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University of Southampton

Faculty of Arts & Humanities

Department of Philosophy

Nietzsche on Art and Affirmation of Life: a study of the relationship between art and life- affirmation through Nietzsche's writings.

by

Mark Angelo Murelli

Thesis for the degree of Master of Philosophy (MPhil)

April 2019

University of Southampton

Abstract

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The relationship between life-affirmation and art in Nietzsche's writing is much discussed in the secondary literature on Nietzsche. One of the positions is that of Bernard Reginster, which is as follows: in Nietzsche's early work *The Birth of Tragedy*, falsification is a central characteristic of art. The affirmation of life based on such art, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, is predicated on falsification. Nietzsche subsequently moves away from life-affirmation based on falsification, to the idea that there must be affirmation of life as it is. This thesis seeks to show, *contra* Reginster, that falsification is involved in the relationship between life-affirmation and art throughout Nietzsche's writings.

This thesis counters Reginster's narrative by moving through Nietzsche's writings to show that falsification, in one form or another, has an ongoing presence in his writing on life-affirmation and art. The thesis begins with the illusory art upon which life-affirmation is based in *The Birth of Tragedy*. It then moves to *The Gay Science*, and the forms of falsification woven into the relationship between life-affirmation and art therein. The thesis subsequently turns to Nietzsche's writings after *The Gay Science*. It looks at both Nietzsche's published and unpublished writing on the relationship between life-affirmation and art. In so doing, the thesis seeks to show that the relationship involves falsification even at the very last in Nietzsche's writing. There is then exploration of the various statuses Nietzsche assigns to truth: this casts doubt on the safe and steady status Reginster claims for truth in Nietzsche's late work.

The conclusion of this thesis is that falsification is involved in the relationship between life-affirmation and art throughout Nietzsche's writing. This is not to deny that there are, as Reginster suggests, instances of the relationship devoid of falsification in Nietzsche's late writings. In showing examples of falsification in the relationship throughout Nietzsche's productive life, however, the thesis offers a corrective to the understanding of a significant aspect of Nietzsche's thought.

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Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

Print name:	Mark Angelo Murelli
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Title of thesis:	<i>Nietzsche on Art and Affirmation of Life</i> : a study of the relationship between art and life- affirmation through Nietzsche’s writings.
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I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

<p>I confirm that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University; 2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated; 3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed; 4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work 5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help; 6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself; 7. Either none of this work has been published before submission, or parts of this work have been published as: [please list references below].
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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used for the titles of writings by Nietzsche:

AC *The Antichrist*

BGE *Beyond Good and Evil*

BT *The Birth of Tragedy*

D *Daybreak*

EH *Ecce Homo*

GM *On the Genealogy of Morality*

GS *The Gay Science*

HH *Human-All-Too-Human*

PTAG *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*

TI *Twilight of the Idols*

UM *Untimely Meditations*

WP *The Will to Power*

For writing by Schopenhauer, the following abbreviation is used:

WWR, I and II *The World as Will and Representation*, volumes 1 and 2

Full bibliographical information for the above writings is provided in the Bibliography.

Introduction

Life-affirmation is important in Nietzsche's work and in Nietzsche's life; and in some ways, there is no distance between Nietzsche's life and his work. Art, for Nietzsche, is a significant force in generating affirmation of life. The relationship between life-affirmation and art in Nietzsche's writing is much discussed in the secondary literature on Nietzsche. One of the positions is that of Bernard Reginster, which is as follows: in Nietzsche's early work, falsification is a central characteristic of art. The affirmation of life based on such art, in Nietzsche's early work, is predicated on falsification. Nietzsche subsequently moves away from life-affirmation based on falsification, to the idea that there must be affirmation of life as it is.¹ In this thesis, I agree with the claims about Nietzsche's early work – I dispute, however, the claim that Nietzsche subsequently moves away from life-affirmation based on falsification.

This thesis seeks to show, *contra* Reginster, that falsification is involved in the relationship between life-affirmation and art throughout Nietzsche's writings. This is not to deny instances of the relationship devoid of falsification in Nietzsche's later writing. It is important, however, to make the counter-argument to Reginster's narrative as it corrects the understanding of an important element in Nietzsche's thought.

Before elaborating on Reginster's narrative and the counter-argument of this thesis, there will be a survey of other positions on the relationship between art and life in Nietzsche's writing. This will give some sense of the wider context. This thesis argues a continuity, namely in the involvement of falsification in the relationship between life-affirmation and art throughout Nietzsche's writings. The survey will therefore look at suggestions, in the secondary literature, of continuity or discontinuity through Nietzsche's writings.

Discontinuities suggested in the secondary literature

In the secondary literature on Nietzsche, there are suggestions of discontinuity between Nietzsche's early and later writings in terms of the relationship between life and art. One such suggestion pertains to Nietzsche's stance towards Richard Wagner. Ridley comments that in the *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche concentrated his hopes for the regeneration of

¹ Maudemarie Clark, in her seminal work *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy* (1990), also thinks that Nietzsche moves away from falsification after his early work.

contemporary culture in Wagner, whereas the ‘later Nietzsche no longer pinned hopes of any sort to Wagner, let alone such grandiose ones.’ (Ridley 2007: 12)² This suggestion seems reasonable, and does not deny that Wagner influenced Nietzsche for the rest of the latter’s life.³

Another suggestion of discontinuity, in the Nietzschean secondary literature, relates to the metaphysics in *The Birth of Tragedy*. In the book, Nietzsche describes a primal artist of the world which creates the world as art. In this scheme, life *is* art (more on all this later). The suggestion of discontinuity is that the metaphysics Nietzsche commits himself to in *The Birth of Tragedy*, he abandons shortly afterwards. Janaway, in his essay ‘Beauty is False, Truth Ugly: Nietzsche on Art and Life,’⁴ remarks that: ‘In later writings Nietzsche abandons the crypto-Schopenhauerian relic of “*das Ur-Eine*” and, as he says in his 1886 Preface to *The Birth of Tragedy*, he can now regard the book’s whole “artist’s metaphysic” as “arbitrary, idle and fantastic” (*BT*, ‘Attempt’, 5)’ (Janaway 2014: 48)⁵

The above is a brief sample of suggested discontinuities between Nietzsche’s early and later writings in terms of the relationship between art and life. There are also, however, various suggestions of continuity in the relationship between art and life in Nietzsche’s writing. The introduction will now sketch a couple of the ‘continuity positions’,⁶ before outlining Reginster’s position and my response to it.

² Ridley (2007).

³ For a comprehensive discussion of the influence of Wagner on Nietzsche, see R. Harvey (2017). *The Case of Nietzsche: Schopenhauer, Wagner, and the ‘Music-Making Physician of Culture*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Southampton.

⁴ Janaway (2014, 39-56).

⁵ It is also contested in the secondary literature that Nietzsche commits himself to the metaphysics in *The Birth of Tragedy*. Gemes and Sykes (2014, 80-105) provides an example of this. Their essay argues that where Nietzsche speaks of metaphysics he is doing one of two things. Either, he is merely setting out the Attic Greeks’ experience of tragedy and belief – which for Nietzsche consist of false metaphysical content; or, he is self-consciously constructing a mythic narrative which aims to make existence bearable. Such an interpretation does, however, render Nietzsche’s later prefatory remark – that the ‘artistic metaphysics’ were ‘arbitrary, idle, fantastic’ – rather puzzling. (*BT*, ‘Attempt’, 5) More on this later, too.

⁶ Other continuity positions are held by, for example, Nehamas (1985) and Leiter (Forthcoming).

Continuities suggested in the secondary literature

One ‘continuity position’ belongs to Sebastian Gardner in his essay, ‘Nietzsche’s Philosophical Aestheticism.’⁷ Gardner claims that the suggestion that justification of existence and the world can only be aesthetic is not confined to *The Birth of Tragedy*,⁸ rather it reappears in Nietzsche’s later writings. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Gardner holds, there are two forms of experience which ‘each supply a different and individually sufficient way of “justifying existence”.’ (Gardner 2013: 601) These two forms of experience are ‘Apollonian’ and ‘Dionysian’, each of which is connected to a set of art forms. The ‘Apollonian’ experience, Gardner tells his reader, is connected to a set of art forms that includes epic poetry, sculpture and painting. A work of any of those art forms contains a ‘beautifying selective representation of reality,’ and in addition activates the natural capacity for dreams, i.e. the capacity for beautiful, radiant images. (*Ibid.*) The ‘Apollonian’ experience is of a selective, radiant and beautiful representation of reality, by which existence is justified. This ‘Apollonian’ experience takes on an illusory element, as it is ‘elaborated through the projection of this representation into the consciousness of the Olympian gods, the reinternalization of which allows the Homeric Greeks to experience themselves as they suppose themselves to appear to their divine spectators.’ (Gardner 2013: 601)

The other form of experience – ‘Dionysian’ – is, as Gardner tells his reader, connected to music and lyric poetry. These art forms activate the natural capacity for intoxication. ‘Dionysian’ experience consists of intoxication and rapture (*Rausch*), a person experiencing ‘ecstatic immersion in a primordial unity.’ (Gardner 2013: 602, 603) ‘Dionysian’ experience also ‘grants an experiential recovery of unity with nature and other men, and allows pain to be experienced with joy.’ (Gardner 2013: 602) The ‘Dionysian’ form of experience, and the ‘Apollonian’ form too, each provide an individually sufficient way of justifying existence. (Gardner 2013: 601) In *The Birth of Tragedy*, however, the ‘Apollonian’ and ‘Dionysian’ experiences find a synthesis in Attic tragedy. In Attic tragedy (in *The Birth of Tragedy*) there is, as is implicit in Gardner’s account of it, a justification of existence. Gardner’s implicit suggestion is that in Attic tragedy, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, the justification of existence takes the following form: individual life, which is essentially suffering, satisfies the primordial unity’s original desire for illusion.

⁷ Gardner (2013, 599-625).

⁸ ‘[O]nly as an *aesthetic phenomenon* are existence and the world *justified* to eternity.’ (*BT*, 5)

Central to Nietzsche's later notion of aesthetic justification of existence and the world is, on Gardner's view, the 'aesthetic state.' (Gardner 2013: 613, *passim*) In Nietzsche's later writing, according to Gardner, there is a reciprocal relation between a human subject, the observer of art, and an object of art. The human subject through an 'overflowing fullness of bodily vigor' transfigures the object of art, until it reflects back his plenitude. (*WP* 801; *Spring - Autumn 1887, rev. Spring - Autumn 1888*) The human subject, as Gardner puts it, invests 'the object [of art] with certain powers and properties.' (Gardner 2013: 614) This is what the human subject does for the object of art (though the object of art is transfigured only in our experience of it, the object itself is not transfigured). The object of art reciprocates, by restoring these powers and properties to the human subject in a heightened form. (*Ibid.*)

On Gardner's interpretation, Nietzsche thinks that there is a 'life-affirmative judgement which...stands at the core of the Aesthetic State, mediating the connection between the object and the subjective increase of life force.' (Gardner 2013: 615) Gardner claims that Nietzsche thinks 'our experience of art is necessarily *taken* by us as an experience or representation of *how the world is.*' (*Ibid.*) This forms, in part, the basis of a life-affirmative judgement and the world is, Gardner referring back to *BT*, 'justified as an aesthetic phenomenon.' (*BT*, 5)

There is one brief remark that I would like to make in relation to the 'aesthetic state' in Gardner's essay, before moving onto the next 'continuity position.' What Gardner describes as the projecting and then receiving back of a single subject, seems to be in Nietzsche's writing divided across two subjects, one who projects, another who receives. There is the artist who, in certain states, transfigures a subject so that it reflects back their plenitude and perfection (*WP*, 801, *Spring - Autumn 1887, rev. Spring - Autumn 1888; TI, IX, 9*) There is also the art-observer who encounters the art in which the subject has been transfigured. In this art-observer, the art 'serves to incite the animal functions by means of images and fantasies of increased vitality – to elevate and stimulate the sense of vitality.' (*WP*, 802; *Spring - Autumn 1887*)

Aaron Ridley is in possession of another 'continuity position' in his essay, 'Nietzsche and the Arts of Life.'⁹ The view that 'life must, in some sense, be construed and conducted *as* an

⁹ Ridley (2013, 415-30).

aesthetic phenomenon if it is not to be merely intolerable' constitutes, according to Ridley, a fundamental continuity in Nietzsche's thought. (*Ibid.*) Ridley discusses Nietzsche's relation to three different types of aesthetic phenomena that could be used so that life is not merely intolerable: aesthetic spectacle, aesthetic experience and aesthetic creativity. In *The Birth of Tragedy* it is aesthetic spectacle, Ridley tells his reader, that is taken as the model for life: Nietzsche invites us to understand life as a 'comedy of art' which provides an entertaining spectacle to its creator, the 'original artist of the world.' (*BT*, 5) To construe the suffering of life as an aesthetic spectacle for the original artist of the world may render life more bearable, runs Ridley's interpretation of Nietzsche. Ridley's assessment of the effectiveness of this idea is understandably lukewarm: 'suffering that is *enjoyed*...does have a certain point to it, and is, in that much, not wholly futile; and life is (partly) redeemed by that thought, even if not, one might imagine, quite so decisively from the mortal point of view.' (Ridley 2013: 417)

Ridley writes that he thinks Nietzsche is sympathetic to the idea of aesthetic experience, properly understood, perhaps providing 'a model for the lived quality of life.' (Ridley 2013: 418) For Nietzsche, Ridley explains, to properly understand a person's experience of art is, broadly, to understand it as interested engagement rather than disinterested beholding. Nietzsche rejects Kant and Schopenhauer's characterization of aesthetic experience as disinterested. (See *GM* III: 6) Ridley gives a more precise idea of what Nietzsche took the nature of aesthetic experience, properly construed, to be. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Ridley claims, aesthetic experience was thought of 'as a matter of transported ecstasy,' and the late Nietzsche thought of aesthetic experience in terms of 'sublimated "sexual excitement."' (Ridley 2013: 418-9) In such aesthetic experience, Ridley explains, life is 'something to be embraced rather than stepped back from; even as something to be lusted after, whatever its terrors.' (Ridley 2013: 419) This correct construal of aesthetic experience, if taken as a model for living, would offer 'another kind of possible justification of existence as an "*aesthetic phenomenon*."' (*Ibid.*) Ridley holds that Nietzsche rejects in principle the idea of disinterested spectatorship as a model for life: such impartiality would be at odds with the requirements of a justification of life.

Lastly, Nietzsche thought that aesthetic creativity or artistry could be a model for life, on Ridley's view. According to Ridley, Nietzsche equates artistry with form-giving. The conception of form is organic: 'parts acquire their "meaning" from their "relation to the

whole”, the resultant structure “lives.” (Ridley 2013: 420) On Ridley’s interpretation of Nietzsche, the artistry of form-giving can render existence and the world tolerable. For Nietzsche, existence and the world in their original state are chaotic and meaningless, suggests Ridley; form-giving can, however, instate order and meaning, with its concomitant valuation. Nietzsche advocates self-creation, Ridley claims, a species of form-giving and literal artistry. For Nietzsche self-creation can, on Ridley’s view, make existence affirmable or at least tolerable. Works of art in the ordinary sense may, as ‘already accomplished feats of form-giving,’ be a spur to self-creation; alternatively, self-creation may be inspired by the exemplars in self-creation who Nietzsche holds up, such as Goethe. (Ridley 2013: 424) Ridley, in sum and to reiterate, argues that Nietzsche’s view that life must be construed and conducted as an aesthetic phenomenon if it is not to be merely intolerable, represents a fundamental continuity in his thought.

Ridley claims that for Nietzsche, aesthetic experience can provide a model for life. The evidence for Ridley’s claim, however, is lacking, and he himself is tentative on this point: ‘He [Nietzsche] is, I think, sympathetic to the idea that aesthetic experience, properly construed, might be taken as a model for the lived quality of life.’ (Ridley 2013: 418)¹⁰ I do broadly agree however that Nietzsche held, throughout his productive life, the view that life must be construed and conducted as an aesthetic phenomenon if it is not to be merely intolerable. Having surveyed some of the secondary literature to give a sense of the wider context of Reginster’s position and my own, I shall now proceed to elaborate on Reginster’s narrative.

Reginster’s Narrative

i) Reginster’s two claims

In his essay ‘Art and Affirmation’,¹¹ Reginster makes the following two claims. First, that throughout Nietzsche’s writing is the suggestion that ‘affirming life is coming to see it as *beautiful* – that is to say, that the affirmation of life is essentially an aesthetic or artistic

¹⁰ On the next page Ridley writes: ‘Nietzsche’s version of aesthetic experience, *if* taken as a model for the lived quality of life, offers another kind of possible justification of existence as an “*aesthetic phenomenon*.”’ (Ridley 2013: 419) The first emphasis is mine.

¹¹ Reginster (2014, 14-37).

stance.’ (Reginster 2014: 14) The second claim is that over the course of Nietzsche’s writing, however, there is a shift in *how* life is seen as beautiful and affirmed. Reginster writes that in Nietzsche’s first book, *The Birth of Tragedy*, it is through life being falsified in various ways (more on these shortly) that it is seen as beautiful and affirmed. After *The Birth of Tragedy*, Reginster suggests, Nietzsche has growing doubts about how legitimate an affirmation of life is when its object is not life but some falsified version of it. In the end, according to Reginster, Nietzsche articulates that a person must affirm life *as it is*; life is seen as beautiful and affirmed not by way of any form of falsification, but through viewing it as a call to adventure and challenge (more on this shortly, too). Reginster argues that in Nietzsche’s writing beyond *The Birth of Tragedy* there is an absence of life-affirmation based on falsification, any kind of falsification. It is this argument with which my thesis critically engages. In what immediately follows, I shall flesh out Reginster’s argument.

ii) *Suffering and the impossibility of fulfilment*

Reginster claims that in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche borrows Schopenhauer’s conception of suffering: the experience of resistance to the satisfaction of one’s desires. (Reginster 2014: 15) Reginster continues that Schopenhauer demonstrates the inevitability of this suffering, which implies the impossibility of fulfilment: a state in which one no longer desires anything. And in *The Birth of Tragedy*, according to Reginster, knowing the impossibility of fulfilment brings the threat of inaction – if I can never achieve fulfilment, what’s the point of acting? Reginster suggests that Schopenhauer’s ideas about suffering and the impossibility of fulfilment are responsible, at least in part, for the forms of illusion in *The Birth of Tragedy*.

iii) *Three types of illusion*

1) *Socratic optimism*

Nietzsche, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, describes the three types of illusion of ‘the more nobly constituted natures who feel the burden and weight of existence with profound displeasure and who must be deluded into forgetting this displeasure through a selection of stimulants.’ (BT, 18) He continues that ‘From these stimulants arises everything which we call culture.’ (*Ibid.*) Reginster picks these three types of illusion up in his essay.

One of these types of illusion is Socratic optimism. Given that Reginster’s essay is about affirmation and art in Nietzsche’s writing, he only touches on the affirmation generated by this. Nietzsche presents the cheerful and optimistic theoretical man, associated with Socrates,

who operates under the illusion that knowledge ‘can help him to heal the eternal wound of life.’ (*BT*, 18) The theoretical man, explains Reginster, believes that everything admits of a causal explanation. One can follow the causal thread into the ‘deepest abysses of being’ to not only know but also *correct* being. (*BT*, 15)

Reginster writes that Nietzsche considers Socratic optimism a delusion (*Wahn*), destined for self-destruction. The theoretical man has the false belief that being can be known and corrected, and the effectiveness of Socratic optimism in generating affirmation depends upon such false belief. This Socratic optimism is, however, doomed. Reginster suggests that for Nietzsche, the ‘will to truth’ of the scientific spirit leads ‘to the discovery, especially in the philosophies of Kant and Schopenhauer, that science gives us knowledge only of “phenomena”, and not of things as they are in themselves.’ (Reginster 2014: 16) Ultimately, Schopenhauer through his metaphysics establishes that suffering is a necessary and incorrigible part of our lives.

2) *Pure Apollonian Art*

Reginster moves on to another of the types of illusion: pure Apollonian art. In pure Apollonian art,¹² a ‘veil of beautiful appearances’ is draped over the true character of existence. (Reginster 2014: 17) The veil conceals the true character of existence, and concealment is a form of falsification according to Reginster. The ‘mirroring of beauty’, specifically the beauty of aesthetic form, belonging to pure Apollonian art generates life-affirmation. (*BT*, 17) Whereas the cheerful and optimistic theoretical man has the false belief that being can be known and corrected, the person engaging with Apollonian art has a different psychological state. The latter ‘knows that the true character of existence may well differ from the beautiful appearance...[but]...he does not know whether, or how, it so differs.’ (Reginster 2014: 17) Reginster understands Nietzsche’s characterization of such cultures as ‘naïve’ in such a way that they do not know the true character of existence – they do not know whether, or how, existence differs from the beautiful appearance of art. (*Ibid.*) As I will later argue in chapter 1, I think Nietzsche is instead drawing on Schiller’s distinction between naïve – ancient and spontaneous – and sentimental – modern and self-conscious – cultures.

¹² I.e., art which does not combine the Apollonian with the Dionysian.

3) *Tragedy*

Whereas pure Apollonian art casts a veil over the terrible character of existence, tragedy keeps it in full view. In tragedy, Reginster tells us, the Apollonian articulates terrible insight in symbols and images, and yet nonetheless tragedy produces life-affirmation. This life-affirmation is achieved by placing the individual in illusory relation to a metaphysical entity of some kind, ‘a “god”, if you like,’ as Nietzsche later wrote, ‘but certainly only a completely thoughtless and amoral artist-god.’ (*BT*, ‘Attempt’, 5) The suffering of the symbolic individual is represented in tragedy as a game that this metaphysical entity in its pleasure plays with itself. The death of the symbolic individual is represented as part of the metaphysical entity’s ‘playful construction and destruction of the individual world,’ which itself is an overflowing of joy on the part of the metaphysical entity. (*BT*, 24) Through identification with the metaphysical entity, a person can affirm his suffering and demise. Reginster claims that for Nietzsche, these relations of an individual to a metaphysical entity were falsifications, there was no such metaphysical entity. As we shall see, Reginster goes on to look at Nietzsche’s later revisiting of tragedy, in which there is no such identification or falsification.

iv) *The intervening years: between **The Birth of Tragedy** and Nietzsche’s late writing*

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, according to Reginster, we find instances of life-affirmation predicated on falsification. Reginster claims that from *The Gay Science* (1882), however, Nietzsche has misgivings about the legitimacy of life-affirmation that does not affirm life but rather some falsified version of it. In *The Gay Science*, Reginster writes, falsification ‘only allows us to cope or to endure,’ rather than enabling us to affirm life. (Reginster 2014: 23) He cites section 107, in which Nietzsche writes that we can employ art – the approved ‘untrue’ – as a counterforce to our honesty. In employing art and the untrue – which in the context of life is to falsify, ‘existence is still *bearable* to us.’ (*GS*, 107)

Reginster argues that from the first edition of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche’s doubts about the legitimacy of affirming some falsified version of life grow and grow. In the end, Reginster claims, Nietzsche makes clear that a person must affirm life *as it is*. The next section of this summary will look at how Reginster expands this interpretation.

v) *Nietzsche's late position: tragedy revisited*

Reginster argues, as I have stated earlier, that Nietzsche comes to clearly articulate that a person must affirm life as it is, rather than making use of any form of falsification. In Nietzsche's late writing he revisits tragedy. His late interpretation of tragedy, Reginster suggests, belongs to his late position that we must affirm life as it is, rather than some falsified version of it. Reginster claims that latterly for Nietzsche, tragedy presents and represents the terrible and questionable aspects of existence as challenges, calls to adventure and opportunities for overcoming. Through representing those aspects of existence in such a way, Reginster continues, tragedy incites the tragic spectator to pursue and deepen his engagement with them. According to Reginster's interpretation, Nietzsche thinks it is a certain type of individual who recognizes and appreciates the beauty of such challenges – namely, those who are strong, whose will to power has not been suppressed. (See Reginster 2014: 34)

Reginster holds that Nietzsche latterly 'considers the tragic effect no longer from the perspective of the "spectator" but from that of the "artist"'; Nietzsche understands the tragic artist as responding to the terrifying and questionable aspects of existence as calls to adventure, challenges and opportunities for overcoming, and inviting his audience to respond in the same way. (Reginster 2014: 34) Nietzsche understands the tragic artist as awakening the audiences' spirit of adventure and will to power. (*Ibid.*) Reginster defines the will to power in Nietzsche's work as 'the desire for the confrontation and overcoming of resistance in the pursuit of some determinate project – in other words, it is a desire for *challenges*.' (Reginster 2014: 36) Challenges, calls to adventure and opportunities for overcoming speak to our desire for the confrontation and overcoming of resistance. This reinterpretation of tragedy that Reginster attributes to Nietzsche is devoid of any form of falsification. Tragedy presents the terrible and questionable aspects of existence with no falsifying metaphysical framework.

The relationship between life-affirmation and art is an important theme in Nietzsche's writing, so it is important to understand it correctly. This thesis will, I hope, aid such an understanding. I will now set out the structure of the main body of the thesis.

Part I: *The Birth of Tragedy* (1882)

In Nietzsche's first book, *The Birth of Tragedy*, art counters the terrible truths of individual human existence in various ways – indeed, in some cases, were it not for art one would not be able to live, in some sense. Some of the ways that art counters terrible truth, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, yield affirmation of life, and such life-affirmation is often based on falsification. The first chapter of this thesis will focus primarily on life-affirmation based on epic poetry and sculpture, art forms Nietzsche labels 'Apollonian' in *The Birth of Tragedy*. The second chapter will explore life-affirmation based on tragedy, an art form Nietzsche understood as an integration of 'Apollonian' and 'Dionysian' aesthetic principles. In the first part of my thesis I am broadly in agreement with the first part of Reginster's narrative, on *The Birth of Tragedy*.

Chapter 1: *Apollonian Art & Life-Affirmation*

Apollonian Art: origins, forms and characteristics.

In this section, I will make preliminary remarks on Apollonian art in *The Birth of Tragedy*, which bear on what will be discussed. These will include what art forms fall under the aesthetic category of Apollonian art, the hallmarks of such art, and the place of a natural Apollonian drive in producing Apollonian art.

The Apollonian Art of the Sculptor

This section will consider one of the ways in which Apollonian art, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, counters the terrible truth of individual human existence and generates life-affirmation. An Apollonian sculpture counters human suffering through providing a beautiful representation of it. The individual in the sculpture, outside of a particular time and place, can broadly represent a type of phenomena, namely humankind. There is, I will claim in this section, life-affirmation based on such Apollonian sculpture. This beautiful representation of human suffering is a 'lie', and so the life-affirmation is predicated on falsification. (BT, 16)

The Deity Dozen: the Olympian Gods

This section will look at how the Olympian gods, considered Apollonian art by Nietzsche, cast a veil over the Ancient Greeks' insight into the truth of individual existence. The Olympian gods not only counter such terrible insight, but also provide a reference by which

the Ancient Greeks affirm their lives. The Hellenes affirm their lives on the false basis that they are like those of the gods, a false basis that pertains to art.

Chapter 2: *Tragic Art & Life-Affirmation*

The nature of tragedy

This section looks at what, for Nietzsche, is the nature of the tragedies of Sophocles, Aeschylus and Wagner (the works of Wagner are more typically referred to as music dramas). The section sets out the aesthetic principles that for Nietzsche these tragedies consist of, namely the ‘Apollonian’ and the ‘Dionysian’, as well as how these principles integrate with one another in tragedy.

Life-affirmation through tragedy

Whereas Apollonian art might tackle the terrible truth of individual human existence by placing some sort of screen before it, tragedy incorporates this terrible truth in such a way that one can affirm it. In this section I will explore how, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, the audience of tragedy affirm life through it. In the experience of tragedy, the audience member occupies the perspective of a metaphysical entity – the original Unity – which takes joy in the destruction of the individual and which requires the destruction of the individual for the creation of new individual forms. Through occupying the perspective of this metaphysical entity, the audience member can affirm the terrible truths of individual existence.

Nietzsche on the truth-status of the original Unity

In ‘Art and Affirmation’, Reginster claims that Nietzsche understood the original Unity and the audience member’s relationship to it as illusory. There are others who share his view, including Gemes and Sykes in their essay, ‘Nietzsche’s Illusion.’¹³ While Reginster and others claim that Nietzsche consistently understood the basis of life-affirmation, in tragedy, to be illusory and a falsification, I conversely argue in this section that Nietzsche did not take it to be so.

Part II: *The Gay Science* (1882)

In *The Gay Science*, first published a decade after *The Birth of Tragedy*, art still counters terrible truth. In addition, art counters dissatisfaction with oneself, and the ugly happenings

¹³ Gemes and Sykes (2014: 80-105).

of life. This chapter of the thesis will, in part, focus on the sections of *The Gay Science* in which art counters self-dissatisfaction and the ugly things of life. As a counterforce to such issues art yields, I will claim, life-affirmation. The chapter will also focus on Nietzsche's presentation of the idea of eternal recurrence, a test of one's ability to affirm one's life.

The first chapter of part II will look at the section (of *The Gay Science*) on 'giving style' to one's character, in order to attain satisfaction with oneself. The second chapter will concentrate on the section on how one should learn from artists how to make the ugly things of life instead beautiful. The third and final chapter will focus on the section in which Nietzsche presents his reader with the test of eternal recurrence.

Reginster's view is that in Nietzsche's writing from *The Gay Science* onwards, there is no falsification in the relationship between life-affirmation and art. Part II of this thesis will first offer a reading of the section on 'giving style' to one's character (in *The Gay Science*) consistent with Reginster's view. It will then seek to show that in the section on learning from artists how to make things beautiful (in *The Gay Science*), there is falsification in the relationship between life-affirmation and art. This is, of course, in conflict with Reginster's view. Lastly, this part of the thesis will explore whether Nietzsche's idea of willing and affirming the eternal recurrence of one's life involves falsification; this is in light of Reginster's view that by the time of *The Gay Science*, falsification allows us only to cope with or endure life, rather than affirm it.

Chapter 3: 'Giving style' to one's character

Self-creation

This section provides background by looking at the theme of self-creation in Nietzsche's earlier works, along with how some of Nietzsche's earlier ideas on self-creation carry into the passage on 'giving style' to one's character in *The Gay Science*. The section also offers an opening interpretation of the passage in *The Gay Science*, which renders 'giving style' to one's character a matter of agency.

The self as composed of drives

In this section there is a survey of passages in *The Gay Science* which suggest that, in writing the book, Nietzsche took the self to be composed of drives. The section then attempts to illuminate what Nietzsche means by drives. These activities are carried out ahead of offering

an interpretation of ‘giving style’ to one’s character, in *The Gay Science*, as the activity of one drive with respect to other drives.

Section 290 of The Gay Science: a naturalist reading

This section discusses the issue of *what* ‘gives style’ to one’s character in the passage of *The Gay Science*. It includes the position of Sebastian Gardner, which is that Nietzsche commits himself to the idea of a conscious self capable of standing back from and going to work on the drives, and thus capable of ‘giving style’ to one’s character. This section offers a naturalist reading of the ‘giving style’ to one’s character passage: what one experiences as ‘giving style’ to one’s character is in fact the activity of one drive with respect to others. This reading suggests that Nietzsche conceives of two levels: the level of the person and the level of the drives. At the level of the person, after ‘giving style’ a person finds himself beautiful, and for Nietzsche, the judgement of something as beautiful is an affirmation of it. (See *WP*, 852) This self-affirmation leads to affirmation of life.

Under this naturalist reading there is a relationship between aesthetic judgement and life-affirmation which is devoid of falsification. This reading is, therefore, consistent with Reginster’s claim that in *The Gay Science* there is no falsification in the relationship between art and life-affirmation.

Chapter 4: Making the things of life beautiful

The anti-realist reading: a response

Nietzsche opens section 299 of *The Gay Science* with the following: ‘What means do we have for making things beautiful, attractive, and desirable when they are not? And in themselves I think they never are!’ (*GS*, 299) Nadeem J.Z. Hussain has interpreted this along anti-realist lines: Nietzsche is saying, on Hussain’s interpretation, that things do not have value in themselves. Art can provide means and techniques, Hussain continues, to enable us to have evaluative illusions in our life, such as that a particular thing is beautiful.

Before working through the means and techniques that Nietzsche thinks art can provide, in this section I disagree with Hussain’s anti-realist reading. I suggest that although Nietzsche is an anti-realist in writing *The Gay Science*, section 299 of the work has a different focus. Nietzsche’s concern in section 299, I claim, is that we move from finding the things of life ugly, which is a rejection of them, to finding the things of life beautiful, which is an affirmation of them.

The artistic means and their nature

In applying each of the artistic techniques Nietzsche suggests one borrows, there is a relationship between art and life-affirmation. Life-affirmation comes as a result of applying an *artistic* technique, and it is the aesthetic judgement ‘That is *beautiful*’ which is an affirmation of life. In this section, I systematically move through the artistic techniques Nietzsche sets down to see whether their application to life would falsify reality, and whether there would be life-affirmation as a result of artistic falsification. I suggest that although some cases are consistent with Reginster’s claim – namely that in *The Gay Science* there is no falsification in the relationship between art and life-affirmation – others are not.

Chapter 5: *Eternal Recurrence*

Origins

This section briefly explains that as sincere as Nietzsche might have been in suggesting that eternal recurrence was a new idea that came to him beside a mighty pyramidal block of stone, it seems he had been influenced by Johannes Gustav Vogt and Arthur Schopenhauer. (*EH*, IX, 1)

Eternal return – how reality is or a thought experiment?

In this section, I enter the debate on whether eternal return was a cosmological theory or a thought experiment for Nietzsche. The section sketches the positions of people on both sides of the debate, Danto a proponent of the former view, Ridley and Williams as proponents of the latter. My own position is that Nietzsche thought of eternal recurrence as something more than a mere thought-experiment but was not entirely comfortable with publishing it as such, and that in section 341 of *The Gay Science* he presents eternal return as a thought experiment.

Questions of scope

This section addresses two questions of scope. The first is whether Nietzsche is writing about affirmation of one’s life *and* the world. While Williams and Huddleston take Nietzsche to be writing about both, I contend that in section 341 of *The Gay Science* Nietzsche is writing only about affirmation of one’s life. The second question of scope is whether Nietzsche is writing about the eternal recurrence of one’s future, in addition to one’s present and past. Ivan Soll saw eternal recurrence as a decision criterion: perform only those actions you would will to

recur eternally. (See Soll 1973: 322-42) I argue that eternal recurrence is limited to one's past and present.

The nature of affirmation

This section looks at the tremendous and monstrous nature of affirming and willing the eternal return of one's past. The section also explores what connection between the past and present Nietzsche might have in mind, and whether one has to will the eternal recurrence of *everything* in one's past. I offer the interpretation that one affirms the eternal return of the whole of one's past because it forms a causal chain to a state of self and life to which one is so well disposed. This need not involve having in mind and affirming the eternal return of each and every event in one's past. The section then looks at the relation of this interpretation to *amor fati*, as well as whether it suggests falsification on the part of either the setter or participant in the thought experiment. I conclude negatively on the latter, and so conclude that the section is not inconsistent with Reginster's claim that by the time of *The Gay Science*, falsification only enables one to tolerate or endure life, not to affirm it.

Part III: Later Writings (1883-1888)

The third part of the thesis will look at the relationship between art and life-affirmation in Nietzsche's writing, both published and unpublished, after *The Gay Science* of 1882. It will explore whether there is falsification in the relationship in Nietzsche's writing of this period, in light of Reginster's claim.

Chapter 6: Case studies from the unpublished notes

A couple of claims of continuity

In this section I will lay out two continuities, uncontroversial ones I think, between Nietzsche's thought in *The Birth of Tragedy* and his later writing. The first continuity consists in Nietzsche's idea that there are dimensions of existence which are negative for a subject. The second continuity is in Nietzsche's characterization of art – as 'beautiful' and 'falsity' – and the important function he assigns to it for life.

A chain reaction of affirmation

This section looks at an unpublished note of 1887 (*WP*, 804; *Spring - Fall 1887*). In the note, Nietzsche suggests that a judgement of beauty – which for Nietzsche is an affirmation – in life can set off a chain reaction of affirmation. Nietzsche's explanation of a person finding a

red rose beautiful, which for Nietzsche is an affirmation, is that the rose stimulates the aesthetic drive in the person. The aesthetic drive now active, the person finds other things in life beautiful, which for Nietzsche is an affirmation. Although the unpublished note seems to refer to beauty-judgements and affirmation in life, I claim there is no reason in principle that for Nietzsche, a series of beauty-judgements and affirmation of life couldn't be originated by a work of art.

In a chain reaction of life-affirmation set off by beautiful art, life-affirmation does not necessarily have built into it any falsification. Thus, the case is not necessarily inconsistent with Reginster's claim that there is no falsification in the relationship between life-affirmation and art in Nietzsche's writing from 1882 onwards.

Art, strength and affirmation of life

According to Nietzsche, the scope of affirmation is broader for those with strength than for those without it. Those who have strength find 'beautiful' and affirm things and conditions which those who lack strength would find 'ugly' and repudiate. In this section I suggest that for Nietzsche, exposure to art can bring strength and therefore, it seems, increase the scope of life-affirmation.

Life-affirmation based on the feeling of strength granted by art does not necessarily have an falsification built into it, thus the case again is not necessarily inconsistent with Reginster's claim.

Art and reform

In a note of 1888 (WP, 795; *March - June 1888*), Nietzsche sets out the idea of 'the artist-philosopher.' Those who have given form to themselves and artists who have given form to material are, according to Nietzsche, preliminary exercises for 'the artist-philosopher', who gives form to society. In this section I explore Nietzsche's idea that 'the artist-philosopher' can affirm society through artistic technique, form-giving and falsification. The note of Nietzsche's is, I suggest, inconsistent with Reginster's claim.

Chapter 7: *Published works*

A harmonious relationship between life-affirmation, art and truth: a clear case

This section looks at a passage of *Twilight of the Idols* (TI, X, 5) that is clearly consistent with Reginster's claim. In the passage, Nietzsche returns to Hellenic tragedy in such a way that exhibits a harmonious relationship between life-affirmation, art and truth.

The art of tragedy, Nietzsche suggests, produces in the audience an affirmation of the constant changing of reality which includes death. The life-affirmation is based not on falsity but on truth. I also suggest that Reginster's interpretation might illuminate this particular passage of *Twilight of the Idols*.

A harmonious relationship between life-affirmation, art and truth: more subtle cases

This section looks at two more subtle cases, in Nietzsche's later published works, of a harmonious relationship between life-affirmation, art and truth. In the first case, again in *Twilight of the Idols*, the art of 'the born painter' communicates a universality, a truth. There is life-affirmation based on such art. The second more subtle case, which refers to *Ecce Homo*, interprets Nietzsche as considering the affirmation of fate the highest philosophical state. This affirmation – besides referring to what is true – is artistic: it employs aesthetic valuation and is the result of making things beautiful, which is what the artist does. Both of these more subtle cases are consistent with Reginster's claim that there is no falsification in the relationship between life-affirmation and art in Nietzsche's later published works.

A harmonious relationship between life-affirmation, art and falsification

This section looks at a couple of passages in Nietzsche's later published works that conflict with Reginster's claim. In *Twilight of the Idols* (TI, IX, 24 to be precise) we find, arguably, the life-affirmation of an art-observer based on falsification – that life is only positive and pleasurable – and this falsification connected to art works. Thus, there is a harmonious relationship between life-affirmation, art and falsification. The section looks at a passage of *On the Genealogy of Morality*, in which Nietzsche thinks that art can be a fundamental opponent of the ascetic ideal. The ascetic ideal, Nietzsche writes, positions truth as the highest value and is life and world-denying. Art conversely, he thinks, values and employs the untrue – including falsification – and is life and world-affirming. These passages conflict with Reginster's claim that there is no falsification in the relationship between life-affirmation and art in Nietzsche's later published works.

Part IV: Nietzsche on the value of truth

This part of the thesis shall explore the various statuses of the value of truth in Nietzsche's writing, (I shall elaborate on what the various statuses are shortly). The primary intention is to cast doubt on how, in Reginster's account, truth has a *singularly* untroubled place in Nietzsche's work in the end. This part of the thesis refers to writing by Nietzsche which ranges from 1882 and 1888.

Chapter 8: The various statuses of truth in Nietzsche's writing

Nietzsche on truth in his works and what it is to be a philosopher

This section looks first at the fact that Nietzsche considers his works to contain truths, focussing on Nietzsche's comments on *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and *Twilight of the Idols*. Next, the section looks at how Nietzsche thinks that to have profound insight into the truth is to be a philosopher, in some sense.

Truth as the highest value

In this section, attention is directed to parts of *The Anti-Christ* in which Nietzsche positions truth as the highest value. In the foreword to *The Anti-Christ*, Nietzsche effectively describes his approach – as well as one of the conditions by which he is understood by his people – as an indifference over whether a truth is useful or fatal. This is, I suggest, a somewhat different picture from that which Aaron Ridley suggests, namely that for Nietzsche 'the value of life trumps the value of truth.' (Ridley 2010: 436)

Truth as of secondary value, and truth as of instrumental value

In Nietzsche's writing, I suggest in this section, there are passages in which truth possess secondary value and life-preservation, in some sense, boasts primary value. There is, relatedly, discussion of section 107 of *The Gay Science*.

This section of my thesis also looks at passages in Nietzsche's writing in which truth is of instrumental value. There is, for example, exploration of Nietzsche's thought that truth is of instrumental value to 'becoming who we are.'

The will-to-truth as a problem

This section discusses Nietzsche's thought that the value of the will-to-truth and the value of the possession of truth need to be established through experimentation. Nietzsche does not apprise the reader of the criterion by which he thinks the value of possessing a truth should be

assessed; this section suggests whether possessing a truth enhances life as a plausible candidate. The section looks to Hussain's essay, 'The role of life in the *Genealogy*,'¹⁴ for an idea of what the enhancement of life might look like for Nietzsche.

¹⁴ Hussain (2013, 142-69).

Part I: *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872)

Chapter 1: *Apollonian Art & Life-Affirmation*

(i) *Introduction*

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, there is a picture of individual existence informed by the philosophy of Schopenhauer. The folk wisdom of the Ancient Greeks that it would have been better not to have been born, for example, is influenced by Schopenhauer's anti-natalism.

Schopenhauer's idea that suffering is an essential feature of individual life exercises an influence in Nietzsche's description of 'the suffering of the individual...the suffering which is inherent to life.' (*BT*, 16)

Bernard Reginster, in his essay 'Art and Affirmation', holds that an insight into individual existence in *The Birth of Tragedy* is substantially based on Schopenhauer's 'pessimism.' (Reginster 2014: 15) The view of Schopenhauer which Nietzsche essentially appropriates, according to Reginster, pertains to the necessity of suffering and impossibility of fulfillment.¹⁵ Schopenhauer conceives of suffering, Reginster explains, as 'the experience of resistance to the satisfaction of our desires.' (*Ibid.*) Such suffering is, Reginster tells his reader, an essential and inevitable part of life according to Schopenhauer. And Schopenhauer's 'demonstration of its [suffering's] inevitability implies the impossibility of *fulfillment*, a condition in which nothing is left to be desired.' (Reginster 2014: 15) Implicit in the idea that suffering – characterised by Schopenhauer as 'the experience of resistance to the satisfaction of our desires' – is inevitable, and will occur indefinitely, is the idea that desiring will occur indefinitely. There will, then, be no fulfillment.

It is these facts about the necessity of suffering and impossibility of fulfillment that, on Reginster's view, inform the insight found in section 7 of *The Birth of Tragedy*:

In this sense the Dionysian man is similar to Hamlet: both have at one time cast a true glance into the essence of things, they have acquired *knowledge*, and action is repugnant to them; for their action can change nothing in the eternal essence of things...knowledge kills action, to action belongs the veil of illusion...Conscious of the truth once glimpsed, man now sees all around him only the horrific or the absurd aspects of existence. (*BT*, 7)

¹⁵ Reginster 2014: 15.

Reginster interprets the above passage along Schopenhauerian lines. This is quite understandable given that Schopenhauer's influence is apparent elsewhere in *The Birth of Tragedy*, that Nietzsche uses the word 'will' elsewhere in the book, and that Nietzsche cites Schopenhauer's work. It is not clear, however, what the essence of things is in this passage. It is only clear that it is something negative: 'true knowledge, insight into the horrific truth, outweighs any motive leading to action.' (*BT*, 7)

As it will have started to emerge, in *The Birth of Tragedy* there is, overall, a negative picture of individual existence. It is art, in the book, that often provides an antidote or preventative. And the art sometimes generates life-affirmation. In this first chapter of the thesis, I will look at the various ways in which Apollonian art provides an antidote or preventative, and can yield affirmation of life. To begin with, I will make some preliminary remarks on Apollonian art which bear on what will be discussed.

(ii) *Apollonian Art: origins, forms and characteristics*

Before looking at instances of Apollonian art and life-affirmation in *The Birth of Tragedy*, I would like to make a few remarks on the origins, forms and characteristics of Apollonian art (in *The Birth of Tragedy*) which will be relevant to those instances. To briefly set the scene, in *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche employs two aesthetic categories that he associates with the gods Apollo and Dionysus. These Apollonian and Dionysian aesthetic categories possess different origins, characteristics and, more or less, encompass different artistic forms.

To start with, let's look at what the characteristics of Apollonian art are, and what art forms constitute Apollonian art. One of the characteristics of Apollonian art is order. Accordingly, the arts of sculpture and architecture, which exhibit order, are Apollonian art forms.¹⁶ Doric architecture, for example, is considered by Nietzsche to be Apollonian art. The Ancient Greeks, Nietzsche writes, learnt of Dionysian festivities taking place. These festivities included both a transgression of the sexual order belonging to 'family life,' – 'family life and its venerable principles' were 'swept away' – and 'an abominable mixture of sensuality and cruelty.' (*BT*, 2) Apollonian culture, which was characterized by order, for a time entirely protected the Ancient Greek from the influence of these festivities, according to Nietzsche.

¹⁶ In the later *Twilight of the Idols* (1889), architecture is no longer under the Apollonian aesthetic category: this is because the Apollonian condition of personal will-lessness – more on this shortly – is not associated with the architect. Nietzsche writes: 'The *architect* represents neither a Dionysian nor an Apollonian condition: here it is the mighty act of will, the will which moves mountains, the intoxication of the strong will, which demands artistic expression...the architect has always been influenced by power. Pride, victory over weight and gravity...' (*TI*, IX, 11)

And this ‘repudiation’ of the Dionysian festivities by Apollonian culture ‘immortalized itself’ in Apollonian art – in ‘Doric art.’ (*BT*, 2)¹⁷

Another characteristic of Doric architecture and Apollonian art more broadly is clarity. We find such clarity not only in architecture and sculpture but also in another Apollonian art form – epic poetry. There is a clarity in the imaginings of either the epic poet or the one reading epic poetry. The Apollonian art forms including epic poetry, then, are in some sense visual, or at least relate to image.

The Apollonian arts of sculpture and epic poetry, with respect to the images associated with it, are characterized as beautiful. Nietzsche writes of the art of the sculptor: ‘here beauty triumphs over the suffering which is inherent to life.’ (*BT*, 16) In relation to Homeric epic poetry, he writes of ‘the influence of the Apollonian drive to beauty.’ (*BT*, 4) Though Nietzsche does not explicitly refer to architecture as beautiful there is no reason, in principle, that Nietzsche wouldn’t characterize it as such.

Both the Apollonian sculptor and epic poet, in the creative process, contemplate images. In the case of the epic poet, it is images in their head, and: ‘the epic poet lives in these images a life of comfort and joy otherwise impossible and never tires of contemplating them lovingly in their minutest details.’ (*BT*, 5) Nietzsche writes that ‘[t]he sculptor, and also the related figure of the epic poet, is absorbed in the pure contemplation of images.’ (*Ibid.*) This recalls Schopenhauer’s writing on the artistic genius, whose ‘pure contemplation...becomes absorbed entirely in the object.’ (*WWR*, I, §36) Schopenhauer suggests that the artist is in a state of disinterested contemplation, necessary to apprehend the eternal Idea, and sustained ‘to enable...[the artist]...to repeat by deliberate art what has been apprehended.’ (*Ibid.*) We find the influence of Schopenhauer’s idea of disinterested contemplation in the artist in *The Birth of Tragedy*: ‘we cannot conceive of the slightest possibility of truly artistic creativity without objectivity, without pure disinterested contemplation.’ (*BT*, 5) In Schopenhauer’s writing, the disinterested contemplation of the artistic genius is mirrored in the art-observer. (See, e.g. *WWR*, I, §44) We also find in *The Birth of Tragedy* that the state of disinterested contemplation of the Apollonian sculptor and epic poet is mirrored in the viewer and reader of their art. Nietzsche writes of ‘the will-less contemplation produced...by the works of art of the sculptor and the epic poet, those truly Apollonian artists.’ (*BT*, 22)

¹⁷ Doric art includes architecture, Nietzsche remarking later in the section that ‘The music of Apollo was Doric architecture rendered in sound.’ (*BT*, 2) This sentence alludes to Goethe’s reported comment: “‘I have found, among my papers,’ said Goethe, “a leaf, in which I call architecture frozen music.”” (Eckermann 1839: 282)

Apollonian art is produced, at least in part, by a corresponding Apollonian drive – which is an artistic drive of nature. This artistic drive of nature, Nietzsche tells us, satisfies itself directly in dreams, ‘*without the mediation of the human artist*’. (BT, 2) These dreams have a clarity, a perfection ‘in contrast to the only partial comprehensibility of everyday reality.’ (*Ibid.*) Dreams have a radiance and beauty of appearance such that even if a dream presents something negative, ‘it remains consecrated by the beauty of appearance.’ (BT, 2) According to Nietzsche dreams are in fact integral to Apollonian art. They are the precondition of sculpture and epic poetry: ‘The beautiful appearance of the world of dream... is the precondition of all plastic art, even... of an important half of poetry’ (BT, 1) Indeed, the Olympian Gods that begin with Homer were born of dream, as we shall see a little later on. (BT, 3) And those qualities of dreams set out above – clarity, radiance and beauty, such that even the negative ‘remains consecrated by the beauty of appearance,’ – are, not coincidentally, present in the Apollonian art forms of sculpture and epic poetry. (BT, 2) Having made these remarks on Apollonian art, I will now begin to look at instances of Apollonian art and life-affirmation in *The Birth of Tragedy*.

(iii) *The Apollonian Art of the Sculptor*

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Apollonian art counters negative individual existence – individual existence even becomes affirmed by way of Apollonian art. This section will explore an example of this, namely the Apollonian art of the sculptor discussed in section 16 of *The Birth of Tragedy*.

Nietzsche draws a distinction between tragedy and sculpture. Tragedy’s goal is the expression of the eternity of the ‘will’, made clear to the tragic spectator only through the annihilation of the individual, in which the individual suffers. ‘The art of the sculptor,’¹⁸ Nietzsche tells us, ‘has a completely different goal.’ (BT, 16) Sculpture in a sense counters ‘the suffering of the individual... the suffering which is inherent to life,’ and there is instead a ‘glorification of the *eternity of the phenomenon*.’ (*Ibid.*) Given the goal of the sculptor’s art is to glorify the *eternity* of the phenomenon, the goal does not refer to one particular phenomenon, as all phenomena are finite. What, then, does it refer to? Whereas the goal of tragedy pertains to the eternity of the ‘will’, that of the art of the sculptor might pertain to the eternity of the broad type ‘phenomenon’, which persists through the change in particular

¹⁸ Shaun Whiteside’s translation of *The Birth of Tragedy* (see my Bibliography for book details) renders the passage in section 16 to be about ‘the plastic arts’ rather than ‘the art of the sculptor.’ ‘The plastic arts’ might include – as they did for Wagner in *The Art-Work of the Future* – painting as well. (See Wagner 1895: 78)

types of phenomena, or to the eternity of all existing types of phenomena. Either would, however, be an ambitious goal for a sculpture: the former would require the communication of something that goes beyond the particular type of phenomenon in the work, and the latter the representation of all existing types of phenomena in a work. I don't think either is a position that we could feasibly attribute to Nietzsche. A more feasible position to attribute to Nietzsche is that the art of the sculptor glorifies the eternity, or longevity, of a particular type of phenomenon.

How does a sculpture refer to the *eternity* of a type of phenomena? Nietzsche does not explain how, but he might understand the subject in a sculpture as outside of a particular place and time and therefore able to broadly represent a type of phenomena. Nietzsche gives a couple of indications of how *glorification* of the eternity of the phenomenon is achieved. (*BT*, 16) He refers to 'radiant glorification', but what does he mean by 'radiant'? (*Ibid.*) This is a quality associated with the *Apollonian* art of sculpture. Nietzsche refers to Apollo as 'He, who according to the etymological root of his name is the "one who appears shining", the deity of light.' (*BT*, 1) Nietzsche, in section 16 of *The Birth of Tragedy*, uses the word '*leuchtende*,' which can be translated as 'radiant', 'bright', 'luminous', 'shining'.

All of these words can be connected with light; it seems unlikely, however, that Nietzsche is talking about a literal relationship of sculpture to light. Ancient Greek art is in Nietzsche's field of vision, as it were, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, and Ancient Greek sculpture had bright colours (contrary to what the Ancient Romans thought). The word 'bright' is perhaps the most sensible translation of '*leuchtende*', referring to the bright colours of Ancient Greek sculpture. In this context, the word 'bright' is perhaps the best translation of '*leuchtende*'. Having studied and taught on Ancient Greek culture, Nietzsche may have been aware of the evidence that Ancient Greek sculptors engaged in polychromy and used bright colours. The glorification in sculpture might have partly consisted in the bright colours, the blues, reds, of the representation.

Nietzsche also writes that in sculpture, 'beauty triumphs over the suffering which is inherent to life, pain is in a certain sense effaced from the features of nature by a lie.' (*BT*, 16) The other part of glorification consists in the beauty of form. Suffering is not omitted in Ancient Greek sculpture: Nietzsche writes that it is '*in a certain sense* effaced from the features of

nature.’ (*Ibid.*)¹⁹ Rather, the beautiful form of the sculpture detracts the viewer from its suffering.

The viewer of such a sculpture, possessing bright colours and beautiful form, takes it to represent how a type of phenomena is; he affirms the type of phenomena, and this is an affective affirmation. This affirmation is, however, based on a falsification. Nietzsche refers to the beautiful form of such sculpture as ‘a lie’. These sculptures falsify form, i.e. the form of sculpture does not correspond to reality, and so affirmation based on such sculpture is predicated on falsification.

In his essay ‘Art and Affirmation’, Reginster understands there to be, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, life-affirmation based on Apollonian art. He writes that ‘the affirmation of existence is made possible by draping a “veil of beautiful appearances” over its true character.’ (Reginster 2014: 17) The relationship of Apollonian art to life, according to Reginster, is a ‘mirroring of beauty.’ (*BT*, 17) Apollonian art is appearance as distinct from reality, and it provides a veil over reality, which is intolerable. Attentive to Nietzsche’s reference to the ‘magnificent “naïveté” of the earlier Greeks,’²⁰ Reginster attributes to the ‘Apollonian subject’ a lack of knowledge of the true character of existence. (Reginster 2014: 17) Nietzsche is not, however, using ‘naïveté’ in the sense of a lack of knowledge, as Reginster thinks. Rather, Nietzsche is drawing from Schiller’s distinction, in his essay ‘On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry’, between ‘naïve’ and ‘sentimental’ cultures. According to Schiller, ‘naïve’ cultures are ancient and spontaneous, whereas ‘sentimental’ cultures are modern and self-conscious.²¹ Nietzsche refers explicitly to Schiller and the ‘naïve’ in *The Birth of Tragedy*. (See *BT*, 3)

(iv) *The Deity Dozen: the Olympian Gods*

Another instance of Apollonian art and life-affirmation in *The Birth of Tragedy* stands in relation to Homer’s Olympian Gods. In section 3 of *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche gives an account of how, in ancient Greece, an Apollonian culture arose²² – the culture of the Olympian Gods. This duodecad of deities had their seat on Mount Olympus, according to Greek mythology, and were the third generation of gods to have emerged from the original

¹⁹ Emphasis mine.

²⁰ *BT*, 17. My emphasis.

²¹ (Nietzsche 2000: 139-40).

²² Doric culture is, for Nietzsche, also an Apollonian culture in Ancient Greece.

chaos. Amongst their ranks was Zeus – who presided on the grounds that he led the overthrowing of the second generation of gods, the Titans – and, beneath him, Demeter, Apollo, Artemis and others.

Nietzsche thinks that in the world of the Olympian Gods, the full spectrum of human life is reflected and literally rendered godly. Even those aspects of human life less worthy of pride, according to Nietzsche, find exuberant, joyful, beautiful and ideal expression in the life of the Olympian Gods. This might suggest to us, Nietzsche writes, an arrogance on the part of the Ancient Greeks. Such a thought would, however, be mistaken, Nietzsche tells us. He invites his reader to consider the folk wisdom enveloped in another Ancient Greek myth – a wisdom that does not indicate, on the part of the Ancient Greeks, the arrogance that the myth of the Olympian Gods might. This is the myth in which King Midas finally catches the wise Silenus, companion of Dionysus, and insistently asks him ‘what is the very best and most preferable of all things for man.’ (*BT*, 3) The daemon Silenus finally bursts into shrill laughter and answers with the tragedy of birth: ‘Miserable ephemeral race, children of chance and toil, why do you force me to tell you what it is best for you not to hear? The very best of all things is completely beyond your reach: not to have been born, not to *be*, to be *nothing*. But the second best thing for you is – to meet an early death.’ (*Ibid.*)

This wisdom that the human being is born of chance, that it would have been best if he had never been born should, Nietzsche thinks, disabuse us of the idea that the Ancient Greeks were arrogant. It is this wisdom, Nietzsche claims, along with the wisdom in myths such as the Moira, Oedipus, and Prometheus, that generated the Ancient Greeks’ need for the Olympian Gods. The myth of the Moira, to give an example of the wisdom in myths that Nietzsche is talking about, consists of three Fates: Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos. These three fates determine the length and happiness of human life: ‘Clotho spins the thread of life, Lachesis draws it off the spindle and Atropos cuts it.’ (Nietzsche 2000: 140)

All this wisdom – which henceforth I shall lump into the short phrase ‘Ancient Greek wisdom’ – generated the need for the Olympian Gods: ‘The Greek knew and felt the terrors and horrors of existence: in order to be able to live at all, he had to use the brilliant Olympians, born of dream, as a screen.’ (*BT*, 3) What does Nietzsche mean by ‘in order to be able to live at all’? This appears, *prima facie*, to mean to continue existing. It seems implausible, however, that Nietzsche means an entire people would have committed suicide had they continued to confront ‘the terrors and horrors of existence.’ (*BT*, 3) What might

Nietzsche have meant, then? In section 7 of *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche writes in a different context: 'Knowledge kills action, to action belongs the veil of illusion...true knowledge, insight into the horrific truth, outweighs any motive leading to action, in Hamlet as well as in the Dionysian man.' (*BT*, 7) Nietzsche may mean in section 3 that the 'wisdom of Silenus' would have, to some extent, immobilised the Ancient Greeks. The insight that it would have been better not to have been born, the subjection to fate and precariousness of their existence would have meant that the Ancient Greeks, to some extent, did not act.

The Olympian Gods provide a brilliant, beautiful and exuberant screen over the 'Ancient Greek wisdom', thus enabling the Greeks to live. Nietzsche considered these Olympian Gods to be Apollonian art. The Gods are, according to Nietzsche, the product of the Apollonian drive. He remarks that '[t]he same drive which took on concrete form in Apollo has given birth to the whole Olympian world,' and that 'through the Apollonian drive towards beauty, the Olympians' divine reign of joy developed.' (*Ibid.*) Nietzsche associates the Gods with the epic poet Homer; epic poetry is considered an Apollonian art by Nietzsche because it is connected to beautiful, brilliant images, in the mind's eye.

Once the Olympian Gods are in place in Ancient Greek culture, it is quite clear from their description as a 'screen' that the 'Ancient Greek wisdom' has not been changed or gone away, rather it has gone from view, so to speak. And the 'Ancient Greek wisdom' reappears, Nietzsche remarking that it was 'continually overcome anew, in any case veiled and removed from view by the Greeks through that artistic *middle world* of the Olympians.' (*BT*, 3) The Olympian Gods, it seems, occupy the consciousness of the Greeks and the 'Ancient Greek wisdom' is pushed down to the unconscious level. This wisdom, however, rises and reappears again and again, and the Greeks again and again push it away and down with the Olympian Gods. As Nietzsche suggests in my last quote, given the recurrence of the 'Ancient Greek wisdom' there might be doubts surrounding whether the Greeks *overcame* this wisdom. They did, however, remove it from consciousness.

The Olympian Gods functioned as a beautiful, aesthetic screen before the 'Ancient Greek wisdom'. But why couldn't something other than the Olympian Gods serve just as well? This is because the Olympian Gods serve other functions, to which we shall now turn. The Olympian Gods, according to Nietzsche, enact and deify the dimensions of life which are unpleasant and a source of suffering for the Ancient Greeks. The Hellenic people, according to Nietzsche, was 'so sensitive in its emotions, so impetuous in its desires,' and therefore 'so

uniquely equipped for *suffering*.' (BT, 3) This suffering existence would have been senseless and intolerable for the Greek people were it not for the Olympian Gods: these Gods exhibited the same emotional sensitivity and impetuosity as the Greek people. This means that the Greek, far from finding his life senseless and intolerable, affirmed it because it was like that of the Gods. Nietzsche writes: 'now it could be said...in a reversal of the wisdom of Silenus that "the very worst thing of all would be to meet an early death, the second worst to die at all."' (BT, 3) The Greeks affirmed their lives, Nietzsche holds, because of something untrue. There are no Olympian Gods in reality, and so the Greeks' lives are *not* like those of the Olympian Gods. The Greeks' affirmation of life is predicated on a falsification. Central to this falsification is art, given that for Nietzsche the Olympian Gods *are* Apollonian art.

It does not appear to be the case that Nietzsche took the Greeks to have a straightforward belief in the Olympian Gods; as we have seen, the 'Ancient Greek wisdom' in their subconscious repeatedly rises to displace the Olympian Gods, who accordingly need to be repeatedly reinstated. It seems that for the Olympian Gods to function effectively as a screen and as a basis of life-affirmation, there must be some degree of self-deception on the part of the Greeks.

The world of the Olympian Gods, who are in idealized human form, provides a beautiful mirroring of the Ancient Greeks and their deeds. The Greeks 'see themselves again in a higher sphere, without this perfect world of contemplation acting as an imperative or a reproach. This is the sphere of beauty, in which they saw their mirror-images, the Olympians.' (BT, 3) The similarity between the beautiful Olympian Gods committing deeds and the Greeks means that the Greeks 'feel themselves worthy of glorification.' (*Ibid.*) There is another level to this instance of Apollonian art that I have presented. For Nietzsche, the Olympian gods are Apollonian illusion, which is:

such an illusion as nature so often uses to realize her intentions. The true goal is concealed by a hallucinatory image: we stretch out our hands towards the latter and nature achieves the former by deceiving us. In the Greeks, "will" wanted to contemplate itself, in the transfiguration of the genius and the world of art; in order to glorify itself, its creatures had to feel themselves worthy of glorification, they had to see themselves again in a higher sphere...This is the sphere of beauty, in which they saw their mirror-images, the Olympians. (BT, 3)

One can recognise the influence of Schopenhauer on the above passage. Nietzsche writes in a way reminiscent of Schopenhauer in ‘On the Metaphysics of Sexual Love,’²³ where Schopenhauer writes of a delusion (*Wahn*) relating to our sexual lives. Schopenhauer claims that nature installs – or uses – a delusion in the individual to achieve its end – or intentions – namely, the continuation of the species. The delusion is a sexual object seeming to be a good thing for the individual. This delusion motivates the individual to the sexual object, and he ‘serves the species, whereas he is under the delusion that he is serving himself.’²⁴ (*WWR II*, 538)

The structure that Schopenhauer sets out in ‘On the Metaphysics of Sexual Love’, I claim, influences the passage in *The Birth of Tragedy* we are considering. I interpret the passage in the following way. There is, according to *The Birth of Tragedy*, a metaphysical entity that continually creates the world. The world that the metaphysical entity creates is an expression of it, and the metaphysical entity views it as such. In fact, the metaphysical entity can only contemplate itself through viewing this world,²⁵ and the possibility of self-glorification for it resides in its expression in the world of individuals. Thus, ‘in order to glorify itself, its creatures had to feel themselves worthy of glorification.’ (*BT*, 3) The metaphysical entity uses the Olympian gods in order to achieve its intentions of self-glorification. By way of the Olympian gods the Greeks will glorify themselves, and thereby the metaphysical entity can glorify itself. This is influenced by ‘On the Metaphysics of Sexual Love’, in which nature uses a delusion in order to achieve its end of the continuation of the species.

(v) Conclusion

In this chapter I have looked at how, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Apollonian art addresses terrible individual existence. Sculpture, an Apollonian art form, addresses the suffering inherent to life by beautiful representation of it. The Olympian Gods, who are Apollonian art, address the Ancient Greeks’ insight into the terribleness of individual existence by acting as a screen before it. And the Olympian Gods also provide the Ancient Greeks with a basis

²³ Part of *The World as Will and Representation*, volume 2.

²⁴ Schopenhauer’s idea that the individual moves according to a delusion and thereby nature achieves her end, has echoes in Nietzsche’s comment that: ‘The true goal [of nature] is concealed by a hallucinatory image: we stretch out our hands towards the latter and nature achieves the former by deceiving us.’ (*BT*, 3)

²⁵ These ideas are expanded upon in the section of the thesis entitled ‘The Original Artist of the World’.

for affirmation of their own lives. The lives of the Ancient Greeks are like those of the Olympian Gods, who are impetuous, emotional and suffer – thus the Ancient Greeks can affirm their own lives as like those of the Gods.

What sculpture and the Olympian Gods share is that they are untrue. Nietzsche is explicit that the beauty in sculpture is untrue: ‘beauty triumphs over the suffering which is inherent to life, pain is in a certain sense effaced from the features of nature by a *lie*.’ (BT, 16)²⁶ The life-affirmation based on sculpture is, accordingly, based on an untrue representation of life. And the Olympian Gods are untrue, a fiction: ‘Wherever we encounter the “naïve” in art, we must recognize the greatest effect of Apollonian culture: which must always first overthrow a realm of Titans, slay monsters, and triumph over a horrific depth of contemplation of the world and the most sensitive capacity for suffering by resorting to powerful misleading delusions and pleasurable illusions.’ (BT, 3) The Greeks affirmation of their lives is based on the delusion that they are like those of the Olympian Gods.

In sculpture there is falsification of individual existence; in relation to the Olympian Gods, insight into individual existence is blocked out. In the next chapter, I will turn to Nietzsche’s account of tragedy (in *The Birth of Tragedy*), in which the truth of individual existence is incorporated.

Chapter 2: Tragic Art & Life-Affirmation

²⁶ My emphasis.

(i) *Introduction*

Nietzsche opens *The Birth of Tragedy* by stating the following: ‘We will have achieved much for the discipline of aesthetics when we have arrived not only at the logical insight but also at the immediate certainty of the view that the continuing development of art is tied to the duality of the *Apollonian* and the *Dionysian*.’ (BT, 1) The continuing development of art is, according to Nietzsche, dependant on the duality of the Apollonian and the Dionysian drives. The Apollonian and Dionysian drives, locked in a productive struggle, stimulate one another to greater and greater art, the Apollonian drive producing Apollonian art, the Dionysian drive Dionysian art. As in the duality of the sexes, Nietzsche tells us, in the continuing development of art there is a continual struggle between the two – the Apollonian and Dionysian drives – punctuated only by ‘temporary periods of reconciliation’. (*Ibid.*) Ancient Greek art, according to Nietzsche, conformed to this pattern of struggle and reconciliation. The Apollonian and Dionysian drives were indeed locked in a productive struggle, bringing each ‘to ever new and more powerful births.’ (BT, 1) The drives were then reconciled, and in coming together produced Attic tragedy, which for Nietzsche represented the acme of Ancient Greek art.

Attic tragedy, as is given in the phrase, is the tragedy of ancient Athens, more precisely in the fifth century BC. Nietzsche refers to the Attic tragedians Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. While Nietzsche praises Aeschylus and Sophocles, Euripides represents for him a decline in the art form.²⁷ Richard Wagner was very interested in Attic tragedy,²⁸ and it seems likely that he exercised an influence over Nietzsche’s treatment of it. Nietzsche met Wagner in 1868, and then from 1869 to 1872 visited Richard and Cosima twenty-three times in Tribschen, at their rented house by Lake Lucerne. (Tanner 1993: x) The publication of *The Birth of Tragedy* came towards the end of this period, in early 1872, and before this period Wagner had made notes that echo in the book. For example, Wagner referred to how “‘the stage of Aeschylus and Sophocles’” represented “‘the brief time span of the flowering of Athenian art.’” (Silk and Stern 1981: 266) And in 1849 Wagner made the following note: “‘Birth out of music: Aeschylus. Decadence: Euripides.’” (*Ibid.*) The full title of the first and second editions of Nietzsche’s first book was *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music*.

²⁷ Though Nietzsche refers to Euripides as a ‘genius’ and ‘richly gifted artist’. (BT, 11)

²⁸ This art-form was for Wagner also a desirable inversion of the commercialized art of his day providing mere post-work entertainment. In Ancient Greece work, both professional and domestic, along with school were suspended for the attendance, and exclusive discussion, of tragedy. Attendance was free, and the actors were supported by the state. (See Magee 2000: 86)

As far as Nietzsche was concerned the decline of tragedy began with Euripides, but the rebirth of tragedy lay in the tragedies (or music-dramas) of Richard Wagner. In what immediately follows I will lay out what 'Dionysian' is and Nietzsche's account of the nature of tragedy, both Attic and Wagnerian. According to Nietzsche, as we shall see, tragedy incorporates the truth of individual existence.

(ii) *The nature of tragedy*

In tragedy, on Nietzsche's account, there are two elements: that which takes place on-stage, and that which takes place off-stage. In the case of the tragedies of Sophocles and Aeschylus, the off-stage element is the tragic chorus, for Nietzsche; in the case of Wagner's music dramas, it is the music played by the orchestra. In the works of Sophocles, Aeschylus and Wagner that which takes place on-stage is, to some extent, Apollonian for Nietzsche. Individuals are the subject of the Apollonian, not the Dionysian, and Nietzsche remarks with respect to the individuals on-stage in tragedy that 'the Apollonian tears us away from the Dionysian universality and allows us to delight in individuals.' (*BT*, 21) These individuals possess beauty, that Apollonian characteristic, Nietzsche remarking that 'through them...[the Apollonian]...satisfies the sense of beauty which craves great and sublime forms.' (*Ibid.*) The type 'image' is Apollonian, not Dionysian, and Nietzsche writes in the same section that '[w]ith the tremendous proliferation of the image...the Apollonian principle tears man up out of his orgiastic self-annihilation.' (*BT*, 21) The dialogue of the stage is also (at least to an extent) Apollonian, 'simple, transparent and beautiful,' the language possessing 'Apollonian certainty and brightness.' (*BT*, 9)

That which is off-stage in tragedy is Dionysian. In the case of the tragedies of Aeschylus and Sophocles it is the music, lyric poetry and dance of the tragic chorus. The tragic chorus formed part of Ancient Greek tragedy, as well as comedy and satyr plays. The chorus danced, they sang and spoke in unison, the speech having a strong rhythmic component. The chorus commented with a collective voice on the dramatic action of the stage, and they provided the audience with background and summary information to help them follow the play. In many plays, the chorus conveyed to the audience the main character's fears or secrets, and often the chorus provided other characters of the play with the insight they required. The chorus was twelve strong in Aeschylus' tragedies, fifteen strong in those of Sophocles and Euripides. The semi-circular space in front of the Ancient Greek stage where the chorus were situated was called the orchestra, the word being derived from the Greek

‘orkheisthai’, meaning to dance. In the tragedies of the man who plunged the orchestra, as we understand it today, lower than the stage, i.e. Richard Wagner, the music is Dionysian.

What is ‘Dionysian’? Whereas the ‘Apollonian’ relates to the individuals of the world, the ‘Dionysian’ relates to a metaphysical entity. Nietzsche refers to this metaphysical entity as *das Ur-Eine*, translatable as ‘the primal oneness’, ‘the original one’ or ‘the original Unity.’ He does also refer to it as ‘the original essence’ (*BT*, 17), ‘the will’ (*BT*, 16) and ‘the world-will’ (*BT*, 21).²⁹ Nietzsche describes the metaphysical entity as eternal: for example, he alludes to it as ‘the eternal life beyond all phenomena and in spite of all annihilation.’ (*BT*, 16) Nietzsche also describes the metaphysical entity as creating and destroying the individuals of the world. In the penultimate section of *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche explains how the off-stage Dionysian element of tragedy ‘reveals to us again and again the playful construction and destruction of the individual world as the overflow of an original joy’ – i.e. the joy of ‘the Original unity’ or ‘the original essence – ‘in a similar way to that in which Heraclitus the Obscure compares the world-forming force to a child at play, arranging and scattering stones here and there, building and then trampling sand-hills.’ (*BT*, 24) It is not possible to pin down what the original Unity is in virtue of its infinite nature. In any case, this metaphysical Unity appears to derive pleasure of some kind from its creation and destruction of individual life.

The tragic chorus and Wagnerian music relate to *das Ur-Eine*, the original Unity. To take up the music in tragedy specifically, it is an expression of the original Unity. Given that the original Unity is a powerful creative force and the music of tragedy an expression of it, the tragic spectator would not be able to endure this music without the on-stage element, according to Nietzsche. That said, Nietzsche does remark that the artistic expression of this powerful creative force would not necessarily be accessible to all. It is accessible to ‘those who, directly related to music, born of its maternal womb as it were, relate to things almost exclusively through unconscious musical relations.’ (*BT*, 21) Nietzsche writes:

To...genuine musicians I direct the question of whether they can imagine someone capable of experiencing the third act of *Tristan and Isolde* purely as a vast symphonic movement, with no help from word and image, without expiring under the convulsive beating of the wings of the entire soul? Imagine a man, who as here has laid his ear as

²⁹ The last two, ‘the will’ and ‘the world-will,’ bring to mind Schopenhauer. Nietzsche wrote in his later preface to *The Birth of Tragedy* that in the work he had ‘laboured to express in the terms of Schopenhauer and Kant new and unfamiliar evaluations.’ (*BT*, ‘Attempt’, 6)

it were on the heart chamber of the world-will, who feels the mad desire for existence flow outwards into all the veins of the world in the form of a thundering torrent or of the gentlest spraying brook, should such a man not suddenly shatter into pieces? (*BT*, 21)

To think that a genuine musician would expire if he experienced the music of the third act of *Tristan and Isolde* without the on-stage element would be peculiar. And, as Tanner remarks, such a claim ‘would hardly survive empirical testing.’ (Tanner 1993: xxiv-xxv) There have been occasions on which people have heard an orchestra rehearsal of this music without the tenor, and ‘the auditors have survived to tell the tale.’ (Tanner 1993: xxv) What might Nietzsche mean, then? One possible interpretation is that this is an exaggeration of the notion that the music would be burdensome, in some sense, for the tragic spectator without the on stage element. There is support for this interpretation earlier on in the same section of *The Birth of Tragedy*: ‘Tragedy... juxtaposes to music tragic myth and the tragic hero, who, like a mighty Titan, relieves us of the burden of the whole Dionysian world by taking it on his shoulders.’ (*BT*, 21)

In *Tristan and Isolde*, as well as in the other tragedies of Wagner and those of Sophocles and Aeschylus, the on-stage element protects the tragic spectator from the force of the Dionysian music; the interpolation of tragic myth and hero between the music and the listener ‘gives the spectator the impression that music is merely the highest means of representing and bringing to life the plastic world of myth.’ (*BT*, 21) The spectator of *Tristan and Isolde*, for example, has the impression that the music merely illuminates the inner turmoil of the eponymous characters. Dionysian music is, however, also expressive of *das Ur-Eine*. Nietzsche’s idea that music expresses a metaphysical entity and illuminates the inner world of the characters in tragedy is, perhaps, to some extent influenced by Schopenhauer’s ideas about music. Schopenhauer characterizes music as a direct copy of the metaphysical Will: the other arts copy the Ideas, which are themselves copies of the metaphysical Will, whereas music copies the metaphysical Will directly. Music expresses the metaphysical Will according to Schopenhauer, and in *The Birth of Tragedy* too music expresses a metaphysical entity. Schopenhauer also writes of music: ‘All possible strivings, impulses, and expressions of the will, all those processes which take place in the heart of man... are to be expressed through the infinite number of possible melodies.’ (*WWR*, I, §52) Nietzsche himself quotes this in section 16 of *The Birth of Tragedy*, so it may have been an influence on Nietzsche’s idea that

music illuminates the characters of tragedy.

Myth protects the tragic spectator from Dionysian music. But myth also seems to be necessary for the clarification of *das Ur-Eine* for the tragic spectator. It is through the annihilation of the tragic hero specifically that the eternal phenomenon of *das Ur-Eine* is clarified for him:

For it is only in the individual examples of such an annihilation that the eternal phenomenon of Dionysian art is made clear to us, the Dionysian art which gives expression to...the eternal life beyond all phenomena and in spite of all annihilation. The metaphysical joy in the tragic is a translation of the instinctively unconscious Dionysian wisdom into the language of images: the hero, the greatest phenomenon of the will, is negated for our pleasure, because he remains only phenomenon and the eternal life of the will remains untouched by his annihilation. (*BT*, 16)

One ought to be hesitant, I think, in stating that the on-stage element of tragedy is ‘the Apollonian’ and the off-stage element is ‘the Dionysian’. My basis for saying this refers to the ‘Ancient Greek wisdom’ that I discussed in chapter 1.³⁰ The Ancient Greeks possessed such wisdom, and what followed was the culture of the Olympian Gods and the Apollonian Greek. But when the Apollonian Greek was faced with the Dionysian dithyramb, he regarded it with ‘an astonishment which was all the greater for being accompanied by the horror that all this was really not so unfamiliar to him after all, even that his Apollonian consciousness did no more than cast a veil over this Dionysian world before him.’ (*BT*, 2) His Apollonian consciousness, according to Nietzsche, casts a veil over the Dionysian ‘Ancient Greek wisdom.’ As the ‘Ancient Greek wisdom’ is Dionysian for Nietzsche, so too might one interpret the suffering and death of the individual in tragedy as a symbolic representation of Dionysian truth, and itself Dionysian.

(iii) *Life-affirmation through tragedy*

³⁰ The wisdom which includes that it would have been better never to have been born.

Tragedy incorporates the truth of individual existence – suffering and death. It does, however, enable the tragic spectator to affirm this truth. This is achieved through the relationship between the individual on the stage – by which I mean the tragic hero – and the original Unity. This is effectively Reginster’s position, in ‘Art and Affirmation’, on tragedy in *The Birth Tragedy*. Reginster writes that ‘the true character of existence is kept in full view in tragedy,’ but ‘affirmation’³¹ (or ‘comforting’)³² ‘is made possible by the manner in which it is *interpreted* or *seen*,’ i.e. its relation to the original Unity. (Reginster 2014: 21)

As we have seen, the original Unity takes pleasure in the destruction of the individual on the stage. Even the prospect of the original Unity’s pleasure in such annihilation is experienced by the tragic spectator. The tragic hero on the stage has a sense of foreboding about his own destruction. The Dionysian music lends the tragic myth here ‘a penetrating and persuasive metaphysical significance,’ such that the tragic spectator senses the joy which the metaphysical entity would take in the destruction of the tragic hero. (*BT*, 21) Nietzsche writes that ‘the tragic spectator experiences a certain presentiment of a higher joy, the highest joy which lies at the end of the path through destruction and negation.’ (*Ibid.*) Nietzsche suggests that tragedy can ‘offer redemption from the craven impulse for this existence.’ (*BT*, 21) The tragic hero on the stage is an individual who is symbolic of the tragic spectator. The joy the metaphysical entity will take in the destruction of the tragic hero is symbolic of the joy the entity will take in the tragic spectator’s destruction. If one, as tragic spectator, directs his attention towards the metaphysical entity’s pleasure in his destruction, this can offer him redemption from his usual fearfulness towards death.

Moving from the foreboding of the tragic hero about his destruction to the destruction of the tragic hero itself, in section 17 of *The Birth of Tragedy* we have his painful demise. Through the painful demise of the tragic hero, symbolic of individual life in a broader sense than just human beings, the tragic spectator recognizes ‘how everything which comes into being must be prepared for a painful demise, ...[he is]... forced to peer into the terrors of individual existence.’ (*BT*, 17) The tragic spectator recognizes a painful demise for himself and other individuals, human or otherwise. (This idea of a painful demise for all individuals is, I think,

³¹ Reginster 2014: 16.

³² ‘[T]he tragic myth does not conceal the terrible aspects of our existence, such as the unavoidable suffering and the constant passing away, but it offers a particular interpretation of it, which is supposed to be comforting.’ (Reginster 2014: 21)

influenced by the Schopenhauerian idea of all individuals suffering.) He feels fear and pity respectively, Nietzsche here employing the concepts in Aristotle's account of tragedy.

The destruction of individual forms by the original Unity is, however, as well as a source of joy for it, necessary for its creation of new individual forms: 'the struggle, the agony, the annihilation of phenomena...seem necessary...in the context of the excess of countless forms of existence which crowd and push their way into life, of the overwhelming fertility' of this metaphysical entity. (*BT*, 17) The original Unity takes joy in the creation of the individuals of the world, as I have noted earlier. Destruction is connected to creation and to the original Unity's 'joy in creation.' (*Ibid.*) In addition, the original Unity has an 'unbridled craving' for the existence of new forms, which requires destruction. (*BT*, 17)

In tragedy the original Unity, expressed by Dionysian music, takes joy in the destruction of the tragic hero as part of the creative process. The original unity craves new individual forms, which require the destruction of the tragic hero. The relation between the metaphysical entity and tragic hero, a symbolic individual, is not limited to tragedy but has application to reality. Nietzsche writes a flowery paragraph on the tragic spectator's experience. He holds that the tragic spectator has a kind of duality of experience. The tragic spectator experiences fear and pity but, simultaneously, he in some sense fuses with the original Unity. Nietzsche writes that we tragic spectators:

are pierced by the raging thorn of these agonies [fear and pity] in the same moment as we have become one *as it were*³³ with the immeasurable original joy in existence and as we sense the indestructibility and eternity of this pleasure in Dionysian rapture. In spite of fear and compassion, we are the fortunate living beings, not as individuals, but as a *single* living being, with whose joy in creation we are fused. (*BT*, 17)

The tragic spectator occupies another, metaphysical perspective, from which he takes pleasure in the annihilation of the symbolic individual. This affirmation of the destruction of the symbolic individual is affective. At the same time, the tragic spectator has their own individual perspective, their fear of their own painful death and their pity towards others for theirs. Julian Young writes of such a duality of tragic experience on the part of the tragic

³³ My emphasis.

spectator, though he understands the occupation of the perspective of the original Unity to be primary: ‘the Greek audience, though...partially identifying with the individual threatened by tragic destruction...has, as its primary identification, the chorus...[which]...draws the...spectator into the Dionysian world. From this perspective he experiences with *joy* the annihilation of the tragic hero.’ (Young 1992: 46)

Part of this tragic spectator experience is located earlier in *The Birth of Tragedy*, and associated with the tragedies of Aeschylus and Sophocles specifically. It is discussed by Janaway in his essay, ‘Beauty is False, Truth Ugly: Nietzsche on Art and Life’.³⁴ Janaway explains that the ‘Dionysian effect of tragedy is its alleged ability to dissolve the sense of individuality and merge the participant or spectator into a “primal oneness” or “primal being” (*das Ur-Eine* or *Ursein*).’ (Janaway 2014: 45) Indeed, Nietzsche tells us, Greek tragedy itself ought to be understood as ‘the Dionysian chorus’ – a tragic chorus merged with a greater primal being – ‘which again and again discharges itself in an Apollonian world of images.’ (*BT*, 8) Nietzsche cites the perspective of the Aristotelian tradition (see *BT*, 7), namely that tragedy was originally only the chorus, or the dithyramb. The subsequent stage-element of tragedy, according to Nietzsche, was shaped by the chorus: when there was originally only the chorus, it gave rise to an imaginary vision of Dionysus, a personification of the ‘primal being’. Subsequently, this vision was translated with a figure on the stage, whether this was by the tragic chorus or a tragic spectator is not clear.

The Dionysian chorus occupies the perspective of the greater ‘primal being’. And from this perspective the destruction of the symbolic individual on the stage signifies his union with the greater ‘primal being’. How does the shattering of the symbolic individual, and his absorption into a greater ‘primal being’, help the tragic spectator affirm death, a truth of individual existence? As Janaway explains, the tragic spectator merges into the ‘primal being’ and, ‘[f]rom this wider standpoint,’ the tragic spectator rejoices ‘in the destructiveness of life’ towards the symbolic individual. (Janaway 2014: 45) The affirmation comes from the tragic spectator’s identifying with the metaphysical ‘primal being’ or ‘original Unity’. And, indeed, in the other instances to which I have turned, the tragic spectator’s affirmation of the truth of individual existence must come from identifying with, or at least their having attention on, the ‘original Unity.’ With respect to the tragic spectator’s duality of experience

³⁴ Janaway (2014: 39-56).

described above, affirmation of the painful demise of individuals would not consist in the fear and pity element of experience. In the other element of this duality, however, the tragic spectator merges with the original Unity – an original Unity which craves the existence of new forms, the destruction of individuals necessary for the satisfaction of this craving. The tragic spectator merges with an original Unity that takes joy in the destruction of the individual. Nietzsche writes that ‘[i]n spite of fear and pity, we are the fortunate living beings, not as individuals, but as a *single* living being.’ (BT, 17) In section 21, the tragic spectator has ‘redemption from the craven impulse for this existence’ and affirms his destruction through having his attention solely on the original Unity, which will take pleasure in his destruction. (BT, 21)

(iv) Nietzsche on the truth-status of the original Unity

Reginster shares the view that affirmation of the truth of individual existence on the part of the tragic spectator must rest on their relation to a metaphysical entity. He writes: ‘such indifference to our own individual fate requires that we identify *exclusively* with the “true author” of the world, the “primordial oneness” or the “child” engaged in a perpetual play of creation and destruction...In other words, it requires us to see ourselves other than we empirically are: it requires us to see ourselves “metaphysically”.’ (Reginster 2014: 22) The tragic spectator affirms the truth of his individual existence – destruction – by moving out of himself, so to speak, to a metaphysical entity, and occupying its perspective on his destruction (or, at least directing his attention towards something else that takes pleasure in his destruction). What did Nietzsche consider the truth-status of this metaphysical entity and its relationship with the individual to be? Here I do not share Reginster’s view that Nietzsche simply took this metaphysical entity and relationship to be illusory: ‘Nietzsche undertakes to distinguish among “three stages” of illusion [which are Apollonian illusion, Socratism and tragedy] in order to show that only one of them, the illusion created by Greek tragedy, can produce a genuine affirmation.’ (Reginster 2014: 16; Cf. Reginster 2014: 21) There are other Nietzschean scholars who share Reginster’s view. They include Gemes and Sykes in their essay, ‘Nietzsche’s Illusion’.

In ‘Nietzsche’s Illusion’, Gemes and Sykes claim that in the first 18 sections of *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche sets out illusions and myths that enabled the Attic Greeks to find life meaningful and affirm it. These illusions and myths grew up spontaneously (in contrast to

‘the modern need for a self-consciously constructed mythology’) and were believed by the Attic Greeks. (Gemes and Sykes: 2014: 81) Within this, Nietzsche understands Attic tragedy as such a myth and illusion. Tragedy provided the Attic Greeks with a metaphysical solace for an understanding of empirical reality as ‘comprised of instrumental, self-serving desire; an endless flux devoid of higher ideals.’ (Gemes and Sykes 2014: 83) Tragedy furnished the Attic Greeks with belief in their participation in a greater whole, through the sense of an ‘underlying unity of all things.’ (Gemes and Sykes 2014: 88) It also provided the Greek with his sense of being consecrated to something higher than himself, a metaphysical ‘primal One.’ The Attic Greek held beliefs about the underlying unity of all things and a metaphysical ‘primal One’ which Nietzsche took to be false, but useful.

In sections 19 to 25 of *The Birth of Tragedy*, Gemes and Sykes claim, Nietzsche provides a ‘narrative of culture and genius, conceived of as an analogue of the myths of Attic Greece serviceable for contemporary culture.’ (Gemes and Sykes 2014: 82) Such a narrative of culture and genius is especially an analogue of the tragedy of Ancient Greece: it provides a member of contemporary culture with the sense of participation in a greater whole and consecration to something higher than himself. According to this narrative and myth of culture and genius, ‘the individual must live for the sake of the highest exemplars or specimens that the human race is capable of producing. It is these individuals who collectively redeem the individual’s experience of life as otherwise meaningless and insignificant.’ (Gemes and Sykes 2014: 83) Gemes and Sykes do not elaborate on this. The idea surely is, however, that under this myth a member of contemporary culture understands that he needs to live to contribute, in some way, to a set of geniuses. The member of contemporary culture has the sense of being consecrated to something higher than himself, namely these geniuses. Through his supposed connection to such geniuses he has the sense of participating in a greater whole.

The division of *The Birth of Tragedy* that Gemes and Sykes suggest does not, in my view, hold up. The division suggests that discussion of tragedy is limited to Attic tragedy and to the first 18 sections of the book. In section 21, however, Nietzsche writes at length on tragedy, both Attic and Wagnerian. Attention on Wagnerian tragedy continues in sections 22 and 24,³⁵

³⁵ Nietzsche discusses tragedy in section 22 of *The Birth of Tragedy*, quoting from Isolde’s *Liebestod* in Wagner’s ‘Tristan und Isolde.’ In section 24 of the same work, Nietzsche writes of the tragic spectator’s

supporting the conventional reading that Nietzsche, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, promotes the rebirth of tragedy in the works of Richard Wagner. Gemes and Sykes claim that in sections 19 to 25 of *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche presents the myth of culture and genius. There are indeed references to, largely German, geniuses in these sections: Bach, Beethoven, Wagner, Kant and Schopenhauer are mentioned in section 19, in the space of 2 pages. It is not at all apparent, however, that Nietzsche is peddling such a myth. To take section 19 as an example, the German geniuses that feature are tied to a German nationalism derived from Wagner: ‘*German music*, as we have to understand it principally in its powerful solar course from Bach to Beethoven, from Beethoven to Wagner...Kant and Schopenhauer...the spirit of *German philosophy*.’ (BT, 19) These German geniuses also play a part in Nietzsche’s suggestion that German music and German philosophy point towards a new age, which ‘represents for the German spirit a return to itself.’ (*Ibid.*) Nietzsche’s ultimate concern here is the establishment of a national and international identity. He remarks: ‘Now at last this spirit may, upon its return home to the original source of its character, dare to stride boldly and freely before all peoples, cut loose from the apron strings of a Romanic civilization.’ (BT, 19) The German people can, through a return to their Dionysian spirit, cast off their Romanic identity and assume a national identity.

One might accept that Gemes and Sykes’ interpretation ought to be replaced by the conventional interpretation of *The Birth of Tragedy* – that it describes Greek tragedy and promotes the rebirth of tragedy in the works of Wagner. This conventional interpretation does not demonstrate, however, that Nietzsche took the relationship between the individual and the metaphysical entity to not be illusory. There are, however, certain remarks that Nietzsche makes, both in the foreword and the later preface to *The Birth of Tragedy*, that would suggest he was committed to the relationship. In the Foreword to Richard Wagner, Nietzsche writes that ‘art is the highest task and the real metaphysical activity of this life in the sense of the man to whom...I wish to dedicate this book.’ (BT, ‘Foreword’) This suggests that Nietzsche is committed to art really relating to metaphysics and ‘the original Unity’. The response to this might be, however, that this is just part of Nietzsche’s elaborate piece of Wagnerian propaganda. Yet in the ‘Attempt at a Self-Criticism’ written after his break with Wagner, Nietzsche writes: ‘Already in the foreword addressed to Richard Wagner, art – and

‘striving towards the infinite, the beating of the wings of longing, which accompanies the highest joy in clearly perceived reality.’ Here, in ‘highest joy’, Nietzsche once again alludes to Isolde’s *Liebested*.

not morality – is established as the real *metaphysical* activity of man.’ (BT, ‘Attempt’, 5) This suggests that Nietzsche *did* think of art as relating to metaphysics and ‘the original Unity’.

In the ‘Attempt at a Self-Criticism,’ Nietzsche does not refer to *The Birth of Tragedy* as containing a self-conscious construction of an illusory metaphysical entity. He writes, rather, that ‘the whole book recognizes only an ulterior artistic meaning hidden behind everything which happens – a “god”, if you like, but certainly only a completely thoughtless and amoral artist-god, who wishes to experience the same pleasure and self-satisfaction in building as in destroying.’ (BT, ‘Attempt’, 5) Nietzsche, as part of setting *The Birth of Tragedy* in opposition to morality in this later preface, remarks that this ‘artistic metaphysics...betrays a spirit which will regardless of the danger oppose the *moral* interpretation and meaningfulness of existence.’ (*Ibid.*) He does not, however, suggest that the artistic metaphysics was deliberately constructed as an illusion. Rather, he writes that ‘one may call this whole artistic metaphysics arbitrary, idle, fantastic.’ (BT, ‘Attempt’, 5) These considerations suggest the contrary to that which Gemes and Sykes, and Reginster claim. It appears that Nietzsche did not, in writing *The Birth of Tragedy*, take the relationship between the individual and the metaphysical entity to be illusory.

In Nietzsche’s conception of tragedy, the tragic spectator affirms the terrible aspects of life. This stands in contrast to Schopenhauer’s advocacy of the negation of the will based on the terrible aspects of life. This contrast, I think, is not coincidental. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, with the terrible nature of individual life comes the threat of despair or the negation of the will. Nietzsche writes that: ‘The profound Hellene...is in danger of longing for a Buddhist negation of the will,’ he writes of ‘an ascetic mood which negates the will.’ (BT, 7) The same threat of a negation of the will also looms, I claim, over the Ancient Greeks who possess the wisdom that it would have been better never to have been born. The Dionysian knowledge of suffering and death might well, it seems, threaten despair in the individual. These threats are influenced by Schopenhauer, who thought that one must despair, or one ought to negate the will, due to the nature of individual life. Although quite often transmitted through the Ancient Greeks, Nietzsche agrees at least in a general sense with Schopenhauer’s idea of the nature of individual life – Nietzsche, however, wishes to avoid and resist the despair or negation of the will which Schopenhauer thought must, or ought to, come as a result of the nature of individual life.

Nietzsche quite nicely encapsulates in the following statement how, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, the despair or negation of the will that is likely or due to happen is avoided: 'Here, at this point of extreme danger for the will, *art* draws near as the enchantress who comes to rescue and heal.' (*BT*, 7) As we shall see, art as a counterforce to the negative nature of reality continues in Nietzsche's later writings.

(v) Conclusion

This chapter has looked at what, for Nietzsche, is the nature of the tragedies of Sophocles, Aeschylus and Wagner. The chapter has then looked at how life-affirmation is predicated on such tragedies for Nietzsche: in occupying the perspective of the original Unity, the tragic spectator affirms human suffering and destruction. The chapter lastly argues, contrary to Reginster, Gemes and Sykes, that Nietzsche did not take the relationship between the individuals of the world and the original Unity to be illusory.

Part II: *The Gay Science* (1882)

Chapter 3: 'Giving style' to one's character

(i) Introduction

The Gay Science was published in its original form in 1882, a decade after *The Birth of Tragedy* was first published. In its original form, *The Gay Science* comprised a 'prelude' of poems (entitled "Jokes, Cunning, and Revenge"³⁶: Prelude in German Rhymes') followed by four books. A second edition of the book was published in 1887 which added a preface, a fifth book and an appendix of poems (entitled 'Songs of Prince Vogelfrei'). In *The Gay Science*, the metaphysics of *The Birth of Tragedy* are absent. There is, however, broad continuity between the two books in as much as they construe life as terrible before art. Life, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, involves horrific insight, painful conclusion and fear of death, at least before art. The introduction of art means engagement with beautiful Olympian Gods, or a supra-individual perspective from which one affirms death. This part of thesis shall explore how, in *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche portrays life as terrible prior to art. It shall also consider the artistic techniques and measures in the book that might address and bring affirmation of life.

The heart of this part of the thesis, though, is to challenge the place of *The Gay Science* in Reginster's narrative of art and life-affirmation through Nietzsche's works. This seems a good point at which to remind the reader of that place. *The Gay Science*, in Reginster's narrative, marks the start of growing misgivings about the ability of illusion – defined as a 'veil' over the true character of life – to provide affirmation at all. On Reginster's interpretation, in *The Gay Science* illusion makes existence merely bearable. Reginster also claims, however, that *The Gay Science* begins Nietzsche's increasing misgivings about the ability of illusion to provide *genuine* affirmation. (Reginster 2014: 23) That is to say, Nietzsche begins to have concerns that if what one affirms is not the true character of

³⁶ Peter Gast, Nietzsche's friend, disciple, assistant, set to music a libretto by Goethe entitled 'Scherz, List, und Rache.'

existence – if one affirms instead a ‘veil’ over life, for example – then this is not a *genuine* affirmation of life.

This chapter shall look at a section of *The Gay Science* which is, on one interpretation, consistent with Reginster’s claims. The next chapter shall turn to another section of *The Gay Science* which is not consistent, on one interpretation, with Reginster’s claims. For now, though, I shall turn to self-creation in *The Gay Science*.

(ii) *Self-creation*

Self-creation recurs in Nietzsche’s works: he writes on it, in one form or another, in *Human-All-Too-Human*; *Daybreak*; *The Gay Science*; *Beyond Good And Evil*; *Twilight of the Idols* and *Ecce Homo*. In *Human-All-Too-Human*, first published from 1878 to 1880 in instalments, we find Nietzsche critical of the artist for not creating himself. In a section entitled ‘An excuse for many a fault’, he remarks: ‘The ceaseless desire to create on the part of the artist, together with his ceaseless observation of the world outside him, prevent him from becoming better and more beautiful as a person, that is to say from creating *himself*.’ (*HAH* II: 102) In discussing self-creation in *Daybreak*, published in 1881, Nietzsche employs the analogy of a gardener and a fruit tree on a trellis.³⁷ The gardener has knowledge of which elements of the fruit tree can be disposed of (without destroying the tree). He can also manipulate parts of the fruit tree, make them develop in particular directions. *In summa*, the gardener can, through knowledge and action, give form to a fruit tree on a trellis. Nietzsche found this a fitting analogy for the possibilities of self-creation. A person can acquire knowledge of which of his drives are removable. He can also manipulate and make drives develop in particular directions. One can, Nietzsche tells us, ‘cultivate the shoots of anger, pity, curiosity, vanity as productively and profitably as a beautiful fruit tree on a trellis.’ (*D*, 60) Though we might think of ‘vanity’ unfavourably and perhaps would dispose of it were we able, it can in a certain direction or context be developed ‘profitably’.³⁸ Nietzsche remarks that one cultivates such drives ‘with the good or bad taste of a gardener.’ (*Ibid.*) A

³⁷ My discussion of this section of *Daybreak* is limited, for my discussion is centred on self-creation in *The Gay Science*. For a more extensive treatment of section 560 of *Daybreak*, see Ridley’s 2017 article, ‘Nietzsche, Nature, Nurture.’

³⁸ In *D*, 560 Nietzsche is, I interpret, writing on how drives can be evaluated differently in particular contexts. In section 38 of the same book, he writes of how drives, *inter alia*, are evaluated differently in different cultures.

person can develop ‘pity’, for example, in accordance with their taste, which is either good or bad.³⁹

Some of the ideas around self-creation in *Daybreak* – that there are raw materials of the self; that self-creation is achieved through self-knowledge; that one can remove elements of oneself and, perhaps, that the self consists of drives – reappear in *The Gay Science*. In a section of *The Gay Science* published only the year after *Daybreak*, Nietzsche states: ‘To “give style” to one’s character – a great and rare art!’ (GS 290)⁴⁰ What might Nietzsche think is the reason for this being such a rare art? He continues that giving style to one’s character ‘is practised by those who survey all the strengths and weaknesses that their nature has to offer...’ (*Ibid.*) In other words, it involves self-knowledge. This might be, given his comments in *The Gay Science* on the state of self-knowledge, at least one of the reasons Nietzsche thinks giving style to one’s character is a rare art. He remarks: ‘So, how many people know how to observe? And of these few, how many to observe themselves? “Everyone is farthest from himself”⁴¹ – every person who is expert at scrutinizing the inner life of others knows this to his own chagrin; and the saying “Know thyself”, addressed to human beings by a god,⁴² is near to malicious.’ (GS, 335)⁴³ Few people know how to observe, and even fewer or none how to observe themselves. It seems likely that for the requisite knowledge for self-creation, one needs to refer to self-observation that one has previously engaged in – but if so few or none engage in self-observation, then the prospects for self-creation are gloomy.

Self-knowledge does not, on its own, mean self-creation, and Nietzsche is critical of the idea

³⁹ It is not clear whether Nietzsche considers good and bad taste a matter of individual subjectivity.

⁴⁰ Nietzsche does not provide any examples of who has achieved this ‘great and rare art.’ In a paean to Goethe in *Twilight of the Idols*, a later work, Nietzsche writes that Goethe ‘strove against the separation of reason, sensuality, feeling, will...he disciplined himself to a whole, he *created* himself.’ (TI, IX, 49) This is a different approach to self-creation than that which Nietzsche describes in *The Gay Science*, as we shall see. Nietzsche might, however, have accepted it as an instance of ‘giving style’ to one’s character. Goethe’s self-creation arguably shares features with the ‘giving style’ to one’s character in *The Gay Science*, namely discipline and the creation and adherence to one’s own law. Also, Nietzsche was already enamoured of Goethe at the time of writing *The Gay Science*, referring to him as a master of prose in section 92, for example.

⁴¹ An inversion of the common German expression ‘Everyone is closest to himself.’

⁴² Apollo. “Know thyself” was inscribed over the entrance to the Temple of Apollo in Delphi where the Oracle of Delphi, who was connected to Apollo, sat.

⁴³ Cf. ‘We remain unknown to ourselves, we seekers after knowledge, even to ourselves: and with good reason. We have never sought after ourselves – so how should we one day find ourselves?...Our eternal sentence reads: “Everyone is furthest from himself” – of ourselves we have no knowledge.’ (GM, Preface, 1)

of mere self-knowledge. In *Beyond Good and Evil* he asks: ‘What did that god mean who counselled “know thyself!”? Does that perhaps mean: “Have no further concern with thyself! Become objective!” – And Socrates?’ (*BGE*, 80) Rather than acquire self-knowledge and have no further concern with oneself, Nietzsche thought one should change oneself. In *The Gay Science*, he writes that those who ‘give style’ to their character ‘survey all the strengths and weaknesses that their nature has to offer and then fit them into an artistic plan until each appears as art and reason and even weaknesses delight the eye.’ (*GS*, 290)⁴⁴ In the process of ‘giving style’ to one’s character one does not become ‘objective’ in self-knowledge: one sees ‘strengths’, and also ‘weaknesses’, the ‘ugly’ aspects of oneself, which motivate one to change oneself. (*GS*, 290)

It would be impressive were a person to know *all* of their strengths and weaknesses – it is also, it seems to me, unlikely. We perceive a lack of self-knowledge in others, which would cast doubt on their prospects for an exhaustive survey and arrangement; and people tell us things about ourselves that we didn’t know: this means, at the least, that if we were to have engaged in this mode of self-creation before one or more of these revelations, it would not have been exhaustive. Nietzsche perhaps really meant that a person who engages in this mode of self-creation arranges those strengths and weaknesses that he *knows* about.

But what does Nietzsche mean by ‘strengths’ and weaknesses’ anyway? Further into this section, I shall make the case that in section 290 of *The Gay Science* Nietzsche takes the self to consist of drives, as he does in section 560 of *Daybreak*. Assuming this interpretation (of section 290) is correct, do ‘strengths’ and ‘weaknesses’ refer to the intensity of drives, i.e. drives with great intensity are ‘strengths’, drives lacking in intensity are ‘weaknesses’? Nietzsche writes of how ‘strengths’ and ‘weaknesses’ are arranged ‘until...even weaknesses delight the eye.’ (*GS*, 290) Were Nietzsche in writing of ‘strengths’ and ‘weaknesses’ referring to the intensity of drives, it seems that there would be an evaluative component in this discussion. It is once those drives lacking in intensity are arranged in an artistic plan that they are evaluated positively, or ‘delight the eye’. Prior to this they are evaluated negatively. It appears from Nietzsche’s comment ‘even weaknesses delight the eye’ that the ‘strengths’, the drives with great intensity, are more effortlessly positively evaluated. They don’t need arrangement into an artistic plan to be evaluated as such.

This interpretation equates drives of great intensity with positive evaluation, and drives

⁴⁴ The idea that all a person’s weaknesses appear as art and reason is misleading – the process of ‘giving style’ to one’s character involves removing and concealing weaknesses, so these do not appear.

lacking intensity with negative evaluation, at least prior to arrangement into an artistic plan. This ought to raise suspicion, I think: there might well be a drive of great intensity that a person evaluates negatively, a drive to violence or cruelty. Conversely, there might well be a drive lacking in intensity that a person evaluates positively, such as a drive to attachment and care for others, or a drive to achievement. One might wish such a drive to have greater intensity, which itself suggests a positive evaluation of it.⁴⁵

The interpretation of ‘strengths’ and ‘weaknesses’ as evaluative terms – i.e. those elements of oneself that one evaluates positively are ‘strengths’, those elements one evaluates negatively ‘weaknesses’ – does not face this kind of issue. Those aspects of oneself that one looks upon positively do not need to be fit into an artistic plan to ‘delight the eye’; the aspects of oneself that one looks upon negatively do need to be addressed in some way. According to Nietzsche, drives do not have any moral value in themselves. The moral character and value of a drive is not inherent in it but derived from the morality of the culture: ‘...In itself it has, like every drive, neither this moral character nor any moral character at all.’ (*D*, 38) In section 290 of *The Gay Science*, in which Nietzsche is arguably trying to take us away from Christian moral evaluations of the self and their Christian accompaniments – more on this later – the value of a drive as a strength, weakness, as ugly, beautiful is not inherent in the drive. Nietzsche writes: ‘Whatever has *value* in the present world has it not in itself, according to its nature – nature is always valueless.’ (*GS*, 301) Whether Nietzsche’s view on whether anything in nature has value in itself alters later in his life is debatable, but this need not be debated for the present purposes.

Nietzsche describes a range of activities pertaining to ‘giving style’ to one’s character, including the following: ‘Here a great mass of second nature has been added; there a piece of first nature removed – both times through long practice and daily work at it. Here the ugly that could not be removed is concealed; there it is reinterpreted into sublimity.’ (*GS*, 290) What is at first striking about this passage is the ugly nature (made explicit or implied) of the aspects of the self, at least prior to treatment. Nietzsche does consider there to be strengths as well as weaknesses – ‘strengths’ and ‘weaknesses’ are interpreted here as evaluative terms –

⁴⁵ Compare section 143 of *Daybreak*, entitled ‘Alas, if this drive should rage!’: ‘Supposing the drive to attachment and care for others (the “sympathetic affection”) were twice as strong as it is, life on earth would be *insupportable*. Only consider what follies people commit, hourly and daily, out of attachment and care *for themselves*, and how intolerably awful they look as a result: how would it be if we became *for others* the object of the follies and importunities with which they had previously tormented only themselves!’

as we have seen. But he writes nothing of treatment of the ‘strengths’ of the self. In *Daybreak*, Nietzsche writes that the self-creator can develop his ‘curiosity’ – generally considered as a positive – ‘as productively and profitably as a beautiful fruit tree on a trellis.’ (*D*, 560) Indeed, even those elements one might have originally looked upon unfavourably can be developed ‘profitably’. In section 290 of *The Gay Science*, should we take Nietzsche’s silence on a person’s strengths in writing about treatment of aspects of the self as a sign, a sign that he didn’t think the strengths required any treatment? The section is entitled ‘One thing is needful’, and the one needful thing is to attain satisfaction with oneself. We might understand, in Nietzsche’s writing, a lack of treatment of one’s strengths in relation to this one needful thing: one does not need to do anything with one’s strengths, those elements of oneself that one evaluates positively, to attain satisfaction with oneself.

The activities belonging to ‘giving style’ to one’s character that I have cited above, namely adding ‘a great mass of second nature’ or subtracting ‘a piece of first nature’, are measures to deal with ugly aspects of the self. The diverse measures arise from the self-creator’s knowledge of whether the ugly aspect of the self in question is removable. In one direction, the self-creator knows that he can remove the ugly aspect and sets about eliminating it, in another that he cannot remove it and so displaces it with ‘a great mass of second nature.’ The knowledge in these instances is twofold: knowledge of the aspect of the self, and knowledge of whether it is removable. This is reminiscent of *Daybreak* in which the self-creator can know some elements of himself and, of those, which he can and cannot dispose of.

Both of the measures in *The Gay Science* that we are looking at require ‘long practice and daily work at it.’ (*GS*, 290) This is a matter of discipline. It is less uncomfortable to follow a drive than it is to deny or displace it (more on the self as consisting of drives in *GS*, 290 shortly). All this calls to mind a passage of *Beyond Good And Evil* in which Nietzsche writes, in relation to self-creation, of ‘the discipline of great suffering’ and of ‘the seventh day’. (*BGE*, 225) Those who engage daily and over a long period in removing or displacing a drive operate in accordance with their own law, they are ‘bound by but also perfected under their own law.’ (*GS*, 290) Further into *The Gay Science* Nietzsche writes: ‘We...want to *become who we are* – human beings who are new, unique, incomparable, *who give themselves laws*,⁴⁶ who create themselves!’ (*GS*, 335) There are those who do not wish to serve laws and ideals, Nietzsche explains, and such people achieve self-satisfaction through a

⁴⁶ This latter emphasis is mine.

route other than ‘giving style’ to themselves. ‘[I]t is the weak characters...who *hate* the constraint of style...they become slaves as soon as they serve; they hate to serve.’ (*GS*, 290) These characters, rather than ‘giving style’, ‘shape’ or ‘interpret’ themselves as ‘*free nature*.’ (*Ibid.*) They unify wild, disparate elements of themselves under the rubric of ‘free nature.’ Nietzsche evidently holds that these people might shape, but do not ‘give style’ to, themselves.

(iii) *The self as composed of drives*

In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche writes of human beings predominantly in terms of drives.⁴⁷ For example, in section 110 he writes of exceptional thinkers: ‘even their life and judgements proved dependent on the ancient drives and fundamental errors of all sentient existence.’ (*GS*, 110) Human beings consist partly of those ancient drives toward food, drink and the sexual drive. Some six sections later, Nietzsche remarks that ‘Wherever we encounter a morality, we find an evaluation and ranking of human drives and actions.’ (*GS*, 116) And in book 4, he suggests that our understanding is largely derived from an unconscious war between our drives, namely our drives to laugh, lament and curse⁴⁸. Understanding is merely the last stage of mental activity, in which the conclusion of this war is given in consciousness. ‘For the longest time, conscious thought was considered thought itself; only now does the truth dawn on us that by far the greatest part of our mind’s activity proceeds unconscious and unfelt; but I think these drives which here fight each other know very well how to make themselves felt by and how to hurt *each other*.’ (*GS*, 333; Cf. *GS*, 111: ‘The course of logical thoughts and inferences in our brains today corresponds to a process and battle of drives that taken separately are all very illogical and unjust; we usually experience only the outcome of the battle: that is how quickly and covertly this ancient mechanism runs its course in us.’)⁴⁹ Our unconscious self consists of drives engaged in war, the outcome of which constitutes our understanding, logical thought or inference. The idea of the self as consisting of drives in *The Gay Science* is consistent, to some extent, with works either side of it, i.e. *Daybreak* and

⁴⁷ *GS*, 21; *GS*, 110; *GS*, 111; *GS*, 113; *GS*, 115; *GS*, 116; *GS*, 118; *GS*, 333; *GS*, 335. (In *GS*, 158, Nietzsche uses the term ‘Eigenschaft’; which can be translated in various ways. For example, it can be translated as ‘feature’, and so could potentially refer to a drive, or it can be translated as ‘trait’.)

⁴⁸ Nietzsche is here in dialogue with Spinoza’s comment: ‘not to laugh at or lament over or despise, but to understand’ (*Ethics*, Book III, *Praefatio*).

⁴⁹ See also *GS*, 115; *GS*, 118 and *GS*, 335.

Beyond Good And Evil.⁵⁰ In *Daybreak*, Nietzsche writes: ‘However far a man may go in self-knowledge, nothing however can be more incomplete than his image of the totality of *drives* which constitute his being.’ (*D*, 119) In *Beyond Good And Evil*, he claims of the philosopher that ‘his morality bears decided and decisive testimony to *who he is* – that is to say, to the order of rank the innermost drives of his nature stand in relative to one another.’ (*BGE*, 6) The implication, in writing of ‘innermost drives’ seems to be that there are other drives. Nietzsche perhaps did not take those other drives to shape one’s morality, or to contribute to who one fundamentally is. In any case who one is, to some extent, is the order of rank of the ‘innermost drives’ of his nature.

What does Nietzsche mean by ‘drives’?⁵¹ It might be to some extent illuminating to consider some of the ways in which drives might relate to objects. A particular object might stimulate a particular drive: for example, a particular person might stimulate the sex drive. Also, as Paul Katsafanas writes, under the influence of drives perceived objects can be presented as oriented towards ends of ours.⁵² A drive can cause us to have an affectively charged response to an object, for example hatred. A drive, on Katsafanas’ interpretation of Nietzsche, can make certain elements of our perceptual experience salient; a drive can also bring about selectivity in our perceptual experience, and which drive is active can shape our experience of an occurrence. To give some sense of drives in the context of ‘giving style’ to oneself, a person might have a drive to cruelty directed towards the person who they love. A person might well wish to remove such a drive and, were they unable to, to deal with it in another manner. In *Daybreak*, published the year before the ‘giving style’ to oneself passage, Nietzsche sets out six methods for removing or otherwise dealing with a drive, or, as he characterizes it, ‘combating the vehemence of a drive.’ (*D*, 109) I briefly set these six methods out here for the reader. Method one: avoid opportunities for gratification of the drive so that it weakens and withers away. A good analogy for this first method might be that a person wants to drink alcohol but does not want to have this want; if this person removes all the alcohol from the house and does not attend pubs or bars, their wanting to drink alcohol will perhaps peter out. I interpret the withering away of the drive associated with method 1

⁵⁰ Although book five of *The Gay Science* was published after *Beyond Good And Evil*.

⁵¹ The German term for ‘drive’ is *Trieb*, derived from *treiben*, meaning ‘to drive’. Translators of Nietzsche’s work sometimes render the term *Trieb*, or a variant of it, as ‘instinct’ or ‘impulse’ (e.g. in *GS*, 333 and *GS*, 110 in the translation that this thesis uses).

⁵² Katsafanas (2013, 727-55).

as, like Janaway, the drive ‘ceasing to exist or operate.’ (Janaway 2012: 190)⁵³ Katsafanas, on the contrary, appears to⁵⁴ hold that, for Nietzsche, ‘drives cannot be eliminated.’ (Katsafanas 2013: 746) Nietzsche, one assumes, does understand there to be certain drives which are ineliminable. The drive to eat or the sexual drive, for example, one would imagine to be ineradicable as far as Nietzsche were concerned. Should this assumption be correct, there would be continuity between *Daybreak* and *The Gay Science* in so far as some drives can be removed, some cannot.

Method 2 is a strict regulation of when the drive is gratified, providing peace from it in the intervening periods. Method 3 is to give oneself over to the drive so that one generates disgust with and thus acquires power over it. (Nietzsche says that this method is harmful as a rule: one does, as a rule, ‘like the rider who rode his horse to death and broke his own neck in the process.’ (*D*, 109) This is, I interpret, because the huge indulgence of a drive might lead to a self-disgust that is harmful or even fatal.) Method 4 is the ‘intellectual artifice’ of associating the gratification of the drive in general with a very painful thought, so the thought of the gratification of the drive is felt as very painful. Nietzsche gives the following example: ‘as many have done a hundred times, a person sets against a violent desire to commit suicide a vision of the grief and self-reproach of his friends and relations and therewith keeps himself suspended in life: - hence forth these ideas within him succeed one another as cause and effect.’ (*D*, 109) Method 5 is the redirection of one’s strength, ‘plays of physical forces’, thoughts, energy from the drive into other channels. (*Ibid.*) There is also the related idea of redirecting ‘food’ from the drive to all the other drives. (*D* 109) Here we touch on a metaphor that forms part of Nietzsche’s discussion about drives in *Daybreak*. In section 119 of the book, Nietzsche holds that one’s drives are overfed or starved and stunted, according to whether or not there are experiences through which the drives can express themselves. (*D*, 119) The sixth and final method is to ‘weaken and depress’ the whole physical system and thereby weaken a ‘violent individual drive.’ (*D*, 109)

Returning to section 290 of *The Gay Science*, the one thing that is needful is, to reiterate, that a person attains satisfaction with himself. It follows that even if a person had a drive to

⁵³ Janaway writes with reference to *D*, 119.

⁵⁴ Katsafanas is commenting on Freud’s writing. He refers, however, to the similarity of Nietzsche and Freud’s models of drives. Katsafanas also seems to see a similarity between Freud’s notion that ‘a drive cannot be eliminated, but only temporarily sated’, and Nietzsche’s writing on drives as ‘ebbing and flooding.’ (Katsafanas 2013: 746 and 747.)

inflict violence on people but never actually did so, he would have reason to address this if it were a source of dissatisfaction with himself. In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche seems to hold that we have drives which are inborn, such as the sexual drive, but also drives acquired through our environment. For instance, in section 21 he refers to chastity as a drive – this is not a drive in one’s original nature but acquired through the environment. Later in the section, Nietzsche writes of ‘how education always proceeds: it tries to condition the individual through various attractions and advantages to adopt a way of thinking and behaving that, when it has become habit, drive and passion, will rule in him and over him *against his ultimate advantage* but “for the common good”.’ (GS, 21) There is quite a lot that is interesting in this passage but, for our purposes, we note that for Nietzsche education is something from without which creates a drive. We might, then, interpret ‘first nature’ and ‘second nature’ in section 290 of *The Gay Science* as the drives with which we are born, and the drives which we acquire through our environment, respectively. To add a ‘great mass of second nature’ to displace a piece of ‘first nature’, would be to displace a drive in one’s original nature with a drive acquired through one’s environment, for example the drive to kindness.

(iv) Section 290 of *The Gay Science*: a naturalist reading

We have, thus far, explicitly talked about a plurality of ‘first’ and ‘second’ drives belonging to the Nietzschean self (in section 290 of *The Gay Science*). Nietzsche does not appear, then, to conceive of the self as something that is simple, i.e. not composed of parts. This thought is made clear by him in a later passage of *Beyond Good And Evil*: ‘one must...finish off that...fateful atomism which Christianity has taught best and longest, the *soul atomism*. Let this expression be allowed to designate that belief which regards the soul as being something indestructible, eternal, indivisible, as a monad, as an *atomon*: *this* belief ought to be ejected from science!’ (BGE, 12) In *Beyond Good And Evil*, Nietzsche thinks of the soul as a “social structure of drives and affects.” (Ibid.)⁵⁵ There has been something thus far implicit in talking about the Nietzschean self in section 290 of *The Gay Science*. Namely, that there is something *extra*, a ‘single taste’, which surveys all the strengths and weaknesses and goes to work on the ugly aspects of oneself. (GS, 290) What is this extra something?

⁵⁵ Translation slightly modified: I translate the German *Affekte* as ‘affects’ rather than ‘emotions’.

R. Lanier Anderson maps out the different positions on this matter nicely, in addition presenting his own, in his essay entitled ‘What is a Nietzschean Self?’⁵⁶ Anderson explains that Kantian-inspired readers like Sebastian Gardner ‘insist that...Nietzsche’s own practical philosophy *commits* him to a conscious self capable of “standing back” from the drives in a broadly Kantian sense. For Gardner, Nietzsche’s thought contains a “buried transcendental dimension.”’ (Anderson 2012: 206)⁵⁷ Through Nietzsche’s talk of surveying one’s strengths and weaknesses, according to Gardner, he commits himself to a conscious self that can transcend the drives. Anderson terms this interpretation as *transcendentalism*. On the other hand, Anderson explains, we have the *naturalism* interpretation of, for example, Brian Leiter and Matthias Risse. This is the position that there is no conscious self over and above our drives, the self is merely ‘a social structure of the drives and affects.’ (*BGE*, 12)⁵⁸ The naturalists hold that on an occasion of surveying and taking action against drives, there is no conscious self separate to the drives. This is, rather, just a case of a dominant drive speaking for the self.

Anderson then presents his own, third interpretation, something of a halfway home between the two above interpretations. This is the idea of a minimal self which is neither the transcendental conscious self suggested by Gardner, or the simple identification of the self with the drives and affects suggested by the naturalists. Anderson suggests that according to Nietzsche, there is within us a repository of drives and affects that recruit and interact with one another. The Nietzschean self is something that is constituted of these drives and affects, and their interplay, so it does not transcend them. The Nietzschean self, however, ‘as a whole is something over and above the constituent drives and affects.’ (Anderson 2012: 225) This self, though minimal, can take up attitudes (including evaluative ones) towards the world, itself, and its constituent drives and affects. (See Anderson 2012: 228) The minimal self is capable of ‘standing back’ from the drives and affects and bringing a unity to them through

⁵⁶ Anderson (2012, 202-35).

⁵⁷ In this quote of Anderson, the second set of speech marks signify a quote of Gardner 2009: 19. (Gardner, S. 2009. ‘Nietzsche, the self, and the disunity of philosophical reason’, in Gemes, K. and May, S. (eds.), *Nietzsche on Freedom and Autonomy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press): 1-33.)

⁵⁸ My discussion is limited to drives, for its scope is the first four books of *The Gay Science* in which affects are not mentioned. Nietzsche refers to ‘the affect of command’ in book five of *The Gay Science*, written after *Beyond Good And Evil*. (*GS*, 347) Affects clearly form part of the ‘soul’ or self in later writing, and as such warrant enquiry.

‘regulating control over them.’ (Anderson 2012: 231) Thus, the minimal self is capable of self-creation.

Which of these interpretations is correct? To reiterate Gardner’s: Nietzsche commits himself to a conscious self capable of standing back from the drives. This is an understandable view, particularly given Gardner’s reading of Kant. To apply this view specifically to section 290 of *The Gay Science*, a conscious self stands back and surveys strengths and weakness, before removing a drive or dealing with it in some other fashion. There is, however, some basis for the idea that what surveys and deals with drives is not a conscious self but a dominant drive. In other words, there is some basis for the naturalist interpretation. Let’s start by returning to the six methods for combatting the vehemence of a drive in *Daybreak* 109. Nietzsche, in setting out the methods, talks in terms of an individual: ‘one can avoid opportunities for gratification of the drive...’, ‘one can impose upon oneself strict regularity in its gratification...’, ‘one can deliberately give oneself over to the wild and unrestrained gratification of a drive...’ (*D*, 109) It appears, so far, as though the person employs these methods. There is then, however, the grand reveal from Nietzsche:

that one desires to combat the vehemence of a drive at all, however, does not stand within our own power; nor does the choice of any particular method; nor does the success or failure of this method. What is clearly the case is that in this entire procedure our intellect is only the blind instrument of another drive which is a rival of the drive whose vehemence is tormenting us... While 'we' believe we are complaining about the vehemence of a drive, at bottom it is one drive which is complaining about another; that is to say: for us to become aware that we are suffering from the vehemence of a drive presupposes the existence of another equally vehement or even more vehement drive. (D, 109)

In sum, there is another vehement drive shaping the entire landscape of complaining, suffering, desiring and employing a particular method. While we believe that we are complaining about the vehemence of a drive, it is in fact another drive. The same goes for suffering the vehemence of a drive. Rather than our making the choice of a particular method, as we suppose we do, another vehement drive moves the intellect to identify a method. The title of the section is ‘Self-mastery and moderation and their ultimate motive’ –

the idea seems to be that what one experiences as self-mastery, as wanting moderation, is in fact the activity of one drive with respect to another.

Why might what one experiences as ‘giving style’ to one’s character not in fact be the activity of one drive with respect to others? *The Gay Science* was published only the year after section 109 of *Daybreak* and a conception of the self as constituted of drives (see *D*, 119). We do not find, outside of section 290 of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche laying out a new conception of the self that does not involve drives. Rather, he writes about the self in terms of drives. I shall now move through, step-by-step, ‘giving style’ to one’s character, offering a naturalist reading. To begin with, Nietzsche writes: ‘to “give style” to one’s character – a great and rare art!’ (*GS*, 290) Nietzsche might in fact conceive of two levels: the level of the person and the level of the drives.⁵⁹ One might talk of a person who surveys and arranges strengths and weaknesses, removes ugly aspects of himself etc.; there is, however, also another level – *the dominant drive* surveys and arranges strengths and weaknesses etc.

How do the levels of person and drives relate to one another? One possibility is that Nietzsche thought of ‘a person’ as a fiction, as he did in the following note written 3 years later⁶⁰: ‘To indulge the fable of “unity,” “soul,” “person,” this we have forbidden: with such hypotheses one only covers up the problem.’ (*KSA II*: 577, June-July 1885)⁶¹ On the naturalist interpretation of Nietzsche’s writing, it is the strongest drive which ‘speaks for the self’. (See Anderson 2012: 205) There are different drives which are, at different points, strongest and ‘speak for the self’. The idea of a person is erroneous, a ‘fable’, the reality is a plurality of drives. In the note just quoted to employ the fiction of ‘a person’ is *verboten*. This is, perhaps, in the context of philosophical investigation. In the context of day-to-day life, Nietzsche perhaps thought, talking of persons is relatively harmless; alternatively, thinking of persons is just how it is. Though in philosophical investigation or reflection one might negate the idea of personhood, in day-to-day life one thinks in terms of persons. Nietzsche’s thought is, perhaps, analogous to the idea in section 301 of *The Gay Science*: one catches the valuelessness of reality only momentarily, in reflecting, while in the current of

⁵⁹ Thanks to Christopher Janaway for this suggestion in private discussion.

⁶⁰ 3 years after *The Gay Science* was published in its original form in 1882: Nietzsche did not revise section 290 of the book for its expanded publication in 1887.

⁶¹ This translation is taken from the online Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Details are provided in my Bibliography, in which I also give the source that is translated on the web page.

life one perceives things as valuable.

This is one possible way of thinking about how the levels of person and drives in Nietzsche's thought relate to one another. This conception – in which it is drives that act – dispenses with the notions of freedom of the will and responsibility.⁶² Indeed, earlier in *The Gay Science* Nietzsche counts among errors 'that our will is free.' (*GS*, 110)

To return to section 290 of *The Gay Science* in particular, why would a dominant drive survey and arrange strengths and weaknesses into an artistic plan? To assume power over the other drives. In section 291 of *The Gay Science*, the very next section, Nietzsche writes: 'I keep seeing the builder, how he rests his gaze on everything built near and afar as well as on city, sea, and mountain contours, and how with his gaze he is perpetrating acts of violence and conquest: he wants to fit all this into *his* plan and finally make it into his *possession* by incorporating it into his plan.' (*GS*, 291) The builder would commit an act of violence in forcing those things into the structure of his plan. In such forcing he conquers them and, in virtue of their now being in his plan, he has power over them.

The dominant drive, using the intellect as a blind instrument,⁶³ surveys and arranges strengths and weaknesses. Why, though, would certain aspects of oneself be evaluated positively if they are rival drives to the dominant drive? This is perhaps because these are weaker drives that the dominant drive can easily combat to retain its status as speaking for the self, or easily defeat to assume the status of speaking for the self. These weaker drives are perhaps second nature. In 'The Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life', published in 1874 and the second of the *Untimely Meditations*, Nietzsche writes that 'second natures are usually weaker than first.' (*UM*, II.3)

The removal of an ugly aspect of one's nature, on a naturalist reading, is the dominant drive

⁶² There is an outward element to attaining satisfaction with oneself – Nietzsche writes that 'only then is a human being at all tolerable to *behold!*' (*GS*, 290; my emphasis.) A person dissatisfied with himself might avenge himself on others. At the very least, others would have to watch him avenge himself on himself – and 'the sight of something ugly makes one bad and gloomy.' (*GS*, 290) Whether this could represent an ethical element to 'giving style' – a person 'gives style' to himself partly to spare others the sight of him or his avenging himself on them – seems to depend on how we understand 'giving style'. Were we to understand this as in fact the activity of a dominant drive, then there do not appear to be the conditions, such as free-will, required for ethical activity. Nietzsche does, arguably, wish to dispense with the moral concepts of free-will and responsibility, as I have stated above.

⁶³ *D*, 109.

destroying a rival drive; in section 333 of *The Gay Science*, in which Nietzsche describes the unconscious process that precedes understanding, there is a picture of rival drives warring for expression. The concealing of an ugly aspect of one's nature might be rendered as the dominant drive suppressing a drive that is a rival for expression. A person's evaluation of aspects of their nature as ugly might be, at bottom, the dominant drive identifying and negatively evaluating other drives as threatening rivals. In *Daybreak*, as we have seen, Nietzsche writes: 'While "we" believe we are complaining about the vehemence of a drive, at bottom it is one drive *which is complaining about another.*' (*D*, 109) Another measure in 'giving style' to one's character is that a great mass of second nature is added to impede a piece of first. This might be interpreted from a naturalist perspective as the dominant drive displacing a piece of first nature. On this interpretation, the dominant drive would rival the first nature for expression and win, until the first nature no longer rivalled it. There doesn't seem to be any reason, however, to suppose that the dominant drive would necessarily be second nature, i.e. a drive acquired through the environment, on my interpretation. Suppose instead then that the second nature is a drive other than the dominant drive. The dominant drive uses this second nature to displace the piece of first. Why would this happen under the motivation of the dominant drive? This would not enable expression of the dominant drive – it would replace the expression of one drive which is not the dominant drive, with the expression of another drive which is not the dominant drive. It would, however, bring power to the dominant drive: whereas the first drive expressed itself independently of the dominant drive, the second would express itself on account of the dominant drive putting it there.

Another measure is to reinterpret something ugly into sublimity. Why would *this* happen under the motivation of the dominant drive? Possibly for the dominant drive to assume power over the other drive. We find in Nietzsche's later work the idea of reinterpretation as a form of assuming power over something.⁶⁴ And, in section 291 of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche writes of how the builder 'would, with a marvellous cunning of imagination, like to establish...[what he sees]...anew at least in thought; to put his hand to it, his meaning into it – if only for the moment of a sunny afternoon...only what is his own and nothing alien may appear to his eye.' (*GS*, 291) The builder acquires a psychological sense of possession and power through bringing what he sees into his own scheme, if only in his imagination. It's

⁶⁴ See, for example, *GM* II: 12.

possible that the dominant drive, in reinterpreting a drive, acquires a sense of power.

Nietzsche might understand there to be two levels in relation to a drive: the level of fact and the level of interpretation. At the level of fact, there are general facts about a drive – meaning facts that apply to the drives in general – and particular facts about it – meaning facts that are particular to that drive. Let’s take the example of the drive to food. General facts about the drive to food might include that it has an object and an aim, that it can make certain elements of our perceptual experience salient and that it can bring about selectivity in our perceptual experience. (See Katsafanas 2013: 727-55.) An obvious particular fact about the drive is that it has the object of food, broadly speaking. Now suppose someone had the drive to the food in front of them, say a bag of crisps. Amongst the facts here is that the drive to food has been stimulated by the bag of crisps, and that the drive has the bag of crisps as its object. There may also, however, be a level of interpretation, that this is greed.

It might be that the dominant drive acquires a sense of power over another drive at the level of interpretation, through reinterpreting the other drive. The builder, in section 291 of *The Gay Science*, gives meaning and acquires power over what he sees without changing it. The dominant drive might likewise, through reinterpretation, give a new meaning and acquire a sense of power over another drive without changing it.⁶⁵ This would not be a falsification because the dominant drive is not falsifying at the level of fact, rather it operates at the level of interpretation.

To take our final step in a naturalist reading of ‘giving style’ to one’s character, Nietzsche writes: ‘Much that is vague and resisted shaping has been saved and employed for distant views – it is supposed to beckon towards the remote and immense.’ (*GS*, 290) This might be interpreted as the dominant drive imposing the meaning of a function upon drives, namely to ‘beckon towards the remote and immense.’ (*Ibid.*) In *On The Genealogy of Morality*, Nietzsche associates such an imposition with a will-to-power: ‘all aims, all uses are merely *signs* indicating that a will to power has mastered something less powerful than itself and impressed the meaning of a function upon it.’ (*GM* II: 12) A naturalist interpretation of the relevant passage of *GS*, 290 might be that the dominant drive, with its will-to-power, masters

⁶⁵ This does raise the question of what bestowed the original interpretation upon the drive. On this reading, the answer would have to be another drive.

the drives weaker than itself and impresses the meaning of a function upon them.⁶⁶

Let's return to 'giving style' to one's character at the level of the person, rather than the level of the drives. A person after 'giving style' finds himself beautiful rather than, in part, ugly, as he did previously. According to Nietzsche, the very judgement of something as beautiful is an affirmation of it, a 'Yes' to it. (On the other side of the coin, the judgement of something as 'ugly' is a repudiation of it, a 'No' to it.) The following note of Nietzsche's I think supports this claim: 'The nose for what we could still barely deal with if it confronted us in the flesh...this determines even our aesthetic Yes. ("That is beautiful" is an affirmation.)' (WP, 852; *Spring - Autumn 1887, rev. Spring - Autumn 1888*)⁶⁷ A person, after 'giving style' to his character, finds himself beautiful. This is self-affirmation, for to find something beautiful is an affirmation. And affirmation of oneself leads to affirmation of life. In an unpublished note of 1885, Nietzsche describes a relationship between self-transfiguration and the transfiguration of existence: 'it is a sign that one has turned out well when, like Goethe, one clings with ever-greater pleasure and warmth to the "things of this world": – for in this way he holds firmly to the great conception of man, that man becomes the transfigurer of existence when he learns to transfigure himself.' (WP, 820; 1885) Although self-affirmation leads to life-affirmation, this is not an affirmation of all that has ever occurred and will ever occur in one's life. Nor is it an affirmation of life which cannot be disrupted by catastrophe. There is, nonetheless, an affirmation of life that results from self-affirmation. You might reflect on personal experience that bears some resemblance to this: when you are satisfied with yourself it leads to an affirmative or positive disposition towards things in life. When things go well in your studies you step onto the street and have a positive attitude towards the world.

Let's refresh on how *The Gay Science* is situated in Reginster's narrative: in *The Birth of Tragedy* there is life-affirmation based on illusion. By the time of *The Gay Science*, however,

⁶⁶ In *GS*, 290, we might have in inchoate form the will to power doctrine which is given expression in *On The Genealogy of Morality* (see *GM II*: 12).

⁶⁷ I have an issue in principle with using *The Will to Power*, given the historic involvement of Nietzsche's sister, Elisabeth. Elisabeth first published *The Will to Power*, propagating the idea that it represented 'Nietzsche's crowning systematic achievement, to which one had to turn for his final views.' (Kaufmann 1968: xiii) *The Will to Power* is not a systematic work by Nietzsche, but some of his notes posthumously extracted and gathered together. And one is much safer turning to Nietzsche's published works for his final views. All that said, I do not have the knowledge to refer to the notebooks in German, and the Stanford edition of Nietzsche's notebooks is incomplete at the present moment.

deception or falsification allows a person only to cope with or endure life, rather than to affirm it. Furthermore, by the time of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche has misgivings about whether an affirmation of life in which life is concealed is a genuine affirmation of life. Section 290 of *The Gay Science*, on the reading offered above, is consistent with Reginster's claims. The life-affirmation that results from self-affirmation is not based upon any falsification or deception. In a person's affirmation life is not concealed, partly or wholly, either. What if we were to assume that for Reginster, the above two claims would extend to *self*-affirmation for Nietzsche? On the naturalist reading offered, 'giving style' to one's character would not be inconsistent with the two claims. There is no falsification, deception or concealment in the 'giving style' to one's character or the resultant self-affirmation.

This chapter has offered a reading of section 290 of *The Gay Science* which is not inconsistent with Reginster's claims about the book. In the next chapter, I shall look at another section of *The Gay Science* which does challenge Reginster's claims about the work.

Chapter 4: *Making the things of life beautiful*

(i) *Introduction*

This chapter offers a reading of section 299 of *The Gay Science* which challenges Reginster's claims about the book. The section is entitled 'What one should learn from artists.' Here, Nietzsche remarks that one should learn from artists the various means they invent and employ to make things beautiful when they are not – one should learn these means to apply them to one's life. And were one to apply these means to one's life, in that much one would be wiser than artists, '[f]or usually in their case this delicate power stops where art ends and life begins.' (*GS*, 299) Indeed, we find in a later unpublished note that the application of artistic technique to life constitutes a 'higher concept' of art for Nietzsche: 'The *artist-philosopher*. Higher concept of art. Whether a man can place himself so far distant from other men that he can form them?' (*WP*, 795; 1885 - 6) From the first to the last, Nietzsche thought of art with respect to life. In section 299 of *The Gay Science*, artistic technique is understood as a means of enhancing and affirming life.

(ii) *The anti-realist reading: a response*

Nietzsche opens section 299 of *The Gay Science* with the following: 'What means do we have for making things beautiful, attractive, and desirable when they are not? And in themselves I think they never are!' (*GS*, 299) This has been interpreted by Nadeem J.Z Hussain along anti-realist lines.⁶⁸ That is to say, Hussain has interpreted Nietzsche as saying that things do not have value in themselves. Nietzsche thinks, on Hussain's interpretation, that artists can help us in the face of the value-lessness of things. Art provides a source of techniques that, refined, can enable us to have evaluative illusions – such as that things are beautiful – in our lives. The artist can help us 'deal with this lack of value in our lives.' (Hussain 2007: 164)

Nietzsche does indeed have an anti-realist stance in *The Gay Science*. In section 301 of the book, he states that 'Whatever has *value* in the present world has it not in itself, according to its nature – nature is always value-less.' (*GS*, 301; Cf. *WP*, 804, *Spring - Fall 1887*: 'To

⁶⁸ Hussain (2007, 157-88).

experience a thing as beautiful means: to experience it necessarily wrongly.’) It is my contention, however, that the idea driving section 299 of the work is something different – namely, that though we find the things of life ugly, through the application of artistic means we can make and find them beautiful. In writing on what means we have for making things beautiful when they are not, Nietzsche remarks: ‘Here we have something to learn from physicians, when for example they dilute something *bitter* or add wine and sugar to the mixing bowl.’ (GS, 299)⁶⁹ The equivalent to bitter taste in our lives is, I suggest, ugliness. We can learn something from how physicians replace unpleasant bitter taste with pleasant taste, for replacing ugliness with beauty in life. The anti-realism expressed in section 301 of *The Gay Science* does, I think, constrain our interpretation. Accordingly, things are not ugly in themselves before the employment of the physician’s means, and not beautiful in themselves after. Rather, we project or assign the values of ugliness and beauty to things. We find the things of life ugly before applying the physician’s means, and we find them beautiful after, but they are neither in themselves.

How would Hussain have interpreted what I have most recently quoted? He would have, I think, interpreted that the bitterness in life is the value-lessness of things. According to Hussain’s interpretation of Nietzsche, art ‘provides a source for techniques that, suitably refined, could help us succeed in regarding things as valuable outside the domain of art proper.’ (Hussain 2007: 172) Although Hussain is writing about art specifically this can reasonably be extended to the art of the physician, which provides a source of techniques. Artists and physicians, through their techniques or means, help us with the matter of things appearing as valuable in themselves, with the matter of experiencing things in the world ‘in some sense, as having their value in them.’ (*Ibid.*) This meets a problem. Nietzsche claims that we have something to learn from physicians for making things appear beautiful in themselves, when they are not. Were we to apply the physician’s means of dilution to the valueless-ness of things, this would not make things appear as having, in some sense, beauty in them. This would rather, by definition, make the valueless-ness of things weaker. A person would see the valueless-ness of things less strongly, rather than seeing things as beautiful in themselves.

⁶⁹ My emphasis.

There is a further problem if we consider the use of one of the artistic means under Hussain's interpretation. I shall soon discuss the different artistic means Nietzsche sets out, but let's now take the following means: 'to see things around a corner and as if they were cut out and extracted from their context.' (GS, 290) Were a person confronted with the valueless-ness of things, it is not at all clear how the person narrowing his view to one thing would help. His view would reduce to one *valueless* thing. Suppose, conversely, that we interpret Nietzsche as saying that we are confronted with the ugliness of things – an ugliness that we project or assign, rather than things being ugly in themselves. In narrowing our attention to something that we find beautiful, we make things beautiful. This makes better sense, I think, of the passage.

(iii) *The artistic means and their nature*

For Nietzsche, as we have seen, to find something beautiful is to affirm it: "That is beautiful" is an *affirmation*.' (WP, 852; *Spring - Fall 1887, rev. Spring - Fall 1888*) Were a person to transpose the artistic means set out in section 299 of *The Gay Science*, he would find life beautiful which would be to affirm it. The question with respect to Reginster's claims is as follows: do the means involve falsification or concealment of life? To address this question I shall now examine each of the artistic means. The first artistic means is: 'To distance oneself from things until there is much in them that one no longer sees and much that the eye must add *in order to see them at all*.' (GS, 299) An artist might find the overall design or form of a building pleasing, yet find the building to have imperfections, which might be designed or the result of time. In the artist establishing distance the imperfections of the building wash away, and he is left with the pleasing overall design. Would one remark that the building has imperfections which do not present at this distance, and so at this distance there is a falsification of the building? Might one, alternatively, characterize this as simply a different point of view from which those imperfections cannot be seen? One has not actively falsified the building, it's just that one passively cannot see the imperfections. We might find this a bit of a stretch if the artist has moved back with the purpose of the omission of those details. In talking about the measure of distance in relation to oneself, however, Nietzsche has a more complex view than this being simply falsification:

Only artists...have...taught the art of regarding oneself as a hero, from a distance and as it were simplified and transfigured – the art of "putting oneself on stage" before

oneself. Only thus can we get over certain lowly details in ourselves. Without this art we would be nothing but foreground, and would live entirely under the spell of that perspective which makes the nearest and most vulgar appear tremendously big and as reality itself. (*GS*, 78)

The measure of distance does not simply falsify, according to Nietzsche. Instead, it breaks a spell. A person requires distance to perceive his overall shape, and to break the spell of seeing the ‘lowly details’ of himself as ‘tremendously big’ and the entire reality of his being. (*Ibid.*) This distance accordingly removes a false impression of oneself. At a distance one is ‘*as it were* simplified and transfigured.’ (*GS*, 78) At a distance one simplified view – i.e. as simply a pleasing overall form, replaces another – i.e. as simply ‘lowly details.’ (*Ibid.*) Nietzsche acknowledges that the view at a distance *is* simplified in its omission of the ‘lowly details.’ (*GS*, 78) The emphasis in the section, however, is on distance *removing* the false impression which a person’s foreground perspective gives. In terms of a view of the overall form of oneself, the view at a distance seems to be truer than that at the foreground perspective. Suppose we apply these findings to the adoption of the artistic means of distance in section 299 of *The Gay Science*. In establishing distance with respect to the events of life, it may not be that a person is simply engaged in falsification. A person might in fact be removing a false impression and acquiring a truer view of the overall form of a situation.

In light of these considerations, to characterize the adoption of the artistic means of distance as a falsification does not seem to capture the complexity of Nietzsche’s position. Nietzsche does also write about distancing oneself from things ‘until there is...much that the eye must add *in order to see them at all.*’ (*GS*, 299) In the domain of art a painter might, for example, encounter a cathedral he finds beautiful except for its set of doors, which he finds ugly. In distancing himself sufficiently from the cathedral, the doors disappear entirely from his view. In order to see them at all, as it were, the painter must invent and add a set of doors. The painter can invent a beautiful set of doors, thus rendering the overall cathedral as beautiful. This beautiful set of doors is an invention and falsification – the cathedral does not have this set of doors but another set.

How would a person transpose this artistic technique for life? A person might distance themselves, so to speak, with respect to a situation of life so that they only see the overall shape of it, just as the painter only sees the overall form of the cathedral. In doing so, a less palatable aspect of the situation is absent, an aspect of cruelty for example. The person puts

in place of the aspect of cruelty something beautiful, say kindness. This is an invention and falsification – there is not kindness but rather cruelty.

After bringing himself to the overall shape of a situation of life and falsifying an aspect of it, the person finds the situation of life beautiful. He thus affirms it, because according to Nietzsche to find something beautiful is to affirm it. This affirmation, however, is based partly on falsification. This interpretation challenges the first of Reginster's claims, namely that by the time of *The Gay Science*, falsification enables a person only to cope with or endure life, rather than to affirm it. It also challenges Reginster's thought that by the time of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche has begun to move in the direction of affirming life *as it is*: here we have affirmation of life partly falsified.

The next artistic means Nietzsche sets out in section 299 of *The Gay Science* is: 'to see things around a corner and as if they were cut out and extracted from their context.' (*GS*, 299) Let's consider this from the point of view of art first of all. Suppose an artist is confronted with three buildings. The central building he finds beautiful, the outer buildings not so. The artist narrows his view and his work to the central building. There is no falsification here: the artist views the central building and his art reflects his view. Were the artist to have a view of the three buildings but depict only the central one, that would be a falsification. The artist, in viewing the central building only, is looking at a part of the world. This is what he does in viewing the three buildings too. It is, in fact, what we always do. A person who in his application of this artistic means to life is wiser than the artist, narrows his view of things. What he sees is true. He does not negate, in his mind, the context of that which he sees, which would be a falsification. Rather, his attention is only on that which he sees. This person has a true view and does not falsify its context, much like the painter.

Another artistic means to which Nietzsche refers is 'to place...[things]...so that each partially distorts the view one has of the others and allows only perspectival glimpses.' (*GS*, 299) The German word translated as 'distorts' in the quote is *verstellen*, which can be translated as adjust/change/alter or obstruct/block. The artist actively arranges objects such that they partially block one another from view. How would the adoption of this artistic means in life translate? One would actively block and conceal from view the ugliness which largely prevails in a situation with the beauty of another. One finds things beautiful, and thus affirms them, because of concealment of their ugliness. This poses a challenge to the second of

Reginster's claims, namely that by the time of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche has misgivings about whether a person who affirms 'life' – but where life is concealed – is engaged in a *genuine* affirmation of life. The affirmation brought about by the artistic means just discussed relies on concealment of life.

Nietzsche also describes this artistic means for making things beautiful when they are not: 'to look at...[things]...through coloured glass or in the light of the sunset.' (*GS*, 299) First, let's take looking at things through coloured glass. An artist encounters a scene of life that he does not find beautiful. In then looking at it through green glass, however, he gives the scene a new aspect and makes it beautiful. This is not a falsification: there is in no sense a claim on the part of the artist that reality is how it is presented through the green glass. Looking at things in the light of the sunset is similar to looking at them through coloured glass, in as much as they have a beautiful aspect. The artist looking at a building or tree in the light of the sunset sees and depicts it as beautiful. This is not a falsification, rather it is how the building or the tree appears at that point in time.

How would a person transpose this artistic technique for life? Nietzsche's idea seems to be, broadly, that a person imposes a beautiful aspect on a scene of life. What does this look like in a non-artistic context? It might mean imposing a new interpretation on a situation that a person finds ugly. Reinterpretation certainly features elsewhere in *The Gay Science* and Nietzsche's corpus. One might find another person's situation terrible and ugly, for example. One might, however, reinterpret this as a situation in which the person can develop their strength, their own powers of reinterpretation, their cunning perhaps. In section 225 of *Beyond Good And Evil*, Nietzsche writes of: 'That tension of the soul in misfortune which cultivates its strength.' (*BGE*, 225) And in section 338 of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche writes: 'there is a personal necessity of misfortune; that terrors, deprivations, impoverishments, midnights, adventures, risks, and blunders are as necessary for me and you as their opposites; indeed, to express myself mystically, that the path to one's own heaven always leads through the voluptuousness of one's own hell.' (*GS*, 335) Nietzsche does not seem to consider such interpretation as falsification. The imposition of a new aspect on a scene of life does not have to mean a falsification of it.

The final approach we should learn from artists that Nietzsche sets out is ‘to give...[things] ...a surface and skin that is not fully transparent.’ (GS, 299)⁷⁰ Nietzsche might here refer to the beauty and appeal of the enigmatic in painting. The most famous example of this is ‘Mona Lisa’ by the Italian Renaissance artist Leonardo Da Vinci. This work appeals to and beguiles people. At least part of the beauty and appeal of the work derives from its mystery. The work achieves a potency through having a surface and skin that is not fully transparent. (*Ibid.*) Nietzsche perhaps thinks we could take in hand a situation of life that confronts us as ugly, and transform it into something enigmatic, beautiful and potent. We could do this by not making the situation fully transparent. Would the use of such a means in life constitute a falsification or concealment? We might think of the beauty and appeal of ‘Mona Lisa’ as deriving, in part, from its partial obscurement or concealment. We might understand the same as applying to a situation of life after application of the relevant means. This would cast doubt on one of Reginster’s claims, namely that by the time of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche has misgivings about whether a person who affirms ‘life’ – but where life is concealed – is engaged in a *genuine* affirmation of life. In giving a situation of life a surface and skin not fully transparent, a person finds a situation beautiful and affirms it through the concealment of life.

(iv) Conclusion

In section 299 of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche suggests that we should learn the means of artists and apply them to life. In applying such means, we would make that which we find ugly in life beautiful instead. The principal intention of this chapter has been to challenge Reginster’s claims about *The Gay Science*. According to Reginster, by the time of *The Gay Science* falsification enables a person only to cope with or endure life, rather than to affirm it. In this chapter, however, we have found that in section 299 of *The Gay Science*, falsification partially contributes to a person’s affirmation of life. Reginster also claims that with *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche begins to doubt whether an affirmation in which life is concealed is a *genuine* affirmation of life. In looking at certain means applied to life in section 299 of the book, however, this chapter has found affirmation of life reliant on concealment of it.

⁷⁰ There might be more approaches to learn from artists, for Nietzsche remarks that artists ‘are really constantly out to invent new artistic *tours de force* of this kind.’ (GS, 299)

In this chapter, and in the thesis overall, I am calling into question Reginster's narrative. One of the ideas belonging to this narrative is that *The Gay Science* initiates a concern with the *genuine* affirmation of life: the affirmation of life as it is. I am not suggesting that Nietzsche does not have a concern with the affirmation of life as it is. As we shall see later in this thesis, there are examples of this in Nietzsche's later works. I am simply suggesting that the picture is more complex than Reginster's narrative suggests.

Chapter 5: *Eternal Recurrence*

(i) *Introduction*

Nietzsche valued his idea of eternal recurrence. He employed it repeatedly, declaring it the ‘fundamental idea’ and ‘basic conception’ of what he considered his finest work, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. (EH, ‘Zarathustra’, I) Nietzsche first wrote on eternal recurrence in *The Gay Science*. I shall reproduce the relevant section in full given that it is the subject of discussion of this chapter:

What if some day or night a demon were to steal into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: ‘This life as you now live it and have lived it you will have to live once again and innumerable times again; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unspeakably small or great in your life must return to you, all in the same succession and sequence – even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and I myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned over again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!’ Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: ‘You are a god, and never have I heard anything more divine.’ If this thought gained power over you, as you are it would transform and possibly crush you; the question in each and every thing, ‘Do you want this again and innumerable times again?’ would lie on your actions as the heaviest weight! Or how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life *to long for nothing more fervently* than for this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal?

There are numerous things to unpack in this passage. Before attempting to unpack these, I shall briefly note the origins of this idea of eternal return.

(ii) *Origins*

In Nietzsche’s later book *Ecce Homo*, he describes the origins of the idea of eternal recurrence:

‘[T]he *idea of eternal recurrence*, the highest formula of affirmation that can possibly be attained – belongs to the August of the year 1881: it was jotted down on a piece of paper with the inscription: “6,000 feet beyond man and time”. I was that day walking through the woods beside the lake of Silvaplana; I stopped beside a mighty pyramidal

block of stone which reared itself up not far from Surlei. Then this idea came to me.’
(*EH*, IX, 1)

The above passage suggests eternal recurrence was a new idea prompted by a mighty pyramid-like stone of affirming world and personal history. As Robin Small points out, however, in the summer of 1881 Nietzsche had, indirectly, read the work of Johannes Gustav Vogt. Vogt wrote on cosmology, including a book called *Die Kraft*. In *Die Kraft*, Vogt sets out a number of ideas including that of ‘[a]n eternal circular course, an eternal coming and going of worlds and, with them, of feeling, thinking and knowing beings.’ (Small 1988: 138; Small’s translation of Vogt.) Nietzsche had read a long, critical review of Vogt’s *Die Kraft* by Otto Caspari, and so knew the above idea of Vogt’s. (*Ibid.*) Further, in volume one of *The World as Will and Representation*, which I assume Nietzsche read in full, Schopenhauer writes of:

A man...who found satisfaction in life and took perfect delight in it; who desired, in spite of calm deliberation, that the course of his life as he had hitherto experienced it should be of...constant recurrence; and whose courage to face life was so great that, in return for life’s pleasures, he would willingly and gladly put up with all the hardships and miseries to which it is subject. (*WWR*, I, §54)

Although Nietzsche was perhaps not dishonest in his account of the origins of eternal recurrence, it seems that there were on some level interacting influences. Vogt’s idea of an ‘eternal circular course, an eternal coming and going of worlds’ was a cosmological theory. Did Nietzsche think of eternal recurrence as a cosmological theory, as how reality is, or did he think of it instead as a thought experiment?

(iii) *Eternal return – how reality is or a thought experiment?*

In Nietzschean scholarship there are, broadly speaking, two views about the status of eternal recurrence in Nietzsche’s thought. There is on the one hand the view that Nietzsche took eternal recurrence to be how reality is. On the other hand, there is the view that Nietzsche took eternal recurrence to be a thought experiment.

A proponent of the former view is Danto in his book, *Nietzsche as Philosopher*.⁷¹ Danto interprets eternal recurrence as striking Nietzsche as a ‘revelation...of a mystical order.’ (Danto 1965: 209) He writes: ‘Overbeck tells us that Nietzsche spoke of it in whispers (as

⁷¹ Another proponent is Kaufmann (1968, 307-36).

Zarathustra speaks to the dwarf) and alluded to it as an unheard-of revelation.’ (Danto 1965: 203) Nietzsche speaking of the eternal return in whispers is not an indication that he took it to be a reality. He might have been playfully or teasingly identifying with his character, Zarathustra. It is somewhat harder to explain away Nietzsche’s reference to the eternal recurrence as ‘an unheard-of revelation.’ Perhaps Nietzsche was testing to see whether Overbeck could affirm eternal recurrence rather than genuinely believing in it.

Danto also writes: ‘He [Nietzsche] was, according to Lou Salomé, reluctant to disclose it [eternal recurrence] to the world until he could find the scientific confirmation he thought it must have if it was to be accepted. He regarded it as “the most scientific of hypotheses.” He came to believe he had a proof for it which was scientifically impregnable.’ (Danto 1965: 203) That Nietzsche believed he had an undefeatable proof for eternal recurrence is dubious given that he never published it. Nietzsche had no issue in principle with publishing a proof: as Danto points out, there is in Nietzsche’s notes a sketch for a book, which would present ‘the theoretical presuppositions and consequences of the doctrine, its proof, its probable consequences in case it should be believed, and some suggestions as to how it might be endured, its role in history, and so on.’ (Danto 1965: 204)

The now prevalent reading of eternal recurrence is as a thought experiment, as Huddleston remarks. (Huddleston 2015: 2) Huddleston himself is a proponent of this view, as are Ridley and Williams.⁷² Ridley and Williams both acknowledge that Nietzsche toys with or treats eternal recurrence as a theoretical idea in his notebooks, but claim it does not have such status in his published works. (See Ridley 2007: 103 and Williams 2001: xvi) Williams writes of eternal recurrence in Nietzsche’s published works: ‘This is an entirely hypothetical question, a thought-experiment.’ (Williams 2001: xvi) Those who view eternal recurrence as a thought experiment do not see it as free from problems, with some attempts having been made to ease such problems. (See Clark 1990 and Reginster 2006.)

All things considered, it seems to me that Nietzsche thought of eternal recurrence as something more than a mere thought-experiment but was not entirely comfortable with publishing it as such. Perhaps he did not feel armed with an adequate proof of the claim to avoid a negative reception, perhaps he did not have sufficient confidence in the idea. The fictional nature of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* provided sufficient cover, perhaps, for Nietzsche to present the idea as how things are rather than as a mere hypothetical.

⁷² Huddleston (2015); Ridley (2007, 102-11); Williams (2001, xv-xvii).

The focus of this chapter is section 341 of *The Gay Science* which, in my view, presents eternal return as a thought experiment. I shall now look at whether the section pertains only to the eternal recurrence of one's own life or to that of world history too.

(iv) *Questions of scope*

Section 341 of *The Gay Science* throws up a couple of questions of scope. The first is whether Nietzsche is writing about affirmation of one's life *and* the world. Williams and Huddleston take Nietzsche to be writing about both, with differing ideas on where the emphasis lies. (With Williams, the emphasis is upon the past and present of the world rather than of one's life, with Huddleston vice-versa.)

It is reasonable to think that section 341 of *The Gay Science* is about affirmation of both one's life *and* the world. As Huddleston remarks, Nietzsche explicitly refers to the affirmation of both elsewhere. Additionally, the birth of the idea is before 'a mighty pyramidal block of stone,'⁷³ which suggests that the idea includes world history. There is also some reference to the world in the section of *The Gay Science* itself: 'The eternal hourglass of existence is turned over again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!' (*GS*, 341) It is my view, however, that in section 341 of *The Gay Science* specifically, the object of affirmation (or otherwise) is only the eternal recurrence of one's own life. The section refers to the eternal recurrence of one's life throughout apart from a single reference to the eternal recurrence of everything else, quoted above, which in context seems a mere backdrop as far as affirmation goes. Clark seems to share the view that specifically in section 341 of *The Gay Science*, the object of affirmation is only oneself and one's own life. (See Clark 1990: 251-2, also 266-7.)

Section 341 of *The Gay Science* speaks of the eternal recurrence of one's past and present. Moving to the second question of scope now, does it speak also of the eternal recurrence of one's future, of the actions one will perform in one's life? Part of the section might tempt us to think so. Nietzsche writes: 'If this thought gained power over you, as you are it would transform and possibly crush you; the question in each and every thing, "Do you want this again and innumerable times again?" would lie on your actions as the heaviest weight!' (*GS*, 341) One might interpret this in the following way: how a person will act – and he himself through his actions – might be transformed by the thought that it will echo through eternity.

⁷³ *EH*, IX, 1.

Alternatively, a person might be crushed under the heavy weight that the actions they perform will recur *ad infinitum*. As Kundera puts it in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*: ‘In the world of eternal return the weight of unbearable responsibility lies heavy on every move we make.’ (Kundera 1985: 5) Ivan Soll sees eternal recurrence as a decision criterion: perform only those actions you would will to recur eternally. (See Soll 1973: 322-42) What follows in section 341 of *The Gay Science*, however, pulls in a different direction to such readings: ‘how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life *to long for nothing more fervently* than for this eternal confirmation and seal?’ (GS, 341) It is not a case of shaping your actions and self such that you long for the ‘eternal confirmation and seal,’ but rather it is a case of being well disposed to yourself and to life. In being well disposed to yourself and to your life, you can affirm your past. The next section shall interpret how Nietzsche might have thought this possible.

(v) *The nature of affirmation*

Nietzsche asks what if ‘some day or night’ a demon presented you with eternal recurrence? With respect to affirming eternal recurrence, however, he asks: ‘have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: “You are a god, and never have I heard anything more divine.”’ (GS, 341) It is not a matter of affirming eternal return on some day or night that the demon shows up, then. The question is whether there has been a particular tremendous moment in which you would have affirmed the eternal recurrence. Huddleston helpfully points out that the German word which Kaufmann translates as ‘tremendous’ – *ungeheuer* – has a rich ambiguity, also meaning monstrous. (Huddleston 2015: 29) For Nietzsche, a moment of affirming one’s past and present is tremendous and monstrous, as is the idea of affirming their eternal return. Indeed, for anyone who has lived long enough or been unfortunate enough for certain events to occur, affirmation of the eternal return of their past seems monstrous. Nietzsche refers later to the idea of eternal return as ‘my real idea from the abyss.’ (EH, I, 3) His deepest personal objection to eternal return was the monstrous way his mother and sister treated him: ‘The treatment I have received from my mother and sister, up to the present moment, fills me with inexpressible horror: there is an absolutely hellish machine at work here, operating with infallible certainty at the precise moment when I am most vulnerable – at my highest moments.’ (*Ibid.*)

In the moment of affirming the eternal return of one’s present and past, what would the nature of the affirmation be? Would it be purely affective? This seems to lack the substance

for the ultimate test of affirmation that Nietzsche considers eternal recurrence to be.⁷⁴ Purely affective affirmation does not really engage with the events at hand nor does it possess interpretive substance. At the same time, Nietzsche does write of a moment. At the end of the section, he asks: ‘how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life *to long for nothing more fervently* than for this eternal confirmation and seal?’ (GS, 341) Nietzsche is perhaps describing a moment in which one is *so* well disposed to oneself and one’s life, that one affirms and wills the eternal recurrence of past things because of their connection to this state of things. This raises two questions: What sort of connection between the past and the present does Nietzsche have in mind? And is Nietzsche talking about willing the eternal recurrence of *everything* in one’s past?

The demon’s presentation of the idea certainly suggests the eternal recurrence of *everything*: ‘every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unspeakably small or great in your life.’ (GS, 341) As Huddleston has reasonably pointed out, ‘one will not actually be able to catalogue...most of the events in one’s life... particularly if they have faded from memory.’ (Huddleston 2015: 24) One will not be able to catalogue every thought, every sigh, everything unspeakably small in one’s life. Yet does one not have to hold everything in one’s mind to affirm and to will its eternal recurrence? One possibility is that Nietzsche means that one affirms one’s past and wills its eternal return because it constitutes a causal chain to a state of self and life to which one is so well disposed. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, published over the three years following the publication of *The Gay Science* (first edition), we find the following passage:

Did you ever say Yes to one joy? O my friends, then you said Yes to *all* woe as well. All things are chained and entwined together, all things are in love; if ever you wanted one moment twice, if ever you said: “You please me, happiness, instant, moment!” then you wanted *everything* to return! (TSZ, ‘The Drunken Song,’ 10)

Suppose in section 341 of *The Gay Science*, the idea is that one affirms the eternal return of the whole of one’s past because it forms a causal chain to a state to which one is so well disposed. This need not involve having in mind and affirming the eternal return of each and every event in one’s past. How substantial such an affirmation of one’s past would be is questionable. Such an interpretation, however, seems plausible: it accommodates a person affirming every thing in their past, which the section of *The Gay Science* suggests, without

⁷⁴ Nietzsche’s use of drugs might have brought him to ideas of affirmation.

their having each and every past event in mind, which would and could not happen. As we have seen, the interpretation also relates to what Nietzsche writes shortly after in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

Nietzsche thinks that the past *does* form a causal chain to the present in a person's life; therefore, in so far as a person who wills the eternal recurrence of his life holds this idea, Nietzsche does not think that he falsifies matters. And the idea of one's past recurring eternally is presented as a thought experiment, neither setter or participant falsifying how reality is (though as I have said I think eternal return was more than a thought experiment for Nietzsche). The setter of a thought experiment is attempting to draw something out in a person, their value hierarchy or the nature of their belief, say. The participant in a thought experiment might make a real effort of imagination to yield a proper result, but this is not their falsifying reality.

I do not think, under this interpretation, that *amor fati* is at play in Nietzsche's presentation of eternal recurrence in *The Gay Science* either.⁷⁵ Nietzsche gives the conception of *amor fati* at the start of book four of *The Gay Science*: 'I want to learn more and more how to see what is necessary in things as what is beautiful in them – thus I will be one of those who make things beautiful. *Amor fati*: let that be my love from now on! I do not want to wage war against ugliness.' (*GS*, 276) Nietzsche wishes to reinterpret what is necessary in things, i.e. fate, thus making and finding them beautiful. To find these things beautiful is, for Nietzsche, to affirm them, as expressed in the ambition that closes the section: 'And, all in all and on the whole: some day I want only to be a Yes-sayer!' (*Ibid.*) Additionally, as we have seen for Nietzsche, "That is beautiful" is an *affirmation*.' (*WP*, 852; *Spring - Autumn 1887, rev. Spring - Autumn 1888*) Under the current interpretation of eternal recurrence, the basis for willing the eternal repetition of the past is not that one has reinterpreted and so come to love it; the basis is, rather, that the past is instrumental to a state and life to which one is so well disposed.⁷⁶

I shall now briefly offer an alternative way Nietzsche might have meant willing the eternal recurrence of one's past. Briefly because this way does not involve affirmation of *everything* in one's past and so ignores what seems to be an interpretive constraint. (Reginster resists reading Nietzsche as really meaning an affirmation of everything in one's past; see Reginster,

⁷⁵ Others have, under different interpretations, made a connection between eternal recurrence and *amor fati*; see, for example, Huddleston (2015).

⁷⁶ Nietzsche only later, I think, brings together the ideas of eternal recurrence and *amor fati*. (See *WP*, 1041).

2006.) I mention it at all because the reading possesses some degree of plausibility in providing more substance to the idea of eternal return, or in tying it to passages and motifs elsewhere in Nietzsche's writing.

Nietzsche could mean that a person affirms *certain features* of his past because they have contributed to who he is now and his current life, things to which he is so well disposed. A person's past trouble might be affirmed for giving him the quality of strength he now possesses. This constitutes giving form to one's life, and so such a reading would participate in the theme of form-giving in Nietzsche's writing. This reading bears some similarity to another section of *The Gay Science*. In section 277, Nietzsche writes that if we reach a certain high point in life there is an accompanying danger, namely the thought of a personal providence. (*GS*, 277) Should we see how 'everything that befalls us continually *turns out for the best*,' there is the risk of believing in a personal deity and providence, which would bring 'spiritual unfreedom.' (*Ibid.*) Some of the examples Nietzsche gives of things turning out for the best include bad weather, sickness and slander. According to Nietzsche, what undergirds things turning out for the best is, at least to some extent, that 'our own practical and theoretical skill in interpreting and arranging events has now reached its apex.' (*GS*, 277) We arrange and draw a connection between bad weather and the production of a treatise, between sickness and an insight. The reading of eternal recurrence we are considering is similar in that interpretations and arrangements are made, connections drawn, between one's past trouble and present strength, for example.

This reading of affirming and willing to eternity certain features of one's past is more realistic than having in mind and willing each and every thing in one's past. Is such form-giving falsification? Not necessarily. Elements of one's past can be correctly selected on account of their significance. That the remainder is omitted does not constitute falsification, such things may not be relevant.

Of the above two readings of section 341 of *The Gay Science*, the first seems the most plausible. To reiterate it, Nietzsche asks whether there has been a moment in which one was so well disposed to oneself and one's life, that one could have willed the eternal recurrence of the whole causal chain of the past to that state. Such a reading observes the interpretive constraint that the eternal return encompasses *everything* in one's past, while not requiring a person to have each and every thing in mind. It also relates to what Nietzsche writes in his next work, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. This interpretation does not involve falsification.

Nietzsche thinks that a person's past does form a causal chain to his present; therefore, in so far as a person who wills the eternal recurrence of his life holds this idea, Nietzsche does not think that he falsifies matters. Eternal recurrence is a thought experiment, neither setter or participant falsifies how reality is. This interpretation is not inconsistent with Reginster's claim that by the time of *The Gay Science*, falsification only enables one to tolerate or endure life, not to affirm it. Indeed, if we take the other, in my view weaker, reading of section 341 of *The Gay Science*, we find that it is not necessarily inconsistent with Reginster's claim.

Part III: *Later Writings* (1883-1888)

Chapter 6: *Case studies from the unpublished notes*

(i) *Introduction*

This chapter shall look at some of Nietzsche's unpublished writing⁷⁷ after the first edition of *The Gay Science* (1882); the next chapter shall turn to some of Nietzsche's published works written after 1882. The overarching intention is to show, *contra* Reginster, that there continues to be life-affirmation based on art and falsification in Nietzsche's writing after 1882. First, however, I shall lay down two claims which would be uncontroversial to Reginster and Nietzschean scholars more generally.

(ii) *A couple of claims of continuity*

In Nietzsche's writing after *The Birth of Tragedy*, we can trace two continuities (possibly more) with that first book of his. The first continuity consists in the idea that there are dimensions of existence that have negative value. Such dimensions do not have negative value *in themselves* for Nietzsche, given his anti-realist standpoint on value, but they have negative value for a subject. The second continuity is in Nietzsche's characterizing art as 'falsity', 'lies', 'untrue', 'unreal', also 'beautiful', and his view that art can serve or be used for an important function in life.

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, the dimensions of existence which have negative value include meaninglessly suffering existence and mortality (the termination of this existence). The beautiful, untrue art of the Olympian Gods serves an important function in the lives of the Ancient Greeks, for example. 'In order to be able to live, the Greeks were obliged to create these gods, out of the deepest necessity,' to whom the Greeks stood in a relation of self-deception or falsification. (*BT*, 3)

⁷⁷ The unpublished writing is drawn from *The Will To Power*, which samples and categorizes Nietzsche's notes.

In the first edition of *The Gay Science*, there are elements of existence that have negative value as a person finds them, as it were. In section 299, for example, Nietzsche claims that the things of life are, as a person finds them, ugly. Nietzsche advises we should use art for the important function of finding the things of life beautiful and thus affirming them.

Four years later in *Beyond Good And Evil*,⁷⁸ it seems a truth about existence can be ‘harmful,’ ‘dangerous,’ even destructive in principle:

Something might be true although at the same time harmful and dangerous in the highest degree; indeed, it could pertain to the fundamental nature of existence that a complete knowledge of it would destroy one – so that the strength of a spirit could be measured by how much ‘truth’ it could take, more clearly, to what degree it *needed* it attenuated, veiled, sweetened, blunted, and falsified. (*BGE*, 39)

In a later section of this work, Nietzsche writes with respect to ‘burnt children’ who’ve dived beneath the surface of reality with ‘disastrous results’: ‘these born artists who can find the enjoyment of life only in the intention of falsifying its image.’ (*BGE*, 59) In referring to such people as ‘born artists’ because they falsify life, Nietzsche reveals that he identifies artists as engaging in falsification of life. Art can be ‘falsity’, for Nietzsche.

Moving into Nietzsche’s late unpublished notes, he writes: ‘Truth is ugly. We possess *art* lest we *perish of the truth*.’ (*WP*, 822; 1888) Here, we find the idea that there are elements of existence, or truths, that have negative value for us. Such negative value, in fact, that we might perish from them, in some sense, were it not for art. Once again for Nietzsche, art serves an important function for life – it removes the risk of perishing from the truth, in some sense.

As far as I have seen, Nietzschean scholars are unanimous in thinking that in this note of 1888, art is beautiful. There is also the view among Nietzschean scholars that in this note, art

⁷⁸ In the period between *The Gay Science*, first edition and *Beyond Good And Evil*, Nietzsche wrote *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883-5). Nietzsche considered *Zarathustra* his greatest work and he wrote modestly – deranged, unfortunately – of it in *Ecce Homo*: ‘I have with this book given mankind the greatest gift that has ever been given it.’ (*EH*, ‘Foreword,’ 4) When Nietzsche sent a copy of *Beyond Good And Evil* to Jacob Burckhardt, he made the accompanying statement: ‘Please read this book (although it says the same things as my *Zarathustra*, but differently, very differently).’ (22nd September, 1886) (Tanner 2003: 7)

is falsity,⁷⁹ though this is not unanimous. Ridley presents a differing view in his paper... My own interpretation is that the note sets up a contrast between ugly truth and the beautiful falsity of art. Should one accept that in the note art is falsity and beautiful, affirmation seems to follow given Nietzsche's claim: "That is beautiful" is an *affirmation*.' (WP, 852; *Spring - Autumn 1887, rev. Spring - Autumn 1888*) The result of this would be an affirmation of life, or part thereof, in which life is falsified. This leads us on to the attempt to show, *contra* Reginster, that in Nietzsche's later writings there is still life-affirmation based on art and falsification.

(iii) *A chain reaction of affirmation*

As we have seen, Nietzsche thinks of art in relation to life. In this relation should and does art, according to Nietzsche, serve any function in our lives beyond saving us from the truth?⁸⁰ The answer to this is, I think, yes, and in this much I agree with Reginster. In a note of 1887, Nietzsche writes: 'Art, knowledge, morality are *means*...in them the aim of enhancing life.' (WP, 298; *Spring - Fall 1888*) How can art enhance life? Aside from the experience of art itself, one possibility is that Nietzsche thought art could set off a kind of chain reaction of affirmation. He writes:

'affirmations of beauty excite and stimulate each other; once the aesthetic drive is at work, a whole host of other perfections, originating elsewhere, crystallize around "the particular instance of beauty."...the judgement of beauty...lavishes upon the object that inspires it a magic conditioned by the association of various beauty judgments—that are quite alien to the nature of that object.' (WP, 804; *Spring - Fall 1887*)

A person finds a tree with white blossom beautiful, for example. The sight of the tree stimulates what Nietzsche calls 'the aesthetic drive' in the person. With the aesthetic drive in operation, the person finds other things beautiful. It might even be that such internal conditions determine and restrict one's visual field to 'other perfections.' This is like the idea that if one has a goal it determines what one sees, in a literal sense; should a person change from one goal to another, the objects in one's visual field fall away and new ones appear.

⁷⁹ E.g. Janaway (2014: 39-56).

⁸⁰ And the contained *experience* of painting, for example, that we can have.

The ‘other perfections,’ or other beautiful things, to which Nietzsche refers are not beautiful in themselves – Nietzsche writes in this very note that ‘To experience a thing as beautiful means: to experience it necessarily wrongly.’ (*Ibid.*)

This note seems to refer to beauty-judgements and affirmation in life, rather than in art. Nietzsche writes of ‘The most habitual affirmations of beauty,’ and gives the example of ‘The sight of a “beautiful woman.”’ (*WP*, 804; *Spring - Fall 1887*) There is no reason in principle, however, that a series of beauty-judgements and affirmations in life couldn’t be originated by a work of art. A painting or sculpture might stimulate the aesthetic drive with beauty-judgements and affirmations of life following. And should Nietzsche’s example of the sight of a ‘beautiful woman’ make it all sound sexual, this would not preclude a work of art as the starting point. Nietzsche writes that ‘The demand for art and beauty is an indirect demand for the ecstasies of sexuality communicated to the brain.’ (*WP*, 805; *1883 - 1888*)⁸¹ He also writes critically of Schopenhauer valuing beauty ‘especially as redeemer from the “focus of the will”, from sexuality – in beauty he sees the procreative impulse *denied*...Singular saint!...what *makes* beauty *appear*?’ (*TI*, IX, 22) The sexual nature of art-reception (as well as art-generation) in Nietzsche’s writing would allow art as the origin of a chain of beauty-judgements and affirmations in life.

(iv) *Art, strength and affirmation of life*

Another way in which art might have the capacity to enhance life, for Nietzsche, is through providing the inward conditions by which one can affirm life. Nietzsche talks about affirmation in relation to strength and power:

The feeling of plenitude, of *dammed-up strength* (which permits one to meet with courage and good-humor much that makes the weakling *shudder*)—the feeling of *power* applies the judgment “beautiful” even to things and conditions that the instinct of impotence could only find *hateful* and “ugly.” (*WP*, 852; *Spring - Fall 1887, rev.*)

⁸¹ Cf. *WP*, 811; *March - June 1888* on the artist and audience: ‘It is the same here as with the difference between the sexes: one ought not to demand of the artist, who gives, that he should become a woman – that he should receive.’ The sexual nature of this analogy is not incidental – for Nietzsche the artist and the art-audience are sexual.

Spring - Fall 1888. Cf. WP 800; March - June 1888: “becoming more beautiful” is a consequence of enhanced strength.’)

The scope of affirmation is broader for those with strength and potency than for those who lack them. Particular things and conditions are found ‘beautiful’ and thus affirmed which, in the case of those who lack strength and potency, are found ‘ugly’ and thus repudiated. To find something beautiful, according to Nietzsche, is to affirm it, expressed in his writing in the form of a ‘Yes’ (*GS*, 276, for example); to find something ‘ugly’, conversely, is to repudiate it, expressed in his writing in the form of a ‘No.’ (See *WP*, 809; *March – June 1888*)

Art, according to Nietzsche, can bring strength and therefore, it seems, can increase the scope of life-affirmation. ‘All art works tonically, increases strength...The ugly, i.e., the contradiction to art, that which is excluded from art, its No...is depressing...It takes away strength... (*WP*, 809; *March – June 1888*) The continual exposure to art can, through its bringing of strength, sustain a broader affirmation of life. We can note here that Nietzsche categorizes the ugly as *not art*, rather than considering ugly and beautiful as evaluative distinctions within art.⁸²

(v) *Art and reform*

The two ways in which art and life-affirmation interrelate that we have explored so far are not necessarily inconsistent with Reginster’s claims. In a chain reaction of affirmation set off by beautiful art, life-affirmation does not have built into it any falsification or concealment, neither does the life-affirmation based on the feeling of strength granted by art. The next example, however, I think is inconsistent with one of Reginster’s claims. In chapter 4, I quoted from a section of *The Will to Power*, a section that I shall here reproduce in full for discussion:

‘The *artist-philosopher*. Higher concept of art. Whether a man can place himself so far distant from other men that he can form them? (— Preliminary exercises: (1) he

⁸² The exception to this might well be music: in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche thinks that the category ‘beautiful’ should not be applied to music. (See *BT*, 16)

who forms himself, the hermit; (2) the artist hitherto, as a perfecter on a small scale, working on material.)' (*WP*, 795; *March - June 1888*)

It is interesting that in the note, the self-creator who I discussed in chapter 3 is referred to not as 'artist-philosopher' but as 'hermit.'⁸³ This gives rise to a couple of questions that I would like to just briefly register here. The first question is this: does a person's knowing and changing aspects of himself not depend, to some extent, on his interaction with others? The second question is as follows: is the self-creator an 'artist-philosopher'? Such a person engages in the artistic activities of giving form and making beautiful (more on those in a moment), and those artistic activities are directed not towards art but a person. The difference between the objects of the 'hermit' and the 'artist-philosopher' – assuming the 'hermit' is not an 'artist-philosopher' – consists only in number.

A common feature of the artist-philosopher, artist and hermit is that they give form. The idea that the artist gives form is explored in Ridley's essay, 'Nietzsche and the Arts of Life.'⁸⁴ In the essay, Ridley argues for Nietzsche's 'equation of form-giving with artistry,' and that for Nietzsche '[t]o be an artist...just *is* to impose form.' (Ridley 2013: 420) The first remark requires qualification: would Nietzsche consider one who makes a paper aeroplane an artist? Would he consider one who copies another person's painting an artist? The second remark seems to imply a definition of artist – Nietzsche, however, asserts in *On The Genealogy of Morals* that 'only that which is without history can be defined.' (GM II: 13) Nevertheless, Nietzsche does write about the artist in terms of form-giving both in his published and unpublished writings. In unpublished notes, Nietzsche associates the artist with a strong emphasis on form: 'One is an artist at the cost of regarding that which all non-artists call "form" as content, as "the matter itself." To be sure, then one belongs in a topsy-turvy world, for henceforth content becomes something merely formal – our life included.' (*WP*, 818; *November 1887 - March 1888*) He also writes: 'Pure "artists" (indifferent toward content).' (*WP*, 69; *1885 - 1886*) We might find the ethical implications of this with respect to life to be troubling. These are to the side of my discussion, but one can find them explored, and compared with Wilde's *A Picture of Dorian Gray*, in Daniel Came's essay 'Nietzsche on the

⁸³ Nietzsche may by this point have had a different conception of self-creation, here I speak in broad terms of self-creation and self-creator.

⁸⁴ Ridley (2013, 415-30).

According to Nietzsche there are various modes of form-giving, which can interrelate. To create a representational sculpture would constitute form-giving: the artist gives form to the clay or stone with which he works. Reinterpretation is a mode of form-giving for Nietzsche. The priest in *On The Genealogy of Morals*, for instance, reinterprets the suffering of the people: the ‘animal “bad conscience” (cruelty turned inwards against itself)’ of the people is reinterpreted by the priest into punishment from God for sins they have committed. (*GM*, III, 20) This reinterpretation constitutes form-giving for Nietzsche: ‘Only in the hands of the priest, this real artist in guilty feelings, did it take form.’ (*Ibid.*) This leads us on to another mode of form-giving, falsification. For Nietzsche, to falsify something is to give form to it: the painter who gives the King broad shoulders and a trim stomach reforms and gives form to his subject.

Whereas the artist gives form in the context of art, the artist-philosopher gives form to *life* (like the artist priest or artist statesman). Nietzsche asks whether the artist-philosopher can distance himself so far from other men that he can give form to them. In so doing, the artist-philosopher would employ the mode of falsification, establishing such distance from other men that their character disappears and he can shape a character in its place. The form the artist-philosopher would create would be a falsification as it would not correspond to the reality of the other men, much as the portrait of the King is a falsification in so far as it doesn’t correspond with reality. The true, ugly character of other men is replaced by the false, beautiful character the artist-philosopher has formed; this enables him to affirm other men as, for Nietzsche, to find something beautiful is to affirm it. This affirmation of life, however, is clearly based on falsification. The artist-philosopher finds ugly and repudiates other men, what he finds beautiful and affirms is a falsification. This runs counter to Reginster’s claim that by 1882, deception or falsification allows a person only to cope with or endure life, rather than to affirm it.

⁸⁵ Came (2014, 127-142).

(vi) Conclusion

In this chapter I have first laid out two continuities, uncontroversial ones I think, between Nietzsche's thought in *The Birth of Tragedy* and his later writing. The first continuity consists in Nietzsche's idea that there are dimensions of existence which are negative for a subject. The second continuity is in Nietzsche's characterization of art – as 'beautiful' and 'falsity' – and the important function he assigns to it for life. From these continuities I moved to unpublished notes written by Nietzsche after 1882, notes which suggest how art can yield life-affirmation. Firstly, I suggested that for Nietzsche a work of art might stimulate the aesthetic drive, leading a person to find things in life beautiful and thus affirm them. Secondly, I explored how for Nietzsche a work of art might bestow feelings of strength and therefore increase the scope of life-affirmation. Thirdly, I looked at how, in Nietzsche's notes, the artist-philosopher can affirm society through artistic technique, form-giving and falsification. Although the first two cases are not inconsistent with Reginster's narrative, the third is. According to Reginster, from 1882 Nietzsche was increasingly concerned with the affirmation of life as it is. By 1888 Nietzsche declares that there must be affirmation of life as it is, on Reginster's narrative. Yet in Nietzsche's note on the artist-philosopher's affirmation of society, penned in 1888, we have an affirmation of life partly if not wholly falsified. My claim in all of this is modest – I agree with Reginster that Nietzsche is concerned about the affirmation of life as it is. But the picture is more complex than this.

Chapter 7: *Published works*

(i) *Reginster and the final stage of his Nietzschean narrative*

The Nietzschean narrative sketched by Reginster reaches a climactic end: a person is to affirm the terrifying and questionable truths of existence. In this ultimate stage of Reginster's narrative, in so far as art plays a part in life-affirmation it is entirely harmonious with the truth. In the first stage of Reginster's narrative, which refers to *The Birth of Tragedy*, art furnished its audience with illusion through which life could be affirmed. This was true even of tragedy, which supplied an illusory metaphysical framework. Nietzsche then, according to Reginster, underwent something of a transition to his late view, in which life-affirmation, art and truth are in harmonious relationship. From *The Gay Science* of 1882 onwards, Reginster claims, there is no falsification in the relationship between life-affirmation and art in Nietzsche's published works. This chapter will look at Nietzsche's later published works⁸⁶ (after the first edition of *The Gay Science*) and it will divide into 3 parts. The first part will look at a clear case of a harmonious relationship between life-affirmation, art and truth in Nietzsche's later published works. This case is consistent with Reginster's claim. The second part of the chapter will look at more subtle cases of such a harmonious relationship in Nietzsche's later published works, cases also consistent with Reginster's claim. The third and final part will, conversely, look at where there is a harmonious relationship between life-affirmation, art and *falsification* in Nietzsche's later published writings. These cases are in conflict with Reginster's claim. The purpose of the chapter is to argue that the picture in Nietzsche's later published works is more complex than Reginster suggests.

(ii) *A harmonious relationship between life-affirmation, art and truth: a clear case*

There is clear textual evidence that in Nietzsche's late writings, there is an instance of a harmonious relationship between life-affirmation, art and truth. This textual evidence is

⁸⁶ Specifically, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, *Twilight of the Idols* and *Ecce Homo*.

situated towards the end of *Twilight of the Idols*⁸⁷ and it centres on tragedy. The relevant passage on tragedy lies in section 5 of a chapter entitled ‘What I Owe to the Ancients.’ It is, however, beneficial to start at section 4 of this chapter: in the section, Nietzsche sets up a link between tragedy – a Dionysian art – and the orgies which were Dionysian mysteries.

According to Nietzsche, ‘the orgy’ is ‘that element out of which Dionysian art evolved,’ Dionysian art including tragedy, as I have just mentioned. (*TI*, X, 4) What do these orgies and Dionysian mysteries contain, other than the obvious? For Nietzsche, the psychology of the orgy expresses ‘the older Hellenic instinct, an instinct still exuberant and even overflowing: it is explicable only as an *excess* of energy.’ (*Ibid.*) Furthermore, in the psychology of the orgy ‘the *fundamental fact* of the Hellenic instinct expresses itself – its “will to life”.’ (*TI*, X, 4) “Will to life” is a reference to Schopenhauer. In German the phrase is *Wille zum Leben*, a phrase in principle just as amenable to being understood and translated as ‘will to live’. Indeed, E.F.J. Payne translates the phrase in Schopenhauer’s work in just this way.⁸⁸ The phrase in Schopenhauer’s work is arguably better translated as ‘will to life’, and in any case this seems the way that Nietzsche understood it: Nietzsche’s use of the phrase incorporates ‘the instinct for the future of life.’ (*Ibid.*) In the religious and sexual acts of procreation, Nietzsche claims, there is expression of the Hellene’s will for the continuation of life, for the eternity of life. Nietzsche explains what the Hellene guaranteed to himself through the Dionysian mysteries: ‘*Eternal* life, the eternal recurrence of life; the future promised and consecrated in the past; the triumphant Yes to life beyond death and change; *true* life as collective continuation of life through procreation, through the mysteries of sexuality.’ (*TI*, X, 4) Note that in the religion of Dionysus, future life is made holy by its connection to sex as a religious rite. But the reason that sex is a religious rite is because of its connection to future life. As Nietzsche comments later on in the section, in Dionysian religion ‘the actual road to life, procreation,’ is ‘the *sacred road*.’ (*Ibid.*) This is, for Nietzsche, in contrast to Christianity: ‘It was only Christianity, with *ressentiment against* life in its foundations, which made of sexuality something impure: it threw *filth* on the beginning, on the prerequisite of

⁸⁷ *Twilight of the Idols* was written in 1888. Nietzsche said of the book later, in the chapter of *Ecce Homo* dedicated to it, that it is ‘the work of so few days I hesitate to reveal their number.’ (*EH*, XIII, 1) Nietzsche does, in the chapter, tell us as much as that he finished *Twilight of the Idols* on the 3rd of September and wrote the foreword on the 30th. It seems he corrected the proofs in the intervening period, during which he was also writing *The Anti-Christ*. (See *EH*, XIII, 3)

⁸⁸ The *World as Will and Representation* volumes 1 and 2. Full bibliographical details are provided in the Bibliography.

our life...’ (TI, X, 4)⁸⁹ (It might give us pause for thought to consider that Christianity speaks of the sanctity of life and is pro-life, and yet it is hostile to the necessary condition of life.)

How, according to Nietzsche, does tragedy connect to the orgy? One way is in the psychology of the tragic audience descending from the psychology of the orgy. ‘The psychology of the orgy as an overflowing feeling of life and energy within which even pain acts as a stimulus provided me with the key to the concept of the *tragic* feeling, which was misunderstood as much by Aristotle as it especially was by our pessimists.’ (TI, X, 5) Both Aristotle’s idea of tragic catharsis – that the pity and terror of the audience are purified and regulated through their expression in tragedy – and Schopenhauer’s idea that tragedy brings about resignation misunderstand the tragic feeling, according to Nietzsche.⁹⁰ Rather than pity, terror, resignation, the tragic audience member realizes in himself ‘the eternal joy of becoming – that joy which also encompasses *joy in destruction*.’ (Ibid.)

Another way in which tragedy connects to the orgy is in the psychology of the tragic *artist* descending from the psychology of the orgy. It is the affirmation of life and ‘the will to life rejoicing in its own inexhaustibility’ in tragedy which Nietzsche recognizes ‘as the bridge to the psychology of the *tragic poet*.’ (TI, X, 5) These things, affirmation of life and ‘the will to life rejoicing in its own inexhaustibility,’ as psychological qualities of the tragic poet can trace their lineage to the psychology of the orgy. (Ibid.) In the orgy, there is ‘the triumphant Yes to life beyond death and change,’ from which the tragic poet’s affirmation of life descends. In addition, in the orgy the will to life expresses itself and rejoices in: ‘*Eternal* life, the eternal recurrence of life.’ (TI, X, 4) Descending from this in the psychology of the tragic poet is ‘the will to life rejoicing in its own inexhaustibility.’ (TI, X, 5) The psychology of the tragic poet imprints itself upon his tragedy. We now have an account of how tragic art evolved out of the orgy: tragedy and the psychology of the tragic poet come from the

⁸⁹ Nietzsche has, more likely than not, integrated a view of Wagner’s set out by Bryan Magee: ‘The life-creating...act...was looked on [by Christianity] as something sinful and dirty.’ (Magee 2000: 93)

⁹⁰ It’s clear from the next sentence that Nietzsche’s ‘pessimists’ means, or include, Schopenhauer: ‘Tragedy is so far from providing evidence for pessimism among the Hellenes in Schopenhauer’s sense that it has to be considered the decisive repudiation of that idea and the *counter-verdict* to it.’ (TI, X, 5) For Schopenhauer’s ideas on tragedy, see *WWR*, I, §51; for Aristotle’s theory of tragic catharsis, see his *Poetics*, 1449b21-28.

psychology of the orgy member.⁹¹

The full extent of what Nietzsche says is in tragedy, reads as follows: ‘Affirmation of life even in its strangest and sternest problems, the will to life rejoicing in its own inexhaustibility through the *sacrifice* of its highest types.’ (*TI*, X, 5) The art of tragedy produces an affirmative stance towards life in the tragic spectator: ‘*to realize in oneself* the eternal joy of becoming – that joy which also encompasses *joy in destruction*.’ (*Ibid.*) The tragic spectator affirms the change that characterizes reality which includes the destruction of things. This is a clear instance of a harmonious relationship between art, life-affirmation and truth in Nietzsche’s later work. Art, specifically tragedy, produces life-affirmation in the tragic spectator; this life-affirmation is based not on falsity, but on truth. Nietzsche considers it true that reality is constantly changing and this includes the death of things.⁹²

Reginster, in writing about tragedy in *Twilight of the Idols*, refers to a different section of the book. I quote the relevant part of the section, before setting out and discussing Reginster’s interpretation of it, which is perhaps applicable to the section on tragedy just discussed (*TI*, X, 5):

What does the tragic artist communicate of himself? Does he not display precisely the condition of fearlessness in the face of the fearsome and questionable?...Bravery and composure in the face of a powerful enemy, great hardship, a problem that arouses aversion – it is this victorious condition which the tragic artist singles out, which he glorifies. In the face of tragedy the warlike in our soul celebrates its Saturnalias; whoever is accustomed to suffering, whoever seeks out suffering, the

⁹¹ This tracing of tragedy to the orgy is quite different to Nietzsche’s account of the origins of Greek tragedy in *The Birth of Tragedy*. Nietzsche, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, draws a distinction between the Dionysian Greeks and the Dionysian barbarian, ‘whose type is at best related to the Greek type as the bearded satyr, to whom the goat lent its name and attributes, is to Dionysus himself.’ (*BT*, 2) The Dionysian barbarians engaged in orgies, in which there was ‘an effusive transgression of the sexual order, whose waves swept away all family life and its venerable principles; none other than the wildest beasts of nature were unleashed here to the point of creating an abominable mixture of sensuality and cruelty which has always appeared to me as the true “witches’ brew”.’ (*Ibid.*) The Ancient Greeks instead engaged in Dionysian dithyrambs, an artistic phenomenon from which tragedy seems to have, in part, originated.

⁹² Nietzsche is here under the influence of Heraclitus. Nietzsche appears to have had a positive attitude towards Heraclitus from beginning to end of his philosophical life. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, he is ‘the great Heraclitus of Ephesus’; in *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, Nietzsche writes: ‘Straight at that mystic night in which was shrouded Anaximander’s problem of becoming, walked *Heraclitus* of Ephesus and illuminated it by a divine stroke of lightning.’ (*PTAG*, 5) And in *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche tells us: ‘I set apart with high reverence the name of *Heraclitus*.’ (*TI*, III, 2)

heroic man extols his existence by means of tragedy – for him alone does the tragic poet pour this draught of sweetest cruelty. – (*TI*, IX, 24)

According to Reginster's interpretation of this passage, the tragic artist encourages in his audience a distinctive sort of active engagement with the terrible and questionable in life. (Reginster 2014: 34) The tragic artist incites his audience to respond to, pursue and deepen their engagement with the terrible and questionable in existence, as 'so many challenges, calls for adventure, or opportunities for overcoming.' (Reginster 2014: 34) In this, the tragic artist invites the audience to approach those terrible and questionable faces of existence as he himself does. How does the tragic artist invite his audience to take such an approach? He does so through the way in which he represents things. He represents things as challenges or calls to adventure, or 'in such a way as to awaken "the warlike in our souls" – that is to say...our will to power.' (*Ibid.*) The will to power, according to Reginster, is 'the desire for the confrontation and overcoming of resistance.' (Reginster 2014: 36)

On Reginster's interpretation, such an approach to the terrible and questionable aspects of existence is affirmative. This is because, according to Reginster: 'happiness lies, in Nietzsche's view, in the taking up of challenges, the activity of confronting and overcoming resistance.' (Reginster 2014: 35) This is not to say, however, that we will be successful in the challenge, in confronting and overcoming resistance. The encouragement of the tragic artist 'provides no assurance that those terrible and questionable aspects will be redeemed or even that they are redeemable at all.' (*Ibid.*) The uncertainty of outcome, however, is no mere contingency when it comes to affirmation. Nietzsche thinks, on Reginster's view, that a certain type of individual recognises the *beauty* of such a challenge – which is to affirm the challenge. Were the outcome certain, however, there would not be a challenge. The uncertainty of outcome is no mere contingency, then, to something being a challenge or, by extension, to recognising the beauty of a challenge.

The section of *Twilight of the Idols* interpreted by Reginster – *TI*, XI, 24 – reads rather differently to me. It may be that Reginster interprets a larger number of passages of *Twilight of the Idols* in the way I have described above, and in his essay provides one example. In any case, I shall go on to suggest that Reginster's interpretation might be applicable to another passage in *Twilight of the Idols*, a passage we discussed a little earlier. For now, though, I shall offer my reading of the section currently being discussed, i.e. *TI*, IX, 24. On my

reading, the *pre-existing* state of the audience member has its festival and is praised in tragedy, rather than tragedy encouraging members of the tragic audience to adopt a particular approach. Nietzsche writes that ‘whoever is accustomed to suffering’ *already*, ‘whoever seeks out suffering, the *heroic* man extols his existence by means of tragedy – for him alone does the tragic poet pour this draught of sweetest cruelty.’ (*TI*, IX, 24) The person already in possession of bravery, who already searches out suffering, praises his own existence through tragedy. As Nietzsche remarks in an unpublished note of the same year: ‘It is the *heroic* spirits who say Yes to themselves in tragic cruelty.’ (*WP* 852; *Spring - Autumn 1887, rev. Spring - Autumn 1888*) Tragedy does not form a particular attitude and lifestyle. Rather, those who already have a certain lifestyle and self-conception affirm themselves in tragedy. The tragic artist, rather than encouraging the tragic audience to adopt a particular approach, at most directs tragedy towards those already heroic so that they can engage in self-celebration. He ‘singles out’ and ‘glorifies’ a ‘*victorious* condition.’ (*TI*, IX, 24) He achieves this through himself possessing such a condition and communicating it, indeed he ‘*has* to communicate it if he is an artist, a genius of communication.’ (*Ibid.*)⁹³

Although in my view Reginster’s interpretation of *TI*, IX, 24 is incorrect, it is possible that his interpretation might illuminate other passages of *Twilight of the Idols*. One such passage might be section 5 of the chapter entitled ‘What I Owe To The Ancients,’ which we have looked at earlier. It might be that Reginster’s interpretation illuminates this section. In the section, Nietzsche writes that the tragic artist affirms life ‘even in its strangest and sternest problems.’ (*TI*, X, 5) The tragic artist does so – using Reginster’s interpretation – by responding to those problems as challenges to take up, calls to adventure, opportunities for overcoming. Not only that but the tragic artist – still using Reginster’s interpretation – encourages the tragic audience to affirm life in the same directions and in the same way.

Using Reginster’s interpretation, *TI*, X, 5 possesses a harmonious relationship between life-affirmation, art and truth, both in the structure of tragedy and in the relationship between tragedy and the tragic audience. Tragedy does not falsify aspects of life, rather it represents them as challenges; tragedy also affirms those aspects, for it affirms life ‘even in its strangest and sternest problems.’ (*TI*, X, 5) In terms of the relationship between tragedy and the tragic

⁹³ Nietzsche refers here to Schopenhauer, who characterizes the artist as a genius in apprehending and communicating an Idea. (See *WWR* I, §36 and §37.)

audience in the section, using Reginster's interpretation, tragedy is an incitement to pursue, deepen engagement with and affirm aspects of existence through seeing them as challenges. Tragedy does not incite the tragic audience to falsify aspects of existence.

In this section, I hope to have provided a clear case of a harmonious relationship between life-affirmation, art and truth in Nietzsche's later writing. In the next section, I shall look at more subtle cases.

(iii) *A harmonious relationship between life-affirmation, art & truth: more subtle cases*

In this section, I shall explore two more subtle cases of a harmonious relationship between life-affirmation, art and truth in Nietzsche's later writing. At any rate, they are passages that can be construed as more subtly housing a harmonious relationship between the three elements. One of the two more subtle cases is found in *Twilight of the Idols*, and it is to this case that I shall now turn.

One might, in certain circumstances, consider selectivity a form of falsification. Suppose a 'philosopher-artist' selected only the positive or beautiful aspects of life for his idea of it. One might refer to this as a falsification: life is not only such things but also the negative or ugly aspects. And one might assume that Nietzsche would consider this approach a falsification. In section 7 of 'Expeditions of an Untimely Man,' however, Nietzsche gives an instance of selectivity which, rather than representing falsification, might mean a greater breadth of truth. Nietzsche writes of the 'born painter' that: 'He never works "from nature" – he leaves it to his instinct, his *camera obscura*, to sift and strain "nature", the "case", the "experience"....He is conscious only of the *universal*, the conclusion, the outcome: he knows nothing of that arbitrary abstraction from the individual case.' (TI, IX, 7) What does Nietzsche mean by this? One interpretation is that the artist's instinct filters out one sunflower after another, for example, so the artist does not experience any of those sunflowers. The artist's instinct also selects a certain sunflower, so the artist experiences it. The sunflower is selected by the artist's instinct if it can stand for the whole of its type, and filtered out if it cannot. A sunflower which can stand for the whole of its type is 'the *universal*.' (*Ibid.*)

This passage of *Twilight of the Idols*, on my interpretation, involves a harmonious

relationship between life-affirmation, art and truth. The art of the born painter provides an instance of nature that can stand for the whole of its type, and thus a truth in some sense. Given the person who is conscious only of the ‘*universal*’ and paints it is a ‘born painter’ and artistic spirit – this in contrast to the ‘*anti-artistic*’ spirit who sees ‘*what is*’ – he, presumably, makes a beautiful painting. And the person who judges a painting as beautiful affirms it according to Nietzsche, as we’ve seen: “That is beautiful” is an *affirmation*.’ (WP, 852; *Spring - Autumn 1887, rev. Spring - Autumn 1888*) The beautiful painting the person affirms provides a truth, in some sense, as I’ve just set out. Thus, on my interpretation, the passage involves a harmonious relationship between life-affirmation, art and truth.

I shall now turn to the second, more subtle case of a harmonious relationship between life-affirmation, art and truth in Nietzsche’s later writing. For Nietzsche, the peak state a philosopher can attain, and greatness in a human being, is to affirm life and truth (to what extent shall be discussed). He writes:

Such an experimental philosophy as I live...wants...a Dionysian affirmation of the world as it is, without subtraction, exception, or selection...it wants...the same things, the same logic and illogic of entanglements. The highest state a philosopher can attain: to stand in a Dionysian relationship to existence – my formula for this is *amor fati*.⁹⁴ (WP, 1041; 1888)

The note above states that the pinnacle state for a philosopher is to affirm the world as it is, rather than a version of it in which certain aspects are subtracted or selected. Does Nietzsche mean the most elevated state for a philosopher is to affirm the whole world? This could mean the affirmation of poverty and child rape. Such an interpretation of what Nietzsche means would result in an outlook that is (*inter alia*) not rich, does not seem to possess any discernment and seems to affirm nothing. As Basil Hallward says to Lord Henry in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, ““You like everyone; that is to say, you are indifferent to every one.”” (Wilde 2005: 19) Simon May offers a reading which is more subtle and charitable to Nietzsche.⁹⁵ According to May, Nietzsche’s most consistent expression of life-affirmation is the idea that a person experiences the world as a whole as beautiful. This is not to find

⁹⁴ Love of fate.

⁹⁵ The Royal Institute of Philosophy, 2015. See also May (2011: 78-100).

beautiful, and thus affirm, each and every individual component of the world, but the whole. This position is consistent with a person detesting this or that element of the world. Thus, we have a position more discerning, richer and more capable of affirmation at all. May's reading conflicts, however, with what Nietzsche goes on to write in the note of 1888 – although May is clear that what he is offering is Nietzsche's most consistent expression of life-affirmation until *Ecce Homo*, written in 1888. Nietzsche writes in the note of 1888 that 'It is part of this state to perceive not merely the necessity of those sides of existence hitherto denied, but their desirability.' (WP, 1041; 1888) The idea is to find desirable sides that are usually found negative, and so denied, rather than to affirm the whole in a fashion consistent with detesting certain sides.

In Nietzsche's note of 1888, he refers to *amor fati*, so we could offer another more charitable interpretation, namely that Nietzsche means the affirmation of fate, of necessity, rather than all things occurring in the world. Nietzsche takes a philosophical position on those things that are fate and necessity further, we might think. This more charitable interpretation understands Nietzsche as not taking all things to be fated, to be of necessity.

With this more charitable interpretation in hand, war might be a suitable example. Nietzsche might have understood war as fated among human beings, and something which the great philosopher affirms. People generally might be unable to affirm war and might at best construe it as a complement of peace – by war, people appreciate peace more. In the highest philosophic state, however, there is affirmation of war, devoid of any relation to peace:

It is part of this state to perceive not merely the necessity of those sides of existence hitherto denied, but their desirability; and not their desirability merely in relation to the sides hitherto affirmed (perhaps as their complement or precondition), but for their own sake, as the more powerful, more fruitful, *truer* sides of existence, in which its will finds clearer expression. (WP 1041; 1888)

The philosopher, in the utmost elevated state, perceives the desirability of war: he perceives that it is more powerful than peace and more fruitful (perhaps, curiously, in helping to preserve the species; see *GS*, 1). According to the above translation, the philosopher in the highest state perceives that war is 'truer' than peace. This could also, however, be translated as 'more genuine', the German word *Wahr* capable of translation as 'true', 'genuine' or

‘real’. Nietzsche might mean, if he were employing the instance of war, that there is something disingenuous about peace. Peace, Nietzsche might think, gives the false impression that people don’t want to commit acts of violence on one another, that people don’t have the desire to expand their power. War is more genuine in its expression of such things, and the desirability – the affirmation – of war consists partly in its being more genuine than peace. In the highest philosophical state there is, for Nietzsche, a harmonious relationship between life-affirmation and truth.

In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche writes: ‘My formula for greatness in a human being is *amor fati*: that one wants nothing to be other than it is, not in the future, not in the past, not in all eternity. Not merely to endure that which happens of necessity, still less to dissemble it – all idealism is untruthfulness in the face of necessity – but to *love* it...’ (*EH*, II, 10) We might again employ the current more charitable interpretation here: a great human being affirms that which is fate and necessity. In any case, whether Nietzsche means affirmation of the whole or part – i.e. of fate and necessity – it is a tall order. A great human being loves – and so affirms – the prospect of the passing of loved ones. He does not merely endure the passing of a loved one but *loves* it.

How does Nietzsche think an affirmation of fate and necessity might be achieved? He thinks that this is a question of strength and health. Nietzsche comments with respect to the art-observer: ‘It is a question of *strength...whether* and *where* the judgement “beautiful” is applied. The feeling of plenitude, of *dammed-up strength...the feeling of power* applies the judgement “beautiful” even to things and conditions that the instinct of impotence could only find *hateful* and “ugly.”’ (*WP*, 852; *Spring - Autumn 1887, rev. Spring - Autumn 1888*) The elements of strength, plenitude of energy, and power apply also to the artist, for Nietzsche: ‘Artists, if they are any good, are (physically as well) strong, full of surplus energy, powerful animals.’ (*Ibid.*) The great human being who affirms fate and necessity is able to do so because he possesses sufficient strength, an abundance of energy and an appropriate quantum of power. The affirmation of fate, here, is based not on reasons but on certain psycho-physical conditions.

In both of the passages that we have looked at, Nietzsche talks about *amor fati*. This brings the possibility of introducing art into the fold along with life-affirmation and truth. To understand the idea of *amor fati*, to some extent, let’s pedal back to *The Gay Science*. In

book four of the work, Nietzsche writes: ‘I want to learn more and more how to see what is necessary in things as what is beautiful in them – thus I will be one of those who makes things beautiful. *Amor fati*: let that be my love from now on! I do not want to wage war against ugliness.’ (GS, 276) The project of *amor fati* consists of aesthetic valuations: taking something *ugly* and making it *beautiful*. Nietzsche thinks of aesthetic valuations as candidates for replacing moral ones. Such valuations of ugly and beautiful are projections, Nietzsche being an anti-realist about value.

There is aestheticism not only in the valuations of beautiful and ugly, but also in making things beautiful. Nietzsche writes: ‘I will be one of those who makes things beautiful.’ (*Ibid.*) This is precisely what Nietzsche deems the artist to do some sections later: ‘What means do we have for making things beautiful, attractive, and desirable when they are not?...Here we have something to learn...from artists.’ (GS, 299) In engaging in the project of *amor fati*, Nietzsche considers himself as becoming an artist, or at the very least becoming aligned with the artist. To now return to the later unpublished note and *Ecce Homo* passage, *amor fati* appears to introduce art harmoniously to life-affirmation and truth. A great human being, or the philosopher in the highest state, finds the truth beautiful – an aesthetic value – which is to affirm it. These people make things beautiful and thus are artists, or are at least aligned to them.

This chapter of my thesis has, so far, looked at clear and more subtle cases of a harmonious relationship between life-affirmation, art and truth in Nietzsche’s later writing. These cases are consistent with Reginster’s Nietzschean narrative. In the next section of the chapter, however, I shall look at a relationship between life-affirmation, art and *falsification* in Nietzsche’s later works. The intention is, again, to show that the picture in Nietzsche’s writing is more complex than Reginster suggests.

(iv) *A harmonious relationship between life-affirmation, art and falsification*

We return to section 24 of ‘Expeditions of an Untimely Man,’ though to a different part of the section. Nietzsche picks up the notion of ‘Art for art’s sake.’ This notion, Nietzsche claims, is a hostile response to art being saddled with the purpose of moral instruction and

improvement.⁹⁶ Once we rid art of moral edification⁹⁷ it does have, Nietzsche thinks, a purpose. Art is not ‘completely purposeless, goalless, meaningless, in short *l’art pour l’art* – a snake biting its own tail.’⁹⁸ (*TI*, IX, 24) What then, according to Nietzsche, is the purpose of art?

The purpose of art, according to Nietzsche, is that it is ‘the great stimulus to life.’ (*TI*, IX, 24) The purpose of art is to generate in the art-observer a desire for life, an affirmative disposition towards life. What, according to Nietzsche, underpins this? The basic instinct of the artist, Nietzsche claims, is directed not towards art but towards life, ‘*a desideratum of life.*’ (*Ibid.*) The basic instinct of the artist, in other words, is to make life something desired and this determines the art. Nietzsche asks: ‘what does all art do? does it not praise? does it not glorify? does it not select? does it not highlight? By doing all this it *strengthens* or *weakens* certain valuations....Is this no more than an incidental? an accident? Something in which the instinct of the artist has no part whatever?’ (*TI*, IX, 24) All of this is not incidental, or an accident, rather that basic instinct of the artist is responsible for it. The basic instinct takes up the positive or desirable aspects of life and filters out the negative; or it highlights the positive or desirable parts of life, pushing back the negative. As a consequence, art generates a desire for life in the art-observer.

Art as Nietzsche describes it (in *TI*, IX, 24) consists of highlighting: strengthening a certain part of life and the corresponding valuation, weakening another and the corresponding valuation. This appears, *prima facie*, as falsification because there is manipulation of reality and valuations in art. This art could, however, bring forth an aspect of a situation otherwise overshadowed by another aspect and the strong valuation of it. Art might, from this point of view, communicate another truth of a situation. This is not altogether dissimilar from section 78 of *The Gay Science*, discussed earlier. A person sees in himself ‘the nearest and most vulgar’ as ‘tremendously big and as reality itself.’ (*GS*, 78) The artist helps him to see another aspect of himself, another truth.

⁹⁶ Not too long before Nietzsche wrote this section, ‘art for art’s sake’ versus art providing moral education was embodied in the figures of Walter Pater and John Ruskin, respectively. A young Oscar Wilde chose between the two schools of thought, choosing the former.

⁹⁷ Something Nietzsche was keen to do in *The Birth of Tragedy* – see *BT*, 5.

⁹⁸ The snake biting its own tail is Ouroboros, an ancient motif which is often construed as representing eternity. Here, it represents circularity. This motif also appears in *The Birth of Tragedy* (see *BT*, 15) and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (see *TSZ*, Prologue, 10).

Art as Nietzsche describes it in *TI*, IX, 24 is also selective. This could be viewed as falsification: the artist's instinct selects the positive aspects of life, but life consists also of negative aspects. One might respond that this selectivity is instinctual rather an intentional act by the artist, and so does not constitute falsification. We have elsewhere in Nietzsche's corpus, however, the label of falsification without an intentional act. In *Beyond Good And Evil*, Nietzsche remarks that 'without a continual falsification of the world by means of numbers, mankind could not live.' (*BGE*, 4) For Nietzsche, a person's Kantian way of perceiving the world is not the result of their intentional act – nonetheless, Nietzsche characterizes this way of perceiving the world as a falsification.

We might, alternatively, see a similarity between the selectivity in this passage of *Twilight of the Idols*, and the artistic technique of 'seeing round a corner' in *The Gay Science*, discussed earlier in this thesis. In both cases, in narrowing his view to one part of a scene, the artist does not falsify another. The artist, in each case, looks at a part of life – this is what he did prior to narrowing his view, and it is in fact what we always do. In relation to the *Twilight of the Idols* passage, however, it is arguably the person who looks at works of art who engages in falsification. A person views works of art which exclusively contain or give prominence to the positive and pleasurable aspects of life. From looking at these works, the person forms the false notion that life is only positive and pleasurable. The person affirms life because of this false notion. In other words, a person affirms life because of a falsification, namely the idea that life is only positive and pleasurable, which does not correspond to reality. This falsification though not presented by the works of art is connected to them, in as much as it is from viewing the works of art that the person forms the falsification.

Let's now look to *On The Genealogy of Morality*, published in 1887, for another example of a relationship between art, falsification and life-affirmation. In this work, Nietzsche suggests that art is in fundamental opposition to the ascetic ideal. The ascetic ideal, according to Nietzsche, lies in Christianity. Features of the ascetic ideal include denial of this world, self-denial and a physiological impoverishment of life. Within the ascetic ideal, truth has the highest value. (See *GM*, III, 24 and 25) Science, Nietzsche argues, is no opponent of the ascetic ideal. Both share 'the same overestimation of the truth (more accurately: the same belief that the truth is *above* evaluation and criticism). (*GM*, III: 25) Indeed, science's valuation of the truth derives from the Christian belief that God is the truth. (See *GM* III: 24)

The man of science, Nietzsche suggests, has an unconscious ‘belief in a *metaphysical* value, the value of *truth in itself*.’ (GM, III, 24) In affirming the truth the man of science, like the Christian, ‘*affirms in the process another world* from that of life, nature and history; and in so far as he affirms this “other world”, what? must he not then in the process – deny its counterpart, this world, *our world*?’ (Ibid.) Like the ascetic ideal, science affirms another world of some kind and in so doing denies this world, one of the reasons it is no opponent of the ascetic ideal. Another reason is that the two share the same physiological foundation: ‘both presuppose a certain *impoverishment of life*.’ (GM, III, 25)

Nietzsche thought that science is no opponent of the ascetic ideal. Art, however, he thought was ‘much more fundamentally opposed to the ascetic ideal than science.’ (GM, III, 25) Why did Nietzsche think this? As we have seen, Nietzsche thought that both the ascetic ideal and science rested on a physiological basis of a certain impoverishment of life. Art, conversely, rests on an opposing physiological basis to the ascetic ideal, according to Nietzsche. He writes in his unpublished notes: ‘Our religion, morality, and philosophy are decadence forms of man. The *countermovement: art*,’ and that ‘The phenomenon “artist” is still the most transparent:-- to see through it to the basic instincts of power, nature, etc.!’ (WP, 794; *March – June 1888* and WP 797; 1885 – 1886) As in the ascetic ideal, in science the truth is made holy; among scientists, as among everyday followers of the ascetic ideal, there is the will to tell the truth to others. In art, conversely, ‘the *lie* is sanctified’ and ‘the *will to deceive* has good conscience on its side.’ (Ibid.) Art has, (can have), the characteristic of being untrue, and the artist has a good conscience about wanting the audience to believe what he produces.

As well as possessing the quality of being untrue, unlike the ascetic ideal or science, art affirms this world and this life. The notion that art affirms life is of a piece with Nietzsche’s note a year later: ‘art is essentially *affirmation, blessing, deification of existence*...There is no such thing as pessimistic art— Art affirms.’ (WP, 821; *March - June 1888*) According to Nietzsche in *On The Genealogy of Morals*, Homer with his Olympian Gods involuntarily affirms human life by making it godly. (GM III: 25) Earlier in *On The Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche writes: ‘With what eyes, then, do you think Homer let his gods gaze down upon the fates of men? What ultimate meaning did Trojan Wars and similar fearful tragedies have? There is absolutely no doubt about it: they were intended as *festive theatre* for the gods.’ (GM, II, 7) The Greeks then thought that their lives had the meaning of providing theatre for the gods and so affirmed them – this life-affirmation is of course based on a falsification

which derives from art. This provides another example in Nietzsche's later work of life-affirmation predicated on falsification.

(v) *Conclusion*

This chapter has looked at Nietzsche's later published works to see whether, as Reginster claims, falsification is not involved in the relationship between life-affirmation and art in these works. The chapter first looked at a passage in *Twilight of the Idols* that is clearly consistent with Reginster's claim. In the passage, Nietzsche returns to Hellenic tragedy in such a way that the relationship between life-affirmation and art is devoid of falsification. The chapter then looked at two more subtle cases, in Nietzsche's later published works, of a relationship between life-affirmation and art devoid of falsification. In the first case, art portrays an instance of nature that can stand for the whole of its type, and there is life-affirmation based on such art. The second more subtle case, in *Ecce Homo*, interprets Nietzsche as considering the affirmation of fate the highest philosophical state. This affirmation – besides not being based on a falsification – is artistic: it employs aesthetic valuation and is the result of making things beautiful, which is what the artist does. Both of these more subtle cases are consistent with Reginster's claim that falsification is not involved in the relationship between life-affirmation and art in Nietzsche's later published works.

The chapter lastly looked at a couple of passages in Nietzsche's later published works that conflict with Reginster's claim. In *Twilight of the Idols* we find, arguably, the life-affirmation of an art-observer based on falsification – that life is only positive and pleasurable – and this falsification connected to art works. Thus, the relationship between life-affirmation and art involves falsification. The chapter then looked at a passage of *On the Genealogy of Morality*, in which Nietzsche thinks that art can be a fundamental opponent of the ascetic ideal. The ascetic ideal, Nietzsche writes, positions truth as the highest value and is life and world-denying. Art conversely, he thinks, values and employs the untrue – including falsification – and is life and world-affirming. Contrary to Reginster's claim, falsification is involved in the relationship between life-affirmation and art in Nietzsche's later published works.

Part IV: Nietzsche on the value of truth

Chapter 8: The various statuses of truth in Nietzsche's writing

(i) Lack of concern with the truth, lack of intellectual integrity

In 1887, Nietzsche wrote the following unpublished note: 'That it does not matter whether a thing is true, but only what effect it produces—absolute lack of intellectual integrity.' (WP, 172; *Spring-Fall 1887*) Although this is an unpublished note, Nietzsche strikes a similar tone in his published work. In *The Anti-Christ*, written the following year, he crafts this wonderful passage: 'In the tone with which a martyr throws his opinion at the world's head there is already expressed so low a degree of intellectual integrity, such *obtuseness* to the question of "truth", that one never needs to refute a martyr.' (AC, 53⁹⁹) To return to the unpublished note of 1887, it is written with reference to a faith. One might, however, redirect Nietzsche's charge toward him: we find, in Nietzsche's writing, examples of falsification which produce the effect of finding something beautiful and affirming it. Why does *this* not display a lack of intellectual integrity?

Nietzsche, or a Nietzschean acolyte, might respond in the following fashion. Truth has lost its legitimacy as the supreme value, and so life-enhancement can be positioned as the highest value. In this new age, indeed the concern is not the truth but the effect of life-affirmation. The value of truth is conditioned upon the higher value of life-affirmation. This is all well and good, however in his note, Nietzsche equates a lack of concern with the truth with a lack of intellectual integrity. Yet Nietzsche himself displays a lack of concern with the truth in the examples of falsification that we should learn from artists, and in his higher concept of 'artist-philosopher.'

⁹⁹ Cf. AC, 12: 'I exclude a few sceptics, the decent type in the history of philosophy: but the rest are ignorant of the first requirements of intellectual integrity. These great visionaries and prodigies behave one and all like little women – they consider "fine feelings" arguments, the "heaving bosom" the bellows of divinity, conviction the *criterion* of truth.' Compare also AC, 47, in which Nietzsche speaks of intellectual conscience: 'Christianity...must naturally be a mortal enemy of the "wisdom of the world", that is to say of *science* – it will approve of all expedients by which...severity in matters of intellectual conscience... can be poisoned and calumniated and *brought into ill repute*.'

As I've just mentioned, Nietzsche equates a lack of concern with the truth with a lack of intellectual integrity. The obverse of this coin is that he equates a concern with the truth with intellectual integrity. What this indicates, perhaps, is Nietzsche still under the influence of the value of truth. He writes more self-consciously in *Beyond Good And Evil*: 'Honesty – granted that this is our virtue, from which we cannot get free, we free spirits.' (*BGE*, 227) This suggests a failed attempt to get free from the value of truth, or simply a recognition that free spirits cannot get free of this value. Given we free spirits cannot get free from the value of truth, Nietzsche says, 'well, let us labour at it with all love and malice,' let's make it our own, even embrace it. (*Ibid.*) Nietzsche's relationship with the value of truth is complex. In what follows, I shall look at Nietzsche's relationship with the value of truth from different angles. This will begin with how Nietzsche perceives his own philosophical works and the philosopher with respect to truth. Next, I shall explore the various statuses of the value of truth within his work. In doing so, I seek to demonstrate that one cannot (correctly) assign a single status to the value of truth in Nietzsche's writing, as Ridley does (what single status Ridley assigns to the value of truth will be given). I also seek to cast doubt on how, in Reginster's account, truth has a *singularly* untroubled place in Nietzsche's work in the end. The picture, I contend, is more complex.

(ii) Nietzsche on truth in his works and on what it is to be a philosopher

In the foreword to *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche declares that *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 'is not only the most exalted book that exists...it is also the *profoundest*, born out of the innermost abundance of truth, an inexhaustible well into which no bucket descends without coming up filled with gold and goodness.' (*EH*, Foreword, 4) Nietzsche, at least in hindsight, considers *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as the communication of truths. And such truths are valuable, no reader – no reader capable of depth, perhaps – going without 'gold and goodness.' (*Ibid.*)¹⁰⁰ The same abundance of truth, in fact an overabundance, features in Nietzsche's description of *Twilight of the Idols*:

A great wind blows among the trees and everywhere fruits fall – truths. There is the prodigality of an all too abundant autumn in it: one trips over truths, one even treads

¹⁰⁰ Although, as Tanner remarks, Nietzsche's madness 'was actually under way while he was writing this book during the autumn of 1888,' I assume the validity of this comment. (Tanner 2004: viii) *Ecce Homo* is at other times, I think, an exaggeration of the views Nietzsche held in sanity.

some to death – there are too many of them...But those one gets one's hands on are no longer anything questionable, they are decisions. Only I have the standard for 'truths' in my hand, only I *can* decide. (*EH*, XII, 2)

There are, for Nietzsche's money, too many truths in *Twilight of the Idols*. The truth is, however, available in the work – in contrast to the path deviating from truth that had hitherto been taken – and it is taken to be valuable.

Nietzsche understands being a philosopher, at least partially, in terms of truth. He considers Shakespeare as something of a philosopher: 'The great poet creates *only* out of his own reality...I know of no more heartrending reading than Shakespeare...Is Hamlet *understood*? It is not doubt, it is *certainty* which makes mad...But to feel in this way one must be profound, abyss, philosopher...We all *fear* truth.' (*Ecce Homo*, 'Why I Am So Clever', 4) To have profound insight into the truth is to be a philosopher, in a sense. This tells us what Nietzsche thinks it is to be a philosopher, but it does not settle what the value of truth is for Nietzsche. In what follows we shall look at the different statuses that Nietzsche assigns to the value of truth.

(iii) *Truth as the highest value*

There are passages in Nietzsche's writing in which truth is, or at least seems to be, the highest value. In *The Anti-Christ*, written in less than a month, Nietzsche writes: 'Truth has had to be fought for every step of the way, almost everything else dear to our hearts, on which our love and our trust in life depend, has had to be sacrificed to it. Greatness of soul is needed for it: the service of truth is the hardest service.' (*AC*, 50) Now one might have interpreted this as people casting off the fictions of Christianity – as painful as that is – through truth, in order to enjoy the freedom to build their own value systems and construct their own meanings. To elaborate on this, the ideas that God created us, that our lives have meaning through the moral values supplied by Him, that God knows what He's doing, give love and trust in life. The casting off of these ideas means resistance and it means pain, however it's necessary to have the freedom to create one's own values and meaning, to form one's own trust in life too perhaps. This is almost certainly a Nietzschean sentiment. In section 50 of *The Anti-Christ*, however, Nietzsche talks about those ideas 'on which our love and our trust in life depend' being 'sacrificed' to *truth*. A person is in 'the service of truth.' Truth appears to occupy the

high ground, rather than possessing instrumental value.

We also find in the Foreword to *The Anti-Christ* the following comment: ‘One must have become indifferent, one must never ask whether truth is useful or a fatality....’ (AC, ‘Foreword’) This suggests that truth is the highest value, rather than being of secondary or instrumental value to anything. Nietzsche is writing here about: ‘The conditions under which one understands me and then *necessarily* understands – I know them all too well.’ (AC, ‘Foreword’) He knows these conditions all too well because he himself has been subject to them, conditions such as being ‘honest in intellectual matters to the point of harshness,’ and being ‘accustomed to living on mountains – to seeing the wretched ephemeral chatter of politics and national egoism *beneath* one.’ (*Ibid.*) Nietzsche, then, at least presents himself as pursuing truth without considering whether it is ‘useful or a fatality.’ Truth is appointed the highest value, rather than being instrumental to life-enhancement, or a secondary value to life-preservation.

How else might one interpret this passage? One might suggest that it slips into the purely autobiographical. It is just Nietzsche who sees ‘the wretched ephemeral chatter of politics and national egoism *beneath*’ him. And Nietzsche’s indifference, his lack of interrogation about whether a truth is useful or a fatality, is with respect to the many. (*Ibid.*) His truths were communicated with indifference over whether they would be of use or have a baleful effect on the many. He writes that, aside from his readers, ‘what do the *rest* matter?’ (AC, Foreword) This alternative reading does not, however, really hold up in my view. The foreword seems to consistently refer to Nietzsche’s readers, as well as Nietzsche. It begins: ‘This book belongs to the very few,’ and after Nietzsche sets out the conditions under which he is understood, he writes: ‘These alone are my readers, my rightful readers, my predestined readers.’ (AC, Foreword)

In the foreword to *The Anti-Christ*, Nietzsche effectively describes his approach – as well as one of the conditions by which he is understood by his people – as an indifference over whether a truth is useful or fatal. This is a somewhat different picture from that of Ridley’s, for example, who holds that for Nietzsche ‘the value of life trumps the value of truth.’ (Ridley 2010: 436) What Nietzsche sets out in the foreword to the *The Anti-Christ* does not conform to the idea that, where there is engagement with the truth, life operates as the highest principle. There is, rather, the pursuit of truth with indifference over whether its fatal for life.

The question of the utility of truth for life is not posed, rather: ‘one must never ask whether truth is useful.’ (AC, ‘Foreword’) In certain passages, Nietzsche does consider the value of life as higher than the value of truth (which shall be considered in the next two sections). Yet we cannot, unsurprisingly, attribute a stable position to Nietzsche on the matter.

(iv) *Truth as of secondary value, and truth as of instrumental value*

In Nietzsche’s writing, there are passages in which truth possesses secondary value and life-preservation, in some sense, boasts primary value. In *The Gay Science*, the life-preservation appears to be literal: ‘*Honesty* would lead to nausea and suicide.’ (GS, 107) Art – the untrue – should be employed for the purposes of self-preservation. Truth is potentially destructive and requires a counterforce. Nietzsche does, however, also positively value it. On his picture, a person engages with the truth, which is valuable, and art – the untrue – only ‘rounds off’ and ‘finishes the poem.’ (*Ibid.*) The truth is of positive value up to the point at which it is pernicious. The truth has secondary value, life-preservation primary. The truth has positive value up to a point, but this does not mean that it is, to that extent, pleasing or happiness-generating. It is the loss of the Christian conception of reality.

Elsewhere in Nietzsche’s writing, we find that truth has instrumental rather than secondary value. In the section of *The Gay Science* just discussed (107), truth is not instrumental to life-preservation. On the contrary, truth at a certain stage would grossly compromise life-preservation, ‘*Honesty* would lead to nausea and suicide.’ (GS, 107) Where truth threatens life-preservation, measures must be taken against truth in the interests of life-preservation, the primary value. There are other passages in Nietzsche’s writing in which truth is of instrumental value. Truth, in these passages, is instrumental to life-enhancement.¹⁰¹ Nietzsche makes a distinction between life-preservation and life-enhancement which, in broad terms, is the same distinction that you or I would make. Life-preservation is the sustainment of life, life-enhancement the improvement of it. A doctor placing someone on a life-support machine is a measure to sustain life, not to improve it. And the books that we read for pleasure and leisure enhance our life, but they do not directly sustain it.

¹⁰¹ I acknowledge that in section 107 of *The Gay Science*, truth – up to the point it would compromise life-preservation – might be considered by Nietzsche to be of instrumental value to life-enhancement, in some sense.

Where Nietzsche is more extreme is in his suggestion that a person should prioritise life-enhancement over life-preservation. He thinks that there is an intimate relation between the highest life-enhancement and a risk to life-preservation, exhibited in the following metaphors: ‘For – believe me – the secret for harvesting from existence the greatest fruitfulness and the greatest enjoyment is – *to live dangerously!* Build your cities on the slopes of Vesuvius! Send your ships into uncharted seas!’ (GS, 107) The slopes of Vesuvius provide fertile ground – but there is of course the risk of the volcano erupting, pouring over and extinguishing the people. It is one and the same thing that poses a risk and provides fertile ground. For a person to make landfall on a new world of warmth and plenty, he must go through a sea and might hit jagged and lethal rocks. Nietzsche is encouraging the prioritisation of life-enhancement over life-preservation.

Let us now turn to the passages in Nietzsche’s writing in which truth is instrumental to life-enhancement. Nietzsche thinks truth, also art, should be means to enhancing life: ‘Art, knowledge, morality are *means*: instead of recognising in them the aim of enhancing life, one has associated them with the antithesis of life, with “God.”’ (WP, 298; *Spring - Fall 1888*) Knowledge should be grounded in this world through an instrumental relation to life-enhancement¹⁰²; instead, it is instilled in a transcendent God who is omniscient. Also, in section 335 of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche thinks about truth in terms of instrumental value. What, in the section, is truth of instrumental value to? Nietzsche writes: ‘We...want to *become who we are* – human beings who are new, unique, incomparable...who create themselves!’ (GS, 335) The expression of ‘wanting to become who we are’ is puzzling. To want to become something is the determination, or at least desire, to become something that one is not: a businessman, for example, might want to become the most successful businessman who ever lived. Yet in Nietzsche’s statement in *The Gay Science*, that which ‘we’ want to become is not something that we are not, but rather who we *are*. The puzzling expression would later reappear in altered form as *Ecce Homo*’s subtitle: ‘How one becomes *what one is*.’¹⁰³

¹⁰² What life-enhancement looks like for Nietzsche in this passage is not clear. The next portion of the unpublished note seems to be about the will to power, if that’s anything to go on. Nietzsche writes of ‘distinctions and antagonisms’ which ‘betray certain conditions of existence and enhancement, not only of man but of any kind of firm and enduring complex which separates itself from its adversary.’ (WP, 298; *Spring - Autumn 1888*) Enhancement, at least for man, rests upon acquiring power over a distinctive entity. Nietzsche perhaps thinks knowledge, along with morality and art, should be means to life-enhancement in terms of the will to power. In any case, in this unpublished note Nietzsche thinks that truth should have instrumental value.

¹⁰³ The emphasis is mine.

How are we to make sense of the expression, ‘we want to become who we are’? Given it is a case of becoming who we *are*, Nietzsche apparently thinks of the desired end as already in us, in some sense. At the same time, it can’t be that the desired end has been realised because we want to *become* who we are, rather than sustain it. The desired end, then, is already in us but not in realised form. In what sense is the desired end already in us? There are a couple of different ways in which we might think about this. We might think of it in terms of qualities, or degrees of qualities, that are already in us but have not been called forth. A person might understand that a strength in him has been brought out in a difficult situation, rather than developed and created.

The other way we can think about this is in terms of the development of a person’s nature. The desired end is the maximal development of various elements of one’s nature. In what sense, though, is this desired end already in us? We have not achieved such maximal development. At the same time, however, we might be able to think of it as our nature. A lateral example might help illuminate the idea. Take a white rose plant that has not fully developed and flourished – at this point in the plant’s development, a person might think of the white rose in full flower as its nature. That something hasn’t come to pass does not preclude attributing it to the nature of an organism or object. Cars pack up, that’s the nature of cars – this applies just as much to cars that have not yet packed up. It is the nature of human beings to be born, develop, degenerate and die – this nature applies just as much to human beings who have not passed through some or any of these stages.

Becoming who one is, under this interpretation, is maximally developing one’s nature. Should this second interpretation be correct it represents a shift, from the Christian conception of the soul as fixed and unchanging, to a conception in which the self is capable of becoming and developing. Perhaps, though, we need not abandon the term ‘soul’.

Nietzsche seems prepared to employ it in *The Gay Science*:

Perhaps nothing separates human beings or ages from each other more than the different degrees of their knowledge of distress – distress of the soul as well as of the body...question marks about the value of all life are made in times when the refinement and ease of existence make even the inevitable mosquito bites of the soul and body seem much too bloody and malicious. (*GS*, 48)

Four years later in *Beyond Good and Evil*,¹⁰⁴ Nietzsche writes that ‘it is not at all necessary...to get rid of “the soul” itself and thus forgo one of the oldest and most venerable of hypotheses.’ (*BGE*, 12) The idea of ‘the soul’, Nietzsche thinks, needs to be altered along various dimensions. It needs to be understood not as singular but as plural; not as immortal but mortal. It needs to be understood not as metaphysical but as worldly and natural. In section 109 of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche asks: ‘When will we have completely de-deified nature? When may we begin to *naturalize* humanity with a pure, newly discovered, newly redeemed nature?’ (*GS*, 109) Elsewhere in the book Nietzsche describes a naturalistic conception of humanity, referring in 1882 to humanity as a ‘species,’ to the preservation of the species, to humans as ‘animals’. (See *GS*, 1, 4, 224, 318 and 354.)

What truth is instrumental to a person achieving maximal development of the various elements of himself? Nietzsche thinks that to achieve this desired end ‘we must become the best students and discoverers of everything lawful and necessary in the world: we must become *physicists* in order to be creators in this sense.’ (*GS*, 335) To discover the truth of what is lawful and necessary in the world is instrumental to a person’s maximal development, Nietzsche remarking ‘long live physics! And even more long live what *compels* us to it – our honesty!’ (*Ibid.*) But what is this truth? Note Nietzsche writes of what is ‘lawful and necessary in the *world*,’ rather than in oneself or merely in oneself. One interpretation is that the person must discover the conditions for the attainment of maximal development. This might be, for example, a certain climate. In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche writes:

I shall be asked why I have really narrated all these little things which according to the traditional judgements are matters of indifference: it will be said that in doing so I harm myself all the more if I am destined to fulfil great tasks. Answer: these little things – nutriment, place, climate, recreation, the whole casuistry of selfishness – are beyond all conception of greater importance than anything that has been considered of importance hitherto...contempt has been taught for the ‘little’ things, which is to say for the fundamental affairs of life. (*EH*, II, 10)

Health and flourishing depend on these ‘fundamental affairs of life.’ The ‘lawful and necessary’ in *The Gay Science* is, perhaps, such things as the climate and nutriment

¹⁰⁴ Four years after the first edition of *The Gay Science*.

conducive to one's development and self-creation. Nietzsche refers to this as what is lawful and necessary in the *world* to mark a contrast, perhaps, with the metaphysical content of Christianity. In discovering what is lawful and necessary in the world, in being 'physicists' in this sense, there's a contrast with ideals that 'have been built on *ignorance* of physics or in *contradiction* to it,' such as ascetism.¹⁰⁵ (*GS*, 335) Nietzsche might also refer to everything lawful and necessary in the *world* because such things as climate and nutriment apply also to other life forms. A person has to discover what's lawful and necessary in the world, so that he can engage those conditions conducive to his maximal development.

We also find that for Nietzsche, a person's relation to the truth has an instrumental value for ascertaining the value of their spirit. The value of a spirit who does not face the truth is low. On the other hand, the spirit who dares and bears a significant amount of truth, such as Schopenhauer, has a high value for Nietzsche.¹⁰⁶ In the foreword to *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche writes: 'I learned to view the origin of moralizing and idealizing very differently from what might be desirable: the *hidden* history of the philosophers, the psychology of their great names came to light for me.' (*EH*, 'Foreword', 3) This psychology, it appears, is that of cowardice towards the truth: 'Error (– belief in the ideal –) is not blindness, error is *cowardice*...' (*Ibid.*) There is not, on the part of those who believe in an ideal, an inability to see the truth, rather there is a cowardice at play. And spirits cowardly toward the truth don't fare well in Nietzsche's measure of the value of a spirit. He writes 'how much truth can a spirit *dare*' and '[h]ow much truth can a spirit *bear*...became for me more and more the real measure of value.' (*EH*, 'Foreword', 3) The idea of a spirit daring truth suggests voluntary action, and we might take this passage to cast light back on the following passage from *Beyond Good And Evil*:

Something might be true although at the same time harmful and dangerous in the highest degree; indeed, it could pertain to the fundamental nature of existence that a

¹⁰⁵ See *GM*, III for Nietzsche writing of the ascetic ideal.

¹⁰⁶ I suspect Nietzsche never radically shifted from his view of Schopenhauer in *The Birth of Tragedy*: 'Here a disconsolate and solitary man might choose no better symbol than the knight accompanied by Death and the Devil, as Dürer has drawn him, the knight in armour with the gaze of iron, who is able to make his way along the terrifying path undisturbed by his horrific companions and yet bereft of hope, having only horse and hound at his side. Our Schopenhauer was such a Dürer knight; he lacked all hope, but he wanted the truth. There are none like him.' (*BT*, 20)

complete knowledge of it would destroy one – so that the strength of a spirit could be measured by how much ‘truth’ it could take, more clearly, to what degree it *needed* it attenuated, veiled, sweetened, blunted, and falsified. (*BGE*, 39)

We might understand the above, in light of the passage in *Ecce Homo*, as a person voluntarily engaging with the truth. Ridley interprets it in such a fashion: each person can voluntarily engage with the truth and take it to a point at which they must falsify (for example). Even a strong spirit, ‘if honestly pressing the limit, will sooner or later find itself at a place where it must either lie or despair.’ (Ridley 2013: 423) It might be, however, that Nietzsche means the thoughts a person actively thinks – or the thoughts that arise more spontaneously – come in attenuated or falsified form, to the degree to which they need to.

There is no direct evidence for the interpretation that a process of falsification occurs in the unconscious, the final product of which emerges in consciousness. We do find elsewhere in Nietzsche’s writing, however, the suggestion of processes occurring unconsciously, the result of which emerges in consciousness as understanding. In *The Gay Science*, as we saw earlier, Nietzsche suggests that in the unconscious there is a battle between drives with an outcome; this outcome then rises into consciousness as understanding. ‘[O]nly the ultimate reconciliation scenes and final accounts of this long process rise to consciousness.’ (*GS*, 333) There might be, in Nietzsche’s view, an unconscious process of falsification. This could occur when a person actively thinks, or when a thought presents unconsciously that needs to be falsified before it is given in consciousness.

(v) *The will-to-truth as a problem*

We find, in Nietzsche’s thought, two interconnected problems. These are the problem of the value of the will-to-truth, and the problem of the value of possessing truth. (The latter is referred to by Nietzsche as the problem of the value of truth.) In the first section of *Beyond Good And Evil*, Nietzsche writes of how the will-to-truth has brought us to ‘strange, wicked, questionable questions!’ (*BGE*, 1) This has caused us to ask questions about the will-to-truth, leading to the most fundamental of which – what is ‘the *value* of this will’? (*Ibid.*) This leads on to the ‘problem of the value of truth.’ (*BGE*, 1) It has ‘*almost* come to seem’ that the

problem of the value of truth has ‘never before been posed’, Nietzsche remarks. (*Ibid.*)¹⁰⁷

It should be said that the value of both the will-to-truth and the possession of truth is a problem, rather than either being declared to be of negative value by Nietzsche. The problem of their value is to be settled, according to Nietzsche, through experimentation. The value of the possession of truth settles the value of the *will-to-truth*, thus the two are interconnected. In *On The Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche writes: ‘The will to truth requires a critique – let us thus define our own task – the value of truth must for once be experimentally *called into question*.’ (*GM*, III: 24) The critical assessment of the will-to-truth is conducted by experimentally calling the value of the possession of truth into question. Should we find the possession of truth to be of negative value, this in turn discredits the will to it.

We find Nietzsche waxing experimental in *The Gay Science* of 1882, in which he writes: ‘I approve of any form of scepticism to which I can reply, “Let’s try it!” But I want to hear nothing more about all the things and questions that don’t admit of experiment.’ (*GS*, 51) And further in, he remarks: ‘To what extent can truth stand to be incorporated? – that is the question; that is the experiment.’ (*GS*, 110) The notion of experiment is a distinguishing mark of Nietzsche’s thought.

Nietzsche does not apprise us of the criteria by which to assess the value of possessing a truth. A plausible criterion for assessing possession of a truth as having positive value, for Nietzsche, is that it is instrumental to life-enhancement, in some sense. And possession of a truth might be assessed as having negative value if it is life-denying – if, for example, it is instrumental to a drive not being expressed – or if it hinders life-enhancement.

Hussain, in his piece ‘The role of life in the *Genealogy*,’¹⁰⁸ offers the suggestion that Nietzsche thinks existing moral values should be revalued according to whether they help or hinder life-enhancement. These criteria are perhaps also applicable to assessing the value of the possession of truth. But what is meant by life-enhancement? More precisely, what is meant by life? Hussain interprets that according to Nietzsche, ‘the fundamental tendency that defines, or is at least essential to, life is a tendency towards expansion, domination, growth,

¹⁰⁷ The emphasis is mine.

¹⁰⁸ Hussain (2013, 142-69).

overcoming resistances, increasing strength.’ (Hussain 2013: 152) ‘Life’, here, refers to all living things, rather than just human life.

Hussain thinks that for Nietzsche, ‘the will to power’ is a shorthand for this tendency, ‘just as talking of a will to replicate would be a shorthand for a more contemporary, more plausible (but still no doubt inaccurate) understanding of what is essential to life.’ (Hussain 2013: 153) On Hussain’s interpretation of Nietzsche, the word ‘will’ applies both to psychological and to non-psychological states. This is reminiscent of Schopenhauer, who writes of his own extended use of the word ‘will.’ (See *WWR*, I, §22) According to Hussain, in using ‘the will to power’ Nietzsche refers to desired aims at expansion, domination and so on – i.e. psychological states. Yet, Hussain writes: ‘We cannot sensibly ascribe to Nietzsche the view that even an amoeba has a psychological state like a desired aim at power.’ (Hussain 2013: 53) In the case of amoebas and plants then, according to Hussain, the word ‘will’ is used figuratively for an instinct for expansion, domination and so on – i.e. for non-psychological states.

Hussain suggests that for Nietzsche, the revaluation of values should be carried out according to whether the values help or hinder the enhancement of life, as described above. The existing moral values are to be assessed ‘according to whether they help the fundamental instincts of life or hinder them.’ (Hussain 2013: 157) Were a value assessed as helping them it would be revalued as ‘good’ and, conversely, were it assessed as hindering them, revalued as ‘bad.’ These criteria to assess the value of values might also be considered applicable by Nietzsche to assessing the value of the possession of truths. Does the possession of this or that truth help those tendencies to, or fundamental instincts for, growth, domination, expansion, the overcoming of obstacles, strength? Or does it hinder them? If it’s the former, the possession of the truth has positive value; if it’s the latter, it has negative value.

As I said earlier, Nietzsche sets the value of the will-to-truth and the value of the possession of truth as problems, rather than declaring either to be of negative value. An experiment needs to be conducted to settle their value. There are various possible results of such an experiment. The results could be mixed, the possession of some truths being of positive value, others of negative value. The results could be perfectly positive – the possession of every truth being of positive value – or the results could, conversely, be unwaveringly

negative.¹⁰⁹ One would draw a conclusion from the results: if the results were mixed, the possession of truth would be concluded to be of mixed value. Were the results purely positive or negative, the possession of truth would be concluded to be of positive or negative value, respectively.

The conclusion on the value of the possession of truth would determine what the value of the will-to-truth is. The determination of the value of the will-to-truth can be categorised in three broad ways. The will-to-truth is of positive value if the possession of truth is of positive value; it is of partly positive, partly negative value if the possession of truth is of partly positive and partly negative value. Lastly, the will-to-truth is of negative value if the possession of truth is of negative value.

The ascetic ideal has, more or less surreptitiously, dominated philosophy according to Nietzsche. The conceptions of truth currently in operation either have truth ‘as God,’ or have been influenced by such things. (*GM* III: 24) As long as God was believed in it ‘was not *permitted* that truth should be a problem,’ and the will-to-truth escaped critique. (*Ibid.*) Once we no longer believe in God, however, the value of the possession of truth and of the will-to-truth become problems that need enquiry.

Nietzsche remarks that ‘there is a hazard’ in posing the problem of the value of truth, ‘and perhaps there exists no greater hazard.’ (*BGE*, 1) He does not elaborate on what this hazard is, instead this closes the section, the close of the section relating to its opening: ‘The will to truth, which is still going to tempt us to many a hazardous enterprise.’ (*Ibid.*) But the hazard could be personal: to establish the value of possessing the truth, a person engages in experimentation. The hazard might be that in engaging in such experimentation, the person perishes, in some sense, from possessing the truth. Nietzsche does, after all, repeatedly express the view that a person can perish from the truth. The hazard could on the other hand be cultural, if Nietzsche is in fact using a short hand for the problem of the value of *the-will-to-truth*. Should this be the case, it could be that Nietzsche has an intuition that the investigation of this problem might generate nihilism. In *On The Genealogy of Morality*,

¹⁰⁹ Indeed, at least in principle, with certain criteria by which to assess the value of truth, some truths may have neutral value. Suppose, as an example, truth were assessed as having positive value if it related to an increased sense of power and having negative value if it made us feel powerless. Certain truths do neither and so would possess neutral value.

published the following year (1887), Nietzsche articulates the consequences of investigating the meaning of the will-to-truth. He remarks that Christianity as a dogma perished from its own morality of truthfulness. (*GM* III: 27) It is also imminent that Christian morality will destroy itself: this truthfulness, Nietzsche claims, will seek the meaning of all will-to-truth. In so doing, the discarded divinity that forms, or at least informs, the will-to-truth will be recognised, ‘the faith that God is the truth, that truth is *divine*.’ (*GM* III: 24) This, Nietzsche is convinced, will bring about the demise of Christian morality, and nihilism: ‘Of this becoming-conscious-of-itself of the will to truth – no doubt whatever – morality will die. That grand drama in a hundred acts, which is reserved for the next two centuries of Europe – the most terrible, most questionable and perhaps also the most hopeful of all dramas...’ (*GM* III: 28) In section 1 of *Beyond Good And Evil*, Nietzsche perhaps intuits the nihilism referred to in this quote, though without striking the note of hope.

(vi) *Conclusion*

In this chapter, I have explored the various statuses that Nietzsche has assigned to the value of truth. In doing so, I have sought to challenge Ridley’s suggestion that, in Nietzsche’s writing, the value of life always values trumps the value of truth. In the foreword to *The Anti-Christ*, Nietzsche effectively describes his approach – as well as one of the conditions by which he is understood by his people – as an indifference over whether a truth is useful or fatal. This is a different picture to that which Ridley suggests. Rather than the idea that where there is engagement with the truth, life operates as the highest principle, this is a pursuit of truth with indifference over whether its fatal for life. The question of the utility of truth for life is not posed, rather: ‘one must never ask whether truth is useful.’ (*AC*, ‘Foreword’)

I have also sought to cast doubt on how, in Reginster’s account, truth has a *singularly* untroubled place in Nietzsche’s work in the end. According to Reginster, Nietzsche has growing doubt that the concealment of the terrible aspects of life and their replacement by beautiful falsity can provide the basis for genuine life-affirmation. In the end, Reginster claims, Nietzsche articulates that for genuine life-affirmation, life cannot be concealed and the terrible aspects of it must be affirmed. Life must be affirmed and so in the end, on Reginster’s narrative, the truth occupies an untroubled place in Nietzsche’s thought. Yet elsewhere in Nietzsche’s writing, he thinks experimentation should be conducted to

determine the value of truth, the potential outcome of which is that truth will be judged to have negative value, to some extent. My suggestion is not that Reginster is incorrect, but rather that the picture is more complex.

Conclusion

Over the course of the thesis I have sought to show, *contra* Reginster, that falsification is involved in the relationship between life-affirmation and art throughout Nietzsche's writings. According to Reginster's narrative, falsification is involved in the relationship in *The Birth of Tragedy*; there is then a transitional period – in which the relationship between life-affirmation and art falls away, and therefore falsification cannot be present in it. This is a transitional period to Nietzsche's late writing in which falsification is absent from the relationship, according to Reginster's narrative.

This thesis begins with *The Birth of Tragedy*, and the falsification involved in the relationship between life-affirmation and art therein. It then attempts to show the presence of falsification in the relationship both in the alleged transitional period, and in Nietzsche's late writing. This thesis does not deny Reginster's claim that Nietzsche's late writing presents instances of the relationship between life-affirmation and art devoid of falsification. The suggestion, rather, is that there are such instances, but there's falsification too. The suggestion is that the picture is more complex than Reginster suggests.

To close this thesis, I shall look at two influences that, I think, illuminate Nietzsche's project of life-affirmation. Nietzsche does have concern with the affirmation of life *as it is* in his later writing, as Reginster points out. Ultimately, however, Nietzsche's interest is in life-affirmation even if it involves falsification, and this is to be understood in connection to a pair of influences.

Nietzsche's concern with life-affirmation is influenced throughout by two, in his eyes kindred, forces: Schopenhauer and Christianity. The philosophy of Schopenhauer and the religion of Christianity share the same root, according to Nietzsche: 'The degenerate instinct that turns against life with subterranean vindictiveness (-- Christianity, Schopenhauer's philosophy...)' (*EH*, IV, 2) Nietzsche understood Schopenhauer to be an atheist,¹¹⁰ but also understood Schopenhauer's philosophy as 'half-Christian,' on account of its morality: 'He who...has, like me, long endeavoured to think pessimism through to the bottom and to

¹¹⁰ 'As a philosopher, Schopenhauer was the *first* admitted and uncompromising atheist among us Germans.' (*GS*, 357)

redeem it from the half-Christian, half-German simplicity and narrowness with which it finally presented itself to this century, namely in the form of the Schopenhauerian philosophy...’ (*BGE*, 56) The philosophy of Schopenhauer shares in Christian morality, according to Nietzsche.

Both Christianity and the philosophy of Schopenhauer are considered by Nietzsche to be life-negating and life-denying. Schopenhauer’s philosophy, Nietzsche writes, negates life with ‘will and representation.’ (See *TI*, IX, 36) Schopenhauer ‘said no to life’ – Nietzsche is concerned, not coincidentally, with saying “Yes” to it. (*GM*, Preface, 5) Schopenhauer’s denial of the will, for Nietzsche, constitutes a denial of life. Nietzsche wishes by contrast for an affirmation of life. There is, in fact, some evidence that Nietzsche’s thought on life-affirmation also emerged from taking Schopenhauer’s philosophy further. Returning to section 56 of *Beyond Good and Evil*: ‘He who...like me...has really gazed...down into the most world-denying of all possible modes of thought – beyond good and evil and no longer, like...Schopenhauer, under the spell and illusion of morality – perhaps by that very act, and without really intending to, may have had his eyes opened to the opposite ideal of the most exuberant, most living and most world-affirming man.’ (*BGE*, 56)

In the subscription to a transcendental next-world in Christianity there is, for Nietzsche, a hostility towards this world. In *Twilight of the Idols*, he writes: ‘the “Beyond” – why a Beyond if not a means of befouling the Here-and-Now?...’ (*TI*, IX, 34) Nietzsche seeks to oppose this hostility towards this world and ‘the Here-and-Now’ with affirmation. Nietzsche also sees in the negative morality of Christianity a source of life-negation and life-denial: ‘Basically I abhor...morality that says: “Do not do this!...”...I do not like negative virtues – virtues whose very essence is negation.’ (*GS*, 304) Nietzsche’s occupation with life-affirmation is, to some extent, an opposition to the life-negation and life-denial he sees in Christianity. Elsewhere, Nietzsche writes: ‘Christianity, that *denial of the will to life* become religion!’ (*EH*, XIII, 2) The use of Schopenhauer’s ‘will to life’ is humorous, but also shows a perception of Schopenhauer and Christianity as, to some extent, the same. This is a result of Schopenhauer stating in his work, which Nietzsche read, that Christianity is his own view.

I mentioned a little earlier on that according to Nietzsche, Christianity and Schopenhauerian philosophy share the same degenerate root. Nietzsche thinks that Christianity has also made

us 'sick', weak and decadent. (See, for example, AC, 52) What might have fulfilled a function historically, Nietzsche thinks, now simply does harm. The life-affirmation Nietzsche describes is underpinned by, and expressive of, health and strength. Not only is the description of life-affirmation in Nietzsche's writing in opposition to Christian life-negation, life-denial and life-hostility; the physiological conditions that undergird and are expressed in life-affirmation are a resistance of the decadence brought about by Christianity.¹¹¹ From *The Birth of Tragedy* onwards, Nietzsche's writing on life-affirmation relates to his views on Schopenhauer, Christianity or both – as something to be opposed or resisted, or at the least something to which his writing on life-affirmation can be traced back.

Throughout his life, Nietzsche's primary concern is the affirmation of life – even if this means the employment of falsification, of one form or another.

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