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# NIETZSCHE

the meaning  
of earth

Lucas Murrey

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Nietzsche

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To Noam Chomsky and Charles Ferguson,  
~~in the hope of deepening our understanding of the psychic origin of greed.~~  
And to Barbara Bodine, Sérgio Vieira de Mello, and the Iraqi people,  
heroines and heroes,  
der Sinn der Erde.

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# Preface

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In his unpublished preface to *Animal Farm*, George Orwell points out that “unpopular ideas can be silenced, and inconvenient facts kept dark, without the need for any official ban.”<sup>[1]</sup> This occurs not through “government,” but the media that inculcates in the people “a general tacit agreement that ‘it wouldn’t do’ to mention that particular fact.”<sup>[2]</sup> Proceeding to the centralization of the press and its mobilization of “daily newspapers,” Orwell reminds us that “most of it is owned by wealthy men who have every motive to be dishonest on certain important topics.”<sup>[3]</sup>

This description of the visual and linguistic culture to which we as a species remain captive invites us to consider a few questions. How are we to understand the powerful psychic force that has been harnessed to destroy language and the freedom to see? And in what way does money underlie this unlimited, dirty river of words and pictures that, in turn, instills the social conformity of slavery to individual tyrants?

In no small measure, these are the questions that the following study of Friedrich Nietzsche seeks to answer. As I show, Nietzsche understands individuals in modern time as imprisoned in a distracting, narcissistic image that is violently cut off from nature and community. “And with fifty mirrors around you,” Zarathustra says, horror-struck, “you flatter and slander your play of colours!” Further, Nietzsche explicitly connects such visual ghastliness with the no less shocking monetization of humankind, as preeminently exemplified by the modern “city, which steams with the vapour of slaughtered spirit” and which is ruled by isolated tyrants who “jingle with their gold.”

This is not to say that such answers are always straightforward. For what does it mean to say that “wealthy men” and women, who, by virtue of their unleashing of the unlimited images in which our everyday lives drown, rule our hyper-visual civilization while they “jingle with their gold”? On the one hand, it is clear that this endless flow of pictures is caught up also in an endless flow of language that knows nothing of the communal spirit of earth. About this Nietzsche leaves little doubt, as when he casts light on the linguistic essence of the city wherein “spirit has here become a verbal game. . . . Loathsome verbal-swill does it vomit!” In fact it is this “verbal game” from which the centralized press and its “daily newspapers” issue forth: “they make newspapers out of this verbal-swill.” “Do you not see the souls hanging like limp, dirty rags?—And they even make newspapers out of these rags!”

But, on the other hand, can we say that Nietzsche identifies the source of the exceptional psychical presence that the moguls of the media willfully appropriate to kill the natural rights of people to see and speak? Although he creatively evoked the Apolline in regard to a “primal desire for appearance,” that is, a limitless desire to stabilize “a single world-image,” Nietzsche’s Dionysian insights are alas neutralized by nineteenth-century strains of nationalism and racism.



In a way, this brings me to the goal of this study, which is to transcend Nietzsche and wonder about our own answers to the questions above. How, for instance, do we understand the origin of the mass psychosis to which our language and style of seeing has succumbed? And in what way has the unlimited essence of the (relatively) new visual media of money been able to indoctrinate, through its control of the media, “a general tacit agreement that ‘it wouldn’t do’ to mention that particular fact”? If the following does not directly answer these urgent questions, one thing remains clear: Examining Nietzsche’s search for such answers will surely enrich our own.

L. Murrey

December 7, 2014

Corseaux, Switzerland

## NOTES

1. George Orwell, “The Freedom of the Press,” Times Literary Supplement, 15 September 1972.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

# Abbreviations

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A The Antichrist  
ASC Attempt at Self-Criticism (1886 Preface to BT)  
BGE Beyond Good and Evil  
BT The Birth of Tragedy  
CW The Case of Wagner  
D Daybreak  
EH Ecce Homo  
GM On the Genealogy of Morals  
GS The Gay Science  
HAH Human, All Too Human  
KB Kommentar zu den Bänden 1-13  
NCW Nietzsche contra Wagner  
NF1 Nachgelassene Fragmente 1869-1874  
NF2 Nachgelassene Fragmente 1875-1879  
NF3 Nachgelassene Fragmente 1880-1882  
TI Twilight of the Idols  
TL On Truth and Lies in an Extra-moral Sense  
UM Untimely Meditations  
Z Thus Spoke Zarathustra

# Introduction

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## RISE OF MASS CULTURE AND THE VISUALIZED CHRONOTOPE

This work on Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) follows that which I recently devoted to Hölderlin's Dionysiac Poetry.<sup>[1]</sup> In part III of this earlier study I show that Friedrich Hölderlin's songs are unique in (Western) art because they alone retrieve an original sociopolitical experience of space and time (and language) that challenges the lethal visual media of money. Important to this retrieval is Dionysian seeing: a literal and metaphorical style of looking that overcomes monetary alienation and reconnects with images of community and nature.<sup>[2]</sup>

But what makes this earthly form of picturing the cosmos critical is how, in its modern instance, the psychic danger of capitalism in industrial time is brought to light.<sup>[3]</sup> Hölderlin envisions a money-tyrant who, "to make / A little profit" (v 39–40), reduces nature to that which he can spy on through a "telescope" (v 51).<sup>[4]</sup> Like Oedipus, who has "one eye too many," perverse individuals "squander, misuse" (v 46)<sup>[5]</sup> earth's resources to satisfy their images of individualism.

But as this work also shows, Hölderlin's resurrection of Dionysian seeing leans into oblivion. Lack of a mentor—one thinks of Friedrich Schiller, who stood by his "dearest Swabian" as Hölderlin "lived on next to nothing and ate only one meal a day"<sup>[6]</sup>—gives way to isolation. By 1800, Hölderlin loses contact with Georg Hege and Christian Neuffer. Although enduring, his relationship with Isaac von Sinclair (who also falls in love with Hölderlin's lifelong muse, Susette Gontard, and who is later accused of treason in Württemberg) represents an ambivalent, tense, and episodic friendship, at best.

In the abyss of Hölderlin's "desolate time" (v 122)<sup>[7]</sup> is the absence of a timeless love. This is particularly painful because of the isolation to which his Dionysian affections for Diotima (Susette) succumb. Although he preserves his letters from his eternal muse, never once—neither before nor during his forty years of madness—does Hölderlin dare to tell his protestant mother about Susette's existence. And inseparable from the absence of immortal passion is that of his new Dionysus. The tyrant into whom Napoléon degenerates suggests that even revolutionary patriots can be no less tyrannical than the (pater) king whose state head they willfully remove. Given such abject poverty and hopelessness, that Hölderlin is able to retrieve with such precision an original Dionysian experience of space and time (what I name the Dionysiac chronotope)<sup>[8]</sup> appears miraculous. All the same, the penniless poet "had no followers of his own."<sup>[9]</sup> Despite the desperation to which he succumbs, because Hölderlin remains "frozen and benumbed by the winter which surrounds" him, there is no one to whom he can pass "the blazing, gleaming torch"(v 218).<sup>[10]</sup>

To understand the (industrial) modern light that consumes Hölderlin's Dionysian illumination we must consider, on the one hand, the progress of

technology in the eighteenth century. Although the poet is inseparable from idyllic southwest German (and French) landscapes, already during his earliest songs humankind is unlocking a new form of energy capture. Suddenly Western civilization has access to what seems like an unlimited amount of steam and electric power.<sup>[11]</sup> Throughout the remainder of Hölderlin's life, the speed of technological progress not only continues, but increases its velocity. Humphrey Davis's hideous mass of Voltaic piles (and sulfurous fumes) in 1808 is followed by Hans Ørsted's (accidental) discovery of electromagnetism in 1820 and Michael Faraday's transformation of this (magical) phenomenon into movement one year later in 1821. In a little over two decades after Hölderlin's death on June 7, 1843, James Maxwell formulates the first theory of wireless communication in his *Dynamical Theory of the Electromagnetic Field* from 1865.

But to understand this "desolate time"—the discovery of natural laws are in themselves not necessarily bad—consumes the epiphany of Hölderlin's "[c]horus-leader of stars" (v 1196),<sup>[12]</sup> we must reflect not only on the rapid progress of technology, but also that upon which these physical revelations unconsciously rest, namely the concentration of money that is inseparable from such modern advancement. Still today we content ourselves with the familiar (and simplistic) view that advances in technology bring the world together and, therefore, lead to a democratic, even utopian state. Ever since this time the modern individual who dares embrace such (breakneck) technological change is often pictured as adventurous, exciting and a model for us all. One recalls Phileas Fogg from Jules Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days* from 1873: an unreal, that is, abstract picture of a person who appears, significantly, at the height of the British Empire.

Before we celebrate this optimistic image of progress and democracy we have to consider how the technological steps forward that Western civilization claims are invariably appropriated by its masters who seek first "to make / A little profit" (v 39-40), even if (in fact, especially if) this means more steps backward for people and nature. For what has defined modern life thus far has not been the communal magic of phenomena that science can inspire, but, instead, what these natural phenomena can do to help already wealthy individuals increase their wealth. Consider the historical time when the Western belief that nature and people are essentially mechanistic—one thinks of Julian Offray de La Mettrie's *L'homme machine*<sup>[13]</sup> from 1748 and the automata of Jacques de Vaucanson (1709-1782)—undergoes a geographic shift. Britain's unique coal resources and incentives for engineers and entrepreneurs to develop new forms of technology change the businessman from Liverpool (who has been selling boatloads of textiles and guns for slaves in Africa)<sup>[14]</sup> into a master of the new mechanical time. This leads also to what I have noted in my earlier study: the iron umbilical cord (Stephenson's Rocket) that is set between Liverpool and Manchester already in 1829.<sup>[15]</sup> And as we shall see in the next chapter, it is no accident that Nietzsche, the first (self-proclaimed) Dionysian philosopher (and who follows in Hölderlin's footsteps in ways that even he could never imagine), understands his philosophical exploratio

of community and earth as a part of a new “struggle” against “English-mechanistic world-dumbing,” im Kampf mit der englisch-mechanistischen Welt-Vertölpelung.<sup>[16]</sup>

The unlocking of industrial technology is first and foremost a leap in energy capture. One calorie consumed while mining coal yields fifty. The application of this energy explosion to agriculture leads to one of the most radical transformations that our species has undergone: The emergence of exponential population growth. All of a sudden we humans are taller and heavier, we live longer and, relative to before, we essentially eliminate infant mortality. Our familiar more-of-everything culture is founded on the increasing mechanization of everyday existence (itself a consequence of unlocking and consuming this new style of energy capture). By 1830 almost anything made by hand can be made faster by a machine. Together these peculiar forces allow England to invent the first high-production economy (and mass consumer culture). No later than 1850, less than seven years after Hölderlin’s death, Britain bestrides the world like a Titan, “striving,” as Nietzsche says, “for English happiness.”<sup>[17]</sup> Given the disconnected spirit of limitlessness that is peculiar to money and that such mass consumption can only reinforce, this means—to continue in the language of Nietzsche—“happiness of the greatest number.”<sup>[18]</sup> This is something to which I shall return.

But for now, let us be somewhat clearer about the kind of numeric ecstasy this implies. Capitalism’s internal dynamic of necessary and unlimited self-expansion produces, in a relatively brief amount of time, a (brave) new world of industry that knows nothing of (self-)regulation. Consider the industries to which steam power has leaped by 1870. Already Britain’s engines are generating four million horsepower, equivalent to the labor of forty million men. This concentrates the estrangement of humans from nature and one another. The poverty upon which modern money-tyrants, to whom Nietzsche refers when he speaks of “these ponderous herd animals with bad consciences (who commit themselves to promoting egoism as an issue of general welfare),”<sup>[19]</sup> leads to an unprecedented wave of urbanization. One recalls Karl Marx’s description of the Scottish Enclosure Acts that began in the eighteenth century and uprooted countless communities that, after centuries of living on the land, have to flee to London in search of slave wages.<sup>[20]</sup> Tragic losses of earth and communality pave the way, literally, to the absorption of more than half of the world’s population into cities. The effect of this cataclysmic change pulsates today in Tokyo, Mexico City, Mumbai, New York, and Sao Paulo, to mention just a few.

To understand the lightning (technological and monetary) “progress” that devours Hölderlin’s Dionysiac chronotope, we have to look directly at the egoism of nineteenth century “earthly masters” (to use a sinister phrase from Paul in the New Testament) and the masses of new “[s]laves” that these industrial moguls demand. We have a catastrophic loss of fairness, justice, and feel for the sacred, all of which are now sacrificed to the supposed inevitability of quantifiable competition. We have mentioned the emergence of the prototype of our “self-destructive culture of the

unlimited.”<sup>[21]</sup> Given the fashionable aesthetics of the time, it is to be expected that contemporary reports—the media control of the early industrial era—seek to absorb this misfortune into hyper-abstract (that is, sociopolitically ineffectual) intellectual categories. Particularly popular is the still modish concept of the sublime: “the vast bellows that give those roaring blasts [from the furnaces, forge &c.] make the whole edifice horridly sublime.”<sup>[22]</sup> Here horrid is—somehow?—not really horrid.

Nevertheless, a few commentators are less romantic when confronting “the lethally limiting unlimitedness”<sup>[23]</sup> of money and the social practices that it generates:

All fixed, rusted relations, with their train of ancient, venerable imaginations and world-views are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can fossilise. All that is solid melts into the air, all that is holy is profaned, and humans are at last compelled to face with sober eyes their real conditions of life and their relations with their kind.<sup>[24]</sup>

Consider also the “half-frightful scene” of “the iron and coal works”<sup>[25]</sup> in Birmingham from the summer of 1824:

A space 30 sq. miles . . . covered over with furnaces, rolling-mills, steam-engines and sooty men. A dense cloud of pestilential smoke hangs over it forever, blackening even the grain that grows upon it; and at night the whole region burns like a volcano spitting fire from a thousand tubes of brick. I thought of the price we had to pay for our vaunted supremacy in the manufacture of iron. But oh how wretched hundred and fifty thousand mortals who grind out their destiny there! In the coal-mines they were literally naked, many of them, all but trousers; black as ravens; plashing about among dripping caverns, or scrambling amid heaps of broken mineral; and thirsting unquenchably.<sup>[26]</sup>

This grisly scene recalls Hölderlin’s critique of “despicable gold,” *schnödem Gold*, and the modern individuals who selfishly “squande[r], misus[e]” (v 46) the “powers” (v 46) of nature.<sup>[27]</sup> In particular, it evokes the image of tragic isolation from *The Archipelago* where,

[e]ach individual is nailed alone  
To his own work, in the noise of his workplace  
Listening only to himself and imprisoned in a labour of madness,  
With an aggressive hand, restless, but always and forever  
Bringing forth nothing, like the Furies, from the toil of his hands. (v 242–46)

But as we have seen, Hölderlin’s poetry retrieves not only Greek tragedy to question the unlimited “machine process”<sup>[28]</sup> of “a clever race” (v 48)<sup>[29]</sup> of money-tyrants in the present, but also Greece’s warnings about the mortal danger of the eyes in myth, cult, and theater. Semele, who is linked (directly) to Dionysus and (indirectly) to Persephone and Narcissus (and even to Oedipus, who as a tragic



hero and tyrant is related to Kreon and Pentheus), models the new mortal threat of seeing that accompanies a visualized space-time of money no longer in balance with nature.<sup>[30]</sup> Hölderlin adapts the early Hellenic response to this peril to absorb the (unlimited) abstractions of monetized eyes that selfishly appropriate modern visual media such as the “telescope[s]” (v 51) into the (unlimited) horror of mystic initiation.<sup>[31]</sup> Consider Hyperion’s criticism of the modern man who, “when he reflects,” degenerates into “a beggar” like the wandering, homeless Oedipus.<sup>[32]</sup>

Understanding the visual unconscious of money and technology that swallow Hölderlin’s Dionysiac chronotope whole is thus to understand those who support the perverse, hyper-abstract thinking to which they are tied. The explosion of energy discussed above is expressed in regard to a (limitless) homogenization of space and time. A train cutting through a rural landscape is the modern extension of “the paradox of an unlimited abstract territoriality” that existed already in the imagination of early historic Greece, one that encompasses not only “all geographic space,” but also, “beyond that, the whole cosmos.”<sup>[33]</sup> This means a deepening of the visualized chronotope<sup>[34]</sup> against which Hölderlin’s poetry (unconsciously) struggles. The hyper-abstractions of Greek philosophy, medieval Christianity, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and Romanticism now coalesce into “the homogenised sensibility of our hyper-monetised, atomised, and self-destructive culture of the unlimited.”<sup>[35]</sup>

Important is not simply the history of a mass population ruled by a concentration of the new visual spirit of money, but also the uneasy physical (and psychical) symptoms that haunt this era. Consider the spatialized time that structures a train station—the modern experience that a wealthy, urban gentleman like Phileas Fogg knows as if intuitively without having to consult his watch because he has internalized the concept of temporality as a series of static (Aristotelian) images.<sup>[36]</sup> Consider also the moving picture of the landscape seen through a glass window: an endless succession of places with which the individual in the iron compartment has no relation. And consider finally the wages paid by hours and minutes after an individual worker “clocks in.”

This implicit collapse of the primal, incalculable experience of space and time in the nineteenth century implies further the vanishing of nonvisual experiences: the smell of a landscape, the natural sounds of human labor (now in competition with the whizzing noise of automated machines), or the nearness of an embrace (who the person embracing does not see) are all suddenly (tragically) distant. When we think of what is lost, it is clear that Marx’s description of “[t]he forming of the five senses” in 1844 as “a labour of the whole of world-history”<sup>[37]</sup> can be understood as a gesture to the history of this physical/psychical perversion. Our relation to nature and ourselves, as Marx and Hölderlin feared, “melts into the air.”

But the victory of the visualized chronotope over a Dionysian image of earth and community has still to be explored. In contrast to the magical picture of Hölderlin’s “[c]horus-leader of stars” from around 1802, the nineteenth century produces the terrifying image of a “whole region [that] burns like a volcano spitting fire from a thousand tubes of brick.” The light that emerges from burning

fossil fuels (most of which are at least sixty million years old—that is, long before we humans and our five senses, including our eyes, evolved) is not simply the familiar opposite of Dionysian light and seeing, but the beginning of an altogether new world-historical lightlessness. Black iron, black coal, black smoke, and black houses, let us not forget, create the Victorian costume: black funerals and top hat—and even the name Black Country. Demeter’s gift to humankind in the form of a luminous epiphany of corn and mystical “light,” φῶς<sup>[38]</sup>—to which Hölderlin refers when he sings of a “flowering land where upon sunny plains/Noble corn and fruit ripens” (v 263–64),<sup>[39]</sup> yields to “[a] dense cloud of pestilential smoke [that] hangs over [the earth] forever, blackening even the grain that grows upon it.” This reminds one of the (spiritual and physical) darkness that accompanies the now ever-present horrors of the industrial accident: dismembered bodies and eyes that the manmade (mechanized) thunder of the modern train crash invites.

This brings us closer to that which, more than anything else, enables the darkening of Hölderlin’s Dionysian light: the emergence of the visual spirit of nineteenth-century mass consumer culture. We have noted how science tends to be absorbed into the monetized chronotope.<sup>[40]</sup> Instead of exploring the enchantment of phenomena like steam, electricity, and electromagnetism, Western masters have been exclusively interested in what these earthly phenomena can do to for their individualism, in particular how they can master nature to make more money. Here I extend this argument to the visualized chronotope. This comes into focus when we recall the magical colors that filled Heinrich Geißler’s glass tubes in the 1850s. Although enchanting, the visual realm of science and magic is foremost a (profitable) distraction. In fact, so great is the way that the visual impulse in humankind is suddenly exploited, it is tempting to think that we as a species suddenly succumbed to the fatal attraction of our own image in a mirror. For Nietzsche, the English problem he identifies is greater than England herself: “for I am already touching upon something serious to me,” he writes, “on the ‘European problem,’ as I understand it, on the breeding of a new ruling caste for Europe.”<sup>[41]</sup>

As Richard Seaford suggests, the internal dynamic of necessary and unlimited self-expansion that belongs to capitalism produces values that are different in kind from those of previous eras.<sup>[42]</sup> Perhaps most terrifying of these new values is the lethal visual culture that accompanies (and reinforces) money. In my previous work, I have touched upon the deep history of the desire to fix an image, for instance, when Alberti seeks mathematically informed pictures.<sup>[43]</sup> During Hölderlin’s lifetime, the old obsession with the camera obscura gives rise to the first photograph in 1825, the patenting of the zoetrope in 1834 by a British mathematician, and the first lucrative photographic processes in 1837 and 1841. Soon after, the photographic magic lantern (1850) and the first color photograph (1861) are invented.

Like Hölderlin, Nietzsche’s attraction to Dionysian light coincides with the rise of this modern visual culture. The sociopolitical significance of photography is unleashed just after 1871 when it is appropriated by the French State for criminal



identification following the Paris Commune.<sup>[44]</sup> Experiments in the photography of motion (1873), commercially successful graphic prints, including halftone photographs in New York City (1880), the patenting of the first film in roll form (1884), the first electromechanical TV scanning system (1884), the manufacturing of flexible transparent film (1889), and the invention of the Kinetoscope (1889) all occur while Nietzsche, who aggressively abandons the progress of such visual media, is busy bringing forth an (oppositional) Dionysian style of seeing.

It is thus not only the monetized chronotope, but the visualized chronotope of the last two hundred years to which Hölderlin's poetry succumbs—and this means also the lightless abyss wherein our next earthly and communal hero first stumbles across an authentic image. But perhaps most frightening is how visualized thought exacerbates the “diseased mind” (v 1015) of the intellectual money-tyrant. As I have shown, there is a mental illness that reinforces the hyper-abstract concept of the sublime. Edmund Burke bizarrely claims that all humans “have a degree of delight, and that no small one, in the real misfortunes and pains of others.”<sup>[45]</sup> The wealthy Whig of the late eighteenth century proceeds: “there is no spectacle we so eagerly pursue as that of some uncommon and grievous calamity.”<sup>[46]</sup>

Burke's psychosis is similar to that of the tyrants of the Greek stage such as Pentheus, who in Euripides's *Bacchae* wants to cut off the head of the new magician (Dionysus) who has come to his city—Pentheus, who sees the demigod of earthly light bound in a dark cell and threatens to imprison Dionysus's maenads, upon whose image he desires to secretly spy (in exchange for a large sum of gold).<sup>[47]</sup>

Hyper-abstractions like the sublime tend to legitimate the inhumanity of a monetized-visualized cosmos wherein individual rulers have no responsibility to peoples and environments. Burke's perverse reflection on seeing is followed by descriptions of “vast bellows that give those roaring blasts [from the furnaces, forges, &c.] make the whole edifice horridly sublime.”<sup>[48]</sup> Such devious attempts to repress this abyss continue in the clever, but finally ignorant musings of many nineteenth-century intellectuals. Five years before Hölderlin's death the English literary critic William Hazlitt formulates the following (grotesque) rhetorical question:

Why do we go to see tragedies in general? Why do we always read the accounts in the newspapers of dreadful fires and shocking murders? Why do so many persons frequent trials and executions, or why do the lower classes almost universally take delight in barbarous sports and cruelty to animals, but because there is a natural tendency in the mind to strong excitement, a desire to have its faculties roused and stimulated to the utmost?<sup>[49]</sup>

Most of us are unable to accept the idea that “ungovernable violence . . . and restless love of mischief,”<sup>[50]</sup> in particular an enjoyment of the images of the suffering other, are natural. Among those who, in contrast to Burke and Hazlitt, sense the visual tragedy that underlies industrialization (when “all that is holy is profaned”) is the French poet Charles Baudelaire. Baudelaire presciently foresees

the impending symptoms of modern visual media:

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A vengeful God has granted the wishes of this multitude. Daguerre was his Messiah. And now the public says to itself: "Since photography gives us every guarantee of exactitude that we could desire (they really believe that, the idiots!), then photography and art are the same thing." From that moment on our squalid society rushes, Narcissus to a man, to gaze at its trivial image on a scrap of metal.<sup>[51]</sup>

As we shall see, among those whose Dionysian voice arises to resist the visualized chronotope that spirals out of England is Nietzsche: "What is lacking in England, and what has always been missing," he declares, is "a real power of spirituality, a real profundity of spiritual reflection, in short, a philosophy."<sup>[52]</sup>

## EMERGENCE OF UNLIMITED LANGUAGE

Part II of this work shows that Nietzsche's retrieval of Dionysian Greece is significantly more infected by nationalism than Hölderlin's adaptation of Hellenic earth and co-being.<sup>[53]</sup> Nevertheless, Nietzsche's pointed criticisms of England are not only nationalist in tone. Among other things, philosophy and language are, for him, inseparable. When Nietzsche declares that "[t]hese Englishmen are no race of philosophers,"<sup>[54]</sup> we are invited to consider the thoughtless transformation to which language succumbs in the nineteenth century. This means the rapid extension (and homogenization) of the English language across the entire planet.

Although the number of native Mandarin Chinese speakers is well over two times that of native English speakers, when one counts the number of persons who also speak second languages, English outnumbers Chinese by more than one-third. Almost 30 percent of the seven billion (plus) persons populating earth speak English whereas 20 percent speak Chinese—the closest second, incidentally, of the other approximately 6,500 languages in existence. Like Hölderlin who warns us about monetized (and homogenized) "names" (v 52) that emerge alongside the reduction of the cosmos to images seen through visual media like the modern "telescope" (v 51), Nietzsche senses the danger of a visualized language that knows no earthly or communal limit.<sup>[55]</sup> In this section, we briefly turn to the deeper reason why the heart of Hölderlin's poetry (Dionysiac language)<sup>[56]</sup> is lost during the arc of the nineteenth century, that is, during the emergence of an unlimited language of technology, money, and visual culture.

This is not to say that the progress of experiencing (and thinking about) language during industrialization is exclusively negative. The transition from Gutenberg bibles of the fifteenth century to newspapers and journals of the eighteenth century—and the literacy explosion in England and elsewhere in Europe that soon follow (again, due to industrial energy and population increase)—is significantly caught up, if only in part, in a story of sociopolitical liberation. The steam press of 1810 and rotary drum printing of 1843—one might also include Morse Code of the 1840s and the transatlantic telegraph cable of the 1860s—tend

to be thought of as making the world a smaller, more democratic (and utopian) place. After all, humans who can communicate better can better establish their individual freedoms. The Freedom's Journal, the first African American newspaper from 1827, is indeed a powerful sociopolitical awakening.

But this optimistic story masks a deeper one of money and, in particular, the secret story of a lethal language of individualism. For it is not the (ancient) powers of steam and writing that suddenly come together in 1810, but instead a patent (for the steam press) that ensures that all money made by this machine shall go to one individual and he alone. The same can be said about the rotary drum press, which is patented in 1847. Perhaps most illustrative of how Western civilization tends to be more attracted to what earthly phenomena such as steam, electricity, and electromagnetism can do for individuals seeking to make more money—than what the communal and earthly magic of these events can inspire—is the transatlantic telegraph cable that has its origin in British engineers and American businessmen of the mid-nineteenth century. Although never mentioned, there is no record that these individuals had any significant interest in the improvement of humankind.

Belonging to this history is a new monetized media control, as witnessed in that which underlies the Crimean war of 1853–1856. This means the first instrumental use of a new modern complex of journalism, railways, and electric telegraphs to sway public opinion. As we shall see, Nietzsche is acutely aware of the difference between the Dionysiac language he seeks to resurrect and the increasing subordination of language to “the homogenized sensibility” of the machine. As if a mirror reflection of the visual industry that haunts the dark philosopher, there is also a corresponding media industry that (industriously) contrasts the chthonic spirit of Nietzsche's Hellenic language. One thinks of the typewriter (1867), the patenting of the five-unit telegraph (1876), the telephone (1876), the phonograph (1877), the linotype (1884) the Nipkow disk (1884), and—last but not least—the invention of the literary agent (1888) just when Nietzsche's vanity publishing comes to an abrupt, tragic halt.

On the one hand, the “mysterious and terrifying power, the unlimited isolating passion for individual gain, more powerful even than the instinct for self-preservation” that brutally reduces language to visual media (for profit) concentrates what we may call a style of word-instrumentalization that emerges already in early historic Greece.<sup>[57]</sup> On the other hand, how we tend to think of language, in particular how higher forms of research and education formulate an understanding of written and oral communication at this time, becomes more disconnected from earth and community. Nietzsche reminds us that most intellectuals of this century (including Burke and Hazlitt) imply that the language of humankind is secretly the language of the monetized (English) ruling class: abstract, unlimited, and visually aggressive.

But a few people with the “real power of spirituality” confront the unhappiness that haunts the time when language, like everything else, “melts into the air.” Consider Baudelaire's celebration of the picture of the past to which the new visual culture and language of modern time lead:

Some democratic writer ought to have seen here [in regard to the emergence of photography] a cheap method for disseminating a loathing for history and for painting among the people.<sup>[58]</sup>

For the purposes of our story, we now turn to what is arguably the most significant (and threatening) enhancement of Hölderlin's Dionysiac language. In his own way (and historical context), Nietzsche senses the power of Hellenic poetry to transcend the restless images and linguistic perversions of the modern money-tyrant "moving this way and that"—his description of "Bentham's footsteps," we should note, is uncanny in its echo of Pentheus in *Bacchae*, who is described as running "feverishly this way and that" (v 625)<sup>[59]</sup>—and gestures to a new experience of language.

## PREVIOUS TREATMENTS

As I shall show in my forthcoming work *Fin-de-siècle Germany and the Trauma of the Great War* (2016), the reception of Nietzsche's philosophy already in the 1890s up until the rise of Hitler's Germany in 1933, in particular with regard to those individuals orbiting Stefan George's *Geheimes Deutschland*, is fundamentally flawed. For all its creative impulses, Nietzsche's connection to Dionysian Greece and its sociopolitics—to say nothing of its intuitive critique of money as an ancient visual media—tends to be neutralized by nationalism and racism. To make matters worse, Nietzsche himself often provides models for individuals to elaborate illusions of individual, nationalistic, and even racial superiority. And as we should expect, scholarship on Nietzsche during Nazism is unacceptable. This leaves Nietzschean scholarship from 1945 until the present, and this means the German-American philosopher and translator Walter Kaufmann, who seeks to rescue Nietzsche's tarnished reputation after 1945. This mission begins with Kaufmann's 1950 publication of *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* and gives way to the many Nietzsche scholars since the 1950s who either modify or criticize Kaufmann's salvation.

What is astonishing about this secondary literature, however, is that despite its apparent shifts in historical perspective there is at its core something that is radically homogenized. Even in regard to the limited subject of the following study, there seems to be a void of variation. This is not to say that no one has treated Nietzsche's relationship with the Dionysian and earthly, nor the sense of a Dionysian community. The problem of Nietzsche's relationship with democracy and the extent and nature of his affinity with National Socialism have also been the focus of several studies. Scholars today would doubtlessly point to Ferdinand Tönnies's *Community and Society* from 1887, Ludwig Klages's *Nietzsche's Psychological Achievements* from 1926, Georg Lukács's *Destruction of Reason* from 1954, as well as Henning Ottmann's *Nietzsche's Philosophy and Politics* from 1999 and Domenico Losurdo's *Nietzsche, the Aristocratic Rebel* from 2009. A contrasting view of the approach taken here can be found, furthermore, in Martine Prange's recent study, *Nietzsche, Wagner, Europe* from 2013.

But to understand what follows in regard to these past explorations would be a diversion. My analysis of Nietzsche is something that these previous perspectives could hardly imagine. This has nothing to do with a private need to create an original and bold work that sets itself firmly against the critical consensus that has built up around Nietzsche's work (as has been suggested)—nor with a desire to confirm a more popular unease—indeed, notoriety—associated with Nietzschean thought. It is true, I confess, that what follows is (implicitly) opposed to Kaufmann. But this is not in a way that is similar to the critique of Kaufmann that has been articulated in a number of postmodern critics over the past few decades. For those who make it to the end of this work, it shall become clear that Nietzsche's philosophy (tragically) conceals its own undiscovered potential. And although this story, to the extent that it overturns an existing critical consensus, may appeal to specialists, it was written no less for the non-specialist. What does tragic concealment and undiscovered potential mean for us all?

Nietzsche's significance also as a forerunner of Nazism has faded among recent scholars. But these are the very same scholars who, like their predecessors, fail to link Nietzsche's nationalism to his reception of Hölderlin and Dionysian Greece—and who fail to read the works of Nietzsche's middle/late period, for instance *On the Genealogy of Morals*, in light of his earlier work, *The Birth of Tragedy*. But even this hardly touches upon the deeper, more urgent, and even mysterious issue.

To introduce that which shall doubtlessly be difficult for (Nietzschean) scholars who have made the fatal mistake of ignoring history, I should stress that the following work is founded upon an exploration of two parallel historical processes, both of which I have already explored—and both of which, despite any attempts to repress the reality of these phenomena with intellectual hyper-abstractions, are not going away: the monetization and visualization of our cosmos.

To be clear so that the reader (specialist and non-specialist alike) has the freedom to think about this little understood history,<sup>[60]</sup> I would like to introduce a few of the difficult, but necessary (and liberating) leaps of thought that this work, in contrast to every other study of Nietzsche that has existed, requires. In this text I repeat the Seafordian insight discussed in my previous book on Hölderlin and his relation to Dionysian Greece (5.2):<sup>[61]</sup> Philosophy emerges from the unlimitedness of money that creates an unconscious imagination that, in turn, sees the universe as ruled by an abstract, singular, and unlimited substance. Although (or perhaps because it is) exceptional, this understanding will be difficult for individuals unacquainted with the ancient mysteries of Greece and the earthly, communal spirit of tragedy.

How does philosophy emerge from money? The visual media of coinage (perhaps to pay mercenaries) is invented in early historic Greece during the seventh century B.C.E. (and quickly spreads thereafter).<sup>[62]</sup> But why early historic Greece? Because Homer invents the visual media of (alphabetic) writing just before—around 800 B.C.E.—and this peculiarly prepares the prehistoric Greeks to transition into the first ever monetized and visualized historical society.<sup>[63]</sup> And this may well lead one to wonder in what way this is relevant to the question above. Because, as all philosophers (should) know, precisely while Solon is



searching for a *térma* (limit) in wealth in the sixth century B.C.E., Pythagoras invents the word “philosophy.”<sup>[64]</sup>

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The linguistic invention (of philosophy) is not only predicated upon the visualizing media of alphabetic writing. It is also, as Seaford trenchantly points out, the product of a monetized unconscious that, in turn, sees the cosmos anew as ruled by an abstract, singular, and unlimited substance. This doubtlessly needs a little explaining. For why is this so? Because money, like writing, is abstract, singular, and unlimited—and these peculiar (and potentially lethal) qualities impress themselves profoundly onto the historic imagination of humankind. In fact, money imprints itself on the soul of humankind with such velocity that, after this transformation, it is almost impossible, because of its (limitless) permeation in human life, to retrieve even the reality of its cataclysmic birth: the fact of the historic emergence of writing and money and what they together mean.

In this work I continue with the idea that Nietzsche, like Hölderlin, adapts the adaption of Dionysus’s epiphany as a magical light in tragedy, as when the god appears to his mystic chorus in *Bacchae* and raises it up from its isolation and darkness. Because money emerges in Greece, only those who isolate themselves from history will find it anachronistic to point out the fact that the Dionysian spirit of Greece confronts money. As I shall stress throughout the text—and repeat in the coda—Nietzsche follows Hölderlin in his illumination of the Dionysian struggle with a monetized style of seeing (as embodied, for instance, by Pentheus) where images have meaning only insofar as they are rooted in a (self-isolating) desire for profit.

Furthermore, I shall also make reference to what Seaford calls a cosmic (vertical) axis. Although this phrase may seem elusive, its meaning, which I also develop in my Hölderlin book, is clear. A cosmic (vertical) axis is a reciprocal relationship between mortals and immortals rooted in a particular place. Through the mystic reenactment of its mythic epiphany on stage, the polis harnesses a sociopolitical potential to redeem cosmological confusion that arises from the visual media of money. This is clear in the contrast between the redemptive lightning and thunder to which the blind, wandering Oedipus succumbs and the horrific vision to which the tragic burial of the living (*Antigone*) coupled with the tragic refusal to bury the dead (*Polynices*) leads. In tragedy, the Greeks seek to actualize the sociopolitical power of art to overcome the lethal monetized and visualized spirits of tyrants such as Kreon. It is the image and language of the rebirth of this cosmic (vertical) axis—following monetary and visual destruction—that Nietzsche, in a time of rapid industrialization, cleverly seeks. And it is this modern German philosophical retrieval that is relevant to our (hyper-monetized) Digital Revolution today.

## SUMMARY

In part I, I focus on two fundamental gestures in Nietzsche’s philosophy: Firstly, his retrieval of the tragic play and secondly, his adaption of ancient tragedy to absorb and transform our monetized and visualized civilization in the present. Chapter one describes the dual origin of the style of seeing that accompanies money both in

the Near East and Greece, as well as its descent from early historic time into the nineteenth century. Chapter two treats Nietzsche's analysis of myth, ritual, and the opening out of both in tragedy to battle monetized and visualized chronotopes. Chapters three, four, and five illuminate the application of this retrieval in the genesis of Nietzsche's own (modern) myth of Zarathustra.

The neutralizing of Nietzsche's Dionysian chronotope by his proto-National Socialism is the theme of part II. Chapters six and seven describe the nationalism (and racism) that plague Nietzsche's early work, chapter eight their (intensified) return in his later writings, and chapter nine the historical context in which this spatio-temporal (and linguistic) psychosis emerges. Chapter ten suggests that despite Nietzsche's criticisms of Christianity, his (anti-Semitic) racism betrays its continued presence in his thought.

Although the conclusion begins by noting Nietzsche's nuanced relationship to Herakleitos, early historic Greece, and tragedy, it focuses finally on the absorption of his Dionysian thinking into a style of (unlimited) battling, self-glorification, and self-isolation peculiar to Herakleitean hyper-abstractions. In a coda I suggest that, because of this concealment, that which makes Nietzschean philosophy good, has still to be discovered.

## NOTES

1. Lucas Murrey, *Hölderlin's Dionysiac Poetry: The Terrifying-Exciting Mysteries* (Heidelberg, New York, Dordrecht, London: Springer, 2015).
2. *Ibid.*, chapters 7-11.
3. *Ibid.*, 7-9.
4. Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, hg. Jochen Schimdt, Bd. 1, *Gedichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1992) 306-07. Cited in Murrey, *Hölderlin's Dionysiac Poetry*, chapter 8.
5. Cited in Murrey, *Hölderlin's Dionysiac Poetry*, 9.2, 8.
6. Cited in Eliza Butler, *The Tyranny of Greece over Germany: A Study of the Influence Exercised by Greek Art and Poetry over the Great German Writers of the Eighteenth, Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), 213. Murrey, *Hölderlin's Dionysiac Poetry*, 6.2.
7. Cited in Murrey, *Hölderlin's Dionysiac Poetry*, 8.
8. *Ibid.*, 1.
9. Butler, *Tyranny of Greece over Germany*, 238.
10. Cited in Butler, *Tyranny of Greece over Germany*, 215; cited in Murrey, *Hölderlin's Dionysiac Poetry*, 9.1.
11. Murrey, *Hölderlin's Dionysiac Poetry*, 6.1, 7.1.
12. Cited in Murrey, *Hölderlin's Dionysiac Poetry*, 6.1.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*
15. *Ibid.*, 9.2.
16. BGE, in Friedrich Nietzsche, *Kritische Studienausgabe*, ed. Giorgio Colli andazzino Montinari, vol. 5, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse, Zur Genealogie der Moral*

- (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999), 195. All translations are mine, unless otherwise noted.
17. BGE in Nietzsche, *Kritische Studienausgabe*, vol. 5, 164.
  18. Murrey, Hölderlin's Dionysiac Poetry, 3.1–2. BGE in Nietzsche, *Kritische Studienausgabe*, 164.
  19. Ibid.
  20. See the subsection Expropriation des Landvolkes von Grund und Boden, in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Werke*, vol. 23, *Das Kapital: Kritik der politischen Ökonomie, Erster Band, Buch I: Der Produktionsprozeß des Kapitals* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1983), 744–60.
  21. Murrey, Hölderlin's Dionysiac Poetry, 6.1.
  22. Ibid., 14.
  23. Richard Seaford, *Ancient Greece and Global Warming: The Benefits of a Classical Education, or: Learn from the Past to Live in the Present* (Exeter: Credo Press, 2011).
  24. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1989), 22–23.
  25. Thomas Carlyle, *The Letters of Thomas Carlyle to his Brother Alexander with Related Family Letters* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1968), 177.
  26. Ibid., 177–78.
  27. Cited in Murrey, Hölderlin's Dionysiac Poetry, 8.
  28. Ibid., 7.1.
  29. Ibid., 8.
  30. Murrey, Hölderlin's Dionysiac Poetry, 2–3, 7, 9.
  31. Ibid., 9.1.
  32. Cited in Murrey, Hölderlin's Dionysiac Poetry, 7.1.
  33. Ibid., 3.1.
  34. For a discussion of the original, ancient visualized chronotope, see Murrey, Hölderlin's Dionysiac Poetry, 3.
  35. Seaford, *Ancient Greece and Global Warming*.
  36. Aristotle's understanding of time as a series of static images is significantly related to his monetized (that is, philosophical) unconscious. See Murrey, Hölderlin's Dionysiac Poetry, 5.
  37. Karl Marx, *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte, Heft III, 3* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2009), 123.
  38. Murrey, Hölderlin's Dionysiac Poetry, 2.3.
  39. Cited in Murrey, Hölderlin's Dionysiac Poetry, 5.3.
  40. For a discussion of Seaford's account of the original, ancient monetized chronotope, see Murrey, Hölderlin's Dionysiac Poetry, 2.3.
  41. BGE in Nietzsche, *Kritische Studienausgabe*, 195.
  42. Seaford, *Ancient Greece and Global Warming*.
  43. Murrey, Hölderlin's Dionysiac Poetry, 6.1.
  44. See G. Doy, "The Camera against the Paris Commune," in *Photography/Politics One*, ed. V. Burgin et al. (London: Photography Workshop, 1979) 13–26; Donald English, *Political Uses of Photography in the Third French Republic 1871–1914* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1984); Alisa Luxenberg, "Creating Desastres:



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