

Introduction

SHEPHERD STEINER

The topography of the general issue is always rough and unpredictable. As the poet Trevor Joyce would put it, the granularity of every essay is different. The terrain is uneven, the content variable, and on the micro level all mapping gives way to *terra incognita*. Every general issue also has its high point: here especially the pages Joseph P. Vincenzo devotes to Nietzsche's environmental aesthetics. In the present issue we have called upon "Zarathustra's Animals" to introduce the fundamental problem, to perform a certain work, and to showcase and model a kind of relation to what Vincenzo isolates in Nietzsche's texts as the "sensible particular (*aisthētón*)," "small things," the "little that makes the *best* happiness." The logic here is simple: working against the symbolist cosmologies of the nineteenth century and now, we stage again and again what Nietzsche describes as the most fruitful compartment to the world. Openness to the variable ecology of the general issue and the world at large is our Dionysian aim.

Thus Nietzsche's exhortation from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: "Step out of your cave! All things would be your physicians."

Many readers will know the short passage from *Ecce Homo*, where Nietzsche "relate[s] the history of [his] *Zarathustra*." I have always cherished these lines set in the Upper Engadine, with Nietzsche hiking on a summer's day pausing before a rock

“6000 feet beyond man and time.” With remarkably few details Nietzsche conjures an exceptionally uplifting scene that I have turned to now and again on sleepless nights to chip away at things like the genre of autobiography, Nietzsche’s philosophical system, but also my fascination with mountaineering literature, and an object choice for mountains and the cult of action these presume over academe and its brand of high thinking. In truth, I return to the passage for self-help, for whatever life’s problems beset me. The scene Nietzsche paints and the sentiment this stirs within me seem to afford some relief. Why, I did not know until reading Vincenzo’s account and, of course, I was reluctant to admit these feel-good effects in any case.

So *Ecce Homo*, with its dog-eared pages recounting Nietzsche’s time at Silvaplana, when “the idea of eternal recurrence” first came to him, has enjoyed a peripatetic existence, first with my books on philosophy and for the longest time nestled amongst my collection of mountaineering literature, the majority of which Nietzsche’s *Höhengedanken* undoubtedly spurred. (As Leif Schenstead-Harris, who writes in this same issue, might put it, the philosopher of 1888 *haunts* the entire genre of mountaineering literature, from the suspect Nietzscheism of Eugen Guido Lammer’s *Jungborn* [1922] to the quietism of Jacques Boell’s easy prose and modest tales of climbing in *High Heaven* [1947] to “the mineral silence” emanating from Lionel Terray’s *Conquérants de l’inutile* [1961].) Now and forever more Nietzsche will be at my bedside table as earthly breviary. Haunting his technics for the endlessness of the cure will be Freud. And hovering over Freud’s ongoing therapeutic will be the recursive sets Laura C. Ballardur explores in her exceptional study of Descartes’s diagrams, also in this issue. But we should give Nietzsche the last word, if only to make clear that his medo-technical advice and introductions themselves are a ghostly affair:

The wind is playing with heavy fragrances that want to get to you, and all the brooks would run after you. All things have been longing for you, while you have remained alone for seven days. Step out of your cave! All things would be your physicians.