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The 2010 volume of Animus is dedicated to the thought of Friedrich Nietzsche, an ironic and profoundly difficult thinker. This volume covers the ethical, political, aesthetic and religious content of Nietzsche's philosophy. Nietzsche for many sets the agenda for contemporary thought. Heidegger famously argued that for Nietzsche the securing of absolute dominion over the entire earth is the secret goad that prods modern man again and again to assume new forms. On this view, Nietzsche highlighted and radicalized the modern notion that human subjectivity is the source of knowledge and mastery. On the other hand, Heidegger acknowledged that Nietzsche repudiated the view that subjectivity has a principle, a united centre. In other words, Nietzsche affirmed some aspects of modern subjectivity and rejected other aspects of it. The chasm between these two attitudes opened up a space which has allowed generations of commentators to define and debate various positions, even those which go against Nietzsche's own intention.

Renato Cristi criticizes the postmodern view that Nietzsche opposed authority in general and the authority of the state in particular. This view exaggerates Nietzsche's individualistic tendencies and ignores the important role that non-normative political authority plays in his thought. Nietzsche's preference for the aristocratic states of antiquity and his antagonism towards the modern democratic state should be taken into account. The modern democratic state demands normative authority based on popular consent, while the ancient aristocratic state made room for the non-normative authority of charismatic leaders as well as tradition.

Daniel Brandes revisits the complicated question concerning Hannah Arendt’s debt to Nietzsche. Focusing on the promising activity as a privileged site of encounter, he suggests that the common tendency to emphasize the heroic and agonistic elements of Arendt’s account distorts both her dependence on, and departure from, Nietzsche. Instead, he emphasizes the neglected dimensions of passivity, affectivity, and futurity that mark both theorists’ account of the promise. Brandes argues that Arendt’s manner of framing the promising agent’s exposure to a radically undetermined future – not via a resolute will to interpretation, but rather a plea for forgiveness – proves decisive.

In the Birth of Tragedy Friedrich Nietzsche hails Wagner and especially his opera Tristan and Isolde as the harbinger of a Dionysian rebirth in German music. It is notorious, however, that in later works such as The Case of Wagner and Contra Wagner Nietzsche turned against Wagner as an arch-ascetic whose late opera Parsifal represents a reversion to Christianity and its life denying spirit. Bernard Wills’ paper argues that Nietzsche's polemic is on the whole a distorted picture of Wagner and of Parsifal especially. Nonetheless, Wills concedes that however wayward some of Nietzsche's specific criticisms might be, there is a genuine criticism contained in his polemic. Nietzsche is correct to sense a liberal Christian humanism at work in Parsifal that is, from his standpoint, unacceptable.
In the past two decades, public sociologists have sought to revive what C. Wright Mills called a 'democratic society of publics'. The publics that such sociologists promote are intellectual ones that resemble Socratic dialogues in which people search for the good order. Nietzsche criticizes such publics for their plebeian character and introduces an alternative type of publics: aesthetic publics. Rather than Socratic dialogues, the art of tragedy is the model of such publics. Marinus Ossewaarde argues that the art of tragedy sheds a different light on the concept of publics and can only enrich the sociological discipline.

Edward Andrew argues that although we thoughtlessly use the Nietzschean language of (moral, religious, aesthetic and cognitive) values to encompass our moral principles, our intuitions of the holy and the beautiful, and our need for truth, Nietzsche showed that “values” are the creations or products of human will, not discoveries of intelligence, illuminations of love, or exigencies of need. Against talk of “absolute values” or “objective values”, which assumes there can be values without evaluation, Nietzsche was clear that nothing is intrinsically good or valuable in itself; values are human choices, estimations, decisions, the expressions of human will. An alternative language is more appropriate to communicate what we hold to be intrinsically valuable, namely Würde (dignity or worthiness). Human beings have value if we can use them for our own purposes but they have an invaluable dignity beyond whatever purposes we may have in mind for them. Activities may have an intrinsic worthiness whatever the market demand or current estimation establishes their value to be.

David Peddle's essay is a commentary on Part One of Thus Spake Zarathustra. He argues that the concept of the overman which develops in Part One must be understood in relation to the parodistic and tragic elements of the text. In particular, Peddle advances the claim that Zarathustra's notion of the overman derives from a tragic awareness unavailable to nineteenth century humanism.

Kenneth Kierans argues that what is essential in Nietzsche's redemptive vision is his determination of human finiteness, human relativity, against which the will exerts its enormous power. As for the eternal recurrence, it transcends the will to power, but also contradicts it. That is at once the greatness and the weakness of Nietzsche's philosophy. His affirmation of eternal recurrence alternates with the negativity, the endlessness, of human willing. The affirmation and the negativity do not coincide, precisely because Nietzsche insists on the finiteness and illusory character of the ego even as he exposes its infinite, absolute character.
NIETZSCHE ON AUTHORITY AND THE STATE

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I have never known anyone whom, judged in the most universal way, I have felt as an authority; at the same time, I have a deep need for such a person
Nietzsche

Postmodern interpretations of Nietzsche emphasize his aversion towards authority. His work is seen as seeking to deconstruct the metaphysical foundations of authority and devoted mainly to personal emancipation and individual self-creation. For Michel Foucault, Nietzsche is the precursor of a philosophy of disparity, dispersion and difference, a philosophy that undermines unity and stability, ontological bulwarks that support the claims of authority. According to Foucault, Nietzschean genealogy "disturbs what was previously considered immobile; it fragments what was thought unified" (Foucault, 1984: 82). The historical sense proper to genealogy dissolves the metaphysical and supra-historical; it consists of "the acuity of a glance that distinguishes, separates, and disperses...– the kind of dissociating view... capable of shattering the unity of man's being through which it was thought that he could extend his sovereignty to the events of the past" (ibid: 87). Nietzsche privileges freedom understood as change and dispersion, and dissolves the unity and stability demanded by authority. Alan Schrift, in agreement with Foucault, writes that the "question of authority and its legitimation is a central issue in Nietzsche's writings... Whether he is dismantling the authority of the moral-theological tradition, deconstructing the authority of God, or excising the hidden metaphysical authority within language, Nietzsche's refusal to legitimate any figure of authority remains constant" (Schrift, 2008: 1). Similarly, Richard Rorty associates Nietzsche with Kierkegaard, Baudelaire and Proust, and considers him to be an exemplary liberal ironist (Rorty, 1989: xiv). He acknowledges that he sponsors a determinate political vision which is "clearly anti-liberal." But Nietzsche’s anti-liberalism is "adventitious and idiosyncratic," and his ideal of self-creativity does not translate into social policy (Rorty, 1989: 99). Nietzsche, a free spirit, preaches abstention from politics and utopian individualism.

The most poignant manifestation of Nietzsche’s refusal to legitimate authority is his

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1 For comments and discussion on earlier versions of this paper I thank Don Dombowsky, Gary Foster, Javier Ibáñez-Noé, Vanessa Lemm, Graeme Nicholson, Ashwani Peetush, Miguel Vatter, Howard Williams and Byron Williston.
2 "Ich habe keinen Menschen kennen gelernt, den ich in den allgemeinsten Urtheilen als Autorität empfunden hätte: während ich ein tiefes Bedürfniß nach einem solchen Menschen hatte" (Nietzsche, KSA 11, 26 [460]).
3 According to Schrift, Nietzsche shares Derrida’s “deconstructive critique of the subject as a privileged centre of discourse in the context of his project of delegitimizing authority” (Schrift, 2008: 1)
abomination of the state as universal guarantor of security and welfare. His *cri de coeur* is: “the least possible state” (*Human All Too Human [HATH]*, §473; *A*, §179). Any form of public intervention should be considered a grievous hindrance to the full development of creative individualities. No social or institutional imperative can stand in the way of human creativity. Nietzsche’s (anti)metaphysical intuitions confirm this avowal of individual creative autonomy. He rejects what he perceives as the authoritarianism of a metaphysics based on the notions of “unity, identity, duration, substance, cause, thinghood, being” (*Twilight of the Idols [TI]*, III 5). As a protection against authoritarian collectivism, his epistemology is nominalist and does away with the notion of truth as discovery (cf. *KSA* 1, 878-81). Only perspectivism can ensure social pluralism as a safeguard against state centralization. Anti-authoritarianism is possibly the most prominent of the attributes postmodernism confers on Nietzsche. As Peter Berkowitz notes, “exaltation of the creative will instills an indiscriminate contempt for authority” (Berkowitz, 1995: 269).

Additionally, Nietzsche’s antipathy towards politics is seen as a confirmation of his rejection of state authority. In *Schopenhauer as Educator [SE]* he writes: “for he who loves the *furor philosophicus* will have no time for the *furor politicus*” (*SE*, section §7). Accordingly, many commentators deny the political orientation of his thought. Thomas H. Brobjer observes that Nietzsche “very rarely speaks explicitly of politics” (Brobjer, 1998: 301), and according to Schrift, Nietzsche “seemed to be almost entirely disinterested in politics” (Schrift, 2000: 221). Bruce Detwiler interprets this antipathy more appropriately as determined by a “thoroughgoing disgust with the modern ‘petty politics’ that [desolates] the German spirit,” and by his opposition to turn “the state into a new idol” (Detwiler, 1990: 60-1). His refusal actively to participate in politics matches his distrust of the modern state which he sees as an impediment for the development of culture. Only an instrumental approach to politics could make sense to him (ibid: 66; cf. Conway, 2008: 38).

In this essay I challenge the anti-authoritarian understanding of Nietzsche by showing that his refusal to grant legitimacy to the state refers only to the modern state. He is critical of the normative authority demanded by the liberal state, an authority based on antecedent consensus.

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4 Much has been written about Nietzsche’s abhorrence of the state. Walter Kaufmann thinks that Nietzsche was “basically anti-political” and for this reason he opposed both the idolatry of the state and political liberalism” (Kaufmann, 1968: 412). Again, according to Leslie Paul Thiele, for Nietzsche politics “constitutes a threat to the individual. The purpose of the state...ought to be the cultivation of individuals. But this is never the case” (Thiele, 1990: 47). Other scholars refer indiscriminately to Nietzsche’s “anti-state animus” (Hunt, 1991: 43), to his “critique of the state” (Brobjer, 1998; 306). A more balanced view is expressed by Don Dombowski: “Nietzsche does not reject all states or political constitutions, rather he rejects the democratic and socialist states... He praises, for example, the Greek state, the Roman state, the military (Bonapartist) state and his contemporary Russian state (under Tsar Alexander III)” (Dombowsky, 2001: 389).

5 A decade ago, articles published by Thomas Brodjer and Alan Schrift in Nietzsche Studien, sparked a lively discussion (Brodjer, 1998 & Schrift, 2000). Don Dombowsky (2001 & 2002; cf. Brodjer, 2001 & Schrift, 2002) convincingly responded to the claims made by those authors. In their recently published anthology of Nietzsche’s political commentary, Dombowsky, together with Frank Cameron, have demonstrated that ‘Nietzsche was an observer of and responded to the political events which shaped the Bismarckian era’ (Cameron & Dombowsky, 2008).
At the same time, he grants legitimacy to non-normative authority, either charismatic or traditional, like the one held by the aristocratic states of antiquity, and by modern strong commanders like Napoleon. I discuss this issue in three distinct moments of Nietzsche’s intellectual development. (1) In his early work (1862-74), Nietzsche assigns an instrumental role to the state, namely facilitating the procreation of the artistic genius. This aim can only be attained by the Olympian existence of an aristocracy secured by the enforcement of slave labour. This is most evident in his essay “The Greek State” where the authority of the state is said to derive from the natural subordination of slaves. Slavery is the necessary condition for the development of an aristocratic culture. This is directly at odds with the liberal notion of state authority. Liberalism does not see authority as naturally given, but as something that is normatively grounded on an antecedent social contract or consensus. Consent is necessary due to the liberal claim that the equality among individuals is natural. In contrast, Nietzsche believes in natural inequality and derives authority from natural hierarchies. Nietzsche’s anti-liberalism is already visible in an essay, written in 1862, where he celebrates Napoleon III and the monarchical principle to the detriment of liberal constitutionalism. (2) In HATH (1878), Nietzsche develops another facet of the notion of natural subordination conceived as the original foundation of authority. He understands the authority of the classical state as subordinate to religion. The triumph of liberal equality severs all links with religion and hierarchical conceptions. The state loses legitimacy and this marks the beginning of its extinction. What Nietzsche fears most are the revolutionary upheavals that follow the extinction of the state, and is willing to compromise with democracy to delay that occurrence. At the same time, he supports Bismarck’s promulgation of anti-socialist legislation in 1878. (3) In 1881, a change takes place in his argumentative strategy when he realizes that the failure of that legislation has led Bismark to promulgate welfare policies that further erode aristocratic authority. He now argues that the worst adversary of state authority is democracy. This is the point of departure of his campaign against current morality which he blames for the growth and consolidation of democracy. Simultaneously, he initiates a campaign in favour of a new aristocratic morality, a key element of which is an ethics of command and obedience. With respect to the authority of the state, his argumentative strategy has a dual aspect. He rejects the attempt by liberal contractualism normatively to ground the legitimacy of the state in a social contract, and at the same time, he defends the non-normative legitimacy of non-liberal authorities, both charismatic figures and the authority held by tradition.

I

On 24 September 1862, when Bismarck becomes Prime Minister of Prussia, Nietzsche is seventeen years old. Twenty six years later, on 3 January 1889, when he collapses on the streets of Turin, Bismarck is still Germany’s Iron Chancellor. Nietzsche’s adult life coincides with the duration of that regime and is pre-eminently determined by the culture and political conceptions current during the Bismarckian era. Nietzsche’s interest in his political context is already in evidence during his years at Pforta. In 1862, he writes an essay in which he lauds the victory of Cavaignac over the socialists, “of the monarchical principle over the republic” (Cameron &

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6 This reference to the monarchical principle, by means of which the subject of constituent power stands above the constitution, coincides with Nietzsche’s view of Napoleon I in GS §23 as one who can claim exceptional rights and who stands above morality (Dombowsky, 2008: 350-351; cf. Cristi, 2010).
Dombowsky, 2008: 27), and then the coup d’etat of Napoleon III in 1851, which Nietzsche justifies on the basis of his charismatic authority. Nietzsche privileges the authority exercised by concrete individuals as opposed to the liberal rule of abstract normativity. Accordingly, in *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* he praises the Greeks for whom “what is more abstract coalesces into a person”, as opposed to the moderns, for whom “the most personal sublimates into an abstraction” (*KSA* 1, 815; cf. Bertram, 2009: 171).

The Birth of Tragedy [*BT*] and Untimely Meditations have been interpreted as engaging in a “fierce attack” against the state, a “motif that remains characteristic of all of Nietzsche’s works” (Kaufmann, 1950: 123). Nietzsche proclaims, in *BT*’s dedication to Wagner, that art is the “most elevated task and true metaphysical activity” (*BT*, Preface). At the same time he declares that he sees no opposition between “aesthetic indulgence” and “patriotic enthusiasm” (ibid). This is significant for it constitutes an acknowledgment that the book does not have a purely contemplative intent. Nietzsche ponders on “a serious German problem... a problem that lies at the very center of German hopes” (ibid). He believes that Germany needs a cultural rebirth and is confident that it can be attained. This is the historical context that makes it urgent to address aesthetic issues. Beneath the present artificial and decadent German culture Nietzsche discerns “the noble heart of popular culture... an immemorial, majestic and internally healthy force” (*BT*, §23). Later in 1886, in the prologue for a new edition of the book, Nietzsche acknowledges its optimistic spirit, but admits that he had placed his hopes where there was nothing to hope for. Germany, “which had recently demonstrated a will to rule Europe and also the strength to rule over it,” had given up on this task and found itself at that point in a process of “transition towards mediocrity, democracy and other modern ideas” (*BT*, Prologue §6). This observation may give us a hint about the direction of Nietzsche’s attack on the state. He sees parliamentary democracy on the rise in Germany and this has meant a weakening of the authority of the executive state. In turn, this constitutes a grave impediment for the advancement of culture. Culture, he acknowledges in *SE*, is “fairly independent of the welfare of the state” (*SE*, §4) and constitutes the highest goal of humankind. A well-ordered state is one which places itself at the service of culture and does not step beyond this ancillary role. It is clear that Nietzsche is not critical of a state that strongly promotes culture. His attacks are directed against a conception of the state which regards itself as “the highest goal of humankind” and which affirms that a human being “has no higher duty than to serve the state” (*SE*, §4).

Confirmation of this view is found in “The Greek State”, an essay originally intended to be included in *BT*. Nietzsche here postulates that two essential modern ideas, the dignity of human being and the dignity of labour, distinguish it from classical culture. The Greeks were able to develop a superior culture by exploiting slave labour. This was then, and continues to be now, a necessary condition for the growth of a superior culture. “The misery of workers must increase to make it possible for a small number of Olympic men to generate the world of art” (*KSA* 1, 767). The democratic state, grounded in popular consent, cannot aspire to develop a true culture. An aristocratic state is required for that purpose, a state whose matrix is a superhuman executive authority, a figure of divine proportions that can grant legitimacy to state authority. The modern democratic state cannot assume an authentic cultural task, which Nietzsche defines

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7 Because of the interest shown here by Nietzsche about what determines the social and political identity of a nation Tracy Strong takes *The Birth of Tragedy* as “obviously the most political of his books” (Strong, 1996: 134).
as the breeding of superior human specimens. The Greek state, in contrast, was the “iron clamp” (ibid: 769) that allowed society to transcend its natural condition, the *bellum omnium contra omnes*. This allowed Greece to attain a superior culture favourable to the development of the Olympian genius.

When Nietzsche turns his attention to his own political milieu he perceives a dangerously atrophied state. This coincides with a loss of a “state instinct” (*Staatstendenz*) on the part of individuals, who, as a result, attribute value to it only “when it coincides with their own interest” (ibid: 772). The aim that guides them is the freedom to pursue their own ends without state interference. They promote “the politics of their convenience” (ibid: 772-3) and it is inconceivable that “they could sacrifice themselves in favour of a state instinct when they lack that instinct” (ibid: 773). Individuals seek protection for their own projects; they long for peace and the avoidance of war. This they are able to secure through the dissemination of “a liberal, optimistic view of the world, that has its roots in the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, in a philosophy that is un-German, genuinely Latin, superficial and devoid of metaphysics” (ibid: 773). The antidote to prevent the state instinct to become a money instinct is “war, always war” (ibid: 774). War reveals the true essence of the state for it contributes to draw strict hierarchical lines of command and obedience, typical of a “belligerent society” in whose apex one finds “the military genius... the original founder of the state” (ibid: 775). Everything else becomes a docile instrument at the service of the aims set by the military genius. The obedience demanded by the military commanders is the reason why the dignity of human beings and the dignity of labour can find no place in a well-constituted state.

The goal here is the preservation and advancement of aristocratic culture. Only culture possesses an intrinsic value; everything else retains instrumental value. “The proper aim of the State [is] the Olympian existence and ever-renewed procreation and preparation of the genius, compared with which all other things are only tools, expedients and factors towards realization” (ibid: 776). Slaves are instruments par excellence and a society that appreciates culture must necessarily be a slave society. Such a society requires a state that sponsors an ethics of command and obedience. The state must remain in the service of an aristocratic society and culture, and serves as an “iron clamp” to establish and preserve the institution of slavery. The modern state, in contrast, has been demeaned by liberals who urge “the emancipation of the masses from the rule of great individuals,” and seek to dismantle the most sacred order, namely “the servitude of the masses, their subservient obedience” (*KSA* 1, 698).  

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8 Nietzsche owes his early conception of the state to Burckhardt (cf. Regent, 2008: 635). Together with other political historians, like Treitschke and Sybel (whose lectures Nietzsche attends while a student at the University of Bonn), Burckhardt adheres to the agenda of the right-wing section of the National Liberal Party whose motto is *Bildung und Besitz*. These historians are conservative liberals who support free trade policies combined with a strong government. They are suspicious of parliamentary democracy and the equalization of rights, and support Bismarck’s anti-socialist legislation. Typically, Burckhardt, as a staunch conservative, defends patrician authority, and, as a liberal, stands for individual freedom, particularly freedom of education. Alfred von Martin perceptively notices the conservative liberal duality characteristic of Burckhardt: “Genuine authority cannot be grounded on the sheer reality of power. Authority, in its highest sense, is a conservative notion, which, in the case of Burckhardt, combines a liberal notion of freedom to make up an anti-revolutionary *complexio*” (von Martin, 1941: 65;
In May 1878, Nietzsche publishes *HATH* which he dedicates to Voltaire. He takes a distance from Wagner’s attempt to renew German culture and reconciles himself with Enlightenment ideals, which he radically distinguishes from those of the French Revolution. He favours Voltaire’s moderation and rejects Rousseau’s radicalism. He thinks that “the revolution energizes the most savage energies” and cannot be “regulator, architect, artist and enrich human nature” (*HATH* §463).

In an extensive section titled *Religion and Government* (*HATH*, §472), Nietzsche analyzes the decline and fall of the modern state. This development, determined by the relation between the state and religion, has two stages. Initially, the state maintains a close internal relationship with religion. One determinate social class takes custody of the state and uses religion as a form of legitimation. “As Napoleon understands it, even today, without the help of priests no power may be ‘legitimate’ (*legitim*)” (ibid). The second stage in this development takes place when religion begins to be perceived as a mere instrument of legitimation. This is typical of liberal regimes. When this happens religion ceases to be public or civic, and turns into a purely private affair. Religious pluralism, a consequence of privatization, gives rise to numberless conflicts. Without the unity secured by the state, multiple religious manifestations, previously repressed, ascend to the surface and generate sectarian conflicts. To face this situation rulers adopt a hostile attitude towards religion. Concurrently, those who take religion seriously adopt a hostile attitude towards the state. The transitional conflicts that ensue further erode the authority of the state which is no longer perceived as a “transcendent (*überweltliche*) institution” (ibid). Among other things, it cannot guarantee the compliance of state commands. Individuals do not feel obligated to obey the laws and majoritarian politics become decisive. “Private enterprises come into action and absorb the functions discharged by the state” (ibid). The most essential of state functions, namely the protection of persons, is privatized, and this, more than anything else, accelerates the death of the state.9

Nietzsche summarizes these two stages of the process of state extinction. He asserts that the state can sustain itself only when its interests coincide with those of religion. When that identity vanishes the foundations that sustain state legitimacy collapse. “When religion evaporates the state inevitably loses its ancient veil of Isis and ceases to inspire reverence” (ibid). This process of secularization is spearheaded by democracy, by the sovereignty of the people. When the authority of the people dissolves divine authority, the outcome is the dissolution of state authority. But this does not end here. There may be an intermediary stage that may delay the extinction of the state and the rise of revolutionary chaos. Hoping that this stage can take effect, Nietzsche concludes with an exhortation that reveals how much he loathes the politics of revolution: “Let us trust the prudence and the self-interest of individuals who seek to prolong the existence of the state for a while and reject the destructive experiments of impatient and fanatical

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9 In *The Twilight of Idols*, Nietzsche confirms this diagnosis. “Democracy has always been the declining form of the power to organize: I have already, in *Human All Too Human*, characterized modern democracy, together with its imperfect manifestations such as the ‘German Reich’, as the decaying form of the state” (*TI* IX, §39)
This section shows that Nietzsche is not hostile against the state per se, but only against bureaucratic, administrative states legitimated by a manufactured normativity. In 1878, with the social tension in Germany rising, Bismarck fears an explosion like the French Commune in 1871. This accounts for the passage of his anti-socialist legislation on October 19 of that same year. Nietzsche supports these emergency measures. In the summer of 1879, after resigning his position at Basel, he writes *The Wanderer and his Shadow* [WS] where he charges the Revolution with setting “the Enlightenment on its fanatical head.” The Enlightenment, which is “so alien to the Revolution,” has now become “violent and impulsive.” The essential task is to cleanse it from this “impurity” and proceed “to strangle the Revolution at birth” (WS, §221). Nietzsche understands that he must proceed with caution. He announces his decision to remain in seclusion, “to withdraw into concealment,” not just because of his reticence to participate in politics, but also strategically as a way to accumulate a capital of ideas with which to confront these “very dangerous times” (WS, §229). Strategic is also his qualified acceptance of democracy. The democratization of Europe is now “irresistible” and may help as prophylaxis against revolutionary upsurges. Nietzsche appeals to democracy as a protection for the “orchards of culture” that may be “destroyed overnight by wild and senseless torrents” (WS, §275).

III

Bismarck soon realizes that his anti-socialist legislation is not successful and thus decides to modify his strategy. In November 1881 he reaches a compromise with the socialist movement by inaugurating policies conducive to a welfare state. In the Gay *Science* [GS], Nietzsche opposes these concessions and radicalizes his rejection of the discourse of equality and social security. He thinks that the European situation approximates that of China where for millennia life goes on without disruption and the desire for change has died (GS, §24). In *Dawn* [D], Nietzsche recognizes in this “fashionable morality”, characterized by the importance given to “sympathy for others” and the urge to “distance life from any danger” (D, §174). The Christian altruism feeds the growth of socialism. What is now seen as most perilous is the “development of rationality, of greed, of the desire for independence”, in one word, the eclosion of “the individual” (D, §173). This is the point of departure, as Nietzsche will acknowledge later in *Ecce Homo* [EH], of his “campaign against morality” (EH, AI) and marks the beginning of his despair on the possibility of restoring an aristocratic state. Bismarck’s capitulation in the face of socialism makes it evident that the liberal contractual state is not an appropriate vehicle to foster an aristocratic hegemony. Bismarck’s state succumbed to the Christian imperatives

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10 This section plays a crucial role in Tamsin Shaw’s argument. Based on Nietzsche’s claim that modern states “must be perceived to be legitimate” (Shaw, 2007: 4), she argues that for Nietzsche the state is the subject of “normative authority”, that it “requires normative consensus in order to rule,” and that it “must establish its authority by promoting the acceptance of laws, norms, and obligations” (ibid: 3 & 13). It seems to me that Shaw has too narrow a conception of legitimacy, which she equates with liberal normativity (cf. Schmitt, 2008: 136-9). Liberalism postulates the priority of rights and thus can only legitimize contractual authority. Shaw does not take into account that Nietzsche rejects the normative authority of the state not only because he is skeptical about attaining a non-coercive consensus, but also because he privileges non-contractual (charismatic and traditional) forms of authority.
inherited by socialism.

Nietzsche believes socialism is to be blamed for undermining the foundations of a healthy ethics of entrepreneurship. The captains of industry no longer seek to cultivate and heighten their superiority, and have thus lost their noble manners. Military society has yielded to an industrial society which shuns the ethics of command and obedience. Present-day workers understandably perceive their bosses as “clever, bloodsucking dogs, who exploit their needs, and whose name, figure, habits and reputation are indifferent to them” (GS, §40). To be able to command subordinates, capitalists must cultivate a charismatic presence; only then will they be exempted from justifying their ascendance; only then will the worker find obedience natural. The oriental temperament, contemplative and phlegmatic, is not advisable for the development of an entrepreneurial ethics, but Nietzsche recommends the immigration of Chinese workers for their pre-disposition towards obedience and a lifestyle similar to “industrious ants” (A, §206).

Nietzsche announces his new morality, one that is more appropriate to belligerent times, a morality of manliness that exalts the ethics of command and obedience. He notices that “the emotion of commanding is a decisive sign of force and self-sovereignty” (GS, §347). Those who ignore how to command “wish for someone who can command, who commands with severity – a god, a prince, a class, a physician, a confessor, a dogma, a party” (ibid). Future commanders will make a habit of commanding and they will exercise it with aplomb. They will also be disposed to obey their peers, but will do so with the same arrogance of their command (GS, §40). Each member of the dominant elite is an autonomous individual, but it is clear that Nietzsche thinks that the leadership of this aristocratic minority must rule itself by an ethics of command and obedience to insure its own interest. This is an impossible task within an industrial and mercantile world, because its commanders, even if they assume an aristocratic stance, lack “the nobility of obedience” (HATH, §440). To obey nobly and in dignity fashion occurs within aristocratic families. This is something inherited from one’s feudal ancestry and cannot “flourish in our cultural climate” (ibid).

All these texts address a select audience and are not normatively guided by universalist imperatives. Nietzsche is opposed to require the state to guarantee universal security and welfare. His sole interest is the creation of the cultural conditions for breeding new aristocrats, who will only need to cultivate a “disposition to command,” and also to obey when required (GS, §283). These “valiant precursors” will be ready for war and “will honour heroism again” (ibid). Nietzsche recommends that they live dangerously. “Build your cities on the slope of Mt. Vesubius! Send you ships to unknown seas! Conduct war against your peers and against yourselves!” (ibid). He admires the architecture, opulent and autocratic, of the mansions and villas built on the heights of Genoa. “The whole district distills that splendid and insatiable selfishness typical of the desire to possess and exploit” (GS, §291). In Germany, the building of cities lays bare the existence “of laws, and a generalized delight in legality and obedience” (ibid). German architects are ruled “by the propensity to equality and submission” (ibid). In a fragment of 1885 he declares that current morality hinders breeding the “men of colossal creativity.” Morality now desires “a happiness of green meadows on earth, a morality that yearns for security, the absence of danger, tranquility and a lightness of being.” Most of all, a morality that shuns “every type of shepherd and leader” (KSA 11, 37 [8]).
When Zarathustra makes its entry he breathes new life to Nietzsche’s campaign in favour of new aristocratic morality. In the chapter “On Self-Overcoming” he bases the patrician ethics of command and obedience on the notion of the will to power.

Wherever I found living beings, I have also heard the language of obedience. Every living thing thing obeys (*Alles Lebendige ist ein Gehorchendes*). And this is what I heard next: whoever does not obey himself shall be commanded. Such is the nature of living beings.

Thirdly, I heard that to command is more onerous than obeying... Wherever I found living beings I have also found the will to power; even in the will of the servant I have found the master (Z, “On Self-Overcoming”)

One may obey or disobey the commands of the will to power. Those who disobey will end up being commanded, and those who obey will be commanders. The will to power is not merely a drive for self-transcendence in pursuit of self-perfection; it also articulates an interpersonal relationship that involves command and obedience.\(^\text{11}\) Both commanders and their subordinates obey the will of power that transcends them.

The ethics of command and obedience demanded by the will to power is essentially aristocratic for it determines a hierarchical inequality between commanders and their subordinates. In the chapter “On the tarantulas”, Nietzsche points to Bismarck as one who surrenders before “the preachers of equality,” full of envy, jealousy and revenge. His response in the name of justice is: “human beings are not equal”, and this nourishes his own “love for the *Übermensch*” and life’s desire to “transcend itself” (Z, “On the tarantulas”). In the chapter “On old and new tablets,” Nietzsche laments the lack of remembrance. The crowd has no sense of history; for them time ceases with their grandparents. Some day the crowd may become master “and down all time in shallow water.” Therefore, “a new nobility is needed, which shall be the adversary of all rabble and despot rule” (Z, “On old and new tablets”, section §11). He rejects both democracy and Bismarck’s autocracy which has surrendered to democrats and socialists. The new aristocracy will look at the future and nobody will be able “to buy it... with merchant’s gold” (ibid, section §12). These new nobles will be essential commanders. Their quest is: “Who can command, who must obey...” And then he adds: “Human society: this is a quest... it seeks the commander... and not a contract” (ibid, section §25).

Christian morality clears the way for the rise of liberal egalitarianism and the social contract, which Nietzsche was to turn into a morality of “opposed intentions”. In a fragment dating from 1885, Nietzsche describes the way in which this opposed morality “will discipline individuals in order to ascend heights, and not for comfort and mediocrity.” This will be “a morality that will breed a leading caste – the future masters of the earth” (*KSA* 11, 37 [8]).

\(^\text{11}\) According to Walter Kaufmann, for Nietzsche “power means something specific...: self-overcoming” (Kaufmann, 1968: 261). Will to power is the striving that requires us to “sublimate” our impulses so as to organize our internal chaos and give style to our characters (ibid: 480). Because Nietzsche constructs it not as a political, but as a psychological notion, it cannot accurately be described as “a will to affect others or as a will to ‘realize’ oneself: it is essentially a striving to transcend or perfect oneself” (ibid: 248). Self-mastery, and not the control or domination of others, is the primordial manifestation of the will to power.
Nietzsche refines his aristocratic vision, characterized by a hierarchical order, class differentials and the ethics of command and obedience. In *Beyond God and Evil* (*BGE*), Nietzsche notes that the legendary strength and inventiveness of the European aristocracy have been weakened by the “profound averageness” of the English people. He observes that “European vulgarity” and the “plebeianism of modern ideas” were the “work and invention” of England (*BGE*, §253). Traditionally, the British parliamentary model allowed aristocratic rule to co-exist with democratic institutions. To this “parliamentary imbecility” (*BGE*, §208), Nietzsche opposes his radical aristocratic proposal determined by his ethics of command and obedience. His aristocratic commanders will demand “critical discipline and every habit conducive to cleanliness and severity in the things of the spirit” (*BGE*, §210). They will constitute an “aristocracy of peers who are used to ruling jointly and understand how to command” (*KSA* 40 [42]).

In the *Genealogy of Morals* (*GM*), Nietzsche re-visits the theme of the birth of the state in terms similar to those he used in “The Greek State.” The state is born as a “terrible tyranny”, as an “oppressive and pitiless machine” (*GM*, II, 17). A dominant group, “a pack of blond beasts of prey” hurls itself on a nomadic, disorganized multitude, and impresses on it a state form which is no more than naked exploitation. How can we talk here of state authority? Are we not in the presence of the arbitrary imposition of a will to power, of the robber who points his gun at me and demands my money? One has to take into account that Nietzsche is considering the birth of the state and not its further evolution. Once the state begins to function properly, as he observes in “the Greek State,” it must adhere to criteria of legitimacy. The authority of the state is legitimate when it submits to a higher, normatively autonomous authoritative source. This may be religion or, as liberalism demands, it may be the consent of individuals who can claim prior autonomy. Nietzsche emphatically rejects consent as a source of legitimacy. To think that state authority is legitimized by a contract is “a romantic illusion.” And he adds: “Whoever can command, whoever is lord by nature, whoever steps forth violently, in deed and nature – what does he have to do with contracts!” (*GM*, II, 17). This marks Nietzsche’s determination not to ground the legitimacy of state authority on contractual formalities. At the same time, he defends other forms of authority as legitimate – charismatic authority and traditional authority.  

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12 Ruth Abbey observes that Nietzsche distinguishes between aristocracy by birth and by merit. She notes that in Nietzsche’s later writings “the traditional notion of aristocracy by birth triumphs over the more meritorious notion mooted in the middle period” (Abbey, 2000: 98).

13 This description of a predatory state matches the one presented by John Stuart Mill in the chapter 1 of his essay *On Liberty*: “as the king of the vultures would be no less bent upon preying on the flock than any of the minor harpies, it was indispensable to be in a perpetual attitude of defence against his beak and claws” According to Brobjer, Nietzsche read *On Liberty* in 1880 (Brobjer, 2008: 149).

14 My use of he Weberian taxonomy to analyze Nietzsche’s concept of authority is justified by the fact that Weber is in debt to Nietzsche in this respect. According to Horst Baier, “Weber’s doctrine of charismatic authority is immediately determined by Nietzsche’s perception of political Caesarism” (Baier, 1981-82: 26; cf. McGuinn, 1975: 109 & 112). Nietzsche does not explicitly distinguish between forms of authority, but Weber’s taxonomy is present in his acceptance of traditional authority in *The Twilight of the Idols*, in his estimation for the authority that issues from an exceptional commander like Napoleon, and in his denunciation the “hypocrisy of the commanding classes” in contemporary Europe, who wield formal juridical authority to protect themselves from their “bad conscience” (*BGE*, §199).
The dominant position in the Anglo-American tradition, which stems from the seminal work of Walter Kaufmann, views Nietzsche as a steadfast anti-political thinker whose orientation is essentially cultural. As the bearer of an aristocratic outlook and advocate for a new nobility, he puts forward cultural, not political proposals. Nietzsche, the argument goes, is not committed to the establishment of an actual aristocratic regime; his patrician heroes are not “authoritarian, elitist and exploitative” political agents, intent, as he puts it, “on setting masses in motion” (KSA13, 16 [39]). In contrast, Cameron and Dombowsky do not accept what they consider to be “the extreme view that Nietzsche’s concern with culture was not also political” (Cameron & Dombowsky, 2008: 1).

Nietzsche is not interested in drawing up constitutional schemes or governmental programs. His reserved aristocratic stance depends on the cultivation of exceptionally high human specimens who wield charismatic authority to overstep the claims of formal legal authority. The early essay which “celebrates Napoleon III as a political genius, one who is governed by other and higher laws than the ordinary person” and whose genius can be recognized by his success” (Cameron & Dombowsky, 2008: 24), illustrates the point. By underscoring its charismatic gist, Nietzsche traces the legitimacy of authority back to the will, to instinct. Cameron and Dombowsky rightly note that Nietzsche evokes Napoleon “as an exemplar...intended to capture his politics of the future” (ibid: 173) and Dombowsky suggests that Napoleon is “the model for the Nietzschean commander” (Dombowsky, 2008: 368). The authority claimed by Caesar, Napoleon and Bismarck is not grounded in abstract reason. The authority Nietzsche has in mind is meant to issue commands that do not require rational or dialectical justification. In contrast to Socrates’s contrived intellectualism, and closer to Luther’s voluntarism, Nietzsche understands that “wherever authority is still part of good ethical custom (zur guten Sitten gehört) and one does not ‘give reasons’ (begründet), but commands (befiehlt), the dialectician is a kind of buffoon: he is laughed at, he is not taken seriously” (TI, II, §5). Nietzsche proceeds to contrast the contingency of freedom to the stability of institutions. “One lives for today, one lives very fast – one lives very irresponsibly: it is precisely this one calls ‘freedom’. That which makes institutions institutions is scorned, loathed and repudiated: whenever the word ‘authority’ is so much as whispered one believes oneself in mortal fear of a new slavery” (TI, IX, §39).

Nietzsche is critical of the normative authority demanded by liberalism, namely an authority normatively grounded on a social contract or antecedent consensus. In no case does he intend to subvert the notion of authority per se or the legitimacy of non-normative authority. The priority that liberalism assigns to freedom means that any authority not stemming from consensus imposes slavery. What is natural, for classical liberalism, is the equality of

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15 Recently, this position has been brilliantly defended by Vanessa Lemm in “Nietzsches Vision einer ‘neuen Aristokratie’”, Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie, vol 56 (2008), p. 370 & 373
16 In contrast, Burckhardt distrusted Napoleon. He saw in him a provincial parvenu who lacked every social grace and sought to exercise raw military power. In his preference for the nobility of Talleygrand, embodiment of the gentler, if venal, aristocratic ethos of the ancien régime, one can see how he differed from Nietzsche’s more radical aristocratism (cf. von Martin, 1941: 150)
17 According to von Martin, this passage lends itself to a comparison with Carl Schmitt’s decisionism (von Martin, 1941: 93).
individuals, hence its historical struggle for the elimination of feudal hierarchies. Nietzsche, in contrast, postulates natural inequality, and derives authority from the hierarchical subordination he finds in natural formations. Here he finds the fertile soil for the breeding of the aristocratic commanders he seeks.

Nietzsche may think that to “serve the state... is not paganism but stupidity” (KSA I, 365); he may acknowledge that “what is most important... is culture,” and that “culture and the state are antagonists” (TI, VIII, §4); Zarathustra may proclaim: “Where the state ends begins the man who is not superfluous” (Thus Spoke Zarathustra [Z], I, “Of the new idol”). But these assertions all have the modern state in sight. When Nietzsche looks back towards antiquity, he recognizes that the richest and most fecund culture flourishes in Attica, and that the Homeric state is not the antagonist of that culture, but a condition of its possibility. As opposed to the modern state, the classical state is not democratic, but governed by aristocrats for aristocrats; it is not an end in itself, but an instrument for the development of a higher culture. “The ancient state is far from sharing the utilitarian point of view of recognizing as culture only what is directly useful to the state itself” (KSA I, 708-9). In contrast, the modern democratic state “presents itself as a mystagogue of culture,” promotes itself “as the highest goal,” and subordinates “all cultural endeavours to its own ends” (ibid: 707-8). Nietzsche despairs of his actual political circumstances and this radicalizes his longing for the rebirth of the commanding authority wielded by an aristocratic state.

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NIETZSCHE, ARENDT, AND THE PROMISE OF THE FUTURE

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In considering Hannah Arendt’s philosophical debt to Nietzsche, commentators have often drawn attention to the figure of the promise and to its central significance in the work of both thinkers. “The real problem regarding man,” as Nietzsche famously wrote in the programmatic opening remarks to the second essay from *On the Genealogy of Morals*, is how “to breed an animal with the right to make promises.”¹ For Arendt, too – who cites this remark approvingly in the closing section of her analysis of action in *The Human Condition*² – the faculty of promising distinguishes human from animal life, and she goes still further, describing it as a “miraculous” faculty with the power to “redeem” the man of action from the necessity and anonymity of natural life and from the inherent meaninglessness of productive activity. For neither thinker can promising be grasped simply as one activity among others, as one possible expression or accomplishment of the self; rather, albeit in importantly different ways, promising is for them *constitutive* of the human subject, exemplifying a complicated temporal structure (a dialectic of memory and forgetfulness) that is the indispensable condition of both agency and responsibility.

But if students of Arendt’s thought have tended to foreground the act of promising as a fruitful point of entry into her engagement with Nietzsche, it is not simply because both thinkers recognized its importance for the modern thought of subjectivity. Rather, it is because they claim to have discovered a powerful Nietzschean strain in Arendt’s own conception of the subject – specifically, the subject of political action. Typical in this respect is Bonnie Honig, who, in her influential comparative analysis, writes that Arendt’s focus on promising “pays tribute to Nietzsche” in the sense that “promising, as a form of binding oneself for the future, is the great achievement of the self-disciplined and sovereign individual.”³ This seemingly innocuous description of things raises a number of questions. Is Honig correct in suggesting that for Arendt promising offers evidence of a “self-disciplined and sovereign individual”? Does the act of promising testify to the sovereignty of the promising subject? Is this reference to the sovereign self not fraught with difficulty, given Arendt’s own radical critique of the

concept of sovereignty in politics?\textsuperscript{4} And although Nietzsche appears to approve this
language, reserving “the right to make promises” for “those who promise like
sovereigns,”\textsuperscript{5} is his own reference to sovereignty not severely complicated and
compromised by the structure of promising that his analysis brings to light – by the fact
that all promising implies a radical passivity or affectivity, and an ineliminable (if finally
sustainable) damage to the promising self? Is it not then misleading to emphasize the
sovereignty and heroism of the promising self as the mark of a profound affinity between
Nietzsche and Arendt? Although it has become a commonplace to locate Arendt’s
Nietzschean inheritance in her supposedly heroic and elitist conception of action, do not
their respective insights into the promising activity, and into the affectivity and
responsiveness that it implies, serve precisely to undercut this familiar and overhasty
judgment?

In what follows I shall suggest that Honig is correct to single out the promising
activity as the site of a highly fruitful encounter between Arendt and Nietzsche. But what
Arendt learned from Nietzsche, and what finds expression in her own framing and
elaboration of the promising activity (with constant recourse to its structural obverse, the
act of forgiving), is not “the connection between human sovereignty and the faculty of
making promises”;\textsuperscript{6} on the contrary, it is the singular structure of passivity – a non-
sovereign reflexivity - built into the promise, a passivity whose temporal structure
demands our attention. In the act of promising, as we shall see, the promising self pledges
itself to the future with a complex gesture that is characterized at once by remembering
(to make a promise is to have a continuous memory that lasts through time) and by
forgetting (to keep a promise, to “discharge the will,” requires that the self-violence
effected by the very act of promising is forgotten, so that the self can act freely, nobly,
without resenting the past or foreclosing the future). This reflexivity attaching to the
promising self - by which it opens itself not only to the past (in memory) and to the future
(in forgetfulness), but also to a futurity per se that stands in excess of all anticipated or
pre-ordained future possibilities - finds importantly different expressions in Nietzsche

\textsuperscript{4} For the clearest articulation of Arendt’s critique of sovereignty – which, for her,
always amounts to a politics of the will - see her ‘What is Freedom?’ in Between Past
and Future (New York: Penguin Books, 1968), and her chapter on ‘The Social
comprehensive treatment of Arendt’s critique of sovereignty, see A. Kalyvas,
Democracy and the Politics of the Extraordinary: Max Weber, Carl Schmitt, and
Hannah Arendt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) especially pp. 210-
223.

\textsuperscript{5} Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals, p. 60.

\textsuperscript{6} In an important footnote in her discussion of Action, Arendt praises Nietzsche for
seeing this connection “with unequaled clarity” and that “it led him to a unique
insight into the relatedness of human pride and human conscience” (HC, 345, ff. 83).
But she immediately thereafter identifies sovereignty in the realm of human action
with mastership in the realm of making, and she goes on to define promising (which
always involves a plurality of perspective on a shared in-between) in its opposition
to all forms of mastery and violence.
BRANDES: NIETZSCHE, ARENDT, AND THE PROMISE OF THE FUTURE

...and Arendt. For both thinkers, the act of promising commits the promising agent to a particular future (in which the present self, word, or deed, will be recouped) and at the same time to an unknown and undetermined future (for which he risks himself each time anew). Where Arendt departs from Nietzsche, as we shall see, is not in her insistence that all promising requires forgiving and forgetting—something that Nietzsche himself understood as well as anyone—but that one cannot forgive oneself. For Arendt, the possibility of acting freely, without resentment toward the past and without anxiety for the future, hinges on one’s being forgiven by others. This is because for Arendt, the wounds opened by promising are not only my own to bear (I discipline, stabilize, and order myself by pledging myself to a particular future, a particular juridico-moral subjectivity) but they are also borne by others (every promise is inserted into a “web of relations” where it sets off a chain of events, the effects of which cannot be foreseen or controlled). Because the promising agent must take responsibility for those - potentially endless - effects of his deed which could not have been foreseen or forestalled, and because this responsibility might well become so weighty as to inhibit or paralyze future action, the agent requires the forgiveness of others, of those who will have suffered the effects of his initiative, in order to finally get free of the enduring force (the “it was”) of the initial deed. In granting a certain priority to others, to those who will be affected by my own actions, Arendt overcomes the heroic inflection in Nietzsche’s account of the promise, which supposes that it is my own reflexivity alone through and for which I am responsible. By examining this difference, rooted in their importantly different conceptions of the reflexivity and futurity implicit in the promise, I hope to challenge the familiar picture of a shared elitism, a shared commitment to the glory and heroism of sovereign selves.

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Nietzsche’s articulation of the complex dynamics of the promising activity is found in the first three sections of the second essay from On the Genealogy of Morals. Let us briefly recall his account. In the first essay, Nietzsche had observed that human beings are by nature creatures governed not by consciousness and memory but by forgetting. Forgetting is natural to us, but not in the manner of a passive endowment. “Forgetting,” Nietzsche writes, “is no mere vis inertiae [inertia] as the superficial imagine; it is rather an active and in the strictest sense positive faculty of repression.”7 This natural faculty is especially in force in the figure of the noble man, who is defined precisely by his capacity to forget. The noble, Nietzsche tells us, has “no memory for insults.” Indeed, “to be incapable of taking one’s enemies, one’s accidents, even one’s misdeeds seriously for very long – that is the sign of strong, full natures in whom there is an excess of the power to form, to mold, to recuperate and to forget.”8 The power to form and the power to forget are directly related to one another, and Nietzsche makes clear that it is only on account of the latter capacity that any creative action is possible at all. It is only because he can forget, because he can “shake off with a single shrug” all the past sufferings and misfortunes which might breed resentment in others, that the noble is able to exercise his will, to seek and welcome novelty and adventure, in short, to act freely in the world.

7 Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals, p. 57.
8 Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals, p. 39.
The second essay begins by straightaway complicating the above discovery. It opens with the famous lines cited at the beginning of this essay: “To breed an animal with the right to make promises – is not this the paradoxical task that nature has set itself in the case of man?” That this promising animal is the noble in a new form (or in its historical accomplishment) is clear from Nietzsche’s affirmation that it is an animal “which needs to be forgetful, in which forgetting represents a force, a form of robust health”. But this description confronts us with a paradox: to make a promise is to sustain a memory over time. Nietzsche emphasizes both the force of will required for such an enterprise and the disciplining of the self that it takes for granted:

[Telling a promise] involves no mere passive inability to rid oneself of an impression, no mere indigestion through a once-pledged word with which one cannot ‘have done,’ but an active desire not to rid oneself, a desire for the continuance of something desired once, a real memory of the will: so that between the original ‘I will,’ ‘I shall do this’ and the actual discharge of the will, its act, a world of strange new things, circumstances, even acts of will may be interposed without breaking this long chain of will. But how many things this presupposes!...Man himself must first of all have become calculable, regular, necessary, even in his own image of himself, if he is to be able to stand security for his own future, which is what one who promises does!

There is an evident paradox at issue here: the same animal who requires forgetting as the condition of action (of “the actual discharge of the will”) breeds in itself an opposing force,” the faculty of memory, which also serves action, only at a distance (enabling an utterance to exceed the time and occasion of its enunciation). In the case of the promise, Nietzsche says, natural forgetfulness is “abrogated” so that a memory can be sustained and projected into the future. But every such abrogation comes at a cost to the animal in whom forgetfulness is a mark of robust health, and whose openness to an unknown and undetermined future is thereby sacrificed to some particular future, a future to which it pledges itself, and the enactment of which presupposes the disciplining and regulation of its self in the service of its willed object. How shall we understand this costly operation? What are the foreseeable effects of the noble’s “labor upon himself”?

And perhaps just as importantly, what distinguishes this heroic “abrogation” of the natural condition (in the service of a continuous will) from the disciplinary regime of the slavish type, which Nietzsche diagnosed so mercilessly? Is there not still, in the making...

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9 Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals, p. 57. Italics are Nietzsche’s.
10 Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals, p. 58.
11 Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals, p. 58. Italics are Nietzsche’s.
12 “The task of breeding an animal with the right to make promises evidently embraces and presupposes as a preparatory task that one first makes men to a certain degree necessary, uniform, like among like, regular, and consequently calculable. The tremendous labor of that which I have called ‘morality of mores’ – the labor performed by man upon himself during the greater part of the existence of the human race, his entire prehistoric labor, finds in this its meaning...” p. 59.
and keeping of promises, some trace of the “self-terrorization” – the will venting itself against itself – that characterizes the man of ressentiment?

Here we may recall Nietzsche’s account of the origins of responsibility and the self-responsible subject. This subject did not come into being as a result of philosophical reflection or by a gradual process of spiritual enlightenment. As Nietzsche put it in *Twilight of the Idols*, culture was inaugurated “not in the soul,” but with the “persuasion of the body,” and it is, first of all, the body that had to be disciplined, regulated, and transformed in the production of the ethico-juridical subject. Nietzsche rehearses at great length the “fearful means” – the “stoning…breaking on the wheel…piercing with stakes…cutting flesh from the chest” - employed by the German people in mastering their courser instincts and “acquiring a memory”.\(^{13}\) It is by such disciplinary measures – what Nietzsche describes as a “mnemonics” of pain – that a “real memory of the will” is created. And only thus does it become possible to open a gap in time between an original decision (“I will”) and the future discharge of that will (the act). Only thus, through the sustaining and projecting of certain selective memories, does it become possible to make promises, to anticipate a future, and to recoup in that future a past that is now present.

It would be a serious mistake to suppose that Nietzsche stands in simple opposition to this long and painful history, or to its hard-won product, the reflexive and responsible subject (i.e. the subject that is not simply identical to itself but “stands security for his own future”). On the one hand, as we have seen, it is by way of a pervasive social disciplining that the self becomes the juridico-ethical subject, normalized according to convention and embodying prevailing codes and standards. But on the other hand – and this is why the disciplinary techniques deployed by the noble are not immediately reducible to the self-terrorization of the slave - it is by virtue of this same hard-won reflexivity, and the self-critique and self-transformation that it makes possible, that we are able to achieve a radical openness to the future, a responsiveness that exceeds mere affect and brings the self into relation with an undetermined future in excess of all prevailing norms and standards. There is nothing especially mysterious about this reference to an undetermined future. It follows directly from Nietzsche’s insistence on unending interpretation – that is, his insistence that passivity is never present in us devoid of some activity, that the active and reactive forces which structure the self (the sensations and affects that, in Nietzsche’s account, displace the traditional prioritizing of consciousness) are always already shot through with interpretation (the body itself is an interpretation, a differential relation of dominance and submission). Indeed, the body seeks to enhance pleasure and escape pain, but since pleasure and pain (and indeed, all bodily forces) are always already interpreted and re-interpreted – are themselves interpretations, orderings of effects in accordance with some dominant striving – there is never an end (or a beginning) to the endless contestation and transformation. But this means that the self must be grasped as both an affect and a futural responsive movement beyond all mere affect. It implies a movement of constant and unending self-critique and re-evaluation.

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\(^{13}\) Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, p. 62.
Nietzsche seeks to register these two senses of the affective self (or rather, the two senses of its reflexivity or responsiveness to the future) with the important distinction between “conscience” and “bad conscience”. When Nietzsche describes thinking itself, or “that somber thing called reflection,” as a “mastery over the affects”\textsuperscript{14} whose governing concern is the avoidance of pain and the exploiting of pleasure, he grasps it as a manner of relating to the future, a form of responsiveness. And it is that form of responsiveness that serves as the condition of “bad conscience,” a form of conscience marked by an attentiveness to prevailing norms and the self’s embodiment of them. But accompanying this form of conscience, with its assimilation of the order of the day and its prudential calculus, is a second form of conscience which stands in a reflexive but critical relation to the self normalized by convention. This form of conscience – which Nietzsche calls, simply, “conscience” - renews the endless contest of interpretations, and thereby exposes the self to the force of an unknown and undetermined future. It is interesting to note that for Nietzsche ‘bad conscience’ is, in some important sense, prior to ‘conscience’, inasmuch as the existing self always embodies the prevailing juridico-moral code, even as it surpasses that ideal in its reflexive futurity. Moreover, the co-existence of the two forms of conscience exposes the self to a dangerous possibility, a possibility that we have already discovered in connection with the promising activity. We saw that the temporal structure of the promise assumes the self’s ability to commit itself to a particular future and, through a selective memory, to recoup what is past in the present. But in this way, by selecting and anticipating in advance what is still to come – or more to the point, by assuming the endurance of a pre-ordained image of the self (as shaped by prevailing norms) – the promise comes at the expense of futurity as such, pre-empting other possibilities, and insulating the self from the slings and arrows of fortune. In an illuminating essay, Rosalyn Diprose further clarifies the danger at issue here:

The ‘real problem regarding man,’ for Nietzsche and, I suggest, for us in the present, is that this body in its responsiveness and futurity is at risk, most notably from the ideal of juridical responsibility that governs it. A condition of somatic reflexivity is that a relation to both the juridico-moral code and the future be maintained, not that the self is entirely engulfed by either. In assuming responsibility for itself, the self risks itself for an unknown future; the self “goes under” as Nietzsche puts it. But the ideal of juridical self-responsibility would remove this risk: it assumes the endurance of a pre-ordained image of the self as the faithful embodiment of the prevailing moral code.\textsuperscript{15}

Now it might be objected that there exists an obvious gap between the stability and orientation introduced by the promise and the wholesale pre-emption of the future hinted at here. There is surely a difference between those who foreclose certain possibilities in the name of a certain ideal (and thereby overcome the abstemiousness of Hegel’s “beautiful souls”) and those who, in Diprose’s words, “embody the juridico-

\textsuperscript{14} Nietzsche, \textit{On the Genealogy of Morals}, p. 62.

moral code they have inherited so extensively that they merely repeat it with resignation.”

This is certainly true, but Nietzsche will insist upon a dialectical relation here: the noble cannot simply avoid identification and normalization. The very constitution of the self is normalizing. What distinguishes the noble as a conscientious person (in Nietzsche’s sense) is not his avoidance of all ‘polluting’ worldly significations—indeed, this is the mark of the cowardly, the abstemious, the resentful type—but his will to risk himself, and to risk his inherited significations, to an unknown future (to new interpretations, evaluations, and constellations of power). In the terms suggested by Diprose, the noble is the one who takes responsibility for himself, both for his inheritance (the juridico-moral code which he currently embodies), and for the transformation of this inheritance in a future still to come. But how might this self-responsibility relate to the act of promising that concerns us here? Again, we have already hinted at the answer. I suggested that the noble’s commitment to futurity as such finds its chief expression in his commitment to interpretation, contestation, transformation. But if this is the case, we must revisit and qualify one of the passages cited earlier from the Genealogy. Nietzsche wrote that between the “I will” and the discharge of that will in action, “a world of strange new things, circumstances, even acts of will may be interposed without breaking this long chain of will.” At first glance, this passage appears to suggest that to remain faithful to a promise is to remain true to something past, to some original cause, in the face of all intervening circumstances. Thus promising would require a refusal to adapt, to transform, to re-evaluate. But in light of the above clarification—regarding the claims made upon the conscientious self by the future—we shall introduce an important refinement to our interpretation of the passage. Namely, we shall ask whether the “long chain of will” cannot accommodate fresh interpretations, adaptations, and re-evaluations. Nietzsche himself suggests as much when he returns to the image of the “chain” just a few pages later. After pointing out that the “origin of a thing and its eventual utility…lie worlds apart” and that “whatever exists…is again and again reinterpreted to new ends, taken over, transformed, and redirected by some power superior to it,” Nietzsche observes that

[the entire history of a ‘thing,’ an organ, a custom can in this way be a continuous sign-chain [Zeichenkette] of ever new interpretations and adaptations whose causes do not even have to be related to one another.]

Reflecting on the apparent shift in Nietzsche’s use of the ‘chain’ image, Judith Butler has rightly observed that “the second use of the ‘chain’ seems to reverse the first…When the text makes this shift, the will, still called noble, not only adapts to new circumstances but endows its customary utterances, including promises, with new

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16 Ibid. p. 123.
17 Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals, p. 58.
18 Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals, p. 77.
19 Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals, p. 77.
meaning.”\textsuperscript{20} This shift suggests, perhaps paradoxically, that nobility (and conscientiousness) lies not in keeping one’s word in the face of radically changed circumstances, but rather in a willingness to risk oneself (and the normative ideal that one has identified with) by reinterpreting the promise to new ends, divorcing it from its original intention in a gesture of fidelity to an unknown future. This latter is an important discovery for us, as we now turn to consider both the continuity and the break between Nietzsche and Arendt on the matter of promising. As I suggested above, both thinkers celebrate the futurity implicit in the promise, but they both see in the very act and structure of promising a dangerous threat to this futurity. For Nietzsche, as we have seen, the threat lies in the fact that the promising agent always embodies (through various forms of social disciplining) certain inherited moral and juridical norms which he seeks, in the act of promising, to recoup in a particular future. In this way, he refuses to risk himself and his normative inheritance, to respond to the unforeseeable contingencies of historical existence by constant adaptation and reinterpretation. However, Nietzsche argues that a certain kind of promising, the “noble” or “conscientious” practice of promising, contains within itself the resources to combat this structural danger, inasmuch as it exposes itself to changing circumstances and has the courage to adapt, revise, and endow the initial utterance with new meaning. In this way, the promise can be turned against its own governing ideal, the ideal of juridico-moral responsibility, which threatens to foreclose the future and dissolve the risk attaching to it. The promise, in sum, redeems itself through a will to interpretation.

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Here is the point at which Hannah Arendt will introduce an important caveat. Having followed Nietzsche thus far, she will insist that although promising does have a certain “redemptive” power – by which it responds to its own structural “frustrations” – it nevertheless opens on to an abyss which it cannot, by its own power, escape. Herein lies the real heart of Arendt’s doctrine (and the reason why the language of sovereignty, either with reference to the promise itself or to the above-described will to reinterpretation, is seriously misleading). For Arendt, as we shall see presently, the promise is both preceded and succeeded by forgiveness – specifically, the forgiveness of the other – and no heroic resoluteness in the face of the future, no willingness to expose one’s own most deeply cherished ideals to the “play of forces” still to come, can overcome or pre-empt this requirement. To be sure, there is a powerful agonistic dimension in Arendt’s theory of political action, and her conception of the public sphere as a site of “incessant contestation” has led certain commentators to emphasize her own ostensible understanding of politics as an unending play of competing interpretations. But however striking we may find Arendt’s agonism (especially in its departure from the administrative and proceduralist conceptions of politics endorsed by her liberal contemporaries), it is finally a qualified agonism, which cannot serve as a placeholder for futurity per se, as it does in Nietzsche. It is forgiveness alone—the other side of the promise—that serves this function in Arendt.

Let us briefly recall the backdrop to Arendt’s account of promising. In her most philosophically important work, *The Human Condition*, Arendt sets out to distinguish and describe the three activities that together constitute the *Vita Activa*. Having distinguished action—the public sharing of words and deeds—from the related activities of labor and action, Arendt draws attention to the “structural limitations” that characterize all action as such. She emphasizes two above all: unpredictability and irreversibility. Action is unpredictable, she claims, on account of the essential unreliability of human beings “who never can guarantee today who they will be tomorrow”. And action is also irreversible—this, on account of the fact that action is never possible in isolation, that it always takes for granted a “web of relations,” and to act into this web (an always already existing network of shared interests) is to set off a chain of reactions that can neither be predicted nor controlled. Indeed, the chain of unforeseen consequences set into motion by every act is potentially endless. To be sure, it is not action alone that is beset by structural limitations. Labor and work also stand in need of “redemption” or “salvation” from their constitutive frailties. But very importantly, whereas neither labor nor work possess “internal remedies” to the frailties that mark their activity – each must have recourse to other, higher faculties - action has internal resources and potentialities by which it can respond to the unpredictability and irreversibility that marks it. These internal remedies lie in the “redemptive faculties” of promising and forgiving. It is by way of these two faculties that man is able to introduce some stability into the public realm of action, and thus to mitigate (without denying or annulling) the radical contingency—i.e. the inherent unpredictability and irreversibility—that characterizes it.

How shall we understand the stabilizing capacity of promising and forgiving? And how does Arendt’s account of these activities provide an antidote to the individualistic inflection of Nietzsche’s account? Promising, Arendt claims, responds to the unpredictability inherent in action by “setting up in the ocean of uncertainty, which the future is by definition, islands of security without which not even continuity, let alone durability of any kind, would be possible in the relations between men.” So far, this sounds very much like Nietzsche, who also emphasizes the “security” made possible by the promise. But whereas Nietzsche treats this securing of the self as the expression of a certain psychic requirement—an insulating tactic which concentrates the self in itself, stabilizing and sheltering the self against affective forces that might unsettle it—Arendt’s thought moves in the opposite direction, emphasizing the worldliness of the promise, which takes the self out of itself and gives it direction and relationality. The “islands of security” achieved by the promise do not refer here to normalized and self-responsible selves (juridical subjects) safely secured from the threats posed by an incalculable future;

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21 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 244.
22 Arendt’s account is peppered with theological language – action is “miraculous,” a “revelation,” a “miraculous faculty,” etc. This fact has not been shown nearly enough attention. For an important exception to this rule, see Susannah Gottlieb, *Regions of Sorrow: Anxiety and Messianism in Hannah Arendt and W.H. Auden* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003). I will refer back to this illuminating study in what follows.
on the contrary, they refer to what is *established by the promise outside the self*—namely, to the new relationships, shared enterprises and worldly institutions inaugurated by the promise. For Arendt, it is precisely on account of this exteriorizing tendency that promising is so important for—indeed, constitutive of—the identity of the self. She notes that “without being bound to the fulfillment of promises, we would never be able to keep our identities; we would be condemned to wander helplessly and without direction in the darkness of each man’s lonely heart.” But this means that for Arendt the stability afforded by promising has an intersubjective character: it is in binding individuals together and giving them a shared interest (inter-interest, literally, a shared in-between space, a shared world) that the promise responds to (without finally overcoming) the contingency that characterizes it.

It is this shared world outside the self, then, which is the condition of stable identity. But this shared world is at the same marked by an ineliminable contingency—a contingency that finds expression not only in the unpredictability that calls forth the promising activity, but also in the irreversibility that calls forth forgiveness. Arendt argues that promising and forgiveness are intimately bound up with one another, with forgiving “serv[ing] to undo the deeds of the past” and promising serving as “the remedy for the chaotic uncertainty of the future”. We have seen how promising combats the uncertainty of the future by establishing binding relationships and shared enterprises. Forgiveness, by contrast, refers to the past, and to the potentially paralyzing consequences of past deeds. “Without being forgiven, released from the consequences of what we have done, our capacity to act would, as it were, be confined to one single deed from which we would never recover; we would remain the victims of its consequences forever…” Arendt’s conception of forgiveness relies on her claim that all action is “inserted” into a pre-existing “web of relations,” setting off a chain of consequences that can never be predicted. Since an actor is not a producer, and the effects of his activity are not under his control, he must accept responsibility not only for his original action but also for the innumerable consequences that will follow upon it. He must act, all the while knowing that he will be “unable to undo what [he] has done, even though [he] did not and could not, have known what he was doing.” These structural features of action, Arendt suggests, threaten to paralyze—or at least seriously inhibit—the actor, preventing him from risking himself (and the world) anew by continued action. It is only by being forgiven for his past deed, and for the present and future consequences of it, that the actor is liberated from this “original sin” and liberated as well for the possibility of future action. This last point is important: for Arendt, what is redeemed by the act of forgiveness is neither the past as such nor any particular past deeds (whose redemption, for Arendt, is the task of memorializing works) but rather the very possibility of continued action in the future.

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The two redemptive faculties, promising and forgiving, are evidently determined in temporal terms by Arendt. This means that they are determined not simply in terms of their past- or future-directedness, but also in relation to beginnings and endings. We have seen that promising is a faculty of beginning, a faculty which introduces something new into the world; by contrast, forgiving brings some earlier beginning to an end, precisely so that there may be a new beginning. This latter is further complicated by the fact that action, for Arendt, has beginning itself as its sole end, as she often noted, quoting Augustine, “that a beginning be made” man was created. But it might now be asked: how are these activities themselves internally ordered? How do they stand with respect to one another? Here I cite from Susannah Gottlieb’s illuminating commentary:

One of Arendt’s central insights, which distinguishes her analysis of promising from the tradition that culminates in Nietzsche’s Zur Genealogie der Moral, is that the stabilizing power of promising is predicated on the interruptive faculty of forgiveness. Against the traditional ordering of these two faculties, which expresses itself in the almost irresistible sequence, ‘promising and forgiveness,’ Arendt places forgiveness first…

This crucial inversion of the Nietzschean order calls for our attention. First, Gottlieb is certainly correct about the secondary character of forgiveness in Nietzsche. If for Nietzsche it is the “slave revolt in morality” which has “given birth to values” – including pity, tolerance, and benevolence – then forgiveness, too, must be included in this list, as a symptom of ressentiment. Indeed, Nietzsche practically defines the noble in terms of the absence of this symptom: “To be unable for any length of time to take his enemies, is accidents, his misdeeds themselves seriously – that is the sign of strong, full natures…”

In his admirable study, Forgiveness: A Philosophical Exploration, Charles Griswold has suggested that Nietzsche’s tendency to see forgiveness as a mark of baseness, as part of a moral system in which the weak and ignoble are empowered, is hardly original to him. It can be traced back to the “classical perfectionist” outlook of Aristotle and the ancient Stoics, according to which “forgiveness is not a virtue because the perfected soul is by definition almost, or entirely, immune from receiving injury, or from doing injury.” Since the character type held up as morally exemplary in these theories is defined by rare virtue, and by a hard-won indifference and invulnerability to the slights or offenses of his neighbors, he simply has no need to forgive. As Griswold points out (and as Nietzsche himself would have insisted), “forgiveness is more appropriate to an outlook that emphasizes the notion of a common and irretrievably finite and fallible human nature, and thus highlights the virtues that improve as well as reconcile but do not aim to ‘perfect’.”

This claim for the Judeo-Christian roots of forgiveness will be further confirmed by Arendt, who suggests (perhaps too sweepingly) that the political significance of forgiveness was an insight “entirely unknown to the

Greeks,” and that its “discoverer” was none other than Jesus of Nazareth. But whereas Nietzsche held this Judeo-Christian echo against forgiveness, Arendt—who insists as well upon the Abrahamic roots of the promising activity—emphasized it.

To be sure, Nietzsche’s critique of forgiveness must be qualified in the light of our earlier discussion. If the noble is characterized by a certain indifference to the effects of action—both the effects of his own deeds on others, and the effects of the deeds of others on himself—he is not indifferent to the self-violence implicit in the promising activity. He recognizes that openness to the future requires attending to the injuries he has himself sustained in his embodiment of the juridico-ethical norms of the day and his preemptive futural projection of these norms. Some intervention into the past is needed in the name of the future. This is accomplished, as we saw, by way of a courageous will to re-interpret, to risk one’s identity anew by risking all one’s inherited determinations in the service of an ever-more affirmative posture. (Exemplary in this regard is the celebrated doctrine of the eternal recurrence, by which the will frees itself from the impotence inherent in trying to change the past against which it is powerless. Rather than submitting to a resentful wrath against the past, against the “it was,” and pretending to a false autonomy with respect to it, the will takes responsibility for its limits, steps out of the determinism that underpins its desire for revenge, and only thereby is able to create new values by transforming and reinterpreting the past under the sway of an undetermined future). One is struck by the heroic and individualistic pathos attaching to Nietzsche’s description of the will thus liberated by itself for its future. It is the heroism of the disciplined will that “shrugs” in the face of the trespasses of others, and conceals the hard work of self-transformation and self-overcoming implicit in the forgetting of its own.

Things are importantly otherwise in Arendt. This is perhaps because we find in her work an implicit recognition of the distinction between ‘forgetting’ and ‘forgiving’. Bonnie Honig is mistaken, or at least one-sided, when she speaks of “the practice of dismissing that Arendt calls forgiveness,” and claims that “Arendt’s theorization of forgiveness recalls…the indifference of Nietzsche’s lords and their lordly practice of dismissing.” It is true that Arendt describes forgiveness as a process of “constant mutual release” from the effects of one’s actions, but there is more to Arendtian forgiving than mere forgetting or dismissing. She would agree with Griswold when he observes that “what Nietzsche seems to be advocating is forgetting wrongs… [but] that is deeply different from forgiveness even if the effect is to liberate the wronged party from

32 See Arendt, The Human Condition, p. 238. Griswold points out that notions of “reconciliation” and the “foreswearing of revenge” “did circulate in pre-Christian pagan thought and culture (counting here the Roman as well as the Greek), contrary to common wisdom” (p. 1). Arendt’s categorical claim to the contrary would have to be refined. However, inasmuch as she is speaking not simply of forgiveness but of its political significance – which goes beyond the forestalling of revenge and calls forth a posture of radical openness to futurity per se – she is surely correct.

resentment.”\textsuperscript{34} If simply giving up resentment were a sufficient condition of forgiveness, it could be accomplished by oneself, by the various strategies of self-discipline and self-overcoming rehearsed by Nietzsche. But Arendt says explicitly that “nobody can forgive himself,” and this for the very important reason that we do not know the ‘self’ we would be forgiving. I cite this important passage:

The fact that the same who, revealed in action and speech, remains also the subject of forgiving is the deepest reason why nobody can forgive himself; here, as in action and speech generally, we are dependent upon others, to whom we appear in a distinctness which we ourselves are unable to perceive. Closed within ourselves, we would never be able to forgive ourselves any failing or transgression because we would lack the experience of the person for the sake of whom one can forgive.\textsuperscript{35}

There can be no forgiveness without the other person – or rather, persons – since the acting self, the one in need of forgiveness, does not appear to himself but only to those who are witness to the deed. Like Nietzsche, Arendt will insist that “the deed is everything,” and that prior to acting the self is a fragmented and indistinct entity; the self only attains an identity and becomes a “who” by its actions. But for Arendt, the acting self does not know himself as such. He is dependent upon those others to whom he appears – those same others who will suffer the effects of his deeds. They alone can “put an end to the consequences of the first misdeed” and thereby liberate the acting self for action, for new risks and initiatives and promises. This is why, as Gottlieb observes, Arendt treats the “interruptive” faculty of forgiveness as the prior condition of the “inaugural” faculty of promising. Every beginning supposes an ending, and the individualistic inflection of the former is crucially qualified by the vulnerability and dependence of the latter. Recalling Arendt’s telling recourse to Abraham as the discoverer of the stabilizing power of promising – “it is as though he departed from his country for no other reason than to try out the power of mutual promise in the wilderness of the world”\textsuperscript{36} - Gottlieb adds:

It is as if Abraham could not have set out on his journey without some sense that he could be forgiven his trespasses, including, of course, the binding of Isaac. The anxiety surrounding the act of promising…is potentially so great that this act would issue into a speechlessness that would deprive the speaker of the capacity to promise – were it not for a prior promise, issued by another, of forgiveness for failing to fulfill one’s promises.\textsuperscript{37}

With this provocative suggestion, Gottlieb goes beyond what is strictly justified by Arendt’s text. Although Arendt does suggest that forgiveness is the condition of promising, she does not extrapolate from this structural priority to an original act of forgiveness – implicit, by necessity – at the origin of the deed. Is it Isaac’s forgiveness

\textsuperscript{34} Griswold, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{35} Arendt, \textit{The Human Condition}, p 243.
\textsuperscript{36} Arendt, \textit{The Human Condition}, pp. 243-44.
\textsuperscript{37} Gottlieb, p. 153.
that Abraham must suppose in order to set out at all? Is it God’s? We do not need to enter into these speculative questions here. It is enough, for our purposes, to register the extreme vulnerability and dependence that precedes the promise and that, for Arendt, can not be substituted for by the solitary subject’s self-overcoming.

It would be a mistake to conclude, without further ado, that we have arrived at a simple opposition, and that in their distinct accounts of the promising activity Nietzsche’s thought betrays a lingering romanticism and individualism while Arendt emphasizes the passivity, vulnerability, and exposure of the promising agent. We have seen that neither thinker can be easily accommodated by the conventional opposition between activity and passivity. The responsible self, in Nietzsche, who has come (at great cost) to embody the prevailing juridico-ethical norms, and who makes a promise with the idea of recouping himself without loss in some particular and preemptive future, is just as much marked by the will to power as the noble, who promises himself to the future as such. And since the will to power names, in the first place, an affectivity, and a responsiveness to the play of forces and energies that situate the self, neither the slave nor the noble can be called simply voluntaristic without serious qualifications. Conversely, although the priority of forgiveness in Arendt’s account does suggest an originary sociality, vulnerability, and passivity that would undercut the voluntaristic strains in Nietzsche’s doctrine, she nevertheless endows the forgiving self with a power that even God does not have (citing with approval the biblical view that “if ye from your hearts forgive,” God shall do “likewise”). The two theorists elude easy oppositions, challenging us to rethink both the subject and the time of the promise, and no thoughtful reconstruction of the encounter between Arendt and Nietzsche can afford to avoid this challenge.

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38 Arendt praises Jesus of Nazareth for maintaining “against the ‘scribes and pharisees’ first that is it not true that only God has the power to forgive, and second that this power does not derive from God – as though God, not men, would forgive through the medium of human beings – but on the contrary must be mobilized by men toward each other before they can hope to be forgiven by God also” (HC, 239). Arendt’s suggestion that Jesus discovered the human prerogative of forgiving against prevailing Hebrew tradition is surprising, indeed, since this same doctrine boasts a very long history in the Hebrew messianic tradition. See Gottlieb, p. 250, ff.18.
“Noble morality, master morality, conversely, is rooted in a triumphant Yes said to oneself- it is self-affirmation, self-gloration of life; it also requires sublime symbols and practices, but only because “its heart is too full”. All of beautiful, all of great art belongs here: the essence of both is gratitude.”

Thus does Friedrich Nietzsche encapsulate the positive aspect of his ethical outlook in *The Case of Wagner*, his ferocious polemic against the composer of *Tristan*, *Parsifal* and the *Ring* cycle. This polemic is part and parcel of Nietzsche’s attack on Christianity and Platonism. Of course, Nietzsche’s relation to these two traditions is complex and not at all easy to define. Still, whatever is the case with Nietzsche the deep thinker, Nietzsche the conscious polemicist identifies Christianity and Platonism with asceticism, self-denial founded not in the will to a higher life beyond the immediacy of passion but rather in simple negativity: a resentful turning of life against itself in loathing and self hatred. This self hatred issues in modern liberalism and utilitarianism (with its misguided notions of sympathy and compassion) and in the spirit of modern science, which carries forward the ascetic outlook of Christian-Platonism even as it pretends to attack it. Thus does Nietzsche diagnose the sickness that saps modern civilization of its life and robs it of the joyous affirmation of its will to power. What is more, he finds in the operas of Richard Wagner a dangerous and corrupting expression of this malaise.

In the following paper I wish to examine the complex relationship that Nietzsche had to the art of Richard Wagner. For Nietzsche, Wagner came to typify the arch-ascetic: the very embodiment of the world and life denying will expressed in Christianity, Platonism and modernity.¹ Ironically, this is for the exact same features as drew Nietzsche to Wagner in the first place. There is a self-overcoming in Wagner that the young Nietzsche takes for Dionysian and naturalistic self-forgetting but that the older Nietzsche rejects as ascetical. How can Wagner’s operas ground such disparate perceptions? Indeed, what actually happens in those operas apart from Nietzsche’s polemic against them? Wagner’s most passionately erotic opera, *Tristan*, does seem (at first glance) to bear out something of Nietzsche’s critique for it involves an apparent valorization of the death instinct over life ; ironically, this is the Wagnerian music drama most praised by Nietzsche in his pro-Wagner phase and least damned in his

¹Nietzsche, Friedrich *The Case of Wagner* trans. W. Kaufmann (Random House, Toronto 1967) p. 191

²This is, at least, is his general point though he has more immediate objections as well. Wagner is, according to Nietzsche, incapable of large scale musical form. (Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, p. 170-171) He cannot let go of an intense moment of passion but stretches it to absurdity. (Nietzsche, p. 172) He is incapable of melody and cannot be danced to. (Nietzsche, p. 168) He is as impotent to construct a dramatic crisis as he is to resolve one. (Nietzsche, p. 175) He is an actor who became a musician and had his revenge on music by subordinating it to text. (Nietzsche, p. 174-1750) One can go on and on. I will not be addressing such objections in this paper both because they strike me, by and large, as unpersuasive and because I do not think they really reflect what Nietzsche is angry about. Nor will I be addressing casual jibes, such as the (textually inaccurate) observation that Wagner’s heroines are never pregnant (unlike Nietzsche’s beloved Carmen?). (Nietzsche, p. 176) This latter though, is indicative of a note of anti-feminism that is a persistent undercurrent in Nietzsche’s diatribe. That said I will try to concentrate in this essay on what I take to be Nietzsche’s philosophical objections to Wagner.
anti-Wagner phase. *Parsifal*, however, is offered as evidence of Wagner’s full surrender to asceticism, pessimism, Schopenhauer, Roman Catholicism and indeed just about any other term of abuse in Nietzsche’s vocabulary. Wagner, one is not surprised to learn, is even a Hegelian! Again, this is ironic for of all Wagner’s operas it is the least susceptible to the charge of being anti-nature or anti-life as we shall see below.

Clearly Nietzsche had a fraught relationship with Wagner both personally and philosophically: so much so that he seems to have had great difficulty in articulating the nature and grounds of their break. Certainly, *The Case of Wagner* scarcely passes muster as serious music criticism: it is maddeningly general as a whole and sometimes surprisingly shoddy when it does descend to details; so much so that the admirer of Wagner (the present author is one) may be taxed to find something positive to say about it. Indeed, commentators not inclined to Nietzsche worship have found it puzzling or simply meretricious. Michael Tanner considers Nietzsche’s critique of *Parsifal* ‘inane’ and suggests that the work was simply too complex and demanding for him to come to grips with.³ Lucy Beckett finds Nietzsche confused about the difference between ideas and art, mistaking the exigencies of philosophic truth for the ‘emotion and intuition’ which drives the artist.⁴ Ronald Gray finds Nietzsche’s criticisms sadly “unspecific” but suggests they are grounded in a rejection of “…what in modern parlance would be called camp- the detached enjoyment of something to which you are not devoted”.⁵ He also suggests that Nietzsche found Wagner’s music dramas too “detached from bodily experience” and never “truly incarnate” in that social and biological realities are never allowed to intrude.⁶

There is perhaps some merit in these views though none seems entirely adequate to account for the uneven quality of Nietzsche’s books against Wagner, which display both flashes of brilliance and much that is simply slapdash. Nor am I convinced that the authors mentioned above have quite articulated the real ground of Nietzsche's break with Wagner. Still, as it seems quite un-Nietzschean to me to affect the dispassionate tone of the ‘scholar’ I will not hide my own view that the *Case of Wagner* is a hatchet job on the master of Bayreuth. To put it briefly: while I am willing to admit that there is something troubling and perhaps even repellent about Wagner I think the critics who try to say that this something is the music are simply wrong. This leaves as one alternative a criticism and rejection of the Wagnerian myths yet here Nietzsche seems to me not to make a completely compelling case (for reasons we shall see below). However, I believe that Nietzsche’s polemic does reveal some fascinating tensions in his own thought. Moreover, I believe there are issues of philosophic substance between Nietzsche and Wagner and that, however wayward its details, Nietzsche’s screed does (in the end) succeed in defining what these are: briefly, I hold that Nietzsche has correctly seen that Wagner’s art, in spite of its pagan Germanic trappings, is ultimately committed to a form of Christian humanism summed up in *Parsifal*, a creed Nietzsche could hardly accept.

In this spirit, I will venture the following on Nietzsche’s behalf: *Tristan* represents, at one and the same time all that is most attractive and most repugnant in Wagner; it is the Wagnerian music drama par excellence. So much so that the synthesis of bodily nature and life with the free movement of love offered in *Parsifal* is not noted by Nietzsche as a synthesis at all. *Parsifal* is read, quite falsely I will


⁴ Beckett, Lucy. “Wagner and his Critics” in *The Wagner Companion* pp.381-382

⁵ Gray, Ronald “The German Intellectual Background” in *The Wagner Companion* p.53

⁶ Ibid. p. 55
argue, as a rejection of intellect and as a screed against sex. It is read as though it were a pale attenuation of *Tristan* rather than a deepening of it; a softening of the powerful and seductive eroticism of the former work into a soppy Pre-Raphaelite exercise in fake medievalism. Really though, the synthesis of nature and spirit offered by Wagner is not recognized, one suspects, because it is not one that Nietzsche would accept even if he did explicitly recognize it. Wagner’s solution to the problem of asceticism is inescapably a liberal Christian one founded in 19th century humanism and its ethic of benevolence. Simply put, *Parsifal* is ascetical not because it is anti-body and anti-sex, these are red herrings behind which the polemical Nietzsche hides his real point, but because of its affinities with the humanistic and liberal culture of the 19th century; it dramatizes compassion to the sick and the outcast in a way that at least one prominent strain in Nietzsche could not accept. For Nietzsche, the ugliness and brutality of the world is to be affirmed with all else; it is not to be redeemed and Wagner’s art is above all else an art of redemption.

However, to see how Nietzsche came to view Wagner the way he did we must pause and consider some of his general views on opera. In the *Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche denounces the flourishing of opera in the 16th century as representing a kind of decadence: opera, he tells us puts an optimistic and humanistic gloss on the original Dionysian spirit of archaic Greek tragedy. It gives us an edenic picture of man in his archetypal purity; a man of the golden age whose speech has the potency and expression of song, who reconciles the objectivity of conceptual thought and language with the spirit of music by a rigorous subordination of the latter to the demands of the former.7 Indeed, it presents man, humanistic man as substantial in his own right. It is an Alexandrian-Socratic art, a triumph of the critical intellect over the original archaic energies revealed to us by the chorus of Aeschylean Tragedy.8 This is entirely consonant with the sensational ‘emotionalism’ we usually associate with opera. As Nietzsche argues in his discussion of Euripides the reign of Socratic reason leads to an externalization of feeling as willed representation; the actor and playwright now cultivate sentiment because they no longer simply are feeling.9 The screen of self-consciousness now intervenes between thought and representation: Man is nothing but what he consciously knows and wills.10 From Nietzsche’s anti-humanist standpoint, then, opera represents the decadence of a rationalist tradition which destroyed the original vitality and healthfulness of the archaic Greeks. Nonetheless, Nietzsche finds in his own day the hope of a revival within German music and art of the Dionysian spirit.11 Indeed, the concluding chapters of this work are an encomium to Wagner, with *Tristan* cited again and again as an example of the Apollonian/Dionysian balance in art (where the Apollonian serves as the necessary occasion for the Dionysian to manifest itself).

However, as essays like the *Case of Wagner* (and the later *Contra Wagner*) show, Nietzsche came later to reject Wagner, especially his employment of the grail mythology in works like *Parsifal*. Nietzsche holds the true Dionysian spirit to be a naturalistic one; the ‘primordial unity’ which begets its image in the forms of Apollonian dreaming is the ‘spirit’ of nature itself. It is not a transcendent principle above or beyond becoming, as say in Plotinus, but the One naturalized as life. From this perspective, the appropriation of medieval grail mythology by Wagner might easily be interpreted as

7 Nietzsche, 1967 p.115-116
8 Nietzsche, p.114
9 Nietzsche, p. 83
10 Nietzsche, p.84
11 Nietzsche, p.123
surrender to ‘Christianity’. The Wagnerian myth at the end of the day can seem anti-natural and the free appropriation of Christian symbols in Wagner’s final work the inevitable culmination of its inherent decadence. Wagner's operas are devoted to preaching a religion of love. However, it is a religion of redemption not of celebration or affirmation: love, it seems, redeems us from nature. This is why (seemingly) it expresses itself as fully in the ‘love-death’ of Isolde as in the innocence and ‘chastity’ of Parsifal. It is nature overcome by a contrary spirit and as such, it is for Nietzsche corrupted by the spirit of asceticism and ressentiment: it can only be a kind of substitute for failed drives of a more basic kind.

Ironies abound here however. It is interesting to compare what Nietzsche says with another stern critic of Wagner. In his well known book Love in the Western World, Denis De Rougement attacks Wagner for reasons similar to Nietzsche’s. Wagner, he tells us, preaches a world denying negative mysticism that alienates us from the demands of society and the natural goods of marriage, family and procreation. De Rougement, however, does not have the same name as Nietzsche for Wagner’s error. In a historical tour de force he associates Wagner, and indeed, the whole tradition of Romantic love in the west with the dualistic heresy of Catharism. The negative mysticism of Wagner and the medieval troubadours manifests the Gnostic Spirit which invaded Christianity in the second century and has shadowed it ever since. This is a tradition (for De Rougement) that denies the incarnation and hence the reality of life and the body. It is a religion of escape which seeks to flee the world for a hypostasized ‘spiritual realm’ of pure light. For De Rougement Eros is the longing of the soul for its original freedom prior to and beyond the world. It is the principle of an anti-Christian religious standpoint that denies the value of creation and seeks to flee the body. His entire work is an attack on it and on Wagner as its high priest.

De Rougement’s positive point may tolerably be summed up this way: “There is no necessary opposition between sensuality and chastity; every good marriage, every love affair, that comes from the heart is beyond this opposition.” Yet here is where things get interesting for this plain bit of Christian wisdom comes from Nietzsche and not Pastor De Rougement. Wagner is attacked as a Christian sentimentalist by Nietzsche and as an anti-Christian Gnostic by De Rougement for the exact same thing: his religion of redemption through love which is interpreted as ascetic and Gnostic hatred of the body. The deep question this raises of course is whether this Gnostic asceticism is, as for Nietzsche, the true ‘essence of Christianity’ or, as De Rougement would have it, a fundamentally ‘pagan’ infection of which the religion of the incarnation must be purified. It is no part of my intention to resolve this question here (if it ever could be resolved) and this is just as well for I find the characterization of Wagner by both these authors inadequate. Wagner is, as far I can see, neither ‘ascetic’ nor ‘Gnostic’, though he can easily be misunderstood as such. Wagner may indeed have consciously appropriated aspects of Schopenhauer’s pessimism and melded it with Medieval and Celtic symbols of an ascetical cast, but, as Nietzsche knew better than anyone, the relation between music and discursive thought is complex: music does not simply illustrate the discursive thoughts of the composer. Words are a kind of

13 De Rougement, pp.228-229
14 De Rougement, pp. 79-81
15 De Rougement, pp. 81-82
frame, a distancing device through which the underlying will of the music expresses itself. In the case of *Tristan* Nietzsche seems to see that the music conveys something at odds with what the text seems (discursively) to say: in spite of the apparent triumph of the ‘death instinct’ in this opera the music itself is surpassingly vital and enacts a ‘craving for existence’ rather than a will to annihilation. *Parsifal*, however, is the centerpiece of Nietzsche’s case *contra* Wagner and it, I will argue below, is clearly not Gnostic or ascetical in intent if we take these words as implying a rejection of nature or bodily life.

I will begin with *Tristan*. Though Wagner is better known for his use of Nordic and Germanic myth in the *Ring*, his use of Celtic and especially grail mythology is just as evident. Early and not entirely satisfactory works such as *Tannhauser* and *Lohengrin* deal with the grail legend as does the late *Parsifal*. Part of the attraction of these traditions for Wagner lies in the ease with which they can be made to express the pessimism of Schopenhauer. Life, self-assertive individuated profane life is the disease of which we are cured by art, love, and religious ecstasy. The goal of liberation is a cessation or suspension of willing, a cessation of life in a moment of transcendent self overcoming. *Parsifal* becomes a hero by *not* succumbing to the wiles of Kundry. *Tannhauser* is redeemed by the love of Elizabeth *from* the delights of Venusburg. Indeed, the notoriously lecherous Wagner had a lifelong fascination with ideals of chastity. Yes to the freedom of the spirit seems, on its face, a kind of no to natural and biological life. *Tristan*, with its notorious sensuality would seem an exception to this. What is ‘chaste’ about an adulterous affair of such volcanic intensity? One could watch *Tristan* several times over and (such is the eroticism of the music) completely miss the fact that Tristan and Isolde do not and could not want to consummate their relationship. Only death can prolong the spiritual ecstasy of love into eternity and physical sex would simply dissipate it. That is why the orgasmic release of erotic tension comes only at the end (with the resolution of the opening chord) in Isolde’s death scene. Sexual satisfaction is not achieved naturally or even physically but against and beyond nature in death (or so the text suggests; as we shall see below, it is problematic to say that this is what *Tristan* means).  

A brief consideration of the physical symbolism of the opera will make this clear. In keeping perhaps with De Rougment’s identification of Wagner with the Gnostic/Manichean tradition the basic symbolism is dualistic. There are night and day. The realm of day is Apollonian. It is also isolating and oppressive. Here Wagner’s Celtic sources serve him well for he can use the imagery and language of Feudalism, with its blood feuds, its codes of honor and its horse trading of brides to symbolize all that is wrong with the ‘light’. In the realm of ‘day’ humans are alienated from themselves and each other by relations of property and obligations of marriage. In the realm of day Isolde is obligated to avenge her honor and the life of her fiance Morold by killing Tristan. In the realm of ‘day’ Tristan is obligated to deliver the woman he loves to his decrepit uncle in order to cement an alliance between Ireland and

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17 This is a point even able commentators miss: Jacques Barzun in his book *Darwin, Marx, Wagner* (Doubleday Anchor Books, New York, 1958) claims that “…it may be doubted whether Tristan’s drama has anything whatever to do with so-called romantic love. It is rather with biological love that the catastrophe is concerned.” (Barzun, p. 236). In spite of the erotic suggestiveness of the music I find this reading impossible to sustain; if Tristan and Isolde are supposed to want ‘biological’ love only why don’t they just get to it? Is Act II so brief they lack the time? Clearly, their physical passion is completely sublimated in a kind of spiritual ecstasy that forgoes even the notion of physical fulfillment and seeks to prolong itself indefinitely (so that time, even the drawn out time of one of the longest acts in the history of opera, becomes their enemy).

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Day, here, may stand in for the life of the individual in all its complex web of social, familial, political and economic ties. It may indeed stand in for bourgeois society as such. The lovers experience this realm of determinate identity as false and alienating: “what could death destroy but what impedes us, that hinders Tristan from loving Isolde forever and forever living but for her.” Against this stands the realm of Tristan in the realm of ecstatic passion, of fusion, identity, of the loss and death of self through its dissolution in the higher life of universal spirit.

If there are agents in any sense in this opera they are day and night: one might almost read the story as a kind of theomachy between the two with night scoring his ultimate triumph over day by means of the ruse of the love potion. Night seeks to return all to its original identity and triumphs through the medium of fatal love. The potion is the crucial moment of this for though there is an incipient attraction between Tristan and Isolde they cannot give expression to it without suppressing their conscious inhibitions. Dissolution in the realm of night cannot be a choice or a free positing of the spirit. This would affirm the existence of the individual for him or herself. One can only be rapt into the realm of night by a power beyond the conscious self. Indeed, Isolde’s conscious intention in Act I is suicide. It is Brangane who substitutes the love potion for the death draught but by a deft irony (a kind of cunning of un-reason) there is a double substitution: it is the love potion that seals the fate of the lovers and brings about their death. Death and death alone has the ultimate intentionality and realizes itself through the lovers and the love that binds them. Thus, at the moment of Isolde’s arrival in act III, Tristan tears at his own wound that it may bleed more freely.

Yet at the moment of (near) death the lovers achieve what is beyond death: the universality of life in and through the other where the ego-consciousness of the one becomes melded with the other such that they can exchange names in their rapture: “You Tristan, I Isolde, no more Tristan! You Isolde, I Tristan, no more Isolde!” The cessation of biological life is death yet this death is transfiguration in a higher spiritual life in which subject and object are identical and the universal is the particular and vice-versa. In a sense then, the power that works through love and uses the deathly-love-potion to achieve the end of death is, in its negation of physical life the manifestation of a higher life and consciousness prior to nature. Thus, this most aggressively sensual of operas might be taken as a monument to a peculiarly Wagnerian sort of chastity: the apotheosis of human sexual desire through its non-fulfillment and deferral on the natural plane and its completion on a spiritual plane at the moment of the passing of nature into the sheer identity of the universal through death. It is easy perhaps to see why the young Nietzsche should have hailed all this as the triumphant rise of a new Dionysian art. It is indeed dedicated to the overcoming of the Apollonian dream of determinate form in the single original will to redemption that lies behind it. Yet at the same time it does not seem to celebrate a natural vitalism but (in the wake of Schopenhauer) an aggressively anti-naturalistic one.

19 Wagner, Tristan I, 2
20 Wagner, Tristan, 2, 2
21 Wagner, Tristan, I, 3
22 Wagner, Tristan, I, 5
23 Wagner, Tristan, 3, 2
24 Wagner, Tristan, 2, 2
What happens though when we turn to *Parsifal*? If any work of Wagner’s drew Nietzsche’s ire and scorn it was this one. Nietzsche treats it as a virtual parody of Schopenhaurian ideals. Parsifal, the holy fool, is a relic of decrepit medievalism, a figure who represents the acme of the ascetic ideal, anti-intellect and anti-sex. Thus, Parsifal’s innocence is a denigration of mind and knowledge while his rejection of Kundry’s wiles is grounded in a horror and contempt of the body and its life. It is Wagner’s great no to life, particularly as its main figure embodies the very ‘virtue’ which has corrupted modern life, compassion and pity. As Nietzsche so memorably puts it “…for what would *Parsifal* amount to if intended as a serious piece? Must we really see in it….” the abortion gone mad of a hatred of knowledge, spirit and sensuality”? A curse on the senses and the spirit in a single hatred and breath? An apostasy and reversion to sickly Christian and obscurantist ideals?”

Later in the same passage Nietzsche sums up his assessment of *Parsifal* as follows: “For *Parsifal* is a work of perfidy, of vindictiveness, of a secret attempt to poison the presuppositions of life- a bad work. The preaching of chastity remains an incitement to anti-nature: I despise everyone who does not experience *Parsifal* as an attempted assassination of basic ethics.”

One can be swept away by Nietzsche’s rhetoric here and never notice at all that the ‘chaste’ Parsifal is in fact his own invention. Parsifal, we know from the legend, is the father of Lohengrin, a fact Nietzsche recognizes but, perhaps deliberately ludicrously, treats as a slip on Wagner’s part. He is not a celibate nor does Wagner ever present him as such. The word ‘chaste’ occurs exactly once in the entire opera when Kundry applies it mockingly to the villain Klingsor. Nor is *Parsifal* a hymn to Schopenhaur’s world denying asceticism: quite pointedly it ends with a vision of redeemed and transfigured nature. Parsifal is indeed a ‘fool’ if by this one means that he is (at first) oblivious to many of the demands of ordinary life and does not comprehend the arcane rituals of the brotherhood of the grail. However, he exercises plenty of reflective intelligence and grows in self-knowledge as the work progresses.

To the extent that Nietzsche’s savaging of *Parsifal* represents more than personal spite directed at its composer I would claim that the answer lies again in Wagner’s ‘non-naturalism’. By this I do not mean that the work is Gnostic in De Rougement’s sense. It quite evidently is not and Nietzsche was mistaken to present it that way. I mean that Wagner seems to present the natural as sustained by a principle distinct from it though in some sense also deeply cognate with it. This principle might alternately be described as Christian charity or Buddhist compassion and *Parsifal* is a hymn to its power and operation. In short, it is dedicated to a humanistic religion of love. This perhaps takes a bit of unpacking. The central image of the opera, the Grail, represents life’s bounty. It is an image of fecundity to be sure but not simply on the level of animal life (though it includes this as well). It is also the higher life of communion and fellowship, the mutual co-inherence of each person in each and each

25 Nietzsche, *Contra Wagner* p.675

26 Ibid.

27 Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner* p.176)


29 Wagner, *Parsifal*, p.61

30 On this point see Tanner, pp. 213-214
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in the whole. Amfortas, the keeper of the grail is the natural son of his predecessor (so much for celibacy) but the life giving power of the grail has prolonged their spiritual bond past its natural term even while it does not suppress it in its natural dimension. Titurel, the father, lives within his tomb. Life and death, nature and super-nature are fused in the spiritual bond of love. So far so good: however, all is not well in the order of the Grail. Particularly, the sexual instinct introduces a division between individual and community. This breeds two destructive reactions; that of the wizard Klingsor who seeks to simply suppress the side of nature by castrating himself and that of Amfortas, who is seduced by Kundry and is wounded by his own spear. It is clear that this dialectic of ‘chastity’ and ‘lust’ is presented by Wagner as one sided and destructive. Amfortas’ wound (his sensuality) will bleed whenever he reveals the grail in a kind of parody of the shedding of Christ’s blood.

The most powerful image of this in the opera is Kundry: she is cursed (for scorning the suffering Christ) to play the role of seductress, to be the feminine embodiment of temptation employed by the wizard Klingsor to lead the grail knights to ruin. She may be taken as a sort of Magdalene figure who projects externally the conflict between nature and spirit that divides Amfortas and Klingsor: her sexuality is exploited as a tool by the monstrous, power mad asceticism of the latter and mindlessly surrendered to by the former. She is an outcast on whom the knights of the grail project their own disordered desires so that they can spurn her (and them!) with contempt or, at best, regard her as the knight Gurnemanz does with a patronizing form of ‘pity’. Her sexuality is not free or life giving but the mirror image of that of the men; she embodies their deepest loathing of themselves and their bodily natures and acts out the role (seductress and temptress) they project upon her. This they do in spite of the fact that the spirit of the grail order commits them to regard the natural as sacred: as Kundry pointedly replies to the taunting of the knights “are not beasts holy here?” Thus, Amfortas, Kundry and Klingsor all represent the conflict between spirit and nature but one in which these two things (intrinsically one) have been set against each other by human pride and false self-reliance. It is these ‘mind-forged manacles’ that the ‘holy fool’ (whose innocence is in fact a unitary consciousness prior to the self-conscious divisions that plague the other characters) must break to restore the fellowship of love and naturalize spirit even as he spiritualizes nature.

It is Parsifal who effects this restoration. In a scene that brings to mind the relation of Socrates and Alcibiades in the Symposium he liberates Kundry from the curse that binds her by spurning her attempt to seduce him. Contra Nietzsche this scene has nothing whatever to do with celibacy. Kundry is acting out the false and oppressive dichotomies that have been imposed on her by others and Parsifal’s rejection of her unfree offer of sexual gratification (symbolized by the curse) is a profoundly

31 Wagner, Parsifal, pp.24-25
32 Wagner, Parsifal, pp. 21-22
33 Wagner, Parsifal, pp.10-11
34 Wagner, Parsifal, p.9
35 Wagner, Parsifal, pp.22-23
36 Wagner, Parsifal, pp.8-9
37 Wagner, Parsifal, p.7
38 Wagner, Parsifal, pp.49-50
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liberating act; Parsifal realizes the moral necessity of treating Kundry as an end or person in her own right and not simply as an extension of either his own desires or of his fear and loathing of those desires. Parsifal’s ‘innocence’ (so mocked by Nietzsche) is crucial to this: the ‘redeemer’ must be free of the puritanical constructions of the grail knights according to which Kundry is an object (she is called a ‘beast’ by the knights) to be shunned when she is not to be used. He must be a ‘pure fool’ in other words. More than this though, he must grow in the knowledge of human suffering: to heal Amfortas he must feel the inner division of nature and spirit within the keeper of the grail.\textsuperscript{39} He must know in himself (through Kundry’s kiss) the fall from grace in order to redeem others and indeed himself for there is a dangerous insouciance in Parsifal’s original innocence symbolized by the killing of the swan and his forgetting of his own mother; he is too ‘pure’ to know the distinction of self and other in a robust way and so at first cannot recognize the ‘rights’ of otherness.

One might conclude then that \textit{Parsifal} represents a rather different Wagner than \textit{Tristan}. The world transcending possibilities of love have become the world redeeming possibilities of love because love has become first and foremost compassion, which can unite self and other in their objective difference (rather than merging them in ecstasy). Though there is a radical identification with the condition of the other in compassion, it is for the sake of liberating the other as other rather than submerging all finite identity in the universal life-principle. It has also become a principle deeply immanent in nature (the opera abounds in natural imagery). The most striking figure of this is Parsifal himself, who is the Christ figure fully and deeply humanized and naturalized; so much so that there is almost no mention of a creator God in the entire work. The human and natural is the locus of any meaningful talk of divinity and though compassionate love is not a simple reflex of nature (it is freedom and so in a sense beyond the natural) the word is the sphere of its activity. Indeed, humanity in this work is both subject and object of salvation: the redeemer is himself redeemed.\textsuperscript{40} Thus, far from being a reversion to ‘medievalism’ or ‘Roman Catholicism’ (as in Nietzsche’s mocking verses in \textit{Beyond Good and Evil}) \textit{Parsifal} can be taken as an expression of a liberal Protestant humanism having affinities with figures like D.F. Strauss and Ludwig Feuerbach, though one might legitimately say that this is a protestant humanism open to Catholic imagery and indeed to Eastern thought as well (as understood through Schopenhauer). However, in his attempt to assimilate the latter Wagner’s superb tact may for once have failed him: Kundry longs for and is given ‘annihilation’ in the Buddhist sense and this is dramatically satisfying (she has lived many times over!). Unfortunately, it does not quite fit with the overall message of the opera that she should be ‘extinguished’ while human nature in Amfortas is elevated and fully healed.

What then are we to make of Nietzsche’s attack on Wagner? Given our beginning statement of ‘master morality’ it seems clear enough that \textit{Tristan} commends to our attention, though it is ridiculous to speak of it as either ‘criticizing’ or ‘espousing’, a form of erotic passion in which physical, biological life is negated by a higher spiritual life. There is ecstatic loss of self, which is why Nietzsche hails \textit{Tristan} in the \textit{Birth of Tragedy}, but not by participation in archaic nature worship. From Nietzsche’s later perspective this would seem, quite logically, a willing of death and nothingness and so must be a symptom of life that has turned against itself. It must, to use two of Nietzsche’s favorite value categories, be a manifestation of sickness and not health. It is perhaps only poor physiognomy and bad digestion that could lead the Tristan and Isolde to trade their inhibited biological life for a spurious pseudo-life of ‘pure spiritual love’! It would seem that if Nietzsche wished to show Wagner to be an ascetic \textit{Tristan} would take center stage.

\textsuperscript{39} Wagner, \textit{Parsifal}, p.46

\textsuperscript{40} Wagner, \textit{Parsifal}, p.66
In truth, it is easy for the critic of Wagner’s *Tristan* to take the tack that it makes a fetish of death and is thus gloomy, obsessive and anti-life. Indeed, if he or she is feeling ambitious the critic can link this ‘death-cult’ to German militarism and Nazism. If *Tristan* is taken as telling us *how to live* this has some bite. Here, however, the listener has to call time out on the philosopher and ask the following simple question: why is this ascetic, gloomy, anti-life, pessimistic work loved by people who are not ascetic, gloomy, anti-life pessimists? Why do I (and many others) leave a performance exhilarated rather than suicidal? Because what the work *does* is not what the work *says*. The critics of *Tristan* are overrating its discursive component. What anyone who actually listens to the work *feels* is its overwhelming, restless, churning vitality for which the ‘death-fantasy’ on stage is only an icon or image. Death here is a metaphor for extreme intensity of feeling; the passing beyond an isolated and finite self-consciousness into a feeling of unity with the all. Mysticism and erotic poetry have long used the metaphor of death to convey this passing away of the limits of consciousness. This is what the music, as opposed to simply the text, enacts and one would expect Nietzsche, of all people, to know this. I suspect he does know this which is why even in his later attacks on Wagner there is only the odd snide glance at *Tristan*. Certainly, he comes close to recognizing what I have said here in one rhapsodic passage in *The Birth of Tragedy*: “To these genuine musicians I direct the question whether they can imagine a human being who would be able to perceive the third act of *Tristan und Isolde*, without any aid of word and image, purely as a tremendous symphonic movement, without expiring in a spasmodic un-harnessing of all the wings of the soul? …suppose a human being has thus put his ear, as it were, to the heart chamber of the world will and felt the roaring desire for existence pouring from there into all the veins of the world…how could he fail to break suddenly?”

The music of *Tristan*, he suggests, effects a triumph over the Apollonian construct of word, image and action, dissolving all in to a vision of the 'unconscious will' the 'true reality' at the heart of the world. The Apollonian illusion that is the external trapping of the music drama falls away to reveal the Dionysian core: “And thus the Apollonian illusion reveals itself as what it really is- the veiling during the performance of the tragedy of the real Dionysian effect…” We might conclude then, that however 'Schopenhaurian' the text might be, the young Nietzsche at least heard a powerful Dionysian affirmation in its music.

With *Parsifal* things are more difficult because the work Wagner wrote is scarcely recognizable from Nietzsche’s critique of it. However, we can give Nietzsche credit for sniffing something out even if many of his specific criticisms can be dismissed as inept. *Parsifal* is an opera whose central images are ones of healing, psychological and spiritual healing for Kundry and physical healing for Amfortas. Even the healer himself, Parsifal, is healed of the destructive side of his own innocence. Thus, the master images of the opera are iatric in nature. Love is beyond good and evil to be sure (love and do what you will says Augustine) but in *Parsifal* it dissolves a binary much closer to Nietzsche’s heart, that between sickness and health. It is an old accusation against Christianity that its doctrine of divine compassion for sinners marks the end of civilized moral values. Instructive on this point is Kant and his reservations about the Christian doctrine of grace in *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*. Similarly, though moral categories are naturalized, sometimes even biologized in Nietzsche, the

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41 Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, p.127

42 Nietzsche, pp. 128-129

43 Nietzsche, p.130

accusation remains that Christian notions of agape and of universal fellowship (which are celebrated in Parsifal) undermine the notion of standards; with Christianity we can no longer maintain the distinction of good and bad in terms of health, vigor, vitality and their opposites. Thus, Nietzsche tells us (in words that are surely addressed to Parsifal) “Conversely, those who suffer most and are poorest in life would need mildness, peacefulness, and goodness most—what is today called humanness— in thought as well as in deed, and, if possible, a god who would be truly a god for the sick, a healer and savior.” 45 “This issue of retaining the ‘objectivity’ of principles is broached directly by Nietzsche: “What alone should be resisted is that falseness, that deceitfulness of instinct which refuses to see these opposites as opposites...to make eyes at master morality, at noble morality...while mouthing the counter doctrine, that of the ‘gospel of the lowly’, of the need for redemption!” 46 Accordingly, it would seem that compassion practiced in a Christian and humanitarian way makes an idol or fetish of sickness and failure as such so as to poison our capacity to value health and strength. The desire to bring redemption to the wretched of the earth makes us sentimental and inclined to see a special purity and innocence in the mere fact of suffering and weakness. We may even be inclined to think that the oppressed and weak are in some sense the good and desire to cut the healthy and strong down to satisfy their resentment and desire for revenge. For Nietzsche however, pity (of the liberal humanitarian sort) cannot accept the fact, the necessity, of suffering as the source of human greatness. Greatness, Nietzsche argues, heroic self assertion, entails distance and the holding apart of extremes. 47 Benevolence or magnanimity may well be practiced from a height or an assumed position of mastery but Christian charity of the sort celebrated in Parsifal erases the distinction between master and slave, strong and weak, by identifying the two (i.e. Christ takes on the condition of fallen humanity).

Moreover there is a deeper issue. There are, Nietzsche tells us, two kinds of sufferers: “...those who suffer from the over-fullness of life, and want a Dionysian art as well as a tragic insight and outlook on life- and those who suffer from impoverishment of life and demand of art and philosophy calm, stillness, smooth seas, or, on the other hand, frenzy, convulsion and anesthesia.” 48 Moreover: “He that is richest in the fullness of life, the Dionysian god and man, can afford not only the sight of the terrible and questionable but even the terrible deed and any luxury of destruction...” 49 Here perhaps is the real issue between Nietzsche and Wagner: Wagner accepts the need for salvation and liberation, whether conceived in Christian or Buddhist terms, thus dividing us from immediate unity with life in both its creative and destructive aspects. For Nietzsche's Dionysian religiosity whatever is must be open to affirmation, so much so that our highest goal is to will the eternal repetition of all that is. 50 There is no salvation for there is nothing from which to be saved. Wagner's apparent affirmation of the need for agape to redeem human life and even inform and illuminate nature thus seems ascetic in spirit after all.

There is then something in Wagner to which Nietzsche could never say yes however wayward and unfair his critique of him may be: the notion that life and nature might be the occasion for the

45 Nietzsche, Contra Wagner, p.607
46 Nietzsche, The Case of Wagner, p. 191
47 Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols, pp.538-540
48 Nietzsche, Contra Wagner, pp.669- 670
49 Nietzsche, p.670
50 Nietzsche, Thus spoke Zarathustra, p.435
manifestation of a higher spirit that elevates and fulfills it. Not of course that Nietzsche is of one mind on this: the ascetic spirit itself must be a manifestation of life and he is sometimes constrained to admit that it cannot (therefore) be simply a negative thing. How does division arise in the bosom of an absolute and all-sufficient principle of life? How can life turn against life? Nor can he help himself from reaching for the language of redemption at crucial points of his own argument: “Grant me from time to time – if there are diving goddesses in the realm beyond good and evil- grant me the sight, but one glance of something perfect, wholly achieved, happy…of a man who justifies man…of a man who justifies man…for the sake of which one may still believe in man!” It seems, after all, that suffering and negativity cannot go on just for their own sake but must be redeemed by someone or something who makes all of it meaningful and worthwhile.

Still, there is perhaps no point in taxing so protean a thinker with inconsistency. We can admit that Nietzsche's aim is an affirmation of natural bodily life as an all-sufficient totality and that from this standpoint Wagner's view of it as a stepping stone to the manifestation of a higher spirit is an insuperable obstacle. We can admit as well that the ferocity and unfairness of Nietzsche's assault is grounded in deep attraction. We know for a fact that Nietzsche was deeply moved by the first excerpts of Parsifal he heard. No one polemicizes so persistently and vigorously against what he simply despises. Any great polemic is in part the product of an author's argument with himself so we need not be surprised to find Nietzsche condemning in Wagner themes that find (from time to time) an echo in his own writing.

In conclusion, we can say that Nietzsche may well have correctly judged the vitalistic impulse behind the music of Tristan however 'world-denying' the discursive content of the libretto may have been. For this reason (perhaps) Tristan does not figure prominently in Nietzsche's later polemics against Wagner. On one level (however) Nietzsche profoundly misjudged Parsifal. It is no part of Wagner's intent in that work to deny corporeality or sexuality or to denigrate critical intelligence. Wagner's aim in that work is not the negation of the natural but its transformation and elevation through compassion. However, even on an amended reading there are elements in this opera that do not go well with Nietzsche's broader outlook. The opera does endorse a Christian (or Buddhist) conception of human life and nature as requiring redemption and this is contrary to Nietzsche's demand that all of life be affirmed in its negativity and destructiveness as much as in its creativity and beneficence. This for Nietzsche is the tragic Dionysian wisdom present (in some sense) in Tristan but negated in Wagner's later work. What is more, Nietzsche at more than one point clearly states the issue as such. Thus, while Nietzsche may well, as Tanner thinks, be flailing to find effective criticisms of Wagner he does highlight a genuine issue. However, part of the eccentricity of Nietzsche's critique may well stem from the fact that he is far closer to aspects of Wagner’s vision than he himself is comfortable admitting. Still, Nietzsche could not have accepted the ethic of compassion at the heart of that vision, at least in the form Wagner expressed it: as Charles Taylor puts it “Nietzsche wins through to his total yea-saying

52 Nietzsche, The Genealogy of Morals, p. 480
53 Tanner, p.207
54 Tanner, p. 218
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precisely by jettisoning the ethic of benevolence, which is inextricably linked in his view with self-negating morality. He presents us with a cruel dilemma. Is it one we have to face?” 55

References

Introduction

In several recent presidential addresses of the American Sociological Association, it has been argued that sociologists should regenerate and get involved in what public sociologists call the ‘publics’, in order to promote critical and reflective discourses (Gans 1989; Adams 1998: 20-21; Piven 2004; Burawoy 2005a). A public, according to C.Wright Mills’ definition, is an arena in which the required physical (communication facilities) and intellectual (ability to think and argue) conditions for democratic debates are present (Ossewaarde 2007). These discussions result in well-informed opinions, which in turn find an outlet for effective action, even against the prevailing system of authority, if necessary (Mills 1956: 303-4). Through such conversions and ‘reflexive self-examination’ (Gouldner 1976: 215), people, like students, media representatives, citizens and so on, can better comprehend social patterns of oppression and delusion, and also act accordingly. Publics are ‘webs of critical discourse’ which contribute towards the formation of the democratic will of ‘lay citizens’, who can directly and competently get involved in the political process of determining the paths along which the world is to develop (Emirbayer and Sheller 1998). The hope of public sociology is, in Mills’ words (1956: 299), ‘that truth and justice will somehow come out of society as a great apparatus of free discussion.’

The Socratic tradition to which public sociology belongs is criticized by Friedrich Nietzsche in The Birth of Tragedy. According to Nietzsche, the fundamental weakness of what he calls ‘Socratism’ is the assumption that reality, including social reality, has a rational (that is, causal, functional, or meaningful) foundation, which is discoverable through reason or science. Hence, contrarily to Socrates and similarly to Heraclites, he maintains that reality, including social life, must instead be understood as a painful and absurd flux of passing phenomena. In Nietzsche’s Heraclitean perspective, the world is a fluid entity that cannot be corrected or improved through (sociological) knowledge and intellectual dialectics. Nietzsche’s concern is not so much about the good, just or beautiful order, – one in which people can encounter each other in truth – since the perpetual flux makes the very existence of such an order very improbable. Instead, the urgent question, for him, is how to confront the existential pain caused by the endless stream of things that go and come, with the greatest human dignity, as a real hero or, what he calls, the ‘good European’ (Parkes 1993; Martin 1995; Krell 1997; Szakolczai 2007; Emden 2008; Andler 2009).
For Nietzsche, the ‘good European’ is the tragic hero who refuses to resign to fate, and opts for greatness and honor, rather than mediocrity and security. This type of hero is represented and honoured in the works of the Attic tragedians, Aeschylus and Sophocles (Griffin 1998: 61). The poetic art of tragedy is, according to him, the only institution that makes living with the truth of a painful and absurd reality possible, without seeking refuge in a world of ideas, which gives meanings, functions and causes to suffering. Only tragic poetry, Nietzsche (2000: 45; 46) says, teaches ‘that life at the bottom of things, in spite of the passing of phenomena, remains indestructibly powerful and pleasurable’, and ‘can reshape that disgust at the thought of the horrific or absurd aspects of life into notions with which it is possible to live.’ Hence, for Nietzsche, tragedy is a more significant cultural force than the Church or the state, which typically represent either the classical European values of the Socratic tradition or a tradition tout court.

Although Nietzsche’s influence on sociology is widely recognized (Antonio 1995: 3), the implications of The Birth of Tragedy for public sociology’s enterprise have been left under-explored. Nietzsche’s key insights – his perception of reality as tragic and of the Socratic tradition as a plebeian force of cultural regress in Europe (Sweet 1999: 345) – could shed a different light on the (mechanic-causal, organic-functional, cultural-meaningful) worldview that is inherent in different (positivist, functionalist, interpretative) sociologies in general, and on the symbolic form and content of publics in particular. Nietzsche introduces what he (2000: 43) calls ‘aesthetic publics’, which are meant to replace the intellectual publics. In and through the aesthetic publics, people are confronted with, or made aware of, the Heraclitean flux of existence – the ‘seriousness of existence’ as the tragedian sees it (Nietzsche 2000: 17) – and are encouraged to actively participate in the performance of the tragedy (c.f., Lea 1977: 37; Sweet 1999: 345). In this way, it is expected that people are able to face the truth and live with it in full dignity, as ‘good Europeans’.

In the first part of the paper, the Heraclitean view of reality is compared with the Socratic approach that characterizes public sociology, as the latter has been presented in the works of thinkers like Alexis de Tocqueville, Thorstein Veblen, Robert Lynd, C. Wright Mills and Alvin Gouldner. The Heraclitean view of society as a fluid entity is not a very dominant perspective, but is still present within sociology (particularly in the works of Georg Simmel). The Heraclitean flux reaches its climax in the poetic form of tragedy, according to Nietzsche, when two opposite forces – Dionysus and Apollo, which are assumed to inhere in reality and to govern the world – are united in a climactic moment of truth. The two types of publics that belong to the Heraclitean and Socratic visions, with their two different appreciations of reason, are also presented. Then, it is

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1 Nietzsche (2000: 5), in a new introduction to The Birth of Tragedy, commented that his book is ‘badly written, clumsy, embarrassing, furious and frenzied in its imagery.’ In Ecce Homo, he stressed that it had provided two decisive insights, namely, an ‘understanding of the Dionysian phenomenon among the Greeks’ and an ‘understanding of Socratism…as a typical decadent [rationality]’ (Nietzsche quoted in Sweet, 1999: 345).
explained why and how bureaucracy is the common enemy of both types of publics. The final two parts of this article deal with the public sociological revival of the Apollonian publics and with Nietzsche’s, as well as other cultural sociologists’, plea for an aesthetic public.

The Heraclitean flux and the Socratic Good

The distinctive feature of the Heraclitean dialectical vision is the perception of reality as having no rational (that is, causal, functional, meaningful) foundation or given order, which could be discovered by reason or science. The Heraclitean dialectical view in sociology implies that the social world, with its orders, identities and inequalities, is studied as a ‘fearful, evil, enigmatic, destructive, disastrous’ flux of passing phenomena, which has neither order, law or form (Nietzsche 2000: 7). The world moves in a dialectic between opposite things that transform reality in their confrontation with each other. Opposites, which sociologists have grasped in ideas like self and other, bourgeois and citoyen, labor and capital, culture and industry, local and cosmopolitan, antiquity and modernity, and myth and enlightenment, are related to each other in a very ambiguous manner. They are namely contraries that struggle against each other, and yet, at the same time, they are driven towards each other, because they ultimately belong to each other (Bloch 1983: 284; Dienstag 2001: 936). This is the tragic story of hero who fights against his fate, knowing that the inevitable will happen, and who, therefore, actually precipitates or realizes his lot. It is the union between opposite forces – the restoration of ‘the original Unity’, according to Nietzsche (2000: 30) – which ensures the ephemeral periods of cultural flourishing (Seaford 2003: 156-159).

Georg Simmel is one of the very few sociologists who, inspired by Nietzsche, assume the Heraclitean dialectic of opposite forces in their reconstruction of social reality. The dialectical sociology of men like Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, C. Wright Mills and Alvin Gouldner, on the other hand, is not Heraclitean but Socratic. Their sociology is based on the understanding of reality as being governed by an ordering principle that can be discovered through reason. The Socratic dialectic, which involves contesting contemplative minds, assumes such a rational order of reality and aims at grasping it through ideas (Gouldner 1965: 259-296; Bloch 1983: 289-90; Prus 2004: 13). Plato’s ideas of ‘truth’, ‘justice’ and ‘beauty’, Thomas Aquinas’ ‘bonum commune’ are examples of such intellectual forms. In sociology, the assumption of a rational order of reality is expressed in, for instance, C. Wright Mills’ ‘democratic society of publics’, Robert Bellah’s ‘good society’, or Philip Selznick’s ‘moral commonwealth’. These concepts presume that there are criteria to distinguish between good and oppressive orders, and that it is humanly (politically and morally) possible and even necessary to strive after such goods.

2 In his presidential address, Herbert Gans (1989: 5) argues that ‘we ought also to confront once more an old, recently forgotten question: what is a good society and how can sociology help bring it about?’
From a Heraclitean perspective, these ideas of an order are illusions, since reality is a flux that is not governed by any order, and in which no order can be discerned. Reality is a stream (or perpetual cycle) of destruction (death) – ‘the violence of the dialectic’, says Walter Benjamin (1977: 166) – and becoming (birth), kept in movement by the continuous strife between opposite forces. The Socratic view, on the other hand, is that the flux is only appearance, and that the enlightened mind can see that there is a hidden, yet discoverable, order of things behind and beyond this physical (phenomenological) veil (Ossewaarde 2010). Reason is the eye that discovers this sublime and eternal meta-physical reality or ordering principle, while the body, with its senses and appetites, can only experience the flux. Reason discovers the good order, which is immune to the forces of the flux or to fate, and which can be imposed on the flux. Chaotic or meaningless realities are, therefore, reshaped in accordance with reason, to achieve, for instance, a more democratic or more just world. Ideas of democracy and justice have always been and will always be, and since reason dwells in this permanence, it can unveil them.

The Socratic intimate relation between reason and the good implies that all evil in the world springs from ignorance, which is not in accordance with reason. Therefore, all evil in the world (falsehood, injustice, oppression, pain) can, at least potentially, be overcome when the world is ordered according to the ideas revealed by reason. The knowledge of the rational order of reality can only be acquired in and through the art of friendly dispute (Ossewaarde 2010). Ignorance is not only the fruit of a suppressed Socratic dialectic, but it also promotes this repression (for instance, by condemning Socrates to death). Hence, ignorance maintains a vicious circle (the flux), and in the end, it is the source of all evil, boredom and woeful agony, while knowledge of the truth about the self and the beautiful ordering principle that governs true reality is the highest that one can achieve in life. The one who knows also sees the unity of all goods (justice, freedom, happiness, health and so forth) in the one Good.

According to the Heraclitean perspective, there may be such a thing as reason, but it is not exempt from the becoming and passing of things, and therefore, sways just as much as passions. Reality, which is always in a state of becoming, does not have a given end, since it does not have a beginning (foundation). Neither reality nor the self are to be shaped according to ideas revealed by reason, since these are pure illusions. Reality is at a certain time and in a given place, when opposite forces are temporarily united, but this union does not last long, and the process of becoming carries on. The self is when the contest between inner forces comes to rest, but the flux ensures that this respite is never permanent. Reason does not have much to say or see in this chaotic process, in which all kinds of (irrational) forces play crucial roles. In other words, the truth about reality is absurd and horrific. The ancient tragedians like Aeschylus and Sophocles express most vividly this Heraclitean vision of the flux, in which the self is carried and tossed back and forth (Steiner 1980: 169). Oedipus’ lot is such that he wishes he was never born.
The Heraclitean unity in the art of tragedy

Nietzsche’s vision of reality in *The Birth of Tragedy* can be described as Heraclitean. He argues that reality is a process of becoming or a ‘flood of suffering and troubles’ (Nietzsche 2000: 57), which is animated by a strife or ambiguous relationship between two opposite forces or drives that inhere in a reality that has neither origin nor foundational principle. He names the two opposites after two mythological deities, Dionysus and Apollo. In Greek mythology, Dionysus is the god of wine, fertility, vitality, ecstasy, intoxication and the art of music, who was unjustly dismembered by his enemies in a spell of individuation and later restored by his brother Apollo (Sweet 1999: 354; 357; Nietzsche 2000: 59-60). Apollo is the god of Delphi, of light and dream. He is ‘an ethical deity’ and the god of individuation and of ‘just limits’ (Nietzsche 2000: 21-2; 31; 58). Nietzsche (2000: 17) holds that these two opposites are united in the art of tragedy:

> The difficult relation between the Apollonian and the Dionysian in tragedy should really be symbolized through a fraternal bond between both deities: Dionysus speaks the language of Apollo and Apollo finally speaks the language of Dionysus, and so the highest goal of tragedy and of art itself is achieved.

Tragedy, Nietzsche emphasizes, is a Dionysian art. The distinctive feature of Attic tragedy, however, which Nietzsche considers to be the most perfect art of tragedy, is that it has succeeded in coupling the Dionysian and the Apollonian opposites in a fraternal bond, without one force annihilating the other (Nietzsche 2000: 46; Weinberg 1967: 256; 263).

Tragic art does not only presume a fundamentally pessimistic view of the world, but it also offers a way to live with this truth. Nietzsche (2000: 60) notes how there is a ‘tragedy’s doctrine of the mysteries’. Nietzsche (2000: 60) points out that the knowledge of the tragedian is the ‘the fundamental knowledge of the unity of all that exists’, which is the consideration of the spell of Dionysus’ individuation as the original cause of evil and ‘the presentiment of a restored unity’ as the original cause of the good. The narrated life of the hero depicts this suffering of individuation and at the same celebrates his heroic longing for an original unity, which is fate. The tragic hero is always a noble character, who is driven by a powerful vitality and potency, and who has a strong will and energy to live life to the fullest. Despite fear and evil, the tragic hero is able to surpass all human limits, to finally succumb to this same transgression or sacrilege (Nietzsche 2000: 58).³ This fundamental imprudence, unreasonableness or disobedience is what triggers the Apollonian wrath on Dionysus. Yet, it is precisely this heroic, Dionysian impulse that leads to the climax in the tragic story of the hero, since it is his ‘attempt to step outside the spell of individuation and to become the single essence of the

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³ Nietzsche (2000: 55) gives the example of the tragic hero’s incest as a monstrous transgression of nature. Kurt Weinberg (1967: 265) points out that ‘tragedy is invented to ascribe dignity to crime.’
world' (Nietzsche 2000: 57). Tragic art expresses the contradictions hidden in things and the agonies that necessarily flow from them.

The agony of Dionysus is the one of a humanity that is torn to pieces in a disorderly world (Steiner 1980: 167). The ‘dismemberment, the properly Dionysian suffering,’ Nietzsche says in a Heraclitean style (2000: 59), ‘is similar to a transformation into earth, wind, fire and water.’ The material world can only be a whole if these four elements are united as One. In other words, the suffering of Dionysus reflects broken bonds, between man and man, and between nature and man (Nietzsche 2000: 22). In his poem The Persians, Aeschylus, the first of the Attic tragedians, presents Xerxes, the greatest enemy of the Greeks, as the tragic hero. In his disastrous defeat at Salamis, the Persian king falls into the Dionysian abyss by crossing the Straits of Helle, driven by his strong Dionysian impulses and energy (his desire to conquer Europe). By imprudently transgressing the Apollonian border that separates Europe and Asia, Xerxes encounters Apollo’s wrath. Xerxes’ fatal misjudgment, which he is destined to make given his blessing and curse, leads to the ruin of the Persians, the climactic unity of opposites. And thereby, the hero transforms the unformulated field of tragic fate, the Dionysian abyss, into a sublime piece of art, of which he forms part.

A tragedy like The Persians tells a profound truth about the Heraclitean flux and the place of human beings in it, presenting the hero’s encounters with the isolation, death and suffering, which are part of the human condition, as the hero experiences it (Curtis 2007: 860; 870). In tragedies, heroes like Xerxes have a Dionysian flaw or impulse that is inescapable, given the forces of necessity. They refuse to accept the limits drawn by Apollo, transgress these limits, fight against misfortune, succumb to their cruel fate, and mystically abandon their selves (Nietzsche 2000: 24; Alford 1992: 157; Antonio 1995: 7; 16; 19). The hero’s self-abandonment, after being ruined, is typically an act of rage (Steiner 1980: 128). Such anti-climax or Dionysian defeat is most evident in Sophocles’ Oedipus myth. After having seen his sacrileges, Oedipus becomes so disgusted with himself that he pokes out his own eyes, so as not to see himself again. His heroic self-abandonment is definite: he will never be king again and will be a blind beggar for the rest of his life (Farley 1996: 127). Gone are the heroic impulses that drove him to overcome the contradictions inherent in human life.

**Apollonian and Dionysian publics**

The tragic art and the Socratic art of friendly dispute take place and result in different publics. The Socratic dialogues presume and promote Apollonian publics, which are based on the assumption that knowledge can be acquired through intellectual interactions.

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4 Hans-Uwe Haus (2008: 321-322) points out that ‘what strikes and fascinates us in reading ancient Greek tragedy, however, is precisely the belief that we cannot assert our will unconditionally and that we occupy a small place in an immense universe in which all things, even the immortal gods, are subject to one force, the force of necessity. For it is the recognition of necessity, in one form or another, that finally resolves the conflict in Greek tragedy.’
Such publics ensure, at the same time, that the contest of minds is not stifled by all sorts of social forces and sophistries (Voegelin 2000: 66; 123; 125). From an Apollonian viewpoint, the essence of the European culture is the rule of reason and the protection of the rational order, through prudence and moderation, that is, by recognizing Apollo’s just limits. Reason and the Apollonian publics can, therefore, only flourish if the European life is lived through friendly disputes, whereby the ordinary citizen is brought on stage and gets a chance to speak. The example of such a wise, reasonable and serene way of life is set by Socrates, the Apollonian intellectual hero who sacrifices his own life for the sake of the eternal Reason and ideas. Socrates even succeeds in turning his own death into a theme for his dialogue, which in turn makes his heroic death become the ‘art of dying’ (Bradatan 2007: 589; 602). The Apollonian hero – the exemplary figure for scientists standing in Europe’s Socratic tradition – outwits even death (Nietzsche 2000: 76; 82). Neither the horror of death, which is itself just appearance, nor the Dionysian abyss is experienced. The material reality veils what cannot be killed.

The Heraclitean perspective, on the other hand, does not perceive reason as such a praiseworthy human characteristic. Reason is, just as everything that is human, subjected to the flux. Hence, for Nietzsche, the ‘art of living’ is not so much philosophizing and learning how to die as to live life with all its horrors and absurdities and purposelessness to the fullest (Nietzsche 2000: 128; Dienstag 2001: 924-925). This powerful will to live is expressed in and reinforced through the Dionysian festival. It is the powerful or heroic will that characterizes Nietzsche’s ‘good European’, who is cultivated in an ‘aesthetic public’. Tragedies used to be performed during the Dionysian festival, in an Athenian sanctuary of Dionysus, in honor of the god of wine (Lea 1977: 36-7; Herington 1986: 19; Scullion 2002: 107). Tragedies are performed against a background of enchanting myths, in particular those of Dionysus’ dismemberment and of his madness inflicted by Hera. Dionysian or aesthetic publics enable the audience, to borrow Leszek Kolakowski’s words (1989: 45), ‘to participate in myth,’ so that it can fully experience the tragedy and become part of it. In aesthetic publics, the demigod and his chorus of satyrs, rather than debating ordinary citizens, are at the centre of the stage, offering a spectacle that, in Nietzsche’s view, is a ‘more truthful, more real, more complete image of existence’ than the Apollonian thinker ‘who commonly considers himself the sole reality’ (Nietzsche 2000: 47).

During the Dionysian festival, the audience becomes intoxicated with the Dionysian ecstasy and will to live (Nietzsche 2000: 52; Dienstag 2001: 932), which Nietzsche (2000: 113) calls ‘an orgiastic feeling of freedom.’ Freedom is here associated with the free play of the virile passions and energies, which refuse to be defeated by suffering and death. This feeling of freedom is an aesthetic experience that is at once ecstatic, musical and intoxicating (Sweet 1999: 354). The audience becomes part of the performance, is carried into life of the legendary hero, tastes the Dionysian euphoria, jubilates in the hero’s triumphs and mourns his downfall and mysterious self-abandonment (Nietzsche 2000: 48; Weinberg 1967: 252-3; 266; Dienstag 2001: 927).

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5 The Dionysian festival and the contest of the tragedies had originally been institutionalized in ancient Athens, in around 534 BCE, during the reign of Pisistratus.
The Attic tragedians remind their audience that the dramatic ruin of the hero can also be their own fate and constantly charge their tragedies with deeper tragic significance, against the superstitions of the crowd (Lea 1977: 37-38; Steiner 1980: 315; Alford 1992: 159; Antonio 1995: 30; Dienstag 2001: 931). 6

Nietzsche (2000: 111) argues that the art of tragedy is ‘a necessary healing craft’. He holds that only the performed tragedy, that is, the aesthetic experience of the Dionysian festival, can reshape the disgust of life into the will to live, and hence, saves from collapsing into a condition of despair or apathy (Nietzsche 2000: 46). The audience needs the literary art, ‘as a protection and remedy’ (Nietzsche 2000: 84), to be able to tolerate (rather than ignore or escape from) reality. The redemptive power of the tragedy lies in its fusion of greatness with suffering – of the tragic hero in this case – against a background of singing and dancing chorus and audience (Nietzsche 2000: 19; 23; Farley 1996: 125). The participants literally imbibe the powerful passions that characterize a heroic life and end. If they are, in turn, able to live such a life, they become Nietzsche’s ‘good Europeans’.

The music of the chorus, in the performance, forms a crucial part of the aesthetic experience of tragic heroism. Nietzsche argues that ‘real music’ or ‘serious music’ is ‘the imageless Dionysian art’ (Nietzsche 2000: 19) performed by the chorus in honor of Dionysus. Such a music expresses the ‘essence of the world’, that is misfortune, which the public of ‘aesthetic listeners’ (Nietzsche 2000: 120) can hear (‘drink’). The Heraclitean flux can, indeed, only be expressed in imageless sounds, while the ‘voice’ of reality is blocked by rationalizations (Friedlander 2006: 640). Music expresses that which words can hardly tell namely the experiences of perpetual destruction and re-creation, death and re-birth, and the climactic moment when the hero meets his fate (Friedlander 2006: 634-5). Tragic music is therefore an ‘original echo of pain’ (Nietzsche 2000: 35), the pain of Dionysus and of everyone who longs for greatness, the infinite. The musical performance requires, or presupposes, an audience that is sensitive enough to be able to hear the shattering of fluid realities or ‘the undistorted voice’ of the flux (Nietzsche 2000: 90) – the pain of becoming – in the performance of the tragedian. In the Apollonian art, by contrast, suffering is vanquished or erased by the beauty of beautiful images that depict a reality free from contradictions.

Nietzsche points out the antagonistic relationship between the Socratic dialogue and the Dionysian festival. Apollonian publics promote a life of intellectual contempt for

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6 Jean Bodin stresses that this so-called deeper tragic significance must be understood within the context of the Athenian city-state. Bodin (2008: 280) argues that the legend of the tragic hero ‘functions as a warning addressed to the demos.’ The tragedian understands the city-state, as Anita Laycock (2009: 29) emphasizes, as the extension of the rule of Olympian gods into the human realm. Paul Epstein (1996: 30), therefore, calls the city-state an ‘Olympian institution’ (Epstein 1996: 30). Nietzsche (2000: 28), however, claims that these gods were ‘born of dream, as a screen’ and created by the Greeks themselves, who invented them to be able to live with ‘the terrors and horrors of existence’.
the primitive, unrestrained instinct, feverish impulses and wildness of the Dionysian impulses, which are aroused during the performance of the tragedy. For Nietzsche, Socrates is ‘a newly born daemon’ and a ‘despotic logician’ who ‘single-handedly dares negate the Greek character’, which is so closely related to the Greek mysteries, and instead, creates an Apollonian or Socratic culture in which there is no place for the Dionysian will to live (Nietzsche 2000: 68; 79; 74). In this culture, the reckless hero who provokes fate and transgresses all reasonable limits is a bad example for citizens. Apollo or the wise philosopher, on the other hand, teaches how to live serenely, in the belief of eternal forms. In his dialogues, Socrates shows an open distaste for the formlessness, fickleness and futility of music, myth and dance, and he reduces the intoxicating tension of the tragic with comical remarks and laughter (Detienne 2001: 150-1). Nietzsche insists that the death of tragedy begins with the Socratic dialogue, which is a cowardly escape of the mind into a dream-world of ideas (Nietzsche 2000: 83). ‘Not reflection, no! - but true knowledge, insight into the horrific truth’ is what fundamental knowledge is about (Nietzsche 2000: 46). The really wise man is Oedipus, not Socrates (Nietzsche 2000: 55); and yet, in the tragedians’ plays, the Dionysian hero is, despite his sharp reason, ignorant. The wise Oedipus did not know who is father was.

Nietzsche, however, notes how even the life of Socrates eventually expresses the union between the Apollonian and Dionysian forces; or more exactly, how the Apollonian drive in Socrates can no longer resist the Dionysian impulse. This climax, according to Nietzsche, is reached when the hero (Socrates) finally becomes musical, just when he is about to die (Nietzsche 2000: 80). Then he comes to realize, against his earlier beliefs, that philosophizing may not be the highest (or most beautiful) art after all, and that there may be wisdom in music, which had thus far been inaccessible to him as theoretical man. For Nietzsche, the last days of Socrates reveal that Apollo needs Dionysus, especially in times of existential crises like an imminent death and wars, and that Dionysus can make himself be heard and felt even in the life of the most reasonable (Apollonian) men. If Dionysus could make such a come-back in the life of Socrates (the personification of European rationality), then, tragedy can also be revived in the Apollonian culture of European modernity. When the Enlightenment movement was destroying the old rational order of Christian Europe, Richard Wagner arose as the new Aeschylus, to reaffirm the Greek character of the German nation. At least that was Nietzsche’s hope when he wrote *The Birth of Tragedy*.

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7 Nietzsche (2000: 73) presents Socrates and Euripides as hand in glove, holding that ‘Socrates used to help Euripides with his writing.’ In his *The Bacchae*, Euripides narrates the story of a Dionysian festival in which things go terribly out of hand. When King Pentheus of Thebes declares a ban on the worship of Dionysus, Pentheus’ cousin, the mask of Dionysus, invites the King to attend the Dionysian public that had driven the Theben women into ecstatic frenzy. During the orgiastic worship of Dionysus, the deity calls out to his worshippers and accuses Pentheus. This drives the women wild, including the king’s mother, who, in her frenzy, cuts off the head of her son, and only realizes what she has done when she awakens from her Dionysian spell. In *The Bacchae*, Dionysus is not always noble, and the chorus, including its singing, dancing, music and acting, plays a minor role.
Bureaucracy and publics

For Nietzsche, the Heraclitean vision sees the truth about reality while tragedy subsequently transforms this unbearable absurdity of life into an aesthetic public, without masking the horror itself. The Socratic dialectic and its Apollonian publics intellectually involve people who are incited to search for the good in the realm of ideas, in spite of the phenomenological flux and absurdity of things. Dionysian publics do not try to check the becoming of reality, but instead, incite the participants to live it as art, by making them become part of the story itself. In Socratic dialogues, disputing friends critically question all established orders in their search for the rational or good order. Both the Dionysian and the Apollonian publics can disturb an established order and institutions. The urge to control drives bureaucracies, which, in order to effectively fix one type of reality, have to destroy all forms of publics that have the potential to upset order. In modern societies, bureaucracies impose an enlightenment model of rational order devoid of mythical content and uncertain self-knowledge, upon a reality that is thereby made fully intelligible, controllable and correctible.

Nietzsche considers the European enlightenment as the modern successor to the Socratic myth-annihilation, which characterizes the Apollonian publics. The enlightenment movement’s confidence in the capacity of reason and its belief in the rational order of reality are Socratic in origin. However, Nietzsche suggests that the enlightenment goes steps further than Socrates in its annihilation of myth. Although Socrates ridicules and destroys the legendary tales of the tragedians, his dialogues are premised upon the myth of the Delphic oracle (which revealed that there was no one wiser than Socrates). And, although Socrates maintains that reason rather than myth is the foundation of European culture, reason, the nous, is itself a mythical entity (Nietzsche 2000: 72): the ‘voice of reason’ is the ‘divine voice’ of Socrates’ daimonion, which makes itself be heard in the dialogues (Nietzsche 2000: 75). In the Dialectic of Enlightenment, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, inspired by Nietzsche (c.f., Wellmer 1991: 3), maintain that the enlightenment movement postulates a vision of reason that is devoid of mythical content. Enlightenment reason, in its origin, seeks to make people think for themselves and to liberate them from their fears and superstitions, but, in the modernization process, it becomes an instrument that serves bureaucratic objectives, such as enforcing laws effectively, fixing a machine, or making a business run more efficiently. Horkheimer and Adorno (2007: 57) emphasize that Nietzsche, like

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8 Antonio (1995: 8) points out that ‘according to Nietzsche, the Protestant ‘north’ is the heartland of Socratic culture,’ the enlightenment movement being represented most explicitly in Kant’s works and, as Benjamin (1977) affirms, in German drama or Baroque opera.

9 Horkheimer and Adorno (2007: 103-4) point out that the enlightenment movement is primarily directed against the myth of the teleological order of natural law (discoverable by the nous) and the charisma of the authorities that safeguard the pre-given order.
Hegel before him, had grasped this pathology of enlightenment reason that turns into a bureaucratic instrument.

The reduction of the Socratic nous to an instrumental reason has far-reaching political and cultural implications. Enlightenment reason provides the static concepts, mummified categories, classifications and catalogues that are required to construct bureaucratic limits and boundaries, which in turn rationally order reality (Honneth 2007: 70). Dialogical or democratic practices have no place in such a technical organization of reality. Bureaucracies, whose function is to implement the enlightenment or any other theoretical model of reality, have no need for the Socratic publics and consider dialogues and the need for intellectual justification rather troublesome and disorderly (Gouldner 1973: 76; Gardiner 2004: 35). The (potential) participants of Socratic dialogues are turned into bureaucratic subjects, like workers, consumers and clients, that is, into ‘spectators without influence’, whose lives are governed by the enlightened power elites and civil servants (Honneth 2007: 33). The identity of bureaucratic subjects is determined by typically large and powerful organizations, such as government agencies and enterprises (Mills 1956: 355).

The Enlightenment movement is, in Nietzsche’s words (2000: 85), ‘the most illustrious opponent of the tragic world-view.’ Horkheimer and Adorno stress that the enlightenment movement, or perhaps more exactly, some kind of process deriving from it, eventually comes to substitute the plebeian entertainment of mass culture industries for the tragic art of the aesthetic publics. According to Nietzsche, bureaucratic subjects who live in a disenchanted world in which myths are annihilated by Apollonian reason cannot bear the horrific and absurd truth about their own existence. The subjects of the culture industries no longer have the opportunity to participate in enchanting tragic myths that cultivate powerful passions and the Dionysian will to live, which characterize Nietzsche’s ‘good European’. The entertainment provided by manufactured images and commodity forms, like music productions, films, television programmes and glossy magazines, ensures that the absurdity of life and the Dionysian abyss are forgotten (Horkheimer and Adorno 2007: 159). Being thoroughly rationalized, such subjects cannot develop the mythical imagination or a certain sensitivity that would have allowed them to ‘live the tragedy’ in and through the aesthetic publics. In a bureaucratic culture, subjects cannot experience, feel or live the tragic fate of the Dionysian hero, because, as Nietzsche (2000: 104-5) identifies the opera and the ‘theatre public’ (Nietzsche 2000: 43) as optimistic entities that do not ‘bear the slightest trace of the elegiac pain of an eternal loss, but rather the serenity of eternal rediscovery, of comfortable pleasure in an idyllic reality.’ Benjamin (1977) contrasts the seventeenth century German opera (the Trauerspiel or mourning play) with Attic tragedy. Like Nietzsche, Benjamin stresses that the latter is mythic in its conception, while the former is organized within a rational order (Friedlander 2006: 633).

\[10\] Nietzsche (2000: 104-5) identifies the opera and the ‘theatre public’ (Nietzsche 2000: 43) as optimistic entities that do not ‘bear the slightest trace of the elegiac pain of an eternal loss, but rather the serenity of eternal rediscovery, of comfortable pleasure in an idyllic reality.’ Benjamin (1977) contrasts the seventeenth century German opera (the Trauerspiel or mourning play) with Attic tragedy. Like Nietzsche, Benjamin stresses that the latter is mythic in its conception, while the former is organized within a rational order (Friedlander 2006: 633).

\[11\] Neil Curtis (2007: 861; 877) points out that, in the culture industry, the mass media plays the role of the chorus and yet, it cannot function as the chorus because it separates the spectator or the listener from the play.
45) insists, shielded by bureaucracies, they are not ‘equipped for the most delicate and intense suffering.’

Bureaucracies expect and demand passive obedience from their subjects, which makes cultural movement nearly impossible. Such passive spectators or so-called ‘consumers of art’ (Shrum 1991: 349; 371), are, Horkheimer and Adorno (2007: 155; 166) point out, deluded en masse, governed to take refuge in comfortable, boring and mindless bureaucratic forms of entertainment. Culture industries provide ready-made experiences to a passive public that is willing to buy them to fill the emptiness of a disenchanted world and appease the cowardly fear of living in the flux, which they explicitly experience in temporary relationships and the continuous flow of new products and changed consumption patterns. The experience of the flux can also be more implicit or unconscious, resulting in a sort of malaise, feeling of insecurity or restlessness. However, the escape from life into a manufactured dream-world of cultural productions does not really quench the thirst, as the Socratic dialogue and the Dionysian festival do, which, therefore, allows the culture industry to carry on with its provision of manufactured dream-worlds, to fill an emptiness that never decreases.

The rebirth of Apollonian publics in sociology

Public sociology is born out of an uneasy relationship to the enlightenment movement in general, and to the bureaucratic fixation of social reality in particular (Ossewaarde 2007; Ossewaarde 2010). Public sociologists, like Robert Lynd and C. Wright Mills, understood their sociologies as sciences that were inspired by the Socratic tradition of dialogues, self-reflection and self-criticism, which also meant that sociologists had the moral duty to bear the consequences of their words and deeds. Public sociologists have, therefore, endeavored to revive the Apollonian publics of friendly disputes (Ossewaarde 2010. In such a view, sociology is only able to flourish when opposite sociological perspectives are allowed to provide liberating perspectives of each other; and when the tension of an intellectual dispute is upheld (Gouldner 1973: 361). According to Alvin Gouldner, for instance, sociology, during the 1960s and 1970s, thrrove on the dispute between functionalist and Marxist sociologists. Similarly, Robert Merton (1976: 110) emphasizes that sociology can grow when sociologists disagree with each other, while it stagnates under the force of one dominant perspective that ends the dispute. Michael Burawoy, on the other hand, holds that sociology – as a science with different dimensions

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12 Patricia Mooney Nickel (2009: 195) argues that Burawoy’s understanding of sociology is not dialectical but bureaucratic, namely, he offers a ‘division of labor as the stabilization of the ‘rationalization’ of the discipline of sociology.’

13 Robert Merton (1976: 116) stresses that ‘the chronic crisis of sociology, with its diversity, competition, and clash of doctrine, seems preferable to the therapy sometimes proposed for handling the acute crisis, namely, the prescription of a single theoretical perspective that promises to provide full and exclusive access to the sociological truth;’ and points out ‘the stagnation of sociological inquiry as a result of premature agreement on a single paradigm that is claimed to be an exhaustive guide to investigating the wide range of sociological questions.’
and facets – can only survive if there is reconciliation, or at least cooperation, between the bureaucratic reason of professional and policy sociologists, on the one side, and the Socratic reason of critical and public sociologists, on the other side.

Public sociologists like Mills and Gouldner maintain that European culture or what they call ‘Western civilization’ finds its highest expression in the flourishing of Socratic reason. In their view, public sociology represents a particular quality of reason, namely the sociological imaginative conception of ‘the interplay of man and society, of biography and history, of self and world’ (Mills 2000: 4). Similarly to reason, the sociological imagination can, however, only flourish in dialogical publics, which can be considered as ‘Apollonian entities’. While sociologists may have different definitions of ‘publics’, they all seem to stress the latter’s dialogical or discursive character. Habermas’ ‘public sphere’ is one in which a critical and reflective (political) discourse can take place, so that only the force of the better argument, and not the power of fixed institutions and habits, is acknowledged (c.f., Gardiner 2004: 38; 42). Mustafa Emirbayer and Mimi Sheller (1999: 155) observe that ‘publics signify rational-critical argumentation and collective will formation regarding the paths along which the state, economy, and civil society itself are to develop.’ In sum, public sociology is an Apollonian enterprise and the public sociologist is a Socratic figure who is a suspect in the eyes of all those who offer a positive doctrine (Gouldner 1976: xvi).

Public sociologists define European culture as an Apollonian culture of critical discourse. They discern the presence of Apollonian publics, in different forms, throughout European history. Tocqueville (2000: 33) argues that publics are the core of what he calls democratic society, which, in his view, is the most rational and just order. He discovers such publics in the Puritan New England township, in which the Socratic dialectic continues and democratic citizens cultivate the type of reasoning needed to make democracy work. Michael Burawoy (2005b: 318; 324) sees the publics in the protest movements of civil society and defines the sociological enterprise today in terms of ‘fostering public sociologies to bolster the organs of civil society’ (Burawoy, 2005b: 319). Civil society movements like Marxism, the labor movement, civil rights movement, anti-war movement or anti-globalization movement are, in this perspective, dialogical entities that contest the fixated, bureaucratized actualities of what he calls a ‘reactionary world’. Burawoy’s publics exist to promote and shape a better alternative world or, as Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot (1999: 373) note, a ‘plurality of worlds’, whereby one world does not dominate the other.

Public sociologists contest the bureaucratic suppression of the Socratic dialectic, which results in the eclipse or reduction of reason to a bureaucratic tool. They seek to explain, in Axel Honneth’s words (2007: 29) ‘the pathological deformation of reason sociologically.’ Since Tocqueville, public sociologists have repeatedly pointed out the danger of the bureaucratic destruction of publics, which is the big threat to democracy.14

14 Francis Fox Piven (2004: 34) has recently re-emphasized the dedication of public sociology to democracy, stating that ‘we should try as sociologists to have a public voice.
Tocqueville (2000: 45), for instance, observes that the destruction of New England townships leads to a social condition in which ‘there is no freedom of mind in America.’ Similarly, Mills (1956: 360-1) emphasizes the relationship between the bureaucratic suppression of the Socratic dialectic and the progress of ‘the second rate mind.’ For public sociologists, ‘the mindlessness and mediocrity of men of affairs’ (Mills 1956: 354), which flow from the destruction of publics and the spread of bureaucracies, is the real social problem of our times. Gouldner (1973: 167-8) insists that ‘in the end, it is the quality of mind, not politics, that confronts us with the deepest abyss.’ Without the Socratic quality of mind and the sociological imagination, which is stifled in bureaucratic life, there can be no possibility to search for alternative orders, and therefore, people are condemned to live in falsehood or delusion. This is the most urgent concern of public sociologists.

Sociology and Dionysian publics

Robert Antonio (1995) has called Nietzsche the ‘antisociologist’ because of the latter’s claim that reality is better understood by the (tragic) artist than by science that relies on reason. Nietzsche’s radical skepticism undermines the very foundation on which sociology reposes and makes the sociological endeavor appear vain. This gap between Nietzsche and sociologists may compel one to conclude that The Birth of Tragedy cannot be of any value to the public sociological enterprise in particular, especially since public sociology cannot incorporate a Heraclitean vision of reality. Furthermore, the aims and commitments of public sociologists seem to differ from those of Nietzsche. The former sociologists are committed to a more just, meaningful and less painful, absurd, oppressive and mindless world. They believe that this can be achieved with the help of human reason, which explains their attempt to make the nous flourish, through the art of friendly dispute without having a particular culture (order) in mind. Nietzsche was also appalled by the mediocrity of man, but had a different vision of greatness. He admired and was committed to the European culture of the Greek tragedians, which he tried to revive through ‘the artistic re-awakening of tragedy and of the tragic worldview’ (Nietzsche 2000: 92), and the corresponding rebirth of aesthetic publics of ‘good Europeans’ (Nietzsche 2000: 92; 120).

For Nietzsche, the European cultural movement was at its peek when tragedy – of which the Dionysian festivals are the expressions – was an integral part of it. The ‘good Europeans’, in his view, are the ones who are able to look at the horrific and absurd realities and endure them without ending up in a state of despair, nihilism, ascetic resignation, apathy or hostility to life (Antonio 1995: 19). The ‘good European’ is not the ‘rational’ Socrates but Agamemnon, Xerxes or Oedipus, who unreasonably dare to fight against their cruel fates and surpass their (predetermined) limits. A renaissance of tragedy

And we should do this in order to contribute to a democratic discourse about public problems that tempers concentrated power.’

15 Hence, for Mills (1956: 350), the clearest indication of cultural regress is that ‘George Washington in 1783 relaxed with Voltaire’s ‘letters’ and Locke’s ‘On Human Understanding’;’ whereas ‘Eisenhower read cowboy tales and detective stories.’
would create such powerful, heroic men. A revitalized Europe is literally one that radiates and creates tragic heroes who are able to rise high above mediocrity that characterizes the bureaucratic realm (Nietzsche 2000: 94). However, centuries of bureaucratic culture have shaped subjects who are much less sensitive to symbols and tragic myths; while at the same time, people can only experience the full aesthetic dimension of tragedies if they possess a mythical imagination, which allows them to ‘live the tragedy’ in aesthetic publics.

Although Antonio presents Nietzsche as the ‘antisociologist’, he does make it clear that Nietzsche has had a major influence on the sociological works of Ferdinand Tönnies, Max Weber, George Simmel and Karl Mannheim. It is especially in the realm of cultural sociology that Nietzsche’s ideas have left their marks. Weber, for instance, recognizes that his interpretive sociology bears, to a large extent, the imprint of Marx and Nietzsche, while Mannheim identifies Nietzsche, together with Marx, as a founding father of the sociology of knowledge (Antonio 1995: 3). It is particularly Simmel who has tried to re-awaken a tragic worldview in sociology, manifesting a Heraclitean or Nietzschean view of ‘society’, which is defined as an aesthetic phenomenon that is becoming. The tragic worldview, in Nietzsche’s own words (2000: 3), is characterized by ‘an intellectual preference for the hard, horrific, evil, problematic aspects of existence which stems from well-being, from overflowing health, from an abundance of existence.’ Simmel shares Nietzsche’s aesthetic commitments in a tragic sociological manner.

Simmel, as Yoel Regev (2005) explains, understands ‘society’ as a cultural complex that moves through a confrontation of opposites, between what he calls the creative force of life and fixed cultural forms. The creative force of life resembles Nietzsche’s Dionysian force, while the fixed cultural form resembles Nietzsche’s Apollonian opposite. According to Simmel, the Heraclitean flux is characterized by the confrontation of the two opposites. As he explains:

Life is ineluctably condemned to become reality only in the guise of its opposite, the form…. Thus life here aspires to the unattainable: to determine and manifest itself beyond all forms, in its naked immediacy. But knowledge, volition and creation, though wholly governed by life, can only replace one form for another: they can never replace the form itself for the life that lies beyond it (Simmel quoted in Regev, 2005: 587).  

The creative force of life needs to express itself in its Apollonian opposite of fixed cultural forms like music, sculpture, literature, painting, science and technology. Simmel’s tragic worldview becomes clearer in his vision of the cruel fate of the Dionysian force that is no longer welcomed in the Apollonian forms, since the latter are no longer receptive to the creative force of life. European culture then becomes purely Apollonian, whereby the dialectical confrontation is confined to an interaction between

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16 Yoel Regev (2005: 587) stresses that, like Nietzsche, ‘Simmel’s sympathies seem to clearly lie on the side of “life”.’
old and new forms. This is the ‘tragedy of culture’ in Simmel’s cultural sociological analysis.  

The tragic worldview in Simmel’s cultural sociology, however, does not at all imply that his aim is to revive aesthetic publics. While public sociology cannot exist without Socratic dialogues, and, indeed, actually develops from such publics, tragic sociology can exist without the Dionysian festival. Public sociology is developed in a dialogical setting, but tragic sociology, although it is inspired by the Attic tragedians, is not performed in the classical Greek theatre. In other words, aesthetic publics are not indispensable for integrating the tragic worldview. Cultural sociologists may, like Nietzsche, acknowledge that aesthetic publics are needed to resist Apollonian dominion and unleash Dionysian habits of imagination in order to regenerate European culture, but they are not the ones who resurrect the aesthetic publics or participate in them qua sociologists. It is not the sociological discourses of academics like Simmel, but the oeuvres of artists, which can revitalize the aesthetic publics and re-enchant European culture. Without the myths of the artist, European culture forfeits its creative force of the imagination (Nietzsche 2000: 122).

In European modernity, such efforts have been highly exceptional given the predominance of the enlightenment movement, but they have been undertaken. Racine, for instance, not only wrote tragedies in the seventeenth century, but he also actively tried to shape the court theatre as a Greek, Dionysian (royal) public (Steiner, 1980: 76). Cultural revitalization, for Racine, required the resurrection of something that resembled the Dionysian festival, but then adapted to a modern age, in which the Greek legends have long lost their ancient, deeper significance. In other words, the challenge of the modern tragedian is to involve people and to get them to participate in a myth while knowing that modern people do not possess the same receptivity as ancient Europeans. The most well-known attempt to revitalize the aesthetic public is doubtlessly Richard Wagner’s festival at Bayreuth. Wagner not only tried to compose tragic music drama in which the Heraclitean dialectic is expressed in tremendous orchestral tensions (Adorno 2008: 121-123), but he also tried to arouse a public response of Dionysian feelings. During late nineteenth century modernity, he attempted to create an audience of aesthetic

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17 Tragic sociologies are typically written in fragments, are full of nuances and diverse voices, and hence, devoid of an overarching unity. In tragic sociological fragments, no thesis is justified and no argument is advanced (Honneth 2007: 71). Tragic sociologists insist upon the fragmentary and unfinished character of social life. Walter Benjamin (1977: 235) suggests that the fragment resembles a tragic ruin.

18 In this article, only the two most illustrious examples in modern European history are mentioned. Jean Bodin (2008: 280) points at some alternative efforts made by several German theatre directors to revitalize the Dionysian festival during the Weimar Republic. Bodin (2008: 278) also identifies the cadres of party discipline as the Bolshevik alternative to confronting the world’s absurdities.
listeners who would be actually able to experience the flux and their woeful agony in his art (Steiner 1980: 286).  

Nietzsche himself had dedicated The Birth of Tragedy to his friend Wagner in 1872. He had hoped that Wagner’s tragic music dramas and the inauguration of the Bayreuth festival in 1876 would mean the rebirth of tragedy in the newly founded German state. In the foreword of The Birth of Tragedy’s second edition in 1886, Nietzsche expressed his disenchantment. He now held that German music, including Wagner’s so-called tragic dramas, was ‘Romantic through and through and the most un-Greek of all forms of art’ (Nietzsche 2000: 11). According to Nietzsche, the works of German composers bore the influence of Christian aesthetics, and reflected the doctrine of beauty (or good) that triumphs over suffering (evil). A true recovery of tragedy is only possible if the Apollonian ideas lose their grip on the minds and hearts of modern Europeans. Zygmunt Bauman’s concept of ‘liquid modernity’ may denote such a loss of ground. In liquid modernity, globalization processes undermine the fixed boundaries of bureaucratic categories, and social forms become increasingly transient and uncertain (Bauman 2000). John Urry (2002: 133) defines this ‘post-modern’ condition as global fluidity or ‘cosmopolitan global fluids’. Urry argues that society as a fluid must be understood as the ‘mobility’ of social reality or an ongoing social process of self-constitution. The ‘post-bureaucratic’ culture, which Bauman and Urry seem to perceive, may offer dialectical possibilities, not only for a regeneration of the Apollonian publics, but also for a revival of the Dionysian publics.

Nietzsche’s vision of ‘aesthetic publics’ enriches the imagination. It enables sociologists to rethink the very notion of ‘publics’. And yet there can be no place for aesthetic publics in public sociology. Public sociologists do not associate publics with aesthetics, and hence, it has not been their endeavor to create publics via the aesthetical experiences of performed tragedies. A sociological dedication to publics is a commitment to the rational order of a good, typically democratic, society, which is discoverable by the nous. The existence of such an order is denied, in the art of tragedy, and in the tragic world-view. The tragic worldview, which perceives the world as a fluid and absurd phenomenon, can be foundational for cultural sociology, but such a sociology is, in the end, itself Socratic since any thinking depends on the nous, and can only survive in a free dialogical setting. Public sociology develops through Socratic dialogues and is destroyed when the Socratic dialectic is suppressed by bureaucracies. The Socratic, dialogical life of public sociologists and of citizens cannot be led in the fixed orders of bureaucracies. This longing for freedom resembles, to a certain extent, the Dionysian will to live and in any case, is not necessarily its antagonist.

19 In the Birth of Tragedy, Nietzsche is still enthused about Wagner’s efforts, but he eventually comes to mock Wagner’s public as a hothouse of romantic dreaming as well as demagogic anti-Semitism (Steiner 1980: 288; Andler 2009: 302). Romanticism is a non-tragic movement and essentially ‘un-Greek’ (Nietzsche 2000: 11). Luis Dumur (2009: 276-7) emphasizes the difference between Nietzsche’s understanding of culture and the romantic concept of Bildung. The latter refers to the romantic ideal of aesthetic self-realization.
Public sociologists seek to revive the political and moral experience of being dialogical citizens in a European culture of critical discourse, in which Apollonian values like democracy, rule of law and human rights are constitutive. In such an Apollonian culture, intellectual mediocrity is the major public sociological concern since the ‘second-rate mind’ is incapable of discovering the rational order of the good society; or even worse, imposes a bureaucratic order on reality in the name of reason or the good. Since ignorance, according to the Socratic tradition, is the source of all evil and suffering, the progressive deterioration of the mind can only mean a general weakening of Apollonian values, immorality, irresponsibility, injustice and manipulation. These are the signs of the irrational order of modern society today. Such a social order of mindlessness, governed by techniques and devoid of sociological imagination, develops when publics are destroyed by bureaucracies, which denies citizens the freedom to govern themselves.

Burawoy (2005b: 317-8) argues that the world, in the era of global capitalism, has become so irrational and unjust place, that the urgent matter is not so much a transformation (purification) of sociology as ensuring that the world does not become an inhabitable place for many.20

Nietzsche, however, argues that the Socratic tradition is itself a plebeian force of cultural regress. Public sociologists assume that reason must be protected from repressive and manipulative forces, because reason, as personified in the dialogical life and death of Socrates, is what makes it possible to give each person, independently of who (s)he is, his or her due in the rational order. Nietzsche does not share this intellectual understanding of order. The European culture that Nietzsche has in mind is an aesthetic complex, in which the Dionysian impulses, – the will to live – which define the tragic hero, are given free rein. From Nietzsche’s viewpoint, the greatness of the good European accrues to the hero who has the courage to transgress Apollo’s boundaries, thereby contesting the fundamentally unjust and obscure conditions of human existence, and yet, without hating them (Nietzsche, 2000: 56; Steiner 1980: 167; Curtis 2007: 866).21

While the Socratic tradition – and all sociological traditions that understand the human being as a rational being – seeks to revive and cultivate the Europeanness that is seen to lie in reason, Nietzsche thirsts for the good European can hardly be grasped by human understanding and be expressed in words. In tragedies, the hero even fights against the gods, in battles that cannot be won. The tragedian knows that the transgression of certain limits is bound to incur the wrath of Apollo, leading to the fatal abyss. The tragic perspective is painfully aware of Apollo’s just limits and of the fluidity of selves and societies, and hence of the futility of the many attempts to shape and re-shape the European identity according to certain ideas of Europe. Yet, the heroic greatness that Nietzsche envisions lies precisely in the confrontation with human fate. These human limits, including death itself, are nearly ridiculed by Socrates, who even philosophizes about death, thereby overcoming or more precisely, masking the true

20 Burawoy (2005b: 325) himself identifies Apollonian culture with ‘democratic socialism’.
21 As Wendy Farley (1996: 125) puts it, ‘by showing the destruction of good persons by power, the tragedies call for a justice that their characters do not receive.’
despair and suffering by having recourse to irony and argument, the voices of reason. Only in the dying Socrates, says Nietzsche, is the (his) Greek character re-affirmed; only then, is the Dionysian force of music allowed to escort him till the gates of Hades.

In Europe’s Socratic tradition, including the Enlightenment, these human limits are generally considered as temporary barriers that can be overcome through human prowess. While public sociologists have been alert watchdogs who were highly aware of the oppressive social or bureaucratic forces that transformed the European mind into a second-rate shallow mind, they have generally not questioned their Socratic tradition, or more precisely, its foundations. Most of them have perceived the absurdity and fragility of social life, but have refused to accept it as the only possible reality. In other words, sociologists do not generally believe in a fatal social determinism but seek to order the flux according to ideas of the good or just society. Hence, Nietzsche can say that they are cowards who flee the harsh reality of the flux. He was, however, not concerned with public issues of democratic life, but longed for a Dionysian greatness. Sociology – and the sociological imagination – cannot be harmed by a continued discussion between these two forms of dialectics, but it is hardly an option to substitute art for sociology, or the sheer will to live life heroically for reason.

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THE UNWORTHINESS OF NIETZSCHEAN VALUES

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Introduction

In The Genealogy of Values: The Aesthetic Economy of Nietzsche and Proust (1995), I contrasted Nietzsche’s and Proust’s language of values to Plato’s language of the Good. Since Plato is often dismissed as metaphysical, my critique of values-discourse was thought to depend upon Platonic metaphysics, against which Nietzsche devoted his life to overcome. In this paper, I should like to compare Nietzsche to another thinker who prided himself on overcoming Platonic metaphysics, namely, Martin Heidegger and to contrast the former’s language of values (Werte) to the latter’s language of worthiness (Würdigkeit) or dignity (Würde). I do this not to exalt the prudence of Heidegger’s judgment in contrast to the imprudence of Nietzsche’s but to get readers to reflect on the difference between Nietzsche’s ready affirmation of values-discourse and Heidegger’s rejection of it without dismissing this difference as grounded in metaphysics or political ideology.

However, to clarify this distinction at the outset, I shall refer to the boldest of English philosophers. In chapter ten of Leviathan, Hobbes wrote: “The Value, or WORTH of a man, is as of all other things, his Price; that is to say, so much as would be given for the use of his Power: and therefore is not absolute; but a thing dependant on the need and judgment of another.” Hobbes is often deprecated for thinking that human value depends on the laws of supply and demand or for denying “objective values” or “absolute values.” Hobbes was simply avoiding what he called “insignificant speech.” Later in chapter ten, Hobbes wrote: “WORTHINESSE, is a thing different from the worth, or value of a man; and also from his merit, or desert; and consisteth in a particular power, or ability for that, whereof he is said to be worthy: which particular ability, is named FITNESSE, or Aptitude.” Immanuel Kant, who has the reputation of a lofty idealist opposed to the low materialism of Hobbes, distinguished value from worthiness or dignity in his formulation of the categorical imperative: “In the Kingdom of ends everything has either Value [Preis] or Dignity [Würde]. Whatever has a value can be replaced by something else which is equivalent; whatever, on the other hand, is above all value, and therefore admits of no equivalent, has a dignity.” For Kant, human beings have an intrinsic worthiness that exempts them from market evaluation; Preis is relativen Wert, while Würde is innern Wert. Hobbes and

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1 For my critical assessment of Heidegger’s politics, see Edward Andrew, “Heidegger’s Führerprinzip: Leadership out of and into Nihilism” in Joseph Masciulli, Mikhail Molchanov and W. Andy Knight eds. (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), 123-34.
Kant thought economics a part of moral and political philosophy, and were aware that values only manifest themselves through market exchange or the price system, a view that prevailed until the time of John Stuart Mill and Karl Marx. The category of value only enters into Mill’s *Principles of Political Economy* at Book III, “Exchange.” Values-discourse only entered philosophy in the mid to late nineteenth century in the neo-Kantianism of the Marburg and Heidelberg schools of *Geistwissenschaft*; Rudolph Hermann Lotze was the dominant figure in exporting *Wertphilosophie* to the French and English-speaking philosophers, and through the German sociologists inspired by them. Although Lotze’s central categories were *Werte* (values) and *Geltung* (validity), Lotze knew nothing about economics or money (*Geld*). Although Nietzsche was not the first philosopher to know nothing about economics, he was the first political philosopher to be sublimely ignorant or gaily unaware of the “dismal science”; “to know nothing about trade is noble.” Nietzsche was also the first political philosopher to use the language of values outside the realm of market evaluation.

We take the language of values for granted and tend to represent our experiences of the holy, the good, the beautiful and the true as religious, moral, aesthetic and cognitive values. We tend to forget how recently the language of values has become hegemonic in our world of discourse. After the First World War, Harvard-educated social scientists spoke of *values*, indicating the German origin of their professors that taught them this key term of social science that Max Weber borrowed from Nietzsche. The etymology of *value*, from the Latin *valeo*, to be in good health, strong and able, and related to *validus*, sound or healthy, is suggestive of Nietzschean vitalism. However, I wish to indicate how talk of our values is symptomatic of an unsound and unhealthy culture, and will be using Heidegger’s critique of Nietzsche’s evaluative philosophy in this project. Truth, beauty, goodness and holiness have converses; “values” do not. One can say a Nazi is evil but one cannot say he lacks values. One can say an objective is valueless (having zero value but not negative value) or one can say that a person lacks values (usually meaning that the person is wholly preoccupied with her interests, or is Madonna’s material girl) but values-discourse deprives us of robust antitheses to truth, goodness, beauty and sanctity. Perhaps conditioned by the etiolated neo-Kantian idealism from which the language of values originated, “values” distort human life by idealization, by presenting what people live for as lofty ideals we present to others. We may say that we live for wine, women and song, and may find multiple orgasms, medium rare roast beef, or the scent of the sea important components of the good life, but we don’t say that they are our values (except perhaps in pub discussions or perhaps as a cynical rejoinder to politicians orating about Canadian values). In the language of classical political economy, “values” are exchange-values, what we present to others, not use-

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values, what we enjoy for ourselves. “Values”, understood as lofty ideals, tend to diminish our fundamental attachments, our loves and loyalties. What one values is not what one loves or needs. “Values” are options; they lack the graceless urgency of need or the graceful compulsion of love. “Values”, I shall argue, are the products of relativistic estimation but are wrongly presented as something universal, absolute or objective. Whereas one may stand or even die for principle, “values” are the stuff of trade-offs, bargaining and negotiation. “Values” adequately express the options of a moral marketplace and the compromises and accommodations necessary to live together, despite “the fact of plurality” or irreconcilable moral and cultural differences. However, values-discourse militates against the search for a common good or goods, against universal principles and against the universal provision of public services.

Nietzsche on the Inherently Subjective Nature of Values

Nietzsche boldly asserted that all values arise from evaluation: "nothing is valuable 'in itself'". He poked fun at those who thought that “values were inherent in things and all one had to do was grasp them.” For Nietzsche, nothing is naturally good or intrinsically worthy: “Whatever has value in our world now does not have value in itself, according to its nature -- nature is always valueless, but it has been given value at some time, as a present -- and it was we who gave and bestowed it.” Nietzsche’s values-discourse derives from his claim “that there are no moral facts whatever.” He declared: “My chief proposition: there are no moral phenomena, there is only a moral interpretation of these phenomena.” Indeed Nietzsche’s Zarathustra asserted that “this creating, willing, valuing ego . . .is the measure and value of all things.”

Nietzsche’s perspectivism consists in the claim that there are no facts but only interpretations. There are no facts evident to the senses or reason: we experience meanings to be interpreted; “our very sense perceptions are permeated with value judgments.” Since “there is only a perspective seeing, only a perspective ‘knowing’,” Nietzsche insisted that “all evaluation is made from that of a definite perspective: that of the preservation of the individual, a community, a race, a church, a faith, a culture.” All value is “relative meaning and perspective:

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12 Nietzsche, Will to Power, p. 149.
14 Nietzsche, Will to Power, p. 275.
16 Nietzsche, Will to Power, p. 149.
our values are interpreted into things.”\(^{17}\) All values are relative to specific sociological and historical perspectives: values “that are not transitory, do not exist.”\(^{18}\) We evaluate from the perspective of our lives, and “there would be no life at all if not on the basis of perspective estimates and appearances,” thus giving the lie to the “prejudice that truth is worth more than mere appearance.”\(^{19}\) Nietzsche insisted that the idea of values as perspectival interpretations to enhance life as will to power “permeates my writings.”\(^{20}\)

Values are the subjectification of the Platonic good. “Plato...convinced himself that the "good" as he desired it was not the good of Plato but the "good in itself," the eternal treasure that some man, named Plato, had chanced to discover on the way!”\(^{21}\) Nietzsche’s values-discourse is an attack on what Plato held to be intrinsically good. Plato was blind to think his good was the good: what he desired was falsely presented as what is inherently good; what he created through his particular desires was portrayed as what he discovered by means of our common reason. For Nietzsche, values are particular, contingent or idiosyncratic, not universal, essential or common to humanity. Values are projections of the imagination, not receptions of the intelligence. Values are created by unique acts of will, not discovered by our common reason. Values are not simply opinions about what is good (such as appear at the beginning of a Platonic dialogue) but declarations of will, assertions of self-identity. Rather than inviting discussion in the manner of a philosophic conversation, an assertion of “These are my values” appears more as an indication to like it or lump it and put up one’s dukes if one doesn’t; assertion of values closes off the possibility of dialogue or a critical appraisal of one’s own opinions. On the other hand, values are the stuff of trade offs and negotiations. One stands, falls or dies on principle but, as Heidegger stated, “No one dies for mere values.”\(^{22}\)

The limit to Nietzschean values-discourse is the valueless and the invaluable. Since values are relativistic estimation, things and persons stand in relationships of "what is more or less valuable.”\(^{23}\) Values are relative; they stand in a relationship of better and worse, more or less. Equal value is no value.\(^{24}\) The invaluable cannot be evaluated: “the value of life cannot be estimated.”\(^{25}\) Nietzsche is not referring to the invaluable dignity or the pricelessness of an

\(^{17}\) Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols, p. 45.  
\(^{18}\) Nietzsche, Thus spoke Zarathustra, p. 116.  
\(^{19}\) Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, p. 46.  
\(^{20}\) Nietzsche, Will to Power, p. 330.  
\(^{21}\) Ibid., p. 510.  
individual life, which may have greater or less value in serving to bring to birth the overman. In a manner reminiscent of Hobbes, Nietzsche wrote: “To estimate what a type of man is worth, one must calculate the price paid for his preservation.” All civilization is based on the relative estimation of the value of human lives. As distinct from individual lives or civilizations, life in general, as the will to power, cannot be measured because there is nothing with which to compare it; things in the world can be estimated, compared or measured but not the world itself. Values, as conditions and ways of life, can be determined by induction and comparison, but life itself is invaluable, incalculable. “The total value of the world cannot be evaluated.”

To be sure, Nietzsche thought irrational estimates of life will constantly be made, issuing either from health, confidence and strength or sickness, diffidence and weakness. To such irrational evaluators, Nietzsche counseled: “If you have hitherto believed that life was once of the highest value [Wert] and see yourself disillusioned [enttäuscht], do you at once have to reduce it to the lowest possible price.”

Nietzsche’s evaluative thought is governed by mercantile exchange [Tausch], despite his lofty contempt for it. Thinking is a process “of setting prices, determining values, contriving equivalences, exchanging [tauschen].” Commerce is both exchange [tauschen] and deceit [täuschen]. Hermes/Mercury (where we get the words merchant and mercantile) was the god of both trade and lying. Merchants bridge different worlds but they do so not simply to expand horizons of meaning in the manner of Gadamer or to open channels of transparent communication in Habermas’s ideal world but also to make money and thus buyers were warned to beware of shoddy or overpriced goods. Hermeneutics (from Hermes) is the art of interpreting what is hidden; it gathers together communication through the veil of illusion, or is the commerce of strangers. Merchants have been instinctively drawn towards the central premise of Nietzsche’s values-discourse, namely, “that art is worth more than truth.”

Although Nietzsche thought man the undefined animal, a creator with a history not a creature with a nature, he sometimes provided a trans-historical definition of man as the measurer [der Messende], the estimator [der Schätzende], or the evaluator. “Perhaps all the morality of mankind has its origin in the tremendous inner excitement which seized on primeval men when they discovered measure and measuring, scales and weighing (the word Mensch,

28 Ibid, p. 70.
31 Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, p. 215. I have changed the translation of *enttäuscht* from “disappointed” to “disillusioned” for reasons that will emerge in the following paragraphs.
33 Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p. 453.
indeed, means the measurer, he desired to name himself after his greatest discovery).”³⁴ We might note Nietzsche’s creative etymology of *Mensch*, presumably from the Latin *mensurare* (measure) and *mens* (mind), rather than the Old High German *mennisc* (manlike). However, Nietzsche’s point was that evaluative thought combined measuring and esteeming in estimating.

Setting prices, determining values [Werte abmessen], contriving equivalences, exchanging, these preoccupied the earliest thinking of man to so great an extent that in a certain sense they constitute thinking as such: here it was that the oldest kind of astuteness developed; here likewise, we may suppose, did human pride, the feeling of superiority have its finest beginning. Perhaps our word Mensch (*manas*) still expresses something of precisely this feeling of self-satisfaction: man designated himself as the creature that measures values, evaluates and measures, as the “valuating animal as such” [Werte misst, wertet und misst als das ‘abschätzende Tier an sich’].³⁵

**Heidegger’s Rejection of Nietzschean Values**

In place of Nietzsche trans-historical definition of man, Heidegger provided a historical definition of humanity to encompass the metaphysics of subjective evaluation.

Self-willing man everywhere reckons with things and men with objects. What is reckoned becomes merchandise... Self-assertive man lives by staking his will. He lives by risking his nature in the vibration of money and the currency of values. As this constant trader and middleman, man is the “merchant”. He weighs and measures constantly, yet does not know the real weight of things.³⁶

Heidegger thought the language of values derives from a subject/object dichotomy that is used pragmatically by science and social science but frames experience in such a way that be cannot see outside the framework; we lose the primal experience of what is and the freshness of the pre-Socratic reflections on our world. In his most extended critique of values-discourse, Heidegger wrote:

> To think against “values” is not to maintain that everything interpreted as “a value”–“culture,” “art,” “science,” “human dignity,”[Menschenwürde] “world,” and “God”–is valueless. Rather, it is important finally to realize that precisely through the characterization of something as “a value” what is so valued is robbed of its worth [als “Wert” das so Gewertete seiner Würde beraubt wird]. That is to say, by the assessment of something as a value what is valued is admitted only as an object for man’s estimation. But what a thing is in its Being is not exhausted by its being an object, particularly when objectivity takes the form of value. Every valuing, even when it values positively, is a subjectivizing. It does not let beings: be. Rather, valuing lets beings: be valid [gelten] – solely as the objects of its doing. When one proclaims “God” the altogether “highest

³⁵ Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, p. 70.
value,” this is a degradation of God’s essence. Here as elsewhere thinking in values is the greatest blasphemy imaginable against Being. To think against values does not mean to beat the drum for the valuelessness and nullity of beings. It means to bring the clearing of the truth of Being before thinking, as against subjectivizing beings into mere objects.\footnote{37}{Martin Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism,” in Basic Writings, ed. D. F. Krell (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1993), p. 251.}

Heidegger’s attack on the Nietzschean language of values was an insistence that the world does not consist solely of objects for willful mastery, that human and non-human beings are not simply human and natural resources in an economy of galloping consumption, and the question of Being or “To be or not to be” is worthy of our consideration, and not to be dismissed as empty or vacuous by positivistic science.

However, what did Heidegger mean when he said that to call something a value is to rob it of its intrinsic worthiness or dignity? Or why did he insist that Nietzsche’s attempt to construct life-affirming values with the counter-assertion that “the very positing. . .of values in the world is already nihilism.”\footnote{38}{Heidegger, Nietzsche, vol. 4, p. 44; also, p. 63, 133, 203-04, 219.} Values are what subjects add on to objects after subjects and objects have been abstracted from our mundane experience of things in the world. That is, prior to the positivistic division of subjects and objects, or values and facts, is our experience of useful and attractive things that are part of a familiar order or everyday world. Once the familiar qualities have been abstracted from things to make them scientific objects, these qualities reappear as subjective projections onto things. Value qualities are not understood as belonging to the thing, or the world in which the thing exists, but only as the product of subjective estimation or evaluation. “Value and the valuable become the positivistic substitute for the metaphysical.”\footnote{39}{Heidegger, Question Concerning Technology, p. 71.}

Heidegger thus did not think that values-discourse is antithetical to the positivist sciences, as we tend to do in juxtaposing values and facts, the subjective and immensurable versus the objective and measurable. But, for Heidegger, the discourses of the specialized sciences and of human values are forms of calculation or estimation about beings or things in the world and ignore meditative thinking on Being or world. “Yet the worth [Würde] of Being, as Being, does not consist in being a value [Wert], even the supreme value.”\footnote{40}{Heidegger, Nietzsche, vol. 4, p. 250.} Being is worthy of contemplation, meditative questioning; it is not an object of our estimation, even of our highest esteem.

Values derive from the reduction of Being to objectified nature, or a world of scientific objects, and then the reconstitution of a meaningful world by human projection onto a world of objects. Values are subjective goals projected onto a world of objects. Values belong to our age of machine technology; they are calculable projections of desires as manageable goals. Rather than limiting or shaping our technical growth in the manner of fixed customs, a continuing tradition, or a stable if changing ethos, values are shaped by technological progress; they are more malleable than languages centred on virtue, natural law or even individual rights, and thus are more easily integrated into the structure and projects of a technological civilization. Like the

\footnotetext{38}{Heidegger, Nietzsche, vol. 4, p. 44; also, p. 63, 133, 203-04, 219.}
\footnotetext{39}{Heidegger, Question Concerning Technology, p. 71.}
\footnotetext{40}{Heidegger, Nietzsche, vol. 4, p. 250.}
headlights on subways or trains, they seem to lead our technological destiny, not follow the tracks laid out for them. Our values on matters of sexuality, life and death, ecology or whatever, appear as the cause but are the consequence of technologies of contraception, abortion, life-support systems, pollutants and emission controls.

Are Naturalistic Values a Contradiction in Terms?

Values are different from the good things in life; they are less what we live by than what we say we are to others. Values are idealizations of the good things in life. We don’t say that our values are wine, women and song even if we live as if they constituted a large part of the good things in life. In the dozens of studies of “Canadian values” or comparative studies of “human values” I have read, no responses of “medium rare lamb”, “unending sex,” or even “the scent of the sea and evergreens” have been recorded. Nietzsche’s values-discourse “de-natures” the good things in life, despite the fact that Nietzsche’s counsel to be faithful to the earth is often taken to be a recommendation to naturalize values. Christianity, Nietzsche taught, is responsible for “disvaluing nature and natural values.” Nietzsche sanctified the supernatural devalues the natural; “everything valuable in itself, becomes utterly valueless, inimical to value through the parasitism of the priest.” We might note here that Nietzsche contradicted the central tenet of his values-discourse, namely, that nothing is valuable in itself. Nietzsche advocated a “naturalization of morality,” and “purely naturalistic values,” while maintaining that “there has never yet been a natural humanity.”

Numerous scholars have indicated that attempted to show that Nietzsche’s valorization of nature was not contradictory. Walter Kaufmann wrote that Nietzsche’s interpretation of Being as will to power was “an attempt to show how values can be generated out of nature.” Nietzsche often referred to a natural order of rank and “inequality of value between man and man.” Various Nietzsche scholars, such as Lawrence Lampert, Richard Schacht, and John Wilcox, thought Nietzsche’s natural order of rank serves to ground an “objective value standard” or “objective values” or a “standard of evaluation in consideration of the fundamental character of reality.” Other scholars, such as Karsten Harries and Hans Georg Gadamer with whom I agree, point out Nietzsche’s contradictory positions on nature as a standard by which to measure life. However, Harries and Gadamer do not relate this contradiction to the inadequacy of his values-

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41 Nietzsche, Anti-Christ, p. 50.
42 Ibid, p. 138; also Will to Power, p. 141.
43 Nietzsche, Will to Power, p.149-50, 226; Daybreak, p. 133.
44 Nietzsche, Will to Power, p. 210, 255; also Beyond Good and Evil, p. 161.
45 Nietzsche, Will to Power, p. 73.
47 Nietzsche, Will to Power, pp. 516, 541; The Anti-Christ, 50.
To attempt to render Nietzsche’s values-discourse consistent, we might suppose that Nietzsche’s natural order of rank was less a matter of fact (about which evidence and argument are relevant) than an assertion of will. “Order of rank: He who determines values and directs the will of millennia by giving direction to the highest natures is the highest man.” If Nietzsche’s proposition is ideological, not falsifiable by appeal to evidence or by inability to sustain dialogue, it is a proposition to be assessed in terms of its power or efficacy, not of truth or falsity. To support this contention, one might point out Nietzsche’s view: “strange though it might sound, one has to defend the strong against the weak; the fortunate against the unfortunate; the healthy against those degenerating and afflicted with hereditary taints.” The powerful have to be defended against the weak who have become dominant, Nietzsche thought, by the prevalence of egalitarian doctrines; “In the age of suffrage universal, i.e., when everyone may sit in judgment on everyone and everything, I feel impelled to reestablish order of rank.” If Nietzsche thought the order of rank was natural or unalterable, rather than historical and changeable, he would not have felt the necessity of coming to the aid of the powerful to restore the order of rank. Natural or “objective values,” according to the central tenets of Nietzsche’s values-discourse, is a contradiction in terms; it is value without evaluation, the estimable without esteeming, willful assertions without volition. In short, one must abandon nature as a standard of evaluation or one must abandon evaluation if nature is a guide to good and evil.

Conclusion

I have attempted to rescue the language of intrinsic worthiness from the language of values, and the oxymoronic usage of “absolute values” and “objective values.” Richard Rorty claimed that a notion of intrinsic worthiness is metaphysical, while rightly stating that “objective values” and “absolute values” belong in the category with square circles. But, for Heidegger, what is intrinsically worthy is not beyond experience but is experienced in a mode of receptivity or openness to what is, as distinct from sizing up, appraising and evaluating what one experienced. To deny that anything is intrinsically worthy is to claim that nothing is invaluable or priceless, that everything is a matter of choice, taste, preference, perspectival appraisal or market evaluation, that nothing is a common good, a shared love or a common need. If intrinsic worthiness does not pertain to a realm outside experience, to what could “intrinsic”, and its converse, “extrinsic,” refer? Perhaps “intrinsic” could refer to the standards appropriate to the matter in hand, whereas ‘extrinsic” might refer to foreign standards, imported from one realm (say, economics) to measure another (say, epistemology or ethics). If we were to hear of the value of Christianity, we would be alerted to some qualities (useful for citizenship or for family solidarity) other than its truth. If we hear of the value of a poem or an act of justice,
we would expect to hear of some characteristic other than the poem’s beauty—perhaps it promotes national pride-- or the act’s justice, which may be useful in showing how superior the way of life of the just agent is to others. Value suggests exchanging what is proper to the doctrine, poem or act for standards of judgment that may be appropriate for entirely different modes of experience.

The Nietzschean language of values is an attack on conceptions of a common good from Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Machiavelli, Bodin, Rousseau and others. Nietzsche declaimed: “And how should there be a ‘common good’! The term contradicts itself: whatever can be common always has little value.” Nietzsche scholars elaborate this point in various ways. According to Alexander Nehemas, what is common is “cheap and detestable.” Robert Solomon indicates that ‘a value is the property of a person.” Philippa Foot agreed with Solomon in asserting that a value is “a personal rather than a universal principle.” Values-discourse suggests that there are no inter-subjective goods. If there are common goods, such as health, education, child care, and public broadcasting, they are to be paid for by the taxes of the healthy and sick, the educated and uneducated, those with and without children, those who love commercials and those who hate them; they are not individual values to be supplied and purchased at the marketplace. Thus, if Nietzsche and his followers are right to think common values is a contradiction in terms, the use of values militates against a polity based on principles of universal provision of needed services.

The language of values expresses well a pluralist marketplace of choices but fails to respond to the claims of need or love. For example, do the sentences “They need food” and “They value food” interchangeable? Or does the former indicate urgent need and the latter indicate preference for good food from a fairly elastic budget for consumer goods? Do the terminally ill “value” health, as do healthy fitness fanatics, or do they “long” for health? Do the homeless “value” housing as do they wealthy and house-proud? Values presuppose elasticity of demand; they are luxuries in the marketplace of choices. Values are not necessities.

If value-discourse does not do justice to the realm of necessity, it also does not express the gracious urgency of love. If we were to overhear the sentence, “I value you very highly,” we would be inclined to think, “Oh, oh, she is telling him to get lost: she does not need him or love him; she might rate his admirable qualities quite highly but she is not sufficiently attached to him

54 Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, p. 53.
that she is willing to overlook his irritatingly estimable qualities. She is moving on.” Does the sentence “I value my Canadian citizenship” mean “My identity is Canadian” or “I am pleased to be Canadian and would be reluctant to part with my citizenship except on favorable conditions”? Value judgments set the judge above the objects of his judgment or distance the estimator from the esteemed. Values are not loves or unshakeable loyalties but are the produce of subjective estimation, relative to other items to be estimated and exchanged. Values, for Nietzsche, are the product of will, not of need or of love.

Anti-metaphysical idealism inheres in Nietzsche’s evaluative philosophy as it is in the common use of values. If we were to hear the meaningless expression, "she has values", we would be alerted to nothing -- or nothing more than that she is not a material girl, devoted to economic acquisition and creature comforts. Anti-naturalism informs values-discourse. If one were to conduct a survey on the good things in life, one might well receive responses of a medium-rare steak, a refreshing sleep, a baby's smile, an exciting sporting event, or lots of sex. But if one were to conduct a survey of Canadian values, few if any of this list of the components of the good life would appear as human or cultural values. Indeed, a response of roast lamb, sex and thinking to a survey of one's values would merit the judgment, "he has no values" or "he has not understood the question". An intrusive surveyor might keep on questioning until she received some proper answers, namely, toleration of “others,” the advancement of knowledge or democracy, world betterment or civic embellishment, politeness or self-actualization. There is a world of difference between what we consider the good things in life and what we maintain to be our values. Values are not what we live by but what we present to others. Heidegger described values as “grist for the mill of propaganda, art products as serviceable objects—at exhibitions of our achievements and as decorations for parade floats.” Our values are advertising ourselves to others, self-images distorted through idealization. We are used by the language we use. The medium is the message. To use the language of values is to reject universal principles, common or shared goods, unshakeable loves or loyalties; it is a commitment to scepticism and relativism, coupled to the certainty that there is no point in discussing one’s values with others, in learning from dialogue and critical reflection. Professions of values are opinionated rather than opinions about the good life that are open to critical examination and philosophic conversation. Conflicting opinions about the use of stem cells in curing diseases are shut off once professions of values are invoked.

Nietzsche’s evaluative philosophy takes the active voice, with the stress on the subject, while Heidegger’s vocabulary of care for what is worthy adopts the passive voice, with the stress on what is needed or loved. An illustration of the latter is Heidegger’s famous statement in Der Speigel (30, 209) of May 1976 that “Only a god can save us.” Nietzschean values-discourse is projective, not receptive; it projects a libertarian sphere of preferences, desired options and negotiable assets, not a communitarian sphere of constitutive attachments, common needs and shared loves.

Heidegger’s wholesale rejection of the language of values may be as romantic as the desire to eliminate the economic marketplace from human life. Values-discourse is appropriate to the sphere of choice, taste and estimation but it perhaps should be bounded by a Kantian language.

57 Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. 3, p. 182
of universal principle, of human dignity, or a Heideggerian language of care for the invaluable worthiness of that which is beyond market calculation. It is not for me to settle the fluctuating shoreline of the language of values, or the changing coastline of the language of worthiness, but is a matter of public debate insofar as dogmatic assertions of values do not preclude the debate from the outset. There is no metaphysical reason why Canadians should think their public broadcasting and health system is worthier than commercial systems but there may be political and economic reasons. To frame the debate in the language of values is to incline the provision of health, child care, knowledge, broadcasting towards market evaluation. A healthy pluralism and a mixed economy require both a language of will, choice and values and a language of care, love, and worthiness.
Parody and Aufhebung

In The Will to Power, Nietzsche states, “Zarathustra adopts a parodistic attitude toward all former values as a consequence of his abundance.” In reading Also Sprach Zarathustra, one immediately encounters Nietzsche’s deft parodies of Platonism and Christianity conceived as the core of the modernity whose rationalistic, Cartesian and moralistic, Kantian senses of self he wishes to overcome in a post-modern revaluation. Nietzsche resolves Platonism and Christianity into a common nihilistic will to power, itself not primarily rational, and so, it is appropriate that his philosophy be given the mytho-poetic form it receives in Zarathustra.

Nevertheless, there is a way in which Nietzschean parody preserves the very tradition it is at great pains to reject. Excellence in parody is to be measured by the grasp of that which one parodies, by the capacity to imitate precisely its literary style and philosophical logic. In Nietzschean parody we have not only ridicule and deconstruction but a reworking, as it were, of motets and madrigals – a musical dimension which resonates with his notion of the hammer as tuning fork. This imitation will be destructive of previous forms of thought but it will also lure the honest scholar into deeper contact with the tradition which Nietzsche parodies. In other words, this parody involves both understanding and preservation.

Nietzsche’s philosophical parody, then, bears a certain kinship with Hegel’s concept of Aufhebung. Usually translated as sublation, the philosophical meaning of this common German word entails a state in which the independence of an element is canceled but preserved in relation to a comprehensive whole. There is, then, in the Hegelian concept of Aufhebung, an important dimension of negativity which reflects the contingency and finitude of objects conceived in an abstract independence from each other. This abstraction is sacrificed and what had previously

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3 Other dimensions of Nietzsche’s corpus reflect this conceptual and stylistic shift, for example, aphorism and genealogy.
5 While Nietzsche makes only passing reference to Hegel, his engagement with Hegel is significant. Like Hegel, Nietzsche is an arch critic of moralism and dualism. Further, as Rosen suggests there is a connection between Hegel’s ‘concept’ and Nietzsche’s conception of eternal return (The Masks of Enlightenment, p.256, n.61). Also, as Gary Shapiro contends, Nietzsche’s criticisms of the modern state and teleological concepts of history may be convincingly read as directed at Hegel (“States and Nomads: Hegel’s World and Nietzsche’s Earth,” Nietzsche and the Becoming of Life, Santiago, Chile, November 3, 2009, and at the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, October 30, 2009. Text online at: http://www.bruner.cuny.edu/philosophy/jns/ShapiroNiNY09.pdf).
appeared self-subsistent is shown to have its cause in a more mediated substance. The possibility for such ideality occurs in self-consciousness. In the moment of consciousness, thought as object is distinguished from thought as subject. This difference is seen as a moment of self-consciousness and is preserved therein. But it is obvious that there would be no self-consciousness without the possibility of consciousness. This negative moment, present in conscious differentiation, is central likewise to Nietzschean parody, conceived in its deconstructive aspect. Further this negativity is reflected in Nietzsche’s sense of the tragic negation of modern man and, therefore, in the movement of the argument of Zarathustra from man to overman.

For Hegel, however, Aufhebung is fundamentally a structure of self-consciousness, and involves a dialectical harmony in which the negation is comprehended and the element of otherness and difference preserved. Nietzschean parody will preserve what is in some sense the otherness of the western philosophical tradition but with a conception of rationality as a product of will to power.

The twin moments of preservation and negation are central to the interpretation of both the content and structure of Also Sprach Zarathustra.

For the purposes of this essay, “will to power” signifies Nietzsche's attempt to conceive the nature of reality without the concept of an underlying truth, without a material or soul atomism, for example, (Beyond Good and Evil, in The Basic Writings of Nietzsche, Trans W. Kaufmann, New York: Modern Library, 1992, 12-13, pp. 209-211). For Nietzsche, will to power is a constant self-overcoming, a becoming without a final goal or purpose. He asserts that it is a processus in infinitum (Will to Power, 552, p.298).

Nietzsche conceives moralism as in some respects at the root of western metaphysics. He states, Indeed if one would explain how the abstract metaphysical claims of a philosopher really came about it is well (and wise) to ask first: at what morality does all this (does he) aim” (Beyond Good and Evil, 6, p.203).

The hermeneutical validity of this structure will depend not only on the evidence I have presented, but on whether the reader finds it useful in detailed explorations of the text.
(2) Teachers of Virtue—Pale Criminal: Revaluation of Morality: Having achieved a vision of eternal return, albeit faint and imagistic, these next sections develop a criticism of life-denying morality and its nihilistic history.

(3) On War and Warriors—On Free Death: Self, Other and the Overman, reinterprets the relation of self and other in human community in the light of the overman. Just as the ascetic ideal is a means to the preservation of life, all human relations are conceived as a means to the birth of the overman. The tragedy of the last man gives rise to an agonistic community, where Christian love and socialistic equality are overcome by the “warrior” ethic of the overman.

(4) On the Gift Giving Virtue: Conclusion, concludes the argument of Part One, linking will to power, eternal return and overman at the level of image.

(1) Prologue—Zarathustra’s Speeches: Parody and Tragedy

The first section of “The Prologue,” is brimming with parodistic suggestions of Plato’s sun analogy as well as Pauline Christology. Zarathustra stands before the sun and announces that each morning he has taken the sun’s overflow. Plato, speaking of sight, states, “it receives from the sun the power it has, just like an influx from an overflowing treasury.” Like a philosopher king, Zarathustra wants to carry wisdom back to a world he has left behind, and he identifies with this overflow: “Bless the cup that wants to overflow, that the water may flow from it golden and carry everywhere the reflection of your delight.” The imagery here, however, is more than Platonic; there is more than overflow, there is also descending: “Like you I must go under – go down, as is said by man, to whom I want to descend.” Similarly, Zarathustra says, “Behold this cup wants to become empty again.” Theologically this concept of self-emptying invokes Paul’s Letter to the Philippians: “Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Jesus Christ, who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality among things to be grasped.”

Throughout this essay I make the assumption that the doctrines of will to power, which is the focus of Part Two, and of eternal return, which is the focus of Part Three, are implicit in various images image in Part One. It is beyond the scope of the present essay to develop a full interpretation of eternal return; such an interpretation would stray too widely from the close textual reading with which this essay is concerned. Nevertheless, for our current purposes, I see eternal return in the light of Will to Power section 617. There Nietzsche states, “That everything recurs is the closest approximation of a world of becoming to a world of being.” I interpret eternal return therefore as the stability of will to power, the self of its self-overcoming. On the presence of eternal return as image, see Paul S. Loeb, in “Finding the Übermensch in Nietzsche’s Genealogy of Morals,” Journal of Nietzsche Studies, Issue 30, 2005, pp. 84-7, and Robert Gooding-Williams in Zarathustra’s Dionysian Modernism, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001, pp. 45-100. Loeb’s account of the latency of the knowledge of eternal return is of great interest. See Paul S. Loeb, “The Thought-Drama of Eternal Recurrence,” and Robert Gooding-Williams, “Ruminations and Rejoinders: Eternal Recurrence, Nietzsche’s Noble Plato, and the Existentialist Zarathustra, Journal of Nietzsche Studies Issue 34, 2007. See also Rosen, The Mask of Enlightenment, p. 27.

10 See also, Martha Kendal Woodruff, “Untergang und Übergang: The Tragic Descent of Socrates and Zarathustra,” Journal of Nietzsche Studies, Issue 34, 2007, p. 66. Gooding-Williams puts the matter succinctly, “His artful repetition and revision of these “precursor texts” is ironic, and to that extent mischief-making, because it argues implicitly against the metaphysical perspectives (Christian asceticism and Plato's understanding of the relationship between time and value) that he believes these texts articulate” (Zarathustra's Dionysian Modernism. p 52).


13 Zarathustra, Prologue, i, 10.
with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.”¹⁴ This Pauline “emptying”, according to Nietzsche, signifies a revaluation of noble values and a spiritual revenge.¹⁵

There is a dialectical dimension in Zarathustra’s emptying. Zarathustra will empty himself until “the wise among men find joy once again in their folly, and the poor in their riches.”¹⁶ Note again the Pauline resonance: “If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is folly with God.”¹⁷ As in the Christian narrative, Zarathustra’s dialectic is to be embodied, is to be incarnate: Zarathustra “wants to become man again”.¹⁸

The Christological imagery is developed here as Zarathustra, an image of the good which overflows, takes on determinate form as expressed in the Hermit’s question: “Alas would you again drag your own body?”¹⁹ Here, to mix religious metaphors, there is a sense of Christ reincarnate, through “love of man;” there is also a play of judgment and repentance, purifying fire and ashes of atonement. The hermit says, “You carried your ashes to the mountain; now would you carry your fire into the valleys?” While Zarathustra asserts here his love of man, the hermit sacrifices love of man for love of God: “Man is for me too imperfect a thing. Love of man would kill me.”²¹ But the hermit does not know what Zarathustra knows – that God is dead. And yet Zarathustra does not tell the hermit; he does not want to take away his belief. Zarathustra does not yet see beyond man, only beyond God. There is in Zarathustra at this point a humanism that prevents his realization of the anti-humanism of the overman and eternal recurrence.

In section three, Nietzsche announces the overman and gives voice to the revaluation which he entails: “Once the sin against God was the greatest sin; but God died, and these sinners died with him. To sin against the earth is now the most dreadful thing, and to esteem the entrails of the unknowable higher than the meaning of the earth.”²² Zarathustra’s revaluation teaches neither love of God nor love of man which together defined the doctrinal parameters of the Christian ethos. He conceives the overman not as the meaning or expression of an otherworldly deity, nor as the meaning of a worldly humanism. Rather, for Zarathustra, the overman is the meaning of the earth: the reconfiguration of man-nature-God that is a demand of the post-Christian west.

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¹⁶ Zarathustra, Prologue, i, 10.
¹⁸ Zarathustra, Prologue, i, 10.
¹⁹ Zarathustra, Prologue, ii, 11.
²⁰ Zarathustra, Prologue, ii, 10.
²¹ Zarathustra, Prologue, ii, 11.
²² Zarathustra, Prologue, iii, 13.
Here we find the ironic measure of Zarathustra’s love of man. Man in the Platonic-Christian paradigm, is for Nietzsche a discordant hybrid (Zwiespalt und Zwitter) of plant and ghost, matter and spirit. On this paradigm, which Nietzsche takes to be fully explicit in his time, it appears from the side of the soul, that the body is “polluted”, while from the side of the body, the soul is polluted. Zarathustra asserts that the whole dualistic, hence moralistic division must be overcome. This I take to be the meaning of “earth” in this passage. We are speaking, beyond the Platonic dualism, neither of body without spirit nor spirit without body. This dualism has been overcome such that nature and man are no longer conceived relative to an otherworldly form – the new paradigm is of overman and earth. In its light, all past constructs of happiness, reason, virtue, compassion are found contemptible. This contempt can “go under” in the overman. Nietzsche understands man and loves man only relative to what is beyond man; he loves man only so far as he is a “going under”.

In terms of musical parody Nietzsche sees man as an overture. He is taken up into the overman in the sense that he is redeemed there. “What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not an end: what can be loved in man is that he is an overture and a going under.” 23 This is a further echo of the Christian economy of death and resurrection expressed as “going under” and “crossing over”. But the overman redeems man only in the passing of man. There is not here a resurrection of soul and body but a sacrifice which frees one from the boundaries of the Platonic/Christian concept of man. The earth does not point beyond itself in an eschatological teleology; rather, it remains with itself and with the overman. Also there is here a criticism of the teleology of modernity and nineteenth century humanism with its glorification of man and sense of man’s liberation as the goal of history.

In contrast with the fundamentally Christian redemption of man in an earthly or otherworldly paradise, Zarathustra advances a tragic redemption in the notion of going under. The emphasis is on an earthly sacrifice: “they sacrifice themselves for the earth, that the earth may some day become the overman’s.” 24 Knowledge and virtue, the totality of man’s intellectual and practical life, are drawn into this tragic orbit. Man is unconfined by the relative contingencies and necessities of chance or promise. There is here a movement beyond self-preservation and the individual spirit: “I love him whose soul is overfull so that he forgets himself and all things are in him: thus all things spell his going under.” 25

There is in Nietzsche’s account a Feuerbachian move from the projection of an ideal beyond man to a recognition that man is himself the ideal. 26 But, for Nietzsche, this humanism is defined from the standpoint of herd mentality and becomes subsumed into the goalless nihilism of the last man. 27 Having oneself as the goal is a ‘right’ that is not shared by the herd because its notion of selfhood is defined by and subsumed by otherness, that is by its relation to humanity or

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23 Zarathustra, Prologue, iv, 15.
24 Zarathustra, Prologue, iv, p.15.
25 Zarathustra, Prologue, iv, p.16.
26 Lampert also comments on the Feuerbachian dimension of Zarathustra. Lawrence Lampert, Nietzsche’s Teaching, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986. p. 38. Lampert’s work is an invaluable guide to Zarathustra even if one is not a Straussian.
27 Zarathustra, Prologue, v, p.17.
community, which from Nietzsche’s standpoint is other to self. So Nietzsche’s arguments are
directed against what humanism sees as the species-being of man. He indicates what to him is
contemptible about the last man, and the crowd clamors for what Zarathustra finds contemptible.
His “brightness” appears as coldness to the crowd, and Zarathustra perceives them to be laughing
with hatred at him. Zarathustra’s going under does not lead to a tragic identity with the
community conceived in its immediate unindividuated relation to the primal will, where not man,
but nature or will is revealed. Here what is revealed is not primal will but the mediocrity of
individuals who have no horizon beyond themselves and their herd.28

“Then something happened that made every mouth dumb and every eye rigid.”29 The
relationship between the jester and the tight-rope walker exhibits both the tragic dimension of the
text as well as the implicitude of eternal return at this stage of the argument. The tightrope
walker has made “danger” his “vocation”. For Nietzsche this is not contemptible and indeed
warrants Zarathustra burying the tight-rope walker. The jester jumps over the danger and
presumably does not go under. At his death, the tight-rope walker sees Zarathustra as the devil,
but Zarathustra informs him that there is no devil or hell, this inference following from the death
of God.

Here Zarathustra is lonely; he is in a position distinct from his original solitude, and he
has been rebuffed by the herd. It is a moment of death and a forgetfulness of time.30 Where
memory draws together past, present and future, forgetfulness might be seen to separate them or
dissolve them. The jester or fool plays with necessities; he reveals a realm of foolishness and
contingency contrasting with the end of play in death, the absence of contingency in the
necessary limit of the human. Nietzsche draws these concepts together in the image of a jester
who can become a cause of what is necessary: a jester who can become man’s fatality. This
connection is further reflected in the sense of Zarathustra as “the mean between a fool and a
corpse,” which I interpret as a mean of contingency and necessity, or, perhaps, ludic self-
overcoming and gravity.31 In this light we have a faint representation of the concepts of will to
power and eternal return. But this is still an inadequate presentation because still in relation to
the perspective of the herd.

The jester leaps over man but is not yet the overman. He has passed over but not under
man; he is not born of a tragic passing away. Moving from the jester, Zarathustra passes
gravediggers and hermits. For the former, in the hands of moralism, there is a sense of the devil
and eternal damnation while for the latter, there is an ascetic indifference for which the
distinction between the living and the dead is not present: “Zarathustra replied: ‘My companion
is dead; I should hardly be able to persuade him.’ ‘I don’t care,’ said the old man peevishly,
‘Whoever knocks at my door must also take what I offer.’”32

28 I will address this tragic dimension further in my discussion of section x below.
29 Zarathustra, Prologue, vi, p.19.
30 Zarathustra, Prologue, vii, p.20.
31 Zarathustra, Prologue, vii, p.21.
32 Zarathustra, Prologue, viii, p.22.
Zarathustra, however, identifies himself with the life-affirming, the creators, whom he sees to be lawbreakers, valuator, despisers of good and evil. He wishes to show these creators “the rainbows and all the steps to the overman”. It is to these few free spirits that he must speak not to the herd. They see only the destructive but not the celebratory dimension of his project. He states, “Companions the creator seeks, not corpses, not herds and believers.” He also states, “No shepherd shall I be nor gravedigger. Never again shall I speak to the people: for the last time have I spoken to the dead.”

This movement beyond the herd mentality of the last man allows Zarathustra to bring into clearer focus the most dangerous thought, that of eternal return. But, as with its expression relative to the jester, eternal return is still portrayed in image: “An eagle soared through the sky in wide circles, and on him there hung a serpent, not like prey but like a friend: For she kept herself wound around his neck.” With the emergence of this concept it is possible to bring out the tragic structure of the argument of the prologue. My contention here is based on the supposition of an analogy between the concept of primal will in the Birth of Tragedy and the conceptual pair of will to power and eternal return. For all the differences between his earlier and later thought, there is a common emphasis on fate, self-overcoming and will.

The allusions to light at the very beginning of Zarathustra strike us as Apollonian. The snake is the animal of Apollo as the eagle is of Zeus. In his solitude Zarathustra seems an Apollonian figure, representing the principium individuationis. In Nietzsche’s account of tragedy there are two distinctive but coalescing moments. The first moment reveals a unity with the community beyond the individual: “Now the slave is a free man; now all the rigid hostile barriers that necessity, caprice, or ‘impudent convention’ have fixed between man and man are broken. Now with the gospel of universal harmony, each one feels himself not only united, reconciled, and fused with his neighbor, but as one with him…. The second moment, made distinct only through abstraction, is a unification with the primal will: “We are really for a brief moment primordial being itself, feeling its raging desire for existence and joy in existence.” In his “Attempt at Self-Criticism” Nietzsche describes this will: “The world – at every moment the attained salvation of God, as the eternally changing, eternally new vision of the most deeply

33 Zarathustra, Prologue, ix, p.24.
34 Zarathustra, Prologue, ix, p.24.
35 Zarathustra, Prologue, x, p.25. While the full expression of eternal return does not occur until Part Three, Heidegger’s reflection on the snake and eagle is telling here. He states, “The eagle soars in vast circles high in the air. The circling is an image of eternal return.” He remarks, “The serpent hangs suspended from the eagle, coiled about his throat. Again, the coils of the serpents, wound in rings about the eagle’s throat are symbolic of eternal return.” Martin Heidegger, Nietzsche, Vol. II, trans. David Krell (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984) p. 46, cf. also p. 214. Also Rosen, “The eagle is the eternal return as a natural force: merciless and strong. The serpent is the human interpretation of eternal return” (Mask of Enlightenment, p76).
36 Here my account differs somewhat from Gooding-Williams (Dionysian Modernism, pp.92-3) who focuses on the tragedy of the tight-rope walker. I see the tragic vision as one obtained by Zarathustra. See also, Martha Kendal Woodruff, “Untergang und Übergang: The tragic Descent of Socrates and Zarathustra,” Journal of Nietzsche Studies, Issue 34, 2007.
37 Cf. Lampert, p. 16.
38 Birth of Tragedy, I, 37.
39 Birth of Tragedy, 17, 104.
afflicted, most deeply discordant, and self-contradictory being who can find salvation only in appearance.” He goes on to articulate the significance of this work: “Here perhaps for the first time, pessimism ‘beyond good and evil’.”

In *Zarathustra*, the first moment occurs as the protagonist sacrifices his isolation and returns to humanity. The mediocrity of the herd, however, its scientism, socialism, and optimism, remain Apollonian veils which prevent the full tragic revelation. Already in his early work he criticized the scientism, humanism and optimism of modern man. Whereas the unity with the ancient community could provide a unity with the primal will, *Zarathustra* can obtain an analogous union only in recognizing a community beyond the herd, a community which he must create.

Having encountered eternal return as imaged in eagle and snake, *Zarathustra* can now articulate the authentic *Untergang* as it leads to the overman beyond man and community as envisaged by humanism. The three metamorphoses can be considered stages in the development of the overman. This section is strikingly parodistic. Here, we find a cluster of allusions to the mytho-poetic history of Christianity: The Garden of Eden (humbling, and mocking of wisdom); John the Baptist (feeding on acorns); Job (sending home the comforters); Moses (stepping into the filthy water, toads and frogs); and Jesus (tempting the tempter, loving those who would despise us). The desert here provides the setting for the biblical narrative of fall and redemption; Moses’ exodus towards freedom and Job’s demand for a mediator which in Christianity is fulfilled in the person of Christ. This, however, is an ironic portrayal, symbolizing for Nietzsche a history of nihilism, in which the will to truth, symbolized by the *camel*, begins by posting an otherworldly meaning and destiny for humankind and ends by turning against itself severing the subject from relation to an underlying object. This signifies a passive nihilism.

The next stage which Nietzsche envisages is nihilism made active. Here the *lion* contends with the dragon of value, and replacing the reactive ‘No’ of the slave with an active naysaying, he creates a freedom from the past valuations and the right to new values. The *child* reveals the overman as creative of new value. He is a “self-propelled wheel” who “wills his own will”. Here the overman is explicitly portrayed in the image of eternal return. In the absence of a moralistic dualism which posits otherworldly forms, there is a ready unity between the overman and eternal return/will to power.

(2) Teachers of Virtue-Pale Criminal: Revaluation of Morality

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40 *Birth of Tragedy*, “Attempt at Self-Criticism,” V, 22.
41 Cf., for example, *Will to Power*, 1, 51, 209, 753 and *Genealogy*, III, 23-26.
42 *Birth of Tragedy*, XVIII, 110 and XVIX, 118,119.
43 Here I differ, at least in emphasis, from Rosen who stresses the continuity in Zarathustra’s character. Relative to the tragic Untergang, he states, “Zarathustra will be neither destroyed nor transformed; he comes and goes, but always as himself” (*Masks of Enlightenment*, p.51).
44 See *Will to Power*, 23.
These next sections establish a revaluation of morality based on the tragic insight Zarathustra has obtained. Having engaged Platonism and Christianity, albeit parodistically, he now expresses more explicit criticism of them as systems of value.

The watchman, like the Shepherd before his herd, realizes that those he protects do not understand herding and watching. They do not know the nothingness of the ideal they follow; they remain unaware of the genealogy of nothingness. The thief who would rid them of their sleep must use their drowsiness to his own benefit. The Ten Commandments and the virtues which lie at their base are indeed expressions of self-overcoming but they are self-overcoming for the sake of life-denying.

The third essay of The Genealogy of Morals is relevant here. According to Nietzsche, it must be a necessity of the first order that promotes a life-inimical species. He argues that it must be in the interest of life itself that such a self-contradictory type does not die out. Ascetic life, he maintains, is self-contradiction; *ressentiment* without equal. What appears contradictory is that ascetics find pleasure in self-sacrifice. The ascetic will grows more triumphant the more it is its own presupposition, that is, its physiological capacity for life, decreases. Further, Nietzsche contends that, physiologically considered, the ascetic will is a self-contradiction (life against life) and can only be apparent. The ascetic ideal springs from the protective instinct of degenerating life. He contends that life wrestles in it and through it, with and against life. The ascetic ideal is, therefore, an artifice for the preservation of life, the ascetic man, a means to the creation of more favourable conditions for life. Thus on Nietzsche’s view, the ascetic priest is among the greatest conserving forces of life. He states, “The No he [the ascetic priest] says to life brings forth, as if by magic, an abundance of tender Yeses; even when he wounds himself, this master of destruction, of self-destruction - the very wound afterward compels him to live.”

For Nietzsche, the slave revolt and the development of the ascetic ideal must therefore be interpreted as means of the will to power: “Man was saved thereby [by the ascetic ideal] he possessed a meaning, ... he could now will something; no matter at first to what end, why, with what he willed: the will itself was saved.”

These otherworldly “Despisers of the Body” are not the bridge to the overman; theirs is mere self-negation: “Your self wants to go under, and that is why you have become despisers of the body! For you are no longer able to create beyond yourselves.” These despisers of the body do not form the bridge to the overman. The bridge comprises those who turn to the body over and against the otherworldliness.

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45 *Zarathustra*, “The Teachers of Virtue,” p.29.
47 *GM*, III, 11, p.553.
48 *GM*, II, 18, p.523.
49 Nietzsche sees religion as the projection of the human will. He argues that Christianity is the projection of an ascetic will. And he refers to its representation as “the ghastly paradox of God on the cross” (*GM*, I,8,p.471).
50 *GM*, III,13, p.557.
51 *GM*, III,28, p.599.
Subsequent to the criticism of the dualism and life-denying of the despisers of the body, Zarathustra advances a revaluation of morality in terms of passion: “in the end all your passions became virtues and all your devils angels”. Also there is a movement beyond God and beyond humanity. In language redolent of Romans 7, he states, “This is my good; this I love; it pleases me wholly; thus alone do I want the good. I do not want it as divine law; I do not want it as human statute and need: it shall not be a signpost for me to overearth and paradises.”

Against the manifold virtues of the ancient and Christian worlds, Nietzsche sees the precursors of the overman, the bridges, as having only one virtue; this is perhaps the will to truth.

“The Pale Criminal” registers the transformation of valuations required in the wake of his critique of moralism. Suggesting Matthew 5, Nietzsche states, “Enemy you shall say but not ‘villain’; ‘sick’ you shall say, but not ‘scoundrel’; ‘fool’ you shall say, but not ‘sinner.’” This is a movement beyond revenge into a peculiarly Nietzschean form of pity: “Your killing, O judges, shall be pity and not revenge. And as you kill, be sure that you yourselves justify life!”

The next three sections perform a summarizing and transitional function. Nietzsche articulates in a certain fashion the history of nihilism: “Once the spirit was God, then he became Man, and now he even becomes rabble.” The moralism and judgmentalism of the herd, its “tragic seriousness” constitute, for Nietzsche, the devil: “and when I saw my devil, I found him serious, thorough, profound, and solemn: it was the spirit of gravity – through him all things fall.” The ludic and parodistic moment in his thought enables the overcoming of the devil: “Not by wrath does one kill but by laughter. Come let us kill the spirit of gravity.” The overcoming of reductio, expressed in “The Pale Criminal” and made possible by a denial of otherworldly metaphysics, responds not with revenge but with a laughter which is beyond the ‘seriousness’ of good and evil, morally and metaphysically.

Passing beyond the thundercloud of nihilism, Nietzsche experiences the God who dances. He states, “Now I am light, now I fly, now I see myself beneath myself, now a God dances through me.” This Dionysian moment reflects the tragic structure of the text as well as the reinterpretation of tragedy implied by the principles of eternal return and will to power as imaged once again in the in the flight of eagle and snake.

But these lofty heights are not easily obtained. In “On the Tree on the Mountainside,” Zarathustra diagnoses a youthful journeyer as a lion, that is, as one who is not yet free but who searches for freedom. He identifies nobility and creation and counsels the youth against falling into the old dualism from which standpoint it appears that the voluptuary is the opponent of the

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53 Zarathustra, “On Enjoying and Suffering the Passions,” p.36.
57 Zarathustra, p.41.
good. Nietzsche sees the true opposition to be between the good and the noble. These “good” are the “Preachers of Death,” those who renounce life. Their eternity is not that of Dionysus but an eternal life which, by virtue of denying natural life, is itself a form of death. For Nietzsche, the preachers of death do not refute life but only themselves. As argued above, they are in fact means in the preservation of life.59

(3) On War and Warriors-On Free Death: Self, Other and the Overman

In the sections from “On War and Warriors” to “On Free Death,” the primary structural theme has to do with a reinterpretation of human community in the light of the emergent doctrine of the overman and in opposition to the egalitarian humanist ethos of bourgeois prosperity and peace. This takes the form of a series of analyses of various formations of the relation of self and other: state, civil society, sexuality, love, friendship, justice, marriage, and death.

Against the Christian root of humanism and universal socialism, he claims, “War and courage have accomplished more great things than love of neighbor.”60 But again this is war without revenge: “You may have only enemies whom you can hate, not enemies you despise. You must be proud of your enemy: then the successes of your enemy are your successes too.”61 Here there is a reconciliation of opposites, though not through the ‘cruelty’ of Christian redemption. Man as interpreted in relation to a Christian ethos is to be seen as the last man. Zarathustra states, “Your highest thought, however, you should receive as a command from me—and it is: man is something that shall be overcome.”62

Nietzsche shares with communism a desire for the withering away of the state. He sees the state as life-denying and contrasts the ‘slow-suicide’ it induces with creativity and life-affirmation. He states, “State is the name of the coldest of all monsters. Coldly it tells lies too; and this lie crawls out of its mouth: ‘I, the state, am the people.’ That is a lie! It was creators who created peoples and hung a faith and a love over them: thus they served life.”63 The state is life-denying because it affirms bourgeois comfort and equality.64 It buys virtue and subverts individual creativity through the modern narcotics of education and the press.65

Zarathustra asserts the lesson of his earlier journey: “Where solitude ceases the market place begins; and where the market place begins the noise of the great actors and the buzzing of the poisonous flies begins too.” 66 He contrasts the invisible revolutions of the world around creators with the invisible revenge that animates the market place.67 In The Genealogy, Nietzsche

59 Cf. “Teachers of Virtue-Pale Criminal”.
64 Lampert, p. 321 n. 85, helpfully refers the reader to Anti-Christ 16, 25, 57; Genealogy II, 23; and Beyond Good and Evil, 251.
locates the origin of the market place in the idea that there is an equivalence between injury and pain. When a contract is broken, he argues, the creditor receives an equivalence, that is, the pleasure of being allowed to vent his power freely upon one who is powerless. The creditor gets to mimic the right of the masters, to despise others and consider them beneath oneself. Nietzsche makes the point that suffering can balance debts to the extent that to make suffer was pleasurable. He argues further that disinterested malice was seen by primitive societies to be a normal quality of men.

The withdrawal from the market place and “the stings of the little men” is not to be conceived as a monastic denial of the world. This is expressed in Nietzsche’s treatment of chastity. Against the valorisation of the unconditional which is characteristic of the shallow thought of the market place, Zarathustra contends, “Chastity is a virtue in some, but almost a vice in many.”

“On the Friend” reiterates the argument of “On Warriors and War.” Nietzsche resists the bad conscience that often masks as friendship, weakness and envy: “Our faith in others betrays in what respect we would like to have faith in ourselves.” Thus he proffers resistance of the friend and a longing for the overman. He states, “In a friend one should have one’s best enemy. You should be closest to him with your heart when you resist him.” The criticism of moralistic dualism is here present as well: “If one wants to have a friend one must also want to wage war for him: and to wage war, one must be capable of being an enemy. In a friend one should still honor the enemy.” Further, “In a friend one should have one’s best enemy.” Not a love of enemy but a unification of friendship and animosity which preserves one’s independence and the otherness of the friend, free from revenge.

“On a Thousand and One Goals” finds the source of values not in the community or the individual but in peoples: “A tablet of good hangs over every people. Behold, it is the tablet of their overcomings; behold it is the voice of their will to power.” The individual whose self-conscious freedom is seen as the ground of morality and political life is itself seen as a product of a people. “First, peoples were creators; and only in later times, individuals. Verily the individual himself is still the most recent creation.” Further, “The delight in the herd is more

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77 *Zarathustra*, “On a Thousand and One Goals,” p.58.
ancient than the delight in the ego; and as long as good conscience is identified with the herd, only the bad conscience says: I.”\textsuperscript{79} Here Nietzsche is reaching behind the modern liberal state to a more ancient source of value. It is not that he advocates a simple return as this would be inconsistent with the notion of the overman. Rather, he asserts this ancient source as an indication of the pretentions of the modern notion of the self-grounding individual.

In this light, that is relative to herd morality, particularly in its religious form, Nietzsche deconstructs love of neighbor as a product of self-loathing: “Your love of neighbor is your bad love of yourself.”\textsuperscript{80} There is here a repetition of the tragic motif that runs through the First Part of \textit{Zarathustra}, both the community and the individual are dissolved in the revelation of a deeper, more dangerous vision: “I teach you the friend in whom the world stands completed, a bowl of goodness – the creating friend who always has a completed world to give away. And as the world rolled apart for him, it rolls together again in circles for him as the becoming of pure purpose out of accident.”\textsuperscript{81}

The overman is the goal and purpose of one who grasps the tragic nature of the modern individual: “I love him who wants to create over and beyond himself and thus perishes.”\textsuperscript{82} It is the goal and purpose of the natural foundation of society in the relation of men and women. He states, “Let your hope be: May I give birth to the overman!”\textsuperscript{83} Likewise, he urges, “Thirst for the creator, an arrow and longing for the overman: tell me, my brother, is this your will to marriage? Holy I call such a will and such a marriage.”\textsuperscript{84}

This orientation of the human beyond bourgeois individuality is intended by Nietzsche to invoke an ethic beyond the subterranean vengefulness of the Christian focus on love: “Would that you might invent for me the love that bears not only all punishments but also all guilt! Would that you might invent for me the justice that acquits everyone, except him that judges!”\textsuperscript{85}

\textit{“On Free Death”} completes the revaluation of Western morality in reflection upon death, the absolute limit of natural beings. Zarathustra is thus portrayed as providing guidance on both how to live well and how to die well. Whereas the otherworldly emphasis of Platonism, denies life and death by pointing beyond nature, to a world of forms and afterlife, on Nietzsche’s account, the affirmation of life entails an affirmation of death as well: “My death I praise to you, the free death which comes to me because I want it.”\textsuperscript{86} By contrast with this affirmative position he mocks the death of Jesus: “Verily that Hebrew dies too early whom the preachers of slow death honor.”\textsuperscript{87} Further, Nietzsche commiserates, “As yet he knew only the tears and melancholy of the Hebrew, and hatred of the good and the just – the Hebrew Jesus: then the

\textsuperscript{80} \textit{Zarathustra}, “On the Love of Neighbor,” p.60.
\textsuperscript{82} \textit{Zarathustra}, “On the Way to the Creator,” p.65.
\textsuperscript{83} \textit{Zarathustra}, “On Little Old and Young Women,” p. 66.
\textsuperscript{84} \textit{Zarathustra}, “On Child and Marriage,” p.71.
\textsuperscript{86} \textit{Zarathustra}, “On Free Death,” p. 72.
\textsuperscript{87} \textit{Zarathustra}, “On Free Death,” p.73.
longing for death overcame him. Would that he had remained in the wilderness and far from the good and the just! Perhaps he would have learned to live and to love the earth – and laughter too."88

Yet, having praised death, Zarathustra asks his friend’s forgiveness for living on in order to see them “throwing the golden ball.”89 Here we have an image of the circularity characteristic of eternal return, portrayed in optimistic fashion by contrast with the preachers of “slow death.”

(4) On the Gift Giving Virtue: Conclusion90

Part One concludes with a series of images of eternal return and will to power. First, the gift of the golden ball is reciprocated by Zarathustra’s followers: “His disciples gave him as a farewell present a staff with a golden handle on which a serpent coiled around a sun.”91 He interprets these in light of will to power: “Power is she, this new virtue; a dominant thought is she, and around her a wise soul: a golden sun, and around it the serpent of knowledge.”92 At this point, the moment of eternal return is not as vivid as is will to power which has received some definition, at least, as self-overcoming. Nevertheless, assuming that eternal return is the necessity of will to power, the moment of being with which Nietzsche wishes to stamp becoming, then we can see that there are strong allusions to eternal return here.93 He states, “When you will with a single will and you call this cessation of all need ‘necessity’: this is the origin of your virtue.”94 He couples this sense of necessity with two images of return. First he suggests a return of virtue: “Lead back to the earth the virtue that flew away, as I do – back to the body, back to life, that it may give the earth a meaning, a human meaning.”95 Second, and more significantly, Zarathustra identifies at least metaphorically with eternal return: “Now I bid you lose me and find yourselves; and only when you have all denied me will I return to you.”96

Zarathustra has not yet achieved full consciousness of will to power and eternal return. However, the meaning of the overman has emerged in contradistinction to the humanism of the nineteenth century and its fundamental doctrines of freedom and equality. In a movement which mirrors the structure of the tragic vision of Nietzsche’s Birth of Tragedy, Zarathustra is educated beyond humanism, and this allows him to become the prophet of the overman. The concept of the overman allows Zarathustra to complete and deconstruct the nihilistic history of Platonism and Christianity and its humanistic nadir. On the basis of this overcoming, Zarathustra reevaluates the fundamental relations of human social life. The community he envisages is not caught in the web of bourgeois nihilism, and thus, does not veil from Zarathustra the full tragic implications of

90 Rosen Notes that Leo Strauss, in a graduate seminar, suggested the three sections “On the Gift Giving Virtue” are “a parody of the New Testament and the Christian Doctrine of the Trinity” (Mask of Enlightenment, p.126).
93 Will to Power, 617.
eternal return and will to power. Parts Two and Three of *Also Sprach Zarathustra* comprise the narrative of this further education which parodistically both cancels and preserves modern moralism.
ON THE UNITY OF NIETZSCHE’S PHILOSOPHY

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In his *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel maintains that modern European political institutions have their "basis" in "the will." The will, he says, is "the place and point of origin" of the whole social and legal order. But, of course, with his larger philosophical system in view, he goes on to say much more: "it is the task of logic as purely speculative philosophy to prove" that the will is the "ultimate spring of all activity, life, and consciousness."\(^1\) From the speculative, that is, the final and highest standpoint, which includes both the human and the divine, there is no being other than will.

Hegel allows that, since the will is free, the false opinion easily arises that its freedom "involves the dissolution of every restriction and every content either immediately presented by nature, by needs, desires, and impulses, or given and determined by any means whatever." This is "negative freedom" or "the freedom of the void," which "takes shape in religion and politics alike as the fanaticism of destruction (of the whole subsisting social order)... and as the annihilation of any organization which tries to rise anew from the ruins."\(^2\) So the negativity of the will can go to any extreme.

But Hegel affirms this negativity, this will, both from the human and the divine side. Indeed, he builds it into his Greek-inspired concept of Being and Becoming so as to harmonize and equalize the human and the divine. God, into whom everything vanishes as into a result, is also the cause who generates and maintains everything which appears to precede that result. In this reversed standpoint, what to the Greeks was a result is now a new beginning: "so that... everything which preceded... is transformed... into something which is dependent upon the result as a principle."\(^3\) Human negativity and emptiness are overcome in the divine, which means that human will, the I, the ego, can be "the unity" of "universality" (power) and "particularity" (existence, goodness). "This is the freedom of the will and it constitutes the concept or substantiality of the will, its weight, so to speak, just as weight constitutes the substantiality of the body."\(^4\)

Schelling thought that Hegel's "reversal" was an impossibility. "Now if this reversal were possible in the way Hegel wishes, and if he had not just spoken of this reversal but had tried it and really established it, then he would already himself have put a

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\(^2\) Ibid., para. 5 and para. 7, Remark.


\(^4\) Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, para. 7.
second philosophy by the side of his first, the converse of the first, which would have been roughly what we want under the name of the positive philosophy." Hegel's philosophy is "merely logical and negative," which means that "real relationships" -- our "positive" experiences -- are incompatible with it.\(^5\) But Schelling was certain that, far from rejecting Hegel's negative logic, his positive philosophy was a step beyond it, one required for the actual realization of the subjective, will-centered consciousness. Like Hegel, he admired Greek philosophical thinking and yearned to reconcile it with the subject-centered freedom and rationality of the modern age.

Nietzsche was intimately familiar with this modern idealistic yearning for fulfillment through contact with the ancient Greeks. And he saw that this was the direction in which German philosophy had been moving for some time: "German philosophy as a whole -- Leibniz, Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, to name the greatest -- is the most fundamental form of romanticism and homesickness there has ever been.... One is no longer at home anywhere: at last one longs back for that place in which alone one can be at home: the Greek world."\(^6\) Homesickness is the demand of the willing ego for another world, in which it can be at home.

But for Nietzsche the willing ego driven by this demand is empty and so must turn nihilistic, that is, end up rejecting its own most cherished ideals. That is for him the true lesson of German philosophy and indeed of Western history. All authoritative "values" -- Greek, Roman, Christian, humanistic -- must collapse before a will that seeks only to affirm itself. Like all the other homeless ones in modern Europe, the Germans are in the process of discovering the irresistibly destructive nature of the will to power.

That is the negative side of Nietzsche's philosophy. The positive side is to be found in Zarathustra’s teaching that a vision of eternal recurrence must "overcome" humanity’s purely self-affirming will. Nietzsche's idea seems to have been that modern Europeans -- or at least some of them -- would sooner or later encounter the utter vacuity of their will and in response come to a deep, reconciling, Heraclitean affirmation of the course of things. To redeem the men of the past and to 're-create all ‘it was’ into a ‘thus I willed it’-- that alone should I call redemption.'\(^7\) Thus Nietzsche's confrontation with the nihilistic will moved him to look beyond the freedom of modern times and to affirm an ancient way of thinking.

In what follows, I will argue that what is essential in Nietzsche's redemptive vision is his determination of human finiteness, human relativity, against which the will exerts its enormous power. As for the eternal recurrence, it transcends the will to power,

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but also contradicts it.\(^8\) That is at once the greatness and the weakness of Nietzsche's philosophy. His affirmation of eternal recurrence alternates with the negativity, the endlessness, of human willing. The affirmation and the negativity do not coincide, precisely because Nietzsche insists on the finiteness and illusory character of the ego even as he exposes its infinite, absolute character.

I The Negative Side

Modern philosophers identify self-knowledge with both the power of the will and the progressive development of social life. Locke, Rousseau, Hegel -- to mention some of the more influential names -- articulated this ideal self-knowledge in different ways, but they all thought that it makes both the individual and the broader society more free. As human conduct becomes more conscious, it becomes more autonomous, more the effect of understanding and reason than of fear and ignorance, weakness and superstition. That is the modern ideal. But, for Nietzsche, such optimism is naïve; it stems from "excessive delight with the [historical] process to the detriment of existence and life."\(^9\)

In his account of human conduct, Nietzsche draws a distinction between the "driving" and the "directing" force. "People are accustomed to consider the goal (purposes, vocations, etc.) as the driving force, in keeping with a very ancient error; but it is merely the directing force -- one has mistaken the helmsman for the steam."\(^10\) It follows that history is in no way teleological: "Against apparent 'purposiveness': -- the latter only an expression for an order of spheres of power and their interplay."\(^11\) History has nothing to do with the movement of mankind towards a predetermined purpose or an as yet unrealized goal. For not only is history aimless and directionless, but "'Mankind'… does not even exist."\(^12\)

Nihilism is the recognition that the world lacks purpose or meaning. What could this meaning have been? "This meaning could have been: the fulfillment of some highest ethical canon in all events, the moral world order; or the growth of love and harmony in the intercourse of beings; or the gradual approximation of a state of universal annihilation

\(^8\) From the very beginning of philosophical discussion about Nietzsche, most commentators -- notably, Karl Jaspers and Karl Löwith -- maintained that the eternal recurrence and the will to power exclude and even contradict each other. The great exception was always Martin Heidegger. Though his thoughts on the issue were subtle, Heidegger often spoke as if Nietzsche had posited nothing but a will to mastery over the entire earth. See, for example, Heidegger's *Nietzsche: Volume IV: Nihilism*, ed. David F. Krell (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1982).


\(^12\) Ibid., no. 90, 55.
any goal at least constitutes some meaning.”

Nihilism appears first in a weak or passive form. There is, for example, the "philosophical nihilist": he "is convinced that all that happens is meaningless and in vain; and that there ought not be anything meaningless and in vain…. At bottom, the nihilist thinks that the sight of such a bleak, useless existence makes a philosopher feel, dissatisfied, bleak, desperate." This is a nihilism of rage against the world because it does not conform to one's highest ideals. The passive nihilist cannot prove that his ideals are true, but cannot abandon them either. As a result, he withdraws from the world and becomes embittered and pessimistic.

Schopenhauer's concept of the will as a wild, aimless force of nature reflects this kind of pessimism. The early Nietzsche was profoundly influenced by Schopenhauer, but he came to think that "nothing is more characteristic of his philosophy than the absence of all genuine willing." Schopenhauer's "mistake" was to confuse "craving, instinct, drive" with the will. For Nietzsche, the will is not something driven by a lack. On the contrary, the will is the "master" of the desires, their appointed "way" and "measure."

"Willing" is the result of "commanding," but not in some empty, indeterminate sense. For Nietzsche, genuine willing is not a willing in general but only "a willing something." By willing something, the I, the ego, steps into a definite existence and way of life. A commanding will knows what it wants and what it can do because it is concretely related to its "total condition." This is the essential moment of finiteness and restriction in Nietzsche's concept of the will.

But the commanding will arises primarily in the mind as opposed to bodily desires, so that when the issue is command over oneself, i.e. self-control, the self, the ego, is at one and the same time commander and obeyer. The ego must somehow overcome the duality and establish effective command. The duality, however, remains; for the ego’s freedom is the freedom of a part, not of the whole: "we are in every given case at the same time those who issue the orders and those who obey them; insofar as we obey, we experience the feelings of coercion,” but insofar “as we are in command… we experience the sensation of pleasure…”

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13 Ibid., no. 12 (A), 12.
14 Ibid. Nietzsche, of course, was not the first to raise the issue of nihilism. See Michael Gillespie, Nihilism Before Nietzsche (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).
15 Nietzsche, The Will to Power, no. 36, 23.
16 Ibid., no. 95, 59.
17 Ibid., no. 84, 52.
18 Ibid., no. 668, 353.
The will tricks us into believing that we can “identify willing and performing, willing and acting,” “and this all the more strongly as we overcome the dichotomy through the notion of the I, the ego.” But the will does not actually overcome the duality between commanding and obeying. Instead, it identifies the I with the commanding part and imagines that the other part will obey: “what is called ‘freedom of the will’ is essentially a passionate superiority toward someone who must obey. I am free; the other must obey -- the consciousness of this is the very willing.” In commanding, I regard my body as an "other" who must obey.

The will's duality cannot be overcome by an act of divine grace. Quite apart from the fact that Nietzsche denies the existence of the Christian God, he thinks that the very idea of such a God is fixed, static, an image projected beyond the world of consciousness and having nothing to do with it. In comparison with such immovable perfection complete unto itself, the conscious ego is condemned to imperfection. Hence to posit the conscious ego as somehow "the standard and condition of life" -- as Christians do -- is the "fundamental mistake": "it is the erroneous perspective of a parte ad totum -- which is why all philosophers are instinctively trying to imagine a total consciousness, a consciousness involved in all life and will, in all that occurs, a ‘spirit,’ ‘God.’”

In its duality, the ego is only relative and formal. It can draw its content only from desire, impulse, inclination, etc., and so is a particular will set in opposition to whatever universal, divine good it may imagine. To be sure, this diremption in the will is just what distinguishes the human being from the unreasoning animal; it makes us "interesting." But the point is that the antinomies and configurations of this will are never-ending. The merely moral standpoint -- the standpoint of relation -- just switches back and forth without being able to resolve the antinomies and get beyond the ought to be.

Nietzsche allows that the ego can alleviate its inner conflict by identifying with the commanding part rather than the coerced. But this feeling of superiority is an illusion, for the will, though a "liberator," "is still a prisoner." The will brings both pleasure and pain. When one attains a condition of power, pleasure arises. "Freedom of the will is the word for that manifold pleasurable condition of the willer who is in command." The "willer" enjoys his "triumph over the resistance" and is certain "that it is his will itself that is overcoming the resistance." In commanding, in overcoming the resistance within, there is also pain, and the pain increases the feeling of superiority: "Displeasure... actually stimulates... [the] feeling of power."

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20 Ibid.
21 Nietzsche, The Will to Power, no. 707, 376.
24 Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, no. 19, cited in Arendt, Willing, 162.
25 Nietzsche, The Will to Power, no. 702, 373.
But there is for Nietzsche a contradiction in the will. On the one hand, in the shift from willing in general to a willing-something, there is an overflowing feeling of power. "Life as a special case (hypothesis based upon it applied to the total character of being --) strives after a maximal feeling of power; essentially a striving for more power; striving is nothing more than striving for power; the basic and innermost thing is still this will." On the other hand, he says that we are wrong to identify our will and our feeling of power with power itself, as if we were the source, the cause, of our action. What we call the will is in truth the means for an involuntary explosion of power: "finally-- a real rechristening; one sees so little will that the word becomes free to designate something else."

For Nietzsche, the connection between cause and effect, between our feeling of power and our conduct, rests on belief or custom. That was also Hegel's teaching. But with him this custom is justified by "spirit," the highest determination of which is God. By contrast, Nietzsche speaks of the "death of God," the main consequence of which is that our modern, human-centered system of belief can no longer be sustained. Nietzsche's madman cries, "Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained the Earth from the sun? Whither is it moving now?.... Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions?"

Nietzsche has in view the post-Hegelian history of nineteenth-century Europe. In the place of Hegel's "absolute spirit," he puts the experience of revolutionary freedom. Thus, whereas for Hegel the belief in free will is grounded in divine power and benevolence, for Nietzsche it is a fate to be suffered. For Europeans believe intensely and passionately that they are free, that their willing has an effect. In fact, they are certain that they are absolutely free in the world even before they do anything. Nietzsche speaks of a "feeling of force" which arises in us "even before the deed… (as at the site of an enemy or an obstacle to which we feel ourselves equal)."

But Europeans can no longer attribute "the value of an action… to the intention, the purpose for the sake of which one has acted or lived… [and so] the absence of intention and purpose in events comes more and more to the forefront of consciousness." The "melancholy" result is that "Nothing has any meaning," for if "‘All meaning lies in intention, and if intention is altogether lacking, then meaning is altogether lacking, too.’" We slowly but inevitably come to grasp "that an action is never caused by a purpose." Nietzsche asks: "why could ‘a purpose’ not be an epiphenomenon… a pale image sketched in consciousness… a symptom of events, not… their cause? -- But with this we..."

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26 Ibid., no. 689, 368.
27 Ibid., no. 95, 60.
30 Nietzsche, The Will to Power, no. 664, 350.
have criticized the will itself: is it not an illusion to take for a cause that which rises to
consciousness as an act of will?"  

The contradiction in the will is the contradiction between its actual impotence and
the feeling of power which accompanies it. To nineteenth-century revolutionaries --
Feuerbach, Stirner and many another -- the feeling of power was everything, but to
Nietzsche the impotence of the human will was undeniable: since we cannot will
backward, we cannot roll back the wheel of time. The problem is therefore to determine
the "degree and therewith the boundary at which the past has to be forgotten if it is not to
become a gravedigger of the present," "to transform and incorporate into oneself what is
past and foreign," and thereby "to heal wounds, to replace what has been lost, to recreate
broken moulds."  

This is the point of departure for Nietzsche’s "genealogy" of morality: our highest
ideals of freedom and benevolence (divine and human) are based on feelings of
resentment towards others for what they have done to us. The idea that a moral will can
dominate this resentment stems from our belief that we can undo what has been done. Yet
this belief only reveals our weakness; nothing that has been done can in fact be undone.
Furthermore, the conflict between the past and our belief in the future moves us to weary
not only of ourselves but also of other human beings: "The sight of man now fatigues. --
What is present-day Nihilism if it is not that? -- We are tired of man,"  

The conflict between the masterful feeling of giving the orders and the slavish
feeling of being coerced is the source of tremendous human suffering. But "there are two
kinds of sufferers: first, those who suffer from the overfullness of life and want a
Dionysian art as well as a tragic insight and outlook on life -- and then those who suffer
from the impoverishment of life and demand of art and philosophy, calm, stillness,
smooth seas, or, on the other hand, frenzy, convulsion, and anesthesia. Revenge against
life itself." The latter seek to eliminate their pain and, when they fail to do so, lust for
revenge. The former want not the mere absence of pain, but the experience of release
from pain. In other words, the intensity of their pleasure is related to the intensity of their
pain. Their "Dionysian," "tragic" insight into life liberates them from needs and desires,
from the lusts of the body, and brings them joy.

Joy as a higher, purer kind of pleasure takes one beyond all finite categories of
pleasure and pain. "Life is a well of joy.... How did I fly to the height where no more
rabble sits by the well? Was it my nausea itself which created wings for me and water
divining powers?" For Nietzsche, nausea, suffering, is the means by which one may
experience joy. “Here, in the highest spheres, the fount of pleasure wells up for me! And

31 Ibid., no. 666, 351-52.
32 Nietzsche, On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life, 10.
34 Nietzsche, Nietzsche Contra Wagner, in The Portable Nietzsche, 669-70.
here is a life of which the rabble does not drink. You flow for me almost too violently, fountain of pleasure."  

Joy is the Dionysian principle. It comes from abundance of life; but abundance has an element of violence in it. Thus joy is as thoroughly nihilistic as life itself, which is constantly producing and destroying. The Dionysian is "an urge to unity," a "feeling of the necessary unity of creation and destruction," a "great pantheistic sharing of joy and sorrow that sanctifies and calls good even the most terrible and questionable qualities of life," "an ecstatic affirmation of the total character of life as that which remains the same, just as powerful, just as blissful, through all change."  

II The Positive Side  

We can see even at this point, then, that Nietzsche’s confrontation with the nihilistic modern will moved him to the standpoint of the "eternal recurrence of the same." Here we have "the most extreme form of nihilism: the nothing (the meaningless), eternally!" Preaching a doctrine that "might in the end have been taught already by Heraclitus," he declares that all things move according to an "unconditional and infinitely repeated circular course." The early Nietzsche wrote a penetrating essay on Heraclitus, and enthusiastically embraced the ancient philosopher’s central idea that the eternally recurring flux transcends the seeming givenness and solidity of the world. According to Heraclitus, "you could not step twice into the same river; for other waters are ever flowing on to you." The river is, and yet is not. Only movement remains, and from out of this all else is formed; nothing exists except this movement.  

Thus Becoming is the truth of Being; it is the process of coming-to-be and ceasing-to-be in which both are not merely related, but identical. This is Nietzsche's ultimate vision; it is a nihilistic doctrine, but also a bold and creative one. He grasps that Becoming contains within itself the principle of life and motion. Being and nonbeing by themselves are abstract and devoid of truth; but in becoming, being and nonbeing overlap and contain one another; the moment of negativity is therefore immanent. To the weak and passive nihilistic consciousness which maintains the separation of being and  

36 Nietzsche, The Will to Power, no. 1050, 539.  
37 Ibid., no. 55, 36.  
41 Walter Kaufmann makes this point in a lively way when he likens Nietzsche’s notion of eternal becoming to Hegel's "bacchanalian whirl," tracing both ideas back to Heraclitus. See Kaufmann, Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1974), 240.
nonbeing, this unity of the objective and the subjective, the real and the ideal, is incomprehensible. Yet the only truth is to be found in eternal becoming.

Nietzsche says that eternal becoming is "a lying puppet-show" performed by time itself.\textsuperscript{42} Time here is no mere subjective form, a net, a way in which individuals impose order on otherwise chaotic external events, but a creative-destructive cosmic process: "again and again it reveals to us the playful construction and destruction of the individual world as the overflow of a primordial delight. Thus the dark Heraclitus compares the world-building force to a plain child that places stones here and there and builds sand hills only to overthrow them again."\textsuperscript{43} Nietzsche affirms eternal becoming as a playful succession of individual worlds which come-to-be and cease-to-be according to no rhyme or reason.

To translate Nietzsche into Heraclitean terms, one could say that the eternal return is a circular process with two sides to it, "the road up and the road down."\textsuperscript{44} The road up is the negative side, in that it is the reality of opposites, and the road down is the positive side, the unification of these real opposites. But both roads merge: "what agrees disagrees, the concordant is discordant."\textsuperscript{45} Christians mean the same thing when they say that God in creating the world both divided it from himself and (in begetting a son) reconciled it to himself. For Nietzsche, too, difference or real antithesis is clearly necessary to the eternal return. The part is something different from the whole and is yet the same as the whole. The eternal return is therefore not mere change but the absolute becoming.

Of course, in recognizing the universality and objectivity of the eternal return, Nietzsche at the same time renounced the principle of individuality and free will. In this he is different from both Heraclitus (who knew nothing of the modern principle of individuality) and Christians (who divinize it). Nietzsche struggled mightily to demonstrate the untrue nature of our subjective consciousness. He thus renounced human beings as finite, individual units. What is valid for him is the universal -- that which eternally binds all things and all events -- and he was certain that he could not affirm such a universal if he were to maintain individual units. That is the general character and form of Nietzsche's philosophy. It advances to the infinite -- eternal return, eternal sameness -- by way of negating finite, subjective consciousness.\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{44} \textit{The Collected Wisdom of Heraclitus}, fragment 69.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., fragment 54.
\textsuperscript{46} Jürgen Habermas describes Nietzsche's philosophy "as the heightening of the subjective to the point of utter self-oblivion," adding that this happens "only at the cost of ecstasy -- at the cost of a painful de-differentiation, a de-delimitation of the individual, a merging with amorphous nature within and without." See Habermas, \textit{The Philosophical
Nietzsche offered a purely mechanistic explanation of the eternal return. But his main concern is with the transformative psychological effects of his teaching. He holds that man’s attitude to the thought of eternal return must undergo a "metamorphosis." Beyond the "Thou shalt" and the "I will" there is the "I am." The "I am" is the attitude of the child; it is creative, and it can liberate us from the nihilistic will for vengeance. "The child is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a self-propelled wheel, a first movement, a sacred 'Yes.'"

The "I am" cannot be commanded as a moral imperative and cannot be willed. A heroic will must overcome moral humanity, but then the hero must become an "overhero." That is, the "sublime" hero must "discard his heroic will": "the ether itself should elevate him, the will-less one." Beyond the "you should" and the "I will" -- both of which are incomplete -- there is the superabundant enjoyment of the childish "I am" -- a self-complete, self-contained phenomenon. There is nothing to be commanded here and hence no resentment and vengefulness; there is nothing lacking, no goal yet to be realized.

The finite and merely human "I will" must be annulled, and this annulling is the work of the hero. So long as his individuality remains, and in such a way that he affirms only his will, his work is incomplete. He will arrive at the standpoint of an infinite will, but find himself pitted against the finite as something other than himself. In other words, he cannot escape his own finitude, and so will again advance to an infinite, over and over, endlessly. The finite human will which exults itself to the infinite is merely abstract identity, intrinsically hollow and false.

One could argue that the overhero does not cease to will, but wills to bring about what happens anyway, so that his "I will" coincides with the "I am." But this coincidence of willing and existing, doing and enjoying, is without any recognizable sense of self, of ego. It is the world of becoming without individuality. "This is the profoundest conception of suffering…. The isolation of the individual ought not to deceive us: something flows on underneath individuals." The individual itself is a fiction. If there is a cosmic will, it is not and cannot become the object of individuals:


47 See, e.g., Nietzsche, The Will to Power, no. 1066, 549.


50 Karl Löwith took this to be Heidegger's position and argued against it with admirable energy. See, e.g., Löwith, Martin Heidegger and European Nihilism, trans. Gary Steiner (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 96-127.

"We are *more* than the individuals: we are the whole chain as well, with the tasks of all the futures of that chain."

Eternal becoming is a circle; it is the will to power "with no goal, unless the joy of the circle is itself the goal; with no will, unless the ring feels good will toward itself." The will of the will to power is not an individualistic, or even a human, will; it is not a will to bring about some past condition of life or some future possibility. It is an impersonal, anonymous, universal will -- the will of the world itself -- and it is joyful no matter what happens. Such "joy," however, makes sense only to those who are strong enough "to do without meaning in things... [who] can endure to live in a meaningless world."

We live in a meaningless world because there is nothing external to the process of becoming from which meaning could be derived. There is no intention either in the process or outside of it. This really is a form of nihilism. But, for Nietzsche, when nihilism is active and strong (as opposed to passive and weak), it heralds a positive, affirming vision of the process: "Can we remove the idea of a goal from the process and then affirm the process in spite of this? -- This would be the case if something were attained at every moment within this process -- and always the same." The world of becoming cannot be explained with recourse to final intentions; but for that very reason we can regard it as justified "at every moment." For that reason, too, we can overcome our feelings of resentment towards it: "There is no place, no purpose, no meaning, on which we can shift the responsibility for our being, for our being thus and thus. Above all: no one could do it; one cannot judge, measure, compare the whole, to say nothing of denying it!"

This way of looking at the world has a relation to modern idealism at its climax. Nietzsche feels the need to move beyond that empty, nihilistic standpoint. For him, however, the transition cannot be dialectical. He rejects the belief of traditional Christian culture that there is a hidden, purposive connection between the negative and the affirmative. Instead, in contemplating the necessity of the transition, he only appeals to the negative consequences which follow from the standpoint of idealism.

Crucial here is Nietzsche's conviction that the yearning for an ideal world -- "a world that is not self-contradictory, not deceptive, does not change, a true world" -- is itself nihilistic. Plato sought such an ideal world and thought he had found it. Christians believed that the ideal world had been revealed and tried in the course of a long history to transpose it onto the real world, to make it actual, but in doing so they exposed the whole

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52 Ibid., no. 687, 366.
53 Ibid., no 1067, 550.
54 Ibid., no. 585 (A), 318.
55 Ibid., no. 55, 36.
56 Ibid., no. 765, 402.
57 Ibid., no. 585 (A), 316.
quest as a "fable." The will to truth, Nietzsche argues, inevitably turns against itself. The result is the nihilist: "a man who judges of the world as it is that it ought not to be, and of the world as it ought to be that it does not exist." The overcoming of nihilism requires a conception of the apparent world as redemption. "What is ‘appearance’ for me now? Certainly not the opposite of some essence: what could I say about any essence except to name the attributes of its appearance!... Appearance is for me that which lives and is effective."

Nietzsche is not simply giving us his subjective opinion; appearance does not exist only in his feeling, his supposition. The content, activity, and vitality of the apparent world -- the positing and the objectifying -- are not merely his. He speaks of a living, overflowing world, a world which is universally true, and not subjective only. At this standpoint, Nietzsche no longer sees himself as an individual unit, a finite human being. Accordingly, he offers us not only certainty, but also truth. The universally binding and authoritative character of the world of appearance is not a mere semblance.

There is a religious dimension to all this, for Nietzsche’s apparent world, the world of becoming, is totally innocent. All becoming is aimless and therefore free from guilt: "Everything is innocence." Nietzsche anticipates that wise men will eventually emerge with "knowledge" of this innocence; "wise innocent" men will supplant those who are "unwise, unjust, guilt-ridden." Guilt and with it the urge to punish come from morality, particularly in its Christian form, which is infinitely more inward and intense than pagan morality. But, in any case, Nietzsche rejects all morality, pagan and Christian: "Wherever responsibilities have been sought, it was the instinct of revenge that sought." More deeply, he holds that moral humanity "has deprived existence in general of its innocence; namely, by tracing back every state of being thus and so to a will, an intention, a responsible act."

For Nietzsche, the overcoming of guilt and the related concepts of causation and moral responsibility exposes the meaninglessness of our ordinary understanding of time. Despite what most moderns think, the present is not the effect of the past, and the present deed is not the cause of the future. That rectilinear view of time is nihilistic; it deepens and radicalizes our feeling that time is irreversible. We come to see time as a futile process; for just as the future disappears into the present, the present vanishes into the past. It is horrible to contemplate this raging process of destruction and ruin. The animals "do not know what yesterday and today are," but humans do, and so they feel weighed down and even crushed by the past. When present and future can only be explained by

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58 See the account of "How the ‘True World’ Finally Became a Fable," in Friedrich Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols, in The Portable Nietzsche, 485-86.
59 Nietzsche, The Will to Power, no. 585 (A), 318.
63 Nietzsche, On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life, 8.
an all-consuming past, hope inevitably turns to despair, optimism to pessimism. Even the critical, future-oriented will, the commanding will, which struggles against the past, cannot dissolve it: "it is not possible to free oneself completely from this chain."64

The only redemption from this inexorable process is the thought that the present moment does not recur or return in a merely temporal process, but comes from eternity to eternity.65 The present moment must be in every moment; the past and future must be in the present. In order to have a single experience again, we must wish for everything again. "The wisest man would be the one richest in contradictions, who has, as it were, antennae for all types of men -- as well as his great moments of grand harmony -- a rare accident even in us! A sort of planetary motion --"66 What is decisive is not what lies behind us in the past, but the relation of the will to it, whether the will suffers "the melancholy of everything finished!"67 The will fools us into thinking that it can command the future, but the truth is that it oscillates between past and future and easily succumbs to weakness and exhaustion. To transcend commands, oscillations, is to be redeemed from time, the will and human finitude itself. Zarathustra says to the heavens, "I have become one who blesses and says Yes.... But this is my blessing: to stand over every single thing as its own heaven, as its round roof, its azure bell, and eternal security; and blessed is he who blesses thus."68

Only a universal knowledge of the world, a vision of the eternal recurrence of the same, is adequate. And this vision has at once an intoxicating and a calming effect. It manifests itself as an "extreme calm in certain sensations of intoxication (more strictly: the retardation of the feelings of time and space.)"69 Nietzsche ascends to the point where the will’s only negation is this retardation, this slowing down, of the feelings of time, so that all of time in its entirety may be affirmed. The will comes to know that "the fatality of its essence is not to be disentangled from the fatality of all that has been and will be."70 This is the very peak of existence. Once that is attained, all that is left is a "Yes and Amen": "For all things have been baptized in the well of eternity".71

III A Unity of the Two Sides?

Nietzsche therefore reaches a standpoint where he renounces individuality itself. He posits eternal recurrence in such a way that the I, the ego, is negated; in their particular subjectivity, human beings are annulled. The great result is a transition to

64 Ibid., 22.
66 Nietzsche, The Will to Power, no. 259, 150.
69 Nietzsche, The Will to Power, no. 799, 420.
70 Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols, 500.
71 Nietzsche, Zarathustra, "Before Sunrise," 277-78.
something universal, something true and affirmative. But the transition is not
accomplished in a systematic way, as in Christian neo-Platonism or German idealism.
There is for Nietzsche no providential, teleological connection between the negative and
the affirmative; he only observes that it is the nature of the limited and the finite to have
its opposite present within it. The process in which one limited and finite being is
superseded by another, which in turn is superseded by another, and so on endlessly, is the
process of the world itself -- eternal return, eternal sameness. Thus, however much the
finite, subjective consciousness may idealize the process, it cannot be the moment in
which the process is present and actual. There can, accordingly, be no real unity or
integration of the ego and the process of the world; the two sides are only negatively
related to each other. But where does that leave the subjective consciousness? By way of
conclusion, and in order to do justice to Nietzsche, I will try to answer this question from
three points of view.

(1) Nietzsche's greatness lies in his insistence that if we are really to recognize the
world, we must determine ourselves as universal and affirm ourselves as universal only.
This is a truly philosophical -- even mystical and religious -- way of looking at finiteness.
It has its roots not only in pre-Socratic Greece, but also in the Oriental world. The idea is
that anyone who thinks through his circumstances and condition must discard his own
sense of ego, of individuality, and lose himself in the universal. Nietzsche of course was a
man of his time; he accepted the view of many of his contemporaries that the Christian
God is dead. But he reasoned that if that God is dead, then humanity and our human, all-
too-human sense of individuality must also die. When Europeans collapse God into the
world, they do not raise nature and human beings to the rank of supreme value; rather,
they make finite things and individual human beings disappear into an impersonal and
anonymous world of becoming.

In this way, Nietzsche criticized those nineteenth-century humanists who wanted
somehow to make subjectivity, individual or collective, the absolute standard and
condition of life. Such humanism for him was merely the culminating point, the last gasp
of Christianity, the point at which the finite subject makes itself infinite and, turning
nihilistic, does away with all content. And surely he was right. The idea that human
subjectivity, separate and apart from the divine, can develop a world out of itself,
transmute itself as form into content, is incredible. No synthesis of the world and human
will is thinkable without a divine and, indeed, Christian basis and foundation.

Hegel held that despite -- or rather because of -- the tremendous weight which
Christians place on the will, the "Christian religion is the religion of reconciliation of
the world with God."72 That was Nietzsche's view as well, except that he rejected this idea of
reconciliation (whether divine or secular) as a delusion. Thus he was not an atheist or
naturalist in the ordinary nineteenth-century sense: he attacked those who in the wake of
the death of God still privileged human existence and human freedom in the world. In

72 G.W.F. Hegel, The Consummate Religion, in Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion,
ed. Peter C. Hodgson and trans. R.F. Brown (Berkeley: University of California Press,
1985), vol. iii, 65.
this respect, he was many degrees superior to liberals and socialists such as J.S. Mill and Karl Marx.

(2) Nietzsche's weakness was that he confined himself to the naturalistic, atheistic standpoint even as he criticized it. It is of course a fact that an entirely new consciousness and sense of self emerged in the course of the nineteenth century. An atheistic will-centered consciousness made itself the basis of all actuality, all social and political life, and then attempted (in various conflicting forms) to re-create the world in its image. Nietzsche rightly ridiculed those atheists who thought that the world could be established through human individuality, human subjectivity alone. Yet he did not allow or even consider that subjectivity may have truth when it is the form for a supernatural content. Nor was he able to explain the origin of the nihilistic, subjective consciousness which elevates itself above the world and denies all natural content. The two points are related.

How does the negativity of the will come into the world? The question cannot be answered if we think of the will as related to itself purely positively and of the world as something purely positive confronting it. Certainly, Nietzsche traced the negativity of the will back to feelings of weakness and hatred; but he did not say where these negative feelings come from. They merely succeed feelings that are naturally good and so are juxtaposed to them; in other words, it is from the outside that the negative will comes into the world. But this assumption of a purely positive, unmixed natural good makes the question of the origin of nihilism and evil impossible to answer.

That is why Hegel insisted that in thinking about evil we begin with God’s will and activity. Nature is innocent -- neither good nor evil -- but the evil will is not merely natural; it is the negative opposed to the good, i.e. the divine will. Thus the negativity of human evil presupposes the positive good of the divine will and arises in reaction to it; pride, resentment, and the will to revenge are reactive emotions and ought not to be. At the same time, as the Genesis account points out, human beings become godlike when they know both good and evil. Their likeness to God is present in their freedom of choice, which is why this freedom transcends the duality of a purely positive natural good and a purely negative human will. The negativity of the will, the drama of choosing between good and evil, does not arise in some external fashion, but is built into the world at its source. Good and evil are bound up with and rooted in one another.  

Hence the solution of the problem: the godlike negativity of human subjectivity itself overcomes the dichotomy of natural innocence and evil. Since we are not natural but rather spiritual creatures, we can choose evil, but we need not; for everything we do originates in the will which (to quote Hegel again) is the "ultimate spring of all activity, life, and consciousness."  

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74 For a robust critique of Hegel's conception of evil and the will, see Richard Bernstein, *Radical Evil: a Philosophical Interrogation* (Oxford: Blackwell Pub., 2002), ch. 2. Writing from a post-Christian, post-Nietzschean standpoint, Bernstein denies that there
(3) Nietzsche sets aside the independence of human consciousness which he sees as an empty abstraction. He conceives of a one-sided ("homesick") human willing, and in so doing completely annihilates the moment of self-knowledge in the world. In the thought of eternal recurrence, Nietzsche envisages a universe utterly without subjectivity. For this he has been, as one would expect, roundly criticized; it is asserted that human individuality, human freedom and brotherhood, should not be abandoned.\textsuperscript{75} The assertion is correct, I believe, but only formally so; it merely counters Nietzsche’s negativity and scepticism with a dogmatic liberal or socialist opinion.

We should recall Schelling's evaluation of Hegel; it can be usefully extended to Nietzsche. Schelling praised Hegel's philosophy insofar as it was "merely logical and negative," for this allows us to put a "second" philosophy, a "converse" and "positive" one, beside his first. Yet Schelling thought that we should keep both the negative and the positive philosophies in view; for the dissolution and the affirmation of human consciousness and freedom are unintelligible without one another. In a more definite and profound way than Nietzsche, Schelling maintained that when the world and subjectivity are built into independent totalities, both reduce themselves to moments of the divine.\textsuperscript{76}

On this fundamental point, for all their differences, Schelling and Hegel were as one, and they were right. For both good and ill, the divine is fully present in the relation between subjectivity and the world; this is why there is no mere juxtaposition or switching back and forth between the two sides; they are in truth identical. Even Nietzsche, in making the transition from the negativity of human willing to the world of becoming, attests to the truth of this view. Though he was convinced that the ego is finite and illusory, he himself in his account of nihilism (which culminates in the subject-centered freedom and rationality of the modern age) brilliantly revealed the infinite and unconditioned character of the human will.

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\textsuperscript{75} A good example of this tendency may be found in Richard Rorty, \textit{Philosophy and Social Hope} (London: Penguin Books, 1999), 84.
\textsuperscript{76} See Emil Fackenheim, \textit{The God Within: Kant, Schelling, and Historicity}, ed. John Burbidge (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 103-06.
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