche's engagement with Gustav Teichmüller, we are thus in a position to determine that by "Zarathustra πλατωνίζειν" Nietzsche was most likely using lexical register 3 of the verb: "To be similar to Plato in manner of expression and in thought."