studies and for those interested in political thought in any region. Although undergraduate students and the lay public will find the details of primary-source material challenging, they will be rewarded by the author’s knowledgeable and accessible prose.

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Leo Strauss’s On Nietzsche’s “Thus Spoke Zarathustra” is the first volume in the University of Chicago Press’s Leo Strauss transcript series. Most of Strauss’s courses from the mid-1950s until his death in 1973 were recorded, transcribed, and made available to a limited group of students and teachers. These recordings are now being remastered, and edited and introduced by appropriate scholars. They are available on the Strauss Center’s website, and several transcripts are being published separately.

The overall effect of this project is similar to the effect of the ongoing publication of courses and manuscripts by Martin Heidegger: we have something “new” long after this seemed possible. The specific impact of Strauss’s volume on Zarathustra, moreover, goes beyond what it teaches us about Nietzsche: we are reminded again of the breadth of Strauss’s comprehension of the central figures of political philosophy, and of the depth of his understanding of the human soul.

Strauss “had a special relationship to Nietzsche from his early years,” Richard Velkley observes in his fine introduction. Yet, Strauss mentioned Nietzsche in print infrequently and wrote only one article about him. The article, from 1973, examines the plan of Beyond Good and Evil, which in Strauss’s “opinion ... is the best and most beautiful writing of Nietzsche”; the article bears comparison to courses Strauss offered on Beyond in 1967 and 1971. Nietzsche himself, however, regarded Zarathustra “as the greatest of his completed works,” so Strauss’s discussion of it is both necessary and welcome: Beyond is meant “only to introduce” it. Nonetheless, because Zarathustra “is very hard to understand ... for sober people, as I hope we all are,” Strauss’s discussion “has recourse to his other writings,” especially to the Untimely Meditations and #57 of the Anti-Christ.
The characteristic sobriety of Strauss’s own philosophical eros is on display throughout. He both examines *Zarathustra* step by step and brings out the fundamental questions with which it deals. He patiently goes through *Zarathustra* from its title to its conclusion, knitting together general and specific points, explaining the famous statement that God is dead, the three metamorphoses, the notion that man is a rope stretched over an abyss, the unity among *Zarathustra*’s various speeches and other elements central to it.

The heart of Strauss’s discussion is his exploration of these fundamental questions. He returns to, clarifies, and deepens his presentation of these problems throughout the course. In general, one of the distinctive elements in his view of Nietzsche is his examining him in political philosophical terms, including his analysis of Nietzsche’s connection to fascism.

Strauss begins by presenting the thought about natural right that precedes Nietzsche: this helps us to situate him and to understand the problems he faced. (Perhaps, indeed, the clarity or intelligibility of Strauss’s situating should make us question Nietzsche’s view that the very categories of thought change or are created by differently fated selves.) The premise of the classic view of natural right was “the end of man” understood as his “rational and social understanding” (4). Plato and Aristotle’s “fundamental differences” with the succeeding Thomistic view is that for Thomas the principles of action inhere in a “faculty which we may loosely call conscience,” and that his natural law teaching refers “to God as the divine legislator” (5–6). The “first wave” of modernity retains a teaching of universal natural right, but it consists of the rights of man. The “break” begins with Rousseau and continues through Kant and his German successors: “nature disappeared” from thinking about right and is replaced by reason or freedom, as in Kant’s moral law. The “third wave” begins most clearly with Nietzsche: both reason and nature, indeed, any universal standards “are abandoned” (6–7).

The notion that nature is neither intelligible nor good and must be overcome began clearly with Descartes. Ultimately, it is argued that reason too cannot supply standards, because it has a genesis, a history and fate, and history is an unfinished series of projects. Still, the status of this understanding of history is itself unclear. “The problem” for Nietzsche is that “the truth about man” and justice “had to have for him” “the character of a free project, of a free creation,” but it also needs a root in nature, “nay ... it must be nature.” This problem “has never been solved.” The “subjective” truth, say, the meaning of Michelangelo’s works, varies among the possibilities of commitments to such projects, but (at least for Nietzsche) there must still be something universal, or a natural root among such truths and not merely among “objectively” factual scientific or empirical ones (15).

Strauss wrestles throughout the course with the problem of nature in Nietzsche, formulating and reformulating or “repeating” his thought several times. He contrasts the *physis/nomos* split with the unitary view of history that seeks to replace it, and he implicitly criticizes the historicist view by examining how much Nietzsche must still rely on a grasp of nature.
Strauss’s focus on nature is connected to his examination of Nietzsche’s understanding of will to power. How might Nietzsche’s view of it be immune from his criticism of others? Why is will to power not merely one interpretation among many, and therefore dispensable? Why is it not subject to a brute imponderable at its base as is every other view or perspective? (Why could it not in principle be overcome through a later understanding?) Among the points that Strauss develops is the notion that will to power is a self-conscious creation—unlike what preceded it, it is not an unwittingly created doctrine. Will to power can attempt to encompass or account for nature, which might seem to be a fact outside of it, by consciously creating or recreating it, and by seeking to be the source of the inanimate as well as the animate.

Still, as with other doctrines, will to power is grounded in the self, not the ego, certainly not the rational ego. The self is linked to the passions, and it is based on something individual and unknowable. One wonders whether the deadly truth that previous so-called truths are merely creations can truly become a life-affirming and also a genuine truth for Nietzsche. The question of the eternal recurrence is linked to this issue, and Strauss considers eternal recurrence to be philosophically necessary for Nietzsche, and therefore sees Nietzsche’s material proofs of it as secondary. One wonders as well whether the notion of the dominance of the distinctive, particular self can nullify or can dispense with the classic understanding of the universality of the human soul. It might be too much to say that Strauss takes the side of Plato against Nietzsche on these matters; he surely does not take the side of Nietzsche against Plato.

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In 1935 Karl Löwith published his path-blazing work *Nietzsches Philosophie der ewigen Wiederkunft des Gleichen*. He focused on Zarathustra’s famous doctrine of the eternal return of the same and its relation to the will to power. With great learning and sensitivity, Löwith considered the eternal return in its context in the history of philosophy from the pre-Socratics to Hegel and beyond and assessed it in terms of its psychological and moral function, logical coherence, and correspondence or noncorrespondence to nature. In