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Cheerful Creation of Words and Worlds Nietzsche's *The Gay Science* in English Translation

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Abstract: The aim of this essay is to review Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Gay Science* in English Translation. It compares and contrasts the translations by Thomas Common, Walter Kaufmann, Josefine Nauckhoff, and R. Kevin Hill. First, I argue in favor of translating the work's title *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft* as *The Gay Science* or perhaps more precisely as *The Gay Knowledge*. Nietzsche who is likely the greatest stylist in the German language wrote with philological precision and succinctness. This exactitude and awareness of the shaping influence of linguistic means on the contents expressed therefore needs to be reflected throughout in any kind of rendition of Nietzsche's artful texts and the evaluation and assessment thereof.

Keywords: Nietzsche, Friedrich; Common, Thomas; Kaufmann, Walter; Josefine Nauckhoff; Hill, R. Kevin; *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, *The Gay Science*; translation; style; philology.

In this review I aim to assess the precision and the overall quality of the translations by Thomas Common,¹ Walter Kaufmann,² Josefine Nauckhoff,³ and R. Kevin Hill⁴ of Friedrich Nietzsche's *Die*

fröhliche Wissenschaft (1882).⁵ Nietzsche had altered its original title *Morgenröte II* (*Dawn II* or *Daybreak II*) to *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*. The four books of a total of 342 aphorisms of *The Gay Science* constitute the culmination of Nietzsche's thought in his middle period. It also announces prominently that "God is dead" as provider of value, meaning, and sense in life; yet precisely this demise allows for a new dawn (GSK 279, §343). With his methodology of having deep suspicion of established bodies of knowledge (GSK 38), Nietzsche unearths in *The Gay Science* highly valuable moral psychological insights regarding the origin of moral feelings that he elaborates on in the Third Essay of his *Genealogy of Morals*. In a late note

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Joyful Wisdom* ("La Gaya Scienza"), transl. Thomas Common, poetry rendered by Paul V. Cohn and Maude D. Petre, London, UK: Foulis, 1910.

² Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science: With A Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, transl. Walter Kaufmann, New York, NY: Random House, 1974. [Henceforth cited as GSK]

³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science: With A Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, transl. Josefine Nauckhoff, poems transl. Adrian del Caro, ed. Bernard Williams, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001. [Henceforth cited as GSN]

⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Joyous Science*, transl. R. Kevin Hill, London, UK: Penguin Classics, 2018. [Henceforth cited as JS]

⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, "Die fröhliche Wissenschaft ("la gaya scienza")," in *Friedrich Nietzsche: Sämtliche Werke, Kritische Studienausgabe, Vol. 3*, eds. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, Berlin, DE: de Gruyter 1988, pp. 343-651, here pp. . [Henceforth cited as FW]

from Spring-Summer 1888, Nietzsche writes:

we others – we see something different into things
[than the mass of people]: our riddle nature, our
contradictions, our deeper, more painful, more
suspicious wisdom.⁶

I endorse Kaufmann's assessment of *The Gay Science* regarding its central importance for his entire *oeuvre* and his judgment of it being simultaneously a stand-alone work:

It mirrors all of Nietzsche's thought and could be related in hundreds of ways to his other books, his notes, and his letters. And yet it is complete in itself. For it is a work of art. [GSK 26]

Nietzsche completed the second edition of *The Gay Science* from 1887 with the subtitle "la gaya scienza." Furthermore, he added to it the Preface, a fifth book, bringing the total number of aphorisms up to 383, and he further enlarged it through an Appendix containing extra poems. Looking back in *Ecce Homo* (1888) on *The Gay Science* and making interpretative comments on this *oeuvre*, the weight Nietzsche accords to the subtitle is noteworthy: He is listing it in the table of contents – unlike his other books – by its subtitle "la gaya scienza," and leaves, thus, its main title unmentioned.⁷ Yet it is true that in *Ecce Homo* the commentary itself is headed by both title and subtitle (EH 333).

First, I will make some remarks on the translation of the adjective *fröhlich* as "joyous" in Hill's title *The Joyous Science* that matches Lauren Lampert's rendition of the title *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* in his book *Nietzsche and Modern Times*.⁸ My objection to this is that *Fröhlichkeit* differs from *Freude*. Correspondingly, *fröhlich* is not congruous in meaning with *freudig*. Therefore, one might be better off translating *fröhlich* as "cheerful." The subtitle "la gaya scienza" too

justifies using the adjective "gay" in the main title as Kaufmann and Nauckhoff have done it and were also continuing doing it in their subsequent publications, for in Provençal *la gaya scienza* there is a word that resembles the word "gay" in sound and orthography. Hence, I take this to be another argument in support of translating the book's title in this way. And that is why I suggest not taking the gaiety out of the gay science in Nietzsche's "most personal" of all of his books that has been written with extraordinary passion,⁹ just as countless translators of *The Gay Science* into languages other than English have done it, entitling their renditions in French with *Gai Savoir*, in Dutch with *De vrolijke wetenschap*, in Italian with *Gaya Scienza*, in Spanish with *Gaya Ciencia*, in Portuguese with *Gaia Ciência*, and so on. Hill concedes that at least in terms of the number of occurrences the title *The Gay Science* outdoes his version *The Joyous Science* (JS xiii).

Common recognized the importance of the subtitle "la gaya scienza" too as he adduced it in his 1910 translation that was published a mere ten years after Nietzsche's decease. The problem with Common's translation of the main title as *The Joyful Wisdom* is that "wisdom" in German corresponds to *Weisheit* and not "science." In contrast to Hill, Bernard Williams is in agreement with me regarding the following point, as he writes in the Introduction to Nauckhoff's rendition of *The Gay Science*, that

no one, presumably, is going to be misled by the more recent association of the word "gay" – it simply means joyful, light-hearted, and above all, lacking in solemnity. [GSN x]

Kaufmann's addition to this denotation of "gay," namely "light-hearted defiance of convention," is warranted as "it suggests Nietzsche's 'immoralism' and his 'revaluation of values'" (GSK 5). Furthermore, Nietzsche fosters the destabilization and dissolution of polar opposites which allow for making distinctions such as the one between gay and heterosexual in the first place. Kaufmann dismisses unconvincingly the word "cheerful" for use in the title on grounds that its main translation is to his mind *heiter*, as in truth *heiter* means "serene" (GSK 4). In her book *Nietzsche's Gay Science: Dancing Coherence*, Monika Langer argues

⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, "21 June 1888 letter to Karl Knortz," in *Friedrich Nietzsche: Sämtliche Briefe, Kritische Studienausgabe in 8 Bänden, Vol. 8*, eds. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, Berlin, DE: de Gruyter 1975, p. 340 #1050. [my translation]

⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, "Nachgelassene Fragmente: Frühjahr – Sommer 1888," in *Friedrich Nietzsche: Sämtliche Werke, Kritische Studienausgabe, Vol. 13*, eds. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, Berlin, DE: de Gruyter 1988, pp. 483-518, here p. 492. [my translation]

⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, "Ecce homo. Wie man wird, was man ist," in *Friedrich Nietzsche: Sämtliche Werke, Kritische Studienausgabe, Vol. 6*, eds. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, Berlin, DE: de Gruyter 1988, pp. 255-374, here p. 262. [Henceforth cited as EH]

⁸ Laurence Lampert, *Nietzsche and Modern Times: A Study of Bacon, Descartes, and Nietzsche*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 1993, p. vii.

in favor of the interconnectedness of the book's sections, a stance that is also being suggested in the subtitle's "dancing coherence" and, thus, not dancing incoherence.¹⁰ She too translates the book's title as *The Gay Science*. Similarly, to the fourth section of the 'Preface to the Second Edition' of his *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche refers already in the first instalment of his free spirit trilogy to the cheerful form of seriousness.¹¹ Nietzsche is interested in philosophical ways of life that are pointing towards joy in life and in one's own self. Correspondingly, he exhorts humans "to not share suffering but joy" (GSK 271). For Kaufmann, Nietzsche's gay science meant "philosophy that sings and sizzles" (GSK 13). For Nietzsche it is of foremost relevance that philosophers are simultaneously musicians and dancers.

Commenting on *The Gay Science*, Keith Ansell-Pearson writes:

The title of the book is a rich and fertile one, suggesting the idea of a practice of knowledge, and an intelligence, that is gay, cheerful and joyous.¹²

He adds that there is a "complex play between lightness and seriousness" at work. In his Introduction to Nauckhoff's translation, Williams points out that *Wissenschaft* in German also refers to knowledge in general and most certainly not merely to the natural sciences (GSN x). Given all of these reasons, one might legitimately designate it as "gay knowledge."

In the fifth and final section of the 1886 Preface to *Daybreak*, which is the book preceding *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche states that a philosopher has also to be a philologist who in the quest for new meaning is cheerfully creating novel words and worlds. Creation and experimentation are what a Nietzschean knower does. Nietzsche who was himself a classical philologist explains that precision and succinctness require an unreservedly philological mindset. He insists on reading and writing slowly and declares that

Philology is that venerable art which demands of its votaries one thing above all: to go aside, to take time,

¹⁰ Monika M. Langer, *Nietzsche's Gay Science: Dancing Coherence*, London, UK: Palgrave MacMillan 2010, pp. xii-xiv.

¹¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, transl. R. J. Hollingdale, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press 1997, p. 111.

¹² Keith Ansell-Pearson, *Nietzsche's Search for Philosophy: On the Middle Writings*, London, UK: Bloomsbury Publishing 2018, p. 12.

to become still, to become slow – it is a goldsmith's art and connoisseurship of the *word* which has nothing but delicate, cautious work to do and achieves nothing if it does not achieve it *lento*. But for precisely this reason it is more necessary than ever today.¹³

This means that for Nietzsche intellectual rumination is indispensable.¹⁴

La Gaya Scienza and *gai saber* refer to the poetic songs that sprang from the forever unrequited courtly love of the medieval troubadours. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche writes

love as *passion* – which is our European specialty – simply must be of noble origin: as is well known, its invention must be credited to the Provençal knight-poets, those magnificent and inventive human beings of the "gai saber" to whom Europe owes so many things and almost owes itself.¹⁵

Hill correctly observes that

the phrase "die fröhliche Wissenschaft" had been used in German to refer to the art of poetry since at least the eighteenth century. [JS xiii]

The Nietzschean lover of knowledge has also always a female beloved that he is pursuing (in vain), namely, life – *vita femina* (GSK 271-2), just as he is an unlucky suitor of the *veritas femina* (GSK 38, BGE 1).¹⁶ In *The Gay Science* and in *Ecce Homo* loving life also entails love of fate, as for the Nietzschean Yes-sayer, *amor fati* affirms the necessity of all events of the present and of the past (GSK 223, EH 258, 324). In the third to last aphorism of Book Four, that was originally planned to be the close of *The Gay Science* and indeed was part of the finale in the book's first edition, Nietzsche opposes the decadence of Socrates (GSK 272) to the over-rich

¹³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*, transl. R. J. Hollingdale, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press 1997, p. 5.

¹⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals: A Polemic*, transl. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, New York, NY: Vintage Books 1967, pp. 13-163, here p. 23. [Henceforth cited as GM]

¹⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, transl. Walter Kaufmann, New York, NY: Vintage Books 1966, p. 208. [Henceforth cited as BGE]

¹⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is*, transl. Walter Kaufmann, New York, NY: Vintage Books 1967, pp. 199-335, here p. 266. [Henceforth cited as EHK]

and overflowing gay spirit of Zarathustra (GSK 274-5). Zarathustra's Prologue commences with nearly the exact same lines as the fourth book of *The Gay Science* ends, and through this overlap is clearly indicating continuity between the two books.¹⁷ This transformation from Socrates to Zarathustra is brought about by the acceptance of the idea of eternal recurrence that is introduced in the penultimate aphorism of book four – this is yet another idea that is being explored in depth in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and in other late Nietzschean writings (GSK 273). In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche is beginning to move beyond the idea of the free spirit toward the one of the ideal of the overman. Thus, *The Gay Science* is leading up to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. There the figure of fateful Zarathustra, with whom Nietzsche strongly identifies, expresses in his initial speech the transformation (*Verwandlung*) that creators undergo and thereby also bring about metamorphosis in the world. The three transformations of the spirit in Zarathustra culminate in the innocently playing child that as such is creating new values after the spirit had created (in his preceding metamorphosis into a lion) the freedom for novel creation (Z 137-40). Nietzsche elaborates that

the child is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a self-propelled wheel, a first movement, a sacred "Yes." [Z 139]

Nietzsche details that in the Dionysian state which is the state that he favors

the whole affective system is excited and enhanced: so that it discharges all its means of expression at once and drives forth simultaneously the power of representation, imitation, transfiguration, transformation, and every kind of mimicking and acting. The essential feature here remains the ease of metamorphosis.¹⁸

This Nietzschean transformative intent and energy also needs to be perceptible in any rendering of *The Gay Science* as Nietzsche not only advocated cheerfulness

but he also wrote cheerfully, that is, in an exuberant style that is comparable to a dance. Communicating well this love, passion, becoming, overcoming, and transfiguration poses doubtlessly great challenges to the translator. The first step regarding successfully meeting these challenges consists, of course, in developing awareness and recognition of them.

Nietzsche is well aware of the limitations of the reach and power of language: The free spirit knows nothing in any direct manner of the affects' workings, but he can make an exegesis of their effects. However, even indirect affective knowledge is limited, for language is insufficient to grasp, even in outline, the nuances of the interactions amongst human drives. Nietzsche's writings are performative. By this I mean to say that they not only thematize transformation of the self and of culture but simultaneously they also engage in this very transformation through linguistic, stylistic, and rhetorical means. For Nietzsche, living is about experimenting playfully with new categories (Z 278, GSK 347). These new categories are consequential and effective, for in Nietzsche's understanding, thinking is doing which turns eventually into flesh. *The Gay Science* states that the free spirit engages in on-going self-transformation (GS 238, TI 519-20). The very early Nietzsche reader and translator Common regarded Nietzsche as being both a philosopher and a poet. Yet many later interpreters read Nietzsche mistakenly as either poet or philosopher and not as an inextricably linked combination of both. Hill recognizes this fact when he refers to,

Nietzsche's suggestion that philosophical enquiry can be both scientifically rigorous *and* poetic. [JS xiii]

Kaufmann likewise notes that good spirits, laughter, and gaiety are fundamental to thinking in the sense of gay science (GSK 257). Accordingly, Nietzschean science substitutes seriousness and sterile truth with life-affirming cheerfulness, artistry, and creativity. The poem crafted in form of a dancing song which concludes the book contains the lines:

we need dances that are new!
Let us dance in myriad manners,
freedom write on *our* art's banners,
our science shall be gay! [GSK 375]

Apart from *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche also regards Daybreak as representing "merriment of the spirit"

¹⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, "Thus Spoke Zarathustra," in *The Portable Nietzsche*, transl. Walter Kaufmann, New York, NY: Penguin Books 1954, pp. 112-439, here p. 121-2. [Henceforth cited as Z]

¹⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, "Twilight of the Idols," in *The Portable Nietzsche*, transl. Walter Kaufmann, New York, NY: Penguin Books 1954, pp. 463-563, here p. 519. [Henceforth cited as TI]

(*Munterkeit des Geistes*).¹⁹ This means that the hilarious mood and its joyous musicality that vehemently opposes the "spirit of gravity" (Z 122) also needs to be perceptibly conveyed by the translation as it is not merely incidental to *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*.

As Nietzsche is one of the greatest stylists in the German language, each one of his published words is well-chosen. In Nietzsche's view, an aptitude for nuances in regard to lexis is essential (EHK 323). Nietzsche not only regards himself as a master of "many stylistic possibilities" but he also declares himself to be a practitioner of an "art of exegesis" (GM 23) and of an "art of style" (EHK 265). He elaborates that the objective of any style consists in communicating an inward state,

an inward tension of pathos, by means of signs,
including the tempo of these signs—that is the meaning
of every style. [EHK 265]

Hill does him largely justice yet there are also translation choices that he made that are not justifiable or at least disputable. Translating "Fröhliche Wissenschaft" in *The Gay Science*, Book 1, section 1 as "joyous wisdom" is not warranted, especially after having decided to translate the book's title as "Joyous Science." In the same section, Hill renders *Schadenfreude*, a malicious satisfaction and pleasure in the misfortunes and miseries of others, as "malicious glee," albeit *Schadenfreude* is an educated English word. Glee is great merriment or delight in general. Yet there is at least a tinge of cruelty needed to be able to feel *Schadenfreude*. A possible alternative could be malicious joy as *Freude* means literally "joy." *Schaden* translates as "damage." Perhaps one could say, gloating over others' misfortune, or, enjoyment obtained from the pain and troubles of others.

In my view, Hill should have made it clear that he translated the second edition of the book that came out in 1887 by writing on the title page (at the very least on the one within the book) what had been written on the German original, namely "Neue Ausgabe mit einem Anhang: Lieder des Prinzen Vogelfrei" which might be rendered in English as "New edition with an appendix: songs of the prince Free-as-a-bird." This would have unambiguously clarified the question

¹⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, "25 January 1882 letter to Heinrich Köselitz," in *Friedrich Nietzsche: Sämtliche Briefe, Kritische Studienausgabe in 8 Bänden, Vol. 6*, eds. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, Berlin, DE: de Gruyter 1975, p. 159 #190. [my translation, henceforth cited as L190]

of the edition used. This brings me to my next point of criticism. By rendering *Prinz Vogelfrei* as "Outlaw Prince," Hill overemphasizes the legal aspect implied in this name (namely that being unprotected by the law of the herd, anybody can shoot him) at the expense of losing Nietzsche's image of the bird who is light and free from social conventions and constraints and in this way able to see the world from above and from a distance. This *Vogelperspektive* (bird's eye view) allows the Nietzschean free spirit to be a creator of words and worlds and a law-maker (as opposed to a law-follower). Yet, the extra materials from *Ecce Homo* that Hill included in his translation are of benefit to the reader, especially as they constitute Nietzsche's own paraphrasing, comments and commentaries of the book.

Due to the book's aphoristic style, it would be utterly helpful to have an index available. For instance, it is sorely missed when one wants to relate sections with the same or a similar topic in order to compare them and to construct out of the fragments a more sustained argument. Both Kaufmann and Nauckhoff provided one. This means that they too regarded it as an indispensable requirement for this particular book. Admittedly, it is a lot of work to put together a good one, yet in this case it would have been definitely worth the effort. Nietzsche appropriates for brief moments the positions of his opponents in order to think them through. This method can be easily misleading for readers whose mastery of the German language has its limits or scholars who have read only excerpts of his work will also experience intense puzzlement. Again, to address this difficulty, an index would come in handy.

It is a too apolitical appraisal of Nietzsche when Hill depicts in the Introduction self-emancipation as the book's principal objective. Nietzsche is not only interested in change on the microcosmic level, in individual self-transformation, but clearly also in change on the macrocosmic level as he is intent on advancing cultural change through engaging in (grand) politics and world philosophy. Hill's reading is similar to the ones made by Daniel Blue and Matthew Meyer arguing that the trilogy of free-spirit books is about Nietzsche becoming who he is, which is in part necessitated by Nietzsche's view, later also taken up by Jaspers, namely, that the life of the philosopher is inseparable from his philosophy. Yet I wish nevertheless to strongly caution against interpreting this trilogy in this vein to the extent

that other themes that are equally important start to become underappreciated. However, I do agree with Hill's overall evaluation of *The Gay Science* at the end of his Introduction to his translation of the text. He writes:

With its unique voice and prose style, its playful combination of poetry and prose, its implied Mediterranean setting, its authorial persona's quest for self-emancipation, *The Joyous Science* is a literary tour de force. It is quite possibly Nietzsche's best book. [JS xxii]

However, I find the word emancipation in the context of Hill's book somewhat misplaced as this word denotes societal and above all political self-liberation, the relevance of which he abrogates in respect of Nietzsche.

It goes without saying that without exception all translation work needs to take the German original text as its basis. As the source text for *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* serves the third volume of the *Kritische Studienausgabe* and volume V2 of the *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*. In his translation, Hill wrote thirty-three pages of annotations. I am skeptical as to Hill's simulation of making Nietzsche speak in nineteenth century English diction. This decision seems to me to be directly clashing with Hill's requirement of readability versus accuracy. Yet whilst reading the translation it seemed to me not having come across too many actual nineteenth century English expressions. This omission benefitted the resulting translation. With its prominently arranged and oversized section headings this translation is most suitable for casual readers, that is, for those who merely want to browse the text and who are not inclined to read it from beginning to end or at least extended excerpts of it. The handy format of Kaufmann's translation which was a genuine pocket book has given way to a format that requires at least a purse or satchel to carry it around. Let us not forget, that Nietzsche is a great advocate of walking and wandering when thinking, a genuinely portable book such as Kaufmann's translation supports such an endeavor.

Overall, to date I consider Kaufmann's translation of *The Gay Science* as the most reliable one in terms of accuracy, the rendition of nuances of meaning, of metaphors, of word-play, and of word choice. As is well known, Nietzsche is not only a philosopher but also a *Schriftsteller*, that is, a stylist and literary author of the highest caliber. This puts undoubtedly extraordinary high demands on his translators. This circumstance warrants the making of several translations as each one

of them has different strong points and weaknesses and I agree with Daniel Ferrer's argument that textual material is

altered or disrupted by the slightest addition to the represented universe. This is why it is undoubtedly necessary to consider that the different versions, even those which are very close, always reflect different worlds.²⁰

Were it not for the fact that there exist already at least three English translations of the book Hill's translation would indeed be an impressive achievement or feat. Hence, one is dealing with a retranslation and a transformative reinterpretation of both Nietzsche's original text and the other English translations of it. Interestingly, for the free spirits too, knowing means making an exegesis (*Auslegung*) or an interpretation.²¹ I suggest that, like the three other translators, Hill became in part the victim of what Nietzsche calls in *Beyond Good and Evil*, section 28, *unfreiwillige Vergemeinerungen* (involuntary vulgarizations). This lack of nuances and the general lowering of the level of sophistication is being caused by the impossibility of the target language to render the stylistic tempo of the source language which depends on the physical make-up, namely the metabolism, of its speakers (*EHK* 40). Nietzsche explains that there are

honestly meant translations that, as involuntary vulgarizations, are almost falsifications of the original, merely because its bold and merry tempo (which leaps over and obviates all dangers in things and words) could not be translated.²²

²⁰ Daniel Ferrer, "Le matériel et le virtuel: Du paradigme indiciaire à la logique de mondes possibles," in *Pourquoi la critique génétique? Méthodes, théories*, eds. Michel Contat and Daniel Ferrer, Paris: CNRS Éditions 1998, p. 27; cited in and transl. Sharon Deane-Cox, *Retranslation: Translation, Literature and Reinterpretation*, London, UK: Bloomsbury 2014, pp. 192-3.

²¹ "Was kann allein Erkenntniß sein? – 'Auslegung!'" Friedrich Nietzsche, "Nachgelassene Fragmente: Herbst 1885 – Herbst 1886," in *Friedrich Nietzsche: Sämtliche Werke, Kritische Studienausgabe, Vol. 12*, eds. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, Berlin, DE: de Gruyter 1988, pp. 67-169, here p. 104.

²² "ehrlich gemeinte Übersetzungen, die beinahe Fälschungen sind, als unfreiwillige Vergemeinerungen des Originals, bloss weil sein tapferes und lustiges tempo nicht mit übersetzt werden konnte, welches über alles Gefährliche in Dingen und Worten wegspringt, weghilft." Friedrich Nietzsche, "Jenseits

In his 1923 translation of Charles Baudelaire's "Tableaux parisiens," Walter Benjamin insists that the translator makes a seminal interpretation via unearthing previously unnoticed aspects of the original text in the source language by way of confronting it with the target language.²³

Volume V2 of the thirty-three volumes *Kritische Gesamtausgabe* uses the equivalent of italics for the sections' headings that are immediately preceding the text. Yet Hill puts the sections headings above the sections which gives them an inordinate weight, especially considering that Nietzsche, occasionally also his friend and amanuensis Heinrich Köselitz aka Peter Gast or even the publisher wrote these titles often only after Nietzsche had written the sections. This means that these titles have frequently and mainly an orienting and organizing function and are not intended to convey deep meanings. By this I do not mean to claim that the sections are randomly placed—they are, indeed, carefully arranged—all I am holding is that the section headings should not be unduly emphasized. This was also argued by Tobias Brücker at the Nietzsche Workshop on the first part of *Human, All Too Human* entitled "Der Wanderer und sein Schatten" that took place on 22 July 2019 in Sils-Maria, Switzerland. In Kaufmann's layout section titles are being distinguished from the text through the use of a period and a dash. Hill did not notice that the close proximity between the title and the aphorism encourages continuous reading. Nietzsche has undeniably the language awareness and the *Sprachgefühl* (feel for language) of a genius. In combination with his training in the classics and his application of its rigor to philosophy and to reading texts results in master pieces such as *The Gay Science*.

Despite of Hill's overarching commitment to readability over rigorousness there is a certain cheer- and joylessness prevalent in it and the light-footedness of Nietzsche's unique voice is often times somewhat amiss in it as well. This results in a text that is only moderately engaging. Kaufmann comments on this

von Gut und Böse," in *Friedrich Nietzsche: Sämtliche Werke, Kritische Studienausgabe, Vol. 5*, eds. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, Berlin, DE: de Gruyter 1988, pp. 9-243, here p. 46. [my translation]

²³ Walter Benjamin, "Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers," in *Walter Benjamin, Gesammelte Schriften, Vol. IV/1*, ed. Tillman Rexroth, Frankfurt/Main, DE: Suhrkamp 1972, pp. 9-21, here pp. 17-20.

difficulty in respect of his *Zarathustra* translation:

Much of what is most untranslatable is an expression of that *Übermut* which Nietzsche associates with the *Übermensch*: a lightness of mind, a prankish exuberance—though the term can also designate that overbearing which the Greeks called *hybris*. [Z 110]

Further, the prose parts of Hills translation are occasionally not sufficiently flowing. Consequently, if one is imagining that one does not know the original text, one experiences some difficulties following the meaning and emphasis purveyed. It is indispensable to be aware of the full context of a section and also of the entire book, if not of the entire published and unpublished work of Nietzsche to fully understand the meaning of words, concepts, and expressions in *The Gay Science*. When translating, it can never be enough to confine oneself to an individual sentence or even worse to a singular word. Each word occurs in the context of entire worlds.

In a letter to his close friend Gustav Krug, Nietzsche confesses,

via using translations I hope to learn the venerated languages themselves.²⁴

Nietzsche is right on target when he deems translations as being merely a makeshift solution for dealing with a lack of foreign language knowledge; especially for academic experts it is indispensable to acquire mastery of any foreign language that is relevant in their field of expertise. In my estimation, merely possessing a reading knowledge of foreign languages does not sufficiently capture the musicality of a language that constitutes part of its meaning. Nietzsche is a case in point for evincing that second-hand knowledge and studying renditions of an original text does not yield detailed understanding of any given discourse. Furthermore, Nietzsche is a master of nuances. The translator needs to be able to render tiny changes or variations in meaning and this is only possible if one has also orally communicated to a considerable extent with competent mother tongue speakers and that one has experience living and studying or working in a country

²⁴ "An den Übersetzungen hoffe ich die geehrten Sprachen selbst zu lernen." Friedrich Nietzsche, "5 October 1872 letter to Gustav Krug," in *Friedrich Nietzsche: Sämtliche Briefe, Kritische Studienausgabe in 8 Bänden, Vol. 4*, eds. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, Berlin, DE: de Gruyter 1975, p. 60 #259. [my translation]

where the language in question is spoken on a daily basis.

A good translator needs to be at least a reasonably good writer and has to be able to command various styles in order to grasp expediently and to the greatest extent possible what the source text is attempting to tell. In addition, it is fairly indisputable that one needs to have advanced knowledge and research experience of the philosophy one is translating in order to be able to produce an accurate rendering of the original text throughout. Obviously, one also needs broad philosophical and cultural knowledge in order to be able to recognize allusions and contextual elements of the source text. This also includes, as Nietzsche puts it, to be able to read between and behind the lines.²⁵ His writing is very dense and it is full of enigmatic hints or signposts, riddles, and unuttered or unspoken thoughts which require extensive reflection and the ability to draw the last conclusions for oneself. Due to this complexity, Nietzsche's readers and translators would have to be at ease with intellectual "rumination" and an "art of exegesis" (*GM* 23). Since none of Nietzsche's books contain as many poems as *The Gay Science*, its translator needs familiarity with *Dichtkunst*, poetry, and verses as well.

I concur with the benchmark Kaufmann, translator and Nietzsche scholar of the highest renown, is providing for assessing the quality of his *The Gay Science* translation and I shall also apply it to the other three translations under review. He writes:

My translation of *The Gay Science* follows the same principles as my previous versions of nine of Nietzsche's books and of *The Will to Power*. The aim is, in one word, faithfulness – to Nietzsche's meaning tone, nuances, style, and manner. Important terms are generally rendered consistently – *Wissenschaft* as science, *Geist* as spirit – and when it seemed helpful, the original German words are furnished in notes. [*GSK* 25]

Consistency of terminology is partially lacking in Hill as Duncan Large evidences it by way of adducing examples for this shortcoming.²⁶ Kaufmann's rendition, mostly meticulous in rigor, is not only the

²⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, "Gedanken über die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten," in *Friedrich Nietzsche: Sämtliche Werke, Kritische Studienausgabe, Vol. 1*, eds. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, Berlin, DE: de Gruyter 1988, pp. 761-3, here p. 762.

²⁶ Duncan Large, "Joyous Conquest? – On Retranslating Nietzsche's *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*," *Existenz* 15/2 (Fall 2020), 55-59, here p. 58.

most frequently cited one, but from the quartet of translators examined here, he is arguably also the most qualified translator. In 1950, Kaufmann writes:

It is evident at once that Nietzsche is far superior to Kant and Hegel as a stylist; but it also seems that as a philosopher he represents a very sharp decline – and men have not been lacking who have not considered him a philosopher at all – because he had no "system." Yet this argument is hardly cogent. Schelling and Hegel, Spinoza and Aquinas had their systems; in Kant's and Plato's case the word is far less applicable; and of the many important philosophers who very definitely did not have systems one need only mention Socrates and many of the pre-Socratics. Not only can one defend Nietzsche on this score – how many philosophers today have systems? – but one must add that he had strong philosophic reasons for not having a system.²⁷

Hill speaks of unveiling rather than veiling truth in Nietzsche. Yet Nietzsche himself provides plenty of evidence that he intends to create surfaces (veils) rather than to destroy them and go beyond them when he, for instance, writes that

leering out of the writings of my *first period* is the grimace of *Jesuitism*: I mean the conscious holding on to illusion and forcibly incorporating that illusion as the basis of *culture*.²⁸

Christine Battersby correctly summarizes that

Nietzsche deploys laughter as a counter to the sublime, and the need to stop at the "fold" of the surface as a block to depth and a metaphysics that locates truth "beyond" appearances.²⁹

Nietzsche concludes the Preface to *The Gay Science* with the exclamation:

Oh, those Greeks! They knew how to live. What is required for that is to stop courageously at the surface,

²⁷ Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1974, p. 79.

²⁸ "Hinter meiner *ersten Periode* grinst das Gesicht des *Jesuitismus*: ich meine: das bewußte Festhalten an der Illusion und zwangweise Einverleibung derselben als Basis *der Cultur*." Friedrich Nietzsche, "Nachgelassene Fragmente: Herbst 1883 16[23]," in *Friedrich Nietzsche: Sämtliche Werke, Kritische Studienausgabe, Vol. 10*, eds. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, Berlin, DE: de Gruyter 1988, p. 507. [my translation]

²⁹ Christine Battersby, *The Sublime, Terror and Human Difference*, London, UK: Routledge 2007, p. 179.

the fold, the skin, to adore appearance, to believe in forms, tones, words, in the whole Olympus of appearance. Those Greeks were superficial – *out of profundity*. [GSK 38]

Since Nietzschean artists of *The Gay Science* are adorers of forms, of tones, and of words, it is necessary to pay utmost attention to all of these elements when translating the book.

The analytic method dictates to be clear, concise, and accessible. If one were to apply the by Nietzsche promoted "intellectual conscience" to Hill (GSK 76), one would have to conclude that it is a rather hastily produced translation, executed in the mindset of an analytic philosopher. In defense of Hill needs to be said that academia still severely underestimates the laboriousness of the translation process and the advanced skill-set that it presupposes which means that the time frames for translations tend to be far too restricted to properly execute the art of translation.³⁰ Hill's translation is a helpful translation to further disseminate Nietzsche's thought in the English-speaking world, yet a definitive translation of this brilliant work remains a desideratum that might be met by Adrian Del Caro's forthcoming retranslation of the book for the Stanford *Complete Works* that is intended to be a rendition focusing on faithfulness to the wording of the original. Of the translations discussed in this review, Kaufmann remains the most sophisticated and, thus, the most commendable one for the English-language reader of Nietzsche. However, his commentary is in part too idiosyncratic and didactic, respectively lacks in a balanced viewpoint to be suitable for translatory objectives. In my ranking, Kaufmann is followed by Nauckhoff as a close second. Nauckhoff renders Nietzsche's emphasis of words more accurately than Kaufmann. Unlike Kaufmann, she is also not introducing paragraph breaks into Nietzsche's aphorisms as he himself has

none in them and, additionally, she is more precise than Kaufmann in the reproduction of Nietzsche's unique manner of punctuation and in the recreation of his succinct expression in English. However, I prefer Kaufmann's more formal vocabulary over Nauckhoff's more informal one as I find the latter has a distracting effect when discussing the first and last questions in the lives of human beings. It is laudable that her faster pacing comes closer to the original work when compared with Kaufmann's translation. Her notes are functionally adequate as they add value and clarification. Yet to my mind, she could have tried harder to revise Kaufmann's rendition and to improve on this old version instead of simply reproducing or copying it with what often times amounts to only minor changes. Nauckhoff's new translation of the book is about as readable as Kaufmann's was. For this reason, I am not convinced that Hill needed to drop precision in order to make the text more readable as upholding both principles has already been successfully done before he had composed his version. Adrian Del Caro's translation of its poems at the beginning and at the end of Nauckhoff's rendition is carefully crafted in terms of preserving not only the verses' semantic contents but also their rhythm, tempo, and mood. I rank Common's translation third, and Hill's version fourth. I suggest that Common at times toned down Nietzsche's language use due to the fact that he valued his aim to spread Nietzsche's philosophy to the highest number of readers possible, over reaching near-perfection in terms of accuracy and precision in his rendition of the work. Yet when considering that he translated the text for the first time into English and he had, thus, no other version to draw on for inspiration, he did an excellent job by any standard. His extraordinary achievement still deserves great admiration and respect.

³⁰ This trend is especially troubling at the advent of AI translation engines.