

Nietzsche's Subjectivism about Life's Meaning

by

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Abstract:

The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate the subjective nature of Friedrich Nietzsche's account of existential meaning. I aim to emphasize that Nietzsche's account can only be properly understood by considering his subjective account of value and the limitations of knowledge and sensory perception imposed by perspectivism. I seek to illustrate that this is only possible by considering many of his works and the concepts contained therein. I first consider Nietzsche's strongly negative reaction to Arthur Schopenhauer's pessimism; next, I adopt Gilles Deleuze's interpretation of the will to power while arguing that the will to power is not as central as might be thought; and, finally, I argue that the death of God is the foundation of Nietzsche's account, as it is this concept that enables and/or necessitates the will to power, the revaluation of values, eternal return, and perspectivism.

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List of Abbreviations

Nietzsche:

A = The Antichrist

AOM = Assorted Opinions and Maxims (in Human, All Too Human)

BGE = Beyond Good and Evil

BT = The Birth of Tragedy

D = Daybreak

EH = Ecce Homo

GD = Götter-Dämmerung

GM = On the Genealogy of Morality

GS = The Gay Science

HH = Human, All Too Human

NCW = Nietzsche contra Wagner

TI = Twilight of the Idols

UM = Untimely Meditations

WP = The Will to Power

Z = Thus Spoke Zarathustra

Schopenhauer:

WWP = The World as Will and Presentation

Introduction

In the spirit of academic integrity and honesty, I must begin by admitting that Nietzsche would never have called his account of existential meaning 'subjective'. However, the reason that he would not have done so is not that he would have considered it objective, but simply because he believed that everything involved interpretation. This is expressed in *The Will to Power*:

Against positivism, which halts at phenomena—"There are only *facts*"—I would say: No, facts is precisely what there is not, only interpretations. We cannot establish any fact "in itself": perhaps it is folly to want to do such a thing.

"Everything is subjective," you say; but even this is interpretation. The "subject" is not something given, it is something added and invented and projected behind what there is.— Finally, is it necessary to posit an interpreter behind the interpretation? Even this is invention, hypothesis. (WP 481)

If Nietzsche's response to the statement 'All things are subjective' is that this is just another interpretation because the subject is added in the background of what exists, my thesis would seem to rest upon a false premise¹. There are two ways around this problem. The first is to posit that the subject must exist in some sense if it is interpreted, added, invented, and/or projected. But this solution would bring about the further problem of

¹ The reader who is suspicious of *The Will to Power* is advised to look at *Beyond Good and Evil*, in which Nietzsche declares the self "a synthetic concept[...], a whole series of erroneous conclusions, and consequently of false evaluations of the will itself" (BGE 19). We are then told that we have 'useful "under-wills" or under-souls' and that the body is simply "a social structure composed of many souls" (ibid.). Another source to consider is *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: "First, people were creators; and only in later times, individuals. Verily, the individual himself is still the most recent creation." (Z I.15)

determining in what way the subject exists. The second is to simply bite the bullet and say that the words 'subject' and 'subjective' are simply being used through convenience. They are convenient terms to capture the spirit of Nietzsche's account life's meaning as resting upon particular values derived from particular perspectives. But I get ahead of myself.

I. Terminology

Throughout this thesis, there are terms that I will float around as if they familiar. The first of these is 'existential meaning,' but this is an easy term to explain. This is a term I frequently use in place of 'the meaning of life' to avoid what I see as awkward phrases like 'the question of the meaning of life' or 'an account of the meaning of life'. I might have just as easily substituted 'life's meaning' for 'the meaning of life,' but I simply prefer the term 'existential meaning' whether written, read, or spoken. The next term is 'objective,' the root word of which suggests that it concerns an object. This is the way in which I usually mean 'objective,' but it is difficult to explain without an example. It seems logical to use the example 'an objective account of existential meaning,' since this is the context in which I primarily use the term 'objective' throughout this thesis. An objective account of existential meaning is simply one in which a life has meaning if and only if it satisfies some objective condition(s) for having meaning. By 'objective condition(s),' I simply mean one/those that come(s) from outside the individual (i.e., from inside or outside of nature) about which our beliefs are either correct or incorrect. If meaning comes from within nature, this is called an imminent or natural account of existential meaning. If meaning comes from outside nature (for example, from following a set of

religious rules and thereby earning a place in some sort of afterlife), this is called a transcendental or naturalist account of existential meaning.

There are two other terms I employ regarding existential meaning: (i) pessimism or nihilism; and (ii) subjective, subjectivity, or subjectivism. In the first case, I tend to refer to 'pessimism' instead of 'nihilism' to match Nietzsche's usage when he refers to philosophers or philosophy. His usage of 'pessimism' is very much tied to his time, but it seems that a proper discussion of a historical figure within philosophy should match the terms in which they would be familiar to that figure. By failing to do so, it becomes more likely that we might introduce concepts into our discussion that bear little to no resemblance to those used in another historical context (in the case of this thesis, the late nineteenth century). As Frederick C. Beiser notes in *Weltschmerz*, mid-to-late nineteenth century German pessimistic philosophy had such a distinctive character that contemporaries coined it "modern pessimism" to differentiate it from earlier forms of pessimism (4). On the other hand, when Nietzsche refers to 'nihilism,' it is almost always in a psychological, social, cultural, or (arguably) metaphysical way. 'Pessimism,' though, is the doctrine that either (i) life has no meaning, or (ii) life is not worth living; but this should be understood as an inclusive disjunction, not an exclusive disjunction. This means that a pessimist could hold that (i) life has no meaning; (ii) life is not worth living; or (iii) life has no meaning and is not worth living. Subjectivism or a subjective account of existential meaning proposes that life has meaning if and only if it satisfies certain internal or subjective conditions for having meaning. Or, more simply, a life is only meaningful if the individual herself judges it to be meaningful from her own perspective (via her affects or some other, presumably mental, factor).

II. Guiding questions

The shape this thesis has taken was largely driven by two guiding questions. The first question that has guided me is: In what way does Nietzsche respond to Schopenhauer? It is for this reason that chapter one had to be called "Existential Meaning: Nietzsche *contra* Schopenhauer". In the first section, we find three primary characteristics of Schopenhauer's pessimism. First, it recommends that the will (i.e., the will to live, or life) be denied. Second, it celebrates asceticism. Third, it holds that existential meaning would require pleasure to greatly outweigh suffering. In the second section, we see how Nietzsche responds to each of these characteristics. In contrast to Schopenhauer's pessimism, he firstly recommends that life be affirmed (as we will see in the second chapter, this seems to amount to a recommendation that we affirm the will to power). He then cautions against asceticism with the reasoning seeming to be that asceticism weakens the individual. Nietzsche, thirdly, objects to the suggestion that a meaningful life would require pleasure to greatly outweigh suffering on the grounds that both suffering and pleasure are secondary characteristics, so neither could grant meaning to life. In the third section, I begin by suggesting that Nietzsche seemed to miss something crucial in Schopenhauer's essay "On the Human Need for Metaphysics" if Nietzsche's argument that meaning is more important than either suffering or pleasure has Schopenhauer as its target. In that essay, Schopenhauer claims that the human need for both religion and metaphysics is driven by the human need for meaning. As such, I suggest that we look elsewhere to understand more about Nietzsche's rejection of Schopenhauer's pessimism. This motivates a discussion of value in which it is shown that Nietzsche holds value to be extrinsic and subjective, and—since existential meaning is

life's value—it is foreshadowed that life's value will turn out to be subjective to Nietzsche because it is (along with all other valuing) a matter of perspective.

Although the second question does not emerge until the third chapter (although it is briefly hinted at in the first), it is no less important. This question comes from a paper called "Fugitive Pleasure and the Meaning of Life: Nietzsche on Nihilism and Higher Values" by Paul Katsafanas. Katsafanas observes that, in "Schopenhauer as Educator," Nietzsche argues that philosophers are meant to judge the value of life as a whole, asking, "what is life worth as such?" (UM III.3) But in "The Problem of Socrates," Nietzsche then says that judgments of life's value, "for it or against it, can [...] never be true," making two further emphatic statements: (i) "*the value of life cannot be estimated*"; and (ii) that we can object to a philosopher on the grounds that she sees "a problem in the *value of life*" (TI "Socrates" 2). On top of these statements seeming to entirely contradict one another, Nietzsche continues to concern himself with the nihilism of western culture, which Katsafanas points out suggests his continued interest in existential meaning, so we should not conclude that Nietzsche had become a more sober and more mature philosopher as some might take the later statements to suggest. While Katsafanas suggests that Nietzsche views a meaningful life as involving will to power in conjunction with higher values in order to achieve and maintain true (active) happiness, I find this solution unsatisfactory. There are, in fact, a number of problems with such an interpretation, including these passages stemming from fourteen years apart, in which time Nietzsche could well have changed his mind. A similar problem can actually be found between two sections of *Twilight of the Idols*, the passage we have already seen (from "The Problem of Socrates") occurs mere pages after Nietzsche wrote, "If [one has

one's] own *why* of life, [one] can bear almost any *how*." (TI "Maxims" 12) Using all three of these sources (along with one from later on in *Twilight of the Idols*), I demonstrate that a very different conclusion is motivated: Nietzsche is denying that we can answer the question of existential meaning, but only insofar as we understand this question to concern (human) life as a whole. Nietzsche never denies that an individual's life necessarily lacks meaning, but only that she is a poor judge of all life's value because she is confined to her perspective.

III. Clarification

The intention of this thesis is neither to defend nor to criticize Nietzsche's account of existential meaning. In fact, I am not completely satisfied with his account. This is primarily a work in the history of philosophy, aiming only to present an interpretation of Nietzsche's account that I believe to be correct. I do not mean to say that it *is* correct, however, because that is not for me to say. This is my interpretation from my perspective, as Nietzsche might say. I do not aim to offer my own account of existential meaning, but simply to reproduce that of Nietzsche as I have found it in his work over the years. Now, let us proceed to Schopenhauer.

Chapter 1: Existential Meaning: Nietzsche *contra* Schopenhauer

I. Schopenhauer

1.1 "On the Human Need for Metaphysics"

Arthur Schopenhauer is one of the best-known pessimists (or, as they are also known, nihilists) in the history of philosophy. He believed that life is not worth living; that life lacks meaning. Throughout his works, he offers several different arguments for this view, but there is little point in discussing these arguments without first contextualizing his pessimism. In order to understand his pessimism, we need to understand the roots of his pessimism. Frederick C. Beiser discusses these roots in his book, *Weltschmerz: Pessimism in German Philosophy, 1860-1990*. As Beiser notes, Schopenhauer rediscovered the problem of evil in "The Human Need for Metaphysics," and declared it to be the motivating question of all philosophy (7). I will now retrace the steps that led Schopenhauer to this conclusion.

At the beginning of "The Human Need for Metaphysics," Schopenhauer writes that humans are unique as the only species that "marvels at its own existence," (182) a feat of which we are capable as a result of a unique separation of will and intellect. From this, the human need for metaphysics arises. Once we become reflective, we begin to wonder, and this wondering "one day...[becomes] the mother of metaphysics." (ibid.) To Schopenhauer, all metaphysical and philosophical inquiries stem from "knowledge of death," along with "consideration of life's suffering and hardship." (183) He further believes that the nature of life itself makes this line of inquiry wholly inescapable, for, "[If] our life were endless and free of pain, it might not occur to anyone to ask why the

world exists and has just this constitution; rather, everything would just be self-evident."

(*ibid.*) For Schopenhauer, though, it is not simply the case that we desire—and fail—to find meaning in existence; he believes that we actually sabotage our search for meaning.

Hence, he writes,

For if anything in the world is desirable, so desirable that even the crude and dull-witted mob would in its more reflective moments value it more highly than silver and gold, it is that a ray of light should fall on the obscurity of our existence and that we gain some insight regarding this puzzling existence of ours, where nothing is clear except its misery and nullity. But even supposing that this were in itself attainable, it is made impossible by impressed and imposed solutions to the problem. (187)

I.II WWP

In the Fourth Book of *The World as Will and Presentation*, "The World as Will: Second Consideration," Schopenhauer presents his ethical philosophy, exploring the relation between ethics, the will, and life itself. Schopenhauer notes in §53 that, although this particular book is ethical, it presents no prescriptivist ethics (322) but rather intends to "[interpret] and [explain] human action" (*ibid.*). Furthermore, Schopenhauer wishes to limit ethical discussion to the realm of the physical world unlike "Kant's great doctrine," which employs "the forms pertaining to phenomena, whose general expression is the Principle of Sufficient Ground, as a vaulting pole by which to fly past the very phenomena that alone give them meaning, and land in the boundless domain of empty fictions." (322-23) Instead, Schopenhauer begins §54 with a particular descriptive theory of the will, which necessitates an exploration of its characteristics. Firstly, the will "is incognizant and only a blind ceaseless pressing." (325) Secondly, it is found in all nature, be it organic or inorganic, animal or vegetable, with its laws appearing "as well in the vegetative part of our own life" (*ibid.*). Thirdly, the will "obtains with the arrival of the

world of presentation, developed for its service, cognizance of its willing and of that which it is willing, namely, that it is nothing other than this world, this life, precisely as it stands before it." (ibid.) To Schopenhauer, the "phenomenal world" is the "mirror" or "objectivization" of the will. Finally, the will is the will for life: 'And since that which the will always wills is life, just because the latter is nothing more than a display of that willing with respect to presentation, it is all the same and only a pleonasm if, instead of simply saying "will," we say "will for life."' (ibid.)

Schopenhauer continues his discussion of the will by pronouncing life and the world to be inextricable from the will itself: "if will exists, so too life, the world will exist." (326) The will for life contains within it a certainty of life, preventing individuals "filled with the will for life" from being concerned about their own existence, even at such a time as they see death (ibid.). We witness the lives and deaths of individuals, but "the individual is only a phenomenon, only exists for cognizance caught up in the Principle of Sufficient Ground, the *principium individuationis*." (ibid.) The will, though, is not "in any way touched by birth or death," which dictates a philosophical way of considering life, although individual lives are gifts that arise from nothing and ultimately dissipate back into the nothingness from which they came when life's gift is taken away from the individual through death (ibid.). This is a central claim for Schopenhauer: Birth and death do not belong to the will, as we have seen, but rather "belong precisely to the phenomenon of will, thus to life" (ibid.). "Birth and death belong in equal manner to life and counterbalance one another as reciprocal conditions or, if one should happen to find the expression congenial as poles of the total phenomenon of life." (ibid.) This is of the utmost importance to our understanding of Schopenhauer's philosophy of existential

meaning, since what is going to emerge is that Schopenhauer discusses existential meaning in terms of the will for life, which Schopenhauer here tells us is a phenomenon of the will itself. Although will is ever-present throughout nature, it is not to be mistaken for life itself or for particular, individual wills, both of which are truly nothing more than manifestations or phenomena of the will. While a mirror such as the will displays an image, the image it shows is but a reflection, and is, thus, not to be mistaken for the original.

I.III "On the Suffering of the World"

In "On the Suffering of the World," Schopenhauer establishes his pessimism about existential meaning in a way that can be expressed as quite a simple conditional: If the meaning of life or existence is not suffering, then the suffering that characterizes life or existence is in direct conflict with existential meaning (41). Schopenhauer supports this point by asserting that the omnipresence of suffering in the world, which emerges from the desires and distress characteristic of life, cannot rationally be taken to be "purposeless and purely accidental" (ibid.). To Schopenhauer, this world is not one in which suffering is occasionally experienced by particular individuals, but rather one in which suffering constantly occurs. In order to substantiate this claim, Schopenhauer provides accounts of suffering and happiness or pleasure, according to which suffering is positive and happiness is negative. Of course, Schopenhauer does not mean to say that suffering is good and happiness is bad, but rather that suffering is positive as the presence or continuation of desire (ibid.), while happiness is negative as the absence or cessation of desire (41-2). We are then informed that the respective intensities of pleasure and suffering are frequently unexpected: Pleasure is less intense than expected, while

suffering is frequently more intense than expected. As Schopenhauer says, "as a rule we find pleasure much less pleasurable, pain much more painful than we expected" (42). Next, pleasure does not outweigh suffering, nor are the two in balance, which Schopenhauer believes that we can see by comparing "the feelings of an animal engaged in eating another with those of the animal being eaten" (ibid.). Following from the above discussion, we can see that Schopenhauer wishes us to conclude that being eaten is more painful than eating another is pleasurable, and that this means that such suffering (which is, presumably, analogous with all other suffering) outweighs pleasure. Schopenhauer highlights the suffering of human existence in three ways: (i) The perpetual motion of time despite our wishes that it would cease (ibid.); (ii) that most of our existence consists of work, worry, or pain (43); and (iii) that the optimism of youth is only so because we fail to consider what fate will bring (47).

I.IV "On the Vanity of Existence"

In "On the Vanity of Existence," Schopenhauer continues his discussion of themes found in "On the Suffering of the World." Importantly, the essay begins as follows:

The vanity of existence is revealed in the whole form existence assumes: in the infiniteness of time and space contrasted with the finiteness of the individual in both; in the fleeting present as the sole form in which actuality exists; in the contingency and relativity of all things; in continual becoming without being; in continual desire without satisfaction; in the continual frustration of striving of which life consists. *Time* and that *perishability* of all things existing in time that time itself brings about is simply the form under which the will to live, which as thing in itself is imperishable, reveals to itself the vanity of its striving. Time is that by virtue of which everything becomes nothingness in our hands and loses all real value. (51)

In the above block quotation, Schopenhauer begins by telling us that existence is characterized by "vanity," a word which can signify multiple different meanings; however, the context of existence helps clarify Schopenhauer's meaning as follows: The very nature of existence marks it as meaningless or futile; the meaningless or futility of existence here means that existence never achieves its purpose. Following the colon, Schopenhauer clearly suggests that he considers particular lives, and existence itself, to be insignificant. Firstly, existence is insignificant because of the contrast between the natures of time and space and individuals' lives in comparison with the former; while space and time are infinitely extended, particular lives take up finite amounts of both, since living beings (i) are mortal, and (ii) only occupy a certain amount of space at a particular time, or even across the span of an entire life. Simply put, an individual can only occupy a certain spatial location in a particular period of time, regardless of the boundlessness characteristic of both time and space. Secondly, existence is insignificant as all that is, or has actual (in contrast to potential) being, exists, and can exist, only in the present, which is ephemeral. Thirdly, existence is insignificant because all things are contingent and relative. Here, Schopenhauer makes two claims in a single sentence clause: (i) all things could have not been, or could have been otherwise, since their being lacks necessity; and (ii) all things are relative, which raises a question as to the nature of their relativity. Fourthly, nothing can truly be said to *be*, since being is a static, persistent state, whereas the world is really characterized by constant change—hence, things always become, since they are transient. Fifthly, existence is insignificant because pleasure is so rare, as living beings are so seldom able to satisfy desires. Sixthly, existence is insignificant because suffering is so common, as living beings are so commonly thwarted

in their attempts to attain the satisfaction of desires. The seventh and eighth claims are quite straightforward. The former informs the reader that the will to live is a thing-in-itself²; and that, as thing-in-itself, the will to live cannot perish. Finally, Schopenhauer elaborates on his initial statement: Since time exists and all things are finite, while the will (or, more accurately, the will's objectification as will to live) is infinite, existence is insignificant, for the infinite will cannot be satisfied within a finite lifetime.

Schopenhauer continues, first by considering the nature of time itself. Time is transient; it is a sequence of brief present moments that quickly enter into the past. Secondly, regardless of degree of significance, every present moment has actuality, which those in the past lack. Thirdly, for a long time, we lacked existence; and, in a short time, we will again lack existence, likewise for a long time. Schopenhauer notes that there are two possible responses to these considerations. One could decide that one should enjoy the present (as this is the only time that truly exists) and thus decide that enjoyment of this kind constitutes the purpose of life. However, one could also decide that "this mode of life [is] the greatest *folly*: for that which in a moment ceases to exist,

² It is perhaps worth noting that it is a matter of some debate whether Schopenhauer employs the thing-in-itself in the Kantian sense, or if he uses Kant's terminology while changing its meaning. If the former is correct, then Schopenhauer is referring to an object as it exists without being observed, which—at least for Kant—exists in the noumenal realm, i.e., the realm of things as they actually are, as opposed to the phenomenal realm which we inhabit. The phenomenal realm is the realm of things as they appear to us. However, Beiser argues for another interpretation of Schopenhauer's usage of the thing-in-itself. According to Beiser, based on textual analysis, Schopenhauer suggests that the thing-in-itself is not to be found beyond appearances; it is not transcendent, but is rather found within objects as they appear. Schopenhauer's thing-in-itself, then, is content as opposed to form; the object as it appears is the form. On this interpretation, the thing-in-itself is taken to refer to the inner essence of objects as they appear. For more detail, see chapter 2 of *Weltschmerz*, "Reconstructing Schopenhauer's Metaphysics."

which vanishes as completely as a dream, cannot be worth any serious effort." (52) Schopenhauer then suggests that the foundation of existence is the transient present, which—as constant motion without rest—has the effect that existence is a constant state of unrest.

As in "On the Suffering of the World," Schopenhauer discusses pleasure. Schopenhauer asserts that nobody can be said to be happy, but that everyone still strives for happiness. However, the attainment of happiness is very rare, and the attainment of happiness is generally met with disappointment. Furthermore, it is unimportant whether or not one finds happiness, since the transient nature of time means that life comes to an end following "a succession of transient present moments." (53) Whenever we satisfy a desire, we find it to have been in vain. While we live expecting better things, we still "long regretfully for what is past." (ibid.) The present, as Schopenhauer continually stresses, is very temporary and is nothing but "the road to our goal." (ibid.) As such, at the end of life, most humans discover that they have only been living from moment to moment, that their lives have passed "unregarded and unenjoyed," despite their expectations (ibid.). "Life," Schopenhauer writes, is "a task: the task of maintaining itself" (ibid.). When this is achieved, we find ourselves burdened by life, which creates a second task: That of escaping boredom. This is not an easy task, since boredom permeates life "like a bird of prey" (ibid.). Schopenhauer, thus, offers that the first task is positive since something—the maintenance of life—is gained; and the second task is negative since we must place aside our consciousness of the first task in order to escape its burden.

From the above, Schopenhauer concludes that "human life must be some kind of mistake" (53). His reasoning is as follows. Firstly, humanity is typified by "needs which are hard to satisfy" (ibid.). Secondly, satisfying these desires leads to freedom from pain, but this then leads to boredom. Thirdly, boredom itself proves that existence is meaningless, since "boredom is nothing other than the sensation of the emptiness of existence." (ibid.) If life were meaningful, Schopenhauer argues, then boredom would not exist, since existence would have a satisfying and fulfilling character. However, the only pleasure we find in life is a constant striving to satisfy our desires, as we believe that our goal would satisfy us—although we always find this satisfaction to be lacking; or the pursuit of "intellectual activity, in which case we are really stepping out of life so as to regard it from outside, like spectators at a play." (54) Sensual pleasure is no different: We strive for it, obtain our goal, and it ends. Whenever we are not distracted by one of these three things, we find ourselves bored; thus, Schopenhauer concludes that boredom is nothing other than the realization that existence is worthless and vain.

To end this essay, Schopenhauer discusses the will to live in the context of human existence. Firstly, he highlights that the human organism represents "the most perfect manifestation of the will to live," given "its incomparably ingenious and complicated machinery" (54). That is, the will to live finds its apex in the high level of intelligence and complexity found only within the human race. However, since the will to live in the form of each human life is ultimately annihilated along with its essence and striving, Schopenhauer submits that we must declare the will's striving to be in vain. Moreover, Schopenhauer declares that nature itself is telling us without ambiguity that this is the case. Schopenhauer has a much stronger point to make, however. The will to live,

Schopenhauer writes, ought not to exist unconditionally and lacks intrinsic value; for, if this were not the case, the will would strive for non-being. I choose to end this summary by repeating the words with which Schopenhauer ends this essay. "We shall do best to think of life as a *desengaño*, as a process of disillusionment: since this is, clearly enough, what everything that happens to us is calculated to produce." (ibid.)

I.V "On Affirmation and Denial of the Will to Live"

In this essay, Schopenhauer begins by noting that, while the will produces the world as we experience it, it must be possible for the will to not do so, and instead remain inactive. Schopenhauer coins the former phenomenon "the phenomenon of the volition of life," and the latter "the phenomenon of non-volition," which he equates with the Vedantic *Magnum Sakhepat* and the Buddhist Nirvana (61). This phenomenon of non-volition is the denial of the will to live, by which the individual ceases to will. Since the will is thing in itself and only knowable by volitional action, to deny the will to live "is for us, who are phenomena of volition, a transition to nothingness." (61) The affirmation of the will to live and the denial of the will to live are found throughout the history of both ethics and religion. As ancient Greek ethicists recommended living a good life, they affirmed the will to live; meanwhile, Hindu ethicists advised readers "to liberate and redeem from life altogether, as is directly stated in the very first sentence of the *Sankhya Karika*." (61) There is likewise an antithesis between Greco-Roman paganism and Christianity as the former advocates the affirmation of the will to live whereas the latter advocates the denial of the will to live. These opposing views of life are demonstrated through funerary practices. In Greco-Roman paganism, the corpse is placed in a sarcophagus depicting "in relief the entire ceremonial of a wedding, from the first

proposal to the point where Hymen's torch lights the way to the bridal chamber." (61-2) This, writes Schopenhauer, "expresses *affirmation* of the will to life, through which life is assured for all time, however swiftly its figures and forms may succeed one another." (62) By contrast, the Christian corpse is placed in a coffin "draped in black as a sign of mourning and with a crucifix upon it" (ibid.). Christianity, "by symbols of suffering and death, expresses *denial* of the will to life and redemption from a world in which death and the Devil reign." (ibid.) Thus, ancient Greek ethics and Greco-Roman paganism affirm to will to live, while Hindu ethics and Christianity deny the will to live.

To Schopenhauer, this is an important observation, since it places his ethics within the Christian tradition and against all other European philosophers. Strikingly, Schopenhauer equates his ethics with the New Testament, while equating those of other European philosophers with the Old Testament. The Old Testament posits an absolute Law which all must obey, but offers no redemption. On the other hand, the New Testament replaces the Law with "the kingdom of grace, which one can enter through faith, charity and total of self," which "is the road to redemption from evil and from the world" (62). The New Testament, thus, preaches asceticism. By preaching asceticism, the New Testament preaches denial of the will to live. As such,

...the transition from the Old Testament to the New, from the dominion of the Law to the dominion of faith, from justification by works to redemption through the Intercessor, from the dominion of sin and death to eternal life in Christ, signifies, *sensu proprio*, the transition from merely moral virtue to denial of the will to live. (62)

European ethicists have followed the spirit of the Old Testament by positing "an absolute moral law (i.e. one which has no foundation and no goal)," offering "moral commandments and prohibitions behind which a dictatorial Jehovah is silently

introduced" (63). Schopenhauer offers that his ethics is different, since it "possesses foundation, aim and goal" (ibid.). Firstly, Schopenhauer's ethics provide a theoretical demonstration of "the metaphysical foundation of justice and charity" (ibid.). From here, it identifies the goal to which perfectly practiced justice and charity "must ultimately lead." (ibid.) Secondly, Schopenhauer's ethics expose the world's reprehensible nature, while offering a path to redemption: denial of the will to live. As such, despite his atheism, Schopenhauer proclaims that his doctrine may be rightly termed "the true Christian philosophy" (ibid.).

Schopenhauer continues by suggesting that human desires must be seen as "sinful and reprehensible" (63) both essentially and originally, since they cause harm and evil. Since desire is rooted in the will, the will itself must be recognized to be reprehensible. The suffering of the world stands testament to the dangerous nature of the affirmation of the will to live, as it follows from various objectifications of the will to live. Thus, "our existence itself implies guilt," as proven "by the fact of death." (ibid.) To Schopenhauer, there are two very different ways of observing the world, which follow from the title of his magnum opus as originally translated by Haldane and Kemp. On the one hand, there is the world as will; and, on the other hand, there is the world as idea. If we consider the world as will, we consider the world from the perspective of the thing-in-itself, which emphasises the importance of sensual pleasure; more specifically, it emphasises the importance of sexual intercourse in order to affirm the will to live by creating life. If we consider the world as idea, we are first of all considering the phenomenal world, as per Kant; Schopenhauer considers the world as idea to likewise be "the world of appearance, the empirical world" (64). In the world as idea, sexual intercourse is of lesser importance

than what follows: conception and pregnancy. While sexual intercourse affirms the will to live, since it is the means that satisfies sexual desire, the importance of conception and pregnancy is seen from the perspective of the world as idea. It is through conception and pregnancy that we find the intellect—which, to Schopenhauer, is embodied by the woman—joined with the will and character, which are embodied by the man. Through reproduction, then, the will escapes its discontinuation—no matter how much we might have learned, we still continue to affirm it in this way. Furthermore, since the intellect has joined with the will, Schopenhauer asserts that "the possibility of redemption...has again been joined to this will." (65) In other words, although the intellect provides us with the tools to deny the will to live, we instead continue to affirm the will, for the will cannot be denied by an intellect that remains entirely tied to it.

There is another way that Schopenhauer believes that we affirm the will, and that is through immoral actions. When one performs immorally, she demonstrates that she still strongly affirms the will to live and is therefore unredeemable at this time. This is so because redemption requires a denial of the will to live, and with it, the world. However, Schopenhauer believes that this is not necessarily negative, since it simply means that she needs to learn. With the proper education and continued experience of suffering, the individual will learn of the road to redemption, and will thus be able to follow it. Moreover, it is not wholly true that the individual who endures immoral suffers. From a physical perspective, it is true that she suffers; but, says Schopenhauer, from a metaphysical perspective, she benefits, since the physical suffering aids her along the road to redemption. In the true spirit of Schopenhauer, this essay ends with a discussion between man and the *World Spirit*, the latter of whom concludes with an aside: "Should I

tell him that the value of life lies precisely in this, that it teaches him not to want it? For this supreme initiation life itself must prepare him." (65) This is the very heart of Schopenhauer's pessimism: Life itself is that which teaches the lesson that non-being is preferable to being.

II. Nietzsche

The importance of Schopenhauer on Nietzsche's philosophy is a topic that has been given a considerable amount of attention through the years. As such, it is unnecessary for this chapter to contain proof that Schopenhauer philosophically influenced Nietzsche.

However, there is one way in which it is necessary to explore the influence of Schopenhauer on Nietzsche, and that is the influence of Schopenhauer on Nietzsche's account of existential meaning. As we shall see, this influence was negative, not positive; nonetheless, negative influence is still a form of influence. The purpose of the remainder of the chapter will be to demonstrate the depth of Schopenhauer's influence on Nietzsche's account of existential meaning. I will demonstrate that Schopenhauer's influence in this area begins at the very roots: The asking of the question. This is so because it was Schopenhauer who brought the question of existential meaning to the attention of nineteenth-century German philosophers. There is, however, much more reason to believe that Schopenhauer influenced Nietzsche in this regard, as we shall see. We will find three core differences between Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, which I will argue demonstrate that Nietzsche was responding to Schopenhauer. Firstly, while Schopenhauer advocated a denial of the will (and thus, life), Nietzsche advocated an affirmation of the will (and thus, life). Secondly, while Schopenhauer celebrated asceticism because it constituted a denial of the will and life, Nietzsche denounced

asceticism for precisely this reason. Thirdly, while Schopenhauer argued that life could only be meaningful if happiness outweighed suffering, Nietzsche denied the importance of happiness. For Nietzsche, it simply was not the case that humans sought happiness; instead, he believed that humans sought meaning. While he was criticizing utilitarianism at the time, we shall see that it is clear that Schopenhauer cannot emerge from this criticism unscathed.

While we can easily identify Schopenhauer's influence on Nietzsche, as he was the only philosopher to whom Nietzsche devoted an entire essay, it is clearly not enough to simply note that Nietzsche wrote an essay called "Schopenhauer as Educator." Instead, let us consider what Nietzsche finds notable about Schopenhauer's philosophy. Nietzsche writes, in "Schopenhauer as Educator,"

[Schopenhauer's] greatness lies in having set up before him a picture of life as a whole, in order to interpret it as a whole; while even the most astute heads cannot be dissuaded from the error that one can achieve a more perfect interpretation if one minutely investigates the paint with which this picture is produced and the material upon which it is painted; perhaps with the result that one concludes that it is a quite intricately woven canvas with paint upon it which is chemically inexplicable. To understand the picture one must divine the painter – that Schopenhauer knew. (141)

Nietzsche employs an extended metaphor here, which is perhaps highly appropriate as this essay dates from his own aesthetic period while discussing another philosopher well known for his aesthetics. Despite Nietzsche's phrasing, his meaning is actually quite simple. Schopenhauer investigated life as a whole in order to understand it, rather than focusing on its components; a component of life cannot be understood separately from others without losing everything that identifies it—life itself. As such, Schopenhauer

understood that it was necessary to understand the underlying force that creates life: the will.

While the above does not provide conclusive evidence that Nietzsche was specifically referring to Schopenhauer's work on existential meaning, this evidence can be found later in the essay. Nietzsche writes, "Let us think of the philosopher's eye resting upon existence: he wants to determine its value anew. For it has been the proper task of all great thinkers to be lawgivers as to the measure, stamp and weight of things." (144) Here, Nietzsche suggests that when Schopenhauer inquires as to the meaning of life, he performs the true task of the philosopher. As a philosopher, Schopenhauer is obligated to consider existential meaning, to determine what value it has. It is the duty of the philosopher, says Nietzsche, to value and evaluate all things. To Nietzsche, though, the philosopher might be known by another name entirely: "the judge of life." (145) To describe the philosopher in such a way is to make a bold claim about their role. While Nietzsche previously made a descriptive claim (a philosopher is one who determines existential meaning), followed by a separate—albeit, connected—normative claim (that a philosopher should determine the value of all things), he now makes a far more specific, normative claim: A philosopher is one who should determine the value of life. Nietzsche later says that the question that Schopenhauer seeks to answer is "'What is the meaning of life as such?'" (146) This is the final point that needs to be raised about "Schopenhauer as Educator." Although Nietzsche says a lot more about Schopenhauer's perspective of existential meaning, there is no need for further detail. In fact, Nietzsche's detailed interpretation of Schopenhauer on this topic is deeply flawed, since Nietzsche appears to have read his own thinking into Schopenhauer. Instead, I will simply note that Nietzsche

viewed Schopenhauer's greatness as resting in his work on existential meaning, and that Nietzsche viewed this as the question that mattered most to Schopenhauer.

From the above, we can see that Nietzsche clearly held Schopenhauer's work on existential meaning to be important. There is a further point that must be made, which is that it is uncertain if Nietzsche would have ever considered this question if it weren't for Schopenhauer's influence. As Wendell O'Brien notes in the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy article, "The Meaning of Life: Early Continental and Analytic Perspectives," Schopenhauer is the genesis of the question of existential meaning in Western philosophy. As we have already seen, Schopenhauer explicitly posed the question, "What is the meaning of life at all?" (75) in his essay, "Character." However, this was also the first time that the question had been posed in Western philosophy. In the introduction to *Weltschmerz*, Beiser makes a related point about Schopenhauer's importance. While O'Brien speaks of Schopenhauer's genesis of the relevant query, Beiser notes its importance to the philosophy of Nietzsche's era. Beiser observes, "It was Schopenhauer who made the question of the value of life so central to German philosophy in the 19th century, and who shifted its interests away from the logic of the sciences and back towards the traditional problems of the meaning and value of life." (11) There is an obvious conflict here, since O'Brien states that Schopenhauer introduced the question of existential meaning to Western philosophy, whereas Beiser suggests that this question was reintroduced by Schopenhauer in his works—more specifically, Beiser credits Schopenhauer with having rediscovered "the ancient Greek question behind the problem of evil" (7). Despite this conflict, there is an underlying agreement that—regardless of the exact role he might have played—Schopenhauer was hugely important to German

philosophy and was the force behind its nineteenth-century emphasis on the question of existential meaning. This provides the context necessary to claim that it is likely as a result of Schopenhauer's influence that Nietzsche considered this question at all as a nineteenth-century German philosopher.

Of course, as previously mentioned, Nietzsche greatly departed from Schopenhauer. Although Nietzsche never indicates that he is responding to Schopenhauer, the extent of the contrast between the works of these two philosophers is striking. The first contrast to consider is that while Schopenhauer advocated a denial of life (which is to say a denial of the will), Nietzsche advocated an affirmation of life. In the fourth book of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche writes,

I want to learn more and more to see as beautiful what is necessary in things; then I shall be one of those who makes things beautiful. *Amor fati*: let that be my love henceforth! I do not want to wage war against what is ugly. I do not want to accuse; I do not even want to accuse those who accuse. *Looking away* shall be my only negation. And all in all and on the whole: some day I wish to be only a Yes-sayer. (*GS* 276)

While it is unnecessary to unpack every aspect of this quotation, there are certain elements that deserve attention. Firstly, the tone of this passage is striking, as it sees Nietzsche depart from his typical militaristic tone and instead adopt a peaceful one. It also speaks to Nietzsche's continued affinity for the aesthetic, as he focuses on beauty and creation. *Amor fati* is, of course, Latin for "love of fate." Furthermore, Nietzsche's affirmative nature is here exposed: By only looking away, and eventually saying yes to everything, Nietzsche displays his unwillingness to negate or deny things as they are, preferring instead to accept them and affirm them whenever he has no need to look away.

This affirmation or Yes-saying is found in several of Nietzsche's other works. For example, Zarathustra repeats the mantra "Yes and Amen" in two sections of the Third Part of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: "Before Sunrise" and in the subtitle of "The Seven Seals ("Or: The Yes and Amen Song"). In fact, one of these instances is particularly striking in light of the above block quotation. Zarathustra pronounces,

...I am one who can bless and say Yes, if only you are about me, pure and light, you abyss of light; then I carry the blessings of my Yes into all abysses. I have become one who blesses and says Yes; and I fought long for that and was a fighter that I might one day get my hands free to bless. But this is my blessing: to stand over every single thing as its own heaven, as its round roof, its azure bell, and eternal security; and blessed is he who blesses thus. (Z III.4)

In short, we can consider Nietzsche's words in *The Gay Science* to indicate his desire to become like Zarathustra, to become his own ideal. Ironically, despite its subtitle, "The Seven Seals" contains but one mention of "Yes" and "Amen" never appears, so the two are obviously never connected in this section. What is notable in this section is an early occurrence of what is here simply called "recurrence" when Zarathustra inquires, "Oh, how should I not lust after eternity and after the nuptial ring of rings, the ring of recurrence?" (Z III.16) In fact, it is here that Zarathustra comes to accept the eternal recurrence of the same as evidenced by the previous quotation and the mantra of this section: "Never yet have I found the woman from whom I wanted children, unless it be this woman whom I love: for I love you, O eternity.

For I love you, O eternity! (Z III.16)" Nietzsche here suggests a link between the affirmation of life, eternal recurrence, and *amor fati*.

Nietzsche discusses affirmation³ at length in *Ecce Homo*. In his discussion of *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche indicates that it is in *The Birth of Tragedy* that he first transcended the traditional opposition between pessimism and optimism, instead unearthing the true opposition as being life-denial versus life-affirmation. The former category includes Christianity, Schopenhauer, Plato, and all other idealists; while the latter includes only the Dionysian—for Nietzsche, at this time, the Dionysian was simply himself. Nietzsche displays the extent of his departure from Schopenhauer when he characterizes this latter perspective as "a formula of *supreme affirmation* born out of fullness, of superfluity, an affirmation without reservation even of suffering, even of guilt, even of all that is strange and questionable in existence ..." (EH "BT" 2) Drawing on a passage from *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche declares himself to be the first tragic philosopher, explaining that affirmation is at its Dionysian heart. Here, Nietzsche describes his tragic or Dionysian philosophy as follows: "Affirmation of transitoriness *and destruction*, the decisive element in a dionysian philosophy, affirmation of antithesis and war, *becoming* with a radical rejection even of the concept '*being*'" (EH "BT" 3). Since this characterization stems from a passage in *Twilight of the Idols*, the passage in question requires discussion.

Saying Yes to life even in its strangest and hardest problems, the will to life rejoicing over its own exhaustibility even in the very sacrifice of its highest types—*that* is what I call Dionysian, *that* is what I guessed to be the bridge to the psychology of the *tragic* poet. *Not* in order to be liberated from terror and pity, not in order to purge oneself of a dangerous affect by its vehement discharge—Aristotle understood it this way—but in order to be *oneself* the eternal joy of

³ The change in language from "Yes-saying" to "affirmation" might reflect a difference in translation between Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. While I primarily use Kaufmann translations, *Ecce Homo* is one exception.

becoming, beyond all terror and pity—that joy which included even joy in destroying. (TI X.5)

This, Nietzsche tells us, is how we must understand tragic or Dionysian philosophy. What characterizes Nietzsche's philosophy, in his own estimation, is that it affirms life even when most would not—of course, this provides stark contrast with Schopenhauer's stance that life should be denied—and destroys in order to create anew. In fact, in the very next paragraph, Nietzsche coins himself "the last disciple of the philosopher Dionysus" and "the teacher of the eternal recurrence" (TI X.5). As we shall see, this final statement will prove to be very important.

Writing of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche again ties together the concepts of a Dionysian spirit and the affirmation of life, this time through Zarathustra himself. Nietzsche explains that Zarathustra exhibits a psychological dilemma. Zarathustra is one who denies everything that has previously been accepted and affirmed, and yet he remains the greatest affirmer of life. Nietzsche's characterization of his own work is again invaluable. He writes of Zarathustra,

...he, who has the harshest, the most fearful insight into reality, who has thought the 'most abysmal thought', nonetheless finds in it no objection to existence, nor even to the eternal recurrence of existence – rather one more reason *to be himself* the eternal Yes to all things, 'the tremendous unbounded Yes and Amen'... 'Into every abyss I still bear the blessing of my affirmation'... *But that is the concept of Dionysos once more.* (EH "Z" 6)

Zarathustra as a Dionysian is one who accepts and affirms life as it is, one who would even choose to live it again and again through the eternal recurrence. Despite suffering, even in a world in which God is dead, Zarathustra is unfaltering in his realization that life is to be affirmed, not to be denied. In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche addresses the importance of Schopenhauer, beginning by identifying Schopenhauer's "pessimism" as

"the problem of the *value of existence*" (GS 357). In the age of atheism, in an age in which it was understood that there was no hope of redemption in the afterlife, Schopenhauer's question became horribly urgent: "*Has existence any meaning at all?*" (ibid.) Here, perhaps failing to recognize that Schopenhauer viewed his philosophy as being necessarily Christian despite his own atheism, Nietzsche dismisses Schopenhauer's own response to the question as "hasty, youthful, only a compromise" as it remains "stuck...in precisely those Christian-ascetic moral perspectives in which one had *renounced faith* along with the faith of God." (ibid.)

Nietzsche continues his criticism of Schopenhauer in *On the Genealogy of Morality*. In the Preface, he takes issue with Schopenhauer's denial of life, which Nietzsche considers to have arisen from the elder's moral values, namely "the unegoistic," "compassion, self-denial, self-sacrifice" which signified "the will turning *against* life," and the possibility of a descent into "*nihilism*" (GM P.5). Nietzsche discusses the concept of the ascetic ideal in the book's Third Treatise, "What Do Ascetic Ideals Mean?" Nietzsche begins by granting that the ascetic ideal can be seen as providing life with meaning. He suggests that the ascetic ideal means "that something *was lacking*, that an enormous *void* surrounded man—he did not know how to justify, to explain, to affirm himself; he *suffered* from the problem of his meaning." (GM III.28) While Nietzsche acknowledges that humanity also suffers in other ways such as disease, he asserts that humans want suffering, so long as it is meaningful. Asceticism offered meaning to suffering, constituting the only meaning that mankind has ever been granted. However, Nietzsche charges that asceticism causes humans to consider their suffering with guilt, thereby increasing suffering at a deeper level. Despite this, Nietzsche concedes that

asceticism allowed for the continuation of the will, since it provided humans with something to desire. The disease of asceticism, unfortunately, was extensive.

One simply cannot conceal from oneself *what* all the willing that has received its ideal from the ascetic ideal actually expresses: this hatred of the human, still more of the animal, still more of the material, this abhorrence of the senses, of reason itself, this fear of happiness and of beauty, this longing away from all appearance, change, becoming, death, wish, longing itself—all of this means—let us dare to grasp this—a *will to nothingness*, an aversion to life, a rebellion against the most fundamental presuppositions of life; but it is and remains a *will!* ... And, to say again at the end what I said at the beginning: man would much rather will *nothingness* than *not* will ... (GM III.28)

In the above, Nietzsche warns of the damage that befalls humanity at the hands of asceticism. While he has previously granted that asceticism is not altogether negative, Nietzsche now asserts that it is more negative and dangerous than positive, and is ultimately and deeply incompatible with a Dionysian outlook on life. As we have seen above, Nietzsche strongly values beauty and becoming, but perhaps the greatest danger that asceticism poses is that it preaches denial of life.

In the fourth part of *Beyond Good and Evil*, "Our Virtues," Nietzsche elaborates on his aversion to pessimism. According to Nietzsche, the problem with "ways of thinking that measure the value of things in accordance with *pleasure* and *pain*," in which he groups hedonism, pessimism, utilitarianism, and eudaemonism, is that these pleasure and pain "are mere epiphenomena and wholly secondary" (BGE VII.225). While Nietzsche does not here say what pleasure and pain are secondary to, he makes a statement that suggests a deep separation from such views. At the end of the same paragraph, he writes, 'You want, if possible—and there is no more insane "if possible"—to *abolish suffering*. And we? It really seems that *we* would rather have it higher and worse than ever. Well-being as you understand it—that is no goal, that seems to us an

end, a state that soon makes man ridiculous and contemptible—that makes his destruction *desirable*.' (BGE 225) In short, to one like Nietzsche (i.e., a Dionysian), the abolishment of suffering and establishment of well-being are not desirable because they weaken humanity, making the species one that should end. Suffering is important to Nietzsche. This sentiment is partially explained in the first section of *Twilight of the Idols*, "Maxims and Arrows," in which Nietzsche first offers, "*Out of life's school of war*: What does not destroy me, makes me stronger." (TI I.8) In the same place, he writes, "If we have our own *why* of life, we shall get along with almost any *how*. Man does *not* strive for pleasure; only the Englishman does." (TI I.12) In the first of these two maxims, Nietzsche reminds us that suffering (or, to avoid begging the question, any form of conflict)—so long as it does not destroy us—makes us stronger. We will explore this theme of Nietzsche's philosophy in the next chapter. Importantly for our current discussion, Nietzsche dismisses the suggestion that pleasure is sought by humanity, suggesting in the first sentence that what we need is meaning. Pleasure is not what is necessary because, so long as our lives have meaning, we can endure almost anything.

In fact, this ties back to a point made in the Third Treatise of the *Genealogy*, in which Nietzsche writes, "The meaninglessness of suffering, not the suffering itself, was the curse that thus far lay stretched out over humanity" (GM III.28). Here, it is the ascetic ideal that fulfils the need for meaning, but we have already seen that the ascetic ideal is at odds with a Dionysian perspective. Still, it is important to consider that Nietzsche offered the following in the same section: "Man, the bravest animal and the one most accustomed to suffering, does *not* negate suffering in itself: he *wants* it, he even seeks it out, provided one shows him a *meaning* for it, a *to-this-end* of suffering." (ibid.) This parallel is

important for two reasons. Firstly, as we saw in *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche is strongly critical of the idea of abolishing suffering; here, Nietzsche suggests that meaningful suffering is desirable for human. Secondly, while Nietzsche speaks positively about meaningful suffering, he makes no such statements about meaningful pleasure in his the maxim from *Twilight of the Idols*; however, it is arguable that meaningful pleasure could be contained within the "how" of life. Thirdly, while Nietzsche does not say in *Beyond Good and Evil* what pleasure and pain are secondary to, there is a common thread linking together all of the above: meaning.

The Antichrist continues Nietzsche's criticism found in the Preface of the *Genealogy*—namely, that compassion (or pity⁴, as Kaufmann translates it) is problematic. Firstly, pity is characteristic of Christianity to such an extent that Nietzsche says, "Christianity is called the religion of *pity*." (A 7) While many emotions enhance our strengthen, pity does the opposite; while suffering in general typically weakens us, "Pity makes suffering contagious." (ibid.) Considering reactions to pity illuminates the problem; as a result of pity, the "law of development, which is the law of *selection*" is crossed (ibid.). In this way, pity "preserves what is ripe for destruction; it defends those who have been disinherited and condemned by life; and by the abundance of the failures of all kinds which it keeps alive, it gives life itself a gloomy and questionable aspect." (ibid.) Despite all of this, pity has sometimes been considered to be virtuous or even, as in the case of Schopenhauer, the highest virtue. To Nietzsche, this is understandable, for

⁴ The word that Nietzsche used in German was *Mitleid*, which can be translated as either 'compassion' or 'pity'. While Maudemarie Clark and Alan J. Swensen use the former in their translation of *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Kaufmann uses the latter throughout his translations.

"this was done by a philosophy that was nihilistic and had inscribed the *negation of life* upon its shield." (ibid.) However, this renders Schopenhauer's philosophy more consistent, as "pity negates life and renders it *more deserving of negation*." (ibid.)

At this point, Nietzsche is far from done. "Pity," he writes, "is the *practice of nihilism*." (A 7) In support, Nietzsche reiterates a previous point: pity weakens us, spreading the suffering of one to others; supporting the continuation of misery by spreading it to others. The danger can be seen when one considers that "pity persuades men to *nothingness!*" (ibid.) However, 'one does not say "nothingness" but "beyond" or "God," or "*true life*," or Nirvana, salvation, blessedness.' (ibid.) The meaning hidden behind all of these designations of "nothingness" is "*hostility against life*." (ibid.) Moreover, "Schopenhauer was hostile to life; therefore pity became a virtue for him." (ibid.) To Nietzsche, the role of the Dionysian philosopher is to purge "such a pathological and dangerous accumulation of pity as is represented by the case of Schopenhauer" from philosophy and culture at large (ibid.), suggesting that he is here following in the footsteps of Aristotle. Nietzsche explains "[in] our whole unhealthy modernity there is nothing more unhealthy than Christian pity." (ibid.) This is necessitated by love for humanity.

Returning to *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche here explains that philosophical pessimism and nineteenth-century German music share a "distinctive character—their *romanticism*." (GS 370) Nietzsche suggests a commonality between all arts and philosophies: "[they] may be viewed as a remedy and an aid in the service of growing and struggling life; they always presuppose suffering and sufferers." (ibid.) But Nietzsche believes that they fail to recognize that there are two distinct types of sufferers. The first

kind suffers from what Nietzsche refers to as "the *over-fullness of life*," and he characterizes their desire as being for "a Dionysian art and likewise a tragic view of life, a tragic insight." (ibid.) The second kind suffers from "the *impoverishment of life*," and those of this type "seek rest, stillness, calm seas, redemption from themselves through art and knowledge, or intoxication, convulsions, anaesthesia, and madness." (ibid.) Romantic art and philosophy (philosophical pessimism) are identified with the latter type, so their representatives include Schopenhauer and Richard Wagner. The Dionysian, the one "that is richest in the fullness of life...cannot only afford the sight of the terrible and questionable but even the terrible deed and any luxury of destruction, decomposition, and negation." (ibid.) For such an individual, "what is evil, absurd, and ugly seems, as it were, permissible, owing to an excess of procreating, fertilizing energies that can still turn any desert into lush farmland." (ibid.) The romantic artist or philosopher—"those who suffer most and are poorest in life"—"would need above all mildness, peacefulness, and goodness in thought as well as deed," in addition "if possible" to "a god who would truly be a god for the sick, a healer and savior; also logic, the conceptual understanding of existence—for logic calms and gives confidence—in short, a certain warm narrowness that keeps away fear and encloses one in optimistic horizons." (ibid.)

Those who desire to "immortalize" also exist within two categories. The work of those of the first type is "prompted, first, by gratitude and love," and "will always be an art of apotheoses, perhaps dithyrambic like Rubens, or blissfully mocking like Hafiz, or bright and gracious like Goethe, spreading a Homeric light and glory over all things." (GS 370) The work of those of the second type will "be the tyrannic will of one who suffers deeply, who struggles, is tormented, and would like to turn what is most personal,

singular, and narrow, the real idiosyncrasy of his suffering, into a binding law and compulsion" (ibid.). This type of individual "revenge himself on all things, by forcing his own image, the image of his torture, on them, branding them with it." (ibid.) The latter "is *romantic pessimism* in its most expressive form," examples of which include Schopenhauer's philosophy and Wagner's music (ibid.). As we have seen so far, Nietzsche diverged from Schopenhauer on a number of grounds, seemingly objecting to Schopenhauer's interpretation of the picture of life, rather than the painting itself. While one might expect that Nietzsche as critic of Schopenhauer would disagree with Schopenhauer's characterization of life as suffering, Nietzsche seems to have accepted this view, arguing that this does not warrant denial of life or the will. Nietzsche's view, instead, seems to be that suffering cannot empty life of meaning because suffering itself can be meaningful. As suffering and pleasure are simply of a secondary nature to Nietzsche, meaning would seem to be independent of them. While we will explore this in further detail, considering what this means for Nietzsche's account of existential meaning, I would like to return to the topic of asceticism, which has only been touched on.

The Third Treatise of the *Genealogy* begins with a question to which there are many answers: "What do ascetic ideals mean?" (GM III.I) For the artist, ascetic ideals mean "nothing or too many different things," while for the philosopher or scholar, they mean "something like a nose and instinct for the most favorable preconditions of higher spirituality" (ibid.) Ascetic ideals for "the physiologically failed and out of sorts (among the *majority* of mortals)" mean 'an attempt to appear to oneself to be "too good" for this world, a holy form of excess, their principal instrument in the battle with slow pain and with bored,' and for "priests, the true priests' faith, their best tool of power, also the "most

high" permission to power." (ibid.) Finally, for the saint, ascetic ideals mean 'among saints, finally, a pretext for hibernation, their *novissima gloriae cupido*⁵, their rest in nothingness ("God"), their form of madness.' (ibid.) The multiplicity of meanings that ascetic ideals have carried suggests to Nietzsche a "basic fact of the human will, its *horror vacui: it needs a goal*,—and it would rather will *nothingness* than *not* will." (ibid.) Artists can, however, be eliminated from discussion because they are simply "valets of a morality or philosophy or religion," and also frequently influenced by "their disciples and patrons, and flatterers" (GM III.5). As such, we can expect the ascetic ideals of artists to merely mirror those of another group. Using the example of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche says that the answer to the question "what does it *mean* when a philosopher pays homage to the ascetic ideal?" is "he wants *to break free from a torture*." (GM III.6) In the next section, Nietzsche once more asks the question, "What...does the ascetic ideal mean for a philosopher?" (GM III.7) His response is that 'at its sight the philosopher smiles at an optimum of the conditions for highest and boldest spirituality—in this he does *not* negate "existence," rather he affirms *his* existence and *only* his existence, and this perhaps to the degree that the wanton wish is never far away: *pereat mundus, fiat philosophia, fiat philosophus, fiam!*⁶ ..." (ibid.)

The freedom that the philosopher seeks through asceticism, according to Nietzsche, is

...freedom from compulsion, disturbance, noise, from business, duties, cares; clarity in the head; dance, leap, and flight of ideas; good air, thin, clear, free, dry,

⁵ Clark and Swensen translate "*novissima gloriae cupido*" as "the last thing, passion for glory." (GM III.1n)

⁶ The final Latin words are translated by Clark and Swensen as "let the world perish, let there be philosophy, let there be the philosopher, *let there be me!*" (GM III.7n)

as the air in high places is, in which all animal being becomes more spiritual and acquires wings; quiet in all souterrains; all dogs neatly put on a chain; no barking of hostility and shaggy rancor; no gnawing words of injured ambition; undemanding and submissive intestines, diligent as mill-works but distant; the heart in a foreign place, in the beyond, in the future, posthumous... (GM III.8)

Furthermore, "at the mention of the ascetic ideal they think, all in all, of the lighthearted asceticism of an animal that has been deified and become fully fledged, that roams more than rests above life." (ibid.) Nietzsche identifies three characteristics associated with the ascetic ideal possessed by "all great fruitful inventive spirits;" these are "poverty, humility, chastity" (ibid.). Nietzsche believes, however, that philosophers do not choose this mode of life "out of a virtue, out of a meritorious will to contentedness and simplicity," but because it is demanded of them by "their supreme lord" (ibid.). The ascetic is "a contradiction" which 'seems to represent, "life *against* life"' (GM III.13). He offers that "*the ascetic ideal springs from the protective and healing instincts of a degenerating life* that seeks with every means to hold its ground and is fighting for its existence," so "in it and through it life is wrestling with death and *against* death," thus rendering the ascetic ideal "an artifice for the *preservation* of life." (ibid.) The popularity of the ascetic ideal throughout history exposes "the *diseasedness*" of our ancestors, 'the physiological struggle of man with death (more precisely: with satiety with life, with tiredness, with the wish for the "end").' (ibid.) In this way, the ascetic priest emerged as "the incarnate wish for a different existence, an existence somewhere else, and in fact the highest degree of this wish, its true fervor and passion," but the strength of that wish ties him to this existence, since "he becomes a tool that must work at creating more favorable conditions for being-here and being-human" (ibid.) The ascetic priest, then, must be seen as a more complex figure than simply an "enemy of life," a "*negating one*," for "precisely

he belongs to the very great *conserving* and *yes-creating* forces of life" (ibid.) What Nietzsche terms "the *diseasedness*" of humanity is ultimately what anchors ascetic individuals to life, since, 'As if by magic, the "no" that he says to life brings to light an abundance of tender "yes's"; even when he *wounds* himself, this master of destruction, self-destruction—afterwards it is the wound itself that compels him *to live ...*' (GM III.13) While Nietzsche does not here explain why this is the case, it is likely one that we have seen before: Since the ascetic ideal provides humans with an interpretation of our suffering, thus granting meaning to our suffering, that which would otherwise lead to the end of life instead attributes to its continuation because our inherent need for meaning is satisfied.

Nietzsche notes that, when we suffer, we seek "a cause for [this] suffering," the most satisfying possibility being the discovery of "a *guilty* perpetrator who is receptive to suffering" (GM III.15). The everyday man who suffers and follows the ascetic priest thinks, "I am suffering: for this someone must be to blame" and the ascetic priest agrees (ibid.). In response, however, 'his shepherd, the ascetic priest, says to him: "That's right, my sheep! someone must be to blame for it: but you yourself are this someone, you alone are to blame for it—you alone are to blame for *yourself!*"' (ibid.) Thus, the sufferer is given the granted the wrongdoer she so badly needed, thus giving some sense of meaning to her suffering, but with it comes guilt as she has been told that she herself is the guilty party, which Nietzsche states "is bold enough, false enough" (ibid.) Nietzsche still must accept, however, that "one thing at least has been achieved by it," which is that "the

direction of the *ressentiment* has been—*changed*." ⁷ While *ressentiment* is generally focused outwards, the blame placed upon the individual by the ascetic priest redirects the *ressentiment* inwards. Not only does the individual continue to suffer, not only does she feel guilt, but she also resents herself and cannot discharge this feeling. It will continue to affect her psychologically and, potentially, physiologically.

Nietzsche writes of his belief that "life's healing-artist instinct has at least *attempted* through the ascetic priest" has been intended "to make the sick to a certain degree *harmless*, to destroy the incurable through themselves, to strictly direct the more mildly sick towards themselves, to give a backwards direction to their *ressentiment*" (GM III.16). In this way, the ascetic priest "[*exploits*] the bad instincts of all sufferers for the purpose of self-discipline, self-supervision, self-overcoming," providing "a mere affect-medication," which Nietzsche observes "cannot be a matter of a true *healing* of the sick in the physiological sense," and, likewise, "the instinct of life" provides no "healing in mind or in intention." (ibid.) As suggested above, the ascetic priest teaches the individual who comes to him to ask why she suffers that her suffering is to be found within, "in a *guilt*, in a piece of the past, [she] is to understand [her] suffering itself as a *state of punishment*" (GM III.20) In this way, the "invalid" is made "the sinner," and Nietzsche doubts that the sinner will be found for millennia, notably where "*wanting-to-misunderstand-suffering*" is "made into life's meaning, the reinterpretation of suffering into feelings of guilt, fear, and punishment;" along with 'everywhere mute torment, extreme fear, the agony of a tortured heart, the cramps of an unknown happiness, the cry

⁷ *Ressentiment* ('resentment') is a French word that Nietzsche uses quite often when discussing moral psychology and related areas of thought.

for "redemption." (ibid.) In this way, life ceased to be boring, and the ascetic priest found himself 'victorious, *his* kingdom had come: people no longer protested *against* pain, they *thirsted* after pain; "*more* pain! *more* pain!" thus cried the longing of his disciples and initiates for centuries.' (ibid.)

III. Nietzsche contra Schopenhauer: How do they really differ?

It is important to note that Nietzsche believes meaning to be more important than either pleasure or suffering (cf. GM III.28; TI "Maxims" 12). But if we see this as a response to Schopenhauer, it's unclear if this objection holds given the implications of "On the Human Need for Metaphysics". In that essay, Schopenhauer's claim seems to be that humans need metaphysics because we need meaning, which is often believed to be achievable through metaphysics. This is the basis of the genesis of both religion and philosophy, which is brought about as a result of the nature of the world. Because the world is characterized by suffering, (human, vegetable, and animal) existence must necessarily be characterized in the same way, as (human, vegetable, and animal) existence occurs within the world, and is therefore subject to the same conditions. It seems the root of this disagreement must be otherwise interpreted in order to be charitable to both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Since both say that humanity truly seeks meaning, the question must become what each sees as constituting meaning. As we see in numerous places that Schopenhauer sees meaning as being thwarted by suffering, we can reasonably conclude that, for him, meaning rests (or would rest) in happiness; however, we should take this claim further, since Schopenhauer argues that, due to the omnipresence and power of suffering, happiness is fleeting. As such, we can interpret Schopenhauer as arguing that true meaning would require *lasting* happiness that

outweighs suffering. Of course, for Schopenhauer, this would require the world to be constituted otherwise than it actually is.

For Nietzsche, on the other hand, the question of existential meaning is just one of many questions of value, as evidenced by his use of the phrase "the value of existence." (UM III.3; cf. discussion of the "value of life" at TI "Socrates" 2 and TI "Morality" 5) As such, a proper understanding of Nietzsche on existential meaning requires a proper understanding of Nietzsche's account of value. We must establish that value is an important concept to Nietzsche, which can be done with reference to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *Daybreak*, and *The Gay Science*. Firstly, in the First Part of *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche notes that humans misunderstand what is truly important. Zarathustra pronounces, "Little do the people comprehend the great—that is, the creating. But they have a mind for all showmen and actors of great things." (Z I.12) He continues: 'Around the inventors of new values the world revolves: invisibly it revolves. But around the actors revolve the people and fame: that is "they way of the world.'" (ibid.) In reality, however, those who do great things are found far away from the famous; in fact, "far from the market place and from fame the inventors of new values have always dwelt." (ibid.) So we can see that, for Nietzsche, value (more specifically, the creation of new values) is important.

But how does Nietzsche understand value? In *Daybreak*, Nietzsche begins by addressing the idea of intrinsic value, or, as he terms it, the "*in itself*". Nietzsche suggests that our inquiries have shifted over time from taking the form "what is the laughable?" to taking the form "what is laughter?" or "[h]ow does laughter originate?" (D 210) While the former suggested that there was some intrinsic quality that rendered

something laughable, the latter emerge as a result of our realization "that there is nothing good, nothing beautiful, nothing sublime, nothing evil in itself, but that there are states of soul in which we impose such words upon things external to and within us." (ibid.)

Nietzsche believes quite strongly that value is within us, not within objects, as he again notes in *The Gay Science*. In Book Four, Nietzsche writes, "[w]hat has *value* in our world now does not have value in itself, according to its nature—nature is always value-less, but has been *given* value at some point, as a present—and it was *we* who gave and bestowed it. Only we have created the world *that concerns man!*" (GS 301) From these passages, we can determine that Nietzsche views value as extrinsic (i.e., value is or comes from outside the object) rather intrinsic (i.e., value is or comes from inside the object), and is subjective since it is derived from one's own inner psychological states.

This leaves an important question unanswered, however, which is this: To Nietzsche, what kind of value does life or existence have? There are many different ways to answer this question, but perhaps the best option is to consider what Nietzsche says about moral or ethical value, as suggested by some of his language. In *Daybreak*, Nietzsche writes,

*A few theses. – Insofar as the individual is seeking happiness, one ought not to tender him any prescriptions as to the path to happiness: for individual happiness springs from one's own unknown laws, and prescriptions from without can only obstruct and hinder it. – The prescriptions called 'moral' are in truth directed against individuals and are in no way aimed at promoting their happiness. They have just as little to do with the 'happiness and welfare of mankind' – a phrase to which is it in any case impossible to attach any distinct concepts, let alone employ them as guiding stars on the dark ocean of moral aspirations. – It is not true, as prejudice would have it, that moral is more favourable to the evolution of reason than immorality is. – It is not true that the *unconscious goal* in the evolution of every conscious being (animal, man, mankind, etc) is its 'highest happiness': the case, on the contrary, is that every stage of evolution possesses a special and incomparable happiness neither higher nor lower but simply its own. Evolution*

does not have happiness in view, but evolution and nothing else. – Only if mankind possessed a universally recognised *goal* would it be possible to propose 'thus and thus is the *right* course of action': for the present there exists no such goal. It is thus irrational and trivial to impose the demands of morality upon mankind. – To *recommend* a goal to mankind is something quite different: the goal is then thought of as something which *lies in our own discretion*; supposing the recommendation appealed to mankind, it could in pursuit of it also *impose* upon itself a moral law, likewise at its own discretion. But up to now the moral law has been supposed to stand *above* our own likes and dislikes: one did not want actually to *impose* this law upon oneself, one wanted to *take* it from somewhere or *discover* it somewhere or *have it commanded to one* from somewhere. (D 108)

Similarly, in the First Part of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Zarathustra proclaims,

Verily, men gave themselves all their good and evil. Verily, they did not take it, they did not find it, nor did it come to them as a voice from heaven. Only man placed values in things to preserve himself—he alone created a meaning for things, a human meaning. Therefore, he calls himself "man," which means: the esteemer.

To esteem is to create: hear this, you creators! Esteeming itself is of all esteemed things the most estimable treasure. Through esteeming alone is there value: and without esteeming, the nut of existence would be hollow. Hear this, you creators!

Change of values—that is a change of creators. Whoever must be a creator always annihilates.

First, people were creators; and only in later times, individuals. Verily, the individual himself is still the most recent creation. (Z I.15)

But perhaps most telling is Zarathustra proclamation in the Third Part, wherein he states,

'He, however, has discovered himself who says, "This is *my* good and evil"; with that he has reduced to silence the mole and dwarf who say, "Good for all, evil for all.'" (Z III.11)

The connection to the topic of existential meaning can be made if we consider that, in the same section, Zarathustra says, "'This is *my* way; where is yours?"—thus I answered those who asked me "the way." For *the* way—that does not exist.' (ibid.)

It is in *Human, All Too Human* that Nietzsche applies his notion of value to life or existence in a way that is seemingly thoroughly pessimistic. He begins a section entitled "*Injustice necessary*" with the words:

All judgements as to the value of life have evolved illogically and are therefore unjust. The falsity of human judgement derives first from the condition of the material to be judged, namely very incomplete, secondly from the way in which the sum is arrived at on the basis of this material, and thirdly from the fact that every individual piece of this material is in turn the outcome of false knowledge, and is so with absolute necessity. (HH 32)

Next, our experiences of others—regardless of their proximity—is necessarily incomplete, so we have no "logical rights to [total evaluations of them]; all evaluations are premature and are bound to be." (HH 32) Furthermore, we measure by "our own being," which is not fixed since "we are subject to moods and fluctuations," but just assessment of relations between oneself and another (whether a person or a thing) would require knowledge of "ourselves as a fixed standard" (ibid.). From this, Nietzsche suggests that it could follow "that one ought not to judge at all," but responds that we cannot fail to evaluate, have aversions or partialities while living, "for all aversion is dependent on an evaluation, likewise all partiality." (ibid.) There is no drive to or away from something in humans that is separable from a feeling that what one desires is beneficial and that what one avoids is harmful; every drive within humans has "some kind of knowing evaluation of the worth of its objective" (ibid.). Humans are "from the very beginning illogical and thus unjust beings *and can recognize this*: this is one of the greatest and most irresolvable discords of existence." (ibid.)

The next section, "*Error regarding life necessary to life*," is, if anything, worse. It begins: "Every belief in the value and dignity of life rests on false thinking; it is possible

only through the fact that empathy with the universal life and suffering of mankind is very feebly developed in the individual." (HH 33) Even those individuals able to "think beyond themselves at all" consider only "fenced-off portions of" universal life (ibid.). They consider "the greatly gifted and pure of soul," who are mere exceptions, and take "their production for the goal of world-evolution and rejoices in the effects they in turn produce," which allows them to believe that life has value but only because they are "thinking falsely" by disregarding all other humans (ibid.). One could also keep all humans in sight but validate only less egoistical drives, justify "them in face of all the other," and thus "hope for something of mankind as a whole" and believe life valuable to this extent, but Nietzsche believes this thinking would likewise be false (ibid.). Moreover, either attitude marks the individual as an "*exception* among men" because most humans bear life without much complaint and so believe life has value, but this again is only because each lives only for herself, refusing to consider others, and at best seeing others "as a dim shadow." (ibid.) Such an individual believes in the value of life only because she "regards [herself] more highly than [she] does the world." (ibid.) Lacking imagination, such an individual is unable to "feel [her] way into other beings," thereby having little participation "in their fortunes and suffering." (ibid.) One who could participate in the fortunes and suffering of others would, by necessity, "despair of the value of life": she who was able to encompass and feel "within [herself] the total consciousness of mankind" would "collapse with a curse on existence" (ibid.). This despair would come from the realization that the human species has "*no* goal," so an individual regarding the total course of existence finds in it no "support or comfort" (ibid.). Realizing that human life is purposeless, the individual would come to perceive

her actions as useless and in vain; but the feeling of her own actions and those of all others would be "a feeling beyond all other feelings," of which "only a poet" would be capable, which is good because "poets always know how to console themselves." (ibid.)

Considering the above quotations together, Nietzsche would seem to be a sceptic at best about existential meaning: The best conclusion the recognition of our unjust, illogical, and false judgments of the value of existence would lead us to is that we do not and cannot know the value of existence because our knowledge is too limited. More striking is the possibility that Nietzsche is a pessimist in the same vein as Schopenhauer: We have wrongly judged life to be meaningful when, in fact, the omnipresence of deep, purposeless suffering throughout the species or even the world marks existence as meaningless. But this conclusion would make little sense considering the objections that we have already seen Nietzsche make in response to such a view. The first missing ingredient is found in the Preface to *Human, All Too Human*. The free spirit asks herself, 'why so apart? so alone? renouncing everything I once revered? renouncing reverence itself? why this hardness, this suspiciousness, this hatred for your own virtues?' (HH Preface 6) But if she then repeats these questions out loud, she might hear the following response:

'[...] You shall get control over your For and Against and learn how to display first one and then the other in accordance with your higher goal. You shall learn to grasp the sense of perspective in every value judgement – the displacement, distortion and merely apparent teleology of horizons and whatever else pertains to perspectivism; also the quantum of stupidity that resides in antitheses of values and the whole intellectual loss which every For, every Against costs us. You shall learn to grasp the *necessary* injustice in every For and Against, injustice as inseparable from life, life itself as *conditioned* by the sense of perspective and its injustice. [...]' (HH Preface 6)

To summarize the rest, Nietzsche believes that the problem at bottom is "*order of rank*": Injustice is always greatest where life in its lowest forms ("at its smallest, narrowest, neediest, most incipient") posits itself as the aim and "measure of things" in order to preserve itself and thus destroys and disputes "the higher, greater, richer." (HH Preface 6) Together, power, right, and "spaciousness of perspective grow into the heights" (ibid.). First of all, the limitations on our knowledge are a result of value judgments resting upon perspectives, and the reason for this injustice is that life is unjustly conditioned by particular perspectives. Secondly, the very nature of opposite values is foolish, costing "intellectual loss" (ibid.). Considered in this light, we begin to see a way forward: Our judgments concerning life must not seek to extend beyond the perspectives proper to each of our lives; and we must recognize the futility of considering values in terms of opposites.

These conclusions, as we will see (particularly in the third chapter), bring us a long way towards an understanding of how Nietzsche can have an account of existential meaning that is not pessimistic in nature; moreover, it will show how such an account is compatible with scepticism concerning judgments concerning life's value. Perspective will be shown to play the role already suggested (i.e., we must judge only our own lives) by demonstrating that Nietzsche does not deny the possibility of individual lives having meaning, nor does he deny the role that such meaning plays in allowing the individual to live and prosper regardless of the conditions under which life makes her live (cf. TI "Maxims" 12). But

Nietzsche will also introduce a way around the problem created by the falsity of our judgments concerning value. Instead of accepting a judgment because it is true or

denying a judgment because it is false, Nietzsche will suggest that we consider the way in which a judgment serves life and a particular species. A judgment will be accepted if it promotes and preserves life, and/or preserves (and possibly cultivates) a species; if it does not, it will be rejected (cf. BGE 4).

Nevertheless, the heart of the matter is what Nietzsche never ceases to hold. What he will hold until the end of his career is that there can never be an absolute "Yes" or "No" given to the question of existential meaning because there are, at best, too many variables. That is to say, life can never be deemed either meaningful or meaningless overall because the concept of meaning, the concept of value, is neither objective nor absolute. There will always be difference between individuals and/or groups concerning what constitutes meaning or value. Life itself is at the heart of our questions concerning value, pushing particular people in different directions, so there can never be an absolute response because such a response would have to come from outside of life. In short, the field of existence is a blank slate on which lives occur like writing on a chalkboard. It is ultimately lacking in meaning or meaninglessness, utterly innocent, because value must be bestowed and the only individuals who have the power to bestow value exist within, have existed within (in which case, they can no longer grant value), or will exist within the bounds of life, within the bounds of existence. The meaning of life for Nietzsche, as shall be shown, is fundamentally subjective. For all of these reasons, Nietzsche shifts the question from one of a singular meaning of life to one of a plurality of meanings of lives.

Chapter 2: The Will to Power and Existential Meaning

In the previous chapter, I explored the relationship between Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, demonstrating that Schopenhauer functions as a strong negative influence for Nietzsche. Rather than following Schopenhauer's pessimism regarding existential meaning, Nietzsche rejects four of its major aspects. The first of these aspects is Schopenhauer's recommendation that people deny life (i.e., the will, or the will to live); against this aspect, Nietzsche recommends the affirmation of life. The second of these aspects is Schopenhauer's celebration of asceticism, which Nietzsche warns the reader against. The third aspect is Schopenhauer's belief that a meaningful life must consist of greater pleasure than suffering (which is one of his major arguments against life being meaningful or worth living), but Nietzsche rejects the notion that either suffering or pleasure can grant life meaning, since they are merely secondary to him—both suffering and pleasure can be meaningful, but neither has guaranteed meaning. The fourth aspect is that Schopenhauer judges life as a whole: He fails to recognize that he is simply articulating a judgment of value that arises from the perspective that is proper to his own life and then holding it to be universally true of life in general. Nietzsche argues that perspective is a feature that characterizes life; all living beings regard the world from a particular perspective. But this prevents us from generalizing our judgments of value concerning life to all individuals. This is the way in which Nietzsche avoids both pessimism and objectivity: The first imposes an absolute "No" where it cannot do so, while the second imposes an absolute "Yes" where it cannot do so. In essence, the general question "Is life meaningful?" is an empty question when "life" is taken to mean "all life," or even when "meaning" is taken to apply beyond a particular individual or a group of

individuals. While Nietzsche's responses to the first three aspects of Schopenhauer's pessimism are connected to this chapter (Nietzsche recommends the affirmation of life by affirming the will to power; asceticism is advised against because it weakens the will to power or expressions thereof; and pleasure and suffering are less important for meaning than is power), the fourth aspect is only addressed in the third and final chapter.

In this chapter, I aim to begin clarifying Nietzsche's account of existential meaning by considering the concept of the will to power. The will to power is a major concept within Nietzsche's mature philosophical thought, so it would be peculiar if this concept had no major role to play in his account of existential meaning. Therefore, by getting a good understanding of this concept—which I will argue that Gilles Deleuze provides in *Nietzsche & Philosophy*—a better understanding of Nietzsche's account of existential meaning will follow. However, I simultaneously aim to demonstrate that the centrality of the will to power to Nietzsche's account of existential meaning has been overstated in the literature, since it is necessary (but not sufficient) for the meaning of life. While the will to power's centrality is equal to that of the revaluation of values—and it is the will to power which grounds other important concepts like eternal return and perspectivism—I argue that the will to power relies upon the death of God. All of the above motivate the structure of this chapter.

In the first section, I discuss papers by Paul Katsafanas, Brian Schroeder, and John Richardson in which the will to power is portrayed as central to Nietzsche's account of existential meaning. This serves to demonstrate that the will to power must be discussed when presenting Nietzsche's thought on the meaning of life. In the second section, I present Gilles Deleuze's interpretation of the will to power in which he argues

(following statements made by Nietzsche in *The Will to Power*) that the will to power is a principle of relations between forces, and that Nietzsche considers forces to constitute all things. Although Deleuze's interpretation begins with *The Will to Power*, his aim will be to demonstrate that the will to power can be seen to function this way in works published during Nietzsche's lifetime. In the third section, I consider three alternative interpretations of the will to power that fall into the three major (and broad) categories of interpretation. I first discuss and critique Martin Heidegger's metaphysical interpretation (found in his colossal *Nietzsche* lecture series). I secondly discuss and critique Maudemarie Clark's psychological interpretation (found in her classic book, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*) with help from Bernard Reginster's *The Affirmation of Life: Nietzsche on Overcoming Nihilism*. The third interpretation I discuss and critique is Christian J. Emden's biological or organic interpretation (presented in his paper, "Nietzsche's Will to Power: Biology, Naturalism, and Normativity"). While this last interpretation is found to be preferable to the other two (and helps motivate further criticism of Clark's psychological interpretation), it is still flawed. In the fourth section, I argue that the will to power cannot be sufficient to grant meaning to life because Nietzsche repeatedly claims that the will to power is (i) life, or (ii) a central condition or characteristic of life. If we accept Nietzsche's claim that the will to power is life, existential meaning becomes a tautology: Life (will to power) is meaningful because life (will to power) is meaningful. If we accept Nietzsche's claim that the will to power is a central characteristic of life, we must explain why it is the case that special treatment should be afforded to the will to power. In this section, I also draw on Henrik Rydenfelt's paper, "Valuation and the Will to Power: Nietzsche's Ethics with Ontology," to demonstrate that Nietzsche's account of

value poses a further problem for the view that will to power grants life meaning. Since Nietzsche holds value to be extrinsic (coming from an individual rather than being found in an object), the will to power itself only has value once an individual has deemed it to be valuable. In the conclusion, I foreshadow the arguments to be made in the third chapter. I introduce a hierarchy of Nietzsche's concepts relevant to existential meaning with the foundation being the death of God; the next level is the will to power and the revaluation of values; the third level is eternal return; and the fourth level is perspectivism. I then provide a condensed argument for the exclusion of the *Übermensch* from Nietzsche's account of existential meaning.

Before discussing the will to power, however, it is important to consider the English word that ties together three of Nietzsche's concepts (the lust or desire for power, the doctrine of the feeling of power, and the will to power): power. In *The Nietzsche Dictionary*, Douglas Burnham identifies seven different ways that Nietzsche employs this term. Importantly, however, Burnham notes a further distinction in Nietzsche's usage of 'power'. While the German *Macht* and *Kraft* can both be rendered as 'power' or 'force' in English, and are often used interchangeably (even by Nietzsche), Nietzsche generally distinguishes between them in one notable sense. While Nietzsche generally employs *Macht* to refer to "political power, or power recognised by laws or institutions," he typically employs *Kraft* to refer to "physical power (in the body, or in a mechanical analysis of a physical system)" (266). All seven meanings of 'power' are broad, and the first—the "most common usage"—"is to describe the capacity of a thing or event (for example, a drive) to bring about a significant change in something else" (ibid.). (H1.45, H1.99, H3.22, H3.26, H3.190, H1.50, D32, Z1.1, Z2.22, Z3.13.2, BGE213, BGE230)

The second, a "subclass of the first," refers to "explicitly political or military power, as for example the new German state at TIGermans1, 4." (266) "Knowledge or faith distinguished from the power to bring about action (D22)" (ibid.) is the third, and, "relatedly, the intellect superficially and easily envisages possibilities that are beyond the power of action (D125)." (266-67) Fourth is the affective sense of power, according to which "[power] is something felt, and it is this feeling of power that is important as a sign of health or a motive for action (H1.50, H1.103, D42, BGE230, TIErrors5)" (267). The fifth sense, "the [sense] of energy," or, "the capacity to do something but without a specific end (H2.226, D111)." (267) (Z1.5, BGEP, BGE253, BGE262, TIGermans1, Skirmishes44) "Physical power in the body" is the sixth sense, which includes "dance (BT9), or...the character of the aristocrat (D201...)", and "similarly, at BGE36 N uses *Kraft* to talk about what would otherwise be called mechanical efficient force." (267) Finally, "Great or overwhelming power is often a key or even defining character of something, whether nature in its truth (BT8), that which was considered divine by the Greeks (H2.220), the surplus of power that is unconcerned by apparent loss (H3.34), the meaning of cheerfulness (TIP), or the Dionysian as 'excess of power' (TIAncients4)." (267)

Of course, it cannot simply be assumed that power is important for Nietzsche—whether in general, or in the context of the subject at hand—simply because it is part of these three terms. It could, after all, be the case that what is of importance is the other parts of the terms: *lust/desire for power*, *the feeling of power*, *will to power*. In passing, it is the case that all of these terms are important to Nietzsche, but we need not concern

ourselves with that. Instead, it would be helpful to consider a passage from *The Antichrist*. Early into this late work, Nietzsche writes,

What is good? Everything that heightens the feeling of power in man, the will to power, power itself.

What is bad? Everything that is born of weakness.

What is happiness? The feeling that power is *growing*, that resistance is overcome.

Not contentedness but more power; not peace but war; not virtue but fitness (Renaissance virtue, *virtù*, virtue that is moraline-free). (A 2)

The above demonstrates that Nietzsche sees power itself as important. Nietzsche not only associates power with the good, but also associates happiness with the felt increase of power. Notice that this allows an earlier question to be answered, namely the question of what happiness and suffering are secondary to. This passage tells us that, to Nietzsche, happiness and suffering are secondary to power.

I. The will to power's importance to existential meaning

The will to power has been the topic of a substantial portion of Nietzschean scholarship, as it is considered one of the most important—or even the most important—concept within Nietzsche's philosophy; a key to unlocking the secrets of his thought, if you will. This belief comes about honestly (although the next section of this chapter will ask if this might be an overstatement), since the will to power makes its first appearance in 1883's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and continues to be utilized through 1888 in both *Twilight of the Idols* and *The Antichrist*. As such, the will to power is present in Nietzsche's writings from the beginning of his late period to the very end of his productive period.

In his paper, "Fugitive Pleasure and the Meaningful Life: Nietzsche on Nihilism and Higher Values," Paul Katsafanas takes the will to power to be both necessary and sufficient for the meaning of life. To Katsafanas, Nietzsche condemns the last human in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* because she lacks the will to power (cf. 409); and this means the last man lacks higher values (cf. 411). In the absence of higher values, one lacks the drive to overcome resistance (i.e., the will to power as Katsafanas understands it), rendering one's life meaningless. Katsafanas therefore concludes that a meaningful life for Nietzsche requires higher values in order to exercise the will to power, thus achieving true (active) happiness (cf. 415). In his "Dancing Through Nothing: Nietzsche, the Kyoto School, and Transcendence," Brian Schroeder also posits that the will to power is central to Nietzsche's account of the meaning of life. Schroeder notes that Nietzsche names life as the will to power (cf. 53) before suggesting that "the active will to power" is generated by continually saying "Yes" to life (58). At the end of his discussion of Nietzsche, Schroeder says that in Nietzsche

...one finds not only the theoretical resources but also the will to ecstatically trans-descend the nihilistic abyss left by the death of God. In such ecstasy is made possible the Great Affirmation of an absolute Yes-saying to life here and now, but an affirmation inseparable from the equally great responsibility to the Earth and its inhabitants that ensues from the metanoesis of self-overcoming. (61)

If the will to power is life (which Schroeder takes to mean that the will to power is precisely that to which one says "Yes" in order to escape nihilism), is that which arises from saying "Yes" to life, and is also what overcomes "the egoistic self" (53), then the will to power is central to any discussion of the meaning of life in Nietzsche.

A highly sophisticated version of this claim is to be found in John Richardson's article, "Nietzsche and Transcendental Argument". First, Richardson suggests that

Nietzsche's account of life involves the conditions of self-preservation and self-enhancement, which are identified as the will to power—this has the consequence that life "wants more life" (294). These life-conditions allow for flourishing and growth, and "these kinds of life have both ontological priority for us—they're what we essentially are—and also valuative priority—they set our ultimate ends." (ibid.) Using these life-conditions, Nietzsche justifies his vision of the human ideal as possessing "a deep will to power" as living beings while simultaneously possessing "a deep will to truth"⁸ as humans" (305). I consider Richardson to be making the same claim as Katsafanas and Schroeder for the following reasons. First, Richardson views life-conditions (the will to power) as being of both ontological and valuative priority, and his discussion includes the vision of the human ideal. In Richardson, the will to power is synonymous with Nietzsche's life-conditions, but simultaneously defines us and sets the ends of our lives (which I take to mean that the will to power sets what makes our lives meaningful), so we consider life meaningful because its conditions set our path to reaching the human ideal. Supposing the accuracy of this analysis, Richardson views the will to power as central to Nietzsche's account of existential meaning at least insofar as the will to power characterizes life itself and then elevates us to a higher state of humanity. So, we have seen in Katsafanas, Schroeder, and Richardson that it is necessary to discuss the will to power when discussing Nietzsche's account of existential meaning because the will to power is central to his account.

II. Deleuze's interpretation of the will to power

⁸ The will to truth, which Nietzsche likens to religious devotion, refers to the drive of the philosopher and/or the scientist to find absolute truth (cf. GM III.25).

I would like to begin by drawing the reader's attention to a distinction Deleuze draws between the conceptions of will found in Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, since doing so creates a direct connection to the previous chapter. It is necessary to begin with a reminder that, to Schopenhauer, there is a unity of will; that is, although there might exist multiple individuals who will, this will is shared by all things and extends throughout the world itself (cf. WWP 55, 60, 61, 64, 69, 70). In *Nietzsche & Philosophy*, Deleuze notes that Schopenhauer is led to deny the will as a result of this unity itself. When an individual becomes conscious "of the identity of the will in all its manifestations," this prompts a denial of the will, suppressing "itself in pity, morality and asceticism" because she understands that all beings suffer together as a result of the will (7; cf. WWP 68). But this is not the case for Nietzsche because the will to power operates on forces, which dominate and are dominated, "acting and being affected" (7-8). The will to power designates the relationship between forces (8). In fact, Nietzsche tells us the following in *Beyond Good and Evil*: "'Will,' of course, can affect only 'will'—and not 'matter' (not 'nerves,' for example.) [...] In short, one has to risk the hypothesis whether will does not affect will wherever 'effects' are recognized' (BGE 36). Since Nietzsche proposes that will can only act upon will, Deleuze suggests that we consider Nietzsche to hold that will (to power) is plural or multiple, not unitary (8). The sense suggested by Deleuze, then, is this: "[A will], of course, can affect only [a will]" (BGE 36). Deleuze concludes the paragraph as follows: "Nietzsche discovers what seems to him the authentically Schopenhauerian mystification; when we posit the unity, the identity, of the will we must necessarily repudiate the will itself." (8)

An earlier section of *Beyond Good and Evil* further illuminates the concept of will as plurality or multiplicity. Nietzsche proclaims the will "to be above all something *complicated*," which "is a unit only as a word," and that the word "unit" is exactly how philosophers adopt "a *popular prejudice* and [exaggerate] it." (BGE 19) He then identifies three primary characteristics that we should recognize in the will. Firstly, we find in "all willing [...] a plurality of sensations," the sensations being those of the states "away from which," and "towards which," as well as the sensations of the "from" and "towards" themselves'; and "an accompanying muscular sensation" such that our "arms and legs" are habitually forced into action when something is willed (ibid.). Secondly, we can conclude from these mental and muscular sensations that thinking is also an "[ingredient] of the will," so "there is a ruling thought" whenever we will (ibid.). Thirdly, the will is "an *affect*, and specifically the affect of the command." (ibid.) Accordingly, Nietzsche asserts that "freedom of the will" is actually a feeling of superiority over an individual "who must obey" even if the latter individual is really the same as the former⁹ (ibid.). This last point is supported by something that Nietzsche believes the will demonstrates. Since we both command and obey when we will, Nietzsche suggest that the notion of the self is "a synthetic concept[...], a whole series of erroneous conclusions, and consequently of false evaluations of the will itself" (ibid.). Nietzsche suggests that the individual who exercises her will celebrates the successes not only of herself as commander (i.e., the one who wills *x*) but "of [her] successful executive instruments," which he terms 'useful "under-wills" or under-souls' before claiming that the body is

⁹ "A man who *wills* commands something within himself that renders obedience, or that he believes renders obedience." (BGE 19)

simply "a social structure composed of many souls" (ibid.). As we will see, Deleuze deems the "souls" in question "forces".

In order to understand the will to power, as interpreted by Deleuze in *Nietzsche & Philosophy*, it is worth considering what the will to power is not. In the "Preface to the English Translation," Deleuze informs the reader that the will to power is not a "wanting or seeking power" (xi). The will to power, then, should not be understood as a drive for or pursuit of power, but something else entirely. Accordingly, Deleuze continues to note that, supposing "all things reflect a state of force," power is "the element, or rather the differential relationship, of forces" in direct confrontation (ibid.). Power is not desired or pursued, Deleuze is telling us, because it is nothing but the relationship of the difference between competing forces; and, furthermore, these forces are omnipresent throughout nature. The aforementioned differential relationship 'expresses itself in the dynamic qualities of types such as "affirmation" and "negation".' (ibid.) So, power – the differential element between opposing forces – expresses itself as affirmation and negation. Deleuze concludes his introduction to the will to power, as he understands it, by offering the following. The will does not desire power; power is "the one that wants in the will." (ibid.) 'And "to want or seek power" is only the lowest degree of the will to power, its negative form, the guise it assumes when reactive forces prevail in the state of things.' (ibid.) Firstly, power is not a desired object of the will, but is rather the force within the will that can be said to desire in some sense. Secondly, while Deleuze previously asserted that the will to power cannot be interpreted as a simple "wanting or seeking of power" (ibid.), he here grants that the will to power can sometimes take this form, but only if it is weak. More specifically, when the will to power wants or seeks

power, we can determine that there are reactive forces in play. With the tools that Deleuze has given us, we can now begin our discussion of the will to power.

To properly discuss Deleuze's interpretation of the will to power, I would like to draw attention to a Critical Legal Thinking article entitled "Deleuze and the Accelerationsists [sic.]" by Jose Rosales. It must be stated, however, that this article is a piece of political philosophy—as such, it will deviate in places from our discussion of the will to power conceived as an element of (Nietzsche's account of) existential meaning. Nonetheless, it is important because it helps explain why Deleuze consistently claims that the will to power should not be conceived of as a desire for power, and produces a helpful starting point for Deleuze's interpretation of the will to power by illuminating a tripartite distinction therein (the will to power as (i) metaphysical principle; (ii) affirmation; (iii) the will to nothingness or nihilism). Rosales discusses Deleuze's interpretation of the will to power in the second section of the article, "Power contra Nihilism," beginning by taking up the claim that the will to power does not amount to a lust or desire for power. Rosales notes that, while concepts or individuals that desire power are discussed in the works of both Nietzsche and Deleuze, there immediately follows a negative evaluation of the desire for power. For instance, in "On the Three Evils," Zarathustra says, "The lust to rule—but who would call it lust when what is high longs downward for power?" (Z III.10) Rosales contends that Nietzsche, thus, "acknowledges expressions of force and domination as expressions of the will to power," despite his acknowledgement that not all expressions of force are of equal merit (Rosales).

For the above reasons, Rosales identifies a tripartite distinction in Deleuze's interpretation of the will to power. This distinction is as follows: The will to power can

be understood as (i) "the process of vital and historical change (**Pure Becoming**);" (ii) "the expression of the subject (collective/individual) who tends toward their own self-overcoming and hence a future (**Joy**);" and (iii) "the expression of the subject (collective/individual) who not only desires power and the domination of others, but those who redefine the very ideas of 'growth' and 'change' as something which preserves, instead of abolishes, a decadent culture (**Nihilism**)." (Rosales)

Rosales identifies the first of these forms of the will to power as metaphysical principle; the second as affirmation; and the third as the will to nothingness or nihilism. Since the above will be expanded on shortly, I will only offer one comment here. The phrase "decadent culture," in the Nietzschean sense, has a very particular meaning, relating to his concept of 'decadence.' In *The Nietzsche Dictionary*, Douglas Burnham explains that Nietzsche uses 'decadence' to refer to "any period of cultural history – or any state of the human organism – which has lost its good taste and value judgement..., health and sureness of instinct..., discipline and sense of future." (93-94) 'Decadence,' Burnham continues, is "associated either with the decline of old cultures, or with moral revolutions." (94) To refer to a 'decadent culture' is to refer to a culture that is "exhausted," often exhibiting a "pathological over-sensitivity; indeed, often an inability not to respond, lacking the strength simply to inhibit one's passions" (ibid.). To continue, "the decadent culture can" also "manifest itself as a craving for stimulation (for the voluptuous, the exotic, the dangerous)." (ibid.) While the ascetic believes such stimulation to be a cause of such a desire for stimulation, it is actually a symptom. Burnham concludes by noting that "decadence in the form of a culture of exhaustion that needs stimulation often precipitates a reaction, which is the 'gathering gloom of the

religious-moral pathos' (1887.11.375, and see 1887.10.119)." (94) Thus, when Rosales refers to a "decadent culture," he refers to an exhausted culture that is either pathologically over-sensitive (and, thus, prone to respond to that which offends its sensitivities), or craving particular types of stimulation (the luxurious or sensual, the unfamiliar, or the perilous).

To demonstrate the first form of the will to power (the will to power as **Pure Becoming**, or the will to power as the metaphysical principle which produces both vital and historical change), Rosales points to a passage of Deleuze's *Nietzsche & Philosophy*. This passage, from a section entitled "What is the Will to Power?", says, "The will to power is, indeed, never separable from particular determined forces, from their quantities, qualities and directions. It is never superior to the ways that it determines a relation between forces, it is always plastic and changing." (50) Rosales adds that the will to power as metaphysical principle "not only denotes a sense of change, but...also includes the idea of 'productivity,' the productivity which is both a continuous destruction and creation of values." (Rosales) Accordingly, Rosales concludes, "the will to power is the strictly immanent principle of change as it is generated out of the social and historical forces of society." (ibid.)

To Rosales, there emerges from the will to power as metaphysical principle no insight more important than the equation or principle¹⁰ Deleuze terms "willing = creating" (69, 84). Rosales interprets the concept of "willing = creating" as necessitating a two-stage understanding of society. In the first stage, we must understand "what and how

¹⁰ When he first writes of "willing = creation," Deleuze terms it an "equation" (69). In the second instance, he terms it a "principle" (84).

[society] creates and produces both forms of life and society itself." (Rosales) In the second stage, we must determine "what organization of society is expressed through the process of production" (ibid.). This seems to be the place in which we should be introduced to second form of the will to power (the will to power as **Joy** or affirmation), but Rosales does not do so. Instead, he immediately begins his discussion of the third form of the will to power (the will to power as **Nihilism** or the will to nothingness). As such, I will turn to Deleuze for discussion of the will to power as **Joy** or affirmation before returning to Rosales for discussion of the will to power as **Nihilism** or the will to nothingness.

In the third of three points about Nietzsche's terminology, Deleuze introduces the will to power as both affirmation and negation. Although the two are introduced simultaneously, I will here only discuss the former. Affirmation is a "primordial" quality of the will to power, and to affirm or appreciate is to "express the will to power" in a positive sense (54). Affirmation is closely related, but not identical, to action (which is a quality of forces) (53-54). While every action contains affirmation, action is more like a "means or [an instrument] of the will to power which affirms" (54). Affirmation is something necessary to action as something that transcends action but is necessary for it to achieve its own ends. Affirmation transcends action as an "immediate [quality] of becoming itself"—it "is not action but the power of becoming active, *becoming active* personified." (ibid.) It almost appears that, Deleuze contends, "affirmation...were both immanent and transcendent in relation to action" (ibid.). It is one half of "the chain of becoming," borne of "the web of chaos," and consequently "takes us into the glorious world of Dionysus" (ibid.).

Affirmation is a component of the will to power as evaluation. Deleuze explains evaluation as the determination of the quality of the will to power that bestows value upon something. A value cannot be abstracted "from the standpoint from which [it] draws [its] value" (54). A value's value is only positive if the will to power it expresses is affirmative. Conversely, Nietzsche sometimes uses the terms "*noble, high and master*" (55) to refer to either active force or affirmative will, although active force is related to interpretation; interpretation involves the determination of a "force which gives sense to a thing." (54) Interpretation is a different matter to evaluation because it concerns the signification of a sense or a meaning, not the matter of a value's value. While Deleuze gives more insight into affirmation, it is through his discussion of eternal recurrence, so I will now move on to the will to power as negation in order to facilitate a focused discussion of Deleuze's interpretation of the will to power.

Returning to "Deleuze and the Accelerationsists [sic.]," Rosales offers an enlightening discussion of the third form of the will to power: **Nihilism** or the will to nothingness. Firstly, Rosales asserts, "the will to nothingness is...productive and creative" like the will to power as a whole because "the moment of [denial or] resentment...that comes to figure as the will to nothingness is the negative quality of the 'one who wills in the will'" (Rosales). In order to understand what Rosales is saying here, we need to investigate both '*ressentiment*' and "the 'one who wills in the will'". In *Nietzsche & Philosophy*, Deleuze gives a very simple definition of '*ressentiment*': "it's your fault" (21). A more robust definition can be found in R. Lanier Anderson's Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy entry, "Friedrich Nietzsche". Anderson suggests that '*ressentiment*' is "a persistent, corrosive emotional pattern of resentful hatred against"

developed by people "who suffered from oppression at the hands of the noble, excellent, (but uninhibited) people valorized by good/bad morality" (Anderson). Those who developed *ressentiment* were also "denied any effective recourse against [the noble, excellent, (but uninhibited) people valorized by good/bad morality] by relative powerlessness" (ibid.). In *A Dictionary of Critical Theory*, Ian Buchanan defines '*ressentiment*' as "[a] vengeful, petty-minded state of being that does not so much want what others have (although that is partly it) as want others to not have what they have." (Buchanan) In the specific context of Nietzsche's work, Buchanan adds that *ressentiment* is "defined...as a slave morality" and as "the core of Christian and Judaic thought," which also renders it "the central facet of western thought more generally." (ibid.) This leads Buchanan to offer a fuller definition of '*ressentiment*' in Nietzsche's usage: *ressentiment* is "the desire to live a pious existence and thereby position oneself to judge others, apportion blame, and determine responsibility." (ibid.) The above, considered together, offer the following picture of *ressentiment*: *Ressentiment* is the Judaeo-Christian vengeful hatred of those oppressed by the noble, and thus blame the noble for their oppression. Since it is Judaeo-Christian, it is a slave morality that permeates western thought, motivates a pious lifestyle and thus allows one to pass judgment on others, allocate blame to them, and establish their responsibility.

In turn, when Rosales speaks of "the 'one who wills in the will'," he is quoting *Nietzsche & Philosophy*. In "Principles for the Philosophy of the Will," Deleuze refers to power as "*the one that wills in the will*" as part of his claim that the will to power should not be conceived as a desire for power (95). Although I will return to this claim throughout the chapter, it is necessary to give a brief description of it here in order to

understand what this claim means. Firstly, the will to power should not be conceived as a desire for power because to do so is anthropocentric, and "[w]ill to power does not imply any anthropomorphism in its origin, signification or essence." (ibid.) This claim can be divided into two. The first of these claims is that to desire power is uniquely human. The second of these claims is that the will to power attributes no human characteristics to any non-human at its beginning, in its sense or meaning, or in its characteristic property or properties. Secondly, power is within the will as its "genetic and differential element," which allows the will to be "essentially creative." (ibid.) As the interpreter, evaluator, and "'the one that' wills," power is "never represented, ...interpreted or evaluated." (ibid.) In answer to the question of what power wills, Deleuze says that "[i]t wills precisely that which derives from the genetic element": Power, as the genetic element, must determine "the relation of force with force" and qualify "related forces." (ibid.) The will to power wills three things: (i) "a particular relation of forces"; (ii) "a particular quality of forces"; and (iii) a "particular quality of power," which is either affirmation or negation (ibid.). While much more must be said on this subject (notably the distinction between force and power), this will be done later.

We have already seen that Rosales describes the will to nothingness as a productive and creative will that emerges at a moment of denial or *ressentiment*, and that the will to nothingness is the negative element of the will to power. However, we must also ask why the existence of the will to nothingness is seen as reprehensible. Rosales says that the answer is found in the static totality from which this will draws its "hatred and piety"—while the will to nothingness is creative, it creates a "repetition of sameness and not difference." (Rosales) Any "expression of the will to nothingness" creates values

that "are grounded in particular circumstances but made to serve as universal principles." (ibid.) In essence, the will to nothingness always creates values that are then employed as universal principles despite being context-dependent. While the will to nothingness is a quality of the will to power, Rosales contends that the former should not be mistaken for the latter because the will to nothingness involves a betrayal of the will to power. Although the will to power is glorified as creative and productive "of the qualities of the relations of force," the negative quality of the will to power itself requires Nietzsche to write against nihilism because this quality itself is nihilism. In other words, one quality of the glorified will to power is nihilism, which means that that which is glorified must also be vilified in one of its expressions.

Nihilism, it must be stressed, is not to be understood as an exclusively psychological phenomenon. Deleuze discusses nihilism in a much broader sense and, in particular, notes that it can manifest within social relations. Existence as interpreted religiously ascribes "wrongs and responsibilities, the bitter recrimination, the perpetual accusation, the *ressentiment*," which produces in individuals a shift from *ressentiment* to bad conscience (21). When blame and responsibility are so often directed at a particular individual, that individual comes to believe that they are, in fact, to blame; and that they are, in fact, responsible. This is how *ressentiment* turns into bad conscience—those who are blamed absorb that blame. *Ressentiment* is directed outwards, bestowing blame and responsibility upon others; and it creates bad conscience, which is directed inwards, bestowing blame and responsibility upon oneself. This is not a simple matter of psychology, since—although it involves psychology—this is fundamentally a social issue; these individuals blame themselves and accept responsibility because that blame

and responsibility are thrust upon them (by society) so often and with such conviction that they cannot help but accept their truth. To Deleuze, moreover, *ressentiment*, bad conscience, and responsibility are to be understood as "the fundamental categories of semitic and Christian thought, of our way of thinking and interpreting existence in general." (ibid.) Because Judaeo-Christianity is fundamentally nihilistic and has had such a profound impact on the western world, Deleuze suggests that it produces a nihilistic manner of thinking and interpreting life itself. If this is correct, then we must ask how the meaning of life can be determined without reflecting nihilism in one form or another. On the one hand, we might be tempted to deny that life itself has any meaning; on the other hand, we might deny that this life can have any meaning without outside influence. For Nietzsche, both of these answers are nihilistic, which produces further reason to vilify nihilism or the will to nothingness: Since it is the negative quality of the will to power itself that has produced the nihilistic lens through which we view our lives, any possibility of a meaningful existence rests upon a rejection of the will to power as negation.

Deleuze's interpretation of the will to power stems from a particular formulation offered by Nietzsche in *The Will to Power*, but this formulation must be prefaced with reference to *On the Genealogy of Morality*. In the Second Treatise of the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche says that "a *power-will* [plays] itself out in all happening." (GM II.12)¹¹ Writing of the way in which mechanistic scientists interpret the world, Nietzsche makes a striking claim in *The Will to Power*: "The victorious concept "force," by means of which

¹¹ In the Kaufmann translation, the connection to the will to power is made explicit: "...in all events a *will to power* is operating." (GM II.12)

our physicists have created God and the world, still needs to be completed: an inner will must be ascribed to it, which I designate as "will to power" (WP 619). Immediately following this claim, Nietzsche gives reason to believe that the will to power should not be considered a desire for power: The will to power is "an insatiable desire to manifest power; or...the employment and exercise of power, ...a creative drive, etc." (ibid.) If the will to power is "an insatiable desire to manifest power" or to employ and exercise power, it is not a desire for power. A desire for power implies that power is lacking but Nietzsche implies that that which wills power already possesses power, since one can neither manifest nor employ and exercise that which one does not possess. Importantly for Deleuze, Nietzsche expands on the concept of the will to power as involving force, submitting that mechanistic theory fails in part because it relies on the senses and psychology, thus failing to "touch upon the causal force." (WP 635) Abstracting away from the senses and that which emerges psychologically, we are left with 'only dynamic quanta, in a relation of tension to all other dynamic quanta: their essence lies in their relation to all other quanta, in their "effect" upon the same.' (ibid.) He here submits that the will to power is "not a being, not a becoming, but a *pathos*—the most elemental fact from which a becoming and effecting first emerge—" (ibid.) Moreover, Nietzsche denies the existence of the atom, suggesting that it "is inferred according to the logic of the perspectivism of consciousness," rendering the atom "a subjective fiction." (WP 636) Perspectivism is that "by virtue of which every center of force—and not only man" interprets the world, measuring, feeling, and forming the world "according to its own force" (ibid.). By this point, then, Nietzsche has submitted that the world is a web of forces made up of particular dynamic quanta that interpret the world in a way that is

consistent with their own particular perspectives as their force will allow them to understand it.

Throughout what follows, Nietzsche expands his view, beginning by claiming that "every specific body strives" for mastery "over all space," likewise aiming to "extend its force" (which he here says is to be understood as its will to power) "and to thrust back all that resists its extension." (WP 636) We should note, though, that "every specific body strives" for mastery "over all space," making it natural that each "continually encounters similar efforts" by "other bodies" with which it ultimately comes "to an arrangement" or "union" if the two bodies are "sufficiently related" (ibid.). If these bodies are sufficiently related, they will "conspire together for power." (ibid.) The inorganic realm is no exception: Even here, "an atom of force is concerned only with its neighborhood" because "distant forces balance one another" (WP 637).

All of the above fragments from *The Will to Power* were written in 1885, the year in which the Fourth Part of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* was composed, and the year before the publication of *Beyond Good and Evil*. This historical context is important because it suggests that, at least at the time at which Nietzsche introduced the will to power, Nietzsche conceived of the will to power as relating to force as discussed in physics. Nietzsche seems to conceive of the will to power in the same way in *Beyond Good and Evil*. In a lengthy section, Nietzsche suggests that the laws of nature discussed by physicists exist 'only owing to [their] interpretation and bad "philology."' (BGE 22) Instead of a "matter of fact" or "text," Nietzsche argues that the laws of nature are proposed (for humanitarian reasons) to inform humanity that it is natural for one to have to obey laws, since even nature must do so (ibid.) Nietzsche then offers the following:

But as said above, that is interpretation, not text; and somebody might come along who, with opposite intentions and modes of interpretation, could read out of the same "nature," and with regard to the same phenomena, rather the tyrannically inconsiderate and relentless enforcement of claims of power—an interpreter who would picture the unexceptional and unconditional aspects of all "will to power" so vividly that almost every word, even the word "tyranny" itself, would eventually seem unsuitable, or a weakening and attenuating metaphor—being too human—but he might, nevertheless, end by asserting the same about this world as you do, namely, that it has a "necessary" and "calculable" course, *not* because laws obtain in it, but because they are absolutely *lacking*, and every power draws its ultimate consequences at every moment. Supposing that this also is only interpretation—and you will be eager enough to make this objection?—well, so much the better. (BGE 22)

While Nietzsche does not discuss forces in the above, he does suggest that the will to power could be the true essence of nature—or, at the very least, that one could interpret the world as being constantly subject to the will to power—rather than accepting that physicists are right when they interpret nature as being subject to laws. While this might be interpreted as suggesting Nietzsche's contempt for physics, this interpretation is drawn into question if we consider a later section of the same work.

In a later section of *Beyond Good and Evil* above, Nietzsche considers the will to power as something that has scientific explanatory power. Since will is incapable of affecting the material, Nietzsche proposes a hypothesis: perhaps will affects will whenever causal effects occur; and we should further consider if "all mechanical occurrences" might be "effects of will," since "a force is active in them," this will being "will force" (BGE 36). On top of this, he suggests that "our entire instinctive life" might be successfully explained "as the development and ramification of...the will to power," and that we could further suppose that the will to power might be responsible for "all organic functions" (ibid.). Should this be proven, and should it be further proven that the will to power also offers "the solution to the problem of procreation and nourishment,"

then we could rightfully consider "all efficient force univocally" to be will to power (ibid.). This would then mean that 'the world viewed from inside, the world defined and determined according to its "intelligible character"...would be "will to power" and nothing else.' (ibid.)¹²

To Deleuze, the will to power is a matter of forces. In "What is the Will to Power?" he says that the will to power is "a complement of force" that is nonetheless inside force, and "not prescribed to [force] as a predicate." (49) Thus, it is not force that wills; instead, the will to power wills. The will to power is within force as its "genealogical element..., both differential and genetic," which can be further understood as "*the element from which derive both the quantitative difference of related forces and the quality that devolves into each force in this relation.*" (50)

Deleuze notes that the word "will" should come as no surprise, since he questions whether anything but the will would be capable of serving the kind of role that he ascribes to the will to power, but that the word "principle" is unexpected within Nietzsche's philosophy, and he is right to make this point. As he explains it, Nietzsche

¹² While both of the above quotations are certainly written in a highly hypothetical fashion, Nietzsche elsewhere makes related statements in a much certain fashion. Since Deleuze quotes Nietzsche on the will to power relating to forces, I will simply give some quotations here about other notable claims in the passages of *Beyond Good and Evil* quoted above: that the world is will to power, and that life is will to power. In *The Will to Power* (specifically, this was written in 1885), Nietzsche writes, "*This world is the will to power—and nothing besides!*" (WP 1067). In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche writes, "A living thing seeks above all to *discharge* its strength—life itself is *will to power*" (BGE 13). In the same book, he again implies that life should be understood as the will to power: since "'exploitation"...belongs to the *essence* of what lives, as a basic organic function; it is a consequence of the will to power, which is after all the will of life.' (BGE 259) Similarly, in *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche writes, "Life itself is to my mind the instinct for growth, for durability, for an accumulation of forces, for *power*: where the will to power is lacking there is decline." (A 6)

objects to principles because they are "too general in relation to what they condition" (50). The will to power, for instance, is opposed to Schopenhauer's will to live "if only because of the extreme generality of the latter." (ibid.) If there is a principle to be found within Nietzsche's philosophy, it must therefore greatly differ from any hitherto found in philosophy. Deleuze identifies one way in which a principle might find its place within Nietzsche's work. The will to power as a good principle must be an "essentially *plastic* principle"—it must be "no wider than what it conditions," change with "the conditioned," and further determine itself whenever it determines another (ibid.). Deleuze asserts that the will to power—being "always plastic and changing"—should be considered a good principle because it is always inseparable from the forces it determines, along with "their quantities, qualities and directions." (ibid.)

The preceding is justified with reference to a section of *The Will to Power* which was written in the spring of 1888. The section commences with a series of questions: 'Is "will to power" a *kind* of "will" or identical with the conception "will"? Is it the same thing as desiring? or *commanding*? Is it that "will" of which Schopenhauer said it was the "in-itself of things"?' (WP 692) In short, these questions are answered in the negative. First, Nietzsche characterizes the standard psychological conceptions of the will as "an unjustified generalization" that "*does not exist at all*" (ibid.) When the will is not seen as "one definite will" with "many forms," "the character of the will" is "eliminated...by subtracting from its content" or its "whither?" (ibid.) The worst offender, Nietzsche proclaims, is Schopenhauer because the Schopenhauerian will "is a mere empty word." (ibid.) The will to live is a matter of fiction, Nietzsche professes, because life is a

particular form of the will to power, rendering it "arbitrary to assert that everything strives to enter into *this* form of the will to power." (ibid.)

To keep the discussion relevant to the meaning of life, it is important to consider the will to power as creation. In two separate places, Deleuze claims that "to will = to create" (36) or "willing = creating" (84). Through willing, new values are created—Nietzsche's vision of the will to power is to be contrasted with those through which "*established* values" are sought (85). The claim that the will creates can be supported with reference to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. In "On Redemption," Zarathustra proclaims, "The will is a creator." (Z II.20) Likewise, in "Upon the Blessed Isles," Zarathustra refers to his "creative will" (Z II.2). The need to create new values is discussed in the preface to *Daybreak*. Here, Nietzsche writes that—through conscience—"we do not want to return to that which we consider outlived and decayed, to anything 'unworthy of belief', be it called God, virtue, truth, justice, charity" (D Preface 4). Established values (such as God, virtue, truth, justice, and charity) must be abolished because they are "outlived and decayed" values that are "bridges-of-lies to ancient ideals" (ibid.). These values and their adherents further wish "to mediate and mix with us" (ibid.). Established values are found within "every kind of faith and Christianness existing today," in "the half-and-halfness of all romanticism and fatherland-worship," and in "the pleasure-seeking and lack of conscience of the artists which would like to persuade us to worship where we no longer believe – for we are artists" (ibid.). Nietzsche concludes as follows:

...as men of *this* conscience...we still feel ourselves related to German integrity and piety of millennia, even if as its most questionable and final descendants, we immoralists, we godless men of today, indeed in a certain sense as its heirs, as the executors of its innermost – a pessimistic will, as aforesaid, which does not draw

back from denying itself because it denies with *joy*! In us there is accomplished – supposing you want a formula – the *self-sublimation of morality*. (D Preface 4)

This will—pessimistic as it may be—denies previously established values, creates new values, and is joyful. Deleuze captures the last of these features of the will as the principle "will = joy" (84). In "Upon the Blessed Isles," Zarathustra says, "my will always comes to me as my liberator and joy-bringer. Willing liberates: that is the true teaching of will and liberty" (Z II.2). Then, in "On Redemption," Zarathustra proclaims, "Will—that is the name of the liberator and joy-bringer; thus I taught you, my friends. But now learn this too: the will itself is still a prisoner. Willing liberates..." (Z II.20) Deleuze declares that "against this *fettering* of the will Nietzsche announces that willing *liberates*; against the *suffering* of the will Nietzsche announces that the will is *joyful*." (85) Likewise, "against the image of a will which dreams of having *established* values attributed to it Nietzsche announces that to will is *to create* new values." (ibid.) Every phenomenon expresses "relations of forces, qualities of forces and of power, nuances of these qualities, in short a type of force and will," which means that, for Nietzsche, "every phenomenon not only reflects a type which constitutes its sense and value, but also the will to power as the element from which the signification of its sense and the values of its value derive." (ibid.) Even as the will to power, however, it must be stated that the will could not grant meaning to life merely by creating new values. We need the will to power to interpret and evaluate life in order to determine what might make life meaningful. This is necessary because life must be understood in order to be valued. Conveniently, the will to power is the source of both interpretation and evaluation. Furthermore, through its

qualities, the will to power allows us to understand why some individuals consider life meaningless while others consider it to be meaningful.

A discussion of how the will to power as interpreted by Deleuze relates to the meaning of life in Nietzsche's work must begin with a discussion of a major distinction Deleuze makes between force and power. Since Deleuze follows the discussion of the will to power as found in *The Will to Power*, we can take as our starting point that forces are dynamic quanta (cf. WP 635). While Deleuze does not define force [with the exception of once terming it "what can," in contrast to the will to power as "what wills" (50)], he provides tools by which it can be understood. I think an operational definition of "force" can be constructed if we consider the meaning of "dynamic quanta". *Oxford Living Dictionaries* defines "quantum" (in physics) as "[a] discrete quantity of energy proportional in magnitude to the frequency of the radiation it represents." ("quantum") However, Nietzsche never references radiation, so we can ignore the end of the definition, rendering a "quantum" simply an amount of energy. As an adjective, *Oxford Living Dictionaries* defines "dynamic" as denoting that something is "characterized by constant change, activity, or progress," with the adjective having a more specific definition of "[r]elating to forces producing motion" in physics ("dynamic"). A dynamic quantum would then be an amount of energy that is constantly changing, active, and progressive (i.e., it progresses), such as the production of motion by particular forces. These forces, in turn, are what Nietzsche characterizes as "dynamic quanta".

In the "Preface to the English Translation," Deleuze writes: "Phenomena, things, organisms, societies, consciousness and spirits are signs, or rather symptoms, and themselves reflect states of forces." (x) The aforementioned are signs or symptoms that

merely "reflect states of forces" because all prepositions contain sets of symptoms communicating the utterer's "way of being" or "mode of existence"—what the modes of existence, and their attendant symptoms, communicate are "the state of forces" the utterer maintains (or attempts to) with herself and with others (ibid.). The signified mode of existence "is the state of forces insofar as it forms a type which can be expressed by signs or symptoms." (ibid.) Any given force, Deleuze asserts, is characterized by the "appropriation, domination, exploitation of a quantity of reality" (3). A force, that is to say, takes ownership of, controls, and takes advantage of some portion of the natural world (or something within it). In Nietzsche's own words, "every specific body strives to become master over all space and to extend its force" (WP 636). Forces are relative and this relationship between forces constitutes a body, which can be "chemical, biological, social or political," (Deleuze 40) but all of these cases require forces to be either dominant or dominated. A dominant force is superior and active, whereas a dominated force is inferior and reactive. So, forces are quantities of energy that are changing, active or reactive, and progressive; but they are also what constitutes a body (be it chemical, an organism, a society or social group, or a political group) as a relationship between forces of different kinds—the dominant (superior and active) and the dominated (inferior and reactive).

In contrast, "power" is first introduced by Deleuze in the "Preface to the English Translation" as the "differential relationship" or "the element" of forces in conflict with one another (xi). The concept of power is, seemingly, already well defined. However, there is a problem with this definition. When Deleuze introduces "power" in this way, he describes it as he later describes the will to power (cf. 7, 50, 52-53, 63, 189, 197). To

compound the problem, Deleuze continues to refer to power as the "differential relationship" or "differential element" of forces (cf. 85). Insofar as power is deemed the "differential relationship" or "differential element" of conflicting forces, power is within the will as that which wills (cf. xi, 85). But we encounter the same problem again: Deleuze also calls the will to power "the one that wills" (49). This problem can be resolved if we consider what it means for power to be in the will. As the differential and genetic element of forces, power is "never represented," nor is it "interpreted or evaluated" because it itself interprets, evaluates, and wills (85). Deleuze, however, almost immediately slips back into referring to the will to power as the one that wills. This, then, suggests two possible solutions. Firstly, we could conclude that "power" is merely one of two words (the other being "will") that can be substituted for "will to power". This solution is problematic, though, because it suggests that the will to power is within itself, since power is described as being within the will (cf. xi, 85). Secondly, we could conclude that power is that which renders the will a will to power because its conjunction with the will endows the will (as will to power) with particular capacities: The capacities to create, interpret, and evaluate. This seems to be the solution that Deleuze has in mind. As we have seen, Deleuze distances the will to power from a desire for power, which can be explained if we view the will to power as a will conjoined with power—the will to power does not desire power because it already has power; and, as such, it would only desire to continue to possess power in order to allow for its own persistence.

The answer is, surprisingly, to be found in Deleuze's "Cours Vincennes," a series of lectures on Spinoza presented at Université Paris 8 between 1977 and 1981. In a lecture transcript from 1981, Deleuze considers a core interpretative difficulty to be that

interpreters fail to distinguish two types of power: those captured by the French words *puissance* and *pouvoir*, respectively. In the cases of both Spinoza and Nietzsche, Deleuze stresses that the relevant sense of 'power' is *puissance*, which he here—following Spinoza—calls "the increase and decrease of power" (Deleuze). Spinoza and Nietzsche understand 'affect' identically. This last point is made more fully in *Nietzsche & Philosophy*. The will to power "is manifested...as the determinate capacity of force for being affected." (62) There is an affinity here between Nietzsche and Spinoza because, in Spinoza, "a capacity for being affected" accompanies "every quantity of force" (ibid.) A body has greater force if it is capable of being affected in more ways. This capacity "measures the force of a body or expresses its power" and the relevant power is not merely "a simple logical possibility" because the bodies related to any particular body always actualise it (ibid.). But, because it is adequately caused by the relevant body (and, therefore, cannot be a passive affect), "this capacity is not a physical passivity" (ibid.). The affinity between the two thinkers continues because, even before he spoke of a 'will to power,' Nietzsche spoke of a 'feeling of power'. The feeling of power is "an *affectivity*, a sensibility, a sensation" that later evolved into the will to power's manifestation (ibid.).

Deleuze offers two ways to view this: (i) the feeling of power (as the will to power's manifestation) is "the sensibility of force;" or, more fully, (ii) the feeling of power (as manifestation of the differential element, will to power) is the "differential sensibility" of force (63). To return to Deleuze's lecture transcripts, power (*puissance*) as "decreases or increases of power" is to be contrasted with the "conquest of a power" (*pouvoir*), the latter of which both Spinoza and Nietzsche deny. Instead, Deleuze proposes that for these thinkers, power (*pouvoir*) is ultimately power (*puissance*). His

explanation of this last point is as follows: "to increase one's power (*puissance*) is precisely to compose relations such that the thing and I, which compose the relations, are no more than two sub-individualities, a formidable new individual." (Deleuze) In other words, an individual increases her power (*puissance*) by producing (and entering into) a relation with some thing through which she becomes one half of a "formidable new individual." (Deleuze) A further clue is found in an endnote from *Nietzsche & Philosophy* in which Deleuze writes that Spinoza recognized before Nietzsche that power is expressed by a force's "capacity for being affected," with this capacity itself being "inseparable" from the force (206n18). However, it should be noted that "capacity" is perhaps not the best choice of translation, since Deleuze denies that such a "capacity" is "an abstract possibility," instead viewing its constant fulfilment and actualisation as necessary (62).

The meaning of life cannot be determined without both interpretation and evaluation. In *Nietzsche & Philosophy*, interpretation and evaluation are introduced near the beginning with Deleuze designating the former as concerning "sense" and the latter as concerning "value" (8). Sense describes the relationship between a force and a thing—the sense of something depends on the way in which it relates to the force within it. Value is more complicated. A thing's value "is the hierarchy of forces which are expressed in it as a complex phenomenon," where "hierarchy" refers to relations between dominant and dominated forces, or relations between wills that are obeyed and wills that obey (8). To Deleuze's Nietzsche, the question of existence's meaning is "the highest question of philosophy" because it poses together the questions of interpretation and evaluation, and Deleuze captures this question ("Has existence a meaning?") as "what is justice?" (18)

Nietzsche seeks to dispense with bad ways of interpreting this question: To Nietzsche, existence cannot be viewed as "something unjust which ought to be justified," something with which to find fault, something to blame (ibid.). To interpret existence, on the above view, a god was necessary: life was accused in order to be redeemed, redeemed in order to be justified; and existence was always evaluated "from the standpoint of bad conscience." (19) This type of interpretation is found in Hegel and Schopenhauer, Deleuze says. To Hegel, life is to be interpreted "from the standpoint of the unhappy consciousness," but Deleuze identifies the unhappy consciousness as Hegel's version of bad conscience (ibid.). By denying the existence of God, Schopenhauer made the question of existence that much more pertinent, but ultimately failed in the same way as Hegel and earlier thinkers by stating that life should be denied and negated because of suffering. In essence, Schopenhauer is to be seen as no better than Hegel because he viewed suffering as characteristic of existence, and concluded from this that life is unjust and thus lacks meaning. To Nietzsche, any such response to the question of existential meaning renders existence blameworthy, and Nietzsche prefers to view existence as innocent (cf. WP 552, 765, 787). Nietzsche states that there are five reasons to believe that we should not see existence as blameworthy. The first of these reasons is that "*nothing exists besides the whole*" (WP 765). The rest, however, are left unstated.

Next, Deleuze informs the reader that the will to power and force are inseparable, but not identical. "Force is what can, will to power is what wills," Deleuze writes (50). This distinction can be explained with reference to WP 619, which was earlier quoted. As Deleuze puts it, "The concept of force is, by nature, *victorious* because the relation of force to force, understood conceptually, is one of domination: when two forces are

related one is dominant and the other is dominated." (51) However, "this victorious concept of force needs a *complement* and this complement is *internal*, an internal will." (ibid.) Additionally, this internal will is necessary "because relations of force remain indeterminate unless an element which is capable of determining them from a double point of view is added to force itself." (ibid.) Deleuze proposes that the will to power be understood as "the internal element of [force's] production," and "in no way anthropomorphic." (ibid.) More specifically, will to power "is added to force as the internal principle of the determination of its quality in a relation ($x + dx$) and as the internal principle of the quantitative determination of this relation itself (dy/dx)." (ibid.) It is, further, "the genealogical element of force *and* of forces." (ibid.) Deleuze concludes that a force can only prevail "over others," and dominate or command them through the will to power; and "the will to power (dy)" is always that which makes a force obey another within a relation of forces (ibid.).

In support, Deleuze cites *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. In the Second Part, Zarathustra discusses the will to power and its connection to power dynamics within mankind and beyond.

What persuades the living to obey and command, and to practice obedience even when it commands?

[...]

Where I found the living, there I found will to power; and even in the will of those who serve I found the will to be master. (Z II.12)

As the above demonstrates, any act of obedience or commanding is an act of will to power, since Nietzsche identifies it as that which "persuades the living to obey and command, and to practice obedience even when it commands" (Z II.12). Moreover, will

to power is found in all who live, whether slave or master. Since Deleuze then discusses the eternal recurrence, which will be explored in the next chapter, I now move to "Nietzsche's Terminology," the seventh section of Deleuze's second chapter.

The first terminological point Deleuze makes is the following: The will to power is Nietzsche's term for "the genealogical element of force," meaning the will to power is both the differential and genetic element of force. As the differential element of forces, the will to power "produces" quantitative differences "between two or more forces" with a presupposed relation (52-53); whereas the will to power as genetic element "produces the quality due to each force in this relation." (53) Chance is necessary to the will to power because it is chance that allows the will to power to be plastic and changing. It is chance that brings "forces into relation," while "the will to power is the determining principle of this relation." (ibid.) Deleuze ends this terminological point with the assertions that the will to power must be added to force but is added only "to forces brought into relation by chance"; and that chance is at the heart of the will to power because all chance can only be affirmed by the will to power (ibid.)

The second terminological point sees Deleuze discussing forces in relation to the will to power. Firstly, the quantitative and qualitative differences of forces "both derive from the will to power as genealogical element." (53) The terms "dominant" and "dominated" refer to the "difference in quantity" between forces, while the terms "active" and "reactive" refer to the quality of forces (ibid.). All forces—be they "reactive or dominated," or "active or dominant"—possess the will to power (ibid.). The "difference in quantity" between forces, however, cannot be measured "without interpreting the qualities of the forces which are present" (ibid.). Forces are, first, "essentially

differentiated and qualified," and, secondly, "express their difference in quantity by the quality which is due to them." (ibid.) This is what Deleuze coins "the problem of interpretation: to estimate the quality of force that gives meaning to a given phenomenon, or event, and from that to measure the relation of the forces which are present." (ibid.) According to Deleuze, however, interpretation always "comes up against all kinds of delicate problems and difficulties," and the "'extremely fine" perception' of chemistry is necessary to address such issues (ibid.).

The third terminological point is that of "the qualities of force," the "principle" of which "is the will to power." (53) It is here that Deleuze informs the reader "it is the will to power that interprets," drawing on *The Will to Power* (ibid.). The first section of *The Will to Power* from which Deleuze here draws contains the following assertion: 'One may not ask: "who then interprets?" for the interpretation itself is a form of the will to power' (WP 556). At the very beginning of the second section here cited, Nietzsche writes, "The will to power *interprets*" (WP 643). However, Deleuze notes that the will to power could not "be the source of the qualities of force" unless it, too, were to "have qualities, particularly fluent ones, even more subtle than those of force." (53) In *La Volonté de puissance*, Nietzsche asserts, "What rules is the entirely momentary quality of the will to power" (VP II.39, qtd. in Deleuze 53). The qualities of the will to power are distinct from the qualities of force because, unlike the qualities of force, they "are immediately related to the genetic or genealogical element," and are, further, "fluent, primordial and seminal qualitative elements" (53). Consequently, Deleuze distinguishes between the terms that Nietzsche uses to "designate the original qualities of force" ("*active* and *reactive*,") and those he uses to "designate the primordial qualities of the will to power" ("*affirmative* and

negative") (53-54). The will to power is expressed by both affirmation and negation, much like forces are either active or reactive. Deleuze indicates, "the will to deny, nihilism, is still will to power" (54) because Nietzsche states in the Third Treatise of *On the Genealogy of Morality* that "a will to nothingness, an aversion to life...is and remains a will!" (GM III.28)

Deleuze considers the distinction between these two kinds of qualities (those of forces and those of the will to power) to be both crucial and central to Nietzsche's philosophy. Deleuze proposes that "the determination of" the affinities between action and affirmation, between reaction and negation "brings the whole art of philosophy into play" (54). Since I have already discussed the will to power as affirmation, I will only address the will to power as negation here. Deleuze believes that negation is contained within "every reaction." (ibid.) Nonetheless, reaction is a "means or [instrument] of the will to power which...denies, just as reactive forces are instruments of nihilism." (ibid.) Negation is necessary to reaction because the former transcends the latter while still being "necessary for [reaction] to achieve [its] own ends." (ibid.) Moreover, Deleuze believes that negation transcends reaction as an immediate quality "of becoming itself," rendering negation "a *becoming reactive*" (ibid.). Deleuze continues by asserting that negation almost seems to be "both immanent and transcendent" vis-à-vis reaction and that—in a poetic turn of phrase—"out of the web of forces" negation makes up half of "the chain of becoming." (ibid.) Through negation, we are hurled "down into the disquieting depths from which reactive forces emerge." (ibid.)

Fourthly, and finally, Deleuze submits that the will to power is evaluative, not only interpretative. To begin, Deleuze again quotes *La Volonté de puissance* as follows:

"Every will implies an evaluation." (VP II.29, qtd. in Deleuze 54) This argument begins with Deleuze suggesting that the act of evaluation "is to determine the will to power which gives value to a thing" because values cannot be abstracted "from the standpoint from which they draw their value," just like meaning cannot be abstracted "from the standpoint from which it draws its signification." (54.) From "the will to power as a genealogical element," "senses derive their significance and values their value." (ibid.) "The signification of a sense," simply put refers to the qualitative element of the force expressed in something (i.e., whether the force is active or reactive, in addition to its "nuance") (54-55). This is, however, further complicated because interpretative and evaluative problems "refer back to and extend one another." (55) Both reactive force and negative will are sometimes described as "*base, vile and slave*" (ibid.). Any value will have a genealogy "on which the nobility or baseness of what it invites us to believe, feel and think" is dependent (ibid.). Since the genealogist "is the master of the critique of value," she is uniquely prepared to identify the type of baseness or nobility found within a given value because she alone "knows how to handle the differential element." (ibid.) Deleuze here offers evidence from the Preface to *On the Genealogy of Morality*: "we need a *critique* of moral values, *for once the value of these values must itself be called into question*" (GM P 6).

In the twelfth section of the second chapter, "The Becoming Reactive of Forces," Deleuze discusses the will to nothingness. As we have previously seen, Nietzsche characterizes the will to nothingness as "an aversion to life, a rebellion against the most fundamental presuppositions of life," which is, nevertheless, "a *will!*" (GM III 28) In *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Nietzsche associates the will to nothingness with the ascetic

ideal, since the ascetic idea "expresses...hatred of the human, still more of the animal, still more of the material," along with "abhorrence of the senses, of reason itself, [and]...fear of happiness and of beauty," and a "longing away from all appearance, change, becoming, death, wish, longing itself" (ibid.). A fuller picture of the will to nothingness is offered if we consult *The Antichrist*, in which Nietzsche proclaims the Christian conception of God to be the following.

God degenerated into the *contradiction* of life, instead of being its transfiguration and eternal Yes! God as the declaration of war against life, against nature, against the will to live! God—the formula for every slander against "this world," for every lie about the "beyond"! God—the deification of nothingness, the will to nothingness pronounced holy! (A 18)

The will to nothingness, considering these two quotations together, is a type of will that denies the immanent¹³ realm. This means that the will to nothingness is the will that denies life, the will to live, nature, the world, and everything within it. Considered in this way, the will to nothingness is what Schopenhauer advocates in his discussions of the meaning of life, since it is the will that operates in the ascetic ideal and the will that denies life. Since it was established in the previous chapter that Nietzsche is largely

¹³ As my supervisor, David Matheson, puts it in "The Incoherence of Soft Nihilism," "immanent features...of life itself" are those features of life which are "entirely natural." (128) However, I am using the term "immanent" in a broader sense, since Nietzsche is discussing life, nature, the material, and the world, rather than simply life. My definition of "immanent" is, thus, "all things which exist (entirely naturally) within the universe." While it might seem excessive to extend the scope of my definition beyond the world, it is necessary in order to contain the world within the immanent realm instead of containing the immanent realm within the world. "Immanent" is to be contrasted with "transcendent," which—as Dr. Matheson notes—is synonymous with "supernatural" (ibid.). A transcendent being or realm is, thus, one which exists beyond the natural (or immanent) such as the Christian God and Heaven.

responding to Schopenhauer's work on existential meaning, it is therefore necessary to consider the role of the will to nothingness in Nietzsche's thought.

At the beginning of "The Becoming-Reactive of Forces," Deleuze discusses the role of the will to nothingness. Firstly, "[a]ctive forces become reactive" whenever reactive forces separate active forces from their capacities (64). Reactive forces, which "are triumphant" everywhere, triumph "through the will to nothingness, thanks to the affinity between reaction and negation." (ibid.) Negation, in turn, is the negative quality of the will to power, "which qualifies it as nihilism or will to nothingness," constituting "the becoming-reactive of forces." (ibid.) However, active force does not become reactive "because reactive forces triumph," but reactive forces instead triumph because "they betray" active force "to the will to nothingness, to a becoming-reactive deeper than themselves," as a result of their separation of active force from its potential to act (ibid.). When reactive forces triumph, they manifest in particular ways—namely "*ressentiment*, bad conscience, and the ascetic ideal"—, which "are primarily forms of nihilism" (ibid.). Necessary characteristics of the relationships between forces seem, according to Deleuze, to include "the becoming-reactive, the becoming nihilistic, of force" (ibid.).

Deleuze next summarizes some themes of Nietzsche's philosophy. Firstly, he considers the way in which the will to nothingness seems to be aligned with reactive forces. The essence of the will to nothingness, after all, seems to be the denial of active force and "to lead it to deny and turn against itself." (69) Yet, the will to nothingness simultaneously created "the foundation for the conservation, triumph and contagion of reactive forces." (ibid.) This demonstrated the will to nothingness to be "the universal becoming-reactive, the becoming-reactive of forces," but also demonstrated that "nihilism

is always incomplete on its own." (ibid.) Deleuze then writes, 'Even the ascetic ideal is the opposite of what we might think, "it is an expedient of the art of conserving life" ¹⁴.' (ibid.) This leads Deleuze to claim nihilism to be "the principle of conservation of a weak, diminished, reactive life." (ibid.) In such a way, "the depreciation and negation of life form the principle in whose shadow the reactive life conserves itself, survives, triumphs and becomes contagious (**GM III 13**)." (69-70)

Drawing on the Third Treatise of *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Deleuze informs the reader that the typical form of the will to nothingness is nihilistic, relating to the reactive and the negative. In such a case, nihilism cannot be complete—it cannot lead to true nothingness or the cessation of life—because it takes on forms such as the ascetic ideal which serve to conserve life, even if in a weakened form. Such a life, thus, continues, and this continuation allows it to become a malady infecting existence—specifically, the existence of human beings.

In the sixth section of the third chapter, Deleuze turns to the principles for the philosophy of the will. These two principles are "willing = creating" and "will = joy," or, in other words, "creation and joy" (84). For support, Deleuze draws on *Zarathustra* and *Beyond Good and Evil*. First, in "Upon the Blessed Isles," Zarathustra says, "my will always comes to me as my liberator and joy-bringer. Willing liberates: that is the true teaching of will and liberty—thus Zarathustra teaches it." (Z II.2) Then, in "On Redemption," Zarathustra says, "Will—that is the name of the liberator and joy-bringer; thus I taught you, my friends. But now learn this too: the will itself is still a prisoner.

¹⁴ The portion in quotation marks is a partial (mis)quotation from *On the Genealogy of Morality*. This passage actually reads, "...the ascetic ideal is an *artifice* for the *preservation* of life." (GM III 13; first emphasis added, second in original)

Willing liberates..." (Z II.20) In the same section, Zarathustra also says, "I led you away from...fables when I taught you, 'The will is a creator.' All 'it was' is a fragment, a riddle, a dreadful accident—until the creative will says to it, 'But thus I willed it.' Until the creative will says to it, 'But thus I will it; thus shall I will it.'" (ibid.) Similarly, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche writes the following: "It is the intrinsic *right of masters* to create values" (BGE 261). It is perhaps worth noting that, in "Upon the Blessed Isles," Zarathustra has already referred to "my creative will," so it is unclear why Deleuze does not note this reference to the creative will (Z II.2).

So, since force and power are omnipresent, accompanying every phenomenon, the will to power must be said to also accompany every phenomenon, which in turn leads Deleuze to his claim that "*the will to power is essentially creative and giving*: it does not aspire, it does not seek, it does not desire, above all it does not desire power." (85) Deleuze explains the portion about the will to power being "giving" by adding that power—"something inexpressible in the will (something mobile, variable, plastic)"—is "the bestowing virtue" within the will, enabling the will to bestow "sense and value" (ibid.). At this point, in an endnote, Deleuze again appeals to *Zarathustra*. In "On the Three Evils," Zarathustra remarks, "The lust to rule—but who would call it *lust* when what is high longs downward for power? ...oh, who were to find the right name for such longing? "Gift-giving virtue"—thus Zarathustra once named the unnamable [*sic*]." (Z III.10) ¹⁵ Further, the will to power is "the *critical* element...which creates sense and

¹⁵ Tomlinson again differs from the Kaufmann translation at this point. The endnote in question reads, "Z III "Of the Three Evil Things" p. 97: "Desire for power: but who shall call it *desire* ... Oh who shall find the rightful baptismal and virtuous name for

values" (86). Accordingly, what is "*high* and *noble*" is superior as exhibiting active force along with active forces' "affinity with affirmation, their tendency to ascend, their lightness." (ibid.) In contrast, "*low* and *base* designate the triumph of reactive forces, their affinity with the negative, their heaviness or clumsiness." (ibid.) Since "the typology of forces and the doctrine of the will to power are inseparable, in turn, from a critique which can be used to determine the genealogy of values, their nobility and baseness," the question arises as to how the noble is superior to the base and the high is superior to the low (ibid.). In an endnote, Deleuze adds, "There can be no preestablished values here to decide which is *better than*" (208n13) before quoting *La Volonté de Puissance* to demonstrate that Nietzsche, in fact, does so: 'cf. **VP II** 530. "I distinguish an ascendent type of life and a type of decadence, decomposition, weakness. Is it thought that the question of precedence between these two types is still in balance?"' (ibid.) It is only the eternal return that can produce such a solution because only that which is superior which returns, since only it "can bear returning" and would will its return, and "the eternal return will not let reactive forces subsist, any more than it will let the power of denying subsist." (ibid.) Instead, the "eternal return transmutes the negative," transforming negation into affirmation (86). This is negation as critique: "destruction becomes active, aggression profoundly linked to affirmation" whereby 'critique' is understood as "destruction as joy, the aggression of the creator." (ibid.) "The creator of values" is "a critic of established values, reactive values and baseness," and can thus be considered a destroyer, criminal or critic (ibid.).

such a longing! 'Bestowing virtue' – that is the name Zarathustra once gave the unnameable.'" (208n11)

We, again, find support in *Zarathustra*. In the Prologue, Zarathustra says, "the man who breaks their table of values, the breaker, the lawbreaker; yet he is the creator." (Z Prologue 9) Later, in "On the Thousand and One Goals," Zarathustra says, "Whoever must be a creator always annihilates." (Z I.15)¹⁶ The sentiment that destruction is necessary for creation is also found in "On Self-Overcoming," in which Zarathustra says, "And whoever must be a creator in good and evil, verily, he must first be an annihilator and break values. Thus the highest evil belongs to the highest goodness: but this is creative." (Z II.12) This brings us to an end of our discussion of Deleuze's interpretation of the will to power: The will to power is the value-creative, interpretative, and evaluative relation between forces; and has two qualities: affirmation and negation.

It strikes me that Deleuze could have quoted much more of "On the Thousand and One Goals" than he actually did. I find the following four paragraphs particularly striking.

Verily, men gave themselves all their good and evil. Verily, they did not take it, they did not find it, nor did it come to them as a voice from heaven. Only man placed values in things to preserve himself—he alone created a meaning for things, a human meaning. Therefore he calls himself "man," which means: the esteemer.

To esteem is to create: hear this, you creators! Esteeming itself is of all esteemed things the most estimable treasure. Through esteeming alone is there value: and without esteeming, the nut of existence would be hollow. Hear this, you creators!

Change of values—that is a change of creators. Whoever must be a creator always annihilates.

¹⁶ There is, here, another difference between the quotations as rendered by Tomlinson and as found in the Kaufmann translation. This endnote reads '**Z Prologue 9**: "the destroyer, the criminal – but he is the creator"; **Z I 15** "whoever creates must always destroy".' (208n14)

First, peoples were creators; and only in later times, individuals. Verily, the individual himself is still the most recent creation. (Z I.15)

In the above, Zarathustra claims that existence itself is without meaning or value in the absence of humanity, since it is the human who creates meaning as "the esteemer," the one who esteems, and thus creates. While most of the above suggests that my summary should have been written in the past tense, notice that any "change of values...is a change of creators," which suggests that so long as values are subject to change, humanity retains its ability to create.

III. Alternative interpretations of the will to power

I have many reasons for favouring Deleuze's interpretation of the will to power. Firstly, by paying attention to Nietzsche's definition of "body," Deleuze helps to explain how Nietzsche does not contradict his claim that "will has been turned into a metaphor when it is asserted that all things in nature possess will" (AOM 5) by repeatedly claiming that the will to power is found throughout the natural world. If bodies are composed of related forces and each relationship of forces constitutes *a* will to power, then we can understand the will to power as a plurality of wills (to power), which actually fits the passage from "Assorted Opinions and Maxims" if we look a bit further: "all the modish philosophers speak of [Schopenhauer's will] and seem to know for certain that all things possess *one* will and, indeed, *are* this one will" (ibid.). What Deleuze allows us to say is that the will to power is actually multiple wills to power—it is simply convenient to speak of a single "will to power." Secondly, the way in which Deleuze ties together passages from *The Will to Power* with those found in Nietzsche's published works is incredibly satisfying (my first point being a good example of this). Thirdly, this

interpretation is highly relevant to the question of existential meaning because it prioritizes notions such as the creation of values, interpretation, and evaluation. Fourthly, the relevance of this interpretation to existential meaning is further bolstered by the qualities Deleuze identifies in the will to power (affirmation and denial/negation) and their associated forms of the will to power (the will to power proper and the will to negation or the will to nothingness). This latter point helps to explain why life seems meaningless to some and meaningful to others, since it becomes a question of what characterizes their respective wills to power.

Interpretations of the will to power fall into three broad categories: (i) psychological; (ii) organic or biological; and (iii) metaphysical. I will begin by discussing the most famous metaphysical interpretation of the will to power, that of Martin Heidegger. Next, I will consider the psychological interpretation of Maudemarie Clark. I will then discuss Christian J. Emden's biological or organic interpretation of the will to power. While there are many more psychological interpretations of the will to power than that of Clark, it would take considerable space to properly address psychological interpretations, as they have been dominant since Walter Kaufmann's *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (first published in 1950). Apart from Clark and Kaufmann, other important psychological interpretations of the will to power are found in Bernard Reginster's *The Affirmation of Life: Nietzsche on Overcoming Nihilism*, and Paul Katsafanas's *The Nietzschean Self*.

III.i: Heidegger's Metaphysical Interpretation

While Heidegger offers quite a robust interpretation of the will to power, I will here simply gloss over it to present its most important features. As a result, I will ignore the first two volumes (*Nietzsche: The Will to Power as Art*, and *Nietzsche: The Eternal Return of the Same*, respectively) and instead focus on the third and fourth volumes. Counter intuitively, I begin with the fourth volume, *Nietzsche: Nihilism*, because it is in this volume that Heidegger offers something of a summary of what he has said about the will to power in the preceding three volumes. In the first chapter of the first part, "The Five Major Rubrics," Heidegger claims that the will to power (along with "nihilism," "revaluation of all values hitherto," ... "eternal recurrence of the same," and "Overman") is one of "five main rubrics" to Nietzsche's thought, each of which "portrays Nietzsche's metaphysics from just *one* perspective, although in each case it is a perspective that defines the whole." (9) To Heidegger, these five main or major rubrics have a kind of bidirectional relationship with one another: On the hand, an understanding of Nietzsche's usage of "nihilism" can only be gained 'if we also understand, in their contexts, "revaluation of all values hitherto," "will to power," "eternal recurrence of the same," and "Overman"; but, on the other hand, if we properly understand nihilism, "we can also acquire knowledge about the essence of revaluation, the essence of will to power, the essence of the eternal recurrence of the same, and the essence of the Overman." (10)

While I acknowledge that I partially violate Heidegger's interpretation by doing so, I will only discuss his interpretation of the will to power, beginning with a passage from earlier on in the same chapter as I have just quoted. Heidegger's interpretation of the will to

power rests, first and foremost, on his interpretation of metaphysics as "the truth of being as a whole" (5).

According to Heidegger, Nietzsche considers the will to power to be "the basic character of being as a whole" (6). Will to power, he asserts, contains Nietzsche's "interpretation of the *essence of power*," (6-7) which informs us that power is only "an increase of power" (7). This, in turn, means that power must "[overtake] and [overcome] the power level it has already attained" in order to "maintain...its essence" (ibid). Heidegger here concedes that this means that "power" in the Nietzschean sense is what we would ordinarily call "overpowering" (ibid.). The rest of our discussion must go further back, to the third volume. The second chapter of the third section is entitled "The Will to Power," and it is unsurprisingly to this chapter that we turn. After a brief discussion of the meanings of "will" and "power," in which he says that we would go wrong if we were to form a simple conjunction of the words "will" and "power" and assumed that this is what the will to power designates, Heidegger suggests that the will to power should not be interpreted psychologically. He makes this claim because, although Nietzsche does conceive of the will to power psychologically, he does not do so in the terms of traditional psychology. Heidegger follows this claim with a quotation from *Beyond Good and Evil*: Nietzsche suggests that psychology should be the "morphology and the doctrine of the development of the will to power" (BGE 23). The point that Heidegger seeks to make is that it is really psychology that is viewed in terms of the will to power, not the will to power that is viewed in terms of psychology. Instead, Heidegger instructs us to follow *The Will to Power*: "the innermost essence of being is will to power" (WP 693).

Based on the last quotation, Heidegger concludes that the will to power can only be interpreted metaphysically. This follows because the will to power is the defining characteristic of all "beings as such," which Heidegger views as the domain of metaphysics. Heidegger then turns to "On Self-Overcoming" from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, noting that Zarathustra says, "Where I found the living, there I found will to power; and even in the will of those who serve I found the will to be master." (Z II.12) Heidegger then says that this means that the will to power is the essence of "life," a term which Nietzsche uses synonymously with "Being"¹⁷. The latter claim comes from *The Will to Power*, in which Nietzsche writes, 'Being—we have no idea of it apart from the idea of "living."— How can anything dead "be"?' (WP 582) Heidegger then says that to will is necessarily to will to command, "even in the willing of one who serves," not because the "underling" wants freedom from the master but because 'precisely insofar as he is underling and servant, ...[he] still has the object of his labor beneath him, as an object that he "commands".' (194) This "underlying," however does dominate the master in a way: "...insofar as the servant makes himself indispensable to the master as such and so obligates and orients the master to himself (the underling), the underling dominates the master." (ibid.) For this reason, Heidegger claims that servitude is "a form of the will to power" (ibid.). Heidegger further claims that willing must be "a command" because, if it "were merely a wishing and striving," it "would never be a willing to be master" (ibid.).

¹⁷ Throughout his works, Heidegger distinguishes "Being" from "being". Although this is far too quick to fully explain this convention within Heidegger, the basic idea is that Being is the essence of a basic; that is, any entity which is in existence has Being as its characteristic feature. Essentially, what characterizes existence is the act of existence.

Heidegger asks what the commanding that is willing has in its essence and responds that "To command is to be master, to have disposition over the possibilities, kinds, ways, and means of efficacious action." (194-95) In turn, that which "is commanded in the command is the execution of such disposition" (195). When this command is made, "the one who commands obeys the disposing and thus obeys himself," consequently becoming "superior to himself" because "he hazards himself" (ibid.). For these reasons, Heidegger declares that "commanding is self-overcoming," and further states that the only individual who requires commanding from another is "he who cannot obey himself." (ibid.) The will cannot be said to "strive for power" because "it comes to pass solely within the essential domain of power" (ibid.). The connection between the words "will" and "power" is no mere arbitrary combination of words, nor is it an artificial one. This is the case because, according to Heidegger, the phrase "will to power" contains within it the essences of both power and willing: "The essence of power is *will to power*, and the essence of willing is *will to power*." (ibid.) Strangely, by the time Heidegger himself speaks of the phrase he says only that "the combination of words *will to power* names precisely the inseparable unity of a conjoined, unique essence: the essence of power." (ibid.) While Heidegger has much more to say on the topic of the will to power, I will simply list other features of the will to power, according to Heidegger: The will to power is also (i) "power...overpowering...itself" (ibid.); (ii) that which animates Becoming (197); (iii) the preservation and enhancement of power (196-97); and (iv) the source of all value and valuation (197-200).

There are many problems with Heidegger's interpretation. The first of these problems is that Heidegger almost exclusively draws on *The Will to Power*, which was

not authorized for publication by Nietzsche. This would not be a significant problem if Heidegger were to demonstrate that the passages that he selects for textual evidence are connected to claims that Nietzsche made in his published works (i.e., those that were authorized for publication by Nietzsche) but, with very few exceptions, he does not. Secondly, while Heidegger claims that we should not conceive of the will to power psychologically because Nietzsche viewed the purpose of psychology to be the "morphology and *the doctrine of the development of the will to power*," (BGE 23) this passage is never mentioned again. Consequently, Heidegger never explains how the will to power as metaphysical could be developed psychologically. Thirdly, Heidegger makes no attempt to reconcile his metaphysical interpretation of the will to power with Nietzsche's frequent criticisms of metaphysics. For instance, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche criticizes the Stoics for having imposed "[their] morality, [their] ideal, on nature" before claiming that "what formerly happened with the Stoics still happens today, too, as soon as any philosophy begins to believe in itself" because philosophy "always creates the world in its own image" (BGE 9). Similarly, in "Assorted Opinions and Maxims" from *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche declares that "will has been turned into a metaphor when it is asserted that all things in nature possess will" (AOM 5). In order to justify his interpretation of the will to power as metaphysics, Heidegger would, first, have to explain how the will to power can be imposed on nature when other philosophical principles cannot¹⁸; he would then have to explain how the will to power is not metaphorical "when it is asserted that all things in nature possess will," since his

¹⁸ In fact, he would actually have to explain why Nietzsche ends the passage in question as follows: 'Philosophy is this tyrannical drive itself, the most spiritual will to power, to the "creation of the world," to the *causa prima*.' (BGE 9)

claim that the will to power is the essence of all beings as such implies that all things in nature have the will to power. For all of these reasons, Heidegger's metaphysical interpretation is untenable.

III.ii: Clark's Psychological Interpretation

In the seventh chapter of *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, "The Will to Power," Maudemarie Clark interprets the will to power as a very particular kind of psychological drive. Clark's interpretation begins in earnest when she defines "power" "as the ability to do or get what one wants," then making "the satisfaction of the will to power, a sense of power, [...] a sense of one's *effectiveness* in the world." (211) This then allows (and demands) us, says Clark, to "[allow] the possibility of other desires...because it requires us to distinguish the desire for power – for the ability to satisfy one's desires – from the other desires one wants to be able to satisfy." (ibid.) The will to power is, consequently, "a second-order desire for the ability to satisfy one's other, or first-order, desires (cf. Frankfurt)" (ibid.). Furthermore, since "the will to power is a second-order drive, being able to do something furnishes a sense of power only if there is some independent reason to be able to." (234) Clark does not say much more here about her own interpretation of the will to power, since much of the chapter is dedicated to a negative project; on the one hand, she seeks to demonstrate the problems with other interpretations of the will to power (both psychological and metaphysical), and on the other hand, she seeks to prove that Nietzsche is simply exaggerating when he says that the will to power is either life or the world. However, what has been said should be enough to furnish a reasonable understanding of Clark's interpretation: The will to power is a psychological second-order drive that allows humans to satisfy those drives that they

have independent reason to desire. When the will to power is satisfied, it results in a feeling of power—a satisfaction that one has effectively satisfied some desire.

Since I have omitted the vast amount of textual support for her position that Clark offers, and I am using her interpretation as an example of how the will to power can be interpreted psychologically, I will offer some textual support for the psychological approach to the will to power before moving on to criticisms of her account. The first piece of evidence that supports any psychological interpretation of the will to power is one from *Beyond Good and Evil* that we have repeatedly encountered. Nietzsche submits that psychology should be the "morphology and *the doctrine of the development of the will to power*" (BGE 23). Since the focus of psychology should be to examine and develop the will to power, it could reasonably be concluded that the will to power is psychological. Furthermore, as we have also already seen, the "will has been turned into a metaphor when it is asserted that all things in nature possess will" (AOM 5). Unless we take the will to power to be exempt to this charge (which would require support), then this also offers support for psychological approaches to the will to power. Since will is not omnipresent throughout nature, it follows that only some entities possess will; we could argue that only psychological beings possess will, or even that only humans possess will.

The first objection to Clark's interpretation is found in Reginster's *The Affirmation of Life*. As Reginster puts it,

Clark's proposal is eminently sensible, but precisely this might already be thought to constitute an exegetical weakness. If the will to power is just the (second-order) desire for the capacity to gratify one's (first-order) desires, it is difficult to understand how Nietzsche could have claimed so much importance and originality for this notion. (128)

As we saw in our discussion of Deleuze's interpretation, Nietzsche did believe that the will to power was a very important and original concept. Clark fails to explain why Nietzsche would have believed this to be the case given the simplicity of her interpretation. There are many other reasons to reject Clark's interpretation, and we will continue with Reginster for a while. The second problem with Clark's interpretation, Reginster writes, is that,

...it cannot make sense of Nietzsche's insistence that the will to power is, by its very nature, an *indefinite* striving, or a perpetual growth or self-overcoming (WP 125, 689, 1067). If all we want in wanting power is the ability to satisfy our desires, we could in principle come to a point where our will to power is completely fulfilled, namely, when we have actually secured sufficient means to satisfy our given desires. It is, of course, possible that the satisfaction of some desires requires an indefinite striving for power. But then, indefiniteness is only an accidental feature of the pursuit of power, a function of the particular desires it is made to serve, and not, as Nietzsche clearly thinks, an essential feature of it. (128)

Reginster's choices of sources here, however, are a little bit strange. In the first instance, Nietzsche says, "To have and to want to have more—*growth*, in short—that is life itself." (WP 125) However, this section is a prolonged critique of socialism, and Nietzsche is expanding on the tendency for those who have possessions to believe that those possessions make them someone; his response is that they are correct, but missing something: "one must want more than one has in order to *become* more" (ibid.). While Nietzsche does expand this principle to life, there is no point in this section at which he indicates that he is discussing the will to power. In the second instance, Nietzsche merely says that "Life as a special case...strives after a *maximal feeling of power*; essentially a striving for more power" (WP 689), which supports only the second of Reginster's two listed features of the will to power. This simply means that life seeks the most power

possible. Thirdly, there is nothing in the last section of *The Will to Power* mentioned by Reginster that discusses the will to power as "an *indefinite* striving, or a perpetual growth or self-overcoming" (128). Reginster might, instead, have turned to *Beyond Good and Evil* in which Nietzsche says, "Whoever reaches his ideal transcends it *eo ipso*." (BGE 73). He might also have consulted the Third Treatise of *On the Genealogy of Morality*, in which Nietzsche refers to 'the law of life[...], the law of the *necessary* "self-overcoming" in the essence of life' (GM III.27). He could also have turned to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, in which Zarathustra recounts life telling him, "I am *that which must always overcome itself*." (Z II.12) As these quotations demonstrate, the issue is not that Reginster's criticism is a bad one, but rather that he chose the wrong sources to support it.

Reginster has a third criticism that I would like to discuss before moving on.

Reginster writes,

Furthermore, it is hard to see how, on this instrumental interpretation, the will to power could provide the principle or the core value of a new ethics (see A 2). The capacity to satisfy one's desires would not possess any value unless the objects of at least some of these desires were independently valuable, and so the value assigned to this capacity derives from the value granted to those objects. In fact, Nietzsche goes so far as to declare that when the will to power is considered a mere "means" to something else, it is thereby "debased" (WP 707, cf. 751). (128)

The first thing that requires comment is Reginster's painting of Clark's interpretation is "instrumental". It is instrumental simply because "it maintains that the desire for power makes no sense if we consider it independently of its relation to first-order desires *in general*" (285n21). The cited section of *The Antichrist*, reads,

What is good? Everything that heightens the feeling of power in man, the will to power, power itself.

What is bad? Everything that is born of weakness.

What is happiness? The feeling that power is *growing*, that resistance is overcome.

Not contentedness but more power; not peace but war; not virtue but fitness (Renaissance virtue, *virtù*. virtue that is moraline-free).

The weak and the failures shall perish: first principle of *our* love of man. And they shall even be given every possible assistance.

What is more harmful than any vice? Active pity for all the failures and all the weak: Christianity. (A 2)

While I agree with Reginster's thought that Clark's account would suffer when it comes to values, it is highly debatable whether the new values that Nietzsche suggests should be conceived of in terms of ethics. The section of *The Will to Power* to which he refers reads, "One kind of means has been misunderstood as an end; conversely, life and the enhancement of its power has been debased to a means." (WP 707) Of course, this technically only suggests that life has power that can be increased, but as Clark and Reginster both interpret the will to power psychologically, they would most likely both agree that the above refers to the will to power. Clark must, therefore, account for how the will to power as she defines it can be said to create values. A final criticism of Clark's account can be drawn from the biological interpretation as presented by Christian J. Emden, so we will move on to his account before returning to Clark's.

III.ii: Emden's Biological Interpretation

In his article, "Nietzsche's Will to Power," Emden argues that psychological interpretations of the will to power (and, more generally, psychological readings of Nietzsche) make a substantial error:

What is at stake [...] in the psychological reading of Nietzsche's project is a historical misunderstanding: when Nietzsche speaks of psychology, he refers not to cognitive psychology but to the psychological sciences of the nineteenth

century, before Freud and before behaviorism; these psychological sciences, through their experimental setup in the contemporary research laboratories of, say, Hermann von Helmholtz or Wilhelm Wundt, are invariably linked to the body, that is, to physiology. When Nietzsche, in *The Anti-Christ*, notes that "when we discount the nervous system and the senses, the 'mortal shroud,' *we miscount*," he underscores that psychology needs to be seen as a science of the body (A 14). (32)

Before beginning his discussion of the will to power, Emden discusses Nietzsche's relationship with science. Firstly, while it is typically believed that Nietzsche was an opponent of Darwinism, Emden counters this interpretation by suggesting that Nietzsche was actually "against the use of Darwin by philosophers" (38). The problem that Emden alleges Nietzsche opposed was the projection of "traditional ideas about moral progress onto evolutionary processes" by Darwinist philosophers such as Herbert Spencer and Paul Rée (ibid.). Both of these philosophers had "left Darwin behind by presenting altruism and the common good as intrinsic values that govern the evolution of the human species toward moral progress ran counter to the critical import of evolutionary thought." (ibid.)

Nietzsche's primary scientific influences, however, were to be found elsewhere. "It was in Maximilian Drossbach's *Über die scheinbaren und die wirklichen Ursachen des Geschehens* (1884) that Nietzsche was able to find a fully developed notion of power that closely resembled his own position as it emerged during the mid-1880s," (43) Emden informs the reader. An endnote at this point reads, 'Rüdiger W. Schmidt, "Nietzsches Drossbach-Lektüre: Bemerkungen zum Ursprung des literarischen Projekts 'Der Wille zur Macht,'" *Nietzsche-Studien* 17 (1988): 465-77, has already pointed to the crucial importance of Drossbach for Nietzsche's later work.' (57n62) Emden then continues.

Drawing on a broad range of contemporary scientific disciplines, from physics to physiology, Drossbach noted in his discussion of reciprocal forces in nature: "We only have a proper understanding of force if we recognize it as the striving for expansion [Streben nach Entfaltung]." Nietzsche underlined the last three words, commenting in the margins of his copy of Drossbach's book: "'will to power,' is what *I* say." (43)

Another endnote follows, in which Emden writes, "Maximilian Drossbach, *Über die scheinbaren und die wirklichen Ursachen des Geschehens in der Welt* (Halle/Saale: Pfeffer, 1884), 45. See the comment in Nietzsche's copy: Anna Amalia Bibliothek, Weimar, Germany, Sig. C 252." (57n63) Emden explains that Drossbach was important for the later Nietzsche in two ways. "What mattered to Nietzsche... was that *Entfaltung* changed the very nature of any thing's being. Second, Drossbach's observation allowed him also to depart from German Romantic *Naturphilosophie*: organisms did not develop according to some kind of intrinsic force." (43) There follows another endnote in which Emden notes, "This also separates Nietzsche from those who seek to adopt his thought within the context of the so-called new materialism, such as Elizabeth Grosz, "Matter, Life, and Other Variations," *Philosophy Today* 55, SPEP suppl. (2011): 17-27." (57n65)

Development in nature was driven, above anything else, by the interaction among organisms and cells, and among organisms, cells, and their respective environments: "Natural beings [Wesen] develop their power by acting upon others and by meeting the agency of others. Reciprocal agency [Wechselwirkung] is means for effective expansion, and the more complete the form of reciprocal agency, the more fully they [i.e., natural beings] develop." (43)

The quotation from Drossbach comes from the same page as Emden last cited (cf.

57n66). Emden has more to say on this influence.

The dynamically complex and multilayered interactions among individual organisms, which put single cells, entire organisms and their respective environments into a feedback loop, renders development and growth possible. What is at stake, then, in the will to power, if viewed from a biological

perspective, is that the evolvability of organisms is inherently linked to the phenomenon of niche construction. (43)

The endnote that follows reads,

See John Odling-Smee and Kevin N. Laland, "Ecological Inheritance and Cultural Inheritance: What Are They, and How Do They Differ?," *Biological Theory* 6 (2011): 220-30; Kevin N. Laland, John Odling-Smee, and Sean Myles, "How Culture Shaped the Human Genome: Bringing Genetics and the Human Sciences Together," *Nature Review Genetics* 11 (2010): 137-48; and John Odling-Smee, Kevin N. Laland, and Marcus W. Feldman, *Niche Construction: The Neglected Process in Evolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 36-115. (57n67)

We should not attempt to understand agency as discussed by Drossbach and Nietzsche in the terms of contemporary analytic philosophy, however. Emden offers that agency, in the Nietzschean sense, neither implies intentionality nor entails teleology; instead, "agency, on the cellular and molecular level" refers to "self-organization and self-regulation" (44). Emden further notes that 'Nietzsche's and Drossbach's conceptions of agency share much common ground with more recent concerns in the biological sciences. See Mark Kirschner, John Gerhart, and Tim Mitchison, "Molecular 'Vitalism,'" *Cell* 100 (2000): 79-88.' (58n72)

Emden notes another major scientific influence on Nietzsche: William Henry Rolph's *Biologische Probleme*, published in 1882. Emden notes,

Rolph provided Nietzsche with a crucial metaphor that echoed Drossbach's emphasis on *Entfaltung*. Arguing that Darwin's "struggle for existence" and Spencer's "survival of the fittest" falsely implied that evolution had reached its climax in human beings, he presented a more dynamic model: the "struggle for life [Kampf um's Leben]" had to be replaced with a "struggle for the multiplication of life [Kampf um Lebensvermehrung]." (44)

The quotation above from Rolph comes from page 97 of *Biologische Probleme* (58n75).

While Darwin placed "natural selection and the preservation of species" at "the bottom

line of evolutionary processes," Rolph argued that "the expansion of life occurred on the same level of living things as Darwin's natural selection, that is, on the level of fairly complex organisms, such as insects and humans." (44) Thus armed, Nietzsche then connected the works of Drossbach and Rolph to those of other scientists, shifting "his attention from entire organisms to molecular and cellular processes" (ibid.). These scientific works were "Julius Robert Mayer's *Die Mechanik der Wärme* (1867), Carl von Nägeli's *Mechanisch-physiologische Abstammungslehre* (1884), Gustav von Bunge's *Vitalismus und Mechanismus* (1886), and Wilhelm Roux's *Der Kampf der Theile im Organismus* (1881)." (ibid.) To avoid unnecessary detail, I will leave this discussion here, and take it that Emden's point has been made: Nietzsche was strongly influenced by the scientists of his time.

Emden's interpretation of the will to power begins with a reading of a section of *Beyond Good and Evil* that we have already seen. Emden notes that Nietzsche here says that "all organic functions are still synthetically intertwined along with self-regulation, assimilation, nourishment, excretion, and metabolism" (BGE 36) "so that the will to power, as it becomes superficially manifest in our drives, really describes" (32) "the world viewed from inside" (BGE 36). Nietzsche is telling us, according to Emden, that we (in our daily lives) fail to account for biological features that are unobservable by the naked eye (cells, for example) and, thus, simply view the world through the "reality" of our "desires and passions" (BGE 36). This provides "a seemingly commonsensical explanatory model readily available to us" (32). However, what Nietzsche really has in mind 'is the "reality of our drives" that bridge the gap, as it were, between our everyday world and its embeddedness in the body, in our messy physiology, and in matter (BGE

36)' (32). Drives, thus, "always already possess a physiological and, thus, biological facticity" instead of being mere "expressions of our volitional existence" (ibid.). Since Emden's interpretation of the will to power is intertwined with an interpretation of Nietzsche's naturalism and normativity as dependent upon the will to power, my summary of Emden's view will be fairly abridged and, thus, possibly risk misrepresentation or inadequate representation.

One point, however, must be made. Emden notes three broad approaches taken to the will to power: (i) exclusion of the will to power from discussion of Nietzsche's philosophy, often because it is seen as incompatible with Nietzsche's naturalism; (ii) denial that the will to power relates to organic life because the will to power is seen as metaphysical, and life should thus be seen metaphysically (cf. Heidegger, *Nietzsche: The Will to Power as Knowledge and as Metaphysics*, 39-48); and (iii) denial that the will to power relates to organic life because the will to power is psychological. What these three approaches share is a belief that philosophical naturalism and scientific realism are one and the same. There is actually a crucial difference, though, according to Emden.

Scientific realism "is predominantly concerned with the status of models and theories"

(36). This characterization of scientific realism comes from pages 110 to 138 of *Scientific*

Realism by Stathis Psillos. Emden continues:

For scientific realism, the development of theories and models is marked by internal logical consistency, which allows for the prediction of novelties, whereas the focus on practices and agency that has recently been emphasized in the debate about philosophical naturalism holds that contingency and context, material circumstances and subjective attitudes play an equally important role in the formation of our theories and models of the world. (36)

This is important because Nietzsche repeatedly suggests that what he has in mind is philosophical naturalism, not scientific realism. For instance, in *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche writes, "on the whole, the procedures of science are at least as important a product of inquiry as any other outcome" (HH 635). If we consider "Reason in Philosophy," from *Twilight of the Idols*, we see that Nietzsche viewed the procedures of science as important because, nowadays, "we possess science precisely to the extent to which we have decided to *accept* the testimony of the senses—to the extent to which we sharpen them further, arm them, and have learned to think them through." (TI III.3) Nietzsche divides the rest of science into two categories. The first of these categories is "miscarriage and not-yet-science," including "metaphysics, theology, psychology, epistemology" (ibid.). The second of these categories is "formal science, a doctrine of signs, such as logic and that applied logic which is called mathematics." (ibid.) The problem, as Nietzsche puts it, is that "in them reality is not encountered at all, not even as a problem" (ibid.). In *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche discusses his problems with logic and mathematics in more detail. The problem with logic, he says, is that it "depends on presuppositions with which nothing in the real world corresponds," such as "the presupposition that there are identical things, that the same thing is identical at different points at time" (HH 11). Logic "came into existence through the opposite belief (that such conditions do obtain in the real world)" (ibid.). Mathematics, on the other hand, "would certainly not have come into existence if one had known from the beginning that there was in nature no exactly straight line, no real circle, no absolute magnitude" (ibid.). As such, Nietzsche believed in the need for scientific procedures, not in the actual, mind-

independent existence of abstract objects; and this marks his philosophy as committed to philosophical naturalism, not scientific realism.

According to Emden, the "will to power seeks to come to terms with what makes selection possible in the first place, that is, in modern parlance, he is concerned with evolvability." (42) In this context, Emden explains, "evolvability refers to how an organism produces heritable phenotypic variation, which goes beyond mere genetic information, and whether an organism's capacity to produce such heritable phenotypic variation does itself evolve." (57n61) This is why Nietzsche viewed "[natural] selection and adaptation as secondary manifestations of more complex developmental processes" (42). Nietzsche makes this suggestion in the Second Treatise of *On the Genealogy of Morality*. Critiquing Herbert Spencer, Nietzsche suggests that "adaptation..., that is to say an activity of second rank, a mere reactivity," was mistakenly placed "in the foreground," rendering "life itself...an ever more purposive inner adaptation to external circumstances" (GM II.12). Adaptation is viewed as mere reactivity, Emden explains, because it is "the way in which organisms [respond] to changes in their environment" (42). This is a problem, Nietzsche alleges, because:

In so doing, ...one mistakes the essence of life, its *will to power*; in so doing one overlooks the essential pre-eminence of the spontaneous, attacking, infringing, reinterpreting, reordering, and formative forces, upon whose effect the "adaptation" first follows; in so doing one denies the lordly role of the highest functionaries in the organism itself, in which the will of life appears active and form-giving. (GM II.12)

These aforementioned pre-eminent forces are, in fact, those with which the will to power is concerned; and these forces occur before adaptation—in fact, they allow for adaptation.

Emden continues by stating, 'regardless as to whether we view power as a psychological or a biological phenomenon, it is concerned with the overcoming of resistance, with the "growth and expansion" of life (*GS* 349)' (47). Further, 'the overcoming of resistance is constitutive of our existence as natural beings consisting of molecules, cells, organs, and such like. Unsurprisingly, Nietzsche noted in a shorthand manner: "*The organic functions*, seen as an organization of the will to power" (*KGW* VIII/1: 6[26]).' (ibid.) Furthermore, the evolvability of the will to power "rests on the self-overcoming of those manifestations that would lead to its destruction in the same way, as it were, that variations among biological traits contribute to the robustness of the organism only if they are not lethal." (53) Without delving further into Emden's interpretation, we can simply summarize it in the following way. As we have already seen, the will to power is the drive for evolvability, which is the expansion of power or life. Secondly, the will to power relates to a biological conception of life (42); Emden (drawing on Nietzsche's notebooks) thus writes, "the will to power...occurs below the human condition, that is, overcoming resistance in realm of human agency supervenes upon a biological kind of overcoming resistance" (47). We can draw two conclusions from this. Firstly, the will to power refers to the overcoming of resistance by biological organisms; by nature, biological organisms strive to overcome resistance. Secondly, so long as it is alive, a biological organism will strive to overcome resistance, since every living organism has the will to power.

While this is a highly sophisticated interpretation of the will to power and offers important insight into Nietzsche's scientific influences, it suffers from a number of problems. The first is a linguistic one: Emden repeatedly references the *Werke: Kritische*

Gesamtausgabe (KGW), a complete critical edition of Nietzsche's works begun by Italian scholars Giorgio Colli andazzino Montinari, and edited by Volker Gerhardt, Norbert Miller, Wolfgang Müller-Lauter, and Karl Pestalozzi (cf. 53-54n1). The *KGW*, however, is inaccessible to Anglophones, which means that we must rely on Emden's own translations of these passages, which are often crucial to his argument. In a similar vein, Emden does not cite the most commonly used translations of Nietzsche's works, instead using the recent Cambridge University Press translations (*ibid.*), which makes it more difficult to verify his claims. There are, however, more substantial problems with Emden's interpretation. Firstly, it is arguable whether biologists primarily influenced Nietzsche's formulation of the will to power. For instance, Greg Whitlock argues in "Roger Boscovich, Benedict de Spinoza and Friedrich Nietzsche: The Untold Story" that the will to power was primarily influenced by Roger Boscovich, an eighteenth-century Croatian physicist, and seventeenth-century Dutch philosopher, Benedict de Spinoza. The influence of Roger Boscovich has been partially accepted by Keith Ansell Pearson in his article, "Nietzsche's Brave New World of Force," and by R. Lanier Anderson in his article, "Nietzsche's will to Power as a Doctrine of the Unity of Science." Secondly, Emden seems to dismiss psychology out of hand in favour of biology. This would, perhaps, not be a problem for his interpretation if it were not for this claim found early into his paper: "Biology comes first, psychology second." (31) This becomes a problem because Emden then proceeds to ignore psychology; but even if psychology is secondary to biology (that is, if psychology is rooted in the physiological), this still means that there must be an account given for the physiological roots of psychology. At the very least, Emden must offer an account for the way in which the will to power as a biological drive

manifests itself within psychology. Thirdly, it is not clear if Emden ever provides convincing reason to believe that the will to power is biological. Based on the evidence he provides, it seems we have reason to ask whether we might, instead, say that Nietzsche found in biological works a good parallel to his will to power and its close relatives (for example, his conception of power). Even if we go so far as to grant that Nietzsche's conception of power is drawn from biological conceptions of power, this does not prove that the will to power is biological. We could, in fact, draw one of two different conclusions: (i) Nietzsche's conception of power is biological; or (ii) Nietzsche's conception of power is inspired by biology. Notice, however, that neither conclusion grants that the will to power is biological.

III.iv: Final criticism of Clark's interpretation

I earlier promised to further critique Clark's interpretation of the will to power, and I will now do so. Although I first conceived of this criticism independently of Emden's work, his work helps to further elucidate my concerns with Clark's interpretation of the will to power, or, for that matter, any psychological interpretation of Nietzsche's work. The problem is that, whenever the will to power is conceived of as psychological, psychology is conceived as it would be understood today. Recall that Emden writes, "when Nietzsche speaks of psychology, he refers not to cognitive psychology but to the psychological sciences of the nineteenth century," at which time "these psychological sciences...[were] invariably linked to the body, that is, to physiology." (32) In *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche writes, 'if we subtract the nervous system and the senses—the "mortal shroud"—*then we miscalculate*,' following his denial "that anything can be done

perfectly if it is still done consciously" (A 14). Throughout this section, Nietzsche is referring to psychology (notably the will and consciousness) and arguing that nothing can come of it without physiology; thus, psychology is secondary to physiology. The mistake that Clark makes is, therefore, to fail to account for the biological basis of Nietzsche's understanding of psychology. This same problem has, in my experience, plagued psychological interpretations of the will to power. As Emden says elsewhere, 'analytic reconstructions of Nietzsche's thought...invariably favor "will" over "power"' (31). Clark demonstrates exactly this issue: While she does offer a quick definition of power, her main goal is to establish that the will to power is a particular type of will—a second-order drive aiming at the satisfaction of some first-order desire. This still lends the will to power a volitional character: It is a drive to satisfy some particular desire; it is that which *chooses* a desire likely to generate a feeling of power. As such, Clark's interpretation of the will to power must be discounted for the reasons suggested above, as well as her misunderstanding of nineteenth-century psychology.

IV. Reconsidering the will to power's centrality

We saw towards the beginning of the chapter that the will to power is considered to be central to Nietzsche's account of existential meaning, but we must consider this claim closely. The will to power is tied very closely to life (as acknowledged by both Schroeder and Richardson) in *Beyond Good and Evil* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, to say nothing of *The Will to Power*, in which life is almost invariably stated to be the will to power (or vice versa). Accordingly, *Beyond Good and Evil* contains the claim, "A living thing seeks above all to *discharge* its strength—life itself is *will to power*" (BGE 13).

Later in the same book, he adds, "[Anything which is] a living and not a dying body...will have to be an incarnate will to power, it will strive to grow, spread, seize, become predominant" for the reason that "it is *living* and because life simply *is* will to power"; and then, "the will to power...is after all the will of life." (BGE 259) Next, in "On Self-Overcoming," Zarathustra proclaims, "Not the river is your danger and the end of your good and evil...but that will itself, the will to power—the unexhausted procreative will of life." (Z II.12) And shortly thereafter, in the same section: "Where I found the living, there I found will to power" (ibid.). Of course, the wording shifts throughout these quotations. In the first case, Nietzsche explicitly claims that the will to power is life itself (cf. BGE 13), which he continues to hold for the majority of the next quoted section (cf. BGE 259). However, near the end of the second quoted section, Nietzsche instead claims that the will to power is life's *will*, thus rendering the will to power a volitional characteristic of life rather than life itself (cf. BGE 259). In the first quotation from *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche continues to view the will to power as life's will (cf. Z II.12); and in the last, Nietzsche seems to suggest that the will to power is biological, since he restricts it to living organisms (cf. Z II.12).

This seems to suggest two different ways in which we can understand the will to power: (i) the will to power is life; or (ii) the will to power is a central characteristic (or condition) of life. On the first interpretation, the following question arises: Can it be granted that life itself is the meaning of life? On the second interpretation, another question arises: As a characteristic or condition of central necessity to life, is the will to power substantively different from (for example) breathing, eating, or drinking? Depending on how this question is answered, we might then ask the following: Should

we grant the will to power a privileged position (as a necessary and sufficient condition) in existential meaning if we would not do so for other central characteristics or conditions of life? I believe that the proper response to each of these questions (with the possible exception of the second) is a simple, concise, and definite "No." My intuition is that we should accept that the will to power is—according to Nietzsche's account of existential meaning—necessary, but not sufficient, for the meaning of life. In the first instance, a tautology seems to be created: Life is meaningful because the will to power, which is life, is meaningful; or, in other words, life (will to power) is meaningful because life (will to power) is meaningful. While this might be true in some sense, it simply seems too easy—meaning is granted through meaning. The second instance seems to have the strongest case, especially if we consider the will to power to be a central drive (whether drive is understood psychologically, biologically, or metaphysically), since the will to power could be seen as that which enforces breathing, eating, or drinking. The drawback of such a view is that the will to power is then employed primarily as self-preservation, which is considered lowly by Nietzsche; so we would then have to insert the ways in which the will to power fosters self-overcoming and growth. Since the third instance relies on the second, it cannot be accepted without accepting the second, which is too narrow.

Therefore, the will to power is necessary, but not sufficient, for the meaning of life.

Henrik Rydenfelt provides further reason to reject the view that the will to power is necessary and sufficient for the meaning of life in his paper, "Valuation and the Will to Power: Nietzsche's Ethics with Ontology." To Rydenfelt, the issue is primarily one of value. Nietzsche, firstly, never claims that the greatness of an individual should be considered intrinsically valuable. Rydenfelt argues that, especially if power and the will

to power are interpreted as natural properties or expressions thereof, such values could be considered descriptive rather than evaluative (cf. 218). Nietzsche, secondly, suggests, "One would require a position *outside* of life...in order to be permitted even to touch the problem of the *value* of life" (TI "Morality" 5). Rydenfelt notes that we might be tempted to view the intrinsic value of life as dependent upon the degree of power associated with an individual's will to power, but Nietzsche makes it clear that he rejects this view. In fact, he explicitly contends in an earlier section of *Twilight of the Idols*, "judgment of value, concerning life, for it or against it, can, in the end, never be true" (TI "Socrates" 2). Rydenfelt suggests that what we can judge is whether something (such as "a morality, a belief or an action") is valuable for life, not whether life is intrinsically valuable (218). Support is found in *Beyond Good and Evil*, in which Nietzsche writes that when we judge, "the question is to what extent it is life-promoting, life-preserving, species-preserving, perhaps even species-cultivating" (BGE 4). But it is also questionable to interpret Nietzsche as saying that anything can be intrinsically valuable, since Nietzsche believed that value comes from the inside, not the outside. Accordingly, Nietzsche informs the reader in *The Gay Science* that "[w]hatever has *value* in our world now does not have value in itself, according to its nature" because "nature is always value-less," so anything taken to be valuable "has been *given* value at some time, as a present—and it was *we* who gave and bestowed it." (GS 301) Regarding existential meaning, this tells us that the meaning of life must come from within nature, which is consistent enough with the standard interpretation. But, since that which is valued must first be valued by an agent (i.e., value is extrinsic, not intrinsic), the will to power could only be valuable to the meaning of life insofar as it has already been valued as meaningful.

Conclusion

The implications for Nietzsche's account of existential meaning are striking and will be explored in the next chapter. Nonetheless, this train of thought must be somehow concluded. We have seen that the will to power requires valuation in order to be deemed meaningful to life, and that this valuation must come from an agent. This implies that neither the meaning/value of life, nor the meaning/value of the will to power, is a default position. Since value comes through evaluation, the will to power must be evaluated (by itself, however), and a corresponding value presumably must be created (as established values are to be denied). If a value must be created, the agent must be able to create a value, which can only be done in the absence of a god (since god is creator). As such, for the will to power to be rendered meaningful, god must be dead, so the will to power relies upon the death of God—rendering the death of God the foundational central concept of Nietzsche's account of the meaning of life. Furthermore, the evaluation of a value seems to rely on the revaluation of values. This, in turn, means that either the revaluation of values is as important (and central) to Nietzsche's account of existential meaning as the will to power, or it is more so. This leaves two concepts of major importance to Nietzsche's account: the eternal return (or eternal recurrence) and perspectivism. In the next chapter, I will argue through reference to Deleuze that, because the eternal return selects (and shapes) what returns, the will to power requires the eternal return to grant meaning to life. Perspectivism, in turn, simply accompanies our interactions with the world and is a reflection of one's respective will to power; but, as a lens through which the world (and its contents) is necessarily seen, it is important to consider in order to fully appreciate meaning of any kind, including of existence. Perspectivism is, furthermore, a

portion of Nietzsche's rejection or reinterpretation of objectivity; we will consider which it should be considered. I thereby propose that the hierarchy of components constituting Nietzschean existential meaning consists of the following: (i) the death of God as the foundation from which all else emerges; (ii) will to power and revaluation of values; (iii) the eternal return or recurrence; and (iv) perspectivism.

Although the will to power is only listed in the second position, it radiates throughout the second to fourth positions as a pluralistic or multiple will with various manifestations. And, although the eternal return is listed after the will to power, it is nonetheless important to ground the meaning of the will itself; it is listed third because it emerges from (or rather, within) the will to power. A fifth concept, the *Übermensch*, is typically introduced as a fifth element of Nietzsche's account of existential meaning but I will question if it should be. The inclusion of the *Übermensch* is drawn into question because this concept appears in only one of Nietzsche's published works: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Although the *Übermensch* is mentioned in three other places within Nietzsche's oeuvre, all three contexts are very particular. The first, chronologically, is in *Twilight of the Idols* and Nietzsche here simply denies that Cesare Borgia can be seen as an *Übermensch* (cf. TI "Skirmishes" 37). Second, in *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche suggests that an individual's great success might render her "a *higher type*, which is, in relation to mankind as a whole, a kind of [*Übermensch*]" (A 4). However, one might wonder what Nietzsche means by "a kind of," and no answer is to be found because he simply moves on to dismiss such cases as "accidents" (fortunate as they might be) that have always been, and might always be, possible. A further problem emerges here because Nietzsche introduced the *Übermensch* in *Zarathustra* as something towards which humans are

either heading or must strive towards (this ambiguity will be discussed briefly in the next chapter), suggesting that such an individual is not yet here; and yet, "even whole families, tribes, or peoples may occasionally represent such a *bull's-eye*." (ibid.) So, if Nietzsche does mean to suggest that the highly successful individual is an *Übermensch*, his criteria for what constitutes an *Übermensch* has changed drastically. This is a major problem because this is the last time that Nietzsche mentions the *Übermensch* except for in *Ecce Homo*, at which point the concept is discussed in relation to *Zarathustra*. It could be argued that Nietzsche captures the same meaning through the term "higher man," but this creates a discontinuity in Nietzsche's works: The "higher man" is discussed in *Zarathustra* along with the *Übermensch*, but then appears separately in later works—with the exception of the aforementioned passages in *Twilight of the Idols* and *The Antichrist*. I thereby propose that the *Übermensch* should not be considered as part of Nietzsche's account of existential meaning because it is simply not an important concept to Nietzsche outside of his sole piece of literary (albeit philosophical) fiction¹⁹. As such, there is no need to include the *Übermensch* in the hierarchy I introduced above.

¹⁹ This should not be taken as a criticism of literary fiction, nor should it be taken as denying that literary fiction can be philosophical or that philosophical fictional can make a valuable contradiction to philosophy. My point is simply that the *Übermensch* is not really discussed outside of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, a work that happens to be a philosophical novel.

Chapter 3: The Death of Objectivity: Into Subjectivism

While this chapter is not the longest in this thesis, it should be read with the utmost care because it presents more aspects of Nietzsche's thought than either of the others. Both of the previous chapters play an important role in what follows, so I will now provide a short summary of each. The first chapter concluded that Nietzsche rejects four core aspects of Schopenhauer's pessimism: (i) Schopenhauer's recommendation that people deny life (i.e., the will or the will to live); (ii) Schopenhauer's celebration of asceticism; (iii) Schopenhauer's belief that a meaningful life must consist of greater pleasure than suffering (which is a crucial way in which he argues that life is meaningless or not worth living); and (iv) Schopenhauer's judgment of the value of existence as a whole. Nietzsche counters of these features: (i) the affirmation of life; (ii) caution regarding asceticism; (iii) neither pleasure nor suffering can grant meaning to life because both are secondary in nature (while either can be meaningful, neither have guaranteed meaning); and (iv) one cannot judge the value of existence as a whole because one has access only to one's own perspective (so, all judgments of value are made from a particular perspective). At the beginning of the second chapter, we saw that the first three of Nietzsche's responses can be understood in terms of the will to power: (i) to affirm life is to affirm the will to power; (ii) asceticism weakens the will to power or expressions thereof; and (iii) power is more important for meaning than either pleasure or suffering.

The second chapter has four sections. The first simply presents that papers by Paul Katsafanas, Brian Schroeder, and John Richardson all suggest that the will to power is central to Nietzsche's account of existential meaning. The purpose of this section was

to demonstrate that it seems important to discuss the will to power when presenting Nietzsche's perspective on existential meaning. The second section presents Gilles Deleuze's interpretation of the will to power: The will to power as the value-creative, interpretative, and evaluative relation between forces, possessing qualities of affirmation and negation. At the beginning of the third section, I provided my justification for preferring Deleuze's interpretation. Firstly, by paying attention to the way in which Nietzsche views bodies and the plurality that arises from this, Deleuze demonstrates that it is not contradictory for Nietzsche to assert that viewing everything in nature as having a will and later assert that everything in nature has a will to power. If forces constitute everything, each of their relations constitutes will to power, and bodies are simply composed of these related forces, the will to power can be seen as wills to power that can conveniently be called by the name "the will to power". Secondly, Deleuze flawlessly connects passages of *The Will to Power* with those found in Nietzsche's published works (one example of this is my first justification). Thirdly, by considering the will to power as creation (of values), interpretation (of senses), and evaluation (of values), this interpretation has great import to existential meaning. Most importantly, as we saw in the first chapter (and will see again in this chapter), Nietzsche considers the question of existential meaning to be a question of value, so existential meaning can be created on this account. Fourthly, since Deleuze identifies the will to power's qualities as affirmation and denial/negation (and these qualities have corresponding wills to power: the will to power proper and the will to negation or the will to nothingness), Deleuze's account helps to demonstrate why some individuals view life as meaningful and others view life as

meaningless: We must simply consider the quality and form of their respective wills to power.

In the third section, I considered alternative interpretations of the will to power. First, Heidegger's metaphysical interpretation was dismissed for three reasons. Heidegger draws his interpretation primarily from *The Will to Power* and very rarely demonstrates connections to Nietzsche's published works. He also never explains how the will to power as metaphysical could be developed psychologically (cf. BGE 23). Finally, Heidegger does not even attempt to reconcile his metaphysical interpretation with Nietzsche's frequent criticisms of metaphysics (cf. BGE 9, AOM 5, for example). Second, Clark's psychological interpretation was dismissed for four reasons, the first three of which are due to Bernard Reginster. Recall that Clark identifies the will to power as "a second-order desire for the ability to satisfy one's other, or first-order, desires" in *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy* (211). In *The Affirmation of Life*, Reginster first objects that if the will to power is understood in such a simple and sensible way, it becomes extremely unclear why Nietzsche considered this concept so unique and important (cf. 128). Reginster's second objection is that Clark's account cannot explain why Nietzsche insists that the will to power is characteristically "an *indefinite* striving, or a perpetual growth or self-overcoming" because will to power understood as simply the desire to be able to satisfy our desires could be "completely fulfilled"—we might be able to satisfy all of our desires, essentially (128). But even if satisfying some desires requires "indefinite striving for power," indefiniteness would not be characteristic of the will to power because it would be "an accidental feature" of power's pursuit and would belong only to the particular desires served by the striving for power (ibid.). Reginster's third

objection is that it is unclear how Clark's instrumental interpretation could allow the will to power to serve as the principle of a new account of value, since the satisfaction of desires would lack value unless the objects of the desires in question were themselves valuable, in which case the value of the satisfaction of a particular desire would be derived from the value accorded its object (ibid.). I finally objected that Clark's psychological interpretation fails to consider that Nietzsche's understanding of psychology would have been rooted in physiology or biology. Emden's biological interpretation was rejected for four reasons. The first reason was that he often references the *Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (KGW), a complete critical edition of Nietzsche's works, which means that Anglophone readers have to rely on his own translations; this would not be a substantial problem if these citations were less frequently central to his argument. The second problem was that there is evidence that the will to power was actually influenced by Boscovich (a Croatian physicist) and Spinoza (it should be noted, however, that both could be correct). The third problem was that Emden fails to properly address psychology despite claiming that biology is primary and psychology secondary, which would suggest that psychology still has a role to play. The fourth and final problem was that Emden never seems to give convincing reason to believe that the will to power is biological, but only that Nietzsche either (i) found a good parallel to the will to power (or at least his conception of power) in biological works, or (ii) that Nietzsche's conception of power is influenced by biology.

In the fourth section, I questioned the centrality of the will to power to Nietzsche's account of existential meaning. I began by showing that Nietzsche views the will to power as either life or a central characteristic thereof. If the will to power is life, a

tautology follows: Life (will to power) is meaningful because life (will to power) is meaningful. While a tautology is not logically invalid, this interpretation would face issues concerning statements like "*the value of life cannot be estimated*" (TI "Socrates" 2; cf. TI "Morality" 5). If the will to power is a characteristic or condition of life, the question would be why it is the will to power and not some other characteristic or condition of life that grants existential meaning. Consulting a paper by Rydenfelt, we came across a further issue. As Nietzsche considers value to be extrinsic, I drew two conclusions. Firstly, the meaning of life would have to come from within nature, which poses no threat to the standard interpretation. Secondly, however, nothing has value until someone has given it value, so the will to power could only be valuable to existential meaning insofar as it has already been valued as meaningful. Therefore, the will to power is necessary (but not sufficient) for existential meaning.

This chapter has seven sections. I will not discuss the seventh because it largely serves as a conclusion. The first considers the death of God, which is not to be taken literally, but rather suggests that religious belief and religious values are impossible or irrelevant in modernity. The death of God is found to be necessary for the will to power because to will is to create and this requires humans to be creators, which we can only be in the absence of a creative god; but also because it allows for the will to power to be developed psychologically, since the death of God renders the will to power free from the weakening effects of God and (minimally) Christianity. The second considers the revaluation of values, which holds that all existing (theistic, moral, metaphysical, and/or epistemological) values must be evaluated and that new values must be created. Due to

the second of these characteristics, the revaluation is tied to the will to power since it is the will to power that creates new values.

The third section is crucial to an understanding of this chapter. It begins with a problem raised by Katsafanas: The early Nietzsche proposed that philosophy is meant to pose the question of existential meaning, but the late Nietzsche seems to refute the possibility of answering this question. But Katsafanas notes that Nietzsche continues to concern himself with the problem of nihilism, so it cannot be the case that he was no longer interested in existential meaning. I then critique the solution offered by Katsafanas (which is, roughly speaking, what was said in the previous two sentences). I provide three criticisms: (i) Katsafanas fails to recognize that there are many meanings of 'nihilism' (but I grant that Nietzsche seems to have in mind the view that life is meaningless or not worth living); (ii) Katsafanas transforms a discussion of Schopenhauer into a more general discussion of philosophers/philosophy; (iii) Katsafanas focuses on texts written fourteen years apart, in which time Nietzsche's views might well have changed when the same problem can actually be located in two sections of one of Nietzsche's late books. My solution involves a close examination of the language employed by Nietzsche and I conclude that both the early and late Nietzsche were referring to the meaning of all life, and he rejects this question, instead proposing that the question can only be answered subjectively. While focusing on the meaning of particular lives does not necessarily mean a shift to subjectivity, Nietzsche suggests that what he has in mind is subjective because it is tied to an individual's perspective.

The fourth section concerns eternal return, which is discussed as both a psychological test and a metaphysical/cosmological doctrine. On the psychological

reading, eternal return has the individual consider how she would react to the prospect of living the same life repeatedly for eternity. Only an individual with a strong love of herself and of life itself would long for eternal return, so it would follow that her life was meaningful. As a metaphysical/cosmological doctrine, eternal return suggests that all things in the universe repeat themselves. But these two interpretations are not mutually exclusive. Even if the claim about reality were true, the individual could still test herself in the same way. Since eternal return is tied to questions of affirmation, and affirmation is a quality of the will to power, eternal return requires the will to power.

In the fifth section, I discuss perspectivism, which holds that all truth and sense perceptions are matters of interpretations of the world that derive from our needs (i.e., our drives and what they seek and avoid), rather than being derived from facts. Furthermore, because our drives (each of which has its own perspective) each seek to rule the others, each drive seeks to establish its perspective as the standard perspective. I then show that it was perspectivism that was being considered in the third section.

In the sixth section, I argue that the *Übermensch* is irrelevant to Nietzsche's account of existential meaning. Nietzsche was concerned with the question of existential meaning from the beginning of his career (cf. BT 7) and still held this concern late into his career. For this reason, it becomes striking that the *Übermensch* is not really discussed in any work other than *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. To further this argument, I consider two of the last appearances of the *Übermensch* and dismiss the first because it only says that a historical figure was not an *Übermensch*. The second is then dismissed because it blatantly contradicts *Zarathustra*. I also assess the possible response that the term "higher

men" carries the same meaning, but this, too, is rejected because that term is used in *Zarathustra* to designate a different class of individual from the *Übermensch*.

I. The Death of God

The death of God is a central concept in Nietzsche's philosophy, and is that which I argue constitutes the foundation of his account of existential meaning. Douglas Burham defines it, in *The Nietzsche Dictionary*, as follows: "Belief in God – and the values that go with such belief – is no longer possible or relevant within modernity. This is both a liberation but also a crushing blow (for it means that the burden of creating and justifying values falls upon the human). Here, 'death' means old, weak, irrelevant, but also historical, transient and certainly not eternal." (92-93) This is important for the question of existential meaning in three ways. The death of God, firstly, discounts supernatural or transcendental accounts of the meaning of life (i.e., those accounts according to which the meaning of life relies upon something outside of the natural or immanent realm, such as God). This is quite straightforward: If it is no longer possible or relevant to believe in God, then we cannot rely upon God to grant meaning to existence. The death of God, secondly, involves the transference of responsibility for value creation and justification from God to humans. Considering existential meaning something that has value (or, alternatively, that is or expresses a value) offers reasonable grounds on which to claim that the death of God renders humans responsible for the creation and justification of existential meaning. The death of God, thirdly, renders existing supernatural/transcendental accounts of existential meaning implausible: these accounts are not eternally plausible because 'death' means the end of eternity, meaning that

supernatural/transcendental accounts lose their justification (namely God) upon the death of God.

Nietzsche first introduced the death of God in *The Gay Science* in a passage in which he warns that "given the way of men, there may still be caves for thousands of years in which his shadow will be shown" and adds that "we still have to vanquish his shadow, too." (GS 108) For our purposes, we can identify two types of caves on which God's shadow is projected: Firstly, modern supernatural/transcendental accounts of existential meaning; and secondly, pessimistic accounts of existential meaning. The first of these requires little justification: Despite the death of God, these theorists seek supernatural/transcendental justification for existence through God. The second requires more justification, but it is related to claims made in the preceding chapters. Pessimistic accounts of existential meaning (or at least those like Schopenhauer's) still exist within the shadow of Christianity because they deny life, view it as unjustified, and suggest that it should be negated—but, as we have previously seen, this is just the ascetic ideal. As the ascetic ideal is a pious one, and the pessimist advocates it, pessimism falls under the shadow of Christianity and thus projects the shadow of God (who is dead) upon the walls of its caves.

The second entrance to the death of God, which also appears in *The Gay Science*, is much more dramatic. A "madman" in a market place seeks God and is taunted. He jumps into the midst of those who taunt him and informs them as to the fortune of God: "*We have killed him*—you and I. All of us are his murderers." (GS 125) This, of course, raises a number of questions. Most importantly, how could we have killed God? Have we unfastened the Earth from the Sun? What does it mean for the planet's movement, and do

directions still exist? "Are we not straying as if through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space?" (ibid.) Have we not robbed the planet of its heat? Is it not now eternally light, requiring lanterns to be lit in the morning? And, of course, "Do we hear nothing as yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God? Do we smell nothing as yet of the divine decomposition? Gods, too, decompose. God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him." (ibid.) In the next paragraph, Nietzsche adds,

"How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it? There has never been a greater deed; and whoever is born after us—for the sake of this deed he will belong to a higher history than all history hitherto." (GS 125)

The "madman" then falls silent, observes his listeners, and notices that they are equally silent and staring at him in shock. Throwing his lantern on the ground, whereupon it breaks into pieces and goes out, he utters his realization: He came too early, before his time, before the deed. The ending of this paragraph, however, draws this into question: "This deed is still more distant from them than the most distant stars—*and yet they have done it themselves.*" (GS 125) Given these words, it is possible God is already dead when the "madman" makes his pronouncement: God is dead, but nobody (save for the "madman") has yet realized it. Could the market place (or even the world as a whole) be a cave upon the walls of which God's shadow is cast and mistaken for God himself? Later the same day, Nietzsche continues, the "madman" barged into a number of churches "and there struck up his *requiem aeternam deo.*" (ibid.) When expelled and confronted,

the "madman" only said: "What after all are these churches now if they are not the tombs and sepulchers of God?" (ibid.)

The first long series of questions relates to the centrality of God in our modes of justification and interpretation, and considers what would happen if we were to remove God entirely. The first question—which is carried into the following paragraph when the "madman" asks if this deed is not greater than we are capable of, thus suggesting that we could only seem capable of it were we to become gods (or were we already gods)—can be otherwise posited as "How could imperfect, finite beings bring about the death of a perfect, infinite being?" The majority of the others fall into a second general question: "Would everything not change were we to execute the centre of our worldview?" The ending of this paragraph simply asks why the death of God has not generated any sensory data—auditory (the sound of the gravediggers burying God) or olfactory (the smell of God decaying).

Nietzsche next turns to a different line of questioning. Firstly, how does one console oneself (or even another) for murdering a deity? Secondly, following from the first line of questioning, how will we clean ourselves? Supposing that water still even exists, how could we help clean one another when covered in God's blood? Further, if water does still exist, is there enough water for every individual on the planet to clean herself (and her knife) or be cleaned? This deed is, of course, greater than any that has ever been accomplished, and Nietzsche believes it will cause history and our offspring to become higher together.

Finally, as I have previously mentioned, the last paragraph allows for two different interpretations. On the one hand, we can accept that the "madman" simply

jumped the gun, announcing the death of God before it had actually come to pass. On the other hand, we can conceive of the "madman" as a man who alone knows God is dead and seeks to inform others, only to discover that they were not prepared for this news. In this second scenario, we could add that the "madman" "came too soon" in the sense that he sought to bring the people the news before they were ready to hear it. On either scenario, however, there is a question that should be asked: Is the "madman" Zarathustra? *The Gay Science* immediately preceded *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. In the prologue of the latter book, Zarathustra remarks to himself of the death of God (cf. Z Prologue 2) before walking into the market place of a town (where many people are congregated in anticipation of a tightrope walker's performance) and preaching of the coming of the *Übermensch* and explaining that God has died (cf. Z Prologue 3). This is a question we should likely keep in mind.

The last occurrence of the death of God in *The Gay Science* comes in the Fifth Book, which was added in the second edition of the book, following the publication of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and *Beyond Good and Evil*. As such, I was hesitant to include it before turning to a discussion of the death of God in *Zarathustra*, but it casts light upon an earlier question. I asked if it might be the case that the "madman" simply brought the news to others too soon for it to be well received. It appears that this is the case since, after clarifying that he is talking about the death of God, Nietzsche now writes, "But in the main one might say: The event itself is far too great, too distant, too remote from the multitude's capacity for comprehension even for the tidings of it to be thought of as having *arrived* as yet." (GS 343) This notion of distance is the same as that which the "madman" presented (cf. GS 125), so it would seem that both depict a scenario in which

most individuals are not prepared to hear of the death of God. Importantly, moreover, Nietzsche here discusses what it means for God to be dead: It means, for one thing, that anything build upon religious faith "must collapse now that this faith has been undermined"; so, for example, all European morality must collapse (GS 343). Neither philosophers nor free spirits are worried or fearful for themselves, perhaps being consumed by "the *initial consequences* of this event" (ibid.). They,

...feel, when [they] hear the news that "the old god is dead," as if a new dawn shone on [them]; their heart overflows with gratitude, amazement, premonitions, expectation. At long last the horizon appears free to [them] again, even if it should not be bright; at long last [their] ships may venture out again, venture out to face any danger; all the daring of the lover of knowledge is permitted again; the sea, [their] sea, lies open again; perhaps there has never yet been such an "open sea." (GS 343)

Nietzsche draws a sharp distinction between the death of God as experienced by a member of the general public and as experienced by a philosopher or free spirit. For the former, the death of God is a terrifying prospect because it dismantles entire systems of thought from morality to metaphysics. Left without their old guidance, they are terrified. For the latter, the death of God liberates for precisely the same reason as it terrifies the masses: she is now free to consider things anew from beyond good and evil, from beyond any established morality, from beyond established worldviews. Each value and sense must be established anew, so she is free to interpret and evaluate without encountering preconceptions. She is a painter with a blank canvas and the freedom to experiment with colours with no rules dictating her use of colour or any other artistic element. She is a writer in a world in which no plot has ever been written, and no rules govern how or what she might write. She is a musician in a world with no previous melodies or rhythms, and no rules to govern what she composes and plays. She is free in a way in which nobody

has been at least since the advent of Christianity—nobody except, perhaps, for God; but God is now dead.

In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, the death of God is a recurring theme from the very beginning. In the Prologue, Zarathustra meets an old saint in the forest and, after they part ways, Zarathustra speaks aloud to himself: "Could it be possible? This old saint in the forest has not yet heard anything of this, that *God is dead!*" (Z Prologue 2) In the next section, Zarathustra again speaks of the death of God in the market place of a town (cf. Z Prologue 3). The death of God is not explicitly referenced again until the Second Part. This occurs in "On the Pitying," in which Zarathustra begins to speak of the manner in which God died. Here, Zarathustra relates the devil's words to him: "God is dead; God died of his pity for man." (Z II.3) This discussion is continued in the Fourth Part. Here, in "Retired," Zarathustra speaks with an old pope about the death of God, asking, "You know *how* he died? Is it true what they say, that pity strangled him, that he saw how *man* hung on the cross and that he could not bear it, that love of man became his hell, and in the end his death?" (Z IV.6) After a period of hesitancy to respond, the old pope says,

When he was young, this god out of the Orient, he was harsh and vengeful and he built himself a hell to amuse his favorites. Eventually, however, he became old and soft and mellow and pitying, more like a grandfather than a father, but most like a shaky old grandmother. Then he sat in his nook by the hearth, wilted, grieving over his weak legs, weary of the world, weary of willing, and one day he choked on his all-too-great pity. (Z IV.6)

In his response, Zarathustra criticizes the dead God for having "wreaked revenge on his pots and creations for having bungled them himself" because "that was a sin against *good taste*." (Z IV.6) Zarathustra's proclamation ends with the words, "There is good taste in

piety too; and it was this that said in the end, 'Away with *such* a god! Rather no god, rather make destiny on one's own, rather be a fool, rather be a god oneself!'" (ibid.)

There are a lot of elements to the discussion in "Retired," so they should be explored. God ultimately dies by choking on pity, but this follows an attitudinal shift. Before the attitudinal shift is discussed, it is important to quickly consider Nietzsche's critique of pity. In *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche terms Christianity "the religion of *pity*" (A 7). "Pity," he continues, "stands opposed to the tonic emotions which heighten our vitality: it has a depressing effect. We are deprived of strength when we feel pity. That loss of strength which suffering as such inflicts on life is still further increased and multiplied by pity. Pity makes suffering contagious." (ibid.) The issue with pity, then, is that it is a strength-reducing emotion or affect by means of which suffering becomes contagious. For our current purposes, this is explanation enough. The first attitudinal shift is that God (having previously been strong) became weak. The second attitudinal shift is that God grew tired of willing. To connect the two, consider this offering from *Beyond Good and Evil*: "The 'unfree will' is mythology; in real life it is only a question of *strong* and *weak* wills.'" (BGE 21)

In the section of *Zarathustra* following that last quoted, Zarathustra encounters the murderer of God, a humanoid creature "sitting by the way, shaped like a human being, yet scarcely like a human being—something inexpressible." (Z IV.7) This humanoid creature that murdered God, the murderer of divinity, tells Zarathustra why God was murdered:

"But he *had* to die: he saw with eyes that saw everything; he saw man's depths and ultimate grounds, all his concealed disgrace and ugliness. His pity knew no shame: he crawled into my dirtiest nooks. This most curious, overobtrusive,

overpitying one had to die. He always saw me: on such a witness I wanted to have revenge or not live myself. The god who saw everything, *even man*—this god had to die! Man cannot bear it that such a witness should live." (Z IV.7)

As before, we are informed that pity played a role in God's death, but we are now also informed that His omniscience (or, more accurately, omniperception: to see or perceive all things) contributed to the reasoning for his death. Seeing all, including the deepest nature of humanity, God was deemed unbearable and His life could not be permitted to continue. Consequently, there is no objective and all-seeing perspective—which, as we shall see, directly links the death of God to perspectivism. The death of God provides one window into an observation Nietzsche makes in *On the Genealogy of Morality*: 'There is *only* a perspectival seeing, *only* a perspectival "knowing"' (GM III.12). According to this statement, all sight and knowledge are matters of perspective. More specifically, however, affects are involved. The last quotation continues as follows: 'and *the more* affects we allow to speak about a matter, *the more* eyes, different eyes, we know how to bring to bear on one and the same matter, that much more complete will our "concept" of this matter, our "objectivity" be.' (ibid.) Perspective thus relates to affects; but Nietzsche also introduces a concept of objectivity according to which objectivity simply consists of the convergence of perspectives concerning a particular object of sight or knowledge. Earlier in this section, Nietzsche says that objectivity is not "disinterested contemplation" (which he dismisses as "a non-concept and absurdity") but, instead, "the capacity to have one's pro and contra *in one's power*, and to shift them in and out" (ibid.). By doing so, "one knows how to make precisely the *difference* in perspectives and affective interpretations useful for knowledge." (ibid.) Nietzsche's conception of objectivity, then, consists of the ability to switch between a multiplicity of "perspectives and affective

interpretations," (that are drawn from the observations of multiple individuals) which have utility for knowledge (ibid.). Such a conception of objectivity, however, is only necessary in the absence of an all-seeing, all-knowing God, since such a deity would have access to an absolute perspective (i.e., this God would know and see any object as it actually is) and could provide humanity with this knowledge in some way. Thus, the death of God is necessary for perspectival sight and knowledge, which then allow for Nietzsche's conception of objectivity.

The death of God has significant consequences. In a section of *The Gay Science* that we have already seen, Nietzsche provides one such consequence: The death of God causes the "collapse" of "the whole of our European morality," since European morality has theistic roots (GS 343). This point is again taken up in the ninth section of *Twilight of the Idols*, "Skirmishes of an Untimely Man," in which Nietzsche contends that English moral philosophers still cling to Christian even while accepting that God does not exist. These English moral philosophers "now believe all the more firmly that they must cling to Christian morality," and "rehabilitate" themselves following every decline of theology by demonstrating their moral fanaticism (TI "Skirmishes" 5). Nietzsche suggests that the proper response is much different and begins with the observation that giving "up the Christian faith" revokes one's "right to Christian morality" (ibid.). We must remember, says Nietzsche, that "Christianity is a system, a *whole* view of things thought out together," and, therefore, Christianity as a whole is broken when belief in God is broken out of it (ibid.). Nietzsche reminds the reader, "Christian morality is a command" with a transcendent origin, "is beyond all criticism" and "all right to criticism," and "has truth only if God is the truth," for which reason "it stands and falls with faith in God." (ibid.)

Nietzsche diagnoses English moral philosophy as resting upon the supposedly intuitive knowledge of "good and evil," thus supposing that Christianity is no longer necessary to justify morality, but this is merely "the *effects* of the dominion of the Christian value judgment and an expression of the strength and depth of this dominion" (ibid.). Instead of having freed morality from Christianity, Nietzsche contends that English moral philosophers have simply forgotten "the origin of English morality" (Christianity) and, having forgotten its origins, they fail to comprehend that it must be justified (ibid.). Nietzsche believes that the ultimate consequence for English moral philosophy is that, for them, "morality is not yet a problem." (ibid.)

While they do not explicitly reference the death of God, these passages discuss a lack of belief in God, which we have already seen to be the default position associated with the death of God (faith in God is impossible or irrelevant within modernity). Being inseparable from a lack of faith, the death of God causes the dissolution of morality. Although the death of God is linked to the dissolution of Christian morality in Nietzsche's works, I would argue that what is actually at stake is the dissolution of all morality. As a European from a Christian background, Nietzsche is primarily concerned with the effects of Christianity (and, to a lesser extent, Judaism, from which Christianity arose) on European society, but we need not limit ourselves to a discussion of Christianity. When Nietzsche writes, "[English moral philosophers] therefore suppose that they no longer require Christianity as the guarantee of morality," (TI "Skirmishes" 5) we can extrapolate to a more general claim: moral philosophers "suppose that they no longer require [theism] as the guarantee of morality" (cf. TI "Skirmishes" 5). Since Nietzsche seeks life affirmation instead of life denial, and views transcendental religions that promise an

afterlife or some other sort of reward in the form of an escape from a flawed existence as denying life, a moral system derived from any such religion is rendered suspect. This would considerably increase the scope of the death of God and its associated criticism (and ultimate dissolution) of morality to include many other religions, such as Buddhism (as a result of nirvana, the transcendent state which individuals might reach to escape the negative features associated with life); Islam (according to which the souls of the righteous dead enter into Jannah, and the souls of evildoers go to Jahannam); and Hinduism (through moksha, the state by which an individual escapes the suffering of samsara, the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth). So long as morality derives from a life-denying religion, it would then fall to the death of God, since morality itself requires such a metaphysical justification. Paganism, however, would be exempt because Nietzsche views pagan religions as life-affirming; he goes so far as to say that, to pagans, "god" is the word for the great Yes to all things' (A 55). The death of God, then, brings about the dissolution of morality with the possible exception of any pagan morality.

The death of God brings about a broader death of objectivity (except, of course, for Nietzsche's conception of objectivity) that is related to perspectivism. As we have already seen, God's murderer says the following to Zarathustra: "The god who saw everything, *even man*—this god had to die! Man cannot bear it that such a witness should live." (Z IV.7) According to this, God was (and had to be) murdered because he saw everything; but "saw everything" can be read to include that God was both all-seeing (in terms of the sensory capacity of vision) and omniscient. This would render the statement "the God who both saw and knew everything could not be allowed to live". Yet such a witness would be one capable of observing objectivity: the independent existence or truth

of any given thing. It is thus striking that Nietzsche's statement that 'There is *only* a perspectival seeing, *only* a perspectival "knowing"' (GM III.12) occurs after he has already proclaimed the death of God in both *The Gay Science* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. This is not coincidental, as I will argue, but instead implies that perspectivism is grounded by the death of God; perspectivism, in turn, is the death of (non-Nietzschean) objectivity in such forms as sight, knowledge, and morality.

To demonstrate that the death of God provides the foundations necessary for the will to power, we could simply look to sections of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* that were discussed in the previous chapter. According to Zarathustra in "On Redemption," "The will is a creator," (Z II.20) and Zarathustra refers to his "creative will" in "Upon the Blessed Isles" (Z II.2). This might provide the answer we need, since many religions take God to be the creator of meaning and value, and the absence of a deity creates both the possibility and the necessity to create new meaning and values, which are created through the will to power. A stronger case for this claim can be made through reference to two texts: *The Antichrist* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. In *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche says that gods have two alternatives: If "they are the will to power, ...they remain a people's god," but if they are "the incapacity for power, ...they necessarily become good." (A I.16) This is closely connected to a previously cited section of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, "Retired," in which the pope tells Zarathustra that God became good: "Eventually...he became old and soft and mellow and pitying, more like a grandfather than a father, but most like a shaky old grandmother." (Z IV.6) Provided that "soft and mellow and pitying" (ibid.) means 'good', then this would imply the following: Having become good, God is no longer the will to power and is, thus, no longer the people's god; and God is "the

incapacity for power" (A I.16). God becomes good in the first place by being "the incapacity for power," but only God as will to power can be "a people's god," so a good God is not the people's god. This point is then explicitly extended to Christianity in *The Antichrist*:

Wherever the will to power declines in any form, there is invariably also a physiological retrogression, decadence. The deity of decadence, gelded in his most virile virtues and instincts, becomes of necessity the god of the physiologically retrograde, of the weak. Of course, they do not *call* themselves weak; they call themselves "the good". (A I.17)

Not only does this passage follow a subsection beginning with the words "A critique of the *Christian conception of God*," (A I.16) two paragraphs after the above block quotation, Nietzsche begins to attack Christian theologians (and those who "submit to [their] simplicity") and the Christian God (A I.17). The relationship between the death of God and the will to power can be summarized as follows: As will to power, God is strong, and that strength is then extended to believers; but when God becomes weak, "the incapacity for power," or decadent, believers become weak or "good". Since God is weakened in *The Bible* (compare the God of the Old Testament to that of the New Testament), Christianity weakens the will to power. Following the death of God, however, the will to power can be developed by psychology (cf. BGE 23), free from continued weakening by God and Christianity.

Nietzsche ties the death of God to the question of existential meaning in *The Will to Power*. Firstly, "[e]xtreme positions are...succeeded...by extreme positions of the opposite kind." (WP 55) When we accept the death of God and the dissolution of morality, we come to believe "in the absolute immorality of nature, in aim- and meaninglessness" by psychological necessity (ibid.). This is the point at which nihilism

emerges, but it is not because we are now less pleased with existence 'but because one has come to mistrust any "meaning" in suffering, indeed in existence.' (ibid.) Nietzsche ends the paragraph as follows: "One interpretation has collapsed; but because it was considered *the* interpretation it now seems as if they were no meaning at all in existence, as if everything were in vain." (ibid.) The death of God here creates a problem for existential meaning because, by bringing about the dissolution of morality, it creates the belief that nature is absolutely immoral, and that everything lacks aim and meaning. As a result, we no longer believe that either suffering or existence can be meaningful. All of this is the case because it was belief in God and the world as essentially moral that were previously taken to provide our suffering and existence with meaning. Accordingly, the death of God and the dissolution of morality create the impression that existence and everything within it are meaningless and vain. An account of existential meaning following the death of God must therefore combat nihilism and provide a new interpretation of existence. But this begins with the revaluation of values.

II. The Revaluation of values

The revaluation of values is intimately tied to Nietzsche's conception of "*new philosophers*" who he understands as "strong and original" individuals with the capacity (having sufficient strength and originality) 'to provide the stimuli for opposite valuations and to revalue and invert "eternal values"' (BGE 203). The revaluation becomes more specific in the Preface of *On the Genealogy of Morality*, wherein Nietzsche identifies a "*new challenge: ...a critique of moral values, for once the value of these values must itself be called into question*" (GM Preface 6). In *The Nietzsche Dictionary*, though, Douglas Burnham observes in "revaluation (of all values)" that the revaluation extends

beyond morality to a "critique of metaphysical beliefs, which implicitly contain values within them" (282). Burnham points to a section of *Twilight of the Idols* called 'How the "True World" Finally Became a Fable'. In this section, Nietzsche identifies six stages of "*The History of an Error*" beginning with the observation that the "true world" was originally "attainable for the sage, the pious, the virtuous man; he lives in it, *he is it.*" (TI "True World") The "true world" next became 'unattainable for now, but promised for the sage, the pious, the virtuous man ("for the sinner who repents").' (ibid.) In the third stage, the "true world" becomes "unattainable, indemonstrable, unpromisable; but the very thought of it—a consolation, an obligation, an imperative." (ibid.) The fourth stage sees the "true world" becoming "unattainable? At any rate, unattained. And being unattained, also *unknown*. Consequently, not consoling, redeeming, or obligating: how could something unknown obligate us?" (ibid.) In the fifth stage, the "true world" (now dubbed "'true" world') is "an idea which is no longer good for anything, not even obligating—an idea which has become useless and superfluous—*consequently*, a refuted idea: let us abolish it!" (ibid.) Finally, in the sixth stage, "we have abolished" the "true world," which then raises the question of which world remains; Nietzsche suggests that the apparent world no longer remains either because it was abolished with the "true world" (ibid.).

Burnham notes that Nietzsche connects each metaphysical and epistemological issue "arising with respect to the true world" to "values and obligations." (Burnham 282) In the first stage, the true world can only be attained by "the sage, the pious, the virtuous man," which requires an individual wishing to attain the true world to live according to the values and obligations of one of these types of individual (at which time they are able to immediately access the true world); this is, however, the stage which Nietzsche

considers the best because it is "relatively sensible, simple, and persuasive." (TI "True World") The second stage makes the true world akin to heaven: It cannot be immediately accessed or attained, but instead becomes a world one can someday attain by living as a sage, pious, or virtuous man (or by seeking repentance for one's sins). It is at the second stage that problems begin to emerge, according to Nietzsche: While the idea of the true world progresses, "it becomes more subtle, insidious, incomprehensible" and "it becomes Christian" (ibid.) In the third case, we see the spectre of the "Königsbergian" (i.e., the Kantian): The "very thought" of the true world consoles us while simultaneously producing "an obligation, an imperative," so Nietzsche compares it to the original conception of the true world (the first stage) "but seen through mist and skepticism." (ibid.) The idea is now "elusive, pale, Nordic" and Kantian (ibid.), so it then provokes Kantian values and obligations. Nietzsche connects the fourth stage with "reason" and "positivism," so it is around these that our values and obligations revolve in this stage (ibid.). The fifth stage creates a new obligation: Since the true world is now recognized as useless, we are obligated to abolish it; the value is less clear. In the final stage, we are left with a blank slate of existence and nature (there is neither a "true world" nor an "apparent world"), which might suggest that value and obligation now come together: Our obligation is to create new values, create a world, make sense of the barren nature of existence and nature to such an extent that something meaningful emerges.

Beyond Good and Evil gives more reason to believe that the revaluation must include a critique of metaphysical beliefs. Firstly, Nietzsche questions whether morality and metaphysics are truly separable. He speaks of what he gradually realized about "every great philosophy so far," the second part of which is "that the moral (or immoral)

intentions in every philosophy constituted the real germ of life from which the whole plant had grown." (BGE 6) In other words, philosophy is always derived from intentions of a moral or immoral nature. Moreover, explaining, "how the abstrusest metaphysical claims of a philosopher really came about" requires that one ask first: "at what morality does all this (does *he*) aim?" (ibid.) Metaphysical assertions, as those deriving from a branch of philosophy, must be understood by considering the morality to which the work (and the philosopher in question) aims. From this can be derived one reason to believe that the revaluation must include a critique of metaphysical beliefs: If metaphysics contains (or emerges from) moral perspectives, it must include (or be driven by) moral values. In order to critique the moral underpinnings of metaphysics, it would seem to be necessary to critique the metaphysical system itself. Secondly, Nietzsche questions metaphysics as resting upon a fundamental "*faith in opposite values*." (BGE 2) Nietzsche counters that it is possible to doubt (i) "whether there are any opposites at all," and (ii) "whether these popular valuations and opposite values on which the metaphysicians put their seal, are not perhaps merely foreground estimates, only provisional perspectives" (ibid.). While "the true, the truthful, the selfless may deserve" value, there remains the possibility that "deception, selfishness, and lust" might have "a higher and more fundamental value for life" (ibid.). Accordingly, "what constitutes the value of these good and revered things" could turn out to be their secret relation and involvement "with these wicked, seemingly opposite things—maybe even one with them in essence." (ibid.) So, Nietzsche suggests that we should carefully consider the value of metaphysical claims not only because they rest upon morality but also because they uncritically presuppose the existence of opposites (or opposite values) that might not even exist.

Nietzsche, however, did not consider the revaluation of values his own invention. Instead, he identified it as a Judaeo-Christian invention, as he explains in *Beyond Good and Evil*, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, and *Twilight of the Idols*. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche explains that there is a "horrible, questioning, and questionable" formula to be found within Christian nomenclature: "it promised a revaluation of all the values of antiquity." (BGE 46) In the First Treatise of the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche adds: "It was the Jews who in opposition to the aristocratic value equation (good = noble = powerful = beautiful = happy = beloved of God) dared its inversion" (GM I.7). From this emerged a new type of good individual ("the miserable alone," "the poor, powerless, lowly alone"), and a new type of pious and "blessed in God" individual ("the suffering, deprived, sick, ugly") (ibid.). Christianity then inherited "this Jewish revaluation" (ibid.) as a love grown from this very "thirst for revenge" and a hatred seeking "victory, spoil, and seduction" (GM II.8). In 'The "Improvers" of Mankind' (the seventh section of *Twilight of the Idols*), Nietzsche informs the reader that Christianity is "the revaluation of all Aryan values, the victory of chandala values, the gospel preached to the poor and base, the general revolt of all the downtrodden, the wretched, the failures, the less favored" (TI "Improvers" 4). Christianity, then, is the revaluation of all noble values culminating in the victory and rebellion of the poor and base (to whom it preaches its gospel).

But, perhaps most importantly, the revaluation means that we no longer dismiss judgments because they are false but instead consider how "life-promoting, life-preserving, species-preserving, perhaps even species-cultivating" it is (BGE 4). In fact, if we were to renounce false judgments, we would be "renouncing [and denying] life" (ibid.). To Nietzsche, untruth is "a condition of life," and this recognition "means

resisting accustomed value feelings in a dangerous way," and such a philosophy would "place itself beyond good and evil." (ibid.) This is one way in which the revaluation connects to the meaning of life. When considering what constitutes meaning, we should consider how a particular judgment promotes and preserves life. A valuable judgment concerning life (i.e., a valuable judgment as to life's meaningfulness or meaninglessness) would thereby promote and preserve life. For now, we can leave it up to interpretation whether such a judgment would concern existence as a whole or an individual life. But there is further reason to tie the revaluation to existential meaning. The first piece of evidence occurs in the preface to *Daybreak*: "[W]e do not want to return to that which we consider outlived and decayed, to anything 'unworthy of belief', be it called God, virtue, truth, justice, charity" (Daybreak Preface 4). The second and third pieces are found in *Ecce Homo*. The second piece is found in "Why I Am So Wise": 'I now have the skill and knowledge to *invert perspectives*: first reason why a "revaluation of values" is perhaps possible at all to me alone.' (EH "Wise" 1). The third is found in Nietzsche's discussion of *Daybreak*: *Daybreak* is said to contain "a revaluation of all values, ...an escape from all moral values, ...an affirmation of and trust in all that has hitherto been forbidden, despised, accursed." (EH "D" 1)

The first and third of these quotes intimately connect the revaluation to morality, but both the first and second suggest that the revaluation should be considered to extend beyond moral considerations. According to the first, the revaluation is applicable to religion (as it counters God) and truth; and the second suggests that the revaluation involves the inversion of perspectives. Now, considering the revaluation in the context of existential meaning, and considering life's meaning (or a meaningful life) to be something

that has value (cf. UM III.3, TI "Socrates" 2), we can identify two objections Nietzsche might make against objective accounts of existential meaning. Firstly, an account of the meaning of life (as a whole, or even of human life as a whole) can never be true because truth does not exist; consequently, an objective account of existential meaning could never stand because not enough individuals would ever have reason to support one such account over another²⁰. The second objection is built upon the first but is intimately connected to perspective (and, thus, perspectivism). This objection must begin with an elaboration of what I call the objectivist perspective (on existential meaning): A life has, or lacks, meaning (or value) if and only if it satisfies, or fails to satisfy, certain objective conditions for having meaning. An objective condition is here simply one that comes from outside the individual in some way—namely, either from nature (natural or

²⁰ It might be objected that, since Nietzsche understands judgment as being valuable so long as it promotes and preserves life, an account might be preferred if it promotes and preserves the lives of a preponderance of individuals. Such an objection, however, would presuppose that conditions of life-promotion and life-preservation are relatively stable across individuals of a given species. Life-promotion takes on forms that are distinct from preservation: "A living thing seeks above all to *discharge* its strength" (BGE 13); "life...aims at *the expansion of power*" (GS 349); and "every living thing does everything it can not to preserve itself but to become *more*" (WP 688). Life-preservation is to merely continue living, whereas life-promotion is to discharge strength, expand one's power, and become more than one is. On the one hand, particular individuals have their own reasons to continue living (for example, one individual might choose to preserve her life to avoid causing pain to her loved ones, whereas another might make the same choice to discover what life might have in store for her). This is admittedly an extreme example taking suicide to be the opposite of life-preservation, but one does cease to preserve one's life by committing suicide, and suicide has already been discussed in the context of existential meaning by the likes of Arthur Schopenhauer (cf. WWP I §§54, 55, 57, 59, 65, 69) and Albert Camus (cf. *The Myth of Sisyphus* 5-10, 12, 22-23, 32, 38, 40-41, 48, etc.). On the other hand, it would have to be demonstrated that the discharging of one's strength, the expanding of one's power, and becoming more would mean the same thing for (at least a sufficient proportion of) different individuals in order to demonstrate that a particular objective account of existential meaning would be preferable in terms of life-promotion.

immanent objectivism) or from something outside of nature (supernatural or transcendental objectivism)—about which our beliefs are either correct or incorrect.

Nietzsche could invert the objectivist perspective and offer what I will call the subjectivist perspective: A life has, or lacks, meaning (or value) if and only if it satisfies, or fails to satisfy, certain internal or subjective conditions for having meaning. That is, a life is only meaningful if the subject judges it to be meaningful from her own perspective (through her affects or some other presumably mental factor).

III. "The value of life cannot be estimated": A problem emerges

III.i: The problem

A possible problem emerges in *Twilight of the Idols* when Nietzsche denies the possibility that "judgments of value, concerning life, for it or against it" can ever be true, going on to add that this ultimately means "*that the value of life cannot be estimated.*" (TI "Socrates" 2) This emerges as a problem in part because it seems to be an objective statement arguing that life is beyond the scope of valuation. The living, Nietzsche says, "are an interested party, ...and not judges," rendering us incapable of judging the value of life; and the dead are incapable of judging the value of life because they no longer exist (ibid.). Nietzsche could, thus, be claiming either (i) that we cannot answer the question of existential meaning, or (ii) that pessimism is the only correct response to the question of existential meaning. Paul Katsafanas notes in "Fugitive Pleasure and the Meaningful Life," however, that neither response seems correct if we consider Nietzsche's late works, which continue to discuss the problematic nature modern culture's nihilism; Katsafanas

asks (perhaps too quickly²¹), "what is nihilism but a view about the meaning of life?"

(397) I will now briefly discuss and critique Katsafanas' solution to this problem in order to motivate my own.

III.ii: Katsafanas' solution

For Katsafanas, the problem emerges because Nietzsche suggests in *Untimely Meditations* (specifically in the third Untimely Meditation, "Schopenhauer as Educator") that the question of existential meaning is the central question of philosophy, and then suggests in *Twilight of the Idols* (specifically in "The Problem of Socrates") that this very question is unanswerable. In fact, in "Socrates," Nietzsche goes so far as to say that when a philosopher sees "a problem in the value of life," it should be seen as "an objection to him, a question mark concerning his wisdom, an un-wisdom." (TI "Socrates" 2) In "Schopenhauer as Educator," Nietzsche first pronounces Schopenhauer's "greatness" to lie "in having set up before him a picture of life as a whole, in order to interpret it as a

²¹ I took issue with Katsafanas on this claim during my presentation at last year's Research Day. The issue is simple: nihilism is not only a view regarding existential meaning. Nihilism (or pessimism, as I generally call it to follow Nietzsche's usage) concerning existential meaning states that life is meaningless or not worth living; but there are also other forms of nihilism such as metaphysical nihilism, compositional or mereological nihilism; and moral or meta-ethical nihilism. Metaphysical nihilism denies the existence of objects or contends that there could be a possible world in which objects do not exist (so either objects do not exist or they might not have). Compositional or mereological nihilism holds that only foundational parts like electrons and quarks exist; when we seem to observe objects with such part, this is simply human misperception, as it is only the parts themselves that exist. Finally, moral or meta-ethical nihilism is the meta-ethical view that moral truths do not exist, such that there are no objective moral facts and morality lacks true propositions. While it seems right that Nietzsche has in mind the first type of nihilism (i.e., pessimism about existential meaning), the above demonstrates that this is not (or would not be) because it is the only type of nihilism.

whole"²² (UM III.3). The philosopher considering existence "wants to determine its value anew," Nietzsche writes, since "great thinkers" have always been "lawgivers as to the measure, stamp and weight of things"; in fact, this is their "proper task" (ibid.). When she considers life as a whole, the philosopher (as "the judge of life") asks, "what is existence worth as such?" (ibid.) I think Katsafanas is right when he says, "Put plainly: philosophers are supposed to assess the value or meaning of life." (396) After introducing Nietzsche's seeming rejection of this view in "The Problem of Socrates," Katsafanas notes that Nietzsche's comments in "Schopenhauer as Educator" could be dismissed as mere "juvenilia," and that the stance taken in "The Problem of Socrates" could be seen as Nietzsche indicating his preference for "more sober philosophical tasks" (397). But Katsafanas notes that Nietzsche then diagnoses modern culture as "[exhibiting] or [fostering] *nihilism*" where "nihilism" means "the collapse of higher values" (ibid.). Nihilism is a problem to Katsafanas because he takes higher values to be necessary to exercise the will to power and thereby achieve true (active) happiness; and this is what he takes to constitute a meaningful life for Nietzsche (cf. 415).

²² Katsafanas suggests that the greatness discussed is "the philosopher's distinction," which in turn suggests that Nietzsche implies that this is what separates philosophers from other scholars (396). However, Nietzsche makes it clear in the preceding sentence that he is referring to Schopenhauer. Writing of "what, after Kant, Schopenhauer can be to us," Nietzsche says that Schopenhauer can be the leader who leads us from "sceptical gloom or criticizing renunciation" to "the heights of tragic contemplation" and adds that it was Schopenhauer who first took this path (UM III.3). Since it is Schopenhauer that is already being discussed when Nietzsche begins speaking of this greatness, it is clear that Nietzsche is praising Schopenhauer's greatness.

III.iii: Critiquing Katsafanas' solution

While I largely agree with Katsafanas that there is a discrepancy in Nietzsche's writings that can ultimately be resolved through recognition of Nietzsche's continued concern about nihilism, there are four major issues with the ways in which Katsafanas both poses and resolves this problem. The first of these has already been noted: By presenting nihilism as only referring to the stance that life is meaningless or not worth living, Katsafanas ignores other forms that nihilism takes within philosophy (such as metaphysical nihilism, compositional or mereological nihilism, and moral or meta-ethical nihilism). That being said, I have already granted that Nietzsche seems to consider nihilism as pessimism concerning existential meaning. The second problem has also already been mentioned: By speaking of "the philosopher's distinction," Katsafanas transforms a discussion of what Nietzsche believed made Schopenhauer great into a discussion of what distinguishes the philosopher from other thinkers. This might not seem like much of a problem but, since Katsafanas is aiming to demonstrate that Nietzsche believed that a philosopher ought to discuss the meaning of life, he begs the question from the beginning—instead of describing what Schopenhauer did that made him so special, Nietzsche is suddenly saying that Schopenhauer was a philosopher who addressed philosophy as one was always meant to. Nietzsche's meaning, however, is closer to this: By revolutionizing philosophy in the way in which he addressed the question of existential meaning, Schopenhauer laid the groundwork for a new style of philosophical inquiry, and philosophers should follow (or should at least consider following) this path.

The third problem is that Katsafanas locates the problem in two texts written fourteen years apart, which allows for the possibility that Nietzsche's views had actually significantly changed. The same contradiction, in fact, seems to arise within *Twilight of the Idols* itself. While Nietzsche seems to deny the possibility of determining life's value in "The Problem of Socrates," he nonetheless writes in "Maxims and Arrows," "If we have our own *why* of life, we shall get along with almost any *how*." (TI "Maxims" 12) Consulting *Oxford Living Dictionaries*, we can see that "why" means: (i) (interrogative adverb) "For what reason or purpose;" (ii) (relative adverb) "(with reference to a reason) on account of which; for which;" or (iii) (noun) "A reason or explanation." As such, one's "*why* of life" is one's reason or purpose to live, or one's explanation of life. "How," in turn, means: (i) "[usually interrogative adverb] in what way or manner; by what means;" or (ii) "[relative adverb usually interrogative adverb] "The way in which; that." One's "*how* [of life]" would subsequently designate the way, manner, or means by which one lives. By extension, then, Nietzsche means that it is possible to survive (or even flourish through) any conditions of life so long as one has a reason or purpose to live (or, at least, understands why one lives). This appears to be a far greater contradiction than that noted by Katsafanas because the passage from "Maxims and Arrows" occurs a matter of pages before the passage from "The Problem of Socrates"²³. Furthermore, these passages are found in the same book and were written within the same year; it is necessary to add this last point because some of Nietzsche's books were written over a number of years and, in some cases, sections were originally published separately before ultimately being

²³ In Walter Kaufmann's anthology, *The Portable Nietzsche*, the former is found on page 468 and the latter on page 474.

published together. Moreover, Katsafanas implies that Nietzsche offers an objective account of existential meaning, and that is precisely where my account of this problem most significantly differs from his.

III.iv: My solution

I would first like to draw attention to a shift in Nietzsche's wording throughout the three passages we have been considering. In "Schopenhauer as Educator," Nietzsche refers not only to 'life' and 'existence,' but to "life as a whole" (which is "interpreted as a whole") and "existence...as such" (UM III.3). Let us first consider "life as a whole". Nietzsche praises Schopenhauer in a very specific way: Schopenhauer knew that "a picture of life as a whole" can only be understood by divining "the painter," and Nietzsche further claims that great philosophy always says, "this is the picture of all life, and learn from it the meaning of your own life." (ibid.) But great philosophy always also says "the reverse: only read your own life and comprehend from it the hieroglyphics of universal life." (ibid.) When Nietzsche speaks of "a picture of life as a whole," he has in mind a "picture of all life" through which one gains one's own existential meaning before then using one's own life (and, presumably, its meaning) to understand all life (and, again presumably, its meaning) (ibid.). This is, in fact, exactly how Nietzsche says that Schopenhauer should be read: first, "individually, by the individual only for himself;" and second, "through yourself in the end for everyone." (ibid.) This kind of reading allows one to first understand oneself viz. one's "own want and misery," one's "own limitedness," and learn from this how to combat these issues: "namely, sacrifice of the

ego, submission to the noblest ends, above all to those of justice and compassion." (ibid.) By so doing, we are then able to distinguish between that which really produces "human happiness" and which "only [appears] to do so" (ibid); the rest of this sentence, however, seems to be Nietzsche's own thought. Only by understanding oneself, at the end of the day, can one understand one's place in relation to others. Now, when Nietzsche poses the question of the existence of life, he renders it "what is existence worth *as such*?" (ibid.; emphasis added) The question is thus what the meaning of existence qua existence is, or what meaning existence has as such; or, even more simplistically, what meaning all existence has (by virtue of being existence). In this place, Nietzsche is thus asking what purpose existence as a whole has instead of asking the more specific question of what purpose a particular individual's existence has. So, in "Schopenhauer as Educator," Nietzsche is concerned with the meanings of both individual lives and of life as a whole.

In "Maxims and Arrows," we strangely immediately run into a bit of a problem with Kaufmann's translation; this problem is strange because it revolves around the pronoun used by a German-born- and-raised philosopher and translator to render a German word (which, in this case, functions as a pronoun). The original German reads, "Hat man sein warum? des Lebens, so verträgt man sich fast mit jedem wie?" (GD "Sprüche" 12) The issue is that Kaufmann translates both instances of 'man' as 'we', but, consulting the *Pocket Oxford German Dictionary: German-English* yields the following results for 'man': (i) "one; you;" (ii) "somebody;" (iii) "they;" and (iv) "people." There is no particular individual in mind, so it would be logical and grammatical to insert any of the aforementioned words. However, the word that fits best would be 'one' (or 'you') since there would then already be a pronoun in use when 'man' repeats; a pronoun, nonetheless,

that refers only to some unspecified individual rather than a group. So, instead of saying, "If we have our own *why* of life, we shall get along with almost any *how*," we could say, "If one/you has one's/your own *why* of life, one/you shall get along with almost any *how*" (TI "Maxims" 12). In this case, however, it is noteworthy that Nietzsche refers to meanings of particular lives rather than returning to his usage of "existence as such" to capture the meaning of all existence in "Schopenhauer as Educator," and this does not strike me as accidental.

Before the now familiar passage in "The Problem of Socrates," Nietzsche asserts that the wisest of any age have always judged life to be "*no good*." (TI "Socrates" 1) These individuals have made a doubtful, melancholic, life-weary, life-resisting sound, and even Socrates declared his life-weariness while dying. And for many (especially pessimists), this has been reason enough to say, "At least something of all this must be true!" (ibid.) Nietzsche retorts: "At least something must be *sick* here" (ibid.) Next, the great sages are characterized as "*types of decline*" whose agreement that life is not good proves only that they "agreed in some *physiological* respect, and hence adopted [and had to adopt] the same negative attitude to life" (TI "Socrates" 2). It is important to carefully examine the wording of the quotation we keep returning to, so I will render it in full before any textual analysis. Nietzsche writes,

Judgments, judgments of value, concerning life, for it or against it, can, in the end, never be true: they have value only as symptoms, they are worthy of consideration only as symptoms; in themselves such judgments are stupidities. One must by all means stretch out one's fingers and make the attempt to grasp this amazing *finesse*, *that the value of life cannot be estimated*. Not by the living, for they are an interested party, even a bone of contention, and not judges; not by the dead, for a different reason. For a philosopher to see a problem in the value of life is thus an objection to him, a question mark concerning his wisdom, an un-wisdom. (TI "Socrates" 2)

The first thing to be noticed is that these "judgments of value" in support of life's meaningfulness or meaninglessness can ultimately "never be true" (TI "Socrates" 2).

What should then be remembered is that this does not imply that such a judgment must be rejected but only that it should be determined whether that judgment serves the promotion and preservation of life (cf. BGE 4). The value of these judgments is "only as symptoms" and they are only worthy of consideration as such. From the contextualization given above regarding the great sages as "*types of decline*" whose physiology (necessarily) produced their "negative attitude to life" it would seem that one's life-conditions viz. one's health or constitution (at least physiologically) can produce particular attitudes to life, which would then suggest that the attitudes (and the judgments that they, in turn, produce) are the symptoms in question (TI "Socrates" 2). In other words, one's perspective on life emerges at least partly from attitudes produced by one's life-conditions, and both these attitudes and one's perspective on life are symptoms of one's life.

Now, the next claim is the most difficult, but it is also the most important: "*the value of life cannot be estimated*" (TI "Socrates" 2). As we have already seen, this can be taken to mean that life is incapable of being valuated, so the question of existential meaning either cannot be answered or cannot be answered in any useful way. But such an interpretation is in tension with both Nietzsche's continued preoccupation with the nihilism of western society, and his statement in "Maxims and Arrows" that having meaning in one's life allows one to survive (or flourish through) any conditions of life (cf. TI "Maxims" 12). Now, I would offer that the second of the two contradictions just

mentioned is not a contradiction at all because Nietzsche is not discussing the meanings of individual lives when he denies that life's value can be estimated, but is instead discussing the meaning of life as such. But this cannot be shown without first continuing to analyze the block quotation. We are then told that the living cannot assess the value of life because we are "an interested party, even a bone of contention, and not judges" (TI "Socrates" 2). A living being cannot assess life because she is not impartial (having an interest in the meaning of life by virtue of living), she is the matter of the dispute, and she is not a judge. The dead, of course, cannot assess the meaning of life because they no longer exist and are, thus, incapable of any assessment. Finally, seeing "a problem in the value of life" marks a philosopher as objectionable and leads one to question her wisdom (ibid.). The question that should be asked is the following: What does Nietzsche mean by "the value of life"?

We can consider two texts: "Schopenhauer as Educator," and "Morality as Anti-Nature" (the latter of which is part of *Twilight of the Idols*). In "Schopenhauer as Educator," Nietzsche tells us that when the philosopher considers existence, she "wants to determine its value anew." (UM III.3) But, more importantly, the question that the philosopher thus asks is: "what is existence worth as such?" (ibid.) While it might be argued that 'existence' and 'life' have different meanings, Nietzsche occasionally uses 'life' in this section in what appears to be the same way as he uses 'existence'. Reiterating what I previously said about this section, the philosopher asks: What is the value of existence qua existence (i.e., existence being existence)? This question is thus about life as a whole or existence as a whole. Now, there are two quotations we should consider from "Morality as Anti-Nature". The first reads, "One would require a position *outside* of life,

and yet have to know it as well as one, as many, as all who have lived it, in order to be permitted even to touch the problem of the *value* of life" (TI "Morality" 5). The second serves as an explanation of the first and can be divided into two distinct parts: (i) "When we speak of values, we speak with the inspiration, with the way of looking at things, which is part of life," and (ii) "life itself forces us to posit values; life itself values through us when we posit values." (ibid.) These quotations motivate two conclusions. The first conclusion is this: The "value of life" is the value possessed by (at least human) life as a whole; it is the value of life as such. In "Schopenhauer as Educator," Nietzsche explicitly speaks of the value of both "life as a whole" and "existence...as such," so this conclusion is consistent with that work. In "Morality as Anti-Nature," Nietzsche contends that life would have to be observed from the outside and known "as well...as all who have lived it" in order to be valued; the value of life requires intimate knowledge of all lives throughout history as they have been lived (TI "Morality" 5). The first conclusion is thus consistent with both "Schopenhauer as Educator" and "Morality as Anti-Nature". This is the second conclusion: The value of life (understood as life as a whole, or life as such) cannot be judged because the perspective through which we posit values is itself part of life, so (our) values emerge from life. These two conclusions, then, motivate a third conclusion: A perspective external to life (but still containing the knowledge of all who have lived) would be necessary to judge the value of life because it is only outside of life that we could possibly have values that are independent of life.

As I have shown, the "value of life" is the value possessed by all life or existence as such, and is, thus, separate from the question of individual meanings of lives. We have already seen that Nietzsche accepts that individual lives can be meaningful: By having

meaning in life, one can survive (or even thrive in) any life-conditions (cf. TI "Maxims" 12). From what was provided above, the value of life as a whole cannot be judged (to be meaningful or meaningless) because we would need a perspective outside of life to do so, but also because our judgments of life will always be symptoms of our attitudes that emerge from our particular life-conditions. Because our values emerge from our attitudes (which are part of our perspectives), and these attitudes emerge from life, we cannot judge the value of life impartially and any such judgment is thereby meaningless. Since our judgments about the value of life emerge from our own life-conditions, they really amount to a wrongly universalized judgment about one's own life that emerge from our perspectives: "My life is meaningful" becomes "Life is meaningful;" and "My life is meaningless" becomes "Life is meaningless." Nietzsche thinks, moreover, that the problem of existential meaning as such is a moral question and connects it to the naivety of saying, "Man ought to be such and such!" (TI "Morality" 6). This is naïve because nature produces such diverse types of humans, and the moralist simply 'paints himself on the wall and comments, "Ecce homo!" (ibid.) Again, we see an individual universalize his values, asserting them to be true of all. This is the connection between morality and the problem of existential meaning as such. The objectivist teaches that life is meaningful under such and such conditions that are held to be true, and so life is otherwise meaningless. But in so doing, she asserts that a meaningful life requires one to be a certain type of person; for example, if the meaning of life is understood as performing sufficient moral activities to be granted eternal salvation in the afterlife, then a meaningful life requires one to be (or at least act as if one is) the type of individual who performs sufficient moral activities to be granted eternal salvation in the afterlife. The

objectivist thus proposes that one ought to be (or at least act as) a certain type of individual (if one wants to live a meaningful life). But we could here ask if it is not the case that the objectivist simply values morality and her religion, and then universalizes these values such that they apply to life and not her own life. As we have already seen, Nietzsche would respond in the affirmative because the objectivist's values reflect her relationship to life: They are simply symptoms, as is her judgment.

IV. Eternal return

Thus far we have seen that the death of God is the foundation for both the will to power and the revaluation of values. In the first case, the death of God is necessary for the will to power because willing is creating, and humans can only create in the absence of a god. Furthermore, to accommodate some of Nietzsche's other statements, the death of God is necessary for the will to power because it frees humans from the weakening effects of God and Christianity, and therefore allows the will to power to be developed psychologically. In the second case, the revaluation of values is necessitated by the death of God because the death of God brings about the dissolution of all types of values derived from (most forms of) theism, and we must therefore (i) evaluate all existing values, and (ii) create new values. The second step of the revaluation intimately connects it to the will to power, since it is the will to power that creates values. We must now consider the eternal return.

Douglas Burham's entry on the eternal recurrence in *The Nietzsche Dictionary* notes that the eternal return²⁴ can be broadly interpreted as either "a metaphysical/cosmological claim concerning reality; or it is a test of – or element within

²⁴ For the most part, I will use "eternal return" to match Deleuze's wording.

– the highest affirmation of life." (118) These two types of interpretation, however, need not be viewed as mutually exclusive, for reasons that will become clear through our discussion. The eternal return is introduced towards the end of the original edition of *The Gay Science* in a section which Nietzsche titled "*The greatest weight*." The eternal return, in its first expression, is as follows:

What, [*sic.*] if some day or night a demon were to steal after you into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: "This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more [...]" [...] Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: "You are a god and never have I heard anything more divine." (GS 341)

I will offer textual analysis below in order to facilitate an understanding of how the eternal return might have evolved throughout Nietzsche's works, but it is important to mention that what Nietzsche calls "the greatest weight" is the question posed by the eternal recurrence (GS 341). As an individual encounters each thing, the eternal return demands that she consider if she would desire it eternally. Nietzsche notes that the individual would have to love herself and life in order to desire nothing more strongly than eternal return. The next work to consider is *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, since Nietzsche says in *Ecce Homo* that "[t]he basic conception of the work" is "the *idea of eternal recurrence*," which he here calls "the highest formula of affirmation that can possibly be attained" (EH "Z" 1). In the same work, Nietzsche calls eternal return the "doctrine of Zarathustra" and says it refers to the "unconditional and endlessly repeated circular course of all things" (EH "BT" 3).

In "On the Vision and the Riddle," Zarathustra teaches a "dwarf" of eternal return beginning with the observation of a gate at which two paths meet; above the gateway is

inscribed "Moment". These two paths each stretch back eternally, but Zarathustra asks whether they contradict one another eternally (i.e., by being eternal paths leading in opposite directions, and thus two eternities). Zarathustra then says,

"From this gateway, Moment, a long, eternal lane leads *backward*: behind us lies an eternity. Must not whatever can walk have walked on this lane before? Must not whatever can happen have happened, have been done, have been passed by before? And if everything has been there before—what do you think, dwarf, of this moment? Must not this gateway too have been there before? And are not all things knotted together so firmly that this moment draws after it *all* that is to come? Therefore—itsself too? For whatever *can* walk—in this long lane out *there* too, it *must* walk once more.

"And this slow spider, which crawls in the moonlight, and this moonlight itself, and I and you in the gateway, whispering together, whispering of eternal things—must not all of us have been there before? And return and walk in that other lane, out there, before us, in this long dreadful lane—must we not eternally return?" (Z III.2.ii)

In "The Convalescent," Zarathustra struggles with the weight of eternal return, which his animals first state:

"O Zarathustra," the animals said, "to those who think as we do, all things themselves are dancing: they come and offer their hands and laugh and flee—and come back. Everything goes, everything comes back; eternally rolls the wheel of being. Everything dies, everything blossoms again; eternally runs the year of being. Everything breaks, everything is joined anew; eternally the same house of being is built. Everything parts, everything greets every other thing again; eternally the ring of being remains faithful to itself. [...] Bent is the path of eternity." (Z III.13.ii)

Zarathustra responds that it is not eternal return per se with which he struggles, but rather his "great disgust with *man*" (Z III.13.ii). To Zarathustra, humans are small in both our "greatest evil" and our "best," and both must be increased (ibid.). Thus, Zarathustra voices his despair at the statements "Eternally recurs the man of whom you are weary, the small man" and "Alas, man recurs eternally! The small man recurs eternally!" This provokes his "disgust with all existence," his nausea, because even the smallest recur

(ibid.). Zarathustra then fully accepts the eternal return in "The Seven Seals (Or: The Yes and Amen Song)," as demonstrated by the repeated refrain of "*For I love you, O eternity!*" (Z III.16) Moreover, each subsection contains the following rhetorical question: "Oh, how should I not lust after eternity and after the nuptial ring of rings, the ring of occurrence?" (ibid.) Zarathustra addresses eternity as the woman he loves, the only woman from who he would want children.

While this is not the final occurrence of eternal return in *Zarathustra*, it is enough to demonstrate that eternal return can be interpreted as either a psychological test of (or in) one's affirmation of life or a metaphysical/cosmological statement about reality (i.e., all things actually return). In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche seems to plainly present the eternal return as a psychological test of the value of one's life. The demon informs the individual that she will have to live her life exactly as it has been eternally, but then the question becomes whether or not the individual would affirm life to such a degree; and Nietzsche tells us that only someone who greatly loved herself and (minimally, her) life would do so (cf. GS 341). *Zarathustra*, on the other hand, seems to present the eternal return as a metaphysical or cosmological doctrine asserting that it is a reality that all things return. In "On the Vision and the Riddle," Zarathustra asks the "dwarf" if it must not be the case that all things that happen have happened before, that all that can walk must have walked the path of eternity before, that the gateway must have been there before, and so forth (cf. Z III.2.ii). In "The Convalescent," Zarathustra's animals state that everything returns, that the universe constantly repeats itself, and Zarathustra responds that this exactly the weight which lies upon his chest: Since all things return, even lesser people will return, which fills him with nausea and disgust (cf. Z III.13.ii). Both

interpretations are supported by these texts, but they are not mutually exclusive. In the first case, notice that Zarathustra struggles with the thought of eternal return because of its consequences (cf. Z III.2.ii; Z III.13), but then later comes to proclaim his love for eternity (cf. Z III.16). Zarathustra seems to be struggling with the concept that he must live his life eternally, a life in which he has continually encountered lesser people. In fact, we are told that "all joy wants eternity" (Z III.15.iii). This then suggests an attitudinal shift: By becoming joyful, Zarathustra learns to affirm life regardless of what it may bring.

It is this psychological test that is relevant to existential meaning. By considering whether or not we would long for an eternal cycle of the lives we have lived, we gain insight into the value our life holds. If we would not wish to repeat our lives eternally, it follows that our lives hold little (if any) value to us (of course, assuming that we would not gain masochistic pleasure by at least imagining an eternal cycle of life). If we would wish to repeat our lives eternally, it follows that our lives hold value to us. In the final chapter of *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche connects eternal return to both the revaluation of all values and the will to power. First, he writes of eternal return as "the *hardest* idea," before adding, "its probable effect if it were not prevented, i.e., if all values were not revalued." (WP 1059) Second, he states that the revaluation of values provides the means to endure the eternal return before adding as a consequence: "no longer will to preservation but to power" (ibid.). Eternal return thus requires the revaluation of values and the will to power to precede it; and, since we have already seen that both of these concepts require the death of God, it is no stretch to say that eternal return likewise requires the death of God. The question that remains to be answered is how the test of

eternal return functions. This question cannot be answered with reference to the final chapter of *The Will to Power* because eternal return seems to have clearly become a metaphysical or cosmological doctrine by this point (cf. WP 1053-1067). Instead, recall features of the will to power that were discussed in the previous chapter: The will to power creates, evaluates, and interprets; and its qualities are affirmation and negation. We have already seen that eternal return is only tolerable (and even joyous) to she who affirms life (cf. GS 341; Z III.15.iii), whether it is conceived of metaphysically/cosmologically or psychologically. Since affirmation is a quality of the will to power, however, eternal return must function upon the will to power. Furthermore, as the will to power is that which creates, evaluates, and interprets, eternal return must connect to these features. So, eternal return is a test (which Nietzsche might also hold to be a cosmological reality) of the degree to which the individual has engaged in creative enterprises that would lead her to interpret her life positively, evaluate it as meaningful, and thereby lead to her affirmation of its eternal return.²⁵

V. Perspectivism

A clear articulation of perspectivism is found in *The Will to Power*. Nietzsche writes against positivism's insistence that "There are only *facts*," beginning with the retort that there are "only interpretations," since no fact can be established "'in itself'" (WP 481). More specifically, according to Nietzsche:

²⁵ This argument seems too quick, which I grant, but further support will be offered towards the end of this chapter. Within "creative enterprises," I include any creative expression of the will to power such as the creation of values, artistic creation, or self-overcoming such that an individual creates an improved version of herself.

In so far as the word "knowledge" has any meaning, the world is knowable; but it is *interpretable* otherwise, it has no meaning behind it, but countless meanings.—
"Perspectivism."

It is our needs that interpret the world; our drives and their For and Against. Every drive is a kind of lust to rule; each one has its perspective that it would like to compel all the other drives to accept as a norm. (WP 481)

Perspectivism, then, is the doctrine that knowledge derives from particular interpretations of the world that our driven by our needs (which are understood as our drives and what they seek or avoid), rather than being derived from facts. Moreover, since each drive has a particular perspective and seeks to rule the others, each drive seeks to establish its perspective as the standard perspective. This doctrine is not confined to *The Will to Power*, however. In the preface to *Beyond Good and Evil*, for instance, Nietzsche describes perspective as "the basic condition of all life" (BGE Preface). It is then carried into the first part of the book itself, "On the Prejudices of Philosophers," beginning in the context of Nietzsche's criticism of the metaphysician's belief in opposites. The belief in opposites is described as "foreground estimates, only provisional perspectives" (BGE 2) or simply "foreground estimates" (BGE 3). A little later on, belief in the truth of Kantian synthetic judgments *a priori* is described as "a foreground belief and visual evidence belonging to the perspective optics of life." (BGE 11) As seen in the discussion of the will to power in the second chapter, Nietzsche criticizes the scientific perspective of laws of nature as an anthropomorphic interpretation driven by ideals of democracy and atheism. Such an interpretation, Nietzsche submits, involves two statements: (i) "Everywhere equality before the law; nature is no different in that respect, no better off than we are;" and (ii) "*Ni Dieu, ni maître*," ("Neither God nor master") so "cheers for the law of nature!" (BGE 22) Nietzsche criticizes this interpretation because it involves the

projection of morality onto nature, and presents an alternative interpretation according to which natural events assert power claims (i.e., nature is utterly lawless and a will to power operates throughout it). The final sentence of this paragraph demonstrates the ultimate point that Nietzsche seeks to make: "Supposing that this also is only interpretation—and you will be eager enough to make this objection?—well, so much the better." (ibid.) If the alternative interpretation is deemed to only be interpretation (which Nietzsche himself accepts), it implies that the first interpretation is also only interpretation because Nietzsche believes that the former interprets the world just as well as the latter, which in turn establishes the lack of facticity of the latter.

The first thing that should be recognized is the agreement between perspectivism as discussed in *The Will to Power* and a related claim in *On the Genealogy of Morality*. In the former, Nietzsche presents our interpretations concerning the world as being driven by "our needs," which are understood as "our drives and their For and Against." (WP 481) In the latter, one aspect of Nietzsche's conception of objectivity is "the capacity to have one's pro and contra *in one's power*" (GM III.12). *The Will to Power* thus seems to be a credible source in this instance because of its fundamental agreement with the *Genealogy*. It should then be recognized that perspectivism has already been tied to the question of existential meaning. Perspectivism informs Nietzsche's denial that the value of all existence can be meaningfully judged. Recall the second and third conclusions drawn regarding this denial. The second conclusion was that the value of all life cannot be judged because all of our values emerge from life, since the perspective through which we posit values is part of life. The third comes from the second combined with the first, which was simply that "the value of life" refers to the value of all (at least human) life; in

other words, it is the value of existence as such or life as such, which means that it is the value that life/existence has as life/existence. The third conclusion was that a perspective external to life (which still contained the knowledge of all who have ever lived) would be necessary to judge the value of life because any judgment from within life is dependent upon life-derived values; so, only outside of life could we conceivably judge life according to life-independent values. This entails perspectivism because perspectivism is the doctrine that knowledge derives from particular interpretations of the world that our driven by our needs (which are understood as our drives and what they seek or avoid), rather than being derived from facts; and, furthermore, Nietzsche is asserting that our judgments about the world arise from our perspectives. These perspectives, in turn, limit the extent to which we are able to meaningfully judge life. Perspectivism, then imposes a limit on the judgment of life as a whole as meaningful or meaningless—it renders the question one from within the bounds of life itself, thus entailing that the question is not whether life as a whole has meaning but whether particular lives have meaning (cf. TI "Maxims" 12). However, because perspectivism prevents an individual from making useful judgments about life as a whole (since such statements are mere reflections of her perspective), it follows that an individual can (at most) make useful judgments about her own life. Next, since Nietzsche allows for the meaningfulness of specific lives (cf. TI "Maxims" 12), it can be concluded that Nietzsche does believe that an individual can make useful judgments about her own life (since, she would otherwise be unable to gain a sense of meaning in life, rendering her incapable of withstanding poor life-conditions).

Before connecting the pieces of Nietzsche's account of existential meaning and demonstrating that it is subjective in nature, I would like to address a possible objection

that occurred to me while writing the preceding paragraph. It could be objected that perspectivism still allows for an objective account of existential meaning using Nietzsche's conception of objectivity. Nietzsche's conception of objectivity consists of the convergence of perspectives concerning a particular object of the senses²⁶ or knowledge; but, since it involves the affects, it is not simply "disinterested contemplation" (GM III.12). It further consists of the ability to switch between a multiplicity of "perspectives and affective interpretations," (that are drawn from the observations of multiple individuals) which have utility for knowledge (ibid.). Employing Nietzsche's conception of objectivity, then, it could be argued that Nietzsche would (or at least could) allow for an objective account of existential meaning according to which what renders life meaningful or meaningless is whatever is found to do so at the convergence of perspectives. For instance, if enough people find a great deal of suffering to render life meaningless, it would be (objectively) agreed upon that a great deal of suffering renders life meaning; or, if someone suffers greatly, her life is meaningless.

This is compelling to an extent, but it fails for one simple reason: Nietzsche's conception of objectivity is not truly objective; it is inter-subjective. Suspicion should arise immediately when examining the quoted section of the *Genealogy* because there are quotation marks around every occurrence of "objectivity," suggesting that Nietzsche himself knew that what he was proposing was not objectivity. More specifically, Nietzsche's conception of "objectivity" begins with observations from particular perspectives—a subject observes an object from a particular perspective. The next stage

²⁶ While Nietzsche usually discusses perspectivism in terms of sight and knowledge, he speaks more generally of the senses in *Beyond Good and Evil* (cf. BGE 192).

is simply evaluation of the degree of agreement between particular individuals and perhaps a filling out of the object based on particular features of sensory perception (consider one individual viewing one side of a tree and another viewing another side, etc.), followed by a conclusion regarding that object. This, however, means that we begin from a subjective perspective and simply add more subjective perspectives; and at no stage is a conclusion drawn from the object itself, but only from a collection of subjective perceptions of that object. Any attempt to create an objective account of existential meaning in such a way would result in nothing more than inter-subjective agreement about what constitutes existential meaning, and it can be readily imagined that other groups would have their own agreements about what constitutes existential meaning, thus finding themselves in inter-subjective disagreement with one another. These accounts might then be combined in an effort to foster greater objectivity, but this would seem to be nothing more than a construct of objectivity resting upon inter-subjectivity, and, thus, ultimately subjectivity. Nietzsche's conception of "objectivity," therefore, cannot inform an objective account of existential meaning because it is an inter-subjective conception fundamentally rooted in subjectivity.

VI. The Irrelevance of the *Übermensch*

I grant that it is intuitively bizarre to exclude the *Übermensch*²⁷ when discussing Nietzsche's account of the meaning of life. After all, the Prologue to *Thus Spoke*

²⁷ I retain the original German because the prefix *über-* has a number of different meanings. The *Pocket Oxford German Dictionary: German-English* lists: "over; above" "during," "over; across," "over; for," and "about". Nietzsche loved, wordplay, though, so it should be asked whether he intends only one of these meanings of *über-*, or rather some combination thereof (or even most of them). To take but one example

Zarathustra includes the following pronouncement by Zarathustra: "The [*Übermensch*] is the meaning of the earth. Let your will say: the [*Übermensch*] shall be the meaning of the earth!" (Z Prologue 3) I do not deny the importance of the *Übermensch* to the discussion of existential meaning in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, but I do object that *Zarathustra* is but one work of many, and is the sole work in which the *Übermensch* is really discussed. As we have seen, Nietzsche concerned himself with the question of existential meaning as late into his career as *Twilight of the Idols*. But Nietzsche's discussion of existential meaning dates as far back as his first philosophical book, *The Birth of Tragedy* (cf. BT 7), so it is difficult to see why – if the *Übermensch* were important to his account of existential meaning – Nietzsche would discuss the *Übermensch* in just one book and then go on to write six more books. While there are three more works that briefly mention the *Übermensch*, each of these occurrences is in a very particular context. The second of these occurrences seems to pose a major problem because, if it is considered literally, Nietzsche has considerably changed his conditions for what constitutes the *Übermensch*. Moreover, a claim that Nietzsche captures the same meaning with "higher [humans]" or "higher types" does not seem to help (if it can even hold) because higher humans are discussed in *Zarathustra* itself as a separate class of individuals from the *Übermenschen*. All of these claims must be considered.

First, we should briefly consider these final articulations of the *Übermensch*. The first case occurs in a section of *Twilight of the Idols* called "Skirmishes of an Untimely

of Nietzsche's love of wordplay, the German title of *Twilight of the Idols* is *Götzen-Dämmerung*, which Walter Kaufmann notes (in his preface to that work) is a variation on Wagner's title, *Götterdämmerung* (or, *Twilight of the Gods*) (TI Editor's Preface).

Man," and is very straightforward: Nietzsche simply denies that Cesare Borgia could be considered an *Übermensch* (cf. TI "Skirmishes" 37). Since the third mention of the *Übermensch* is in *Ecce Homo* and is there discussed in the context of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, it remains only to discuss the second of these late passages concerning the *Übermensch*. This is found in *The Antichrist*, in which Nietzsche writes that a greatly successful individual is "a *higher type*, which is, in relation to mankind as a whole, a kind of [*Übermensch*]" (A 4). A possible question that emerges here is what Nietzsche means by "a kind of," but this question is left unanswered because Nietzsche simply goes on to describe such individual as fortunate "accidents" that have always been, and might always be, possible (ibid.). Nietzsche then goes on to add, "even whole families, tribes, or peoples may occasionally represent such a *bull's-eye*." (ibid.) To a reader with some familiarity with Nietzsche's work, the problem will be obvious here: According to *Zarathustra*, the *Übermensch* is not yet here and one must therefore either strive to become or make way for the *Übermensch*; and yet, according to *The Antichrist*, the *Übermensch* might have been here since the beginning in the form of a greatly successful individual. Instead of supposing the reader's familiarity with the *Übermensch*, however, I will now discuss the concept as found in *Zarathustra* with occasional reference to two very different interpretations: Heidegger's and Deleuze's.

The *Übermensch* has a number of characteristics, the first of which is presented in the Prologue to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Zarathustra proclaims, "*I teach you the [Übermensch]*. Man is something to be overcome. What have you done to overcome him?" (Z Prologue 3) He continues by explaining that the *Übermensch* is a simple natural progression: "All beings so far have created something beyond themselves; and do you

want to be the ebb of this great flood and even go back to the beasts rather than overcome man?" (ibid.) The first characteristic of the *Übermensch*, then, is the overcoming of humanity. But this immediately raises a question: What does it mean to overcome humanity? In the third volume of Heidegger's *Nietzsche*, the answer is that the *Übermensch* is the nihilistic "expressly willed negation of the previous essence of man." (vol. III, 217) To Heidegger, this is nihilistic because the will to power is affirming the negation of humanity's previous essence. To overcome humanity, in Heidegger's view, is then to overcome the previous or historical essence of humanity: to become the purest manifestation of will to power and eternal return (ibid., 216-17). In *Nietzsche & Philosophy*, Deleuze denies such a view: "The [*Übermensch*] is not a man who surpasses *himself* and succeeds in surpassing himself." (168) More specifically, Deleuze informs the reader that we cannot "follow an interpretation such as that of Heidegger who turns the [*Übermensch*] into the realisation and even the determination of the human essence." (169) To Deleuze, the essence of humanity and the world in which humans live is nothing but "the becoming-reactive²⁸ of forces," which is nihilism (ibid.).

Deleuze's answer to the question of what it means to overcome humanity is quite bleak: the overcoming of humanity involves active destruction and is typified by what Deleuze presents as "the man who wants to perish" in *Zarathustra* (174). This man is "already on the path of the [*Übermensch*]" because "he wants to be overcome" (ibid.). Active destruction is the negation of reactive forces; through eternal return, the will to nothingness becomes a will to affirmation, and the reactive forces with which it was

²⁸ The "becoming-reactive of forces" means that reactive forces separate active forces "from what [they] can do," which renders active forces reactive (64). This is achieved through the will to nothingness.

previously allied are now destroyed (cf. 70, 174). It is tempting to conclude that Deleuze actually finds himself in agreement with Heidegger: If the essence of humanity is becoming-reactive, and active destruction is the negation of reactive forces, then overcoming humanity simply involves the (affirmatively willed) negation of humanity's essence. What Deleuze is saying, however, is much bleaker than this. It begins with a further characteristic of "the man of active destruction": Such an individual is merely a parent or "ancestor of the [*Übermensch*]." (174; cf. 175) So, the essence of humanity is becoming-reactive, and overcoming humanity is achieved through active destruction (the negation of reactive forces). But an individual who longs to be overcome, who actively destroys herself, is simply an ancestor of the *Übermensch*. What Deleuze is suggesting is therefore that the precondition for *Übermenschen*—the stage of worldly existence into which *Übermenschen* enter—is the self-destruction of humanity itself. It is only by destroying the very heart of humanity that humanity can be overcome, that the *Übermensch* can come to be.

This first characteristic is sufficient for our purposes. If the *Übermensch* is a radical overcoming of humanity (which can be understood in ways including the overcoming of humanity's past essence such that one becomes the personification of will to power and eternal return; or the self-destruction of humanity to make way for the *Übermensch*), it is difficult to understand how the *Übermensch* has always been possible. Following from this, it is difficult to understand how Nietzsche could view certain families, peoples, or tribes as this ideal state of humanity or post-humanity. We could perhaps conclude that *Übermenschen* have always existed and will always exist, but are just exceedingly rare. The question would then be why Zarathustra pronounces the

Übermensch as the meaning of the earth that is yet to come, and that this is a natural surpassing of humanity (cf. Z Prologue 3). Another option would be to conclude that the *Übermensch* is simply a higher human or a higher type. But then the question would be why higher humans are discussed separately from the *Übermensch* in *Zarathustra*. Throughout much of the Fourth Part of *Zarathustra*, Zarathustra converses with higher men who include "two kings, the retired pope, the wicked magician, the voluntary beggar, the wanderer and shadow, the old soothsayer, the conscientious in spirit, and the ugliest man" (Z IV.17.ii). These men, however, are not the *Übermensch*: Zarathustra says that they "are not high and strong enough," are "mere bridges," and "signify steps"—in other words, it is from these higher men that we can expect the *Übermensch* to develop (Z IV.11). Thus, if Nietzsche captures the same meaning with "higher men" or "higher types," a contradiction arises in *Zarathustra* that would then have to be explained away.

Conclusion

The problem of existential meaning can be shown to be subjective on Nietzsche's view by examining the connections between the concepts discussed in the last chapter. We began with the death of God, which was discussed as the dissolution of (almost all) theism and all that entails theism. The death of God has many consequences such as the collapse of European morality (since it has Christian roots), the invalidity or at least irrelevance of any supernatural or transcendental account of existential meaning (since they locate existential meaning outside of the natural), and the collapse of objectivity as traditionally conceived (which, as I have argued, is really replaced by inter-subjectivity rather than genuine objectivity). There are three more major ways in which the death of God is important for existential meaning. Firstly, the will to power can be developed psychologically following the death of God. This is necessary because God became weaker in the New Testament and Christians, accordingly, became weaker; and, since Christianity is the basis of much European culture, Europeans more generally weakened. Secondly, the death of God allows for the will to power to be a creative will, since the non-existence of God means that God is not creator. Thirdly, because God and Christian values were used to interpret and evaluate life (i.e., to judge it as meaningful or meaningless), the death of God creates the impression that existence (and all that is within it) is meaningless. One task for an account of existential meaning following the death of God is, thus, to combat nihilism. These consequences of the death of God all relate to the revaluation of values, perspectivism, or the will to power.

The revaluation of values should be considered first because it helps to explain features of the will to power. The revaluation of values is largely connected to the dissolution of morality—more specifically, Nietzsche says that the new task for the philosopher is to critique moral values, evaluating their (supposed) value (cf. GM Preface 6)—but it also applies to metaphysics and epistemology. In the case of morality, the revaluation of values is a straightforward consequence of the death of God: Because the death of God includes the dissolution of morality, all moral values must be evaluated and those which are not found to be useful are discarded. From this were derived two stages of the revaluation: (i) established values are evaluated; and (ii) new values are created. Moreover, because Christianity itself involves a revaluation of values (inherited from Judaism) and Christianity is a life-denying religion, a new revaluation is necessary to affirm life. Metaphysics and epistemology are subject to the revaluation of values for two reasons. Firstly, to Nietzsche, every philosophy aims at a particular morality, so philosophy (including metaphysics and epistemology, since they are branches of philosophy) is inseparable from morality. Secondly, Nietzsche questions whether opposites (which the metaphysician accepts uncritically) even exist. This is a problem for epistemology because it brings into question the notions of truth and falsity themselves, which would make it harder to determine how we come to know anything (or, perhaps, even if we can know anything). Moreover, the revaluation of values means that we no longer reject false judgments, but instead ask what utility they have to promote and preserve life, and to preserve or even cultivate species. This is because, as falsity is part of life, rejecting false judgments means denying and renouncing life. A valuable account of the meaning of life would then be one that promotes and preserves life. But because

truth does not exist and the revaluation includes an inversion of perspectives, two possible objections to objective accounts of existential meaning were discussed. The first is roughly that the draw of an objective account of existential meaning is its purported truth; but if truth does not exist, then no particular objective account would be preferable to another due to variation in what would promote and preserve particular individuals' lives. The second employs the inversion of perspectives: Instead of having the value or meaning of life derive from outside the individual (i.e., value or meaning being either in or beyond nature), Nietzsche could object that the value or meaning of life derives from inside the individual.

In the previous chapter, we saw that the will to power creates, interprets, and evaluates. More specifically, the will to power creates new values. In order for the will to create, the non-existence of God is necessary (so that God is not taken to be the creator of all things), as already stated, so the will to power relies upon the death of God. But the will to power is necessitated by the revaluation of values because the revaluation demands existing values be evaluated and new values be created. The creation of new values requires little comment, since to create value is simply to deem something valuable. On the other hand, interpretation and evaluation have very specific meanings, which requires us to return to Deleuze's *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. Firstly, senses are interpreted while values are evaluated. The relationship between a force and a thing are its sense (i.e., a thing's sense is determined by the manner in which it relates to the force within it). Value is understood as "the hierarchy of forces which are expressed in it as a complex phenomenon" with "hierarchy" designating relations between dominant and dominated forces, or relations between wills that are obeyed and wills that obey (8). A

sense's signification is the qualitative force expressed in something (i.e., whether it is active or reactive, and its "nuance"), whereas a value is evaluated depending on "the quality of the will to power" in its corresponding object (i.e., whether it is affirmative or negative, and its "nuance") (54-55). To interpret life (understood as lives, or instances of being as opposed to physical substances) would be to ask if its overall quality is active (dominant) or reactive (dominated) and what nuance it has; by so doing, we gain a sense of life, we understand its meaning (in the sense of a definition). To evaluate life would be to ask whether its will to power is affirmative or negative and what nuance it has.

Interpretation must always come before evaluation because it is only through understanding the meaning or sense of something that we can hope to understand the extent to which its value(s) is/are valuable. The will to power would, then, create particular values, and life would be interpreted and evaluated according to these values; but (as we have already discussed and will discuss again when we return to perspectivism) this is exactly the problem that Nietzsche has with the notion of the value of life being judged. Therefore, the death of God allows for the will to power, while the revaluation of values requires it to create values, interpret senses, and evaluate values.

Eternal return was then discussed as both a psychological test of one's affirmation of life, and a metaphysical or cosmological statement about reality. If eternal return is a psychological test, the question it asks is whether an individual affirms her life to such an extent that she would choose (and even long) to live it repeatedly for the rest of eternity; only by loving herself and (at least her) life would she be able to affirm (at least the idea of) its eternal return. If eternal return is a metaphysical or cosmological statement about reality, everything within the world is in a constant cycle of becoming. The cosmological

or metaphysical interpretation is compatible with the psychological interpretation as shown through reference to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Zarathustra feels the great weight of eternal return because of its consequences (cf. Z III.2.ii; Z III.13) before declaring that he loves eternity (cf. Z III.16). What Zarathustra seems to struggle with is the thought of his life as a continuous cycle in which he has to repeatedly encounter lesser humans, but his attitude has clearly shifted when he proclaims his love for eternity, which Zarathustra seems to explain with his statement that "all joy wants eternity" (Z III.15.iii). Becoming joyful teaches (or enables) Zarathustra to affirm life regardless of any hardships. Eternal return as psychological test, though, is what is important for existential meaning. An individual would not long for the eternal return of a life she did not value (or value to a significant degree), but only for a life she did value (or value to a significant degree). Moreover, Nietzsche strongly suggests in *The Will to Power* that both the revaluation of values and the will to power must precede eternal return; and, since both the revaluation of values and the will to power must be preceded by the death of God, eternal return must likewise be preceded by the death of God. I further suggested that, since affirmation is a quality of the will to power, eternal return must function upon the will to power (which creates, interprets, and evaluates). So an individual who would affirm eternal return is one who is creative (in a broad sense including not only the creation of values but the creation of things she would take to have value), who would interpret life positively, and who would thereby assign a positive value to life (i.e., she would deem life to be meaningful).

I would like to briefly note that eternal return can be connected to Nietzsche's discussion of *amor fati*. *Amor fati* is mentioned explicitly in four places in Nietzsche's

published works (i.e., those which were not published posthumously): Once in *The Gay Science*; once in the epilogue to *Nietzsche contra Wagner*; and twice in *Ecce Homo*. In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche writes,

I want to learn more and more to see as beautiful what is necessary in things; then I shall be one of those who make things beautiful. *Amor fati*: let that be my love henceforth! I do not want to accuse; I do not even want to accuse those who accuse. *Looking away* shall be my only negation. And all in all and on the whole: some day I wish to be only a Yes-sayer. (GS 276)

In *Nietzsche contra Wagner*, Nietzsche writes, "whatever is necessary—as seen from the heights and in the sense of a *great* economy—is also the useful par excellence: one should not only bear it, one should *love* it. *Amor fati*: that is my inmost nature." (NCW Epilogue 1) Next, in a section of *Ecce Homo* called "Why I am So Clever," Nietzsche writes of *amor fati* as the measure of a human being's greatness: "one wants nothing to be other than it is, not in the future, not in the past, not in all eternity. Not merely to endure that which happens of necessity, still less to dissemble it [...] but to *love* it..." (EH "Clever" 10) The final articulation of *amor fati* in Nietzsche's published works is in his discussion of *The Wagner Case* in *Ecce Homo*. It is articulated as follows: "I am not injured by what is *necessary*; *amor fati* is my innermost nature." (EH "Wagner" 4) All of these articulations share one common feature: The love (or, in the first case, beautification) of necessity. This, however, is what the cosmological or metaphysical interpretation of eternal return preaches; because all things, events, actions, etc. return by necessity, one must love eternity, which includes necessity. This love, though, (especially in the first case) seems to involve the same thing as the psychological test of eternal return: Affirmation. In the first case, Nietzsche explicitly states that he wishes to become a "Yes-sayer," which is connected to affirmation in "Schopenhauer as Educator". In that

work, Nietzsche asserts that "the glorious, creative human being" can (via her genius) "answer the question: 'Do you affirm this existence in the depths of your heart? Is it sufficient for you? Would you be its advocate, its redeemer? For you have only to pronounce a single heartfelt Yes! – and life, though it faces such heavy accusations, shall go free.'" (UM III.3) *Amor fati*, then, has relevance to existential meaning at least insofar as it connects to eternal return.

The last concept that was discussed earlier in the chapter was perspectivism—the doctrine that knowledge derives from particular interpretations of the world that our driven by our needs (which are understood as our drives and what they seek or avoid), rather than being derived from facts. More specifically, the relevant perspective is that derived by a particular drive that has established its perspective as the dominant one over the perspectives of other drives. The most important factor is the role perspectivism plays in existential meaning. We cannot judge the value of existence as a whole because our judgments about existence derive from our particular perspectives, and these perspectives emerge from life itself. This is why the only way such a question could be answered is from outside of life, but also why we would still need knowledge from inside life to answer it. However, because Nietzsche grants the possibility of individual lives being meaningful (cf. TI "Maxims" 12) and an individual has access only to her own perspective, it follows that the question of existential meaning for Nietzsche is only one of how an individual judges her own life. The possibility of an objectivist stance derived from perspectivism and Nietzschean objectivity was considered, but then rejected on the grounds that Nietzsche's conception of "objectivity" is actually inter-subjective and thus derives from subjectivity. This means that any such objective account of existential

meaning would be merely inter-subjective and masquerading as objectivity. One issue that was raised is one that I would like to now briefly expand on: Nietzsche connects objective stances on existential meaning to morality.

Considering a part of *Twilight of the Idols* called "Morality as Anti-Nature," we can see that Nietzsche objects to objective accounts of existential meaning in part because they simply involve a moralist painting himself on a wall and commenting, "*Ecce homo!*" (TI "Morality" 6; cf. TI "Morality" 5) More specifically, they entail a moralist proclaiming that there is something that a human ought to be or do. For instance, ancient Greek perspectives often taught that an individual ought to be virtuous; and Schopenhauer taught that an individual ought to negate the will to live. The issue at stake for Nietzsche is that such a stance imposes conformity on a species characterized by "an enchanting wealth of types, the abundance of a lavish play and change of forms" (TI "Morality" 6). Such a statement is not unusual for Nietzsche. In "On the Spirit of Gravity," Zarathustra says that he answers those who ask for the way: "This is *my* way; where is yours?" and that his reason for giving such an answer is that "*the* way—that does not exist." (Z III.11.ii) In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche criticizes moral philosophers for addressing an individual and assuming that each individual has the same moral or ethical needs (cf. BGE 198), and later argues that moral codes of conduct depend on those involved (i.e., the agent and the individual upon whom she acts) (cf. BGE 221). The fundamental question, then, is why a philosopher who praised difference would be so quick to propose an objective account of the meaning of life. The quick answer is that he would not.

Nietzsche's account is subjective for one simple reason: Human life is experienced subjectively. Life is experienced by particular individuals according to their perspectives; and judged by these individuals according to their perspectives. God must be dead for the individual to judge it meaningful; she must not deny life by longing for a world beyond the natural realm. The will to power is necessary because it allows an individual to create values that are her own, not those of a god or a religion; and this, in turn, entails that values be reevaluated, since it is only by dispelling old values that new ones become necessary. The will to power further allows the individual to interpret and evaluate life. Through eternal return, the individual then tests whether or not she would affirm life; whether she judges her life to be meaningful and thus worth living even repeatedly for eternity. But all stages of this are perspectival—all derive from particular perspectives. All that matters to Nietzsche, at the end of the day, is what an individual would say at the end of the day: Would she deny or affirm life? This affirmation or denial is a further matter of perspective that we have seen emerges from affects. But by connecting eternal return to love, Nietzsche also demonstrates that what matters is an individual's passion. This is why Nietzsche's account of existential meaning is subjective: It emerges from nothing more than an individual's innermost mental states, which in turn arise from her intimate relationship with life itself.

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