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Nietzsche
Truth, Value, Tragedy

Seminar Notes

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Contents

1. Introduction: Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and Wagner

1

In the 19th century the traditional Platonic-Christian conception of human being underwent a revolution in which we are still caught up and with which we still have to come to terms. Darwin is one name often mentioned in this connection, Marx another, Freud a third. In this seminar I would like to examine some aspects and consequences of this revolution by taking a look at some of Nietzsche's writings. This examination will focus on three themes, truth, value, and tragedy. My discussion will end with a consideration of *Zarathustra*,[1] but much of it will be concerned with Nietzsche's early writings, especially *The Birth of Tragedy*.

To introduce that discussion I shall begin, however, by taking a careful look at two short essays dating from that period, at "The Pathos of Truth," dating from 1872, and "On Truth and Lie in an Extramoral Sense," dating from the following year.[2] More clearly than *The Birth of Tragedy*[3] these essays allow us to understand the nature of Nietzsche's philosophical project, his life-long struggle with nihilism. They also underscore his debt to Schopenhauer and I am convinced, notwithstanding what commentators such as Heidegger and Kaufmann have suggested, that without consideration of that debt there can be no adequate understanding of Nietzsche, and more especially of Nietzsche's understanding of truth, value, and tragedy.

2

Before turning to the two essays next time and to introduce the topic of this seminar I would like to anticipate and take a brief first look at *The Birth of Tragedy*.

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[1] References in the text are to Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin Books, 1954). Abbreviated PN.

[2] References in the text are to Daniel Breazeale, *Philosophy and Truth: Selections From Nietzsche's Notebooks of the Early 1970's*, (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1979). Abbreviated PT.

[3] References in the text are to are to Friedrich Nietzsche, *"The Birth of Tragedy" and "The Case of Wagner,"* trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1967). Abbreviated BT.

Written at the time of the Franco-Prussian War, the book is of course much more than the title suggests: not just an inquiry into the birth of tragedy, but also an analysis of its death; also an analysis of our own plight, which Nietzsche links to that death; and a call for a rebirth of tragedy, a rebirth that, Nietzsche then thought, was already announcing itself in Wagner's music drama, where such a rebirth would inevitably usher in a postmodern culture.

As is well known, Nietzsche blames the death of Attic tragedy on the poet Euripides. But behind Euripides stands Socrates. In blaming Socrates Nietzsche is not so much attacking the historical Socrates as a tendency that he takes to be both life denying and fundamental to our modern culture. Nietzsche's Socrates is a construct that figures Descartes even as it draws on material taken from Plato, Xenophon and especially Aristophanes.

Key to our spiritual situation is a naïve trust in the power of reason to lead us to the only life worth living:

> The most acute word, however, about this new and unprecedented value set on knowledge and insight was spoken by Socrates when he found that he was the only one who acknowledged to himself that he knew *nothing*, whereas in his critical peregrinations through Athens he had called on the greatest statesmen, orators, poets, and artists, and had everywhere discovered the conceit of knowledge. To his astonishment he perceived that all these celebrities were without a proper and sure insight, even with regard to their own professions, and that they practiced them only by instinct. "Only by instinct": with this phrase we touch upon the heart and core of the Socratic tendency. With it Socratism condemns existing art as well as existing ethics. Wherever Socratism turns its searching eyes it sees lack of insight and the power of illusion; and from this lack it infers the essential perversity and reprehensibility of what exists. Basing himself on this point, Socrates conceives it to be his duty to correct existence: all alone, with an expression of irreverence and superiority, as the precursor of an altogether different culture, art, and morality, he enters a world, to touch whose very hem would give us the greatest happiness. (BT 87)

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Nietzsche calls the Greeks the chariot-drivers of every subsequent culture. (BT 94) Socrates is one of these, indeed the most important, for he is the model of the theoretical man.

> In order to vindicate the dignity of such a leader's position for Socrates, too, it is enough to recognize in him a type of existence unheard of before him: the type of the *theoretical man* whose significance and aim it is our next task to try to understand. Like the artist, the theoretical man finds an infinite delight in whatever exists, and this satisfaction protects him against the practical ethics of pessimism with its Lynceus eyes that shine only in the dark. Whenever the truth is uncovered, the artist will always cling with rapt gaze to what still remains covering even after such uncovering; but the theoretical man enjoys and finds satisfaction in the discarded covering and finds the highest object of his pleasure in the process of an ever happy uncovering that succeeds through his own efforts. (BT 94)

Art is content with appearance. It lets it be. This ability to let what appears be, presupposes a certain renunciation. The artist does not insist on being, as Descartes put it, the master and possessor of nature. So understood all genuine art is attended by an aura of tragedy. It is born of the recognition that we human beings lack the power to so master reality that we are able to secure our existence.

Science, on the other hand, wants to seize and possess reality, failing to recognize the human being's final impotence. Science covers up that impotence. Over its progress presides thus the

> profound illusion that first saw the light of the world in the person of Socrates: the unshakable faith that thought, using the thread of causality, can penetrate the deepest abysses of being, and that thought is capable not only of knowing being, but even of *correcting* it. (BT 95)

Nietzsche understands modern science and even more our technology as the triumph of the Socratic understanding of reality. The human capacity to know is here made the measure of reality. What is real is equated with what we can grasp or comprehend. But we can grasp and comprehend only what has a certain hardness and endures. Being thus

comes to be understood in opposition to time. But if, as Nietzsche is convinced, reality and temporality cannot be divorced, then a metaphysics that thinks being against time, even as it claims to seize the essence of reality, has to alienate us from reality. That Nietzsche's Socrates should resemble Descartes is no surprise.

4

Nietzsche's Socrates is an optimist. He believes in the power of reason to lead us to that happiness of which we human beings are capable. "Hence the image of the *dying Socrates*, as the human being whom knowledge and reasons have liberated from the fear of death, is the emblem that, above the entrance gate to science, reminds all of its mission — namely, to make existence appear comprehensible and thus justified." (BT 96) Promising a conquest of the fear of death, the image of the dying Socrates promises also the conquest of the egoism that supports such fear, an egoism that has to lead to pessimism, as Schopenhauer had shown to Nietzsche's satisfaction.

> By contrast with this practical pessimism, Socrates is the prototype of the theoretical optimist who, with his faith that the nature of things can be fathomed, ascribes to knowledge and to insight the power of a panacea, while understanding error as the evil *par excellence.* To fathom the depths and to separate true knowledge from appearance and error, seemed to Socratic man the noblest, even the only human vocation. And since Socrates, this mechanism of concepts, judgments, and inferences has been esteemed as the highest occupation and as the most admirable gift of nature, above all other capacities. Even the most sublime ethical deeds, the stirrings of pity, self-sacrifice, heroism, and that calm sea of the soul, so difficult to attain, which the Apollinian Greek called *sophrosune*, were derived from the dialectic of knowledge by Socrates and his like-minded successors, down to the present, and accordingly designated as teachable. (BT 97)

But this optimistic confidence in reason's power to grasp the essence of reality and to guide human beings to happiness must in the end undermine itself. Reason itself calls such optimism into question, and here Nietzsche is thinking first of all of Kant and Schopenhauer as critics of the claims of reason.

> But science, spurred on by its powerful illusion, speeds irresistibly towards its limits, where its optimism, concealed in the essence of logic, suffers shipwreck. For the periphery of the circle of science has an infinite number of points; and while there is no telling how this circle could ever be surveyed completely, noble and gifted men nevertheless reach, e'er half their time and inevitably, such boundary points on the periphery from which one gazes into what defies illumination. When they see to their horror how logic coils up at these boundaries and finally bites its own tail — suddenly the new form of insight breaks through, *tragic insight* which, merely to be endured needs art as a protection and remedy. (BT 97 - 98)

Nietzsche welcomes this tragic insight, terrifying as it is and much as it needs art for a remedy. This presupposes that he understands the Socratic spirit and its understanding of reality as heading towards disaster precisely because they raise the false expectation that by just being reasonable we can render ourselves the masters and possessors of nature and assure universal happiness.

> Now we must not hide from ourselves what is concealed in the womb of this Socratic culture: optimism, with its delusion of limitless power. We must not be alarmed if the fruits of this optimism ripen — if society, leavened to the very lowest strata by this kind of culture, gradually begins to tremble with wanton agitations and desires, if the belief in the earthly happiness of all, if the belief in the possibility of such a general intellectual culture changes into the threatening demand for such an Alexandrian earthly happiness, into the conjuring up of a Euripidean *deus ex machina*.
>
> Let us mark this well: the Alexandrian culture, to be able to exist permanently, requires a slave class, but with its optimistic view of life it denies the necessity of such a class, and consequently when its beautifully seductive and tranquillizing utterances about the “dignity of man” and the “dignity of labor” are no longer effective, it gradually drifts towards a dreadful destruction. There is nothing more terrible than a class of barbaric slaves who have learned to regard their existence as an injustice,

> and now prepare to avenge, not only themselves, but all generations. (BT 111)

Socratic optimism has to generate the idea of paradise regained as the work of reason. Happiness is to be made available to all. This is the dream pursued by the Enlightenment and still by Marx and his many followers. It is also remains the American dream. If Nietzsche is right, this dream conflicts with the human condition and he credits Kant and Schopenhauer with having shown the limits that are set to knowledge and our desire for happiness:

> The extraordinary courage and wisdom of *Kant* and *Schopenhauer* have succeeded in gaining the most difficult victory, the victory over the optimism concealed in the essence of logic — an optimism that is the basis of our culture. While this optimism, resting on apparently unobjectionable *aeternae veritates,* had believed that all the riddles of the universe could be known and fathomed, and had treated space, time and causality as entirely unconditional laws of the most universal validity, Kant showed that these really served only to elevate the mere phenomenon, the work of *maya,* to the position of the sole and highest reality, as if it were the innermost and true essence of things, thus making impossible any knowledge of this essence or, in Schopenhauer's words, lulling the sleeper still more soundly asleep. (BT 112)

Both, according to Nietzsche, used reason to undermine our faith in reason: Kant by showing that knowledge of the things in themselves is denied to us, that we have to settle for a knowledge of appearances, Schopenhauer by showing that, caught up in a world of appearance, we are denied that happiness that we demand by the lack constitutive of our inescapably temporal, desiring, embodied being. Hegel's attempt to recover the 18th century's faith in reason in the face of Kant's critique is deemed to have been a failure, a vain attempt to rescue the Enlightenment from its critics — today we may want to include its postmodern critics.

5

But why is it important to know that what science investigates is only the world of phenomena, that science gives us no insight into things in themselves? After all, is it not

precisely the world of phenomena that matters? Why should we care about the depth? Should Nietzsche not apply to modernity what he said about the Greeks? "Those Greeks," he had said, "were superficial — *out of profundity*..."[4] But are our scientists not, precisely in this respect, Greeks? Why is it important to oppose to the understanding of reality governing science a supposedly deeper understanding? What might be the measure of such depth?

A first answer to such questions is suggested already by Kant. The world of phenomena that science investigates, according to Kant, cannot know anything of values or for that matter of freedom, and that is to say of persons. Of course, persons and their behavior, too, can be investigated as any object can be investigated. But such investigation will not understand persons as persons. Nor will it have room for value, as Wittgenstein recognized in the *Tractatus*. Freedom and values have no place on the map of science. The understanding of reality supporting our science has to lead to nihilism. Socratic optimism culminates in nihilism. I accept this claim and I, too, would add, following Nietzsche, that this is precisely why modern culture, shaped by such optimism, has turned to the aesthetic to recover there a plenitude reality denies us. The modern cultivation of the aesthetic and the scientific understanding of reality belong together. Art provides fictions of meaning, but as the word "fictions" suggests, the turn to the aesthetic is understood here as turn away from reality, a turn towards illusion.

That Kant himself knew that nature, as discussed in the *First Critique*, should not be equated with reality, and that is to say also that experience, as discussed in the *First Critique,* should not be equated with experience, is shown by the need he felt to write the *Second Critique*. But is practical reason able to establish the worth and meaning of human life? Can we even make sense of a pure practical reason? Just this Schopenhauer had taught Nietzsche, and is teaching us, to question. Nietzsche recognized that all meaning finally had to be grounded in our affective life, above all in eros. It is the downgrading of instinct, of the affects, that he holds against the Socratic tradition. Socrates insisted that established ethics be given a firmer foundation in reason, but reason, Nietzsche insists, is incapable of providing such a foundation.

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[4] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft*, "Vorrede zur zweiten Ausgabe," in *Sämtliche Werke, Kritische Studienausgabe*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980), abbreviated as KSA, vol. 5, p. 42.

We do indeed, Nietzsche points out, find some recognition of the final inadequacy of the Socratic project even in Plato's account of the life of Socrates. In the *Phaedo* Plato tells of Evenus, a poet, who has heard that Socrates, awaiting his death in prison, has turned to the writing of verse and music. He asks Cebes about the rumor and Cebes in turn checks it with Socrates. Socrates answers that there is indeed something to the story: he had had a recurrent dream that always told him that he should "cultivate and make music." Hitherto, Socrates explains, he had thought that he had been engaged in making the right kind of music when engaging others in conversation, that the dream was just exhorting him to continue his pursuit of philosophy. But now, that he is facing death, he is uneasy about that interpretation. Could it be that the dream meant popular music rather than philosophy? The delay of the return of Apollo's sacred ship from Delos has given him a bit of extra time, which he spends composing a hymn to Apollo and by putting some of Aesop's fables into verse.

> The voice of the Socratic dream vision is the only sign of any misgivings about the limits of logic: Perhaps — thus he must have asked himself — what is unintelligible to me is not necessarily unintelligent? Perhaps there is a realm of wisdom from which the logician is exiled? Perhaps art is even a necessary correlative of, and supplement for science? (BT 93)

Nietzsche finds an analogue to such recognition in the life of Euripides:

> In the evening of his life, Euripides himself propounded to his contemporaries the question of the value and the significance of this [the Socratic] tendency, using myth. Is the Dionysian entitled to exist at all? Should it not be forcibly uprooted from Hellenic soil? Certainly, the poet tells us, if it were only possible; his most intelligent adversary — like Pentheus in the *Bacchae* — is unwittingly enchanted by him, and in his enchantment runs to meet his fate. (BT 81)

The play is curious. One cannot but sympathize with Pentheus who sees in the anarchic potential of Dionysiac frenzy a threat to the establishment, to the state. And yet the Dionysian power he battles proves stronger than whatever measures he is able to take. In the end he is torn to pieces by his own mother in just such a frenzy.

But if indeed both Euripides and Socrates came to recognize the one-sidedness of Socratism, such recognition came too late. With the privileging of reason art had lost its

religious, mythical significance. With Euripides art comes to be entertainment — the modern aesthetic conception of art — while with Plato art becomes an edifying discourse, a moralizing tale. Interesting in this connection is Nietzsche's suggestion that the Platonic dialogue is the Aesopian fable raised to its highest power, an interpretation that invites one to read the reference to Aesop in the *Phaedo* somewhat differently: Socrates could then be seen as pointing ahead to Plato. But more important is that, in the wake of the Socratic privileging of reason, art comes to be caught between an aesthetic and a moralizing function, losing its highest mythical function. To the extent that the Socratic spirit presides over our modern conception of reality, Hegel's famous pronouncement, that art in its highest sense belongs to the past, would seem to be correct.

6

By undermining the faith in reason that had allowed modern man to find his place, Kant and Schopenhauer created the need for a reestablishment of that place. The destruction of that place called for a construction. It is this task that Nietzsche first assigned to Wagner and later claimed as his own.

In approaching this task history could be of help. If we can indeed recognize in Socrates the origin of the tradition that is now coming to an end, by turning back to Greek civilization before it succumbed to the Socratic spirit we can gain some idea of where to turn. This leads Nietzsche to attribute a new significance to the tragic age of the Greeks. The Pre-Socratics thus gain new importance, but more important even are the great tragedians, especially Aeschylus, while Euripides is said to have succumbed to Socratism. The revival of Attic tragedy was to become a means of overcoming the nihilistic tendencies in the thought of Schopenhauer. But at the time of writing *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche thought that such work of reconstruction was already going on. In Richard Wagner he thought to have found the genius, who could fashion not a mere imitation of Greek tragedy, but an equivalent work that would do for this age what Aeschylus did for the Greeks. Nietzsche hoped to use the work of Wagner to meet the challenge posed by Schopenhauer’s destruction of the tradition. *The Birth of Tragedy* is thus among other things also a pamphlet for Wagner.

7

But to understand better what led Nietzsche to Wagner we have to go back to Schopenhauer. In what sense had Schopenhauer broken with the tradition? In the *World as Will and Representation*[5] Schopenhauer accuses the academicians of his day of having lost touch with reality in their preoccupation with a realm of pure thought, mistaking their words and concepts for reality. The tradition was wrong to make the human being first of all a thinking being. Deeper than thought is desire. No hungry person needs to be reminded of this. *Erst kommt das Fressen, dann kommt die Moral,* writes Brecht in the *Three Penny Opera*. Man is not disembodied spirit, but essentially will, desire, and discovers himself to be such by discovering himself to be a body. Not that there are first desires which then find expression in the body. Rather our body is given to us in our desires, while our desires are given us in our body.

This entails a rejection of the Platonic-Christian conception of human reality. Human beings do not have their bodies, they are their bodies. Similarly we are not persons who happen to have a sex, male or female, but are essentially sexual. Schopenhauer stood the traditional conception of man on its head. Nothing could be more misleading than Plato's metaphor in the *Phaedo* of the coat for the body: we cannot take off our bodies as we can take off a coat. The Platonic conception of human reality has to alienate us from ourselves. Whenever human beings consider themselves as essentially spirit, they will consider the body as something alien and accidental, something of which they ought to be ashamed, a reminder of their fallen state, to be hidden from others and from themselves. For the Platonist the possession of a body thus tends to become a paradigm of our alienation from our true spiritual nature.

Yet such idealization of the spirit is challenged by the very nature of our experience. We see the world from a certain perspective, from a place within this world. This place is provided by the body. The body is the measure of the world in which we live. This insight was lost by the Cartesian account of experience, which makes the thinking subject the measure of what is.

If, ever since Plato, there has been a tendency to see in detached "objective" understanding the paradigm of human activity, Schopenhauer interprets such

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[5] Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, vols. 1 and 2, trans. Payne (New York: Dover, 1966). Abbreviated WWR.

understanding as a derivative mode of experience, as artificial as the conception of human being as essentially a *res cogitans*. Before human beings think they live, they desire, they will to live. Thinking itself is but an expression of the will; we think in an attempt to assert our mastery over what is. We can liken the human being to an iceberg: the largest part of his being is concealed in half- and subconscious regions that are nonetheless very real.

Yet in one respect Schopenhauer does remain committed to the tradition: like consciousness desire is essentially polar. It presupposes a distance between desire and desired, paralleling the distance between subject and object, a parallel that becomes apparent in the rhetoric of intention and intended. The desired constitutes desire as lack. From this it follows that for Schopenhauer human being is essentially dissatisfied, a being in need.

To be sure, this is close to Plato's understanding of the erotic essence of human being. But for Plato such dissatisfaction is linked to the way we are removed from the realm of true being, which yet beckons us as our true home. For Schopenhauer life cannot be justified by an appeal to a reality beyond that life: there is no higher meaning, no God, no reason in history. The ideal of satisfaction, of a state of plenitude, which is part of Plato's understanding of eros and which remains constitutive of many traditional theories, will never be realized, for such plenitude is incompatible with what we are. And yet Schopenhauer does not surrender this ideal. He clings to it and just because he does he is driven to pessimism and to his philosophy of renunciation. Only self-denial of the will can release us from that painful state which is human existence, indeed is constitutive of reality. In this Schopenhauerian vein the young Nietzsche had composed as a twelve year-old a fantasia for four- hand piano with the title "Pain is the Keynote of Nature."

Schopenhauer's description of the human situation coupled with a continuing demand for satisfaction has to lead to a philosophy that seeks to escape that situation. Part of Schopenhauer's revolution is thus a new interpretation of the fall: whereas the Platonic tradition interpreted the fall as a fall into the temporal, the body, for Schopenhauer the understanding, and much more reason are the source of our sense of self-alienation. The original sin is nothing other than our individuality. The snake is the

principium individuationis. Despairing over his fallen state the human being seeks to atone for his pride and offers his self-will and spirit as a sacrifice.

This sacrifice can taken may forms. Schopenhauer's radical version of renunciation provides only one, rather extreme example, which precisely because of its extremity has to prove rather unattractive. But if the source of our suffering is located first of all in reason, are there not more life-affirming answers? Following Schopenhauer we thus meet with numerous attempts to oppose the spirit to the soul.[6] There is the hope that by breaking the hold of the *principium individuationis* the human being can return to the paradise the spirit refuses him. The old Adam fell when the human spirit awoke and let man recognize his nakedness. The new Adam will be born when the spirit is brought at a sacrifice. In this sense Nietzsche could call Schopenhauer a Dionysian thinker. Once again the individual is made to feel himself to be but a part of a larger whole.

Yet although supported by strands in his work, this is no longer Schopenhauer. Nietzsche, as we shall see, accepts much of Schopenhauer's anthropology, but he has doubts concerning Schopenhauer's adherence to an ethics of satisfaction, doubts that become ever more articulate. Nietzsche challenges this ideal and with it the presupposition of Schopenhauer's pessimism. The lack of satisfaction becomes oppressive only when all striving is seen as lack. But striving and happiness need not be thought as opposed. What if struggle, if striving should be understood as itself bringing happiness? Nietzsche's thought may be understood as an attempt to develop a positive alternative to Schopenhauer, accepting much of Schopenhauer 's revision of the traditional image of man.

8

Schopenhauer underscores our desire to exist as the individuals we happen to be. Yet to exist as an individual is inevitably accompanied by pain. The desire to exist as this individual is therefore attended by another, a desire to escape from the *principium individuationis*. Here we have in a nutshell the key to Nietzsche's understanding of the "Apollonian and Dionysian duality" (33). And yet the way Nietzsche applies this duality

[6] One of the most significant: Ludwig Klages, *Der Geist als Widersacher der Seele*, 2 vols. Vol. 1: *Leben und Denkvermögen*. Vol. 2: *Die Lehre vom Willen* 2. ed. 2. ed. 2. ed. 2nd ed. (Leipzig:Ambrosius Barth, 1937), 1939.

to art and aesthetic experience is quite un-Schopenhauerian. Let us consider this in more detail:

To explain that duality Nietzsche refers us to two well known phenomena: dream and intoxication.

> The beautiful illusion of the dream worlds, in the creation of which every man is truly an artist, is the prerequisite of all plastic art, and, as we shall see, of an important part of poetry also. In our dreams we delight in the immediate understanding of figures; all forms speak to us; there is nothing *unimportant or superfluous*. But even when this dream experience is most intense, we still have, glimmering through it, the sensation that it is *mere appearance:* at least this is my experience, and for its frequency — indeed, normality — I could adduce many proofs, including the sayings of the poets. (BT 34)

Much here recalls traditional descriptions of the aesthetic. Nietzsche reads the beautiful object in the image of the dream, or, more precisely, the dream in the image of the beautiful object. Here too the beautiful is marked by plenitude: in it nothing seems unimportant or superfluous. But this plenitude is bought at the price of reality: we sense that the beautiful lacks reality.

The significance of the Apollinian is not exhausted with this look at the beautiful. The dream sphere contrasts with waking reality by its clearer form and heightened meaning: it transforms reality so that it acquires a plenitude that it lacked. But is not everyday reality, as Kant has taught us, itself a reality that has been transformed, subjected the human understanding and its modes of organization.

> Philosophical men even have a presentiment that the reality in which we live and have our being is also mere appearance, and that another, quite different reality lies beneath it. Schopenhauer actually indicates as the criterion of philosophical ability the occasional ability to view men and things as mere phantoms and dream images. Thus the aesthetically sensitive man stands in the same relation to the reality of dreams as the philosopher does to the reality of existence; he is a close and willing observer, for these images afford him an interpretation of life, and by reflecting on these processes he trains himself for life. (BT 34)

Note that this invites an interpretation of artists and of philosophers such as Schopenhauer as human beings who somehow have become distanced from reality, have lost their place in everyday life and now observe it from the outside, as it were. But the analogy between waking reality and dream on which Nietzsche, following Schopenhauer, here insists, also suggests that it is precisely by shaping reality in a quasi-artistic fashion we give it structure and meaning. I shall have to return to this point.

Apollo is understood by Nietzsche as the idealized incarnation of what Schopenhauer had called the *principium individuationis*.

> The joyous necessity of the dream experience has been embodied by the Greeks in their Apollo: Apollo, the god of all plastic energies, is at the same time the soothsaying [*wahrsagende* — literally "truth-telling"] god. He, who (as the etymology of the name indicates) is the "shining one," the deity of light, is also ruler over the beautiful illusion of the inner world of fantasy. The higher truth, the perfection of these states in contrast to the incompletely intelligible everyday world, this deep consciousness of nature, healing and helping in dreams and sleep, is at the same time the symbolical analogue of the soothsaying faculty and of the arts generally, which make life possible and worth living. (BT 35)

Appealing to Schopenhauer, Nietzsche calls Apollo the apotheosis of the *principium individuationis*, which is thus tied to art.

9

In his understanding of the Dionysian, too, Nietzsche follows Schopenhauer, but gives his account a twist very much his own.

> In the same work Schopenhauer has described for us the tremendous *terror* which seizes man when he is suddenly dumbfounded by the cognitive form of phenomena because the principle of sufficient reason, in some one of its manifestations, seems to suffer an exception. If we add to this terror the blissful ecstasy that wells from the innermost depths of man, indeed of nature, at this collapse of the *principium individuationis*, we steal a glimpse into the nature of the *Dionysian*, which

> is brought home to us most intimately by the analogy of intoxication. (BT 36)

There are experiences when we glimpse that everyday reality is only the surface, when we begin to suspect the superficiality of the ruling understanding of reality. That such suspicion should be attended by terror can hardly surprise. Yet terror is linked to blissful ecstasy: Nietzsche could be said to transform Schopenhauer's pessimistic reading of reality as will into almost its opposite:

> Either under the influence of the narcotic draught, of which the songs of all primitive men and peoples speak, or with the potent coming of spring that penetrates all nature with joy, these Dionysian emotions awake, and as they grow in intensity everything subjective vanishes into complete self-forgetfulness. In the German Middle Ages, too, singing and dancing crowds, ever increasing in number, whirled themselves from place to place under this same Dionysian impulse. In these dancers of St. John and St. Vitus, we rediscover the Bacchic choruses of the Greeks, with their prehistory in Asia Minor, as far back as Babylon and the orgiastic Sacaea. There are some, who, from obtuseness or lack of experience turn away from such phenomena as from "folk-diseases," with contempt or pity born of the consciousness of their own "healthy-mindedness." But of course such poor wretches have no idea how corpselike and ghostly their so-called "healthy-mindedness" looks when the glowing life of the Dionysian revelers roars past them. (BT 36-37)

Art can serve Dionysus as well as Apollo. An art serving Dionysus has to challenge the established understanding of reality principle with the promise of liberation.

> Under the charm of the Dionysian not only is the union between man and man reaffirmed, but nature which has become alienated, hostile, or subjugated, celebrates once more her reconciliation with her lost son, man. Freely, earth proffers her gifts, and peacefully the beasts of prey of the rocks and desert approach. The chariot of Dionysus is covered with flowers and garlands; panthers and tigers walk under its yoke. Transform Beethoven's "Hymn to Joy" into a painting; let your imagination conceive the multitudes bowing to the dust, awestruck — then you will approach

> the Dionysian. Now the slave is a free man; now all the rigid, hostile barriers that necessity, caprice, or "impudent convention" have fixed between man and man are broken. Now, with the gospel of universal harmony, each one feels himself not only united, reconciled and fused with his neighbor, but at one with him, as if the veil of maya had been torn aside and were now merely fluttering in tatters before the mysterious primordial unity. (BT 37)

This is a reading of Schopenhauer's will that appears to substitute for the pain and suffering that Schopenhauer took to be essential to the will and to all its manifestations joy. In the Dionysian experience the individual affirms himself not as this individual, but as a part of humanity, to which he is joined by an ecstatic fellow feeling — I don't want to use the Schopenhauerian "sympathy" because that word suggests something like pity, i.e. that we are joined through shared suffering, rather than through joy.

The distinction between Apollo and Dionysus suggests the possibility of distinguishing between two kinds of art. Nietzsche marks this distinction by contrasting the Apollinian art of Homer with the Dionysian art of Archilochus.

To understand Nietzsche's turn to tragedy, we have to keep in mind the shortcomings of the Apollinian and the Dionysian. A purely Apollinian state would lose touch with reality, would substitute for reality beautiful illusion. A purely Dionysian state, on the other hand, would destroy the individual. This is to say: human beings can truly affirm themselves only by saying yes to both, individuality and reality, to both Apollo and Dionysus. This calls for a mediation of the Apollinian and Dionysian spheres. And precisely such mediation, according to Nietzsche, is effected by tragedy. We can see now how tragedy serves life. It is the art form that allows for the fullest self-affirmation. And here we return once more to the radical difference between Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Listen to how Nietzsche himself puts this difference in the later preface:

> How I regret now that in those days I still lacked the courage (or immodesty?) to permit myself in every way an individual language of my own for such individual views and hazards — and that instead I tried laboriously to express by means of Schopenhauerian and Kantian formulas strange and new valuations which were basically at odds with Kant's and

> Schopenhauer's spirit and taste! What, after all did Schopenhauer think of tragedy?
>
> "That which bestows on everything tragic its peculiar elevating force" — he says *in The World as Will and Representation*, volume II, p. 495 — "is the discovery that the world, that life, can never give real satisfaction and hence is not worthy of our affection: this constitutes the tragic spirit — it leads to *resignation*."
>
> How differently Dionysus spoke to me! How far removed I was from all this resignationism! (BT 24)

It was precisely their ability to temper the Dionysian with the Apollinian that is said to have distinguished Greek culture form the barbarian cultures around it. And Nietzsche, too, demands a unification of the two principles: if human beings are to affirm themselves, there must be some leader, some genius, who can assign us our place in a way that will do justice to both. This leader Nietzsche then hoped, this new Aeschylus, would be Wagner.

10

Wagner and Nietzsche met for the first time in November 1868 in Leipzig.[7] Nietzsche was 24, Wagner 55. Before that meeting Nietzsche had not been particularly fond of Wagner's music. Schumann had been his hero. There is little in the preceding notes that suggests that he would expect just from Wagner such a cultural reconstruction. But on October 27 the *Prelude* to *Tristan* and the overture to the *Meistersinger* and made a deep impression. For a lopng time, he writes, had he not experienced such a joy of *Entrücktheit*.[8] The meeting had been arranged by Wagner himself, who had wanted to meet the young man who was considered the brightest hope of the philologians at Leipzig and who had played the Prize Song from the *Meistersinger* for Frau Ritschl, the wife of Nietzsche's mentor. Wagner was staying with her friend, Frau Brockhaus, and had heard

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[7] For a readable account of their relationship, see Ronald Hayman, *Nietzsche - A Critical Life* (Oxford, Oxford U. Press, 1980), pp. 106-147. See also Walter Kaufmann, Nietzsche, Philosopher, Psychologust, Amtchrist (Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1966), pp. 30-60.

[8] Friedrich Nietzsche, Letter of Oct. 27 to Erwin Rohde. *Sämtliche Briefe*, *Studienausgabe* (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1986), abbreviated SB, vol. 2, p. 332

of the young Nietzsche. The first meeting was spent discussing Wagner's music and the philosophy of Schopenhauer.

Wagner had discovered Schopenhauer late in is life and what he had discovered was quite different from what Nietzsche had found: Nietzsche had experienced Schopenhauer as a liberation — Schopenhauer sets us free. By denying God, by denying the whole dimension of what is higher, Schopenhauer calls on us to us to assume responsibility for ourselves. Schopenhauer showed Nietzsche a freedom that demands the death of God. Wagner on the other hand found in Schopenhauer a metamorphosis of the Christian doctrine of redemption from the rule of the individual will. In Wagner's Siegfried Nietzsche saw an attempt on Wagner's part to furnish us with an ideal image of the godless, free man. This is indeed in keeping with how Wagner had conceived of Siegfried. In him ideas of freedom mingled with communist or socialist dreams. Wagner expressed the hope that socialism, which he had expected would be brought to power by the presidential election of 1852 in France, would prepare the way for the realization of the ideal that he had presented. Siegfried appeared as a revolutionary, and as such as the enemy of Wotan, who symbolized the old established order.

Freedom did not gain the hoped for victory. Louis Napoleon seized power instead. With this December coup Wagner seems to have lost his desire for political engagement and at the same time much of his interest in Siegfried. In *Mein Leben* he writes: "I turned away from the investigation of this enigmatic world as one turns one's back on a mystery that no longer seems worth trying to fathom."[9] Siegfried lost some of his actuality for him and seemed more and more irrelevant. It was at this time that Wagner began to be interested in Schopenhauer.[10] Wotan seemed to him now more interesting than Siegfried. In a letter he describes Siegfried as the man we desire for the future (Nietzsche might have spoken of the Overman), Wotan as a description of man as he exists now, who stands in the way of Siegfried. The new world can be fashioned only by our own destruction.

But the revolutionary has given up hope. At the same time as the political loses importance, the world of passion becomes more important. And so does Schopenhauer.

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[9] Richard Wagner, *Mein Leben*, quoted in Jerrold Siegel, *Marx's Fate: The Shape of a Life* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978) Siegel, Marx's Fate, p. 217.
[10] For an account of Wagner's relationship to Schopenhauer see Bryan Magee, *The Philosophy of Schopenauer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 326-378.

Wagner came across Schopenhauer while working on the *Ring*. The words had already been been written, but, Wagner tells us, it was Schopenhauer who first taught him to understand the depth of his creation, and more especially of Wotan. Wagner was to write later that he had first understood the *Götterdämmerung* as the collapse of a particular form of order; Schopenhauer taught him to see more deeply and to recognize that what he had presented was the essence of the world itself, which again and again must reach the point when the will, tired of itself, turns back against itself. Wotan becomes a follower of Schopenhauer. Listen to his words in Die Walküre:

> I must forsake what I love,
> murder the man I cherish,
> deceive and betray someone
> who trusts me.
> Away, then
> with lordly splendour,
> divine pomp
> and shameful boasting!
> Let it fall to pieces,
> all that I built.
> I give up my work.
> Only one thing I want now:
> the end![11]

Using power, Wotan tires of power, disgusted with it, desires its destruction, desires peace and rest.

The *Gotterdämmerung* can thus be seen as a sign of the darkening of European, and more especially German culture. The optimism that had marked much of the first half of the century was rapidly fading. 1848 and 1851 were key years in this history of disillusionment. More and more despaired of the possibility of a new reconstruction. We sense something of this longing for chaos in Nietzsche, especially in *The Birth of Tragedy,* but it is always tempered by an insistence on structure. Increasingly Nietzsche recognized all that separated his affirmation of life from Wagner's glorification of redemption and love. The young Nietzsche still dreams of revolution, if not in a political

[11] www.rwagner.net/libretti/walkure/e-walk-a2s2.htm

sense, dreams of a refashioning of the world out of the ruins of the old. Wagner had long since surrendered his hope for revolution and turned to resignation and accommodation. He had joined the establishment. At issue are two very different conceptions of tragedy.

11

In the April following his meeting with Wagner in November 1868 Nietzsche moved to Basel. A few weeks later he visits Wagner for the first time in his house in Tribschen on Lake Lucerne. It is Wagner more than Nietzsche who insists on these visits. In a note from the first months, Wagner pleads: "come and restore my faith in, what I, together with Goethe and a few others —call, German liberty." (June 3, 1869)[12] The note is significant: it suggests what Wagner saw in Nietzsche: his own Siegfried in whom he had already lost faith. Nietzsche, on the other hand, calls Wagner his Jupiter.[13] In a letter to his friend Rohde he writes about the days spent at Tribschen: "Dearest friend, what I learn and see there, hear and understand cannot be described. Schopenhauer and Goethe, Aeschylus and Pindar are still alive, believe me."[14]

The Birth of Tragedy in its final form is the result of this friendship. Nietzsche had first wanted to write a more comprehensive work on the Greeks. In 1871 the first part of the work is finished. He called it *Griechische Heiterkeit*, Greek serenity or cheerfulness. The book included much of the material later published as the *The Birth of Tragedy,* but it included far more, especially reflections on the Greek state. Sections 8 - 15 were given as a public lecture on Feb 1, 1870, *Sokrates und die griechische Tragödie* and privately published, Basel, 1871.

Wagner is disappointed that in the manuscript there is so much talk about the Greeks and so little about Wagner. Nietzsche listens to the complaint. What now drops out are especially reflections on the Greek state as the soil in which genius could grow. The manuscript was changed and given the title "Musik und Tragödie." But now the original publisher is no longer interested. He objected especially, as Nietzsche himself was to do in his later prologue, to the mixture of Wagner and the Greeks. In that prologue Nietzsche also wonders whether there is not too much Schopennhauer in the book, too little dance, too little laughter. As we shall see, this does not mean that

[12] Letter from Richard Wagner, cited in Hayman, p. 111.
[13] Letter to Erwin Rohde, August 15, 1869, SB, vol. 3, p. 42.

Nietzsche broke with Schopenhauer's image of man. But it does separate him from Schopenhauer's pessimism. Such pessimism pertains not to the human condition as such, but to this age.

What separates Nietzsche from Schopenhauer is apparent in their very different understanding of art. Nietzsche wants art to save us from the very self-negation Schopenhauer desires. Already in *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche suspects a Buddhistic streak in Schopenhauer and Wagner. Just this separates them from the so intensely political Greeks:

> Who would have supposed that precisely this people, after it had been deeply agitated through several generations by the strongest spasms of the Dionysian demon, should still have been capable of such a uniformly vigorous effusion of the simplest political feeling, the most natural patriotic instincts, and original manly desire to fight? After all, one feels in every case in which Dionysian excitement gains any significant extent how the Dionysian liberation from the fetters of the individual finds expression first of all in a diminution of, in indifference to, indeed in hostility to the political instincts. Just as certainly, Apollo who forms states is also the genius of the *principium individuationis*, and state and patriotism cannot live without an affirmation of the individual personality. But from orgies a people can take one path only, the path to Indian Buddhism, and in order that this be endurable at all with its yearning for the nothing, it requires those rare ecstatic states with their elevation above space, time, and the individual. (BT 124)

Nietzsche's Greeks are not at all Schopenhauerian saints. They do not make the impossible demand that they be redeemed and Schopenhauer, despite his insistence that God is dead, is a philosopher of redemption. And redemption, as Nietzsche so scathingly shows, was a theme that never was to leave Wagner: Here is what he later was to write on Wagner and redemption:

> You, too, prefer Wagner's problem to Bizet's? I., too, do not underestimate it; it has its peculiar magic. The problem of redemption is certainly a venerable problem. There is nothing about which Wagner has

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[14] Letter to Erwin Rohde, September, 1869, SB, vol. 3, p. 52.

> thought more deeply than redemption; his opera is the opera of redemption. Somebody or other always wants to be redeemed in his work: sometimes a little male, sometimes a little female —this is *his* problem. — And how richly he varies his leitmotif! What rare, what profound dodges! Who if not Wagner would teach us that that innocence prefers to redeem interesting sinners? (The case in *Tannhäuser*.) Or that even the Wandering Jew is redeemed, settles down, when he marries? (The case in the *Flying Dutchman.)* Or that old corrupted females prefer to be redeemed by chaste youths (The case of Kundry.) Or that beautiful maidens like best to be redeemed by a knight who is a Wagnerian (The case in *Die Meistersinger.)* Or that married women, too, enjoy being redeemed by a knight? (The case of Isolde.) Or that "the old God," after having compromised himself morally in every respect, is finally redeemed by a free spirit and immoralist? (The case in the *Ring*.) Do admire this final profundity above all! Do you understand it? — I beware of understanding it. (*The Case of Wagner*, BT 160)

To be sure, what Wagner and Schopenhauer had in mind was not quite the same thing. If Schopenhauer secularized the theme of redemption, Wagner eroticized it. By linking redemption to the love of a man and a woman Wagner took a step Schopenhauer could not have accepted. But keep in mind the way the way themes of redemption and satisfaction belong together. And how both have to turn against reality as we live it. Given his interest in redemption, it is not at all surprising that Wagner should have joined the themes of love and death. All his life Nietzsche fought against such world-weary self- and world-negation, even as he too experienced the seductive power of the call for redemption from the ills of this world. But the Greeks he dreamed of did not demand a final satisfaction, nor did they demand redemption.

12

In view of the tensions that separated Nietzsche and Wagner even at the time of their first meeting, one may well wonder how it was that they could ever become friends. What is remarkable is not so much they their friendship should eventually break up, but that it should ever have begun.

An answer is suggested when we ask ourselves what each sought in the other. I have already suggested that Nietzsche's understanding of the modern situation brought with it a call for reconstruction. Nietzsche looked for a spiritual leader, who could assign to him and others their place. He found no one more qualified to play that part that Wagner. How much Nietzsche once understood himself as the servant of Wagner's cause is shown by his willingness to give up his academic career to travel through Germany, giving speeches supporting Wagner's art and Bayreuth.

Beyond this they were united by their rejection of the present age. At one point Wagner compares himself to Homer, Nietzsche to Plato and expresses the hope that together they will bring about a new renaissance where Plato embraces Homer and Homer, filled with Plato's ideas, becomes only now the greatest of all poets. At this time Wagner began to show a new interest in his Siegfried.

When Wagner finally reads *The Birth of Tragedy* he is so excited that he can hardly write; Cosima writes that there is only one individual who knows all about Wagner; who this is I won't tell, she adds rather coyly.

In 1872 Wagner moved to Bayreuth. He chose Bayreuth rather than Munich for political reasons: the continued support of king Ludwig II was insufficient to overcome the hostility of the Bavarians. But Wagner may have welcomed the fact that Bayreuth was a rather insignificant town without a very developed artistic tradition of its own. Wagner now hoped to draw Nietzsche closer to himself by making him the educator of his son. Nietzsche resisted. Indeed one senses a growing resistance, a need not to get too close. Nietzsche was to call this need "*sanitarisch,*" a matter of hygiene. (*Nietzsche Contra Wagner*, PN 664) He needed the distance to preserve his own freedom.

Wagner is hurt by what he takes to be Nietzsche's lack of interest in him, when at one point, Nietzsche visits his sister and mother in Naumburg, without making the easy detour to Bayreuth. But something else bothered him. In *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche had expressed a willingness to serve Wagner's art. The priority of art was recognized. It was not the philosopher, but the artist who was to assign the new man his place. But increasingly Nietzsche came to see it as his task to sketch the image of the new ideal man. And to the extent that he took that task seriously, he had to appear not as the servant, but as the rival of Wagner, the philosopher-poet as rival of the composer-poet, all the more so since his conception of the great man and Wagner's moved increasingly

apart, or rather, Wagner was no longer as interested in the great man as he was in the theme of redemption.

In *Wagner in Bayreuth* Nietzsche interprets that interest as a temptation. In public, however, he still subordinates himself to Wagner's work. Meanwhile Wagner is preoccupied with financial worries, worries about Bayreuth, is upset that Nietzsche is dealing with something as removed from the realities of the present as ancient Greece. When Nietzsche finally does come to Bayreuth to pick up where they left off at Tribschen he finds Wagner uninterested, uninterested in the Greeks, uninterested in abstract ideas, worried about the mundane problems of the present. Nietzsche leaves Bayreuth after this Easter visit of 1873 depressed. Yet Wagner's hold on him is still strong enough to make him feel ashamed for having served the Greeks instead of Wagner. He writes a disgustingly servile letter, where he begins by begging Wagner to take him only as a student, a servant.

The *Untimely Meditations* (*Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen)* owe their origin to Wagner's suggestion that he turn away from the past and dedicate himself to the present, to Bayreuth. And yet Nietzsche could not be of very much help. For Bayreuth to be financed the fund-raisers could not attack the public as viciously as Nietzsche did. The Wagner clubs were quick to point this out to Wagner. Increasingly, Nietzsche, had to recognize how untimely he was, how much those around him preferred to hear of redemption rather than of the founding of a new world.

And was not Wagner himself with those Nietzsche attacked? All this wallowing in decline, *Götterdämmerung*, *Untergang des Abendlandes*, this resigned but still somehow enjoyable awareness that no room is left to create what is really new. And yet, this was the space that Nietzsche thought had already been opened up by Kant and Schopenhauer and that he wanted to keep open. To do so he had to liberate his contemporaries from their own civilization, from the ethics of satisfaction, from the alienation from time that supported it, and from an understanding of time that made such alienation all but unavoidable. To overcome that understanding is, as we shall see, the point of the eternal recurrence.

In 1874 Nietzsche is not yet ready to break with Wagner. He still wants to see in Wagner the genius who will give us a new ideal image of man and by doing so will give a new health to the modern world.

And yet — the price of this health seemed to be illusion. "Only when he loves, when he is surrounded by the illusion of love, does man create, that is only where he has an unwavering faith in what is perfect and right."[15] The traditional absolute is still demanded here, even if the human being suspects that what he worships is an illusion. But is this not to settle for some golden calf or other? For what was about to be condemned as Kitsch? What separates the artwork envisioned by Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy* from Kitsch?

Nietzsche at this point still does not possess the strength to lead himself. So he demands the leader in whom he can believe. And yet he recognizes in Wagner too much that destroys the illusion: Wagner is human, all too human.

This lets us see the friendship between Nietzsche and Wagner in a different light. Precisely because Nietzsche never let Wagner be himself, but idealized him, created him in his own image, did his friendship with him have to come to an end. This illusion could last in Tribschen, this island of the blessed, as Nietzsche called it, but in Bayreuth Nietzsche was confronted with sides in Wagner that made such an idealization impossible. Bayreuth opened Nietzsche's eyes to the real Wagner; at the same time it opened his eyes to what he had made of Wagner, to the role illusion, his own will to illusion, had played in this, too.

Beginning with this disillusionment we find Nietzsche becoming increasingly suspicious of all illusion. There are writings from 1874, when in public Nietzsche still appeared as a servant of Wagner, in which Nietzsche tells how distant Bayreuth had become, how uninterested he had become in its success or failure. Wagner, Nietzsche suggests, is an actor who creates an illusion. He likens Wagner to the demagogue who has a good ear for what the people want and caters to them. By giving them the illusion they want he gains power over them. (Cf. Hans Jürgen Syberberg's films on Wagner, Hitler, and Ludwig II!)

But is Nietzsche writing about Wagner and his audience or about Wagner and himself? What he accuses Wagner of doing is not so very different from what he had advocated in *The Birth of Tragedy*. Or had illusion a different meaning then? "Someone

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[15] *Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben,* 7, *Sämtliche Werke,* KSA, vol.1 p. 296.

who applauds in the theater today, will be ashamed of tomorrow."[16] And what is the illusion the people want? It presupposes a mood of resignation. There is no hope for reconstruction, only a hope for redemption, salvation. As Heidegger was later was to proclaim in the despairing *Spiegel* interview: *Nur ein Gott kann uns retten*!

13

In August 1874 Wagner and Nietzsche did met again. Again it was a disappointing encounter. This time it is Nietzsche who courted disaster by carrying a copy of Brahms's *Schicksalslied*, leaving it conspicuously on the piano. Wagner gets the hint and blows up. During this time there are suggestions that Nietzsche get married. He was to become editor of the *Bayreuther Blätter*, a job he declined.

In 1875 Wagner begins with rehearsals for the *Ring*. He wanted to gather his followers and disciples around himself to witness the great event. Nietzsche excuses himself for being ill. There is an increasing stress at this time on faithfulness to oneself.

How does this agree with the illusions that may be necessary if we are to exist? We could say that more and more Nietzsche waged within himself a battle between Socrates and Wagner. "Socrates, I have to confess, is so close to me I almost never stop fighting with him."[17] But in 1875 Wagner is once more triumphant. Nietzsche writes the 4th of the *Untimely Meditations, Wagner in Bayreuth*. Privately he expresses the wish that Bayreuth might fail, that only such a failure would allow Wagner to liberate himself. And Wagner, too, speaks of the whole Bayreuth business as a morass and as nonsense and yet he wants Nietzsche to serve it. At this time Nietzsche becomes once again more interested in Plato, especially in Plato's conception of the state. In *Wagner in Bayreuth* he denies art the right to assign us our place; it is only a liberating preparation, it imparts a blessing, a consecration (*Weihe*). There are hints of a state where Wagner would no longer be necessary, a state of the future. Socrates gives way to the politician Plato, to Plato as the founder of a polis. In the present age we need Wagner to liberate us.

But is Wagner's music a liberation, a setting free? Is it not rather an opiate that makes us incapable of decisive action? Nietzsche now looks beyond Wagner to someone who could create the needed ideal.

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[16] Nietzsche, "Nachgelassene Fragmente," Anfang 1874 – Frühjahr 1874 , *KSA,* vol. 8, p. 97

Wagner himself was not interested in this ideal. But when he read *Wagner in Bayreuth* he liked it. He saw many flattering pages and invited Nietzsche to the grand opening. Nietzsche left for Bayreuth the end of July 1876. Kaiser Wilhelm, King Ludwig, and the Emperor of Brazil were present. The interest of those present focused as much on these celebrities as on what was happening on the stage. At one point, when Walhall was supposed to appear, the mechanism did not work: a gaping void opened up instead and in the middle one could see the stage manager with rolled up sleeves. Wagner called Bayreuth the Washington of the arts. Wagner did indeed toy with the idea of emigration. In *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche was to write: *Die deutsche Kunst, der deutsche Meister, das deutsche Bier*, "The German art, the German master, the German beer." The Wagnerians had become master of Wagner. The demagogue is not only leader, but also victim.

14

In Bayreuth Nietzsche had still hoped for a genuine conversation that would allow him to renew his friendship with Wagner. Nothing came of it. He found the whole scene insufferable and fled to Klingenbrunn in the Bavarian Forest. Here he wrote the aphorisms of *Human, All Too Human*.

He met Wagner only once more, on October 1876, in Sorrento. He is told of the Parsifal idea and of Wagner's sympathies with Christian ideas, especially the last supper. Wagner, too, had been conquered by the dead God.

To understand the importance of their encounter, one has to keep in mind how symptomatic Wagner's development had been: Wagner had begun as an atheist. He felt himself to possess and was intoxicated by a new freedom. This filled him with the hope for a **new society**. Gradually that hope was shattered. No doubt events contributed to this, but that the idea could thus be shattered, suggests something about the weakness of the idea.

But where do we get an idea to put in the place of the dead God? We cannot simply invent a new ideal image of man. All such inventions have to seem arbitrary. The old God is dead and no new God appears. When this is recognized, what is to be done? Do we not need God and his prophets to assign us our place? When human beings

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[17] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Nachgelassene Fragmente," Sommer 1875, KSA 8, p. 97.

have experienced the death of God, they are likely to seek refuge in illusion. Is all that is left to us then an existence in bad faith? Are all prophets not false prophets, actors who alienate us from ourselves?

Nietzsche contra Wagner? What is at stake is the problem of bad faith, of Kitsch in the deepest sense. What stands in the way of the victory of Wagner is Socratic faithfulness to oneself. In this sense we can perhaps say that the Socrates of *The Birth of Tragedy* finally forces Dionysus to acknowledge his rights. But Nietzsche knows, as Plato knew, that Socrates and Socratic honesty make sense only if there is some reality that assigns human beings their place, a place that they can occupy in good faith. But does Nietzsche's proclamation of the death of God allow for such a place? What then are we to do, having to live with the death of God? What leaders is the future to know? Leaders like Wagner or like Nietzsche's Zarathustra? Or is Zarathustra perhaps himself a poet-leader of the Wagner type? The *Führer* as *Verführer*, the leader a seducer? We shall have to return to such questions.

To put what is essentially the same question more simply: How is good faith possible if God is dead? And a today perhaps more seductive question: why is good faith good? Why not bad faith? Why not illusion? Nietzsche suggests that honesty has a claim on us that we cannot deny. This made Wagner finally unacceptable. Nietzsche came to see him as paradigm of the dishonest artist, the false prophet.

15

Let me briefly sketch the end of the relationship between Wagner and Nietzsche. In 1878 Nietzsche received Wagner's *Parsifal;* at the same time Wagner received *Human, All Too Human*. Wagner attacks Nietzsche in an essay, *Publikum und Popularität*.[18] Cosima joins in. They describe Nietzsche as a kind of traitor who has joined the many against the noble few, although Nietzsche had by this time become lonely as never before. They suggest mental illness, also that a treatment of that illness could occur only should Nietzsche return to Bayreuth. In 1879 Nietzsche asks to be relieved of all

[18] Richard Wagner, "Publikum und Popularität," *Bayreuther Blätter*, August and September 1878, *Sämtliche Schriften und Dichtungen*, vol 10, p. 140 ff.

teaching duties: physical and psychical ailments make it impossible for him to continue. On February 14, 1883 Wagner dies. The first part of *Zarathustra* had just been finished. In January 1889 Nietzsche goes insane. He dies in 1900.

What is at stake in their relationship goes beyond their private lives. The story of their early friendship and their later struggle still concerns us. At stake is our own future.

2. "On the Pathos of Truth"

1

In our first session I introduced the topic of this seminar. I claimed that in the 19th century the traditional Platonic-Christian conception of man underwent a revolution in which we are still caught up and with which we still have to come to terms. In this seminar, I pointed out, I shall examine some aspects and consequences of this revolution by taking a look at some of Nietzsche's writings, focusing on just three themes: truth, value, and tragedy. The seminar will end with a consideration of *Zarathustra*, although much of it will be concerned with *The Birth of Tragedy*. But I begin by taking a careful look at two brief essays from that period, "The Pathos of Truth" (1872) and "On Truth and Lie in an Extramoral Sense" from the following year.

To situate these early works I spent quite a bit of time on Schopenhauer, Wagner, and on Nietzsche's relationship to both, but especially to Wagner. To understand the importance of their relationship, I suggested, one has to keep in mind how symptomatic Wagner's development had been: Wagner had begun as an atheist. He felt himself to possess and was intoxicated by a new freedom. This filled him with the hope for a new ideal image of man, to replace the Christian ideal, and the humanist ideal of the Enlightenment. The new image was embodied in Siegfried. Gradually that hope was shattered. No doubt events contributed to this, but that the idea could thus be shattered, suggests something about the weakness of the idea.

But where are we to find an ideal to put in the place of the dead God and the associated image of man? Must all such inventions not seem arbitrary? The old God is dead and no new God appears. Reason proved unable to step into the place left vacant by the death of God. When this is recognized what is to be done? Is all that is left to us an existence in bad faith? Are all prophets not false prophets, actors, who, like Wagner, alienate us from ourselves?

What is at stake in Nietzsche's relationship to Wagner is the problem of bad faith, of Kitsch — and the phenomenon of Kitsch has long been a central concern of mine.[19]

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[19] See Karsten Harries, *The Meaning of Modern Art* (Northwestern U. Press, 1968) pp. 74-83, 144-152; Waarom moeten we bang zijn voor kitsch." Translation by Jan Willem Reimtsma of "Why Should We Be Afraid of Kitsch?" *Nexus,* 2007, no. 47, pp. 127-147; *Between Nihilism and Faith: A Commentary on Either/Or* (De Gruyter, 2010), pp. 76-88.

But this is to say that the story of their early friendship and subsequent estrangement still concerns us. At stake, I suggested, is our own future.

2

What the young Nietzsche expected from Wagner was a cure of modernity's ills. Later he came to understand Wagner as part of the disease rather than as someone able to offer a cure. I shall return to this point in later sessions. But first let me return to the question: in what sense is modernity in need of a cure? We are given a pointer by one of the most frequently cited statements from *The Will to Power*, which dates from 1888:

> For a philosopher to say, "the good and the beautiful are one," is infamy; if he goes on to say: "also the true," one ought to thrash him. Truth is ugly. We possess art lest we perish of the truth.[20]
>
> Wir haben die Kunst*, damit wir nicht an der Wahrheit zugrunde gehen*.[21]

What does this statement say? Does it say that the truth is not available to us? How could it then be something that lets us perish? Or does it let us perish precisely because, though unavailable, it does not let go of us, forcing us to pursue it? Like a drug?

And who is meant by the *wir*? We human beings? We decadent moderns? Is there a sense in which truth has become a particular danger for us moderns? What does Nietzsche mean here by "truth"? Is the truth which has shaped modernity an illusion? I shall return to this question in the context of *On Truth and Lie*. But bracketing for the time being the question of the essence and the availability of truth, if the pursuit of truth is such a danger, why should human beings have undertaken it? How are we to understand the *Pathos of Truth*? A number of remarks by the young Nietzsche circle around thus question:

> Man demands truth and fulfills this demand in moral intercourse with other men: this is the basis of all social life. One anticipates the unpleasant consequences or reciprocal lying. From this there arise the *duty of truth*. (PT 27 – 70)

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[20] *The Will to Power* (abbreviated WP) 822, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale, Random House: New York, 1967.
[21] KSA, vol. 13, p. 500

This presupposes that in some sense the truth is available to human beings. Otherwise they could not lie. Truth and lie are contrast terms. You cannot say all truth is a lie, just as you cannot say all reality is a dream.

Related is the following:

> What does truth matter to man? The highest and purest life is possible with the belief that he possesses truth. Man requires *belief in truth*.
>
> Truth makes its appearance as a social necessity. Afterwards, by means of a metastasis, it is applied to everything, where it is not required.
>
> All virtues arise from pressing needs. The necessity for truthfulness begins with society. Otherwise man dwells within eternal concealments. The establishment of states promotes truthfulness.
>
> The drive toward knowledge has a *moral* origin. (PT 34 – 91)

That a measure of truthfulness is indeed a presupposition of social life is easily granted. More difficult to understand is the "metastasis" that raises the pathos of truth above its moral origin.

> Man does not by nature exist in order to know: *truthfulness* (and *metaphor*) have produced the inclination for truth. Thus the intellectual drive is produced by an aesthetically generalized moral phenomenon. (PT 44 – 130)
>
> (cf KSA 7, 474: Zwei zu verschiedenen Zwecken nöthige Eigenschaften — die Wahrhaftigkeit — und die Metapher — haben den Hang zur Wahrheit errzeugt. Also ein moralisches Phänomen, aesthetisch verallgemeinert, erzeugt den intellektuellen Trieb.)

Metaphor is here understood as aesthetic generalization, where we should ask ourselves how we are to understand this aesthetic generalization and in just what sense such generalization is necessary. To understand the pathos of truth, this suggests, we have to understand the nature of this aesthetic generalization. But how much does this really tell us about the origin of the pathos of truth?

Is it to be understood as a product of necessary practice?

> In some cases necessity produces truthfulness as a society's means of existence.

> Through frequent practice this drive is reinforced and is now unjustifiably transmitted by means of metastasis. It becomes an inclination in itself. A quality [viz. truth] develops out of a practice [designed] for specific cases. Now we have the desire for knowledge. (PT 113 – 130)

3

But let me turn to the essay "On the Pathos of Truth." It is a rather short piece, dating from 1872, the first of "Five Prefaces to Five Unwritten Books," and, as he explained later in a letter to Cosima Wagner that accompanied the Christmas gift, "and not to be written." The others were *Gedanken über die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten*, "Thoughts on the Future of Our Educational Institutions," *Der griechische Staat*, "The Greek State," *Das Verhältnis der Schopenhauerischen Philosophie zu einer deutschen Kultur*, "The Relation ship of Schopenhauer's Philosophy to a German Culture," and *Homers Wettkampf,* "Homer's Contest." In a letter to his friend Rohde he calls the first the main section.[22]

A strange genre: prologue to an unwritten and never to be written book. A *Vorrede* that is never followed by what it should introduce, a proper *Rede*. And perhaps one should keep in mind that the German verb *vorreden* means also and indeed first of all to tell tales, with the overtone that such tales may not be in agreement with the truth. In this case Nietzsche would seem to be telling tales to Cosima.

How seriously, however, Nietzsche himself took this tale is suggested by the fact that, as your edition indicates, parts of it were to appear almost verbatim in the second untimely meditation, *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie*, *On the Use and Abuse of History*, in *Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen*, "Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks," and in *Über Wahrheit und Lüge*, "On Truth and Lie."

Before turning to details a brief overview:

1. The essay begins with a discussion of fame (par. 1)

2. The second section centers on the demand that what is great should be eternal, or as he was to write in the *Second Untimely Meditation*, on the demand for a monumental history. (Pars 2, 3, repeated in the *Second Untimely Meditation*.)

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[22] Letter to Rode, January 3, 1873, SB, vol. 4, p.110.

Monumental history belongs to those who for the sake of a fame that transcends time don't cling to their individual existence.

3. The next section presents the philosopher as the most daring of these knights of fame. (Pars 4, 5, 6) This section reappears in *Philosophy in the Tragic Age*.

4. The article concludes with three short paragraphs that include two famous passages that were to make their way into *On Truth and Lie.*

4

First a few words about the title: the idea of a pathos of truth is touched on in a number of fragments of 1872.

> *All actual striving for truth has come into the world through the struggle for a holy conviction* – through the pathos of the struggle. Otherwise men have no interest in the logical origin. (PT 17 – 47)

Why does Nietzsche here speak of a holy conviction?

> We see how philosophy is at first carried on in the same manner that language originated — i.e. illogically.
>
> Now the pathos of *truth* and *truthfulness* is added. To begin with this has nothing to do with matters of logic, but signifies merely that no conscious deception is committed. But these deceptions contained in language and philosophy are unconscious at first, and it is very difficult to become conscious of them. (PT 48 - 143)

When do we say, "p is true" instead of simply asserting p? — only when challenged?

> The pathos of truth in our world of lies.
>
> The world of lies [encountered] again in the highest peaks of philosophy.
>
> The goal of these highest lies is mastery of the unlimited knowledge drive.
>
> How is it that there is any pathos of truth in this world of lies? From morality. The pathos of truth and logic.
>
> Culture and this truth. (PT 57 – 5)

There is tension in these remarks: it is precisely the pathos of truth that lets us climb the highest peaks of philosophy and look there for the highest truths. But are these not unmasked in turn as just higher order lies by the pathos of truth, looking yet higher? Looking at what? What truth is the pathos of truth concerned with?

5

But let me return to the first paragraph of the essay:

> Is fame [*Ruhm*] actually nothing but the tastiest morsel of our self-love [*Eigenliebe]?* Yet the eager desire for it has been linked to the rarest of men [*seltenste Menschen]* and to their rarest moments. These are moments of sudden illumination, moments in which the person stretches out his commanding arm as if to create a universe, draws up light from within himself and shines forth. At such a moment he is pierced by a certainty which fills him with happiness, the certainty that that which exalted him and carried him into the farthest regions — and thus the height of this *unique* feeling — should not be allowed to remain withheld from all posterity. In the eternal need which all future generations have for these rarest illuminations such a person recognizes the necessity of his own fame. From now on humanity needs him. And since the moment of illumination is the epitome and embodiment of his inmost nature, he believes himself to be immortal as the man of this moment, while he casts from himself all the other moments of his life as dross, decay, vanity, brutishness, or pleonasm and hands them over to mortality. (PT 61)

How are *Ruhm* und *Eigenliebe* linked? There are moments where the self transcends itself. The light of such self-transcendence is here the subject's own, which that subject then casts into the world. But are those "farthest regions" to which the certainty that exalted him carried him more than his own fantastic constructions? Have they carried him into a realm beyond time, where eternity rules? What is the ontological status of these "farthest regions"? And in what sense do the others need him? Just what does he have to give them? A saving truth? A saving illusion? And do those others need him and his fullness as much as he needs them, needs them to save him from his self-proclaimed solar plenitude and prodigality?

Consider in this connection the beginning of the *Nachtlied,* the "Night-Song" in *Zarathustra*:

> Light am I; ah, that I were night! But this is my loneliness that I am girt with light. Ah, that I were dark and nocturnal! How I would suck at the breasts of light! and even you would I bless, you little sparkling stars and glowworms up there, and be overjoyed with your gifts of light.
>
> But I live in my own light; I drink back into myself the flames that break out of me. I do not know the happiness of those who receive; and I have often dreamed that even stealing must be more blessed than receiving. This is my poverty, that my hand never rests from giving; this is my envy, that I see waiting eyes and the lit-up nights of longing. Oh, wretchedness of all givers! Oh, darkening of my sun! Oh, craving to crave! Oh, ravenous hunger in satiation! (PN 217-218)

Zarathustra belongs with these knights of fame.

The end of this first paragraph also brings to mind Goethe's *Faust:*

Das ist der Weisheit letzter Schluß:
Nur der verdient sich Freiheit wie das Leben
Der täglich sie erobern muss.
Und so verbringt, umrungen von Gefahr,
Hier Kindheit, Mann und Greis sein tüchtig Jahr.
Solch ein Gewimmel möcht ich sehn,
Auf freiem Grund mit freiem Volke stehn.
Zum Augenblicke dürft' ich sagen:
Verweile doch, du bist so schön!
Es kann die Spur von meinen Erdentagen
Nicht in Äonen untergehn. —
Im Vorgefühl von solchem hohen Glück
Genieß' ich jetzt den höchsten Augenblick.

Yes, to this thought I hold unswerving,
To wisdom's final fruit, profoundly true:
Of freedom and of life he only is deserving

Who every day must conquer them anew.
Thus here, by danger girt, the active day
Of childhood, manhood, age will pass away.
Aye! such a throng I fain would see,
Stand on free soil among a people free.
Then might I say, that moment seeing:
"Ah, linger on, thou art so fair!"
The traces of my earthly being
Can perish not in aeons they are there!
That lofty moment I now feel in this:
I now enjoy the highest moment's bliss.
(trans. George Madison)

It is a moment of the anticipation of fame that is here declared to be Faust's highest moment. We know of course that Faust was mistaken: he did not hear a free people laboring to wrest land from the sea; what he heard were only the *Lemuren* digging his own grave. The expectation of the generations that would remember him appears vain.

And what of the recognition of Nietzsche's *seltenste Menschen*. Is that, too, only an illusion? An illusion that finally proves unable to banish the terror of time?

In this connection I would like to call your attention to one of the *Dionysos Dithyramben*, entitled *Ruhm und Ewigkeit*

Diese Münze, mit der
alle Welt bezahlt,
Ruhm —,
mit Handschuhen fasse ich diese Münze an,
mit Ekel trete ich sie unter *mich.*
Wer will bezahlt sein?[23]

This coin, with which
All the world pays
Fame —,
With Gloves I touch this coin,

[23] KSA, vol. 6, p. 403, 404.

With disgust I stomp it *below* me.

Who wants to be paid?

The dithyramb concludes with an unconditional affirmation of being and ends with the Zarathustra line:

Denn ich liebe dich, o Ewigkeit! —

For I love you, oh eternity! —

The pathos of truth is linked to the love of eternity. The kind of afterlife that fame has to offer does not satisfy that love, although already in Plato's dialogues the two are connected. Think of the way Plato frames the *Phaedo*, a frame that demonstrates that even far from Athens and some time after the death of Socrates, he has not been forgotten.

A question about the conclusion of this paragraph: "And since the moment of illumination is the epitome and embodiment of his inmost nature, he believes himself to be immortal as the man of this moment, while he casts from himself all the other moments of his life as dross, decay, vanity, brutishness, or pleonasm and hands them over to mortality." What does "pleonasm" mean? The word comes from the Latin *pleonasmus*, which in turn derives form the Greek *pleonasmos*, which derives form the verb *pleonazein*, which means to be redundant, superfluous, also to act superfluously. *Pleon*, meaning more, is the comparative of *poly* much.

The first meaning listed in the OED belongs to grammar and rhetoric: pleonasm refers to the use of more words than are necessary to express the meaning. This may be considered negatively, as a fault, or positively, as a device that adds force to the discourse.

The ordinary meaning, "redundant," "too much," is called in the OED figurative; the rhetorical meaning is primary.

Does this help us to read the line in question: I would like to call your attention to the contrast between

draws up light from within itself and shines forth (l. 5)

Licht aus sich schöpfend und um sich strömend

and

casts from himself (l.14)

von sich wirft.

The great man envisioned by Nietzsche casts from himself all that is more than what is encompassed in the phrase

> epitome and embodiment of his inmost nature
> *der Auszug und der Inbegriff seines eigenen Wesens.*

The words "dross, decay, vanity, brutishness," *Schlacke, Fäulnis, Eitelkeit, Tierheit* all call for another more positive term: *Schlacke* refers to what is left over when fire has done its work; *Fäulnis* excludes integrity, wholeness, *das Heile*; *Eitelkeit* here means lacking in substance, weight; *Tierheit*, brutishness, refers to what excludes the truly human. So the truly human is associated with essential existence or true being. This would be a reading that recalls Plato. But the "or" (*oder*) in "or pleonasm" invites a second reading: the just named *Schlacke*, etc. are rejected as would be a word unnecessary to express the meaning. And this means that *Auszug und Inbegriff* may be understood as the translation of human nature into words that are more than just a pleonasm, into something very much like a poem. Is essence, and more especially the essence of the human being, to be understood as at bottom a transfiguring aesthetic construct?

Let me review what has been said so far: the first paragraph introduces the person desiring fame as a godlike creator who returns to or, is it, gives birth to his own essential self. The next two paragraphs introduce us to the idea of culture and link it to the desire for fame.

6

The next paragraph begins with a Schopenhauerian reflection on the passing of all things.

> We observe every passing away and perishing with dissatisfaction, often with astonishment, as if we witnessed therein something fundamentally impossible. We are displeased when a tall tree breaks, and a crumbling mountain distresses us. Every New Year's Eve enables us to feel the mysterious contradiction of being and becoming. But what offends the moral man most of all is the thought that an instant of supreme universal perfection should vanish like a gleam of light as it were, without posterity and heirs. (PT 61-62)

Appealing to Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, Milan Kundera was to speak of "The unbearable lightness of being." Throughout his life Nietzsche struggled to make this lightness bearable. Here he speaks of the moral man (*sittlichen Menschen*). In *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie* he will speak of the *Tätigen und Mächtigen*, who use history as a weapon against resignation. Bound up with this is the demand for a monumental history.

> His imperative demands rather, that whatever once served to propagate more beautifully the concept "man" must be eternally present. The fundamental idea of culture is that the great moments form a chain, like a chain of mountains which unites mankind across the centuries, that the greatest moment of a past age is still great for me, and that the prescient faith of those who desire fame will be fulfilled. (PT 62)

The metaphor of the mountain range reminds me of Hölderlin's *Patmos*.

> *Nah ist*
> *Und schwer zu fassen der Gott.*
> *Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst*
> *Das Rettende auch.*
> *Im Finstern wohnen*
> *Die Adler und furchtlos gehen*
> *Die Söhne der Alpen über den Abgrund weg*
> *Auf leichtgebaueten Brücken.*
> *Drum, da gehäuft sind rings*
> *Die Gipfel der Zeit,*
> *Und die Liebsten*
> *Nah wohnen, ermattend auf*
> *Getrenntesten Bergen,*
> *So gieb unschuldig Wasser,*
> *O Fittige gib uns, treuesten Sinns*
> *Hinüberzugehn und wiederzukehren.*
>
> Near is
> And difficult to grasp, the God.

> But where danger threatens
> That which saves from it also grows.
> In gloomy places dwell
> The eagles, and fearless over
> The chasm walk the sons of the Alps
> On bridges lightly built.
> Therefore, since round about
> Are heaped the summits of Time
> And the most loved live near, growing faint
> On mountains most separate,
> Give us innocent water,
> O pinions give us, with minds most faithful
> To cross over and to return.[24]

The demand that the great be eternal is opposed to life, is thus unnatural. Returning to the beginning, we can say that it is precisely the desire for fame that makes the human being the unnatural animal, that makes him human. The will to live, just to survive, stands in the way of such a desire.

What is meant by "Terrible cultural struggle", *der furchtbare Kampf der Kultur* that "is kindled by the demand that that which is great shall be eternal"? It is a struggle against the will just to live. But if that struggle is to be understood as even possible, the human being has to be understood as capable of so transcending itself that he or she no longer wants just to live, and we can already surmise that this will be bound up with the pathos of truth. There is something unnatural about this pathos. Most human beings have very different concerns.

> Who could perceive in them that difficult relay race by means of which only what is great survives? And yet again and again a few persons awaken, who feel themselves blessed in regard to that which is great, as if human life were a glorious thing and as if the most beautiful fruit of this bitter plant is the knowledge that someone once walked proudly and stoically through his existence, while another walked through it in deep

[24] The English translation of "Patmos" by Michael Hamburger*, Poems and Fragments*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961), pp pp. 462 - 487.

> thoughtfulness and a third with compassion. But they all bequeathed *one* lesson: that the person who lives life most beautifully is the person who does not esteem it. Whereas the common man takes this span of being with such gloomy seriousness, those on their journey to immortality knew how to treat it with OIympian laughter or at least with lofty disdain. Often they went to their graves ironically – for what was there in them to bury? (PT 62)

Cf. *Schopenhauer als Erzieher* 5:

> *Das sind jene* wahrhaften Menschen, jene nicht-mehr Tiere, die Philosophen, Künstler, und Heiligen*; bei ihrem Erscheinen und durch ihr Erscheinen macht die Natur, die nie springt, ihren einzigen Sprung, und zwar einen Freudensprung, denn sie fühlt sich zum ersten Male am Ziele, dort nämlich wo sie begreift, daß sie verlernen müssen, Ziele zu haben.*[25] Those are those true human beings, those no-longer animals, the philosophers, artists, and saints; when they appear and in their appearing nature, which never jumps, make its only jump and indeed it is a jump of joy, for the first time she feels she has reached her goal, the point namely where she comprehends that she has to unlearn to have goals.

The discussion recalls what Schopenhauer had said of persons of genius, whom he called "those abnormally favored individuals", in whom "in moments of supreme enhancement, the knowing part can become detached from the primary willing part."[26] This conception of the great man also invites us to think of Socrates in the *Phaedo*.

[25] KSA 1, 380.
[26] WWR II, ch. XIX, p. 206.

3. "On the Pathos of Truth" II

1

Last time we began our discussion of Nietzsche's early essay, "On the Pathos of Truth," a rather short piece, dating from 1872, the first of "Five Prefaces to Five Unwritten Books." I gave you a brief overview of the essay, which I divided into four parts:

1. The introductory discussion of fame (par. 1)

2. The second section, which centers on the demand that what is great should be eternal, or, as Nietzsche was to put in the *Second Untimely Meditation*, it centers on the demand for a monumental history.

3. The next section presents the philosopher as the most daring of the heroes of that history. (Pars 4, 5, 6)

4. The article concludes with three short paragraphs that include two famous passages that were to make their way into *On Truth and Lie.*

Last time we spent quite a bit of time on the first paragraph, which links *Ruhm*, fame, and *Eigenliebe*, self-love.

The next section, as we saw, begins with a Schopenhauerian reflection on the passing of all things. Bound up with this is the demand for a monumental history. Bound up with such reflection is the unnatural demand that the great be eternal. Returning to the beginning, we can say that it is precisely the desire for fame that makes the human being the unnatural animal. The will to live, just to survive, stands in the way of such a desire.

This helps to explain the following paragraph, which begins with a reference to "terrible cultural struggle... kindled by the demand that that which is great shall be eternal." It is a struggle against the will just to live. But if that struggle is to be understood as even possible, the human being must be capable of so transcending him- or herself, that such an individual no longer wants just to live, and we can already surmise that this will be bound up with the pathos of truth. To repeat: there is something unnatural about this pathos. Nietzsche's conception of the great man invites us to think of Socrates in the *Phaedo*.

This is as far as we got last time.

2

The next par. begins with the assertion that the philosophers are the boldest knights among these addicts of fame.

> The boldest knights among these addicts of fame, those who believe that they will discover their coat of arms hanging on a constellation, must be thought among the *philosophers*. Their efforts are not dependent on a "public," upon the excitation of the masses and the cheering applause of contemporaries. It is their nature to, to wander the path alone. (PT 62-63)

The sentence recalls Nietzsche's comparison of Schopenhauer to Dürer's knight with death and devil in *The Birth of Tragedy*:

> One who is disconsolate and lonely could not choose a better symbol than the knight with death and devil, as Dürer has drawn him for us, the armored knight with the iron, hard look, who knows how to pursue his terrible path, undeterred by his gruesome companions, and yet without hope, alone with his horse and dog. Our Schopenhauer was such a Dürer knight; he lacked all hope, but he desired truth. He has no peers. (BT 123)

But the phrase "those who believe that they will discover their coat of arms hanging on a constellation" calls to mind the much later poem *Ruhm und Ewigkeit*, one of the Dionysus dithyrambs, that I mentioned already last time:

> *Ich sehe ein Zeichen --,*
> *Aus fernsten Fernen*
> *sinkt langsam funkelnd ein Sternbild gegen mich…*
>
> *Schild der Notwendigkeit!*
> *Höchstes Gestirn des Seins!*
> *-- das kein Wunsch ereicht,*
> *-- das kein Nein befleckt,*
> *ewiges Ja des Seins,*
> *ewig bin ich dein Ja:*
> *denn ich liebe Dich, o Ewigkeit! — —*

> Highest star of Being!
> — That no wish reaches
> — that no No sullies
> Eternal Yes of Being.
> Eternally I am your Yes:
> For I love you, oh eternity! — —

The *Wappenschild*, the coat of arms, of the philosopher, is this shield of necessity, which knows nothing of negativity, nothing of possibility, nothing of time. The goal of the philosopher's love is *Ewigkeit.* His eros tends towards eternity. Here Nietzsche accepts Plato. But what is the ontological status of this idea of necessity or eternity? What does it have to do with reality? That so understood the philosopher's eros is unnatural requires no comment.

> Their talent is the rarest and in certain respect most unnatural in nature, even shutting itself off from and hostile towards similar talents. The wall of their self-sufficiency must be made of diamond if it is not to be demolished and shattered. For everything in man and nature is on the move against them. Their journey towards immortality is more difficult and impeded than any other, and yet no one can be more confident than the philosopher that he will reach his goal. Because the philosopher knows not where to stand, if not on the extended wings of all ages. For it is the nature of philosophical reflection to disregard the present and momentary. He possesses the truth: let the wheel of time roll where it will, it will never be able to escape from the truth. (PT 62-63)

In what sense does the philosopher possess the truth? It would seem that given the Schopenhauerian tenor of so much of this, possession of the truth is insight into the essence of what is. Perhaps we can speak of the double vision of such human beings: in the momentary and transitory they see the essential. The philosopher has his eyes fixed on the latter. This explains his essential absentmindedness. Remember the story of Thales and the well. This raises the question the poet Hölderlin had raised: does King Oedipus possess perhaps one eye too many?

3

To illustrate the idea of the philosopher that has been sketched Nietzsche next turns to Heraclitus. As I have already pointed out, the text here is pretty much identical with that of *Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter* (ca. 1875). It is helpful to turn to this later text because it makes clear that Nietzsche understands Heraclitus in the image of Schopenhauer:

> *Wenn nun Heraklit in dieser Weise die Zeit, losgelöst von allen Erfahrungen betrachtet, so hatte er an ihr das belehrendste Monogramm alles dessen, was überhaupt unter den Bereich der intuitiven Vorstellung fällt. So wie er die Zeit erkannte, erkannte sie zum Beispiel auch Schopenhauer, als welcher von ihr wiederholt aussagt*:[27]
>
> When Heraclitus now, removed from all experiences, considers time, he has in it the most instructive monogram of all that falls under the realm of intuitive representation. As he understood time, so did e, g, Schopenhauer, who speaks of it repeatedly:

What follows in the text is a half page of paraphrase and direct quote from *The World as Will and Representation* I, par. 3:

> In time each moment is only in so far as it has effaced its father, the preceding moment, to be just as quickly effaced itself. Past and future (apart from the consequences of their content) are as empty and unreal as any dream; but present is only the boundary between the two, having neither extension nor duration. In just the same way, we shall also consider the same emptiness in all the other forms of the principle of sufficient reason, and shall see that, like time, space also, and like this, everything that exists simultaneously in space and time, and hence everything that proceeded from causes and motives, has only a relative existence, is only through and for another like itself, i. e. just as enduring. In essence this view is old: in it Heraclitus lamented the eternal flux of things; ...[28]

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[27] KSA I, 823.
[28] WWR I, p. 7.

Nietzsche could thus find the link between Schopenhauer and Heraclitus made by Schopenhauer himself. Where Nietzsche speaks of time as the *Monogramm*, Schopenhauer speaks of its as the simplest form. If the present is, past and future are not; but this attempt to give priority to the present collapses when we reflect on the fact that the present is itself only the extensionless boundary between past and future. And this negativity extends to all forms of the principle of sufficient reason.

Heraclitus is understood by Nietzsche as the paradigmatic seeker of truth:

> It is important to discover that such men once lived, for one would never be able to imagine on one's own, as an idle possibility, the pride of the wise Heraclitus (who may serve as our example). For by nature every striving for knowledge seems intrinsically unsatisfied and unsatisfying. Therefore, unless he has been instructed to the contrary by history, no one will be able to imagine such regal self-esteem, such boundless conviction that one is the sole fortunate wooer of truth. Men of this sort live within their own solar system, and that is where they must be sought. Even a Pythagoras and an Empedocles treated themselves with superhuman respect, indeed with an almost religious awe. But they were led back to other men and to their salvation by the bond of sympathy, coupled with the great conviction concerning the transmigration of souls and the unity of all living things. (PT 63)

The description of the philosopher as living within his own solar system anticipates the role of the sun in *Zarathustra*, for instance the *Nachtlied,* where Zarathustra speaks of himself as a sun. The statement that philosophers of this sort treat themselves with an almost religious awe is worth noting. They attempt to be more than human. But is this attempt not all too human? One is forced to think of the mad Nietzsche who speaks iof himself as condemned to be God. What is clear, however, is that the place occupied by the philosopher is also the place that will be assigned to Zarathustra and also the place Nietzsche would like to claim for his own.

An interesting distinction is drawn between Empedocles and Pythagoras on the one hand and Heraclitus on the other. The former are possessed by a sympathy that leads them back to other human beings. Heraclitus is of a different sort:

> But only in the wildest mountain wasteland, while growing numb from the cold, can one surmise to some extent the feeling of loneliness which permeated the hermit of the Ephesian temple of Artemis. No overwhelming feeling of sympathetic excitement emanates from him, no desire to help and to save. He is like a star without an atmosphere. His burning eye is directed inward; from without it looks dead and frigid, as if it looked outward merely for appearances' sake. On all sides the waves of illusion and folly beat directly against the fortress of his pride, while he turns away in disgust. But even tender-hearted men shun such a tragic mask. Such a being might seem more comprehensible in a remote shrine, among images of the gods and amidst cold, sublime architecture. (PT 63 – 64)

Zarathustra, descending from his mountain, wanting to become once more a human being, is Heraclitus become Empedocles. The mad Nietzsche would rather be a professor than God, but feels condemned to be the latter. Once again the *Nachtlied*, the "Night Song" of *Zarathustra* comes to mind, e. g. these lines:

> *Aber ich lebe in meinem eigenen Lichte, ich trinke die Flammen in mich zurück, die aus mir brechen.*
> *Ach, Eis ist um mich, meine Hand verbrennt sich an Eisigem!*
> But I live in my own light, I drink the flames that break out of me
> Back into me.
> Ah, ice surrounds me, my hand burns itself on what is icy! (PN 218)

Characteristic is the sublime mountain scenery. As we shall see in Zarathustra, **the** struggle for an escape from the spirit of revenge**,** the ill will against time, will also be **a** struggle against the sublime**.** The heroic philosopher Nietzsche presents here is very much sublime.

> And if he was perhaps observed while watching the game of noisy children, he had in any case been pondering something never before pondered by a mortal on such an occasion, viz., the play of the great world-child, Zeus, and the eternal game of world destruction and origination. He had no need for men, not even for the purposes of his knowledge. He was not at all concerned with anything that one might

> perhaps ascertain from them or with what otherwise men before him had struggled to ascertain. "It was myself which I sought and explored," he said, using words which signified the fathoming of an oracle –- as if he and no one else were the true fulfiller and accomplisher of the Delphic maxim, "know thyself." (PT 64)

As the footnote informs us, according to Diogenes Laertius the young Heraclitus, like Socrates, said he knew nothing, only to say later, when grown up, that he knew everything, which would make Heraclitus the grown up Socrates. Is this then how Nietzsche thought of Schopenhauer, who is figured by his Heraclitus?

The "know thyself" here has more of a Schopenhauerian than a Socratic ring. For Schopenhauer it was indeed in our own being, in our own will, that the essence of all that is discloses itself.

> But what he heard in this oracle he presented as immortal wisdom, eternally worthy of interpretation in the sense in which the prophetic speeches of the sybil are immortal. It is sufficient [*Es ist genug*] for the most distant generations: may they interpret it only as the sayings of an oracle — as a Heraclitus, as the Delphic god himself "neither speaks nor conceals: Although Heraclitus proclaims his wisdom "without laughter, without ornaments and scented ointments," but rather, as it were "with foaming mouth," it *must* penetrate thousands of years into the future. Since the world forever requires truth, it requires Heraclitus forever, though he does not require the world. What does his fame matter to *him*? (PT 64)

But in what sense is Heraclitus's message sufficient for the most distant generations? *Es ist genug*, it is sufficient. *Genug* for what? And in what sense does the world need the truth? Is it needed in the sense in which God is not needed? Is Heraclitus's wisdom like a poem we need? A culture founding poem? But is the truth not precisely something that the world does not need? There is tension in these statements:

> "Fame among mortals who are continually passing away!" as he scornfully proclaims. Fame is something for minstrels and poets and for those who were known as "wise" before him. Let them gulp down this tastiest morsel of their self-love; the fare is too common for him. His

> fame matters to men, not to him. His self-love is love of truth and it is this truth which tells him that the immortality of humanity requires him, not that he requires the immortality of the man Heraclitus. (PT 64-65)

The passage brings us back to the beginning: Heraclitus does not require fame, but he will be famous. Heraclitus is thus presented to us very much like the Zarathustra of *Ruhm und Ewigkeit*, who would stomp with disgust on fame, that coin with which all who can be bought want to be paid.

With this we come the end of the paragraphs that were to reappear in *Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter*.

4

At this point a profound skepticism would seem to undercut much that has gone before:

> Truth! Rapturous illusion of a god! What does the truth matter to men!
>
> And what was the Heraclitean "truth"?
>
> And where has it gone? A vanished dream which has been erased from mankind's countenance by other dreams! It was hardly the first! (PT 65)

The passage recalls *Metaphysics* I, ch. 2, 982 b 12 where Aristotle says that it was "owing to wonder that men both now begin and at first began to philosophize." The insight the philosopher seeks is free in that it has left the ordinary concerns of life behind. Once more let me quote Aristotle:

> Evidently then we do not seek it for the sake of any other advantage, but as the man is free, we say, who exists for himself and not for another, so we pursue this as the only free science, for it alone exists for itself. (*Metaphysics* I, ch. 2, 982 b 25-28) [29]

Here then we have the leap of which Nietzsche spoke. We should keep in mind the way Nietzsche links in a number of fragments the emergence of the pathos of truth to an aesthetic generalization. Should we understand the pathos of truth as an aesthetic generalization of Aristotelian wonder?

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[29] Translation W. D. Ross,

Aristotle himself raises an obvious objection:

> Hence also the possession of it might be justly regarded as beyond human power; for in many ways human nature is in bondage, so that according to Simonides, "God alone can have this privilege," and it is unfitting that man should not be content to seek that knowledge that is suited to him. *Metaphysics* I, ch. 2, 982 b 30-32)

But the gods, Aristotle continues, are not jealous. The gods of the godless Nietzsche, on the other hand, appear to be jealous. Consider for example this passage from *Homer's Contest*, where he says of Miltiades:

> *Nach der Schlacht von Marathon hat ihn der Neid der Himmlischen ergriffen. Und dieser Neid entzündet sich, wenn er den Menschen ohne jeden Wettkämpfer, gegnerlos, auf einsamer Ruhmeshöhe erblickt.*[30]
> After the battle of Marathon the envy of the heavenly ones seized him. And this envy ignites when it observes the human being without any competitor, without an opponent, on the lonely peak of fame.

The statement that Heraclitus's truth has vanished is of course challenged by the very fact that Nietzsche is discussing that truth.

Difficult to understand is the phrase

> *Schwärmerischer Wahn eines Gottes*

This recalls a passage in the *Birth of Tragedy* where Nietzsche speaks of the empirical world as *die entzückende Vision*, the delightful vision, of the *Ur-Eine,* the primordial one, and thus a *Schein*, an illusion.

But what sense does it make to speak here of truth as the *illusion of a God*? Does truth have its place in this world of phenomena?

> Regarding everything which we call by the proud metaphors "world history" and "truth" and "fame", a heartless spirit might have nothing to say except: (PT 65)

We shall return to the problem of metaphor next time. Here I would like to just suggest a contrast between *pleonasm* and *proud metaphor*.

Nietzsche, it would seem, would have liked to be that heartless spirit. Consider these notes:

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[30] KSA I, 791-792.

> Write in a completely impersonal and cold manner,
> Omit all "us," "we," and "I." Also limit the sentences with "that." So far as possible, avoid all technical terms.
> Everything must be said as specifically as possible, and every technical term, including "will" must be left out. (PT 55)
> I would like to treat the question of the value of knowledge as it would be treated by a cold angel who sees through the whole shabby farce. Without anger, but without warmth. (PT 55)

The tale of the animals who invented knowing, returns as the beginning of *On Truth and Lie*

> Once upon a time, in some out of the way corner of that universe which is dispersed into numberless twinkling solar systems, there was a star upon which clever beasts invented knowing. That was the most arrogant and mendacious minute of world history, but nevertheless only a minute. After nature had drawn a few breaths, the star cooled and solidified, and the clever beasts had to die. The time had come too, for although they boasted how much they had understood, in the end they discovered to their great annoyance that they had understood everything falsely. They died, and in dying cursed truth. Such was the nature of these desperate beasts who invented knowing. (PT 65)

The tale has its origin in the beginning of the second volume of *The World as Will and Representation*:

> In endless space countless luminous spheres, round each of which some dozen smaller illuminated ones revolve, hot at the core and covered with a hard cold crust; on this crust a moldy film has produced living and knowing beings; this is empirical truth, the real, the world. Yet for a being who thinks, it is a precarious position to stand on one of these numberless spheres freely floating in boundless space, without knowing whence and wither, and to be only one of innumerable similar beings that throng, press, and toil, restlessly and rapidly arising and passing away in beginningless and endless time.[31]

[31] WWR II, p. 3.

It is a characteristic post-Copernican reflection on the eccentricity of our situation in the cosmos. Ours is in no ways a privileged position. The world is not such that we have a right to understand ourselves as its privileged observers. And yet note that this reflection at least presupposes the thought of the infinite and that of truth, how otherwise would it be possible to claim that the clever beasts "had understood everything falsely"? Consider in this connection these notes:

> The philosopher caught in the nets of language.
>
> The one philosopher is here identical with all scientific endeavor; for all the sciences rest upon the philosopher's general foundation. The prodigious *unity* of all the knowledge drives must be demonstrated: the fragmented scholar. (PT 42-118, 120)

We should note how Nietzsche here claims that all the sciences rest on the philosopher's general foundation. How does Nietzsche understand that foundation? And how is it linked to the idea of "truth"?

It would seem that it is an awareness of infinity that distinguishes these beings who have invented knowledge. The Copernican reflection on the cosmos is tied to Kant's second Copernican revolution, where Nietzsche emphasizes that it has forced us to recognize that a knowledge of things in themselves is denied to us.

But, as Nietzsche points out, we are not just knowing animals.

Against Aristotle, Nietzsche would seem to take here the side of Simonides:

> This would be man's fate if he were nothing but a knowing animal. The truth would drive him to despair and destruction: the truth that he is eternally condemned to untruth. But all that is appropriate for man is belief in attainable truth, in the illusion which draws near to man and inspires him with confidence." (PT 65)

What follows is another very Schopenhauerian passage:

> Does he not actually live by means of a continual process of deception? Does nature not conceal most things from him, even the nearest things — his own body, for example, of which he has only a deceptive "consciousness"? He is locked within this consciousness and nature threw away the key. Oh, the fatal curiosity of the philosopher, who longs, just once, to peer out and down through a crack in the chamber of

> consciousness. Perhaps, he will then suspect the extent to which man, in the indifference of his ignorance, is sustained by what is greedy, insatiable, disgusting, pitiless, and murderous — as if he were hanging in dreams on the back of a tiger. (PT 65)

Presupposed is Schopenhauer's iceberg image of man: Consider the following passage from *The World as Will and Representation*:

> In fact, the intellect remains so much excluded from the real resolutions and secret decisions of its own will that sometimes it can only get to know them, like those of a stranger, by spying them out and taking unawares. (WWR II, 209)

And the will is described by Schopenhauer, too, pretty much in the way it is understood by Nietzsche. Consider another passage:

> To regard the immoral element in the will as an imperfection of it would be a fundamentally false point of view; on the contrary, morality has a source that really lies beyond nature; hence it is in contradiction with the utterances of nature. For this reason, morality is directly opposed to the natural will, which in itself is absolutely egoistic; in fact, to pursue the path of morality leads to an abolition of the will. (WWR II, 215)

The ending of the essay appeals to the traditional dreaming-waking opposition only to invert it:

> "Let him hang!" cries art. "Wake him up!" shouts the philosopher in the pathos of truth. Yet even while he believes himself to be shaking the sleeper, the philosopher himself is sinking into a still deeper magical slumber. Perhaps he then dreams of the "ideas" or of immortality. Art is more powerful than knowledge, because it desires life, whereas knowledge attains as its final goal only — annihilation. (PT 65)

The philosopher's waking reality turns out to be only a more profound slumber.

The last sentence once again recalls Schopenhauer. Listen to the way Nietzsche characterizes Schopenhauerian man in *Schopenhauer as an Educator*:

> *Der Schopenhauerische Mensch nimmt das freiwilllige Leiden der Wahrhaftigekit auf sich, und dieses Leiden dient ihm, seinen Eigenwillen zu ertöten und jene völlige Umwälzung und Umkehrung seines Wesens*

> *vorzubereiten, zu der zu führen der eigentliche Sinn des Lebens ist. Dieses Heraussagen des Wahren erscheint den anderen Menschen als ein Ausfluß der Bosheit, denn sie halten die Konservierung ihrer Halbheiten und Flausen für eine Pflicht der Menschlichkeit und meinen, man müsse böse sein, um ihnen also ihr Spielwerk zu zerstören. Sie sind versucht einem solchen zuzurufen, was Faust dem Mephistopheles sagt: "so setzest du der ewig regen, der heilsam schaffenden Gewalt die kalte Teufelsfaust entgegen"; und der, welcher Schopenhauerisch leben wollte, würde wahrscheinlich einem Mephistopheles ähnlicher sehen als einem Faust — für die schwachsichtigen modernen Augen nämlich, welche im Verneinen immer das Abzeichen des Bösen sehe*. (KSA I, 371-372)
>
> Schopenhauerian man accepts freely the suffering that truthfulness must bring, and this suffering helps him to extinguish his self-directed will, and to prepare for that total revolution and reversal of his essence, which to achieve is the real meaning of life. This speaking of the truth appears to other human beings as an expression of evil, for they consider the conservation of their half-truths and illusions a human duty and think one would have to be evil to thus want to destroy their toy. They are tempted to call such a person with the words Faust addresses to Mephisopheles: "thus you oppose to the ever active, beneficently creative power the devil's cold fist": and he who wants to live in Schopenhauerian fashion would probably look more like Mephistopheles than Faust — at least for those weak modern eyes, which see in negation always the mark of evil.

Following Schopenhauer, Nietzsche goes on to interpret such negation as really a *Heiligung und Errettung*, a sanctification and salvation, a not altogether convincing interpretation.

Consider in this connection Mephisto's words in Faust II:

> *Vorbei — ein dummes Wort*
> *Warum vorbei?*
> *Vorbei und reines Nichts, volkommnes Einerlei*
> *Was soll uns denn das ew'ge Schaffen!*
> *Geschaffenes zu nichts hinwegzuraffen!*

"Da ist's vorbei!" Was ist daran zu lesen?
Und ist so gut als wär es nicht gewesen,
Und treibt sich doch im Kreis, als wenn es wäre.
Ich liebte mir dafür das Ewig-Leere (11596 - 11603)

Past — a stupid word
Why past?
Past and pure nothing, all the same
What good is us all that eternal creating!
To have the created turn to nothing!
"There it is past!" What can we read in that?
And is as good as had it never been,
And still it turns in a circle, as if it were.
I'd love instead the eternally empty.

The final word in *Faust* belongs, however, not to the ***Ewig-Leere***, the eternally empty, but to the ***Ewig-Weibliche***, the eternally feminine.

4. "On Truth and Lie in an Extramoral Sense" I

1

Today I would like to turn to the most sustained fragment of what presumably was to have become Nietzsche's *Philosophenbuch*. Dating from 1873 it has come in for quite a bit of attention in recent years, where the very fact of its popularity invites thought. Let me read you here a few passages from Ronald Hayman's semipopular, *Nietzsche - A Critical Life*:[32]

> One of the reasons his catastrophe is important is that with his headaches, his vomiting, and his madness, he was, more directly than any other thinker, living out the consequences of losing faith in a system of belief that is now generally discredited. (11)
>
> In any case, his madness invalidates neither his assessment of the demand that he was making on us or the demand itself. *We have no option but to follow him into the impasse from which his escape was into insanity*. He has left us to find our own way out. If we lose faith in language and truth, how are we to communicate? If we lose faith in the coherence of the self, how can we expect to think coherently? Almost a century has passed since Nietzsche formulated his challenge to our conventions of thinking and expressing ourselves, but we have neither answered it nor found alternative conventions. (11, 12, my emphasis)

And yet we do communicate and we do think more or less coherently. Do we really "have no option but to follow Nietzsche into that impasse from which his only escape was into insanity"? Could it be that Nietzsche went insane because of some all too mundane illness? — where I only mention that the diagnosis of syphilis, made after a very cursory examination on the occasion of his admission to a medical facility in Jena, and later often repeated, especially by Paul Julius Möbius (*Über das Pathologische bei Nietzsche*, 1902), and then in 1946 by Wilhelm Lange-Eichbaum, was almost certainly mistaken.

But why would a thinker who would lead us into such an impasse find any followers? What mood on their part would have to be presupposed? The pathos of truth?

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[32] Ronald Hayman, *Nietzsche - A Critical Life* (Oxford, Oxford U. Press, 1980).

And are we in fact convinced by what Nietzsche, or perhaps just Hayman's Nietzsche, has to say? If so, what convinces us? The soundness of the arguments? Or do we want to be convinced? If the latter, this raises another and equally interesting question: why should people want to be convinced of something seemingly so dismal. For readers who do want to be thus convinced the fragment to which we are now turning has become a central text, as it has for Hayman.

Let me anticipate here and suggest that much of the interest in the essay is tied to a dissatisfaction with a world disenchanted by science, tied to a longing for a culture that would once again give the imagination its due. As the critic Geoffrey Hartmann claimed, quite some time ago, in "Literary Criticism and its Discontents, "Anything that blows the cover of reified or superobjective thinking is important."[33] It is easy to see why those who share this conviction should look to Nietzsche, who was in fact trying to do something of the sort. If what Hartman here calls reified or superobjective thinking is linked to a life-denying nihilism, then anything that breaks their hegemony will indeed be important. But then one should also expect that such an interest is likely to lead to wishful thinking, wishful thinking especially about the ability of the humanities to blow the cover of the kind of thinking found in the sciences. Instead of genuinely challenging what is taken to be the false hegemony of rationality one seeks refuge in impotent aesthetic constructions. One finds thus today a widespread tendency towards an aestheticizing of thinking, especially in the humanities, which so aestheticized becomes little more than aesthetic production, a perhaps delightful, but finally inconsequential, harmless diversion, a version of Hermann Hesse's *Glasperlenspiel*.

Such wishful thinking also leads to wishful reading. The essay we are concerned with seems to me to have been a victim of such wishful reading, fostered in the English speaking countries by the fact that for a long time it was available only in the Kaufmann translation in the *Portable Nietzsche*. But Kaufmann translated only about half of the fragment as we have it, breaking off with

> to be truthful means using the customary metaphors — in moral terms: the obligation to lie according to a fixed convention, to lie, herd-like, in a style obligatory for all. … (PN 47)

[33] Geoffrey Hartmann, "Literary Criticism and its Discontents," *Critical Inquiry,* vol. 3, no, 2, p. 216

You find Breazeale's translation on p. 84.

What follows, but was omitted, is the part of the essay where Nietzsche's debt to Kant and Schopenhauer is evident. No interpretation of this essay that leaves out this debt can be adequate.

Let me therefore begin with the very end of part 1 of this fragment:

> All that conformity to law, which impresses us so much in the movement of the stars and in chemical processes, coincides at bottom with those properties which we bring to things. Thus it is we who impress ourselves in this way. In conjunction with this it of course follows that the artistic process of metaphor formation with which every sensation begins in us already presupposes these forms and thus occurs within them. The only way in which the possibility of subsequently constructing a new conceptual edifice from metaphors themselves can be explained is by the firm persistence of these original forms. That is to say, this conceptual edifice is an imitation of temporal, spatial, and numerical relationships in the domain of metaphor. (88)

This passage makes clear that in this essay Nietzsche understands the problem of metaphor formation against the background of the Kantian *a priori*, which remains the *a priori* of metaphor formation. I shall turn to this *a priori* next time. Today I shall focus on the first part of the essay, and this means, I shall focus on metaphor.

2

Let me return to the beginning of the essay: we return to the already familiar fable that is designed to challenge pre-Copernican anthropocentrism with a reflection on cosmic eccentricity.

> Once upon a time, in some out of the way corner of that universe which is dispersed into numberless twinkling solar systems, there was a star upon which clever beasts invented knowing. That was the most arrogant and mendacious minute of "world history," but nevertheless, it was only a minute. After nature had drawn a few breaths, the star cooled and congealed, and the clever beasts had to die. — One might invent such a fable, and yet still would not have adequately illustrated how miserable,

> how shadowy and transient, how aimless and arbitrary the human intellect looks within nature. There were eternities during which it did not exist. And when it is all over with the human intellect, nothing will have happened. For this intellect has no additional mission which would lead it beyond human life. (PT 79)

Note how both space and time figure in this reflection.

Such eccentricity clashes with human pride. Copernican science defeats pre-Copernican anthropocentrism. In *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche will celebrate Copernicus together with the Pole [Giuseppe Ruggero] Boscovich [actually a Jesuit from Ragusa, now Dubrovnik] whom he calls the *grösste und siegreichste Gegner des Augenscheins*, the greatest and most victorious opponent of visual appearance. Note the nature of this victory: it relies on a thought pattern I want to call Copernican reflection: *Augenschein* is devalued as mere *Augenschein* by being shown to be no more than perspectival appearance. The world opened up by the scientist is opposed to that comparatively superficial world given to the senses, especially to the eye. Nietzsche speaks of this victory over the senses as *der grösste Triumph über die Sinne, der bisher auf Erden errungen ist.* (KSA 5, 26) "The greatest triumph over the senses that has been won so far." But the other side of this victory is what Nietzsche calls the *Selbstverkleinerung des Menschen*, *sein Wille zur Selbstverkleinerung*, "The self-diminution of man, his will to self-diminution," which since Copernicus is said to be in *einem unaufhaltsamen Fortschritte*, "in an unstoppable progress." This statement is from the *Genealogy of Morals*, where Nietzsche also writes that *Seit Kopernikus scheint der Mensch auf eine schiefe Ebene geraten — er rollt immer schneller nunmehr aus dem Mittelpunkt weg — wohin? ins Nichts? ins durchbohrende Gefühl seines Nichts* (KSA 5, 404) "Since Copernicus the human being seems to have stumbled unto an inclined plane — he rolls ever faster away from the center — where? Into nothing? Into the penetrating awareness of his own 'nothing'?" Essentially the same thought returns in the *Will to Power*. The other side of the Copernican victory is nihilism. Modern science and nihilism belong together. Cf. Wittgenstein's *Tractatus:*

> 6.4 "All propositions are of equal value."

> 6.41 The sense of the world must lie outside the world. In the world everything is at it is and happens as it does happen. In it there is no value — and if there were, it would be of no value."[34]

This conjunction of science and nihilism will continue to occupy us.

3

In this essay fragment Nietzsche once again returns to the theme of pride, although he casts it in a somewhat different light:

> There is nothing so reprehensible and unimportant in nature that would not immediately swell up like a balloon at the slightest puff of this power of knowing. And just as every porter wants to have an admirer, so even the proudest of men, the philosopher, supposes that he sees on all sides the eyes of the universe telescopically focused upon his action and thought (PT 79)

In this connection let me say a few a words about Copernican revolutions:

1. If Copernicus removed the human being physically from the center, this did not shake his cognitive anthropocentrism, his faith that the human understanding is able to comprehend the cosmos.

2. Kant both validated and limited this cognitive anthropocentrism in a way that prompted Russell to speak in *Human Knowledge* of the Kantian Copernican revolution as really a Ptolemaic counter-revolution that placed man, the knower, at the center once more, if at the price of denying him access to things in themselves.

3. A third Copernican revolution is inaugurated when Kant's transcendental subject is brought down to earth and the Kantian project with its claim to objectivity is challenged by the way logic cannot free itself from its entanglement in inevitably concrete language, from rhetoric. Paul de Man was thus to speak of "the necessary subversion of truth by rhetoric."[35] Does the philosopher's pride finally shatter on the inescapably figural character of all thought and language?

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[34] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. C. K. Ogden (London: Routledge, 1922)

[35] Paul de Man, "Rhetoric of Tropes (Nietzsche)," *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979, p. 110.

But let me proceed with the essay:

> It is remarkable that this was brought about by the intellect, which was certainly allotted to these most unfortunate, delicate, and ephemeral beings merely as a device for detaining them a minute within existence. For without this addition they would have every reason to flee this existence as quickly as Lessing's son. (PT 79)

Let me begin by picking up on Lessing's son. I find this a somewhat puzzling reference, despite the footnote, which refers us to the offspring of Lessing and Eva König, who died on the day of his birth. I take it that what we have here is first of all once again a reference to *The World a Will and Representation*. In ch. 41, vol. II we read:

> Lessing admired the understanding of his son. Because this son had absolutely declined to come into the world, he had to be dragged forcibly into it by means of a forceps; but hardly was he in it, when he again hurried from it. (WWR II, 579)

A bit later Schopenhauer returns to Lessing's son when he argues against those who say that everything had been wisely arranged by God:

> But this and everything like it are indeed mere *conditiones sine qua non*. If there is to be a world at all, if its planets are to exist as long as is needed for the light of a remote fixed star to reach them, and are not, like Lessing's son, to depart again immediately after birth, then of course it could not be constructed so unskillfully that its very framework would threaten to collapse. (WWR II, 581)

We meet with an interesting substitution here: Schopenhauer was using the example to suggest that a certain degree of order is a necessary condition of the very being of our world, while Nietzsche suggests that our intellect is a necessary condition of our being, given the needy beings we are.

The thought of our intellect as a compensation for our neediness is a familiar one. It thus recalls Pico's *Oration on the Dignity of Man* where man is described as the being that has no essence, no proper place, who faces therefore the acquisition of such an essence as a task. Pico calls therefore calls the human being a Proteus and Nietzsche, too, understands the human being first of all as a being of dissimulation.

> As a means for the preserving of the individual, the intellect unfolds its principle powers in dissimulation, which is the means by which weaker, less robust individuals preserve themselves — since they have been denied the chance to wage the battle for existence with horns or with the sharp teeth of beasts of prey. This art of dissimulation reaches its peak in man. Deception, flattering, lying, deluding, talking behind the back, putting up a false front, living in borrowed splendor, wearing a mask hiding behind convention, playing a role for others and for oneself — in short continuous fluttering around the *solitary* flame of vanity — is so much the rule and the law among men that there is almost nothing which is less comprehensible than how an honest and pure drive for truth could have arisen among them. (PT 80)

There is a curious tension in this text between being deluded and wanting to be deluded. And yet Nietzsche asserts that there is something that can be called *ein ehrlicher und reiner Trieb zur Wahrheit,* **"**an honest and pure drive for truth." The question remains: how are we to understand such a drive.

And what is the goal of this drive? How is truth here understood? An answer is suggested by

> And, besides, what about these linguistic conventions themselves? Are they perhaps products of knowledge, that is of the sense of truth? Are designations congruent with things? Is language the adequate expression of all realities? (PT 81)

To have truth, designations must be congruent to things. Language must be the adequate expression of reality. But we have no access to the things themselves, Nietzsche insists. And if there is no such access, how can there be the demanded correspondence.

The first step in this argument recalls Descartes and is tied to the reflection on perspective:

> They [human beings] are deeply immersed in illusions and in dream images; their eyes merely glide over the surface of things and see "forms." Their senses nowhere lead to truth; on the contrary, they are content to receive stimuli and, as it were, to engage in a groping game on the back of things. (PT 80)

The passage invites comparison with the already familiar tiger passage at the bottom of the page:

> Does nature not conceal most things from him — concerning his own body — in order to confine and lock him within a proud, deceptive consciousness, aloof from the coils of the bowels, the rapid flow of the blood stream, and the intricate quivering of the fibers! She threw away the key. And woe to that fatal curiosity which might one day have the power to peer out and down through a crack in the chamber of consciousness and then suspect that man is sustained in the indifference of his ignorance by what is pitiless, greedy, insatiable, and murderous — as if he were hanging in dreams on the back of a tiger. (PT 80)

Descartes had tried to show that there is an exit from the labyrinth of appearances: we gain proper access when we understand ourselves as thinking substances, and proper access to nature when we reconfigure it relying on the language of mathematics. But do we know ourselves to be such a thinking substance? Nietzsche here accepts Schopenhauer's inversion of the traditional image of man. Just as our earth is eccentrically located in the cosmos, so he thinking self is eccentrically located in a larger self. The cosmological reflection with which the essay begins is translated into a psychological key.

4

Given the repeated injunctions against the truth, why should there be such a thing as this insistence on telling the truth, the drive for truth. In answer Nietzsche comes up with what we can call a social contract theory of truth. Truth has its foundation in the social being of man.

> Insofar as the individual wants to maintain himself against other individuals, he will under natural circumstances employ the intellect mainly for dissimulation. But at the same time, from boredom and necessity, man wishes to exist socially and with the herd; therefore he needs to make peace and strives accordingly to banish from his world at least the most flagrant *bellum omnium contra omnes*. This peace treaty brings in its wake something which appears to be the first step towards

> acquiring that puzzling truth drive: to wit, that which shall count as "truth" from now on is established. That is to say, a uniformly valid and binding designation is invented for things, and this legislation of language likewise established the first laws of truth. (PT 81)

This now allows us to give some sense to lying:

> The liar is a person who uses the valid designations, the words, in order to make something which is unreal appear to be real. He says for example, "I am rich," when the proper designation for his condition would be "poor." He misuses fixed conventions by means of arbitrary substitutions or even reversals of names. If he does this in a selfish and moreover harmful manner, society will cease to trust him and will thereby exclude him. (PT 81)

This transference of the social contract from the political into the linguistic sphere is interesting. Nietzsche repeatedly speaks of Hobbes, so in the first *Untimely Meditation* on David Strauss, where contrasting him with Hobbes, he attributes to the latter *eine ganz anders grossartige Wahrheitsliebe*,[36] "a very differently grand love of truth," which points to the origin of all ethical norms in the *bellum omnium contra omnes.* That high estimation of Hobbes was to change. In *Beyond Good and Evil* (252*)* he writes that Hobbes, together with Bacon Hume, and Locke, meant an *Erniedrigung,* a lowering, and a *Wert-Minderung,* a devaluation of the concept of the philosopher.[37] I wonder whether Nietzsche actually read anything by Hobbes; what he found in Schopenhauer may have sufficed. The changed opinion about Hobbes may just be a function of the changed attitude to Schopenhauer.

But the passage is difficult to make sense of. Let us begin with the characterization of the liar as someone who makes arbitrary substitutions. This presupposes that there is a proper use of a convention. That proper use links things to valid and binding designations. This presupposes that the things are in some sense available to those who would enter into such a contract. This does not mean that they have to understand things as they are in themselves, but it does presuppose that they understand their appearances in the same way. The sameness of experience is a

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[36] KSA I, p. 194.
[37] KSA V, p. 195,

necessary condition of this social contract theory. But this is to say that something like Kant's understanding of experience is being presupposed. In what sense then did Nietzsche challenge Kant? If we understand truth as a correspondence between our propositions and things in themselves then there is no truth for Kant either.

And yet Nietzsche refuses to content himself with truth in the sense in which Kant claims science yields truth.

Would Nietzsche have insisted that it is not so much a matter of a refusal as a necessity of thought? And what necessity of thought will appear when we raise Kant's Copernican reflection to a still higher level and reflect on the way thinking remains tied to language?

> Thus, even at this stage, what they hate is basically not deception itself, but rather the unpleasant, hated consequences of certain kinds of deception. It is in a similarly restricted sense that man now wants nothing but truth: he desires the pleasant, life preserving consequences of truth. He is indifferent toward pure knowledge which has no consequences; towards those truths which are possibly harmful and destructive he is even hostilely inclined. (PT 81)

If truth demands the congruence of our designations with things there is no truth.

> It is only by means for forgetfulness that man can ever reach the point of fancying himself to possess a "truth" of the grade just indicated. If he will not be satisfied with truth in the form of tautology, that is to say, if he will not be content with empty husks, then he will always exchange truths for illusions. (PT 81)

Nietzsche here admits truth in the form of tautology. But why "illusions"? Does Nietzsche have a right to this word at this point? Or, perhaps under the spell of Schopenhauer's rhetoric, does he move too easily from the Kantian *Erscheinung* to *Schein*, i. e. from appearance to Illusion?

You may want to say that the following reflection gives him this right:

> What is a word? It is the copy in sound of a nerve stimulus. But the further inference from the nerve stimulus to a cause outside us is already the result of a false and unjustifiable application of the principle of sufficient reason. (PT 81)

But how convincing are these reflections? The word is said to be a copy (*Abbildung*) of a nerve stimulus *(Nervenreiz*) in sound (*Lauten*). What sense can we give here to the idea of a copy? Copy would seem to presupposes a certain structural similarity.

That this nerve stimulus does not permit the inference to a cause without us invites question. As a physical event, must it not have a cause of some sort?

I do not know what exactly lets Breazeale think that we have here is an implicit critique of Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer's theory of the word is indeed quite different. What makes it most obviously different is Schopenhauer's distinction between **word** and concept. The word is understood by him as first of all the arbitrary sign of a concept. Schopenhauer here does not insist on a picture relationship, but on arbitrariness. A word is the repeatable token of a concept. Schopenhauer does speak of concepts as representations of perceptions, though he adds, *copies of quite a special kind in an altogether heterogeneous medium* (WWR I, 40) How are we to understand this heterogeneity? Perceeptions are particulars, while concepts are essentially general.

> Thus a concept has generality not because it is abstracted from several objects, but conversely because generality, that is to say non-determination of the particular, is essential to the concept as an abstract representation of reason. (WWR I, 40)

Schopenhauer's account is thus more complicated than Nietzsche's in this passage. Something like that complication seems needed. Nietzsche himself will grant much of this on p. 83, so we will have to come back to this point.

The second part of Nietzsche's sentence does refer to Schopenhauer's causal theory of perception. According to Schopenhauer, when I see the sun, the understanding passes immediately from what Nietzsche calls a nerve stimulus to the object that causes that stimulus. Schopenhauer is aware, however, that there is no necessity here. My seeing can be mistaken. There is a sense in which the seen sun is not so much cause, as effect. We are tossed back and forth between two ways of looking at the matter: cause and effect reverse themselves. This reversal is part of perception as Schopenhauer understands it.

But Nietzsche is concerned here not so much with the nature of perception as with the nature of language:

> If truth alone had been the deciding factor in the genesis of language, and if the standpoint of certainty had been decisive for designations, then how could we still dare to say "the stone is hard," as if "hard" were something otherwise familiar to us and not merely a purely subjective stimulation. We separate things according to gender, designating the tree as masculine and the plant as feminine. What arbitrary assignments! How far this oversteps the canons of certainty! We speak of a "snake": this designation touches only on its ability to twist itself and could therefore also fit a worm. What arbitrary differentiations! What one-sided preferences, first for this, then for that property of a thing!" (PT 81-82)

If one accepts Schopenhauer's theory of the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign, Nietzsche's reflections would lose their target, because Nietzsche is here arguing against those who think that words somehow express the essence of the thing. But this is hardly an adequate view, even if, as the footnote tells you, Socrates seems to defend such a theory in the *Cratylus*. Socrates does argue against Hermogenes that there is correctness in names, that correctness is based on an *eidos* that manifests itself in *physis*. Schopenhauer appropriates but transforms this Platonic understanding of the correctness of names. Linguistic signs may be arbitrary, but concepts, such as 'elephant' or 'tree' have their ground in a perception of similarity. And, returning to the *Cratylus*, we should not forget the second part of the discussion with Hermogenes, where Socrates examines Cratylus' position, which amounts to an ironic attempt to take etymologies too seriously. The proper course lies somewhere between the positions laid out by the Eleatic Hermogenes and Heraclitean Cratylus.

But let us return to Nietzsche's text

> The various languages placed side by side show that with words it is never a question of truth, never a question of adequate expression; otherwise, there would not be so many languages. The "thing in itself" which is precisely what the pure truth, apart from any of its consequences, would be) is likewise something quite incomprehensible to the creator of language and some thing not in the least worth striving for. (PT 82)

We should note that it is Nietzsche's understanding of truth as, not just a correspondence, but a congruence of designations and things (81) that allows him to say that pure truth

would be the thing in itself. This formulation recalls the traditional view that gives human discourse its measure in divine discourse: God's creative word is nothing other than the thing. Our speaking, on this view, has its measure in the identity of word (*logos*) and being. Given such a strong view of truth, truth is of course denied to us finite knowers.

Kant would have agreed. One may well wonder what lets Nietzsche insist on such a strong definition, which lays down conditions that can never be fulfilled. Is the answer provided by the pathos of truth? Does the pathos of truth turn out to be but a version of the desire to be God, that is of pride in the traditional sense?

I return to the text:

> The creator only designates the relation of things to men, and for expressing these relations he lays hold of the boldest metaphors. To begin with, a nerve stimulus is transferred into an image: first metaphor. The image, in turn, is imitated in a sound: second metaphor. (PT 82)

Nietzsche's perspectivism announces itself here. But again, to lay hold of the relation to things, must we not have some understanding of the things so related? There is another difficulty: how are we to understand this laying hold? Does it not suggest a subject that deliberately uses metaphors as an instrument? As a matter of fact, as the following sentence shows, metaphor is itself a metonymy. It invites us to understand natural processes in the image of rhetoric. Is this justified? Is it a device to get the reader to collude with the author?

5

What we can agree on is that the thing in itself remains quite incomprehensible. What we are dealing with are always only appearances.

> It is this way with all of us concerning language: we believe that we know something about the things themselves when we speak of trees, colors, snow, and flowers, and yet we possess nothing but metaphors for things — metaphors which correspond in no way to the original entities. In the same way that the sound appears as a sand figure, so the mysterious X of the thing in itself first appears as a nerve stimulus, then as an image, and finally as a sound. Thus the genesis of language does not proceed

> logically in any case, and all the material within and with which the man of truth, the scientist, and the philosopher later work and build, if not derived from never-never land, is at least not derived from the essence of things. (PT 82-83)

The question is: what are we to make of the idea of this mysterious thing in itself? Where does it come from? Why is it needed? Nietzsche here would seem to blur the distinction between the thing-in-itself and objective appearance, i.e. the object science seeks to know.

In the next paragraph Nietzsche finally addresses the problem of concepts and their generality:

> In particular, let us further consider the formation of concepts. Every word instantly becomes a concept precisely insofar it is not supposed to serve as a reminder of the unique and entirely individual original experience to which it owes its origin: but rather, a word becomes a concept insofar as it simultaneously has to fit countless more or less similar cases — which means purely and simply, cases which are never equal and thus altogether unequal. Every concept arises from the equation of unequal things. Just as it is certain that one leaf is never totally the same as another, so it is certain that the concept "leaf" is formed by arbitrarily discarding these individual differences and by forgetting the individual aspects. This awakens the idea that, in addition to the leaves, there exists in nature the "leaf": the original model according to which all the leaves were perhaps woven, sketched, measured, colored, curled, and painted — but by incompetent hands, so that no specimen turned out to be a correct, trustworthy, and faithful likeness of the original model. (PT 83)

Here he disagrees with Schopenhauer who had said that the concept has generality not because it is abstracted from particulars, but because generality belongs to the concept as an abstract representation of reason. Nietzsche here seems to remain caught in a pre-Kantian mode of thinking. Common to empiricists and rationalists had been the belief that concepts and percepts could be placed in a continuum. For the former concepts are washed out, if you want white percepts; for the latter percepts are confused concepts. Kant breaks this continuum. In the realm of aesthetics this has its counterpart in

Lessing's rejection of the *ut pictura poesis* thesis. I find it impossible not to go along with Kant here.

Nietzsche is of course right when he argues in the following lines that we should not reify and attribute causal efficacy to these concepts. And yet the reference to Schopenhauer's *qualitas occulta* invites questioning:

> We call a person "honest," and then we ask "why has he behaved so honestly today?" Our usual answer is: "on account of his honesty." Honesty! This in turn means that the leaf is the cause of the leaves. We know nothing whatever about an essential quality called "honesty"; but we do know of countless individualized and consequently unequal actions which we equate by omitting the aspects in which they are unequal and which we know designate as "honest" actions. Finally we formulate from them a *qualitas occulta* which has the name "honesty." We obtain the concept, as we do the form, by overlooking what is individual and actual; whereas nature is acquainted with no forms and no concepts, and likewise with no species, but only with an X which remains inaccessible and undefinable for us. For even our contrast between individual and species is something anthropomorphic and does not originate in the essence of things. (PT 83)

To return to the *Cratylus*: does the way we group objects have no foundation in these objects? Is there nothing like an *eidos* in *physis*? In that case, whether we group elephants and giraffes in different species would have to be considered completely arbitrary. Not that such groupings are necessary. No doubt we could group things differently, depending on different interests and experiences. But something like Schopenhauer's argument for a *qualitas occulta* has to be right. Indeed Nietzsche's own account presupposes it. Otherwise leaves would not have been grouped together. There has to be something like similarity to be discovered in phenomena if concept formation is to make any sense. Furthermore, this similarity has to be experienced similarly by different human beings, otherwise the social contract theory of language makes no sense.

This then leads me to the key question with which I want to conclude:

> What then is truth? A movable host of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which have been

> poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred, and embellished, and which, after long usage, seem to a people, to be fixed, canonical, and binding. Truths are illusions which we have forgotten are illusions; they are metaphors that have become worn out and have been drained of sensuous force, coins which have lost their embossing and are now considered as metal and no longer as coins. (PT 84)

We should hear here the famous passage in *The Critique of Pure Reason* where Kant speaks of the question, "What then is truth?" as *Die alte und berühmte Frage, womit man die Logiker in die Enge zu treiben vermeinte*,[38] "as the old and famous question with which one meant to push the logicians into a corner," and answers it by granting the traditional definition of truth as correspondence.

I want to focus especially on the very last part of the quote:

> *Metaphern die abgenutzt und sinnlich kraftlos geworden sind, Münzen die ihr Bild verloren haben und nun als Metall, nicht mehr als Münzen in Betracht kommen.*

Metaphors that have become *abgenutzt und sinnlich kraftlos* have, I take it, lost their metaphorical force. We no longer experience the collision of different images, indeed no image at all. *Kraftlosigkeit des Sinnlichen* is indeed one of the requirements of truth as Kant understands it. The discourse of science is necessarily *entfärbt*, drained of color, *kühler*, cooler, as Nietzsche says at the bottom of the page. (PT 84) This is required by the pursuit of truth as it governs science. This is to say also that such discourse must seek to free itself from metaphor. The direction of this discourse towards non-metaphoricity has its foundation in the ideality of the objects of knowledge. But the process should not be understood simply as an *Abnutzung*. *Sinnlich kraftlos* has to be opposed to *geistig kraftvoll.* Nietzsche here again would seem to be too tied to a pre-Kantian understanding of the relationship of percept and concept.

The second statement is more confusing. The economic metaphor is indeed suggestive, but just what does it suggest? What are we to understand by coins that have lost their image? What was it that one could exchange them for? The loss of the *Bild*, the image on the coin, agrees with what I have said about the whiteness of scientific discourse. But what are we to make here of *Metall*? Using Schopenhauer's account, the

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[38] Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, A58/B83

metal would seem to be that altogether heterogeneous material of which he speaks, the medium of generality. That does indeed remain empty without reference to the sensible and imaginable. As Kant had put it, "*Gedanken ohne Inhalt sind leer, Anschauungen ohne Begriffe sind blind*," "Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind."

5. "On Truth and Lie in an Extramoral Sense" II

1

I would lie to begin by returning to the question of truth.

> We still do not yet know where the drive for truth comes from. For so far we have heard only of the duty which society imposes in order to exist: to be truthful means to employ the usual metaphors. Thus, to express it morally, this is the duty to lie according to a fixed convention, to lie with the herd and in a manner binding upon everyone. (PT 84)

Given the preceding, the claim is easily understood. Lie here operates against the background of the strong understanding of truth discussed earlier. It should be clear also that within the realm of the lie, so understood, we must distinguish between lying and truth-telling:

> As a *"rational"* being, he now places his behavior under the control of abstractions. He will no longer tolerate being carried away by sudden impressions, by intuitions. First he universalizes all these impressions into less colorful cooler concepts so that he can entrust the guidance of his life and conduct to them. Everything which distinguishes man from the animals depends upon this ability to volatilize perceptual metaphors in a schema, and thus to dissolve an image into a concept. For something is possible in the realm of these schemata which could never be achieved with the vivid first impressions: the construction of a pyramidal order according to castes and degrees, the creation of a new world of laws, privileges, subordinations, and clearly marked boundaries — a new world, one which now confronts that other vivid world of first impressions as more solid, more universal, better known, and more human than the immediately perceived world, and thus as the regulative and imperative world. (PT 84)

The main thought should be familiar by now. Note, however, the tone of the key words: *verallgemeinern*, "universalize," *die anschaulichen Metaphern zu einem Schema verflüchtigen, also ein Bild in einen Begriff auflösen*, "to volatilize perceptual metaphors in a schema, and thus to dissolve an image into a concept."

> Whereas each perceptual metaphor is individual and without equals and is therefore able to elude all classification, the great edifice of concepts displays the rigid regularity of a Roman columbarium and exhales in logic that strength and coolness which is characteristic of mathematics. Anyone who has felt this cool breath [of logic] will hardly believe that even the concept — which is as bony, foursquare, and transposable as a die — is nevertheless merely the residue of a metaphor, and that the illusion which is involved in the artistic transference of a nerve stimulus into images is, if not the mother, then the grandmother of every single concept. (PT 84)

But remembering the earlier discussion (PT 82), if the grandmother of every concept is the transference of a nerve stimulus into an image (perceptual metaphor), and their mother the transference of images into words (original poetry), that transference also invites us to inquire into the father and perhaps the grandfather. The father would refer to what lets human beings universalize impressions, to that which according to Nietzsche lets every word immediately become a concept, i.e. to what Schopenhauer calls reason, while the grandfather would refer to what Schopenhauer calls the principle of sufficient reason.

2

Given the fact that, as I pointed out, *On Truth and Lie* first became available to English speakers in Kaufmann's abridged edition, it is perhaps not surprising that the paternity of the concept should have been suppressed, at any rate gone pretty much unrecognized. Its significance becomes more apparent in what follows. Let me turn to the middle of the page:

> Here one may certainly admire man as a mighty genius of construction, who succeeds in piling up an infinitely complicated dome of concepts upon an unstable foundation, and, as it were, on running water. Of course, in order to be supported by such a foundation his construction must be like one constructed of spider's webs; delicate enough to be carried along by the waves, strong enough not to be blown apart by every wind. As a genius of construction man raises himself far above the bee in the following way: whereas the bee builds with wax that he gathers from

> nature, man builds with the far more delicate conceptual material which he first has to manufacture from himself. In this he is greatly to be admired, but not on account of the drive for truth or for pure knowledge of things. (85)

The material of which this conceptual edifice is constructed is not the same as the ground that precariously supports it. While the former is manufactured by the subject, the latter may be thought of as the Heraclitean river, thought of as a stream of perceptions.

In the lines I skipped, Nietzsche once again linked politics and epistemology. This should be compared with Kant's account. For the Kant of *The Critique of Pure Reason* the understanding was the source of the laws of nature and of our concepts. Source should here be understood in terms of its paternity. Nietzsche understands this paternity as anthropomorphism.

> That is to say, it is a thoroughly anthropomorphic truth which contains not a single point which would be "true in itself" or really and universally valid apart from man. At bottom, what the investigation of such truths is seeking is only the metamorphosis of the world into man. (PT 85-86)

What we should ask is how *anthropos* (*der Mensch*) is to be understood here.

> Similar to the way in which astrologers considered the stars to be in man's service and connected with his happiness and sorrow, such an investigator considers the entire universe as the infinitely fractured echo of one original sound — man; the entire universe as the infinitely multiplied copy of one original picture — man. His method is to treat man as the measure of all things, … (PT 86)

Kant would insist that "man" be thought here in terms that would include any understanding, i.e. as a transcendental subject. Would Nietzsche disagree? If not, his use of the copy metaphor is quite misleading: *als das verfielfältigte Abbild des einen Urbildes, des Menschen, "*as the infinitely multiplied copy of one original picture—man." We have an uncertainty here similar to the one I noted before with respect to the word. At stake is what I called the third Copernican revolution, the legitimacy of substituting for Kant's transcendental structures a natural language. Does it rest on a confusion of what Kant had been careful to separate: on a failure to give full weight to

the heterogeneity of the impression and the concept, a heterogeneity to which the picture theory simply cannot do justice?

The last statement of this paragraph demands our special attention:

> … but in doing so he again proceeds from the error of believing that he has these things [which he intends to measure] immediately before him as mere objects. He forgets that the original perceptual metaphors are metaphors and takes them to be the things themselves. (PT 86)

Note that there are two problems here that should not be blurred:

1. The problem of the metamorphosis of things into perceptions. This metamorphosis is meant by the original perceptual metaphors that cut us off from the truth.

2. Then there is the metamorphosis of these metaphors into words and concepts. This involves the human knower in a very different way. Schopenhauer would have said it involves reason.

The heterogeneity of these two "metaphors" must be acknowledged. Nietzsche tends to lump them together, inviting confusion (cf. bottom of PT 81).

When Nietzsche speaks of the forgetting of this primitive world of metaphor we may want to add that this forgetting takes two forms: we forget this world, i.e., we cover up what we perceive with our words and concepts, and we forget that this world is itself a world of metaphors.

It is to the second Nietzsche turns first of all and he is of course right" there can be no such thing as a correct perception. What would it mean?

> … but in any case it seems to me that “the correct perception” — which would mean “the adequate expression of the object in the subject” is a contradictory impossibility, for between two absolutely different spheres as between subject and object, there is no causality, no correctness, and no expression; there is at most an *aesthetic* relation. I mean a suggestive transference, a stammering translation into a completely foreign tongue — for which there is required in any case, a freely inventive intermediate sphere and mediating force. “Appearance” is a word that contains many temptations, which is why I avoid it as much as possible. (86)

This reminds me of Kant's discussion of the schematism, where he insists that there must be something that mediates between the categories of the understanding and appearance (*Erscheinung*). The schema is understood by Kant as a third thing, as a product of the imagination, which is understood as a representation of a *Verfahren der Einbildungskraft einem Begriff sein Bild zu verschaffen*, "of a procedure of the imagination to furnish a concept with its picture."[39] The schema thus bridges the gap that has opened up between concept and percept, where Kant subordinates the work of the imagination to the transcendental unity of the apperception, subjects it to the logos. But there is also the problem how to furnish a picture with its concept. This is the problem of the genesis of empirical concepts such as elephant or rose. Here the imagination must recognize in particulars a kind of family resemblance. Such recognition is at work in the creation of any concept. Metaphor formation is a similar process, but here the family resemblance would seem to be between concepts rather than particulars.

I do think that the imagination needs to be given a more important role than Kant here gives it. But to a Kantian Nietzsche appears confused in his own metaphorical use of metaphor. And this confusion, it would seem, is not forced on us by the matter to be thought. It depends on what seems almost a deliberate blindness. At any rate, we can distinguish between

a. perceptual "metaphors"

b. the metaphor of the word

c. metaphor in the usual sense, which presupposes a proper, i. e. generally accepted discourse.

Did Nietzsche himself think that he had seriously challenged Kant? His rejection of the Kantian *Erscheinun*g may suggest this. And yet with his view of science he would seem to grant Kant most of what matters. To be sure, at first there is an obvious difference.

> But when the same image has been generated millions of times and has been handed down for many generations and finally appears on the same occasion for all mankind then it acquires at last the same meaning for men it would have if it were the sole necessary image and if the relationship of the original nerve stimulus to the generated image were a strictly causal

[39] Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft,* A 140/B 179-180.

> one. In the same manner an eternally repeated dream would certainly be felt and judged to be reality. But the hardening and congealing of a metaphor guarantees absolutely nothing concerning its necessity and exclusive justification. (PT 87)

Nietzsche is very much aware that such reflections are difficult to reconcile with our faith in science, faith that we daily affirm in our everyday behavior.

> Every person who is familiar with such considerations has no doubt felt a deep mistrust of all idealism of this sort just as often as he has quite clearly convinced himself of the eternal consistency, omnipresence, and infallibility of the laws of nature. He has concluded that so far as we can penetrate here — from the telescopic heights to the microscopic depths — everything is secure, complete, infinite, regular, and without any gaps. Science will be able to dig successfully in this shaft forever, and all the things that are discovered will harmonize with and not contradict each other. How little does this resemble a product of the imagination, for if it were such, there should be some place where the illusion and unreality can be divined. (PT 87)

What would Kant have thought of the following observation, which would call what here is asserted into question:

> Against this, the following must be said: if each of us had a different kind of sense perception — if we could only perceive things now as a bird, now as a worm, now as a plant, or if one of us saw a stimulus as red, another as blue, while a third even heard the same stimulus as a sound—then no one would speak of such a regularity of nature, rather nature would be grasped only as a creation which is subjective in the highest degree. (PT 87)

A Whorfian kind of reflection is raised to the physiological level, which presupposes, however, an objective nature. So it is not surprising that Nietzsche should return to a position that would seem very much in keeping with what Kant has to say:

> But everything marvelous about the laws of nature, everything that quite astonishes us therein and seems to demand our explanation, everything that might lead us to distrust idealism: all this is completely and solely contained within the mathematical strictness and inviolability of our

> representations of time and space. But we produce these representations in and from ourselves with the same necessity with which the spider spins. If we are forced to comprehend all things only under these forms, then it ceases to be amazing that in all things we comprehend nothing but these forms. For they must all bear within themselves the laws of number, and it is precisely number which is most astonishing in things. (PT 87)

The section concludes with the passage I considered in the very beginning, which asserts that metaphor presupposes the forms that we bring to things. This is to say, metaphor formation presupposes a world of objects in Kant's sense.

3

The second part of the essay changes the tenor of the discussion. It begins by inviting us to understand science as a columbarium of concepts, a graveyard of perception.

> We have seen how it is originally language which works on the construction of concepts, a labor taken over in later ages by science. Just as the bee simultaneously constructs cells and fills them with honey, so science works unceasingly on this great columbarium of concepts, the graveyard of perceptions. (PT 88)

Since it seeks to complete the work of language, science would bring it to an end. Therefore:

Language:science = life:death

This burial work would seem to begin as soon as there is speech. Interesting is the analogy with the bee. But science replaces honey with ashes. — Note how Nietzsche relies on a relatively small set of images that keep returning.

Nietzsche next shifts to an image of science as a Tower of Babel:

> It is always building new, higher stories shoring up, cleaning and renovating the old cells; above all, it takes it takes pains to fill up this monstrously towering framework and to arrange therein the entire empirical world, which is to say, the anthropomorphic world. Whereas the man of action binds his life to reason and its concepts so that he will not be swept away and lost, the scientific investigator builds his hut right next

> to the tower of science so that he will be able to work on it and find shelter for himself beneath these bulwarks which presently exist. And he requires shelter, for there are frightful powers which continuously break in upon him, powers which oppose scientific “truth” with completely different kind of “truths” which bear on their shields the most varied sorts of emblems. (PT 88)

What then is the difference between the discourse of science and everyday language? Schopenhauer had suggested that science is distinguished from ordinary language by its systematic form of description. It subordinates particular truths under ever more general principles, insists on closure and completeness. Nietzsche here follows Schopenhauer.

Crucial is Nietzsche's assertion that

> The drive toward the formation of metaphors is the fundamental human drive, which one cannot for a single instant dispense with in thought, for one would thereby dispense with man himself. This drive is not truly vanquished and scarcely subdued by the fact that a regular and rigid new world is constructed as its prison from its own ephemeral products, the concepts (PT 88-89)

There is thus tension in human beings between the demands of reason and the imagination. "Prison" does not seem to me a quite adequate translation of *Zwingburg*, which refers to a tyrant's strong castle. The metaphoric drive, the imagination, appears as an anarchic element, which challenges what science would have us accept as reality by opposing to it the realms of myth and art. Metaphor would now seem to mean more what we usually mean by that term. By contrast proper discourse is discourse whose propriety is tied to obedience the rule of that tyrant living in the strong castle. Metaphor keeps us open to the infinite life and richness of the life of perception. In that sense metaphor opposes to what is accepted as waking reality a reality that is quite different, closer to that of the dream.

> In fact, because of the way that myth takes for granted that miracles are always happening, the waking life of a mythically inspired people — the ancient Greeks for instance — more closely resembles a dream than it does the waking world of a scientifically disenchanted thinker. (PT 89)

Myth is tied to an enchantment that, it would seem, true humanity requires. *The Birth of Tragedy* develops this point.

There is in us an innate tendency to allow ourselves to be enchanted:

> But man has an invincible inclination to allow himself to be deceived and is, as it were, enchanted with happiness when the rhapsodist tells him epic fables as if they were true, or when the actor in the theater acts more royally than any real king. So long as it is able to deceive without *injuring*, the master of deception, the intellect, is free; it is released from its former slavery and celebrates its Saturnalia. (BT89)

Nietzsche thus seems to plead for a liberation of the imagination:

> In comparison with its previous conduct, everything that is now does bears the mark of dissimulation [*Verstellung*], just as the previous conduct did of distortion [*Verzerrung*]. The free intellect copies human life. But it considers this life something good and seems to be quite satisfied with it. That immense framework and planking of concepts to which the needy man clings his whole life in order to preserve himself is nothing but a scaffolding and toy for the most audacious feats of the liberated intellect. And when it smashes this framework to pieces, throws it into confusion, and puts it back together in an ironic fashion, pairing the most alien things and separating the closest, it is demonstrating that it has no need of these makeshifts of indigence and that it will now be guided by intuitions rather than concepts. There is no regular path which leads from these intuitions into the land of ghostly schemata, the land of abstractions. There exists no word for these intuitions; when man sees them he grows dumb, or else he speaks only in forbidden metaphors and in unheard-of combinations of concepts. He does this so that by shattering and mocking the old conceptual barriers he may at least correspond creatively to the impression of the powerful present intuition. (PT 90)

There is something volcanic about this imagination. It refuses to bind itself to the regulative ideal of truth as a correspondence of our discourse to the things. And yet there is something like correspondence, an analogue to truth: Nietzsche speaks of a *schöpferische Entsprechung* to a *gegenwärtige Intuition*, "a creative correspondence to

the present intuition." The imagination appears here free from the tyranny of reason. This is to say also that truth no longer functions as a regulative ideal. What has been substituted for it is what one might call truth of an altogether different sort.

Nietzsche goes on to juxtapose the intuitive and the rational man, one scornful of abstraction and the architecture of reason, the other fearful of anarchic intuition and the deconstructive impulse:

> The latter is just as irrational as the former is inartistic. They both desire to rule over life: the former, by knowing how to meet his principle needs by foresight, prudence, and regularity; the latter by disregarding these needs and, as an "overjoyed hero," counting as real only that life which has been disguised as illusion and beauty. Whenever, as was perhaps the case in ancient Greece, the intuitive man handles his weapons more authoritatively and victoriously than is opponent, then, under favorable circumstances, a culture can take shape and art's mastery over life can be established. (PT 90)

The fragment ends on the same note as *On the Pathos of Truth*. Again we are reminded of the Stoic sage as Schopenhauer describes him: the man of reason. That Schopenhauer here sides with the artist is evident, and siding with the artist he also sides, at least as Nietzsche reads him, with the formation of culture. The opposition of reason and culture will occupy us again in *The Birth of Tragedy*.

4

Nietzsche suggests a deep connection between rationality as it manifests itself in science and death. Remember the image of a *Kolumbarium der Begriffe,* ˆa columbarium of concepts," and a *Begräbnisstätte der Anschauungen*, "a graveyard of intuitions." Concepts, this suggests, is the ashes of lived intuition. The pursuit of truth seems to lead us out of life. The pathos of truth may want to translate life out of time, may want eternal life, and yet the idea of such a translation is the deepest deception. The project to become God is really the pursuit of nothing, a nothing whose seductive promise we bear within ourselves. The attempt to defeat the essential insecurity of human existence by turning to reason, transforms human life, even before death, into a living death. (Compare with the

Christian understanding!) A civilization that has subjected itself to the tyrant in his castle lives death.

This forces us to take seriously Geoffrey Hartmann's already quoted claim that "Everything that blows the cover of reified or superobjective thinking is important." But note that Nietzsche's essay gives us no hope that the *Zwingburg* that science has built will collapse when we realize that all concepts originate with the imagination, that the mother of all concepts is the poetic imagination. We have to keep in mind also the father, i. e. reason.

The essay thus suggests that what endows the father and his castle with their suffocating authority is our own overly great preoccupation with our indigence, is our own attempt to secure our existence. It is we who allow this patriarch to rule our lives and that rule, it would seem here, will be broken, not by reasoning more carefully, but by a different pathos, a pathos that frees us from the pathos of truth. The problem we face is not so much one of epistemology, as one of ethics.

6. *Artisten-Metaphysik*

1

Last time I concluded my discussion of "On Truth and Lie." Let me sum up part of our discussion by returning to the three different types of metaphor that we can distinguish in Nietzsche's essay.

1. "The original perceptual metaphors." Nietzsche here insists on what Kant had already insisted upon: that these “metaphors” do not give us the things themselves. There is no perception of reality as it is. We have no organ for the truth.

2. These perceptual metaphors are imitated in sounds, in words, where Nietzsche tells us that "every word instantly becomes a concept precisely insofar as it is not supposed to serve as a reminder of the unique and entirely individual original experience to which it owes its origin" (PT 83). In Schopenhauer's language: we have here the translation of the percept into an entirely heterogeneous medium.

Nietzsche links this turn to the word to a covering up of the perceptual. That covering up is linked to a desire for security. That desire in turn leads to a forgetting of the contribution made by the creative imagination.

3. The repressed imagination reasserts itself in a third kind of metaphor, which may be looked at as a confusion of the established conceptual order.

> But man has an invincible inclination to allow himself to be deceived and is, as it were, enchanted with happiness when the rhapsodist tells him epic fables as if they were true, or when the actor in the theater acts more royally than any real king. So long as it is able to deceive without *injuring*, the master of deception, the intellect, is free; it is released from its former slavery and celebrates its Saturnalia. (PT 89)

Especially the second part of the essay makes clear what concerns Nietzsche: the liberation of an imagination that has been subjected to reason, the role of the tyrant in his *Zwingburg*, who would lord it over the imagination. In a manner that recalls Hegel, Nietzsche recognizes that, to the extent that we make reason the measure of reality and what matters, no very important place is left to art. Modernity and its ruling understanding of reality would seem to have made art and the work of the imagination

peripheral. Hegel had recognized this and interpreted it as a mark of humanity's coming of age, of enlightenment. This development is a presupposition of what Heidegger had called the aesthetic approach to art.

One might ask: do we need art? I shall return to this question. But a first answer should have suggested itself by now: the need for art, as Nietzsche understands it, is the other side of the nihilistic character of objectifying reason. The two are intimately joined, as is suggested by the birth of modern aesthetics as a response to a loss threatened by the hegemony of Cartesian rationality. (Cf. Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten)

And this much seems right, unless we can undermine in some sense the authority of the tyrant in his *Zwingburg*, of the sense of reality or the reality principle he represents, art in its highest sense, to use Hegel's term, will be a thing of the past. On this Hegel, Nietzsche, and Heidegger agree. The intent of Nietzsche's "On Truth and Lie" may thus be taken to be subversive. This subversive intent colors its rhetoric and links the essay to *The Birth of Tragedy*, which antedates it by two or three years. To challenge Hegel's claim, to argue that it is indeed possible to restore to the imagination the significance it once held, we have to challenge and undermine the hegemony of objectifying reason, which has triumphed in modern science and technology. In this sense, what Nietzsche was to say much later about *The Birth of Tragedy* in his "Versuch einer Selbstkritik" can be said about this essay, too.

> What I then got hold of, something frightful and dangerous. a problem with horns but not necessarily a bull, in any case a *new* problem — today I should say that it was the problem of science itself, science considered for the first time as problematic, as questionable. (BT 18)

"On Truth and Lie" hints at the answer to the question: what is so questionable about science? The image of the columbarium provides a pointer: science is the graveyard of perceptions, also of the imagination. It deprives the world both of its color and its value. What Nietzsche is laying hold of is what we can perhaps call the nihilistic character of the pursuit of truth. The pathos of truth bids us transform the world of percepts into a columbarium. It tends towards death. Instead of laying hold of the things themselves, it estranges us from reality, putting in its place a bloodless human reconstruction. It is thus significant that when Nietzsche speaks of the *Turmbau der Wissenschaft* he invokes the Tower of Babel, invokes an architecture that the Bible takes to be a paradigmatic

expression of pride. Living reality is replaced with ashes; the *lumen naturale* of Descartes becomes a flame that burns to ashes. Pride tends towards death, towards silence, towards nothing.

2

But let me turn to *The Birth of Tragedy*. Written at the time of the Franco-Prussian War that book is of course far more than its title suggests, not only an analysis of the birth of tragedy, but equally an analysis of its death, and a celebration of Wagner as the artist of genius who had brought about its rebirth. As we shall see, the death of tragedy is blamed on Socrates, but the tendency Nietzsche associates with Socrates is one that Nietzsche takes to be constitutive of a tradition that stems from Socrates and includes modernity. Thus Nietzsche's Socrates, I want to suggest, is also a figure of Descartes. The critique of Socrates must thus be understood first of all as a critique of modernity, where the problem of modernity is also the problem of science.

> And science itself, our science — indeed, what is the significance of all science, viewed as a symptom of life? For what — worse yet, whence — all science? How now? Is the resolve to be so scientific about everything perhaps as kind of fear of, an escape from, pessimism? A subtle last resort against — truth? And morally speaking a kind of cowardice and falseness? Amorally speaking, a ruse? O Socrates, Socrates, was that perhaps your secret? O enigmatic ironist, was that perhaps your — irony? (BT 18)

Science itself, Nietzsche here suggests, functions as a bulwark against truth, "a kind of fear of, an escape from, pessimism? A subtle last resort against — truth?" *Furcht und Ausflucht vor dem Pessimismus, Notwehr gegen die Wahrheit*. Against *what* truth? — I take it against the truth that reality in itself has no meaning, that meaning or value are not discovered, properties of things, but human creations.

> There is an ancient story that King Midas hunted in the forest a long time for the wise Silenus, the companion of Dionysus, without capturing him. When Silenus at last fell into his hands, the king asked what was the best and most desirable thing for man. Fixed and immovable, the demigod said not a word, till at last, urged by the king, he gave a shrill laugh and broke into these words: "Oh, wretched ephemeral

> race, children of chance and misery, why do you compel me to tell you what it would be most expedient for you not to hear? What is best of all is utterly beyond your reach: not to be born, not to be, to be nothing. But the second best for you is — to die soon." (BT 42)

Schopenhauer quotes these same lines from the Elegies of Theognis and refers to *Oedipus at Colonus* (WWR II, 587) where we find these lines spoken by the chorus of elders:

> Say what you will, the greatest boon is not to be;
> But, life begun, soonest to end is best,
> And to that bourne from which our way began
> Swiftly return.
> (OC.1225. trans.Watling)

This suggests that science and art are competing strategies for coping with the truth, more precisely to evade the truth.

> How is the world of the Olympian gods related to this folk wisdom? Even as the rapturous vision of the tortured martyr to his suffering. Now it is as if the Olympian magic mountain had opened before us and revealed its roots to us. The Greek knew and felt the horror of existence. That he might endure this terror at all he had to interpose between himself and life the radiant dream-birth of the Olympians. The overwhelming dismay in the face of the titanic powers of nature, the Moira enthroned inexorably over all knowledge, the vulture of the great lover of mankind, Prometheus, the terrible fate of the wise Oedipus, the family curse of the Atridae which drove Orestes to matricide: In short that entire philosophy of the sylvan god, with its mythical exemplars, which caused the downfall of the melancholy Etruscans — all this was again and again overcome by the Greeks with the aid of the Olympian *middle world* of art; or at any rate it was veiled and withdrawn from sight. (BT 42)

The later preface suggests that despite all that had changed, the central problem posed by this book had remained very much with Nietzsche:

> Still, I do not want to suppress entirely how disagreeable it now seems to me, how strange it appears now, after sixteen years — before a

> much older, a hundred times more demanding, but by no means colder eye, which has not become a stranger to the task which this audacious book dared to tackle for the first time: *to look at science in the perspective of the artist, but at art in that of life*. (BT 19)

Let us follow the invitation extended by the quote and look at science from the vantage of the artist, and at art from the vantage of life, beginning with life.

3

What is life? Or rather, what is Nietzsche's view of life? What is his view of nature? In *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche gives a rather Schopenhauerian answer.

> Though it is certain that of the two halves of our existence, the waking and the dreaming states, the former appeals to us as infinitely preferable, more important, excellent, and worthy of being lived, indeed, as that which alone is lived — yet in relation to that mysterious ground of our being, of which we are the phenomena, I should, paradoxical as it may seem, maintain the very opposite estimate of the value of dreams. For the more clearly I perceive in nature those omnipotent art impulses, and in them an ardent longing for illusion, for redemption through illusion, the more I feel myself impelled to the metaphysical assumption that the truly existent primal unity, eternally suffering, also needs the rapturous vision, the pleasurable illusion, for its continuous redemption. And we, completely wrapped up in this illusion and composed of it, are compelled to consider this illusion as the truly nonexistent — i. e. as a perpetual becoming in time, space, and causality — in other words, as empirical reality. (BT 44-45)

The debt to Schopenhauer is evident, although Nietzsche poetically transforms Schopenhauer's will into an artist who seeks redemption from his own suffering in illusion. To the essence of reality belongs illusion. Being is an endless process of self-transcendence. Nietzsche was to return to this point and to criticize it in the later preface:

> Already in the preface addressed to Richard Wagner, art, and *not* morality, is presented as the truly *metaphysical* activity of man. In the book itself the suggestive sentence is repeated several times, that the existence of the

> world is *justified* only as an aesthetic phenomenon. Indeed, the whole book knows only an artistic meaning and crypto-meaning behind all events — a "god," if you please, but certainly only an entirely reckless and amoral artist-god who wants to experience, whether he is building or destroying, in the good and the bad, his own joy and glory — one who, creating worlds, frees himself from the *distress* of fullness and overfullness and from the affliction of the contradictions compressed in his soul. The world — at every moment the *attained* salvation of God, as the eternally changing, eternally new vision of the most deeply afflicted, discordant, and contradictory being who can find salvation only in *appearance*: you can call this whole artists' metaphysics arbitrary, idle, fantastic; what matters is that it betrays a spirit who will one day fight at any risk whatever the *moral* interpretation and significance of existence. Here, perhaps for the first time, a pessimism "beyond good and evil" is suggested. Here that "perversity of mind" gains speech and formulation against which Schopenhauer never wearied of hurling in advance his most irate curses and thunderbolts: a philosophy that dares to move, to demote, morality in the realm of appearance — and not merely among appearances or phenomena (in the sense assigned to these words by Idealistic philosophers), but among "deceptions," as semblance, delusion, error, interpretation, contrivance, art. (BT 22-23)

Nietzsche's metaphysics is an *Artisten-Metaphysik*. Being is an artistic activity. What Schopenhauer called will is understood as such activity, as process tending towards form, *energeia*, coming to rest in some *ergon,* resembling a work of art. (Cf. Aristotle) But what matters more to Nietzsche is the rejection of a higher meaning.

And yet human beings would seem to insist on such a meaning, on such a justification. What Nietzsche suggests is that such a justification will always be an aesthetic representation of what **is**. To repeat from *The Will to Power*: we have art that we not perish of the truth. In the language of *The Birth of Tragedy*:

> *nur als aesthetisches Phaenomen ist das Dasein der Welt* gerechtfertigt.

I would like to consider each of the key words in turn:

1. What is the meaning of "justified," *gerechtfertigt*? What reason do you have for doing what you are doing? What reason is there for something being the way it happens to be? A totally justified world would be one totally subject to the principle of sufficient reason, as Leibniz understood it. When we ask for a justification or reason we ask for something beyond the particular action or fact that can function as its justifying ground. Traditionally this ground has been located in being, where being would have to present itself as having to be just as it is, *sub specie necessitatis* or *aeternitatis*. Being has served as a justification of becoming — think of Plato's forms. God has similarly been understood as the justifying ground of the world.

In *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche still invokes God.

> Insofar as the subject is the artist, however, he has already been released from his individual will [Nietzsche here relies on Schopenhauer's understanding of the artist], and has become, as it were, the medium through which the one truly existent subject celebrates his release in appearance. For to our humiliation *and* exaltation, one thing above all must be clear to us. The entire comedy of art is neither performed for our betterment or education, nor are we the true authors of this art world. On the contrary, we may assume that we are merely images and artistic projections for the true author, and that we have our highest dignity in the significance as works of art — for it is only as an aesthetic phenomenon that existence and the world are eternally justified — while of course our consciousness of our own significance hardly differs from that which the soldiers on canvas have of the battle represented on it. (BT 52)

It is easy to see why Nietzsche should later have questioned "this whole artists' metaphysics" and called it "arbitrary, idle, fantastic." One issue at stake is how we are to understand the creativity of the artist. Nietzsche here clearly holds an inspiration theory. A higher power acts through the artist. This is not all that distant from Kant's understanding of the genius through whom nature gives the rule to art.

Later in the text Nietzsche returns to this view:

> Here it becomes necessary to take a bold running start and leap into a metaphysics of art by repeating the sentence written above, that existence

> and the world seem justified only as an aesthetic phenomenon. In this sense, it is precisely the tragic myth that has to convince us that even the ugly and disharmonic are part of an artistic game that the will in its eternal amplitude of its pleasure plays with itself. (BT 141)

Attempts at a theodicy that would have us appreciate the dark parts of the world painting as necessary to its perfection are not so very distant, although little comfort seems offered by such an aesthetic understanding of the deity to someone condemned by an inscrutable fate to dwell in darkness. Nietzsche invokes the musical phenomenon of dissonance.

He has this to say about the tragic effect:

> Again and again it reveals to us the playful construction and destruction of the individual world as the overflow of a primordial delight. Thus the dark Heraclitus compares the world-building force to a playing child that places stones here and there and builds sand hills only to overthrow them again. (BT 142)

How important is Nietzsche's introduction of "God" into this discussion? Can "God" simply be crossed out? To rephrase the question: how does Nietzsche understand the artistic imagination? How is it linked to being?

To claim that there can be only an aesthetic justification is to reject any attempt to offer a moral interpretation, as Nietzsche emphasizes:

> It was *against* morality that my instinct turned with this questionable book, long ago; it was an instinct that aligned itself with life and that discovered for itself a fundamentally opposite doctrine and valuation of life — purely artistic and *anti-Christian*. What to call it? As a philologist and man of words I baptized it, not without taking some liberty — for who could claim to know the rightful name of the Antichrist? — in the name of a Greek god: I called it Dionysian. (BT 24)

5

But let us consider more carefully the word "phenomenon." The word is of course not Nietzsche's, but drawn from Kant and Schopenhauer. The word suggests

appearance; something shows itself. But the way things look may be misleading. Appearance may thus tend to confuse itself with illusion, *Schein*.

In modern philosophy phenomenon tends to be understood in opposition to reality, as appearance. Lambert thus understood phenomenology as an inquiry into the nature of appearance so that we might not fall prey to the illusions into which one falls when one uncritically entrusts oneself to what appears. Kant at one point (1770, in a letter to Lambert) thought of calling what was to become *The Critique of Pure Reason* a "Phenomenology."

In the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant distinguishes between *Schein* and *Erscheinung*, between illusion and appearance. Kant speaks of natural illusions, when reason, by its very nature, cannot help but project what has really its foundation in its own mode of operation into things.[40] Kant speaks of the *transzendentale Schein,* the transcendental illusion, as a *natürliche und unvermeidliche Illusion*, a natural and inescapable illusion. I want to suggest that Nietzsche understands phenomena as natural illusions, as opposed to merely subjective, and therefore arbitrary illusions. Consider this passage from *The Will to Power*, dating from 1887:

> 569. Our psychological perspective is determined by the following:
>
> 1. That communication is necessary, and that for there to be communication something has to be firm, simplified, capable of precision... Thus the fuzziness and chaos of sense impressions are, as it were, logicized.
>
> 2. The world of "phenomena" is an adapted world which we feel to be real.
>
> 3. The antithesis to the phenomenal world is not "the true world" but the formless, unformulable world of the chaos of sensations — another kind of phenomenal world, a kind "unknowable" for us.
>
> 4. Hypothesis that only subjects exist — that "object" is only a kind of effect produced by a subject upon a subject — a modus of the subject.

In this sense phenomena, for Nietzsche, are natural illusions. They have their foundation in the necessity of communication, are transcendental conditions of the possibility of communication. The question is whether there could not be many ways of creating such

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[40] Cf. *Kant, Kritik der reinen Vernunft,* B 350ff.

an apparent world (*scheinbare Welt*). Nietzsche tends to see this constitution in more artistic, subjective terms than Kant or Schopenhauer, although restraints are placed on such constructions by the requirements of communication, which have their foundation in Schopenhauer's principle of sufficient reason.

6

How then is *aesthetic phenomenon* to be understood? How is it tied to the phenomenon of the everyday? What does *aesthetic* add? We are given a first answer by what Nietzsche has to say about the beautiful illusion we meet with in our dreams.

> The beautiful illusion of the dream worlds, in the creation of which every man is truly an artist, is the prerequisite of all plastic art, and, as we shall see, of an important part of poetry also. In our dreams we delight in the immediate understanding of figures; all forms speak to us; there is nothing unimportant or superfluous. But even when this dream experience is most intense, we still have, glimmering through it, the sensation that it is mere appearance: at least this is my experience, and for its frequency — indeed, normality — I could adduce many proofs, including the sayings of the poets. (BT 34)

The aesthetic phenomenon is here linked to the world of the dream.

But let us consider the word *aesthetisch*.

We do well to remember that, as Nietzsche uses it, the word is of relatively recent origin. Baumgarten defined aesthetics as the science of perceived perfection. To perceive such perfection is to experience something beautiful. What is perfection? According to Baumgarten, a perfect whole is one where all the different elements of the manifold have a sufficient reason for being just as they are. The perfect manifold justifies itself. Baumgarten thus likens the work of art to the Leibnitian cosmos, where we may well wonder whether the Leibnitian world is so much like a work of art because Leibniz was in fact an artist working in a conceptual medium: he re-presented the world as if it were a work of art. Nietzsche does the same, except that he connects art with dream, illusion. What led Leibniz to his artistic metaphysics must have been the experienced insufficiency of the world as it presented itself first of all and most of the

time. The world needed to be represented as justified, as having its sufficient reason in God.

But all that matters here to us is the view than an aesthetic phenomenon justifies itself because it presents itself to us as having to be as it is, *sub specie aeternitatis*. It delivers us from contingency. The world presented to us by objectifying reason, on the other hand, is by its very nature through and through contingent. This has to do with the very medium of concepts, with their generality. Science has to present the world *sub specie possibilitatis,* as just happening to be. Wittgenstein recognized this in the *Tractatus*. The other side of scientific objectivity is nihilism.

But, according to Schopenhauer, the aesthetic experience does not subject what is experienced to the principle of sufficient reason. It reveals in the particular the Platonic Idea and thus transfigures it. The aesthetic phenomenon is the phenomenon seen independently of the principle of sufficient reason.

Implicit in Nietzsche's observation that all justification is aesthetic is another: that the human being as he is in himself lacks dignity. Thus we find him writing in *Der griechische Staat:*

> *Ich dächte, der kriegerische Mensch wäre ein Mittel des militärischen Genius;... und nicht ihm, als absolutem Menschen und Nichtgenius, sondern ihm als Mittel des Genius — der auch seine Vernichtung als Mittel des kriegerischen Kunstwerkes belieben kann, — komme ein Grad von Würde zu, jener Würde nämlich, zum Mittel des Genius gewürdigt zu sein.* (KSA I, 775-776)
>
> I would think of the warlike human being as a means for the military genius. … And a degree of dignity belongs to him, not in so far as he is an absolute human being and non-genius, but in so far as he is a means of the genius — who may even choose his destruction as a means of the warlike work of art — namely of having been considered worthy to be a means of genius.

Nietzsche generalizes this thought and maintains that only the work of the genius gives dignity. In *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche thus speaks of *die schönen Verführungsworte von der Würde des Menschen und der Würde der Arbeit* as *verbraucht*, "the beautiful seductive words of the dignity of man and the dignity of work" as "worn out."

> Let us mark this well: the Alexandrian culture, to be able to exist permanently, requires a slave class, but with its optimistic view of life it denies the necessity of such a class, and consequently, when its beautifully seductive and tranquillizing utterances about "the dignity of man" and "the dignity of labor" are no longer effective, it gradually drifts toward a dreadful destruction. There is nothing more terrible than a class of barbaric slaves who have learned to regard their existence as an injustice, and now prepare to avenge, not only themselves, but all generations. (BT 111)

According to Kant and Schiller the human being has "dignity," *Würde*, in so far as he is more than a merely natural being. The human being must and does transcend his own natural being. He does so when he recognizes himself as a moral agent, provided by his reason with a measure that tells him what to do. But what if he does not bear that transcendent measure within himself? Must he not then create such a measure if his life is to have dignity? Must he not oppose to what is, an aesthetic ideal, perhaps an image, perhaps a story, a poem? Only the work of genius, Nietzsche insists, can justify life and give it dignity. The human being must then serve art in one of two ways: either by becoming a genius or by subordinating him- or herself to the work of a genius. This defines the place Nietzsche assigned to Wagner.

Given what I have said, we may well want to think of Nietzsche's aestheticism in Kierkegaard's terms.[41] But Kierkegaard presents us with a sketch of the aesthetic life only to criticize it: the aesthetic individual, unable to find meaning in reality, replaces it with aesthetic constructions and as a result becomes alienated from reality. He lives in the subjunctive. Nietzsche on the other hand sees the turn to art as a turn to life. The turn to tragedy is to allow the greatest possible self-affirmation. Perhaps we should distinguish here between a *merely aesthetic* and a *mythic* work of art. Wagner could then be discussed as the inventor of a tragic myth. And myth according to Nietzsche is a presupposition of spiritual health.

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[41] See Karsten Harries, *Between Nihilism and Faith: A Commentary on Either/Or* (Berlin and New York: DeGruyter, March 2010).

> But without myth every culture loses the healthy natural powers of its creativity: only a horizon defined by myths completes and unifies a whole cultural movement. Myth alone saves all the powers of the imagination and the Apollinian dream from their aimless wanderings. The images of the myth have to be the unnoticed omnipresent demonic guardians, under whose care the young should grow to maturity and whose signs help the man to interpret his life and struggles. Even the state knows no more powerful unwritten laws than the mythical foundations that guarantee the connection with religion and its growth from mythical notions.
>
> By way of comparison let us now picture the abstract man, untutored by myth; abstract education, abstract morality; let us imagine the lawless roving of the artistic imagination, unchecked by any native myth; let us think of a culture that has no fixed and primordial site but is doomed to exhaust all possibilities and to nourish itself wretchedly on all other cultures — there we have the present age, the result of that Socratism which is bent on the destruction of myth. And now the mythless man stands eternally hungry, surrounded by all past ages, and digs and grubs for roots, even if he has to dig for them in the remotest antiquities. The tremendous historical need of our unsatisfied modern culture, the assembling around one of countless other cultures, the continuing desire for knowledge — what does all this point to, if not to the loss of myth, the loss of the mythical home, the mythical maternal womb. (BT 135-136)

How are we to understand Nietzsche's claim that myth is necessary to keep the imagination from "aimless wanderings"? What is the fixed and primordial site" of a culture, *fester und heiliger Ursitz einer Kultur*? A culture needs a foundation and yet all such foundations would seem to be humanly established by artist leaders. Or is Nietzsche here envisioning some other sort of ground or foundation? Note the invocation of the maternal, the earth metaphors, the desperate search for roots, for a rebirth of a new German myth on Dionysiac foundations.

> We may think so highly of the power and vigorous core of the German character that we dare to expect of it above all others this elimination of the forcibly implanted foreign elements, and consider it possible that the

> German spirit will return to itself. Some may suppose that this spirit must begin its fight with the elimination of everything Romanic. If so they may recognize an external preparation and encouragement in the victorious fortitude and bloody glory of the last war; but one must still seek the inner necessity in the ambition to be always worthy of the sublime champions on this way, Luther as well as our great artists and poets. But let him never believe that he could fight without the gods of his house, or his mythical home, without "bringing back" all German things! And if the German should hesitantly look around for a leader who might bring him back again into his long lost home whose ways and paths he scarcely knows anymore, let him merely listen to the ecstatically luring call of the Dionysian bird that hovers above him and wants to point the way for him. (BT 138-139)

The text here sounds an ominous note: we need a *Führer*, Nietzsche tells his readers. The *Birth of Tragedy* calls for such a leader; it means to make us receptive for such leadership. In this respect it invites comparison with Heidegger's writings of the thirties, especially with "The Origin of the Work of Art" and the *Rekotoratsrede*. As this suggests, with his call for a leader Nietzsche was not at all alone and his call did not go unheard. In this connection the George-Kreis deserves special attention.

7

In the later preface Nietzsche criticizes the early work for being *ohne Willen zur logischen Sauberkeit*, for being *sehr überzeugt und deshalb des Beweisens sich überhebend, mißtrauisch selbst gegen die Schicklichkeit des Beweisens:*

> To say it once more: today I find it an impossible book: I consider it badly written, ponderous, embarrassing, image-mad and image-confused, sentimental, in places saccharine to the point of effeminacy, uneven in tempo, without the will to logical cleanliness, very convinced and therefore disdainful of proof, a book for initiates, "music" for those dedicated to music, those who are closely related to begin with on the basis of common and rare aesthetic experiences, "music" meant as a sign of recognition for close relatives *in artibus* — an arrogant and rhapsodic book that sought to

> exclude right from the beginning the *profanum vulgus* of "the educated" even more than the "mass" or "folk." (BT 19)

What he had substituted for reasoned argument was "music," "romantic music."

> But, my dear sir, what in the world is romantic if your book isn't? Can deep hatred against "the Now," against "reality" and "modern ideas" be pushed further than you pushed it in your artists' metaphysics? Believing sooner in the Nothing, sooner in the devil than in "the Now"? Is it not a deep bass of wrath and the lust for destruction that we hear humming underneath all your contrapuntal vocal art and seduction of the ear, a furious resolve against everything that is "now," a will that is not far removed from practical nihilism and seems to say: "sooner let nothing be true than that *you* should be right, than that *your* truth should be proved right. (BT 25)

The Birth of Tragedy is later criticized for having confused *romantisch* and *dionysisch*. What is the relation between the two? In *Morgenröte* III, 159 Nietzsche will have this to say about romanticism:

> *es wird zu viel Kraft an alle möglichen Todten-Erweckungen weggeworfen. Vielleicht versteht man die ganze Bewegung der Romantik am besten aus diesem Gesichtspunkte.* (KSA 3, 145)
>
> Too much energy is wasted on all sorts of resurrections of the dead. Perhaps the whole romantic movement is best understood from this point of view.

But why should the myth be not only Dionysian, but also tragic? What is the relationship between these two?

7. Apollo and Dionysus

1

Last time we spent most of our time on Nietzsche's claim, repeated several times in the *Birth of Tragedy*:

Only as an aesthetic phenomenon is the existence of the world justified.

Today I would like to begin with a passage in Chapter 24, where Nietzsche repeats this point.

> If you would explain the tragic myth, the first requirement is to seek the pleasure that is peculiar to it in the purely aesthetic sphere, without transgressing into the region of pity, fear, or the morally sublime. How can the ugly and the disharmonic, the content of the tragic myth, stimulate aesthetic pleasure? (BT 141)

Nietzsche answers his question with these already cited lines:

> Here it becomes necessary to take a bold running start and leap into a metaphysics of art, by repeating the sentence written above, that existence and the world seem justified only as an aesthetic phenomenon. In this sense, it is precisely the tragic myth that has to convince us that even the ugly and disharmonic are part of an artistic game that the will in its eternal amplitude of its pleasure plays with itself. (BT 141)

This suggests that what in the later preface he calls his *Artisten-Metaphysik* is itself something of which he became convinced by tragic myth, is perhaps itself a sort of tragic myth. The vision of God as a supreme artist, creating and destroying, playing by himself, is a mythic vision, as is the Heraclitean vision of the child tossing pebbles and building a sand-pile, only to tear it down again. These are Apollinian metaphors of a Dionysian reality, lenses through which to look at and change our outlook on life.

What then of *The Birth of Tragedy*? What sort of book is it? Certainly it is not first of all a scholarly investigation into tragedy, but must be understood itself as a contribution towards the establishment of an aesthetic, more precisely a tragic justification to our own existence, less *Wissenschaft* than myth.

I have suggested that *The Birth of Tragedy* is not just about tragedy, but must be understood as itself an attempt to give an aesthetic, more precisely a tragic justification to

our existence. The book presents itself thus to us as itself something like a tragic myth. In reading it, it is therefore important to keep in mind Nietzsche's understanding of tragedy:

> The tradition is undisputed that Greek tragedy in its earliest form had for its sole theme the sufferings of Dionysus and that for a long time the only stage hero was Dionysus himself. But it may be claimed with equal confidence that until Euripides, Dionysus never ceased to be the tragic hero; that all the celebrated figures of the Greek stage — Prometheus, Oedipus, etc. — are mere masks of this original hero, Dionysus. That behind all these masks there is a deity, that is one essential reason for the typical "ideality" of these famous figures which has caused so much astonishment. (BT 73)

In the language of Schopenhauer's aesthetics: Dionysus names the Platonic idea that we "see" in the individual heroes:

> Using Plato's terms we should have to speak of the tragic figures of the Hellenic stage somewhat as follows: the one truly real Dionysus appears in a variety of forms, in the mask of a fighting hero, and entangled, as it were, in the net of the individual will. The god who appears, talks and acts so as to resemble an erring, striving, and suffering individual. That he *appears* at all with such epic precision and clarity is the work of the dream interpreter, Apollo, who through this symbolic appearance interprets to the chorus its Dionysian state. In truth, however, the hero is the suffering Dionysus of the Mysteries, the god experiencing in himself the agonies of individuation, of whom wonderful myths tell that as a boy he was torn to pieces by the Titans and now is worshipped in this state as Zagreus. Thus it is intimated that this dismemberment, the properly Dionysian *suffering*, is like a transformation into air, water, earth, and fire, that we are therefore to regard the state of individuation as the origin and primal cause of all suffering, as something objectionable in itself. From the smile of this Dionysus sprang the Olympian gods, from his tears sprang man. In this existence as a dismembered god, Dionysus possesses the dual nature of a cruel, barbarized demon and a mild, gentle

> ruler. But the hope of the epopts looked towards a rebirth of Dionysus, which we must now dimly conceive as the end of individuation. It was for this coming third Dionysus that the epopts' roaring hymns of joy resounded. And it is this hope alone that casts a gleam of joy upon the features of a world torn asunder and shattered into individuals; this is symbolized in the myth of Demeter, sunk in eternal sorrow, who rejoices again for the first time when told that she may once more give birth to Dionysus, (BT 73-74)

The passage illustrates Nietzsche's rather free use of Greek myth and religion and his attempt to, as he was to put it in the later critical postscript, laboriously express by means of Kantian and Schopenhauerian formulas his own, in many ways very different views. The opposition Apollinian-Dionysian is taken to be roughly equivalent to that of representation and will, Olympian and chthonic. Themes from the Demeter (corn-goddess and mother in law of Hades) and the Dionysus legends are woven without scholarly inhibitions into an aesthetic whole. Eleusinian and Orphic Dionysian mysteries are joined. Nietzsche could have appealed to an obscure saying by Heraclitus: "Hades and Dionysus are the same."[42]

Nietzsche's tragic myth can also be given a cultural reading. Nietzsche tells the story of the history leading up to the present as a tragedy. T he hero of that story is of course once again Dionysus, who is opposed by Socrates. This helps to explain the ideality of Nietzsche's Socrates. Here, too, Nietzsche is not at all concerned with historical accuracy. He is attempting to tell a modern myth, where it is significant that this myth takes the form of a historical narrative.

2

And is this not how one must understand *The Birth of Tragedy*?

> How now? Is your pessimists' book not itself a piece of anti-Hellenism and romanticism? Is it not itself something "equally intoxicating and befogging," in any case a narcotic, even a piece of music, *German* music? But listen:

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[42] Fr. 15. See M. S. Silk and J. P. Stern, *Nietzsche on Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1981), p. 183).

Nietzsche continues, quoting what he had written earlier in *The Birth of Tragedy*:

> "Let us imagine a coming generation with such intrepidity of vision, with such a heroic penchant for the tremendous; let us imagine the bold stride of these dragon-slayers [cf. Siegfried], the proud audacity with which they turn their back on all the weakling's doctrines of optimism in order to 'live resolutely' in wholeness and fullness: would it not be necessary for the tragic man of such a culture, in view of his self education for seriousness and terror, to desire a new art, the art of metaphysical comfort, to desire tragedy as his own proper Helen, and to exclaim with Faust:
>
> Should not my longing overleap the distance
> And draw the fairest form into existence?"
>
> "Would it not be necessary?" — No, thrice no. O you young romantics: it would not be necessary! But it is highly probable that it will *end* that way, that you *end* that way — namely "comforted, as it is written, in spite of all self-education for seriousness and terror, "comforted metaphysically" — in sum, as romantics end, as *Christians*. (BT 26)

What is wrong with an art like Helen? To answer that question we have to consider the very different relationship in which such an art of metaphysical comfort and what Nietzsche envisions stand to time.

In this connection we should ask once more, keeping Schopenhauer in mind, what the relationship is between *romantisch* and *Musik*, on the one hand, and *Dionysisch* and *tragisch*, on the other.

In the later preface Nietzsche accuses himself of having obscured his central insight in two ways: by fumbling along with a Schopenhauerian vocabulary and by confusing his insights into the Greek issue with Wagnerian ideas.

> Is it clear what task I first dared to touch with this book? How I regret now that in those days I still lacked the courage (or immodesty?) to permit myself in every way an individual language of my own for such individual views and hazards — and that instead I tried laboriously to express by means of Schopenhauerian and Kantian formulas strange and new valuations which were basically at odds with Kant's and Schopenhauer's spirit and taste. (BT 24)

The passage invites the reader to detach the book's central insights from its Schopenhauerian appearance. I shall return to this point. But let me point out here already that the intent to offer with this book a medicine against Schopenhauer should have been clear to the careful reader, although a passage like the following may at first seem to suggest the very opposite:

> Let no one try to blight our faith in a yet-impending rebirth of Hellenic antiquity; for this alone gives us hope for a renovation and purification of the German spirit through the fire magic of music. What else could we name that might awaken any comforting expectations for the future in the midst of the desolation and exhaustion of contemporary culture? In vain do we look for a single vigorously developed root, for a spot of fertile and healthy soil: everywhere there is dust and sand; everything has become rigid and languishes. One who is disconsolate and lonely [I cited the following lines once before] could not choose a better symbol than the knight with death and devil, as Dürer has drawn him for us, the armored knight with the iron, hard look, who knows how to pursue his terrible path, undeterred by his gruesome companions, and yet without hope, alone with his horse and dog. Our Schopenhauer was such a Dürer knight; he lacked all hope, but he desired truth. He has no peers. (BT 123)

But why should the gloomy Dionysian wisdom of Silenus offer a cure to modernity's malaise? And what about Schopenhauer? Is Schopenhauer's pessimistic wisdom not a symptom of such malaise?

Unlike Schopenhauer, Nietzsche is, however, not calling for a journey to the East, but for a journey back to Greece. The next section develops this point:

> Tragedy absorbs the highest ecstasies of music, so that it truly brings music, both among the Greeks and among us, to its perfection; but then it places the tragic myth and the tragic hero next to it, and like a powerful Titan, takes the whole Dionysian world upon his back and thus relieves us of this burden. On the other hand, by means of the same tragic myth, in the person of the tragic hero, it knows how to redeem us from the greedy thirst for this existence, and with an admonishing gesture reminds us of another existence and a higher pleasure for which the struggling hero

> prepares himself by means of his destruction, not by means of his triumphs. (BT 124-125)

Here Nietzsche remains close to Schopenhauer, but in the same paragraph he presents tragedy as not only born of music, but also as an antidote to music.

> The myth protects us against the music, while on the other hand it alone gives music the highest freedom. In return, music imparts to the tragic myth an intense and convincing metaphysical significance that word and image without this singular help could never have attained. (BT 126)

We hear both Schopenhauer and Wagner in these words. But they also communicate a sense that we need to protect ourselves against Schopenhauer's music. *The Birth of Tragedy*, born of Schopenhauer's music, wants to provide the needed protection. But this protection, it would seem, requires a surrender of the Schopenhauerian pathos of truth. *The Birth of Tragedy* is indeed enamored with *Schein*. The reader is left to wonder, whether, instead of offering a genuine cure, it turns out to be itself only music, insubstantial like Helen in Goethe's *Faust*. This at least is the charge made in the later preface:

> *ein Narkotikum jedenfalls, ein Stück Musik sogar, deutsche Musik.*

Music here is linked to Schopenhauer, to *Romantik*, and in turn to the offer of a *metaphysischer Trost*, a *jenseitiger Trost*.

The author of the later "Attempt at a Self-Criticism" wants to teach the art of a *diesseitiger Trost*.

3

Let me return to Nietzsche's dependence on Schopenhauer. In *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche seems to take for granted Schopenhauer's distinction between the world as will and the world as representation, and the related distinction between two kinds of art, one transfiguring representations by making visible in them the Platonic ideas; the other music, giving a copy of the inner essence of the world itself, the will. Nietzsche associates Apollo both with the world of representations, which in his myth he interprets as the work of a divine artist, and with art; and Dionysus with both will and music. Dionysus himself is an Apollinian image.

In passing I should note that the association of Dionysus with music had to raise questions for anyone who was up on his Greek gods: Apollo was the God of music, although there was also music associated with Dionysus. But Nietzsche here is thinking also of Wagner. The collage of the modern and the Greek is indeed, as Nietzsche himself was to observe, a characteristic feature of the style of *The Birth of Tragedy*. It is a strategy that aims at the negation of history and historical scholarship. It seeks to exhibit something more like Plato's ideas, as Schopenhauer understood them, transformed by Nietzsche into artistic creations — Nietzsche himself calls Dionysus, said to be embodied in the heroes of Greek tragedy, such an idea. I am reminded of the language of fairy tales: once upon a time there lived a poor shoemaker, etc. Or think of the language of sacred festivals: today Christ is born. The affront to science, to philology, posed by Nietzsche's distinctive style, designed to let us "see" aesthetic ideas, is evident. That Willamowitz-Moellendorf should have been outraged was to be expected and from the point of view of what he thought classicists ought to be doing, he was absolutely right. Whether certain of Nietzsche's hunches or assertions could or can be supported by diligent research is not what matters here: this discourse is, by its very nature, *ohne logische Sauberkeit*. But can we reconcile Nietzsche's attempt to contribute to a rebirth of myth with an insistence on *logische Sauberkeit*? This invites the Nietzschean question, seen in the perspective of life, just what is the significance of the will to *logische Sauberkeit?*

Nietzsche begins his discussion with the already quoted distinction between the spheres of dream and intoxication (34). Much here recalls traditional descriptions of the aesthetic: Nietzsche reads the beautiful object in the image of the dream and the dream in the image of the beautiful object. Once again the beautiful is marked by plenitude: in it nothing seems unimportant or superfluous. But this plenitude is bought at the price of reality: we sense that the beautiful lacks reality.

But the significance of the Apollinian is not exhausted with this look at the beautiful. The dream sphere, as here described, contrasts with waking reality in virtue of its clearer form and heightened meaning: it transforms reality so that it acquires a plenitude that that reality initially lacks. But is our familiar everyday reality not itself a reality that has been transformed, subject to the human understanding and its modes of organization.

> Philosophical men even have a presentiment that the reality in which we live and have our being is also mere appearance, and that another, quite different reality lies beneath it. Schopenhauer actually indicates as the criterion of philosophical ability the occasional ability to view men and things as mere phantoms and dream images. Thus the aesthetically sensitive man stands in the same relation to the reality of dreams as the philosopher does to the reality of existence; he is a close and willing observer, for these images afford him an interpretation of life, and by reflecting on the image he trains himself for life. (BT 34)

Here already Nietzsche emphasizes that illusion heals. It is the medicine we mortals need:

> The joyous necessity of the dream experience has been embodied by the Greeks in their Apollo: Apollo, the god of all plastic energies, is at the same time the soothsaying god. He, who (as the etymology of the name indicates) is the "shining one," the deity of light, is also ruler over the beautiful illusion of the inner world of fantasy. The higher truth, the perfection of these states in contrast to the incompletely intelligible everyday world, this deep consciousness of nature, healing and helping in dreams and sleep, is at the same time the symbolical analogue of the soothsaying faculty and of the arts generally, which make life possible and worth living. (BT 35)

Following Schopenhauer, Nietzsche also interprets Apollo as the divine image of the *principium individuationis*.

> And so, in one sense, we might apply to Apollo the words of Schopenhauer when he speaks of the man wrapped in the veil of maya: "Just as in a stormy sea that, unbounded in all directions, raises and drops mountainous waves, howling, a sailor sits in a boat and trusts in his frail bark: so in the midst of a world of torments the individual human being sits quietly, supported by and trusting in the *principium individuationis*." In fact, we might say of Apollo that in him the unshaken faith in this *principium* and the calm repose of the man wrapped up in it receive their most sublime expression; and we might call Apollo himself the glorious

> divine image of the *principium individuationis*, through whose gesture and eyes all the joy and wisdom of "illusion," together with its beauty, speak to us. (BT 35-36)

Note that the metaphorical extension of the art sphere invites us to look at the world of representations in its entirety as if it were a work of art. This is the point of Nietzsche's *Artisten-Metaphysik*.

I remarked on Nietzsche's collage style. A particularly impressive example is found in his description of the Dionysian:

> In the same work Schopenhauer has described for us the tremendous *terror* which seizes man when he is suddenly dumbfounded by the cognitive form of phenomena, because the principle of sufficient reason, in one if its manifestations, seems to suffer an exception. If we add to this terror the blissful ecstasy that wells from the innermost depths of man, indeed of nature, at this collapse of the *principium individuationis*, we steal a glimpse into the nature of the *Dionysian*, which is brought home to us most intimately by the analogy of intoxication.
>
> Either under the influence of the narcotic draught, of which the songs of all primitive men and peoples speak, or with the potent coming of spring that penetrates all nature with joy, these Dionysian emotions awake, and as they grow in intensity everything subjective vanishes into complete self-forgetfulness. In the German Middle Ages, too, singing and dancing crowds, ever increasing in number, whirled themselves from place to place under this same Dionysian impulse. In these dancers of St. John and St. Vitus, we rediscover the Bacchic choruses of the Greeks, with their prehistory in Asia Minor, as far back as Babylon and the orgiastic Sacaea. There are some, who, from obtuseness or lack of experience turn away from such phenomena as from "folk-diseases," with contempt or pity born of the consciousness of their own "healthy-mindedness." But of course such poor wretches have no idea how corpselike and ghostly their so-called "healthy-mindedness" looks when the glowing life of the Dionysian revelers roars past them. (BT 36-37)

Schiller's words, set to music by Beethoven, become the *Eleusinische Mysterienruf*.

There is tension between passages like this and the wisdom of Silenus, which is also the wisdom of Schopenhauer, between existing as part of a larger, but quite this-worldly whole, and that insight, if you want between Dionysian ecstasy and Dionysian wisdom, one life affirming, the other life-negating. And a similar tension exists in Nietzsche's discussion of Apollinian beauty, between a beauty that offers us in the beautiful illusion an escape from reality, and a beauty that seduces us to participate in reality by transfiguring it, perhaps we can say between a sublime and a truly beautiful beauty.

In *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche distinguishes Homer, the Apollinian epic poet, from Archilochus, the Dionysian lyric poet. (The 7th century poet Archilochus is said to have tried to introduce the Dionysian cult into the island of Paros. When opposed, the men became sterile. The Delphic oracle thereupon told the Parians to honor Dionysus.)

Nietzsche's view of lyric poetry deserves consideration.

> Now let us suppose that among these images he [Archilochus] also beholds himself as non-genius, i.e., his subject, the whole throng of subjective passions and agitations of the will directed to a definite object which appears real to him. It might seem as if the lyric genius and the allied non-genius were one, as if the former had of its own accord spoken the little word "I." But this mere appearance will no longer be able to lead us astray, as it certainly led astray those who designated the lyrist as a subjective poet. For, as a matter of fact, Archilochus, the passionately inflamed, loving and hating man, is but a vision of the genius, who by this time is no longer merely Archilochus, but a world-genius expressing his primordial pain symbolically in the symbol of the man Archilochus — while the subjectively willing and desiring man Archilochus, can never at any time be a poet. (BT 50)

Lyric poetry has its origin in a mood. That mood expresses itself in the music of the poem. Nietzsche continues his discussion with folk song.

> First of all, however, we must consider the folk song as the musical mirror of the world, as the original melody, now seeking for itself a parallel dream phenomenon and expressing it in poetry. Melody is therefore primary and universal, and so may admit of several

> objectifications in several texts. Likewise in the naive estimation of the people, it is regarded as by far the more important and essential element. (BT 53)

The Dionysian ground provided by the music ushers forth Apollinian images. In this connection I should point once more to the hope Nietzsche connects with Luther's music.

> It is from this abyss that the German Reformation came forth; and in its chorales the future of German music resounded for the first time. So deep, courageous and spiritual, so exuberantly good and tender did this chorale of Luther sound — as the first Dionysian luring call breaking forth from dense thickets at the approach of spring. And in competing echoes the solemnly exuberant procession of Dionysian revelers responded, to whom we are indebted for German music — and to whom we shall be indebted for *the rebirth of German myth*. (BT 136-137)

4

In keeping with this understanding of music, Nietzsche sees the origin of tragedy in the chorus (56):

> The metaphysical comfort — with which, I am suggesting even now, every true tragedy leaves us — that life is at the bottom of things, despite all the changes of appearances, indestructibly powerful and pleasurable — this comfort appears in incarnate clarity in the chorus of satyrs, a chorus of natural beings who live ineradicably, as it were, behind all civilization and remain eternally the same, despite the changes of generations and of the history of nations.
>
> With this chorus the profound Hellene, uniquely susceptible of the tenderest and deepest suffering, comforts himself, having looked boldly right into the terrible destructiveness of so-called world-history as well as the cruelty of nature, and being in danger of longing for a Buddhistic negation of the will. Art saves him, and through art — life. (BT 59)

Again we meet here with the un-Schopenhauerian idea of art as a remedy against a Buddhistic denial of the will to live.

> Here, when the danger to the will is greatest, art approaches as a saving sorceress. Expert at healing, she alone knows how to turn these nauseous thoughts about the horror or absurdity of existence into notions with which one can live: these are the sublime as the artistic discharge of the horrible, and the comic as the artistic discharge of the nausea of absurdity. The satyr chorus of the dithyramb is the saving deed of Greek art; faced with the intermediate world of these Dionysian companions, the feelings described here exhausted themselves. (BT 60)

The question remains of just how we are to understand this artistic discharge of horror and nausea. Does an appeal to aesthetic distance help here? Does the suffering individual transcend himself by turning himself into a spectator?

> Such magic transformation is the presupposition of all dramatic art. In this magic transformation the Dionysian reveler sees himself as satyr, and as a satyr, in turn, he sees the god, which means that in his metamorphosis he beholds another vision outside himself, as the Apollinian complement of his own state. With this new vision the drama is complete.
>
> In the light of this insight we must understand Greek tragedy as the Dionysian chorus which ever anew discharges itself in an Apollinian world of images. (8, pp. 64-65)

But why a Dionysian rather than a more purely Apollinian art? What is the point of Apollinian art? Nietzsche's answer is quite in keeping with Schopenhauer's understanding of the aesthetic experience:

> Plastic art has an altogether different aim: here Apollo overcomes the suffering of the individual by the radiant glorification of *the eternity of the phenomenon*: here beauty triumphs over the suffering inherent in life; pain is obliterated by lies from the features of nature (16, p. 104)

The Apollinian art-work offers an illusion of timeless plenitude that so absorbs the subject that he forgets himself as this particular individual and thus defeats time in time. But what need is there then for the art of Dionysus? Nietzsche's answer once again recalls Schopenhauer and yet now sounds a very different key:

> Dionysian art, too, wishes to convince us of the eternal joy of existence: only we are to seek this joy not in phenomena, but behind them. We are to

> recognize that all that comes into being must be ready for a sorrowful end; we are forced to look into the terror of the individual existence — yet we are not to become rigid with fear: a metaphysical comfort tears us momentarily from the bustle of the changing figures. We are really for a brief moment primordial being itself, feeling its raging desire for existence and joy in existence; the struggle, the pain, the destruction of phenomena now appear necessary to us, in view of the excess of countless forms of existence which force and push one another into life, in view of the exuberant fertility of the universal will. (17, p. 104)

But how is such a vision supposed to help transfigure my personal existence or the existence of the polis? Is it not profoundly pessimistic? Consider these lines:

> This view of things already provides us with all the elements of a profound and pessimistic view of the world, together with the *mystery doctrine of tragedy*: the fundamental knowledge of the oneness of everything existent, the conception of individuation as the primal cause of evil, and of art as the joyous hope that the spell of individuation may be broken in augury of a restored oneness. (10, p. 74)

We understand why Nietzsche later regretted having obscured his life-affirming Dionysian insights with Schopenhauerian words.

5

But let me return to the question of the healing power of tragedy on which Nietzsche insists. In this, of course, he is following Aristotle. In his famous definition of tragedy Aristotle tells us that tragedy imitates an action with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions. Nietzsche's understanding of tragedy may be understood as an appropriation of this account:

> Never since Aristotle has an explanation of the tragic effect been offered from which aesthetic states or an aesthetic activity of the listener could be inferred. Now the serious events are supposed to prompt pity and fear to discharge themselves in a way that relieves us; now we are supposed to feel elevated and inspired by the triumph of good and noble principles, at the sacrifice of the hero in the interest of a moral vision of the universe. I am

> sure that for countless men precisely this, and only this, is the effect of tragedy, but it plainly follows that all these men, together with their interpreting aestheticians, have had no experience of tragedy as a supreme *art*. (BT 132)

The first sentence might appear to exempt Aristotle from this judgment. But what is meant by pity and fear. In the *Poetics* Aristotle has rather little to say about pity and fear, more about what kind of plot is likely to arouse them. This deficiency is made up to some extent by a number of passages in the *Rhetoric*.

> Fear may be defined as a pain or disturbance due to a mental picture of some destructive or painful evil in the future. Of destructive evils only; for there are some evils, e g. wickedness or stupidity, the prospect of which does not frighten us: I mean only such as amount to great pains or losses. And even those only if they appear not remote but so near as to be imminent: we do not fear things that are a long way off: for instance we all know we shall die, but we are not troubled thereby, because death is not close at hand. (*Rhetoric* II, 5, 1382 a 21 - 28.)[43]

Aristotle goes on to describe the conditions under which we feel fear:

> If fear is associated with the expectation that something destructive will happen to us, plainly nobody will be afraid who believed nothing can happen to him; we shall not fear things that we believe cannot happen to us, nor people who we believe cannot inflict them upon us; nor shall we be afraid at times when we think ourselves safe from them. It follows therefore that fear is felt by those who believe something to be likely to happen to them, at the hands of particular persons, in a particular form, and at a particular time. (*Rhetoric* II, 5, 1382 b 28 – 36)

Aristotle goes on to give quite specific advice concerning what an orator should do to fill his audience with fear:

> Consequently, when it is advisable that the audience should be frightened, the orator must make them feel that they really are in danger of something, pointing out that it has happened to others who were stronger than they are,

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[43] Tr. W. Rhys Roberts

> and is happening or has happened, to people like themselves, at the hands of unexpected people, in an unexpected form, and at an unexpected time. Death itself is a proper subject for tragedy only if it is presented in such a way that we recognize our impotence to make ourselves certain that death is a long way off. (*Rhetoric* II, 5, l383 a 8 – 13)

Fear then is tied to insecurity. To say that tragedy should make us feel fear is to say also that it should rob us of the security of the everyday.

We sense the deep opposition between Apollinian and Dionysian beauty, also between Plato and Aristotle. Platonic beauty is understood as an epiphany of true being. It thus promises security, an escape from time. The beauty of tragedy reveals the final insecurity of the individual. Consider Oedipus. Oedipus's life stands for a life lived in an attempt to have the individual secure himself, a prideful life. Tragedy reveals to us the futility of such attempts. In a different way this is the point of the failure of Pentheus in the *Bacchae*. But what is edifying about their failure? What does Aristotle mean when he speak of a catharsis?

Before I return to this question let me turn to the other emotion, to pity:

> Let us now consider Pity, asking ourselves what things excite pity, and for what persons, and in what states of our mind pity is felt. Pity may be defined as a feeling of pain caused by the sight of some evil, destructive or painful, which befalls one who does not deserve it, and which we might expect to befall ourselves or some friend of ours, and moreover to befall us soon. In order to feel pity, we must obviously be capable of supposing that some evil may happen to us or to some friend of ours, and moreover some such evil as is stated in our definition or is more or less of that kind. It is therefore not felt by those completely ruined, who suppose that no further evil can befall them, since the worst has befallen them already; nor by those who imagine themselves immensely fortunate. (*Rhetoric* II, 8, 1385 b 11 – 22)

Aristotle proceeds to explain the grounds on which we feel pity:

> The grounds, then, on which we feel pity are these or like these. The people we pity are: those whom we know, if only they are not very closely related to us; in that case we feel about them as if we were in danger ourselves.

> For this reason Amasis did not weep, they say, at the sight of his son being led to death, but did weep when he saw his friend begging: the latter sight was pitiful, the former terrible, and the terrible is different from the pitiful; it tends to cast out pity, and often helps to produce the opposite of pity. Again, we feel pity, when the danger is near ourselves. Also we pity those who are like us in age, character, disposition, social standing, or birth; for in all these cases it appears more likely that the same misfortune may befall us also. (*Rhetoric* II, 1386a 17 – 27)

The actor who would move us to pity should bring the actions he represents close to us; they have to bring them before our eyes in a way that they appear just to have happened or are about to happen:

> Anything that has just happened, or is going to happen soon, is particularly piteous: so, too, therefore are the tokens and the actions of suffering — the garments and the like of those who have already suffered; the words and the actions of those actually suffering — of those, for instance, who are on the point of death. Most piteous of all is it when, in such times of trial, the victims are persons of noble character: whenever they are so, our pity is especially excited, because their innocence, as well as the setting of their misfortunes before our eyes, makes their misfortunes seem close to ourselves. (*Rhetoric* II, 8, 1386 b 1 – 8)

Tragedy, on Aristotle's view, reveals to the human being who he is: noble in his desire to give order and structure to his life and world, yet pitiful in his inability to secure himself. Tragedy reveals the tragic fate of man. The opacity of the world stands in the way of a faithful execution of the divine command.

Is the death of Socrates a tragedy? In the image of the music making Socrates there does seem to me to be at least a trace of a recognition of the futility of his enterprise.

But what is edifying about such recognition? What is the meaning of catharsis? Again the *Poetics* give us no good answer. The definitive explanation that Aristotle is supposed to have given in the *Poetics* has been lost. In the *Politics* we are given more of a hint. There Aristotle not only emphasizes the power of music to arouse the emotions, but ties such an arousal to a purgation. Tragedy, according to Aristotle, would appear to

have a purgative and a healing effect: our souls are lightened and delighted. To say this is to suggest that ordinarily we suffer from a burden, the usually repressed fate of human beings to be at the mercy of powers greater than they are, of fate and the gods. This fatedness of human existence finds expression in the way the tragedians tend to return to a few tragically fated families, to the traditional stories, which, Aristotle suggests, should be kept as they are.

But the burden that weighs on us is not so much that in the end we are powerless before the terror of time. That burden cannot be lifted, except by virtue of an illusion. Tragedy would then become an art of escape, and there is much in *The Birth of Tragedy* that invites such an interpretation. But the burden is rather that we repress that powerlessness and the associated emotions. Just for this reason we are unable to affirm ourselves in our entirety, we deny that in us which places us at the mercy of time. First of all and most of the time we human beings live alienated from our own being, find ourselves unable to affirm ourselves in our entirety. To affirm ourselves, we have to affirm also that we exist at the mercy of time, we have to affirm the temporality and finitude of our existence. Just that Nietzsche's formulations in *The Birth of Tragedy*, with their talk of metaphysical solace, all too often do not suggest. And yet, it seems to me, already in that book he was after something like this: a this-worldly solace, as the later preface puts it. The healing power of tragedy is tied to its ability to reconcile us with the human condition. Such reconciliation, Nietzsche suggests, requires distancing and idealization, the aesthetic translation of human existence into an ideal sphere. But it also requires the appropriation or recollection of the truth concerning our ephemeral existence.

8. Socrates

1

Let me begin by reviewing briefly some of the main points of our discussion of *The Birth of Tragedy*.

1. I have suggested that one thing Nietzsche is concerned about in *The Birth of Tragedy* is the nihilistic character of a culture that accepts the hegemony of reason, of science. The connection between such a reason and nihilism is crucial. To the extent that objectifying reason governs our approach to what we experience, things must present themselves as contingent, as arbitrary, as not justified. This is one thing Nietzsche learned from Schopenhauer: things might have been otherwise. There is no good reason for their being the way they are. Reason, so understood, has no room for God, no room for value.

2. But Schopenhauer had also pointed to a sort of experience that delivers us from contingency, to aesthetic experience, if at the price of lifting us out of what we usually consider reality. Lost in the appreciation of the beautiful, I become absorbed in the aesthetic object and lose myself as this individual with these fears and concerns. Such experience, which in time delivers us from the burden of our temporal existence, justifies itself.

3. But for Kant and for Schopenhauer the experience of the beautiful is also tied to an experience of its irreality. Will the pursuit of the aesthetic then not substitute illusion for reality? And will the attempt to live aesthetically not substitute as Kierkegaard suggested, the subjunctive of wishful thinking for the indicative of life? The question is whether it is possible to oppose to the **aesthetic** in Kierkegaard's sense another understanding of it that escapes his critique. Nietzsche certainly suggests that a positive answer can be given, and following his terminology in *The Birth of Tragedy*, we may want to speak of a transformation of the aesthetic into the mythic. While the aesthetic replaces reality with a self-justifying illusion, myth represents and idealizes reality in such a way that it appears to us as justified. The mythic can thus be opposed in this sense to the aesthetic, where I would be using the word, however, not as Nietzsche is using it in *The Birth of Tragedy.* There the juxtaposition would be between mythic and romantic.

In the last session I therefore focused on the problem of myth, and more especially on tragic myth. Why tragic myth?

To affirm ourselves we have to affirm also that we exist at the mercy of time, we have to affirm our embodied being and with it the temporality and finitude of our existence. The healing power of tragedy is tied to its ability to reconcile us with the human condition. Such reconciliation requires distancing, the aesthetic translation of human existence into an ideal sphere. But it also requires the appropriation or recollection of the truth concerning our ephemeral existence. Tragedy so understood presents itself as strangely ambivalent, as medicine and as poison.

2

But what place is there for tragedy in the modern world, given the way that world is dominated by faith in reason? Must modernity not divorce the beautiful and the real, turn to the beautiful as to an escape from reality, a supplement?

Nietzsche gives a first answer to this question in his discussion of Euripides, where Euripides is of course, just like Socrates, also an ideal type, if you wish, a caricature.

> But if we desire, as briefly as possible, and without claiming to say anything exhaustive, to characterize what Euripides had in common with Menander and Philemon, and what appealed to them so strongly as worthy of imitation, it is sufficient to say that Euripides brought the spectator onto the stage. He who has perceived the material out of which the Promethean writers, prior to Euripides formed their heroes, and how remote from their purpose it was to bring the faithful mask of reality onto the stage, will also be aware of the utterly opposite tendency of Euripides. (BT 77)

Nietzsche's description of Euripides here comes pretty much straight from the *Frogs* of Aristophanes, where Euripides is made to say the following:

> I put things on the stage that came from daily life and business
> Where men could catch me if I tripped; could listen without dizziness
> To things they knew and judge my art. I never crashed and lightened
> And bullied people's senses out; nor tried to keep them frightened

> With magic Swans and Aethiop knights, loud barb and clanging vizor. (ll. 958-964)[44]

And a bit later:

> This was the kind of lore I brought
> To school my town in ways of thought —
> I mingled reasoning with my art
> And shrewdness, till I fired their heart
> To brood, to think things through and through;
> And rule their houses better, too. (ll. 971-976)

As the Dionysus of the play then points out, the Athenian who had gone through the school of Euripides cased to be a

> Religious, unsuspecting fool,
> And happy in a sheeplike way. (ll. 989-990)

Euripides appears here rather as a representative of enlightenment, indeed of the Enlightenment and its commitment to realism in art, prefigured in the Renaissance (cf. Alberti).

> The spectator now actually saw and heard his double on the Euripidean stage, and rejoiced that he could talk so well. But this joy was not all; one could even learn from Euripides how to speak oneself. He prides himself upon this in his contest with Aeschylus: from him the people have learned how to observe, debate, and draw conclusions according to the rules of art and with the cleverest sophistries. (BT 77)
>
> And so the Aristophanean Euripides prides himself on having portrayed the common, familiar, everyday life and activities of the people, about which all are qualified to pass judgment. If the entire populace now philosophized, managed land and goods, and conducted lawsuits with unheard-of-circumspection, he deserves the credit, for this was the result of the wisdom he had inculcated in the people. (BT 78)

We can speak of a profanation of tragedy. One could perhaps liken this to the profanation of medieval painting by the Renaissance, which finds its expression in the

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[44] Trans. Gilbert Murray.

turn to representation and the abandonment of the idealizing gold background.[45] To use a metaphor, the Euripidean tragedy had lost the gold background of the older tragedy, represented there by the chorus, which should perhaps also be understood as an idealizing, metaphorical device: the chorus helps to let us experience the tragic hero as a mask of Dionysus. And we also meet with an insistence on realism, on the probable. The gods are psychologized. The individual psyche is substituted for the sacred:

> With this gift, with all the brightness and dexterity of his critical thinking, Euripides had sat in the theatre and striven to recognize in the masterpieces of his great predecessors, as in paintings that have become dark, feature after feature, line after line. And here he had experienced something which should not surprise anyone initiated into the deeper secrets of Aeschylean tragedy. He observed something incommensurable in every feature and in every line, a certain deceptive distinctness and at the same time an enigmatic depth, indeed an infinity in the background. (BT 80)

This divine perspective is exchanged for a merely human perspective.

However we judge Nietzsche's interpretation of Euripides, he does seem to sketch the place of an art that has subordinated itself to reason: the place of art in the modern age.

> And how dubious the solution of the ethical problems remains to him! How questionable the treatment of the myths! How unequal the distribution of good and bad fortune! Even in the language of the Old Tragedy there was much he found offensive, or a least enigmatic; especially he found too much pomp for simple affairs, too many tropes and monstrous expressions to suit the plainness of the characters. So he sat in the theater, pondering uneasily. And as a spectator he confessed to himself that he did not understand his great predecessors. (BT 80-81)

3

Nietzsche goes on to link Euripides and Socrates.

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[45] See Karsten Harries, *Infinity and Perspective* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001), pp. 83-91.

> That Socrates was closely related to the tendency of Euripides did not escape the notice of contemporaneous antiquity. The most eloquent expression of this felicitous insight was the story current in Athens that Socrates used to help Euripides write his plays. Whenever an occasion arose to enumerate the demagogues of the day, the adherents of the "good old times" would mention both names in the same breath. To the influence of Socrates and Euripides they attributed the fact that the old Marathonian stalwart fitness of body and soul was being sacrificed more and more to a dubious enlightenment that involves the progressive degeneration of the powers of body and soul. (BT 86)

Euripides is the poet of aesthetic Socratism.

> The most acute word, however, about this new and unprecedented value set on knowledge and insight was spoken by Socrates when he found that he was the only one who acknowledged to himself that he knew nothing, whereas in his critical peregrinations through Athens he had called on the greatest statesmen, orators, poets, and artists, and had everywhere discovered the conceit of knowledge. To his astonishment he perceived that all these celebrities were without a proper and sure insight, even with regard to their own professions, and that they practiced them only by instinct. "Only by instinct"; with this phrase we touch upon the heart and the core of the Socratic tendency. With it Socratism condemns existing art as it condemns existing ethics. Wherever Socratism turns its searching eyes it sees lack of insight and the power of illusion; and from this lack it infers the essential perversity and reprehensibility of what exists. Basing himself on this point, Socrates conceives it to be his duty to correct existence: all alone, with an expression of irreverence and superiority, as the precursor of an altogether different culture, art, and morality, he enters a world, to touch whose very hem would give us the greatest happiness. (BT 87)

Nietzsche calls the Greeks *the chariot-drivers of every subsequent culture*, that is to say, Greek culture has provided the heroes that offered orientation and models to every subsequent culture. Socrates is one of these. He is the model of the theoretical man.

> In order to vindicate the dignity of such a leader's position for Socrates, too, it is enough to recognize in him a type of existence unheard of before him: the type of theoretical man whose significance and aim it is our next task to try to understand. Like the artist, the theoretical man finds an infinite delight in whatever exists, and this satisfaction protects him against the practical ethics of pessimism with its Lynceus eyes that shine only in the dark. Whenever the truth is uncovered, the artist will always cling with rapt gaze to what still remains covering even after such uncovering; but the theoretical man enjoys and finds satisfaction in the discarded covering and finds the highest object of his pleasure in the process of an ever happy uncovering that succeeds through his own efforts. (BT. 94)

Lynceus, we should keep in mind, was the pilot of the Argo, able to see even Hades. In Goethe's *Faust* he forgets his duty when he sees Helen. This suggests:

Helen: tragedy = pathos of truth: pessimism

Later of course Nietzsche was to criticize this turn to Helen as a piece of anti-Hellenistic romanticism.

As the beginning of the following paragraph makes clear:

> There would be no science if it were concerned only with that one nude goddess and with nothing else, (BTR 95)

Nietzsche here refers to the veiled image of Isis at Sais, subject of a poem by Schiller, in which the veiled image warns mortals not to lift that veil, that he who dares to do so will *see* the truth, for Nietzsche no doubt linked to the pathos of truth. Both the artist and the theorist are said to delight in what exists. The artist, however, is said to remain with what even after the uncovering still remains covering, *Hülle*. This suggests that there remains in him an awareness of the hidden depth, an awareness of transcendence. Schopenhauer might say, he remains focused on the Platonic idea, which is itself a veil of the will. The theoretical person, on the other hand, is said to be satisfied with the discarded covering, with phenomena, which demonstrate to him his own power to uncover. And it is this process of uncovering that really delights him, where possession of the truth is indefinitely deferred, but that deferral is suppressed. Attention focuses instead on the

truths of science, which are *Hüllen* of truth itself, where truth would be once again the coincidence of reason and being.

The artist is content to gaze at beautiful appearance. Theoretical man, on the other hand wants to uncover, wants to get to the bottom of things. Just this desire Nietzsche questions. One thing pre-Socratic Greek culture can teach us is, in the words of *The Gay Science*:

> to stop courageously at the surface, the fold, the skin, to adore appearance, to believe in forms, tones, words, the whole Olympus of appearance. Those Greeks were superficial — *out of profundity*... Are we not, precisely in this respect, Greeks? Adorers of forms, of tones, of words, and therefore — *artists*?[46]

Art is content with beautiful appearance. It lets it be. This ability to let things be presupposes a certain renunciation: no longer does the artist insist on being, as Descartes put it, the master and possessor of nature. So understood all genuine art has something of tragedy about it. It is born of a will to power that recognizes its own lack of power.

Science, on the other hand, wants to seize reality. Theory, as Nietzsche presents it in *The Birth of Tragedy*, is possessed of a will to power that wants to appropriate reality, to comprehend it. It fails to recognize the human being's final inability to overpower reality. Science covers up such impotence. Over its progress presides thus the

> profound *illusion* that first saw the light of the world in the person of Socrates: the unshakable faith that thought, using the thread of causality, can penetrate the deepest abysses of being, and that thought is capable not only of knowing being, but even of *correcting* it. This sublime metaphysical illusion accompanies science as an instinct and leads science again and again to its limits at which it must turn into art — *which is really the aim of this mechanism*. (BT 95)

The Socratic reality principle triumphs in modern science and even more in technology.

Interesting is the passage on Lessing that preceded this passage:

> Therefore Lessing, the most honest theoretical man, dared to announce that he cared more for the search after truth than for truth itself

[46]KSA vol. 5, p. 42.

> — and thus revealed the fundamental secret of science, to the astonishment, and indeed the anger of the scientific community. (BT 95)

The footnote gives you the relevant text, which Kierkegaard, too, had discussed in his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript,* where it appears in the context of a critique of Hegel's system. The finitude of the human being demands the indefinite deferral of the truth. To affirm one's finitude requires renunciation of the claim to truth, of that kind of cognitive pride. For Nietzsche it is the process of discovering truth that gives pleasure, the continuing assertion of one's own power that in order to continue may come to no end.

This understanding of this *einzige, immer rege Trieb nach Wahrheit* is opposed to the Socratic faith in reason.

What is the boundary at which science must turn into art of which Nietzsche is here speaking? How are we to understand this *Umschlagen*? I take it science reaches this point when it realizes that it is not laying hold of the thing in itself but remains caught in the net of its own constructions.

> But science, spurred on by its powerful illusion, speeds irresistibly towards its limits, where its optimism, concealed in the essence of logic, suffers shipwreck. For the periphery of the circle of science has an infinite number of points; and while there is no telling how this circle could ever be surveyed completely, noble and gifted men nevertheless reach, e'er half their time and inevitably such boundary points on the periphery from which one gazes into what defies illumination.
>
> When they see to their horror how logic coils up at these boundaries and finally bites its own tail — suddenly the new form of insight breaks through, tragic insight which, merely to be endured needs art as a protection and remedy. (BT 97 - 98)

Socratic faith is faith in the commensurability of a thinking governed by the principle of causality, and more generally, the principle of sufficient reason, and being. This faith is inseparable from science. It has been its ruling myth. When insight into the incommensurability of thought and being dawns, into the unavailability of truth, insight into the Dionysian abyss, Socratic culture will turn from science to art, where this turn is prefigured by Socrates' own turn to music.

We do indeed find some recognition of the final inadequacy of the Socratic project in Plato's account of the life of Socrates. In the *Phaedo* Plato tells of Evenus, a poet, who has heard that Socrates, awaiting his death in prison, has turned to the writing of verse and music. He asks Cebes about the rumor and Cebes in turn checks it with Socrates. Socrates answers that there is indeed something to the story: he had had a recurrent dream, which always told him that he should "cultivate and make music." Hitherto, Socrates explains, he had thought that he had been engaged in making the right kind of music when engaging others in conversation, that the dream was just exhorting him to continue his pursuit of philosophy. But now, that he is facing death, he is uneasy about that interpretation. Could it be that the dream meant the popular music rather than philosophy? The delay of the return of Apollo's sacred ship from Delos has given him a bit of extra time, which he spends composing a hymn to Apollo and by putting some of Aesop's fables into verse.

> The voice of the Socratic dream vision is the only sign of any misgivings about the limits of logic: Perhaps — thus he must have asked himself — what is unintelligible to me is not necessarily unintelligent? Perhaps there is a realm of wisdom from which the logician is exiled? Perhaps art is even a necessary correlative of, and supplement for science? (BT 93)

Nietzsche finds an analogue in the life of Euripides:

> In the evening of his life, Euripides himself propounded to his contemporaries the question of the value and the significance of this (the Socratic) tendency, using myth. Is the Dionysian entitled to exist at all? Should it not be forcibly uprooted from Hellenic soil? Certainly, the poet tells us, if only that were possible; his most intelligent adversary — like Pentheus in the *Bacchae* — is unwittingly enchanted by him, and in his enchantment runs to meet his fate. (BT 81)

The play is curious. One cannot but sympathize with Pentheus, who sees in the anarchic potential of Dionysiac frenzy a threat to the establishment, to the state. And yet the Dionysian power he battles proves stronger than his measures. In the end he is torn to pieces by his own mother in just such a frenzy.

But if indeed both Euripides and Socrates came to recognize the one-sidedness of Socratic culture, such recognition, Nietzsche points out, came too late. With the

privileging of reason art had lost its religious, mythical significance. With Euripides art comes to be entertainment: the aesthetic conception of art; with Plato art becomes an edifying discourse: a moralizing tale. Interesting in this connection is Nietzsche's suggestion that the Platonic dialogue is the Aesopian fable raised to its highest power, an interpretation that invites one to read the reference to Aesop in the *Phaedo* somewhat differently: Socrates could then be seen as pointing ahead to Plato. But more important is that, in the wake of the Socratic privileging of reason, art comes to be caught between an aesthetic and a moralizing function. To the extent that the Socratic spirit presides over the reality principle of the modern world, Hegel's famous pronouncement, that art in its highest sense belongs to the past, would seem to be correct.

Nietzsche is unwilling to accept the finality of this judgment. Such unwillingness leads him to attempt to take a step beyond the Socratic reality principle and that means also beyond the aesthetic approach, across the threshold that separates modern Socratic from a post-modern and once again tragic culture.

> Here we knock, deeply moved, at the gates of the present and future: will this "turning" lead to ever-new configurations of genius and especially of the *Socrates who practices music*? Will the net of art, even if it is called religion or science, that is spread over existence be woven ever more tightly and delicately, or is it destined to be torn to shreds in the restless, barbarous, chaotic whirl that calls itself "the present?
>
> Concerned but not disconsolate, we stand aside a little while, contemplative men to whom it has been granted to be witness of these tremendous struggles and transitions. Alas, it is the magic of these struggles that those who behold them must also take part and fight. (BT 98)

Note that science is here discussed as itself as a kind of art, a myth that like other myths helps liberate us from the fear of death.

> Hence the image of the dying Socrates, as the human being whom knowledge and reason have liberated form the fear of death, is the emblem that, above the entrance gate of science, reminds all of its mission — namely to make existence appear comprehensible and thus justified; and if reasons do not suffice myth has to come to the aid in the end — myth

> which I have just called the necessary consequence, indeed the purpose of science. (BT 96)

4

If Socrates is the paradigm of the theoretical optimist, the death of tragedy is the other side of such optimism.

> For who could mistake the optimistic element in the nature of dialectic, which celebrates a triumph with every conclusion and can breathe only in the cool clarity and consciousness — the optimistic element which having once penetrated tragedy must gradually overgrow its Dionysian regions and impel it necessarily to self-destruction — to the death-leap into the bourgeois drama. Consider the consequences of the Socratic maxims: "Virtue is knowledge; man sins only from ignorance; he who is virtuous is happy." In these three basic forms of optimism lies the death of tragedy. (BT 91)

Given such optimism art cannot be given more than a peripheral significance. It becomes the servant of reason, an ornamenting of moral precepts, for example; or it can become entertainment. Philosophical thinking, reason, overgrows art.

In conclusion let me return then to the question: what place is there for art in a Socratic culture?

A first answer was given by Nietzsche's description of Euripides.

A second answer is given by his reference to Aesop's fables, the Platonic dialogue, and to the novel.

A third answer is given in section 19, which begins with the suggestion that Socratic culture is best characterized as the culture of opera. What is striking about Nietzsche's characterization of opera is that in some ways it recalls what Nietzsche himself had said of tragedy, not surprising when one keeps in mind that Nietzsche is thinking of Wagner when he is speaking of the rebirth of tragedy and Wagner would seem to belong to the history of opera. In *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche seeks to detach Wagner from this history.

Let me call attention here to the way Nietzsche links opera and entertainment**.**

> Closely observed, this fatal influence of the opera on music is seen to coincide exactly with the universal development of modern music; the optimism lurking in the genesis of opera and in the culture thereby represented, has, with alarming rapidity, succeeded in divesting music of its Dionysian-cosmic mission and impressing on it a playfully formal and pleasurable character; a change comparable to the metamorphosis of the Aeschylean man into the cheerful Alexandrian. (19, p. 119)

I want to underscore playfully formal and pleasurable," *formenspielerisch, vergnüglich*. Once more the aesthetic appears here as a *Hülle*, as a covering. What is covered up is the *empfindungsarme Nüchternheit* that Nietzsche associates with Socratic-Alexandrian culture. The aesthetic comes to be understood as essentially *Ersatz*, opera *Ersatz* for the lost tragic myth. And as the modern age could be called the age of opera, it could be called the age of decoration. Nietzsche thus discusses opera as the art of the decorated word, analogous to an understanding of architecture as the art of the decorated building.

> But this was not the opinion of the inventors of the recitative; they themselves, together with their age, believed rather that the mystery of antique music has been solved by this *stilo rappresentativo*, in which, so they thought, was to be found the only explanation of the enormous influence of an Orpheus, an Amphion, and even Greek tragedy. The new style was looked upon as the reawakening of the most effective music, ancient Greek music: indeed, in accordance with the popular opinion of the Homeric as the primitive world, they could abandon themselves to dreams of having descended once more into the paradisiacal beginnings of mankind, where music also must have had unsurpassed purity, power, and innocence of which the poets, in their pastoral plays, could give such touching accounts. Here we can see into the innermost development of this thoroughly modern variety of art, the opera: art here corresponds to a powerful need, but it is a nonaesthetic need: the yearning for the idyllic, the faith in the primordial existence of the artistic and good in man. (19, p. 115)

Nietzsche here reminds us that the founders of modern opera understood their work as a recovery of the music of the ancients in which the good natural human being in whom

reason and emotion harmonized found his natural expression. When one reads such a passage one has to ask to what extent Wagner's *Musikdrama* does not also stand in this tradition. And what about Nietzsche himself? How will he distinguish his music making Socrates, and that is to say himself, from the creators of such opera? What music will he produce? For an answer we shall have to turn to *Zarathustra*.

9. *Incipit Tragoedia*

1

As we turn to Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, first two questions:

Here the first: What are we to make of the fact that the first section of the prologue also appears as par. 342 of the *Gay Science* (1882), virtually identical, although instead of *See seiner Heimat* it has *See Urmi*, and it lacks the paragraphing. This is the paragraph that follows the one (341) that presents the doctrine of the eternal recurrence in subjunctive form:

> *The greatest stress.* How, if some day or night a demon were to sneak after you in 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; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything immeasurably small or great in your life must return to you — all in the same succession and sequence — even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and I myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned over and over, and you with it, a dust grain of dust." Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or did you once experience a tremendous moment when you would have answered him, "You are a god, and never have I heard anything more godly." If this thought were to gain possession of you, it would change you, as you are, or perhaps crush you. The question in each and every thing, "Do you want this once more and innumerable times more?" would weigh upon your actions as the greatest stress. Or how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life *to crave nothing more fervently* than this ultimate confirmation and seal? (PN 101-102)

In the notebooks of 1881 *Zarathustra* and the thought of the eternal recurrence are closely linked. It is indeed in paragraph 342 that Zarathustra appears for the first time in public (KSA 14, 279) and it was with this paragraph that the original edition of *The Gay Science* ended. In the notes he appears a year earlier in connection with a planned work

Mittag und Ewigkeit. Later Nietzsche considered writing a second *Zarathustra* work with that title. Eventually that work became Part IV, although the four parts were published together only in 1892, after he went insane. The unity of *Zarathustra* is thus problematic: the first part was written in January 1883, the manuscript was sent to the publisher February14, the day after Wagner's death; it appeared first in April 1883, becoming the "first part" only with the appearance of the second, which Nietzsche wrote that spring and summer, published still in that same year. The third part was finished by early 1884 and appeared the end of March. At first Nietzsche thought of it as the completion of the whole. The fourth part appeared in a private edition of just 40 exemplars in 1885 under the title "Vierter und letzter Teil." But an edition of the first three parts appeared in 1886. It is well to keep this publishing history in mind when one considers the question of the unity of *Zarathustra.*

The first section is called in the *Gay Science Incipit tragoedia*: the tragedy begins. The beginning of *Zarathustra* is the beginning of tragedy. But what is the relationship between Zarathustra and tragedy? The relationship is suggested once again in *The Twilight of the Idols,* in the section called the history of an error, which concludes with the words, *Incipit Zarathustra*:

> 6. The true world — we have abolished. What world has remained? The apparent one perhaps? But no! *With the true world we have also abolished the apparent one*.
>
> (Noon; moment of the briefest shadow; end of the longest error; high point of humanity; INCIPIT ZARATHUSTRA. (KSA 6, 91)[47]

The error whose history is discussed in this section is the mistaken belief in a true world. That world is a cerebral construction, a fable of sorts, which obscures its being only a fable. The history described how that supposedly true world became increasingly more inaccessible, emptier, until finally it disappeared altogether and with it the devaluation of the world into a world of mere appearances. Platonism comes to an end in nihilism. The nihilist still operates with the conception of a true world that justifies becoming, but he can no longer give a content to this conception. The place has become empty. God is dead. The question for us moderns is, according to Nietzsche, how to meet this fact of the death of God. It is precisely tragedy that here provides the answer, as it had already

[47] Trans. Walter Kaufmann, PN 486.

in the *Birth of Tragedy* provided the answer to the nihilistic wisdom of Silenus. Tragedy is understood as an art of affirmation, precisely because it does not deny the negativity of life.

> Any distinction between a "true" and an "apparent" world — whether in the Christian manner or in the manner of Kant (in the end, an underhanded Christian) — is only a suggestion of decadence, a symptom of the *decline of life*. That the artist esteems appearance higher than reality is no objection to this proposition. For "appearance" in this case means reality once more, only by way of selection, reinforcement, and correction. The tragic artist is no pessimist: he is precisely the one who says Yes to everything questionable, even to the terrible — he is Dionysian.[48]

Tragedy here appears as an alternative to Christianity. In this connection I would like to point out that Kierkegaard already entertained such a possibility:

> [Our age] is self-complacent enough to disdain the tears of tragedy, but it is also self-complacent enough to dispense with the divine mercy. But what is human life when we take these two things away, what is the human race? Either the sadness of the tragic, or the profound sorrow and profound joy of the religious. Or is that not the characteristic of everything that proceeds from that happy people [the Greeks] — a melancholy, a sadness, in its art, in its poetry, in its life, and in its joy?[49]

In *Ecce Homo* tragedy is similarly defined as the highest art of saying yes to life.

Nietzsche describes himself as the first tragic philosopher:

> *Vor mir giebt es diese Umsetzung des Dionysischen in ein philosophisches Pathos nicht: es fehlt die* tragische Weisheit. (KSA 6, 312)
>
> Before me this transformation of a Dionysian into a philosophical pathos is unknown: what I lacking is *tragic wisdom*.

Except perhaps in Heraclitus: by now Nietzsche no longer conflates Heraclitus with Schopenhauer. And yet we have to add that even Schopenhauer inscribes such a tragic wisdom into his text. Consider vol. I par. 54 of *The World as Will and Representation*,

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[48] Trans. Walter Kaufmann, PN 484.

where Schopenhauer points to Goethe's Prometheus and the Arjuna of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

In that same place in *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche also writes that wherever he wrote Wagner in *The Birth of Tragedy* work he should have written Nietzsche or Zarathustra**.** This makes clearer how Nietzsche understood his Zarathustra. The work would seem to be not so much a tragedy as a fictional presentation of a teacher of tragedy. We may of course want to ask whether the work in turn is also a tragedy, the tragedy of Zarathustra's *Untergang*. Or is it perhaps a comedy? Zarathustra at any rate belongs together with Wagner and that means also with Aeschylus. With his teaching Zarathustra projects a tragic ethos. He teaches us to affirm life despite the negativity on which tragedy insists. To affirm ourselves fully we have to understand ourselves tragically.

> One question remains: art also makes apparent so much that is ugly, hard, and questionable in life; does it not thereby spoil life for us? And indeed there have been philosophers who have attributed this sense to it: "liberation from the will" was what Schopenhauer taught as the over-all end of art; and with admiration he found the great utility of tragedy in its "evoking resignation." But this, as I have already suggested, is the pessimist's perspective and 'evil eye.' We must appeal to the artists themselves. *What does the tragic artist communicate of himself?* Is it not precisely the state *without* fear in the face of the fearful and questionable that he is showing? (KSA 6, 127)[50]

2

This brings me to my second question: given Nietzsche's recognition that Wagner was in fact not the new Aeschylus but had to be interpreted as a phenomenon of decadence, why turn to Zarathustra (ca. 630 - ca. 553)? Why not Empedocles? Earlier I suggested that Zarathustra seems to have taken the place of the once projected Empedocles drama.

Where did Nietzsche get the idea? Zarathustra after all is said to be the first one to have fallen into the error of oppositional thinking: opposing light and darkness, good

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[49] Søren Kierkegaard, *Either-Or*, trans. Walter Lowrie, David F. Swenson and Lilian Marvin Swenson vol.I (New York: Doubleday, 1959), p. 144.

and evil, Ormuzd and Ahriman. A posthumously published fragment gives the answer (KSA 11, 53 - 25):

> I had to give the honor to Zarathustra, to a *Persian*; Persians were the first to *think* of history as something having unity and greatness. A sequence of developments presided over by a prophet. Every prophet has his *hazar,* his empire of a thousand years.

One could perhaps also point to Emerson's *Essays*, where there is mention of a wise man from China who, looking at the prophet Zarathustra, is so impressed by his appearance and gait that he proclaims that these cannot lie and that nothing but truth could issue from them. (KSA 14, 279) In the margin Nietzsche wrote *Das ist es!* Perhaps we should also point to St. Augustine who in *The City of God* mentions Zarathustra as the one person who was born laughing instead of crying, but this is taken by Augustine as an unnatural and therefore bad omen: Zarathustra came to a bad end.

Zarathustra is often mentioned in Nietzsche's unpublished notes. In the fall of 1881 he appears as author of aphoristic sayings that later became part of *The Gay Science*, without his name, with the exception of 342. (KSA 14, 279)

3

The title of the book is suggestive*: Ein Buch für Alle und Keinen*.

The first section ends with the words:

> "Behold this cup wats to become empty again, and Zarathustra wants to become man again."
>
> Thus Zarathustra began to go under. (PN 122)

Did he then live an inhuman life? What is Zarathustra's relationship to Plato's philosopher? How do they relate to the sun? The sun is described as ascending to Zarathustra's cave. Zarathustra is thirty when he leaves the lake of his home to go into the mountains, the same age as Christ when he began his ministry; but Zarathustra stays in the mountains for ten years without getting tired, enjoying his solitude. And yet he descends "to become man again." This suggests that human beings are fully human only when they communicate with others. Note the general theme of return! Why does the

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[50] PN, pp. 529 -530.

philosopher king in the *Republic* return to the cave? How is that cave related to Zarathustra's?

Note in this section and throughout how landscape function as a metaphor. Lake of his home — mountain — forest — city — forest. Times of day have a similar function.

The process of individuation demands of Zarathustra, as it demands of us, that he leave the lake of his home, but in this departure he has also lost something important that needs to be recovered.

4

Coming down from his mountain Zarathustra meets a holy man, like Zarathustra someone who has left man behind. (Cf. the most pious man for whom the last pope is looking in Part IV only to learn that he has died) This holy man left human beings because he loved them too much. Schopenhauer's asceticism is brought to mind. He loved man and yet measured man by an ideal of perfection no human being can meet. What remains to the hermit are God and the animals.

Zarathustra also loves human beings, but this love is quite different from that of the saint in the forest. It is tied to the bringing of a present; that present is his vision of the overman, Nietzsche's version of Wagner's Siegfried. Yet this present also implies a taking away. For to accept this present one has to acknowledge first that God is dead.

The old man asks Zarathustra to stay:

> Do not go to man. Stay in the forest! Go rather even to the animals! Why do you not want to be as I am — a bear among bears, a bird among birds?" (PN 123)

Living simply, as but another animal, the saint praises the god who is his god. Zarathustra takes his leave:

> What could I have to give you? But let me go quickly lest I take something from you! And thus they separated, the old one and the man, laughing as two boys laugh.

But when Zarathustra was alone he spoke thus to his heart: "Could it be possible? This old saint in the forest has not yet heard anything of this, that *God is dead*!" (PN 124)

5

The next four sections are set in the city. People are gathered in the marketplace, waiting for a performance by a tightrope walker. And while they are waiting Zarathustra attempts to give them his gift, the overman: man is something that must be surpassed. Zarathustra speaks of the need to create beyond oneself. Important here is the distinction between a narcissistic and a procreative eros. But it is not just man that must be surpassed, but more especially a particular conception of man:

> 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? What is the ape to man? A laughing stock and a painful embarrassment. And man shall be just that for the overman: a laughing stock or a painful embarrassment. You have made your way from worm to man. Once you were apes, and even now, man is more ape than any ape.
>
> Whoever is the wisest among you is also a mere conflict and cross between plant and ghost. But do I bid you become plants or ghosts?" (PN 124)

The word "ghost" here suggests that process described in the "History of an Error," which lets the dimension of what is higher become ever emptier. Schopenhauer had inverted that picture and that inversion informs Zarathustra's message: what is put in the place of God is "the meaning of the earth."

> Behold, I teach you the overman. The overman is the meaning of the earth. Let your will say: the overman shall be the meaning of the earth! I beseech you, my brothers, remain faithful to the earth, and do not believe those who speak to you of otherworldly hopes! Poison-mixers are they, whether they know it or not. Despisers of life are they, decaying and poisoning themselves, of whom the earth is weary: so let them go. (PN 125).

The overman is Zarathustra's attempt to articulate the meaning of the earth.

The human being who has overcome that human being caught between plant and ghost has also overcome the shame he feels before himself, a shame that speaks in the

words of the old saint who finds man far too imperfect. Such shame can be raised to disgust and contempt:

> Once the soul looked contemptuously upon the body, and then this contempt was the highest: she wanted the body meager, ghastly, and starved. Thus she hoped to escape it and the earth. Oh, this soul herself was still meager, ghastly, and starved: and cruelty was the lust of this soul. But you, too, my brothers, tell me: what does your body proclaim of your soul? Is not your soul poverty and filth and wretched contentment?'
>
> "Verily a polluted stream is man. One must be a sea to be able to receive a polluted stream without becoming unclean. Behold, I teach you the overman: he is this sea; in him your great contempt can go under." (PN 125)

In the overman such contempt is drowned. This does suggest that the tragic vision grows out of a nihilistic one. Schopenhauer must come before Nietzsche. The ending of this section is interesting:

> "Behold, I teach you the overman: he is this lightning, he is this frenzy."
>
> When Zarathustra had spoken thus, one of the people cried: Now we have heard enough about the tightrope walker; now let us see him, too!" And all the people laughed at Zarathustra. But the tightrope walker, believing that the word concerned him, began his performance. (PN 126)

What is the similarity between the tightrope walker and the overman? The tightrope walker dances above other men. He lives a life of danger. He makes danger his profession, living with the constant threat of falling to his death: a metaphor for the human condition that is spelled out in the next section:

> "Man is a rope, tied between beast and overman — a rope over an abyss. A dangerous across, a dangerous on-the-way, a dangerous looking-back, a dangerous shuddering and stopping.
>
> "What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not an end: what can be loved in man is that he is an overture and a going under." (PN 126-127)

Man is said to be "a rope between animal and overman." This formulation takes the place of the two that preceded it and placed man

1. between animal and God.

2. between plant and ghost.

2 retains the basic anthropology of 1. It could be illustrated by turning to Sartre, or, more appropriately, to Schopenhauer.

Man is a going beyond himself, going to something else, but this something else is not an ideal for the sake of which he is acting. That ideal has its foundation in the going beyond.

Why does Zarathustra say that he loves "those who cast golden words before their deeds and always do more than they promise." (PN 127-128)

In *The Genealogy of Morals Nietzsche* was to suggest that the human being is truly human only when he calls himself to account, when he can make promises. The human being needs to act according to principles. These principles are not given to him. He must himself create them. They are part of the human being's attempt to articulate the meaning of the earth. But being just conjectures, they should retain their measure in the earth. It is for this reason that we should allow our actions to overflow our principles. Again we meet with the tension between the Apollinian and the Dionysian.

> "I love him who justifies future and redeems past generations: for he wants to perish of the present."(PN 128)

The man who justifies the future cannot appeal to the future to give a meaning to his life. Neither can he appeal to an after-life or a millennium. The present has priority over the future. In what we are and do we should justify the future. We must live in such a way that our life demands a future.

Why is the past in need of redemption? In itself the past has no meaning, no more than does human being. But we can give the past a meaning by providing it with a meaningful end, the present, and by interpreting the past as leading to that end. What Hegel does with history we, too have to do, only with more open eyes, keeping in mind that all such interpretations are but human creations.

But what are we to make of:

> *"I love him who chastens his god because he loves his god; for he must perish of the wrath of his god."* (PN 128)

This is an inversion of Hebrews 12, 6, cited here in the German, which is evoked by Nietzsche's choice of words: *Den wen der Herr lieb hat den züchtigt er*. "For the Lord disciplines him whom he loves." "Perish" translates *zugrundegehen*: "to go to the bottom, the ground."

But has Zarathustra not said that God is dead? Here, however, he speaks not of God, but of "his god." The gods are human creations. But this does not mean that they are therefore arbitrary. They are, we can say, natural illusions. Think of Eros, of Apollo and Dionysus, or of Hera and Aphrodite. In them the meaning of the earth finds expression. They are themselves Apollinian images. In them the Dionysian ground of our existence has been chastened.

But notice that in the second part of the sentence there is the suggestion that the god has a quite independent reality. What does "chasten" mean here? *Züchtigen, in die Zucht nehmen*, sublimation, to give Apollinian form to the divine, as we do when we articulate or fashion an image of it. But by so doing, we also do violence to the divine. Consider the insistence in many religions that God not be named or imprisoned in an image. In chastening god we do violence to him and he revenges himself. And yet we cannot do without such violence. In the anger of the god the divine reasserts itself. Nietzsche's earth is holy in Otto's sense, a *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*. What is meant here by earth invites comparison with Schopenhauer's will.

6

Zarathustra does not succeed in reaching the people in the marketplace. Addressing their pride, Zarathustra speaks of what is "most contemptible," of the last man. Overman and last man belong together. Zarathustra wants to bring both to the people — a new love and something they should despise.

> "The time will come for man to set himself a goal. The time has come for man to plant the seed of his highest hope. His soil is still rich enough. But one day this soil will be poor and domesticated, and no tall tree will be able to grow in it. Alas, the time is coming when man will no longer shoot the arrow of his longing beyond man, and the string of his bow will have forgotten how to whir!

> "I say unto you: one must still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star. I say unto you: you still have chaos in yourselves.
>
> "Alas the time is coming when man will no longer give birth to a star. Alas the time of the most despicable man is coming, he that is no longer able to despise himself. Behold, I show you the *last man*.
>
> "What is love? What is creation? What is longing? What is a star? Thus asks the last man, and he blinks. (129)

How are we to understand this blinking of the last man?

> "One still works, for work is a form of entertainment. One no longer becomes poor or rich: both require too much exertion. Who still wants to rule? Who obey? Both require too much exertion.
>
> "No shepherd and one herd! Everybody wants the same, everybody is the same: whoever feels different goes voluntarily into a madhouse.
>
> "'Formerly, all the world was mad,' say the most refined, and they blink.
>
> …
>
> "One has one's little pleasure for the day and one's little pleasure for the night: but one has a regard for health.
>
> "'We have invented happiness,' say the last men, and they blink."(130)

The last man lives as one lives — Heidegger's "they" comes to mind. The last man no longer has ideals, nor does he seem to miss them. He is happy with his little pleasures. The overman just interferes with such happiness.

7

The next section is perhaps the most puzzling. A fellow in motley clothes appears. He is also a tightrope walker:

> Then something happened that made every mouth dumb and every eye rigid. For meanwhile the tightrope walker had begun his performance: he had stepped out of a small door and was walking over the rope, stretched

> between two towers and suspended over the market place and the people. When he had reached the exact middle of his course the small door opened once more and a fellow in motley clothes, looking like a jester, jumped out and followed the first one with quick steps. (PN 131)

What do we make of the fact that this person is said to be a *bunter Gesell*. What of his motley clothes? Patchwork. Eclecticism. Compare this with the self-description of the old magician in Book 4:

> 'Suitor of truth?" they mocked me; "you?
> No! Only poet!'
> An animal, cunning, preying, prowling,
> That must lie,
> That must knowingly, willingly lie:
> Lusting for prey,
> Colorfully masked,
> A mask for itself,
> Prey for itself —
> *This*, the suitor of truth?
> No! Only fool! Only poet!
> Only speaking colorfully,
> Only screaming colorfully out of fools' masks,
> Climbing around on mendacious word bridges,
> On colorful rainbows,
> Between false heavens
> And false earths,
> Roaming, hovering —
> *Only* fool! *Only* poet! (PN 410)

We should keep in mind that there is also much about Zarathustra that reminds one of this jester. Consider these words:

> "To my goal I will go — on my own way; over those who hesitate and lag behind I shall leap. Thus let my going be their going under." (PN 136)

Think of the later preface to *The Birth of Tragedy*, where Nietzsche suggests that it is just a piece of German music. Nietzsche, Wagner, and Zarathustra intertwine. The magician,

the poet who traffics in the tatters of former myths, patches them together — is this not what Nietzsche criticizes as romanticism? But is not this the collage style of Zarathustra — a patchwork of the New Testament, Goethe, Heine, Plato, Schopenhauer? All have contributed to this style. Is Nietzsche therefore like the old magician?

> "Foreward, lamefoot!" he shouted in an awe-inspiring voice. "Foreward, lazybones, smuggler, pale-face, or I shall tickle you with my heel! What are you doing here between towers? The tower is where you belong. You ought to be locked up; you block the way for one better than yourself." And with every word he came closer and closer; but when he was but one step behind, the dreadful thing happened which made every mouth dumb and every eye rigid, he uttered a devilish cry and jumped over the man who stood in his way. This man, however, seeing his rival win, lost his head and the rope, tossed away his pole, and plunged in to the depth even faster, a whirlpool of arms and legs. The market place became as the sea when a tempest pierces it: the people rushed apart and over one another, especially at the place where the body must have hit the ground. (PN 131)

The tightrope walker loses his head, the rope, falls and dies. Zarathustra promises to bury him with his own hands. What are we to make of this?

8

Musing over the dead tightrope walker. Zarathustra offers us yet another description, but now not of human being in general, but of himself as he appears to the many, rather like a jester, someone in between a fool and a corpse. (PN 132) The corpse belongs to what has been: Zarathustra has found real companions only among the dead. This has to refer among other things to the Greeks and to their tragic way of life. The jester, I suggested, stands for Wagner. Zarathustra here thus figures Nietzsche, standing in between Wagner and the Greeks.

Warnings by the jester, Wagner, and the jeers of the gravediggers, the philologians, accompany Zarathustra as he leaves town. He is tolerated only as long as he is put in the role of someone like Wagner, a poet, not to be taken too seriously; or as

someone serving a dead past. And yet the nature of Zarathustra's service distinguishes him from society's gravediggers.

After some journeying Zarathustra and his dead companion are offered bread and wine by a hermit at whose house Zarathustra knocks. Important is that the same food is served to the dead and the living, important also that this food is bread and wine. That food, especially the wine, suggests not only the Christian sacrament, but also Dionysus.

After a long sleep Zarathustra decides that he needs living, not dead companions, but he also realizes that that he cannot speak to the people on the marketplace. He is going to look for a few companions, or disciples who will spread his word. *Zarathustra* proposes an elitist conception of education.

The last section returns to Zarathustra's two animals, eagle and serpent, which now appear joined in an emblem soaring in the sky. Note also once more how the succession of landscape images and references to times of day suggest a spiral:

mountain — forest — city — forest

morning — evening (death of the tightrope walker)— night (carrying the corpse) — morning (Zarathustra sleeping) — noon (Zarathustra awakens)

Noon: INCIPIT ZARATHUSTRA

10. Old and New Values

1

As I pointed out last time, the *Prologue* of *Zarathustra* presents us with two conflicting images of man: the overman is opposed to the last man. The overman is the ideal that Nietzsche wants to put in place of the traditional conception of God.

On the Biblical account God created man in His image. Thus human being is given its measure in God. That measure is made explicit in the Ten Commandments. God is here thought of as the authority that provides human beings with needed orientation. Implicit in this conception is an understanding of the vocation of man. The ideal life is the life lived in obedience to God's law.

But what happens to that ideal when God is dead or remains absent? Must human beings then not give themselves the laws by which hey should live, relying on their reason? Is this not the meaning of Enlightenment autonomy? In *Genesis* we read of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Practical reason, as Kant, with the Enlightenment, understood it, promises such knowledge. It could thus be charged with the sin of pride. The ideal here is the person following what his reason commands. But is practical reason able to deliver what here is expected of it? Is a selfish person who says after me the deluge unreasonable? Is his not a different problem, say, that he has a heart of stone?

What becomes of autonomy when human beings have lost faith, not just in God, but also practical reason? Autonomy then transforms itself into existentialist authenticity, which would put the free individual human being in the place of God. Sartre thus understands the fundamental project of man as a project to become God. And God does not have to exist for this project to make sense, although I should add that for Sartre this is a finally futile project, since the idea of God, like the idea of a *summum bonum*, a highest good according to Schopenhauer, is self-contradictory. Given this desire to become totally self-sufficient, the human being has to see the animal in him, his or her body, his or her sensuousness, his or her sexuality, as a burden.

Nietzsche would have us understand all three, the Biblical God understood as author of the law, Kantian autonomy, and existentialist authenticity as having to alienate the human being from himself, for if we are not just animals, we are also animals. In

their place Nietzsche wants to put the overman. The overman, too, is a human creation, but one that instead of alienating the human being from the earth leads to its affirmation. To repeat: The overman is an articulation of the meaning of the earth.

What links Nietzsche to the tradition is his insistence that man measure himself by ideals, that he cast golden words ahead of himself, that in a sense he overcome what he is, but not in the sense of self-renunciation, but towards a fuller self-affirmation. It is precisely this willingness that Nietzsche finds lacking in the last man. Here we have the image of the person who has lost touch with the earth, has domesticated himself, and cannot give birth to new stars. He has found happiness and security in doing what one does.

2

But let me return to the idea of God. The thought of God and of a realm of being beyond this world which is supposed to be both the true reality and to provide human beings in their lives on this earth with a measure, an **after-world**, is born according to Nietzsche of the inability to accept the negativity that is part of the human condition. After-worlds are born of the inability to accept the wisdom of Silenus. And thus we read in the sermon "*On the Afterworldly*"

> It was suffering and incapacity that created all afterworlds — this and the brief madness of bliss, which is experienced only by those who suffer most deeply.
>
> Weariness that wants to reach the ultimate with one leap, one fatal leap, a poor ignorant weariness that does not want to want any more: this created all gods and afterworlds. (PN 143)

Note that Nietzsche here includes his own *Birth of Tragedy* among these attempts to escape from the negativity of time; he, too, spoke there of a deity that finds release from its suffering in the illusions it creates, the world of phenomena. This gives a justification to this world, an aesthetic justification. But the author of that justification is still imaged as a god. Nietzsche now rejects this interpretation:

> At one time Zarathustra, too, cast his delusion *beyond man* [my italics], like all the afterworldly. The work of a suffering and tortured god, the world then seemed to me. A dream the world then seemed to me, and

> the fiction of a god: colored smoke before the eyes of a dissatisfied deity. Good and evil and joy and pain and I and you — colored smoke this seemed to me before creative eyes. The creator wanted to look away from himself; so he created the world. (PN 142)

How are we to understand this "beyond man," *Jenseits des Menschen*? The golden words that Zarathustra praises presumably are not cast in this sense "beyond man." When the latter happens, when these golden words are cast beyond man, the creator denies the createdness of his creations, if you like, he denies their metaphorical nature. But all values and gods are metaphors. They all finally speak of the earth.

If there is to be a justification the human being himself will have to furnish it, according to Nietzsche. But how are we to do so? Instead of listening to those who speak of after-worlds, we should listen to the body:

> Listen rather, my brothers, to the voice of the healthy body that is a more honest and purer voice. More honestly and purely speaks the healthy body that is perfect and perpendicular: and it speaks of the meaning of the earth. (PN 145)

Note the emphasis on honesty**,** which contrasts sharply with the readiness of *the Birth of Tragedy* to accept illusion:

> Many sick people have always been among poetizers and God-cravers; furiously they hate the lover of knowledge and that youngest among the virtues, which is called "honesty." They always look backward toward dark ages; then, indeed, delusion and faith were another matter: the rage of reason was godlikeness, and doubt was sin. (PN 145)

The body is said to speak of the meaning of the earth. That meaning, however, has been identified with the overman, where it is not clear at this point how Nietzsche would have us think the connection between earth and overman. But the general direction of his thinking is clear enough: the overman should not be understood as a timeless value, a telos towards which all humanity tends. The overman must be born again and again. He is not a fixed, but a dancing star.

That inversion of Platonism that Schopenhauer performed in his anthropology is here carried over into Nietzsche's ethics. The body replaces the forms as the source of

values, as the theory of recollection is inverted. Nietzsche himself indicates his relationship to Schopenhauer:

> I know these godlike men all too well: they want one to have faith in them, and doubt to be sin. All too well I also know what it is in which they have most faith. Verily, it is not in after-worlds and redemptive drops of blood, but in the body, that they too have most faith; and their body is to them their thing-in-itself. But a sick thing it is to them, and gladly would they shed their skins. Therefore they listen to the preachers of death and themselves preach afterworlds. (PN 145)

For Nietzsche all meaning finally has its origin in the body. But how are we to understand this body.

3

In the next sermon, *On the Despisers of the Body,* Nietzsche offers a brief sketch of his philosophical anthropology. Essentially his understanding is that of Schopenhauer:

> "Body am I, and soul" — thus speaks the child. And why should one not speak like children?
>
> But the awakened and knowing say: body am I entirely and nothing else; and soul is only a word for something about the body.
>
> The body is a great reason, a plurality with one sense, a war and a peace, a herd and a shepherd. An instrument of your body is also your little reason, my brother, which you call "spirit" a little instrument and toy of your great reason. (PN 146)

The attack on the tradition is clear enough. Note also the tension in Nietzsche's conception between unity and plurality. We can live our life only as one life. From this flows the demand for problem-solving, self-integration. And yet our desires will pull us in different directions. One cannot eliminate that tension. To do so would be to lose human being. We have to do violence to ourselves and affirm the necessity of such violence. The dream of an overcoming of alienation is a false, profoundly alienating dream.

The spirit is seen as an instrument of the body, not the body an instrument of the spirit.

> Behind your thoughts and feelings, my brother, there stands a mighty ruler, an unknown sage — whose name is self. In your body he dwells; he is your body.
>
> There is more reason in your body than in your best wisdom. And who knows why your body needs precisely your best wisdom?
>
> Your self laughs at your ego and at its bold leaps. "What are these leaps and flights of thought to me?" it says to itself. "A detour to my end. I am the leading strings of the ego and the prompter of its concepts." (PN 146)

If Nietzsche is right and all meaning finally has its seat in the body then the instrumentalization of the body must lead to a loss of all meaning, must be intimately tied to nihilism. To deny this one has to argue that the spirit can discover meanings other than those of the body. Just this Nietzsche would deny.

To be for the human being is already to be claimed, but what claims us, what provides us with something like a vocation, is not God, but our own body. It does so, Nietzsche suggests, even when we turn in disgust away from the body.

> Even in your folly and contempt, you despisers of the body, you serve yourself. I say unto you: your self itself wants to die and turns away from life. It is not longer capable of what it would do above all else: to create beyond itself. That is what it would do above all else, that is its fervent wish. (PN 147)

The passage recalls, if from a distance, Plato's *Symposium*. Diotima had there distinguished the lower from the higher mysteries of love. The lower forms of eros are all examples of what Nietzsche here calls creating beyond oneself, whether we speak of the having of children, of creating a work of art, or of founding a city. Sartre would thus be mistaken when he maintains that the fundamental project of the human being is the project to become God. The main wish of the human being, according to both Diotima and Nietzsche, is not just to love, but to create something beyond him- or herself. And the most natural expression of this is the desire to have children. Note how this desire functions in Zarathustra himself. It is this desire that drove him off his mountain, and the whole book significantly concludes with Zarathustra saying: my children are near. But this comparison makes clear also what separates Nietzsche from Plato: Plato's higher

forms of eros are seen as aberrations. In Plato's *Symposium* the desire for satisfaction is taken to be more fundamental than the desire to create beyond oneself. But the distinction between a contemplative narcissistic and a procreative eros remains fundamental.

4

Zarathustra tells us to listen to the body, but does the body speak with one voice? The next sermon, *On Enjoying and Suffering the Passions,* addresses this question. Its very title is interesting, especially in the German, *Von den Freuden- und Leidenschaften.* Why do we use a word like "passion," which suggests suffering? What kind of metaphysical assumptions are buried in terms such as these? Nietzsche's title puts these into question.

> My brother, if you have a virtue and she is your virtue, then you have her in common with nobody. To be sure, you want to call her by name and pet her; you wan to pull her ear and have fun with her. And behold, now you have her name in common with the people and have become one of the people and herd with your virtue.
>
> You would do better to say, "Inexpressible and nameless is that which gives my soul agony and sweetness and is even the hunger of my entrails. (PN 148)

What Nietzsche here calls a virtue I would like to call a claim. The body presents us with a multiplicity of claims. These claims are immediate and private. In being named they become public. And there is increasing tension between claim and word. Hunger or sexual desire would be obvious examples.

> May your virtue be too exalted for the familiarity of names: and if you must speak of her, then do not be ashamed to stammer of her. Then speak and stammer: "This is *my* good; this I love; it pleases me wholly; thus alone do I want the good. I do not want it as divine law; I do not want it as human statute and need: it shall be a signpost to me for over-earths and paradises. It is an earthly virtue that I love: there is little prudence in it, and least of all the reason of all men. But this bird built its

> nest with me: therefore I love and caress it; now it dwells with me, sitting on its golden eggs." Thus you shall stammer and praise your virtue. (148)

These claims should be accepted for what they are, and not be devalued by being interpreted as signposts pointing towards something much more important and higher — Think once more of the *Symposium*, where sexual desire is seen as a sign, a lower manifestation of something higher. Or perhaps even better: think of the *Song of Songs*, which speaks of a very worldly love, but has been allegorized in ways that suggest that its real meaning lies elsewhere.

Implicit is a critique of the traditional view of the passions as somehow evil:

> Once you suffered passions and called them evil. But now you have only your virtues left: they grew out of your passions. You commended your highest goal to the heart of these passions: then they become your virtues and passions you enjoyed.
>
> …
>
> And nothing evil grows out of you henceforth, unless it be the evil that grows out of the fight among your virtues. My brother, if you are fortunate you have only one virtue and no more: then you will pass over the bridge more easily. It is a distinction to have many virtues, but a hard lot; and many have gone into the desert and taken their lives because they had wearied of being the battle and battlefield of virtues. (PN 148)

But what account can we then give of words like "bad" and "evil"? Nietzsche here points to the fact that if the human being is a field of claims, these claims do not form a harmonious whole. The human being is a battle-field of claims. It is because of this that we have to take sides among our virtues. We have to adopt attitudes towards claims. Values are then human creations, not arbitrary creations, but articulations of claims. But since not all claims can be affirmed, in creating our values we have to affirm some claims and reject others. The distinction between good and bad is unavoidable for this reason.

This account, however, is deficient in that it has left out the social dimension. Human being is essentially a being with others. This reflects itself in language. If the human being is to exist in some harmony with others the values that govern his life cannot be simply his own. Values must be held in common. As articulations of claims

values are essentially public, while claims are essentially tied to the individual. It is this social dimension that is developed in the sermon, *On the Thousand and One Goals.*

5

> Zarathustra saw many lands and many peoples: thus he discovered the good and evil of many peoples. And Zarathustra found no greater power on earth than good and evil.
>
> No people could live without first esteeming; but if they want to preserve themselves, then they must not esteem as their neighbor esteems. Much that was good to one people was scorn and infamy to another: thus I found it. Much I found called evil here, and decked out with purple honors there. Never did one neighbor understand the other: ever was his soul amazed at the neighbor's delusion and wickedness. (PN 170)

Nietzsche stresses here the importance of the concrete situation of the human being in the articulation of his values.

> A tablet of the good hangs over every people. Behold it is the tablet of their overcomings; behold it is the voice of their will to power. (PN 170)

It is in this connection that we return to the idea that it is only the human being who by creating values gives dignity to life, although now it is expressed in somewhat different terms:

> First, peoples were creators; and only in later times, individuals. Verily, the individual himself is still the most recent creation. (PN 171)

The individual is himself a human creation. Interesting is the last suggestion of the sermon: that there will be humanity only when it is united by one ideal image:

> A thousand goals have there been so far, for there have been a thousand peoples. Only the yoke for the thousand necks is still lacking: the one goal is lacking. Humanity still has no goal.
>
> But tell me brothers, if humanity still lacks a goal — is humanity itself not still lacking too? (PN 172)

11. The Problem of Time

1

The first part of *Zarathustra* implies a twofold critique of the established Platonic-Christian value system. It is on one hand attacked for its form: by absolutizing values in such a way that they prevent a genuine openness to claims, it cuts values off from their inevitably temporal foundations, or better, denies values the soil from which they arise and in which they must retain their roots to live. All such value talk could be charged with pedantry in Schopenhauer's sense. Thus cut off from their affective ground values have to become hollow shells.

But that value system is also criticized for its content. The value central to Christianity seems to Nietzsche to be born of a rancor against time and thus against the body. But perhaps these two points are related: the investment in timeless form is itself governed by the rancor against time.

We have thus at least the sketch of a general theory of values, a sketch that lets us see values on one hand as human constructs and yet, on the other, shows why these constructs are not therefore arbitrary. But he who would attempt a reconstruction has to break with the way the society, to which he belongs, sees things. It requires freedom, also and indeed especially from common sense:

> Is it your wish, my brother, to go into solitude? Is it your wish to seek the way to yourself? Then linger a moment, and listen to me.
>
> "He who seeks, easily gets lost. All loneliness is guilt" — thus speaks the herd. And you have long belonged to the herd. The voice of the herd will still be audible in you. And when you will say, "I no longer have a common conscience with you," it will be a lament and an agony. Behold, this agony itself was born of the common conscience, and the last glimmer of that conscience still glows in your affliction. (PN 174)

Nietzsche does not underestimate the difficulty of this path.

> You call yourself free? Your dominant thought I want to hear, and not that you have escaped from a yoke. Are you one of those who had the *right* to escape from a yoke? There are some who threw away their last value when they threw away their servitude.

> Free *from* what? As if that mattered to Zarathustra! But your eyes should tell me brightly: free for what? (PN 175)

2

Part One of Zarathustra offers us at least a sketch of a theory of value. But there is a more fundamental question: why do human beings need values at all? Key here is the problem of decision: I have lost my way. When several possibilities beckon and we need to make a decision, we have to take a stance towards our desires or whatever claims us; we begin to look for some guidepost, some authority to which we can appeal to make that decision. But if that decision is not to be experienced as something imposed on us, but as something we really choose, that authority has to be understood in such a way that it issues from within us. In the end authority must rest with the self. That is to say, we require something like our own ideal image, an image that we recognize as our measure. The traditional understanding of human being as created in the image of God gives one answer to this need, an answer that Zarathustra challenges with his teaching of the overman, or, more generally with his insistence that all such measures be understood as not given but as human creations. How else could they issue from the self?

Let me return to this issue by turning to the section *On the Blessed Isles*:

> Once one said God when one looked upon distant seas; but now I have taught you to say: overman.
>
> God is a conjecture; but I desire that your conjectures not reach beyond your creative will. Could you create a god? Then do not speak to me of any gods. But you could well create the overman. Perhaps not you yourselves, my brothers. But into fathers and forefathers of the overman you could recreate yourself: and let this be your best creation. (PN 197

Both God and the overman are said here to be conjectures. But as conjectures, they differ, as we saw, in both form and content. God is a conjecture that reaches beyond man's creative will:

> God is a conjecture, but who could drain all the agony of this conjecture without dying? Shall his faith be taken away from the creator, and from the eagle his soaring to eagle heights?

> God is a thought that makes crooked all that is straight, and makes turn whatever stands. How? Should time be gone, and all that is impermanent be a mere lie? To think this is a dizzy whirl for human bones, and a vomit for the stomach; verily I call it the turning sickness to conjecture thus. Evil I call it, and misanthropic — all this teaching of the one and the Plenum and Unmoved and the Sated and the Permanent. All the permanent —that is only a parable. And the poets lie too much. (PN 198)

God is a conjecture measuring human existence by the One, the Plenum, the Sated, the Permanent.

Note that this can be given a moral as well as an epistemological expression. In keeping with the Platonic understanding of *eros* human being is understood here as a desire for unity. But this, according to Nietzsche, who here follows Schopenhauer, is a vain desire. Our own being denies us the satisfaction we seek. The human being on this view lacks the strength to actually achieve that unity he seeks, to overcome the gap between the human and the divine.

But what then makes human beings form such conjectures? I shall have to return to this question. But first I would like to return to the just quoted passage, which concludes with a reference to the *Chorus Mysticus* with which Goethe concludes his *Faust*.

> What is destructible
> Is but a parable;
> What fails ineluctably
> The undeclarable
> Here it was seen,
> Here it was action;
> The Eternal-Feminine
> Lures to perfection.

It deserves to be quoted also in the German:

> *Alles Vergängliche*
> *Ist nur ein Gleichnis;*
> *Das Unzulängliche,*

Hier wird's Ereignis;
Das Unbeschreibliche.
Hier ist's getan;
Das Ewig-Weibliche
Zieht uns hinan.

Not only in *Zarathustra* is Nietzsche struggling with this ending: The first of the *Lieder des Prinzen Vogelfrei*, *Songs of the Prince Free as a Bird* which conclude Book Five of *The Gay Science* deserves mention in this connection:

An Goethe

Das Unvergängliche
Ist nur dein Gleichnis
Gott, der Verfängliche
Ist Dichter-Erschleichnis ...

Welt-Rad das rollende,
Streift Ziel auf Ziel:
Not nennts der Grollende
Der Narr nennts Spiel

Welt-Spiel das herrische
Mischt Sein und Schein: -
Das Ewig Närrische
Mischt uns — hinein! ... (KSA 3, 639)

The indestructible
Is only your parable
God the seductive one
Is poets' invention

World-wheel, the rolling one
Touches goal after goal

He who resents it calls it necessity
The jester calls it a game

World-game, the ruling one
Mixes being and illusion
The eternally jesting
Mixes *us* into the mix.

The gods are only parables. In them we recognize, if only obscurely, the meaning of our own existence. Consider *On Poets:*

> "Since I have come to know the body better," Zarathustra said to one of his disciples, "the spirit is to me only quasi-spirit; and all that is permanent' is also a mere parable."
>
> "I have heard you say that once before," the disciple replied; and at the time you added, 'But the poets lies too much." Why did you say that the poets lies too much?"
>
> "Why?" said Zarathustra. "You Ask, why? I am not one of those whom one may ask about their why? Is my experience but of yesterday? It was long ago that I experienced the reasons for my opinions. Would I not have to be a barrel of memory if I wanted to carry my reasons around with me? It is already too much for me to remember my own opinions; and many a bird flies away. And now and then I also find a stray in my dovecot that is strange to me and trembles when I place my hand on it. But what was it that Zarathustra once said to you? That the poets lie too much? But Zarathustra too is a poet. Do you now believe that he spoke the truth here? Why do you believe that?" (PN 238-239)

3

The overman is a conjecture that should give meaning to temporal existence: creation is proposed as the great redemption from suffering.

> Whatever in me has feeling, suffers and is in prison; but 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. Willing no more and esteeming no more and creating no more — oh, that this great weariness might always remain far from me! In knowledge too I feel only my will's joy in begetting and becoming; and if there is innocence in my knowledge, it is because the will to beget is in it. Away from God and gods this will has lured me; what could one create if gods existed? (PN 199)
>
> But my fervent will to create impels me ever again toward man; thus is the hammer impelled toward the stone. O men, in the stone there sleeps an image, the image of my images. Alas, that it must sleep in the hardest, the ugliest stone! Pieces of rock rain from the stone: what is that to me? I want to perfect it; for a shadow came to me — the stillest and lightest of all things once came to me. The beauty of the overman came to me as a shadow. O, my brothers, what are the gods to me now? (PN 199-200)

A philosophy with a hammer! — but the hammer is the artist's hammer, which seeks to free the image sleeping in the stone. That should be kept in mind when there is talk of a philosophy with a hammer. Here, at least, the hammer in question is a sculptor's hammer.

In this section already we get a hint of what will be a pervasive theme in this second book, one that makes it much darker than the first. What gives birth to the conjecture that is God is a suffering from temporality. As will to power lacking power we find it difficult to forgive ourselves our temporality. To affirm ourselves we have to overcome what Zarathustra calls the spirit of revenge. And for Nietzsche that must mean also: he has to overcome the Schopenhauer in himself.

It is the theme of time that gives the second book a much darker note than the first. Consider the end of *The Dancing Song*:

> But when the dance was over and the girls had gone away, he grew sad.
>
> "The sun has set long ago," he said at last; "the meadow is moist, a chill comes from the woods. Something unknown is around me and looks thoughtful. What? Are you still alive, Zarathustra?

> "Why? What for? By what? Whither? Where? How? Is it not folly still to be alive?
>
> "Alas, my friends, it is the evening that asks thus through me. Forgive me my sadness. Evening has come; forgive me that evening has come." (PN 221)

The time now is no longer noon. The sun has set. But what kind of a request is this: to be forgiven that evening has come? Is this Zarathustra's fault? Does this not show that Zarathustra is himself subject to the spirit of revenge? That spirit threatens to overwhelm him who had spoken of the beauty of the overman.

4

How does Zarathustra understand beauty? We are given an answer in the section *On Those Who Are Sublime*. Note that beauty is opposed here to the sublime, where beauty is the positive term:

> One who was sublime I saw today, one who was solemn, an ascetic of the spirit; oh, how my soul laughed at his ugliness! With a swelled chest and like one who holds in his breath, he stood there, the sublime one, silent, decked out with ugly truths, the spoil of his hunting, and rich in torn garments; many thorns too adorned him — yet I saw no rose. (PN 228-229)

But let me focus on the important definition of beauty we are given in that sermon:

> His arm placed over his head: thus should the hero rest; thus should he overcome even his rest. But just for the hero the *beautiful* is the most difficult thing. No violent will can attain the beautiful by exertion. A little more, a little less" precisely this counts for much here, this matters most here.
>
> To stand with relaxed muscles and a harnessed will; that is most difficult for all of you who are sublime.
>
> When power becomes gracious and descends into the visible — such descent I call beauty (PN 230)
>
> *Wenn die Macht gnädig wird und herabkommt ins Sichtbare: Schönheit heisse ich solches Herabkommen*.

What does it mean for power to become "gracious" (*gnädig*) and to descend into the visible? What is "grace"? To repeat a point I have already made: like Heidegger and Sartre, Nietzsche, too, understands human being as willing power, lacking power. And all too often the human being finds it impossible to forgive himself his own lack of power. It is just this that fills him with the spirit of revenge. It is this spirit that lets us resent the greater power of others. Thus for Nietzsche the demand for equality is itself born of the spirit of revenge.

Consider the sermon *On the Tarantulas*:

> There it comes willingly: welcome, tarantula! Your triangle and symbol sits black on your back; and I also know what sits in your soul. Revenge sits in your soul: wherever you bite, black scabs grow; your poison makes the soul whir with revenge. (PN 211)

Note that the tarantula is characterized in two ways: the symbol of the Trinity is tied to the spirit of revenge. The overcoming of the spirit of revenge is a presupposition of the overman:

> For *that man be delivered from revenge*, that is for me the bridge to the highest hope, and a rainbow after long storms. (PN 211)

We should note Zarathustra's suggestion that revenge lets thinkers go too far, until in the end they have to lie down, weary, in the snow to sleep.

> They are like enthusiasts, yet it is not the heart that fires them — but revenge. And when they become elegant and cold, it is not the spirit, but envy that makes them elegant and cold. Their jealousy leads them even on the paths of thinkers; and this is the sign of their jealousy: they always go too far, till their weariness must in the end lie down to sleep in the snow. Out of every one of their complaints sounds revenge, in their praise there is always a sting, and to be a judge seems bliss to them. (PN 212)

Unable to forgive themselves their lack of power, they are unable to enter into a meaningful relationship with others. Interesting is the ending of this sermon, which suggests that Zarathustra himself is not free from the spirit of revenge.

> Alas: then the tarantula, my old enemy, bit me. With godlike assurance and beauty it bit my finger. "Punishment there must be and

> justice," it thinks; "and here he shall not sing songs in honor of enmity in vain."
>
> Indeed, it has avenged itself. And alas, now it will make my soul too, whirl with revenge. (PN 214)

Zarathustra himself will become weary and long for the night.

But let me return to the definition of beauty. Beauty depends on the ability of man to forgive himself his lack of power, a lack that, if Nietzsche is right, lets human beings construct a God, who by extending to human beings his grace, promises to deliver them from their weakness, above all from the power of death, of time, but also from the tyranny of those stronger than they are. The meek shall inherit the earth. But if we could be gracious to ourselves we would not need divine grace. Nor would we need the kind of grace of which Schopenhauer speaks. But let us take a more careful look at grace:

The Christian tradition had understood the human being as fallen and in need of grace, where the source of this grace is placed beyond human being, in God. Schopenhauer had appropriated and secularized this notion:

> In the Christian teaching we find the dogma of predestination in consequence of election and nonelection by grace, obviously springing from the view that man does not change, but his life and conduct, in other words his empirical character are only the unfolding of the intelligible character, the development of decided and unalterable tendencies, already recognizable in the child. (WWR I, 293)

The kind of self-overcoming on which Nietzsche insists makes no sense on such a view, which holds that everyone of us is as he is, has his of her unchangeable character. Schopenhauer refers here to St. Paul's *Letter to the Romans*:

> What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! For he says to Moses: "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and will have compassion on whom I have compassion." So it depends not upon man's will or exertion, but upon God's mercy. For the scripture says to Pharaoh: "I have raised you up for the very purpose of showing my power in you, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth." So then he has mercy upon whomever he wills, and he hardens the heart of whomever he wills. (9, 14 - 21)

What is translated here as "mercy" in German is once again *Gnade*, which Kaufmann translates as "grace." God's power becomes visible in Pharaoh. Once again we have a gracious descent of power that manifests itself in Pharaoh's power. A Christian might well understand beauty as a gracious descent of divine power. Think of the beauty of nature! The difference between that view and Nietzsche's is of course that when Nietzsche thinks of power he is thinking first of all of a very human power. The grace that issues in beauty does not issue from beyond human beings, but from within them.

But before returning to Nietzsche let me consider one more passage from *The World as Will and Representation*: In the penultimate paragraph Schopenhauer writes that the self-suppression of the will that according to him is redemption cannot be

> forcibly arrived at by intention or design... it comes suddenly as if flying from without. Therefore the Church calls it the *effect of grace*. (WWR I, 404

Grace to Schopenhauer means the redemption from pride, from that original sin which founds all other sin:

> This sinner was Adam, but we all existed in him; Adam became miserable, and in him we have all become miserable. The doctrine of original sin (affirmation of the will) is really a great truth which constitutes the kernel of Christianity, while the rest is only clothing and covering, or something accessory.
> (WWR I, 405)

Grace redeems and it redeems by granting us the power to deny the will to live by subverting the *principium individuations*. Schopenhauer's doctrine of redemption presupposes the Silenic wisdom that human existence is fundamentally miserable and that we lack the power to escape such misery by intention or design.

If Schopenhauer may be said to have secularized the Christian notions of grace and redemption, Wagner, who also had a profound influence on Nietzsche, may also be said to have, not only secularized, but to have eroticized them. Recall the passage on Wagner on redemption that I discussed in the Introduction. Crucial to this idea of redemption is the idea of rescuing the individual from a restlessness that seems constitutive of humanity. Human being has no fixed essence. The human being is the always unsettled being. This is why our being is always an issue for us. Redemption

settles. And since most of us lack the strength to become Schopenhauerian hermits, to live in the forest with bears and bees, the next best thing may be to follow Wagner's advice and allow ourselves to be settled by marriage, without questioning.

> *Tristan and Isolde* glorifies the perfect spouse who, in a certain situation, has but one question: " But why didn't you tell me that before? Nothing simpler than that!" The answer:
>
> "That I may not tell you;
> And what you ask,
> That you may never know."
>
> Lohengrin contains a solemn excommunication of inquiry and questioning, Wagner here advocates the Christian concept: "You shall and must have faith." It is a crime against the highest, the holiest, to be scientific. (*The Wagner Case*, PN 460-461)

5

That Nietzsche cannot accept any of these versions of redemption should be obvious. And yet, one of the last sections of the Second Book of *Zarathustra* is called *On Redemption*. It should be clear that whatever this might mean, it surely will mean that redemption in the Christian, Schopenhauerian, and Wagnerian senses will become unnecessary.

In this sermon Zarathustra is addressing the cripples. These are human beings who lack something that a normal human being possesses. To them Zarathustra says that they should not condemn themselves for what they lack, but accept it, affirm themselves and that means also their lack. Otherwise their being cripples will also cripple them spiritually.

But Zarathustra is more interested in those whom he calls inverse cripples:

> "There are human beings who lack everything, except one thing of which they have too much — human beings who are nothing but a big eye or a big mouth or a big belly or anything at all that is big. Inverse cripples I call them.
>
> "And when I came out of my solitude and crossed over this bridge for the first time, I did not trust my eyes and looked again, and said at last,

> 'An ear! An ear as big as a man!' I looked still more closely — and indeed, underneath the ear something was moving, something pitifully small and wretched and slender. And, no doubt about it, the tremendous ear was attached to a thin small stalk — but this stalk was a human being. If one used a magnifying glass one could even recognize a tiny envious face; also, that a bloated little soul was dangling from the stalk. The people, however, told me that this great ear was not only a human being, but a great one, a genius. But I never believed the people when they spoke of great men; and I maintained my belief that it was an inverse cripple who has too little of everything and too much of one thing." (PN 250)

The inverse cripple is one with a bloated soul. What has bloated his soul is the inability to forgive himself that in him that is tied to the body. He has crippled himself. Zarathustra expands on this notion of the cripple in a way that includes his predecessors and contemporaries.

> When Zarathustra had spoken thus to the hunchback and to those whose mouthpiece and advocate the hunchback was, he turned to his disciples in profound dismay and said: "Verily, my friends, I walk among men as among the fragments and limbs of men. This is what is terrible for my eyes, that I find men in ruins and scattered as over a battlefield or a butcher-field. And when my eyes flee from the now to the past, they always find the same: fragments and limbs and dreadful accidents — but no human beings. (PN 250)

Earlier (PN 149) Zarathustra had spoken of the human being as a battlefield of virtues. This battle lets human beings cripple themselves. Zarathustra looks ahead to a more integrated existence.

> "I walk among men as among the fragments of the future — that future which I envisage. And this is all my creating and striving, that I create and carry together into One what is fragment and riddle and dreadful accident. And how could I bear to be a man if man were not also a creator and guesser of riddles and redeemer of accidents." (PN 251)

Zarathustra seeks to justify human existence by creating an image that allows for the gathering together of what is now at war in the individual.

When Zarathustra is described as a guesser of riddles this invites us to compare him with Oedipus. The riddle that Oedipus solves is a riddle about time. The riddle that Zarathustra addresses is that same riddle.

That Zarathustra should call himself a redeemer of accidents recalls what Nietzsche had said about aesthetic justification in *The Birth of Tragedy*. Zarathustra, too, is a poet of sorts, who seeks to project an ideal, a tragic vision that is to allow for full self-affirmation.

First of all reality presents itself to us as contingent. How are we to overcome this sense of contingency, past accident, into something that seems necessary?

> "To redeem those who lived in the past and to recreate all 'it was' into as 'thus I willed it' — that alone should I call redemption. 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; but what is it that puts even the liberator himself in fetters? 'It was' — that is the name of the will's gnashing of teeth and most secret melancholy. Powerless against what has been done, he is an angry spectator of all that is past. That the will cannot will backwards; and that he cannot break time and time's covetousness, that is the will's loneliest melancholy." (PN 251)

With this we have returned to the topic of time. Does time not make such poetic reconstruction of past accidents a mere fantasy, mere illusion. Is it not itself born of the inability to accept one's impotence, one's subjection to time, a subjection that cannot be separated from the human condition?

> "That time does not run backwards, that is his wrath; 'that which was' is the stone he cannot move. And so he moves stones out of wrath and displeasure, and he wreaks revenge on whatever does not feel wrath and displeasure as he does. Thus the will, the liberator, took to hurting; and on all who can suffer he wreaks revenge for his inability to go backwards. This, indeed this alone, is what revenge is: the will's ill will against time and its 'it was.'" (PN 251)

In the spirit of revenge Nietzsche locates the deepest source of all self-alienation. It is the power that cripples. It is also the power that lets us long for redemption. What we want to be redeemed from is time, mortality.

The spirit of revenge tempts us see our present condition as a punishment of sorts, something inflicted on us because of some transgression, where that transgression turns out to be nothing other than our humanity, our individuality. Zarathustra opposes to all such accounts his insistence on the creative power of the will:

> "I led you away from these 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.'" (PN 253)

But how can we affirm all that is dreadful in the past, past suffering, pointless death, torture, murder? By telling a story about it? By emphasizing something like reason in history? To overcome the spirit of revenge we have to learn to will the past, to will backward. And this is what is most difficult:

> "But has the will yet spoken thus? And when will that happen? Has the will been unharnessed yet from his own folly? Has the will yet become his own joy-bringer? Has he unlearned the spirit of revenge and all gnashing of teeth? And who taught him reconciliation with time and something higher than any reconciliation; but how shall this be brought about? Who could teach him also to will backwards? (PN 253)

The rhetorical question startles Zarathustra. He stands on the threshold of the thought of the eternal recurrence, even as he shies away from this threshold.

12. The Eternal Recurrence

1

In *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche give us an account of how the thought of the eternal recurrence first came to him:

> Now I shall relate the history of *Zarathustra*. The fundamental conception of this work, *the idea of the eternal recurrence*, this highest formulation of affirmation that is at all attainable, belongs in the August of 1881: it was penned on sheet with the notation underneath, "6000 feet beyond man and time." That day I had been walking through the woods along the lake of Silvaplana; at a powerful, pyramidal rock not far from Surlei I stopped. It was then that this idea came to me. (KSA 6, 335)[51]

Nietzsche tells us that it was preceded by a change in his taste, especially his taste in music. Nietzsche ties that change to a newly found health, which here means not so much that he had actually gotten healthier, but rather that he thought himself healthier. He found himself in a different mood. The thought of the eternal recurrence presupposes this shift in mood.

It was the following winter, while walking near Rapallo, that, according to this account, the Zarathustra idea seized him.

> It was on these two walks that the whole of *Zarathustra I* occurred to me, and especially Zarathustra himself as a type: rather he *overtook me* ... (KSA 6, 337)[52]
>
> To understand this type, one must first become clear about his physiological presupposition: this is what I call the *great health*. (KSA 6, 337)[53]

The thoughts of the eternal recurrence and of Zarathustra are said to have a physiological and that means here also an affective base and they need to be understood with reference to that base. This also requires us to think the connection between truth and affect.

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[51] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, in *The Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), p. 295.
[52] Ibid., p. 298.
[53] Ibid.

Some such connection is suggested by paragraph 54 of Schopenhauer's *World as Will and Representation*, in which Schopenhauer seems to have inscribed a reader like Nietzsche into his text long before Nietzsche was born:

> Therefore a philosophical knowledge of the nature of the world which had reached the point we are now considering, but went no farther, could even at this point of view, overcome the terrors of death according as reflection had power over direct feeling in the given individual. A man who had assimilated firmly into his way of thinking the truths so far advanced, but at the same time had not come to know, through his own experience or through a deeper insight, that constant suffering is essential to all life; who found satisfaction in life and took perfect delight in it; who desired, in spite of calm deliberation, that the course of his life as he had hitherto experienced it should be of endless duration or of constant recurrence; and whose courage to face life was so great that, in return for life's pleasures, he would willingly and gladly put up with all the hardships and miseries to which it is subject; such a man would stand "with firm, strong bones on the well-grounded, enduring earth" and would have nothing to fear. (WWR I, 283)

The quoted line is from Goethe's poem *Grenzen der Menschheit* and it is Goethe's *Prometheus* whom Schopenhauer understands as a poetic expression of this view. Schopenhauer here cites the very same lines Nietzsche later was to cite in *The Birth of Tragedy* as an expression of human self-assertion that no longer needs the gods, even if the gods need us humans to maintain them in being. Schopenhauer places this Prometheus next to Arjuna, who in the *Bhagavad-Gita* is taught the same lesson that we have nothing to fear from death or time by Krishna, a lesson that Schopenhauer also finds in Bruno and Spinoza. Schopenhauer concludes these with this remark:

> The will affirms itself; this means that while in the objectivity, that is to say in the world and in life, its own inner nature is completely and distinctly given to it as a representation, this knowledge does not in any way impede its willing. It means that just this life thus known is now willed as such by the will with knowledge, consciously and deliberately,

> just as hitherto the will willed it without knowledge and as a blind impulse. (WWR I, 285)

Such affirmation forms of course the very opposite of Schopenhauer's renunciation.

> The opposite of this, the denial of the will-to-live, shows itself when willing ends with that knowledge, since the particular phenomena known then no longer act as *motives* of willing, but the whole knowledge of the inner nature of the world that mirrors the will, knowledge that has grown up through apprehension of the Ideas, becomes the *quieter* of the will, and thus the will freely abolishes itself (WWR I, 285)

What Nietzsche presents as an inspiration would thus seem to be at least in part a recollection of something he had read in Schopenhauer.

But what is it that allows Schopenhauer to speak with such confidence on this point? Presupposed is the distinction between timeless will and temporal representation.

> Above all, we must clearly recognize that the form of the phenomenon of the will, and hence the form of life and of reality, is really only the *present*, not the future or the past. Future and past are only in the concept, exist only in the connexion and continuity of knowledge in so far as this follows the principle of sufficient reason. No man has lived in the past, and none will ever live in the future; the *present* alone is the form of all life, but it is also life's sure possession, which can never be torn from it. The present always exists together with its content; both stand firm without wavering, like the rainbow over the waterfall. (WWR I, 278 – 1)

Is Nietzsche entitled to this understanding? It would seem that he would have to reject it. Think of the "History of an Error."

And in what sense are future and past only in the concept? Is there not something similar that must be said of the present? Once more I cite Schopenhauer:

> Of course, if we think back to the thousands of years that have passed, to the millions of men and women who have lived in them, we ask, What were they? What has become of them? But on the other hand, we need recall only the past of our own life and vividly renew its scenes in our imagination and then ask again, What was all this? What has become of it? As it is with this our life, so it is with the life of those millions. Or

> should we suppose that the past took on a new existence by its being sealed through death? Our own past, even the most recent, even the previous day, is only an empty dream of the imagination, and the past of all those millions is the same. What was? What is? The will, whose mirror is life, and will-free knowledge beholding the will clearly in that mirror. He who has not already recognized this, or will not recognize it, must add to the above question as to the fate of past generations this question as well: Why preciely is he, the questioner, so lucky as to possess this precious, perishable, and only real present, while those hundreds of generations of men, even the heroes and sages of former times, have sunk into the night of the past, and have thus become nothing, while he, his insignificant ego actually exists? Or, more briefly, although strangely: Why is this now, his now, precisely now and was not long ago? Since he asks such strange questions, he regards his existence and his time as independent of each other, and the former as projected into the latter. He really assumes two nows, one belonging to the object and the other to the subject, and marvels at the happy accident of their coincidence. (WWR I, 278-279)

Let me read you here from Hugo von Hofmannsthal's *Terzinen über die Vergänglichkeit*:

> *Noch spür ich ihren Atem auf den Wangen:*
> *Wie kann das sein, daß diese nahen Tage*
> *Fort sind, für immer fort, und ganz vergangen?*
>
> *Dies ist ein Ding, das keiner voll aussinnt*
> *Und viel zu grauenvoll, als daß man klage:*
> *Daß alles gleite und vorüberrinnt.*
>
> *Und daß mein eignes Ich, durch nichts gehemmt,*
> *Hinüberglitt aus einem kleinen Kind*
> *Mir wie ein Hund unheimlich stumm und fremd.*

Dann: daß ich auch vor hundert Jahren war
Und meine Ahnen, die im Totenhemd
Mit mir verwandt sind wie mein eignes Haar

So eins mit mir als wie mein eignes Haar.

Still I feel her breath on my cheeks:
How can this be, that these near days
Are gone, forever gone, completely past?

This is a thing that no one fully fathoms
And much too horrible to now lament
That everything is gliding and runs by us.

And that my own I, hindered by nothing,
Glid here out of a little child,
Now. like a dog, uncannily strange and foreign.

Then: that I also was a hundred years ago,
As were my ancestors, who in their burial shroud
Are related to me as is my own hair,

As much at one with me as my own hair.

What kind of unity is this — the unity of self? (Absence of the beloved. The temporality of love. Beauty as the object of love. The temporality of our experience of the beautiful.)

Schopenhauer discusses this unity in terms of the distinction between phenomenon or representation and thing it itself or will:

> On the one hand, every individual is the subject of knowing, in other words the supplementary condition of the possibility of the whole

> objective world and, on the other, a particular phenomenon of the will, of that will which objectifies itself in each thing. But this double character of our inner being does not rest on a self-existent unity, otherwise it would be possible for us to be conscious of ourselves in ourselves and independently of the objects of knowing and willing. Now we simply cannot do this, but as soon as we enter into ourselves in order to attempt it, and wish for once to know ourselves fully by directing our knowledge inwards, we lose ourselves in a bottomless void; we find ourselves like a hollow glass globe, from the emptiness of which a voice speaks. But the cause of this voice is not to be found in the globe and since we want to comprehend ourselves, we grasp with a shudder nothing but an unstable wavering phantom. (WWR I, 278–fn)

But to say that we simply cannot do this: is this not to say that the idea of the will and the subject are not similarly just phantoms that disappear once we try to grasp them?

> Accordingly, we have not to investigate the past before life or the future after death; rather have we to know the present as the only form in which the will manifests itself. It will not run away from the will, nor the will from it. Therefore whoever is satisfied with life as it is, whoever affirms it in every way, can confidently regard it as endless, and can banish the fear of death as a delusion. This delusion inspires him with the foolish dread that he can ever be deprived of the present and deceives him about a time without a present in it. This is a delusion which in regard to time is like that other in regard to space, in virtue of which everyone imagines the precise position occupied by him as above, and all the rest as below. In just the same way, everyone connects the present with his own individuality… (WWR I, 280)

This presupposes that the will, as the thing in itself, is not subject to the principle of sufficient reason and thus to time. What right does Schopenhauer have to this devaluation of time? He relies of course on Kant, but is such reliance convincing?

Is the demon of par. 341 (101) of *The Gay Science* who sneaks after you in your loneliest loneliness then Schopenhauer?

2

The content of Nietzsche's doctrine of the eternal recurrence would not seem to go significantly beyond what Schopenhauer asserts. And Zarathustra's reaction, too, to this doctrine is at first not at all one of affirmation.

Consider the section "The Soothsayer," which precedes the sermon in which Zarathustra teaches his version of redemption.

> "And I saw a great sadness descend upon mankind. The best grew weary of their works. A doctrine appeared, accompanied by a faith: 'All is empty, all is the same, all has been!' And from the hills it echoes: All is empty, all is the same, all has been!'" (PN 245)

Zarathustra, too, a Zarathustra who has already been bitten by the tarantula, is touched by this faith and becomes weary.

> Thus grieved in his heart, Zarathustra walked about, and for three days he took neither food nor drink, had no rest, and lost his speech. At last he fell into a deep sleep. But his disciples sat around him in long night watches and waited with great concern for him to wake and speak again and recover from his melancholy. (PN 246)

Sleeping, he dreams. Among other things this dream would seem to describe the birth of an inspiration, where again it is well to keep in mind what Nietzsche has to say *in Ecce Homo:*

> Has anyone at the end of the nineteenth century a clear idea of what poets of strong ages have called *inspiration*? If not, I will describe it. — If one had the slightest residue of superstition left in one's system, one could hardly reject altogether the idea that one is merely incarnation, merely mouthpiece, merely a medium of overpowering forces. The concept of revelation — in the sense that suddenly, with indescribable certainty and subtlety, something becomes *visible*, audible, something that shakes one to the last depths and throws one down — that merely describes the facts. One hears, one does not seek; once one accepts, one does not ask who gives; like lightning, a thought flashes up, with necessity, without hesitation regarding its form — I never had any choice. (KSA 6, 339)[54]

[54] Ibid., p. 300.

Zarathustra's dream deserves being quoted in its entirety:

> "Listen to the dream which I dreamed, my friends, and help me guess its meaning. This dream is still a riddle to me; its meaning is concealed in it and imprisoned and does not yet soar above it with unfettered wings.
>
> "I had turned my back on all life, thus I dreamed. I had become a night watchman and a guardian of tombs upon the lonely mountain castle of death. Up there I guarded his coffins: the musty walls were full of such marks of triumph. Life that had been overcome looked at me out of glass coffins. I breathed the odor of dusty eternities: sultry and dusty lay my soul. And who could have aired his soul there?
>
> "The brightness of midnight was always about me; loneliness crouched next to it; and as a third, death-rattling silence, the worst of my friends. I had keys, the rustiest of all keys; and I knew how to use them to open the most creaking of all gates. Like a wickedly angry croaking, the sound rang through the corridors when the gate's wings moved: fiendishly cried this bird, ferocious at being awakened. Yet still more terrible and heart constricting was the moment when silence returned and it grew quiet about me, and I sat alone in this treacherous silence.
>
> "Thus time passed and crawled, if time still existed — how should I know? But eventually that happened which awakened me. Thrice, strokes struck at the gate like thunder; the vaults echoed and howled thrice; then I went to the gate: 'Alpa,' I cried, 'who is carrying his ashes up the mountain? Alpa! Alpa! Who is carrying his ashes up the mountain?' And I pressed the key and tried to lift the gate and exerted myself; but still it did not give an inch. Then a roaring wind tore its wings apart; whistling, shrilling, and piercing, it cast up a black coffin before me.
>
> "And amid the roaring and whistling and shrilling the coffin burst and spewed out a thousandfold laughter. And from a thousand grimaces of children, angels, owls, fools, and butterflies as big as children, it laughed and mocked and roared at me. Then I was terribly frightened; it

> threw me to the ground. And I cried in horror as I have never cried. And my own cry awakened me — and I came to my senses." (PN 246-247)

His favorite disciple offers an interpretation that identifies Zarathustra with the wind and the coffin. Zarathustra rejects it.

3

The Third Book begins with a section called "The Wanderer": at midnight Zarathustra starts out across a ridge to catch a boat that will carry him across the sea from the blessed isles to the land where his cave lies. The beginning of the third book is thus the beginning of a homecoming. Later Zarathustra will refer to himself as "ein Fluß, der zurück zur Quelle fließt ," "a river that flows back to its source" (PN 279). A river that flows back to its source: that would be a river whose past origin lies in the future: the river here becomes a ring: Zarathustra thus describes himself in a way that prefigures the eternal recurrence.

The first and the second book had both closed with Zarathustra taking leave from his friends. At the end of Part One this leave-taking is said to be for the sake of his disciples who have to learn to walk alone, learn to resist Zarathustra, to even deny him, so that they may become themselves and his friends in higher sense. The leave-taking from his friends at the end of the Second Part is for the sake of Zarathustra himself, who knows "it", and yet resists what he knows and does "not want to say it" (PN 257).

> "The pride of youth is still upon you; you have become young late; but whoever would become as a child must overcome his youth too." And I reflected for a long time and trembled. But at last I said what I had said at first: "I do not want to."
>
> Then laughter surrounded me. Alas, how this laughter tore my entrails and slit open my heart! And it spoke to me for the last time: "O Zarathustra, your fruit is ripe, but you are not yet ripe for your fruit. Thus you must return to your solitude again; for you must yet become mellow." (PN 259)

Like a river returning to its source, Zarthustra, who we are told became young late, must once again become as child. This brings to mind Meister Eckhart's words: "My soul is as young as the day it was created; yes, and much younger. I tell you, I should be

ashamed if it were not younger tomorrow than it is today."[55] When we say of someone that he is young, we mean that not much time has passed by since he was born. Similarly Eckhart means by "young" proximity to one's origin, where this origin is understood by him not as a temporal event. To say that I should be ashamed if my soul were not younger tomorrow than it is today, is to say that I should be ashamed if it had not come closer to that reality which is my origin, which in this case is God, an origin that I bear within the depth of my own soul. But can this help us to understand Zarathustra's homecoming to his *Quelle* or source?

The theme of homecoming is raised explicitly in the very beginning of the Third Part, in the section called "The Wanderer."

> I am a wanderer and mountain-climber he said to his heart; I do not like the plains, and it seems I cannot sit still for long. And whatever may yet come to me as destiny and experience will include some wandering and mountain climbing: in the end, one experiences only oneself. The time is gone when mere accidents could still happen to me; and what could still come to me now that was not mine already? What returns, what finally comes home to me, is my own self and what of myself has long been in strange lands and scattered among all things and accidents. And one further thing I know: I stand before my final peak now and before that which has been saved up for me the longest. Alas, I have begun my loneliest walk! But whoever is of my kind cannot escape such an hour — the hour which says to him:
>
> "Only now are you going your way to greatness! Peak and abyss — they are now joined together." (PN 264)

Homecoming is described here as a homecoming of the self to the self. This homecoming is also a self-integration, where we should keep in mind the traditional Platonic understanding of recollection as a kind of homecoming, transformed by St. Augustine into *memoria.* What comes home, Zarathustra tells us is that of himself that had long been in strange lands and scattered among all things. This should be read together, not just with what had been said about redemption and the cripples in the

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[55] *Meister Eckharts Predigten*, ed. and trans. Josef Quint, 3 vols. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1936-1976), "Adolescens, tibi dico: surge!" 2, 305. *Meister Eckhart*, trans.

preceding book (PN 250 - 251), but also with the discussion of *curiositas* in Augustine's *Confessions*.

Note that the integration that here is placed in the future is described as also a return to the origin, to what was. Homecoming means an appropriation of the past that is inseparable from full self-affirmation: "The time is gone when mere accidents could happen to me." This raises the question of what is required so that a human being may understand him- or herself in such a way that accidents can no longer happen to him or her? Was the fact that I was born at a particular time, of a particular sex, into a particular family, an accident? The integrating love of self requires *amor fati.*

But at this stage Zarathustra has not yet achieved such self-integration. It still awaits him as a task, requires further journeying. That journey leads beyond oneself:

> "But the lover of knowledge who is obtrusive with his eyes — how could he see more of all things than their foregrounds (*vordern Gründe*)? But you, O Zarathustra, wanted to see the ground (*Grund*) and background (*Hintergrund*) of all things; hence you must climb over yourself — upward, up, until even your stars are *under* you!
>
> Indeed, to look down upon myself and even upon my stars, that alone I should call my peak; that has remained for me as my ultimate peak. (PN 265)

Note the distinction between *vordern Gründe*, *Grund*, and *Hintergrund*.

What is the significance of the fact that he is about to leave the blessed isles, the *glückselige Inseln*? The second sermon of Book II is called "Upon the Blessed Isles" (PN 197). We find a reference to Zarathustra's blessed isles in the section "On Great Events" where an island with a fire spewing mountain is said to be not far from the blessed isles. In *Ecce Homo* we find an interesting reference to Tribschen, where he spent so many happy hours with Cosima and Richard Wagner, as "eine ferne Insel der Glückseligen." (KSA 6, 323) After the disappointment of Bayreuth these days seemed very far away.

Raymond B. Blakney (New York: Harper, 1957), p. 134.

4

In the very next section Nietzsche first presents the thought of the eternal recurrence. Important is to whom he tells his vision:

> To you, the bold searchers, researchers, and whoever embarks with cunning sails on terrible seas — to you, drunk with riddles, glad of the twilight, whose souls flutes lure astray to every whirlpool, because you do not want to grapple along a thread with cowardly hand; and where you can guess, you hate to deduce — to you alone I tell the riddle that I saw, the vision of the loneliest. (PN 267 - 268)

The German important is important there, as is the reference to seafaring. Nietzsche liked to think himself in the image of Columbus, as a Genoese.[56]

Zarathustra describes a journey.

> Not long ago I walked gloomily through the deadly pallor of dusk — gloomy and hard, with lips pressed together. Not only one sun had set for me. A path that ascended defiantly through stones, malicious, lonely, not cheered by herb or shrub — a mountain path crunched under the defiance of my foot. Striding silently over the mocking clatter of pebbles, crushing the rock that made it slip, my foot forced its way upward. Upward, defying the spirit that drew it downward toward the abyss, the spirit of gravity, my devil and archenemy. Upward — although he sat on me, half dwarf, half mole, lame, making lame, dripping lead into my ear, leaden thoughts into my brain. (PN 268)

Who is the dwarf: the spirit of gravity? The question is important, because it is the dwarf who first announced the doctrine that time is not a straight line.

This is not the first mention of this dwarf. Earlier he had been introduced as Zarathustra's devil:

> I would believe only in a god who could dance. And when I saw my devil I found him serious, thorough, profound, and solemn: it was the spirit of gravity — through him all things fall." (PN 153)

He returns in the "Dancing Song":

> "Do not cease dancing, you lovely girls! No killjoy has come to you with evil eyes, no enemy of girls. God's advocate am I before the devil: but the devil is the spirit of gravity." (PN 219)

Presumably Eros, *der kleine Gott*, as he is called in the very next paragraph, is meant when Zarathustra calls himself the *Fürsprecher* of God. He is the advocate of love. Remember the passage in the prologue where Zarathustra says I love him who chastens his god. The present section refers us back to this prologue. It bids us think of this God as cupid. The *chastening of cupid* is a traditional topos in art.

A fuller explanation is given later in the section entitled "The Spirit of Gravity."

> We are presented with grave words and values almost from the cradle: "good" and "evil" this gift is called. For its sake we are forgiven for living.
>
> And therefore one suffers little children to come unto one — in order to forbid them betimes to love themselves: Thus the spirit of gravity orders it.
>
> And we — we carry faithfully what one gives us to bear, on hard shoulders and over rough mountains. And should we sweat we are told: "Yes, life is a grave burden." But only man is a grave burden for himself! That is because he carries on his shoulders too much that is alien to him. Like a camel, he kneels down and lets himself be well loaded. Especially the strong, reverent spirit that would bear much: he loads too many alien grave words and values on himself, and then life seems a desert to him. (PN 305-306)

The spirit of gravity, who imposes grave words and values, is thus the God that gave Moses the law. Zarathustra has recast the old God as his devil because he presents us with a law that is brought to us from without, as Moses carried God's tablets down from Mount Sinai.

> Man is hard to discover — hardest of all for himself: often the spirit lies about the soul. Thus the spirit of gravity orders it. He, however, has discovered himself who says, "This is *my* good and evil": with that he has

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[56] See Karsten Harries, "The Philosopher at Sea," *Nietzsche's New Seas. Explorations in Philosophy, Aesthetics, and Politics,* ed. Michael Allen Gillespie and Tracy B. Strong

> reduced to silence the mole and dwarf who says, "Good for all, evil for all." (PN 306)

Zarathustra recasts the old God as his devil because he stands in the way of his commandment: love thyself, which is also *amor fati*.

> "O Zarathustra," he whispered mockingly, syllable by syllable; "you philosopher's stone! You threw yourself up high, but every stone that is thrown must fall. O Zarathustra, you philosopher's stone, you slingstone, you star-crusher! You threw yourself up so high; but every stone that is thrown must fall. Sentenced to yourself and to your own stoning — O Zarathustra, far indeed have you thrown the stone, but it will fall back on yourself." (PN 268)

The dwarf here speaks of the futility of the attempt to place our creations, to cast ourselves, so ahead of ourselves that our work can take the place of God, speaks of the futility of the overman.

> Then the dwarf fell silent, and that lasted a long time. His silence, however, oppressed me; and such twosomeness is surely more lonesome than being alone. I climbed, I climbed, I dreamed, I dreamed, I thought; but everything oppressed me. I was like one sick whom his wicked torture makes weary, and who as he falls asleep is awakened by a still more wicked dream. (PN 268-269)

The dwarf falls silent: God has become silent. God's silence is nihilism. This silence recalls the melancholy that seized Zarathustra after he had heard the soothsayer, where the German is important, the *Wahrsager*, i. e. he who says the truth: the truth is that there is no God. But even this truth burdens us. So our identification of the *Geist der Schwere* with the old God would seem not to have been quite right. The *Geist der Schwere* is rather the spirit of the place that God once occupied and that now has become empty. But the spirit of that place is the spirit of revenge.

Zarathustra confronts this spirit with a courage that lets him pronounce an either - or: "Dwarf! It is you or I!" The thought of the eternal recurrence presupposes courage. Either God is the author of meaning or Zarathustra, that is to say the human being whose beginning was said to be the beginning of tragedy. In *Either-Or*, as already mentioned,

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(Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1988), pp. 21-44.

Kierkegaard's A suggests that the true either-or is between the religious and the tragic. Nietzsche could have agreed with this. I, at any rate, would agree with it.

Courage slays dizziness at the edge of abysses. The deepest abyss is said to be pity. Courage is said to slay even death. But is this slaying of death not a fantasy, a brave show covering up grim reality, as the term *klingendes Spiel*, referring to the (brass) music that accompanies an army venturing into battle, suggests, a term that suggests a drowning out of the horrors of battle.

> "Stop dwarf!" I said. "It is I or you! But I am the stronger of us two: you do not know my abysmal thought. That you could not bear. (PN 269)

We should note the reversed order: I or you. The dwarf is now confronted with Zarathustra's abysmal thought. The spirit of gravity weighs on us only as long as we are possessed by the spirit of revenge. But just this the thought of the eternal recurrence is to overcome.

> "Behold this gateway, dwarf!" I continued. "It has two faces. Two paths meet here; no one has yet followed either to its end. This long lane stretches back for an eternity. And the long lane out there, that is another eternity. They contradict each other, these paths, they offend each other face to face; and it is here at this gateway that they come together. The name of the gateway is inscribed above: "moment." But whoever would follow one of them, on and on, farther and farther — do you believe dwarf, that these paths contradict each other eternally?" (PN 269-270)

Zarathustra presents his thought as a riddle? But the spirit of gravity seems quite unimpressed. He gives his answer rather quickly and contemptuously.

> "All that is straight lies," the dwarf murmured contemptuously. "All truth is crooked; time itself is a circle." (PN 270)

Why is the dwarf able to move so easily to the thought that time is a circle? We should note how close his words are to the words his animals later attribute to Zarathustra.

> "'Now I die and vanish,' you would say, 'and all at once I am nothing. The soul is as mortal as the body. But the knot of causes in which I am entangled recurs and will create me again. I myself belong to the causes of the eternal recurrence. I come again, with this sun, with this earth, with this eagle, with this serpent — not to a new life or a better life

> or a similar life: I come back eternally to this same, selfsame life, in what is greatest as in what is smallest, to teach again the eternal recurrence of all things, to speak again the word of the great noon of earth and man, to proclaim the overman again to men. I spoke my word, I break of my word: thus my eternal lot wants it; as a proclaimer I perish. The hour has now come when he who goes under should bless himself. Thus ends Zarathustra's going under." (PN 333)

But let me return to the question: why does the spirit of gravity have so little difficulty thinking the thought of the eternal recurrence? The answer becomes obvious once we understand the spirit of gravity as a mask of the old God. For the old God dwells in eternity. Try now to think the relationship of this God to time. God must be thought of as equidistant from every point of time. God is the center of that circle which is creation. I would thus suggest that the thought of the eternal recurrence had to suggest itself to Christian theologians.

That this was indeed the case is easily demonstrated. I refer you here to Georges Poulet's *Metamorphoses of the Circle*.[57] Here just a few telling quotations:

Thomas Aquinas:

> Eternity is always present to whatever time or moment of time it may be. One can see an example of it in the circle: a given point on the circumference, even though indivisible, nevertheless cannot coexist with all the other points, because the order of succession constitutes the circumference; but the center that is outside the circumference is immediately connected with any given point of the circumference whatsoever. (*Summa contra gentiles*, Lib. I, chap. lxvl)
>
> Eternity resembles the center of the circle; even though simple and indivisible, it comprehends the whole course of time, and every part of it is equally present. (*Declaratio quorundam Articulorum*, op. 2, Poulet 154)

Pierre Auriol:

> There are those who use the image of the center of the circle, in its relation to all points of the circumference, and they affirm that this is similar to the

[57] Georges Poulet, *The Metamorphoses of the Circle*, trans. Carley Dawson and Elliott Coleman in collaboration with theauthor. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1967).

> *Nunc* of eternity in its connection with all the parts of time. By which they mean that eternity actually coexists with the whole of time. *(Commentarii in Primum Librum Sententiarum Pars prima* (Rome 1596), p. 829. Poulet 154

Poulet gives many other quotes, but the main point should have become clear enough.

The question then is: why does Zarathustra reject the dwarf's reply?

In Zarathustra's formulation the thought is different in that it accepts the linearity of time and does not attempt to think it from an external vantage point. Eternity here seems to mean something like endlessness. The problem is: how are we to think this endlessness. Here it is helpful to compare Nietzsche's teaching of the eternal recurrence with Kant's first antinomy.

But let us look carefully at Nietzsche's text: "must not whatever can walk have walked down this lane before?" How are we to think: whatever can walk, whatever can happen? We are asked to think a totality of possibilities. If you wish, we are to think logical space as a limited whole. Just this Kant would forbid us to do. But before returning to Kant I would like to consider briefly some propositions from Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*:

> *6. 45* The contemplation of the world *sub specie aeterni* is its contemplation as a limited whole.
>
> The feeling of the world as a limited whole is the mystical feeling.
>
> 6. 522. There is indeed the inexpressible. This s*hows* itself; it is the mystical.

In Wittgenstein's or Carnap's sense Nietzsche might be said to say what is *inexpressible*. It shows itself. It has its base in an experience.

But what kind of experience are we talking about? An aesthetic experience?

Before I take up this question, let me turn to Kant. Relevant for our purposes is especially the first antinomy. The thesis states that the world has a beginning in time. For suppose the contrary: that up to the present moment an eternity had passed, and an infinite chain had come to an end, had been completed. But this cannot be. Therefore the world must have a beginning in time.

The antithesis denies this. Suppose there had been a beginning. Then there would have to be a time before the time the world began, an empty time. But in this empty time the beginning of something cannot be thought.

Kant's solution to the antinomy rests on his insistence that the whole of the world is a concept that can never be given in intuition. There is only an endless regress. The infinite cannot be mastered by the idea of totality. That goes not only for the world as a whole, but for every thing, and more especially for every person. The idea of a thing as such an infinite, but limited whole is a mere idea.

What then lets Nietzsche insist on the idea of a limited whole? We have to turn to an experience. Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* gives us here a pointer: Wittgenstein speaks there of the mystical experience, which for him is inseparable from the aesthetic, which in turn fuses for him with the ethical. Here one could consider Nietzsche's discussion of the Psychology of the Artist in *Twilight of the Idols*. He speaks there of intoxication (*Rausch*). *Rausch* idealizes. It transforms reality into something perfect. Beautiful reality is reality thus transformed. Is the doctrine of the eternal recurrence then mere poetry? And has Zarathustra himself not said that "the poets lie too much?" And did he not call himself a poet? I shall try to finish up this discussion next time.

13. Conclusion: Tragedy and Redemption

1

I would like to begin our least meeting by returning to the section *On the Vision and the Riddle* and to the difference between the spirit of gravity's statement that time is a circle and Zarathustra's statement of the eternal recurrence.

I suggested that the spirit of gravity can be understood as a figure of the old God. His standpoint is that of eternity. Looking at time from that standpoint it closes into a circle. I pointed to Georges Poulet's *Metamorphoses of the Circle*, where he quotes a number of medieval thinkers who express a rather similar point of view. We must see how traditional, indeed unavoidable from the standpoint of the spirit of gravity, this thought is. Nor does it depend on the assumption of the Christian God. It suggests itself also when we assume, with Schopenhauer, e.g., the eternity of the will and attempt to think the realm of representations as an expression of that will. The difficulty is of course with the idea of eternity. What right do we have to think the temporal world as an expression or the work of an eternal being. As Kant pointed out

> When you suppose a *simply necessary (schlechthin notwendig) being* (be it the world itself, or something in the world, or the cause of the world) you posit a time infinitely distant from every given point in time; because otherwise it would depend on an other and older being. But in that case this being cannot be reached by your empirical concept and is too great for you to get there by any continuous regress.
>
> But if, according to your opinion, everything that belongs to the world (be it conditioned or condition) is *accidental* (*zufällig*), then every given existent is too small for your concept. For it always forces you to look for another existent, on which the first depends. (A 488/489, B 516/517)

Zarathustra's own explanation appears different from the dwarf's in that it takes time more seriously. Crucial to his reflection is the thought of *whatever can walk*, of *whatever can happen*. The space of possibilities is here thought as a totality, as a limited whole. If we use the Wittgensteinian idea of logical space we can say that the coordinates of that space, the number of what Wittgenstein calls the objects, the

Gegenstände that make up the substance of the world, *die Substanz der Welt,* is finite. From this it would follow that the number of possible world states would also be finite. Given the endless regress that Zarathustra invites us to think we get the thought of recurrence.

This is essentially the argument that Nietzsche gives in a remark that came to be included in *The Will to Power* (1888*)*:

> WP 1066. If the world *may* be thought of as a certain definite (*bestimmt)* quantity of force and as a certain definite number of centers of force — and every other representation remains indefinite and therefore *useless* — it follows that in the great dice game of existence, it must pass through a calculable number of combinations. In infinite time, every possible combination would at some time or another be realized: moreover, it would be realized an infinite number of times. And since between every combination and its next recurrence all other possible combinations would have to take place, and each of these combinations conditions the entire sequence of combinations in the same series, a circular movement of absolutely identical series would have been demonstrated. (KSA 13, 375)

Note that the thought is expressed in the subjunctive. The only useful way of thinking the world is said to be to think it as definite (*bestimmt*). But Nietzsche cinsiders the mechamism that it resupposes an "imperfect and only preliminary hypothesis." (KSA 13, 376)

Kant would reject such a thought: although what we experience is given to us as determinate and determined, it is not given to us as a determinate whole in the sense that it is not constituted by what is other than it. The set of its conditions has similarly no closure. This is also at the heart of Schopenhauer's formulation of the principle of sufficient reason. Today we may want to invoke such notions as alterity or differance. Only by refusing to heed the injunction laid down by Kant in his antinomies can someone think, as Nietzsche in an earlier (1885) fragment appears to do, the world as a definite force (WP1067), *eine bestimmte Kraft, in einen bestimmten Raum eingelegt* (KSA 11, 610) Kant would have insisted that the thought of the world as in this sense a definite whole is only a *transcendent idea*, a mere thought.

Note that this idea defeats contingency. And to do so, it would seem, it does not have to assume the dwarf's vantage point and posit an eternal being outside time.

And yet, it should be obvious that here the idea of determination (*Bestimmung*) is inseparable from that of eternity. Whatever elements that enter into different combinations have to preserve their distinct character through time. They take the place of eternal being. But again, as Kant points out, the world is not given to us as a whole. Our thought of it as such a whole remains a mere idea of reason. It is thus significant that Nietzsche speaks of the eternal recurrence most often in the subjunctive, although he also suggests that science will support that thought. Thus he writes:

> WP 1063 The law of the conservation of energy demands eternal recurrence. (KSA 12, 205)

But we must keep in mind is that for Nietzsche the truths of science are not truths at all, if by truth is meant the congruence with things as they are. They are conjectures that give us power.

> WP 533. Logical certainty, transparency, as criterion of truth (*omne illud verum est, **quod clare et distincte percipitur**."* — Descartes) — with that the mechanical hypothesis concerning the world is desired and credible.
>
> But this is a crude confusion: like *simplex sigillum veri*. How does one know that the real nature of things stands in *this* relation to our intellect? — Could it not be otherwise? That it is the hypothesis that gives the intellect the greatest feeling of power and security, that is most *preferred, valued, and consequently* characterized as true? — The intellect posits its freest and *strongest* capacity and capability as criterion of the most valuable, consequently of the *true* —
>
> "True": from the standpoint of feeling —: that which excites the feeling most strongly ("ego");
>
> from the standpoint of thought —: that which gives thought the greatest feeling of strength;
>
> from the standpoint of touch, seeing, hearing —: that which calls for the greatest resistance.(KSA 12, 286-287)

But the standpoint of thought is not understood here as one that allows access to things as they are. Quite the opposite:

> WP 516. Supposing there were no self-identical "A", such as is presupposed by every proposition of logic (and of mathematics), and the "A" were already *mere appearance*, then logic would have a *merely apparent* world as its condition. In fact, we believe in this proposition under the influence of ceaseless experience which seems continually to *confirm* it. The "thing" — that is the real substratum of *"A"*; *our belief in things* is the precondition if our belief in logic. The *"A"* of logic is, like the atom, a reconstruction of the thing. ... Logic is the attempt *to comprehend the actual world by means of a scheme posited by ourselves; more correctly, to make it formulable and calculable for us.* ... (KSA 12, 389-391)

The will to power that finds expression in logic triumphs in science and finally in technology.

Remember that the reconstruction of things on which the will to power depends presupposes that power of reason to furnish, as Schopenhauer puts it, copies of a quite special kind in an altogether heterogeneous medium. That medium is marked by generality. A multiplicity of particulars is brought under once concept. Implicit in this generality is the timelessness of the concept. It is not bound to a particular moment. All conceptual determination does violence to what it determines. But this is to say that the Cartesian idea of a fully determinate, clear and distinct perception rests on a confusion. Note what Descartes has to say about the distinct:

> Principle XLV. But the distinct is that which is so precise and different from all other objects that it contains within itself nothing but what is clear.[58]

The distinct is all present to the regarding eye. It is clearly marked off from all other objects. It is thus essentially a whole. But we are never given such wholes. As Nietzsche puts it: we have no organ for the truth. Truth is a construct born of the will to power.

Our thought of things as wholes in this sense is always only an idea. Perception does not offer us totalities. Like the idea of the world whole, I have elemental wholes

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[58] René Descartes, *The Philosophical Works*, trans. Elizabeth Haldane and G. R. T. Ross (New York: Dover, 1955), vol.1, p. 237.

only as ideas. They are never given. To insist on a perception of the whole and that includes also insistence on a perception that is in the Cartesian sense clear and distinct, is not to take seriously enough the finitude of the human situation.

But must we then not say the same of the thought of the eternal recurrence? Is it more than a mere thought, a transcendent idea in Kant's sense, meaningless rather than demonstrably true or false, an idea at any rate than can never be given adequate support?

But why does Nietzsche then advance an argument that, it would seem, rests on premises he himself would have to consider false. Is that argument itself meant as a parable?

2

But before going on, let me continue with *On the Vision and the Riddle*. The thought is found frightening.

> Thus I spoke, more and more softly; for I was afraid of my own thoughts and the thoughts behind my thoughts. Then suddenly I heard a dog howl nearby. Had I ever heard a dog howl like this? My thoughts raced back. Yes, when I was a child, in the most distant childhood: then I heard a dog howl like this. And I saw him, too, bristling, his head up, trembling, in the stillest midnight when even dogs believe in ghosts — and I took pity: for just then the full moon, silent as death, passed over the house; just then it stood still, a round glow — still on the flat roof, as if on another's property — that was why the dog was terrified, for dogs believe in thieves and ghosts. And when I heard such howling again I took pity again. (PN 270)

The dog's howling leads to pity, which had been called the deepest abyss. Note here the fusion of past and present (cf. Proust). A new image follows:

> Where was the dwarf gone now? And the gateway? And the spider? And all the whispering? Was I dreaming then? Was I waking up?
> Among wild cliffs I stood suddenly alone, bleak, in the bleakest moonlight. But there lay a man. And there — the dog, jumping, bristling, whining — now he saw me coming; then he howled again; he cried. Had I ever heard a dog cry like this for help? And verily, what I saw, I had never seen the like. A young shepherd I saw. Writhing, gagging, in spasms, his

> face distorted and a heavy black snake hand out of is mouth. Had I ever seen so much nausea and pale dread on one face? He seemed to have been asleep when the snake crawled into his throat, and there bit itself fast. My hand tore at the snake and tore in vain; it did not tear the snake out of his throat. Then it cried out of me: "Bite! Bite its head off! Bite!" thus it cried out of me — my dread, my hatred, my nausea, my pity, all that is good and wicked in me cried out of me with a single cry. (PN 271)

Later, in the section *The Convalescent*, we are given an interpretation.

> The great disgust with man — this choked me and had crawled into my throat, and what the soothsayer said: 'All is the same, nothing is worthwhile, knowledge chokes.' A long twilight limped before me, a sadness, weary to death, drunken with death, speaking with a yawning mouth. 'Eternally recurs the man of whom you are weary, the small man' — thus yawned my sadness and dragged its feet and could not go to sleep. Man's earth turned into a cave for me, its chest sunken; all that is living became human mold and bones and musty past to me. My sighing sat on all human tombs and could no longer get up; my sighing and questioning croaked and gagged and gnawed and wailed by day and night: 'Alas, man recurs eternally! The small man returns eternally! (PN 331)

To someone who cannot affirm life, someone filled with Schopenhauerian pity, the thought of the eternal recurrence has to appear as a negative thought, which just compounds the burden character of life. It only serves to make that burden infinite.

And consider how negative that thought is: it suggests a process without either goal or purpose, just the opposite of the Christian conception of time, which is future oriented. Life is here given a goal that is placed beyond life, a contradictory goal: eternal life.

How should we understand the biting off of the head of the snake? The thought of the eternal recurrence has its foundation in the affirmation of life in all its negativity. But this is the mood of tragedy. This is why tragedy and the doctrine of the eternal recurrence belong together.

3

But Zarathustra suggests that this thought is more than just an idea. It has its foundation in a particular mode of perceiving what is, one governed by courage and *amor fati*. Such love transfigures, perfects our perceptions. The doctrine of the eternal recurrence thus has its foundation in something like an aesthetic, perhaps we should say mystical or religious experience. We could indeed try to define aesthetic experience as the experience of something as a whole. I would insist that this whole is imaginary, a product of the *Einbildungskraft.*

Nietzsche describes the thought of the eternal recurrence as the thought that allows for the fullest self-affirmation. It is indeed a thought that gathers the self into a whole, but in a way that is at the same time an overleaping of the old self. Recall the sermon *On Redemption*. Zarathustra there addresses the cripples. Zarathustra's creating could be said to be *a carrying into one of what is fragment and riddle and dreadful accident*. The mood that accomplishes such gathering is *amor fati*. That love so completely embraces the self that it must also embrace the world. And like all love it perfects what it embraces, that is to say, makes it whole. In this embrace the fragmentary self that presents itself first of all and most of the time is leapt over. Zarathustra's homecoming is a homecoming to this enlarged self.

> I Zarathustra, the advocate of life, the advocate of suffering, the advocate of the circle, I summon you, my most abysmal thought.
> Hail to me! You are coming, I hear you. My abyss speaks. I have turned my ultimate depth inside out into the light! Hail to me! Come here! Give me your hand! Huh! Let go! Huhuh! Nausea, nausea, nausea — Woe unto me! (PN 328)

Is it the depth that speaks, the *Abgrund*, or only a *Gedanke*, even if it is called the *abgründlichste Gedanke*.

Nietzsche also speaks of a vision rising form the abyss. The thought articulates that vision. It is, I have suggested, a vision of what is as a whole. Is this vision free of the spirit of revenge? Is it not the spirit of revenge that lets Zarathustra, too, leap over man, leap over life? Does the affirmation of life demand renunciation of the whole? Of the vain insistence that one perceive the whole?

I have suggested that the vision of the eternal recurrence is born of love. That love idealizes the beloved. This idealizing love gives birth to the thought of the eternal recurrence. But is such idealization really compatible with full affirmation? The thought of the eternal recurrence is to allow for the most complete affirmation of all that is. As a teacher of the eternal recurrence Zarathustra is to play the part of the great tragic poets. But does that thought really allow us to embrace reality; does it not rather, precisely because it attempts to embrace all of reality, overleap reality? — a thought born of the spirit of revenge?

4

In *Ecce Homo*, as I pointed out, Nietzsche describes the thought of the eternal recurrence as an inspiration. The human being is seized by something higher — or perhaps lower. The abyss speaks. Dionysian being becomes word.

Being becomes Word? Is this thought then the truth? But what then is truth?

First of all, Nietzsche argues, what we take to be true has its measure in inevitably perspectival phenomena. Our world is constituted by our will to power.

This is especially true of our concepts and values. Both are creations of the will to power, which seeks to secure itself by holding on to something firm, by placing itself on a firm foundation. This is how Nietzsche would have us understand Descartes when he makes our ability to perceive something clearly and distinctly the measure of truth. So understood, the insistence that the human being is capable of the truth and on the conditions that make this possible (in the case of Descartes God), has its foundation in the will to power that cannot forgive itself its lack of power, i.e. in the spirit of revenge. But the thought of the eternal recurrence presupposes that the spirit of revenge has been overcome. Must it then not also presuppose an overcoming of truth in the Cartesian Platonic sense?

But once more: what then is truth? All truth, Nietzsche says a number of time, has its foundation in the Will to Power. But Nietzsche also gives us a stronger formulation: Truth he says is a name for the will to power.

What then is will to power. With that term Nietzsche attempts to interpret the meaning of both human being and of being as a movement from chaos to form, using the language of *The Birth of Tragedy* we can say an endless overflowing of chaos into form,

a constant overpowering and being overpowered. Think of a river about to freeze. Nietzsche's understanding may once again be considered the inverse of Plato's. Instead of understanding definition in terms of an imposition of timeless forms on the Heraclitean river, Nietzsche understands it as an emergence of such forms from this river.

As Heidegger points out, of these two conceptions of truth, truth as correspondence and truth as chaos made definite, the latter may be said to be the more fundamental in that it is presupposed by the former: When I call a proposition such as "there is a red book on the table" true, then the red book on the table is understood by Nietzsche as itself the product of a process of definition.

Given this general background we can now distinguish two kinds of truth:

1. Truth born of the will to power unable to forgive itself its lack of power, i. e. truth born of the spirit of revenge. Platonic or Cartesian truth.

2. Truth born of the will to power strong and courageous enough to forgive itself its lack of power, i.e. truth born of grace. Dionysian truth.

In the *Will to Power* Nietzsche calls it childish to insist on clarity and distinctness as a criterion of truth. And just as Nietzsche calls on our will to power to affirm itself in its lack of power, so he calls on us to acknowledge that truth in its deepest sense is given to us only in the subjunctive, conjecturally, in parables. Philosophy, like science, should be experimental.

Let me return now to the thought of the eternal recurrence and ask: in what sense is it true? Is it an experimental truth in the described sense? Somewhat like the conjectures of science?

Yet in a crucial respect the thought of the eternal recurrence is unlike the conjectures of science. In science our will to power is directed outward; we are trying to understand something other. The thought of the eternal recurrence is inseparable from the will to power's attempt to understand its own abysmal being. Here the will to power is struggling to grasp its own essence. It is then not simply a movement from chaos to form but an attempt to think this movement, which is precisely the essence of the will to power. The thought of the eternal recurrence is the result of an attempt to think the essence of being, that essence which Schopenhauer had thought in terms of will, and which we ourselves are. Nietzsche follows Schopenhauer, but cannot divorce the essence of will from time.

What resists such attempts to think being or will is precisely its infinity, its abysmal, Dionysian aspect. The attempt entangles us in Kant's antinomies.

Why not leave it at that? Why insist on thinking the infinite as a whole. Nietzsche here points to love. We transfigure what we love, perfect it, make it whole.

5

The story that Nietzsche tells in the Third Part of Zarathustra is no doubt one that shows Zarathustra struggling with and seeming to overcome the spirit of revenge. But does he really succeed? Consider *The Other Dancing Song* and the *The Seven Seals* with which the book concludes.

The first shows Zarathustra between his two loves, life and wisdom.

> Then life looked back and around thoughtfully and said softly: "O Zarathustra, you are not faithful enough to me. You do not love me nearly as much as you say; I know you are thinking of leaving me soon. There is an old heavy, heavy growl-bell that growls at night all the way up to your cave; when you hear this bell strike the hour at midnight, then you think between one and twelve — you think, O Zarathustra, I know it, of how you want to leave me soon."
>
> "Yes'" I answered hesitantly, "but you also know — " and I whispered something into her ear, right through he tangled yellow foolish tresses.
>
> "You know that, O Zarathustra? Nobody knows that."
>
> And we looked at each other and gazed on the green meadow over which the cool evening sun was running just then, and we wept together. But then life was dearer to me than all my wisdom ever was. (PN 221)

Is it life Zarathustra loves or his wisdom? Remember the melancholy end of the first dancing song.

Whom does Zarathustra love? Every section of *The Seven Seals* ends with the same words?

For I love you, O eternity!

It is not time that Zarathustra loves, but time transfigured into eternity. But is this not the old Platonic theme: we find it impossible to make peace with time and so we retreat from

time to eternity. Zarathustra's wisdom offers him and us a parable of life. It is a parable born of love of life? But is it that parable Zarathustra loves or life?

Must the thought of the eternal recurrence not bring with it a downgrading of all that ties us into time? Of care, anticipation, suffering, — and human love, that love that looks beyond itself, beyond the beloved, to the offspring of that love, to children. Zarathustra (and Nietzsche himself) confess that they never found the woman of whom they want children. But what kind of child can eternity give birth to? The dwarf has already hinted at the answer: the thought that time is a circle. Inseparable from the thought of the eternal recurrence is the thought of the cosmically expanded self. But this expansion of the self is imaginary, is only poetry. The love of Zarathustra would seem to be a barren, narcissistic love.

To test that interpretation consider the *Drunken Song* of the Fourth Part, which offers an interpretation of the *Dancing Song*.

> You vine! Why do you praise me? Did I not cut you? I am cruel, you bleed; what does your praise of my drunken cruelty mean?
> "What is perfect, all that is ripe — wants to die" — thus you speak. Blessed, blessed be the vintager's knife! But all that is unripe wants to live: woe!
>
> Woe entreats: Go! Away, woe! But all that suffers wants to live, so that it may become ripe and joyous and longing — longing for what is farther, higher, brighter. "I want heirs" — thus speaks all that suffers, "I want children, I do not want myself!"
>
> Joy, however, does not want heirs or children — joy wants itself, wants eternity, wants recurrence, wants everything eternally the same.
>
> Woe says, "Break, bleed, heart! Wander, leg! Wing, fly! Get on! Up! Pain! Well then, old heart! Woe implores, "Go!" (PN 434 - 435)

The desire to have children would seem to be subordinated here to the theme of self-affirmation, as woe is subordinated to joy. And, in a very traditional way, joy wants eternity, wants eternal recurrence. The desire to have children is subordinated to a different kind of self-affirmation.

What then are we to make of Zarathustra's *Yes and Amen Song*, this hymn to the eternal recurrence, to this nuptial rings of rings? What kind of wedding is this? The

wedding of eternity and life, where the offspring is the eternal recurrence? Does this offspring have the same status as the traditional idea of eternal life, it too a contradiction? Is Zarathustra, too, just an inventor of another afterworld born of the spirit of revenge? Does he too not cover up reality with the imaginary? Is he, too, only fool, only poet, as the Old Magician sings of himself? (409) But in this song it is not really the old magician who mocks himself, but life. Is life mocking Nietzsche, too?

Remember that in the section *On the Blessed Isles* Zarathustra had said:

> *All that is permanent — that is only a parable. And the poets lie too much.* (PN 198)

Since Nietzsche is referring here to Goethe, let me conclude by referring to one of Goethe's poems, a poem that Schopenhauer refers to in par. 54 as expressing the world view of someone really able to affirm life. Significantly it bears the title *Grenzen der Menschheit*:

Wenn der uralte
Heilige Vater
Mit gelassener Hand
Aus rollenden Wolken
Segnende Blitze
Über die Erde sät,
Küss ich den letzten
Saum seines Kleides,
Kindliche Schauer
Treu in der Brust.

Denn mit Göttern
Soll sich nicht messen
Irgend ein Mensch.
Hebt er sich aufwärts
Und berührt
Mit dem Scheitel die Sterne,
Nirgends haften dann

Die unsichern Sohlen,
Und mit ihm spielen
Wolken und Winde,

Steht er mit festen
Markigen Knochen
Auf der wohglgegründeten
Dauernden Erde,
Reicht er nicht auf,
Nur mit der Eiche
Oder der Rebe
sich zu vergleichen.

Was unterscheidet
Götter von Menschen?
Das viele Wellen
Vor jenen wandeln,
Ein ewiger Strom
Uns hebt die Welle,
Verschlingt die Welle,
Und wir versinken.

Ein kleiner Ring
Begrenzt unser Leben,
Und viele Geschlechter
Reihen sich dauernd
An ihres Daseins
Unendliche Kette.

When the ancient
Holy father

With calm hand
From the rolling clouds
Sends blessed lightning
Over the earth,
I kiss the last
Seam of his cloak
With childlike awe
Deep in my breast.

For with gods
Shall never compete
Mortal Man.
If he lifts himself up
And touches
The stars with his head,
Then nowhere are anchored
His uncertain feet,
And with him sport
The clouds and the wind.

If he stands with firm,
Vigorous bones,
Upon the well-founded
and enduring earth,
He does not reach up
Even to the oak tree,
Or the vine
To compare himself.

What distinguishes
Gods from Men?
That many waves

Pass before them
An eternal stream:
Us the wave lifts;
Devours us,
And we drown.

A small ring
Limits our life,
And many generations
Continously join,
To form their existence's
Endless chain.
(Trans. Emily Ezust, corrected)

"Ein kleiner Ring/ Begrenzt unser Leben" — "A small ring/ Limits our life. Our life is limited. What limits it is first of all death. With Heidegger we can say that the anticipation of death is inseparable from an understanding of my life as my own. Death lets us understand our life as a whole, as a *kleiner Ring*. But granted that it is possible to gather life together into a whole in this way, should we do so? Goethe suggests that the ring be understood as member of a *Kette*, a chain. That chain is not given as a whole. Self-affirmation in the fullest sense demands we affirm ourselves on one hand as limited by the little ring that encloses our life and yet at the same time joined in the chain of generations. That is to insist that genuine homecoming requires an overcoming of the narcissistic eros, requires something like a looking beyond the self to the children. The end of *Zarathustra* gestures uncertainly in this direction:

> "Am I concerned with my happiness? I am concerned with my work."
> "Well then! The lion came, my children are near, Zarathustra has ripened. My hour has come: this is my morning. My day is breaking: rise now, rise now, rise though great noon!"
> Thus spoke Zarathustra, and he left his cave, glowing and strong as a morning sun comes out of dark mountains. (PN 439)