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The Paradox of Philosophical Education: Nietzsche New Nobility and the Eternal Recurrence in Beyond Good and Evil (Book Review)

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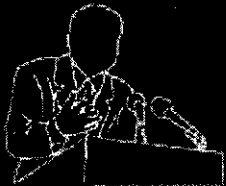
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Review of: The Paradox of Philosophical Education: Nietzsche's new nobility and the eternal recurrence in *Beyond Good and Evil* by J. Harvey Lomax
Lexington Books, Lanham MD, 2003
Pages: 145. £14.95



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Political Theory

This book was written, at least in part, to correct prevailing postmodernist interpretations that confuse Nietzsche's attack on rationality with an exuberant nihilism. Nietzsche, the philosopher who best exemplifies the crisis of the West, attacked philosophy by tearing down the moral prejudices that were held as truths. He intended, it is argued, to introduce a sort of poetic philosophy that would elevate individuals and political communities to great heights. His new nobility is a healthy will that commands obedience, with the eternal recurrence - the ability to will all things, past, present and future - as its highest expression. Christianity might have prevailed because of the low state of philosophy, but Nietzsche aims to replace Christianity with the myth of the will and the eternal recurrence. It is paradoxical, in that, however much he cared for philosophy, his appeal to truth ends in a noble lie.

The book's greatest weaknesses are also great strengths. For one thing, the author makes little effort to interpret the whole of Nietzsche's corpus; instead, he focuses almost exclusively on the first three chapters of *Beyond Good and Evil*. Nietzsche is clearest here, he claims; and a close reading of this part will provide a better understanding not only of the remainder of the text, but also, more importantly, of Nietzsche's magnum opus, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Although this might somewhat qualify his analysis, he is right to place *Beyond Good and Evil* among Nietzsche's most important texts. The brevity of the study also means that he has little time to consider secondary literature, but one can hardly blame him for maintaining his focus.

This is not intended for casual students of Nietzsche. Its introductory chapter is amazingly short and admittedly terse.

Moreover, the author avoids spelling out his argument, preferring to reveal his conclusions at the end, a style that might be problematic for readers needing guideposts along the way. As he warns in the preface, the book must be read in its entirety. In so doing, however, the reader is rewarded with a commentary nearly as rich and compelling as the text it seeks to illuminate.

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