


The nature and scope of Nietzsche's philosophical reception of Genesis 2:4b–3:24

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Nietzsche's writings on the Old Testament have been the subject of in-depth research in various academic disciplines. This article's original contribution to the ongoing discussion lies in its exclusive focus on Nietzsche's philosophical reception of Genesis 2:4b–3:24 in particular. The objective is to provide an extensive overview of the related data by way of thematically correlated representative samples in the philosopher's German writings. As background, the relevant aspects of Schopenhauer's reception of Genesis 2:4b–3:24 are noted before identifying two types of philosophical criticism discernible in Nietzsche's consistent and frequent recourse to the text's memorable mythological motifs. Based on the sheer quantity and quality of associated content involved, the study concludes that Nietzsche's critical and creative interactions with Genesis 2:4b–3:24 represent a combined critique and revitalisation of the tradition of allegorical interpretations in philosophical approaches to religious mythology.

Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications: The research is located at the intersection of biblical studies and philosophy. More specifically, the history of the Old Testament's reception within 19th-century German atheist philosophy of religion is enriched with the first overview exclusively devoted to the nature and extent of motifs from Genesis 2:4b–3:24 in the writings of Nietzsche.

Keywords: Nietzsche; Schopenhauer; Old Testament; Genesis 2–3; reception history; philosophical interpretation; allegory; hermeneutics.

Introduction

A substantial amount of research has been devoted to exploring various aspects of the reception of the Old Testament in the writings of the influential 19th-century philosopher Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844–1900) (e.g. Baumgartner 1912:526–531; Eldad 1985:47–68; Salaquarda 2000:323–333; Gericke 2011:456–469). Outside biblical studies but still within theology as such, the relevance of Nietzsche's views of the Old Testament has not been neglected. This is true in the context of Nietzsche's reception of the Old Testament relative to systematic theology (e.g. Ingrassia 1995:19–97), religion (e.g. Figl 2007; Sommer 2014) and the philosophy of religion (e.g. Santaniello 2001; Young 2006).

More specific related facts include Nietzsche's exposure to Old Testament narratives as the son of a Lutheran pastor (e.g. Schmidt 1991; Young 2010:3–20) and to historical-critical Old Testament scholarship as a first-year theology student in Bonn and afterwards in classical philology (e.g. Benne 2005:9; Young 2010:51–62); his preference for the Old Testament over and against the New (e.g. Shapiro 1982:193–222); his complex relations to Jews or Judaism (e.g. Kaiser 1994:269–281; Hartwich 1996:179–200; Salaquarda 1996:90–118); his late familiarity with Wellhausen's source criticism and history of the Israelite religion (e.g. Ahlsdorf 1990); his aversion to 'Priestly' psychology, theology and ethics (Sommer 1999:194–214; Grøn 2005:375–408); and his allegorical use of Old Testament characters, events and ideas (e.g. Wiley-Richards 1990; Hayoun 1997).

The research problem, objectives and scope

While the related research includes isolated references to some examples of the reception of Genesis 2:4b–3:24 in Nietzsche's writings, no study available is exclusively devoted to identifying where, when, why and how this particular Old Testament text is encountered throughout the totality of Nietzsche's literary legacy (cf. Rohls 2013:31–63). As a result, the need remains for a comprehensive perspective to be provided giving an adequate impression of the actual significance, role, nature and frequency with which mythological motifs from this biblical context feature in Nietzsche's philosophical reception thereof. With this gap in the current state of research in view,

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the original contribution of this article comes in the form of filling it in order to supplement our existing knowledge of the associated unexplored reception-historical terrain.

Concerning method, the discussion will be limited to a descriptive approach combining reception-historical remarks with meta-philosophical comments. In both cases, brevity is required to cover the necessary ground, given that the sheer quantity and complex qualities of Nietzsche's philosophical reception of Genesis 2:4b–3:24 allow only a limited number of representative samples from the data to be included. For the same reason, related specialist contemporary (to Nietzsche) and current Old Testament scholarship on Genesis 2:4b–3:24 on the one hand, and in Nietzsche studies in philosophy (and elsewhere) on the other, cannot be discussed here (for the former, see Müller 1991:68–87; Otto 1996:167–192; Pfeiffer 2000:487–500, 2001:2–16; Bauks 2011:139–168). In other words, the focus has to be on what is practical and necessary in light of the specific research problem, contribution and objectives outlined.

A particular challenge exists regarding the optimal way of disseminating the study's findings on the philosophical reception of Genesis 2:4b–3:24 in Nietzsche's writings. The dispersed and disconnected nature of the relevant data does not allow for purely diachronic narration. Even on a thematic level, the various elements from Genesis 2:4b–3:24 are frequently found in isolation, in mixed states or verbally reconstructed in Nietzsche's writings. As a result, none can be treated completely separately. That being said, context and coherence in presenting the findings were not neglected. The particular historical, biblical and philosophical locations of a given piece of the reception of a motif from Genesis 2:4b–3:24 will be indicated by way of source dating, thematic linking, motif-specific commentary and problem-specific meta-philosophical clarification.

A final preliminary remark concerns the primary source materials to be utilised in quoting from the relevant parts of Nietzsche's published and unpublished German manuscripts. A great variety of critical text editions are available for each book, essay, letter and fragment. All have their own share of advantages and disadvantages in relation to the others. This study will be indebted to Nietzsche (2009) as reconstructed in the internationally recognised *Digitale Kritische Gesamtausgabe Werke und Briefwechsel* (eKGWB). The citation format follows what has been standardised in Nietzsche studies with reference to this source and in a manner based on the present journal's citation requirements.

Background: Schopenhauer's reception of Genesis 2:4b–3:24

The reception of Genesis 2:4b–3:24 cannot be as satisfactorily understood without asking how and why this particular Old Testament text came to Nietzsche's attention as something *philosophically* (as opposed to merely religiously or theologically) interesting in the first place. The answer

lies in the reception of the same Old Testament text in the writings of his early mentor, Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860). To be sure, Schopenhauer's relation to and reception in Nietzsche in the context of religion has been researched extensively (see Salaquarda 1998; Young 2006). But this is not the case with reference to Genesis 2:4b–3:24 where connections are noted and explored but not in a manner exclusively concerned with this Old Testament text only, thereby offering no sustained and focused account of the associated philosophical *Wirkungsgeschichte*.

As the story goes, the young Nietzsche discovered Schopenhauer's philosophy by accident while perusing the shelves of an antique bookshop (see Young 2010:81). The book he read that night and which awakened the philosopher in him included the following words:

Der Mythos vom Sündenfall (obwohl wahrscheinlich, wie das ganze Judenthum, dem Zend-Avesta entlehnt: Bun-Dehesch, 15) ist das Einzige im Alten Testament, dem ich eine metaphysische, wenn gleich nur allegorische Wahrheit zugestehn kann; ja, er ist es allein, was mich mit dem Alten Testament aussöhnt. Nichts Anderm nämlich sieht unser Daseyn so ähnlich, wie der Folge eines Fehltritts und eines strafbaren Gelüstens. (Schopenhauer 1873 [WW II 3:666])

Here Schopenhauer indicates that the narrative of Genesis 2:4b–3:24 is the only part of the Old Testament which he has any affinity for (despite the fact that he did, on occasion quote other passages approvingly). This is only possible by reducing its theology to anthropology and the literal sense to the allegorical. With reference to the reception of Genesis 2–3, no explicit distinction is made, however, between different species of allegory. In this way, Schopenhauer perceived in Genesis 2:4b–3:24 what he took to be a pessimistic albeit profound metaphysical truth about the world and the human condition. The same reception interests are discernible in another allusion to Genesis 2:4b–3:24, this time quoting affirmatively from the English poet (Lord) Byron's *Don Juan*.

Als der deutlichste Ausdruck des Willens also ist jener Akt der Kern, das Compendium, die Quintessenz der Welt. Daher geht uns durch ihn ein Licht auf über ihr Wesen und Treiben: er ist das Wort zum Räthsel. Demgemäß ist er verstanden unter dem »Baum der Erkenntniß«: den nach der Bekanntschaft mit ihm gehn Jedem über das Leben die Augen auf, wie es auch Byron sagt: 'The tree of knowledge has been pluck'd, – all's known'. *D. Juan*, 1, 128. (Schopenhauer 1874 [WW II, 45:4:568])

The philosophical reception of and allegorical approach to the mythological motif of the trees in Genesis 2:4b–3:24 are readily apparent. Schopenhauer's own metaphysical concept of the will-to-live combined with his interest in its relations to epistemological and ethical matters is the motivating factor for the particular form and content of the comment. It also provides the organising principle in his work that explains the profundity and popularity of the associated arboricultural symbols in particular. In the next passage, however, they are reconfigured and

paradoxically united with reference to the stereotypical Christian meta-narrative's soteriological reinterpretation of the same text:

Die moralischen Tugenden sind eben nicht der letzte Zweck, sondern nur eine Stufe zu demselben. Diese Stufe ist im Christlichen Mythos bezeichnet durch das Essen vom Baum der Erkenntniß des Guten und Bösen, mit welchem die moralische Verantwortlichkeit zugleich mit der Erbsünde eintritt. Diese selbst ist in Wahrheit die Bejahung des Willens zum Leben; die Verneinung desselben hingegen, in Folge aufgegangener besserer Erkenntniß, ist die Erlösung. (Schopenhauer 1873 [WW II 48:4:698])

For Schopenhauer, metaphysical truths can be expressed by philosophers looking to religious myths as long as they limit the interpretation to the allegorical sense. This idea has a long tradition in the reception history of religious myth within critical philosophy. For example, in another text, Schopenhauer demonstrates this precedent for allegorical readings with reference to Plato, amongst others:

Allegorie von der Höhle, im Anfang des siebenten Buches der Republik, ein höchst abstraktes philosophisches Dogma aus. Ebenfalls ist als eine tiefsinnige Allegorie von philosophischer Tendenz die Fabel von der Persephone anzusehn, die dadurch, daß sie in der Unterwelt einen Granatapfel kostet, dieser anheimfällt ... (Schopenhauer 1873 [WW I 50:3:284])

Here the examples given are Plato's allegory of the cave and the 'philosophical tendency' of the 'fable' of Persephone's entrapment in Hades. The same allegorical approach thus warranted Schopenhauer's own selective reuse and reapplication of particular motifs in Genesis 2:4b–3:24:

... die Kindheit, die Zeit der Unschuld und des Glückes, das Paradies des Lebens, das verlorene Eden, auf welches wir, unsern ganzen übrigen Lebensweg hindurch, sehnsüchtig zurückblicken. (Schopenhauer 1873 [WW II 31:3:451])

In this philosophical reception, the myth of 'paradise' (Eden) is used to describe a particular phase in developmental psychology in the context of a discussion of the perpetual childlike mind of genius in other areas of life. The dilemma, according to Schopenhauer, is that most people who use religious language are intellectually childish through and through, because they cannot admit to its allegorical nature. As a result, humans have a superstitious belief regarding the nature of alleged divine revelation:

Der aber ist nur noch ein großes Kind, welcher im Ernst denken kann, daß jemals Wesen, die keine Menschen waren, unserm Geschlecht Aufschlüsse über sein und der Welt Daseyn und Zweck gegeben hätten. Es giebt keine andere Offenbarung, als die Gedanken der Weisen; wenn auch diese, dem Loose alles Menschlichen gemäß, dem Irrthum unterworfen, auch oft in wunderliche Allegorien und Mythen eingekleidet sind, wo sie dann Religionen heißen. Insofern ist es also einerlei, ob Einer im Verlaß auf eigene, oder auf fremde Gedanken, lebt und stirbt: denn immer sind es nur menschliche Gedanken, denen er vertraut, und menschliches Bedünken. (Schopenhauer 1871 [PP II/15/177:387]).

In sum, there never was any literal divine revelation in history, but there was and is wisdom about the human

condition in allegory and philosophy. Even so, Schopenhauer wryly observes that the latter too will never be more than only human opinions. With these considerations regarding the relevant aspects of Schopenhauer's philosophy and reception of Genesis 2:4–3:24 in view, it is time to consider Nietzsche's own interests in and interactions with this particular Old Testament narrative.

The philosophical reception of Genesis 2:4b–3:24 in Nietzsche's writings

In Nietzsche's early essay entitled *Schopenhauer als Erzieher*, the only content that can be associated with the reception of Genesis 2:4b–3:24 and linking it to that of his early mentor is the following, part III of his *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen I–IV*:

Sich als Frucht am Baume zu wissen, die vor zu vielem Schatten nie reif werden kann und dicht vor sich den Sonnenschein liegen zu sehen, der einem fehlt! (Nietzsche 1874 [eKGWB/SE-1[5]])

The quoted material clearly contains an allusion to the motif of the trees (and fruit) of Genesis 2:4b–3:24 in the context of philosophical expression. It presupposes an allegorical understanding that allows for a creative reapplication for the sake of illustration through its archetypal symbolism. Yet, this is done in a manner not sufficiently indicative of the suggested influence of Schopenhauer's reception. In fact, the only clear reception-historical link with Schopenhauer's philosophical interpretation of Genesis 2:4b–3:24 that Nietzsche himself mentions comes from two of his *Nachgelassene Fragmente*, the first dated to the autumn of 1887:

Das Dasein als Strafe und Buße: 'der Mythos vom Sündenfall ist es allein, was mich mit dem alten Testament aussöhnt' ... (Nietzsche 1887 [eKGWB/NF-10[101]])

In the second, Schopenhauer is actually referred to by name:

... was Schopenhauer mit dem alten Testament aussöhnt: der Sündenfall-mythus; Register zu machen für meine Ja, meine Neins, meine Fragezeichen. (Nietzsche 1888 [eKGWB/NF-12[1] II 219/IV 220])

In another passage related to the present concern, Nietzsche could not resist speculating about parallels between Greek and Hebrew myths of emancipation (see above Schopenhauer on Persephone). Thus with reference to the story of Prometheus in his essay on *Sokrates und die griechische Tragödie*, the latter can be considered as analogous to what:

... der Sündenfallmythus für das semitische hat, und dass zwischen beiden Mythen ein Verwandtschaftsgrad existirt, wie zwischen Bruder und Schwester. (Nietzsche 1871 [eKGWB/SGT-1[1]])

Schopenhauer's interest in Genesis 2:4b–3:24 can be seen as a necessary explanatory condition for Nietzsche's initial philosophical focus thereon. That being said, it cannot be construed as a sufficient one to account for Nietzsche's

sustained interest therein and the even greater quantity and particular qualities of engagements therewith. For one, Nietzsche was a much more historically-conscious philosopher than his mentor, and in another unpublished fragment, he expressed extreme disdain for theological-allegorical interpretations of texts:

Auch die Künstler pflegen schlecht zu lesen, sie neigen zum allegorischen und pneumatischen Erklären. (Nietzsche 1876 [eKGWB/NF-23[22]])

Elsewhere this is extended to metaphysical understandings of the world at large. Yet, statements like these cannot be taken as proof of a categorical aversion to the *philosophical* tradition that looked to myths as or for expressing certain truths about the human condition. To be sure, Nietzsche's philosophy passed through many phases, some more positivist in their assessment of the nature of religious language. Yet as he himself was a product of the classical philology of the 19th century, Nietzsche had no problem with a historically conscious interest in the allegorical sense of ancient myths precisely because of the literary-critical insight that the *Gattung* of the text was not that of historiography. He also took seriously the historical-critical insight that the world in the text did not correspond to any past event:

Es ist komisch, daß die christlichen Mythen durchaus historisch sein sollen! (Nietzsche 1888/1872 [eKGWB/AC-52/NF-19[40]]).

When Nietzsche thus alludes to Genesis 2:4b–3:24 in the following text, also part of his philosophical reception thereof and therefore warranting inclusion, he is purposefully rephrasing a condensed version of the stereotypical Western Christian soteriological meta-narrative:

Er würde an sich dem Menschen die Unsterblichkeit gönnen, vorausgesetzt, daß derselbe immer unsterblich dumm bleibt Er schafft ihm Thiere, dann das Weib, damit er Gesellschaft hat, damit er Unterhaltung hat (damit er nicht auf schlechte Gedanken kommt, aufs Denken, auf's Erkennen Aber der Dämon (Schlange) verräth dem Menschen, was es mit der Erkenntniß auf sich hat. Die Gefahr Gottes ist ungeheuer: jetzt muß er die Menschen fortreiben vom Baum des Lebens und sie durch Noth, Tod und Arbeit niederhalten. (Nietzsche 1887 [eKGWB/NF-9[72]])

The context for the paraphrase is actually not at all mere description or recapitulation. In fact, the quote above features in a context where Nietzsche is engaged in a critical variety of philosophical commentary on Genesis 2:4b–3:24. The particular passage from which the quote was taken actually commences with a prior allusion to the biblical narrative revealing Nietzsche's philosophical-allegorical interests:

Im Anfange des Alten Testaments steht die berühmte Geschichte von der Angst Gottes. Der Mensch ist dargestellt als Fehlgriff Gottes; der Mensch als ein Fehlgriff Gottes; das Thier ebenso Moral: Gott verbietet die Erkenntniß, weil sie zur Macht. (Nietzsche 1887 [eKGWB/NF-9[72]])

This reading is not as literary-uncritical and theologically naïve as it *prima facie* appears to be. When Nietzsche writes about the 'terror [Angst] of God' by using an subjective

genitive (i.e. the anxiety that god has in light of humanity's actions and possible consequences as a result) he does this without assuming the meaning of religious language is univocal. The deity as a character in a narrative is assumed to exist only in the world of the text and therefore as having the ontological status of a fictional entity. Yet, neither is the intent mere caricaturizing nor satire typical of many other atheist mockeries of the Bible during the time. Once this is understood, the atheological critique of the literary divine is as it shows itself to be ultimately about something else altogether. As if the allegorical sense of the text hinted at a moral-psychological genealogy of its own ideological background:

Hat man eigentlich die berühmte Geschichte verstanden, die am Anfang der Bibel steht, – von der Höllenangst Gottes vor der Wissenschaft? Man hat sie nicht verstanden. Dies Priester-Buch par excellence beginnt, wie billig, mit der grossen inneren Schwierigkeit des Priesters: er hat nur Eine grosse Gefahr, folglich hat 'Gott' nur Eine grosse Gefahr. – Der alte Gott, ganz 'Geist', ganz Hohe-<r>priester, ganz Vollkommenheit, lustwandelt in seinem Garten: nur dass er sich langweilt. (Nietzsche 1888 [eKGWB/AC-48])

The 'Priestly book' Nietzsche refers to here is not a misidentification of Genesis 2:4b–3:24 with the Priestly source of the documentary hypothesis in Pentateuch criticism or but what he saw as the literary legacy of a post-exilic scribal culture who had lost much of the spiritual vitality, theological creativity and moral relevance of idealised earlier forms of Yahwism. Nietzsche is not so much looking to the allegorical sense as a platform for atheological critique as for psychological profiling. In other words, Nietzsche's critical perspectives on Genesis 2:4b–3:24 are ultimately not about a realist view of reference as regards the character of the deity in the world of the text. Instead, they are concerned with exposing the axiological assumptions underlying it as a projection of what Nietzsche took to be the particular personality type's neurotic tendencies in the world behind the text:

Der Anfang der Bibel enthält die ganze Psychologie des Priesters. – Der Priester kennt nur Eine grosse Gefahr: das ist die Wissenschaft – der gesunde Begriff von Ursache und Wirkung. Aber die Wissenschaft gedeiht im Ganzen nur unter glücklichen Verhältnissen, – man muss Zeit, man muss Geist überflüssig haben, um zu 'erkennen' ... 'Folglich muss man den Menschen unglücklich machen', – dies war zu jeder Zeit die Logik des Priesters. – Man erräth bereits, was, dieser Logik gemäss, damit erst in die Welt gekommen ist: – die 'Sünde' ... Der Schuld- und Strafbegriff, die ganze 'sittliche Weltordnung' ist erfunden gegen die Wissenschaft! (Nietzsche 1888 [eKGWB/AC-48])

Nietzsche's philosophical-critical interests are thus motivated by historical consciousness but not limited to historical-critical concerns. In this case, the allegorical meaning of Genesis 2:4b–3:24 is seen as providing access to metaphysical and epistemological assumptions in the religious language about a mythological moral order opposed to scientific knowledge. Nietzsche thus looked to what the allegorical sense seemed to imply as to what can be discovered about the genealogy of morals as regarding its now invasive and destructive roots traceable back to the world behind the text.

A form of therapeutic philosophy is operative in Nietzsche's reading, aimed as it is at the creation of critical-historical consciousness in the reader with reference to the religious sources of contemporary nihilism.

That being said, an altogether different form of philosophical criticism with reference to Genesis 2:4b–3:24 is also present in Nietzsche's writings. Passages reflective thereof are characterised by a more free-spirited and anarchistic approach towards the historical sense yet in such a way that critical-historical consciousness is presupposed rather than discarded. Here we see the model of the exegete as artist who looks to the world of the text as raw material with which to represent related aspects of the history of ideas in the world in front of the text, that is, the history of ideas ever since, and already potentially foreshadowed in mythological guise. Many examples of this second free-spirited form of post-historical or neo-allegorical exegesis can be given, all involving a constructive variety of philosophical exegesis. The first in fact comes from his first publication in classical philology:

Unsere Kunst offenbart diese allgemeine Noth: umsonst dass man sich an alle grossen productiven Perioden und Naturen imitatorisch anlehnt, umsonst dass man die ganze 'Weltliteratur' zum Troste des modernen Menschen um ihn versammelt und ihn mitten unter die Kunststile und Künstler aller Zeiten hinstellt, damit er ihnen, wie Adam den Thieren, einen Namen gebe: er bleibt doch der ewig Hungernde, der 'Kritiker' ohne Lust und Kraft, der alexandrinische Mensch, der im Grunde Bibliothekar und Corrector ist und an Bücherstaub und Druckfehlern elend erblindet. (Nietzsche 1872 [eKGWB/GT-18])

In this bit of reception, an allusion to Genesis 2:4b–3:24 is found with specific mention of 'Adam naming the animals'. The context is a critique of art in the modern world which is only good at giving names to whatever is paraded through time (commenting and classifying available material) and without the power and passion to create anything new. Yet, this is no naïve-realist hermeneutic quoting out of context and reading whatever meaning is required by religious dogma back into the text. Nor is it simply based on a critical-realist hermeneutic of suspicion concerned with meeting the highest scientific standards in the interpretation of the Old Testament. Instead, Nietzsche's reception involves a non-realist hermeneutic of reconstruction in which a mythological motif in the biblical narrative taken as allegory can be freely re-applied as analogy (wie) illuminating a current cultural condition.

In other words, Nietzsche continues the tradition of the philosopher having recourse to myth to express a profound insight about the human condition or world. Yet, the biblical interpreter is not the historian or scientist of scripture but the philosopher artist seeking to cure others from metaphysical illusions, epistemological petrification and moral inertia. Though less obvious in the wording, the same use of the proverbial philosopher's stone to turn manure into gold and science into art is also evident in the redaction-history of Nietzsche's comments on the character of 'Eve' in Genesis

2:4b–3:24. In one fragment, *qua* fragment, he merely notes a factum obtained from reading the Old Testament scholarship of his day (cf. Wellhausen 1887:217):

Heva ist die Schlange: sie steht an der Spitze der bibl<ischen> Genealogie (wie die Schlange auch als Eigennamen bei den Hebräern gew<öhnlich> vorkommt) (Nietzsche 1887 [eKGWB/NF-11[289]]).

Yet, Nietzsche, the artist-philosopher, was not only interested in linguistic, literary and historical matters but, as suggested here, looking for the allegorical sense and to mythological motifs in the world of the text to express his own views about something in the world behind it that has had enduring cultural effects:

'Das Weib ist seinem Wesen nach Schlange, Heva' – das weiss jeder Priester; 'vom Weib kommt jedes Unheil in der Welt' – das weiss ebenfalls jeder Priester. 'Folglich kommt von ihm auch die Wissenschaft' ... Erst durch das Weib lernte der Mensch vom Baume der Erkenntniss kosten. Was war geschehn? Den alten Gott ergriff eine Höllenangst. Der Mensch selbst war sein grösster Fehlgriff geworden, er hatte sich einen Rivalen geschaffen, die Wissenschaft macht gottgleich, es ist mit Priestern und Göttern zu Ende, wenn der Mensch wissenschaftlich wird! (Nietzsche 1888 [eKGWB/AC-48])

In this de/re-mythologising of the Genesis 2:4b–3:24 text, the reference to Eve (Heva), to the generic philosophical or allegorical female (das Weib) and to the arboricultural theme (with the grammatical plural 'Baume der Erkenntniss') are telling. Texts like these are representative of an ambivalent attitude on Nietzsche's part to constructions of the female gender in Genesis 2:4b–3:24. One can see misogynistic and patriarchal tendencies (Eve or woman as source of 'jedes Unheil'). Of course, here one must distinguish between descriptive and evaluative references, the former implying or only noting what was the case in the world behind the text. Given Nietzsche's own autobiographical accounts of romantic disappointments and familial conflict, it cannot be denied that Nietzsche shared some of that sentiment. Yet at other times, we also see Nietzsche as feminist (Eve or woman as the source of scientific knowledge and therewith apotheosis) or, also in this context, as at least anti-humanist (Eve as the deity's *second* mistake, i.e. man or Adam was the first *mistake*).

Of course, the ambivalence extends to Nietzsche's constructive philosophical-allegorical approach to all the other characters and themes in Genesis 2:4b–3:24, that is, to not only the deity and the two humans but also to the trees, the fruit, the snake, the relations between these and ultimately to 'paradise' or the 'garden' (as opposed to 'Eden') itself. The former term appears in several contexts, one of which involves an allegorical reading that is artistically reconstructed in the context of Nietzsche's philosophical critique of a particular constrictive and self-denying religious psychology:

Was locktest du dich ins Paradies der alten Schlange? Was schlichst du dich ein in dich – in dich? (Nietzsche 1889 eKGWB/DD-Raubvögeln)

In another context, Nietzsche alludes to the motif that came to be known as the flight from paradise but which is now isolated and re-appropriated as a mythological truth about a recurring event in the history of ideas:

Also Flucht aus dem Paradies der Menschen in die großartigen Tugendmomente der Geschichte: in's Paradies der Menschengüte. Die Räuber (Karl Moor, Plutarch, die großen Menschen). (Nietzsche 1871 [eKGWB/NF-1, 9[123]])

Ultimately, the desire for utopia is a projection of a retrojected idea (pun intended). It is present in language and the desire for original meanings:

Erinnerung an eine frühere bessere Welt (Präexistenz) oder Paradies im Anfang oder Gott als Ursache der Dinge – alles setzt die gleiche Hypothese voraus. 'Der werdende Gott' ist der mythologische Ausdruck für die wahren Vorgänge. (Nietzsche 1880 [eKGWB/NF-4[96]])

It is even present in music, specifically in Opera (attention: Wagner). This was an insight Nietzsche had very early on, yet the implications of which were hard to see at the time:

eine unhistorische Flucht in eine phantastische Urgeschichte der Menschheit, einen sentimentalischen Trieb ins Idyllische (Nietzsche 1878 [eKGWB/NF-[29]])

As for when Nietzsche opts for referring to a 'garden', obviously alluding to the one that is the spatial setting of Genesis 2:4b–3:24 itself. In the first example, the choice of wording with which the reception commences is a poignant play on the epistemic motif:

Gewiss, wir brauchen Historie, aber wir brauchen sie anders, als sie der verwöhnte Müssiggänger im *Garten* des Wissens braucht, mag derselbe auch vornehm auf unsere derben und anmuthlosen Bedürfnisse und Nöthe herabsehen. Das heisst, wir brauchen sie zum Leben und zur That, nicht zur bequemen Abkehr vom Leben und von der That oder gar zur Beschönigung des selbstsüchtigen Lebens und der feigen und schlechten That. (Nietzsche 1874 [eKGWB/HL-1])

This above-quoted allusion to Genesis 2:4b–3:24 ('garden of knowledge', knowledge or life opposition) occurs in the context of discussing the perils of historical knowledge for its own sake in terms of what is conducive to and enabling life, in the sense of action based, vibrant and innovative culture. Another rare reference to the garden motif is found in an allusion to Schopenhauer's pessimism and the denial of the will-to-live in the context of the metaphysics of sexuality:

Wenn man den Unzufriedenen, Schwarzgalligen und Murrköpfen die Fortpflanzung verwehrte, so könnte man schon die Erde in einen Garten des Glücks verzaubern. Dieser Satz gehört in eine praktische Philosophie für das weibliche Geschlecht (Nietzsche 1879 [eKGWB/VM-III] 278))

With bitter sarcasm and paradox, Nietzsche notes how the earth could be 'soured' to become a 'garden of happiness' if humans ceased to procreate to end the suffering attending the human condition ... only to become extinct. This is chided as a 'practical philosophy' for the female gender, thereby

alluding to not only the garden but to the punishment of Eve in the story and the 'curse' of the pain of giving birth. Interestingly, as is known, after leaving the University, Nietzsche did attempt to work as a gardener but could not manage because of problems with his eyes (ironic in a sense Nietzsche would have appreciated, considering the motif of opened eyes in Genesis 2:4b–3:24). Ultimately, as Nietzsche's reception of this motif, most other references to a garden are either in the context of Epicurean garden-philosophy or the gardens he liked to sit in. Not unrelated to the same spatial mereology of Nietzsche's reception of Genesis 2:4b–3:24 is the 'tree of knowledge':

Wo der Baum der Erkenntniß steht, ist immer noch das Paradies. 'Die Moral selber war der erste Sündenfall: die Moral selber ist die Erbsünde' – so denkt jeder Erkennende (Nietzsche 1882 [eKGWB/NF-3])

Fragments like these and others frequently reveal the redaction-historical processes behind the particular aphorism that eventually did make it to publication:

'Wo der Baum der Erkenntniß steht, ist immer das Paradies': so reden die ältesten und die jüngsten Schlangen (Nietzsche 1886 [eKGWB/JGB-152])

The allegorical sense of the tree translated into philosophical language is here seen as a mythological representation of the same insights prefiguring modern non-cognitive perspectives regarding epistemological issues in meta-ethics. Especially when the mythological symbolism of the snake is introduced in the context of the object of knowledge constructed as the fruit of the tree, Nietzsche wanted to say it 'just right' to communicate philosophically profound insights expressed in aesthetically pleasing literary formats (note the employment of onomatopoeia [ss > hissing snake]):

[...] man weiss ersichtlich in Europa, was Sokrates nicht zu wissen meinte, und was jene alte berühmte Schlange einst zu lehren verhieß, – man 'weiss' heute, was Gut und Böse ist. (Nietzsche 1886 [eKGWB/JGB-202])

The blending of metaphors and mythological elements is also common in Nietzsche's artistic philosophical use of Genesis 2:4b–3:24 for the sake of a religious-mythological representation of non-dualism in the ontology of metaphysics, epistemology and ethics:

Theologisch geredet – man höre zu, denn ich rede selten als Theologe – war es Gott selber, der sich als Schlange am Ende seines Tagewerks unter den Baum der Erkenntniß legte (Nietzsche 1882 [eKGWB/NF-4[260]])

Here we find not only a conflation of the Genesis 1 and 2 creation narratives (seldom 'reasoning theologically' or 'as theologian') as reconstructed with the associated anachronistic demonic element of the Christian soteriological reading. In addition, we see that the combination of the wisdom as (en)light(en)ment metaphor (as in Plato) with solar mythology (as in Plato as well) is also attested on several occasions, again showing a history of composition and redaction and ultimately coming to include the tree of knowledge from the

Garden narrative as well. Thus, a related idea could begin and remain quite fragmentary:

Eine Sonne, um die sich die Schlange der Erkenntniß ringlet
(Nietzsche 1882 [eKGWB/NF-10[12]])

Yet, the same idea could and did eventually become the moral philosophy expressed by Nietzsche's Zarathustra on the virtue that gives of itself in the 'seventh solitude':

Wahrlich, ein neues Gutes und Böses ist sie! ... Macht ist sie, diese neue Tugend; ein herrschender Gedanke ist sie und um ihn eine kluge Seele: eine goldene Sonne und um sie die Schlange der Erkenntniß (Nietzsche 1882 [eKGWB/AS-33])

Nietzsche also frequently refers to the tree of knowledge in an idiomatic manner to represent particular cultural contexts and historical periods in his genealogical approaches to human morals (both in and outside the book of the same English title). Thus in an early essay on the mindset of slaves in the Greek state, he remarks as follows on the loss of what he perceives to be the moral innocence in servitude through the acquisition of knowledge:

Unschuldstand des Sklaven durch die Frucht vom Baume der Erkenntniß vernichtet haben! (Nietzsche 1872 [eKGWB/GSt-12])

Also with reference to how the intellectual maturity of the modern world has come to mean squeezing out the meaning of and solutions to ever-renewing problems of knowledge:

Sinn und Lösung aller Werde-Räthsel überhaupt, ausgedrückt im modernen Menschen, der reifsten Frucht am Baume der Erkenntniß! (Nietzsche 1874 [eKGWB/HL-9])

The now familiar inherent tension between the quest for knowledge and what is conducive to life is also present in the idea that there is no necessary correlation between looking for truth and acting in a manner that is morally 'good'. On the contrary, not all that glitters is gold and truth is often the fruit one wishes to shake from the 'tree of knowledge':

Nicht Das, was glänzt, scheint, erregt, sondern die oft unscheinbare Wahrheit ist die Frucht, welche er vom Baum der Erkenntniß zu schütteln wünscht. (Nietzsche 1879 [eKGWB/MA-264])

Quantitatively speaking, the appearance of the 'tree of knowledge' motif is second only to that of the snake or serpent as regards the number of appearances in the associated allusions in Nietzsche's reception of Genesis 2:4b–3:24. Yet, these are often intertwined (pun intended) as in the following example:

Als er aber seine Schlange gegen sich züngeln sah, da verwandelte sich langsam, langsam sein Gesicht: widerwillig sprang ihm das Thor der Erkenntniß auf (Nietzsche 1883 [eKGWB/NF-13[3]])

In this creative adoption and adaptation of the snake (wisdom) and (tree of) knowledge mythological motifs in Genesis 2:4b–3:24, the former is made into a catalyst for the opening of the 'gate' of knowledge within Nietzsche's allegorical and autobiographical alter-ego: Zarathustra.

An altogether different configuration of the motif is present in the reference to the tree of humanity and reason or rationality in another context:

Der Baum der Menschheit und die Vernunft (Nietzsche 1879 [eKGWB/WS-189])

But then there is the other side of the same coin. On the one hand, we see a more pessimistic view of knowledge in how Nietzsche reconfigures Genesis 2:4b–3:24's concept of 'good and evil' as the object of knowledge (both as a poetic merism and ethics of epistemology). Firstly, there is the assumption in the text:

Der Mensch kann von sich nicht selber wissen, was gut und böse ist, darum lehrt ihn Gott seinen Willen (Nietzsche 1888 [eKGWB/AC-55])

In other words, humans cannot in themselves know what is good and require a god to tell them how to live. But how can one know what is true or real in this regard?:

Gegen diese Betrachtung empört sich etwas in uns; die Schlange Eitelkeit redet uns zu 'das Alles muß falsch sein: denn es empört ... Könnte das nicht Alles nur Schein sein?' (Nietzsche 1888 [eKGWB/NF-16[25]])

The motif of the snake in Genesis 2:4b–3:24 becomes in this remark of Nietzsche a symbol for Descartes demon that doubts all appearances and perceived truths. This is even or especially the case for 'moral' facts, having turned out to be divine prejudices as exposed by fleeing wisdom or life, again represented in the snake motif:

Aus dem Paradiese. 'Gut und Böse sind die Vorurtheile Gottes' – sprach die Schlange und floh in Eile (Nietzsche 1882 [eKGWB/NF-18[6]])

In moments of epistemological nihilism, Nietzsche uses Genesis 2:4b–3:24 to express the mythological truth already encountered suggesting if either life or knowledge is chosen, the other is lost:

Vom Baum der Erkenntniß. – Wahrscheinlichkeit, aber keine Wahrheit: Freischeinlichkeit, aber keine Freiheit, – diese beiden Früchte sind es, derentwegen der Baum der Erkenntniß nicht mit dem Baum des Lebens verwechselt werden kann. (Nietzsche 1879 [eKGWB/WS-1])

Also, whereas as we saw the tree of knowledge as configured in Byron's *Don Juan* was merely quoted in Schopenhauer, in Nietzsche it becomes transformed and expanded in equally memorable ways that clearly alludes to the epistemic disillusionment of Genesis 2:4b–3:24. The reception context is the critique of knowledge for its own sake and science that is not conducive to life, allegorically adopted and adapted as der *Don Juan* der Erkenntniß who cannot get enough of knowing without even a passion therefore and therefore eventually lusts after the most useless, dangerous and unsatisfying knowledge, namely, of Hell (Nietzsche 1882 [eKGWB/M-327]). That being said, the tree of life and assorted reconfigurations in conjunction with other motifs feature far less than the tree of knowledge. Yet ultimately, Nietzsche can even affirm what he sees and by revaluing the

experience attempt to overcome the tragic nihilism by turning it into an aesthetic vision of eternal light:

Die Sonne der Erkenntniß steht wieder einmal im Mittag; und geringelt liegt die Schlange der Ewigkeit in ihrem Lichte (Nietzsche 1881 [eKGWB/NF-11[196]])

The same tragic vision is elsewhere similarly correlated with a conjunction of the snake motif and the implied immortality with it was associated which:

Gegen den Werth des Ewig-Gleichbleibenden (v. Spinozas Naïvetät, Descartes ebenfalls) der Werth des Kürzesten und Vergänglichsten, das verführerische Goldaufblitzen am Bauch der Schlange vita – [Nietzsche 1887 [eKGWB/NF-9[26]]]

Yet as elsewhere, even this motif is not positive or negative in the reception thereof throughout Nietzsche's writings. Consider the following texts where the snake motif is itself constructive as in need of being transcended, even if not likely and with related motifs from Genesis 2:4b–3:24 itself:

Ich fand auf meinem Gange seine langen Esels-Ohren – ich fand auch meine Schlange, die hatte den Kopf verloren (Nietzsche 1883 [eKGWB/NF-18[53]])

Yet, subtle variations of the biblical motif are as usual present, here where the decapitation of the snake is said to occur by way of biting rather than stomping:

Aber das vermögen wir nicht mehr! der Schlange den Kopf abbeißen! (Nietzsche 1883 [eKGWB/NF-21[6]])

The idea of nakedness as shameful is a related concept that Nietzsche often employs, constructing the disillusionment of knowledge and the shedding of associated illusions as an unrecognised divine attribute (which again, Genesis itself hints at, albeit not so directly or even intentionally):

Ihr verhüllt eure Seele: Nacktheit wäre Schande für eure Seele. Oh daß ihr lerntet, warum ein Gott nackt ist! Er hat sich nicht zu schämen. Er ist mächtiger nackt! (Nietzsche 1882 [eKGWB/NF-5[30]])

Again reception itself appears in multiple locations, both in unpublished and published writings, clearly reconfigured as nihilism being a divine state of mind, a god having no higher purpose and values than its own:

Wer aus sich kein Hehl macht, empört: so sehr habt ihr Grund, die Nacktheit zu fürchten! Ja, wenn ihr Götter wäret, da dürftet ihr euch eurer Kleider schämen! (Nietzsche 1883 [eKGWB/Za-I-Freunde])

At this point, for no other reasons that spatial constraints and despite many similar comments, allusions, citations and re-applications of the same mythological motifs in Nietzsche's philosophical reception of Genesis 2:4b–3:24, the present overview has to conclude.

Conclusion

This article's original contribution to the ongoing research on Nietzsche and the Old Testament lies in its exclusive focus on

and extensive overview of the reception of Genesis 2:4b–3:24 in the philosopher's writings.

As background, the influence of Schopenhauer's preference for this particular Old Testament text was clearly evident and partly accounts for Nietzsche's initial philosophical interests in and subsequent repeated reuse of the specific variety of mythological motifs therefrom. Two types of philosophical criticism, one descriptive and one constructive, were identified, the latter predominating. Samples of reception were shown to be present throughout the philosopher's career (1870–1889) and writings (both published and unpublished).

The mythological motifs from the Garden narrative adopted and adapted to express philosophical ideas include those of the deity, the animals, the snake (the most popular), Adam, Eve, the tree of knowledge (the most pervasive, and good and evil as objects), the tree of life, the fruit, paradise and nakedness. There is no one sense of reference for any of these motifs in Nietzsche's reception of Genesis 2:4b–3:24. Each could be both positive and negative, used descriptively or reconfigured, and with reference to various contexts in the world behind, of and in front of the text.

The study concludes that Nietzsche's many and variable engagements with Genesis 2:4b–3:24 can therefore be seen to stand in the philosophical tradition of allegorical approaches to religious myth, epistemological and moral concerns dominating, and with critical-historical consciousness as the hermeneutical warrant for rather than the invalidation thereof.

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