lies in the deep connection between self-sacrifice and culture. To be self-transcending, the human being must also be self-sacrificing, but this raises the question of how one might create a culture in which individuals willingly divest themselves of something substantial that is their own for the sake of something higher, more noble, and more exalted that is not their own. Unless the culture offers a sufficiently compelling reason for self-sacrifice, no one will endure the pain of self-denial. We are thus left with a puzzle: If self-sacrifice and culture are coeval and conjoined, reciprocally dependent and codetermining, how does a genuine culture come into being? It seems that Nietzsche's answer is the creative genius, who can emerge even from a decadent culture to serve as inspiration and exemplar for others—as Nietzsche hoped Wagner would. Regardless of whether Nietzsche retained his faith in Wagner's aesthetic project, the heroic creative genius raises more questions than it answers; in particular, it leads us to reflect on Nietzsche's account of human freedom and to wonder about the relation between the common expression of freedom in service of an existing culture and the extraordinary activity of cultural geniuses that serve as legislators for the rest of humanity, presenting in their own person a new ideal prescribed by new tables of law. As this symposium attests, such questions take us to the heart of Nietzsche's thought, and Church is to be commended for writing such a stimulating and provocative book.

Freedom, Myth, and Science

Shilo Brooks

Princeton University

Unfashionable Observations is a difficult book. It can exasperate even Nietzsche's most dedicated students not only because it consists of four intricate and subtle essays, but also because the essays appear at first to be only contingently related occasional reflections provoked by a particular concern or interest. As I have argued elsewhere, the unity of the essays, the continuity of the intention animating their composition, and the logic of the book's overall argument become evident after repeated comparative readings.[1]

[1]Shilo Brooks, *Nietzsche's Culture War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018). Like Church, I argue that taken together the essays offer a unified and coherent

Readers of Nietzsche can be grateful for Church's rich analysis, which does much to make sense of this challenging book. Church has acquired a profound understanding of the essays through careful study, and his knowledge of the philosophic context informing Nietzsche's thought is evident throughout. Church's lucid exposition, attention to detail, and seemingly compendious knowledge of Nietzsche's eighteenth- and nineteenth-century predecessors make his book indispensable. All future interpretations of the *Observations* will benefit from engaging with Church's most helpful commentary.

It is difficult to quibble with Church's major thesis that the *Observations* first outlines how modernity is dehumanizing, and then offers a humanizing remedy. Accordingly, while the first pair of essays on Strauss and scientific history are mostly critical of modern life, the second pair on Schopenhauer and Wagner show how to "create a new form of culture that will foster the best or most exemplary life for human beings" (1). Church insists, and rightly so, that the thesis of his book (and thus of Nietzsche's) can only be proved when the *Observations* is read as a book with "two halves which mirror one another," and which build a unified argument in successive fashion (1–2, 10–11, 130). Church's analysis convincingly proves his major thesis on all counts.

Yet for all of Church's success in proving his major thesis, there are some minor theses which seem to be in tension with one another. He claims that Nietzsche is deeply committed to human freedom, the free shaping of the self, and freedom from the natural order. Nietzsche thinks human beings are essentially autonomous, so free in fact that we can "shape our life in our own image," recreating nature and human nature to endow our lives with meaning and purpose (3, 68). In "On the Utility and Liability of History for Life," Nietzsche asserts that human beings can create a "new and improved *physis*" for themselves (UL, 167; cf. SE, 195, 211–14).

Yet at the same time that Church argues that Nietzsche thinks humanity is free, he maintains that the *Observations* rejects the possibility that myth, illusion, and falsehood can be employed freely to imbue modern human existence with meaning. Church's Nietzsche rejects the use of myth, illusion, and self-deception as tools for liberation and self-creation (3, 17–20, 68). In his analysis of "David Strauss the Confessor and the Writer," Church says that Nietzsche's project consists in "dispelling illusion and self-deception" (54). Nietzsche "sees in modernity the irreversible trend toward the demythologizing of culture" (37). Similarly, in his treatment of "Utility and Liability," Church argues that scholars who think the essay endorses willful belief in myth suffer from a "misunderstanding," and fail to see that this is

philosophical narrative that constitutes Nietzsche's first attempt to diagnose and cure the spiritual ailments of modern society. We differ in the details of the sickness and the resources for remedy.

a "mistaken way to read the essay" (56–57, cf. 111, 126, 129, 234). Church challenges "this 'mythic' interpretation of 'Utility and Liability,'" remarking that "although Nietzsche celebrates myth in *The Birth of Tragedy*, he uses the word only once in this essay in an off-handed way" (56).

But if human beings are free to cultivate and create themselves using culture, why would Nietzsche deny them the freedom to use cultural tools such as myth and illusion to do so? One difficulty with Church's assertion that Nietzsche uses the word "myth" only once in *Utility and Liability* is that Church himself has told us that we should read the *Observations* as a whole. Nietzsche may use the word "myth" only once in "Utility and Liability," but he uses it liberally throughout "Richard Wagner in Bayreuth." In that essay, Nietzsche wonders how myth and music can "live in our modern society" and not fall victim to it (RW, 301). Wagner was a "mythologist and mythic poet" whose highest imperative was "to return myth to the realm of the masculine" and make it speak again in modern times (RW, 269, 301). Nietzsche even asserts that Wagner's most famous myth, the *Ring of the Nibelungen*, is so rich that it is actually "an immense system of thought without the conceptual form of thought" (RW, 309). Wagner, Nietzsche says, "thinks mythically," and his art "shapes or poeticizes" history just as the Greeks did in their myths (RW, 309, 271).

If Church is right that Nietzsche intends this portrait of Wagner the mythmaker to serve as a model of the exemplary individual who can redeem modern humanity, then it is unclear why that same Nietzsche would prohibit modern humanity from using myth as a tool for redemption (199). Perhaps Church's claim that Nietzsche rejects myth is overstated. In fact, Nietzsche himself employs mythic creativity in "Schopenhauer as Educator" and "Richard Wagner," both of which feature what scholars agree are highly aggrandized and semimythical accounts of the lives and thought of their protagonists. Nietzsche openly confessed to artistically enhancing his mentors in his discussion of the *Unfashionable Observations* in *Ecce Homo*, an autobiography of sorts which is itself a highly aggrandized and at times outright false or mythical account of his own life.[2] These memorializing writings might rightly be called monumental histories, following Nietzsche's description and endorsement of that fictional and mythologizing form of history in "Utility and Liability" (UL, 96–98; cf. 130–31). All of this is to say nothing, of course, of Nietzsche's greatest mythical writing and the writing he prized most highly: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Far from barring modern humans from using mythical exaggerations, simplifications, and falsehoods in his project of redemption through free self-creation, Nietzsche did precisely this without a hint of a guilty conscience.

Perhaps the reason Church thinks Nietzsche is antimythology is that he also thinks Nietzsche is pro–modern science (93, 107). "Nietzsche was not

[2]Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, "Untimely Ones," §3.

anti-science," Church says, and "modern science . . . allows humanity to emerge from a condition of myth-making" (236, 93). The truth-telling intention of modern science is incompatible with the falsifying intention of mythology. Church sees humanity as free, but not so free as to be permitted to believe in humanly created myths in an era of scientific truth. Yet the problem with saying that modern science allows humanity to emerge from a condition of myth making is that the only modern scientific insights Nietzsche explicitly calls "true" in the *Observations* are those that affirm that human beings are condemned to a certain kind of myth making. These insights encourage the use of myth and illusion instead of forbidding it.

In the ninth section of "Utility and Liability," Nietzsche says that he holds to be "true but deadly" the "doctrines of sovereign becoming, of the fluidity of all concepts, types, and species, of the lack of any cardinal difference between man and animal" that are in current scientific fashion (UL, 153). He doubtless has many thinkers in mind when he invokes these "doctrines," but his references to the "fluidity" of all species and types, and to the lack of any cardinal difference between man and animal, cannot but call to mind the revolutionary studies in biological evolution by Charles Darwin and Jean-Baptiste Lamarck. Nietzsche may not be antiscience, but calling science's evolutionary insights "deadly" does not exactly make him proscience either, especially if, as Nietzsche asserts, "science robs the human being of the foundation for all his security and tranquility, his belief in what is lasting and eternal" (UL, 164).

If the sovereignty of becoming makes the idea of Being an illusion, and if all intellectual concepts, epistemological types, and biological species are in a continuous state of flux, then what could our conceptions of "truth" and "nature" be but certain kinds of myths or life-promoting falsifications in a stream of ceaseless change? The young Nietzsche did not fully confront the problems with this position in his early writings, not least of which is why this position among all others should be exempted from the status of being called myth—i.e., from its own highest insight—and elevated to the status of permanent truth. Nor does he seem to have been fully committed to it given his middle-period experiments with reason. For Church, however, the young Nietzsche is already committed: namely, to a modern science that provides permanent truths upon whose authority our human creativity and freedom are not free to encroach. But Nietzsche knew well that science may reveal the impermanence of a world which invites creative interpretation instead of the permanence of a world which prohibits it. Church sees humanity as somewhat free, but the young Nietzsche saw humanity as entirely free—and certainly free enough to utilize myth—since science and myth have something creative in common.