

VOLUME 14 (2010): NIETZSCHE
Published November 2010. ISSN 1209-0689

The 2010 volume of *Animus* is dedicated to the thought of Friedrich Nietzsche, an ironic and profoundly difficult thinker. This volume covers the ethical, political, aesthetic and religious content of Nietzsche's philosophy. Nietzsche for many sets the agenda for contemporary thought. Heidegger famously argued that for Nietzsche the securing of absolute dominion over the entire earth is the secret goad that prods modern man again and again to assume new forms. On this view, Nietzsche highlighted and radicalized the modern notion that human subjectivity is the source of knowledge and mastery. On the other hand, Heidegger acknowledged that Nietzsche repudiated the view that subjectivity has a principle, a united centre. In other words, Nietzsche affirmed some aspects of modern subjectivity and rejected other aspects of it. The chasm between these two attitudes opened up a space which has allowed generations of commentators to define and debate various positions, even those which go against Nietzsche's own intention.

Renato Cristi criticizes the postmodern view that Nietzsche opposed authority in general and the authority of the state in particular. This view exaggerates Nietzsche's individualistic tendencies and ignores the important role that non-normative political authority plays in his thought. Nietzsche's preference for the aristocratic states of antiquity and his antagonism towards the modern democratic state should be taken into account. The modern democratic state demands normative authority based on popular consent, while the ancient aristocratic state made room for the non-normative authority of charismatic leaders as well as tradition

Daniel Brandes revisits the complicated question concerning Hannah Arendt's debt to Nietzsche. Focusing on the promising activity as a privileged site of encounter, he suggests that the common tendency to emphasize the heroic and agonistic elements of Arendt's account distorts both her dependence on, and departure from, Nietzsche. Instead, he emphasizes the neglected dimensions of passivity, affectivity, and futurity that mark both theorists' account of the promise. Brandes argues that Arendt's manner of framing the promising agent's exposure to a radically undetermined future – not via a resolute will to interpretation, but rather a plea for forgiveness – proves decisive.

In the *Birth of Tragedy* Friedrich Nietzsche hails Wagner and especially his opera *Tristan and Isolde* as the harbinger of a Dionysian rebirth in German music. It is notorious, however, that in later works such as *The Case of Wagner* and *Contra Wagner* Nietzsche turned against Wagner as an arch-ascetic whose late opera *Parsifal* represents a reversion to Christianity and its life denying spirit. Bernard Wills' paper argues that Nietzsche's polemic is on the whole a distorted picture of Wagner and of *Parsifal* especially. Nonetheless, Wills concedes that however wayward some of Nietzsche's specific criticisms might be, there is a genuine criticism contained in his polemic. Nietzsche is correct to sense a liberal Christian humanism at work in *Parsifal* that is, from his standpoint, unacceptable.

In the past two decades, public sociologists have sought to revive what C. Wright Mills called a 'democratic society of publics'. The publics that such sociologists promote are intellectual ones that resemble Socratic dialogues in which people search for the good order. Nietzsche criticizes such publics for their plebeian character and introduces an alternative type of publics: aesthetic publics. Rather than Socratic dialogues, the art of tragedy is the model of such publics. Marinus Ossewaarde argues that the art of tragedy sheds a different light on the concept of publics and can only enrich the sociological discipline.

Edward Andrew argues that although we thoughtlessly use the Nietzschean language of (moral, religious, aesthetic and cognitive) values to encompass our moral principles, our intuitions of the holy and the beautiful, and our need for truth, Nietzsche showed that "values" are the creations or products of human will, not discoveries of intelligence, illuminations of love, or exigencies of need. Against talk of "absolute values" or "objective values", which assumes there can be values without evaluation, Nietzsche was clear that nothing is intrinsically good or valuable in itself; values are human choices, estimations, decisions, the expressions of human will. An alternative language is more appropriate to communicate what we hold to be intrinsically valuable, namely *Würde* (dignity or worthiness). Human beings have value if we can use them for our own purposes but they have an invaluable dignity beyond whatever purposes we may have in mind for them. Activities may have an intrinsic worthiness whatever the market demand or current estimation establishes their value to be.

David Peddle's essay is a commentary on Part One of *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. He argues that the concept of the overman which develops in Part One must be understood in relation to the parodistic and tragic elements of the text. In particular, Peddle advances the claim that Zarathustra's notion of the overman derives from a tragic awareness unavailable to nineteenth century humanism.

Kenneth Kierans argues that what is essential in Nietzsche's redemptive vision is his determination of human finiteness, human relativity, against which the will exerts its enormous power. As for the eternal recurrence, it transcends the will to power, but also contradicts it. That is at once the greatness and the weakness of Nietzsche's philosophy. His affirmation of eternal recurrence alternates with the negativity, the endlessness, of human willing. The affirmation and the negativity do not coincide, precisely because Nietzsche insists on the finiteness and illusory character of the ego even as he exposes its infinite, absolute character.