INTRODUCTION

The clue to the riddles

In this study I aim to make significant new progress in solving the riddles of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* by offering a new understanding of Nietzsche's well-known clue that the thought of eternal recurrence is its fundamental conception (*Grundconception*) or fundamental thought (*Grundgedanke)* (EH Z:1).[1] Traditionally, commentators have understood this clue to mean that they should look in the text of *Zarathustra* for some kind of explication and defense of the thought of eternal recurrence. Or, more recently, and in a more literary vein, they have interpreted the narrative of *Zarathustra* as a kind of *Bildungsroman* in which Zarathustra learns how to awaken, confront, teach, and affirm his thought of eternal recurrence.[2] But these scholars have been frustrated in their doctrinal approach because those places in *Zarathustra* where eternal recurrence is explicitly broached are few and isolated, leaving open the question as to how this thought is supposed to be the *Grundgedanke* of Nietzsche's artistic work as a whole.[3] Also, these scholars have complained, the protagonist Zarathustra himself never seems to fully express, explain, prove, endorse, teach, or definitively affirm the thought of eternal

[1] In *Zarathustra* and elsewhere, Nietzsche employs two German terms to refer to his thought, "*Wiederkehr*" and "*Wiederkunft*" – translated by Kaufmann and others as "return" and "recurrence" respectively. Outside of *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche also uses a third term, "*Wiederholung*," to refer to his doctrine – translated by Kaufmann and others as "repetition." Nietzsche seems to employ all of these terms interchangeably (for example, in Z III.13:2 and EH BT:3), but some scholars have found an important conceptual difference between them (Stambaugh 1972, p. 30ff.; 2004) or have wondered if they should find such a difference (Ansell-Pearson 2005, pp. 19–20, n. 1). I do not believe that Nietzsche used these different terms to convey any principled philosophical distinctions, and throughout this study I have followed the majority of scholars in using the single English term, "recurrence," to refer to Nietzsche's doctrine.

[2] Lampert 1986, pp. 259–260; Higgins 1987, pp. 98–104, 131–158, 191–201; Gadamer 1988; Schacht 1991, p. 231ff.; Gooding-Williams 2001, p. 183ff.

[3] I develop this point with respect to Gooding-Williams' interpretation in Loeb 2007. More generally, Nehamas comments that "the single most serious problem *Zarathustra* presents [is that it] resists a unified reading, concealing its general structure and strategy, its overall point" (2000, p. 166).

recurrence. When Zarathustra does refer to this thought, he (or his soul) does so while dreaming or intoxicated or convalescent (or while recollecting such moments), and then usually in song. Otherwise, Nietzsche puts different, and seemingly incompatible, versions of the thought into the mouths of strange and apparently unqualified characters like the dwarf in the "Vision and the Riddle" chapter, or Zarathustra's animals in the "Convalescent" chapter, or the higher men in the "Awakening" chapter. As a result, commentators have reached a variety of ingenious but ultimately unsatisfactory conclusions: that we should look instead in Nietzsche's unpublished notes (Heidegger 1982); or that Nietzsche intended eternal recurrence only as a useful fiction, mythic image, hypothetical thought-experiment, as-if story, or practical postulate (Clark 1990, p. 245ff.; Schacht 1991, p. 232ff.; Gooding-Williams 2001, p. 213); or that he conceived of eternal recurrence as an incommunicable esoteric or mystical insight (Salaquarda 1989; Stambaugh 1994); or that he had no single, univocal doctrine in mind (Winchester 1994, pp. 9–33; Gooding-Williams 2001, p. 183ff.); or that he designed eternal recurrence as an exoteric noble lie that would conceal his true esoteric views (Levine 1995, p. 122ff.; Rosen 1995, pp. x–xvi, 10–17; Waite 1996, p. 315ff.); or even that he intended us to notice that eternal recurrence is a flawed, incoherent or self-consuming thought (Berkowitz 1995, pp. 207–210; Magnus 1999).

In this study I propose an alternative, and especially literary, understanding of Nietzsche's clue. Rather than focusing on *Zarathustra*'s doctrinal aspects, I emphasize its narrative aspects and I argue that Nietzsche constructed these aspects so that they would embody and enact his thought of eternal recurrence. Since this is a thought about time, and since *Zarathustra* narrates the life of the fictional character Zarathustra, the book's relevant narrative aspects must therefore concern the chronology of events in Zarathustra's life. More specifically, in the same *Ecce Homo* retrospective where he explains *Zarathustra*'s fundamental conception, Nietzsche writes that eternal recurrence is Zarathustra's teaching of the unconditioned and endlessly repeated circular course of all things (EH BT:3). But Zarathustra's life is itself one of these things, and so the narrative of his life must somehow display the unconditioned and endlessly repeated circular course of Zarathustra's life. Applying the thought of eternal recurrence as he first published it in *Gay Science* 341, and as I defend it from critics in Chapter 1, Nietzsche's book should therefore imagine Zarathustra reliving a life he has already lived before.

This new understanding of Nietzsche's clue helps to explain his famous, but enigmatic, concluding signature in *Twilight of the Idols*: "I, the last

disciple of the philosopher Dionysus – I, the teacher of eternal recurrence."[4] Part of what Nietzsche means by this, as the rest of the passage shows, is that he learned Zarathustra's thought of eternal recurrence from the Dionysian mystery-cults of the ancient Greeks.[5] Indeed, in an unpublished note written shortly before he completed Part III of *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche states explicitly: "I have discovered the Greeks: they believed in eternal recurrence! That is the mystery-faith!" (KSA 10:8[15]). But these mystery-cults were not concerned to explain, defend, or prove their doctrine. Instead, they practiced a ritualistic enactment of key episodes in the mythical narrative of the god Dionysus (Seaford 1994, p. 234ff.; Seaford 2006). In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche had emphasized the enacted event of Dionysus' dismemberment and reintegration, which he interpreted as displaying a Schopenhauerian metaphysics of individuation (BT 10). Now, however, he emphasizes the related event of Dionysus' death and rebirth into his identical life, and he interprets this enacted event as displaying a metaphysics of eternal recurrence: "Dionysus cut into pieces is a *promise* regarding life: it [life] will be eternally reborn and return home again from destruction" (KSA 13:14[89]). As Nietzsche relates when he re-introduces the god Dionysus after a fourteen-year hiatus, he had learned much more about the philosophy of Dionysus since he offered him his first-born book as a sacrifice, and chief among these new secrets is Dionysus' identity as the *circulus vitiosus deus* (BGE 295, 56).[6] When we consider *Zarathustra*'s pervasive allusions to the myth of Dionysus (Lampert 1986; Del Caro 1988; Gooding-Williams 2001), as well as Nietzsche's identification of Zarathustra with Dionysus (EH Z:6–8, DD), it seems very likely that the Greek mystery-cult performance of Dionysus' eternally recurring life actually served as the model for Nietzsche's invention and enactment of Zarathustra's eternally recurring life.[7] Whereas *The Birth of Tragedy*

[4] See also EH P:2 and EH BT:3. Nietzsche's 1888 notes include plans for a book linking Dionysus and the philosophy of eternal recurrence (KSA 13:19[8], 13:22[14]).

[5] In his later *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche explicitly refers to eternal recurrence as *Zarathustra*'s teaching. There is no contradiction with his *Twilight of the Idols* description of *himself* as the teacher of eternal recurrence, because this follows his claim to be the last disciple of the philosopher Dionysus, and he identifies his imagined future philosopher Zarathustra with Dionysus. I discuss Nietzsche's distinction between himself and Zarathustra in Chapter 8.

[6] Del Caro (1988, pp. 69, 82–83; 1998, pp. 79, 82) discusses Nietzsche's later interpretation of Dionysus as a personification or symbol of eternal recurrence. But he does not go far enough in spelling out Nietzsche's interest in the performative aspect of the mystery-cult rituals or Nietzsche's emphasis on Dionysus' eternal rebirth into his *identical* life.

[7] Del Caro (1988, p. 66) gives some good reasons why we should take *Dithyrambs of Dionysus* seriously and rightly observes that the common theme of this work is death and passing. See also Crawford 1995, pp. 227–258.

explains how the Greeks composed tragic poems that revealed their secret Dionysian doctrines, *Zarathustra* is Nietzsche's own such tragic poem in which he reveals the secret of eternal recurrence.

My performative approach to *Zarathustra* is especially supported by Nietzsche's own description of his masterpiece as a kind of drama or play or opera akin to Wagner's operas. In *Ecce Homo* (II.4), Nietzsche suggests that no one would have noticed if he had published his *Zarathustra* under the name "Richard Wagner." In particular, as Roger Hollinrake first emphasized, Nietzsche conceived of *Zarathustra* as a four-part *Gesamtkunstwerk* analogous to Wagner's tetralogy *Ring of the Nibelung*.[8] This is why Nietzsche writes: "The fourth of the *Untimely Meditations* is entitled 'Richard Wagner in Bayreuth'… Read Nietzsche-Zarathustra and the festival of the future, the great noon. Nothing but world-historical accents; the genuine psychology of the genuine dithyrambic poet, the poet of *Zarathustra*" (Hollinrake 1982, p. 20). But Wagner himself famously writes as follows concerning his intentions in this total artwork:

> Alberich and his ring could not harm the gods if the latter were not already ripe for disaster. So where is the nub of the catastrophe? Look at the first scene between Wotan and Fricka, which eventually leads to the scene in Act II of *Die Walküre*. The rigid bond that unites them both, arising from love's involuntary mistake of perpetuating itself beyond the inescapable laws of change, of maintaining mutual dependence, this resistance to the eternal renewal and change of the objective world lands both of them in the mutual torment of lovelessness. The course of the drama thus shows the necessity of accepting and giving way to changeability, the diversity, the multiplicity, the eternal newness of reality and of life. (To August Röckel, 1854; Osborne 1993, pp. 184–185)

Although Nietzsche would not admit it in his later harsh critiques, he was of course quite sympathetic to Wagner's philosophical insistence on the reality and inescapability of change. His character Zarathustra devotes many speeches to this theme, consistently attacks all the various ways in which humans idealize and long for permanence, and says that the best images and parables should eulogize transience and flux (Z II.2). Yet according to Wagner this is precisely the whole aim and unifying theme of his *Ring* cycle. Eternal change, we might say, is the *Grundconception*

[8] Nietzsche's design of *Zarathustra* includes poetry, drama, song, and dance – all key components of the total work of art that Wagner found fused together in ancient Greek tragedy and hoped to reassemble in his new and revolutionary artwork of the future (TI IX:11). Nietzsche's invention also includes instructions for musical accompaniment, such as a dance-oriented rhythmic whip, castanets, a lyre, a heavy booming bell, and a harp; as well as an operatic cacophony of cries of distress, gurgling, ass-braying (Shapiro 1991, p. 72ff.); and even a shaping of the German language into a kind of sonorous music (Parkes 2005, pp. xxviii–xxxi). See also Deleuze 1994, p. 9.

or *Grundgedanke* of Wagner's most important and elaborate artwork. Suppose, however, that we interpreted this relation as commentators typically interpret the relation between eternal recurrence and Nietzsche's own *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Thus, it might be asked, why does the *Ring*'s principal protagonist Wotan never explicitly explain or prove the philosophical principle of eternal change? Why is this principle only explicitly broached and discussed at a few isolated places in the artwork? Are not those characters in the *Ring* who wholeheartedly endorse this principle, such as the god of fire Loge (*Rheingold*, Scene 4), unreliable mouthpieces? And since this is a wholly fictional work, how can we possibly suppose that Wagner actually believed in the truth of his *Grundgedanke*? Perhaps Wagner never intended eternal change as a literally true cosmological doctrine, but rather only as a useful fiction, a mythic image, a hypothetical thought-experiment, an as-if story, or a practical postulate?

I think we can agree that these seemingly trenchant questions actually miss the point of Wagner's artwork. Although Wotan, the principal protagonist of the *Ring*, delivers some crucial operatic speeches in which he can be said to learn, understand, confront, teach, and finally affirm the philosophical principle of eternal change, it would be highly misleading and aesthetically limiting to describe this artwork as Wagner's *Bildungsroman* or "thought-drama" with respect to the doctrine of eternal change. Instead, as Wagner explains above, the narrative course of the drama *shows,* manifests, and exemplifies this doctrine. This means that the fictional protagonists of this artwork do not relate to some abstract *concept* of change, but rather to the *reality* of change that is embodied in the structure of the narrative itself. So, for example, as Wagner writes above, Wotan and Fricka attempt to perpetuate their love beyond the inescapable laws of change, but their love changes and ends nevertheless. Wotan and Fricka do not confront the thought that their love will change; rather, they experience this reality and are swept up in the consequences of their visceral emotional responses to this fact.

Or, to consider a more general and far-reaching example, Wagner suggests a little earlier in the same letter cited above, that the gods in the *Ring* – and indeed, all the gods – are ultimately driven by their fear of death:

> We must learn to die, in fact to die in the most absolute sense of the word. Fear of death is the source of all lovelessness, and it arises only where love itself has already faded. How did it come about that mankind so lost touch with this bringer of the highest happiness to everything living that in the end everything they did, everything they undertook and established, was done solely out of fear of the end? My poem shows how. It shows nature in its undistorted truth.

Again, although Wagner's analysis here is expressed in conceptual terms, his total artwork incorporates a narrative in which its fictional protagonists share an overwhelming emotional response to the reality of death. At the very start of the *Ring* (*Rheingold*, Scene 2) the gods are immortal, but they are confronted for the first time with the prospect of old age and death (due to the loss of the golden apples which only the kidnapped Freia knows how to grow). The course of the narrative then follows their various fear-induced attempts to combat death: holding onto love, constructing a new and impregnable Valhalla-castle, robbing the gold ring from the dwarf Alberich in order to keep their eternal youth, attempting to breed a new Wälsung race, and attempting to uphold law, contract, tradition, and custom (as engraved on Wotan's spear). All these attempts fail, however, and in the end Wotan (with the crucial aid of his daughter, Brünnhilde) must lead the gods into accepting and even initiating their own demise. As the *Ring* ends, then, we see the supposedly eternal and impregnable new home of the gods consumed by Loge's ever-changing fire and swept away by the ever-changing flow of the waters of the Nibelung. As Wagner says, his poem shows nature in its undistorted truth.

In this study, then, I propose that Nietzsche similarly intended to communicate the truth of his own view of nature by means of a narrative that extends throughout his entire published book, and not just in those places where Zarathustra or other characters speak or sing of this view.[9] Just as the lives and actions of the protagonists in Wagner's *Ring* are meant to dramatize his insight into the reality of eternal change, so too the life and actions of Zarathustra are meant to dramatize what Nietzsche thinks is the deeper reality of eternal repetition. Thus, the fictional protagonist of Nietzsche's artwork does not relate to some abstract concept of eternal recurrence, but rather to the reality of eternal recurrence that is embodied in the structure of the narrative itself. And although this protagonist does deliver some crucial speeches and songs in which he can be said to awaken, confront, teach, and affirm the thought of eternal recurrence, it is the narrative course of the book's drama that actually shows, manifests, and enacts this thought.

I argue in this study that this performative understanding of Nietzsche's clue helps to resolve the many interpretive difficulties that have long preoccupied students of this book.[10] Foremost among these

[9] By contrast, Richard Schacht dismisses in a single sentence the "story line" of Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* (1991, p. 240), but analyses at book length the philosophical principles communicated by the story line of Wagner's *Ring* (Kitcher and Schacht, 2004).

[10] Gooding-Williams (2001, p. 183ff.) also describes as "performative" his interpretation of the *Grundconception* of eternal recurrence. But his sense of this term is restricted to the

is the question of the completeness and structure of Nietzsche's book. So in Chapters 2 and 3, and drawing on Nietzsche's allusions to Plato's *Phaedo*, I begin with the idea that the exact repetition of Zarathustra's life requires Nietzsche's narrative structure to emphasize above all else the event of Zarathustra's death and return to his identical life. This idea would seem to be contradicted by the fact that the narrative portrays Zarathustra as glowing and strong at the very end of Part IV and therefore seems to postpone indefinitely the death that is anticipated from the very start of the book. In Chapters 4 and 5, however, and drawing on his allusions to Aeschylus' tetralogies and the New Testament narrative, I argue that Nietzsche designed Part IV as a satyr play that narrates dramatic and philosophical developments which chronologically *precede* the ending of the tragic trilogy in Parts I–III. The story of *Zarathustra* therefore concludes twice: chronologically with the climactic conclusion of Part III, and structurally with the analeptic satyr play of Part IV. This means that the Faustian tolling of the twelfth bell of midnight at the end of Part III is actually the conclusion of the complete Zarathustra tragedy. But midnight is Nietzsche's symbol for the moment of death, and I argue accordingly that this conclusion is in fact a depiction of the moment of Zarathustra's death. Since Zarathustra ceases to exist entirely, and is thus unable to perceive any passing time, his perspective must show him an immediate return into his identical life. I suggest that this is why Nietzsche depicts, as Zarathustra's last word at the end of Part III, his joyful and affirmative response to the secret revelation that he is eternally wedded to life. Indeed, I show, Nietzsche constructs this revelation so that it fulfills an earlier prophetic vision in which Zarathustra saw himself crossing the gateway of the moment of death and returning to the scene of his most distant childhood.

Another obvious and central difficulty in understanding Nietzsche's book has to do with Zarathustra's many uninterpreted dreams, visions, riddles, secrets, allegories, and symbols. So in Chapter 3**,** I argue that the endless repetition of life requires Nietzsche's narrative to display the fact that Zarathustra is living a life he has already lived before. Given this idea, it is surprising that Nietzsche does very little to depict Zarathustra's memory of his previous life. According to critics of Nietzsche's doctrine, this is because Zarathustra's eternally recurring life would not in fact be identical if

"thought-drama" wherein Zarathustra performs three different formulations of the thought of eternal recurrence. I criticize all three formulations in Loeb 2007. Other recent performative approaches to *Zarathustra* (Zittel 2000; Westerdale 2006) are not likewise motivated by the idea that Nietzsche dramatizes the cosmological thought of eternal recurrence.

it included any memory of its previous iteration. But my response to these critics in Chapter 1 shows that Nietzsche's thought excludes the possibility of Zarathustra having ever lived an initial or original life that could omit such a memory. In addition, I argue, scholars have failed to recognize the significance of Nietzsche's narrative emphasis on Zarathustra's prophetic ability. Not only does Zarathustra frequently refer to himself as a prophet, but Nietzsche designs his narrative structure so that Zarathustra's prophetic visions are always fulfilled. I propose that this design is intended to enact his idea that the circular course of Zarathustra's repeated life enables him to remember a past *that is also his future*. Hence, the proper exegesis of many of Zarathustra's visions, dreams, and symbols requires noticing his performance of mnemonic or precognitive abilities that are entailed by the narrative's embedded thought of eternal recurrence. In particular, the reason Zarathustra is able to have a prophetic vision of his death and return is that he has died and returned before and thus is able to remember and foresee the moment when he will die and return again. Further, I argue, a close examination of Nietzsche's narrative reveals that Zarathustra's "most abysmal thought" is related to his childhood memory of having died and returned. This memory lies buried in his subconscious mind, and causes him psychological distress that is expressed in the form of frightening symbolic dreams, visions, and voices. At the redemptive "great noon" moment, however, Zarathustra becomes strong enough to command awake – that is, to bring up to the surface of his rational awareness – his memory of the truth of eternal recurrence.

Perhaps the most widely debated difficulty of Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* is its concept of the superhuman (*der Übermensch*) and the relation of this concept to the book's other central concepts of will to power and eternal recurrence.[11] This is because Zarathustra seems to give very little content to his teaching of the superhuman, and even seems to treat it as provisional in relation

[11] Throughout this study, I have departed from Kaufmann and Hollingdale in translating Nietzsche's gender-neutral word, "*Mensch*," into the English word, "human." I have only used the word, "man," when translating Nietzsche's gender-specific word, "*Mann*" (as used for example in Z I.18), or sometimes when writing of the higher humans in Part IV (who are all men). Furthermore, in translating Nietzsche's related gender-neutral noun, "*Übermensch*," I have followed Hollingdale rather than Kaufmann (and, more recently, Parkes and Del Caro) in choosing the Latinate prefix "super" rather than the Anglo-Saxon prefix "over." The former prefix is quite naturally and standardly used to translate Nietzsche's very closely related adjective, "*übermenschlich*," and I think this grammatical relation is more important to capture than the associations with other "*über-*" terminology standardly translated with the "over-" prefix (such as "*Überfluss*," or "*überwinden*"). In addition, the coined noun "overhuman" is not used in the English language at all outside of Nietzsche scholarship, whereas the noun "superhuman" does have wide usage today. But I have departed from Hollingdale in not capitalizing the noun and instead allowing the context to show whether the noun or adjective is intended. Some scholars and translators (see

to his later teaching of eternal recurrence. In addition, the progressive and futuristic ideal of the superhuman seems to presuppose a linear time and a negation of the past that are at odds with his supremely affirmative teaching of circular time. In response, I argue in Chapters 6 and 7 that a careful reading of the narrative event of Zarathustra's self-redemption reveals his discovery and actual performance of an ability to will backward in time.[12] For once Zarathustra learns that he is able to recollect his life's future, he realizes that he is also able to recollect any reminders or commands that he gives himself in the future. And if he can do this, then he can also impress reminders or commands in his memory that help determine his past life to be what it unchangeably is. This means that he no longer feels impotent with respect to the past, but is rather able to say that he is, and shall be, willing this past. Zarathustra is thus the stylist of his own life because his perfected self can backward-will unity, necessity, and meaning into those aspects of his life that otherwise might be fragmentary, accidental, and pointless. On my performative reading, Nietzsche depicts the newly redeemed Zarathustra as sending mnemonic communications (such as "It is time!" or a cry for help) back to those key stages in his life in which he needed special assistance in progressing toward his destiny – for example, when he was overwhelmed by prophetic nihilism, or when he was ensnared in his love for his children. Since his prevision shows that this ability renders him no longer human (*nicht mehr Mensch*), we can infer that Nietzsche conceives of the superhuman as the kind of species whose discovery and affirmation of eternal recurrence grants it this new kind of power over time. Nietzsche thus illustrates what he means by going beyond the human whenever he depicts a manifestation of Zarathustra's backward-willing. And his concept of the superhuman is not incompatible with eternal recurrence because it presupposes a circular time in which there is no way to affirm the future without also affirming the past.

Diethe 2006, pp. x–xi) have proposed leaving Nietzsche's German term, "*Übermensch,*" untranslated, since it has become familiar to English speakers. But I do not agree that it is so familiar, and besides, this choice simply obscures Nietzsche's intended associations with all of the terms that *are* translated into English, or it requires leaving still more terms untranslated (as Diethe selectively does with *Unmensch*). Some scholars have argued that the English terms, "superman," or "superhuman," should be avoided because they have unsavory ethical or political connotations, but then so does the German term. See also Del Caro 2006, p. xli.

[12] Although a couple of scholars have argued that Zarathustra makes a non-metaphorical discovery of backward-willing (see Berkowitz 1995, pp. 179, 193, 198–199; and Gooding-Williams 2001, p. 205ff.), they think that Zarathustra discovers the denial of time and thus the changeability of the past (views that the narrative ascribes instead to Zarathustra's dwarf archenemy); they argue that Nietzsche's narrative goes on deliberately to undermine Zarathustra's discovery; and they do not apply this discovery to the narrative itself.

Finally, there is an important set of interpretive difficulties concerning Nietzsche's depiction of Zarathustra's horrified realization that the small human, the human who hates and accuses life, must eternally recur. According to the traditional analysis, eternal recurrence is a doctrine of unconditional and total affirmation, and so this doctrine teaches Zarathustra how to affirm *all* of life, even the small human that so nauseates him. But this analysis ignores Nietzsche's other characterization of eternal recurrence as a selective doctrine. It also fails to explain how affirming the small human and his eternal recurrence could be compatible with Zarathustra's goal of overcoming the small human, that is, of creating the superhuman. In Chapters 6 and 7, then, and drawing on Nietzsche's allusions to Wagner's *Ring of the Nibelung*, I offer an exegesis that helps to reconcile the Yes-saying and No-saying aspects of Nietzsche's thought of eternal recurrence. In particular, I argue that Zarathustra only overcomes his nausea when he discovers that his "hammer" thought of life's eternal recurrence will lead the small human to want to abridge his hated life as much as possible. Of course, Zarathustra can do nothing to end the eternal recurrence of the small human's *past* existence. But by bringing the selective thought of eternal recurrence into the world, he is able indirectly to end the small human's *present* existence and thereby foreclose a future that would have eternally recurred. In this way, the climax of Nietzsche's book depicts the precise moment when Zarathustra acts to compel humankind to follow the tragic law of life and initiate its own self-overcoming. Just as the greatest sacrifices life for the sake of power, so too humankind must sacrifice itself for the sake of the superhuman. Indeed, I argue, Nietzsche concludes his book by showing how Zarathustra follows his own command and enacts his own tragic voluntary death.

Having offered this set of solutions to the riddles of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, I turn in my last chapter, Chapter 8, to discuss the relation of this singular work to the later series of books Nietzsche wrote in his own voice. Here I focus specifically on the book that is most studied and admired today, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, and I argue that my reading of *Zarathustra* helps us to understand three of its key, but obscure, aspects. These are: Nietzsche's call for reversing the bad conscience at the end of the second essay, his recommendation for countering the ascetic ideal at the end of the third essay, and his discussion of atheism in both these essays. At the same time, I argue that a careful reading of Nietzsche's allusions to *Zarathustra* in this later work help to confirm the interpretation I have set out in this study.