GUIDE TO LIVING

Horst Hutter: *Shaping the Future: Nietzsche's New Regime of the Soul and Its Ascetic Practices* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006. Pp. xvii, 222. $80.00, $26.95 paper)

DOI: 10.1017/S0034670507000368

Horst Hutter's interpretation of Nietzsche's writings takes its cue from the work of Pierre Hadot and the claim that, in the ancient world, philosophy was seen as having two possible roles. One was the search for truth; the other was as a guide to living. Seen from the latter vantage point, philosophical doctrines could assist individuals striving for self-improvement. This understanding of philosophy is Hutter's focus throughout this book: indeed, philosophy conducted in the service of self-perfection soon becomes synonymous with ancient philosophy itself. Two other features of ancient philosophy underlined by Hutter are the fact that it was typically practiced in schools and that it had political implications. As a consequence of ancient philosophy being practiced in schools and being directed toward self-perfection, dialogue took precedence over writing as the mode of philosophical expression. With regard to politics, ancient schools of philosophy either aimed to reform the political structures of society or withdrew from politics and society altogether. However, even those schools of philosophy that recommended withdrawal from mainstream society had, according to Hutter, a political message.

Hutter suggests that this way of thinking about ancient philosophy sheds light on Nietzsche's thought. As everyone who knows anything about Nietzsche appreciates, he was trained in ancient philosophy (and, more generally, ancient culture). Hutter argues that Nietzsche continues the ancient style of philosophy in three important respects. First, Nietzsche values philosophy not primarily for its propositional content or truth value but for its ability to foster self-improvement. Philosophy, for him, is most important for the contribution it makes to the art of living, to the practice of caring for the self. Second, notwithstanding its accent on solitude, Nietzsche's philosophy should be understood as an intersubjective enterprise, something to be shared and participated in with others. Nietzsche's philosophical exercises document, therefore, not only his personal struggle for self-improvement; they might also be relevant for others similarly engaged. This way of reading Nietzsche helps to explain the passages in which he seems to privilege spoken over written communication. It also allows Hutter to bring out the important but neglected place that friendship enjoys in Nietzsche's thought. Solitude and friendship are not mutually exclusive life choices but different techniques for promoting self-improvement. Nor does Nietzsche think of friendship as antithetical to enmity: rather, the most fruitful relationships of one's life partake of elements of both. Third, Nietzsche's philosophy has

direct political implications: part of its purpose is to advocate reform of the political structures and relations of modernity. Although he does not engage this debate in any detail, Hutter effectively rejects the many readings that portray Nietzsche as an apolitical thinker. Points one and three, moreover, seem to be connected by the fact that Nietzsche's spiritual exercises aim to assist free spirits of the future to become who they are and to engage in self-perfection. These future readers represent his hoped-for leadership: they will guide cultures of the future out of the malaise of modernity.

Each of chapters 2 to 6 details the specific ascetic practices Nietzsche recommends to those in pursuit of self-improvement. They are solitude (chap. 2), friendship (chap. 3), writing (chap. 4), nutrition and attention to the needs of the body more generally (chap. 5), and dancing (chap. 6). In chapter 4, Hutter makes the interesting observation that three of Nietzsche's major antagonists—Socrates, Jesus, and Buddha—had an immense impact on subsequent centuries without writing anything. This could further help to explain Nietzsche's ambivalence about the written word. It is interesting to note in this context that the eponymous Zarathustra does not write but speaks to his followers and those he encounters. In chapter 6, Hutter argues that dance is of great significance in Nietzsche's philosophy. In combining self-discipline and self-control with a certain abandonment of the conscious ego, dance synthesizes Apollo and Dionysus.

Although I find the general contours of Hutter's argument persuasive, I have some observations about particulars. First, in Nietzsche's case, the separation between a doctrine's propositional content and its contribution to the art of living seems somewhat artificial. Consider his attack on Christianity, which proceeds from both angles. Nietzsche suggests, on the one hand, that Christianity's metaphysical tenets are false and, on the other, that it encourages the neglect or punishment of the self rather than self-love and self-care. These two facets of his critique of Christianity—criticisms of its propositional content and of its approach to the self—seem to be intimately connected. While there is no necessary connection between positing an after-life and devaluing earthy life, Nietzsche sees them as linked in Christianity. So the distinction between philosophy as the quest for truth and philosophy as a way of life should not be overdrawn: truth claims can have important consequences for ways of caring for, or neglecting, the self.

Second, Hutter claims that dance is "the most important spiritual and ascetic practice suggested by Nietzsche as part of his yea-saying and constructive labors" (191). Given the significance of dance for Nietzsche's project of perfecting the free-spirited self, some more precise discussion of what Hutter means by dance or what he thinks Nietzsche means by dance would be welcome. Is dance movement to music? Movement to sound? Moving in a patterned way? Moving spontaneously? What does the highly formalized and controlled dancing engaged in by middle- and upper-class Europeans of the nineteenth century have in common with dance at rave parties? And what does either share with the naked Nietzsche dancing alone in his room in

Turin in the days prior to his mental collapse? Indeed, it turns out that for Hutter not everything we call "dance" fulfils this function of affirmative self-fashioning. So what, exactly, did the dancing philosopher mean by dancing?

Finally, while contemporary Nietzsche scholars must sympathize with Hutter's claim about the impossibility of engaging all or even most of the vast secondary literature on Nietzsche, it is anomalous that he ignores Alexander Nehamas's discussions of Nietzsche throughout *The Art of Living* (his 1998 book which began as the Sather lectures). This omission is even more striking given the admiration Hutter professes for Nehamas's earlier work, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature.* That Hutter neglects Lou Salomé's work on Nietzsche is regrettable: there he would have found much to support and nourish his interpretation, including the term "essence" being used without irony or explanation when describing Nietzsche's thought.

–Ruth Abbey

OAKESHOTT AS POSTMODERNIST

Suvi Soininen: *From a "Necessary Evil" to the Art of Contingency: Michael Oakeshott's Conception of Political Activity* (Exeter, UK: Imprint Academic, 2005. Pp. viii, 247. $49.90.)

DOI: 10.1017/S003467050700037X

This book is one in a series of monographs published by Imprint Academic Press on the thought of Michael Oakeshott. This series, which already includes seven titles, testifies to the increasing scholarly interest in Oakeshott's philosophy. There are many reasons for this growing interest, perhaps the most important being that it has become increasingly clear that Oakeshott was one of the most important political philosophers of the twentieth century. He also had many interesting and profound things to say about the nature of philosophy, history, art, religion, and education. He is generally counted as one of the most influential conservative thinkers in post-World War II Europe and America. The other thinker who springs to mind in this connection is, of course, Leo Strauss; and perhaps another reason why Oakeshott has attracted so much attention of late is that his modest and skeptical conservatism differs fundamentally from the more dogmatic and universalist conservatism of Strauss's neoconservative followers in Washington.

In Suvi Soininen's well-researched book, however, the emphasis does not fall on Oakeshott's conservatism. Indeed, she is concerned to put some distance between Oakeshott and the traditionalist, Burkean conservatism with which he is often associated and for which he has been frequently criticized. In opposition to the traditionalist, Burkean conservative, Soininen offers us an Oakeshott who has far more in common with postmodernist thinkers who emphasize the contingency of the self and of political activity in general. The thinker to whom she most closely assimilates Oakeshott is Richard Rorty.