**Unphilosophical Philosophy: Nietzsche's Will to Power as Overcoming of
Truth and Revaluation of Time**

by

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ABSTRACT

This essay deals primarily with Nietzsche's 'theory of knowledge,' and seeks to adequately display his proposition that concepts are always the expression of individual embodied values, thus appraising them as metaphors created for the purpose of communication by a certain kind of life seeking to impose and promote itself as a particular perspective and limited amount of force. It presents Nietzsche as 'the thinker of values' *par excellence* and argues that rather than seeking Truth, he aimed to expose it as a ruling standard of valuation that is set to expire with modernity, revealing the radical 'value for life' that he calls 'will to power' as the decisive supreme value. It also defends the position that the cornerstone of this envisioned revaluation of values is 'eternal recurrence,' as his new vision of time which redeems the past, granting creative 'free spirits' the freedom to establish new values in the future.

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KEY TO REFERENCES FOR NIETZSCHE'S WORKS*

- The Anti-Christ	AC
- Beyond Good & Evil	BGE
- The Birth of Tragedy	BT
- Daybreak (Dawn of Day)	DD
- Ecce Homo	EH
- On the Genealogy of Morality	GM
- The Gay Science	GS
- The Philosopher (in Philosophy and Truth)	P
- Schopenhauer as Educator (in Untimely Meditations)	SE
- Twilight of the Idols	TI
- On Truth & Lie in the Extra-Moral Sense (in Philosophy and Truth)	TL
- Thus Spoke Zarathustra	TSZ
- The Will to Power	WP

* Works by other authors are cited using abbreviated references in footnotes. A full bibliography is provided as appendix.

INTRODUCTION

Why are there beings at all instead of nothing? That is the question which Martin Heidegger poses as the fundamental one at the very beginning of his 'Introduction to Metaphysics'.¹ Heidegger, like many who write after 1900, was inspired by a great mind of the 19th century: Friedrich Nietzsche. The desire to satisfy our craving for an answer to this question has spurred some of mankind's most profound thinking. People of all sorts have proposed a variety of explanations as to how and why it appears to us that there *is* something rather than nothing; we've referred to them by many names and titles including sages, sophists, philosophers, scientists, savants, experts, priests, prophets or even poets and artists. Nietzsche, as one who preaches that psychology ought to be our guide in philosophical and political matters², was quite explicit in his efforts to distinguish himself from others who sought to provide or discover *the* true answer to the question which arguably stands at the core of man's interrogations about humanity and the world. He denounces the dogmatism of previous thinkers and calls out *all* philosophies as merely personal confessions which are always created out of some conscious or unconscious ambition to gain power in some form or another.³ But one should restrain from hasty superficial interpretations which would have this be the sign of a shallow Nietzsche charging his predecessors with fraud, and accusing them of willingly and freely choosing to deceive us so that they may gain security, notoriety, or financial benefit. He sees in this a deeper need and striving which he believes extends to all of

¹ Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p.1

² BGE 23, p.31-32

³ BGE 5 & 6, p.12-14

mankind; every human being is on an endless quest for *meaning*, as he seeks to minimize or eliminate *senseless* suffering.⁴

I believe this insight opens the door to an alternative way of looking at all philosophy, including Nietzsche's, which is meant to be *a prelude to a philosophy of the future*, as his book 'Beyond Good & Evil' is subtitled. Instead of a customary approach with regards to philosophical writing seen as the account of an individual's mind striving to reason its way towards definitive answers, one ought to see in this an attempt to philosophize by thinking outside of true and false dialectics. Even the central elements of Nietzsche's teaching, namely his "doctrines" of will to power and eternal recurrence, are mostly expressed as suggestions or suppositions, and often begin with "what if".⁵ I propose that Nietzsche's work is not meant to provide us with *the Truth*, and consequently expose any prior philosophy as false, but rather that it is designed to seek out a specific kind of reader existing in a particular historical period and illuminate for them the possibility of thinking and *living* without the "True or False" criterion, which in the end always incarcerates thinking as being either dogmatic or deceptive. These future disciples as envisioned by Nietzsche are to set the stage for the revaluation of values that he apprehends. My main argument is that this reappraisal of values is the task of the 'philosopher of the future', whose role is to fill the void present after the self-induced implosion of Truth, by establishing 'will to power' as the new highest value and standard for valuation. I intend to present an informed comprehensive proposition which reconciles Nietzsche's "doctrines" of 'eternal recurrence' and 'will to power', in an

⁴ GM II 7, p.44

⁵ BGE 36, p.47-48 & GS 341, p.273

attempt to portray them as inseparable parts of a new paradigm that is to exist outside of and *replace* the notion of absolute Truth. This entails a thorough exploration of the prospect of cultivating individuals who rid themselves of their commitment to Truth so as to think anew with will to power as the benchmark for attributing value, eventually rendering absurd any trial which might be held to try and judge the actual reality of Nietzsche's 'doctrines'.

The opening chapter shall be dedicated to further explaining the task I am trying to accomplish here and the limitations to such an endeavor which are imposed by the written format. My wish is to clarify how it is possible to read written text at all while being rid of the assumption that it is intended to deliver any objective 'fixed' content. I suggest that it is very important for one to be able to adopt such a stance if one is to understand Nietzsche in general as well as the particular interpretation of his work that I propose here. Therefore, it seems appropriate to briefly expose some of the progress achieved in literary theory on this matter, and this also constitutes a fitting prologue to the discussion which is to follow concerning Truth; or more specifically the beginning of the end for the concept of absolute Truth, starting with Immanuel Kant's 'Critique of Pure Reason' and then through Arthur Schopenhauer, whose work drew Nietzsche towards philosophy,⁶ to finally arrive at Nietzsche himself. Although each one of these thinkers, to some extent feeding off the previous one, has at least flirted with the idea that no such thing as a definitive written answer to the fundamental question could be produced by any human being, they nevertheless all wrote philosophy. Nietzsche specifically denounced writing as inferior to speech, and we know by his own admittance that it was

⁶ SE 2 & 3, p.130-146

his second best option given that he could not accomplish his goal of founding his own philosophical school, which was to be constructed in a setting reminiscent of the Epicurean garden.⁷ An analysis of writing and its affinity for Truth would therefore be an appropriate commencement. Following that, the core of this first chapter will be allotted to an inquiry of Nietzsche's sometimes ambiguous and seemingly contradictory stance regarding Truth, which is jointly described as a once admirable 'noble lie' that has guided man's quest for meaning over millennia, as well as an ideal which is now rapidly losing its shine and value and ought to be destroyed so as to create anew.

In the second chapter, we shall look at what Nietzsche provides his readers with as the basis for this creation; that is, we will examine "will to power" as his suggestion for a new foundation on which those who can bear to live without Truth may proceed to establish new idols and values in the future. I will investigate the asserted implications of this revaluation of all values which is occasioned by a metamorphosis of the *way* of attributing value as such. "Free spirits" living in these times of transition, having recognized and embraced the task hinted by Nietzsche, ought to rethink the way they understand individual human beings, specifically with regards to consciousness and the faculty of "free will." Nietzsche's erection of a new standard, which is to replace the crippled ideal of Truth, also provides his disciples with new ways of heeding to freedom and consciousness. This central chapter will contain the gist of my main argument as I shall draw from Nietzsche to expose man's most determining quality; his highly developed consciousness or intellect, which is taken to be both the instrument meant for reaching the Truth and its container, as yet another kind of will to power. Here I intend to

⁷ Hutter, *Shaping the Future*, p.4

penetrate the dynamics of the 'will to power' which is revealed as inclusive of the human mind, thereby supplanting our current conception of the psyche as a separate center of rationality which allows one to make free decisions. This should be the principal inquiry as the chapter will consider the many corollaries to Nietzsche's proposal that "everything is will to power."⁸ The assignment here is to try and appraise the fluctuations of the will to power as described by Nietzsche, which result in his unforgiving determinism and perspectivism. My attempt will be to understand the meaning and ramifications of what Nietzsche sometimes refers to as the "will to nothingness"⁹ and give the reader a sense of what remains of the human being once absolute Truth as a concept and ideal is out of the picture.

Subsequent to this, the third and final part will investigate the new time conception which grows out of will to power. This new way of conceiving time is supplied by Nietzsche as the "doctrine" of eternal recurrence, and it is revealed in his epic drama 'Thus Spoke Zarathustra' as being the highest of all thoughts; one which is required in order to conquer the mightiest enemy of all. This formidable foe enters the scene in the prologue of the book in an unfortunate turn of events involving a jester and a tightrope walker. The incident sends Zarathustra on his journey which is narrated throughout the rest of the book. Through the deciphering of the tale, I intend to stand by the interpretation that what lies in the way of our advancing towards the over-man as foreseen by Zarathustra is the hold of the past's grip on the present which prevents the future from unfolding free from ascetic ideals such as God or Truth. According to

⁸ WP 675, p.356

⁹ GM Second Essay 24 p.66, GM Third Essay 28 p.120, AC 18 p.140, WP 401 p.217

Nietzsche, worshipping such idols engendered what he calls 'slave values' with which men seek to achieve victory and mastery over the earth. By doing so they acquire the power and means to take action and satisfy the weak man's desire of revenge over nature for the slavish condition he's been put into. This craving for revenge is accentuated by centuries of repressed envy towards those who were initially masters due to natural strength, and more recently by the fact that techno-science, which ironically is a product of those slavish values' conquest of the earth, infected mankind with the disease of nihilism by destroying old 'idols' which stood as absolute realities but are now revealed as illusory and at best a-moral, if not worse.¹⁰ The advent of will to power and man's evolution to the state of over-man by means of a turning back towards nature cannot happen without a device with which he can overcome this exponentially amplified desire for *revenge*. This is where Nietzsche's teaching of eternal recurrence comes into play and, as this essay's final chapter will show, why it is inseparable from will to power, as each one completes the other.

Before we proceed, it is important to note that since our main interest here is with Nietzsche's theory of knowledge which reveals both Truth and 'will to power' as values and methods of valuation, I rely for reference on some of Nietzsche's unpublished works such as 'The Will to Power' put together by Walter Kaufmann and the notebooks from the early 1870's which include the 'On Truth & Lie in a Non-moral Sense' collection of aphorisms. While it is true that Nietzsche never published this work, these particular aphorisms distributed posthumously *were* written with the intention of being employed in the composing of two books that Nietzsche expected to publish, one of which would

¹⁰ SE 2, p.132-133

indeed have been titled ‘The Will to Power’.¹¹ To the second envisioned but never completed book, Nietzsche gave many tentative titles, including ‘On Truth & Lie in a Non-moral Sense’, and it was meant to be a companion piece to his ‘Birth of Tragedy’ which would treat of the supremely practical general problem of culture.¹² It seems important for the sake of academic integrity that I do mention that Nietzsche’s notebooks for the projected ‘Will to Power’ book, as well as those from the early 1870’s, were never published by him. That being said, unlike many of his other notes regarding which Nietzsche’s intention is unknown or questionable, he certainly intended to publish these specific ones, although certainly not in the same form and arrangement as they are found in the notebooks, but was prevented from doing so because of illness and being preoccupied with other projects. The 1870’s notebooks specifically contain the most explicit, detailed, and sustained treatment of epistemological issues, which are our main interest here.¹³ Many Nietzsche scholars agree that the theory of truth which he advanced in these unpublished writings was never modified in any essential respect in the published books.¹⁴ Furthermore, people like Daniel Breazeale maintain that in some instances the published books seem to even *presuppose* the notes found in these ‘Nachlass’, and in his view it is doubtful that one may even be capable of producing a coherent account of Nietzsche’s theory of knowledge and truth without using them.¹⁵

¹¹ WP, p.xvii

¹² Breazeale, *Philosophy and Truth*, p.xxi

¹³ Ibid., p.xlvi

¹⁴ Ibid., p.xlvi

¹⁵ Ibid., p.xlvi

CHAPTER 1

Concerning Writing

There is an underlying problem when one decides to *write* so as to challenge the place and value of Truth itself. Writing, arguably more so than speech or thought, is in a certain sense what we've come to use as the medium within which Truth formation happens. Certainly, one may in part attribute this to the fact that the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic faiths, which have been increasingly dominant over the last few millennia, are religions of the book where Truth is delivered as revelation contained in scripture that is rigorously studied (hermeneutics), and even sung out loud or memorized verbatim. The popular folk saying has it that whatever is written must be true, and even the less religious among us will grant that more often than not, we bother to write down something only if we believe it to be some kind of untimely Truth which is well worth remembering and communicating, or at least marks a path that takes us closer to Truth. Over time, books have increasingly been brought into place as central instruments for the education of human beings. We're trained to use them as mines where we dig for information on every topic ranging from history to mathematics, and we tend to assume that after everything is given due thought, said, and done, conclusions or final answers have been reached and put into print so as to become permanent parts of our collective memory and be shared by current and future generations. However, if we start giving more thought to this predicament, we are eventually faced with the many unanswered questions which arise when trying to determine whether or not a text contains any meaning at all, let alone has any Truth to deliver. Literary theory, which has strong links

with political and philosophical thought for obvious reasons, has had many scholars trying to at least map out the many mysteries that become apparent when one poses questions such as: “What is the meaning of a literary text? How relevant to this meaning is the author’s intention? Can we hope to understand works which are culturally and historically alien to us? Is ‘objective’ understanding possible, or is all understanding relative to our own historical situation?”¹⁶ Many scholars and thinkers from different branches of academia have put effort into composing possible answers to these questions, including philosophers such as Heidegger and his successor Hans-Georg Gadamer.

Terry Eagleton tries to initiate neophytes to the main currents and evolutions in literary theory with his best-selling book ‘Literary Theory: An Introduction.’ His work is a valuable source of information, for it provides a comprehensive examination of the discipline regrouping all of its main currents in one single document; an arrangement which also lays out a chronicle of the field’s evolution in different periods of time. Eagleton’s clear and accessible account renders a broad survey which covers the principal ideas of past and present major contributors to literary theory. For the purpose of our discussion regarding the ties between Truth and written word, what is most relevant in Eagleton’s book is his mapping of transcendental phenomenology, which evolves into hermeneutical phenomenology (hermeneutics here is meant in the modern sense as interpretation of text in general), and finally arrives at reception theory. Eagleton explains that if one were to accept the premises of phenomenology, which he resumes as “a form of methodological idealism, seeking to explore an abstraction called ‘human

¹⁶ Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, p.57-58

consciousness' and a world of pure possibilities"¹⁷, one would believe that there is such a thing as the *essence* of a written text, and that it is delivered to us by means of intuition. Language is then seen as simply an expression of this essence or of the author's world, which he simultaneously created and lived in. This approach, whose major contributor was Edmund Husserl according to Eagleton's account, means that one ought to assume there is meaning which is generated from intuition and which precedes language. Writing is then simply putting labels on a meaning which I already possess. As Eagleton points out, this is the limit of Husserl's philosophy in this regard, as it remains unable to answer how one may come to possess any meaning without already having a language.¹⁸ Being that any language is inevitably social, if one were to dismiss Husserl's argument based on the fact that language must necessarily precede meaning; or go even further in claiming that language *creates* meaning, then one would have to accept that meaning is *historical*. This realization is what caused Heidegger, Husserl's best-known pupil, to break with his mentor's system. As opposed to phenomenology where the world is entirely the human subject's creation, Heidegger's proposition is that we create the world as much as it creates us, and our creating of the world is nothing less than language as such. Eagleton explains that in this view, "language always pre-exists the individual subject, as the very realm in which he or she unfolds; and it contains 'truth' less in the sense that it is an instrument for exchanging accurate information than in the sense that it is the place where reality 'un-conceals' itself, gives itself up to our contemplation."¹⁹ What is described is certainly a different way of finding Truth in a text or a piece of art; perhaps it is an account of how Truth finds *us*, but the assumption that some piece of reality is

¹⁷ Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, p.49

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.52

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.55

unconcealed with the use language, especially when it is written, is still present. In this case, whatever the *oeuvre* that one reads or admires, one must see its author as simply *a* being whose creative actions produce something through which the Truth, or *Being* itself, is revealed to us. Eagleton states that “literary interpretation for Heidegger is not grounded in human activity; it is not first of all something we *do*, but something we must let happen.”²⁰

Some hermeneuticists have distinguished a text’s meaning from its significance. E.D. Hirsch Jr accepts the premise of Husserlian phenomenology that the meaning of a text remains fixed, and that it simply corresponds to the thing the author had in mind when he wrote; which is to say, the intention which he had when writing. The fact that the work may portend something different to each reader is a matter of the text’s significance and not its *meaning*, which does allow for multiple valid interpretations but establishes a permitted ‘system of typical expectations and probabilities’ within which a given interpretation is situated.²¹ Of course, as Eagleton points out, what is highly problematic in this assumption is that one has to take for granted that meaning is something pure and solid,²² as well as fancy that the author was able to wholly and faithfully reproduce in his work the meaning he had in his mind. Hirsch’s attempt is obviously to try and salvage the idea of a meaning or Truth contained in the text itself, while others like Heidegger and Gadamer carry us further along the path towards a comprehensive analysis of what goes on in the reader’s mind, rather than in the text or in the author’s head. The fear of someone like Hirsch is that if we strip the text of an

²⁰ Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, p.56

²¹ Ibid., p.58

²² Ibid., p.60

absolute meaning resistant to cultural and historical context, then we fall into the anarchy of complete relativism where nothing stops us from taking any word to mean anything. But again, Eagleton reminds us that the fact language is social and bound by historical and cultural context means that we are never effectively free to use any word as we please. For this he refers to Gadamer who professes that, while it may be true that it is impossible for anyone to know any text 'in itself', it is also impossible to make it into anything and everything, because we as readers are bound by the social circumstances of the historical period we live in. In this case, the Truth a reader finds in a piece of writing is about himself more than about the text or its composer. Gadamer says that rather than 'leaving home' to venture into the 'world' of the author, we 'come home' to a more complete understanding of ourselves.²³

The latest evolution from these kind of hermeneutics is 'reception theory' which focuses primarily, if not entirely, on the reader. While previous emphasis has been put mainly on the author and his product, one is forced to admit that the reader is just as essential in order for literature to happen at all. Reception theory draws our attention to the fact that while reading, one is constantly "engaged in constructing hypotheses about the meaning of the text. The reader makes implicit connections, fills in gaps, draws inferences and tests out hunches; [...] The text itself is really no more than a series of 'cues' to the reader, [who] 'concretizes' the literary work, which is in itself no more than a chain of organized black marks on a page."²⁴ Eagleton is quick to point out that if we are to see the text as merely a series of gaps which are constantly filled by the reader who

²³ Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, p.62

²⁴ Ibid., p.66

creates it, then paradoxically the more information the work provides, the more indeterminate it becomes.²⁵ It will become increasingly clear as the argument of this essay unfolds that this angle is the one which best illustrates how I believe one is to approach Nietzsche's writing. There are many elements in Eagleton's further description of reception theory which are reminiscent of Nietzsche's ideas of will to power, eternal recurrence, and perspectivism. This mode of thought reminds us that reading is always a dynamic process evolving in time. The reader comes to the text with his own beliefs and expectations which are then subject to change as "the hermeneutical *circle* – moving from part to whole and back to part – will begin to revolve. [...] [The reader] will try to hold different perspectives within the work together, or shift from perspective to perspective in order to build up an integrated 'illusion'."²⁶ Eagleton indicates that this means we read backwards and forwards simultaneously, predicting and recollecting, perhaps aware of other possible realizations of the text which our reading has negated.²⁷ This means reading suspends and questions, or even attacks, the beliefs and expectations we bring to the text. What is cited above is highly reminiscent of the instructions Nietzsche provides his readers with in the preface to his 1881 book 'Daybreak'; he writes that to read him well is "to read slowly, deeply, looking cautiously before and aft, with reservations, with doors left open, with delicate eyes and fingers."²⁸ The work of Wolfgang Iser on the matter tells us that reading 'disconfirms' our habits of perception and in so doing lays them out before us so that we may identify what they are. It can be the case of course that a certain work reinforces our patterns of perceiving or delivers a

²⁵ Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, p.66

²⁶ Ibid., p.67 [Italics mine]

²⁷ Ibid., p.67

²⁸ DD Preface 5, p.5

weak, barely noticeable attack on them. But what should be for us a “valuable work of literature [is one that] violates or transgresses these normative ways of seeing, and so teaches us new codes for understanding.”²⁹

A quandary with reception theory is that it inevitably leads to an epistemological problem. Just as Nietzsche does away completely with the ‘thing in itself’³⁰, so is reception theory taken to its full extent incapable of saving the ‘text in itself’. Even if this ‘text in itself’ is held to be merely an arrangement of black ink spots on paper, how can one discuss these symbols at all without having already concretized them? Iser’s response, that the text exercises some logical determinacy over the possible interpretations of it, can seem ambiguous and unsatisfying. Instead, Eagleton mentions the American critic Stanley Fish, who is perfectly comfortable admitting that

“when you get down to it, there is no ‘objective’ work of literature there on the seminar table at all. [...] The true writer is the reader: [...] reading is not a matter of discovering what the text means, but a process of what it *does* to you. Everything in the text – its grammar, meanings, formal units – is a product of interpretation, in no sense ‘factually’ given; and this raises the question of what it is that Fish believes he is interpreting when he reads. His refreshingly candid answer to this question is that he does not know; but neither, he thinks, does anybody else.”³¹

Once more we must remind ourselves that this does not necessarily lead to the anarchy one may foresee. While the text is believed to be completely empty and one is to remain oblivious to its Truth or to its lack of it, the reader on the other hand is time-bound and

²⁹ Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, p.68

³⁰ GS 54, P.116

³¹ Eagleton, *Literary Theory*, p.74

‘interpretive strategies’ have been imposed on him by the cultural and historical context in which he is situated. This means that not all interpretations are in fact possible, but that a certain ever-changing range of interpretations are always present, and that those which would be completely absurd relative to the current context are rare, or even inexistent occurrences, which are thought of as incoherent for they point to a context which no longer exists, or perhaps one that has yet to come. As I shall discuss in this chapter, the interpretation of Nietzsche’s writings which I lay out and defend here is only possible in the context of the late stages of modern nihilism; what he writes at the end of the 19th century is “the history of the next two centuries”³², not something he regards as an eternally valid Truth that stands independent from historical and cultural context. Reception theory, reaching its most radical conclusion with Fish’s perplexing stance, resonates with one main idea that is to be developed later on in this treatise, and which stands as the kernel of the “sophist” world view that reemerges most assertively with Kant, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. This is the profound Truth-shattering notion that we only ever find in things whatever we ourselves have put into them. Fish is worth mentioning as one rare modern author that dares to apply this perspective to written text and candidly endorse its full consequences. His very peculiar view as to what a written text actually is (or isn’t) should define one’s approach when reading Nietzsche’s books particularly, and perhaps all written word in general including this one.

Having described the possibility above, my hope is to provide a disclaimer and show that there *is* a way to *write* about the dethroning of Truth as supreme value, even though writing is most often taken to be the medium of Truth. In order to do so, one must

³² WP Preface 2, p.3

be capable of setting aside the question of whether what is written is true or false, as well as one's wonder about the author's intentions, and instead pay attention to how he the reader is affected by the text. Because it has become almost instinctively tied to Truth, writing isn't the ideal format to use when one wishes to challenge and question the very concepts of True and False. Nietzsche himself had embraced writing as his life's vocation because his fragile health and lack of financial resources stood in the way of actualizing his vision, which was to replicate the method used in ancient Greek philosophical schools by creating sanctuaries where disciples would gather and be educated into a way of living, taught by means of example and conversation, and for which books would merely act as fishing hooks used to acquire like-minded students.³³ Physical interaction such as face-to-face oral communication is preferable because it means an exchange through body language which is held to be as important as or even more so than what is actually said. Together with that, the speaker disposes of tools such as tone of voice and tempo which have a more limited effect and are much less apparent in a written text, when they are not absent completely. It also means both parties have the opportunity to interrupt with questions and request clarifications. On the other hand, the philosopher with a mission of Truth always writes for everyone and no one; for the sake of objectivity. His wish is to give form to the reality he believes to have discovered or gotten closer to; this form is regarded as a permanent creation of his, which conveys the absolute Truth he has arrived at. Oppositely, talking is never done alone and always directed precisely at whoever is listening at that moment. Unlike writing which is unilateral for both author and reader, speech always creates some dialogue which emphasizes the inherent subjectivity in everything. Most often than not, what one wishes to accomplish with a

³³ Hutter, *Shaping the Future*, p.33 & 36

lively conversation is to have a lasting impact on the mind of the other participant, whereas writing, especially in philosophy which has become an almost exclusively scholastic affair, often prides itself primarily as the creation of something objective and untimely ‘in itself’; a set of words which carry pure meaning that points to an absolute Truth.

Like Nietzsche, I have no choice but to use the same format and compose a written text, but in doing so I shall follow his recommendation and be ‘un-philosophical.’³⁴ Nietzsche masterfully manages to write while keeping himself from coming out as a dispatcher of Truth or a dogmatic. The first way he does it is by using the aphoristic form which was first used by Hippocrates, and by other ‘pre-Platonics’ with which he was more than familiar. As opposed to a logical succession of statements which lead to Truth claims and compose a doctrine, aphoristic writing gives concise subjective claims arranged in no specific manner concerning a wide range of topics. This grants the reader much more freedom in making connections and linking ideas together as only he can and will. Furthermore, aphorisms are equally suited to be spoken or written. One can say Nietzsche’s writing is therefore done in ‘speech’ style, as it is said that he paid great attention to the rhythm of his sentences, and would only publish aphorisms which *sounded* the way he wanted, like one does when composing music.³⁵ Secondly, with regards to content, Nietzsche’s writing may be described as Janus-faced; it contains many apparent contradictions which are left to the reader to resolve. The aim is not held to be merely the transmission of thoughts from the author’s head to the reader’s, but to provoke

³⁴ BGE 19, p.25

³⁵ Safranski, *Nietzsche: A Philosophical Biography*, p.20

the reader into creating new thoughts which did not exist in the author's mind nor are in the text. This is noted by scholars who have worked on Nietzsche's writings exhaustively for the purpose of translating them into English, like Daniel Breazeale who remarks that "it seems to have been one of Nietzsche's stylistic aims to obscure the close connections between his various themes, to present his thoughts on various subjects as if they were independent of each other, for the purpose of forcing the reader to make the connections- and thus to do the thinking- for himself."³⁶ Of course many other texts may affect readers in this way, however this aspect is often put aside as secondary in favor of the task of receiving, or *understanding*, the meaning which we fancy the text contains, and to do so with as little distortion as possible; as *objectively* as possible. Instead, the idea here is to do as Nietzsche did and go against objectivity³⁷, which holds Truth as the unquestioned capital standard, and rather focus on the disturbance pertaining to the dynamic configuration of our inner drives which is occasioned by the act of reading. These drives are in constant relations of *commanding* and *obeying* which, being the perpetual twofold activity of will to power, Nietzsche extends to absolutely everything,³⁸ as we shall explore in the second chapter of this essay. His writing style is therefore a *commanding* one made to legislate individual "souls"; in this he arguably mimics his 'friend-enemy' Plato who may have had the same purpose, but whose dialogues are written very differently.³⁹ All readers can attest to the fact that when reading any text, a change is triggered within us which is composed of our repeatedly commanding and obeying ourselves in digesting the literature. However, the novelty lies in the fact that when an

³⁶ Breazeale, *Philosophy and Truth*, p.xlvi

³⁷ TI What the Germans Lack 6, p.76

³⁸ BGE 19, p.25-26

³⁹ Hutter, *Shaping the Future*, p.126

author acknowledges the probable lack of any objective meaning or Truth in his text, his intent to steer the reader's flux of inner drives and passions in a certain direction takes the front stage. Therefore, let us say that unlike what one may be used to when reading philosophy, the primary goal of this written essay, as it is with Nietzsche's books also, is not to transmit any kind of pure meaning or Truth, but to have a certain effect on the reader.⁴⁰

Approaching writing this way is indeed very close to Stanley Fish's view described earlier, and it allows one to read Nietzsche without being on the hunt for Truth. This removes many hindrances to the thinking process as one is no longer forced to dismiss some of his contradictory elements, nor is the reader required to brand other philosophy encountered prior or after reading Nietzsche's as false. Subsequent to this tutorial of sorts with which I hope to have explained the unusual way in which one is invited to read this essay, and most importantly Nietzsche's corpus, I shall now proceed towards defining some concepts I plan to use in further explaining the particular way in which Nietzsche hopes to *affect us* with his philosophy. The attack on the actuality of a 'text in itself' containing a pure meaning perpetrated by Stanley Fish and others can be viewed simply as solipsistic-ism applied in the context of literary theory. The same way Fish says that he does not know what lies there in front of him that he is reading, one can say that one does not know about the existence of anything else. Still, such a stance can be unfathomable for many who are accustomed to believing that they can have *knowledge* of things, as a piece or indication of Truth put into language. Let us then get into the broader issue of Truth as knowledge and language as its format.

⁴⁰ Hutter, *Shaping the Future*, p.139

Philosophy as Hunt for Truth

The idea of solipsism, as first uttered by the sophist Gorgias of Leontini, is the claim that nothing exists, that even if something does one cannot know anything about it, and finally that even if one could know, that knowledge cannot be communicated to others.⁴¹ Although their arguments may have rested on more modest foundations than that of current post-moderns, many sophists of ancient Greece argued as Gorgias did, or at least were taught that it was in their best interest to act as if any given text had no Truth in or “behind” it. Rather, what was seen as most important was the effect it could and would have on those at the receiving end. This view was upheld mainly for its perceived great advantages as it was the base insight for the art of rhetoric which was taught, or sold as a commodity, to those who wished to manipulate others. Eliminating any absolute meaning contained in the ‘text in itself’ not only leads to Stanley Fish’s inconclusive solipsistic stance, but it also may seem like the destruction of the rampart from which one may call out demagogues or ill-intentioned masters of the literary art trying to steer public opinion in one way or another for their personal benefit. The perverse effects of these sophists and their ways are discussed in Platonic dialogues such as the ‘Gorgias,’ the ‘Phaedrus,’ and the ‘Theateteus.’ Nietzsche himself also warns of those kinds of risks, as he alerts readers in many aphorisms throughout his books of the dangers of such thinking, sharing his worries about it entering unworthy minds.⁴² If the difference between a sophist as it has just been described and a ‘philosopher’ as Plato would have him might not be entirely clear even to us today, it was even less so for those who lived at

⁴¹ Sextus, *Against the Logicians*, p.15

⁴² BGE 30 & 40 p.42 & 50-51, EH III 1 p.36-38

the time in ancient Athens. A prime example is Aristophanes' play 'The Clouds' featuring Socrates' character as yet another sophist, which one can assume was faithful to the perception many of his contemporaries had of him, so as to successfully produce the intended comic effect. Additionally, in dialogues such as the 'Phaedrus', Socrates displays his ability to argue both sides of an argument in an equally beautiful and convincing manner. Without ever identifying himself as one or the other, he does however speak at length about others whom he views as sophists and holds to be different from philosophers and himself. An example of this is when at a certain point in his discussion with Phaedrus, he actually mentions Gorgias, and includes him with those who believe that "probability is superior to truth, and who by force of argument make the little appear great and the great little, and the new old and the old new."⁴³ In this particular dialogue as in others, the pillar supporting Socrates' argument against the sophists, referred to as rhetoricians or practitioners of the oratory art in this instance, is his unshakable belief in the existence of Truth and in the worthiness of man's quest to gain knowledge of it. He compares the great orator Lysias, whose written speech is being appraised in the discussion, to a man claiming to be a doctor by virtue of knowing how to administer different kinds of medicine which produce various effects of which he is also aware, all while lacking knowledge as to whom they should be dispensed, at what time, and in what amount.⁴⁴ In order for rhetoric to be truly practiced as an art, Socrates goes on to explain, a man would have to know the required preliminaries; he would have to learn to recognize the different existing human natures so that he may divide his speeches and know which are appropriate for whom, and distinguish between those situations

⁴³ Plato, *Phaedrus*, p.128

⁴⁴ Ibid., p.129

when he should speak and those when he should remain silent. Phaedrus agrees with Socrates that this should be the way rhetoric is done if it is to be considered an art. Socrates however will end the discussion by stating that even such a man, who has learned the things mentioned above and practices what was agreed to be the true oratory art, is still merely a sophist and inferior to a philosopher.⁴⁵ This is because in questions of justice and good, “he who would be a good rhetorician has no need of truth- [...] and that always in speaking the orator should run after probability, and say good-bye to the truth.”⁴⁶ Therefore the writing of Lysias, Socrates says, and even his speeches which allow for questioning and exchange of ideas, are inferior to the principles of justice, goodness, and nobility written in the philosopher’s soul and spoken only so that they may be implanted in the souls of others that are worthy for they can make them grow.⁴⁷ The philosopher becomes a dialectician when he practices another kind of speaking and writing far better and more powerful than that of the rhetoricians; it is “an intelligent writing which is graven in the soul of him who has learned, and can defend itself, and knows when to speak and when to be silent.”⁴⁸ This is one occurrence where confusion might arise concerning the difference between a mere sophist and what Plato imagines a philosopher to be, as the traits of a rhetorician (sophist) and those of a dialectician (philosopher) are described containing similar aspects. To resolve the cluttering which is apparent here, one can imagine that the practitioner of the art of rhetoric ought to learn when to speak and when to be silent judging by the probabilities of successfully convincing his audience, calculated thanks to his knowledge regarding the nature of the

⁴⁵ Plato, *Phaedrus*, p.132

⁴⁶ Ibid., p.133

⁴⁷ Ibid., p.137-138

⁴⁸ Ibid., p.136

men in front of him that he seeks to persuade. On the other hand the philosopher, as the dialectician Socrates describes, will choose to speak or to remain silent, also using his capacity to determine the types of soul(s) which compose his audience, but his consideration will be whether or not those with whom he is to share his knowledge of Truth as principles of goodness and justice are worthy of receiving it and apt to make it grow.

Despite claiming to have some idea of how one should write so as to better the sophists, Socrates still chose not to write a single word, and tales of his many conversations come to us through Plato, a notorious writer. Nicholas Carr researched many classicists in order to discuss Plato in his book 'The Shallows' concerning the effects of different media, such as the written book or the internet, on the human brain. He notes that in the 'Republic', which is believed to have been written around the same time as the 'Phaedrus', Plato has Socrates go out of his way in order to attack poetry, an almost exclusively oral art back then, which was held as the opposite of literature. Hence, Carr notes, Plato's attack is on the oral tradition "of the bard Homer but also the tradition of Socrates himself- and the ways of thinking it both reflected and encouraged."⁴⁹ It is no coincidence that Plato appears to represent both the point where philosophy shifts from the kind of relativism practiced by sophists to the pursuit of absolute Truth as the 'idea of the Good', as well as the passage from the oral tradition to a written one. Written word is as he believes Truth ought to be: logical, rigorous, self-reliant.⁵⁰ Carr quotes Walter J. Ong saying that "Plato's philosophically analytical thought, was possible only because of

⁴⁹ Carr, *The Shallows*, p.55

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.56

the effects that writing was beginning to have on mental processes.”⁵¹ He also cites British scholar Eric Havelock stating that the ‘oral state of mind’ was Plato’s main enemy.⁵²

Nietzsche clearly and boldly picks his side as he says that “the legislation of language likewise establishes the first laws of truth.”⁵³ This means Heidegger was likely inspired by Nietzsche in having the insight which separated him from his mentor Husserl; namely, that language with all its elements of syntax, grammar, and concepts as *words*, structures our thought and is that with which we construct our world. For Nietzsche, language *does* create meaning and the creation of the self-conscious artist is held higher than that of natural science aiming for objectivity; therefore, language *is* rhetoric.⁵⁴ Attesting to this view is Nietzsche’s condemning of his own first book ‘The Birth of Tragedy’ for being uneven in tempo, for its “length in excess” and for its being very convinced⁵⁵, while his work of art ‘Thus Spoke Zarathustra’ which “may perhaps be counted as music”⁵⁶, he proclaims to be his chief work that stands on its own.⁵⁷

On the other hand, one can imagine that Nietzsche saw value in many of Socrates’ lessons as described above, and followed the advice the Greek tried to deliver.⁵⁸ Judging by how he expressed his worries about his writings falling into unfit hands in his autobiography ‘Ecce Homo’, and how big chunks of some of his central books like ‘Beyond

⁵¹ Carr, *The Shallows*, p.56 (note 27)

⁵² Ibid., p.55 (note 26)

⁵³ Breazeale, *Philosophy and Truth*, p.xxx

⁵⁴ Ibid., p.xxxi

⁵⁵ BT Attempt at Self-Criticism 2-3, p.18-19

⁵⁶ EH III ‘Z’ 1, p.65

⁵⁷ EH III ‘Z’ 6, p.71

⁵⁸ GS 340, p.272

Good & Evil’ or ‘Thus Spoke Zarathustra’ are dedicated to the conscientious description of the type of ‘spirits’ for whom he writes, one can assume that he learned all he could about different kinds of human natures and their possible reactions to a philosophy such as his. Furthermore, Nietzsche did wish to write about certain principles which, as we mentioned earlier, were destined to be implanted in the souls of readers endowed with special qualities, where they would be able to grow and produce new thoughts. This apparent similarity between the two further adds to the difficulty of trying to pinpoint *the* most appropriate appellation for both, especially Socrates; perhaps a daring compromise would be to say he might be both the last sophist and the first philosopher, in the Platonic sense at least. Either way, the mode of thinking initiated by Plato is precisely what concerns us most here, as Nietzsche’s war is one against Platonism more so than against the historical Socrates. From early on in his academic career, Nietzsche used the term ‘pre-Platonic’ philosophers, disclosing where he saw a cleavage. Already at the time, he shares with his friend Erwin Rohde that his “occupation with the Pre-Platonic philosophers has been especially fruitful.”⁵⁹ Starting from 1869, as a professor of philology at the University of Basel also charged with instructing in the lower division ‘Pädagogium’, Nietzsche gave lectures on specialized topics which included ‘the Platonic Dialogues’ and ‘the Pre-Platonic Philosophers’, the latter being his personal favorite and offered on four occasions.⁶⁰ This indicates he was most inspired by thinkers from Thales to Socrates, but also that he knew Plato well enough to attack him and challenge his upholding of the written format as superior to oratory arts, as he eventually did.

⁵⁹ Breazeale, *Philosophy and Truth*, p.xviii

⁶⁰ Ibid., p.xvi-xviii

If certain interpretations can allow us to assert some possible similarity with regards to the intentions which motivated Plato and Nietzsche, certainly their method and the axioms of their philosophy are different, if not diametrically opposed. Whereas Platonic dialogues have Socrates speaking of principles of justice and goodness which for him make up nobility, Nietzsche's fictional character Zarathustra speaks of honesty (more with regards to one's self, and less as blind commitment to Truth or 'objectivity'), being loyal to the earth, and life-affirmation, as the noble things.⁶¹ Additionally, Plato's intent seems to be the development of the intellect, furthering man's rational knowledge using writing, and fostering life in the city. One can see this by analyzing a seemingly innocent passage in the 'Phaedrus' which can be very telling in the context of our current discussion. At a certain point as the men get setup for conversation, Phaedrus asks Socrates "Do you ever cross the *border*? I rather think that you never *venture* even outside the gates." To which Socrates answers: "I am a lover of knowledge, and the men who dwell in the city are my teachers, and not the trees, nor the country."⁶² Plato's philosopher is one who seeks to acquire knowledge; his concern is with men and reason. He takes a stab here at the pre-Socratics, often described as 'natural philosophers,' from whom he distances himself. He wishes to remain in the realm of ideas and rationality, as he guards against crossing the boundary to venture into the chaos of nature. Nietzsche sees in this a philosophy which had the same aspiration as the one he seeks to inspire; one made to legislate and impose an order so as to *cure* a dis-ease.⁶³ However, he points to the danger of it spreading and entering the minds of those men operating outside the rules of art, such as those lesser types Socrates called rhetoricians. Nietzsche narrates in his

⁶¹ TSZ Third Part 12(11), p.176 & BGE 212 & 260, p.137-139 & p.204-208

⁶² Plato, *Phaedrus*, p.96 [Italics mine]

⁶³ GS Preface 2, p.35

‘Genealogy of Morals’ how Platonism trickles down and is misused or vulgarized to eventually assume the form of the Christian religion. Baring this form, it grows into a poison which over time cultivates resentment towards nature, denial of all earthly things, as well as fanatic veneration of the intellect and its powers in the name of the ideal of Truth, at the expense of the body’s health. Therefore, Nietzsche’s philosophy must do as Plato’s did, but its content is to be completely different and fit for modern times. He must attack Platonism and its most destructive consequences, as Platonic dialogues assailed sophists and poets for the corruption and harm they would give rise to in the city. His philosophy must steer men towards nature, just as Plato’s sought to tame man for communal life in the city by guiding human beings towards rationality and the realm of ideas, thus enhancing civilization. Platonic dialogues are intended to have an effect on readers so as to leave them pondering the possibility of a new configuration for their conflicting inner drives, and provoke them into comparing the state of their own soul with this new prospect. This new structure is an aristocratic one in which the soul’s said ‘calculating’ part, upheld as the noble one, is to rule over the others. Nietzsche writes thousands of years later and denounces the deterioration of this regime into one of ‘tyranny of reason’ which is now a threat to life as such. Consequently, as is also the case with Platonic dialogues, much of Nietzsche’s philosophy is assailment or *negation* of previous values; his first task is to bring down that which has come to define every human ‘soul’ and stands at the core of Platonism: man’s obsessive belief in absolute Truth and his immutable conviction that he can come to know it. His disciples are to pick up the torch and carry the task which he set in motion, and this task must begin with the destruction of the old ‘shrine’, because “we can destroy only as creators”.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ GS 58, p.122

The Attack on Truth

Since mere questioning of ‘Truth’ as a concept appears to be a very delicate and perplexing affair, the task of overcoming it can seem overwhelming. In some sense, Truth is something which is now built into our second and even our first nature. More specifically, Nietzsche’s attack is directed at theoretical optimism and the ‘scientific Socratism’ it produces. His fight is against the notion that man stands in an independently real world that he may rationalize so far as to be completely rid of illusion in order to know what really *is*. In this view, the aim is to reach a point where man’s representations correspond perfectly to the things ‘in themselves’, and the possibility of accomplishing this is simply presupposed.⁶⁵ Scientific Socratism is the term Nietzsche uses to refer to the intellectual movement born from theoretical optimism, and as such it alludes most importantly to the Enlightenment and the scientific revolution or the advent of ‘modern science’, whose motto is “that illusion is intolerable, that man can replace lies with truths.”⁶⁶ To denounce the aforementioned presupposition as a groundless assumption, Nietzsche brings to our attention “that a belief, however necessary it may be for the preservation of a species, has nothing to do with truth, one knows from the fact that, e.g., we have to believe in time, space, and motion, without feeling compelled to grant them absolute reality.”⁶⁷ His mention of time, space, and motion specifically is no coincidence; it is a direct reference to the work of Arthur Schopenhauer who wrote at length about this in his ‘On the Principle of Sufficient Reason’ and ‘The World as Will and Representation’, himself being inspired to do so by Immanuel Kant’s ‘Critique of Pure

⁶⁵ Breazeale, *Philosophy and Truth*, p.xxviii

⁶⁶ Ibid., p.xxxv

⁶⁷ WP 487, p.269

Reason.’ Nietzsche directly credits these two thinkers with “the victory over the optimism concealed in the essence of logic” and with the destruction of “scientific Socratism’s complacent delight in existence by establishing its boundaries.”⁶⁸

Schopenhauer identifies a fundamental error which he tracks back so far as the writings of Aristotle. He claims that Aristotle, and the many that followed after him such as Descartes or Spinoza, did not fully comprehend the difference between *cause* and *reason*. Schopenhauer uses Aristotle to point at the basic insight that to explain *why* something exists is very different from knowing and proving *that* it exists. He then develops this further by drawing on Kant’s teachings, and calls to attention that the cause as to why something exists is always the logical justification as to why it exists *for me*, a rational animal, whereas the *reason* why something exists has to do with the thing in-itself and can never be known, as Kant demonstrated. Knowledge of the cause for which *I* believe something exists has nothing whatsoever to do with the *reason* for which the thing exists, and it doesn’t allow me to pronounce myself on the absolute reality of the thing. From confusing those two very different matters was born Descartes’ Ontological proof for the existence of God, as well as Spinoza’s pantheism and the philosophy of those Schopenhauer calls ‘Neo-Spinozans’ such as Schelling and Hegel.⁶⁹ Schopenhauer sets out to correct this mistake, as he hears Kant’s warning that

“These unavoidable problems of pure reason itself are **God, freedom and immortality**. But the science whose final aim in all its preparations is directed properly only to the solution of these problems is called **metaphysics**, whose procedure is in the beginning **dogmatic**, i.e., it confidently takes on the execution of

⁶⁸ BT 18-19, p.112 & 120

⁶⁹ Schopenhauer, *Principle of Sufficient Reason*, p.8-17

this task without an antecedent examination of the capacity or incapacity of reason for such a great undertaking.”⁷⁰

Kant will go on to explain that space and time are merely forms of our intuition, and that if we were to remove ourselves as subject, then they would cease to exist. Space being the form by which representations appear to us as static, and time being the form by which we represent motion, we need to have a third form by which the two may appear to us simultaneously or juxtaposed. This third form, which as the other two exists in us ‘a priori’, is *causality*; as that which allows us to represent *change*. These are simply what we call the forms in which our intuition enters consciousness and “as appearances cannot exist in themselves, but only in us.”⁷¹ Space, time, and most importantly *cause* have nothing to do with the thing ‘in-itself’, whose existence and the *reason* for it remain unknown to us and are not even asked after in experience.⁷² However, philosophers after Kant have continued to think of *cause* as *reason* for a thing’s existence, clinging on to the hope that it may give us proof or basis to believe that causality is that by which our mind may confirm a thing’s existence. The way this was done by Hegel and others has been to concede Kant’s point that causality is a form of our intuition, but argue that what this intuition perceives as *cause* is the *essence* of a being, and that thus by grasping its essence and it entering our realm of reason, we come to have knowledge of things which accumulates over time; that is to say, historically, to the eventual actualization of *absolute Being through* us. Therefore, Schopenhauer says, Hegelian philosophy and the likes are simply a reiteration of the Ontological argument, and arise from the same

⁷⁰ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p.139

⁷¹ Ibid., p.168

⁷² Ibid., p.162

confusion of cause and reason also responsible for the Cosmological argument and its 'first cause'. If we understand causality as he and Kant did, as being merely *our* way of representing *change*, then the term 'first cause' is a *contradictio in adjecto*. If every cause and effect always involves a *change*, then we are forced to always ask of the change that brought it about, *in infinitum*.⁷³ Due to this mistake, Schopenhauer notes, the origin of knowledge as *concepts* is also being forgotten or ignored. He reminds us that concepts are always arrived at by truncating perception; we drop much of what has been perceived and retain what appears to us to be common in all. That is why a concept is never something perceptible; because it is always more or less general. Thus, "the higher we ascend in abstract thought, the more we deduct, the less therefore remains to be thought. The highest, i.e., the most general conceptions, are the emptiest and poorest, and at last become mere husks, such as, for instance, being, essence, thing, becoming, &c, &c."⁷⁴

Given all that, I propose that it is understandable for us to continue to use the word 'truth' so as to refer to our constant automatic representing of things in time, space, and as cause and effect; this is truth which imposes itself on me as my body will not permit the full endorsement of the belief that the chair I sit on or the keys I type with do not exist. Sensation received in an uninterrupted flow by my nervous system may only enter my consciousness as formatted into space, time, and causal relations. Furthermore, by the time I have a concept in my mind, much of what has been perceived has been rejected for the sake of arriving at something which is general enough so that it may be communicated. Building on Schopenhauer's description of concept formation, Nietzsche

⁷³ Schopenhauer, *Principle of Sufficient Reason*, p.42

⁷⁴ Ibid., p.116

explains the process by which this kind of truth occurs, starting from a nerve stimulus which is followed by an image, then a sound, and finally the concept. Each step is the creation of a metaphor for the previous one, and it represents it in the same way a Chladni sound figure represents actual sound.⁷⁵ The sensation with which we start is already a metaphor for a hypothetical thing in-itself, and the sound which we call a word is a metaphor for this sensation. Nietzsche uses the example of the word “leaf” to explain that “every concept arises from the equation of unequal things. Just as it is certain that one leaf is never totally the same as another, so it is certain that the concept “leaf” is formed by arbitrarily discarding these individual differences and by forgetting the distinguishing aspects.”⁷⁶ We can infer that as language develops and more meaning is created, human beings become increasingly intelligent. Communication is bettered, thus allowing ever more complex cooperation and coordination, which means man’s survival and prosperity become increasingly dependent on his intellectual capacities, rather than on other physical traits.

Understood in the way described above, truth is necessary for human life; insofar that our species can only endure by means of its being social. That is to say, “the necessity for truthfulness begins with society.”⁷⁷ The development of the rational mind thus becomes man’s principal preoccupation as he wants to secure the conditions for his survival which always involve some kind of social life, thus creating a need for ever more concepts serving the purpose of communication. This means a progressive ascension towards ever more general concepts, as the amplitude of man’s intelligence comes to

⁷⁵ TL I, p.82-83

⁷⁶ Ibid., p.83

⁷⁷ P 91, p.34-35

define him, and is venerated for its triumph over seemingly any danger or threat. As levels of security and comfort increase, man finds time to process ever more perceptions into concepts, and at some point in his intellectual development a new idea comes about as a result of prolonged contemplation. To go back to Nietzsche's leaf example, from the equation of all perceived leaves; which are all unequal, under the concept 'leaf', "awakens the idea that, in addition to the leaves, there exists in nature the "leaf": the original model according to which all leaves were perhaps woven, sketched, measured, colored, curled, and painted- but by incompetent hands, so that no specimen has turned out to be a correct, trustworthy, and faithful likeness of the original model."⁷⁸ Eventually, this new idea is applied not only to mere concrete 'objects' referred to as word-concepts, but to concepts themselves as they become increasingly general and empty. For instance, one observes that a variety of things trigger in one's mind a glimpse of the idea of beauty. From this, one supposes the possibility of the existence of an 'idea of beauty' which is permanent and higher than the beauty one sees in particular temporal things. As Schopenhauer indicated, since conceptualization spreads to everything and aims for the ever more general and universal, we end up with concepts which are almost meaningless; so little of perception and of what is particular remains, that we are left with nearly empty husks. Capitalized 'Truth', I should use here to refer to the emptiest of all, which has been called the *absolute*, the 'thing in-itself', the 'first cause', God, Spirit, and many other names. It is the notion of an ideal 'pure' concept, completely devoid of all perception; that is to say, *objective*. It is imagined that in ascending to this height on the ladder of conceptualization, our intellect would at some point gain knowledge of what it is to *be* without subjective perception. Consequently, it would mirror, or contain a

⁷⁸ TL 1, p.83

concept which is an exact copy of the exterior ‘thing in-itself’ as it exists before our perceiving it. Nietzsche sums this up by saying that “truth makes its appearance as a social necessity. Afterwards, by means of a metastasis, it is applied to everything, where it is not required.”⁷⁹ The belief in the eventual discovery of this Truth, and the zealous commitment to it as *the* purpose of mankind, can be described as a ‘pure knowledge drive’.

That being said, we find ourselves today in a position where we may look back at more than two millennia of devotion to this ideal and training or reinforcing of our drive to pure knowledge, and despair at its fruitlessness. Therefore, we might by way of habit proclaim that the ideal of Truth at which the pure knowledge drive aims simply does not exist, and that whatever is in our minds *certainly* does not correspond to things in themselves or their essence. Nietzsche warns us that this “would of course be a dogmatic assertion and, as such, would be just as indemonstrable as its opposite.”⁸⁰ This is because, paradoxically, such a statement would be exactly like the very thing of which it denies the existence. To say that nothing is true is itself a Truth claim, and it still traps us into the True and False opposition of which we are trying to get rid of. It prompts the paradoxical nonsensical question as to whether it is true that nothing is true. In denying Truth as much as in affirming it, one is still determined by it. Instead, Nietzsche’s effort is to adopt a psychological outlook regarding these matters; his concern is not with the ‘objective’ reality of either argument, but rather with the effect a way of thinking or another has on different kinds of minds. Serious questioning concerning the capacities

⁷⁹ P 91, p.34

⁸⁰ TL 1, p.83-84

and limitations of reason, and of metaphysics as a science, has been on the decrease since Plato, and the result has often been our forgetting of the origin of concepts. Climbing up the ladder of thought in our frantic chase after the ideal of an “idea of the Good” interpreted as an absolute Truth or God, we have erased from our minds the idea that conceptions are merely the remainder of stripped down subjective perceptions, and have imagined them as tools in a realm of ‘pure’ reason where we may use them as we wish since they are subject to our ‘free will’. Skepticism regarding this mode of thinking has always been present, but its strongest and most timely manifestation occurred around the 18th century with thinkers like Leibniz, Hume, or Kant, as a reaction to and criticism of the rediscovery and reinterpretation of Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy, known as the Enlightenment. However, in defiance of that, many thinkers continued to argue for the possibility of there being a Truth and of our capacity of uncovering or even *creating* it. Nietzsche notes that generally speaking, it is always *faith* and its universal binding force that holds a society together, and “man’s greatest labor so far has been to reach agreement about very many things and to submit to a *law of agreement*- regardless of whether these things are true or false.”⁸¹ After thousands of years of Christianity as popularized Platonism, faith in objectivity and free will, as well as the belief that our rational knowledge does indeed tell us something about the reality of things, are the elements which continue to stand at the core of the civilized human society we’ve come to build and are held to be necessary for its order and well-functioning. To go to war with such credence sometimes meant putting one’s life in danger, or at least resulted in being isolated, marginalized, and unpopular, as was the case with Schopenhauer and Nietzsche whose books went unnoticed during their lives and were frowned upon for many years

⁸¹ GS 76, p.130

after. Someone like Hegel on the other hand, whose concept of Spirit as ‘the absolute’ has come full circle (in so far that it actually asserts or describes the furthest ascension in abstract thought and claims to arrive at Truth or “God” by reasoning and extreme conceptualization, as opposed to positing a divine being given as a starting point ‘by necessity’ which one would then simply have to justify or defend, as was previously usually the case), has seen escalating popularity and praise during his lifetime. To be convinced that one can come to truly know things because he is endowed with reason, and that the Truth is inevitably tied or even interchangeable with the Good as such, is a formidable stimulus for putting tremendous effort into science and philosophy. One will analyze cause and effect thinking that discoveries are made towards knowing the reason for there being things, or at least that progress is made in that direction. Plato delivered the foundation for this belief system, and whether or not he intended for it to become what it has as it transformed into Stoicism and Christianity, it has perdured for millennia and been the source of much stamina and creativity before it reached the late stages of its deterioration and became a threat. Nietzsche will gladly recognize that it has given direction to man’s will and strengthened it⁸² so as to make him capable of accomplishing many great things. Whether or not it constituted an accurate account of actual reality, because of this “*obedience* over a long period of time and in a *single* direction, [...] something always develops, and has developed, for whose sake it is worth while to live on earth; for example, virtue, art, music, dance, reason, spirituality- something transfiguring, subtle, mad, and divine.”⁸³

⁸² GS 347, p.289

⁸³ BGE 188, p.101

Nietzsche himself, as any reader, if we accept the premises postulated by our discussion of literary theory, is conditioned by the historical and cultural context in which he finds himself. This context is what makes for his particular view regarding the spread and growth of Platonism. Additionally, Nietzsche's commitment to philosophy rested on his wish to attend to his fragile condition and attenuate the pain he constantly felt, both due in part to the disease which he had contracted as a young adult. He saw in it a *practice* that is akin to therapy or to medicine, which by way of self-healing may be able to cure or diminish the effects of his illness. An indication of this is that in another letter to Rohde and in one to von Meysebug from 1874, he speaks of his project to write a series of 'Untimely Meditations' as "a five year project for purging himself of all of his hostile and negative thoughts and feelings."⁸⁴ It is also worth noting that at one point, Nietzsche considered 'The Philosopher as Cultural Physician' as a tentative title for his envisioned major book concerning philosophy which was to accompany 'The Birth of Tragedy'; although, such a book was never published by him.⁸⁵ This particular approach towards philosophy was also the reason for his being so interested in the ancient Greeks, especially the pre-Socratics, who had a similar view.⁸⁶ Therefore, we are to understand that Platonism, as any philosophy, is taken to be a medicament which was required at the time it was created, and prescribed to particular kinds of people. Gradually, it fell into the hands of phony medics that Socrates warned us about in the 'Phaedrus': those that claimed to be doctors without knowing for whom their medicine was appropriate, during which period of time, and in what dosage. As any curative treatment which is wrongly administered, it has grown poisonous as its healing purposes were superseded by the

⁸⁴ Breazeale, *Philosophy and Truth*, p.xx

⁸⁵ Ibid., p.xix

⁸⁶ Hutter, *Shaping the Future*, p.12 & 113

intensification of the cancer that is *nihilism*, spreading and corrupting everyone alike and thereby killing itself from within.

Science as a Path to Truth

The latest and most dangerous symptom of this illness is the uncontrolled rise of techno-science which destroys life at an alarming rate. This makes for an ambiguous stance towards science on Nietzsche's part, to which I should try to provide an explanation. At this point, one should have a sense that for the sake of coherence, doing away with dogmatism and disposing of the belief in Truth as such ought to be extended to the realm of science.⁸⁷ If we are to experiment with thinking and acting without Truth, the notion that science gets us closer to 'objective reality' by means of its 'accurate observation' is to be denounced as merely another iteration of theoretical optimism. Science is the strongest and most potent manifestation of the drive to pure knowledge, and modernity's promotion of technology as mankind's tool for the 'revelation' of Truth is accompanied by unprecedented intensification of the systematic destruction of life at the hands of the human species, which makes the scientific project condemnable.⁸⁸ Be that as it may, it does not necessarily mean that science as such is to be condemned and gotten rid of immediately. Such a course of events may be a colossal waste of all progress achieved by years of obedience to the ascetic ideal, and since science is the agent by which the now faulty Platonism extinguishes itself, an abrupt stopping of the scientific project would only further delay the revaluation of values that is to come. Beyond this

⁸⁷ BGE 14, p.21-22

⁸⁸ Breazeale, *Philosophy and Truth*, p.xxxiv

future event, Nietzsche imagines the advent of a 'Gay Science', as his book from 1882 is titled, which is not at the service of man's quest for Truth, but affirms life and helps man in claiming his role as shepherd of the earth. This new science is to be nothing less than an art of poetry, as we learn in Nietzsche's auto-biography that the 'Gay Science' title is simply a translation of the Provençal 'gaia scienza' or 'gai saber', having in mind the 'Consistori Del Gai Saber', a 14th century poetic academy in Provence which sought to revive the dying spirit of troubadour poetry.⁸⁹ It is not entirely clear what this new science as envisioned by Nietzsche ought to be, but perhaps we can get a better idea of it by determining what it is not. As one should always proceed with Nietzsche, we ought to try to learn more about that which he affirms; in this case, a 'gay science', by identifying as precisely as possible what he attacks or criticizes and his reasons for doing so. His 'yes-saying' always emerges out of a 'no-saying' which points to it, and this is no different in his treatment of the topic of science.

As previously alluded to, monotheistic faiths had man believe in the existence of an anthropomorphized Truth named "God". Organized Judeo-Christian religions built on the philosophical foundation set by Platonism propelled this ideal to the level of supreme value as the ecumenical goal. The quest after the attainment of this goal trained man's will with unprecedented efficiency by positing an objective which was further in the future than any other; the reward of eternal life would be granted once one's earthly living was consumed, meaning one would have to wait longer for this than for any other earthly procurement. Using scientific language and 'discoveries' such as those of neurology, the sense in which Truth is 'embodied' in us becomes apparent. The moral

⁸⁹ Chaytor, *History of Aragon and Catalonia*, p.198

code attached to these monotheistic faiths has had human beings forbid themselves earthly gratification by commanding them to consistently restrain and deny their strongest most basic passions such as sexual desire or greed, for the sake of being awarded an imagined prize which is placed in the ‘afterlife’. This was done so as to create masses of individuals capable of delaying reward for literally as long as humanly possible; that is, for the entire duration of one’s life. Scientists today believe that they have identified neurotransmitters of dopamine and serotonin as the part of the brain which regulates the ‘reward’ system and determines one’s capacity for delaying gratification.⁹⁰ It could very well be the case that thousands of years of Judeo-Christian morality has affected the biological evolution of these neurotransmitters, as it probably has other parts of our bodies. One can imagine that the purpose of this was to shape, or I dare even say *biologically modify*, human beings so that they be made capable of sustained effort and train them to endure suffering over long periods of time without the need for any earthly reward. Under this light, Nietzsche’s referring to this moral code as “slave morality” makes even more sense.

However, as mentioned earlier, this does mean that strict obedience was practiced, for the sake of this ideal, and everything we associate with civilization developed greatly, including the many scientific branches and their applications. In order for this to be possible, the entire human race had to be enslaved, no longer by any human masters but to the ascetic ideal, which granted both eventual victory over all earthly rulers, and all the goods of civilization such as modern science and its technology. Nietzsche explains how and why religious institutions eventually lost control of the scientific enterprise, as it

⁹⁰ Carr, *The Shallows*, p.205

turned against that which created it by advancing arguments based on empirical knowledge which challenged religious dogma up to its philosophical core. As we've said, the entire system rested on faith in a reward, placed outside of the earthly physical world, with which one would be reunited *only in the afterlife*, making it impossible for us to observe and to have any degree of certainty concerning its actual existence. The restraint commanded by the devotion to his ideal is responsible for the creation of human beings endowed with the necessary discipline to be rigorous investigators of the world. These first men of science act in good faith starting from the knowledge provided by scripture and churches, looking to find signs of God; which is to say, elements of Truth, in nature. This means the scientific method is one of a man "determined to banish every vestige of illusion from himself and his world, to direct the merciless light of rational inquiry into even the darkest and most hollowed recesses of the spirit."⁹¹ This of course ends in nihilism as everything which cannot be proven 'true', after it has been brought and tried before the bar of conscious reflection, is dismissed. Only that which can be measured and weighed is considered true to the modern enlightened man.⁹² Being that the promised reward, which initially permitted all of this to happen, is immaterial and situated in a transcendental realm of ideas or in an imagined afterlife, it fails the test of scientific inquiry. Thus science commits suicide as it cripples the very thing which fueled the drive that made it flourish.

Platonism wants that certain individuals may come to know Truth in this transcendental world of ideas, by use of their rational minds. Christianity for Nietzsche is

⁹¹ Breazeale, *Philosophy and Truth*, p.xxvi

⁹² Ibid., p.xxvi

“Platonism for the people”⁹³ as it vulgarized the idea in preaching that everyone may come to know God by reaching an immaterial heaven following one’s death, given that one lives according to a certain set of rules. Nietzsche’s ‘Genealogy of Morals’ gives a treatise concerning how the long devotion to the ideal of coming to know the Truth, or being reunited with God in the afterlife, has devalued the natural earthly world which came to be seen as a sort of trial room from which we await to be freed either in the mind or in death, so as to finally enjoy our reward. Therefore, when the prospect of being recompensed in the afterlife is discarded, the scientific man is left with a ‘merely’ natural valueless world, as well as with the strong ‘will’ and the capacity to delay gratification which has been cultivated from obedience to that which is no longer tenable. Because this ascetic ideal has been the ecumenical goal for millennia, the modern man cannot conceive of another and falls back on it, but this time he intends to make sure it is true and to ensure the procurement of reward. He sets out to employ what has remained of the aforementioned capacities in order to *create* this ideal; to transform the earthly world in which he no longer sees any value, so that it provides him with the Truth or ‘God’ which was previously promised to him only in a transcendental realm of ideas or in the afterlife. This means the advent of techno-science with its rabid transformation (read: destruction) of nature. As technology progresses and not only fails to deliver what it set itself to do, but also has to face the devastation it causes, the ultimate scientific man falls into despair and absolute skepticism. Nietzsche speaks of this type as a ‘philosopher of desperate knowledge’ who “simply magnifies the deficiencies and vices of the drive to pure knowledge.”⁹⁴ The epidemic of nihilism spreads and intensifies, and after having been

⁹³ BGE Preface, p.2

⁹⁴ Breazeale, *Philosophy and Truth*, p.xxxvi-xxxvii

conditioned by the ascetic ideal for millennia, mankind cannot envision any other purpose and therefore carries on further denying life and nature; a world without Truth is not one worth living in. I will have more to say on this ‘will to nothingness’ in my second chapter.⁹⁵

For now, these compose the two aspects of science which are important for us here: first, that it is born from and similar to the religious impulse which is to find Truth, and although the notion of what Truth is and how it is to be attained may have changed as Platonism became Christianity and then modern science, its ascetic core as ‘pure knowledge drive’ is maintained. Second, that the scientific project unknowingly erodes its own foundations as it produces ever more complex technology which puts in peril not only the very basis for its being convinced of the existence of the Truth it seeks to attain, together with any beneficent character supposedly attached to it, but also the existence of the physical world it depends on in order to carry on its mission. In Nietzsche’s words, “science, spurred by its powerful illusion, speeds irresistibly towards its limits where its optimism, concealed in the essence of logic, suffers shipwreck. [...] When they see to their horror how logic coils up at these boundaries and finally bites its own tail- suddenly the new form of insight breaks through, *tragic insight* which, merely to be endured, needs art as a protection and remedy.”⁹⁶ Here we see the first mention of *art* in the context of science, and Nietzsche’s idea that the former ought to come rescue the latter. As we shall see, perhaps today we are at the beginning of such a transition.

⁹⁵ For the discussion of the last three paragraphs, I rely on the entire content of ‘On the Genealogy of Morality’ and ‘Beyond Good & Evil’.

⁹⁶ BT 15, p.97

Some people within the scientific community itself have sensed the unfolding of these events. While it may be that, at the dawn of scientific development, individuals expressing those kinds of concerns were judged absurd and marginalized, today notorious figures in the domain of science, like theoretical physicist Stephen Hawking, can be quoted saying that a scientific theory, like any theory, “exists only in our minds and does not have any other reality (whatever that might mean). [...] Any physical theory is always provisional, in the sense that it is only a hypothesis: you can never prove it.”⁹⁷ Thomas Kuhn’s book ‘The Structure of Scientific Revolutions’ redefines the word ‘paradigm’ as an implicit world view which stems from a scientific experiment, and is regarded as the most influential work on scientific procedure as it argues that science is simply an endless succession of paradigms which are incommensurate.⁹⁸ According to Kuhn, “the new paradigm may solve puzzles better than the old one does, and it may also yield more practical applications. But that does not mean it is a truer reflection of reality, [...] the real world is unknowable, and propositions are true or false only within the context of a particular paradigm.”⁹⁹ Theories like these are blatant examples of what Nietzsche foresaw; Kuhn may be one of the best actualizations of Nietzsche’s claim that “the assiduous pursuit of knowledge will turn into absolute nihilism. This happens when the critique of knowing turns into a self-critique, and science turns into philosophy.”¹⁰⁰ This means that an ‘inside job’ is required for the overthrowing of theoretical optimism, since it has conquered both art and religion which are forced to justify themselves before

⁹⁷ Hawking, *Brief History of Time*, p.15 [compare with BGE 14]

⁹⁸ HORGAN, *Profile: Reluctant Revolutionary: Thomas S. Kuhn Unleashed "paradigm" On the World*, p.40-49

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Breazeale, *Philosophy and Truth*, p.xxxiv

the bar of rational self-consciousness.¹⁰¹ As mentioned previously, Nietzsche considers that the big chunk of this self-critique has been accomplished by Kant and Schopenhauer. Following that, those like Kuhn are simply ‘absolute scientists’ or part of the ‘philosophers of desperate knowledge’ introduced above.¹⁰²

What then is a ‘gay science’ to be? Who is to invent and practice such a thing? For this Nietzsche speaks of the ‘philosopher of tragic knowledge’ as the one who “masters the uncontrolled knowledge drive, though not by means of a new metaphysics.”¹⁰³ This kind of philosopher knows what the ‘philosopher of desperate knowledge’ knows; both are skeptics and have the same critique of knowledge and Truth, but while the latter remains a mere ‘knower’ devoted to ‘blind science’, the tragic philosopher is a *creator*. Knowing that only illusion is possible, and that everything including human culture rests on it, he takes it upon himself to create new illusions, thus becoming a “totally new type of philosopher-artist who fills the empty space with a work of art, possessing aesthetic value”.¹⁰⁴ The gay science is therefore a science in so far that it understands and perpetrates the self-critique of science, but it doesn’t stop in nihilistic despair at the “realization of general untruth and mendaciousness that now comes to us through science- the realization that delusion and error are conditions of human knowledge and sensation.”¹⁰⁵ Instead, the philosopher of tragic knowledge creates new illusions for himself, thus cultivating a new life and giving its rights back to *art*.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ Breazeale, *Philosophy and Truth*, p.xxxv

¹⁰² Ibid., p.xxxvi

¹⁰³ P 37, p. 11

¹⁰⁴ P 44, p.15

¹⁰⁵ GS 107, p.163

¹⁰⁶ P 37, p.11

Prolonged devotion to the pure knowledge drive has habituated us to viewing illusion as something harmful and undesirable that is to be abolished. Instead of the chase after perfection ‘in itself’ which inevitably ends in disappointment, the philosopher-artist has a good will to appearance and creates something which is perfect *for him*. According to Walter Kaufmann, this

““artistic Socrates” is Nietzsche himself. He looks forward to a philosophy that admits the tragic aspects of life, as the Greek poets did, but does not sacrifice the critical intellect; a philosophy that denies Socrates’ optimistic faith that knowledge and virtue and happiness are, as it were, Siamese triplets; a philosophy as sharply critical as Socrates’ but able and willing to avail itself to the visions and resources of art.”¹⁰⁷

It seems very plausible that Nietzsche, intentionally or not, may serve as a model for this philosopher of tragic knowledge that would be as an artistic Socrates. Nietzsche certainly writes philosophy which is very critical, but at the same time he does so using rhythmically arranged aphorisms and, as we may recall from our earlier discussion, his chief work he considered to nearly be music. His goal is clearly to make of critical philosophy something which is aesthetic; to produce not Truth but a work of art. In ‘The Gay Science,’ Nietzsche explains the utilitarian value he sees in rhythm, such as that of poetry or music. He notes that from the very first times when poetry came into existence, rhythm was believed to be audible over greater distances, and it was recognized that “rhythm is a compulsion, it engenders an unconquerable urge to yield and join in; not only our feet follow the beat but the soul does”.¹⁰⁸ This gives even more credence to my

¹⁰⁷ BT Translator’s Introduction, p.12

¹⁰⁸ GS 84, p.139

earlier mention that Nietzsche's primary goal is to have an *effect* on those reading him; his philosophy, and that of future tragic philosophers, is to be a melody whose beat the reader's soul is compelled to imitate. It is the recognition of all the things said here which leads Nietzsche to the bold statement that "it is only as an aesthetic phenomenon that existence and the world are eternally justified."¹⁰⁹

This constitutes the type of philosophers and the kind of science that Nietzsche foresees in a future marked by nihilism. While there might be dim signs of this today, the pure knowledge drive decidedly remains that which defines science, even though the more we chase Truth the more we doubt our ability to reach our goal and actually acquire knowledge of reality. Faith in the worthiness of this hunt is preserved, due to factors ranging from the hope that it might at least convert into a process of creation of Truth as a nexus of concepts composing a theory which explains the whole of human experience, to a mere unwillingness to abandon the quest for fear of losing all the by-products of the journey on which we are increasingly dependent. Consequently, scientific theories that will be used here to accompany Nietzsche's main 'doctrines' are *not* brought up with the intent of standing as *proof* of the Truth of these propositions, but rather are present because they are recognized as the most powerful and efficient *metaphors* one can make use of today in contributing to the destruction of Platonism. Only science can destroy its own base, and this deed is a prerequisite to its conversion into a foundation for the revival of art as therapy and backbone of human culture. The rise of science as 'pure knowledge drive' at the detriment of art and religion goes hand in hand with the dissolution of culture. Science shares theoretical optimism with religion, but nothing else; it lacks a

¹⁰⁹ BT 5 & 24, p.52 & p.141

moral code. It cannot borrow from or reconcile with that of religion and remain coherent, because religious morality rests on the ascetic ideal as God and the promise of the afterlife which, as previously mentioned, science is forced to dismiss for those are mere notions which fail the test of rational investigation that demands *facts*. Scientific Socratism is at the center of modern culture and grows uncontrollably, but by itself it cannot serve as foundation for culture because it “is intrinsically unselective; [...] the only criterion it recognizes is the purely formal one of certainty, to which all other considerations- value for human life included- are irrelevant.”¹¹⁰

At this point I believe to have provided an exhaustive explanation of my interpretation of Nietzsche’s position concerning Truth as an ascetic ideal, of its evolution over time, and of its role in the current crisis he calls nihilism. This view is summed up in a few quotations one can dig up out of his many books, which I hope the reader is in a better position to understand now. For instance, in an early writing Nietzsche asks:

“What then is truth? A movable host of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred, and embellished, and which, after long usage, seem to a people to be fixed, canonical, and binding. Truths are illusions which we have forgotten are illusions; they are metaphors that have become worn out and have been drained of sensuous force, coins which have lost their embossing and are now considered as metal and no longer as coins.”¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Breazeale, *Philosophy and Truth*, p.xxxiv

¹¹¹ TL 1, p.84

Insofar as truths are always concepts, Nietzsche's note on the lack of sensuous force is highly reminiscent of Schopenhauer's insight that concepts are always formed by our dropping a good deal of what is perceived. This means that while the drive to pure knowledge is maintained, science will generate concepts which are progressively stripped of perception, and as it does so they become increasingly universal or distant from the subjective "reality" of living sensations. Of course, the exact same can be said of the technology which is produced from these concepts, as all of us can witness today. Similar to the previous quote, we can read in the 'The Gay Science': "What are man's truths ultimately? Merely his *irrefutable* errors."¹¹² We find something alike in the posthumously published collection of aphorisms titled 'The Will to Power', where Nietzsche declares that "Truth is the kind of error without which a certain species of life could not live. The value for *life* is ultimately decisive."¹¹³ Of course when Nietzsche speaks of truth in these instances, it includes both what I've put under 'truth' and 'Truth'; indeed, Truth *is* truth or a metaphor which has been rhetorically intensified and embellished starting with Plato, and came to seem fixed and binding. I simply chose to distinguish between the two to the extent that Truth refers to the guiding metaphor which, as previously mentioned, acts as ecumenical goal and guides the creation of all other truths, thus serving as the standard by which we determine the *value* of all other metaphors or concepts. Given that, "considered as an unconditional duty, truth stands in a hostile and destructive relationship to the world"¹¹⁴, one may ask how come this will to Truth has ever arisen in the first place. Nietzsche's answer is that it must have come from a social; therefore, moral, imperative 'thou shall not deceive' which was gradually

¹¹² GS 265, p.219

¹¹³ WP 493, p.272

¹¹⁴ TL 176, p.92

extended to the entire world in which we expected to also find Truth.¹¹⁵ To be sure, Truth had value for life at the time it appeared, or else it wouldn't have caught on and endured for so long as man's highest ideal. Arguably, what distinguishes Nietzsche from all other philosophers since Plato is that he is the first to question the value of Truth and share a suspicion that the pursuit of it is rapidly growing inimical to human life. Modernity is the period where Truth and the monotheism it induces dies at the hands of the type of human beings it created, leaving them worshipping the nothing. The modern man sacrifices God himself,¹¹⁶ thus "God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him."¹¹⁷ But what is Nietzsche's yes-saying which one ought to see in all this no-saying and Truth denying? What new value would promote and affirm life in the way Truth is no longer able to do so? What seed does Nietzsche give for free spirits and tragic philosophers of the future to plant in their souls and make grow? Where do we start in our task of creating an aesthetic philosophy to replace the truthful one? Well, one of the most rhetorically intensified, transferred, and embellished notions that Nietzsche gifts us with is 'will to power.' Following this first chapter in which I have described the essential elements of the context for which the 'theory' of 'will to power' was intended, let us proceed with the examination of this infamous 'doctrine'.

¹¹⁵ GS 344, p.281

¹¹⁶ BGE 55, p.67

¹¹⁷ GS 125, p. 181

CHAPTER 2

The Will to Power

Let us then examine the notion of will to power. As usual with Nietzsche, the ideal path is to start with the deconstructive elements so that we may understand what is affirmed, as the latter is usually intended to be in part inferred by the reader following his acceptance of the former. Nietzsche sets out to expose some prejudices that philosophers up to and including Schopenhauer have had regarding the concept of *will*. One of his most important statements concerning the will, and by extension the will to power (because as we shall later see, all willing is will to power), is found in aphorism 19 of ‘Beyond Good & Evil’. The most erroneous blind assumption made by thinkers before him, Nietzsche says, is that they’ve spoken of the will as if it was ‘one’ thing. This thinking culminates in Schopenhauer who speaks of the will as the sole thing which is truly and wholly known to us. Nietzsche claims that this hasty presumption is due to the fact that we only possess one word for this very complicated notion, namely “will-ing.” Philosophers have been quick to overlook, or even forget, that willing is something far more complicated than the simple *unit* of force they made it to be. Therefore, Nietzsche says:

“So let us for once be more cautious, let us be “unphilosophical”: let us say that in all willing there is, first, a plurality of sensations, namely, the sensation of the state “*away from which*,” the sensation of the state “*towards which*,” the sensation of this “*from*” and “*towards*” themselves, and then also an accompanying

muscular sensation, which, even without our putting into motion “arms and legs,” begins its action by force of habit as soon as we “will” anything.”¹¹⁸

Nietzsche warns us about being deceived by grammar; ‘the will’ for him, unlike the word, is not one single thing. Rather, it is a plurality of sensations each of which *is* also a ruling thought that is inseparable from any “willing.” The relationship between these many thought-carrying sensations is one of continual commanding and obeying. In that sense, the complex of willing is an *affect*. It is a perpetual competition between sensations, in which each one continually seeks to command other rival ones that are inferior to it in strength at any given moment, while simultaneously obeying stronger ones. “Freedom of will” is merely the feeling of being able to command, it “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 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.”¹¹⁹ We, as will to power, constantly alternate between commanding and obeying, and most of this manifold ongoing process is kept away from our consciousness. The affect enters consciousness only very late, and there it is felt as feelings of pleasure or pain. We think by means of synthetic concepts such as “I”, and use or arrange them as grammar and rules of communication have instructed us to. Most often than not, we identify ourselves with the commanding, as feeling of pleasure (*I feel great*), but we detach from this “I” the pain of obeying (*it hurts*). One way or another, we forget that we act as both commanding and obeying parties in the act of willing. The fact that we always

¹¹⁸ BGE 19, p.25

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p.25-26

obey ourselves, because what we command is always ourselves and not some “it”, means that “as the obeying party we know the sensations of constraint, impulsion, pressure, resistance, and motion, which usually begin immediately after the act of willing”.¹²⁰ This obedience is expected and viewed as an effect which happens by necessity following the “I”’s command. This is how we end up with a simplistic notion of willing where mere *commanding* alone suffices for action. Since the resisting obeying part is not taken into account, willing becomes equated with acting. When will and action come to be seen as one and the same, any action is called “freedom of will”; the individual who wills identifies himself exclusively with the commanding party involved in willing, and thus any credit or responsibility for the action is attributed to his commanding “I”. Meanwhile, for this commanding “I”, the obedience of other parties, which act as successful useful instruments or “under-wills”, manifests itself as feelings of delight which are added to the feeling of delight from commanding itself. Nietzsche’s analogy to explain this misconceiving is to say that “our body is but a social structure composed of many souls- [...] what happens here is what happens in every well-constituted commonwealth; namely, the governing class identifies itself with the successes of the commonwealth.”¹²¹ Finally he adds that, if we are to give up the old prejudice that results in the notion of “free will”, and instead understand willing as both commanding *and* obeying, then morals is simply “the doctrine of the relations of supremacy under which the phenomenon of “life” comes to be.”¹²²

¹²⁰ BGE 19, p.26

¹²¹ Ibid., p.26-27

¹²² Ibid., p.27

Now, this first and most fundamental description of the notion of will ties into another prejudice which Nietzsche seeks to denounce as fictitious; namely that of the opposition between subject and object. It was exposed in the previous paragraph that the “I” is held to be a created concept which results from our dismissing an important part of willing; a part which is just as essential as the one we exclusively identify the will with. This reveals the higher notion that the differentiation between subject and object is nothing more than *our* thinking the world in time, space, and *causality* by way of our consciousness, as I’ve explained in my first chapter. Nietzsche rejects Kant’s claim that attributes the presence of causality as a form of our conscious thinking to an existing more primary *sense* of causality, and instead suggests that our constant inventing of causes or “doers” behind events is merely the manifestation of a desire to find something *familiar* in everything that surrounds us.¹²³ Since the will involves the ceaseless activity of our passions, which occurs prior to the appearance in our consciousness of the thoughts that accompany sensations, the ideas of subject and object have no meaning there; indeed, all we can say is that they are forms of thinking used in the limited realm of said consciousness. This means that there is no *agent* of will; will to power is not a united will aiming for an object, power, which is situated outside of it. As such, will to power is not one unique force, but the tension between different complexes of forces seeking to make alliances with one another, separate from each other, and entertain mutual relations where all parties simultaneously obey and seek to command. Will to power does not refer to *a* will that seeks power, but to *the seeking of power* itself; the will constantly strives to create itself as increase in power. The different complexes of forces are constantly affirmed as an ever new hierarchy imposes itself forcefully, meaning that variety and

¹²³ WP 551, p.297

plurality are conditions of will to power, rather than any kind of unity or uniting force. This multiplicity of drives is in constant flux and it does not wish for anything that it does not already have; the will simply wills to will or to over-power itself, meaning that what the will wants, it already has, namely the relentless affirmation of its power over itself by increasingly forceful willing. Just as the will should not be understood as the cause or the subject that effects the seeking of power as its object, power should not be considered an aim or a purpose for the will. Instead, Nietzsche tells us, power should be understood as the stored up energy which simply increases to the point where it cannot help but be discharged. What we call the purpose is a minor accident in the configuration of the hierarchy existing between the complexes of forces at a given moment, which provides a direction for the discharge of the energy which had been dammed-up.¹²⁴ As it is always the case with any activity of the plurality of sensations, an accompanying thought comes into consciousness after the path has been settled in advance by the ongoing motion of the will to power. It is then translated into a concept; something which is familiar, and held by the conscious ego as being the cause or the driving force for the action, when really it was merely the directing force which pointed the inevitable action in an often arbitrary direction, or as Nietzsche asks, “is it not often enough a beautifying pretext, a self-deception of vanity after the event that does not want to acknowledge that the ship is *following* the current into which it has entered accidentally?”¹²⁵ It is important to constantly remind ourselves that, regardless of our using the one word ‘*will*’, Nietzsche urges us to understand it as describing many elements or quanta of force in permanent interaction with one another. In the ‘Gay Science’ he writes explicitly that

¹²⁴ GS 360, p.315

¹²⁵ Ibid., p.316

“there is no will, and consequently neither a strong nor a weak will. The multitude and disgregation of impulses and the lack of any systematic order among them result in a “weak will”; their coordination under a single predominant impulse results in a “strong will”: in the first case it is the oscillation and the lack of gravity; in the latter, the precision and clarity of the direction.”¹²⁶

For Nietzsche, the will is not merely craving or drive itself, as Schopenhauer and others misunderstood it to be, but rather that by which cravings are mastered and given a way or a measure;¹²⁷ or as mentioned earlier, it is the process by which the tension between the multiple centers of force creates a hierarchy or an order of rank that endures for a certain time. Understood in this manner, will to power is obviously *not* libertinage or the ‘laissez aller’ with which more superficial and careless readers of Nietzsche often confuse it, but precisely the opposite of those things.¹²⁸

As that phenomenon by which organic things seek to grow by means of strength affirmation and forceful expenditure of accumulated energy, life itself, or what Schopenhauer called ‘the will to life’, is will to power for Nietzsche.¹²⁹ Let us recall the two sensations which he specifically singled out in this plurality of interacting sensations, namely that of ‘away from which’ and of ‘towards which’. This supposes that the ‘whole’ is composed of ‘parts’ whose sole activity is to dispense energy in order to move away from the state they are in at any given moment, and to *desire* another state. Therefore, it might very well be the case that precisely desirability and eternal dissatisfaction is the

¹²⁶ WP 46, p.28-29

¹²⁷ WP 84, p.52

¹²⁸ WP 122, p.75

¹²⁹ GS 349 & WP 254, p.291-292 & p.148

driving force behind every ‘part’ of will to power, and as such it is will to power itself.¹³⁰ This desire manifests itself as the appearance of a temporary hierarchy commanded by an impulse which is strongest for a period of time, combined with the obeying practiced by other weaker ones, which results in what we refer to as a *deed*; all quanta of force seeks to express itself as *action*. It wants to be willed over other ones that shall not be willed at that given moment. From this, it follows that any condition or stage in the ongoing motion of will to power is bound up with all the other ones which have been and will be, as an inevitable sequence of ‘necessary’ events. This means that in will to power, with all its “correlations of Yes and No, of preference and rejection, love and hate, all that is expressed is a *perspective*, an interest of *certain types* of life: in itself, everything that *is* says Yes.”¹³¹ This is nothing less than a reinterpretation of the world as such and the life that occurs in it. Nietzsche wants us to look at the world bearing in mind the *value* of will to power, instead of the previous value of Truth. This new system of valuation makes for a world view which is reminiscent of the one presented by notorious pre-Platonic philosophers that inspired Nietzsche. It is one in which being is becoming, and the existing world is one composed of a multitude of quanta of force that perceive one another; a network of perspectives that continually seek to execute themselves through action or fulfillment of their desire at the expense of other alternative paths of becoming. Each drive is its own point of view, and other ones only exist as interpreted by it according to its needs, for “it is our needs that interpret the world; our drives and their

¹³⁰ WP 331, p.181

¹³¹ WP 293, p.165 [Italics mine]

For and Against. Every drive is a kind of lust to rule; each one has its perspective that it would like to compel all the other drives to accept as a norm.”¹³²

If one seriously studies the ancient Greek thinkers known as ‘Heracliteans’, as Nietzsche did, one can find early traces or rudimentary renditions of this ‘perspectivism’ and the accompanying rejection of the possibility of there being an absolute Truth. The most notorious among them include Empedocles and of course Protagoras whose book is ironically titled ‘Truth’. The irony, as it is recognized by Socrates in the Platonic dialogue ‘Theaetetus’, is that by virtue of the statement “nothing is true”, the fact that ‘there is no Truth’ itself is prevented from being taken as true. Socrates asks, does this not mean that to avoid contradiction, one must admit that “the *Truth* of Protagoras is not true for anyone at all, not even for himself?”¹³³ A ‘truth paradox’ is thus revealed, which can only be solved by accepting that with the disposing of Truth, the concept of ‘falsehood’ loses all meaning. The statement “nothing is true” cannot be taken to mean strictly “everything is false”, for in both cases Truth is maintained as the standard by which everything is judged. Socrates, speaking for the deceased Protagoras in the ‘Theaetetus’, explains the sophist’s view as such:

“the theory that there is nothing which in itself is just one thing; nothing which you could rightly call anything or any kind of thing. If you call a thing large, it will reveal itself as small, and if you call it heavy, it is liable to appear as light, and so on with everything, because nothing is anything or any kind of thing. What is really true, is this: the things of which we naturally say that they ‘are’, are in process of coming to

¹³² WP 481, p.267

¹³³ Plato, *Theaetetus* 171c, p.40

be, as the result of movement and change and blending with one another. We are wrong when we say they 'are', since nothing ever is, but everything is coming to be."¹³⁴

Nietzsche's books contain many formulas that express this particular view, including the slogan "Nothing is true, everything is permitted"¹³⁵ which he borrows from the medieval order of the Assassins, as well as the statement cited here earlier: "Truth is the kind of error without which a certain species of life could not live. The value for *life* is ultimately decisive."¹³⁶ Now it is one thing to say that the absolute reality of things 'in-themselves' is to remain forever unknown to us for we lack the capacities to cognize it entirely as it is, which is what Kant and Schopenhauer argued, and it is another entirely to say that the thing 'in-itself' does not exist at all as Socrates' account of Protagoras' book suggests, and as Nietzsche says clear and square.¹³⁷ In the former case, one preserves Truth and may continue to maintain any morals and value judgments that are dependent on its existence, and it is simply conceded that while the logic that wants Truth to exist is endorsed, we lack the capacity to fully grasp and identify what Truth is. In the latter case, as Nietzsche argues, the fact that we simply lack an organ for Truth and have no way of knowing it, for any of the concepts we create and work with are grounded in sensual perception, means that *for us* Truth does not exist.¹³⁸ The view of Protagoras and other Heracliteans as it is described in the 'Theaetetus' is not by any means taken as is by Nietzsche. One does find there important elements that Nietzsche rejects as he builds on the insight of these pre-Platonics; for example, the dialogue employs the concept or word

¹³⁴ Plato, *Theaetetus* 152d-e, p.14-15

¹³⁵ GM Third Essay 24, p.111

¹³⁶ WP 493, p.272

¹³⁷ WP 555, p.301

¹³⁸ WP 616, p.330

‘subject’ when it refers to individuals as perceptive beings¹³⁹, and one of Socrates’ early critiques in the discussion is to ask whether or not Protagoras’ theory forces itself to admit that the perspective of other creatures with the power of perception, such as the baboon or the pig, is as true as that of any human being.¹⁴⁰ As I’ve touched upon earlier in the previous chapter, Nietzsche’s stance is more of a solipsistic one; he prevents himself from providing a definitive answer as to whether or not perspectives other than human exist, stating simply that they “are perhaps somewhere possible.”¹⁴¹ Most importantly, for him the idea of subjectivity disappears together with the belief in Truth, as revealed by the following passage:

“There exists neither “spirit,” nor reason, nor thinking, nor consciousness, nor soul, nor will, nor truth: all are fictions that are of no use. There is no question of “subject and object,” but of a particular species of animal that can prosper only through a certain relative rightness; above all, regularity of its perceptions (so that it can accumulate experience)- ”¹⁴²

However, the link between Nietzsche’s view and that of pre-Platonics like Protagoras remains strong. They have in common their disbelief in the existence of absolute Truth, and even though with Nietzsche subjectivism evolves into what he calls perspectivism, one can see the early germs of his ‘doctrine’ of will to power in fragments of pre-Platonic philosophy. I have already indicated that for Nietzsche, dismissing one’s belief in Truth means doing away with ‘good and evil’ value judgments of slave morality. He wishes to replace those with ones of ‘good and bad’ for which the basis is the value of life as

¹³⁹ Plato, *Theaetetus* 166d, p.34

¹⁴⁰ Plato, *Theaetetus* 161c, p.27

¹⁴¹ WP 616, p.330

¹⁴² WP 480, p.266

increase in strength or power; something like a measure of health in a large sense that would include the entire 'body' as quanta of force. With that in mind, I shall point out that the Protagoras of the 'Theaetetus', personified by Socrates, sustains something strikingly similar when he provides an example to expose his theory, which incidentally also utilizes the same theme of health. He draws to attention that when food tastes bitter to a sick man, and the opposite to a healthy one, we do not affirm the healthy man to be the wiser and to possess knowledge of the true taste of the food. Each one of them tastes according to his condition, and neither of them is more ignorant than the other just as neither of the different tastes is truer than the other. But one man is in a *better* healthier condition than the other who is sickly and weak. The point then is not to gain wisdom of the true taste of the food, but for each individual to constantly change from a lesser state to a better one.¹⁴³ Nietzsche's 'doctrine' of will to power resonates even more in the explicit description of Protagoras' view, which declares that "when a man's soul is in a pernicious state, he judges things akin to it, but giving him a sound state of the soul causes him to think different things, things that are good. [...] the one kind are *better* than the others, but in no way *truer*."¹⁴⁴ What Socrates fails to do is to properly apply Protagoras' view to Protagoras himself. He continually entangles himself in trying to determine whether his rival's philosophy is True in the sense that he would have it; in other words, if it is absolute Truth. Obviously, his logic leads him to conclude that it cannot be so.¹⁴⁵ The point, however, is that the theory Protagoras advances expresses how things seem to be *for him*; it is obviously his own interpretation of the world. The reason he calls it 'Truth' is because he redefines the word to a mere qualifier for whatever it is

¹⁴³ Plato, *Theaetetus* 166e-167a, p34-35

¹⁴⁴ Plato, *Theaetetus* 167b, p.35

¹⁴⁵ Plato, *Theaetetus* 171a-d, p.39-40

better for a particular individual to believe. In the same vein, Nietzsche attributes the basic insight for the appearance of Truth to those who had found that it is *better* for them not to be deceived by wrong usage of words and concepts; it allowed them to be stronger and healthier, and to preserve themselves longer.¹⁴⁶ Protagoras' theory is true *for him*, and perhaps for others who are endowed with a similar constitution, because it allows them to live better than any other would; not because he is confident that it is Truth in the absolute sense.

At this point it should be even clearer that nothing which is said here or by Nietzsche claims to have anything to do with the actual reality of things as they are 'in themselves'; speculation on this is left to dogmatic philosophers and leads only to nihilism. This is merely a display of the illusions under which Nietzsche saw the possibility for the affirmation of a certain kind of life; one which is stronger than that which was promoted by previous valuations, in that it affirms itself and the world rather than deny them. His books are aimed at readers who are impregnated with great creative force and have a will to experiment with new values, because they have experienced, understood, and accepted his denunciation of the previous system of values centered around Truth as also a mere illusion under which another weaker and self-denying type of life preserved and promoted itself. If anything, I believe Nietzsche intends to serve as an inspiring example to these particular individuals; he certainly does not want them to live exactly as he did and blindly adopt his ideas to become fanatic proselytes. Rather, his wish is for them to be inspired to create their own illusions under which their own life and earthly existence is affirmed. His hope is that others after him will be artists whose

¹⁴⁶ GS 344, p.280-283

creation is themselves and their own lives, as opposed to philosophers who accept one doctrine or another as Truth and thus become nihilists. This view of the future emanates from all his books, especially in the passages where he attacks philosophy as it has been understood from Plato onwards, but it is nicely summed up in the following note from 'The Will to Power' which reads:

"Ultimately, man finds in things nothing but what he himself has imported into them: the finding is called science, the importing- art, religion, love, pride. Even if this should be a piece of childishness, one should carry on with both and be well disposed toward both- some should find: others- *we* others!- should import."¹⁴⁷

To ask whether or not the 'doctrine' of will to power is Truth is to submit the former to the standard of valuation of the latter. Instead, Nietzsche wants to consider the reverse question and ask what becomes of Truth and of its worth if we consider will to power, or relations of force and degree of strength, as supreme value. After making his case that a world and a life dictated by Truth and devoted to the pursuit of it can only lead to nihilism, what he proposes is "a countermovement [...] regarding both principle and task; a movement that in some future will take the place of this perfect nihilism- but pre-supposes it, logically and psychologically, and certainly can come only after and out of it."¹⁴⁸ At this point, I believe we must go on and consider how Truth and what we've referred to as the pure knowledge drive is to be explained once they are demoted from their status as ecumenical goals and are themselves subordinated to new valuations. Viewed through the lens of will to power, how and why does Truth arise in the particular

¹⁴⁷ WP 606, p.327

¹⁴⁸ WP Preface 4, p.4

kind of species that man is? What kind of worth can we assign Truth under the new regime of values that Nietzsche points towards? How are we to reinterpret the role and meaning of our intellectual faculties and our consciousness itself, if they are no longer defined as ‘divine’ tools whose exclusive purposes are the pursuit and attainment of Truth held as the supreme goal of mankind? In brief, how exactly does the revaluation of values begin to happen? These are the questions that I shall try to explore in the remainder of this second chapter.

Devaluation & Revaluation

Before we make the next leap forwards, let us take a step back. From what has been discussed so far, it should be clear that the one whose thought is liberated from Truth will not discard anything merely because it is an illusion or ‘false’. The free spirit knows that the falseness of a judgment is not necessarily an objection to it.¹⁴⁹ Nietzsche tells us that the kind of philosopher he envisions in the future “will make use of religions for his project of cultivation and education, just as he will make use of whatever political and economic states are at hand.”¹⁵⁰ He notes that the talent and merit of previous founders of religions, such as Saint-Paul or the Buddha, was to *see* a lifestyle with customs which act as discipline of the will and to *select* it for their project; they apply to it their own interpretation and shine supreme value on it, so as to elevate it to such a status that those living under it will fight or even die for it.¹⁵¹ Today, life in the Western world is increasingly defined by modern science as described in the previous chapter, and

¹⁴⁹ BGE 4, p.11

¹⁵⁰ BGE 61, p.72

¹⁵¹ GS 353, p.296

by the atheism that often accompanies it. For Nietzsche, atheism means that “the father”, “the judge”, and “the rewarder” in God have been refuted, along with his “free will”.¹⁵² ‘God’ was the name Truth was given in the religious context; that is, when it had a moral code attached to it with which it sought to discipline the human will. Religion condemned scientific knowledge as something which corrupted the soul and worked against its reaching salvation; instead it demanded blind faith in God. Science differs from theism by fostering intellectual development and operating on the basis of empirical knowledge, but it nonetheless preserves the objective of attaining ‘God,’ which it now calls Truth. No matter how convinced the scientific community might be that it is going *against* the ideal of religion, from this perspective we see that science is actually the most recent and noble manifestation of it.¹⁵³ To serve the purpose of religion, Truth was anthropomorphized into a universal father figure capable of constantly judging everyone; as such, it was endowed with the role and freedom of attributing reward and punishment. The Church preached that one may *actually* come to be reunited with God in the beyond by living a life of faith and obedience to its moral code, and thereby see oneself be rewarded with the ‘saving’ of one’s immaterial soul. Science is the rise of those that are no longer content with mere convictions and aspire to gain ‘*knowledge*’ of Truth as a concept or a ‘unified theory’ by developing the intellectual capacities of minds in the actual world. As such, science liberates itself and proceeds unconcerned with moral codes, since morality no longer plays a role in the potential achievement of its goal, as it does in religion. The will of the scientific man, trained by millennia of compliance to religious ethics which are now abandoned, is free to race towards actualizing ‘God’ as a ‘pure’ concept named

¹⁵² BGE 53, p.66

¹⁵³ GM Third Essay 23, p.110

Truth without any obligated regard for morality. As I've recounted in the first chapter, the Church's obsession with spirituality at the expense of the body translated in its strict morality that 'tamed' the instincts in favor of the mind, had for result the coming into being of the scientific man. This creation proved cancerous, given that the fanatic commitment to truthfulness as a path to God that composed the Christian conscience emancipated into science, which rejects the Church and disapproves of its priests whose authority is dependent on the faith of believers rather than on 'knowledge.' Science strips God of its role as a moral judge and pursues what's left of him as a crippled 'idea' that it calls Truth.¹⁵⁴ The atheist is therefore left with a religious instinct which is in the process of growing powerfully, as it is no longer attended to properly by organized religion, but at the same time refuses any theistic satisfaction with deep suspicion.¹⁵⁵ He believes himself to be a 'free' spirit liberated from religious dogma, but he is actually *not*, given that *he still believes in Truth*.¹⁵⁶ Science is not an attack on the ideal itself, but rather mere repugnance and pugnacity directed at "its outworks, its apparel and disguise, at the way the ideal temporarily hardens, solidifies, becomes dogmatic."¹⁵⁷ Additionally, the scientific atheist eventually realizes the dangerous character of an unbridled scientific pursuit which is allowed to progress without a moral code steering it. As a consequence of this, one sees many attempts, now more than ever, to reinstate the lost authority of the old ethics by formulating a scientific base on which one wants to see it rest. To accomplish that, one uses *moral* interpretations of empirical data and 'discoveries' regulated by the strict laws of logic; one tries to employ the findings of modern science

¹⁵⁴ GS 357, p.307

¹⁵⁵ BGE 53, p.66

¹⁵⁶ GM Third Essay 24, p.111

¹⁵⁷ GM Third Essay 25, p.113

so as to justify ‘good and evil’ value judgments. Tremendous efforts are made by notorious scientists working in tandem with laical governments to secularize the old religious values and to have science, with its uncompromising rationale, serve as the foundation for a modern version of the very same morality which saw God swiped from under its feet and was progressively transformed and renamed into ‘human rights.’ Kant himself was one of the first to attempt to salvage Christian morality after having dismissed God by way of logic. To do this, he came up with the ‘categorical imperative’, for which Nietzsche mocks and criticizes him.¹⁵⁸ The majority of atheists today are quick to call themselves ‘humanists’ and associate with this Christianized scientific movement. The demeanor and strong conviction with which they try to justify and enforce Judeo-Christian ‘good and evil’ value judgments by means of reason and scientific ‘facts’ is, ironically, sometimes comparable to that of religious fanatics and Church members. Nietzsche tells us that “precisely in their faith in truth they are more rigid and more absolute than anyone else.”¹⁵⁹ However, theirs is a hopeless enterprise, because science is incapable of assuming that role due to reasons which I have provided in my first chapter.

Regardless, this secular humanitarian scientific movement is the latest development of the religious instinct, and we ought to follow Nietzsche’s counsel to use it for the creation of new values. Scientific language is particularly useful as it allows us to formulate metaphors which bear weight in the current historical context. Therefore, it is worthwhile to take a further look at new developments in certain areas of science, and identify scientific theories which can best accelerate nihilism. It is important to note that

¹⁵⁸ GS 335, p.264

¹⁵⁹ GM Third Essay 24, p.112

as science strips the ascetic ideal of its outer shell of metaphors, moral values and judgments, institutions, and ascetic *practices*, it both reveals this ideal as nothingness and *solidifies the commitment to it*. To illustrate this subtle point, Nietzsche gives the examples of Copernicus' overthrowing of theological cosmology, and asks his readers to ponder whether this actually damaged or rather accentuated faith in the ascetic ideal. What he suggests is that, modern science is the best ally of the ascetic ideal because it both divulges it as nothingness and simultaneously makes one will this nothingness by dismissing every form and ornament that it had.¹⁶⁰ Denial of this life and of this world is the core of both the religious and the scientific, but the former had priests who built *another* world on this foundation, one which was promised to exist and accessible in the afterlife. As already mentioned, due to such inventions propagated by people like Saint-Paul, a kind of life which denied itself and the world was *given some value*; the ideal was covered and beautified by things attached to it, so much so that its foundation was forgotten. Thus the consequence of something such as the victory of Copernicus' heliocentric cosmology over the religious geocentric model, is the extinguishing of man's "faith in his dignity, uniqueness, irreplaceableness in the rank-order of beings, - he has become *animal*, literally, unqualifiedly and unreservedly an animal, man who in his earlier faiths was almost God ('child of God', 'man of God')..."¹⁶¹ The progress of science both reveals the ideal as the nothingness that it is, and leaves one with nothing else to will by devaluating everything that was hitherto attached to it. Thus, we read that:

"Everywhere else where spirit is at work in a rigorous, powerful and honest way, it now completely lacks an ideal – the popular expression for this abstinence is 'atheism' –: *except for its will to truth*. But this will, this *remnant* of an ideal, if you believe me, is that ideal itself in its strictest, most spiritual formulation,

¹⁶⁰ GM Third Essay 25, p.114-115

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p.115

completely esoteric, totally stripped of externals, and thus not so much its remnant as its *kernel*.

Unconditional, honest atheism (– *its* air alone is what we breathe, we more spiritual men of the age!) is therefore *not* opposed to the ascetic ideal as it appears to be; instead, it is only one of the ideal's last phases of development, one of its final forms and inherent logical conclusions, – it is the awe-inspiring *catastrophe* of a two-thousand-year discipline in truth-telling, which finally forbids itself the *lie entailed in the belief in God*.”¹⁶²

From our perspective, the ‘upside’ here is that this is a sure way to the absolute nihilism and complete absence of value which makes *necessary* a future revaluation of values. Therefore, Nietzsche’s denunciation of science is to be understood as his lamenting the fact that it has become largely the affair of godless Judeo-Christians who seek in it a new foundation for the morality they wish to preserve and a new path towards God which has been re-baptized “the absolute” and de-anthropomorphized to a certain extent, thus allowing these moderns to cling to it as the nearly empty concept ‘Truth.’ As such, Truth is the ethereal skeleton of God, which remains once the morality it supported and the Church institution which animated it have completely decomposed, following God’s death at the hands of modern science.¹⁶³ Physics is the branch of science which usually plays coroner and identifies the remaining Truth in its own terms, most often simply as ‘knowledge regarding the creation of the universe’ or recently more specifically as an atom that would explain the ‘origin’ of matter such as the Higgs Boson. While this turn of events is deplorable, dangerous, and most importantly futile, for it can only lead to tragic nihilism, it does not mean that science as such is to be condemned. The revaluation of values proposed by Nietzsche forbids us from believing in something which is ‘science

¹⁶² GM Third Essay 27, p.118-119

¹⁶³ GS 125 & 343, p.181-182 & 279-280

in itself,' and then judging it at the bar of Judeo-Christian morals that equates Truth and everything that leads to it with goodness and the rest with evil. Instead, we are to condemn scientific pursuit as described above for the threat it represents to life; it is a world-denying enterprise, a downward path towards nothingness, which is today mostly manifested as a desperate attempt to bring about a 'kingdom of God' on earth. At the same time, we must consider the possibility of a science that does the opposite; one which affirms life by promoting values that strengthen human beings, thus contributing to the breeding of a healthier species that *affirms* its existence and the world. One shall recall the allusion made in the previous chapter regarding Nietzsche's notion of *gai saber*; it aims to serve as the basis of a science whose capacities are harnessed and guided by different values, those of life as will to power. Such a 'gay science' means that the scientific enterprise must be redirected towards a reunion with *art*, because "art, in which *lying* sanctifies itself and the *will to deception* has good conscience on its side, is much more fundamentally opposed to the ascetic ideal than science is".¹⁶⁴

Accordingly, I should like to remind the reader that in a passage cited here earlier, Nietzsche instructed that we be well disposed towards science. As previously explained, the reason for this is that most science today is guided by the prospect of actualizing the ascetic ideal, and as such it is a steep hill for one to slide into nihilism, absolute skepticism, and a scientific community made up of "philosophers of desperate knowledge", which are elements that constitute the only soil from which "philosophers of tragic knowledge" that create new values can grow. Therefore, one should not go on a crusade against science and try to stop its progression, for that would only postpone the

¹⁶⁴ GM Third Essay 25, p.114

coming of the context under which the revaluation of values happens out of necessity. Nietzsche gives the examples of domains such as medicine or philology as being areas of science which are particularly effective at carrying us further on this path.¹⁶⁵ Nowadays, a book such as 'Incognito' written by neurologist David Eagleman can be seen to contain reiterations of ideas proposed by thinkers like Kant, Hobbes, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and others, written in scientific language and 'supported' by experiments. It is a book which seeks to rid the reader of some common beliefs concerning knowledge and the limitations of consciousness, on the account that they are untrue according to the latest observations; as such, it knowingly or unknowingly contributes to spreading and accentuating nihilism, and it stands out from other areas of science, especially technoscience, which retain strong optimism concerning the possibility of producing Truth and are very committed to the attainment of this goal. The study of the brain presented in Eagleman's book, which is not merely a piece of nihilism but also hints at alternative valuations, gives credence to Nietzsche's claim that medicine is by definition *anti-Christian*.¹⁶⁶ Eagleman seeks to familiarize his readers with the latest approach in neurology that involves getting rid of the old analogy which had us equate the brain with consciousness, thinking of it as a never changing piece of computer hardware into which information about the real world is 'stored' and kept ready for us to access and utilize to make 'free' decisions. He offers a gathering of studies and experiments which rather have us believe that our brains are merely about "gathering information and steering behavior appropriately. It doesn't matter whether consciousness is involved in the decision making. And most of the time, it's not. [...] Our brains run mostly on autopilot, and the

¹⁶⁵ AC 47, p.175

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

conscious mind has little access to the giant and mysterious factory that runs below it.”¹⁶⁷

Eagleman mentions an experiment conducted by German physiologist Johannes Peter Müller (1801-1858) which had people other than philosophers begin to doubt the belief that representations entering our consciousness by means of sensation are accurate. Müller noticed that no matter what he did to the nerve of the eye; whether he exposed it to light, applied pressure to it, or electrocuted it, the result was always a sensation of light and nothing else. From this, something occurred to him that he could and may have read in Kant’s first critique written nearly a hundred years earlier; namely that we are not aware of real things as such, but only of what the nervous system tells us is ‘out there.’¹⁶⁸

Eagleman himself in writing his book is perplexed when he must give a definition of an ‘illusion,’ for as he says, “there is a sense in which all vision is an illusion.”¹⁶⁹ This indicates that neurology as he now understands it stands at the point where science becomes self-conscious or where the pure knowledge drive becomes self-referential. The man of science swears only by empirical observation that depends on the senses and on different measurement apparatus which extends their potency. Following this procedure, he is eventually confronted with what according to his own method is ‘evidence’ that “Truth and the *belief* that something is true [are] two completely diverse worlds of interest, almost *anti-thetical* worlds- one gets to them by fundamentally different roads. To be knowledgeable in this- in the Orient that is almost enough to *constitute* a sage: thus the Brahmins understood it, thus Plato understands it, thus does every student of esoteric wisdom understand it.”¹⁷⁰ One should obviously recall here the distinction made earlier

¹⁶⁷ Eagleman, *Incognito*, p.5

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p.15

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p.23

¹⁷⁰ AC 23, p.144-145

between what I have referred to as truth and Truth. Nietzsche explicitly says that the two notions are contradictory and to be dissociated from one another. In fact, postulating the existence of an absolute Truth and entertaining the possibility that we may acquire knowledge of it means to formulate a contradictory impossibility.¹⁷¹ Nietzsche explains that

“As soon as one wishes to *know* the thing in itself, *it is precisely this world* [which one comes to know]. Knowing is only possible as a process of mirroring and measuring oneself against *one* standard (sensation).

We *know* what the world is: absolute and unconditional knowledge is the desire to know without knowledge.”¹⁷²

Whether one is a philosopher or a scientist, once one realizes the contradiction exposed above, one is forced to completely rethink one’s understanding of consciousness as to its role and why it developed as it did. Eagleman’s answer to this is one which very much distances itself from the contradiction that Truth is, and instead clearly evokes the will to power or the *value for life*. He boldly states that “consciousness developed because it was advantageous, *but advantageous only in limited amounts*.”¹⁷³ To complement this statement, he mentions the work of 19th century philosopher and psychologist Johann Friedrich Herbart who argued that ideas themselves were in permanent competition with one another for their gaining access into our awareness. Herbart believed similar ideas could form alliances, meaning that ideas rise into consciousness by being assimilated into a complex of ideas which is already present in it, and thus he “introduced a key concept: there exists a *boundary* between conscious and unconscious thoughts; we become aware

¹⁷¹ TL 1, p.86

¹⁷² P 114, p.40

¹⁷³ Eagleman, *Incognito*, p.6

of some ideas and not of others.”¹⁷⁴ Again one should here recall the activity of will to power as described by Nietzsche in which each sensation, together with its accompanying thought, is in permanent rivalry with the others and seeks to separate from or ally itself with others. The similarity between Eagleman’s descriptions of the workings of the brain in his book of science and the ‘doctrine’ of will to power laid out by Nietzsche grows further as one reads through ‘Incognito’. The neurologist calls on the work of Walt Whitman in comparing our brains to representative democracies. The metaphor is used to argue that our brains are found to be “built of multiple over-lapping experts who weigh in and compete over different choices. [...] we are large and we harbor multitudes within us. And those multitudes are locked in chronic battle.”¹⁷⁵ Such an interpretation of empirical data is an example of how science itself inevitably comes to dispel the very ideas which are tied to the pure knowledge drive that fuels it; in this case, what comes to be discarded is the idea of consciousness as a unified free will capable of causing action and imposing itself on our instincts, or in other words, our entire view as to the role and power of reason itself. Ironically, if reason, as the dynamic interconnectedness of concepts in our consciousness, were free; which is to say, capable of cutting itself from the influence of instincts, and able to consistently overpower them, then religious institutions might have not enjoyed the firm hold they tend to have on masses of people. This grip is an *emotional* one, which allowed the Church to impose a particular way of life on huge portions of humanity, thus disciplining the will of entire peoples so as to direct all their strength towards spirituality, which is in retrospect revealed as a pre-condition for the eventual scientific revolution. It is precisely because the struggle between our strong and

¹⁷⁴ Eagleman, *Incognito*, p.14

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.107

weak desires happens at the unconscious level of instincts and passions, and because the result modulates what goes on in our consciousness, that religions which are “optimized to tap into emotional networks” are so successful even when confronted to the strongest rational arguments.¹⁷⁶

Science, as the latest product of the development of consciousness and rationality, reaches the stage where it forces itself to admit that it cannot know anything of actual reality, not even itself and its own tools. Because our conscious faculty developed increasingly potent reasoning and complex means of communication, it came to determine us and was promoted to the rank of ideal. This ideal was one of a pure consciousness; a pure concept which is completely independent from perception, based on the naïve assumption that if some conceptualizing is beneficial and life-preserving for an extended period of time, an existing eternal pure concept is necessarily an ideal worth chasing after. Organized religions have attached a code to this pursuit to ensure it conserves its property of preserving and enhancing a certain type of human life, but when the authority of these clerical institutions expired, we were left with science as the pursuit of Truth, and by extension of everything else, ‘for its own sake.’ When the relentless inquisitiveness of science is forced to look at its own procedures and motivations, it finds that they fail to pass its own test of uncompromising logic and reason, and it is compelled to dismiss them. Thus begins a period of nihilism; a time when “why?” finds no answer,¹⁷⁷ when it seems that all has been, is, and will be, *in vain*. For Nietzsche, philosophy in these times is nothing less than “this ultimate, self-referential application of

¹⁷⁶ Eagleman, *Incognito*, p. 118

¹⁷⁷ WP 2, p.9

the knowledge drive.”¹⁷⁸ This amounts to philosophizing with a hammer, as the subtitle of his book ‘Twilight of the Idols’ goes; it means that philosophy becomes a tool with which to re-assess the worth of all existing concepts and judgments according to the most fundamental valuation: the value for life. Metaphors of it, such as will to power, are summoned into consciousness only when human life has decayed into the most profound state of nihilism. What I have done so far is to display the reasons for which the supreme value of Truth, and of course moral judgments regarding related notions such as consciousness, are being shattered by the philosophizing hammer of Nietzsche and others. But the pieces from these broken ideals are all we have in order to rebuild something. A return to a hypothetical pre-conscious state is neither possible nor desirable; truth as concept formation is all we have to attempt to give ourselves new goals. The same pieces must be reassembled as the commencement of a new shrine; this means one must regain innocence and experiment with new assemblies. It is not sufficient to merely have new valuations *in mind*; one must permit oneself to *be* a new direction from which Truth, knowledge, consciousness, and thinking are viewed differently; that is, from an extra-moral point of view situated ‘beyond good and evil.’

Will to Nothingness

An important conclusion can be drawn from all the deconstructive work that has been exposed here so far; it represents the resolution of an important question which must be given an answer if we are to start envisioning new values by formulating metaphors spurred from a strong will to power. Once one has grasped the apparent limits of

¹⁷⁸ Breazeale, *Philosophy and Truth*, p.xxxvi

reasoning and the contradiction in which Truth entangles us, one has essentially dismissed the entire aim for which one believed conscious reasoning has developed and was highly valued. Following this, a new question presents itself, which must be given a response in order to reach closure on the lion-esque enterprise of destruction of the old shrine, and assess what is left for us to rebuild with. The question is: How are we to understand consciousness in the aftermath of “God’s death”? What is this thing called “thinking” that we claim defines us as human beings and separates us from other animals, and what is it worth? If man is the *thinking* animal, to give thinking a *reason*, a *purpose*, a *direction*, is to give mankind those things. With this in mind, we shall proceed further in our analysis of concept formation, which is nothing less than an attempt to try to understand consciousness in the context of will to power. Nietzsche points to the need for a new vision on this matter by stating clearly that “if the morality of “thou shalt not lie” is rejected, the “sense for truth” will have to legitimize itself before another tribunal: -as a means of the preservation of man, as *will to power*.”¹⁷⁹ This means that our intellect is to be seen as a consequence of the conditions in which we, as a particular configuration of struggling quantum of force for which we use the metaphor ‘will to power’, find ourselves. We have consciousness as we do because we need it; it was developed because it was necessary for our species to keep on living.¹⁸⁰ The neuroscientist Eagleman goes in the same sense by reporting that

“You are not consciously aware of the vast majority of your brain’s ongoing activities, and nor would you want to be- it would interfere with the brain’s well-oiled processes. [...] To the extent that consciousness is useful, it is useful in small quantities, and for very particular kinds of tasks. It is easy to understand why

¹⁷⁹ WP 495, p.272

¹⁸⁰ WP 498, p.273

you would not want to be consciously aware of the intricacies of your muscle movement, but this can be less intuitive when applied to your perceptions, thoughts and beliefs, which are also final products of the activity of billions of nerve cells.”¹⁸¹

Basic observation ascertains to the fact that our best executed and most important actions, including many on which our survival depends, are *un-conscious*.¹⁸² Everyone would agree with Eagleman’s example of this, where he points to the fact that “the best way to get out of breath is to *think* about your breathing.”¹⁸³ One can also think here of athletic training which always aims to condition the body into executing certain desired actions as automatisms; that is, without the interference of conscious thoughts, so as to produce optimal results. Most of our body’s activity is kept away from our consciousness; the latter developed only from *relations* with the ‘outside’ natural world. But one should not make the error of supposing that these relations are ones of causality; Eagleman instead proposes that “the internal data is not *generated* by external sensory data but merely *modulated* by it.”¹⁸⁴ This assertion is also found in Nietzsche’s denunciation of our prejudice towards causality, by which we erroneously assign imagined causes ‘behind’ everything. This is something he brings up in many of his books, as it constitutes an essential part of his ‘doctrine’ of will to power. It is found in its clearest formulation in an aphorism written in 1888 for the envisioned ‘The Will to Power’ title, which states:

“Two successive states, the one “cause,” the other “effect”: this is false. The first has nothing to effect, the second has been effected by nothing. It is a question of a struggle between two elements of unequal power:

¹⁸¹ Eagleman, *Incognito*, p.56-57

¹⁸² WP 289, p.163

¹⁸³ Eagleman, *Incognito*, p.56 [Italics mine]

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., p.44

a new arrangement of forces is achieved according to the measure of power of each of them. The second condition is something fundamentally different from the first (not its effect): the essential thing is that the factions in struggle emerge with different quanta of power.”¹⁸⁵

Proceeding from this, I shall try to make a clear distinction between what is meant by ‘outer’ and ‘inner’ relationships. The ‘outside’ world does not cause anything; the conditions for any occurring ‘event’ are always already present in the ‘body’. The sensation is not the effect of any cause, but an occurrence in a necessary sequence of events. This ‘body’ is thought of as quantum of force, which contains many different drives that struggle with one another for domination, and each one seeks to position itself in relation to the others so as to produce the conditions under which its own will can be expressed as action. A puissant quantum of force is rich in potent instincts and thereby preserves and enhances itself forcefully; it endures and grows stronger as a result of its struggles with other competing factions of force. That is what Nietzsche recognizes as strong *vitality*; a living being that successfully imposes a cadence or a solid order on itself and others, as a process of becoming. The *modus operandi* for the creation of the conditions which constitute a ‘strong will to power’ is as follows. Each drive has the same purpose in that it seeks to discharge its strength and thus be satisfied, whether it is strong or weak. The strongest drive will be victorious in the struggle, at the expense of the weaker ones which ‘lose’ and assume a role of obedience. For the time being, the direction that any of those wills seek to enforce shall not be carried into action, as another enactment is being *imposed* on them; a hierarchy headed by the commanding drive that acts as the norm, and for which they assume a role of servitude. However, when the

¹⁸⁵ WP 633, p.337

creation of such an *order* of rank fails to happen, due to there being too many competing drives, none of which is strong enough to decisively impose itself over the others, we have a 'weak will to power.' The latter is also referred to by Nietzsche as *decaying* life, or *de-cadence*. Such a weakening quantum of force fails to carry itself out decisively and *act* over other factions, from which it follows that these other quantum seize the opportunity to expend their force and actively impose themselves, thus preserving and enhancing their strength. This is important because it allows us to understand that the other factions are not *responsible* for one's strong or weak will to power. In Eagleman's terms, it is not *caused* by exterior forces; it is rather merely modulated by its continual struggle against them. Due to constant use of language and grammar, our reflex is to postulate a completely independent thing 'outside' of the body which *causes* what we experience as resistance to our will to power. But to construct such an independent agent is *once again* the error of constructing a *thing-in-itself*; a Truth, and of adding an assumed relation of causality between us and it. To avoid this, the most we can say is that the will to power that we are, as the phenomenon life itself, is an experience of variation of force. Expenditure of force is an over-powering, a growth, an increase in potency; it expands as some strength is 'gained' at the expense of other factions in which it diminishes.

This brings us to our new understanding of consciousness. In my opinion, this is key to understanding what the revaluation of values means and how it occurs. Nietzsche's suggested answer as to the origin and purpose of consciousness is as follows. He presupposes that to begin with, the human animal's physical condition did not advantage him with any strong means of survival; therefore, he *had* to devise means of

communication so as to favor social intercourse which was essential for his survival.¹⁸⁶ In a long aphorism from 'The Gay Science', he elaborates on this theory. His claim is that the most physically disadvantaged animal needed the other members of his own kind more than any other species does. Therefore, he sustains that

*"consciousness has developed only under the pressure of the need for communication; that from the start it was needed and useful only between human beings (particularly between those who commanded and those who obeyed); and that it also developed only in proportion to the degree of this utility. Consciousness is really only a net of communication between human beings; it is only as such that it had to develop; a solitary human being who lived like a beast of prey would have not needed it."*¹⁸⁷

The importance of this passage and of the entire aphorism from which it is cited cannot be stressed enough. Nietzsche goes on to explain that in order for man to satisfy his pressing need to create cooperation by communicating his actions, thoughts, feelings, and movements, he first needed to "know" about them himself. An important allusion, which should be obvious to the reader this far into our discussion, is made specifically in the passage cited above, which categorizes human beings as strong and weak will to power. Following our inquiry into the meaning of the notion of will to power, this passage can be rightly interpreted as stating that consciousness appeared as the way by which those individuals with the strongest will to power imposed this strong will on their less endowed peers. Consciousness begins and develops out of a necessity for advanced means of communication, and is to be understood as strong will to power manifested in human form. It is the way by which a stronger individual, as the most potent quantum of

¹⁸⁶ WP 524, p.284

¹⁸⁷ GS 354, p.298

force, imposes himself on weaker ones and uses them as *successful tools* for his own survival and growth. At bottom, consciousness is the form of will to power which precedes its expressing itself as the action of communicating.

The network of concepts becomes increasingly varied and complex, as individual human beings seek to attain their full potential of domination by directly imposing the ‘will to power’ that they *are* as forcibly as possible on the highest number of their weaker peers, and thus also indirectly on the general complex of other perceived competing factions called ‘nature.’ Consciousness grows in human beings seeking to conquer numerous dangers as they present themselves, thereby further assuring the preservation and enhancement of their strong vitality by increasingly forceful expenditure of accumulated strength. The creation of ever more signs of language is required to progressively cement and increase power. Given this new evolution, it is inevitable that “the human being inventing signs is at the same time the human being who becomes ever more keenly conscious of himself.”¹⁸⁸ This calls our attention back to consciousness as an ‘internal’ activity and its repercussions as such. I have already introduced this subject to some extent, in my discussion of Schopenhauer contained in the first chapter. I invite the reader to recall from there the notion by which concepts are abbreviated perceptions. The claim was that in thinking, much of what has been perceived by the senses is dismissed, and what is kept is what we become conscious of as a concept; I had also explained how for Nietzsche, these word-concepts that compose language *are* meaning as such, and are to be seen as the final link in a long chain of unconscious metaphor creation. We now add to this the suggestion that the parts of these perceptions for which the metaphors we call

¹⁸⁸ GS 354, p.298

concepts are summoned into consciousness, are selected only according to whether there is a *need* for them to be ‘known’ so that they may be communicated. From this, it follows that, by conceptualizing our perceptions and actions, we *deny* them. In Nietzsche’s words, we read that fundamentally they are

“altogether incomparably personal, unique, and infinitely individual; there is no doubt of that. But as soon as we translate them into consciousness *they no longer seem to be*. [...] whatever becomes conscious *becomes* by the same token shallow, thin, relatively stupid, general, sign, herd signal; all becoming conscious involves a great and thorough corruption, falsification, reduction to superficialities, and generalization.”¹⁸⁹

Eventually, man becomes so accustomed to functioning with consciousness, that his principal activity is to engage in creating means of communication, and thus he distances himself from the early stages of its development and the conditions by which it came into being. As a consequence of this, he commits tremendous blunders; he overestimates this new faculty, and as more of his feelings are denied into becoming concepts, he transforms consciousness into a unity. He views this unity as that which *causes* actions, and he elevates it to the rank of highest possible state of being envisioned as “God” or Truth.¹⁹⁰ I’ve already covered the devastating consequences of this oversight in previous sections. As precedently mentionned, the resulting perspective is one in which modernity is understood as the beginning of the end of this course headed for absolute nihilism; we shall see how in this transitional period, consciousness reveals itself as a *will to nothingness*.

¹⁸⁹ GS 354, p.300

¹⁹⁰ WP 529, p.285-286

Only from where we stand are we able to make the statement above. Before being so far on our path of conceptualization that we fathom the nihilism to which the quest for an ideal world of consciousness unavoidably brings us, part of us remains preoccupied with whatever remains that can be made into concept and used to further increase our domination of the 'outside' world. Absolute nihilism is achieved when there are no perceptions which haven't been generalized, falsified, and denied into concepts; when all the 'outer' has *been given* a will (*commanded* into a direction by our will to power expressed by way of consciousness) and rationalized into the 'inner.' The only point at which we begin to grasp the limit of conscious thinking is when we are close to reaching it. Occasionally, some specimens attain this pinnacle of consciousness and find themselves with nothing left to rationalize out of existence but the *very ideal of Truth itself*. Up to that point, consciousness retains some value as the release of the will to power that we are, imposing itself on that which is not yet under our domination. Nietzsche traces the origin of this inverted perspective back to Plato, who he sees as the perpetrator of the most astonishing rebaptisms:

"Plato measured the degree of reality by the degree of value and said: The more "Idea," the more being. He reversed the concept "reality" and said: "What you take for real is an error, and the nearer we approach the 'Idea,' the nearer we approach 'truth.'" - Is this understood? [...] Plato, as the artist he was, preferred appearance to being! lie and invention to truth! the unreal to the actual! But he was so convinced of the value of appearance that he gave it the attributes "being," "causality" and "goodness," and "truth," in short everything men value."¹⁹¹

¹⁹¹ WP 572, p.308

The core of Nietzsche's revaluation of values, or the germ of it, which may only grow when planted in the soil of perfect nihilism, begins with the revaluation of the faculty named 'consciousness', which has rendered itself and life as such completely valueless. It comes out redefined as progressive generalization inevitably leading to the eventual envisioning of a unity, and is thus seen as the chase for something contrary to all life, considering that life *is* will to power, and therefore *plurality*, perspective, interpretation, and struggle between varying quanta of force. In order to become a "philosopher of tragic knowledge" capable of bestowing this new valuation, Nietzsche had to overcome the most radical nihilism, which he describes as "the conviction of an absolute untenability of existence when it comes to the highest values one recognizes; plus the realization that we lack the least right to posit a beyond or an in-itself of things that might be "divine" or morality incarnate."¹⁹² The individual in this most extreme state of nihilism experiences consciousness as *will to nothingness* which, insofar that it is a *will*, is still will to power and subsists as a *type* of life for which everything including its own existence appears valueless, but "it prefers to will *nothingness* rather than *not* will."¹⁹³

The citation above is an often quoted one from the Nietzsche's 'Genealogy of Morals'. Allow me to explain how the content of that book fits in to our current discussion. The reader should keep in mind that the ideas Nietzsche presents there are complemented by the aphorisms found in his often published together books 'Twilight of the Idols' and 'The Anti-Christ' made public a year later. So far, our discussion of consciousness and how it came into being has been pertaining to the human species in

¹⁹² WP 3, p.9

¹⁹³ GM Third Essay 1, p.68

general. But Nietzsche did go further and tried to identify the specific type of individuals to which the tremendous growth of consciousness way beyond the measure in which it is beneficial, can be attributed. To do this, he relied on his great understanding of human psychology which is exhibited throughout his entire corpus, and is most extensively displayed in the works mentioned above.¹⁹⁴ Nietzsche presents us with a conflict which pits those in which *life* is decadent versus those in which *humanity* is less developed; insofar that humanity is gauged by one's level of commitment to 'the four great errors', the compilation of which almost completely describes the mechanism of consciousness. An entire section of 'Twilight of the Idols' is dedicated to these errors, which constitutes an expansion of a particular aphorism found in 'The Gay Science' where they are enumerated as follows:

"Man has been educated by his errors. First, he always saw himself only incompletely; second, he endowed himself with fictitious attributes; third, he placed himself in a false order of rank in relation to animals and nature; fourth, he invented ever new tables of goods and always accepted them for a time as eternal and unconditional."¹⁹⁵

One should now recall the sort of human beings to which we have attributed the apparition of consciousness in our previous discussion. The starting supposition there was that, at a certain point in time, the condition of human animals deteriorated, leading them to a stage where their entire species was in danger of disappearing, due to their anatomy's being ill equipped to permit them to survive and profit from contests of brute force

¹⁹⁴ What follows is based on the entire content found in the 'Genealogy of Morals' and 'Twilight of the Idols' & 'The Anti-Christ'; this is merely a brief interpretation of the original ideas found there, presented so as to be relevant here.

¹⁹⁵ GS 115, p.174

prevalent in the natural world. We've seen how Nietzsche postulates that it is out of this *need* for the preservation and enhancement of the will to power that they *are*, that consciousness developed as a means by which they may release their strength and command their weaker peers into serving as tools for overcoming the threats posed by the 'outer world.' These particular individuals we may think of as *masters*, and those who obey them and act as their successful means are essentially *slaves*. The master's need develops consciousness as will to power so that it may overpower that of the slave, which is already weaker, and thus grant him his victory on elements of nature which imperil his life.¹⁹⁶ The degree of evolution of consciousness is, as we've been admonished by both Eagleman and Nietzsche, always proportionate to the need for it; no more and no less. What then of the slave? While his constitution may be weaker, he *is* still will to power, and as such he too seeks to will its will or to *command*; as Nietzsche says, "these weaklings- in fact *they*, too, want to be the powerful one day, this is beyond doubt".¹⁹⁷ But what the slave must overcome is considerably stronger than what the master had to conquer. Again, consciousness develops accordingly and so, while at the departing line the master enjoys a head start due to his stronger pre-disposition, the new expression of will to power known as consciousness comes to be far greater in the slave. As for the passions and instincts which operate 'behind' the conscious partition of will to power, the master's are arranged in the form of a strong hierarchy that imposes an order of rank modeled after that of pre-conscious states which once successfully granted survival, the

¹⁹⁶ Of course, he can already *physically* overpower weaker human animals and threaten, beat, or kill them. But as one would imagine, the spoils of this by itself are much less than those gained when it is coupled with will to power as communication which grants the ability to give complex *orders* and exercise psychological coercion. I suppose what Nietzsche means is that this was the edge missing, which it was necessary for the powerful to acquire in order to keep on living; the physical superiority was no longer sufficient.

¹⁹⁷ GM First Essay 15, p.29

latest being the one out of which consciousness itself appeared. Emanating from this unconscious structure, his “chivalric-aristocratic value judgments are based on powerful physicality, a blossoming, rich, even effervescent good health that includes the things needed to maintain it, war, adventure, hunting, dancing, jousting and everything else that contains strong, free, happy action.”¹⁹⁸ When consciousness, as the newly formed expression of will to power, exercises its latest feature of being able to *command* other human beings, the master’s constitution simply grows in power, whereas the slave’s composition is *changed* as a result of his losing this struggle with a stronger faction. His drives must now *obey* and none of them ever gets to assume a *commanding* role and increase its power; they are thus atrophied and he, as will to power, grows progressively weaker, consequently reducing the amount of force which is necessary for the master to expend in order to maintain his authority. What this literally means is that, as a result of this new relationship between different individuals of the human species, those who are ‘masters’ become relatively less imaginative over time, while the faculty of consciousness by which one can potentially better ‘know’ himself and the world is growing in those that are ‘slaves.’ Obviously, as a consequence of his obsession with the realm of the mind and of his condition of slavery, the slave’s physical weakness also increases with time. Accompanying an increase in mental agility, the one instinct in him that grows in power is *envy*, which is permanently nourished by the suffering the slave endures, given the position he finds himself in. In such circumstances, the impressive development of his consciousness rests on a single powerful drive: the desire for *revenge*.¹⁹⁹ Endowed with such cognitive capacities and an envious hatred of the masters,

¹⁹⁸ GM First Essay 7, p.17

¹⁹⁹ GM First Essay 10, p.20-22

the slaves who are in permanent contact with their oppressors come to know their ways, their values, and their weakness. From this occurs the first revaluation of values, perpetrated by the Jews, which Nietzsche exhaustively describes in many of his works including of course the 'Genealogy of Morals.'²⁰⁰ The slaves' complex network of concepts attributes the master's weakness to the latter's strong instincts, of which the former only knows the negative feelings of constraint, pressure, and pain. He puts value only in that which *he* has that allows him to grow more powerful in his own way; he values only consciousness and labels as *evil* everything he 'knows' the master *is* or holds high.

The slaves who accomplish these sorts of revaluations are those that, in addition to having qualities found in most of their peers, such as a relatively vast mind and developed cleverness, are also the most creative and educated among their kind. This constitutes a new caste, the priestly one, of which Nietzsche's favorite example is Saint-Paul, a character he thoroughly analyzes in 'The Anti-Christ', and which is described there as possessing all the features above as well as an embodied strong hatred and '*ressentiment*.'²⁰¹ As touched upon earlier in a short passage concerning founders of religions, Saint-Paul knew how to recognize those he could *command* and use in order to acquire power over the masters. In his persona, two great foundations of 'slave moralities' are reunited, being that he was firstly a Jew, and secondly someone knowledgeable in Greek philosophy and tragic poetry, the former being at the time dominated by various forms of Platonism, including the very influential Stoicism. He

²⁰⁰ GM First Essay 7, p.17

²⁰¹ AC 42-43, p.166-169

used his higher intelligence to beautify the story of a Jew named Jesus of Nazareth, and thus created a movement by which slave values would spread to the oppressed masses of the Roman Empire waiting to affirm themselves, thus uniting them so he could lead them against the masters.²⁰² Revolt is inevitable once the masses combine behind their highly intelligent leader, who delivers to them an eloquent collection of ideas that shines ‘divine’ value on their existence, and who presents that as the highest achievement of that which they value the most: the conscious mind *in itself*, raised to the status of sole true God. Being that they are mobilized in such manner, and that the number of slaves is much greater than that of masters, thus compensating for their being considerably weaker physically, they finally come to be substantially superior to their masters and obtain some form of actual revenge over them. In the case of the Jewish slaves led by Moses, the revolt merely granted them their freedom, but the heirs to this Jewish revaluation are the Christians.²⁰³ They are the ones who achieve the greatest victory which has determined humanity for two thousand years and from which we still ‘suffer’ today; that is the triumph of Christianity over the Roman Empire.²⁰⁴

Praise and pursuit of consciousness and cleverness as the highest goods is a specific trait of the slave, being that those are the principal conditions of his existence, and their value is translated into an intelligible moral code which “says ‘no’ on principle to everything that is ‘outside’, ‘other’, ‘non-self’: and *this* ‘no’ is its creative deed.”²⁰⁵ By virtue of such a morality, happiness is separated from action and instead associated with

²⁰² AC 42, p.167

²⁰³ GM First Essay 7, p.17

²⁰⁴ GM First Essay 16, p.31-33

²⁰⁵ GM First Essay 10, p.20

“rest, peace, ‘Sabbath’, relaxation of the mind and stretching of the limbs, in short as something *passive*.”²⁰⁶ Obviously, the opposite is true in the noble values of the masters, who knew that being *active* is inseparable from being happy, and for whom a high degree of consciousness and cleverness was “nowhere near as important as the complete certainty of function of the governing *unconscious* instincts”.²⁰⁷ But this enmity towards the ‘outer’ world and everything in it is not the sole consequence of the slave’s will to power being constantly “denied the proper response of *action*”.²⁰⁸ He also becomes infected with a disease which remains even after the actual revolt and triumph over the masters is accomplished; this is because “all instincts which are not discharged outwardly *turn inwards*.”²⁰⁹ Masses of slaves have been taught to be ashamed of all their instincts, thanks to the sermonizing of priests filled with envy and desire for revenge.²¹⁰ Following the successful revolt over the master type, all men live under the oppressive narrowness of priestly customs; they are ‘tamed’ human beings whose instincts continue to be denied, this time by virtue of their commitment to their own slave morality. The ‘master type’, as external enemy, is lacking, and so is any other ‘outer’ obstacle against which the will would externalize itself even if it were allowed to. In this world ‘purified’ by clergy, the fight is then *internalized* as one now wants to purify himself; man turns against the human animal as such and declares war on all instincts. Nietzsche’s term for this is ‘bad conscience.’²¹¹ This is not to say that the master types do not feel *ressentiment*; they certainly do, but “it is consumed and exhausted in an immediate reaction, and therefore it

²⁰⁶ Ibid., p.21

²⁰⁷ Ibid., p.21

²⁰⁸ Ibid., p.20

²⁰⁹ GM Second Essay 16, p.57

²¹⁰ GM Second Essay 7, p.43

²¹¹ GM Second Essay 16, p.57

does not *poison*”²¹² and infect with the same disease. In a world where Christianity and its slave morality has achieved victory, the priestly values sit at the top of human society; it calls itself advanced *civilization*, where all men are ‘tamed’, where no life seeks to expand, where everything and everyone is “getting thinner, better-natured, cleverer, more comfortable, more mediocre, more indifferent, more Chinese, more Christian”.²¹³

Tremendous amounts of blood are spilled and sacrifices made so as to preserve, maintain, and reinforce the conditions in which man can grow to become so clever and inquisitive that he eventually realizes where the path he is following inevitably leads him. Nihilism occurs when man’s consciousness expands so far as to perceive its limits, and he is thus faced with a contradiction; one now sees that by successfully removing all that is dangerous, unconscious and unpredictable, all that causes fear and suffering, all the instincts and passions from the world and himself, he also gets rid of any reason to love, respect, admire, or *affirm* life at all. In such conditions, and insofar that he cannot ‘not will,’ given that life itself is will to power, he wills that which has been hidden behind the yearning to unite with God for all this time; his will to power is a *will to nothingness*.

This is what brings Nietzsche to say that “ultimately the growth of consciousness becomes a danger; and anyone who lives among the most conscious Europeans even knows that it is a disease.”²¹⁴

²¹² GM First Essay 10, p.22

²¹³ GM Second Essay 12, p.25

²¹⁴ GS 354, p.300

Free Will & Modern Efficiency

The revaluation of consciousness as described above has tremendous consequences on many other notions which rest entirely on the belief that conscious reasoning grants access to an independent ‘realm of ideas’ which take us closer to Truth as ‘goodness itself.’ Before I conclude this second chapter, I would like to explore the repercussions of reassessing the value of consciousness as it has been done here, starting with the implications concerning the notion of ‘free will’ and the related issue of *responsibility*. The subject has already been briefly introduced in my earlier description of the structure of will to power, where I have explained how we come to associate ourselves entirely with the conscious “I” and isolate it as the commanding party to which we attribute the ‘cause’ of our actions. Because most of the activity of the will to power that we call our ‘body’ is kept away from consciousness, and because the realm of conscious thinking has been directed towards Truth for millennia, we have grown highly accustomed to think of our conscious ego as something separate from other parts of us, which can ‘make its own decisions’ and seek to impose its rational will on that of our feelings, desires, and passions. This notion can be traced back as far as in Plato’s Republic where the soul is described as having three separate parts, one of which is rational and therefore ought to rule the other two baser ones. Some might argue that Plato’s view was far more subtle than what is briefly described here, and they might be correct, but our main concern in this instance is that the Platonic outlook was vulgarized and distorted as it was mixed with Jewish interpretations of the world and thus became the Christian religion. Consciousness was then understood as the center of ‘free will’ and

portrayed as the soul itself which is at odds with the ‘evil’ temptations of instincts and desires that pressure one’s will towards sinning. Nietzsche is very clear as to the motives of those who came up with such a notion:

“The whole of the old-style psychology, the psychology of will, has as its precondition the desire of its authors, the priests at the head of the ancient communities, to create for themselves a *right* to order punishments – or their desire to create for God a right to do so... Men were thought of as ‘free’ so that they could become *guilty*: consequently, every action *had* to be thought of as willed, the origin of every action as lying in the consciousness (- whereby the most *fundamental* falsification *in psychologicis* was made into the very principle of psychology)...”²¹⁵

This making men accountable was absolutely necessary for the first revaluation of values, that of the slaves, to be successful. It is no coincidence that it originated among those weaker types, in which the network of concepts, or *language*, was most developed and relied upon more than anything else. This notion of free will rests on the error of dividing every action into subject and object, which we are seduced into perpetrating by our rules of logic and grammar. By posing a subject ‘in itself’ behind every deed, we are led to suppose that since the action is separate from its ‘doer’, the latter *could have acted another way*. We commit the error of believing that strong will to power is *free* to be weak, and the obeying factions are thus capable of holding the commanding one *responsible* for being in its leading position.²¹⁶ Responsibility is equally attributed to the weaker parties for the position they are in, and so their state is no longer seen as something inevitable due to their inherent weakness, but instead becomes “a voluntary

²¹⁵ TI The Four Great Errors 7, p.64

²¹⁶ GM First Essay 13, p.26

achievement, something wanted, chosen, a *deed*, an *accomplishment*.”²¹⁷ Not only does it allow the slaves to accuse the masters of being *guilty* of their strength and oppressive ways, but it also sanctifies the position of weakness and submission, and makes it far more bearable, by making of it an *achievement*. Thus the reversal of values begins from these ‘lies’, and all that which constitutes the slave, such as impotence, timid baseness, submission to the hated masters, cowardice and delaying action, or being incapable of taking revenge, are turned into acts of ‘free will’ and thus become goodness, humility, obedience to God, patience, and forgiveness or ‘love of one’s enemies.’²¹⁸

Furthermore, under the rule of aristocratic ‘master’ values present in ‘pre-moral’ times, the value of an action was judged according to its consequence. The strong and noble considers the action ‘good’ if it is a *successful* discharge of force and imposition of his ‘will’ over other factions, granting him an increase in strength. So that we may understand how this came to change, we first ought to recall our earlier acknowledgement that the need for the production of means of advanced language, initiated by masters but quickly growing more prevalent in their weaker subordinates, also constitutes the first attempt at *self-knowledge*. Therefore the fast spreading slave values, whose eventual victory marks the beginning of a ‘moral’ period, want that actions become judged according to their *intention* which is now ‘known.’ Instead of the consequence situated in the ‘outer’ world that the slave denies, the intention located in the realm of consciousness, most valued by the slave, is now used to determine the worthiness of a deed. Again, because the weakest factions are almost constantly denied response through

²¹⁷ Ibid., p.27

²¹⁸ GM First Essay 14, p.27-28

action and are thus *inconsequential*, will to power turns inwards and, given the absence of ‘outer’ consequences that require deeds, uses a *concept* (something ‘inner’) to determine value. The slave applies this morality of intention primarily to the actions of the master, which bear the gravest consequences, and then also to his own passive condition of oppression which he rationalizes into deeds, as described above. The slave comes to ‘know’ that the master judges actions according to their consequences, and his general ‘no’ to all aspects of the master, including this one, is his creative base for the ‘yes’ that he attributes to himself. Therefore, he looks at the *opposite* of consequence in order to evaluate a deed; namely, the *origin* of it rather than the ‘result.’ Given that the slave values eventually achieve victory, we see that “the intention as the whole origin and prehistory of an action- almost to the present day this prejudice dominated moral praise, blame, judgment, and philosophy on earth.”²¹⁹

Nietzsche means something entirely different when he speaks of freedom of will under the value of will to power. For him the ‘free’ or ‘unfree’ will as it is understood by the slave’s morality of intention “is mythology; in real life it is only a matter of *strong* and *weak* wills.”²²⁰ Thus, we are permitted to speak of a ‘free’ will when it is a strong will capable of carrying itself out as action. The weak will on the other hand is ‘unfree’ because its weakness restricts it from the possibility of action, and it is compelled to serve as the useful tool of stronger factions. Again, neurologist David Eagleman’s view has something of this, as he suggests that science is completely incapable of finding room for a ‘free will’ in the machine of neural activity. There is no physical gap in the current

²¹⁹ BGE 32, p.44

²²⁰ BGE 21, p.29

understanding of science which allows us to incorporate a ‘ghost’ of free will as a nonphysical entity that interacts with the vastly complex interconnected network of the brain.²²¹ The example utilized by Eagleman is strikingly similar to the one used by Nietzsche when discussing the will in ‘Beyond Good and Evil’s aphorism 19. I direct the reader to the passage from that section quoted here earlier, in which Nietzsche referred to a muscular sensation that begins its action as soon as we ‘will’ anything, before we actually put limbs into motion. Eagleman mentions scientist Benjamin Libet who performed an experiment designed to ‘verify’ such a claim in the 1960s. He simply asked subjects to move their finger whenever they wanted, while at the same time watching a high-resolution timer and noting the precise moment at which they felt like moving. Thanks to electrodes attached to their brains, Libet observed a rise in cerebral activity related to the motion, which began an entire second *before* subjects felt the urge to move. This means that “parts of the brain were making decisions well before the person consciously experienced the urge. [...] it seems that our brains crank away behind the scenes- developing neural coalitions, planning actions, voting on plans- before we receive the news that we’ve just had the great idea to lift a finger.”²²² Scientific experiments such as these contribute to the revaluation of values by depreciating the idea that an action must be judged according to what precedes it in consciousness. However, one should be prudent not to get carried away into interpreting this as the call for a ‘return’ to pre-moral times and ‘value according to consequence.’ Once again, ‘free spirits’ understand the limitations of consciousness and the problem of Truth as presented by Nietzsche, and therefore know that both the origin of the action and the consequences of it are

²²¹ Eagleman, *Incognito*, p.166-167

²²² *Ibid.*, p.167

impossible to know. Therefore, his proposition is that we may perhaps try to judge deeds according to their *physiological* value; we ought to consider whether an action is the expression of a strong or weak will to power; whether it is commanding or obeying; “whether it is the expression of a complete or an inhibited life”.²²³

The revaluation of values here means an extra-moral outlook where the value of actions is judged precisely by what is *unintentional* about them. Intention shall be seen as a mere sign or symptom which is almost meaningless until it is interpreted using measures of strength and vitality. Such a task is nothing less than the overcoming, and even self-overcoming, of morality.²²⁴ Again, Eagleman goes in the same sense by elaborating on one of the most admirable conclusions that his book has to offer; one that is rarely openly endorsed even today. After presenting the scientific case for the untenability of the notion of ‘free will’, he claims that blameworthiness or culpability is the wrong questions to ask. Instead, he suggests that our judicial courts should simply always assume that criminals could have not acted otherwise, and ask themselves what to do with such individuals *moving forward*. According to him, the legal system should be a forward-looking one that concerns itself not with whether or not to attribute blame and punish *the past*, but instead try to evaluate the criminal and penalize him with a customized sentence designed considering implications on the betterment of mankind in the future.²²⁵ I am aware that this view may not be entirely consistent with Nietzsche’s persuasion; for example he would perhaps dispute the use of scientific ‘facts’ to evaluate those prosecuted, or disagree with Eagleman as to what is best for them and the species,

²²³ WP 291, p.164

²²⁴ BGE 32, p.44-45

²²⁵ Eagleman, *Incognito*, p.174-180

but the basic insight regarding free will with which we are preoccupied at the moment seems to be shared by both thinkers. To ask whether one could have acted otherwise is a habit we ought to get rid of, and instead interpret the intention and the action as the sign of a strong or a declining life. An order of rank must be established between individuals endowed with 'weak will to power' incapable of commanding 'themselves' and others, and those who possess 'strong will to power', and judgments pronounced accordingly. The slavish Christian morality of intention stands or falls with the belief in God;²²⁶ thus, it is increasingly untenable in these times of the "death of God." Therefore, it is above all the ambient denial of God which brings us closer to the end of this moral period and the belief in notions which define it, such as free will and resulting guilt. As Nietzsche says, "we deny God; in denying God, we deny accountability: only by doing *that* do we redeem the world.-"²²⁷ In this sense, atheism is a sort of 'second innocence;' in denying God humanity liberates itself from its feeling of being indebted towards God as its 'first cause', and as such atheism is not an end but a *beginning*.²²⁸

Secondly, I would like to address that which in the current day is perhaps the fastest growing and most virulent modern manifestation of the ascetic ideal, and that is the value of *efficiency* propagated by means of *technology*. I permit myself to define efficiency here in a way that fits the context of our discussion. Let us then say that, as the 'slave' is denied action and forced into obedience, the equation he adopts is one that equates action (performed by the master) with suffering (experienced by the slave). In this position, the slave only perceives the *negative* effects of action; he experiences

²²⁶ TI Expeditions of an Untimely Man 5, p.80-81

²²⁷ TI The Four Great Errors 8, p.65

²²⁸ GM Second Essay 20, p.61-62

suffering which for him has *no meaning*. As previously discussed, this is what forces him to *invent* meaning; to create values for himself which are entirely based on his strong instinct for *revenge*. The conclusion of Nietzsche's 'Genealogy of Morals' delivers an answer to the question asked throughout the entire book: what is the meaning of ascetic ideals? His response is that they reveal man's main problem is not with suffering as such, but with *meaningless* suffering; the human being can bare tremendous suffering but it always needs an aim, even if that aim is nothingness. With the slave revolt achieved, the priests and their institutions, as the strongest manifestations of this will to nothingness, rise to power and regulate the lives and actions of weak-willed believers. The priest does not combat the source of suffering itself, but only acts to appease suffering and discomfort when they come up; in order for his role of alleviator of suffering to remain necessary, he needs to maintain or even increase the present amount of suffering.²²⁹ Therefore, ascetic practices commanded by the church purposely transfigure existing suffering into a pain which priests alone can appease, thereby rendering clergymen indispensable as 'saviors' of those who believe. With the coming of modern science, these methods are not only revealed as concealed traps but are also discarded due to their being *inefficient*. By overthrowing the clergy, science liberates will to nothingness from its containment in the clerical structure, and demands *efficiency*; it seeks to wage war on the 'cause' of suffering. However, it maintains belief in the ascetic ideal and remains convinced that the instincts are this cause. Its task is to shine the light of reason and understanding on all masterful expenditure of tremendous force in which conscience is absent or has very little presence, repudiated for being the source of all great suffering. The impulse to make everything consume less and eliminate risk, that everything should

²²⁹ GM Third Essay 17, p.95-96

demand the least possible effort to produce the *intended* result (emphasis on *intention*), that everything should proceed strictly from consciousness and logic, that ‘nature’ ought to be fixed by our complete removal of suffering from it to make it ‘fair’; that is how I believe we ought to understand the modern value of *efficiency*, given the context of our discussion. It is merely the unbridled, completely purposeless, strongest manifestation of the will to nothingness. Nothingness is willed not in opposition to some master noble class, and not under the instruction of a moral code promoted by some clerical caste that seeks to maintain its authority over the weak and the sick, but simply because there is nothing else to will; the entire world has been rendered valueless by the growth of consciousness and reason. The instinct of revenge is now free and stronger than ever from its victories over many opponents; by use of overgrown consciousness it has denied everything into ‘concepts’, and its arrogant gaze is now fixated on all that remains: life itself. The predominant sentiment is that a world from which Truth or ‘God’ has been removed is not one worth living in. Nietzsche qualifies this modern existence as

“nothing but *hubris* and godlessness, in so far as it is strength and awareness of strength rather than weakness: [...] *Hubris* today characterizes our whole attitude towards nature, our rape of nature with the help of machines and the completely unscrupulous inventiveness of technicians and engineers; *hubris* characterizes our attitude towards God, or rather to some alleged spider of purpose and ethics lurking behind the great spider’s web of causality [...]; *hubris* characterizes our attitude towards *ourselves*, - for we experiment on ourselves in a way we would never allow on animals, we merrily vivisect our souls out of curiosity: that is how much we care about the ‘salvation’ of the soul!”²³⁰

²³⁰ GM Third Essay 9, p.82

Understood as will to power, life itself is all about self-enhancement, enforcement of hierarchy and order of rank, 'Yes' and 'No', and discharge of strength or *deeds*. Suffering is therefore inseparable from life, as the relations of commanding and obeying between competing quanta of force are translated into the sensations we know as 'pain' and 'pleasure.' Any enhancement is always created by a discipline of suffering; of *great* suffering. The war modernity wages against suffering is therefore the very same war that will to nothingness wages against life as such.²³¹ Whenever suffering is higher and worse than ever, it is the sign of a stronger type of life seeking preservation and further improvement; conversely, times of peace, comfort, contentment, and *status quo* are the sign of decadence, decaying life, exhaustion and loss of vitality. One may observe this both in the 'outer' world, as the sacrifice in blood and human lives involved with the construction of any strong enduring monuments or empires, and 'internally' as the amount of suffering and pain associated with any self-improvement or self-overcoming that eventually brings great pleasure; indeed, even philosophy as the seeking for knowledge has been "a desire to hurt the basic will of the spirit which unceasingly strives for the apparent and superficial- in all desire to know there is a drop of cruelty."²³² Every man who has suffered profoundly has the strong conviction that because of this he knows something which no one else knows; that he is so much more clever and wise thanks to once being 'at home' in the most terrifying worlds of suffering.²³³

Even in this time of nihilism, we may still find relatively stronger and weaker natures or compositions. We must thus distinguish between active and passive nihilism.

²³¹ BGE 225, p.153-154

²³² BGE 229, p.159

²³³ BGE 270, p.220

Perhaps the passive form is the most prominent, as a weak will that no longer attacks, as Buddhism, exhaustion; a spirit which disintegrates as previous goals and values are no longer believed in, “-and whatever refreshes, heals, calms, numbs emerges into the foreground in various disguises, religious or moral, or political, or aesthetic, etc.”²³⁴ But there is also active nihilism, *enacted* by those who still have strength remaining even after having triumphed over all previous goals and values; such a nihilist “reaches its maximum of relative strength as a violent force of destruction- [...] these do not find it possible to stop with the No of “judgment”: their nature demands the No of the deed.”²³⁵ The most common of such deeds today is the active exporting, or the spilling over, of will to nothingness into the ‘outer’ world by means of *technology*. It is the principal weapon in the war waged by the modern nihilist against the valueless world and all the suffering he sees in it. Many such individuals are relatively subtle and hard to identify, but the strongest nihilists, such as praised scientist and inventor Ray Kurzweil, clearly stand out to whoever has an eye for spotting them. Kurzweil should not be mistaken with the scientist who has grasped the limits of knowledge and has resigned to becoming a “philosopher of desperate knowledge” as described near the end of my first chapter. He opens his best-selling book ‘The Singularity Is Near’ by stating his commitment to two ideas which we have here considered to be fundamental errors. First, he shares his conviction that an idea in itself can triumph over absolutely everything, and that we ought to find such ideas and implement them in the ‘real world’ so as to solve any and all problems.²³⁶ Secondly, he expresses his belief that we can understand our own

²³⁴ WP 23, p.18

²³⁵ WP 23-24, p.18

²³⁶ Kurzweil, *The Singularity is Near*, p.2

intelligence, and then revise and expand it too.²³⁷ Based on these two assumptions, the well respected scientist, to which many in the field look for predictions regarding future innovations, goes on to argue that an event of massive importance is to come in the following decades. His claim is that in a relatively short period of time, technology will be able to encompass all human knowledge, abilities to solve problems and recognize patterns, and even *emotional* and *moral* intelligence.²³⁸ His name for this event is the ‘Singularity,’ and he promises that it

“will allow us to transcend these limitations of our biological bodies and brains. We will gain power over our fates. Our mortality will be in our hands. We will be able to live as long as we want (a subtly different statement from saying we will live forever). We will fully understand human thinking and will vastly extend and expand its reach. [...] [It] will represent the culmination of the merger of our biological thinking and existence with our technology, resulting in a world that is still human but that transcends our biological roots.”²³⁹

This type of discourse is suspiciously similar to that of a priest promising future access to a ‘kingdom of heaven.’ The last sentence in that particular citation reveals that Kurzweil unequivocally equates ‘human’ exclusively with consciousness and openly seeks to rid us of the biological as we have it. Interestingly, the explicit definition of ‘human’ that he provides happens to be somewhat reminiscent of our understanding of the will. He says that “ours is the species that inherently seeks to extend its physical and mental reach beyond current limitations.”²⁴⁰ However, given his eager apprehension of the Singularity,

²³⁷ Ibid., p.4

²³⁸ Ibid., p.8

²³⁹ Ibid., p.9

²⁴⁰ Kurzweil, *The Singularity is Near*, p.9

we can only read in this a will to *nothingness* which seeks to expand the disease of overgrown consciousness and extend its reach in the ‘outer’ world by means of materialized concepts or ‘technology.’ His wish is for us to infuse the rest of the universe with our creativity and intelligence, thus transforming ‘dumb’ matter and mechanisms of the universe into exquisitely sublime forms of intelligence; this to him is the ultimate destiny of the entire universe.²⁴¹ These beliefs are derived entirely from his unwavering faith in the exponential growth of information technology, out of which he expects the creation of an artificial intelligence superior to ours, which would be the last step leading to an ‘intelligence explosion.’ He then imagines that his ultra-intelligent machine would be able to create other machines superior to itself, thus accelerating evolution and solving problems at a pace that would be swiftly abrupt and impossible for biological brains to keep up with. Kurzweil states that this would leave us no choice but to physically combine with the technology which would outperform us and recognize facts or process data much faster and in bigger quantity than we can. The instinct of revenge on the ‘real world’ and its natural conditions is only thinly veiled as the discussion comes to address nanobots, which Kurzweil envisions as machines so tiny that they can alter the constitution of matter at a molecular level, and thus act upon blood or nerve cells. He looks forward to the day when such machines will “interact with biological neurons to vastly extend human experience by creating virtual reality from within the nervous system. [...] Nanobots called foglets that can manipulate image and sound waves will bring the morphing qualities of virtual reality to the real world.”²⁴² Contempt of the human body is also blatant, as he mentions that in this virtual reality, everyone gets to be

²⁴¹ Ibid., p.21

²⁴² Kurzweil, *The Singularity is Near*, p.28

a different person both physically and emotionally; for example romantic partners will supposedly be able to select any kind of body that they wish for their lovers to have, and the other way around.²⁴³ The first thirty pages of Kurzweil's book constitute a summary of his entire work, and it is followed by the actual science which is supposed to demonstrate that his claims are valid and attainable in the near future. This summary is concluded by yet another revealing statement as to what Kurzweil's project is really about. He states that even given all that, "our civilization will remain human- indeed, *in many ways it will be more exemplary of what we regard as human than it is today*, although our understanding of the term will move *beyond its biological origins*."²⁴⁴

Besides the obvious active nihilism, which rests on an assumed disdain of nature and 'body,' and a desire for revenge that we may suppose were the main forces behind the writing of such a book, something else is noteworthy here. In Kurzweil's view, this fantasized world of pure human intellect contained in technology culminates in the entire universe being saturated with our intelligence. At that point, "we will determine our own fate rather than have it determined by the current "dumb," simple, machinelike forces that rule celestial mechanics."²⁴⁵ If one ignores the denial of life and world permeated by this statement, and actually attempts to ponder the possibility of such an event, one may find that something is missing. Where Kurzweil is perhaps most mistaken is in his lack of concern for *purpose*. *What exactly is this fate which we will ourselves determine? Why* would an autonomous artificial intelligence create anything at all, let alone anything *good* for us? There is absolutely no purpose to the accomplishment of this vision other than to

²⁴³ Ibid., p.29

²⁴⁴ Ibid., p.30 [Italics mine]

²⁴⁵ Ibid., p.29

make everything ‘pure intellect’ or *idea*, to make everything *one*, to make the whole an uncaused cause, something unchanging and untimely, ‘God’, Truth, all of which amount to saying: *nothingness*. According to the view which I have exposed here from the beginning, such an event is held to be impossible and its most basic assumptions and goals are recognized as contradictions. Consciousness does not ‘know’ anything, and certainly the least of all does it know of the essential processes of preservation and enhancement of the will to power ‘behind’ it. Consciousness is activated as a network of concepts which are mere hints, metaphors of fractions of the permanent activity of the many drives to which it has no access. Furthermore, such metaphors only appear in consciousness as the response to a drive’s need for expressing its power by use of advanced communication, and can not be prompted simply out of curiosity or for ‘the sake of knowledge itself.’ Whatever is ‘known’ is always mere concept, metaphor, it is an end rather than a beginning and therefore can only allow us to create machines and never something organic.²⁴⁶ We create machines from *concepts*; only by mistakenly supposing that consciousness is the center of will, of *free* will even, do we come to think that we may successfully implant our will into a machine, as Kurzweil does.

Incidentally, I would like to mention that the failure to make a considerable difference on the part of every single major ecological movement so far is due to this same mistake. As long as we are still infected with ‘bad conscience’, which rests on our profound unconscious hatred of the world and our desire to take revenge over it, and which draws us into passive or active nihilism, any attempt to ‘save the environment’ will

²⁴⁶ WP 478 & 646, p.264-265 & p.343

be utterly pointless. Human beings that deny or wage war against the 'natural' instincts within themselves can only passively detach themselves from the 'outer' world of nature, or actively seek to extinguish life in it. The former is today often seen as 'earth-friendly' or 'green' simply because it does not enact its inner will to nothingness and actively sabotage the conditions necessary for life; it wills and thinks 'No', but it does not have the strength to *do* 'No.' As one may recall, these weaker elements have grown accustomed to conceiving of their weakness as a *voluntary deed*, and thus in this case are found believing that they freely prevent themselves from contributing to the deterioration of the environment, when really it is simply that their will lacks the strength to carry itself out as action. The idea that an individual may seek 'inner peace' as the ceasing of ongoing struggle between the 'inner' plurality of drives that constitute one's life, and at the same time perpetrate actions that successfully preserve and enhance life in the 'outer' world, is completely absurd. All concepts *deny* the will to power that life is, whether they remain thoughts in our minds or are materialized as technology. A lessening of mankind's assault on 'nature itself' is inseparable from overcoming our belief in the existence of such a thing, and is only possible in presence of human beings endowed with 'strong will to power' which carries itself forcefully into action to preserve and enhance the life that it is. This is entirely different from trying to implement an *idea* of 'clean environment,' which as a concept inevitably *denies* life and the earth. 'Peace on earth' is synonymous with the end of all life on earth, as any form of life is a quantum of power seeking to impose itself as the norm. What we ought to achieve is a 'healthy' confrontation with the 'natural' world as we seek to master it with the strength of our own will to power, whereas the modern nihilist existing as will to nothingness seeks to

detach himself from the world and renounce life, or actively destroy those things with the use of consciousness. However, this consciousness is our greatest inheritance from millennia of devotion to the ascetic ideal. It is by far our strongest weapon, and therefore a revaluation of values may only come by way of it. What must be combated is not the intellect but the structure of weak will to power 'behind' it, turned inwards by unconscious *envy* and desire for *revenge*. Nietzsche's fictional character Zarathustra is the embodiment of this *turning back* of overgrown consciousness against that which made it possible; he is the teacher of the formula which is to cure the disease of 'bad conscience'. I shall then conclude this discussion with a third and final chapter treating Nietzsche's 'Yes-saying' and 'Yes-doing' 'doctrine' of eternal recurrence.

CHAPTER 3

The Life-Affirming Concept

In his autobiography titled 'Ecce Homo', Nietzsche delivers an assessment of each one of his published books. Looking back on his entire corpus, he writes so as to tell himself his own life, and arrives at the conclusion that he is a destiny. It is very clear from the beginning of the book that this extraordinary declaration is, in Nietzsche's eyes, validated by the one creation which for him clearly stands entirely on its own, 'Thus Spoke Zarathustra.'²⁴⁷ He goes so far as to say that with it he has "given humanity the greatest gift it has ever been given."²⁴⁸ Indeed, this book is unlike any other written by Nietzsche or anyone else; it is the epic tale of a fictional character named Zarathustra

²⁴⁷ EH III 'Z' 6, p.71

²⁴⁸ EH Foreword 4, p.4

whose journey and teachings are recounted in a way strangely similar to that found in scripture, and in which Nietzsche's attention to the tone and tempo of his composition is more apparent than ever, so much so that it has attracted and inspired actual musicians. It is said to be a book that is to be read using one's hearing, and when reviewing it Nietzsche reminds us that, as previously expressed in a quote cited here earlier, no one can see or hear "in things –books included– more than he already knows. If you have no access to something from experience, you will have no ear for it."²⁴⁹ This is the key to solving the riddle posed by the subtitle to 'Thus Spoke Zarathustra,' 'A Book for Everyone and Nobody.' Zarathustra's teaching aims to communicate the remedy for the crisis of nihilism spreading to all mankind and threatening the survival of the human species; in that sense, it concerns all of humanity. At the same time, this teaching may only be understood by those who have experienced this menace themselves in the most profound way; those who stand at a critical point in history, or in their individual development, where the disease of 'bad conscience' is most intense in its poisoning of the body and rests on the brink of successfully extinguishing human life forces. The suggestion that his greatest book is also one for 'nobody' is therefore a question Nietzsche extends to us. It asks whether or not someone other than him has so far attained such a state of sickness and pain, and then managed to not only emerge out of it, but also overcome it by *affirming* it. He confesses that 'Thus Spoke Zarathustra' was composed when, on top of his fragile condition characterized by repeated episodes of intense pain, he found himself stuck in unfavorable circumstances that presented the opposite of what was desirable for him in all aspects.²⁵⁰ He did not merely believe that suffering was a

²⁴⁹ EH I 1, p.37

²⁵⁰ EH III 'Z' 1, p.66

necessary component of the phenomenon ‘life’ and that it is folly to wish to abolish it, but also experienced this for himself, as his greatest realizations resulted from his condition of great suffering. Accordingly, one of Zarathustra’s main teachings is delivered when he has a conversation with life as such. The latter reveals herself as will to power as she unveils her secret and tells him that she is “that which must always overcome itself.”²⁵¹ In the complex of struggling forces that is will to power, each quantum is as much defined by its own strength as it is by the resistance that it encounters. Therefore, it means that life actually *seeks* resistance, and that the strongest will to power is also that which looks for the most of it. Its task is *not* to master all resistance, but to find ‘rivals’ which require the expenditure of its full strength.²⁵² God is thus a counter-concept to life in the strictest sense²⁵³ and in all aspects; to think of it as an unchanging entity, as an omnipotent unity, as everything that is or ‘Being’ itself, comes down to the contradiction of saying that he is that which is not. Knowing Truth as ‘pure objectivity’ or Godly perspective is simply nonsense; it is as if the eye demanded to directly see itself.

Nonetheless, even though this error and its corollaries have defined and shaped us for millennia now, we remain a type of *life* or a will to power, albeit a decadent one. As such, *the human being is something that must be overcome*; this statement is repeated by Zarathustra many times throughout the book as a sort of chorus.²⁵⁴ The only alternative to a forecast which involves the near end of our species is to trust that life in us is doing

²⁵¹ TSZ Second Part 12, p.99

²⁵² EH I 7, p.15

²⁵³ EH IV 8, p.95

²⁵⁴ TSZ Prologue 3 p.11, First Part 5 p.33, First Part 10 p.42, First Part 14 p.50, Third Part 12(3) p.171

what it always does, and that the great suffering attributed to this long period dominated by Christian morality is the preparation of something great which is to come. Human beings defined by bad conscience are despisers; that they love only the ascetic ideal as God, Truth, or nothingness betrays the fact that they despise themselves, viewing themselves as incomplete. As one may recall, this is one of the 'four errors' which have been said to have educated man so far, and which actually define 'humanity.' Early on in 'Zarathustra's Prologue,' we learn that the 'Overman,' as the one *getting-over* his humanity, is one capable of resisting contamination and becoming a despiser himself; he has to be a 'sea' (deep, strong will to power or vitality) so as not to have his entire self corrupted by the polluted stream of despising human beings because they shamelessly despise themselves.²⁵⁵ The weak that are corrupted in such manners are many, and Zarathustra foresees their transformation into the passive nihilist type described here earlier, which he refers to as the 'last man.' Such a man is the extreme Buddhist; it is life that no longer aims to reach beyond itself and in which every instinct is completely anemic, including the instinct that despises. Despising others and himself, seeking to rule or submitting to obedience, becoming rich or poor, all those things are for him too much of a burden; hence the 'last man' wishes for all mankind to become one big herd without any herdsman, he works in order to entertain himself, but with the constant risk of that becoming a strain as well, and any quarrels are mocked and quickly forgotten.²⁵⁶ Zarathustra is well aware of all those things from the very beginning of his tale. Right away he descends into the world of human beings in order to deliver his teaching

²⁵⁵ TSZ Prologue 2-3, p.10-12

²⁵⁶ TSZ Prologue 5, p.15-16

concerning the ‘last man’ and reveal to them the type of man who overcomes nihilism, the ‘Overman.’

However, a series of events in the town turn him away and set him on the journey which is recounted throughout the four parts of the book following the prologue. The crowd Zarathustra addresses in the prologue is gathered in a market-place awaiting the performance of a tightrope walker. They believe Zarathustra’s ‘Overman’ refers to the equilibrist and demand that he shows himself. The performer thus begins his act, and starts walking the tight rope. But soon enough another fellow appears and starts following him, progressing faster than he can and catching up to him. Quickly enough, the second man dressed like a jester jumps right over the tightrope walker who loses balance and falls down to his death. I believe the jester and the tightrope walker represent the two possible venues for those who have strong instincts. One should keep in mind that ‘strong will to power’ is not merely strong instincts but the *ordering* of these instincts; the presence of an order of rank or a hierarchy headed into one direction as a ruling thought. Inversely, ‘weak will to power’ means primarily chaos among the various drives, regardless of their being weak or strong. The despiser is such a man; he has one dominant drive, the instinct for revenge, which assumes a tyrannical position. Like any regime of tyranny, there is no concern for order of rank; everything under the despotic element is equal in that it is resistance which must be dominated and rendered inoffensive. The jester represents this despising and vengeful disposition; rather than acting to cross the bridge himself, he merely re-acts when seeing someone else trying to do so. As revealed by Zarathustra in his speech about the ‘Overman’ given prior to the events and agitation

in the market-square, the rope is 'the human' as such; it is "fastened between beast and Overhuman- a rope over an abyss."²⁵⁷ Just like the jester after him, the tightrope walker emerges out of the first tower, the 'beast' end of the rope. He has both strong instincts and strong will to power. He is above the entire crowd beneath him who are weak in both aspects; passive nihilists who beg Zarathustra to turn them into the 'last man.'²⁵⁸ In his very insightful interpretation of 'Thus Spoke Zarathustra,' Laurence Lampert notes that "by making danger his vocation, [the tightrope walker] has lifted himself high above the crowd and made himself the model for an ideal contrary to the crowd's ideal of risk-free contentment. In living heroically, he has distinguished himself by a manliness worthy of Zarathustra's respect."²⁵⁹ Holding tight to his pole, which we may think of as a bar of values which gives him some sense of equilibrium and prevent his falling into the abyss of nihilism under him, he advances on the path of humanity and distances himself from the beast as he progresses towards the 'Overman.' I concur with Lampert's view that the jester stands as the manifestation of the crowd's nature and sentiment. He is a cynic who provides Zarathustra with a shortcut in his due study of the average man, following his ten years of solitude.²⁶⁰ As such, I believe his tripping the tightrope walker is the expression of the fact that there will always be those among the crowd, living in its culture of risk-free contentment, whose instinct of revenge is still strong enough for them to re-act out of *envy* and trip anyone seeking to maintain himself above them on the path towards the 'Overman.' Obviously, the crowd and the jester view Zarathustra as such a man, hence the warning he will hear as he is leaving the town. By trying to cross the

²⁵⁷ TSZ Prologue 4, p.13

²⁵⁸ TSZ Prologue 5, p.16

²⁵⁹ Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teaching*, p.27

²⁶⁰ Ibid., p.27

bridge towards the Overman, the tightrope walker earned Zarathustra's respect and friendship; therefore, Zarathustra departs with the man's corpse on his back, looking to bury him properly. On his way out, the jester yells at him from the tower:

“‘Go away from this town, O Zarathustra,’ he said. ‘Too many people here hate you. You are hated by the good and the righteous and they call you their enemy and despiser; you are hated by the believers of right belief, and they call you a danger to the multitude. It was lucky for you that they laughed at you: and verily, you were talking just like a jester. It was lucky for you that you made company with the dead dog; by abasing yourself like that, you saved your own skin for today. But now go forth from this town- or tomorrow I shall jump over you, a living man over a dead one.’”²⁶¹

As previously noted by Zarathustra himself, the crowd of human beings set on the path to becoming ‘last men’ begins by mocking him; this is what quarrels are becoming for them, a derisive matter. Immediately following the fall of the tightrope walker, the market-place is emptied; we can assume that everyone casually went back to their daily business. Zarathustra saved himself by tending to the dying tightrope walker, which the crowd undoubtedly interpreted as compassion or even pity; practices that they identify with. However, he might not be so lucky in the future and the *envy* of despisers might kill him some day. He has learned a valuable lesson from this experience, and his entire adventure is one in which he will seek the solution to the problem of *revenge*. He realizes that the town of common people is not the right place for him to deliver his teaching. His companions ought to be *alive*, they must have the will to follow him and risk themselves on the path towards the ‘Overman.’ Those who were once courageous tightrope walkers but have been tripped up, or whose beliefs and values failed to carry them and thus made

²⁶¹ TSZ Prologue 8, p.19

them fall, are *corpses*; they can be carried and led anywhere by someone like Zarathustra. The dive into the abyss of nihilism has turned them into atheists who, having been failed by whatever form of old theistic consolations they were holding on to, now hunger deeply for new beliefs to satisfy their need of the religious; Zarathustra does not want such 'believers.'²⁶²

Humanity, as the turning inwards of drives and instincts, as 'bad conscience' and overgrown consciousness, is a disease that the skin of the earth has.²⁶³ Looking further at this sickness introduces the problem of *time*. As mentioned above, that which must be overcome is the reign of *envy* and the desire for *revenge*. Our consciousness' inventing of a 'world behind;' a 'real world' opposed to the merely 'apparent' world perceived through the senses, or of any 'other world' such as 'virtual' computer worlds, is a *re-action* of making bearable meaningless suffering and incapacity for action in the actual earthly world. What happens is that the body despairs of its own condition of weakness, and revenge that can not be taken on what is 'outer' is directed inwards at the body itself. The prospect of a leap of death towards deliverance from the pain of a weak will that is prevented action, is here used as a goal for living; to reach heavenly nothingness gives an aim and meaning to weak lives and thus allows them to bare suffering and endure.²⁶⁴ Such 'bodies' that want to 'go under' are evidently despisers of the earth and of themselves. But even turned against itself in this way, the will to power does not ever stop to seek release as action; it *wishes it could act*, which makes for an

²⁶² TSZ Prologue 9, p.20-21

²⁶³ TSZ Second Part 18, p.113

²⁶⁴ TSZ First Part 3, p.28

unconscious envy that lurks at the bottom of all this despising.²⁶⁵ Consciousness becomes a tool for beautifying death as salvation by way of being reunited with God as ‘the one,’ the ‘plenum,’ the unmoved, the complete, and the *permanent*.²⁶⁶ Efforts of consciousness are mobilized to fantasize revenge over what is earthly, changing, and *timely*. The Christian values place eternity over time, which is held to be linear, beginning with an act of creation by an uncaused cause and ending with the *salvation* of eternity. In this view, finite life in a world of change and time is something that human beings were put into as punishment and from which they are to be saved. For Zarathustra, the bridge to mankind’s highest hope is to redeem it from revenge. It is repressed envy which burns inside and gives rise to the madness of revenge. Weak elements wish for deliverance from their incapacity to act as the advent of a world in which there is no more willing; such an event is their ultimate fantasy as it both grants vengeance over ascending vitality and strong will to power by annihilating such things, and puts an end to their own impotent existence of suffering by the same token. This was for a long time called ‘equality before God,’ but with modernity the veil of priestly inventions falls from it as it does from everything else, and one’s will to equality is now openly against all that has power.²⁶⁷ This disease of ‘bad conscience’ means that the past is permanently regurgitated;²⁶⁸ no action is permitted or encouraged by tradition and convention other than the reaction of seeking revenge for what was and is. The obvious solution to the problem is for the will to be allowed to will again; that it no longer be denied or deny itself expression into action. But mankind’s will is a prisoner of the past; it has been

²⁶⁵ TSZ First Part 4, p.31

²⁶⁶ TSZ Second Part 2, p.74

²⁶⁷ TSZ Second Part 7, p.86

²⁶⁸ GM Third Essay 20, p.105

directed towards nothingness and has devoted itself to that goal for so long and in so many ways that this quest has become second nature. In Zarathustra's words:

“‘To redeem that which has passed away and to re-create all “It was” into a “Thus I willed it!” –that alone should I call redemption! [...] “It was”: that is the will’s gnashing of teeth and loneliest sorrow. Powerless with respect to what has been done– it is an angry spectator of all that is past. [...] That time does not run backwards, this arouses the will’s fury; “That which was” –that is the stone which it cannot roll away. ‘And so it rolls stones away in fury and ill-humour, and takes revenge on whatever does not, like itself, feel fury and ill-humour. [...] ‘This, yes this alone, is what *revenge* itself is: the will’s ill-will towards time and its “it was”. [...] ‘*The spirit of revenge*: that, my friends, has been up to now humanity’s best reflection;”²⁶⁹

As Zarathustra himself confesses, such a past and a present are unbearable if one cannot see what is to come out of this.²⁷⁰ The liberation of present and future will is synonymous with actual willing of the will to power; with action instead of re-action. The heavy past that lies behind, to which we owe our traditions, conventions, and conditions of existence, is the gravity that holds our will from flying into the future. Zarathustra refers many times to this as the ‘spirit of heaviness’ and presents it as his arch-enemy. Again, I agree with Lampert who argues that this “enemy is what has mastered the world as the view that mankind is ultimately responsible to something outside itself, that human beings are by nature or by God fitted for obedience or reverence before what is universal and transcendent.”²⁷¹ The ascetic ideal in all of its forms, including the naked one, is chronophobic; it retains the valuation that puts eternity above time. The religious man, the optimistic scientist, and the pessimistic nihilist are all alike in their looking down on

²⁶⁹ TSZ Second Part 20, p.121-122

²⁷⁰ TSZ Second Part 20, p.120

²⁷¹ Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teaching*, p.198

the finite and timely features of worldly existence, as well as in their striving for an eternal ideal as God, Truth, or nothingness. Zarathustra's task is to cure the disease of bad conscience by finding that which can defeat the spirit of heaviness and the call for revenge. For himself and those who are to be his companions, all the 'No-saying' and 'No-doing,' which have been exposed here in the first two chapters, are inseparable from 'Yes-saying.'²⁷²

Because life is understood as that which always overcomes itself, both Nietzsche and his character Zarathustra maintain hope for the future. If 'bad conscience' is a disease, then it is suggested that perhaps it is a disease like pregnancy.²⁷³ Under the valuation of will to power, the ascetic ideal appears as merely another trick that a degenerating life used in order to preserve itself at all costs. As such, this ideal can only be apparent and temporary; like any other scheme for preservation and enhancement, it can only be a pre-condition for something else that is to follow it in the chain of becoming.²⁷⁴ The 'four errors' which have defined humanity have educated us, in the sense that our deep want to see things differently has prepared the intellect so that it now has it in its "*power* the ability to engage in 'pros' and 'cons': we can use the *difference* in perspectives and affective interpretations for knowledge."²⁷⁵ The one who teaches the possibility of the 'Overman' can only come in opposition to the ascetic ideal; his vision of a life-affirming shepherd of the earth is entirely determined by it. Zarathustra descends from his mountain to give his teachings after ten years of solitude because he is

²⁷² EH IV 2, p.89

²⁷³ GM Second Essay 19, p.60

²⁷⁴ GM Third Essay 13, p.87-89

²⁷⁵ GM Third Essay 12, p.87

overburdened with wisdom.²⁷⁶ He himself will eventually acknowledge that “for the creator to be himself the child that is newly born, he must also want to be the birth-giver and the pain of the birth-giver.”²⁷⁷ Zarathustra wishes to share his prophecy of the ‘Overman’ with all human beings, but once he finds himself among them, he realizes that the coming of such a being is impeded by the instinct of revenge that has infected most of our species and reveals itself as the principal obstacle to all willing forward. Thus, one could argue that the events of the entire book lead to the happening recited by Zarathustra in the aphorism titled ‘On the Vision and Riddle.’ There, we learn that just as revenge or *ressentiment* is what characterizes a weak incapacitated complex of drives and instincts that are turned inwards, the seeking to command of tremendously potent drives and vital instincts capable of triumphing over all enemies of life is recognized as an *attacking courage*. Just as God was the creative deed of a ‘no’ to everything ‘outer’ and the noble master values that reigned there, once again it is out of *opposition*, this time to the ascetic ideal as ‘spirit of heaviness,’ that a new ‘Yes-saying’ and ‘Yes-doing’ emerge. An increase of force somewhere always means a decrease somewhere else, and vice versa. Just as the Greek pagan religion was conquered by the Judeo-Christian one because it had become degenerate and retrogressed,²⁷⁸ creators will again emerge, with strong will to power and mastery of its potential weapons, following the ‘death of God.’ The spirit of revenge, as the wish for ‘that which was’ to be changed or ‘punished’ (thus granting ‘retribution’), as the hatred of time itself for not allowing what has passed to be rectified and ‘brought to justice,’ and as despising of oneself for not being able to ever fully compensate what has been done, paralyses action in the present and holds prisoner the

²⁷⁶ TSZ Prologue 1, p.9

²⁷⁷ TSZ Second Part 2, p.74

²⁷⁸ WP 1042, p.537

future, and can only be overcome by its very opposite. This other extreme is the courage to look behind at all that has been and to ask for it *one more time and even infinitely more times!* Only a man with the courage to gladly accept that everything which has been and is will eternally repeat itself exactly as it happened can cure himself of ‘bad conscience.’ This principle of eternal recurrence is first formulated in ‘The Gay Science’ and presents itself as both the solution to the problem of death and the ultimate formula of life-affirmation by which one overcomes the ascetic ideal in its final form of Schopenhauerian pessimism. Nietzsche asks what would become of the reader if he were faced with having to live his life exactly as he lived it, in its finest details and with the exact same sequence of events, once more and innumerable more times. He claims that this is the kind of thought which would either change or crush whoever becomes possessed by it.²⁷⁹ On the larger scale of mankind, he tells us that it is “the triumphant idea of which all other modes of thought will ultimately perish. It is the great cultivating idea: the races that cannot bear it stand condemned; those who find it the greatest benefit are chosen to rule.”²⁸⁰ The key which separates Nietzsche’s idea from other conceptions of circular time is *repetition*. If one is afflicted with ‘bad conscience’ and thus ill-disposed towards the timely world of becoming, one seeks vengeance over it for the impossibility to will backwards or to satisfy one’s wish to *change* the past. But if one is well disposed towards his own life and the world, one will affirm what has passed by wishing that it would happen again *exactly as it did*, and thus one would actually will backwards! Like Zarathustra, one who is pre-disposed to such a task must summon his courage and defeat that which wants to see life end, by requesting for life to eternally

²⁷⁹ GS 341, p.273-274

²⁸⁰ WP 1053, p.544

repeat itself. The weak, sickly, ill-disposed elements would be crushed by the thought of having to live their lives an infinite number of times. For Nietzsche, this type of decadent disposition culminates in Schopenhauer who had declared that “at the end of his life, no man, if he be sincere and at the same time in possession of his faculties, will ever wish to go through it again. Rather than this, he will much prefer to choose complete non-existence.”²⁸¹ On the other hand, the one passing this ultimate test of vitality and strength of instincts retrieves ‘freedom of will’; immune to the sickness of revenge, he would will forwards again and create himself as ‘strong will to power,’ all in ‘good conscience’ towards sexuality, the lust to rule, pleasure in appearance and deception (art), and great and joyful gratitude for life and its typical states.²⁸² Contrary to everything which emanated from repressed envy and desire for revenge, his affects would be *affirmative* of life and the earth as “pride, joy, health, love of the sexes, enmity and war, reverence, beautiful gestures and manners, strong will, the discipline of high spirituality, will to power, gratitude towards earth and life- everything that is rich and desires to bestow and that replenishes and gilds and immortalizes and deifies life-”.²⁸³

Given our earlier discussion of consciousness in the second chapter, one might object here that, being a *thought*, eternal recurrence as word-concept denies the ‘life’ or hierarchy of drives that lies ‘behind’ it. In response to this I would insist on the importance of Nietzsche’s statement, given while thoughtfully looking back on his work and life in his last published book ‘*Ecce Homo*,’ which defines eternal recurrence as the

²⁸¹ Schopenhauer, *World as Will & Representation* 59, p.324

²⁸² WP 1047, p.538

²⁸³ WP 1033, p.533

highest *attainable* formula of affirmation.²⁸⁴ Any thought is mere metaphor, but it is a hint as to the condition of the will to power ‘behind’ it. Like any such metaphor, it is herd signal and meant to communicate something. When the disease of ‘bad conscience’ reaches climax, it is the weapon with which the strongest most courageous type of life expresses itself as will to power and seeks the overcoming of the instinct of revenge by way of creating an order of rank. After having revealed God as the anti-thesis of life and the ruling thought of the weakest type of human being, Nietzsche asks what metaphor or word-concept sits at the other end of the spectrum, and would be the ruling thought of the one with the strongest nature which experiences itself by the virtue of its offensive courage. Eternal recurrence is the answer to this question; it is the most life-affirming concept for it affirms will to power more than any other concept ever can, not because it fully and completely does so. Obviously as concept, it cannot do so, but the scariest thought which almost chokes Zarathustra to death when he thinks of eternal recurrence, is that by virtue of it one must actually will the ascetic ideal and all its life-despising believers! Eternal recurrence and will to power are completely inseparable from one another. If we understand the will to power as that which continually wills itself, and which is determined by its own strength as much as by all the resistance posed against it, it follows that the latter is also continually being willed! Following the ‘death of God,’ during the nihilistic period where the pure knowledge drive turns one progressively into a ‘philosopher of desperate knowledge,’ new formulations of the old errors are frequently found in more or less elaborate articulations. An example worth signaling here is the mistake of attributing to the world an *intention* not to reach any goal or final state. Eternal recurrence ought to be differentiated from this notion of eternal *novelty* which wants that

²⁸⁴ EH III ‘Z’ 1, p.65

the world is capable of infinite transformations and has a sort of ‘conscious’ will or regulation which prevents it from ever returning to any form which has already been. Obviously, as it has been overstated throughout this entire discussion, the objection is not that eternal recurrence is ‘true’ in the absolute sense while eternal novelty is not. We should not permit ourselves such speculation; concern over knowledge of Truth belongs well behind us, and if one should have a bad conscience regarding anything, let it be about that.²⁸⁵ Rather, Nietzsche sees in this notion of ‘eternal novelty’ a hidden desire to once again find God as the world’s property of permanently creating itself anew. It enables one to view nature as an infinite force that one equates with God in the manner Spinoza did. Instead, we ought to see that the concept of infinite force is incompatible with the very concept of ‘force,’ which is by definition something limited.²⁸⁶ Thus it follows that the world view suggested by Nietzsche’s notion of eternally recurring will to power is one in which a definite quantity of force has definite numbers of centers of force. The possible combinations of force are therefore also limited in number, and in infinite time every combination would have to be realized an infinite number of times. Furthermore, “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 movement that has already repeated itself infinitely often and plays its game *in infinitum*.”²⁸⁷ Thus, the one who wills eternal recurrence also wills the two millennia of devotion to the ascetic ideal; one actually wills life that denies itself. Zarathustra, viewing himself as a young shepherd

²⁸⁵ GM Second Essay 24, p.66

²⁸⁶ WP 1062, p.546-547

²⁸⁷ WP 1066, p.548-549

being possessed by the ruling thought which carries the promise of the ‘Overman,’ is choked by the realization of this fact. What is even more shocking is that the small weak man and his slave revolt must be willed not only as the precondition for the coming of the ‘Overman,’ but also because if the thought of eternal recurrence remains merely a weapon for defeating the life-despisers, it is simply the instrument of Zarathustra’s very own revenge rooted in his despising the slavish types for their life-denying values and deeds.²⁸⁸ As Lampert explains, the heavy black snake which chokes Zarathustra in ‘On the Vision and Riddle’ is the embodiment of his

“recognition that, far from exercising sweet revenge on the small and the vengeful, he must will their eternal return. That the great weight of this thought threatens to crush him shows that he too is afflicted by a form of the universal human sickness of revenge. His accusation is not only against life’s accusers, but against life for needing such accusers. [...] He, the man who experiences himself as ascendant in the order of rank among human beings, must overcome the revenge of his own soul and say to that whole order of rank, “But thus I willed it!””²⁸⁹

This is acted out in Zarathustra’s vision, when he commands himself (the young shepherd) to bite off the head of this snake, and then obeys himself. After this act of willing which has liberated him, he *laughs* like no human being has ever laughed before; the source of poison has been completely eliminated and he is free to ascend towards the ‘Overman.’ However, I stand with Lampert in urging readers to refrain from interpreting this as the beginning of an “eternity of well-being taught by modern philosophers to lie

²⁸⁸ Lampert, *Nietzsche’s Teaching*, p.217

²⁸⁹ Lampert, *Nietzsche’s Teaching*, p.217

ahead, in a golden age to be established by industrious men.”²⁹⁰ ‘Humanity’ defined by the instinct of revenge sought to *dominate* everything, to crush all resistance and see the end of all strife. This is very different from will to power free from its disease of ‘bad conscience’ which, as previously mentioned, actually wills and seeks resistance, struggle, and suffering. The ‘cured’ one’s strong commanding act of will blesses all beings in the order of rank it creates and wills their eternal return in willing its own. We, having become the most spiritual animals, exercise our mastery over things by the use of word-concepts; one ought to remember again that we only find in things that which we have imported into them. Thus, “all things fall under the power of man’s naming; through the exercise of that power, earthly things have hitherto fallen under the curse of man’s revenge against time. Only a naming free of revenge does justice to earthly things and frees them from that curse”.²⁹¹ In ‘On the Vision and Riddle,’ one finds that of all places, the heavy black snake crawled inside Zarathustra’s mouth and bit him *in the throat*. Thus, the horrific scene also enacts revenge’s corrupting of man’s greatest power, that of giving meaning to things by naming them. That brings us back to the very beginning of our discussion, as I would like to ground everything said here into the context of historically bound readers living in the early 21st century. The following sections shall conclude the entire argument extended over all three chapters, but prior to that I feel obligated to propose some answers, however brief, to two questions: what becomes of philosophy given what has transpired here, and how does one live a life of self-overcoming (rather than self-denying) in current days?

²⁹⁰ Ibid., p.220-221

²⁹¹ Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teaching*, p.215

Philosophy & the Life of the Convalescent

Nearing the conclusion, I shall then try to answer the questions above by briefly exposing what I believe to be misinterpretations of Nietzsche's writings and the related argument presented here. Obviously, I do not contend that there is one single correct or 'true' way of reading Nietzsche or any other text. Instead, I believe that any writing is merely a collection of metaphors that spur out of lived experience and its perceived effects, both of which are hidden from the realm of consciousness that only admits signs and symbols. As such, what is said or written is highly dependent on the reader's pre-disposition and the historical context to which he is bound. Therefore, I consider that both those who write philosophy, as well as those that provide their interpretation of it, are signaling something concerning their condition by articulating metaphors in speech or writing. As I argue in my first chapter, I see strong indication that Nietzsche had a similar understanding concerning both what he himself and other thinkers wrote, given his violent attack on Truth. He candidly discloses that for him, every great philosophy so far has been "the personal confession of its author and a kind of involuntary and unconscious memoir".²⁹² Consequently, what will be succinctly discussed here is how certain interpretations of his outlook are to be avoided, because they hinder the intended therapeutic effect aimed to disburden the reader of his 'bad conscience,' and instead aggravate the disease by forcing valuations of Truth on Nietzsche's philosophy. Considering his assault on Truth and the importance of art both in his life and his books, I believe he himself thought he was merely sharing metaphors that were to alter the perspective of others with kindred pre-dispositions. Like anyone else, although perhaps

²⁹² BGE 6, p.13

with the difference that he *knowingly* did so, Nietzsche made use of writing in the hope that particular others will relate and *obey* the directives of his will to power, for which his books are indeed mere hints. He commands one to be stronger, *more evil*, and more profound,²⁹³ and swimmingly acquiesces that “our highest insights must –and should– sound like follies and sometimes like crimes when they are heard without permission by those who are not predisposed and predestined for them.”²⁹⁴ Zarathustra’s warning is similar, as he claims that all ‘good and righteous men’ would call the Overman a Devil.²⁹⁵ Obviously, the reference here is to the ‘good and evil’ value judgments that define Judeo-Christian morality, and Nietzsche warns us that whoever rejects all those life-denying values and embraces their ‘noble’ counter-parts, thus growing to be well disposed towards ‘body’ and life in the ‘apparent’ world, will be labeled dangerous and evil by those who embrace slave morality in one form or another. However, active nihilists that encounter Nietzsche’s writings will often see in declarations like this, of which there are many more throughout his books, a war cry that condones actual violence against Christian individuals. This is clearly a mistake, as Nietzsche stresses the importance of differentiating between war on Christianity and the ascetic ideal, and attacks on individual ‘believers.’ In ‘Ecce Homo’ he tells us that he, as an opponent of Christianity, has “no intention of holding against an individual what has been the disaster of millennia.”²⁹⁶ Secondly, a campaign that seeks to dispose of all living Christians is pointless, because the Christian manner of living in its most basic understanding, as above all a ‘not-doing’ of many things; as a way of life which denies itself or as instincts

²⁹³ BGE 295, p.236

²⁹⁴ BGE 30, p.42

²⁹⁵ TSZ Second Part 21, p.125

²⁹⁶ EH I 7, p.16

turned inwards against themselves, will remain forever possible. Even if its personal God, its institutions, and its metaphysics are removed, Christianity will continue to be an option, because it is first and foremost a lifestyle, and not merely a system of beliefs.²⁹⁷ Finally, we should keep in mind our earlier discussion of active nihilism and remember that the very drive which created Christianity forces one to fight against it as a matter of principle.²⁹⁸ There are many today who embody this curious phenomenon, including of course the previously mentioned most extreme scientific atheists, but their war is not the one Nietzsche has in mind for those whose ears he speaks into. To be sure, we must welcome the intensification of the crisis as the growing of the resistance facing our will to power; the stronger a faction is, the more resistance it will *seek*, and the strong one is to rejoice when the opponent has strengthened himself so as to present a higher challenge. However, if the latter is to remain a potential rival over whom we seek to maintain mastery, in no case are we to join in and contribute to his enhancement, as this would of course be nothing less than submission to another center of force. The ‘free spirit’ Nietzsche writes for is primarily at war with himself; his energies are needed to guard himself from the ambient decadence, and are not to be wasted doing what the active nihilist already does so earnestly. Besides, he tells us that “decadence itself is nothing *to be fought*; it is absolutely necessary and belongs to every age and every people. What should be fought vigorously is the contagion of the healthy parts of the organism.”²⁹⁹ In such times of transition, strong individuals seeking to preserve their health *are* an internal war, and as such, the respective conscious ‘I’ of someone with a

²⁹⁷ AC 39, p.163-164 & WP 212, p.124-125

²⁹⁸ WP 179, p.109

²⁹⁹ WP 41, p.26

higher nature is nothing less than a battle ground for the struggle between ‘noble’ ‘good and bad’ valuations and slavish ‘good and evil’ ones.³⁰⁰

At present, one would probably have a hard time arguing that the current historical context is one of complete nihilism, or that humanity as a whole has transformed into the ‘last man.’ On the contrary, active nihilists, often unconscious of their condition, wave the banner of civilization and seek to spread their will to nothingness, almost always disguised as efficiency and will to equality under universal ‘human rights,’ to peoples that persist in worshipping traditional garnished forms of the ascetic ideal and their sturdier valuations. A contrast is created, which exposes Western modernity as defined by a much emptier version of this ideal, wrapped in its thin shell of secular democratic culture of contentment, promoting a risk-free society. Those of us who oppose it can only do so because we have been educated in its values; we have “outgrown Christianity and are averse to it –precisely because we have grown out of it”³⁰¹. We remain defined by it even in opposing it, first of all because it is necessarily so with all antagonisms, and secondly because we combat it by turning against it the weapon it has granted us. Nietzsche’s denunciation of consciousness as a will to nothingness and of its disproportionate growth into a disease should not be interpreted as a call to cease thinking, but rather as an alert concerning the increasing urgency to aim ideation in a new direction and approach it vis-à-vis a new goal. Writing at the very end of the 19th century, Nietzsche foresees his readers as preparatory human beings; the target of one’s attacking courage must first and foremost be the ‘bad conscience’ inevitably present within

³⁰⁰ GM First Essay, p.31-32 & BGE 200, p.111-112

³⁰¹ GS 377, p.340

ourselves. His claim is that the whole history of mankind as it has been recorded so far is the experimental refutation of the principle of a so-called ‘moral world order.’ He saw himself as the self-overcoming of morality out of the will to truthfulness it created, and of the moralist into its antithesis, the *immoralist*. This type of being denies both the kind opposite to it, which is the good, benevolent, and beneficent one, and the validity and value of Christian morality as such.³⁰² Living among the ‘civilized’ democratic herd, one’s struggle is primarily against oneself in order to resist the present ambiance and defy the gravity of the ‘spirit of heaviness,’ which even today continues to pull one away from the earth and towards the ‘heavens’ of worlds ‘beyond.’ In such conditions, one is a ‘*force majeure*’ simply by raising awareness about the discovery of what hides behind Christian morality, and without any violent action or succumbing to active nihilism, one is already, like Nietzsche, part of a destiny that breaks the history of humanity in two.³⁰³ In anticipation of a future age in which the gathered strength of free spirits erupts into the creation of a new shrine built on the ashes of the old idols, what is needed now is preparatory courageous human beings who

“know how to be silent, lonely, resolute, and content and constant in invisible activities; human beings who are bent on seeking in all things for what in them must be *overcome*; [...] human beings with their own festivals, their own working days, and their own periods of mourning, accustomed to command with assurance but instantly ready to obey when that is called for –equally proud, equally serving their own cause in both cases; more endangered human beings, more fruitful human beings, happier beings! For

³⁰² EH IV 3-4, p.89-90

³⁰³ EH IV 8, p.94-95

believe me: the secret for harvesting from existence the greatest fruitfulness and the greatest enjoyment is –
to live dangerously!”³⁰⁴

This brings me to the important distinction between ‘free spirit’ and ‘Overman.’ I believe this is in dire need of clarification, since Nietzsche’s teachings aimed at ‘free spirits’ can easily be misinterpreted as instructions for transforming oneself into the ‘Overman.’ Furthermore, I deem that to think of ‘Thus Spoke Zarathustra’ as the tale of one’s becoming the ‘Overman’ is equally a misreading. The distinction between Zarathustra, as the prophetic figure who *teaches* us about the Overman, and the Overman itself as a future type of man is essential, but often overlooked. Early in the first part of the book, Zarathustra confesses that he too once believed in God, ‘good and evil,’ and the world beyond. But he overcame himself as a sufferer and created a new flame for himself, and then God left him.³⁰⁵ As explained in the previous section, when seeking to overcome the instinct of revenge, he then comes face to face with his very own desire for vengeance and despising of the small man, and must use the courage he has summoned to triumph over it in this most abysmal form. At the end of his journey, he is a convalescent, comforted by his singing animals and songs he chants to himself. We ought to recall a passage from ‘The Birth of Tragedy’ cited here earlier, which described art as the remedy for one afflicted with tragic insight, following his gaining wisdom concerning the limits of human consciousness and the contradiction involved in the pure knowledge drive. I understand the Overman to be the self-creating child; he has regained *innocence* and no longer has to fight the attraction of Platonism as Christianity, which is said to have

³⁰⁴ GS 283, p.228

³⁰⁵ TSZ First part 3, p.27-29

shifted “the centre of gravity of life *out* of life into the ‘Beyond.’”³⁰⁶ His center of gravity is once again the earth, as it should be, and therefore he is the embodiment of Zarathustra’s call to ‘stay true to the earth.’³⁰⁷ Affirmation of the ‘apparent’ world and of life is for the Overman both first and second nature, as he is to come in a post-nihilistic world where it is up to him to create all values. Eternal recurrence is the expression and seal or confirmation of this disposition, formulated as concept. Zarathustra appears as though he had become a child and was in such a state of innocence at the very beginning of the Prologue, when he descends from his mountain looking forward to delivering his teaching of the Overman to the crowd of the city.³⁰⁸ But the events involving the tightrope walker force him into an unexpected adventure in which he must gather the courage to overcome the very core of the ‘spirit of heaviness,’ composed of instinct for revenge; an enemy that, as he will discover, still pulls its weight even on Zarathustra himself, as portrayed by his struggle against the *heavy* black snake. As Lampert notes, Zarathustra defeats a dwarfed version of ‘Platonism for the people’ by translating his courage into a deductive argument, and therefore clubs rationality with its own weapon.³⁰⁹ Correspondingly, truthfulness is described as a ‘lion-will,’³¹⁰ and the summoning of the thought of eternal recurrence is said to be the ultimate lion’s exuberance and willfulness.³¹¹ Therefore, I believe it is safe to say that Zarathustra’s spirit is not that of the child but that of the lion. Rather than a tale about innocent creation of new idols and values, it is more a story of courage and heroic battle against the old

³⁰⁶ AC 43, p.167

³⁰⁷ TSZ Prologue 3, p.12 & First Part 22(2), p.66

³⁰⁸ TSZ Prologue 2, p.10

³⁰⁹ Lampert, *Nietzsche’s Teaching*, p.165-166

³¹⁰ TSZ Second Part 8, p.89

³¹¹ TSZ Third Part 3, p.140

ideal and its most precious valuations, which reveals that only by successfully defeating this formidable foe is one's will liberated and able to will forwards towards the Overman, thus granting great hope for the future. Following his winning the battle which settles the future of mankind, Zarathustra retires in convalescence and finds comfort in songs, not unlike old Socrates did at the end of his life in the 'Phaedo.' Zarathustra, like Nietzsche, remains determined entirely by that which he opposes. Neither of them is a spirit defined by the innocence of a child, which freely and cheerfully creates new values. However, Zarathustra is the magnificent expression of Nietzsche's vision as to how this innocence could be regained, and his understanding of what has to be done for the accomplishment of this task. He saw in the advent of this second innocence an occurrence which marks the end of an era, and enables those capable of overcoming their condition of decadence to launch themselves towards a higher type of living being, which he called the Overman. Needless to say that the focus of Nietzsche's philosophy is entirely on the future and on novel creations, and not on a 'return' to an imagined 'state of nature' or a rebuilding of Greco-Roman antiquity, as it is often misinterpreted to be. In the war against 'bad conscience' and the ascetic ideal, "we "conserve" nothing; neither do we want to return to any past periods; we are not by any means "liberal"; we do not work for "progress"". ³¹² Any attempt of reverting to a previous culture or to the 'state of nature' amounts to the same thing, and that is merely the enactment of one's *current idea* of what the said 'state of nature' or historical context actually was. Such a vision based on remembered collections of concepts, or 'history,' would not in any way correspond to the actual period as it once existed. What determines each historical period and the various cultures present in them is the distribution of will to power among the human beings

³¹² GS 277, p.338

living at that time, which is impossible to replicate for men existing as a different link in the chain of becoming. Eternal recurrence posits that the entire process of becoming has a limited number of variations which it endlessly goes through in the same order, not that certain past combinations of force will return purely as a result of human initiative.

When understanding Nietzsche this way, the meaning of philosophy itself changes. Its literal definition as the pursuit and love of knowledge is done away with together with Platonism. The will to truthfulness it has cultivated becomes self-referential, and thus philosophy as an activity is converted into something different. Its aim is no longer to know the thing-in-itself, but to cope with its discovering its own limits. Internally, philosophy becomes a form of therapy by which one re-learns to live in the aftermath of the revelation of its previous foundations as groundless assumptions. As the most advanced exercise of man's capability for creating meaning, it ought to be redirected and used as the uniquely efficient weapon that it is, in the fight against the sickness of 'bad conscience.' In tandem with this inwards cleansing, its exteriorization is the importing of new meaning into the actual earthly world; this revaluation of all values according to one's newly gained 'good conscience' is first and foremost accepting of knowledge's newly recognized limits, and affirmative of illusions or 'lies.' As such, it is art, and the manifestation of an *active* will to power; a strong life that carries itself into action and does not merely re-act. Our first creation is of course ourselves, following the overcoming of incorporated slave values and desire for revenge, and begins with the self-overcoming of our predominant capacity and our pronounced fondness of being *possessed* by thoughts. Individuals who cling to their state of overgrown consciousness

would be crushed if the thought of eternal recurrence captured their minds, because they are “those for whom life is thought and who have brought civilization under a rule, the traditional teachers of mankind who have judged that life is no good.”³¹³ Alternatively, for those who overcome nihilism within themselves and turn into ‘philosophers of tragic knowledge,’ eternal recurrence is the ruling thought of a will to power that has been liberated from ‘bad conscience’ and is allowed to will and strengthen itself again. It is the seal which confirms that one is cured of the sickness of revenge, as a wish that everything in one’s life would happen again, including the disease itself and those infected by it, for they are pre-conditions of one’s state of cheerfulness and empowerment. As such, one imitates Zarathustra and remains a convalescent throughout his life, finding comfort in art as the creation of a new self and the new meaning emerging from it. His creations and those of his peers prepare a future free from nihilism and the rule of the ascetic ideal, where they are intended to shape generations to come that will thus carry the species towards the ‘Overman.’ A stranger to the ascetic ideal and its debilitating effects, this envisioned new being is the embodiment of the novel values given by the creators who preceded him. The strength of his will to power untainted by the ascetic ideal, he acts with the innocence of a child and builds a new future where life, together with all of its earthly conditions, is affirmed. He does not seek to dominate, destroy, castrate, or escape his own life and what belongs to the earth, but to *master* those things. His mastery is one that acts to impose an order of rank on the actual ‘apparent’ world, and it affirms all elements in it as necessary successful tools of its own self-enhancement and that of the species. As such, it is entirely different from the active nihilist’s project of domination through technology, which is merely thinly veiled exteriorization of reactive will to

³¹³ Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teaching*, p.168

nothingness. Such scientific atheism is both dogmatic; for it still believes in Truth, and unsatisfying, due to its disowning all priestly inventions and practices specifically designed to bring comfort and relieve the suffering of the weak and sick. Its most fervent defenders, such as Ray Kurzweil, no longer bother hiding their true intentions, and openly respond with “not yet” when asked whether or not God exists,³¹⁴ exhibiting the unwavering confidence they have in their capability to establish the ‘kingdom of heaven’ on earth in the near future.

Even though one can find Zarathustra rejoicing at nihilism as the night before a new dawn and seemingly displaying enthusiasm concerning its acceleration,³¹⁵ one should not overlook the particularity of the audience he is addressing at that moment. He is talking specifically to his ‘brothers’, which presumably are men that, like him, have first overcome their very own kind of revenge; they have vanquished the heavy black snake of despising life for its need of the smaller life-denying man, which once staggered Zarathustra too and rendered him speechless. Before one has gathered the courage to perform such a strong act of will, one may hardly even speculate as to how nihilism may be accelerated by such individuals. Tentatively, we may suppose that the ‘divine’ laughter heard by Zarathustra after he has decapitated the heavy black snake could be a hint; perhaps *it* would suffice to hasten nihilism, as a laughter that makes everything ‘too light’ for the despisers who hear it and thus renders them vulnerable, as it did for the dwarf in ‘On the Vision and Riddle.’³¹⁶

³¹⁴ Kurzweil, *The Singularity is Near*, p.375

³¹⁵ TSZ Third Essay 12(20), p.182

³¹⁶ Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teaching*, p.165

Conclusion

My purpose with this entire treatise has been to explain the reasons for which I believe that it is an error to approach Nietzsche's 'doctrines' of will to power and eternal recurrence as actual Truth claims regarding the reality of things, and to present these two notions as inseparable and complementary. Our strong inclination to immediately ask whether what we perceive and become conscious of is true or false in the absolute sense has been cultivated for millennia and is now embodied as second nature. I have argued that Nietzsche attacks this mindset by questioning the worth of its end goal when it is weighed in terms of its impact on human life. The only way to reconcile the many apparent contradictions in his philosophy is to accept the premise that he abandons the issue of *knowledge* of Truth, and urges his readers to replace it with the problem of its *value*, which he contrasts with that of his own propositions. Truth for him is merely another perspective, and as such it can and will be eventually demoted in favor of another dominant interpretation of the perceived 'apparent' world. Modernity is seen as the transitional period which is marked by the self-consummation of Truth as overgrown consciousness and reckless pure knowledge drive. Nietzsche traces the philosophical inauguration of the ascetic ideal back to Plato, to whom he attributes the displacement of man's 'center of gravity' away from the earth and into a 'beyond.' Plato's best known metaphor for this ideal was the sun of his famous cave analogy, where it was eventually identified as 'the idea of the Good.' Founders of religions like Saint-Paul or Muhammad later presented vulgarized versions of the ideal by merging it with the deity and scripture of pre-existing monotheism, as well as streamlining and institutionalizing the

corresponding moral code. The striving for the ascetic ideal in the form of God gave desperately needed *meaning* to the pain of the weak, sickly, and slavish, and armed them with the power of words and creative imagination fed by intense desire for revenge. This enabled these many that despised their weak suffering bodies to revolt and achieve victory against their physically endowed and materially privileged masters, thus eliminating all obstacles standing in the way of their relentless ascent towards the ideal. The 'dark ages' or medieval period was essentially the era of zealous spreading of the revolt, riding on the momentum gathered from its most important victory of all against the Roman Empire. As this progressed, external resistance grew scarce, causing devotion to God and will to truthfulness to cast its gaze inwards at its own foundations, marking the beginning of a new era in which the quest after the ideal would begin to slowly secularize and transform into the drive to pure knowledge, thus stimulating interest for classical philosophy and giving birth to modern science. Today, Western culture no longer aims to become the Jesus of scripture; the transcendental angel; a pure soul reunited with the 'Holy Spirit.' Rather, the modern human being is as Icarus; he is the son of *technē*, increasingly defined by cybernetic engineering and advanced computing, seeking to build wings that will carry him upwards into heavens and sun. Nietzsche, most explicitly through his character Zarathustra, is the one that foretells the inevitability of the fall back down on earth, and the events that surround it. With him, the sun of Plato sets, and the earth becomes once again man's center of gravity.³¹⁷ But by putting the earth back at the center of man's universe, Zarathustra must face his own problem of 'evil' or *suffering*,³¹⁸ which is the stimuli for the creation of all meaning, and thus the very same

³¹⁷ TSZ First Part 22(2), p.66-67

³¹⁸ Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teaching*, p.171

thing that once prompted the invention of the ascetic ideal by weak human beings who sought deliverance from suffering by escaping life all together. Following his criticism of Truth and God as mere forms of the malignant ascetic ideal, Nietzsche's teaching is about the possibility of using consciousness, which is the most meaningful inheritance of two millennia of devotion to the ideal, to vanquish the spirit of heaviness within ourselves and escape the sun's gravitational field. Individuals capable of doing this would prepare the way for an entirely new kind of human being, one which *consciously* affirms life and earthly conditions of suffering as eternally recurring will to power. Zarathustra's metaphor for this cheerful affirmation is *dancing*, which is the embodiment of order and rhythm, and defies gravity but at the same time requires it.

To be sure, at present the ascetic ideal still pulls tremendous weight, and even in 2013 Nietzsche's philosophy remains one for the future. Individuals dwarfed by the old spirit of heaviness hold the hinges of power and flap the wings of technology, carrying an ever bigger portion of mankind upwards towards the ideal in its latest form, that of a democratized secular global human society. What remains of the attached moral code is now articulated as the spreading of absolute equality and human rights across the entire species. But the free spirits for whom Nietzsche writes ought to realize that the striving for the universal is always a cover for the desire to dive right into nothingness. The notion of universality itself is a contradiction; a concrete example are democratic regimes which, in their desperate pursuit to give equivalent importance to all public issues and put every group or interest on an equal footing, inevitably end up increasingly neglecting and mishandling all facets of governance. Even in the most abstract realm of metaphysics, the

innate forms and configuration of consciousness do not permit us to escape the fact that perception requires at least duality; an imagined object and subject existing in time and space. Some-thing can only be a thing for another thing; if *it* is everything or the sole thing, then ‘thing-ness’ is not present and thus it is equivalent to no-thing. Hence, the materialistic or mechanistic theory starts to refute itself as the scientific project frantically strips the ascetic ideal of any remaining clothing. Subsequently, one starts foreseeing the imminent fall back onto the earth and is once again faced with the essential character of our predispositions for living on it. Those most weakened by their efforts to escape earthly conditions will succumb to fatalism and descend into despair and ‘unembellished’ nihilism. But for stronger natures, these events redefine the human being as the animal that measures and weighs; as *will to power*. This enables select specimens among modern men to become aware of and utilize their tremendous potential for excelling in this activity, granted by their exceptionally vast and sensible consciousness, which is the latest and thus still most unfinished and unstrong development in the organic.³¹⁹ As that by which we can *name* things, it allows us to “impose upon becoming the character of being– that is the supreme will to power.”³²⁰ Faced with the untenability of a moral world order, those able to overcome their addiction to the idealism of morality and their longing for the ascetic ideal, incarnate the initiation of a new experiment that aims to determine who can command and who must obey.³²¹ Various forms of Platonism have been used to tame the human animal so as to protect the weakest most endangered individuals from perishing at the hands of those which embodied a chaotic aggregation of strong passions. The latter, as the incarnation of very potent but disordered and thus ‘weak’ will to power,

³¹⁹ GS 11, p.84

³²⁰ WP 617, p.330

³²¹ TSZ Third Part 12(25), p.184-185

to which the term *tyrant* refers, have been identified early on by Plato himself, and by many others ever since, as the most serious threat to the well being and survival of the human species. The worship of the ascetic ideal and the disproportionate growth of consciousness are thus protective measures and reactions to the oppression or imminent danger of tyrannical regimes. The cure provided by Platonism involves the repression of the passions by subordinating them to the intellect and its realm of ideas. Once made accessible to the masses in the religious form of Christianity, the effectiveness of the remedy became widespread and thus marked the beginning of a 2000 years long period in which instincts, desires, and passions would be abated while consciousness grew. This means that only two ‘soul regimes’ have been man’s main preoccupation until now: the threatening lack of order among man’s strongest passions which manifested itself as oppression through random acts of violence and tyranny, or the tamed ‘civilized’ human animal that represses his instincts and relies increasingly on his intellect in order to survive. Nietzsche makes the very sensible case that, because the latter has been so successful for such a long period of time, mankind has forgotten that life itself is *nothing but* this complex of passions, instincts, and desires in constant flux. Consequently, he reminds us that consciousness itself also rests on them, no matter how inhibited and weakened they are, and thus in seeking to protect our existence from the peril of tyrannical regimes, we deny life’s most essential components.

Subsequently, just as the last time the survival of our species was severely menaced, a new regime or constitution³²² will emerge out of the will to power’s

³²² One can take regime and constitution here to refer to both a ‘soul’ regime or ‘bodily’ constitution of drives and passions, as well as an actual political regime and constitution of law.

permanent seeking to enhance and preserve itself, and act as a remedy for the sickness associated with the current state of ‘civilization.’ Zarathustra may be seen as an early prophetic figure of this new era, envisioned as one in which human beings use their consciousness and intellectual abilities to create themselves as strong will to power; in other words, to *order* their passions and impose a hierarchy on their complex of drives, rather than be consumed by their chaotic predisposition or despise and desperately repress them. Nietzsche’s call for ‘free spirits’ to become immoralists is therefore absolutely *not* a call for random acts of violence, erotic depravity, and the domination of everything and everyone through abuse of power, as clumsy critics often misunderstand it to be. Rather, what he aims to teach is that desires and passions such as lust and sensuality, anger, pride, selfishness, or even envy, ought not to be systematically denied and suppressed as a matter of principle. It is certainly prudent to be weary of their dangerous expressions, but the vision communicated through his character Zarathustra and throughout his books is that rather than forbid them completely and strive for a fantasized ideal world or state of being where we are rid of them, we now have the capacity to experiment with the possibility of arranging them in a way that is beneficial to our health and strengthening. For instance, envy is certainly destructive when it prompts stealing or destruction, and when repressed it has disastrous consequences and turns poisonous, as explained here earlier. But an intelligent man liberated from the chains of modern convention and morality grants himself the possibility of embracing his envious sentiment as an unpaired source of motivation for self-improvement, and thus accepts his passion as the root of great strength that it can be. By doing so, he may then surmount his initial state of inferiority or lack, and successfully fulfill his desire for the object of envy.

The same could be said concerning anger, which is undeniably inappropriate in many situations and has an obvious negative impact on one's physical and psychological well being when it is constantly repressed, but can for instance be a strong ally in war or in any type of competition. One can imagine what a formidable combatant and competitor a combination of Achilles and Socrates would constitute, as an individual that could discipline powerful vital instincts, and demonstrate his ability to constantly channel their release appropriately and cheerfully, by virtue of stalwart healthy unison between intuition and thought.

As previously stated, the way forward envisioned by Nietzsche is marked by an important transition, which is to give birth to nothing less than a new kind of human animal. The pretension that we fully comprehend the 'Overman' would be highly presumptuous, given that Nietzsche himself abstained from it. In my opinion, a more appropriate view is to consider that he invites those who are strong, healthy, and of the adventurous kind to experiment and risk living differently. As indicated many times already, we may only 'know' what we have experienced, and thus Nietzsche's message to mankind's best elements is to summon the courage to live solitary lives away from the decadence of modernity, and investigate the possibility of breeding human beings that would arm the 'pagan' splendor and health of the Homeric with the weapon of tremendous intellectual capacity and science. Nietzsche himself somewhat embodies this as he seems to share characteristics of both a philosopher and a sophist. He was a scholar and a professor, and produced a collection of books which ended up revolving around his fictional representation of a historical character named Zarathustra. In this and in his

project of reversing values so as to cure a disease with which he diagnosed mankind, he is strikingly similar to the preeminent philosopher Plato. But he is also undeniably different, and explicitly positions himself on many instances against philosophy as it has been understood and practiced from Socrates onwards.

An interesting validation of the above conclusion appears when comparing him with the ‘men of motion’ epitomized in the *Theaetetus*. The adepts of Heraclitean or Homeric doctrines are described by Theodorus in that particular dialogue as always on the move, never standing still, answering questions with little enigmatic phrases and strange turns of language, and being careful not to reach any stable definite conclusions.³²³ It seems to me that Nietzsche’s approach is similar to what one finds in the *Theaetetus*, given the number of maxims and short aphorisms his books contain, together with his very peculiar writing style, and his explicit aversion to dogmatism. For instance, he chose to end ‘*Beyond Good & Evil*’ with an aphorism in which he diminishes the value and questions the authority of any definitive propositions or group of words immortalized on paper.³²⁴ Additionally, Zarathustra himself confesses that he is “a wanderer and a mountain-climber.” [...] ‘I do not love the plains, and it seems that I cannot sit still for long.’”³²⁵ The combination of the ‘sophist’ and the ‘philosopher’ occurs when the latter’s pursuit of knowledge has led him to a confrontation with his own unphilosophical foundations. This is the ultimate test of one’s strength, and if one can summon the courage to overcome it, one can proceed with self-improvement and healing of one’s embodied ‘bad conscience’. This experience determines the remainder of one’s

³²³ Plato, *Theaetetus* 179e-180b, p.51

³²⁴ BGE 296, p.236-237

³²⁵ TSZ Third Part 1, p.131

life, and aims one towards the same state of convalescence that Zarathustra finds himself in at the end of his journey, assuming the role of *teacher of the Overman*. As one can gather from reading through the epic, his foremost student is himself, seeing that he must learn how to will his own future liberated from the chains of the past, thus engaging in actual willing rather than being willed by 'exterior' fluctuations of force that restrict his action to mere re-actions. In achieving this, one will necessarily embody new life-affirming values for which new metaphors will appear in consciousness. Hence, it is more than probable that a new language will accompany the advent of new types of human beings that are loyal to the earth. Their will is to be free in the sense that it will be liberated from the poisonous revenge which infects the body when instincts are denied expression and thus turned inwards. The notion of 'free will' as the ability to make decisions exclusively or mainly according to one's conscious reasoning is entirely dependent on one's faith in the ascetic ideal and disappears together with it. Whether one is a 'free spirit' as Nietzsche envisions it is therefore not a *choice*; as he says in 'The Anti-Christ,' "the decision is given in advance; no one is free to choose here. One either *is* Chandala or one is *not*."³²⁶ Those predisposed for the task Nietzsche has in mind will respond to his books, which he extends as fish-hooks designed to catch people with the strength for such a calling.³²⁷ The specifics of what this monumental enterprise involves at the individual level, including of course interactions with the collectivity, is a very broad topic worthy of its own dissertations and books. Furthermore, the extent to which such an individual should engage with the progression of nihilism remains unclear to me as of now. Certainly, one's destructive labor and creative efforts ought to be directed

³²⁶ AC 60, p.196

³²⁷ EH III 'BGE' I, p.77

primarily at oneself, in getting rid of one's embodied 'bad conscience' and habitual relapse into the web of nothingness which lives on the future's blood.³²⁸

The revaluation of values includes the overhauling of philosophy itself, and therefore it does not happen in books or laws, but is incarnated by self-cultivating individuals that seek themselves in solitude.³²⁹ One value which Nietzsche insists on attacking more than others is that which wants pity and compassion to be held as virtues. Because it is essentially the contagion of suffering, pity is described as *practical* nihilism.³³⁰ Likewise, 'will to nothingness' is said to be construed by the union between nausea for man and compassion for him; the former is the sickness of the weak and unprivileged, and the latter is the spreading of it. The danger of course is that the strong elements be infected in this way;³³¹ Zarathustra himself must overcome pity and instead learn to enjoy himself as he says all strong ones ought to do.³³² Given that the herd champions compassion, constantly pitying one another and themselves, the 'free spirit' embraces isolation so as to avoid infection. Although, this does not necessarily entail a life of uncompromising reclusiveness; as it is with the actual immune system of the human body, one must face contagion on occasion so that the accumulated strength and the endurance of one's health are reinforced or reaffirmed. Furthermore, the vast topic of friendship can also be entirely re-explored in light of the argument presented here. Free spirits would certainly benefit from sparring with other strong-natured friends that would act as both rivals and companions. For those of the pitying herd that still thirsts for

³²⁸ TSZ Third Part 5(3), p.148

³²⁹ TSZ First Part 22, p.64-68

³³⁰ AC 7, p.130

³³¹ GM Second Essay 14, p.89

³³² TSZ Second Part 3, p.75-78

revenge over past and present suffering, such a life and happiness are unfathomable. But those with great strength within themselves may seize the privilege of living ‘beyond good and evil’, away from the morality of convention and the sickly air of nihilism. Their strength in will to power is both the destroyer of old valuations and the creator of new ones. Inventors of new values have always lived away from the market-place and from fame; Zarathustra teaches that the Overman begins where the state ends.³³³

In addition to the tremendous risk inherent in engaging undiscovered paths, also emerges the increasing danger that the earth to which one swears to stay true may suffer irreversible damage at the hands of the active nihilism manifested in modern man’s unrestrained technological drive. This signals a great crisis in the future, with which Nietzsche predicts his name will be associated.³³⁴ Nonetheless, the preparatory human beings, for whom he merely sets beacons with his books, will continue to incarnate life’s best attempts at overcoming itself, and affirm this kind of life by tracing their own path and values. As Zarathustra does, they will respond to any that question them thus: “‘This – is just *my* way: –where is yours?’ Thus I answered those who asked of me ‘the way’. For *the* way – does not exist!’”³³⁵

³³³ TSZ First Part 11 & 12, p.43-47

³³⁴ EH IV 1, p.88

³³⁵ TSZ Third Part 11, p.169

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