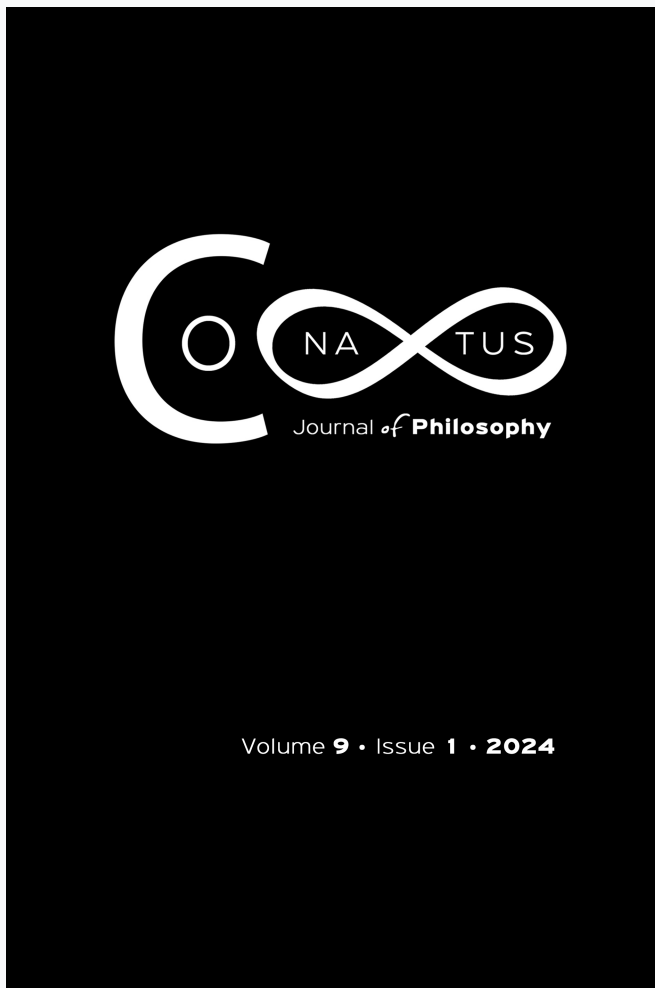


## Conatus - Journal of Philosophy

Vol 9, No 1 (2024)

Conatus - Journal of Philosophy



### Nietzsche's Intellectual Integrity and Metaphysical Comfort

*Anthony Chimankpam Ojimba*

doi: [10.12681/cjp.34391](https://doi.org/10.12681/cjp.34391)

Copyright © 2024, Anthony Chimankpam Ojimba



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).

#### To cite this article:

Ojimba, A. C. (2024). Nietzsche's Intellectual Integrity and Metaphysical Comfort. *Conatus - Journal of Philosophy*, 9(1), 109–130. <https://doi.org/10.12681/cjp.34391>

# Nietzsche's Intellectual Integrity and Metaphysical Comfort

**Anthony Chimankpam Ojimba**

*University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria*

*E-mail address: [anthony.ojimba@unn.edu.ng](mailto:anthony.ojimba@unn.edu.ng)*

*ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8188-8392>*

## Abstract

*This paper examines Nietzsche's intellectual integrity, with a view to showing that despite his attempt to overcome metaphysics, using this concept, Nietzsche remains within the comfort of metaphysics. Intellectual integrity represents Nietzsche's unique style of questioning and his critical method of analysing Western metaphysical foundations. It is a flexible and dialectic principle, which approaches the question of 'being' as a dynamic process of endless interpretations and becoming, instead of as a fixed essence or a metaphysical absolute. Attempts are made, in the paper, to examine the dynamics of Nietzsche's intellectual integrity, as well as its intimate link with other key concepts in his philosophy. To achieve its goal, the paper adopts the method of historical hermeneutics and textual analysis.*

**Keywords:** *intellectual integrity; becoming; being; metaphysics; endless interpretations; radical questioning*

## I. Introduction

The idea of intellectual integrity is not a novel concept, in the history of thought. Notwithstanding that this idea is ascribed to Nietzsche, it can be traced back to the skeptics, who critically challenged and questioned the foundations of human beliefs, knowledge, morality, religion etc. Nietzsche, himself, admitted this

when he asserts that “except a few skeptics, the decent type, in the history of philosophy, the rest do not know the first requirements of intellectual integrity.”<sup>1</sup> Nietzsche’s intellectual integrity harbors the same vibrancy and dynamism of the skeptics’ critical attitude. It designates his unique style of questioning and his critical method of analysing Western metaphysical foundations. It is a flexible and dialectic principle, which approaches the question of being as a dynamic process of endless interpretations: a critical and non-dogmatic method, which does not accept any principles, without challenging them. It represents the ability to challenge and the courage to critically question the basic foundations of beliefs and assumptions, which are uncritically and dogmatically accepted as true, absolute, highest, objective, unconditional and unquestionable.

Intellectual integrity (*Redlichkeit*)<sup>2</sup> has variously been interpreted as order, lawfulness, courage, etc. However, the contemporary understanding of *Redlichkeit* translates it as honesty, integrity, sincerity and candor.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, within the philosophical context of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, “intellectual integrity represents *truthfulness in explanations as promises*.”<sup>4</sup> This calls attention to the vibrancy and dynamism of Nietzsche’s intellectual integrity. It shows it as a process and as that which constantly strives for elevation.

In the later stages of its materialization, intellectual integrity is referred to as the “aesthetic integrity,” which is the art of the artist and the basic force behind man’s affirmation of endless interpretations.<sup>5</sup> In Nietzsche’s estimation, “the world becomes infinite, to the extent that there are infinite interpretations.”<sup>6</sup> The implication of this thought is the experience of “being” as interpretation – an interpretation with endless flux and possibilities. This means that, for Nietzsche, a static being is inconceivable. Rather, “being,” for him, is an illusion, which is

<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo and the Antichrist*, trans. Thomas Wayne (New York: Algora Publishing, 2004), 111; § 12. Cf. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, ed. Walter Kaufmann, trans. Walter Kaufmann and Reginald J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 223; § 414.

<sup>2</sup> Nietzsche uses *Redlichkeit* (which is a German word for integrity or honesty) interchangeably with intellectual integrity. For further discussion on *Redlichkeit*, see Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: A Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), 155-156; § 227.

<sup>3</sup> Wilhelm Stefan Wurzer, “Nietzsche’s Dialectic of Intellectual Integrity: A Propaedeutic Study,” *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 13, no. 2 (1975): 237.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 242.

<sup>6</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, ed. Bernard Williams, trans. Josefine Nauckhoff (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 239-240; § 374.

a creation of becoming.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the characteristics of fixity, permanency and unchangeability are denied to being. This is a critique on being: a critique on metaphysics. It represents an attempt by Nietzsche to overcome metaphysics. However, this constitutes a problem for Nietzsche: given that metaphysics is an embodiment of some absolutes, how actually possible is it for Nietzsche to overcome metaphysics, using this critical method of intellectual integrity? Was Nietzsche, in his attempt to overcome metaphysics, not himself, imposing another metaphysics, especially going by his doctrine of the will to power, which constitutes the basic principle (essence) of life and his idea of the superman, which designates the essence of humanity? Are the two ideas of basic principles and essence not appeals to something fixed and constant about being, which is an appeal to metaphysics? This paper, therefore, argues that despite Nietzsche's attempt to overcome metaphysics, using his concept of intellectual integrity, Nietzsche still remains within the unbroken line of the metaphysical tradition.

Previous studies have focused on the deconstructive, hermeneutic, epistemic and moral implications of Nietzsche's intellectual integrity. However, none has paid attention to the metaphysical implications of this concept. This work, therefore, is an attempt in such a direction. To accomplish its purpose, the paper is divided into three sections. Section one delves into the concept of intellectual integrity and its philosophic-historical development, while section two articulates the intimate link between intellectual integrity and other key concepts in Nietzsche's philosophy. Section three attempts a critique of Nietzsche's intellectual integrity and embodies the conclusion.

## II. Nietzsche's concept of intellectual integrity and its philosophic-historical development

Around 1880, Nietzsche had plans to write a "History of Integrity," in which he was to concentrate on the "Passion of Integrity."<sup>8</sup> This was, because, Nietzsche thought that intellectual integrity, which is translated in German as *Redlichkeit*, had been totally absent from the history of philosophy.<sup>9</sup> This is why he posited that "except a few skept-

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Anthony Chimankpam Ojimba, "Ubuntu's Ontological Account in African Philosophy and Its Cross-Tradition Engagement on the Issue of Being Versus Becoming," *Comparative Philosophy: An International Journal of Constructive Engagement of Distinct Approaches towards World Philosophy* 14, no. 1 (2023): 98-115.

<sup>8</sup> Wurzer, 237.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 236.

tics, the rest of the philosophers, in the history of philosophy, do not know the requirements of intellectual integrity.”<sup>10</sup> He maintains that Western philosophy, which is understood here as Western Metaphysics, has always missed this method of intellectual integrity. He was of the view that “philosophers have not only failed to accomplish an elaborate critical analysis of Western metaphysical foundations, but, also, evaded the herculean task of questioning the very value of culture’s essence, traditionally known as morality.”<sup>11</sup> Nietzsche, therefore, resolved to overcome this lack by means of a “new enlightenment,” which he describes as “the philosophic movement of *Redlichkeit*”<sup>12</sup> – intellectual integrity – which, in his estimation, begins with the death of metaphysics.

Intellectual integrity, as already hinted above, describes Nietzsche’s unique style of questioning. It represents his critical method of analyzing the Western metaphysical foundations. It is a flexible, dialectical, critical and non-dogmatic method, which does not accept any principles without challenging them. It designates a radical attitude of questioning the basic foundations of our beliefs and assumptions, which are uncritically and dogmatically accepted. It rejects any absolute principle and subjects every belief to radical scrutiny. It is deeply rooted in intellectual transparency and honesty, which throws open the foundations and roots of beliefs through radical questioning. It incorporates the culture of openness, criticality, radicality, courage, honesty and flexibility.<sup>13</sup>

Nietzsche’s intellectual integrity is a dialectical and dynamic principle that dislodges the categories of unity, identity, fixity and constancy, which characterize the traditional metaphysical system of philosophizing, while replacing them with the notion of endless becoming. For Nietzsche, the traditional or classical metaphysical system or style of philosophizing was characterized by an uncritical and dogmatic acceptance of ideas and ideals, without radically questioning them. In his estimation, this uncritical, dogmatic and absolute acceptance of ideals, without questioning, is succinctly captured in the traditional Platonic speculative world of forms, which recognizes the forms as something absolute, unchanging, unquestionable and constant. This also reminds one of the Kantian postulations of the noumenal world or the world

---

<sup>10</sup> Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 111; § 12. Cf. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 223; § 414.

<sup>11</sup> Wurzer, 236.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 236.

<sup>13</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 205.

of things-in-themselves, which describes the speculative metaphysical world. Nietzsche does not accept the ideas of constancy, fixity and absolutism with reference to the fundamental principle of being; rather, he favours the idea of becoming or motion. This is why he maintains that the highest intent of his philosophy is to impress the character being upon becoming.<sup>14</sup> This simply means, for him, that the ultimate intention of his philosophic enterprise, which is propelled by intellectual integrity – his style of philosophizing – is to stripe being of its features of constancy and fixity, while replacing them with the notion of endless becoming. This is why he describes reality or being as a process and as deeply rooted in endless flux. This also informs the reason why he traces his intellectual ancestry to the Heraclitean philosophy of becoming. He finds, in Heraclitus, a kindred spirit, because Heraclitus exhibits the tragic wisdom and critical attitude that Nietzsche finds lacking in the history of philosophy. This tragic wisdom, open-mindedness and critical questioning is the decisive move towards a Dionysian philosophy, which affirms “passing-away and annihilating the yea-saying to contrariety and struggle, as well as becoming, with a radical repudiation of the very concept of ‘Being.’”<sup>15</sup> He is very critical of metaphysical absolutes or metaphysical traditions of fixity, essence and substance as instantiated in Plato’s absolute philosophic world of forms, as already hinted above. This informed why he considers his philosophy as a counter movement to Platonism, which signifies for him a movement in opposition to Western metaphysics that recognizes the categories of fixity and unity as the elemental principle of being.<sup>16</sup> This counter movement against absolute metaphysical system of philosophizing is symbolized in his philosophic movement of intellectual integrity, which for him begins with the death of God:<sup>17</sup> the collapse of the absolute metaphysical tradition or the metaphysics of substance.

Nietzsche regards traditional morality, which he describes as the Platonic Christian morality, as a slave morality.<sup>18</sup> In his estimation, this morality was always afraid of accepting challenges and contradictions. Invariably, it favours the notions of permanency, fixity and constancy with regards to being. In Nietzsche’s view, the Platonic-Christian mo-

<sup>14</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 330; § 617.

<sup>15</sup> Allan D. Shrift, *Nietzsche, and the Question of Interpretation: Between Hermeneutics and Deconstruction* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 64.

<sup>16</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 61.

<sup>17</sup> Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 120; § 125.

<sup>18</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 205; § 260.

rality and system of philosophizing cultivated a method of truthfulness – the idea of what is good is true – which suppressed other thought systems, especially, that of the free spirits. This tradition favours identity, instead of difference, constancy, instead of change, and monism, instead of pluralism as constitutive of the basic principle of being. Admittedly, this explains why Nietzsche pitches his intellectual integrity as an attack on Platonism, which he describes ultimately as Western metaphysics.<sup>19</sup>

As already hinted above, Nietzsche detests the metaphysical tradition of essence, unity, constancy and fixity. He considers the Platonic-Christian philosophy as a metaphysical interpretation of reality, which he views as erroneous and deceptive. Plato posits the ideal world as constituting the perfect representation of reality, while casting aspersions on the natural world as a world of imitation and imperfect reflection of the ideal world. Similarly, Christianity toed the same line of thoughts by appropriating the Platonic interpretation of reality to suit the Christian worldview. At this juncture, Plato's ideal world becomes the Christian heavenly world, while his chief form – the form of Good – becomes God, which is like the sun that illumines the earth or the natural world. Nietzsche's intellectual integrity is critical of this method of interpreting reality as Nietzsche regards such ideals and worlds as metaphysical fictions utilized by Christianity to keep man under its control and perpetual dominance. This is why he urges us, in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, to remain faithful to the natural world and do not listen to those who speak to us about any terrestrial or supernatural world.<sup>20</sup> In Nietzsche's estimation, this erroneous and deceptive interpretation of reality, engineered by Platonism and, by extension, Christianity, propelled him to embark on his philosophic movement of *Redlichkeit* – intellectual integrity – which, in his view, begins with the collapse of metaphysics (the death of God), which ultimately presupposes, for him, the crumbling of Platonism. Thus, Nietzsche developed his idea of intellectual integrity as a direct attack and dethronement of the classical or Platonic-Christian metaphysical tradition.

Intellectual integrity affirms the death of the metaphysical absolute, which characterizes the traditional philosophical thought systems. For Nietzsche, it represents a breakage and freedom from the absolute metaphysical tradition, which formed the basis of traditional philosophizing. This is why he was of the view that “the substance of philoso-

<sup>19</sup> Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, 61.

<sup>20</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, eds. Adrian Del Caro and Roberts B. Pippin, trans. Adrian Del Caro (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 6.

phy and the philosophical intentions of man is no longer the traditional mode of philosophizing, but intellectual integrity, which begins with the death of God – the death of metaphysics.”<sup>21</sup> In Nietzsche’s estimation, intellectual integrity does not disappear with the collapse of traditional mode of philosophizing, but constantly wills to overcome and strives for elevation. It does not posit itself as an absolute principle, but as a dynamic principle, which consists in endless interpretations. It incorporates a dialectic force and presents “being” as an expressive and interpretive phenomenon. Apart from its vibrancy and dynamism, Nietzsche’s intellectual integrity has strong connections with other key concepts in his philosophy, which I will now delve into.

### III. Nietzsche’s intellectual integrity and its intimate link with other key concepts in his philosophy

This section concentrates on Nietzsche’s intellectual integrity and its intimate connection with other key ideas in his philosophy, such as the will to power, perspectivism and interpretation, the death of God and nihilism, eternal return and becoming as well as his notion of art. First of all, I will start by exploring the intimate link between Nietzsche’s intellectual integrity and his idea of the will to power.

#### a. Intellectual integrity and the will to power

There is a strong link between Nietzsche’s intellectual integrity and his notion of the will to power. For Nietzsche, the will to power is the condition or the basis for the will to truth, which is integrity. This becomes clear, in Nietzsche’s statement, in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, as he wrote: “even you, the seeker of knowledge, are only a path and footstep of my will; indeed, my will to power follows also on the heels of your will to truth!”<sup>22</sup> This means that without the will to power, there is no integrity (truth) for Nietzsche.

Nietzsche views the will to power as “the essence of life.”<sup>23</sup> In his estimation, “man’s will to power comprises of many wills to power, with each of them in continuous competition and constant interplay among themselves.”<sup>24</sup> This shows the will to power as a dynamic principle. Similarly, it indicates that the goal is always the “elevation of one

<sup>21</sup> Wurzer, 236.

<sup>22</sup> Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 90.

<sup>23</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 148; § 254.

<sup>24</sup> Wurzer, 240.



above the other, which involves an assiduous play of overcoming.”<sup>25</sup> Thus, “each strives for *more* power, not because it lacks power, but because *power* desires more power.”<sup>26</sup> Nietzsche views this power from the perspective of aesthetics and dialectics. Admittedly, this aesthetic and dialectic force of the will to power further establishes the link between Nietzsche’s intellectual integrity and his notion of the will to power. Nietzsche posits that intellectual integrity is the “aesthetic integrity,” which is the basic force behind man’s affirmation of being as endless interpretations. This presupposes being not as a metaphysical absolute, but as a dynamic interpretation, made up of endless interpretations. Similarly, the will to power, also a dynamic principle, involves itself in an assiduous play of overcoming. It is deeply rooted in the notion of becoming and affirms being as endless interpretations. Thus, intellectual integrity, with the help of the dynamic will to power, affirms the death of the metaphysical absolute. It challenges the notions of fixity, permanency and constancy, which characterize the classical notion of being. It affirms the dethronement of the Platonic-Christian metaphysical interpretation of reality. Apart from its intimate connection with the will to power, Nietzsche’s intellectual integrity is also linked to his idea of perspectivism and interpretation in affirming the death of metaphysics: the death of the absolute and monistic principle through the affirmation of being as endless interpretations and perspectives.

#### b. On perspectivism, interpretation and integrity

Nietzsche’s perspectivism, like his concept of integrity, represents a further critique on metaphysics. It is an affirmation of the death of the metaphysical absolute. In other words, it uproots the idea of ontological monism and affirms the enthronement of ontological pluralism. It discountenances the metaphysical view that subjectivity is capable of dominating the whole idea of being given the multidimensionality and divergent character of reality.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, it advocates for the collapse of the metaphysical presence, identity, fixity, unity, the unconditioned, the highest values and the absolutes, as Nietzsche puts

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. Cf. Anthony Chimankpam Ojimba, Obiora Anichebe and Anthony U. Ezebuio, “Friedrich Nietzsche on Metaphysical Errors and the ‘Will to Power,’” *Uche Journal of Philosophy* 15, no. 1 (2015): 27-47.

<sup>27</sup> Anthony Chimankpam Ojimba and Obiora Anichebe, “Asouzu’s Complementarism and Nietzsche’s Perspectivism: Implications for Cross-Cultural Philosophizing,” *Global Journal of Cultural Studies* 1, no. 1 (2022): 10-20.

it: “it seems to me important that one should get rid of all, the unity, some force, something unconditioned; otherwise one will never cease regarding it as the highest court of appeal and baptizing it ‘God.’”<sup>28</sup> In this connection, Nietzsche’s perspectivism is an attack on the classical metaphysical notions of unity and essence with regards to the basic principle of being.

Nietzsche’s perspectivism overlaps with his concept of interpretation. “By introducing the notion of interpretation, Nietzsche imposes the definition of Being as ‘text.’”<sup>29</sup> Being is similar to a text that requires our interpretation and without this interpretation, the world, for Nietzsche, is meaningless: “the essential character of the world manifests infinite interpretations or perspectives, otherwise, it is meaningless.”<sup>30</sup> This interpretive and perspectival character of being or reality represents being not as a fixed essence or a metaphysical absolute, but as deeply rooted in endless possibilities, perspectives and interpretations. To this extent, one can contend that “while the idea of perspectivism tends to emphasize the plurality of ways by which being is disclosed, the idea of interpretation accentuates its equivocal character.”<sup>31</sup> This equivocal character of being, as Nietzsche presents it, shows being as having multiplicity of meanings and interpretations and not just one meaning or one interpretation. This informed why he maintains that existence without interpretation is non-sense, and that the world is infinite, to the extent that it is made up of infinite interpretations:

How far the perspectival character of existence extends, or indeed whether it has any other character; whether an existence without interpretation.... doesn’t become ‘non-sense;’ whether, on the other hand, all existence isn’t essentially an interpreting *existence* – that cannot, as would be fair, be decided even by the most industrious and extremely conscientious analysis and self-examination of the intellect; for in the course of this analysis, the human intellect cannot avoid seeing itself under its perspectival forms, and *solely* in these... But I think that, today, we are, at least, far from the ridiculous immodesty of decreeing from our angle that perspec-

<sup>28</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 181.

<sup>29</sup> See Alexander Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* (London: Harvard University Press, 1985), 3.

<sup>30</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 267.

<sup>31</sup> Jean Granier, “Perspectivism and Interpretation,” in *The New Nietzsche*, ed. David B. Allison, 181-196 (London: MIT Press, 1985), 191.

tives are *permitted* only from this angle. Rather, the world has once again become infinite to us: insofar as we cannot reject the possibility *that it includes infinite interpretations*.<sup>32</sup>

The infinitude of interpretations, as Nietzsche contends, in the above quotation, amounts to the affirmation of the collapse of the metaphysical absolute and the enthronement of being as consisting in endless flux and possibilities. This ultimately means that there is nothing fixed, permanent and/or unchanging about “being.” This represents an attack on being – an attack on metaphysics, which is the ultimate intention of Nietzsche’s intellectual integrity.

Nietzsche’s intellectual integrity is linked to his concept of perspectivism, and interpretation and this link lies in the affirmation of being as endless interpretations and perspectives. Just like perspectivism, intellectual integrity also challenges the metaphysical conviction that subjectivity is capable of dominating the totality of being. It champions ontological pluralism and affirms being as a dynamic process of endless interpretations. Similarly, at the highest stages of its development, intellectual integrity is referred to as aesthetic integrity and the art of the artist, which is the basic force behind man’s affirmation of being as “endless interpretations.” Furthermore, in Nietzsche’s estimation, the world becomes infinite to the extent that there are infinite interpretations and perspectives. The implication of this thought is the experience of being as interpretation or endless perspectives, which is rooted in endless possibilities. It then means that for Nietzsche, a static being is inconceivable. Rather, being is an illusion, which is a creation of becoming and ceaseless interpretations. Thus, Nietzsche’s intellectual integrity, just like his concept of perspectivism, dethrones the metaphysical absolute and the notion of ontological monism and institutes the idea of endless interpretations and perspectives. Nietzsche’s concept of intellectual integrity is further related to his idea of eternal return, which is also deeply rooted in the notion of becoming, in affirming the death of metaphysics.

### c. On the idea of becoming, eternal return, and integrity

Eternal return represents Nietzsche’s deep thought, which affirms that all aspects of life return innumerable times in identical fashion.<sup>33</sup> It is not a theory of the world, but a view of the self. For him, eternal

<sup>32</sup> Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 239-40.

<sup>33</sup> Matthew C. Chukwuelobe, “Eternal Return and Ilo Uwa-Nietzsche and Igbo African Thought: Implications for Cross-Cultural Philosophizing,” *Philosophy Today* 56, no.1 (2012): 39-48.

recurrence expresses the notion of endless becoming and represents existence as dynamic.<sup>34</sup> It is not only “Nietzsche’s attempt to replace some principles outside the physical world of flux and the notion of a beyond, but also his essential philosophical goal as an affirmation of the world.”<sup>35</sup> In other words, it emphasizes Nietzsche’s *amor fati*, which is the love of the world, as it is, contrary to the Platonic metaphysical ideal world that denigrates the natural world.

Particularly, Nietzsche’s idea of the eternal return is linked to his effort to replace metaphysics and, by extension, religion.<sup>36</sup> This idea is related to his effort to affirm the death of metaphysics (death of God), using his critical method of intellectual integrity. Certainly, there is a link between Nietzsche’s method of intellectual integrity, which is a critical method of questioning the Western metaphysical foundations, and his idea of eternal return, which is also an effort to replace metaphysics. In a sense, eternal return does not appeal to the “otherworldly.” Rather, it concerns “this worldliness.” This becomes clear when Zarathustra admonishes people to “remain true to the earth and do not believe those who speak of super-terrestrial hopes.”<sup>37</sup> In doing so, “eternal return entails the affirmation of life and existence in this world, to the utter exclusion of another world.”<sup>38</sup> Simply put, it connected the death of God to the denial of any suprasensory, transcendental or metaphysical reality.

As hinted earlier, Nietzsche’s thought of eternal return is deeply rooted in the notion of becoming. This is, because, in Nietzsche’s estimation, a static being is inconceivable. Rather, being is dynamic and flexible, which captures the notion of endless flux. This also explains why he is of the view that “to impress the character of becoming upon being, is the highest will to power.”<sup>39</sup> This is in line with Nietzsche’s critical method of intellectual integrity, which also approaches the question of being as a dynamic process of interpretations, endless flux and becoming, instead of as “the eternally fixed,” “the unchangeable ideals” or a metaphysical absolute. So, eternal return, the will to power

---

<sup>34</sup> Anthony Chimankpam Ojimba and Ada Agada, “Nietzsche’s Idea of Eternal Recurrence and the Notions of Reincarnation in Onyewuanyi and Majeed,” *Filosofia Theoretica: Journal of African Philosophy, Culture and Religions* 9, no. 2 (2020): 38.

<sup>35</sup> Chukwuelobe, 39-48.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>37</sup> Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 6.

<sup>38</sup> See Karl Lowith, *Nietzsche’s Philosophy of Eternal Recurrence of the Same*, trans. J. Harvey Lomax (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 87.

<sup>39</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 330; § 617.

and intellectual integrity share, in common, the elements of becoming and endless interpretations. In this connection, being, for Nietzsche, is an illusion which, itself, is a creation of becoming and interpretations.

The link between Nietzsche's thought of eternal return and his concept of intellectual integrity, as explained above, is tied to the event of the "Death of God," which is the death of metaphysics that Nietzsche's critical method of intellectual integrity affirms. By affirming being as interpretation and becoming, Nietzsche's intellectual integrity affirms the death of the metaphysical absolute – the death of the metaphysical world – which is equivalent to the denial of the transcendental world that his idea of eternal return affirms. This is why Zarathustra admonishes people to remain faithful to the earth and do not believe those who speak of super-terrestrial hopes: the hope of a world beyond this life. Thus, in doing so, the thought of eternal return entails the affirmation of life and existence, in this world, to the utter exclusion of another world (metaphysical world or the transcendental world). Nietzsche's method of intellectual integrity is an attempt to strongly question and overcome this metaphysical world – a world similar to Plato's world of ideas or the world of forms. This is why Nietzsche sees metaphysics (Western philosophy) ultimately as Platonism, as already hinted above, and why he considers his own philosophy as a counter movement to metaphysics, which means for him, a movement in opposition to Platonism.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, as has been hinted above, Nietzsche's concept of intellectual integrity is also tied to the event of the death of God and, subsequently, his idea of nihilism, in the affirmation of the death of metaphysics.

#### d. On the death of God, nihilism, and integrity

Nietzsche's pronouncement concerning the death of God means the death of metaphysics.<sup>41</sup> "God," in Nietzsche's thinking, represents "the suprasensory world in general."<sup>42</sup> God is the name for the realm of ideas and ideals. Thus, the pronouncement: "God is dead," means that the suprasensory or the metaphysical world is without effective power. This means that "it bestows no life."<sup>43</sup> Metaphysics (that is, for Nietzsche, Western philosophy), is understood, ultimately, as Platonism. Nietzsche views his philosophy as a countermovement to metaphysics-

<sup>40</sup> Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, 61.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

ics, and this represents, for him, a movement against Platonism. Thus, by pronouncing the death of God, Nietzsche affirms the death of the metaphysical absolute, which characterizes the Platonic-Christian interpretation of reality. This interpretation of reality favours the idea of the metaphysical presence, identity, fixity and permanency. It favours the world of being. Therefore, Nietzsche's pronouncement of the death of God dethrones this Platonic-Christian or metaphysical interpretation of reality from its pre-eminent position assigned to it in the world of being. Similarly, Nietzsche's intellectual integrity, by affirming being as endless interpretations, becoming and possibilities, affirms the death of metaphysics – the death of God or the realm of ideas and ideals – which forms the basis of the Platonic-Christian interpretation of the world. Intellectual integrity, as a flexible and dynamic principle, approaches being as expressive and interpretive phenomenon. This means that being is no longer a metaphysical absolute, but consists in a dynamic process of endless interpretations, endless flux and becoming.<sup>44</sup> In the same vein, intellectual integrity denies being of any permanent and fixed features. Instead, it represents being as becoming and endless possibilities. To this end, it affirms the death of being – the collapse of the metaphysics of substance – which Nietzsche's pronouncement of the death of God declares. The idea of the death of God leads to what Nietzsche captions nihilism.

Heidegger defines nihilism as “a historical movement, and not just any view or doctrine advocated by someone or other.”<sup>45</sup> Similarly, Nietzsche defines it as “the devaluing of the highest values.”<sup>46</sup> He understands it as an ongoing historical event. He interprets that event as the devaluing of the highest values up to now. “God – the metaphysical world or the suprasensory world – as the world that truly is and determines all ideals and ideas, the purposes and grounds that determine and support everything that is and human life in particular – all these are represented as meaning the highest values.”<sup>47</sup> Therefore, Nietzsche's understanding of nihilism, as the devaluing of the highest values, is an affirmation of the collapse of these highest values – the realm of the ideas and ideals. This realm of the highest values has been designated by the Platonic-Christian or metaphysical interpretation of the reality as the true world. In contrast to it, the sensory world, which

---

<sup>44</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 330; § 617.

<sup>45</sup> Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, 62.

<sup>46</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 9; § 2.

<sup>47</sup> Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*, 62.

is the physical world, has been conceived by this interpretation as the unreal world. Nietzsche's understanding of nihilism, as the devaluation of these highest values – the realm of ideas and ideals – represents an attack on the world of being: the world of the highest values or absolute principles. Ultimately, this is an attack on metaphysics. Similarly, Nietzsche's intellectual integrity affirms the death of these highest values by showing them not as constituting the first condition of existence – as originating from a supernatural source – but as creations and interpretations of the human mind. It deposes them from the fictitious world of being, where the Platonic-Christian interpretation of the world has located them. This is an attack on the world of being: an attack on metaphysics. Also, Nietzsche's intellectual integrity is intimately linked to his notion of art and this link is viewed from the perspective of creativity and affirmation of being as endless interpretations.

#### e. On integrity and art

Nietzsche's idea of intellectual integrity is closely linked to his notion of art. This link is viewed from the point of view of creativity and affirmation of existence or being as endless interpretations.<sup>48</sup> In fact, Nietzsche's whole philosophy could be construed as artistic. Similarly, in the later stages of its materialization, as earlier hinted, intellectual integrity is referred to as “the aesthetic integrity,” which is interpreted as the art of the artist and the basic force behind man's affirmation of being as endless interpretations.<sup>49</sup> This informed why he is of the view that “it is only as an aesthetic phenomenon that existence is justified”<sup>50</sup> and that “art is essentially affirmation, blessing (and) deification of existence.”<sup>51</sup> For him, it is the noble man or the artist (superman), who represents the highest principle of humanity that creates (interprets) and this creation (interpretation) is made possible through art. Thus, in Nietzsche's thinking, “the noble man creates his own value”<sup>52</sup> and this is brought about through the instrumentality of art. This means that the noble man or the superman adopts a value-creating relation to existence or being and not positing being as something fixed, permanent, constant, unchanging, or a metaphysical absolute. The noble man initi-

<sup>48</sup> Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 239-240; § 374.

<sup>49</sup> Wurzer, 242.

<sup>50</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, eds. Raymond Geuss and Ronald Speirs (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 33; § 5.

<sup>51</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 434; § 821.

<sup>52</sup> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 205; § 260.

ates this value-creating relation to existence or being through art. This is why, for Nietzsche, *to be* and *to create* (interpret) are one and the same. This creativity and interpretation depict the artistic force of integrity. Thus, intellectual integrity reveals being as deeply rooted in art (artistic creativity) and a dynamic process of endless interpretations. This is why Nietzsche is of the view that “we possess art less we perish of the truth.”<sup>53</sup> He lays emphasis, here, on the artistic creativity of truth, which is truth as consisting in endless process of interpretations as against objectivity of truth, which is truth as eternally fixed and absolute ideal. Intellectual integrity, therefore, is a dialectic principle, which is rooted in art and which makes possible man’s affirmation of being as endless interpretations. This is because, Nietzsche sees interpretation as a creative and artistic activity.

Furthermore, integrity, for Nietzsche, is grounded in art. In fact, he conceives *integrity* as *art* and this becomes clear in his assertion that “there is something in the nature of morality which is contrary to *integrity* because “*integrity is art*.”<sup>54</sup> This also informed why he sees religion and morality as decedent forms of man and art as the counter-movement.<sup>55</sup> He goes further to maintain that “the criterion of truth, the substance of philosophy and the philosophical intention of man, is no longer morality, per se, but, the *art of intellectual integrity*.”<sup>56</sup> This, for him, begins with the death of metaphysics (death of God) and ends with *amor fati*, which is the love of one’s fate or world (affirmation of life whether pleasurable or painful). The usage of *art*, in conjunction with *integrity*, as Wurzer puts it: “art of intellectual integrity” indicates the interconnectedness between art and integrity, in Nietzsche’s philosophy. Furthermore, in Nietzsche’s view, as intellectual integrity re-evaluates without end and affirms the death of metaphysics (death of God or collapse of the suprasensory world), and thereby making nihilism (idea of nothingness or the devaluation of the highest values) possible, art comes to the rescue, enabling us to create (interpret), to overcome this passive nihilism, as a result of the death of metaphysics (collapse of the suprasensory world), which is ushered in by the dynamic power of intellectual integrity (*Redlichkeit*). Nietzsche is, therefore, laying emphasis on the creative power of art and this connects his idea of integrity. Having analyzed Nietzsche’s idea of intellectual integrity

---

<sup>53</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 435; § 822.

<sup>54</sup> Wurzer, 238.

<sup>55</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 419; § 794.

<sup>56</sup> Wurzer, 238.



and examined its intimate connection with other key concepts in his philosophy, I will, at this juncture, proceed to evaluating this concept in line with whether Nietzsche succeeded in overcoming the traditional or classical metaphysical tradition using this concept, as he claimed, or whether he ended up affirming this metaphysical tradition.

#### IV. Nietzsche's intellectual integrity and the metaphysical tradition

Recall that intellectual integrity represents Nietzsche's unique style of questioning. It designates his critical method of analysing Western metaphysical foundations. It is a flexible and dialectic principle, which approaches the question of being as a dynamic process of endless interpretations, instead of as "the eternally fixed" "the unchangeable ideals" or a metaphysical absolute. The implication of this thought, therefore, is the experience of 'being' as interpretation. This means that being is no longer a metaphysical absolute, but consists in a dynamic process of interpretation, endless flux, and becoming. This ultimately means that there is nothing fixed, permanent and/or unchanging about being. This is an attack on being: an attack on metaphysics. It is an attempt by Nietzsche to overcome metaphysics. This also informed his declaration of the death of God, which means, for him, the death of metaphysics. But, a critical look at this reveals that Nietzsche's attempt to overcome metaphysics, using this critical method of intellectual integrity, was an attempt in futility. This is, because, to get rid of metaphysics is impossible. To be precise, any attempt to overcome metaphysics will be, in itself, an imposition of another metaphysics.

To further buttress the above view, it will be apposite to make reference to the logical positivist attacks and rejection of metaphysics, which they, ultimately, embraced from the back door. For them, statements of metaphysics are nonsensical as a result of their not being amenable to empirical verification. As a result of this, they became distrustful of all metaphysical speculations and postulations and, instead, posited that metaphysics should be eliminated from the confines of philosophy and knowledge, in general. However, not minding that "the logical positivists' attacks on metaphysics were capable of damping a beginner's appetite for metaphysical speculation, metaphysics still soldiers on a viable body of knowledge."<sup>57</sup> To further illustrate, the verifiability principle, which the logical positivist embraced as their standard principle of measuring the meaningfulness of any proposition, is not, itself, verifiable. That is to say that it is an ideal concept and, as such,

---

<sup>57</sup> Aja Egbeke, *Metaphysics: An Introduction* (Nsukka: University of Nigeria Press, 2016), 212.

another metaphysics. Consequently, Nietzsche's attempt to overcome metaphysics, using his concept of intellectual integrity, is an attempt in futility. This is, because, "any attack on metaphysics has the metaphysical result of calling forth an examination of the first principles of that view, itself. Consequently, the attacker is challenged to produce a different metaphysics, that is, a set of philosophical principles – an alternative to the one under attack."<sup>58</sup> This is exactly the case with Nietzsche, as his attempt to overcome metaphysics ended up introducing another metaphysics as instantiated in his notion of the will to power, which he describes as the essence of life and the basic principle of reality.<sup>59</sup>

Nietzsche, as Heidegger posited, can be described as a metaphysical thinker, given his idea of asking the same basic question that has guided every metaphysical thinking from the inception of time. This question is the question of what constitutes being. Nietzsche's response to this question, as Heidegger hinted, is the "will to power," by which he names what constitutes the basic character (essence) of all beings. Similarly, Stephan Körner shows that every philosophical trend has its own metaphysics.<sup>60</sup> In his estimation, this is the philosopher's ultimate presuppositions or that which constitutes the driving force in his philosophy: the perspective from which he addresses his metaphysical thought.<sup>61</sup> To illustrate, "Kant's categorial framework is epistemology; Aristotle's is ontology; while Collingwood's is history."<sup>62</sup> This shows that every person has his own metaphysics (his own categorial framework). Nietzsche is not an exception. The "will to power," which he identifies as the principle of life and that which constitutes the basic character of all things proves this. Thus, as a critic of metaphysics, Nietzsche has his own metaphysics – which his critical method of intellectual integrity attempts to overcome – going by this notion of categorial framework. To be more precise, in an attempt to overcome metaphysics, Nietzsche ended up positing another metaphysics in the form of the "will to power," which he defines as that which constitutes the essence or the basic principle of all things and his notion of the

---

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 212.

<sup>59</sup> Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 550; § 1067, 148; § 254. Cf. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 48; § 36.

<sup>60</sup> See Stephan Körner, *Categorial Frameworks* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1970), 10.

<sup>61</sup> Stephan Körner, *Metaphysics: Its Structure and Function* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 17.

<sup>62</sup> See Stephan Körner, *The Fundamental Questions of Philosophy: One Philosopher's Answer* (New Jersey: The Harvester Press, 1969), 178-180.

*Übermensch* or superman, which designates the essence of humanity. The two ideas of “basic principle” and “essence” represent appeals to something enduring, fixed and permanent, which are appeals to metaphysics.

Nietzsche’s idea of the “Primordially One,” as articulated in his book, *The Birth of Tragedy*, further designates his re-enthronement rather than dethronement of metaphysics. The “Primordially One,” in Nietzsche’s estimation, represents the non-individuated reality behind all appearances.<sup>63</sup> Nietzsche views this “Primordially One” as a kind of artist; a child playing in the sand on the beach, wantonly and haphazardly creating individuated shapes and forms (the world) and then destroying them, taking equal pleasure in both parts of the process – in both the creation and the destruction.<sup>64</sup> In a sense, this child, who in a metaphysical play, creates and destroys the world, is the underlying reality: the underlying principle of everything. This is, because, according to Nietzsche, “we are not ‘identical’ with the child, but are only one of the unsubstantial shapes with which it plays.”<sup>65</sup> The idea of an “underlying principle” is an appeal to the characteristics of fixity, permanency, un-changeability and constancy, which are the features of being – the characteristics of metaphysics.

The two basic concepts in Nietzsche’s philosophy – the will to power and the eternal return or recurrence – describe whatever is, in its real being, in accordance with the principles of *essence and existence*, in terms that has continually guided metaphysical thinking, since antiquity. In other words, the relation that exists between the will to power and the idea of eternal recurrence, in Nietzsche’s philosophy, throws him back to the ancient metaphysical traditional relations of essence and existence. This implies that the will to power which, according to Nietzsche, represents the essence of being, exists in the form of eternal recurrence. This ties Nietzsche to the ancient metaphysical relations of essence and existence.

Nietzsche can be placed within the tradition of modern metaphysical thinking in view of his characterization of the will to power as the “Being of beings:” a thinking which expresses the essential character of the Being of beings, generally as “will.” This can be found in Shelling’s characterization of willing as “Primal Being” and his attribution of some of all the essential features of metaphysics, like uncondition-

---

<sup>63</sup> Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, xxiv.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., xxiv-xxv.

ality, independency of time and self-affirmation.<sup>66</sup> Shelling's expression is similar to that of Leibniz, who defined the Being of beings as the "unity of perception (representation) and *appetitus* (striving);"<sup>67</sup> and what Schopenhauer had in mind when he entitled his major work *The World as Will and Representation*. Nietzsche follows the same line of thought, when he describes the primal Being of beings as the "will to power." Therefore, Nietzsche is still trapped within the metaphysical tradition of being, which his critical method of intellectual integrity strongly questions.

In spite of the above observations, there are thinkers, who have defended Nietzsche's philosophic project of overcoming metaphysics, as a result of the deconstructive power and the playful nature of his philosophic enterprise. One of such thinkers is Alan Schrift, who posits that Heidegger, for instance, misinterpreted Nietzsche's philosophical project by maintaining that "Nietzsche is always and only thinking metaphysically."<sup>68</sup> By interpreting Nietzsche this way, Schrift maintains that "Heidegger neglects to attend to the fundamental theme in Nietzsche's philosophy: the theme of play."<sup>69</sup> For Schrift, "play" operates in Nietzsche's philosophy both as a stylistic device and as a philosophical concept. He then concludes that had Heidegger understood this point in Nietzsche, his interpretation of him would have been different. Heidegger's student, Eugen Fink, follows this same line of thought. Fink contends that "Heraclitus represents the *originary* root of Nietzsche's philosophy."<sup>70</sup> In his estimation, "in Heraclitus' conception of play, Nietzsche finds his deepest intuition of the reality of the world, as grandiose cosmic metaphor."<sup>71</sup> He is of the view that "rather than being a culmination of metaphysics, Nietzsche's thinking operates at the boundary of metaphysics, sometimes, imprisoned within, and, sometimes, liberated from metaphysics."<sup>72</sup> For him, "insofar as Nietzsche's thinking arises in response to the metaphysical tradition, valuing, as it does, becoming and appearance, as alternatives to Being and Truth, Nietzsche remains imprisoned within metaphysics. But, when "Nietzsche's thinking" according

---

<sup>66</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche: The Will to Power as Art* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 34.

<sup>67</sup> Heidegger, *Nietzsche: The Will to Power*, 35.

<sup>68</sup> Schrift, 63.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

to him, “arises out of his Heraclitean insight into the cosmic play of the world, beyond all valuation, precisely because all values emerge within this, his thinking liberates itself from the metaphysical tradition.”<sup>73</sup> Fink, thus, concludes that “where Nietzsche grasps being and becoming, as *Spiel* (play), he no longer stands in the confinement of metaphysics.”<sup>74</sup> However, despite the above defense, offered in favour of Nietzsche’s project of overthrowing metaphysics, one can conclude, based on the initial observations, above, that Nietzsche still remains within the comfort of the metaphysical tradition. Thus, Nietzsche’s intellectual integrity fails to accomplish its purpose. This, notwithstanding, the vibrancy and dialectic force of intellectual integrity can ignite critical rationality, questioning attitude and epistemic transparency in the contemporary world.

## References

Chukwuelobe, Matthew C. “Eternal Return and Ilo Uwa-Nietzsche and Igbo African Thought: Implications for Cross-Cultural Philosophizing.” *Philosophy Today* 56, no. 1 (2012): 39-48.

Egbeke, Aja. *Metaphysics: An Introduction*. Nsukka: University of Nigeria Press, 2016.

Granier, Jean. “Perspectivism and Interpretation.” In *The New Nietzsche: Contemporary Styles of Interpretation*, edited by David B. Allison, 181-196. London: MIT Press, 1985.

Heidegger, Martin. *Nietzsche: The Will to Power as Art*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991.

Heidegger, Martin. *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*. Translated by William Lovitt. New York: Harper and Row, 1977.

Körner, Stephan. *Categorical Frameworks*. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1970.

Körner, Stephan. *Metaphysics: Its Structure and Function*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

Körner, Stephan. *The Fundamental Questions of Philosophy: One Philosopher’s Answer*. New Jersey: Harvester Press, 1969.

---

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

Lowith, Karl. *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Eternal Recurrence of the Same*. Translated by J. Harvey Lomax. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997.

Nehamas, Alexander. *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*. London: Harvard University Press, 1985.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Beyond Good and Evil: A Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books, 1966.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Ecce Homo and the Antichrist*. Translated by Thomas Wayne. New York: Algora Publishing, 2004.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*. Edited by Raymond Geuss and Ronald Speirs. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Gay Science*. Edited by Bernard Williams. Translated by Josefine Nauckhoff. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Will to Power*. Edited by Walter Kaufmann. Translated by Walter Kaufmann and Reginald J. Hollingdale. New York: Vintage Books, 1968.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Edited by Adrian Del Caro and Roberts B. Pippin. Translated by Adrian Del Caro. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Ojimba, Anthony Chimankpam, and Ada Agada. "Nietzsche's Idea of Eternal Recurrence and the Notions of Reincarnation in Onyewuenyi and Majeed." *Filosofia Theoretica: Journal of African Philosophy, Culture and Religions* 9, no. 2 (2020): 35-56.

Ojimba, Anthony Chimankpam, and Obiora J. Anichebe. "Asouzu's Complementarism and Nietzsche's Perspectivism: Implications for Cross-Cultural Philosophizing." *Global Journal of Cultural Studies* 1, no. 1 (2022): 10-20.

Ojimba, Anthony Chimankpam, Obiora J. Anichebe, and Anthony U Ezebuiro. "Friedrich Nietzsche on Metaphysical Errors and the 'Will to Power.'" *Uche Journal of Philosophy* 18, no.1 (2014): 27-49.

Ojimba, Anthony Chimankpam. "Ubuntu's Ontological Account in African Philosophy and Its Cross-Tradition Engagement on the Issue of Being Versus Becoming." *Comparative Philosophy: An International Journal of Constructive Engagement of Distinct Approaches towards World Philosophy* 14, no. 1 (2023): 98-115.

Shrift, Allan D. *Nietzsche and the Question of Interpretation: Between Hermeneutics and Deconstruction*. New York: Routledge, 1990.

Wurzer, Wilhelm Stephan. "Nietzsche's Dialectic of Intellectual Integrity: A Propaedeutic Study." *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 13, no. 2 (1975): 235-245.