

‘LET THOSE WHO HAVE EARS HEAR’ NIETZSCHE’S CRITIQUE OF RATIONAL SUBJECTIVITY AND HIS APHORISTIC WRITING

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ABSTRACT: Nietzsche’s distinct writing style is deeply intertwined with his philosophy. This essay examines the relationship between Nietzsche’s philosophy and his aphoristic writing through his critique of traditional metaphysics anchored on the notion of the rational subject. Nietzsche diagnoses the way of subjectivity thinking as the misinterpretation of language, locating the roots of rational thought to the structures and habits of language. The conceptual systemic writing of philosophy contributes to this thinking and stifles the living ‘self’ with the rational subject ‘I’. Therefore, Nietzsche abandoned the traditional conceptual writing and adopted aphoristic style, orientating readers to approach the true ‘self’ which is inaccessible to reason. Aphoristic writing embodies pluralism by presenting fragments, inviting a wider range of interpretation, and revealing diverse perspectives. Its structure also ensures the consistency of the theme. Only those readers who ‘have ears’ can hear the reecho in Nietzsche’s aphorisms through his esoteric writing which opens to the future.

KEYWORDS: Nietzsche; Metaphysics; Reason; Subject; Aphorism

INTRODUCTION

As a philosopher, Nietzsche is known not only because of his strong opposition to traditional metaphysics and the powerful claim ‘God is dead’, but also his unique writing style, which is closely connected to his philosophy.

Nietzsche critiques the traditional metaphysics represented by Platonism which refers to several types of metaphysics. These thoughts have a common point: the dualism structure that creates a higher existence that is more certain, and reliable than the real world and considers such existence as the base of the world of phenomena and gives meaning to the latter. In *The Republic*, when discussing beauty, Socrates distinguishes two kinds of people: those who are

capable of approaching beauty itself, and those who believes in beautiful objects¹. While beautiful objects, such as beautiful sounds and colours and shapes do not equal to beauty itself². This 'itself' is 'same and unchanging' thing³, meaning Truth in Plato³. Thus, phenomena are untrue and fails to offer the approach to Truth. The real philosophers are spectators of the truth⁴. 'God' 'Heaven' in Christian shares the same kernel as Plato's Truth and the world of truth: to divide the world into a 'true' itself and an 'illusory' one, including the manner of Christianity or in the manner of Kant⁵. According to this tradition, human beings need to find a foundation for living, which relates finite life to eternal existence. Therefore, humans could be free from the limited world phenomena and access towards the eternal world of Truth.

However, it is 'this' phenomena world could be argued much more convincingly in favour of its reality, rather than the 'other' reality could be proven⁶. This distorted understanding of reality faced a challenge in the danger of Nihilism and the crisis which was looming in the second half of the 19th century in Western culture, as portrayed in Dostoevsky's novels. Nietzsche has seen the crisis and decay of traditional values and beliefs. He poses that it would not make any sense to fabricate a world 'other' than this one, rather, it is a sign of decadence⁷. Nietzsche famously announced that 'God is dead'⁸, referring to the decline of religious belief and the loss of meaning in traditional values. As Heidegger points out, 'God' 'stands for the supersensory world of ideals that contain the goal that exists beyond the earthly life for this life'⁹. The death of God does not cause nihilism directly. As Reginster notes, only when our life has meaning merely from the existence of God or metaphysical world, the inference from the death of God to nihilism holds¹⁰. In *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche

¹ Plato. *The Republic*, Book 5, 476b–476d.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., Book 6, 494e.

⁴ Ibid., Book 5, 475e.

⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, 'Twilight of the Idols', in *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*, trans. Judith Norman, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 170.

⁶ Ibid., this is the first proposition posts by Nietzsche in the section "'Reason" in Philosophy', p. 170.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, New York: Vintage, 1974, p. 167.

⁹ Martin Heidegger, 'Nietzsche's Word: "God Is Dead"', in *Off the Beaten Track*, trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 165.

¹⁰ Reginster, Bernard. *The Affirmation of Life Nietzsche on Overcoming Nihilism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008, p. 9.

considers that nihilism means ‘the highest value devalue themselves’¹¹. ‘A nihilist is a man who judges of the world as it is that it ought not to be, and of the world as it ought to be that it does not exist’¹². To Nietzsche, nihilism is a necessary transitional stage that questions the foundations of existence, leading to the fresh understanding of the world and our existence¹³. Nihilism is the denial of a truthful world, of being, to Nietzsche, is a ‘divine way of thinking’¹⁴. Nietzsche ascribes the cause of nihilism to the faith in the categories of reason¹⁵. According to Nietzsche, it is the prejudice of reason that forces people to make use of unity, identity, permanence, substance, cause, objectification, being. Philosophers infatuate the subjective assurance in the way the categories of reason are applied, and they conclude that these categories could not have come from the empirical world. So they set up a higher world to interpret the origin of reason¹⁶. Accordingly, Nietzsche’s philosophy rejects reason but pursues to the ‘affirmation of life’. The figure of Dionysus in Nietzsche’s first influenced work *The Birth of Tragedy* is regarded as the role of symbol of this ideal¹⁷.

Nietzsche’s rejection of traditional metaphysics, or reason, not only reflected in his content of philosophy, but also his style of writing. This essay aims to present how Nietzsche’s philosophy and style of writing go together, and how Nietzsche uses aphorisms to achieve his philosophical purpose. Towards this goal, I discuss three related aspects. First, I start with Nietzsche’s critique on traditional metaphysics, which centered on the thinking of subjectivity, and the role that traditional writing plays in philosophy. This is also the reason that Nietzsche abandons traditional conceptual systemic writing. Second, I introduce Nietzsche’s philosophical focus: to revive the living ‘self’, which is the reason that he adopts aphoristic writing. After analysing the negative and positive reasons that Nietzsche adopts aphoristic writing, lastly, I present the characteristics and

¹¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, R. J. Hollingdale, New York: Vintage, 1968. Book One, ‘European Nihilism’. p. 9.

¹² *Ibid.*, Book Three, ‘Principles of a new evaluation’, p. 318.

¹³ *Ibid.*, Book One, ‘European Nihilism’. p. 14.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, ‘Twilight of the Idols’, in *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*, trans. Judith Norman, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp. 169-170.

¹⁷ Reginster, Bernard. *The Affirmation of Life Nietzsche on Overcoming Nihilism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008, p. 1. This point will be argued detailed in the following context.

effect of Nietzsche's aphorisms and how they contribute to break through the limitations of traditional writing of philosophy and convey Nietzsche's own philosophical idea which is inaccessible for reason.

I. NIETZSCHE'S HAMMER

Nietzsche attributes the origin of traditional metaphysics to Socrates (also Socrates in Plato's work). According to Nietzsche, Socrates influences Euripides to write the tragedy which abide by the laws of reason, and this event caused the deviation of Dionysus from tragedy. 'This is the new opposition: the Dionysiac versus the Socratic, and the work of art that once was Greek tragedy was destroyed by it'¹⁸. Affected by Socrates, Plato exiles poets and separates art and philosophy. Plato considers that as imitators, poets have nothing to do with the truth. The truth of bed is the 'form' of bed, which 'exists in nature'¹⁹. The bed made by the carpenter is the imitation of the form of bed. And the bed created by painters, which imitates the bed created by the carpenter, is the imitation of the imitation, the third remove from nature. What painting imitates is illusion rather than truth. Therefore, art is far from the truth. Only philosophers are capable of grasping 'thing itself', what is always 'the same and unchanging'²⁰. The 'itself' cannot be grasped by sight, only by reason and thought²¹. Thus, Plato claims that reason, rather than art, becomes the only path to the world of form, the Truth.

Despite the differences between 'form' (or 'Idea' in Plato), 'substance' in ancient Greek, 'God' in the medieval period, and 'I' in modern philosophy, the inner logic and the way of constructing a 'being' which is set as the stable fundamental base for existence is the same. As Heidegger suggests, Plato understands beings as 'Idea', which is conceived in terms of the suprasensuous, recognized as true being, whether it be God, or the moral law, or the authority of reason²².

Nietzsche considers these concepts as 'idols' and he touches these 'oldest, most

¹⁸ Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. Ronald Speirs, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. p. 60.

¹⁹ Plato. *The Republic* Book 10, 597a–598c.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. 4, ed. David Farrell Krell, trans. Joan Stambaugh, David Farrell Krell, Frank A. Capuzzi. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1991, pp. 201–202.

convinced' and 'almost the most hollow' eternal idols with a hammer, sounding out idols²³. Nietzsche declares a war to these eternal idols and his 'hammer' strikes the core of these 'idols': the rational subject. He considers these idols are the products of subjectivity. Nietzsche ascribes 'substance' in ancient Greek, 'God' in Christianity, and 'ego' in Descartes, to the rational subject. 'The concept "reality," "being," is taken from our feeling of the "subject"'²⁴. 'Subject' means the most stable thing in the world, which is the core concept of traditional metaphysics. Traditional metaphysics believes in the 'I' as being, as substance, and it projects this belief onto all things. The concept of 'being' is only derived from the concept of 'I'²⁵. Therefore, philosophers confuse what 'comes first with what comes last'²⁶. The 'highest ideas' in philosophers—Being, the Unconditioned, the Good, the True, the Perfect—must come from the concept of 'God', which is called 'the last, emptiest, most meagre idea of all' by Nietzsche²⁷.

This basic presupposition of reason—to project the belief in the I-substance onto all things and create the concept of 'thing'—is also the basic presuppositions of the metaphysics of language²⁸. Nietzsche argues that the rational subject is caused by the misuse of language and our habitual thinking.

We have regarded the effect as something that effects, and this we have regarded as a being. But even in this formulation, the concept 'effect' is arbitrary: for those changes that take place in us, and that we firmly believe we have not ourselves caused, we merely infer to be effects, in accordance with the conclusion: 'every change must have an author'; —but this conclusion is already mythology: it separates that which effects from the effecting²⁹.

According to Nietzsche, the concept of a 'subject' is a being that we invent to attribute actions and events to a particular agent. For instance, consider the expression, 'the lightning flashes', we have posited the flash first time as an activity, and a second time as a subject. 'The lightning flashes' is an event that happened, is an action. However, our habitual thinking leads us to seek a subject that acts,

²³ Nietzsche, 'Twilight of the Idols', p.155.

²⁴ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, p. 269

²⁵ Nietzsche, 'Twilight of the Idols', p.169. When Nietzsche discusses 'reason' in philosophy, he analyses the production of these 'highest ideas', and its relationship with language.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 288.

an agent responsible for the event. This is because independent ‘action’ does not exist in our habitual thinking, rather, action must be the action of some subject. Thus, a being is added to an event, and we make the effect into a being³⁰. Instead of taking flash as an effect, we seek an author for it, the ‘lightning’. In this way, we attach the concept of a being, and we turn the event ‘flash’ to ‘something is flashing’, we add the ‘lightning’ to the event, and turn the action of the flash into an entity with a subject.

This subject way of thinking is also evident in the proposition ‘I think, therefore I am’, which regards ‘thinking’ as the predicate and condition, and the subject ‘I’ is the condition of the activity of ‘thinking’. “‘Thinking’ is an activity to which thought *must* supply a subject as cause³¹. Consequently, the subject ‘I’, ‘a synthesis which is *made* by thinking³²’ becomes synonymous with ‘I think’.

The concept of the subject implies twofold prescriptive meanings. First, the subject is considered the cause of an action, and it is more fundamental than the action itself. While an action is variable, the subject remains stable. Second, the subject is the carrier of the action, and the action relies on the subject. The action represents the state of the subject. These implications establish the priority status of the ‘subject’ and lead to the subject way of thinking, which posits that changeable phenomena are not real existence. Instead, the more real existence is the stable subject that determines the phenomena.

Nietzsche argues that this concept of subject and the subject way of thinking is universal in traditional metaphysics and the consequent foundational ideas are on the false premise. The supersensory world constructed by these ideas results in nihilism. Nietzsche names those who believe that the nature of things can be discovered by logic as ‘theoretical optimist’³³. And this optimistic metaphysics of logic leads to lies. ‘When logic is thought to be the sole ruler it leads to lies; for it *is* not the sole ruler’³⁴.

Moreover, the conceptual language of philosophy assists this subject way of thinking. ‘It is language which works on building the edifice of concepts; later it

³⁰ Ibid. , pp. 287–289.

³¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, New York: Vintage, 1966. p. 67.

³² Ibid.

³³ Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, p. 74.

³⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Philosophy and Truth: Selections from Nietzsche’s Notebooks of the early 1870’s*, trans. Daniel Breazeale. Atlantic Highlands, N.J: Humanities Press, 1979. P. 28.

is science'³⁵. The subject-predicate writing is the typical conceptual writing in philosophy, the core of which is the basic laws of logic, the law of identity and the law of contradiction. These laws ensure that the subject equals the predicate in the logical sense. These laws are regarded as 'forms of pure knowledge, because they precede all experience'³⁶. However, Nietzsche argues that these laws 'are not forms of knowledge at all! they are regulative articles of belief'³⁷. When this 'subject–predicate' language structure is applied to the reality, it intensifies the thinking that believes all 'predicate' objects presuppose a subject which is the condition of 'predicate'. Thus, conceptual writing becomes the reason's helper, and turns the living life into the rational and logical subject which is presupposed.

II. AN 'ARTISITC SOCRATES'

It is discussed that Nietzsche's critique on the subject which is the core of traditional metaphysics. However, it is debatable about whether there exists subjectivity in Nietzsche's philosophy. In Heidegger's view, Nietzsche's philosophy is 'the metaphysics of subjectivity', as he turns Being (Sein) to 'the will to power', 'will comes to light as the essence of that subjectivity'³⁸. While in the perspective of post-modernists such as Derrida, Nietzsche's project is a certain deconstruction of the subject³⁹. Some contemporary scholar considers that Nietzsche 'furnishes a more complex model of subjectivity' which enables a single person to comprise a multiplicity of subjectivities⁴⁰.

Despite these disputes, Nietzsche's rejection of the rational subjectivity and affirmation of life is doubtless. The figure of Dionysus symbolizes the 'affirmation of life', whereas 'the Crucified' represents the negation of life⁴¹. Dionysus versus the 'Crucified'. Suffering, unlike in Christian counts as an objection against life or a formular for its condemnation⁴², rather, is desirable and affirming life. In

³⁵ Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, p. 150.

³⁶ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, pp. 287–288.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 288.

³⁸ Martin Heidegger, 'Nietzsche's Word: "God Is Dead"', in *Off the Beaten Track*, trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 182.

³⁹ Jaanus Sooväli, 'Gapping the Subject: Nietzsche and Derrida,' in *Nietzsche and the Problem of Subjectivity*, ed. João Constâncio, Maria João Mayer Branco and Bartholomew Ryan, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015, p. 439.

⁴⁰ See Guay, Robert. 'The "I's Have it: Nietzsche on Subjectivity,' *Inquiry*, vol. 49. No. 3, 2006, pp. 218–241.

⁴¹ Reginster, Bernard. *The Affirmation of Life Nietzsche on Overcoming Nihilism*, p. 228.

⁴² Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, p. 543

Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Nietzsche distinguishes ‘self’ and ‘I’. The former is a ‘great reason’, while the latter is a ‘small reason’. As a ‘great reason’, the ‘self’ is the body. ‘Behind your thoughts and feelings’, ‘stands a powerful commander, an unknown wise man – he is called self. He lives in your body, he is your body’⁴³. ‘The body is a great reason’. ‘Your small reason, what you call “spirit” is also a tool of your body, my brother, a small work – and plaything of your great reason’⁴⁴. “‘I’ you say and are proud of this word. But what is greater is that in which you do not want to believe – your body and its great reason. It does not say I, but *does* I’⁴⁵. The ‘self’ in Nietzsche, is the will to power. The essence of all lives including humans is the will of pursuing power. The will to power relates to living life. ‘Wherever I found the living, there I found the will to power’⁴⁶. The philosophy that Nietzsche seeks is the expression of the will to power based on the body. ‘Like me, guide the virtue that has flown away back to the earth – yes, back to the body and life: so that it may give the earth its meaning, a human meaning!’⁴⁷. Life represents the whole character of beings, the essence of which is the will to power. ‘There is nothing to life that has value, except the degree of power – assuming that life itself is the will to power’⁴⁸. Nietzsche approves of Epicureans’ attitude to philosophy, ‘they rejected the search for truth with irony; “philosophy as an art of *living*”’⁴⁹.

The rational subject in traditional metaphysics suppresses and denies what Nietzsche calls the ‘self’, or the ‘body’. Whereas the subject way of thinking is connected to the conceptual way of writing, which also relates to Socrates, ‘from Socrates onwards, the mechanism of concepts, judgments and conclusions was prized, above all other abilities, as the highest activity and most admirable gift of nature’⁵⁰. This conceptual writing alongside the traditional subjectivity leads to the stifle of real life.

In order to revive the living ‘self’ in philosophy, Nietzsche proposes a new

⁴³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Adrian Del Caro, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. p. 23.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

⁴⁸ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, p. 37.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 247.

⁵⁰ Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, p. 74.

type of philosophy, which is the union with art. In his notes, Nietzsche conveys this claim: a philosopher must be ‘a totally new type of philosopher-artist who fills the empty space with a work of art, possessing aesthetic value’⁵¹. And this idea of a new type of ‘philosopher-artist’ is both a constant theme and goal in Nietzsche’s writings.

In spite of Nietzsche’s critique of traditional metaphysics, he never gives up the philosophy that presents the living ‘self’ in a way that art does. This is presented in Nietzsche’s portrayal of the last days of Socrates who is the representative figure of ‘logical optimism’ as mentioned above. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche discusses ‘whether the birth of an “artistic Socrates” is something inherently contradictory’⁵², and offers the possibility that Socrates as a musician. ‘As he tells his friends in prison, the same figure kept appearing to him in dream time after time, and it always said the same thing: “Socrates, make music!”’ ‘Finally, in prison, he agrees to play the music for which he has so little respect, so as to unburden his conscience completely. In this state of mind he composes a proemium to Apollo and versifies some Aesopian fables’⁵³.

Nietzsche argues that the separation of art and philosophy is not necessary, in other words, philosophy and art are not exclusively antithetical and inherently contradictory. Nietzsche points out that the music and philosophy in ancient Greek are integrated: ‘Judged from the standpoint of the present, an entire period of Greek philosophy simultaneously belongs within the realm of their art’⁵⁴. And what Nietzsche aims for in his aphoristic writing, is to revive the life. ‘We now oppose knowledge with art: return to life!’⁵⁵. He pursues the union of art and philosophy like in Pre-Platonic philosophy: a philosophy could affirm life. Thus, Nietzsche’s writing serves to free the living ‘self’ from the conceptual philosophy in the integration of philosophy and art, in Nietzsche’s word, to be a ‘philosopher-artist’.

⁵¹ Nietzsche, *Philosophy and Truth*, p. 15.

⁵² Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, p. 71.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Nietzsche, *Philosophy and Truth*, p. 12.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 14.

III. 'A THIRD EAR'

Nietzsche rejects the systemic doctrine writing of philosophy. He sketched his stylistic ideal writing in his notes, which seeks to avoid technical terms and aims to do more with less.

'Write in a completely impersonal and cold manner.' 'Omit all "us", "we", and "I" Also limit the number of sentences with "that". So far as possible, avoid all technical terms. Everything must be said as specifically as possible, and every technical term, including "will" must be left out'⁵⁶.

In 'Twilight of the Idols', Nietzsche points out that the aim of his writing is 'to create things that stand the test of time; striving for a little immortality in form, in substance'⁵⁷. To fulfill this aim, Nietzsche has found his own form which he is proud of – aphorism. 'I am the first German to have mastered the aphorism; and aphorisms are the forms of "eternity"; my ambition is to say in ten sentences what other people say in a book, –what other people do *not* say in a book...'⁵⁸. Referring to Nietzsche's writing, Deleuze's evaluation contributes: 'The poem and the aphorism are Nietzsche's two most vivid means of expression, but they have a determinate relation to philosophy'⁵⁹.

The term 'aphorism' comes from the Greek 'aphorismos' which derives from the Greek verb 'aphorizein', meaning 'to define'⁶⁰. What 'aphorism' 'defines' clearly not through a restrict logical definition, but rather to demarcate from popular opinion, including cognitive, moral prejudices, while in Nietzsche's case, from traditional philosophy. Compared with forms of narrative such as allegory and parable, which tell a story through plot, and characters, alongside a beginning and end, aphorism appears as non-narrative. As Miller has pointed out, an aphorism includes the beginning and ending in a single sentence⁶¹. Such characteristic determines aphorism's own tempo of writing, which has no time for complete characters or plot. Therefore, aphorism breaks up the linear knowledge system of traditional metaphysics constructed in conceptual writing.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 55.

⁵⁷ Nietzsche, 'Twilight of the Idols', p. 223.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Deleuze, Gilles, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson, London: Continuum, 2002. p. 31.

⁶⁰ For a detailed examination of the association and difference between German words 'Sentenz' and 'Aphorism', see Joel Westerdale, Günter Abel, and Werner Stegmaier, *Nietzsche's Aphoristic Challenge*, the first chapter 'They're aphorisms!', the particular section 'Sentenz and Aphorismus', p. 14.

⁶¹ Miller, J. Hillis. 'Aphorism as Instrument of Political Action in Nietzsche', *Parallax (Leeds, England)*, vol. 32, 2004, p. 72.

Aphorism in Nietzsche's writing express pluralism through presenting fragments and countless 'chances'. Each aphorism is a statement of a chance. Deleuze illustrates Nietzsche's philosophy in the game 'dice throw' in Heraclitus' expression. 'Nietzsche identifies chance with multiplicity, with fragments, with parts, with chaos: the chaos of the dice that are shaken and then thrown. *Nietzsche turns chance into an affirmation*'⁶². The 'chances' and fragments in Nietzsche's aphorisms convey a plural thought through the expression of sense. Deleuze points out at the beginning of *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 'Nietzsche substitutes the correlation of sense and phenomenon for the metaphysical duality of appearance and essence and for the scientific relation of cause and effect'⁶³. 'Sense' in Deleuze means a complex notion. There is always a plurality of senses in 'event', 'phenomenon', word' and 'thought'. Everything is complicated and has many senses in Nietzsche. This pluralist idea is viewed by Deleuze as 'philosophy's greatest achievement', 'the conquest of the true concept'⁶⁴. And the aphoristic form is perfect for expressing this pluralist idea. 'An aphorism is present as a fragment; it is the form of pluralist thought', 'only the aphorism is capable of articulating sense'⁶⁵.

Unlike traditional treatises, there is more space in Nietzsche's aphorisms, calling for interpretation. Deleuze praises Nietzsche's aphorisms as 'the art of interpreting'⁶⁶. In the preface of 'On the Genealogy of Morals', Nietzsche responds to the polemic caused by the aphoristic writing in *Human, All Too Human*, highlighting the interpretation of aphorisms: 'If this book is incomprehensible to anyone and jars on his ears, the fault, it seems to me, is not necessarily mine'. In other words, the difficulty caused by the aphoristic form lies in the fact that 'today this form is *not taken seriously enough*'⁶⁷. 'An aphorism, properly stamped and molded, has not been "deciphered" when it has simply been read, rather, one has then to begin its *exegesis*, for which is required an art of exegesis'⁶⁸. In the same work, Nietzsche gives an example of 'exegesis' in the third essay, 'What Is the

⁶² Ibid., p. 26.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 3.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 4.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 31.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, p. 22.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 23.

Meaning of Ascetic Ideals?’ beginning with an aphorism from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, presenting an interpretation of ascetic ideals. Finishing the discussion of a common interpretation of ascetic ideals in a traditional ‘essay’ way, Nietzsche turns to ask at the end of the first section: ‘Am I understood? ... Have I been understood?... “Not at all, my dear sir!” – Then let us start again, from the beginning’⁶⁹. Following this ironical writing, Nietzsche starts with the same question at the beginning of the second section, ‘What is the meaning of ascetic ideals?’ and provides another interpretation in the next section.

The structure of Nietzsche’s aphorisms ensures the consistency of the theme. Nietzsche’s philosophical writings are not a mere series of aphorisms, the connections between each aphorism in Nietzsche are the connections between the fragment chances, which consist of a part of an integral collection of aphorisms. These connections are composed not at random, but in a ‘system in aphorisms’. ‘Nietzsche’s philosophy is neither a unified, closed system nor a variety of disintegrating aphorisms, but rather a system in aphorisms’. ‘The single meaning of Nietzsche’s multiple metamorphoses must be understood in terms of the fundamentally experimental character of his philosophizing’⁷⁰. Stegmaier calls the structure of Nietzsche’s aphorisms ‘contextualization’. Nietzsche assembles the standalone aphorisms in carefully composed aphorism books, creating contexts of aphorisms himself. They usually already link several topics in their own context; in the connection with others, thematic chains are formed, which Nietzsche, in turn, intertwines artfully. This results in dense thematic webs in which the aphorisms offer themselves for mutual interpretation⁷¹. Nietzsche repeatedly revisited his thoughts and placed them in different contexts. He abandoned the central perspective in the traditional conceptual writing of philosophy and presents his respective subject in the newly composed perspectives. Therefore, if there is a subject in Nietzsche’s writing, it is not the presupposed subject in traditional metaphysics presented as truth, rather, it becomes visible in its possible perspectives. Moreover, the rhythm and the tempo lie in the aphorisms construct a part of the ‘Contextualization’ as well. Nietzsche

⁶⁹ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, pp. 97–98.

⁷⁰ Löwith, Karl. *Nietzsche’s Philosophy of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same*, trans. J. Harvey Lomax, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997, p. 11.

⁷¹ Stegmaier, Werner. *Friedrich Nietzsche zur Einführung*. Hamburg: Junius, 2011, p. 103.

complains ‘what torture books written in German are for anyone who has a *third* ear! ... there is art in every good sentence – art that must be figured out if the sentence is to be understood!’⁷².

Compared to the centered, certain, and closed traditional writing, Nietzsche’s aphoristic writing opens to the future. ‘A lack of courage for the problem leads the systematic philosopher to close the open horizon of attempting examination and questioning. The correlate to the critique of the system is a philosophic will to the rediscovery of the world and to the open horizons of questioning’⁷³. In addition, the diversity of perspectives in Nietzsche’s aphorisms does not offer to determine a fixed understanding. They can be understood differently. In this way, they remain open for the future⁷⁴. Nietzsche does not teach lessons through his aphorisms, instead, he orientates each person in his own way. Thus, his writing is forever open and forever unfinished.

Admittedly, as it is pluralism in ‘chances’, placed in diverse perspectives, embracing interpretation, and open to the future, Nietzsche’s aphoristic writing also comes with the price of uncertain meanings and perplexing understanding. Being conscious of the result of abandoning conceptual writing and expressing philosophy in such a way, Nietzsche even goes so far as to conceal himself in his aphorisms. ‘If previous philosophy is unconscious autobiography, Nietzsche’s aphorisms are conscious self-revelations. But being conscious, they are ways not only to reveal his self but to conceal it’⁷⁵. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche divides philosophers into the exoteric and the esoteric philosophers: ‘the exoteric approach comes from outside and sees, estimates, measures, and judges from the outside, not the inside: what is much more essential is that the exoteric approach sees things from below, the esoteric looks down from above’⁷⁶. Nietzsche noticed the differences between exoteric and esoteric writing in ancient society and the need of concealing himself, showing his need of distinguishing readers in *The Gay Science*:

One does not only wish to be understood when one writes; one wishes just as surely not to be understood. It is not by any means necessarily an objection to a

⁷² Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 182.

⁷³ Löwith, Karl. *Nietzsche’s Philosophy of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same*, p. 13.

⁷⁴ Stegmaier, Werner. *Friedrich Nietzsche zur Einführung*, p.104.

⁷⁵ Dannhauser, Werner J, *Nietzsche’s View of Socrates*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1974. P. 200.

⁷⁶ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 42.

book when anyone finds it impossible to understand: perhaps that was part of the author's intention he did not want to be understood by just “anybody.” All the nobler spirits and tastes select their audience when they wish to communicate; and choosing that, one at the same time erects barriers against “the others”.⁷⁷

Nietzsche's writing is not for all people, neither is his philosophy. ‘Nietzsche distinguishes between good and bad readers. The latter abuse his books, and to guard against them he takes care to be misunderstood’⁷⁸.

‘Let those who have ears hear!’⁷⁹. Readers who have ears can open their inwardness and approach to one's ‘self’ through Nietzsche's aphorisms. Heidegger once claims that language speaks through calling for those who carefully listen⁸⁰. Similarly, Nietzsche's aphorisms also call for listening. Unsatisfied being the certain ‘logos’, the sound in Nietzsche's writing is on the verge of meaning, presenting a variable and transforming truth. In this way, writing becomes a re-echo of voice, conveying the presence of metaphysics. For ‘good readers’ who ‘have ears’ and can properly interpret Nietzsche, Nietzsche's aphorisms provoke them to think and rethink and orientate them the access to the living ‘self’, which is inaccessible for reason. ‘Nietzsche consciously writes for the few, hinting to them of truths which are accessible only to true creative selves’⁸¹. Nietzsche's aphorisms are expressed as assertions and conclusions without systemic arguments. Instead of ‘teaching’ readers in a conceptual way, ‘the aphorisms, then, are hints about matters at which one can only hint. Being deeply personal, the expressions of Nietzsche's true self, they are meant to provoke the reader to become a true self’⁸².

Intriguingly, Nietzsche's ‘enemy’ in philosophy is Plato's Socrates, while Nietzsche's adversary in writing is Plato. Nietzsche sees Platonic dialogue as a masterpiece of ancient Greek writing, ‘which was created by mixing all available styles and forms together so that it hovers somewhere midway’ ‘between prose and poetry, thus breaking the strict older law about the unity of linguistic form’⁸³.

⁷⁷ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, p. 343.

⁷⁸ Dannhauser, Werner J, *Nietzsche's View of Socrates*, p. 201.

⁷⁹ Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, p. 213.

⁸⁰ Martin Heidegger, ‘Language,’ in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. Vincent B. Leith. New York: W.W.Norton Company, 2008, p. 919.

⁸¹ Dannhauser, Werner J, *Nietzsche's View of Socrates*, p. 201.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, p. 69.

‘Platonic dialogue was the boat on which the older forms of poetry, crowded together with all her children, sought refuge after their shipwreck’⁸⁴. Nietzsche’s aphoristic writing rescues philosophy and poetry from the ‘Platonic boat’ on which stands the helmsman, Socrates.

IV. CONCLUSION

This essay begins with Nietzsche’s critique on traditional metaphysics which establishes a higher world beyond the reality. Nietzsche’s critique of it centers on the rational subject. He diagnoses the way of subjectivity thinking as the misinterpretation of language and locates the origin of rational thought in the structures and habits of language. The conceptual systemic writing of philosophy contributes to this thinking and stifles the living ‘self’ with the rational subject ‘I’. Therefore, Nietzsche abandoned the traditional conceptual writing and adopted aphoristic writing, orientating readers to approach the true ‘self’ which is inaccessible for reason. Aphorism writing express pluralism through presenting fragments, offering more space to interpretation. Its structure also ensures the consistency of the theme. Only the readers who ‘have ears’ can hear the reecho in Nietzsche’s aphorisms through his esoteric writing which opens to the future.

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⁸⁴ Ibid.

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