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Nietzsche's Theory of Valuation

by

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**A thesis submitted to the Faculty
of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of the degree of**

Master of Arts

Department of Philosophy

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Abstract

Though he was highly critical of morality, it was Nietzsche's belief that a revaluation of all values was necessary, and, thus, he clearly felt that, though old modes of valuation had to be overcome, some form of valuation would remain. I argue that Nietzsche criticized morality itself, and not just the way in which a particular moral scheme can produce negative effects when it comes to dominate a culture. Nietzsche's criticisms of Kantian morality in particular provide us with a negative definition of what an appropriate mode of valuation would entail. In order to get beyond the purely negative conception of the revaluation of all values which the study of Nietzsche's critique of morality provides, we must turn to Nietzsche's doctrine of the eternal recurrence. In this doctrine, Nietzsche puts forward a framework for a free, non-moral mode of valuation which is best understood in terms of aesthetics and in which the will-to-power takes the form of artistic self-creation.

Table of Contents

Title Page	Page i
Acceptance Form	Page ii
Abstract	Page iii
Table of Contents	Page iv
Introduction	Page 1
Chapter One	Page 4
Chapter Two	Page 33
Section One	Page 33
Section Two	Page 61
Section Three	Page 75
Chapter Three	Page 93
Conclusion	Page 128
Bibliography	Page 132

Introduction

This paper will investigate Nietzsche's critique of morality in order to demonstrate on the one hand, that it is directed against moral theory in general, and on the other hand that Nietzsche advances a theory of valuation which is not moral in nature and which is therefore not subject to his criticisms of moral valuation. It has been recently argued, most notably by Brian Leiter¹, that Nietzsche only criticized certain types of moral theory, rather than morality in general. The first chapter of this paper will deal with this claim of Leiter's in general terms, in order to demonstrate that Nietzsche does in fact criticize morality generally, and that he does not in fact differentiate between what Leiter calls "Morality in the Pejorative Sense" and another, non-pejorative sense of morality. By the end of this chapter, the differences between my position and that of Leiter are shown to be less significant than it may initially seem. The reason for this is that, while Leiter over-emphasizes certain aspects of Nietzsche's critique of morality, much of what he says is quite accurate. However, I believe that Leiter's use of the term "Morality in the Pejorative Sense" is misleading, because it implies that Nietzsche had a non-pejorative sense of morality. In order to demonstrate this, the second chapter undertakes to provide a detailed description of Nietzsche's reasons for criticizing morality.

The second chapter is divided into three sections, each of which deals with a

¹ In "Nietzsche and the Immorality Critics", by Brian Leiter.

different aspect of Nietzsche's critique of morality. In order to provide a context for Nietzsche's rejection of morality, his criticism of Kantian morality is addressed. In the first section of the second chapter, I suggest that Kant approaches morality on two levels. At the first level, Kant analyses morality with the goal of determining what the conditions are under which morality is possible. Though Nietzsche is often highly critical of Kant in his writings, I argue that Nietzsche's critique of morality owes a debt to Kant's work in this regard, because Kant, as a critic of traditional moral theory, has framed the conditions under which morality would be possible and this enables Nietzsche to argue that those conditions do not exist, and therefore that morality itself is impossible. The second level at which Kant approaches morality is more ambitious. Kant intends not only to investigate the criteria for determining whether or not a maxim is a moral one, but also to show how the principle of morality - the categorical imperative - can be determining for rational agents. If Kant were successful in making a case for this second level of his moral theory, it would provide him not simply with a framework for making moral judgements, but also with a way of giving moral judgements practical value. I argue that Nietzsche is even more critical of Kant with regards to his approach at this second level, since Nietzsche feels that there are no universal and necessary "truths" or "values" and thus that it is always inaccurate to claim that an imperative applies to people in other circumstances than our own, or even that it applies to ourselves in every similar set of circumstances. After spelling out the existence of these two Kantian approaches to morality in the first section of Chapter Two, the second and third sections of this chapter will deal with Nietzsche's reasons for rejecting, in section two, the conception that moral imperatives can be universal or necessary, and in section three, the

moral concepts which are required, not only by Kantian morality, but by all moral modes of valuation.

In the third chapter, some of the implications of Nietzsche's criticism are discussed. From the second chapter's discussion of Nietzsche's critique of morality, it becomes clear that, while Nietzsche objects to the moral mode of valuation, he does not in fact believe that valuation itself is impossible. As a result, there is a sense in which Nietzsche advocates a non-moral mode of valuation which represents what he often refers to as "the revaluation of all values". Given its discussion of Nietzsche's specific reasons for rejecting morality, the second chapter will have already provided a sense of what Nietzsche sees as the negative limitations of valuation - which is to say that it will have shown what will not be a part of Nietzsche's non-moral mode of valuation. The goal of the third chapter will then be to trace the positive aspects of Nietzsche's description of valuation. In other words, given that Nietzsche objected to morality, yet felt that valuation was a necessary component of life, the attempt must be made to describe the kind of valuation which Nietzsche felt was in fact worthwhile. In this chapter, it will be argued that Nietzsche advocated a non-moral mode of valuation which is best understood in terms of the highest expression of the will-to-power in artistic self-creation. After describing Nietzsche's views in this regard, the last part of this paper will return to Kant's critical study of morality in order to determine whether or not Kant makes certain criticisms which will affect the claims which Nietzsche makes about non-moral valuation.

Chapter 1

Though Brian Leiter presents a compelling case for the point of view that Nietzsche opposes only certain kinds of morality (what Leiter calls “Morality in the Pejorative Sense²”) and not all possible forms of morality, his account is ultimately flawed in its attempt to discover a type of morality of which he feels Nietzsche would have approved. This chapter will discuss Leiter’s claims in detail and will be used to demonstrate that Nietzsche felt that all moral forms of valuation should be transcended, in order to provide a context for the subsequent chapters, in which the precise nature of a mode of valuation which gets beyond morality will be discussed.

In order to illustrate the flaws in Leiter’s interpretation, it is first necessary to give him his due and to explain why his argument is compelling. The main strength of Leiter’s interpretation of Nietzsche’s attack on morality lies in his depiction of Nietzsche as a critic of moral culture rather than simply a critic of moral theory. Leiter argues that:

what distinguishes Nietzsche...is that he is a genuine critic of *morality* as a real cultural phenomenon, while recent Anglo-American writers are only critics of particular *philosophical theories of morality*. Nietzsche, unlike these writers, situates his critique of morality within a broader “cultural critique” in which morality is attacked as only the most important of a variety of social and cultural forces posing obstacles to human flourishing... Nietzsche is concerned with the condition of a culture, not the shortcomings of a theory, and in

2

This point of view of Leiter’s is outlined in detail in “Morality in the Pejorative Sense: On the Logic of Nietzsche’s Critique of Morality”, British Journal for the History of Philosophy 3 (1995) p. 113-145.

particular with the character and consequences of its moral culture.³

This argument is convincing because of the extent of Nietzsche's criticism of his contemporary culture, one which, in his view, had been tainted by the dominance of the morality of Christianity, as he points out:

*I condemn Christianity, I bring against the Christian Church the most terrible charge any prosecutor has ever uttered. To me it is the extremest unthinkable form of corruption, it has had the will to the ultimate corruption conceivably possible. The Christian Church has left nothing untouched by its depravity, it has made of every value a disvalue, of every truth a lie, of every kind of integrity a vileness of the soul.*⁴

The point that needs to be singled out for special attention in the above quotation is that Nietzsche criticizes Christianity for having caused the ultimate corruption, and that this ultimate corruption involves making every value a disvalue. It would be wrong to oversimplify Nietzsche's extensive and varied criticisms of Christianity, but what is important to note in relation to Leiter's point of view, is that Nietzsche holds Christianity responsible, among other things, for having inverted values so pervasively, that his contemporaries were unable to think freely about them⁵. Pointing out the dominant position of Christian morality, Nietzsche argues that

the decisive sign that reveals that the priest (-including the *concealed*

³ Brian Leiter, "Nietzsche and the Morality Critics", Ethics, January 1997, p. 252.

⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, The Anti-Christ, section 62, page 198, translation R. J. Hollingdale

⁵

This point of view is expressed by Nietzsche in his contention that the influence of Christian morality led subsequent moralists to take the value of morality for granted, when they should, in Nietzsche's view, have started by evaluating morality itself, to see if it is worthwhile.

priest, the philosopher) has become master not only within a certain religious community but in general is that *décadence* morality, the will to the end, counts as morality *in itself*, is the unconditional value everywhere accorded to the unegoistic and the hostility towards the egoistic.⁶

In other words, the dominant moral theory, that of Christianity, has taken the place of morality in itself - other potential interpretations of value are summarily dismissed - and even those who claim to be moralists, are merely trapped inside the narrow confines of the Christian system of values, they are, in Nietzsche's words, "*infected*". This depiction of morality seems to provide some of the impetus for Leiter's account since Nietzsche obviously implies that other forms of morality are possible. However, I will argue that, though Nietzsche does discuss the relative merits of various moral schemes, he does so in the context of his belief that morality by its very nature requires the adoption of certain undesirable and incoherent beliefs and thus that it is morality itself - in all of its forms - which must be transcended.

Ironically, Nietzsche points out, one of the inconsistencies of morality is that it is the nature of a moralist to be immoral. In order to make new laws, it is necessary to consider the old ones to be wrong. Nietzsche argues that "Isn't a moral philosopher the opposite of a Puritan? Namely insofar as he is a thinker who considers morality questionable, as calling

6

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, "Daybreak", section 2, p. 66-67, translation R. J. Hollingdale

7

This is the word Nietzsche uses in *Ecce Homo*, to describe those who do not see the point made in the above citation. Interestingly, Nietzsche points out that, since they do not agree with him on this point, in essence "the whole world" is infected.

for question marks, in short as a problem? Should moralizing not be - immoral?⁸“there is a continual moiling and toiling going on in morality - the effect of *successful crimes* (among which, for example, are included all innovations in moral thinking)⁹”. As Nietzsche points out, history is full of accounts of “freedoers and freethinkers” whose actions, though originally considered immoral, in fact paved the way for changes in morality:

“One has to take back much of the defamation which people have cast upon all those who broke through the spell of a custom by means of a *deed* - in general, they are called criminals. Whoever has overthrown an existing law of custom has hitherto always first been accounted a *bad man*: but when, as did happen, the law could not afterward be reinstated and this fact was accepted, the predicate gradually changed; - history treats almost exclusively of these *bad men* who subsequently became *good men*!¹⁰

The significance of the passage cited above is that it would seem that the potential exists for people to come along who will throw off the burden of Christian morality and, though originally feared and hated, come to redefine the good. There are two questions which need to be addressed with respect to this: firstly, what is it about the Christian moral culture that is most in need of being overthrown, according to Nietzsche, and secondly, would Nietzsche support the new definitions of the good that would come to be as a result of this process. In my opinion, Leiter’s discussion of Nietzsche’s critique of moral culture is excellent at highlighting the reasons for which Nietzsche feels that Christian morality must be

8

Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, section 228, page 157, translation by Walter Kaufmann.

⁹Friedrich Nietzsche, Daybreak, section 98, page 59, translation by R. J. Hollingdale.

¹⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, Daybreak, section 20, p. 18, translation by R. J. Hollingdale

overthrown. However, I feel that Leiter does not adequately deal with the second question, because he does not explicitly discuss the fact that, for Nietzsche, there is no absolute standard of the “good”, and thus, any moral scheme which requires an absolute standard of the “good” must be rejected¹¹.

Nonetheless, both of these questions relate directly to Leiter’s interpretation of the Nietzschean attack on morality, since Leiter’s answer to the first question determines his response to the second question. Though, as mentioned above, Nietzsche’s criticisms of Christianity in general, and of Christian morality in particular are extensive and varied, there is a particular area of Nietzsche’s attack on Christian morality which Leiter chooses to highlight. According to Leiter:

Any particular morality will...be an *MPS* [morality in the pejorative sense] for Nietzsche if it:

i) presupposes certain *particular* descriptive claims about the nature of human agents: for example that agents act freely and thus are responsible for what they do (“the Descriptive Component”)

and/or

ii) embodies a normative agenda which benefits the ‘lowest’ human beings while harming the ‘highest’ (“the Normative Component”)

11

At this point, the question can be raised as to whether or not Nietzsche would condone a moral scheme which does not have an absolute standard of the “good”. The rest of this paper will be devoted to the explanation of Nietzsche’s various reasons for rejecting morality. Unfortunately, Nietzsche is not consistent in his use of the term “moral”, and thus, it is not possible to simply provide a specific definition of what Nietzsche means by the term “morality”. However, the reasons that Nietzsche provides for rejecting morality, when taken together, as they are in this paper, do provide sufficient evidence that Nietzsche advocates a theory of valuation which he believes is not a moral theory of valuation.

Note, first, that these two components are not of equal importance for Nietzsche, for what ultimately defines an MPS as against morality in a nonpejorative sense is the distinctive moral agenda.¹²

In the above passage, Leiter describes the reasons for which a morality will be a morality in the pejorative sense according to Nietzsche. What this means is that Leiter thinks that Nietzsche believed in a non-pejorative sense of morality. I dispute this claim, though I do not think that Leiter's position is completely at odds with my own. As we see from the passage cited above, Leiter claims that Nietzsche's main condemnation of moral schemes comes about when they benefit the "lowest" human beings at the expense of the "highest". I agree that Nietzsche criticizes certain moral schemes for this very reason, but I think that it is wrong to place too much emphasis on this aspect of Nietzsche's critique of morality. Though benefiting the interests of the "lowest" human beings at the expense of the "highest" may be one of Nietzsche's main reasons for criticizing Christian morality as it came to be expressed in European culture, he has other reasons for criticizing morality which are not related strictly to the effects of a particular moral scheme. The gap between Leiter's position and my own is not very large, because Nietzsche's other reasons for rejecting morality include the fact, highlighted by Leiter in part (i) of the preceding citation, that moral schemes presuppose certain particular descriptive claims. In my opinion, Nietzsche rejects morality in general, on the one hand, because all moral schemes require that their descriptive claims be absolutely true, a requirement which is incompatible with Nietzsche's perspectivism - which is incompatible with the notion of absolute truth; and, on the other hand, because moral schemes involve the justification of values based upon external

¹² Brian Leiter, "Nietzsche and the Morality Critics", p. 263

standards, a method of justification which, in Nietzsche's view, is ultimately incoherent. These issues will be discussed in more detail in the subsequent chapters, but for now, we will deal with Leiter's argument specifically.

In defence of point (ii) in the passage cited on the previous page, Leiter presents a good case. He argues that:

Nietzsche identifies a variety of normative positions - what we may characterize simply as "pro" and "con" attitudes - as constituting the distinctive normative component of MPS. So for example, a morality will be an MPS if it embraces any one or more of the following sorts of normative views: 1 Pro: Happiness; Con: Suffering. 2 Pro: Altruism or selflessness; Con: Self-love or self-interest. 3 Pro: Equality; Con: Inequality. 4. Pro: Pity; Con: Indifference to the suffering.¹³

Leiter goes on to assert that:

Nietzsche's criticisms consist of two parts: a) with respect to the Pro-Object, Nietzsche argues either (i) that the Pro-Object has no *intrinsic* value (in the cases where MPS claims it does) or (ii) that it does not have any or not nearly as much *extrinsic* value as MPS treats it as having; and b) With respect to the Con-Object, Nietzsche argues only that the Con-Objects are *extrinsically* valuable for the cultivation of human excellence and that this is obscured by the "con" attitude endorsed by MPS¹⁴.

Leiter does seem to have a point in highlighting this feature of Nietzsche's critique of morality. Nietzsche argues that:

For every strong and natural species of man, love and hate, gratitude and revenge, good nature and anger, affirmative acts and negative acts, belong together. One is good on condition one also knows how to be evil; one is evil because otherwise one would not understand how to be good. Whence, then, comes the sickness and ideological unnaturalness that rejects this doubleness - that teaches that it is a

¹³ Brian Leiter, "Nietzsche and the Morality Critics", p. 267

¹⁴ Brian Leiter, "Nietzsche and the Morality Critics", p. 268

higher thing to be efficient on only one side?...The demand is that man should castrate himself of those instincts with which he can be an enemy, can cause harm, can be angry, can demand revenge - this unnaturalness corresponds, then, to that dualistic conception of a merely good and a merely evil creature (God, spirit, man); in the former are summarized all the positive, in the latter all the negative forces, intentions, states....Much labor has been expended in all ages and especially in the Christian ages, to reduce mankind to this half-sided efficiency, to the "good": even today there is no lack of those deformed and weakened by the church for whom this object coincides with "humanization" in general, or with the "will of God", or with "salvation of the soul". The essential demand here is that mankind should do nothing evil, that it should under no circumstances do harm or desire to do harm.¹⁵

Clearly then, Nietzsche advocates, as Leiter points out, a rejection of any morality that devalues qualities such as self-love and anger (which can, according to Nietzsche, be extrinsically valuable) simply because they are considered "evil".

Although I agree with Leiter that Nietzsche rejects moral schemes because they falsely ascribe intrinsic value to things which are only extrinsically valuable in certain circumstances and because they falsely accuse certain qualities of being "evil" when those qualities can be extrinsically valuable, I think that the reason for this is that Nietzsche denies that there is such a thing as intrinsic value in the sense which morality requires. In other words, "goodness" can only be measured in terms of a particular standard, not absolutely as a pure concept, and "evil" cannot exist insofar as it is meant to represent that which is bad in and of itself. Nietzsche argues that:

To think a thing evil means to make it evil. - The passions become evil and malicious if they are regarded as evil and malicious. Thus

¹⁵

Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 351, p. 192, translation by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale.

Christianity has succeeded in transforming Eros and Aphrodite - great powers capable of idealisation - into diabolical kobolds and phantoms by means of the torments it introduces into the consciences of believers whenever they are excited sexually. Is it not dreadful to make necessary and regularly recurring sensations into a source of inner misery, and in this way to want to make inner misery a necessary and regularly recurring phenomenon *in every human being!*¹⁶

Interestingly, Nietzsche himself emphasizes that it is “every human being” who will suffer as a result of the misleading belief that the sexual passions are evil. This emphasis does not seem to go along with the point of view of Leiter, that Nietzsche criticizes morality only so long as it goes against the interests of the highest kind of human being, since it would appear that Nietzsche refers to a process by which every human being is made miserable. In other words, it is the action of turning regularly recurring sensations into a source of inner misery that turns inner misery itself into a necessary and regularly recurring phenomenon. From this it is clear that Nietzsche’s criticism of morality does not explicitly require an acceptance of the point of view that there really are two kinds of people - the higher and the lower - and that morality is only wrong in the context of these two kinds of people.

One point that Leiter makes is to emphasize his belief that Nietzsche’s critique of morality centres around the notion that certain moral cultures are detrimental to the cultivation of human excellence. Leiter argues that :

what unifies Nietzsche’s seemingly disparate critical remarks - about altruism, happiness, pity, equality, Kantian respect for persons, utilitarianism, and so on - is that he thinks a culture in which such norms prevail as morality will be a culture which eliminates the conditions for the realization of human excellence, the latter requiring, on Nietzsche’s view, concern with the self, suffering, a certain stoic indifference, a sense of hierarchy and difference, and the like. Indeed

¹⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, Daybreak, section 76, p. 45, translation by R. J. Hollingdale

when we turn to the *details* of Nietzsche's criticisms of these various norms we find that, in fact, he focuses precisely on how they are inhospitable to human excellence.¹⁷

While I agree with Leiter's argument that Nietzsche opposes the culture in which moral norms prevail for precisely the reasons outlined above, I take exception to Leiter's claim that Nietzsche would support a "non-pejorative" sense of morality which would not hinder the realization of human excellence. I think that "what unifies Nietzsche's seemingly disparate critical remarks - about altruism, happiness, pity, equality, Kantian respect for persons, utilitarianism, and so on" is that, while all of these qualities can perhaps be useful in certain circumstances, it is wrong to think of them as having intrinsic value and thus it is wrong to think of them as being, in every case, a worthwhile motivation for action. The problem with moral schemes is that they rely upon the absolute value of such concepts as altruism, and happiness, in the sense that moral schemes need these concepts to have value in every possible case and outside of the circumstances in which they are applied. The reason for this is that, if a moral theory such as utilitarianism is to serve as a standard by which actions are judged, then it must have value external to the actions themselves. Since, in Nietzsche's view, the actions themselves are all that exist, then it is always wrong to judge an action according to some external standard¹⁸.

¹⁷ Brian Leiter, "Nietzsche and the Morality Critics", p. 265.

¹⁸

The exact nature of Nietzsche's claim that there is nothing outside of the actions themselves will be addressed later in this paper, but for now, what is important to note here is that one of the things which unifies Nietzsche's seemingly disparate criticisms of moral theories is that, for Nietzsche, moral valuation relies upon concepts which are external to the actions themselves, and thus moral valuations cannot have the immediacy which Nietzsche feels a legitimate theory of valuation must have.

I maintain the position that Nietzsche criticizes all forms of moral theory because they are internally inconsistent for reasons such as the one discussed in the preceding paragraph, however I will admit that, at first glance, Leiter seems to have some evidence to uphold his interpretation. Leiter refers, for instance, to Nietzsche's claims about how moralities treat happiness and suffering. "According to Nietzsche, the "spirit" of Morality in the Pejorative Sense is that happiness is good and suffering bad.¹⁹" This attitude is problematic for Nietzsche, Leiter argues, because "happiness is not an intrinsically valuable end; men who aim for it - directly or through cultivating the dispositions that lead to it - would be 'ridiculous and contemptible'²⁰"; and because "*suffering* is positively necessary for the cultivation of human excellence²¹". Thus, Leiter argues, Nietzsche believes that morality in a pejorative sense does harm to the "highest human beings" on two counts: by falsely granting intrinsic value to happiness and by denying the extrinsic value of suffering. Leiter's support for this argument comes from several passages in Nietzsche, which at first seem to lend credence to his claims. Upon further study, however, a discrepancy reveals itself.

Though Leiter's argument revolves around what he calls "morality in the pejorative sense", the passages he cites with reference to Nietzsche's attitudes towards the respective values of happiness and suffering make no reference to the so-called "highest human beings". Since Leiter had earlier argued that "any particular morality will, in turn, be a

¹⁹ Brian Leiter, "Nietzsche and the Morality Critics", p. 268

²⁰Brian Leiter, "Nietzsche and the Morality Critics", p. 269.

²¹Brian Leiter, "Nietzsche and the Morality Critics", p. 269.

‘morality in the pejorative sense’ for Nietzsche if it....embodies a normative agenda which benefits the ‘lowest’ human beings while harming the ‘highest’²²”, it would seem that Nietzsche’s criticisms of a moral system with regards to its treatment of happiness and suffering would have to make reference to the “lowest” and the “highest” human beings in order to constitute a “morality in the pejorative sense”. Leiter uses the following citations to support this part of his argument:

Are we not, with this tremendous objective of obliterating all the sharp edges of life, well on the way to turning mankind into *sand*? Sand! Small, soft, round, unending sand! Is that your ideal, you heralds of the sympathetic affections?²³

and:

The discipline of suffering, of *great* suffering - do you not know that only *this* discipline has created all enhancements of man so far? That tension of the soul in unhappiness which cultivates its strength...[W]hatever has been granted to [the human soul] of profundity, secret, mask, spirit, cunning, greatness - was it not granted to it through suffering, through the discipline of great suffering?²⁴

Nietzsche does not mention the idea of greater or lesser human beings in either of these passages, rather his words seem to describe humanity in general and human qualities which everyone possesses to some degree. This is not to say that Nietzsche does not believe that morality is in fact a detriment to the cultivation of human excellence, rather it suggests that

²²Brian Leiter, “Nietzsche and the Morality Critics”, p. 263.

²³

Brian Leiter, “Nietzsche and the Morality Critics”, p. 268, from Daybreak, section 174, translation R. J. Hollingdale

²⁴

Brian Leiter, “Nietzsche and the Morality Critics”, p. 269, from Beyond Good and Evil, sections 225 and 270.

Nietzsche believed that it was at least theoretically possible for all human beings to cultivate “profundity, secret, mask, spirit, cunning, greatness”, if they are not limited by the restrictions of morality. The question then becomes, does Nietzsche truly make a distinction between what Leiter calls “morality in the pejorative sense” and some other, positive sense of morality; or does Nietzsche in fact feel that morality by its very nature is detrimental to the development of superior human abilities?

This question of course hinges upon the way in which Nietzsche interprets the meaning of the word “morality”. In contrast to the point of view taken by Leiter - that “Nietzsche uses the word ‘morality’ (*Moral*) in both positive and negative senses²⁵” - I argue that Nietzsche does consistently view ‘morality’ in a negative sense. This interpretation is based in part upon the fact that Nietzsche felt that he was the first person to truly study “morality” critically, or at least the first person to make a wholehearted attempt to determine the value of “morality” itself:

I have never yet encountered anybody, not even in books, who approached morality in this personal way and who knew morality as a problem, and this problem as his own personal distress, torment, voluptuousness, and passion? It is evident that up to now morality was no problem at all but, on the contrary, precisely that on which after all mistrust, discord, and contradiction one could agree...I see nobody who ventured a *critique* of moral valuations...The mistake made by the more refined among [historians of morality] is that they uncover and criticize the perhaps foolish opinions of people about their morality, or of humanity about all human morality - opinions about its origin, religious sanction, the superstition of free will, and things of that sort - and then suppose that they have criticized the morality itself...Thus nobody up to now has examined the *value* of that most famous of all medicines which is called morality; and the first step would be - for

²⁵Brian Leiter, “Nietzsche and the Morality Critics”, p. 263.

once to *question* it. Well then precisely this is our task-²⁶

Unfortunately, Nietzsche was not as systematic in pursuing this task as one might have hoped he would be. Nonetheless, it is possible to discern two points that Nietzsche makes consistently about morality which seem to constitute the thrust of his criticism: firstly that morality in practice places restrictions upon the actions of moral agents, thereby limiting their freedom and thus their potential for growth, and secondly that morality, by its very nature, causes people to make false and misleading generalizations about the value of certain human actions, qualities, and mental states, when in fact, the value of any of these things relies upon their context and thus must be evaluated immanently, and not in terms of a general standard of valuation.

On the first point, Nietzsche states quite simply that:

morality is nothing other (therefore *no more!*) than obedience to customs, of whatever kind they may be; customs, however, are the *traditional* way of behaving and evaluating. In things in which no tradition commands there is no morality; and the less life is determined by tradition, the smaller the circle of morality. The free human being is immoral because in all things he is *determined* to depend upon himself and not upon a tradition: in all the original conditions of mankind, 'evil' signifies the same as 'individual', 'free', 'capricious', 'unforeseen', 'incalculable'.²⁷

26

Friedrich Nietzsche, The Gay Science, section 345, page 283-5, translated by Walter Kaufmann

27

Friedrich Nietzsche, Daybreak, section 9, page 10, translated by R. J. Hollingdale, though Nietzsche in this passage uses a very limited and precise definition of morality: "obedience to customs", this is not the only possible interpretation of morality, nor is it the only one which Nietzsche himself uses. Though Nietzsche clearly opposes the rigid tradition based form of morality, I argue that this is not the only form of morality which he objects to, as is shown in the rest of this paper.

Immorality is thereby associated with freedom by Nietzsche, since to be immoral means to be self-justified - i.e. to depend upon oneself and not upon a tradition. The significance of this claim will be discussed in Chapter Three, but what is important to note in the context of Leiter's argument is Nietzsche's view that morality, as it becomes expressed in culture, exerts a powerful influence on all of those who come under its sway. This leads to the ironic twist that: "if an action is performed *not* because tradition commands it but for other motives (because of its usefulness to the individual, for example), even indeed for precisely the motives which once founded the tradition, it is called immoral and is felt to be so by him who performed it: for it was not performed in obedience to tradition."²⁸ What is important to note is that Nietzsche is not necessarily opposed to the original motives for which a moral system was developed; rather he is opposed to the fact that morality causes people to lose sight of those original motives and to simply follow tradition when they ought to make value judgements in accordance with each situation as it arises. In addition, Nietzsche points out that even the moral agent feels that he has acted immorally, thus revealing the fact that, in his opinion, the negative effects of morality are so pervasive that they have an impact even on those who seem to be able to see beyond their moral systems. The ability of morality to cloud the judgement of even the moral agent is referred to again by Nietzsche when he argues that:

It is not only the spectators of an act who assess its morality or immorality according to whether or not it is successful: no the performer himself does so. For the motives and intentions behind it are seldom sufficiently clear and simple, and sometimes even the memory seems to be muddled by the success of an act, so that one

²⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, Daybreak, section 9, page 10, translated by R. J. Hollingdale

foists false motives upon one's act oneself, or treats inessential motives as essential.²⁹

Once again in this passage, Nietzsche attacks the heart of morality by questioning the motives of actions, and illustrating that even were it worthwhile to judge actions based upon their motives - as a deontological moral theory does - it is often impossible to accurately discern one's own motivations, let alone the motivations of others. In effect this calls into question the very practice of morality - or at least of certain kinds of morality.

Though Nietzsche is extremely adept at pointing out the hidden motivations behind actions which were seemingly done for moral motives³⁰, this by no means represents the whole of his critique of morality. Nietzsche is making a more sophisticated critique of morality than would be the case if he were simply denying that people ever were truly moral in their actions:

'To deny morality' - this can mean, *first*: to deny that the moral motives which men *claim* to have inspired their actions really have done so...*Then* it can mean: to deny that moral judgements are based on truths. Here it is admitted that they really are motives of action, but that in this way it is *errors* which, as the basis of all moral judgement impel men to their moral actions. This is *my* point of view...Thus I deny morality as I deny alchemy, that is, I deny their premises: but I do *not* deny that there have been alchemists who believed in these premises and acted in accordance with them. - I also deny immorality: *not* that countless people *feel* themselves to be immoral, but there is any *true* reason so to feel. It goes without saying that I do not deny - unless I am a fool - that many actions called immoral ought to be avoided and resisted, or that many called moral ought to be done and encouraged - but I think the one should be encouraged and the other

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Friedrich Nietzsche, Human, All too Human, chapter 2, section 68, page 44, translated by R. J. Hollingdale

³⁰ See for example, Chapter 2, Section 57 of Human, All too Human.

*avoided for reasons other than hitherto.*³¹

It is clear from the above citation that Nietzsche argues that moral reasons are not valid for determining what actions ought to be taken, but in order to determine what “other reasons” he might have in mind, it is necessary to pin down exactly what Nietzsche thinks “moral” reasons are.

As mentioned above, it is part of the nature of morality that it is a source of restrictions, according to Nietzsche; and Nietzsche clearly opposes these restrictions:

Morality makes stupid - Custom represents the experiences of men of earlier times as to what they supposed useful and harmful - but the *sense for custom* (morality) applies, not to these experiences as such, but to the age, the sanctity, the indiscussability of the custom. And so this feeling is a hindrance to the acquisition of new experiences and the correction of customs: that is to say morality is a hindrance to the creation of new and better customs: it makes stupid.³²

In contrast to the bluntness of the above passage, Nietzsche seems in some places to hold a somewhat ambivalent view as to the usefulness of the hindrances which morality creates for human beings, as is demonstrated by this passage from Human, All too Human:

The beast within us wants to be lied to; morality is an official lie told so that it shall not tear us to pieces. Without the errors that repose in the assumptions of morality man would have remained animal. As it is, he has taken himself for something higher and imposed sterner laws upon himself.³³

Contrary to many of Nietzsche’s descriptions of morality, the above passage would seem to

³¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, Daybreak, section 103, page 60, translated by R. J. Hollingdale

³² Friedrich Nietzsche, Daybreak, section 19, page 19, translated by R. J. Hollingdale

³³

Friedrich Nietzsche, Human, All too Human, chapter 2, section 40, page 35, translated by R. J. Hollingdale.

suggest that morality can be beneficial to man - though he does still maintain that the assumptions of morality rest on errors. The seemingly positive thrust of the above description of morality can be explained by the fact that, for Nietzsche at least, the denial of the “animal side” of ourselves is not actually a good thing:

I am *glad* about the military development of Europe; also of the internal states of anarchy: the time of repose and Chinese ossification, which Galiani predicted for this century, is over. Personal *manly* *virtu*, *virtu* of the body, is regaining value, estimation becomes more physical, nutrition meatier. Beautiful men are again becoming possible. Pallid hypocrisy...is over. The barbarian in each of us is affirmed; also the wild beast.³⁴

Since Nietzsche felt that morality’s assumptions were based on errors, one way to understand the negative view that he takes of morality is to figure out exactly what these errors are. As argued above, morality errs in practice, when it denies the freedom of moral agents by restricting their actions directly or by causing them to call into question the motives for their actions. At this point, it is important to ask what Nietzsche’s conception of “freedom” is, since it is of such a great importance for his moral theory. This topic is so complex, that it will be addressed in detail in both of the subsequent chapters. Specifically, in the third section of Chapter Two we will look at Nietzsche’s criticism of the Kantian notions of “free will” and of “autonomy” in order to illustrate what Nietzsche considers to be an inaccurate depiction of human freedom. In the third chapter, we will positively describe what Nietzsche’s conception of freedom was. For now, let it just be said that Nietzsche thinks that one of the features of moral schemes is that they can restrict the

34

Friedrich Nietzsche, Will-to-Power, section 127, page 78, translated by R. J. Hollingdale and Walter Kaufmann

freedom of those who ascribe to them. This allows us to continue the current discussion in general terms, and to determine whether the restriction of freedom is a necessary feature of morality (which is what I believe Nietzsche's position to be) or whether the restriction of freedom is a feature of certain kinds of morality (what Leiter calls "morality in the pejorative sense") and therefore that Nietzsche would have no objection to a moral system which did not restrict freedom in this way.

One of the main reasons that thinking morally restricts freedom, according to Nietzsche, is because it causes us to make false and misleading generalizations about the value of human actions, qualities and mental states. Although it does not receive a systematic and thorough treatment, this argument clearly emerges when Nietzsche's various comments on morality are considered together. In essence, Nietzsche makes the argument that the normative claims of morality are based upon generalizations which are misguided for two reasons: firstly because they lead the moralist to apply personal standards to all of humanity; and secondly because they lead the moralist to make a judgement about the essence or intrinsic qualities of objects based upon a finite - and often small - set of experiences with those objects. It is the first of these reasons which receives the most direct support from Nietzsche, and so it will be addressed first.

In many places Nietzsche criticizes moral theories for implying that there is a set of universal human standards, since he feels that any worthwhile value judgement will be personal and immediate, and thus cannot apply to anyone else or at any other time. In Thus Spake Zarathustra, for instance, he intones: "he has discovered himself who says: This is *my* good and evil: he has silenced thereby the mole and dwarf who says: 'Good for all, evil for

all'³⁵". Further, he states: "'This - is now *my* way: where is yours?' Thus I answered those who asked me 'the way'. For *the* way - does not exist!³⁶". More evidence of this belief can also be found:

A virtue has to be *our* invention, *our* most personal defence and necessity: in any other sense it is merely a danger. What does not condition our life *harms* it: a virtue merely from a feeling of respect for the concept 'virtue', as Kant desired it, is harmful. 'Virtue', 'duty', 'good in itself', impersonal and universal - phantoms, expressions of decline, of the final exhaustion of life, of Königsbergian Chinadom. The profoundest laws of preservation and growth demand the reverse of this: that each one of us should devise *his own* virtue, *his own* categorical imperative.³⁷

In a telling passage, Nietzsche even implies that his personal standards of value - the freedom of the spirit which he refers to in such glowing terms in many of the above passages - are not meant to serve as the standards for all people: "Whatever kind of bizarre ideal one may follow (e.g. as 'Christian' or as 'free spirit' or as 'immoralist' or as *Reichsdeutscher*), one should not demand that it be *the* ideal: for one therewith takes from it its privileged character. One should have it in order to distinguish oneself, not in order to level oneself.³⁸"

Because a proper, non-moral mode of valuation makes value judgements relative to the

35

Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathustra, 'Of the Spirit of Gravity', page 212, translated by R. J. Hollingdale

36

Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathustra, 'Of the Spirit of Gravity', page 212, translated by R. J. Hollingdale

37

Friedrich Nietzsche, The Anti-Christ, section 11, page 133, translated by R. J. Hollingdale

38

Friedrich Nietzsche, Will-to-Power, section 349, page 190-191, translated by R. J. Hollingdale and Walter Kaufmann

context of the action which is judged, one cannot expect to be able to extend one's valuations to the actions of other people. There is no "good" outside of action, because "*the good*", like "*the way*", does not exist. Just as a work of art can be "beautiful", but cannot represent "*the beautiful*", so too, for Nietzsche, a person can consider something to be "good", but they cannot consider that thing to represent "*the good*". It is not immediately obvious that Nietzsche proposes an aesthetic mode of valuation in place of the moral, and so this idea will be developed as the essay progresses, but it is important to see, even at this point, the way in which Nietzsche associates creation with valuation when he refers to virtue as "an invention".

In addition to the mistake that morality makes in universally applying what ought to be a purely personal value judgement, Nietzsche also argues that it is wrong for morality to make general conclusions about the intrinsic value and the essence of various human traits simply based upon a set of particular experiences with those traits:

Is the *origin of all morality* not to be sought in the detestable petty conclusions: 'what harms *me* is something *evil* (harmful in itself); what is useful *to me* is something *good* (beneficent and advantageous in itself); what harms me *once or several times* is the inimical as such and in itself; what is useful to me *once or several times* is the friendly as such and in itself'...Does that not mean; to imagine that the paltry, occasional, often chance *relationship* of another with oneself is his *essence* and most essential being, and to assert that with the whole world and with himself he is capable only of those relationships we have experienced with him once or several times? And does there not repose behind this veritable folly the most immodest of all secret thoughts: that because good and evil are measured according to our reactions, we ourselves must constitute the principle of the good?³⁹

In this extremely powerful passage, Nietzsche makes a very potent criticism of morality.

³⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, Daybreak, section 102, page 60, translated by R. J. Hollingdale

The fact that morality requires us to immodestly believe that “we ourselves must constitute the principle of the good”, in my opinion, undermines morality’s objectivity and thereby deals it a serious blow. Though most moral philosophers believe that they are developing an objective argument in order to determine what people ought to do, Nietzsche argues that the entire process is suspect because of its attempt to argue from an often small, but always finite set of experiences to a universal statement about the intrinsic value of certain objects such as altruism, duty and happiness. As we will see in Section Two of Chapter Two, all knowledge, in Nietzsche’s view, is a form of valuation, and, thus, as an expression of a value judgement, knowledge itself depends upon perspective. Moral schemes will always fail insofar as they require universal and necessary grounds for their imperatives, since it is impossible even for knowledge itself, to be necessary, according to Nietzsche.

Part of the problem with morality, Nietzsche argues, is that, in morality, the original feelings of desire and aversion that we naturally develop, become stifled and altered by the intellectual concepts which moral theories lead us to adopt. These moral feelings thereby lose their immediacy:

It is clear that moral feelings are transmitted in this way: children observe in adults inclinations for and aversions to certain actions and, as born apes, *imitate* these inclinations and aversions; in later life, they find themselves full of these acquired and well-exercised affects and consider it only decent to try to account for and justify them. This ‘accounting’, however, has nothing to do with either the origin or the degree of intensity of the feeling: all one is doing is complying with the rule that, as a rational being, one has to have reasons for one’s For and Against, and that they have to be adducible and acceptable reasons. To this extent the history of moral feelings is quite different from the history of moral concepts. The former are powerful *before* the action, the latter especially after the action in face of the need to pronounce

upon it.⁴⁰

The passage cited above highlights one of the reasons why Nietzsche's revaluation of all values is best seen as a rejection of moral values in favour of a mode of valuation akin to the aesthetic. It simply does not make sense to demand an accounting of aesthetic valuations. One does not try to explain the reasons for which one feels that something is beautiful, beyond noticing certain similarities in the various things which one considers to be beautiful. Thus we may develop patterns of taste whereby certain categories of thing will appeal to us, but we understand and expect that there will be anomalies. In much the same way, Nietzsche argues, we have certain "moral feelings" which we experience and from which it may be possible to predict what moral feelings we can expect to have in a given situation. The mistake that is made in a moral scheme is that we develop "moral concepts" to justify and to account for these feelings, and then, eventually, we force the feelings themselves to match the concepts. One result of this psychological process on moralists is that they end up developing moral theories which simply serve to rationalize the views which they already hold:

Consider, for example, the indefatigable, inevitable British utilitarians, how they walk clumsily and honorably in Bentham's footsteps...not a new idea, no trace of a subtler version or twist of an old idea, not even a real history of what had been thought before...Ultimately they all want *English* morality to be proved right - because this serves humanity best, or 'the general utility' or 'the happiness of the greatest number' - no, the happiness of *England*. With all their powers they want to prove to themselves that the striving for *English* happiness - I mean for the comfort and fashion (and at best a seat in Parliament) is at the same time also the right way to virtue; indeed that whatever virtue has existed in the world so far must have consisted in such

⁴⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, Daybreak, section 34, page 25, translated by R. J. Hollingdale

striving.⁴¹

While the specific reference in the above passage is to British utilitarianism, it also reflects Nietzsche's view that morality by its very nature constitutes a misguided attempt to justify one's personal feelings and reactions by adopting the triply mistaken conclusion that those feelings are the result of an accurate assessment of the true nature of the object or person that caused the reaction, that that person or object will always cause that same reaction, and that all human beings, when in similar circumstances, will share our reaction to that person or object.

Based upon this assessment of Nietzsche's views, it seems that it is morality itself which is seen to be the problem and not that there could be a kind of morality - what Leiter terms "morality in the non-pejorative sense" which Nietzsche would support. Leiter owes his interpretation to the belief that:

the heart of Nietzsche's complaint is simply that morality in the pejorative sense has a *deleterious effect on higher types* (i.e. those who manifest human excellence). It is true that Nietzsche also seems to think that morality in the pejorative sense is in the interests of other persons - "lower men" - but this by itself is *not* objectionable; recall that Nietzsche says, "The ideas of the herd should rule in the herd but not reach out beyond it". It is this "reaching out beyond," then that is at issue because it is this that *harms* "higher men". If there were a social order in which morality in the pejorative sense existed - and in which it served the interests of "lower" types - without having any effects on potentially "higher men", then one would imagine that Nietzsche should have no objections.⁴²

41

Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, section 228, page 156-157, translated by Walter Kaufmann.

⁴²Brian Leiter, "Nietzsche and the Morality Critics", p. 266, footnote 37.

I agree with Leiter that one of Nietzsche's main complaints against Christian morality in particular is that it "has a deleterious effect on higher types", but I disagree with his claim that Nietzsche would have no objection to a moral scheme that "served the interests of the 'lower' types - without having any effects on potentially 'higher men'". The reason for this is that Nietzsche believes that morality goes against human freedom. Although Nietzsche uses a variety of definitions of "morality", they share in common the notion that a moral scheme includes a set of prescriptive rules which ought to be adopted. Nietzsche does not object to valuation in general - or else he could not have called for a revaluation of values - but he does object to the moral mode of valuation because he feels that it involves the use of external concepts in order to judge actions when those actions can only have value internally. The actions themselves are all that exists, he argues⁴³, and so the act of subsuming our valuation under any external standard is necessarily incoherent. For Nietzsche, morality, by its very nature, restricts our freedom thus preventing us from becoming what he calls "free spirits". In order to justify this argument, it is necessary to look at Nietzsche's interpretation of freedom and at how this conception of freedom relates to his notion of the "higher" type of man. Nietzsche's concept of freedom will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, but before it is addressed, it is important to shed some light on the reasons that Leiter seems to over-emphasize the notion of 'higher' and 'lower' types of man in his account of Nietzsche's criticism of morality.

43

Nietzsche's claim that only the actions themselves exist is a complicated one, and as a result it will be addressed in detail later in this paper (in Section 3 of Chapter 2). For now, it is important merely to be aware of the fact that Nietzsche held this belief.

One argument which could be made in defence of Leiter's point of view must still be considered, though it is ultimately unconvincing. This defence of Leiter's position would hold that Nietzsche advocated a kind of a bipartite moral system whereby there were two moralities: one for the herd and one for the "higher men". Under this interpretation, morality in a non-pejorative sense would embody the morality of the "higher men" and would not be harmful to them because it was operating in their interests, as opposed to the morality of the herd which operated in the interests of the herd. While it is unclear whether or not Leiter himself holds this position, it is consistent with his doctrine of morality in the non-pejorative sense, and it would receive some textual support from Nietzsche in passages such as this one:

None of these ponderous herd animals with their unquiet consciences (who undertake to advocate the cause of egoism as the cause of the general welfare) wants to know or even sense that "the general welfare" is no ideal, no goal, no remotely intelligible concept, but only an emetic - that what is fair for one *cannot* by any means for that reason alone also be fair for others; that the demand of one morality for all is detrimental to the higher men; in short that there is an order of rank between man and man, hence also between morality and morality.⁴⁴

This citation seems to lend credence to Leiter's argument, given the fact that it seems to indicate that the problem for the higher men is not morality itself, but rather "the demand of one morality for all". There are, however, two considerations which go against this point of view: one involves a practical issue, the other is theoretical in nature. The first of these considerations involves a point which we have already discussed: that the influence of

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Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, section 228, page 157, translated by Walter Kaufmann.

morality is, according to Nietzsche, quite powerful and pervasive. Under Nietzsche's view, moral schemes are a form of will-to-power. As such, they try to exert themselves as much as they can. The practical effect of this belief is that a morality of the "lowest" human type, inasmuch as it seeks to exert itself as will-to-power, would be driven to dominate the "highest" type of human. This is the process through which Nietzsche feels the morality of the weaker, "slavish" element in Europe won out over the more noble element through the rise of Christianity⁴⁵. Thus it is Nietzsche's view that, in practice, moralities will come into conflict and also that the morality of the supposedly "lower" element of man can exert a deleterious influence over the "higher" element. What this means is that, practically speaking, it would seem that Nietzsche would find it impossible for a moral scheme to limit its influence to those who will not be harmed by it.

From a theoretical point of view, Nietzsche does not advocate the adoption of a morality which would not be harmful to the "higher" type of man, because such a view would be inconsistent with his desire to get beyond morality and beyond humanity altogether. Though Nietzsche is highly critical, as Leiter points out, of moral schemes which sacrifice the "strong" for the sake of the "weak", Nietzsche does not advocate the replacement of these schemes with a kind of moral theory which benefits the "strong" type of man. Instead, Nietzsche argues that morality produces a situation in which people are taught not to think for themselves. In other words, the effect of morality is to cause people to adopt a static set of values and thereby to prevent them from dynamically creating their

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This depiction of the rise of Christian morality is outlined in detail in the first essay of The Genealogy of Morals

own. As it should by now be clear, the gap between my position and that of Leiter is not as wide as it might have initially appeared. In Leiter's own words:

the normative component of an MPS is harmful not because its specific prescriptions and proscriptions explicitly require potentially excellent persons to forgo that which allows them to flourish...Rather, Nietzsche's claim is that an MPS *in practice* simply does not make such fine distinctions: under a regime of MPS values - and importantly because of MPS's embrace of the idea that one morality is appropriate for all - potentially higher men will come to adopt such values as applicable to themselves as well. Thus, the normative component of an MPS is harmful because, in reality, it will have the effect of leading potentially excellent persons to value what is in fact not conducive to their flourishing and devalue what is in fact essential to it.⁴⁶

I agree with Leiter that, according to Nietzsche, many of the normative claims made by moral schemes lead to misconceptions about value and thereby prevent the flourishing of potential free spirits. However, I argue that, in Nietzsche's view, it is the moral mode of valuation itself which causes this problem for two reasons. Firstly, morality requires the assertion of certain descriptive claims about the nature of humanity and of reality - whereas, in Nietzsche's view, all knowledge relies upon one's perspective, and thus these descriptive claims cannot be assumed to be legitimate. Secondly, morality requires us to determine the value of actions and traits based upon external criteria when, in fact, we cannot coherently do so, since the actions and the traits themselves can only be valued internally. In order to demonstrate Nietzsche's views with regards to these two claims, we must turn to a study of Nietzsche's specific criticisms of morality.

With regards to the first claim, the next chapter, by studying Nietzsche's critique of

⁴⁶Brian Leiter, "Nietzsche and the Morality Critics", p. 274.

Kantian morality specifically, will illustrate the ways in which moral schemes require us to make certain descriptive claims about humanity. This approach allows us to see Nietzsche's reasons for rejecting the various descriptive claims of morality and thereby to be able to negatively determine what a non-moral mode of valuation would consist in. In Chapter Three, we will positively describe Nietzsche's proposed free mode of valuation by attempting to illustrate what it means for valuations to be self-justified.

Chapter 2

Section 1

In order to be able to successfully assess the coherency and the implications of Nietzsche's critique of morality, it is perhaps best to apply his critique to a specific theory in order to see what insight Nietzsche might provide. Given that, in his criticisms of morality, Nietzsche often refers both explicitly and implicitly to the views of Kant, it seems that Kant's moral theory provides a useful foil which enables us to more fully understand Nietzsche's contribution to the study of morality. Despite the intensity with which Nietzsche sometimes derides Kantian morality, a proper study reveals that Kant is not as vulnerable to Nietzsche's attack as one might initially be lead to believe. The reason for this is that there are in fact two rather distinct approaches which Kant takes in his discussion of ethics. On the one hand, in the first two sections of the Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals and in the "Analytic of Practical Reason" in the Critique of Practical Reason, Kant takes a highly critical approach to morality during which he attempts to determine what morality must be, if it is in fact possible for morality to be coherent. This approach we will refer to as the first sense of Kant, in which, as a moral critic, he points out the flaws of traditional moral philosophy, and argues that certain beliefs which are required for the existence of moral theory cannot be proven to be true, and must in fact be assumed, if morality is to be possible. On the other hand, in the third section of the Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals, and in the "Dialectic of Practical Reason" in the Critique of Practical Reason, Kant seems to shift his focus a bit, and he makes many claims that seem

more in line with the traditional moral philosophy which he criticizes in other sections of his work. This second approach, we will refer to as the second sense of Kant, in which, in his attempt to demonstrate that morality is in fact possible, he compromises some of his earlier arguments in order to be able to assert the existence of God, immortality, and freedom, which he thinks must exist in order for morality to be possible.

In this chapter, the existence of these two Kantian approaches to morality will be demonstrated, and each approach will be described in detail. Then, we will address Nietzsche's criticisms of Kant's moral theory as they relate to either or both of Kant's approaches. Through this study, it will be possible to see that Nietzsche's critique of morality, while it is effective against many of Kant's arguments in the "Dialectic of Practical Reason", does not seem to recognize its own reliance upon Kant's own critique of morality. In other words, it will be argued that Nietzsche's critique of morality can be seen as extending some of the work which Kant had accomplished. Kant's opposition to dogmatic moral philosophy is used as a basis for Nietzsche's rejection of morality itself. Whereas Kant describes what he feels morality must be, if it is to be coherent, Nietzsche argues that the requirements for morality which Kant points out cannot be absolutely true - since there is no absolute truth according to Nietzsche - and thus, that morality itself is incoherent. In order to make this argument, this chapter is divided into three sections. In this, the first section, Kant's approach to morality will be set out in detail, and the two approaches which he takes to the study of morality will be described. In the second section, Nietzsche's perspectivism will be discussed in order to illustrate the reasons why Nietzsche believes that there can be no universal and necessary truths and therefore that there can be no universal

and necessary grounds for morality. While this would be sufficient to illustrate the rejection of Kantian morality - since Kant himself argued that morality had to be universally and necessarily valid - it could still be argued that a kind of moral theory which does not require universality and necessity of its principles would be possible. In order to respond to this claim, the third section will provide arguments against the two principles which are required for a system of valuation to be considered moral: firstly, a belief in the unified subject who can initiate action as a moral agent, and secondly, the belief in a free will which can make moral choices. As we shall see, Nietzsche's criticism of these two moral concepts, when combined with his perspectivism, will allow us to negatively describe what a non-moral mode of valuation must consist in, that is to say, it will allow us to determine that, at the very least, Nietzsche's proposed non-moral valuation will not involve the moral concepts of "free will" and of the unified subject, and will recognize the fact that it too represents a perspective, and not an absolutely true system of valuation. This discussion will provide a context for the third chapter, in which we attempt to positively describe the nature of the revaluation of all values which Nietzsche proposes.

In order to understand the differences between Kant's two approaches to the study of morality, it is important to set up the discussion by describing each of these approaches in detail. As such, the best place to start this discussion is with a description of Kant's role as a critic of dogmatic moral philosophy, a role which, as mentioned above, represents the first approach which Kant takes to the study of morality. One of the first points that Kant makes about morality is that moral valuations must be universally and necessarily valid:

Everyone must admit that if a law is to be morally valid, i.e., is to be

valid as a ground of obligation, then it must carry with it absolute necessity. He must admit that the command, "Thou shalt not lie", does not hold only for men, as if other rational beings had no need to abide by it, and so with all the other moral laws properly so called; and he must concede that the ground of obligation here must therefore be sought, not in the nature of man nor in the circumstances of the world in which man is placed, but must be sought a priori solely in the concepts of pure reason; he must grant that every other precept which is founded on principles of mere experience - even a precept that may in certain respects be universal - insofar as it rests in the least on empirical grounds - perhaps only in its motive - can indeed be called a practical rule, but never a moral law.¹

It is this requirement that moral laws be universal and necessary which separates moral principles from those practical principles which are subjective and empirical:

All practical principles which presuppose an object (material) of the faculty of desire as the determining ground of the will are without exception empirical and can furnish no practical laws. By the term "material of the faculty of desire" I understand an object whose reality is desired. When the desire for this object precedes the practical rule and is the condition under which the latter becomes a principle, I say, first that this principle is then always empirical.... Second, a principle which is based only on the subjective susceptibility to a pleasure or displeasure (which is never known except empirically and cannot be valid in the same form for all rational beings) cannot function as a law even to the subject possessing this susceptibility because it lacks objective necessity, which must be known a priori. For this reason, such a principle can never furnish a practical law. It can, however, be counted among the maxims of a subject thus susceptible.²

From the passage cited above it is clear that, according to Kant, the source of moral imperatives cannot be subjective. Even were there to be a subjective principle which is

¹

Immanuel Kant, Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals, Preface, Ak. 389, translated by James W. Ellington.

²

Immanuel Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, Part 1, Book 1, Chapter 1, §2, Ak. 21, translated by Lewis White Beck.

universally endorsed by humanity, such a principle could not provide the basis for a moral law, Kant argues:

But suppose that finite rational beings were unanimous in the kind of objects their feelings of pleasure and pain had, and even in the means of obtaining the former and preventing the latter. Even then they could not set up the principle of self-love as a practical law, for the unanimity itself would be merely contingent. The determining ground would still be only subjectively valid and empirical, and it would not have the necessity which is conceived in every law, an objective necessity arising from a priori grounds, unless we hold this necessity to be not at all practical but only physical, maintaining that our action is as inevitably forced upon us by our inclination as yawning is by seeing others yawn. It would be better to maintain that there are no practical laws but merely counsels for the service of our desires than to elevate merely subjective principles to the rank of practical laws, which must have an objective and not just subjective necessity and which must be known a priori by reason instead of by experience, no matter how empirically universal.³

From the above, it is easy to see that Kant is a critic of moral dogmatism. Since moral principles must be universal and necessary, and since empirical observations can never provide universal and necessary principles, any moral theory which bases its moral imperatives upon empirically derived claims about “human nature” or the “highest good” will have to be rejected.

Kant’s attack upon dogmatic moral theory is described by Schopenhauer, who points out its relationship to Kant’s theory of epistemology and its criticism of the misuse of speculative reason:

Kant therefore ventured to demonstrate by his teaching the impossibility of our being able to prove all those dogmas that were

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Immanuel Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, Part 1, Book 1, Chapter 1, §3, Ak. 26, translated by Lewis White Beck.

alleged to have been proved. Speculative theology and the rational psychology connected with it received from him their death-blow.⁴

Among other things, theories of ethics and morals had previously relied upon dogma:

Ethics was also treated by that realistic philosophy according to the law of the phenomenon, which it regarded as absolute and holding good even of the thing-in-itself. Therefore ethics was based now on a doctrine of perfect happiness, now on the will of the Creator, and finally on the notion of perfection....Kant, as we have already said, entirely separated the undeniable, great ethical significance of actions from the phenomenon and its laws, and showed that the former directly concerned the thing-in-itself, the innermost nature of the world, whereas the latter, i.e., time and space, and all that fills them and is arranged in them according to the causal law, are to be regarded as an unstable and insubstantial dream.⁵

Now Schopenhauer was of course highly critical of Kant's views on ethics, but what is important here is that he noted the significance of the revelation that absolute, universal, and necessary moral rules can not be discovered through a study of phenomena: in order for there to be universal and necessary moral rules, there must be rules which are based upon a priori necessity, and which do not rely upon simply observing the various features of the world of appearances. Thus, we see already that the distinction between noumena and phenomena is essential to Kantian ethics: "the great ethical significance of actions...directly concerned the thing-in-itself". Under Nietzsche's point of view, Kantian morality requires the belief that there is a distinction to be made between phenomena and noumena. Though

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Arthur Schopenhauer, The World as Will and Representation, Appendix, page 423, translated by E. F. J. Payne.

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Arthur Schopenhauer, The World as Will and Representation, Appendix, page 424-425, translated by E. F. J. Payne.

Nietzsche's specific criticisms of Kant's depiction of the intelligible will will be discussed later in this section, what is important to note here, is that, under Nietzsche's interpretation of Kant, morality is only worthwhile as a practical ground for action if there is a thing-in-itself. Thus, if Nietzsche is right in rejecting the separation of the world into phenomena and noumena, then, not only will dogmatic moral theories be incoherent, morality itself will be incoherent, according to Kant's own depiction of what morality must be.

We arrive at this conclusion since, without yet asserting that morality is in fact possible, Kant makes several claims about what morality would require. The most important requirement for the existence of morality is the fact that the will must be free. As we have seen above, moral laws can only be derived from rules that do not rely upon empirical observation; the implication of this is that, in order for morality to be possible, the will must be free:

Since the mere form of a law can be thought only by reason and is consequently not an object of the senses and therefore does not belong among appearances, the conception of this form as the determining ground of the will is distinct from all determining grounds of events in nature according to the law of causality, for these grounds must themselves be appearances. Now, as no determining ground of the will except the universal legislative form can serve as a law for it, such a will must be conceived as wholly independent of the natural law of appearances in their mutual relations, i.e., the law of causality. Such independence is called *freedom* in the strictest, i.e., transcendental, sense. Therefore, a will to which only the legislative form of the maxim can serve as a law is a free will.⁶

In order for anything to be transcendently free, it cannot be a product of contingency. If

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Immanuel Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, Part 1, Book 1, Chapter 1, §5, Ak. 28-29, translated by Lewis White Beck.

causality is properly understood as a category which our understanding necessarily applies to phenomena as it perceives them, then our pure reason operating a priori is the only thing which could have the ability to be free. In other words, the only thing which can operate outside the causal chain which applies to all phenomena is the reason inasmuch as it considers things a priori. Thus, based on his epistemological views, Kant is led to the belief that the only source of freedom is rationality:

The will is a kind of causality belonging to living beings insofar as they are rational; freedom would be the property of this causality that makes it effective independent of any determination by alien causes. Similarly, natural necessity is the property of the causality of all non-rational beings by which they are determined to activity through the influence of alien causes....As we have already seen, natural necessity is a heteronomy of efficient causes, inasmuch as every effect is possible only in accordance with the law that something else determines the efficient cause to exercise its causality. What else, then, can freedom of the will be but autonomy, i.e., the property that the will has of being a law to itself?⁷

It is important to note, however, that Kant does not assert that the will truly is free. What we have seen is that, in order for morality to be possible, the will must be transcendently free. In his discussion of speculative reason, Kant had pointed out that it was impossible to prove or to disprove the existence of freedom, but, importantly, he had also argued that the concept of natural necessity was compatible with the concept of a free will:

Now I may say without contradiction that all the actions of rational beings, so far as they are appearances (encountered in some experience), are subject to the necessity of nature; but the same actions, as regards merely the rational subject and its faculty of acting according to mere reason, are free. For what is required for the

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Immanuel Kant, Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals, Third Section, Ak. 446, translated by James Ellington..

necessity of nature? Nothing more than the determinability of every event in the world of sense according to constant laws, i.e., a reference to cause in the appearance; in this process the thing in itself at its foundation and its causality remain unknown. But, I say, the law of nature remains, whether the rational being is the cause of the effects in the sensuous world from reason, i.e., through freedom, or whether it does not determine them on grounds of reason...Freedom is therefore no hindrance to natural law in appearances; neither does this law abrogate the freedom of the practical use of reason, which is connected with things in themselves as determining grounds.⁸

Though Kant specifically states that freedom of the will is compatible with the idea of natural necessity, it is also important to remember that, as he himself pointed out, there is no empirically derivable proof that freedom of the will exists: “it is not enough to prove freedom from certain alleged experiences of human nature (such a proof is indeed absolutely impossible, and so freedom can be proved only a priori)”. He is therefore forced into a rather interesting line of argument, declaring that:

one must show that freedom belongs universally to the activity of all beings endowed with a will. Now I say that every being who cannot act in any way other than under the idea of freedom is for this very reason free from a practical point of view. This is to say that for such a being all the laws that are inseparably bound up with freedom are valid just as much as if the will of such a being could be declared to be free in itself for reasons that are valid for theoretical philosophy. Now I claim that we must necessarily attribute to every rational being which has a will also the idea of freedom, under which only can such a being act. For in such a being we think of a reason that is practical, i.e. that

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Immanuel Kant, Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics, Ak. 345-346, translated by James Ellington.

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Immanuel Kant, Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals, Third Section, Ak. 447, translated by James Ellington..

has causality in reference to its objects.¹⁰

This is an interesting and somewhat complex argument of Kant's, which he summarizes by saying that "the same laws that would bind a being who is really free are valid equally for a being who cannot act otherwise than under the idea of its own freedom¹¹". There is a certain admirable subtlety in the way this argument relates to his earlier discussion of the basis of universal principles. In order to be universal, a principle must apply to all members of a given class. As we have discussed, the moral principles are universal, according to Kant, because they are based on the nature of reason itself and will therefore apply to all beings who possess the faculty of reason. In the above quotation, Kant points out that a necessary feature of rationality is the causal association between will and action. Whether or not rational beings truly possess free will, they must act upon the assumption that their will causes their actions.

As mentioned above, so long as Kant contents himself with being a critic of traditional moral theory, he does not attempt to assert that the will is truly free. Instead, he draws the relationship between morality and freedom in order to show that, unless the will is transcendently free, morality is impossible. As a result, when Nietzsche criticizes morality because it falsely argues that there is a free will which can initiate action, in a sense, he relies upon Kant's critique of morality in order to demonstrate that morality is

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Immanuel Kant, Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals, Third Section, Ak. 448, translated by James Ellington..

¹¹

Immanuel Kant, Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals, Third Section, Ak. 448 (note), translated by James Ellington...

impossible because freedom of the will is impossible. This argument of Nietzsche's will be discussed in detail later in this chapter; for now, what is important to show is that Kant shifts his point of view slightly in his further discussion of morality, when he attempts to demonstrate that, though the transcendental freedom of the will cannot be proven to exist, it must nonetheless be assumed as a moral postulate of pure practical reason.

Some readers of Kant may be inclined to deny that this shift of focus in fact takes place, and so it is important to demonstrate exactly the way in which Kant moves from a critical discussion of what morality would have to be were it possible, to a positive assertion that moral imperatives are in fact given to us by reason. In his discussion of freedom at the end of the first book of the second part of the Critique of Practical Reason, Kant states that:

Since it is, properly speaking, only the concept of freedom, among all the ideas of pure speculative reason, which brings such a great extension in the field of the supersensuous, though it is only practical knowledge which is enlarged, I ask myself: Why does it alone have such a great fruitfulness, the others merely indicating the empty place for merely possible beings of the understanding without being able in any way to define the concept of them? I soon see that, since I cannot think without a category, I must first seek out the category in reason's idea of freedom. This is the category of causality. I also see that, although no corresponding intuition can be made the basis of reason's concept of freedom, inasmuch as it is a transcendent concept, a sensuous intuition must previously be given to the understanding's concept of causality (for the synthesis of which the reason's concept of freedom requires the unconditioned), and only by this intuition is it assured objective reality.¹²

The intuition which could provide objective reality may be possible for the category of causality, because:

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Immanuel Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, Part 1, Book 1, Chapter 3, Ak. 103, translated by Lewis White Beck.

In these categories [of causality and of the necessity of a thing] it was permitted to add to the completely conditioned in the world of sense (to the causality and the contingent existence of things) the unconditioned in the intelligible world and to make the synthesis transcendent; this was permissible, even though the unconditioned was not further defined.¹³

The means of this addition has already been discussed above: it is the compatibility of the natural necessity of rational beings as phenomena with the freedom of the will of rational beings as noumena. In other words, it is possible that the will of a rational being is a thing in itself, and, if this were the case, it would be able to operate outside of the chain of causality, because the categories of the understanding (including causality) only apply to the phenomena.

Thus far, there has been no shift of focus in the discussion of morality, and Kant has merely referred to his earlier arguments about the speculative use of reason without giving any grounds for the idea that there is a tension between his arguments concerning the use of pure practical reason, and those involving the use of pure speculative reason. The shift of focus to which I have been referring, comes about, I believe, as a result of Kant's attempt to answer a question which he refers to in a passage directly after the above citation:

in the Dialectic of pure speculative reason it was found that the two incompatible modes of finding the unconditioned for the conditioned...do not in fact contradict each other and that the same act, which as belonging to the world of sense is always sensually conditioned, i.e. mechanically necessary, can at the same time, as belonging to the causality of the acting being in so far as it belongs to the intelligible world, have a sensuously unconditioned causality as its foundation. That is, it can be thought of as free. Then it was only a

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Immanuel Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, Part 1, Book 1, Chapter 3, Ak. 104, translated by Lewis White Beck.

question of whether this “can be” could be changed to an “is”; it was a question of whether in an actual case, and, as it were, by a fact, one could prove that certain actions presupposed such an intellectual, sensuously unconditioned, causality, regardless of whether they are actual or only commanded, i.e., objectively and practically necessary.¹⁴

The question which Kant refers to above, is, in my view, of the utmost importance in illustrating that there are two separate approaches which Kant takes to the study of morality. On the one hand, he looks at what is required for morality to be possible and concludes that morality would only be possible if there is an intelligible will which is free from the causal chain of natural necessity which affects all phenomena, and which is therefore capable of determining the unconditioned grounds for moral imperatives. Since we operate under the idea of our freedom, it is possible for us to assume that our will is free. This is possible given the assumption that there is a noumenal will. The will must be noumenal, or else it cannot be free, according to Kant, because speculative reason teaches us that causality is a category of the understanding which is applied to all phenomena. If there is no noumenal will, then we can only have experience of the will as a phenomenon, and this experience will be subject to causality as a category of the understanding. The shift in focus which we have been referring to, comes about when Kant moves from his belief that the intelligible will “can be” thought of as free - a view which, as he points out, is perfectly consistent with his study of pure speculative reason - to the argument that we ought to act as though the intelligible will really “is” free. The impetus for this shift in focus is that Kant is not content to merely assert, as he does in his first approach, that morality is theoretically possible, and

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Immanuel Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, Part 1, Book 1, Chapter 3, Ak. 104, translated by Lewis White Beck.

that we can therefore answer the conditional question: if I want to be moral, then how ought I to act?. On the second level from which Kant approaches morality, he wants to show how the moral principle can be determining for human action and therefore that human agents ought to act morally, i.e., in accordance with universal principles.

It is important to note that this shift in focus is a subtle move on Kant's part and that he does not actually contradict any of his earlier arguments from The Critique of Pure Reason. The reason that he is able to avoid contradiction is that Kant studies the transcendental principles of practical reason in order to find legitimacy for moral action without attempting to empirically prove the existence of these transcendental principles:

If practical reason may not assume and think as given anything further than what speculative reason affords from its own insight, the latter has primacy. But suppose that the former has of itself original a priori principles with which certain theoretical principles are inseparably bound but which are beyond any possible insight of the speculative reason (although not contradictory to it). Then the question is: Which interest is superior? It is not a question of which must yield, for one does not necessarily conflict with the other. It is a question of whether speculative reason, which knows nothing of that which the practical reason offers for its acceptance, must take up these principles and seek to integrate them, even though they transcend it¹⁵

In the above passage, Kant attempts to stake out a realm of knowledge that practical reason can provide which, though it is not asserted with the same conviction as the knowledge provided by the critical use of speculative reason, does not come into conflict with any of the principles of speculative reason. This move is necessary, since Kant had argued in the Critique of Pure Reason that it is impossible to have scientific knowledge of the existence

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Immanuel Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, Part 1, Book 2, Chapter 3, Ak. 120, translated by Lewis White Beck.

of freedom, though freedom of the intelligible will was compatible with the notion of the natural necessity of the phenomena, as we have seen. Therefore, in order to advocate the existence of transcendental freedom, Kant cannot expect to rely upon apodictically proven facts of speculative reason, instead, he can only assert that practical reason reveals moral postulates which need to be accepted in order for morality to be valid. The important question which Kant raises in the preceding quotation is whether or not speculative reason ought to seek to integrate the principles which the practical reason “offers for its acceptance”. I believe that Nietzsche quite correctly criticizes Kant for giving an affirmative answer to this question, although I argue that Kant is very careful in doing so, and that insofar as he restricts himself to criticizing dogmatic moral philosophy, Kant avoids this error.

In order to demonstrate that Kant does in fact imply that the speculative reason ought to seek to integrate the transcendental principles of practical reason we must turn to the nature of what was referred to above as the “middle ground” between the scientific knowledge gleaned by the critical use of pure speculative reason and the dogmatic metaphysical claims which the critical use of pure speculative reason revealed to be “nonsense and delusion”. Into this middle ground, Kant advances the idea of the postulates of pure practical reason:

The postulates of pure practical reason all proceed from the principle of morality, which is not a postulate but a law by which reason directly determines the will. This will, by the fact that it is so determined, as a pure will requires these necessary conditions for obedience to its precept. These postulates are not theoretical dogmas but presuppositions of necessarily practical import; thus, while they do not extend speculative knowledge, they give objective reality to the ideas

of speculative reason in general (by means of their relation to the practical sphere) and they justify it in holding to concepts even the possibility of which it could not otherwise venture to affirm.¹⁶

Inasmuch as they remain postulates, and not proven facts, the postulates of pure practical reason remain a description of what morality must be, if it is to be possible. As transcendental principles of practical reason, these postulates represent the practical truths which enable us to determine the moral legitimacy of actions. This clearly illustrates that these moral postulates are not theoretical truths, and thus that they cannot be conceived of in the same way as the metaphysical arguments for their reality which Kant opposed in The Critique of Pure Reason. The important question however, is: how do we know that reason really can freely determine the will, as morality requires? Unlike in his earlier discussions of morality, Kant seems to have now taken morality for granted; he argues:

not only *since I am justified in thinking of my existence as that of a noumenon in an intelligible world but also since I have in the moral law a pure intellectual determining ground of my causality* (in the sensuous world), it is not impossible that the morality of intention should have a necessary relationship as cause to happiness as an effect in the sensuous world; but this relation is indirect, mediated by an intelligible Author of nature.¹⁷

It would seem from the above, that Kant no longer believes that it is merely possible to think of a rational being as possessing a transcendental will, but that such a point of view is justified. Now it could be argued that Kant uses the term “justified” simply to mean that this

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Immanuel Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, Part 1, Book 2, Chapter 6, §2, Ak. 132, translated by Lewis White Beck.

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Immanuel Kant, Critique of Practical Reason, Part 1, Bk 2, Chap. 2, Ak. 114-115, translated by Lewis White Beck, my emphasis.

point of view is not expressly contradicted by the principles of pure speculative reason, but if so, then there would not be sufficient strength to warrant the assertion that knowledge of the moral law does represent a pure intellectual determining ground of one's causality. The shift in Kant's approach is thereby revealed: we see that Kant moves from thinking that "my" idea of freedom allows me to act as if morality were worthwhile to the belief that since "I" have an idea of my own freedom, this gives me the justification for asserting that all rational wills have this idea, and therefore that, practically speaking, the idea of freedom of the will may as well be true. In addition, the above passage, taken from the discussion of "The Critical Resolution of the Antinomy of Practical Reason", comes in the middle of a discussion of the nature of the "highest good". The "highest good" is a concept which can only exist if the will is seen to be intrinsically good, and Kant's discussion of the intrinsic value of the good will also seems to rely upon the truth of certain assumptions, as we shall see as we make a detailed study of Kant's notion of the "good will".

There is a necessary relationship in Kant's ethics between the concept of freedom and the concept of intrinsic value: since no action which is done for a contingent end can be morally good, according to Kant, then morally good actions require ends which are valuable intrinsically. Put in other words, if we deny the existence of universal and necessary obligation, then any action that we take can only be evaluated in terms of its effectiveness at obtaining a specific goal. If one's goal for instance, is the cultivation of artistic genius, then one's actions can be evaluated in terms of their effectiveness in cultivating artistic genius. Since he felt that moral obligations are universal and necessary, Kant therefore requires an end which is intrinsically valuable, so that the actions which are

intended to produce that end are universally and necessarily good, not merely contingently good. As mentioned above, Kant had shown that the only proper source of necessary obligation for the whole of the class of rational beings is in the nature of reason itself. The element which Kant finds that will serve as an intrinsically valuable end, is the “good will”:

A good will is good not because of what it effects or accomplishes, nor because of its fitness to attain some proposed end; it is good only through its willing, i.e. it is good in itself. When it is considered in itself, then it is to be esteemed very much higher than anything which it might ever bring about merely in order to favor some inclination, or even the sum total of all inclinations.¹⁸

It must therefore be an intrinsic property of reason that it recognizes the inherent goodness of the “good will”. Unfortunately, Kant has great difficulty in proving that the “good will” must be intrinsically valuable. He argues that:

Reason, however, is not competent enough to guide the will safely as regards its objects and the satisfaction of all our needs (which it in part even multiplies); to this end would an implanted natural instinct have led much more certainly. But inasmuch as reason has been imparted to us as a practical faculty, i.e., as one which is to have influence on the will, its true function must be to produce a will which is not merely good as a means to some further end, but is good in itself. To produce a will good in itself reason was absolutely necessary, inasmuch as nature in distributing her capacities has everywhere gone to work in a purposive manner.¹⁹

The main problem with the above argument is that Kant uses a synthetic judgement deduced a posteriori in order to determine a necessary truth which he claims we can understand a priori. The belief that nature “has everywhere gone to work in a purposive manner” - whether or not it happens to be true - depends upon a study of the laws of nature, and not

¹⁸ Immanuel Kant, Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals, First Section, p. 1062-1063.

¹⁹ Immanuel Kant, Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals, First Section, p. 1064.

simply on the metaphysics of nature nor the metaphysics of morals. The only way that we could conclude that nature grants every faculty for a specific purpose is if we were to have a priori knowledge that every natural faculty has a “purpose” for which nature intended it.

Such knowledge does not exist a priori in our faculty of reason, and it cannot be deduced a posteriori, because, even if every natural faculty which we perceived was found to have a natural purpose, we could not know with certainty whether the natural purpose was truly a property of the faculty as a thing-in-itself, or whether the idea of natural purpose was just a necessary category by which our reason understands the faculties which it perceives. In other words, it is purely arbitrary to assume that, because we can only conceive of natural faculties as having a purpose for which they are intended, nature distributes her capacities in a purposive manner.

In his discussion of free will, Kant was led to the claim that, though we may not be able to prove practically the existence of free will, we can still have morality because rational beings can only act under the idea of their free will, and having the idea of free will is equally as valid as actually having free will (at least for the purposes of moral valuation). Leaving aside the question of whether or not Kant eventually goes beyond simply asserting that rational beings can have an idea of freedom, it might seem that a similar claim could be made with respect to the notion of the intrinsic value of the good will, but this claim is much less convincing than Kant’s argument with regards to free will. Having the idea of an intrinsically valuable “good will” is not in any sense as valid as a source of evaluation as the actual, practically demonstrable existence of an intrinsically valuable “good will”. The reason for this is simply that if we are to base our evaluation on the idea of an intrinsically

valuable “good will” then we are, in effect, making the assertion that an action or a judgement is valuable because it procures the only end which could possibly be intrinsically valuable. Even if we concede - as Kant would have us do²⁰ - that *no other end* could be intrinsically valuable, this would not be the same as conceding that the “good will” itself must in fact be intrinsically valuable. We cannot empirically demonstrate that the “good will” is in fact an intrinsically valuable end, and, as a result, Kant’s moral system can only be based upon the contingent claim that: *if* the “good will” is in fact intrinsically valuable, *then (and only then)* our actions will be morally legitimate insofar as they have the “good will” as their end. Kant’s insistence that an action can only be moral inasmuch as it is intended to produce an intrinsically valuable end leads to the logical result that no action can be moral, unless we can demonstrably establish the intrinsic value of the “good will”.

In the context of Kant’s first approach to the study of morality, he would have no problem with the preceding argument. The fact that an inherently valuable will is necessary in order for morality to exist would simply reveal another of the conditions whereby morality is possible. If Kant, as we have argued, takes a second approach to morality in which he wishes to assert that the moral viewpoint is justified and that others ought to be moral, then he will have to demonstrate the existence of the “good will” much more rigorously. In order to be intrinsically good, according to Kant, the “good will” must not be directed at some specific object or end, since any such end would necessarily be phenomenal and therefore

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“There is no possibility of thinking of anything at all in the world, or even out of it which can be regarded as good without qualification, except a *good will*”, Immanuel Kant, Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals, First Section, p. 1062.

could not be good in itself. Since moral actions are those which are done out of a good will, moral actions are those which are carried out, not with the intention of achieving a specific phenomenal goal, but solely out of respect for duty.

Though it is not listed as one of the postulates of practical reason, clearly the intrinsic value of the “good will”, in order to be the source of moral obligation, must be deducible a priori by the practical reason. At this point, we could perhaps attempt to defend Kant’s moral theory on the basis of the claim that the intrinsic value of the “good will” is known by the faculty of reason a priori, because the categorical value of the “good will” is practically necessary for the existence of morality. In other words, just as the categories of the understanding give structure to the laws of nature by filtering all of our perceptions through the concepts of time, space, causality, etc..., so too the fact that the “good will” is intrinsically valuable gives structure to the laws of freedom by establishing the end for which all truly free action is intended. Unfortunately, this claim will suffer from the same problem which affected the attempt to prove the value of the “good will” through an appeal to the natural purpose for which it must have been intended. The simple fact that we may only be able to conceive of morality under the belief that there is a “good will” which is directed at no phenomenal object, is not sufficient to prove that we must in fact have the ability to have such a will. Kant himself recognized this point, since, as he mentioned, many people have expressly denied the possibility of human beings acting solely out of a respect for duty:

when we pay attention to our experience of the way human beings act, we meet frequent and - as we ourselves admit - justified complaints that there cannot be cited a single certain example of the disposition

to act from pure duty; and we meet complaints that although much may be done that is in accordance with what duty commands, yet there are always doubts as to whether what occurs has really been done from duty and so has moral worth. Hence there have always been philosophers who have absolutely denied the reality of this disposition in human actions and have ascribed everything to a more or less refined self-love. Yet in so doing they have not cast doubt upon the rightness of the concept of morality. Rather, they have spoken with sincere regret as to the frailty and impurity of human nature, which they think is noble enough to take as its precept an idea so worthy of respect but yet is too weak to follow this idea²¹

Thus, Kant points out that, the fact that it may be very hard for people to be moral does not mean that the concept of morality is wrong, since we can still have the concept of the “good will” - the idea “so worthy of respect” - even though we recognize that we are unable to follow it, in all cases.

From Nietzsche's point of view, there are two points that need to be made. On the one hand, as we saw in the first chapter, Nietzsche denies morality as he denies alchemy, which is to say he does not say that there have never been any actions done out of moral motives, rather he sees that some people have in the past acted out of a sense of moral intention. This is one of Nietzsche's main reasons for rejecting morality, since he feels that the concept of moral intention itself is a misleading and incoherent one. In other words, the fact that people have in the past acted on the basis of their belief that they must be properly moral in their motives is one of Nietzsche's main reasons for accusing morality of restricting freedom. In addition, the fact that people believe in the rightness of the concept of morality even though they often fail to live up to the demands of moral theory leads to the

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Immanuel Kant, Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals, Second Section, Ak. 406, translated by James W. Ellington.

development of guilt. In Nietzsche's view, guilt originally emerges out of "bad conscience", which is the instinct of cruelty directed inwardly at oneself:

The chief trick the ascetic priest permitted himself for making the human soul resound with heart-rending, ecstatic music of all kinds was, as everyone knows, the exploitation of the *sense of guilt*. Its origin has been briefly suggested in the preceding essay - as a piece of animal psychology, no more: there we encountered the sense of guilt in its raw state, so to speak. It was only in the hands of the priest, that artist in guilt feelings, that it achieved form - oh, what a form! "Sin" - for this is the priestly name for the animals "bad conscience" (cruelty directed backward) - has been the greatest event so far in the history of the sick soul: we possess in it the most dangerous and fateful artifice of religious interpretation.²²

The notion of guilt is inextricably linked with the notion of suffering, and the two concepts are related directly to the distinction between the noumena and the phenomena:

Second series of questions: *for what* is there suffering? - and from this a conclusion is derived concerning the relation of the true world to our apparent, changing, suffering, contradictory world: (1) Suffering as a consequence of error: how is error possible? (2) Suffering as a consequence of guilt: how is guilt possible? (- experiences derived from nature or society universalized and projected to the sphere of "in-itself"). If, however, the conditioned world is causally conditioned by the unconditioned world, then freedom to err and incur guilt must also be conditioned by it: and again one asks, *what for?* - The world of appearance, becoming, contradiction, suffering, is therefore *willed: what for?* The error in these conclusions: two opposite concepts are constructed - because one of them corresponds to a reality, the other "must" also correspond to a reality.²³

For Nietzsche, the distinction between phenomena and noumena is based purely upon the

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Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals, Third Essay, Section 20, p. 140, translated by Walter Kauffmann.

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Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 579, p. 311 translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale

illogical assumption that, since the world of appearance is real, the world of the noumena must also be real. As we shall see in more detail in the next section, the assumption that there are two separate realities is unfounded, according to Nietzsche, and so any moral theory which relies upon the existence of these two realities is incoherent. What this means for the topic at hand is that Nietzsche denies that it is worthwhile to act purely out of a respect for duty, and he therefore rejects the idea that we ought to feel guilty when we act on the basis of other motives. Thus, we must, in Nietzsche's view, get beyond the restrictive moral concept of guilt:

Against remorse - I do not like this kind of cowardice against one's own deeds; one should leave oneself in the lurch at the onset of unanticipated shame and embarrassment. An extreme pride, rather, is in order. After all, what is the good of it! No deed can be undone by being regretted; no more than by being "forgiven" or "atoned for". One would have to be a theologian to believe in a power that annuls guilt: we immoralists prefer not to believe in "guilt". We hold instead that every action is of identical value at root - and that actions that turn *against* us may, economically considered, be nonetheless useful, generally desirable actions.²⁴

Since all that exists is the action itself, it does not make any sense to determine the value of an action on the basis of the motive for which it was taken. Thus it is just as incoherent to consider someone a good person for having acted out of a respect for duty as it is to feel guilty oneself, because one believes that one has acted out of "selfish" motives. All of our actions are the result of one of our particular drives or desires, and so it is wrong to think of an intrinsically valuable, pure good will which is not directed at a particular end, but which

24

Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 235, p. 136, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale

acts only out of respect for duty.

As we have seen, the notion of morality was directly related by Kant to the idea of the intrinsically valuable good will. For Nietzsche, however, an accurate mode of valuation must reflect the fact that any human quality can be beneficial or harmful, depending upon the circumstances. As a result, those qualities which a particular moral scheme may consider intrinsically good, are in fact only useful in certain circumstances, and for certain people. Thus Nietzsche argues in section 338 of The Gay Science, that pity is often a negative quality; and in Thus Spake Zarathustra, he praises the importance of self-love, and denies the intrinsic value of altruism:

One must learn to love oneself with a sound and healthy love, so that one may endure it with oneself and not go roaming about - thus do I teach. Such roaming about calls itself 'love of one's neighbour': these words have been up to now the best for lying and dissembling, and especially for those who were oppressive to everybody.²⁵

Regardless of the merits of his specific argument about the relationship between suffering and artistic creation, Nietzsche does seem justified in denying that any human qualities are intrinsically good or evil. In itself however, this claim about human qualities is not original, since it was recognized by Kant himself, who argued:

Moderation in emotions and passions, self-control, and calm deliberation are not only good in many respects but even seem to constitute part of the intrinsic worth of a person. But they are far from being rightly called good without qualification (however unconditionally they were recommended by the ancients). For without the principles of a good will, they can become extremely bad; the coolness of a villain makes him not only much more dangerous but

25

Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathustra, "Of the Spirit of Gravity", section 2, page 211, translated by R. J. Hollingdale.

also immediately more abominable in our eyes than he would have been regarded by us without it.²⁶

Though he uses the language of the “good will” in making his point, there is no doubt from the above passage that Kant recognized the fact that certain human qualities are mistakenly thought to have intrinsic value. Unlike Nietzsche, Kant puts forward the idea that the “good will” is the one thing “which can be regarded as good without qualification²⁷”. This enables him to evaluate human actions in terms of their accordance with the good will, and to make his moral claim that those actions which are done out of a respect for duty are morally good, while actions which are not taken in accordance with the good will, are immoral. In order for this to be possible, Kant requires the point of view that the good will is the will which is not directed at any phenomenal end. When this idea is put into practice it means that only those actions which are done out of a respect for duty - since the respect of duty is the only motivation which necessarily involves the practical application of the good will - are moral. For example, if someone donates to charity, their action is only morally valid, according to Kant, if it is done out of a sense that one has a duty to donate to charity. If the donation is made for any other reason, then, while it may not be an evil act, it cannot be considered a moral action.

In much the same way as with the discussion of freedom, there are, in the discussion of the “good will”, essentially two approaches taken by Kant. On the one hand, Kant operates as a moral critic, pointing out the limitations of traditional moral theories, and

²⁶ Immanuel Kant, Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals, First Section, p. 1062.

²⁷ Immanuel Kant, Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals, First Section, p. 1062.

demonstrating that, in order to be coherent, morality must adopt the belief that the will has transcendental freedom and that only the good will can have intrinsic value, insofar as it is a will which operates purely out of the respect for duty. On the other hand, Kant also seems to go beyond merely describing what morality would have to be out of a desire to assert that people really ought to act morally. Given the requirements of morality conceived through his first approach, asserting that people ought to act morally requires that the moral postulates of practical reason: freedom, God, and the immortality of the soul, are true.

In the context of these two approaches of Kant, it is possible to discern the two separate thrusts of Nietzsche's criticism of morality in general. On the one hand, Kant's first approach to morality, whereby if I am to be moral, I ought to act in accordance with the categorical imperatives, is unacceptable, according to Nietzsche, because it is based upon the incoherent moral concepts of the unified subject which, as a moral agent, is the cause of action, and of the free will which can operate outside of contingency. On the other hand, Nietzsche also opposes the second approach which Kant takes to morality, because he argues that, even if such concepts as the unified subject and free will were coherent ideas for an individual to believe in, it would nonetheless be wrong for that individual to generalize about those beliefs and to try to apply them to others because, in Nietzsche's view, there are no universal standards of truth, and all knowledge - including the knowledge of moral concepts such as these, is a matter of perspective.

In order to demonstrate this, it is necessary to show that, for Nietzsche, a mode of valuation, to be considered moral, had to involve, at the very least, the concepts of "free will" and of the unified subject. From the study we have done of Kantian morality, it is clear

that, for Kant, morality is only possible so long as the will is able to freely initiate actions, as a moral agent. The moral concepts of both the freedom of the will and the unified subject are thereby implied. The reason for this is that, in order to make a moral judgement about an action, we must at least be able to assert two things: firstly that another action could have been taken (which requires that the will was free to act in a different way); and secondly, that there was a specific agent who took action and who can thereby be differentiated from the action itself (which requires that there be a unified subject which can act upon objects). Nietzsche rejects this point of view because, in his view, there is only the action itself and the belief that there are differentiable mechanical entities such as the subject which initiates an action and the object which is acted upon, is merely an inaccurate interpretation of events: “Two successive states, the one “cause” and the other “effect”: this is false. The first has nothing to effect, the second has been effected by nothing²⁸”. This quotation attacks the idea that the world can be separated into causes and effects, or as it applies to the notion of the moral agent, that the world can be separated into a will which acts and a body which carries out the dictates of the will.

Given the existence of the two approaches to morality, it is clear that we have two separate reasons for criticizing morality to consider. In the next section, we will discuss Nietzsche’s perspectivism in order to provide the reasons for which the absence of absolute standards of truth make it impossible for moral imperatives to be universal and necessary. In the third section of this chapter, we will turn to the specific moral concepts of the “unified

28

Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 633, p. 337, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale.

subject” and of “freedom of the will”, in order to show Nietzsche’s reasons for arguing that these moral concepts are incoherent.

Section 2

As discussed above, Kant felt that only universal and necessary principles could serve as a foundation for moral obligation. Even if an empirical study revealed that a particular quality was shared in every known case, it would be illogical to conclude that that quality was universal or necessary, since it is not possible to evaluate every possible instance in order to determine whether or not that quality truly is universal. In addition, even the fact that said quality did apply in every case would not be enough to prove that it was necessary that the quality applied. Thus Kant concludes that, since moral concepts must be universal and necessary:

all moral concepts have their seat and origin completely a priori in reason, and indeed in the most ordinary human reason just as much as in the most highly speculative. They cannot be abstracted from any empirical, and hence merely contingent, cognition.²⁹

The evidence for this conclusion is simply that the only universal and necessary quality of all rational beings is their reason, therefore any universal and necessary principles which apply to all rational beings must be derived from the nature of reason itself. As a result, if it is true that moral obligation must be universal and necessary, and that only rational beings can be moral, then it will follow logically that morality will be entirely determined by the nature of reason itself.

As a result of his own epistemology, Kant is limited to an internal critique of reason, which is to say a critique of reason by reason itself. This element of the Kantian critique is

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Immanuel Kant, Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals, Second Section, Ak. 411, translated by James Ellington..

alluded to by Deleuze, who argues that:

La génie de Kant, dans la *Critique de la raison pure*, fut de concevoir une critique immanente. La critique ne devait pas être une critique de la raison par le sentiment, par l'expérience, par une instance extérieure quelle qu'elle fût. Et le critiqué n'était pas davantage extérieur à la raison: on ne devait pas chercher dans la raison des erreurs venues d'ailleurs, corps, sens ou passions, mais des illusions provenant de la raison comme telle. Or, pris entre ses deux exigences, Kant conclut que la critique devait être une critique de la raison par la raison elle-même. N'est-ce pas la contradiction kantienne? faire de la raison à la fois le tribunal et l'accusé, la constituer comme juge et partie, jugeante et jugée.³⁰

Deleuze repeats the accusation raised by Nietzsche that Kant fails in his mission because he relies on an internal critique of reason when he needs to critique reason at least partly from outside of reason itself. As we have seen, the only way in which freedom could be possible, according to Kant, is if the intelligible will exists as a thing-in-itself, outside of the causal chain of the phenomenal world. In denying the existence of the two worlds of appearance and reality, Nietzsche thereby denies that reason can have knowledge outside of the world of contingency:

One would like to know what things-in-themselves are; but behold, there are no things-in-themselves! But even supposing there were an in-itself, an unconditioned thing, it would for that very reason be unknowable! Something unconditioned cannot be known; otherwise

30

Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche et la philosophie*, p. 104, translated by Hugh Tomlinson into: "Kant's genius, in the Critique of Pure Reason, was to conceive of an immanent critique. Critique must not be a critique of reason by feeling, by experiencing, or by any kind of external instance. And what is criticized is no longer external to reason: we should not seek, in reason, errors which have come from elsewhere - from body, senses, or passions - but illusions coming from reason as such. Now, caught between these two demands, Kant concludes that critique must be a critique of reason by reason itself. Is this not the Kantian contradiction, making reason both the tribunal and the accused; constituting it as judge and plaintiff, judging and judged?"

it would not be unconditioned! Coming to know, however, is always, “placing oneself in a conditional relation to something” - one who seeks to know the unconditioned desires that it should not concern him, and that this same something should be of no concern to anyone. This involves a contradiction, first, between *wanting* to know and the desire that it not concern us (but why know at all, then?) And, secondly, because something that is of no concern to anyone *is* not at all, and thus cannot be known at all.³¹

In other words, there is no knowledge which is not contingent. As we have seen, the moral scheme of Kant requires the distinction between the phenomena and the noumena in order to provide a basis for freedom of the will, as well as to provide a basis for the idea of a “good will” acting out of a respect for duty. Thus, if Nietzsche is correct in rejecting the distinction between the noumena and the phenomena, then Kantian morality will lose its entire foundation. Since Kant had argued that a moral imperative is different from a hypothetical imperative precisely because it is universal and necessary, if there is no source of universality and necessity, then there can be no principles which are, in Kant’s view, properly considered moral. The significance of the above passage therefore becomes more clear when we turn to Kant’s defence of the idea that pure reason acting a priori reveals the source of universal and necessary moral obligations.

Since it is only in our reason that we can even hope to be free from contingency, according to Kant, it is our reason which provides the basis for freedom and for our knowledge of necessity. Through the methodical study of our faculty of reason, it is possible for us to understand the principles of necessity which shape the world of the phenomenon

31

Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 555, p. 301, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale.

in the form of either the laws of nature which shape the way in which objects relate to one another, or the laws of freedom which shape the way in which rational beings ought to relate to one another. Any detailed account of the faculties of the intellect would necessarily rely upon a posteriori study, and so the only elements of our intellect which we can have knowledge of a priori are its most basic features such as the categories of the understanding:

Natural and moral philosophy...can each have an empirical part. The former has to because it must determine the law of nature as an object of experience, and the latter because it must determine the will of man insofar as the will is affected by nature. The laws of the former are those according to which everything does happen, while the laws of the latter are those according to which everything ought to happen, although these moral laws also consider the conditions under which what ought to happen frequently does not. All philosophy insofar as it is founded on experience may be called empirical, while that which sets forth its doctrines as founded entirely on a priori principles may be called pure. The latter, when merely formal, is called logic; but when limited to determinate objects of the understanding, it is called metaphysics. In this way there arises the idea of a twofold metaphysics: a metaphysics of nature and a metaphysics of morals. Physics will thus have its empirical part, but also a rational one. Ethics will too, though here the empirical part might more specifically be called practical anthropology, while the rational part might properly be called morals.³²

In other words, the study of morals is the study of the metaphysics of the laws of freedom. Since morality must be universal and necessary, the foundation for morality must be found in the determinate objects of the understanding which we have knowledge of a priori.

As Deleuze implied in his critique of Kant, the fact that we are denied an absolutist, dogmatic external standard from which to criticize reason, does not necessarily mean that

32

Immanuel Kant, Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals, Preface, Ak. 387, translated by James Ellington..

reason cannot be criticized at all. In this sense, we must see Nietzsche's critique of reason not as an absolute rejection of the principles of reason, since those principles, even when they cause us to adopt "conventional fictions", are useful in certain circumstances; they are "conventional" precisely because they enable us to engage in communication and description. Instead of summarily rejecting reason, Nietzsche takes the point of view of perspectivism, whereby it is acknowledged that, since reason too represents a particular perspective ("Coming to know means 'to place oneself in a conditional relation to something'; to feel oneself conditioned by something and oneself a condition to it - it is therefore under all circumstances establishing, denoting, and making-conscious of conditions³³"), it would be wrong to exaggerate the importance of the faculty of reason to such an extent that we exclusively use a rational mode of valuation rather than a free one. As a result, Nietzsche's critique of morality reveals that Kant's grounds for universal and necessary moral obligation are contingent, and not necessary.

If, as Kant argues, our goal is to determine the universal and necessary standards of morality, then we must remain outside the world of contingency. It is precisely this sort of freedom which is impossible in a world in which all knowledge is contingent. For Kant, the notions of "freedom of the will" and morality were inextricably linked, since the only way that a rational being could be free was to follow the moral laws of his or her will. The actual mechanics of morality had been rather simple for Kant. Any maxim according to which we might choose to act could in certain circumstances be legitimate, depending upon the end

33

Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 555, p. 301, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale

for which it is intended. In order to be universally legitimate for all rational beings, however, it must be possible for all such beings to operate upon that maxim without contradiction. Thus, to use one of Kant's own examples³⁴, if we were to break a promise, then we would only be acting morally if we could at the same time will that all rational beings broke their promises. If this maxim were universalized, however, it would undermine the institution of promise-making itself, and we would then be left with a moral imperative which, if followed would, by its very nature, make it impossible for it to be fulfilled. For Kant, an action is only moral if it is done freely, thus we must be able to accomplish any moral obligation; if it is impossible then we cannot be morally obligated to do it. Therefore, the action of breaking a promise cannot be moral, since to universalize it would make its very performance impossible. What is important in this example is that it demonstrates the way that morality must function according to Kant. We cannot derive the principles of morality from a study of the empirical world, rather we must study pure reason and then apply it to a situation in the real world in order to determine if a principle is truly rational, which is to say is moral. This is precisely what makes Kant's argument so compelling: it only relies upon the most basic of rational principles, i.e. the notion of causality and the rules of logic. However, if, as Nietzsche argues, these very notions are contingent, they cannot provide the source for the necessary obligation which Kant's moral theory requires and therefore morality itself can have no universal and necessary foundation. Without this foundation, Kant believed that morality itself would be illegitimate, because there would be

34

Found in Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals, by Immanuel Kant,, First Section, Ak. 402-403.

no way of differentiating between a truly moral imperative and a merely contingent desire. I believe that this is one of Nietzsche's main reasons for rejecting morality in favour of a non-moral mode of valuation which recognizes that its principles are immanent and contingent and not universal nor necessary.

Even the most basic of rational principles - the very elements of reason which Kant believes to be absolute and a priori - are in fact simply conditional and derived from a particular interpretation of the world. Thus Nietzsche argues that absolute "truth" and the rules of logic are simply the result of a particular mode of valuation:

The very first acts of thought, affirmation and denial, holding true and holding not true, are, in as much as they presuppose, not only the habit of holding things true and holding them not true, but a right to do this, already dominated by the belief that we can gain possession of knowledge, that judgements really can hit upon the truth; - in short, logic does not doubt its ability to assert something about the true-in-itself (namely that it *cannot* have opposite attributes). Here reigns the coarse sensualistic prejudice that sensations teach us truths about things....Logic is the attempt to comprehend the actual world by means of a scheme of being posited by ourselves; more correctly, to make it formulatable and calculable for us-³⁵

In the above passage, Nietzsche argues that the rules of logic are best understood as an attempt to shape the world into categories which are calculable by human reason. The claim that these rules of logic are not themselves necessarily true is a significant one, since it will prevent Kant from having any possible source for the universal and necessary obligations of moral imperatives. It could, perhaps, be argued that Kant's theory of morality can accommodate Nietzsche's critique by restricting itself to the claim that its moral principles

35

Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 516, p. 280, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale

are necessary insofar as the fact that a being is rational makes him subject to the same morality as all other rational beings. This approach is ultimately unsuccessful, however, since, even if all rational beings did require the belief in a certain set of principles, this would not make those principles necessary absolutely because it is not necessary that there be rational beings.

Even were we to concede to Kant that there were certain principles which every rational being believed in, simply as a result of their own rationality, then this would still not establish the necessity of those principles. :

The way of knowing and of knowledge is itself already part of the conditions of existence: so that the conclusion that there could be no other kind of intellect (for us) than that which preserves us is precipitate: this actual condition of existence is perhaps only accidental and perhaps in no way necessary.³⁶

With respect to Kant's argument specifically, what this means is that the a priori "truths" which Kant derives from the study of reason - even if they happen to be an accurate depiction of human reason - are provisional:

The most strongly believed a priori "truths" are for me - *provisional assumptions*; e.g., the law of causality, a very well acquired habit of belief, so much a part of us that not to believe in it would destroy the race. But are they for that reason truths? What a conclusion! As if the preservation of man were a proof of truth!³⁷

It is the mistaken belief that that which is conditional for the existence of a rational being

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Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 496, p. 272-273, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale

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Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 497, p. 273, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale

must be necessary which leads us to false conclusions about the importance of morality. Nietzsche argues that, even if Kant's interpretation of value were the only correct interpretation that a rational being could have, it would still remain an interpretation:

That the value of the world lies in our interpretation (-that other interpretations than merely human ones are perhaps somewhere possible-); that previous interpretations have been perspective valuations by virtue of which we can survive in life, i.e., in the will to power, for the growth of power; that every elevation of man brings with it the overcoming of narrower interpretations; that every strengthening and increase of power opens up new perspectives and means believing in new horizons - this idea permeates my writings. The world with which we are concerned is false, i.e. is not a fact but a fable and approximation on the basis of a meager sum of observations; it is "in flux", as something in a state of becoming, as a falsehood always changing but never getting near the truth: for there is no "truth".³⁸

One of the elements which emerges from Nietzsche's perspectivist point of view in the citation presented above, is the fact that the world in which we live is "in flux". The result of this feature of the world is not only that there is no "truth", but also that there is no "being" of any kind. If there is no "being" then it is clearly wrong to think of the subject as being a static, unified substance. Thus, Nietzsche's criticism of the notion of the subject is directly related to his perspectivism, as we shall see in more detail in the next section of this paper. In addition, Nietzsche points out that the world which we are concerned with is "a fable and approximation". This is an important point, because it illustrates the way in which Nietzsche considers moral concepts. The fact that they are so pervasive and credible indicates that they are not going to be easy to overcome. For this reason, Nietzsche does not

38

Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 616, p.330, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale.

simply dismiss moral concepts such as the unified subject and freedom of the will. Instead, Nietzsche highlights the effectiveness of moral concepts at controlling the way in which we interpret reality by referring to moral concepts as “regulative fictions”.

These regulative fictions are the concepts whereby the faculty of reason enables us to have knowledge of the world. They are regulative in the sense that they give a structure to perception and to knowledge, yet they are fictions because, despite the fact that we must operate under them in order to have knowledge, they are nonetheless inaccurate representations of reality:

Ce qui me sépare le plus fondamentalement des métaphysiciens, c’est ceci: je ne leur accorde pas que c’est le “je” qui pense. Je prends plutôt le *je lui-même comme une construction de la pensée*, du même ordre que “matière”, “chose”, “substance”, “individu”, “but”, “nombre”, donc comme une *fiction régulatrice* grâce à laquelle on s’imagine et on introduit une espèce de constance, donc une espèce d’“intelligibilité” dans un monde du devenir.³⁹

Even though we may not be able to make the world intelligible without the regulative concepts of “goal”, and “I”, that is not to say that those concepts are accurate representations of reality⁴⁰. Because of their importance to Nietzsche’s rejection of morality, I will deal

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Friedrich Nietzsche, cited in “Logique de la Fiction”, in Les signes du texte, p. 41; “What separates me most fundamentally from the metaphysicians is this: I do not agree with them that it is the “I” that thinks. I take rather the *I itself as a construction of thought*, of the same order as “matter”, “thing”, “substance”, “individual”, “goal”, “number”, therefore as a *regulative fiction* by virtue of which one imagines oneself and introduces a kind of constancy, therefore, a kind of “intelligibility” in a world of becoming.”, Bela Egyed’s translation.

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Though the concept of freedom and of the self are regulative fictions for Kant too, they are used in a very different way. Nietzsche points out that they are regulative fictions in order to make the claim that morality, since it relies upon the truth of these fictions, must be rejected.

separately with two of these regulative fictions (the freedom of the will and the unified subject) in the third section of this chapter. For now, it is important to assess the significance of regulative fictions in the context of Nietzsche's criticism of Kant's attempt to provide universal and necessary grounds for moral imperatives. Nietzsche makes the claim that moral concepts are in fact "fictions" which the intellect might need to adopt, but which do not accurately reflect the world:

The categories are "truths" only in the sense that they are conditions of life for us: as Euclidean space is a conditional "truth". (Between ourselves: since no one would maintain that there is any necessity for men to exist, reason, as well as Euclidean space, is a mere idiosyncrasy of a certain species of animal, and one among many.⁴¹

The reason that they are best thought of as fictions is because they claim to represent absolute truth, when in fact all truth is conditional. The reason that they are considered "regulative" fictions is that they are conditions for life, in other words, they are necessary for providing the rules by which understanding, interpretation, valuation, knowledge, and life itself are possible. The notion of moral concepts as being regulative fictions has serious implications for morality, since the fact that all truths are conditional contradicts the notion of an absolute moral imperative. For Kant, the idea of freedom was constitutive of practical reason. This can be interpreted in two ways: firstly, that the idea of freedom is necessary for the perspective of practical reason; and secondly, that the idea of freedom represents the means whereby we can achieve universal values. Given Nietzsche's use of the concept of regulative fictions, it is clear that even if the idea of freedom were necessary to practical

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Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 515, p. 278, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale

reason, this would represent a mere idiosyncrasy of practical reason, and could not serve as the grounds for necessary obligation.

Whereas Kant thought that his moral system could be pure insofar as it applied itself purely in accordance with the formal principles of reason, Nietzsche denies the validity even of these formal principles themselves:

We are unable to affirm and to deny one and the same thing: this is a subjective empirical law, not the expression of any “necessity” but only of an inability. If, according to Aristotle, the law of contradiction is the most certain of all principles, if it is the ultimate and most basic, upon which every demonstrative proof rests, if the principle of every axiom lies in it; then one should consider all the more rigorously what presuppositions already lie at the bottom of it. Either it asserts something about actuality, about being, as if one already knew this from another source; that is, as if opposite attributes could not be ascribed to it. Or the proposition means: opposite attributes should not be ascribed to it. In that case, logic would be an imperative, not to know the true, but to posit and arrange a world that shall be called true by us. In short, the question remains open: are the axioms of logic adequate to reality or are they a means and measure for us to create reality, the concept of “reality” for ourselves? To affirm the former one would, as already said, have to have a previous knowledge of being - which is certainly not the case. The proposition therefore contains no criterion of truth, but an imperative concerning that which should count as true.⁴²

Not only does Nietzsche’s interpretation of the regulative fictions of reason render the idea of universal and necessary morality impossible, he also points out that the belief in logic itself is a form of valuation. When the mind structures reality according to the categories of the understanding, it is actually following an imperative which ascribes values to the world and which thereby creates the world itself, operating “as a means and measure for us

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Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 516, p. 279, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale.

to create reality”:

The valuation “I believe that this and that is so” as the essence of “truth”. In valuations are expressed conditions of preservation and growth. All our organs of knowledge and our senses are developed only with regard to conditions of preservation and growth. Trust in reason and its categories, in dialectic, therefore the valuation of logic, proves only their usefulness for life, proved by experience - not that something is true....”The real and the apparent world” - I have traced this antithesis back to value relations. We have projected the conditions of our preservation as predicates for being in general. Because we have to be stable in our beliefs if we are to prosper, we have made the “real” world a world not of change and becoming, but one of being.⁴³

Making the “real” world a world of being, rather than of change and becoming, allows us to make use of moral concepts such as the unified subject and free will. Nietzsche’s criticism of these moral concepts involves both the accusation that they are incoherent, and the belief that a proper mode of valuation - one which recognizes that there is only one world and that it is a world of change and becoming - will therefore avoid the use of either of these moral concepts.

At this point, it is therefore necessary to turn to Nietzsche’s specific reasons for rejecting, firstly the moral concept of the unified subject, and secondly, the moral concept of free will. This study will occupy the third section of this chapter, and in this section it becomes possible to see what concepts a non-moral mode of valuation must overcome, and it becomes possible to provide the basis for our investigation of what the positive description of non-moral valuation - which we will introduce in Chapter Three - must consist in.

43

Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 507 p. 276, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale.

Section 3

Since morality requires the belief in a moral agent who can initiate action, in order to make a judgement as to the morality of a person's action, the moral theorist advocates the notion of a unified and coherent subject. Without this kind of subject, which is conceived as being somehow separate from the action itself, there will be no grounds for making the moral claim that a given action was "good" or "evil", since that action will simply exist, as an event which took place and which should not be judged in terms of what else "might" have happened. As we have seen, Nietzsche feels that it is nonsensical to try to disassociate the doer of an action from the action itself, and thus, unlike the moral theorists, Nietzsche does not see the subject as a unified whole:

Psychological history of the concept 'subject'. The body, the thing, the 'whole' construed by the eye, awaken the distinction between a deed and a doer; the doer, the cause of the deed, conceived ever more subtly, finally left behind the 'subject'. Our bad habit of taking a mnemonic, an abbreviative formula, to be an entity, finally as a cause, e.g., to say of lightning 'it flashes'. Or the little word 'I'. To make a kind of perspective in seeing the cause of seeing: that was what happened in the invention of the 'subject' the 'I'! 'Subject', 'object', 'attribute' - these distinctions are fabricated and are now imposed as a schematism upon all the apparent facts. The fundamental false observation is that I believe it is *I* who do something, suffer something, 'have' something, 'have' a quality.⁴⁴

Using this interpretation of the subject, it is simply wrong to believe that there is a unified entity for which actions can be morally right or wrong; "The Subject" is a fiction resulting

44

Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 547-549, p. 294, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale

from the belief that many similar states in us are the effect of one substratum: but it is we who first created the 'similarity' of these states; our adjusting them and making them similar is the fact, not their similarity (-which ought rather to be denied-)⁴⁵. If we acknowledge that we live in a world of becoming, this fiction will not hold sway, because we will not be drawn into the belief that there is a "substance" which remains the same and which undergoes all of the experiences of the "I".

Properly understood, the subject, inasmuch as it exists at all, consists in the dynamic array of passions and drives that each one of us represents:

The 'subject' is not something given, it is something added and invented and projected behind what there is. - Finally is it necessary to posit an interpreter behind the interpretation? Even this is invention, hypothesis...It is our needs that interpret the world; our drives and their For and Against. Every drive is a kind of lust to rule; each one has its perspective that it would compel all the other drives to accept as a norm.⁴⁶

In this way, Nietzsche argues that the drive to accept the dictates of reason with respect to the rules of logic and the existence of "free will", "being", etc..., is an example of the lust to rule. The notion of the subject itself is an example of the lust to rule.

Despite their actual lack of control over their surroundings, people make the mistake of assuming that there is a unified whole which thinks and which can also take action. The notion of the subject thereby has its origin in thought:

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Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 485, p. 269, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale

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Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 481, p. 267, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale

C'est la pensée qui pose le *je*, mais jusqu'à présent on croyait comme le "peuple", que dans le "je pense" il y avait *je ne sais quoi d'immédiatement connu* et que ce *je* était la cause donnée de la pensée et qu'on "comprendait" par *analogie* avec elle toutes les autres relations de cause à effet. Cette *fiction* a beau maintenant d'être habituelle et indispensable, cela ne prouve pas qu'elle ne soit un produit de la fantaisie: quelque chose peut-être nécessaire à la vie, et néanmoins faux.⁴⁷

The preceding quotation can be seen as a direct attack upon those theorists who argue that there is a unified subject which can be said to have certain essential characteristics which determine what actions it ought to take, for instance the characteristics of free will and reason which enable the subject to derive universal and necessary moral obligation.

Contrary to Nietzsche's point of view, Kant argues that the self, insofar as it acts morally, must follow certain principles derivable by reason. Thus the possibility of moral action requires that the will is a unified subject which can initiate action. As Karl Ameriks points out, in his study of the Kantian notion of the self, there is a divergence of opinion about the correct interpretation of the Kantian subject, owing mainly to "the manifold ambiguity of Kant's doctrine of the 'transcendental unity of apperception'⁴⁸". Nonetheless there are some elements of the transcendental unity of apperception which are not disputed:

Kant speaks of this unity as "transcendental" because (like everything

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Friedrich Nietzsche, cited in "Logique de la Fiction", in Les signes du texte, p. 41; "It is thought which puts forward the "I", but until now, we have believed like the "people" that in the "I think" there was I don't know what immediately understood and that this "I" was the cause of thought and that we "understood" by analogy with it all other relations of cause to effect. This fiction may well be habitual and indispensable now, that does not prove that it isn't a product of fantasy: something perhaps necessary to life, and nonetheless false.", my translation.

⁴⁸Karl Ameriks, "Kant and the Self: A Retrospective", in Self and Subject, p. 56.

else he calls “transcendental”) he takes it to be a necessary condition of all our experience. He calls it a unity of “apperception” because it is the condition that all items of that experience must be able to be accompanied by the representation “I think”. And he speaks of this apperception as involving a “unity” in order to highlight the fact that this “I” has a kind of simplicity or self-sameness that contrasts with the multiplicity of items that are its possible objects. Moreover, it is called an “original synthetic” unity because it is not derivable from any one of the representations by themselves and because even as a group the representations do not “combine themselves”. This minimal gloss on Kant’s terms is common ground for all interpreters⁴⁹

Nietzsche finds fault with the Kantian notion of the unity of the theoretically knowing subject. First of all, as mentioned earlier, Nietzsche stressed that the simple fact that a category of the understanding was a necessary condition of all our experience is not sufficient to demonstrate that it provides an accurate interpretation of reality. Absolute necessity cannot be grounded upon conditions which are necessary for our experience, because it is theoretically possible for rational beings not to exist and thereby not to have any experience.

To this the sympathetic interpreter of Kant would have to respond that, though it is true that if rational beings did not exist, then there would be no morality, this is not sufficient, by itself, to dismiss the value of morality altogether. Since rational beings do in fact exist, and since they can only exist if the faculty of rationality exists, then any principles which are derivable solely from the nature of reason itself might as well be necessary. Though this is a much weaker claim than that of absolute necessity, it could still provide the basis for a sense of morality which provided imperatives for all rational beings. Yet even this sense of morality would depend upon what Nietzsche called the regulative fiction of the

⁴⁹Karl Ameriks, “Kant and the Self: A Retrospective”, in Self and Subject, p. 56.

thinking subject. Where Nietzsche saw a multiplicity of desires and drives, Kant felt there was a subjective unity, as is mentioned by Ameriks above. This subjective unity can be construed as a mere self-sameness which differentiates it from the multiplicity of items which are possible as its objects, but, given this interpretation, it becomes clear why Nietzsche ultimately rejected this concept of the subject.

First of all, it seems arbitrary to state that the subject itself is simple, while there is a multiplicity of items which can be the objects of that subject. Since the subject too consists of a multiplicity of desires which can manifest in various ways, it seems that Nietzsche is correct in pointing out that the concept of the unified subject is just one way of interpreting this set of desires, and possibly not the right way. When one realizes that the notion of the unified subject, even for Kant, relies upon the division of the world into the phenomenal and the noumenal, then it seems that we have all the more reason for supporting Nietzsche in his rejection of the point of view that there is a unified substance which represents the subject. In addition, it is Nietzsche's view that we live in a world of becoming. Given this view, he believes that it is simply an error to ascribe to ourselves a static existence. Nietzsche's non-moral mode of valuation will therefore avoid this error by recognizing that what seems to be an individual with a unified existence over time is really an array of forces which changes over time as it interacts with the world.

For Nietzsche, the fact that there was no unified subject did not mean that one's actions lost all significance: "When one has grasped to what extent the concept "individual" is an error because every single creature constitutes the entire process in its entire course

(not merely as “inherited”⁵⁰, but the process itself) then the single creature acquires a tremendously great significance”. The nature of this significance will be addressed in Chapter Three, but it is important to note that, for Nietzsche, the notion of the unified subject was integral to the development of morality:

The psychological error out of which the antithetical concepts “moral” and “immoral” arose is: “selfless”, “unegoistic”, “self-denying” - all unreal, imaginary. False dogmatism regarding the “ego”: it is taken in an atomistic sense, in a false antithesis to the “non-ego”; at the same time, pried out of becoming, as something that is a being. The false substantialization of the ego: (in the faith in individual immortality) this is made into an article of faith, especially under the influence of religio-moral training. After this artificial separation of the ego and the declaration that it exists in and for itself, one confronted a value antithesis that seemed irrefutable: the single ego and the tremendous non-ego. It seemed evident that the value of the single ego could lie only in relating itself to the tremendous “non-ego” - being subject to it and existing for its sake. - Here the herd instincts were decisive: nothing is so contrary to the instinct as the sovereignty of the individual. But if the ego is conceived as something in and for itself, then its value must lie in self-negation.⁵¹

Not only does the moral concept of the self represent a misrepresentation of reality, it is also clear that, in Nietzsche’s view, the belief in the single ego provides the impetus for the adoption of moral modes of valuation, because it involves the division of reality into the general categories of the ego and the non-ego. As a result, the concept of the self as a unified substance is a moral concept, in Nietzsche’s view, and a non-moral mode of valuation, will not interpret the self as a pure being.

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Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 785 p. 412, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale

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Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 786, p. 413-414, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale

In addition to the importance of the notion of the self in the development of morality, Nietzsche also highlights the fact that the notion of “free will” is a fundamental element of morality. He argues that:

This entire distinction “moral” and “immoral” proceeds from the idea that moral as well as immoral actions are acts arising from free spontaneity - in short, that such spontaneity exists, or in other words: that moral judgements in general relate only to one species of intentions and actions, those that are *free*. But this whole species of intentions and actions is purely imaginary; the world to which alone the moral standard can be applied does not exist at all: - *there are neither moral nor immoral actions.*⁵²

Despite the statement that the species of actions that moral judgements relate to is purely imaginary, Nietzsche does not believe that human freedom is impossible. Up until now, we have discussed the freedom of the will as a moral concept which Nietzsche rejects without actually putting forward Nietzsche’s reasons for rejecting this concept of freedom specifically. In order to understand Nietzsche’s conception of freedom, we must now finish this chapter with a discussion of Nietzsche’s reasons for rejecting the notion of free will specifically in order to be able to illustrate the way in which Nietzsche felt freedom was possible.

In Nietzsche’s view, there is still a sense in which individuals can be free, albeit, contingently free. Before we can explain this view in detail, it is necessary to show how it is different from the rationalist interpretation of “free will” and autonomy provided by Kant. As mentioned in the first section of this chapter, Kant argued that all beings are “determined

52

Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 786, p. 413, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale

to activity through the influence of alien causes”, but that rational beings can be free inasmuch as they are autonomous, which is to say inasmuch as they can legislate rational laws for themselves to follow. Freedom in precisely this sense is denied by Nietzsche, who argues that there is no “free will” which could pass the laws Kant refers to:

Dangerous distinction between “theoretical” and “practical”, e.g. in the case of Kant, but also in the case of the ancients: - they act as if pure spirituality presented them with the problems of knowledge and metaphysics; - they act as if practice must be judged by its own measure, whatever the answer of theory may be. Against the former I direct my *psychology of philosophers*: their most alienated calculations and their “spirituality” are still only the last pallid impression of a physiological fact; the voluntary is absolutely lacking, everything is instinct, everything has been directed along certain lines from the beginning-⁵³

Unfortunately, the above citation reflects Nietzsche’s habit of speaking aphoristically in strong rhetorical terms without making a detailed argument in favour of his claims. Though it is clear that Nietzsche feels that there is no “free will” of the kind that is required for Kant’s moral scheme, he does not give us good reason for supporting his point of view over that of Kant. What Nietzsche refers to above as his “psychology of philosophers” rests mainly on his contention that philosophy leads to a denial of life; he argues that:

The history of philosophy is a secret raging against the preconditions of life, against the value feelings of life, against partisanship in favor of life....I fear it is still the Circe of philosophers, morality, that has here bewitched them into having to be slanderers forever - They believed in moral “truths”, they found there the supreme values - what else could they do but deny existence more firmly the more they got to know it? - For this existence is immoral - And this life depends upon

53

Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 458, p. 251, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale

immoral preconditions: and all morality *denies* life.⁵⁴

But as was mentioned above, Kant's goal was to find a foundation for universal and necessary principles. He argued that all of our perceptions of the world were interpreted by the faculty of our understanding and that, in experiencing the world, our understanding applied the notion of causality to the phenomena. As a result, Kant contends that the only exception to this empirical causal chain would have to involve the world of the noumena, and therefore that, in order for morality to be possible, our will had to exist as noumena, in order to be outside of the scope of causality. As we have seen, Nietzsche rejects the idea that the world is divisible into phenomena and noumena, yet he nonetheless believes that there is a sense in which we can be free. The question that must therefore be answered is: given that he opposes Kant's belief that only the will can be free, and that the will can be free only in so far as it follows the concepts of pure reason applied practically, what does Nietzsche mean by "freedom"?

In order to answer this question, it is first necessary to show that Nietzsche did not think that we have to escape contingency in order to be free⁵⁵. He argues that:

Artists seem to have more sensitive noses in these matters, knowing only too well that precisely when they no longer do anything "voluntarily" but do everything of necessity, their feeling of freedom, subtlety, full power, of creative placing, disposing, and forming

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Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 461, p. 253-254, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale.

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While Kant shares the view that freedom and contingency are interdependent, in Kant's view, one can only be free insofar as one follows the dictates of pure reason - thus acting morally - whereas, for Nietzsche, one can only truly be free when one escapes the limitations imposed by morality.

reaches its peak - in short, that necessity and “freedom of the will” then become one in them.⁵⁶

Though Nietzsche uses the term “freedom of the will” in the above passage, it is clearly a different sense than the Kantian notion of “free will” through rational autonomy. Nietzsche argues that it is when we act out of necessity that we can be free. In order to make sense of this argument, we must see Nietzsche’s reasons for rejecting “free will” in Kant’s sense of the term. Some of these reasons are given in The Twilight of the Idols, in which Nietzsche refers to “free will” as one of the four great errors:

Error of free will. - Today we no longer have any sympathy for the concept of “free will”. We know only too well what it is: the most disreputable of all the theologians’ artifices, the aim of which is to make humanity “responsible” in the theologians’ sense, that is, *to make it dependent on them*. - Here, I am simply offering the psychology of all making-responsible. Wherever responsibilities are sought, what tends to be doing the seeking is the instinct of *wanting to punish and rule*. One has stripped becoming of its innocence when some state of being-such-and-such is traced back to will, to intentions, to acts; the doctrine of the will was essentially invented for the purpose of punishment, that is, for the purpose of *wanting to find people guilty*. All of the old psychology, the psychology of will, has its precondition in the fact that its originators, the priests in the elites of the old communities, wanted to create a *right* for themselves to inflict punishments - or wanted to create a right for God to do so. Human beings were thought to be “free” so that they could be ruled, so that they could be punished - so that they could become *guilty*.⁵⁷

Given the above passage, it is clear that for Nietzsche, the adoption of the notion of “free will” carried with it the specific goal of enabling feelings of guilt. When Kant tries to make

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Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, part 6, section 213, p. 139-140, translated by Walter Kaufmann.

⁵⁷Friedrich Nietzsche, The Twilight of the Idols, “Four Great Errors”, section 8, p. 1265.

each rational person the source of his or her own “free will”, all that he is doing is giving each individual the role of the priests in the old communities. This is a result of the sense in which freedom of the will itself is a kind of commandment to obey, as Nietzsche points out:

That which is termed “freedom of the will” is essentially the affect of superiority in relation to him who must obey: “I am free, ‘he’ must obey” - this consciousness is inherent in every will; and equally so to the straining of the attention, the straight look that fixes itself exclusively on one aim, the unconditional evaluation that “this and nothing else is necessary now”, the inward certainty that obedience will be rendered - and whatever else belongs to the position of the commander. A man who *wills* commands something within himself that renders obedience, or that he believes renders obedience.⁵⁸

From the above passage, it is clear that Nietzsche sees the Kantian notion of “freedom of the will” as an extension of the original doctrine of “free will”. Rather than having a set of moral doctrines imposed upon them from an external source, rational moralists in the Kantian tradition make themselves the source of the imperatives which they must follow. In both cases Nietzsche argues that it is the desire to command, and the delight in commanding which provide the inspiration for morality. Originally this delight in commanding was that of the priest who provided the rules for the entire community to follow. Under Kantian moral theory, however, the individuals themselves express their desire to command through the belief that they have a will which can initiate the actions of their body and which thereby causes that body to obey. Thus, the freedom of the will itself involves a sense of delight at being able to triumph over one’s body:

58

Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, part 1, section 19, p. 26-27, translated by Walter Kaufmann.

“Freedom of the will” - that is the expression for the complex state of delight of the person exercising volition, who commands and at the same time identifies himself with the executor of the order - who as such enjoys also the triumph over obstacles, but thinks within himself that it was really his will itself that overcame them.⁵⁹

Not only do the earliest forms of morality share with Kant’s moral theory the notion of the “freedom of the will”, they also have in common a hidden desire for power. In the former case it is the priests’ desire to control their fellow man, while in the latter case it is the reason’s desire to control the individual. The fact that morality involves a hidden will-to-power is not enough, in and of itself, to demonstrate that it should be rejected. A much more effective criticism of morality will emerge if Nietzsche can, on the one hand, establish that morality requires the “freedom of the will” and, on the other hand, that the notion of the “freedom of the will” in the moral sense is based upon an error.

On the first of these points, Nietzsche discusses the notion of responsibility in order to prove that moral responsibility requires a sense of “free will”:

Man feels his power, his “happiness”, as they say: there must be “will” behind this state - otherwise it would not be his. Virtue is the attempt to set the fact of willing and having-willed before every exalted and strong feeling of happiness as a necessary antecedent: - if the will to certain actions is regularly present in the consciousness, a feeling of power may be interpreted as its effect. This is merely a perspective of psychology: always based on the false presupposition that nothing belongs to us that we have not consciously willed. The entire theory of responsibility depends upon the naive psychology that the only cause is will and that one must be aware of having willed in order to believe in *oneself* as cause. - Comes the countermovement: that of the moral philosophers, still subject to the same prejudice that one is responsible only for what one has willed. The value of man is posited

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Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, part 1, section 19, p. 27, translated by Walter Kaufmann.

as a *moral* value: consequently his morality must be a *causa prima*; consequently there must be a principle in man, a “free will” as *causa prima*. -The idea behind it is: if man is not *causa prima* as will, then he is irresponsible - consequently he has no business before the moral tribunal - virtue and vice would be automatic and mechanical.⁶⁰

In the passage cited above, Nietzsche shows that it is the notion of “freedom of the will” which provides the means to make moral judgements, since it is the belief that the moral agent’s will is the cause of his or her action which leads to the conclusion that the agent is “morally responsible” for their action. Nietzsche points out, quite rightly, that it is naive to think that the will is the only possible cause of action. One of the goals of a non-moral mode of valuation, is to transcend this interpretation of the will as a cause of action, and, in so doing, to get beyond the very idea of cause and effect: “Instead of ‘cause and effect’ the mutual struggle of that which becomes⁶¹”. In addition to this, Nietzsche points out that there would be no need for a moral tribunal if there were no notion of “free will”: since all of our actions would be automatic and mechanical, it would be empty and meaningless to accuse a person of immorality; their actions would simply have been the only actions which they were able to take and thus, they can not be guilty of having willfully avoided a better course of action.

At this point, one could make the mistake of thinking of Nietzsche as a hard determinist. Given the above passage, there is a sense in which it seems that Nietzsche

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Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 288, p. 163, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale

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Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 617, p. 331, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale

denies the possibility of humans acting freely. As has already been mentioned, I believe that Nietzsche does have a concept of freedom, but that his idea of the way in which people can be free contradicts the moral notion of “free will”. Before making a positive account of his description of freedom, I shall briefly turn to some of the passages in Nietzsche which seem to limit him to hard determinism, in order to refute this evidence, and to show that this is not in fact Nietzsche’s position. Perhaps the passage in Nietzsche which seems to bring him closest to hard determinism is the following section of Human: All too Human:

The complete unaccountability of man for his actions and his nature is the bitterest draught the man of knowledge has to swallow if he has been accustomed to seeing in accountability and duty the patent of his humanity. All his evaluations, all his feelings of respect and antipathy have thereby become disvalued and false: his profoundest sentiment, which he accorded to the sufferer, the hero, rested upon an error; he may no longer praise, no longer censure, for it is absurd to praise and censure nature and necessity.... Good actions are sublimated evil ones; evil actions are coarsened, brutalized good ones. It is the individual’s sole desire for self-enjoyment (together with the fear of losing it) which gratifies itself in every instance, let a man act as he can, that is to say as he must: whether his deeds be those of vanity, revenge, pleasure, utility, malice, cunning, or those of sacrifice, sympathy, knowledge. Degrees of intelligent judgement decide whither each person will let his desire draw him; every society, every individual always has present an order of rank of things considered good, according to which he determines his own actions and judges those of others. But this standard is continually changing, many actions are called evil but are only stupid, because the degree of intelligence which decided for them was very low. Indeed, in a certain sense *all* present actions are stupid, for the highest degree of human intelligence which can now be attained will certainly be exceeded in the future: and then all our actions and judgements will seem in retrospect as circumscribed and precipitate as the actions and judgements of still existing primitive peoples now appear to us.⁶²

62

Friedrich Nietzsche, Human, All Too Human, Chapter 2, #107, p. 57-58, translated by R. J. Hollingdale.

Even in the midst of one of his most eloquent expressions of a kind of determinist point of view, Nietzsche seems to leave room for some kind of autonomy, and it seems that there is a tension in the above passage between the notions of freedom and determinism. These ideas even seem to be in tension from one sentence to the next. Thus Nietzsche says, “let a man act as he can, *that is to say as he must*”, reflecting his earlier statement that everything is necessity, and that it make no more sense to praise a man for the morality of his actions then to praise a flower for its beauty. In the very next sentence, however, Nietzsche describes a “degree of intelligent judgement” which decides “*whither each person will let his desire draw him*”. These two elements of Nietzsche’s argument are clearly in tension with one another. There is a sense in which the expression “degrees of intelligent judgement” could perhaps refer to something necessary and determined, yet then it would surely not make sense to talk of people being able to let their desires draw them in a certain way. Since Nietzsche specifically states that these degrees of intelligent judgement “decide” then it seems that he is committed to the fact that it is at least theoretically possible that a different decision could be made. If a faculty of the mind, in this case the faculty of intelligent judgement is making a decision, then there must at least be the amount of freedom which would be necessary for a person to be able to decide something, which presumably would involve a choice of some kind.

The reason for this apparent tension is that Nietzsche, at this point in his writing, considers the notion of will in terms of the Kantian (and Schopenhauerian) notion of a noumenal will which can take action in the world of the phenomena. As we have seen, Nietzsche eventually rejects the idea that there are two separate worlds: that of the

phenomena and that of the noumena. Even in this citation from Human: All Too Human, Nietzsche denies the existence of “free will” in the sense required by morality. Kant had argued that a certain amount of freedom was necessary in order to render moral judgements valid, since, if a person’s action was necessarily determined by nature, then it would not make sense to criticize them for having taken that action. Clearly then, it would not make sense for Nietzsche, who points out in the above quotation that “it is absurd to praise and censure nature and necessity”, to join Kant in praising and censuring the actions of humans. Yet Nietzsche does not hesitate to praise and censure certain aspects of humanity, thus the question is, how can he do this consistently? In order to be fair to Nietzsche, it is necessary to look at his rather complex views on human freedom. Though he expressly denies the existence of “free will” in the sense of conscious willing with a purpose in mind, Nietzsche does seem to think that there is at least one area in which human beings are free: they are free to choose their own values. That is to say, Nietzsche believes that one can be free insofar as one has the power to act. Since one’s power to act is determined by one’s will-to-power, morality - which undermines our will-to-power by causing us to falsely believe that we can consciously will our intentions and then act so as to bring about our ends - restricts our freedom by restricting our will-to-power, i.e. our power to act. All things, including morality, are forms of the will-to-power, according to Nietzsche, but not all forms of the will-to-power give us the same freedom to act. In the next chapter, I will argue that the highest expression of will-to-power, for Nietzsche is the expression of the will-to-power as artistic self-creation, and that it is in terms of this form of the will-to-power that we must interpret Nietzsche’s non-moral standard of valuation. In its doctrine of human freedom as

the freedom to initiate action according to conscious willing, morality misconstrues the true nature of human freedom and prevents us from the dynamic revaluation of all values which is required by the expression of the will-to-power as artistic self-creation.

Since it is clear that Nietzsche's rejection of the moral concept of freedom of the will does not involve a rejection of all kinds of human freedom, it is easy to see that, for him it is just as wrong to believe in the "unfree will" as it is to believe in the "free will":

The desire for "freedom of the will" in the superlative metaphysical sense, which still holds sway, unfortunately, in the minds of the half-educated; the desire to bear the entire and ultimate responsibility for one's actions oneself, and to absolve God, the world, ancestors, chance, and society involves nothing less than to be precisely this *causa sui* and...to pull oneself up into existence by the hair, out of the swamps of nothingness. Suppose someone were thus to see through the boorish simplicity of this celebrated concept of "free will" and put it out of his head altogether, I beg of him to carry his "enlightenment" a step further, and also put out of his head the contrary of this monstrous conception of "free will": I mean "unfree will", which amounts to a misuse of cause and effect. One should not wrongly reify "cause" and "effect", as the natural scientists do (and whoever like them, now "naturalizes" his thinking), according to the prevailing mechanical doltishness which makes the cause press and push until it "effects" its end; one should use "cause" and "effect" only as pure concepts, that is to say, as conventional fictions for the purpose of designation and communication - *not* for explanation...The "unfree will" is mythology; in real life it is only a matter of *strong* and *weak* wills.⁶³

In the preceding passage, we can see that, for Nietzsche, the moralist and the natural scientist commit similar errors. Just as the moralist mistakenly concludes that our will is the cause of our actions, the mechanistic determinists mistakenly conclude that our will is

63

Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, part 1, section 21, p. 28-29, translated by Walter Kaufmann.

ultimately “unfree” and that everything about us is entirely determined. By situating himself between these two positions, Nietzsche reveals the sense in which he uses the concept of freedom. When a person is confronted with a situation in which a judgement must be made, or an action must be taken, that person acts freely insofar as he or she judges the goodness or badness of the action purely on its own terms and with the knowledge that there is nothing over and above the act itself. In other words, valuations must be made, not in terms of some transcendental ideas, or absolute goals, but in terms of whether or not that action, in that particular instance, is good or bad for the person to take. What morality does, Nietzsche argues, is to create a kind of a obstacle to the will-to-power’s ability to express its “For and Against”, restricting the way in which judgements are made and thereby preventing us from making judgements freely. As a result, morality is always detrimental to freedom and thus incompatible with the free spirit.

By this point, it should be clear that it is morality itself which Nietzsche sought to overcome in his revaluation of all values, and that, in order to overcome morality, we have to overcome the idea that there is a unified subject, and that there is a free will which can be the first cause of action. Clearly, in a non-moral mode of valuation, Nietzsche will not incorporate these moral concepts and he will also not take the point of view that this mode of valuation is universal or necessary. Having given this negative description of non-moral valuation, it is now necessary to positively describe the nature of a mode of valuation which does not involve the mistakes of morality. This mode of valuation, in my opinion, is best understood as the expression of the will-to-power as artistic self-creation, and, in the third chapter, we will attempt to describe the features of this form of the will-to-power.

Chapter 3

Perhaps the best place to start in a description of non-moral valuation, is to look at the ramifications of the lack of absolute truth. Importantly, Nietzsche did not think that he was the first person to confront the lack of absolute truths, but he felt on the one hand that the effects of this revelation would take generations before they would fully reveal themselves, and on the other hand that many of the first people to confront the lack of absolute truths were drawn into a pessimistic, passive nihilism to which Nietzsche strenuously objected. Thus, in the discussion of the death of God - which, for Nietzsche, represents the destruction of the source of all absolute truths mankind had previously believed in - Zarathustra is initially surprised that people are unaware of the death of God; “when Zarathustra was alone, he spoke thus to his heart: ‘Could it be possible! This old saint has not yet heard in his forest that *God is dead!*’⁶⁴”. Then, when Zarathustra speaks to the people for the first time, he counsels them against the pessimism which leads people to devalue the earth:

I entreat you, my brothers, *remain true to the earth*, and do not believe those who speak to you of superterrestrial hopes! They are poisoners, whether they know it or not. They are despisers of life, atrophying and self-poisoned men, of whom the earth is weary: so let them be gone! Once blasphemy against God was the greatest blasphemy, but God died, and thereupon these blasphemers died too. To blaspheme the earth is now the most dreadful offence, and to esteem the bowels of the

64

Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathustra, “Zarathustra’s Prologue”, section 2, p. 41, trans. by R. J. Hollingdale.

Inscrutable more highly than the meaning of the earth.⁶⁵

At this point, it is necessary to refute a criticism that might be made against Nietzsche's critique of morality. It could be argued that, since he had denied the existence of absolute standards, then Nietzsche has no means by which to judge. Thus, in the above passage, when Zarathustra states that "to blaspheme the earth is now the most dreadful offence", the fact that there is no longer an absolute standard against which "offences" can be judged means that there is no standard by which we can say that blaspheming the earth is dreadful.

At this point, it might seem that there is a tension in Nietzsche's critique of morality between his rejection of the absolute and necessary standards of morality and his criticism of many different modes of valuation. It could, for instance, be argued that Nietzsche has no right to criticize any mode of valuation, since he has denied the existence of the universal and necessary standards of value which are necessary in order to make this criticism. I do not find this criticism particularly convincing, but it, nonetheless, deserves some attention. In defence of Nietzsche, there are two points that must be made.

Firstly, it would be perfectly coherent to deny the possibility of an absolute externalist critique of morality and yet still criticize modes of valuation based on their internal flaws. Nietzsche's genealogical study of morality goes about this by studying the origins of moral theories and attempting to show that the origins of a given moral theory contradict its own principles. In addition, Nietzsche's genealogy of morals evaluates the goals of a particular moral scheme and tries to determine the effectiveness of a given moral

65

Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathustra, "Zarathustra's Prologue", section 3, p. 42, trans. by R. J. Hollingdale.

scheme in achieving its goals. As a result, one could clearly argue that a moral system is “stupid” when it fails to recognize the fact that it originated in practices which go against its current precepts, or when it is incapable, in practice, of attaining the goals which it is supposedly designed to achieve. Secondly, Nietzsche can argue from a theoretical point of view, that all moral valuations are necessarily “stupid” in the sense that they restrict the freedom of the moral agent, by providing false standards of value, which preclude the free form of valuation of the free spirit. In other words, since moral concepts are implausible or incoherent, the moral schemes which rely upon them are “stupid”. In addition, if a moral scheme overcomes some of those moral concepts, then it can be seen as being more intelligent than the moral schemes which preceded it. Thus, Kantian morality could perhaps be seen as being more “intelligent” than utilitarianism in this sense, because Kantian morality had overcome the moral concept of happiness as the *summum bonum*. Nonetheless, insofar as it requires the moral concepts of free will and of the subject, Kantian morality is still incoherent and therefore “stupid” when compared to a non-moral mode of valuation which does not involve any moral concepts.

If Nietzsche is to abandon universal and necessary moral standards then he must give them up completely. This implies that, while he may prefer one system of valuation over another, there is no objective reason for Nietzsche to assume that all people ought to accept his view. As mentioned above, Kant’s notion of freedom was inextricably tied up with his concept of morality: people are only moral insofar as they are autonomous, and they can only be autonomous if they have the free will which is required to choose to follow the purely rational principles of morality. Nietzsche wishes to deny the existence of free will, yet there

is nonetheless a prescriptive element to his philosophy. He states for instance, that, “a doctrine is needed powerful enough to work as a breeding agent: strengthening the strong, paralyzing and destructive for the world-weary⁶⁶”, and that:

A doctrine that puts an end to such a condition [pessimism] by *commanding* something or other - a revaluation of values by virtue of which the accumulated forces are shown a way, a whither, so they explode into lightning flashes and deeds - certainly does not need to be a doctrine of happiness: by releasing force that had been compressed and dammed to the point of torment it *brings happiness*.⁶⁷

Such a doctrine may not need to be a doctrine of happiness, but it certainly sounds like it is a doctrine that can bring about change in the world. But one wonders what the positive elements of Nietzsche’s doctrine of freedom are. In other words, what exactly is it that Nietzsche is prescribing for us, beyond the negative statement that our valuations must not be moral. In the above passage, it is clear that Nietzsche condemns what he refers to above as pessimism and world-weariness, and other places as nihilism and the denial of life⁶⁸; but the nature of the “revaluation of values” is not described, beyond the fact that it will release forces damned by morality and bring happiness. As we have seen, the notion of the revaluation of values is very closely linked to Nietzsche’s concept of freedom, but this concept itself, as we have seen is an elusive one.

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Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 862, p. 458, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale

⁶⁷

Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 1022, p. 529, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale

⁶⁸

Such references are extremely prevalent in Nietzsche, see for example, The Will to Power, sections 580-598.

Since Nietzsche, unlike Kant, denies the existence of intrinsic value, then, by itself, this would make it logically inconsistent for him to try to absolutely evaluate a moral system. However, as we have seen, Nietzsche can and does evaluate particular moral systems under their own terms; and, as we shall see, he also evaluates morality in general by comparison to a non-moral standard of valuation.

One rather ineffective argument about the ability to judge moral systems would be to state that, if we are not allowed to make value judgements based upon the essence or the intrinsic value of objects, then we must always have a specific goal which we can use as a barometer in order to measure the extrinsic value of objects. What this means for the case of morality is that any judgement which we make about the value of morality itself (or of a particular moral scheme) will rely upon a discussion of its extrinsic value in producing a particular goal. Under this narrow interpretation of valuation, one could argue (as I believe Leiter does), that Nietzsche only rejects morality as a result of his belief that a particular quality, such as “human excellence” is unattainable through morality. While I agree with Leiter that Nietzsche rejected those moral systems which, in practice, prevented people from becoming extraordinary, I think it is wrong to conceive of “human excellence” in terms of a quality - or a set of qualities - which is intrinsically valuable and therefore which ought to be the goal of a moral system. If we were to interpret “excellence” in this way, then we would be ascribing to Nietzsche a point of view which sounds disturbingly similar to the principles of the moral theories which he soundly criticizes. It would therefore be inconsistent of Nietzsche to describe a set of qualities which make a person “excellent”, though he does in fact argue that, in order to be a “free spirit”, one needs to live life in a

certain way. The way in which life must be lived, however, is not in accordance with a rigid set of principles whereby one becomes “excellent”, instead it is best construed as a process whereby one can take action freely. I believe that, for Nietzsche, human excellence is best understood, not as an intrinsically valuable quality, but as a process by which one has the freedom to make valuations without being restricted by morality.

In support of the above argument, it is necessary to examine the question of intrinsic value, in order to show that Nietzsche does not wish to judge moral systems based upon their ability to produce a quality which he labels: “human excellence”. The question of the existence of intrinsic value is clearly an important one for Nietzsche, yet he does not seem to have spent as much time on the subject as one might have liked. It is clear, however, that he recognized the problem, as can be seen in the following passage from The Genealogy of Morals:

The question “What is this or that table of values really worth?” Must be viewed under a variety of perspectives, for the question “valuable to what end?” is one of extraordinary complexity. For example, something obviously valuable in terms of the longest possible survival of a race (or of its best adaptation to a given climate, or of the preservation of its greatest numbers) would by no means have the same value if it were a question of developing a more powerful type. The welfare of the many and the welfare of the few are radically opposite ends. To consider the former *a priori* the higher value may be left to the naïveté of English biologists.⁶⁹

The contention in the above passage is simply that there is no reason to simply assert that “the longest possible survival of the race” is a higher value than “developing a more

69

Friedrich Nietzsche, The Genealogy of Morals, First Essay, Section 17, p. 188, translated by Francis Golffing.

powerful type". Clearly if there were an intrinsically valuable end, then a table of values could be evaluated in terms of its ability to produce this end. Since Nietzsche wants to deny the existence of intrinsic value, then it would be logically inconsistent for him to claim that the latter value is universally and necessarily higher just as it is logically inconsistent for English biologists to make the opposite claim. However it is not inconsistent for Nietzsche to favour a mode of valuation which is conscious of its own contingency and which does not require us to arbitrarily assert that one particular end is better than any other, such a mode of valuation, as we shall see, is best thought of in terms of aesthetic judgement. What seems to be a tension in Nietzsche's critique of morality, is in fact the result of falsely believing that Nietzsche's notion of freedom requires the kind of absolute, dogmatic standards which he criticizes moral systems for having.

In order to overcome this apparent tension between Nietzsche's critique of morality and his denial of intrinsic or absolute value, it is necessary to acknowledge that Nietzsche's reasons for rejecting morality are contingent. The difference, however, is that Nietzsche proposes a mode of valuation which is aware of its own contingency, and which can thereby be free. As far as his theoretical critique of morality is concerned, it is unnecessary for Nietzsche to reconcile his rejection of various moral theories with the fact that there is no absolute standard against which a moral system can be judged. The reason for this is simply that Nietzsche would argue that his value judgements are not based on absolute principles, and, thus, that he is not guilty of the hypocrisy of those moral systems which falsely believe that they are grounded in universal and necessary obligation. It is simply not the case that judgements can only be made if there are absolute standards of value. The proper

interpretation of the passage from Thus Spake Zarathustra, regarding the blasphemy of the earth, is not to think that Zarathustra condemns the blasphemy of the earth as being intrinsically bad. Instead, Zarathustra is arguing that, since God is dead, any mode of valuation which favours the adherence to old religious moral codes over the adoption of new ones which reflect the nature of the world, is blasphemous in the sense that it denies value to the only thing which can have any value - acting in the world - for the sake of that in which is no longer even possible to believe.

The adoption of standards of value which rely on eternal concepts such as “God” do not accurately reflect life, according to Nietzsche, because they misrepresent the nature of reality, as well as because they aim at a particular “final state” when there is no possible “final state” in this world of becoming:

If the motion of the world aimed at a final state, that state would have been reached. The sole fundamental fact, however, is that it does not aim at a final state; and every philosophy and scientific hypothesis (e.g. mechanistic theory) which necessitates such a final state is *refuted* by this fundamental fact. I seek a conception of the world that takes this fact into account. Becoming must be explained without recourse to final intentions; becoming must appear justified at every moment (or incapable of being evaluated; which amounts to the same thing); the present must absolutely not be justified with reference to the future, nor the past by reference to the present. “Necessity” not in the sense of an overreaching, dominating total force, or that of a prime mover; even less as a necessary condition for something valuable.⁷⁰

It is clear from the above that Nietzsche will reject any mode of valuation which operates under the goal of leading us towards some ultimate final state, since there is no final state

70

Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 708, p. 377, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale

to which they can lead. Those modes of valuation which depend upon a particular teleology will therefore be rejected by Nietzsche, on account of their misrepresentation of reality.

In order to understand the way in which systems of values can be compared meaningfully to one another without the presence of absolute standards of value, we must first determine what it means for a conception of the world to take into account the fact that the world of becoming cannot involve final intentions. Evidently, if a system of value requires the existence of final intentions then it will be refuted by the lack of any final state, as was mentioned in the quotation above. In addition to this, a system of values can be refuted by the fact that it requires the belief in certain regulative fictions which are misrepresentations of the world:

one must admit that nothing has being – because then becoming would lose its value and actually appear meaningless and superfluous. Consequently one must ask how the illusion of being could have risen (was bound to rise); likewise: how all value judgements that rest on the hypothesis that there are beings are disvalued. But here one realizes that this hypothesis of beings is the source of all world-defamation (-the “better world”, the “true world”, the “world beyond”, the “thing-in-itself”).⁷¹

It is clear, then, that Nietzsche believes that some theories of value can be refuted by the fact that they require us to believe that our regulative fictions represent an absolute truth. The reason that this is unacceptable for Nietzsche is because it contradicts the very nature of the world of becoming:

1. Becoming does not aim at a *final state*, does not flow into “being”.

71

Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 708, p. 377, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale.

2. Becoming is not a merely apparent state; perhaps the world of beings is mere appearance.

3. Becoming is of equivalent value every moment; the sum of its values always remains the same; in other words, it has no value at all, for anything against which to measure it, and in relation to which the word "value" would have meaning, is lacking. *The total value of the world cannot be evaluated*; consequently philosophical pessimism belongs among comical things.⁷²

Nietzsche does not think that any mode of valuation will ever have "value" in the absolute sense, because absolute value cannot exist. The reason for this is that since any value system which we might have, while it might seem "true" to us and while it may represent a condition through which our very existence is possible, cannot represent "true value" because there is no stable value in a world of becoming. The reason for this is fairly clear: if there is no being, and if everything is therefore in a state of becoming, then any value is not only subject to change, it is also false insofar as it claims to be absolute when it in fact represents a conditional.

The first important difference between a mode of valuation based on being and a mode of valuation based on becoming is now revealed: while neither mode of valuation can provide us with absolute values or necessary truths, at least the latter mode recognizes its own weakness and avoids the hypocrisy of asserting its values as if they were necessary, when necessary values are impossible. This rejection of those modes of valuation which are based on the concept of being leads one to wonder what Nietzsche can possibly mean when he describes a mode of valuation which is based on becoming; he describes the nature of

72

Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 708, p. 378, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale.

such a mode of valuation in The Twilight of the Idols:

What is the only doctrine that can be *ours*? That nobody *gives* human beings their qualities, neither God, nor society, nor their parents and ancestors, nor *they themselves* (the nonsense of the last notion we have rejected was taught by Kant as “intelligible freedom”, and perhaps already taught by Plato as well). *Nobody* is responsible for the fact that we are here at all, that we are constituted in such and such a way, that we are in these circumstances, in this environment. The fatality of our essence is not to be resolved by the fatality of all that was and that will be. We are *not* the consequence of a special intention, a will, a goal; we are *not* being used in an attempt to reach an “ideal of humanity”, or an “ideal of happiness”, or an “ideal of morality” - it is absurd to want to *divert* our essence towards some goal. *We* have invented the concept “goal”; in reality goals are *absent*. One is necessary, one is a piece of fate, one belongs to the whole, one *is* in the whole. There is nothing that could rule, measure, compare, judge our being, for that would mean ruling, measuring, comparing, and judging the whole - *but there is nothing outside the whole!*⁷³

From the preceding quotation it is clear that Nietzsche rejects teleological conceptions of value because they all rest upon the presupposition that there is something besides life which we can attain by living better.

Since there is only life itself (“the whole”) it is foolish to assign value to aspects of our life based upon an eternal ideal which cannot exist. Another error, however, would be to recoil from the fact that life consists in becoming, not in being, and to see the absence of absolute standards as a reason for pessimism. Ironically, it is the consideration of the pessimistic point of view which can enable us to see the possible means of our freedom, Nietzsche argues:

Whoever has endeavoured with some enigmatic longing, as I have, to

73

Friedrich Nietzsche, The Twilight of the Idols, “The Four Great Errors”, section 8, p. 1265-1266.

think pessimism through to its depths and to liberate it from the half-Christian, half-German narrowness and simplicity in which it has finally presented itself to our century, namely, in the form of Schopenhauer's philosophy; whoever has really, with an Asiatic and supra-Asiatic eye, looked into, down into the most world-denying of all possible way of thinking - beyond good and evil and no longer, like the Buddha and Schopenhauer, under the spell and delusion of morality - may just thereby, without really meaning to do so, have opened his eyes to the opposite ideal: the ideal of the most high-spirited, alive, and world-affirming human being who has not only come to terms and learned to get along with whatever was and is, but who wants to have *what was and is* repeated into all eternity, shouting insatiably *da capo* - not only to himself but to the whole play and spectacle, and not only to a spectacle but at bottom to him who needs precisely this spectacle - and who makes it necessary because again and again he needs himself - and makes himself necessary⁷⁴

In the passage cited above, there is a statement of what it means to be "high-spirited" according to Nietzsche. As we have seen, the free spirit does not seek a freedom from all contingency, rather free spirits recognize that they can only be contingently free, yet they do not react to this fact with a pessimistic avoidance of life. Instead, a free spirit affirms life in its good and bad aspects, recognizing that we cannot have one without the other. Before the nature of this affirmation is discussed in detail, it is worthwhile to look briefly at Nietzsche's reasons for believing that the affirmation of life involves valuation.

As mentioned earlier, Nietzsche considers his view that there must be a revaluation of all values to be one of the most important aspects of his philosophy - in the language of Ecce Homo, the reason that he is a destiny. Some explanation of what he means by the revaluation of all values is provided in Nietzsche's discussion of The Twilight of the Idols

74

Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, part 3, section 56, p. 68, translated by Walter Kaufmann.

in Ecce Homo:

There is no 'reality', no 'ideality' which is not touched on in this writing (-touched on: what a cautious euphemism!...) Not merely *eternal* idols, also the youngest of all, consequently the weakest with age. 'Modern ideas', for example. A great wind blows among the trees and everywhere fruits fall - truths. There is the prodigality of an all too abundant autumn in it: one trips over truths, one even treads some to death - there are too many of them...But those one gets one's hands on are no longer anything questionable, they are decisions. Only I have the standard for 'truths' in my hand, only I *can* decide. As if in me a *second consciousness* had grown, as if in me 'the will' had turned on a light for itself over the *oblique* path on which it had hitherto been *descending*...The *oblique* path - it was called the 'path to truth'...All 'obscure impulse' is at an end, it is precisely the *good* man who has known least what was the right path...And in all seriousness, no one before me has known the right path, the *ascending* path: only after me are there again hopes, tasks, prescribable paths of culture - I *am the bringer of the good tidings of these*.⁷⁵

Summarized above are many of the ideas which we have discussed so far. First of all, Nietzsche refers to 'truths' as decisions. Clearly the difference between a proper mode of valuation and the moralities of the past lies in the fact that any revaluation of values will recognize the fact that the new values which it brings, as well as the old ones that are being replaced, represent a decision about the way we will conceive the world. Unlike the hypocritical moralities which preceded Nietzsche's theories, the revaluation of values will not result in a system of values which represents passively gathered knowledge about the world. For Nietzsche, the mind, as will to power, takes an active role in shaping the way in which the world is perceived so that every "truth" is a decision.

Also in this passage is a restatement of the belief that the path previously thought of

75

Friedrich Nietzsche, Ecce Homo, "Twilight of the Idols", section 2, p. 86, translated by R. J. Hollingdale.

as the moral one is in fact merely a misconception. The reasons for this are several, many of them having been outlined above, and they include the mistaken belief that the goals which fostered a particular moral system represent the ideal goal, or the only goal that a mode of valuation can have. This is incorrect, Nietzsche argues, because all previous modes of valuation have relied upon one particular aspect of humanity in order to determine goals:

In relation to the vastness and multiplicity of collaboration and mutual opposition encountered in the life of every organism, the *conscious* feelings, intentions, and valuations is a small section. We have no right whatever to posit this piece of consciousness as the aim and wherefore of this total phenomenon of life: becoming conscious is obviously only one more means toward the unfolding and extension of the power of life. Therefore it is a piece of naiveté to posit pleasure or spirituality or morality or any other particular of the sphere of consciousness as the highest value - and perhaps even to justify "the world" by means of this. This is my *basic objection* to all philosophic-moralistic cosmo- and theodicies, to all *wherefores* and *highest values* in philosophy and theology hitherto. One kind of means has been misunderstood as an end; conversely, life and the enhancement of its power has been debased to a means. If we wished to postulate a goal adequate to life, it could not coincide with any category of conscious life; it would rather have to explain all of them as a means to itself⁷⁶

When we consider this passage in the context of the earlier citation in which Nietzsche says that it is absurd to divert our essence in the interest of some goal, it becomes clear that the affirmation which the high-spirited are drawn to, must involve an affirmation of all of life - in its good, bad, and indifferent aspects. This would be the only goal which is both adequate to life, and which does not seek its justification outside of life. This affirmation is best seen as an aesthetic valuation of life, since: "the existence of the world is *justified* only as an

76

Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 707, p. 376, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale

aesthetic phenomenon⁷⁷. It is only through aesthetics that the world can be justified, according to Nietzsche, since it is only an aesthetic valuation which can accommodate the contradictions in life. In order to affirm the good, bad, and indifferent aspects of life, we must conceive of life itself as a work of art, since in art contradictory impulses can coexist as part of a whole onto which we impose an order. In his description of The Birth of Tragedy, Nietzsche describes the artistic meaning behind events:

the whole book knows only an artistic meaning and a 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 in 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.⁷⁸

Up until now, a lot has been said in general terms about what Nietzsche's views of freedom and of the affirmation of life must consist in. In order to be able to give a full explanation of Nietzsche's critique of morality, it is necessary to move beyond the general, and to discuss the specific meaning of Nietzsche's discussion of the eternal recurrence. As the earlier quotation from Beyond Good and Evil asserts, the high-spirited want "to have *what was and what is* repeated to all eternity", according to Nietzsche. This affirmation of eternal recurrence involves, as we have seen, the affirmation of all of the aspects of life, not just of those aspects which bring joy. Though it is in some sense a fearful doctrine, the free

⁷⁷

Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy, "An Attempt At Self-Criticism", section 5, p. 22, translated by Walter Kauffmann.

⁷⁸

Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy, "An Attempt At Self-Criticism", section 5, p. 22, translated by Walter Kauffmann.

spirit looks forward to the eternal recurrence:

What if some day or night a demon were to steal after you into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: "This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to return to you, all in the same succession and sequence..." Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: "You are a god and never have I heard anything more divine." If this thought gained possession of you it would change you as you are or perhaps crush you. The question in each and every thing, "Do you desire this once more and innumerable times more?" would lie upon your actions as the greatest weight. 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?⁷⁹

For Nietzsche, freedom therefore consists in making ourselves so well disposed towards life that not only do we not fear the eternal recurrence, we embrace it. Unlike the modes of valuation which depended upon a reference to an impossible "final state", the eternal recurrence recognizes that there is no stability in life beyond the process of "becoming" itself. There is therefore no goal to the eternal recurrence, "unless the joy of the circle is itself a goal"⁸⁰.

Aware of the fact of eternal recurrence, the free spirit can undertake the revaluation of all values:

Means of *enduring* [the hardest idea]: the revaluation of all values. No

79

Friedrich Nietzsche, The Gay Science, Book Four, section 341, p. 274, translated by Walter Kauffmann.

80

Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 1067, p. 550, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale

longer joy in certainty but in uncertainty; no longer “cause and effect” but the continually creative; no longer will to preservation but to power; no longer the humble expression, “everything is *merely* subjective”, but “it is also *our* work! - Let us be proud of it!”⁸¹

One of the points made in the above citation is that the acceptance of perspectivism is an integral part of eternal recurrence. In other words, the free spirit realizes that everything recurs eternally, and in so doing acknowledges that even this perspective of the world as eternal recurrence is itself a perspective. Instead of using this as a basis for rejecting our interpretation of the world, and for bemoaning the fact that we can never have absolute truth, free spirits marvel at the world that is created by their perspective, seeing it as a source of pride. In addition, the overcoming of simple causality is described in the above. Instead of “cause and effect”, the new valuation of values will recognize that the world consists in becoming: since there is only a dynamic process of becoming, and no static “being” in the world, there can be no separate causes and effects. Though the world is still one of contingent relationships, these relationships are between dynamic systems of force, playing off against one another in mutual exchange of power. There is no “being” to preserve under this conception of the world, and thus the “will to preservation” is replaced with a “will to power”. This will to power is the active process by which knowledge and values are continually created in the world in a reciprocal relationship.

Since, as we have seen in our discussion of knowledge, Nietzsche believed that all knowledge involves value judgements, it is clear that, in order to be free, we must recognize

81

Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 1059 p. 545, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale

that the world we create reflects our values. Thus, under the theory of will to power, we cannot use our knowledge of the world to create a static system of values, because our knowledge itself is conditioned by our dynamic attempts to apply certain value judgements to the world. This is why morality is so dangerous, according to Nietzsche. The moral drive to provide obligations based upon concepts external to life restricts our ability to perceive and to shape the world:

To *endure* the idea of the recurrence one needs: freedom from morality; new means against the fact of *pain* (pain conceived as a tool, as the father of pleasure; there is no cumulative consciousness of displeasure); the enjoyment of all kinds of uncertainty, experimentalism, as a counterweight to this extreme fatalism; abolition of the concept of necessity; abolition of the “will”; abolition of “knowledge-in-itself”. Greatest elevation of the consciousness of strength in man, as he creates the overman.⁸²

Not only does Nietzsche argue that the doctrine of the eternal recurrence involves liberating oneself from the yoke of morality, he also refers once again to creation. Since knowledge consists in perspectival valuation, “knowing” is itself a continual process of creation. The greatest elevation of the consciousness of strength in man involves the continual dynamic creation of the overman as a work of art. In addition, Nietzsche once again shows that the eternal recurrence need not be a fearful idea, since it is possible to conceive of it as the ultimate source of strength. When we are free spirits, we can engage our will to power consciously, which is to say, we will not sublimate our will to power into artificial constructs such as morality. Though they might need to make use of certain regulative fictions such

82

Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 1060, p. 545-546, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale

as the notion of the self, the free spirits will do so with the knowledge that the notion itself is a fiction. Once morality is overcome, we can deal with situations immanently and naturally, without trying to make certain regulative fictions - which we consider "truths" - force upon the world certain features which it will not allow.

What is important to note is that morality is not rejected because the ends which moral systems pursue are undesirable. In other words, Nietzsche does not argue that we must necessarily avoid the things which morality invites us to pursue. In his criticism of the utilitarians, for instance, Nietzsche does not argue that happiness is not something desirable for people, instead he argues that, on the one hand, pleasure cannot have the intrinsic value which utilitarians ascribe to it, and on the other hand, making a particular end, such as happiness the purpose for which we ought to take action restricts us from the freedom to augment our essence. The mistake of morality is not in giving us the wrong purpose, rather it is the fact that it tries to give life any purpose whatsoever that causes morality to restrict our freedom:

the mistake is that, instead of looking for a purpose that explains the *necessity* of such means, we presuppose in advance a goal that actually *excludes* such means; i.e. we take a desideratum in respect of certain means (namely pleasant, rational, and virtuous ones) as a norm, on the basis of which we posit what general purpose would be desirable - The fundamental mistake is simply that, instead of understanding consciousness as a tool and particular aspect of the total life, we posit it as the standard and the condition of life that is of supreme value: it is the erroneous perspective of *a parte ad totum* [from a part to the whole] which is why all philosophers are instinctively trying to imagine a total consciousness, a consciousness involved in all life and will, in all that occurs, a "spirit", "God". But one has to tell them that precisely this turns life into a monstrosity; that a "God" and total sensorium would altogether be something on account of which life would have to be condemned - Precisely that we have *eliminated* the total consciousness that posited ends and means, is our great relief -

with that we are no longer *compelled* to be pessimists.⁸³

In the above passage we can see the relationship between Nietzsche's idea that morality mistakenly overemphasizes the value of a particular aspect of life and his idea that the belief in absolute standards of value turns one's attention away from life, away from the only world there is. While Nietzsche has done a good job of explaining this link, it still leaves us with the question of what it means to adopt valuations which affirm life. What we can now conclude is that the affirmation of life is incompatible with the belief in absolute standards of value. We had already seen that Nietzsche felt that a world of becoming made such standards impossible, and it is now evident that the superior mode of valuation will not necessarily reject all values which have gone before it. What it must do, however, is recognize the fact that all values are subject to change, since there is no being, and thus all valuations will eventually be overcome.

In his doctrine of the eternal recurrence, Nietzsche therefore describes a mode of valuation which is dynamic, inasmuch as it expresses valuations with a sense of immediacy, rather than with a sense of law. In other words, whereas the moral mode of valuation leads to the creation of laws and rules of conduct, the idea of the eternal recurrence teaches us to make value judgements as they happen, and that the adoption of laws and standards of practice can only serve as a restriction of our ability to create values for ourselves. The counsel of the eternal recurrence is to indulge our power to act in such a way that we act immanently and honestly in every situation. By immanently, what is meant is that we do not

83

Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 707, p. 376-377, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale

rely upon concepts which are external to the actions themselves; by honestly, what is meant is that we act naturally rather than with the goal of upholding a standard which is imposed upon us by the dictates of society, by our upbringing, or by our endorsement of a particular moral principle. This mode of valuation is not moral because it does not concern itself with the question of responsibility, nor does it require us to consider ourselves the cause of our own actions. It is only by acting in accordance with the notion of eternal recurrence that we can be free, according to Nietzsche, because it is this notion which enables us in the end to get beyond morality by liberating ourselves from its restrictions. Nietzsche argues that the proper model for this kind of valuation is artistic creation because it is in art that we create a self-justified whole whose value is immanent.

In order to comprehend the nature of such a mode of valuation, it is worthwhile to try to put into practical terms and to attempt to evaluate certain actions in terms of Nietzsche's theory of the eternal recurrence and of the will to power. At this point, it is useful to bring up Kantian morality once more, in order to see the differences between Kant and Nietzsche's approaches to valuation. If we take, for example, the action of making a deceitful promise, Kant would argue that making a promise which we know we cannot fulfill is immoral since, in order to be moral, an action must be universalizable, and since, if we were to try to universalize the action of making deceitful promises, then we would undermine the institution of promise making itself and thereby make our own action contradictory of the laws of practical reason. Given Nietzsche's perspectival approach, he will not say whether or not one ought to make deceitful promises, since he does not endorse any theory whereby rules of conduct are established for all moral agents as if there were

such a thing as a simple moral agent which could have the same interests in every case. Thus Nietzsche calls the moral approach to the question incoherent, because its attempt to provide an imperative is simply an assertion of how the instigator of the moral point of view thinks the world “ought to be”. Since the world is properly thought of as consisting in a dynamic pattern of becoming, there is no final state which the world can arrive at, and therefore there is nothing that it “can be” in its entirety. The attempt by the moralist to create a set of imperatives to structure the way that the world ought to be is merely an example of misdirected will to power. It is will to power, because it is an attempt to give a specific structure to the world through value judgements, but it is misdirected because it aims at a goal which is incoherent with the true nature of the world.

Though Nietzsche rejects Kant’s rationale for saying that it is immoral to make a deceitful promise, he does not necessarily have to say that making deceitful promises is valuable. What Nietzsche will say is that, since there is nothing which is intrinsically good or evil, we cannot enter into a decision about making a promise as if that particular instance of promise making represented the entire institution of making promises. Instead, Nietzsche argues that a person is only a free spirit when they recognize that they are a dynamic system of forces and when they recognize the forces which are active in them at a given time and thus act consciously so as to increase their power. Hence free spirits will not try to find a law or a moral imperative which they can use to determine whether or not they ought to make a deceitful promise, rather they will react to each case on its own merits and they will act in a way that reflects their power. Thus, the moral question of whether or not it is the “right” thing to do is left completely aside, and even the idea that there is a moral agent who

“does” the action is left behind: all that is left is the action itself:

just as the popular mind separates the lightning from its flash and takes the latter for an *action*, for the operation of a subject called lightning, so popular morality also separates strength from expressions of strength, as if there were a neutral substratum behind the strong man, which was *free* to express strength or not to do so. But there is no such substratum; there is no “being” behind doing, effecting, becoming; “the doer” is merely a fiction added to the deed - the deed is everything.⁸⁴

Free spirits recognize the fictions Nietzsche describes above. Since they recognize that the relationships of force which they consist of are dynamic, the free spirits will not expect to have one aspect of their character dominate all of their actions. Instead, they will dynamically create and re-create themselves as a work of art. Practically speaking, this means that they will act as they are inclined in a given situation, recognizing that their inclinations stem from the various drives, desires and the interplay of forces of which they are made. While they may in a given case decide that they will make a promise they know that they cannot keep, they will not expect to do this in every case, because they recognize that the contingent events which brought them into a given situation will not be the same as the events which lead them into the next situation in which they will have the option of making a deceitful promise. From this it is clear that Nietzsche’s explanation of a non-moral mode of valuation cannot be used to positively determine what specific actions a free spirit will take, or ought to take, but that it can be used to determine the method which ought to be used in order to determine value. This method is to choose one’s values in a free-floating

84

Friedrich Nietzsche, The Genealogy of Morals, First Essay, Section 13, p. 45, translated by Walter Kauffmann.

way as much as possible and to exert all of one's drives to their fullest extent whenever possible. The free spirit avoids the self-denial that is associated with subsuming one's desires according to moral concepts. The association of this non-moral mode of valuation with the aesthetic should be fairly clear. For Nietzsche, it would make no more sense to tell someone what traits or actions they should consider "good" and "evil" than it would to tell them what works of art they should consider "beautiful" or "ugly":

That which is instinctively *repugnant* to us, aesthetically, is proved by mankind's longest experience to be harmful, dangerous, worthy of suspicion: the suddenly vocal aesthetic instinct (e.g. in disgust) contains a *judgment*. To this extent the beautiful stands within the general category of the biological values of what is useful, beneficent, life-enhancing - but in such a way that a host of stimuli are only distantly associated with, and remind us only faintly of, useful things and states give us the feeling of the beautiful, i.e. of the increase of the feeling of power... Thus the beautiful and the ugly are recognized as *relative* to our most fundamental values of preservation. It is senseless to want to posit anything as beautiful or ugly apart from this. *The beautiful exists just as little as does the good, or the true.*⁸⁵

This does not mean, however, that we cannot criticize other people for the way in which they determine their values. Nietzsche argues that one ought to be honest in aesthetic judgements and to determine what one likes and dislikes oneself without relying upon external standards of what one thinks one "ought to find beautiful". By determining one's aesthetic judgements freely, one is able to affirm all of the aspects of one's character, rather than denying one's interests in certain things simply because others would be critical of them. In much the same way, Nietzsche argues, that in ethics, one must determine one's values on the basis of

85

Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 804, p. 423, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale

one's real desires and aversions, and not in terms of some moral standard according to which one "ought to" ascribe a particular value to a particular action or character trait. It would of course be impossible for Nietzsche to prove that his theory of valuation is the "correct" one, since, as we have seen, he argues that essentially there is no "correct" method of valuation. However, when we take his criticisms of traditional morality and add to this his advocacy of a mode of valuation which leads to the honest expression of desire and aversion, it is clear that he has made a clear aesthetic argument in favour of his mode of valuation.

At this point, it is necessary to discuss the question, alluded to in the last chapter, of whether or not the non-moral mode of valuation which Nietzsche describes - expressed in the doctrines of the will to power and of the eternal recurrence - are subject to some of the criticisms which Kant makes in his critique of dogmatic moral philosophy. In specific terms, the question must be raised as to whether or not the doctrines of the eternal recurrence and of the will to power express the kinds of dogma that Kant had proven, in his critique of pure speculative reason, to be unfounded. This would be a severe criticism of Nietzsche's position since, as we saw in the last chapter, Nietzsche endorsed some of Kant's reasons for rejecting dogmatic metaphysics. In fact, since Nietzsche's perspectivism led him to the belief that there is no absolute truth and thus that all knowledge of the nature of the world is based upon a particular perspective, it is clear that if Nietzsche advocates a cosmological view of the eternal recurrence, then he must do so in light of the fact that this point of view also represents a particular perspective, and he therefore cannot say that the eternal recurrence is cosmologically "true".

Though, as we have seen, Nietzsche's discussion of epistemology and of the lack of

absolute truth make it impossible for him to say that the doctrine of the eternal recurrence is a cosmological truth, this would, nonetheless, represent a possible interpretation of the doctrine of the eternal recurrence. This interpretation of eternal recurrence is summarized by Bernd Magnus, who writes:

There is first of all the *cosmological* interpretation. It consists of an attempt to interpret the doctrine of eternal recurrence as itself an attempt to offer a theory of the universe. Indeed, under this interpretation, Nietzsche is to be read as having attempted to provide a true theory of the universe. While this interpretation crops up again and again in the Nietzsche literature, I believe it has the least to recommend it.⁸⁶

I have to share Magnus' rejection of this interpretation of eternal recurrence, since it relies upon a dogmatic description of recurrence which goes directly against Nietzsche's statements about the subjectivity of truth. Nonetheless, I think that there is some support for this point of view, because I think that there are occasions in Nietzsche's writings where he goes against the spirit of what he has said elsewhere. For instance, in the following passage of The Will to Power, Nietzsche seems to be describing a true cosmological interpretation of eternal recurrence:

If the world may be thought of as a certain definite 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; more: 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 is thus demonstrated: the world as a circular

⁸⁶ Bernd Magnus, Nietzsche's Existential Imperative, p. 140.

movement that has already repeated itself infinitely and often and plays its game *in infinitum*. This conception is not simply a mechanistic conception; for if it were that, it would not condition an infinite recurrence of identical cases, but a final state. *Because* the world has not reached this, mechanistic theory must be considered an imperfect and merely provisional hypothesis.⁸⁷

Though the preceding quotation shows how it might be possible for someone to mistakenly think that Nietzsche would actually assert the cosmological truth of eternal recurrence, it is important to note that what is really revealed above, is that Nietzsche's view of the eternal recurrence is a non-dogmatic one. As a cosmology, eternal recurrence plays an interpretive role in speculative reason, while as an ethics, it plays its role in practical reason:

Nous avons remarqué que l'éternel retour comme doctrine physique, était la nouvelle formulation de la synthèse spéculative. Comme pensée éthique, l'éternel retour est la nouvelle formulation de la synthèse pratique: *Ce que tu veux, veuillele de telle manière que tu en veuilles aussi l'éternel retour....* Voyons mieux comment l'éternel retour opère ici la sélection. C'est la pensée de l'éternel retour qui sélectionne. Elle fait du vouloir quelque chose d'entier. La *pensée* de l'éternel retour, elle fait du vouloir une création, elle effectue l'équation vouloir = créer.⁸⁸

The link between the two interpretations of eternal recurrence lies in the fact that knowledge itself is a form of valuation, for Nietzsche. Thus, the cosmological interpretation of eternal

⁸⁷

Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 1066, p. 549, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale

⁸⁸

Gilles Deleuze, Nietzsche et la philosophie, p. 79; "We have noted that the eternal return, as a physical doctrine, was the new formulation of the speculative synthesis. As an ethical thought the eternal return is the new formulation of the practical synthesis: *whatever you will, will it in such a way that you also will its eternal return....* How does the eternal return perform the selection here? It is the *thought* of the eternal return that selects. It makes willing something whole. The thought of the eternal return eliminates from willing everything which falls outside the eternal return, it makes willing a creation, it brings about the equation "willing = creating"', Hugh Tomlinson's translation.

recurrence itself represents grounds for what Deleuze calls a selection: the selection of eternal recurrence as an ethical framework along with the creative approach to valuation which it involves.

In the first sentence of the preceding passage from The Will to Power, Nietzsche points out that every representation of the world other than that it contains a certain definite quantity of force and a certain definite number of centres of force is “indefinite and therefore useless”. From our earlier discussion of Nietzsche’s critique of morality it is clear what Nietzsche means. While he has proven that we cannot have absolute standards of truth, he has also pointed out the limitations of those theories which deny perspectivism, revealing their internal inconsistencies. For instance, with respect to reason, we will recall that Nietzsche demonstrated that it was impossible for reason to lead to universal necessity since it was at least theoretically possible that there are other perspectives other than that of reason which we can use to gain knowledge of the world. Though Nietzsche asserts that the world is one of becoming and that the property of “being” is one which is arbitrarily assigned to various experiences or sets of experience, he does not assert this in a dogmatic way as if, unlike the principles of reason, it is the unique perspective which can be proven to be true.

Also in the passage from The Will to Power cited above, Nietzsche provides illumination as to the nature of his endorsement of mechanistic theory. At several points in his writings, Nietzsche stresses the fact that even the doctrines of science cannot simply be accepted uncritically. For instance, in On the Genealogy of Morals, he points out that:

Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as science “without any presuppositions”; this thought does not bear thinking through it is paralogical: a philosophy, a “faith”, must always be there first of all so that science can acquire from it a direction, a meaning, a limit, a

method, a *right* to exist.⁸⁹

From this, it is clear that Nietzsche cannot coherently attempt to prove the truth of eternal recurrence scientifically, instead, he can only try to analyze the concept of becoming in a way which actively tries to avoid absurd or incoherent presuppositions. Thus, if a representation of the world is indefinite - as all representations of the world other than that it consists in "a certain definite quantity of force and as a certain definite number of centers of force" are, according to our earlier citation - then it ought to be avoided. As a result, when Nietzsche points out the relationship between mechanistic theory and his description of eternal recurrence, it is to illustrate that he does not endorse a dogmatic view of eternal recurrence. Instead, Nietzsche describes a doctrine which, though it is not the only possible interpretation of the world, provides a framework for a free, non moral mode of valuation, under which one acts freely insofar as one lives in such a way that one can will that one's actions recur over and over again into eternity.

The formula for this non-moral mode of valuation, is given by Nietzsche in various ways. In Thus Spake Zarathustra, for instance, Zarathustra states:

I taught them all *my* art and aims: to compose into one and bring together what is fragment and riddle and dreadful chance in man - as poet, reader of riddles, and redeemer of chance, I taught them to create the future, and to redeem by creating - all that *was past*. To redeem that past of mankind and to transform every 'It was' until the will says: 'But I willed it thus! So shall I will it' this did I call redemption, this alone did I teach them to call redemption.⁹⁰

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Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals, Third Essay, Section 24, p.151-152, translated by Walter Kauffmann.

⁹⁰

Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathustra, "Of Old and New Law Tables, Section 3,

Not only does Zarathustra teach that redemption is a form of art, he also teaches that life involves creation. Nietzsche's non-moral mode of valuation is therefore best understood in terms of creation, of aesthetics. For this reason, Nietzsche sees his revaluation of all values to be more in tune with the work of artists, than with the work of traditional philosophy:

In the main, I agree more with the artists than with any philosopher hitherto: they have not lost the scent of life, they have loved the things of "this world" - they have loved their senses. To strive for "desensualization": that seems to me a misunderstanding or an illness or a cure, where it is not merely hypocrisy or self-deception. I desire for myself and for all who live, *may* live, without being tormented by a puritanical conscience, an ever-greater spiritualization and multiplication of the senses; indeed we should be grateful to the senses for their subtlety, plenitude and power and offer them in return the best we have in the way of spirit. What are priestly and metaphysical calumnies against the sense to us! We no longer need these calumnies: it is a sign that one has turned out well when, like Goethe, one clings with ever-greater pleasure and warmth to the "things of this world": - for in this way he holds firmly to the great conception of man, that man becomes the transfigurer of existence when he learns how to transfigure himself.⁹¹

We can now see, that this affinity which Nietzsche feels towards artists is a reflection of his belief that, since our very existence in the world involves the active interpretation and valuation of reality, the way in which we ought to exist is to treat the world and ourselves as artists treat their work. Since their work involves an endorsement of the senses, artists cling to the "things of this world" and are not led into the foolish belief that there are two separate worlds. As a result, a work of art is self-justifying, and does not require an external

translated by R. J. Hollingdale.

91

Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 820, p. 434, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale

standard of judgement. As was demonstrated in Chapter Two, Nietzsche is highly critical of moral concepts because they are an obstacle to freely making judgements; this is not the case, however, with aesthetic judgements:

Judgments concerning beauty and ugliness are shortsighted (-they are always opposed by the understanding -) but persuasive in the highest degree; they appeal to our instincts where they decide most quickly and pronounce their Yes and No before the understanding can speak. The most habitual affirmations of beauty excite and stimulate each other; once the aesthetic drive is at work, a whole host of other perfections, originating elsewhere, crystallize around "the particular instance of beauty". It is not possible to remain objective, or to suspend the interpretive, additive, interpolating, poetizing power (- the latter is the forging of the chain of affirmations of beauty).⁹²

It is clear that, for Nietzsche, aesthetic judgement, unlike moral judgement, is immanent and personal. Since its pattern of judgement is also immanent and interpretive, the doctrine of eternal recurrence is best understood in terms of aesthetic valuation.

In addition to involving immanent and interpretive judgement, the doctrine of eternal recurrence entails other aspects of aesthetic valuation. The first of these relates to the formulation and the defence of eternal recurrence. Rather than putting forward the doctrine of eternal recurrence as a logical argument which is apodictically proven by the nature of the world, the eternal recurrence ought to be construed as an aesthetic doctrine, in other words, as a self-justifying and immanent description of the world which Nietzsche feels ought to be adopted, not because it is absolutely "true", but because it represents an aesthetically appealing depiction of the world which is not internally inconsistent in the way

92

Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 804, p. 423-424, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale

that moral schemes are. It therefore would be incoherent for Nietzsche to attempt to prove the truth of eternal recurrence and to try to force others to live their lives as if it were true. This is one of the reasons why I share Magnus' rejection of the cosmological interpretation of eternal recurrence. The method which Nietzsche must adopt, is to describe eternal recurrence in such a way that it appeals to others, and so that it seems to be the most attractive interpretation of reality.

In addition to this, as we saw in Chapter Two, Nietzsche can also illustrate the flaws in other possible interpretations of reality by showing their internal inconsistencies. For this reason, the revaluation of all values involves two separate tasks: firstly the destruction of the old values, and secondly the creation of new ones. This is reflected by the fact that Zarathustra discusses redemption with "old shattered law-tables around him and also new law-tables, half-written"⁹³. The devaluation of old values is essential to the ability to create new ones, since it is only through the negation of old concepts that we can affirm the new:

The psychological problem in the type of Zarathustra is how he that says No and *does* No to an unheard of degree, to everything to which one has so far said Yes, can nevertheless be the opposite of a No-saying spirit; how the spirit who bears the heaviest fate, a fatality of task, can nevertheless be the lightest and most transcendent - Zarathustra is a dancer - how he that has the hardest, most terrible insight into reality, that has thought the "most abysmal idea", nevertheless does not consider it an objection to existence, not even to its eternal recurrence - but rather one reason more for being himself the eternal Yes to all things⁹⁴

93

Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathustra, "Of Old and New Law Tables, Section 3, translated by R. J. Hollingdale.

94

Friedrich Nietzsche, Ecce Homo, "Thus Spake Zarathustra", Section 6, translated by Walter Kauffmann.

In order to transform the saying no into an affirmation, Zarathustra becomes an artist (a dancer in the preceding passage) with a lightness of spirit that comes - not from trying to escape the world for the sake of an imaginary better world - but from the realization that, though we can only interpret the world as it comes to us through sensation, the fact that we can interpret the world is the source of our power:

It is a question of strength (of an individual or of a people), *whether* and *where* the judgment “beautiful” is applied. The feeling of plenitude, of *dammed-up strength* (which permits one to meet with courage and good-humour much that makes the weakling *shudder*) - the feeling of *power* applies the judgment “beautiful” even to things and conditions that the instinct of impotence could only find *hateful* and “ugly”. The nose for what we could still barely deal with if it confronted us in the flesh - as danger, problem, temptation - this determines even our aesthetic Yes. (“That is beautiful” is an *affirmation*.)⁹⁵

There is no denying that there is suffering in the world, Nietzsche points out, but the instinct of the moralist is to deny the world because of this suffering. In his rejection of the denial of the world, Nietzsche rejects the denial of suffering.

As we saw in Chapter Two, Nietzsche pointed out that suffering can be extrinsically valuable, and he therefore rejected moral theories which placed all suffering in the category of “evil” and thereby prevented us from seeing the possible value of suffering:

a preference for questionable and terrifying things is a symptom of *strength*; while a taste for the *pretty and dainty* belongs to the weak and delicate. *Pleasure* in tragedy characterizes *strong* ages and natures: their *non plus ultra* is perhaps the *divina commedia*. It is the *heroic* spirits who say Yes to themselves in tragic cruelty: they are hard

95

Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 852, p. 449-450, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale

enough to experience suffering as a *pleasure*.⁹⁶

As was discussed in Chapter Two, Nietzsche does not deny that some of the qualities which moral theories hold to be ideals can be valuable. Instead, he denies the use of these qualities as ideals. In the same way, he does not argue that one ought to reject pleasure in favour of suffering, instead, he argues that one ought to seek the power whereby one can experience suffering itself as a pleasure. The way in which opposite concepts such as suffering and pleasure can be reconciled, is through aesthetics:

“Beauty” is for the artist something outside of all orders of rank, because in beauty opposites are tamed; the highest sign of power, namely power over opposites; moreover without tension: - that violence is no longer needed; that everything follows, obeys, so easily and so pleasantly - that is what delights the artist’s will-to-power.⁹⁷

In order to reconcile the fact of suffering with the affirmation of life, one requires an aesthetic mode of valuation, one which can unite the terrible aspects of life with the wonderful, and which can see both as a source of power.

Nietzsche’s non-moral mode of valuation is therefore clearly in evidence. The fact that there can be no absolute truths or values is not a reason to reject the world, according to Nietzsche. The highest expression of the will-to-power is artistic self-creation. In this form of the will-to-power, the denial of absolute value becomes a source of pride, since it is acknowledged that all of one’s values depend upon one’s perspective, and thus that one

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Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 852, p. 450, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale

⁹⁷

Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 803, p. 422, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale

is responsible for the value of the world. The denial of life is therefore replaced by an affirmation, and it is recognized that the very conflicts in life, inasmuch as they are resolved by the creative self-overcomer, are a symbol of pride and joy:

Those imposing artists who let a *harmony* sound forth from every conflict are those who bestow upon things their own power and self-redemption: they express their innermost experience in the symbolism of every work of art they produce - their creativity is gratitude for their existence. The *profundity of the tragic artist* lies in this, that his aesthetic instinct surveys the more remote consequences, that he does not halt shortsightedly at what is closest at hand, that he affirms the *large-scale economy* which justifies the *terrifying*, the *evil*, the *questionable* - and more than merely justifies them.⁹⁸

The doctrine of eternal recurrence, as a non-moral mode of valuation, can therefore be understood as the doctrine whereby one lives one's life as a tragic artist. Rather than recoiling in horror at the terrifying, the evil, and the questionable, the creative self-overcomer affirms the reality in which they emerge. There is no justification beyond the justification of the whole, in art, as in non-moral valuation, and therefore, it is the "large-scale economy" which is justified. It is more than merely justified, however, because the fact of its existence depends upon its creation. In other words, the world itself is a work of art, created by the revaluation of values, and the world as a work of art, when created by the tragic artist, is an expression of gratitude for existence.

98

Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 852, p. 451, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale

Conclusion

Though it is clear from even the briefest study of Nietzsche's work that he was bitterly opposed to certain kinds of morality, it is not obvious whether it is possible to have a moral scheme which he would not oppose. In the first chapter of this paper, this issue was addressed through a study of Leiter's belief that Nietzsche only opposes certain kinds of morality, what he calls "morality in the pejorative sense". Ultimately Leiter's point of view was rejected, and it was concluded that Nietzsche opposed morality in general because he felt that morality, by its very nature, involved valuations which he opposed; most notably, valuations which were incompatible with his notion of freedom.

In the second chapter, Nietzsche's critique of morality is evaluated in more detail. First of all, by evaluating his critique with respect to the ethics of Kant, one concludes that Nietzsche does reveal some serious theoretical difficulties in Kant's moral system and indeed in any moral system which seeks to establish universal and necessary obligation. In order to demonstrate this claim, it is necessary to show that Nietzsche relies to some degree upon Kant's criticisms of dogmatic moral theory. In this context, it was shown that Nietzsche, in a certain sense, advanced Kant's criticism of morality, by establishing the falsehood of the principles which Kant had said were required in order for morality to be possible. In this way, Nietzsche argues that morality itself is impossible. The specific reasons for Nietzsche's claims were discussed in more detail with reference to the moral concepts of "freedom of the will" and of the "unified subject". Specifically, it was argued

that, in Nietzsche's view, moral schemes required the truth of these concepts. Since there is no absolute truth, moral imperatives cannot be universal and necessary. In addition, it was shown that there are internal inconsistencies in these concepts, and that, for that reason, Nietzsche felt that these moral concepts themselves had to be overcome.

Given that, according to Nietzsche, the moral concepts of the unified subject, of freedom of the will, and of universality and necessity had to be overcome, it is clear that a non-moral mode of valuation would not make use of these concepts. In the third chapter, this was expanded upon, and it was demonstrated that, for Nietzsche, the revaluation of values involved the advocacy of a doctrine of eternal recurrence under which one dynamically recreates oneself as a work of art, since this was, according to Nietzsche, the highest expression of the will-to-power. Although the concept of freedom had been discussed in the second chapter as well, it is in the third chapter that the attempt is made to determine what the more specific implications of Nietzsche's concept of freedom are in order to be able to understand what it means to create oneself as a work of art. One concludes that Nietzsche is successful in describing a non-moral form of valuation which recognizes its own contingency, yet allows us to be free, and that, this conception is not subject to the criticisms which both Kant and Nietzsche make about moral valuation, because it is not a dogmatic conception. Rather than relying upon "truths" about reality, the revaluation of all values involves the knowledge that, seeing oneself as a dynamically self-creating work of art is not the only possible way of conceiving one's relationship to reality. It is however, the most aesthetically appealing way for Nietzsche, and it is a way which does not commit the mistakes that moral modes of valuation do.

In conclusion, it seems that Nietzsche presents an extremely significant criticism of morality. The effectiveness with which he dismisses the grounds for universal and necessary obligation leads to the conclusion that there can be no universal and necessary standard of morality. On top of this, even if we were to attempt to present a theory of morality based upon some particular end that is not universal or necessary, the very fact that it sought the attainment of a particular end would establish that it should be rejected since the desire to achieve that particular end would divert the moral agent from the free pursuit of those things which are beneficial to his or her essence. We are left then with the attempt to find a non-moral mode of valuation, if we are to salvage valuation at all. The way in which valuation can remain worthwhile in a world of becoming is, Nietzsche argues, through the eternal recurrence. Because it avoids the adoption of all of the regulative fictions required by moral schemes, eternal recurrence is a far more useful means of conceiving the world, it is in fact that most likely provisional hypothesis which we can have. The reason for this is that the doctrine of the eternal recurrence does not attempt to force reality to fit to a particular concept or set of concepts which a particular person holds to be true.

Instead Nietzsche argues that all interpretations of the world - and indeed the world itself, since it is made up of these interpretations - consist in the will to power: "*This world is the will to power - and nothing besides! And you yourselves are also this will to power - and nothing besides!*"⁹⁹". Since it recognizes this, the eternal recurrence - as the doctrine of the will-to-power as artistic self-creation - is the only doctrine which provides us with a

99

Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power, section 1067, p. 550, translated by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale

worthwhile mode of valuation. It is through the conception of oneself as a tragic artist in the process of dynamically asserting one's will-to-power in such a way as to create the world, that one is able to wish that every event in life be repeated on to eternity and thereby achieve the ecstasy of genuine gratitude for one's existence.

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