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# NIETZSCHE'S AESTHETICS

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This thesis contains my own work that was undertaken when I was in registered postgraduate candidature.

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ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF ARTS

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# NIETZSCHE'S AESTHETICS

by Ruben Ernesto Berrios

My thesis is an interpretation of the hitherto neglected aesthetics of Nietzsche's mature period (1886-8). It is divided into two parts. The first part examines Nietzsche's critical aesthetics (where the aesthetic is the object of his thought) and prepares the ground for the second part, in which Nietzsche's aestheticism (where he employs the aesthetic as a mode of thought) is examined.

Nietzsche's central philosophical concern is with the problem of value and he undertakes the specific task of the critique of moral values. His aesthetics contribute to this task in two ways. Firstly, since, for Nietzsche, the aesthetic is transparent to the presuppositions of life – abundant or impoverished life – he diagnoses morality by means of the aesthetic. Through the apprehension of the aesthetic aspects of morality – its beauty or ugliness, modes of creation and style – Nietzsche identifies and evaluates the form of life that underpins morality. He concludes that our morality – slave or Christian-based morality – is fundamentally impoverished. Secondly, the aesthetic provides Nietzsche with a solution to the predicament of morality. He recommends a mode of life – a noble ethic – that is, in part, modelled on his paradigm of healthy living: the artist who creates values from the abundance of life. Here Nietzsche advances an ideal that is broadly aesthetic in content.

The success of Nietzsche's aesthetic critique of morality is dependent upon the extent to which he can maintain his fundamental dichotomy of abundant and impoverished life. I argue that, on one level, Nietzsche does succeed in preserving the value of the aesthetics of abundance; but, on a deeper level, he is compelled to recognise that impoverishment is intrinsic to all life.

**Contents**

## Acknowledgements

This project is dedicated to my parents German and Doris Berrios. They have inspired and supported me in manifold ways. I want also to mention Íde Ní Luanaigh. Without her I doubt that I would have been able to finish. And finally, much thanks to Dr. Aaron Ridley who supervised the project.

## Abbreviations

All parenthesised references are to sections of Nietzsche's works. When the sections are divided into chapters, roman numerals are used; thus, 'TI IX.9' refers to section nine of the ninth chapter of *Twilight of the Idols*. When the text is a preface or epilogue, the abbreviation 'Pref' or 'Epil' is used; thus, 'GM Pref 6' refers to section six of the preface to *On the Genealogy of Morals*, and 'CW Epil' refers to the epilogue of *The Case of Wagner*.

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| **AC** | *The Anti-Christ*. Translated by R. J. Hollingdale. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968. |
| **ASC** | 'Attempt at a Self-Criticism' in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*. Translated and edited by W. Kaufmann. New York: Random House, 1968. |
| **BGE** | *Beyond Good and Evil* in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*. |
| | *Beyond Good and Evil*. Translated by R. J. Hollingdale. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990. |
| **BT** | *The Birth of Tragedy* in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*. |
| **CW** | *The Case of Wagner* in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*. |
| **D** | *Daybreak*. Translated by R. J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982. |

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| **EH** | *Ecce Homo* in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche.* |
| | *Ecce Homo.* Translated by R. J. Hollingdale. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992. |
| **GM** | *On the Genealogy of Morals* in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche.* |
| | *On the Genealogy of Morality.* Translated by C. Diethe and edited by K. Ansell-Pearson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. |
| **GS** | *The Gay Science.* Translated by W. Kaufmann. New York: Vintage, 1974. |
| **HA (I - II)** | *Human, All Too Human.* Translated by R. J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986. |
| **NCW** | *Nietzsche Contra Wagner* in *The Portable Nietzsche.* Translated and edited by W. Kaufmann. New York: Viking Penguin, 1954. |
| **TI** | *Twilight of the Idols.* Translated by R. J. Hollingdale. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968. |
| | *Twilight of the Idols.* Translated by Duncan Large. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998. |
| **TL** | 'On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense' in *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings.* Translated by R. Spiers and edited by R. Geuss and R. Spiers. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. |

**UM (I - IV)** *Untimely Meditations*. Translated by R. J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

**WP** *The Will to Power*. Translated by W. Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale and edited by W. Kaufmann. New York, Vintage: 1968.

**Z** *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Translated by R. J. Hollingdale. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969.

# Introduction

Friedrich Nietzsche – arguably the most important philosopher of the second half of the nineteenth century – was infatuated with art. In an aphorism from his final year of creativity and sanity he wrote: "Without music life would be a mistake" (TI I.33). And thus, in the simplest of terms, voiced his unreserved dedication to art in general, and to music in particular. For those contemporary philosophers who take an interest in such things, few would deny the basic fact of Nietzsche's partiality to art. And most, when invited to expand, would gesture towards Nietzsche's first book, *The Birth of Tragedy*, as the central and enduring monument to that partiality.[1] But while it is true that *The Birth of Tragedy* is Nietzsche's most sustained contribution to the "science of aesthetics" (BT 1), as he there calls it, this should not blind us to the fact that in Nietzsche's other works – most notably those of his final period – there are stances taken towards art and the aesthetic that are as profound and compelling as anything we find

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[1] Monroe Beardsley's claim that "Nietzsche's philosophy of art, in its main features, is set forth in his first book, *The Birth of Tragedy*" (1966: 275) may be taken as representative of this view, which is to attribute only to the early Nietzsche a profound interest in aesthetics. Nicholas Martin's recent study, *Nietzsche and Schiller: Untimely Aesthetics*, continues this selective emphasis on the early aesthetics. Martin's book – the function of which is to show that "Nietzsche's early writings owe more to Schiller than either Nietzsche or any commentator since wishes to admit" (1996: 5) – is a scholarly contribution to the history of aesthetics that reveals a link between the aesthetico-cultural programs of the two thinkers. Similarly, *Nietzsche on Tragedy* by Silk and Stern is concerned only with Nietzsche's early theory of tragedy.

in that youthful *tour de force*. My claim is that Nietzsche's interest in art deepened as his philosophical career progressed and that in his final writings there emerged an aesthetic that – in all its richness and subtlety – bespoke his philosophical maturity. My overarching task is to defend this bold claim; or, at the very least, to give to it a higher degree of clarity and plausibility than perhaps it has enjoyed up to now. This project, then, is an attempt to illuminate – or, perhaps, to draw a map of the territory of – Nietzsche's mature aesthetics. In what follows, I will be concerned, firstly, to distinguish my approach from various others that have been taken in the area. I will then outline the principal features of Nietzsche's mature aesthetic and the questions that my project seeks to address.

## I

The idea that Nietzsche might have a 'late' or 'mature' aesthetics presupposes the periodisation of his *oeuvre*. What justification, then, is there for thinking that there is a 'late Nietzsche' – and so a late Nietzschean aesthetic? Tracy Strong has written that it is "commonplace to assume that there is a more or less important tripartite composition to Nietzsche's life and writings", and then goes on to describe Nietzsche's three periods.[2] Strong labels "perilous" the tendency to "emphasise" this tripartite periodisation – especially the idea of the progression in Nietzsche's thought that he takes the periodisation to imply.[3] We should examine "Nietzsche's enterprise as a whole", he concludes.[4] Strong is right, I believe, to advise caution in the use of the tripartite division; it is clear that there

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[2] Strong, 1975: 7.

[3] *Ibid.*.

[4] *Ibid.*.

are continuities between Nietzsche's writings which render the division less than absolute. But it is equally clear that those commentators who presuppose the division do not – or, if they do, they should not – treat it *as* absolute. For the purposes of making perspicuous large discontinuities in Nietzsche's thought – i.e., the fact that Nietzsche *does* change his mind on a number of issues – the threefold division is indispensable. Michael Tanner identifies as one of the factors that contribute to various "misreadings" of Nietzsche the tendency to "treat all his writings as though they had been produced simultaneously."[5] The periodisation of Nietzsche's thought, then – though, even more, a due regard to the idiosyncrasies of each text – goes a long way to warding off the misinterpretation of his ideas. So to answer the question, since it is meaningful to divide Nietzsche's writing into periods, there is also a *prima facie* justification for claiming that there is something called 'Nietzsche's mature aesthetics'.

So what, then, is the 'tripartite composition' of Nietzsche's philosophical works? His early or 'romantic' period is said to begin with *The Birth of Tragedy*, to include the *Untimely Meditations*, and is characterised by the influence of the philosophy of Schopenhauer and the art of Wagner. Nietzsche's famous break with Wagner, and the appearance, in 1878, of *Human, All Too Human*, ushers in his middle – or what has come to be called his 'positivist' – period, which ends with Book IV of *The Gay Science* in 1882. The mature period begins with *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, which was published in the period 1883-1885, and terminates

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[5] Tanner, 1994: 4. Arthur Danto may be taken as representative of such approaches. In *Nietzsche as Philosopher*, he writes that Nietzsche's books "do not exhibit any special structure as a corpus. No one of them presupposes an acquaintance with any other ... [H]is writings may be read in pretty much any order, without this greatly impeding the comprehension of his ideas" (1965: 19).

with Nietzsche's collapse in early 1889.[6] Although there are a number of differences between the aesthetics of the three periods, the one fundamental cleavage is Nietzsche's abandonment of the Schopenhauer and Wagner-inspired romanticism of his early period. The question of the hold that Nietzsche's two mentors continue to have on him in his later work is still a matter of controversy.[7] I will offer my own view on the matter – in the case of Schopenhauer, first of all – by discussing a book which challenges the conventional periodisation of Nietzsche's works through a novel interpretation of his aesthetics.

Julian Young – whose *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art* remains one of the few book-length treatments of the subject – argues that "Nietzsche's thought about art divides into four main periods" and "that the fourth constitutes a return to the first."[8] Young organises his study around what he sees as Nietzsche's differing relations to Schopenhauer's philosophy, conceived broadly as a brand of 'metaphysical pessimism'. For Young, *The Birth of Tragedy* – the representative of period one – is thoroughly Schopenhauerian. (While that view might seem conventional, some

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6 Although *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is usually interpreted as marking the beginning of Nietzsche's mature period, it is clear that the post-*Zarathustra* works – beginning with *Beyond Good and Evil* in 1886 – form a natural group. In other words, the post-*Zarathustra* writings form a coherent philosophical unit. And it is these writings that I will, in the main, examine in my project. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, I believe, stands alone in Nietzsche's *oeuvre*. I prefer not to extract Zarathustra's poetical-philosophical images from their context, for, in my view, this strips them of much of their meaning and power. I do not discuss directly, then, Zarathustra's celebrated doctrines of the *Übermensch* (the superman or overman) and the 'eternal recurrence' – although I do examine the 'will to power' since it figures in the post-*Zarathustra* works. However, Nietzsche's aesthetic ideal of nobility – which I do examine – is to a certain extent related to his conception of the *Übermensch*. As J. P. Stern observes, "The Superman ... is an aesthetic ideal" (1979: 208).

7 In *Willing and Nothingness: Schopenhauer as Nietzsche's Educator* – a collection that explores the enduring influence of Schopenhauer on Nietzsche – Christopher Janaway writes that "Schopenhauerian elements ... persist in [Nietzsche's] later period despite the prominent rejection of others" (1998: 14). And in *Nietzsche, Wagner, and the Philosophy of Pessimism*, Roger Hollinrake claims: "Implicitly as well as explicitly, creatively as well as critically ... Wagner was indispensable as a point of reference throughout the period [i.e., the late period] of strenuous intellectual endeavour on the fruits of which Nietzsche's reputation ultimately depends" (1982: ix).

8 Young, 1992: 1.

commentators beg to differ.[9] ) "In the middle of his life", Young continues, "Nietzsche turned against pessimism and against Schopenhauer."[10] Here, the "science-affirming anti-artism" of *Human, All Too Human* – for Young, Nietzsche's second period – gave way to the new aesthetic of *The Gay Science* (period three) in which "Nietzsche's scientism evaporate[d], leading to a renewed sense of the importance of art".[11] Finally, in his fourth period – exemplified by *Twilight of the Idols* – Nietzsche "came back ... to pessimism", and though he made "every rhetorical effort to disguise this from us", Young argues, Schopenhauer's "essential spirit, his pessimism, lives as strongly in Nietzsche's final works as in his first."[12] I think that Young gets Nietzsche's late aesthetics wrong. There is no doubt that the mature Nietzsche does exhibit a renewed interest in *The Birth of Tragedy*, and also that he re-adopts a broadly pessimistic outlook. But Nietzsche is at pains to distinguish his new pessimism – which he calls "*Dionysian* pessimism" (GS 370) – from the "romantic pessimism" (*ibid.*) that he attributes to Schopenhauer and Wagner. My belief is that, *pace* Young, the final Nietzsche is *not* a metaphysical pessimist and I present my argument against Young in chapter three. My position, in effect, amounts to a defence of what Nietzsche felt to be his position at the time.

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9 Walter Kaufmann has written that "Nietzsche's early concern with art ... has created, or supported, the presumption that the young Nietzsche was essentially romantic. In fact, he was anti-romantic even in his first three books" (1956: 104-5). If we categorise Schopenhauer as a romantic – as most do – then it seems that, for Kaufmann, *The Birth of Tragedy* is 'anti-Schopenhauerian'. As he says in his introduction to the Vintage edition of the book, *The Birth of Tragedy* "constitutes a declaration of independence from Schopenhauer" (1968: 11). Kaufmann, I think, is over-zealous – to the point of distortion – in his attempt to redeem Nietzsche from Schopenhauer – to, as it were, sever Nietzsche entirely from his philosophical roots. An altogether more acute interpretation of the topic is provided by Henry Staten in 'The Birth of Tragedy Reconstructed'. Staten argues that "Nietzsche apparently tried to write the metaphysical will out of *The Birth of Tragedy* but found, on arriving at section 16, that he could not do it" (1990: 193). At this point in the book, Nietzsche takes on board Schopenhauer's philosophy of music, but also – and, for Nietzsche, regrettably – Schopenhauer's metaphysics, which are bound to his conception of music.

10 Young, 1992: 3.

11 Young, 1992: 148.

12 Young, 1992: 3.

But what of the influence of Wagner on the late Nietzsche? Given the frequency of Wagner's name in the writings of this period, there might be a case for arguing that Nietzsche never completely freed himself from the dominance of Wagner's art and *Weltanschauung* – the second of which was closer to his own than he ever publicly admitted. The putative 'anti-artism' of *Human, All Too Human* is in part explained by Nietzsche's identification of 'art as such' with 'Wagner's art'. To break with Wagner, for Nietzsche, is to break with art itself.[13] Nietzsche's famous Wagner tracts of his final year – *The Case of Wagner* and *Nietzsche Contra Wagner* – exhibit his virulent ambivalence to the dead composer; as Thomas Mann famously writes, "Nietzsche's immortal critique of Wagner ... [is] ... a panegyric in reverse, another form of eulogy."[14] Nietzsche's deep-seated need to cut loose from Wagner forces him to appropriate – and to direct at Wagner – philosophy's paradigmatic anti-art doctrine: the Platonic attack on poetry. However, as in the case of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, I will take seriously Nietzsche's claim that his own late Dionysian pessimism is distinct from, and more 'healthy' than, the intoxicated romanticism of Wagner. Thus, my project contains readings of Nietzsche's late Wagnerian criticism, and I will try to show how they enrich his overall aesthetic vision, while simultaneously threatening to dissolve some of his key distinctions. Julian Young pays scant attention to Nietzsche's Wagner tracts, which is odd, since along with *The Birth of Tragedy*, they remain Nietzsche's only sustained commentaries on aesthetics. In this area, then, my own approach deviates once again from that of Young.

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[13] Julian Young makes a similar point; *Human, All Too Human* contains a "devastatingly deflationary portrait of the artist posing as romantic, prophetic, quasi-priestly 'genius' (Wagner, that is, in all but name)" (1992: 58).

[14] Mann, 1985: 100.

I will close this section by describing briefly my own use of Nietzsche's texts. Although I am interested primarily in the mature Nietzsche, I make use of material from both his early and middle periods. Given the caveats that I have sounded concerning the tendency to view Nietzsche's entire output as a unified whole, how am I to justify this apparently illegitimate use of earlier texts? Put plainly, it is a matter of recognising the continuities and discontinuities in Nietzsche's thought. In his final writings, Nietzsche is extraordinarily direct. To make sense of some of his 'arguments' – or, to present them as coherently as possible – one is, at times, forced to go back to prior formulations, to fill in the gaps as it were. Many of Nietzsche's thoughts develop over time, and it is sometimes the case that in order to comprehend them fully, one requires a knowledge of their original and developmental forms.[15] Thus, to take one important example, the notion of 'self-reflexive form-giving' which we find, though not in those precise terms, in chapter seven of *Beyond Good and Evil* and in Essay Two of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, can be illuminated by a knowledge of its earlier formulations in Books II and IV of *The Gay Science*. At times, Nietzsche does this reclamation for us. In 1886, he wrote five prefaces for new editions of his earlier books; most relevant in this context is the 'Attempt at a Self-Criticism' appended to *The Birth of Tragedy*. There is much in the 'Attempt' that is insightful about *The Birth of Tragedy* itself. But there is also much that is reinterpretative, as Nietzsche reclaims what he considers valuable in *The Birth of Tragedy*, and forces it into the new philosophical context of his final period. Thus, the 'Attempt' is more a statement of Nietzsche's final aesthetics; it

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[15] Nietzsche himself advises his readers, in the preface to *On the Genealogy of Morals*, to "have first read my earlier works without sparing themselves some effort" (GM Pref 8), and thus points to the interrelatedness of his works.

introduces – so I maintain – a non-metaphysical pessimism and concomitant notion of tragedy, and should be sharply distinguished from *The Birth of Tragedy* as it stands. This, then, is my general methodology with respect to the interpretation of Nietzsche's late texts; I refer back to earlier passages only when they clarify their later counterparts.

## II

In this, and the following section, I want to continue outlining my general approach to Nietzsche's late aesthetics by considering two books, both highly influential, that treat of the subject in different ways: Heidegger's *Nietzsche* and Alexander Nehamas' *Nietzsche: Life as Literature.*

When writing on Nietzsche it has become *de rigueur* to address the question of the *Nachlass*, that large body of Nietzsche's unpublished notes, some of which are collected together in *The Will to Power.* In the case of Nietzsche's aesthetics, the question can be tackled by looking at what is perhaps the most famous treatment of the subject: Volume One of Heidegger's *Nietzsche*, entitled 'The Will to Power as Art'. This volume is a reading of Book Three, Part IV, of *The Will to Power* – which comprises notes that Nietzsche wrote in the period 1883-8 – and is thus a commentary on Nietzsche's late aesthetics. My position with regards to Heidegger is ambivalent. He employs dubious means – he concentrates wholly on *The Will to Power* – but emerges with a reading of Nietzsche that, on one level, I agree with, but, on another, I am profoundly hostile to.

Heidegger's interpretation of the distinction between Nietzsche's published works and unpublished notes is eccentric at best. He claims that

what "Nietzsche himself published during his creative life was always foreground" and that Nietzsche's "philosophy proper" – that is, his "fundamental position" – was "left behind as posthumous, unpublished work" in *The Will to Power*.[16] This view arises from the alleged fact that Nietzsche, in his final period, planned what Heidegger refers to as a "*magnum opus*" called *The Will to Power*, but collapsed before he could bring it to fruition. But the actual fact is that Nietzsche abandoned *The Will to Power* as a philosophical project; and the notes that appear in that volume were either at one time intended for publication and then discarded, or never intended for publication at all.[17] It was Förster-Nietzsche – the philosopher's sister – who retrieved and published these notes, on the basis of a plan that had already been rejected by her brother. *The Will to Power*, then, is not Nietzsche's 'draft *magnum opus*', and so Heidegger's view that it is only there that we can find the 'proper' Nietzsche has no basis. My own view is that there is an important distinction between private notes that entertain various positions and published texts that decisively affirm them. In the case of Nietzsche, the great stylist, who, as Michael Tanner has pointed out, "took great pains over the finished form of what he published", the distinction is especially active.[18] I am, then, a "splitter", to employ Bernd Magnus' term – which denotes those who admit of a split between the published and the unpublished Nietzsche.[19] My focus is on the published works. However, and here I follow Julian Young, when a published passage can be clarified by an unpublished note – that is, when a published thought is given more

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16 Heidegger, 1991: 8-9.

17 See Magnus, 1986. In particular pp. 85-8.

18 Tanner, 1994: 5.

19 Magnus, 1986: 82.

coherent expression in its unpublished form – I will quote from *The Will to Power*. But I will make it clear that I am doing so, and will always give "interpretative precedence" to the published passage.[20]

Despite Heidegger's misguided view of the status of *The Will to Power*, his interpretation of the relation between Nietzsche's concepts of 'art' and the 'will to power' is, in my view, structurally sound. For Heidegger, the will to power is Nietzsche's key doctrine, it describes the "basic character of beings".[21] Heidegger argues that "*an interpretation of will to power must begin ... with art*", since "for Nietzsche *art* attains an exceptional position within the task of a general interpretation of all occurrence, which is understood as will to power".[22] Heidegger's claim, then, is that through the concept of art one can interpret the concept of the will to power, since art enjoys an interpretative position that is, at least in this case, 'exceptional'. As he goes on to say, it is the perspicuity of art – or, more properly the artist – that enables "Being", i.e., the will to power, to "light ... up".[23] For reasons that I introduce in chapter one and discuss at length in chapter four, there is an important sense in which both art and artist are transparent to certain life impulses that Nietzsche, at times, calls the 'will to power'. Thus, in this context, I am in agreement with Heidegger.

The point at which I diverge from Heidegger's interpretation is in the metaphysical status that he attributes to the will to power. For Heidegger, "the expression 'will to power' provides an answer to the

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20 Young, 1992: 4.

21 Heidegger, 1991: 69.

22 Heidegger, 1991: 67-8.

23 Heidegger, 1991: 69.

question 'What is being?'", and he suggests that "[s]ince antiquity that question has been *the* question of philosophy."[24] In his unpublished notes, Nietzsche experiments with the concept of the will to power and seems to present it as a metaphysical, and at times a cosmological, doctrine.[25] Heidegger, for reasons that I have previously outlined, takes this as Nietzsche's 'real' view. But in the published works, which are my principal concern, there is no such experimentation; nowhere does Nietzsche state categorically that the will to power is the Essence of All Things as such, or that it is – using Heideggerian terminology – the 'Being of beings'. In his published works, Nietzsche is relatively silent about the meaning of the will to power. The most we get is a quasi-naturalistic picture of a form-giving force that is associated with ascendant forms of life, and is in abeyance, or corrupted, in degenerate forms of life. Moreover, Nietzsche launches numerous attacks on metaphysics, in the form of the ascetic concepts of immutable 'being', 'reality' and 'truth' and the associated concept of God. He does so by anthropologising them – through psychology and history, or, collectively, 'genealogy' – by showing them to be the products of humanity, of *immanent* life. It is highly unlikely, then, that Nietzsche would actively preach a metaphysics. And if he does – as it were inadvertently – promulgate a metaphysic, that should be demonstrated and *not* presupposed, as Heidegger presupposes it. In his published works, and especially in his aesthetics, Nietzsche is at times on the brink of making metaphysical pronouncements. And in such instances,

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24 Heidegger, 1991: 4.

25 Most famously Nietzsche writes: "do you want a *name* for this world? A *solution* for all its riddles? ... – *This world is the will to power – and nothing besides!* And you yourselves are also this will to power – and nothing besides!" (WP 1067). Erich Heller describes this as Nietzsche's "most recklessly metaphysical note", and that it is "an assertion that only adds 'power' to Schopenhauer's metaphysics of the Will" (1988: 61). Magnus explains that this was "an entry Nietzsche jotted down in July 1885 but had set aside by February 1888 as material for which he had no further use" (1986: 88).

I attempt to prevent him – as reasonably and coherently as is possible – from succumbing to such temptations.

## III

In *Nietzsche: Life and Literature*, Alexander Nehamas – in systematic and thought-provoking ways – places the aesthetic at the heart of Nietzsche's philosophy. He attempts to make sense of a number of conflicts in Nietzsche's mature thought by offering a fresh approach to the question of the relation between Nietzsche's perspectivism and aestheticism. Perspectivism is the view that – here Nehamas quotes from *The Will to Power* – "there are no facts, only interpretations" (WP 481); aestheticism is the name that Nehamas gives to Nietzsche's tendency to look at the world "as if it were a sort of artwork ... in particular ... as if it were a literary text."[26] These ideas are linked in two ways. Aestheticism, Nehamas explains, "provides at least part of the motivation for perspectivism".[27] Which is to say, if one views the world as a text, and given that, as Nehamas puts it, "literary texts can be interpreted equally well in vastly different and deeply incompatible ways", it follows that the world can also be interpreted in such ways.[28] Nietzsche's aestheticism, then, allows him to view the world multi-perspectivally, and so to produce a number of incompatible interpretations of the world. The second way in which aestheticism and perspectivism are linked concerns, what is for Nehamas, the exemplarity of Nietzsche's texts. Nietzsche is driven to offer a positive

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26 Nehamas, presumably, is thinking of the following note from *The Will to Power*: "The world as a work of art that gives birth to itself" (WP 796).

27 Nehamas, 1985: 3.

28 *Ibid.*.

philosophy, but "without falling back into the dogmatic tradition he so distrusted".[29] In other words, perspectivism does not allow Nietzsche to state 'my judgement is *the* judgement', that is, to demand unconditional acceptance of his views – since that would mean his lapsing into dogmatism, or non-perspectivist metaphysics. Nietzsche can only say "my judgement is *my* judgement" (BGE 43); and he achieves this, so Nehamas argues, by employing a "variety of literary genres and styles" so as to "make his presence as an individual author" – "a literary character who is a philosopher" – "unforgettable to his readers."[30] Nietzsche, then, by underlining his idiosyncrasy through his unique style, thereby exemplifies the perspectival character of his claims, and so, indirectly, the doctrine of perspectivism itself. Nehamas concludes that Nietzsche's "aestheticism is, therefore, the other side of his perspectivism."[31]

Taking the issue of Nietzsche's style first; there is little doubt that Nietzsche is – to use a term that he predicates of Wagner – a "seducer" (CW PS). Nietzsche seduces us into assent through his "stylistic pluralism" and highly charged, or "hyperbolic", tone of voice.[32] But I harbour doubts concerning Nehamas' claim that Nietzsche's style "play[s] a crucial philosophical role in his writing."[33] I have doubts, in other words, over the alleged exemplarity of Nietzsche's style. Nietzsche exemplifies his doctrine of perspectivism, on one level, by actually practising perspectival

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29 (Nehamas, 1985: 8). In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche describes the "dogmatists' philosophy" as "unconditional" (BGE Pref). He is referring to Platonism and "Platonism for 'the people'" – that is, Christianity (*ibid.*).

30 Nehamas, 1985: 4-5, 8.

31 Nehamas, 1985: 8.

32 Nehamas, 1985: 20, 22.

33 Nehamas, 1985: 5.

philosophy – that is, by producing conflicting interpretations of the same, or closely related, phenomena. That sense of exemplarity I grant. However, it is something else, and more problematic, to claim that Nietzsche actually exemplifies his "positive views" – i.e., his ideal of post-ascetic nobility – through his philosophy.[34] *Is* Nietzsche an instance of the nobility – of the successful overcoming of asceticism – that he recommends? I doubt that he is. Nietzsche exemplifies, rather, the *struggle* to overcome asceticism, or decadence; he is the exemplary modern who has become conscious of the value, or valuelessness, of modernity. In *The Case of Wagner*, he writes: "I am, no less than Wagner, a child of his time; that is, a decadent: but I comprehended this, I resisted it. The philosopher in me resisted" (CW Pref). I take the view, then, that Nietzsche does not exemplify his ideals and that this is not of any serious consequence for his philosophy. The recommendation of an ideal through the various concepts and 'arguments' – i.e., the content – of his philosophy is, I think, enough to prevent Nietzsche lapsing back into the dogmatic philosophical tradition. Here I align myself with Aaron Ridley, whose recent *Nietzsche's Conscience* identifies the various problems that arise from the claim that Nietzsche exemplifies his ideal.[35]

But what of Nehamas' first sense of Nietzsche's aestheticism, the idea that Nietzsche looks at the world as if it were an artwork, and, in particular, a literary text? It is worth considering the force of this idea. When reading Nietzsche's late works, one gets the feeling that he is operating with a set of criteria that are, first of all, broadly aesthetic or artistic, and, secondly, presupposed or hidden, somehow operating – or

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[34] Nehamas, 1985: 2.

[35] See Ridley, 1998. In particular, pp. 93-5, pp. 154-5.

simmering away – beneath the surface of his text. The value of Nehamas' formulation of Nietzsche's aestheticism lies in the fact that it explains, in part, this property of Nietzsche's texts. Aestheticism is Nietzsche's general tendency to take up an aesthetic standpoint with respect to the world; and we possess the consequences of his adopting that standpoint – i.e., his explicit philosophical claims – but are seldom given a description, by Nietzsche, of the standpoint itself. More generally, by highlighting the aesthetic core of Nietzsche's thought, Nehamas shows how aesthetics can be made to take the philosophical lead, and not merely be a supplementary discipline that is practised after 'philosophy-proper' (i.e., metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of language etc.) has been done. I take on board, then, this sense of Nietzsche's aestheticism, and use it, as we will see, to construct a major part of my model of his aesthetics. However, I have serious doubts concerning Nehamas' overall interpretation of Nietzsche's aesthetic standpoint. And this has important consequences for his claim that Nietzsche's aestheticism motivates his perspectivism.

To prepare the ground for my argument against Nehamas, I would like, for a moment, to broaden the discussion. In the essay 'Modern Philosophy and the Neglect of Aesthetics', Roger Scruton discusses the claim that it was the decline in religious interest that contributed to the ascendance of aesthetics in post-Enlightenment philosophy. It is Kant who, in the *Critique of Judgement*, exemplifies the inception of this tradition when he "situates the aesthetic experience and the religious experience side by side".[36] But, in the end – Scruton tells us – Kant uses the aesthetic to vindicate the traditional claims of religion. Scruton insists

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36 Scruton, 1990: 104.

that we need not accept Kant's conclusion, he asks: "Suppose we look for the meaning of the world in aesthetic experience, while reserving judgement in matters of faith?"[37] If we attempt to do that, then this would give "to aesthetic interest an importance comparable to that which once had attached to religious worship", with the result that "aesthetics ... [would move] ... from the periphery of philosophy to the centre".[38] There are various nineteenth century philosophers for whom this indeed is the case. Scruton mentions Schiller, Hegel and Kierkegaard, but thinks, primarily, of Nietzsche – "whose flight towards the aesthetic followed an act of deicide unparalleled in the history of thought."[39] I want to stress the point that the primacy of the aesthetic for Nietzsche is the result not only of his infatuation with art but – as for many of his predecessors – of the crisis in value that follows the recognition of the fact that, in Nietzsche's words, "God is dead" (GS 125; 343). Much of Nietzsche's thought consists in the diagnosis of this crisis in value – a condition he calls 'nihilism' – but there is also much that is best viewed as an attempt, on his part, to put value back into the world. In short, Nietzsche's aestheticism – his conception of the world viewed as a work of art – puts him in the position to attempt, as Scruton articulates it, "to find a way of life that would raise nobility, glory and tragic beauty to the place that had been occupied by moral goodness and faith."[40] For Nietzsche, aesthetic value is the only remedy for the self-devaluation of value that is nihilism.

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37 Scruton, 1990: 104-5.

38 Scruton, 1990: 105.

39 *Ibid.*.

40 *Ibid.*.

I have taken this detour to emphasise exactly what is at stake in Nietzsche's aestheticism, and to stress the profound role that it must, and does, play in his philosophy. Nehamas, in my view, underplays these considerations and it has serious consequences for his central claim. For Nehamas, Nietzsche's aestheticism is primarily literary, and its most important element is, what I will call, the 'multiple interpretation thesis' which, Nehamas tells us, is part of "the motivation for perspectivism."[41] Thus, if one views the world as if it were a literary text, and assuming that literary texts are capable of multiple interpretation, it follows that the world is capable of multiple interpretation – which is, basically, what the perspectivist doctrine amounts to. Adopting the broader view, as I did in the preceding paragraph, it is clear that the most important element of Nietzsche's aestheticism is *not* the multiple interpretation thesis, but, rather, something different and more urgent.

If we accept that Nietzsche does view the world as a literary text, we should then ask: what is Nietzsche's literary ideal? In his "philology of the world", as Nehamas puts it, what texts does Nietzsche have in mind?[42] It is not controversial to say that it is pre-Socratic literature – in particular, the Homeric epics and the tragedies of Aeschylus and Sophocles. Bearing that in mind, Nietzsche's aestheticism, put crudely – very crudely – looks like this. The death of God and the resultant condition of nihilism incite Nietzsche to look at the world as if it were a text, an epic or tragic text. He looks at the world from the perspective of these literary values, which, from a modern perspective, may be subsumed – however anachronistically – under the heading of 'aesthetic values'. Nietzsche uses these aesthetic

41 Nehamas, 1985: 3.

42 *Ibid.*.

values to aid the diagnosis of nihilism, as well as to propose a cure. Nietzsche idealises Greek literature, and draws from it his highest values, in Scruton's words, 'nobility, glory and tragic beauty'. That Nietzsche perhaps over-idealises his Greeks – or, as Henry Staten has shown, appeals to an "idealising falsification of the idea of the 'noble Greek'"[43] – is an important point, but not the one at issue here. The point, rather, is that Nietzsche's aestheticism is a 'Hellenic aestheticism' and it involves a non-pluralistic, and more or less stable, interpretation of the epic and tragic literature of pre-Socratic Greece.[44]

Against Nehamas, then, my claim is that Nietzsche's literary aestheticism does *not* bring with it the multiple interpretation thesis. On the contrary, it presupposes a single interpretation of a set of texts; an interpretation that struggles to extract the values that are dealt with therein, so as to put them to philosophical work. Are we expected to believe, as Nehamas would have us, that, for Nietzsche, the most important characteristic of literature is expressed in the platitudinous claim that texts can be interpreted in a number of incompatible ways? Nietzsche would certainly acknowledge that truism, but, for him, what is of far greater importance is the value of the values that are advanced in literature. Indeed, if one were to take Nietzsche's Hellenic aestheticism as a model for literary interpretation – bearing in mind that it is a simple, non-multiple, interpretation – it would actually discourage the hermeneutical tendency

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43 Staten, 1990: 43.

44 The recurring concepts that Nietzsche draws from epic and tragic literature are: 'noble', 'great', 'heroic', 'glorious' and 'gratitude', 'reverence', 'honour'. Nietzsche invokes these concepts in a consistently positive fashion. Thus, Nietzsche is rarely, if ever, multi-perspectival about these terms. For example, in *The Case of Wagner*, he writes: "Noble morality ... is rooted in a triumphant Yes said to *oneself* – it is self-affirmation, self-glorification of life ... All of *beautiful*, all of *great* art belongs here: the essence of both is gratitude" (CW Epil). And in *Beyond Good and Evil*: "The noble human being honours himself as one who is powerful" (BGE 260), "*The noble soul has reverence for itself*" (BGE 287).

to interpret phenomena pluralistically. My own view is that Nehamas looks for perspectivism in, and reads it into, Nietzsche's aestheticism. He over-emphasises what he alleges to be – but, in fact, is not – the formal aspect of Nietzsche's aestheticism (the multiple interpretation thesis) and that blinds him to its actual content, which, as I have shown, is capable of undermining the alleged formal aspect. As I show in chapter three, perspectivism arises from Nietzsche's critique of ascetic, or transcendental, epistemology, and so, in its own way, is also a response to the death of God – the self-devaluation of transcendental value. In conclusion, then, by interpreting Nietzsche's aestheticism as the supposed 'motivation' for his perspectivism, Nehamas trivialises it and falsifies it.

## IV

Having defined various aspects of my position by describing the influential claims of Heidegger and Nehamas, I want now to outline the basic distinctions that structure my interpretation of Nietzsche's aesthetics. Nehamas has pointed to that general aspect of Nietzsche's thought where he looks at the world as if it were a work of art. And I claimed that by doing this, Nietzsche hopes both to diagnose, and to prescribe a cure for, nihilism. Basically, Nietzsche's aestheticism allows him to think about values aesthetically, and to do things with the aesthetic – to evaluate and prescribe. In this case, the aesthetic is not so much a body of thought as a mode of thought, and its presuppositions are not directly to view – they are, in a certain sense, implicit. But it is *also* the case that Nietzsche thinks about the aesthetic directly, and practises what some would call 'aesthetics proper'. For Nietzsche, here, the aesthetic and art are a critical object of thought. The distinction between the aesthetic as a mode of thought

(Nietzsche's *aestheticism*) and the aesthetic as an object of thought (Nietzsche's *critical aesthetics*) is basic to my interpretation.[45] The distinction is not as crisp as I have presented it; the two sides are basically aspects of each other, or two expressions of something called 'Nietzsche's aesthetics'. I will give my reasons for making the distinction in a moment. First of all, though, I would like to draw a further contrast within the domain of Nietzsche's aestheticism.

In the previous section, I called Nietzsche's literary aestheticism, a *Hellenic* aestheticism, where Nietzsche evaluates the world in terms of the values of the tragic age of Greece.[46] However, there is a more fundamental conception of Nietzsche's aestheticism that, in fact, underlies this literary view of the world. Nietzsche binds the aesthetic values of beauty and ugliness to his 'living' – or vitalistic – values of abundant life and impoverished life. Beauty is abundance – ugliness is impoverishment. This form of aestheticism is prior to the concepts of 'artist' and 'work of art', including, of course, literary works of art. I will call this most general of Nietzsche's perspectives his *vitalistic* aestheticism, since this label captures the Nietzschean idea of the intimacy of the aesthetic and life.[47] Nietzsche's aestheticism, then, is distinct from his critical aesthetics, and is divided into

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45 My distinction resembles the contrast that Aaron Ridley draws between the "unofficial" and the "official" aesthetic of the *Genealogy* (1998: 86).

46 Nietzsche, of course, was not the first German philosopher or critic to be captivated by Antiquity. As Silk and Stern have observed, "German Hellenism" dates back, at least, to Winckelmann in the eighteenth century (1981: 4). Hölderlin, Schiller and Goethe continued this trend.

47 I use the word 'vital' in its conventional sense, meaning 'pertaining to life'. The expressions 'life aestheticism' and 'living aestheticism' are awkward and slightly misleading formulations of the idea – hence my preference for 'vitalistic aestheticism'. Michael Tanner has employed the term in connection with Nietzsche, as well as with Wagner and D. H. Lawrence. Tanner describes "moral vitalism" as "a tradition of thought that uses as the criterion of moral worth 'life'" (1979: 160). More recently, Daniel Conway has written: "Throughout his writings from the period 1885-88 and especially in the books written in his final year of sanity, Nietzsche evinces his ever-strengthening commitment to a form of vitalism" (1997: 35). Nietzsche does use the term 'vitality' – *Vitalität* (TI IX.37) or *Lebendigkeit* (CW 7) – but not systematically.

two – the vitalistic and the Hellenic. I make the second distinction to draw attention to the conceptual gap that exists between Nietzsche's values of beauty-abundance and tragic nobility. Nietzsche, in general, conflates the two – they are, for him, virtually indistinguishable – and *Dionysus* is the name that he gives to that amalgam of the vital and the tragic noble. In the penultimate section of this introduction, I will return to Nietzsche's Hellenic aestheticism and outline the role that it plays in his aesthetics.

As I have said, Nietzsche's aestheticism (I refer now to the vitalistic) and his critical aesthetics are aspects of each other. What, then, are my reasons for separating them? Firstly, circumscribing Nietzsche's critical aesthetics – the more traditional – will make conspicuous his more idiosyncratic aesthetics – his aestheticism. And it is partly on the basis of the idiosyncrasy of his aesthetics that we can illuminate Nietzsche's contribution to the discipline. Secondly, the distinction is of expository value. It presents a structure around which one can give an account of Nietzsche's aesthetics – and this is how it is used here. I begin with an account of Nietzsche's critical aesthetics and end with his vitalistic aestheticism; that is, begin with his more traditional approaches to philosophical aesthetics and move to his more innovative approaches. The two approaches are interdependent, and I will reflect upon their relation in section IX below.

In the rest of this introduction, I propose to give a summary of my project in reverse order from that of the chapters. In other words, I will give an account of Nietzsche's vitalistic aestheticism first and his critical aesthetics second. My reasons for doing this are twofold. Firstly, I attempt to contextualise Nietzsche's aesthetics within the aesthetic tradition, and I

argue that his vitalistic aesthetic arises from the concept of 'aesthetic' itself. Secondly, I also provide an account of the central concerns of Nietzsche's late philosophy as a whole, and his vitalistic aestheticism – as the most fundamental manifestation of his aesthetic – is intimately related to these concerns. It is to Nietzsche's philosophy as whole, then, that I will turn in the following section.

## V

As I have previously indicated, Nietzsche's aestheticism provides a perspective through which he hopes to tackle the more general problem of value. That problem, indeed, is the central concern of his mature philosophy. Nietzsche asks that the "future task of the philosophers" be "understood as the solution of the *problem of value*, the determination of the *order of rank among values*" (GM I.17). Two early, and well known, commentaries on Nietzsche – by writers from distinct philosophical traditions, Gilles Deleuze and Walter Kaufmann – make some helpful remarks on this point. Deleuze places Nietzsche's concern with value in context; he claims that, for Nietzsche, "Kant had not carried out a true critique because he was not able to pose the problem of critique in terms of values."[48] By contrast, Nietzsche's own "philosophy of values ... is ... the only way in which a total critique may be realised".[49] For Deleuze, then, Nietzsche's thought is best viewed as the consummation of the

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48 Deleuze, 1983: 1.

49 *Ibid.*. Deleuze's idea can be fleshed out in the following way. The historical-psychological focus – or the 'immanent' basis – of Nietzschean critique distinguishes it from the Kantian mode, which conceives of the means of critique – 'pure reason' – in transcendental terms. David Owen has discussed Nietzschean critique – 'genealogy' – and its relation to the Kantian project. He writes that "the Kantian activity of critique as specifying transcendental conditions of possibility is transformed into the enterprise of establishing historical conditions of possibility and the affective interests embedded in these conditions" (1995: 39).

philosophical project of critique, since he made the question of the value of values central to that project. Kaufmann's comments echo a point that I made earlier. Nietzsche leaves "little doubt", writes Kaufmann, over "his primary concern: values."[50] Which is not to say that he is involved with the "academic field of value theory", rather, "Nietzsche attack[s] the value problem which stares our generation in the face" – the problem of nihilism.[51] Kaufmann then cites the oft-quoted fragment from *The Will to Power*: "What does nihilism mean? *That the highest values devaluate themselves*. The aim is lacking; 'why?' finds no answer" (WP 2). For Kaufmann, then, Nietzsche responds to the crisis in value that follows the death of God.

I have made the claim that Nietzsche's aestheticism is, in an important sense, motivated by his overall concern with value. But there seems to be nothing in Deleuze's account that would suggest this; it is not immediately obvious how Nietzsche's critique of value might be usefully served by his aestheticism. And similarly, the role that the aesthetic plays in the aftermath of the self-devaluation of value – the problem that Kaufmann stresses – remains unclear. Indeed, pressing the point further, given that the aesthetic is *itself* predicated upon a set of values, is it not actually a part of the problem, rather than the solution? What, then, leads Nietzsche to invoke the aesthetic in his grappling with the question of value? I will provide an answer to that question in the following section. But, prior to that, it is necessary to attain a clearer conception of what the aesthetic is – and so what it actually means for Nietzsche.

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50 Kaufmann, 1956: 102.

51 *Ibid.*.

Aesthetics, as the philosophical discipline that was born in the eighteenth century, was defined by Baumgarten as the 'science of sensory cognition'. In this form, 'aesthetic' was construed in terms of the Greek term – *aísthesthai*, meaning 'to perceive' – from which it was derived. As Hegel puts it in the *Aesthetics* – the most sustained contribution to the subject of the nineteenth century – "'Aesthetics means ... precisely ... the science of sensation" – *die Wissenschaft des Sinnes*.[52] But it meant more than that. For Kant, since Baumgarten had attempted also "to bring the critical treatment of the beautiful under rational principles", the term 'aesthetic' signified, in addition, "the critique of taste."[53] 'Aesthetics' becomes, then, the philosophy of beautiful sensuous perception, and thus enters the realm of value, treating of the relative quality (beauty or ugliness) of sensations. And since it deals with beautiful sensations as such, it covers those that arise from the worlds of both nature and culture. Although we now tend to use the term in connection with culture – specifically, art – it is important, in the context of Nietzsche's aesthetics, to bear in mind the wider sense of the term.

Taking 'aesthetic', then, in its broad sense, we are able to state that Nietzsche's aestheticism, in its most basic form, is his tendency to admit of the presence of only the values of beauty and ugliness when looking at the world. And the consequence of his adopting such a perspective is that – as Nietzsche puts it – only a "purely aesthetic interpretation ... of the world" is possible (ASC 5). This might seem an uninformative restatement of Nehamas' view that Nietzsche looks at the world as if it were a work of art – but it is not. As I have described it, Nietzsche's aesthetic perspective is

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52 Hegel, 1975: 1.

53 Kant, 1929: 66.

conceptually prior to the existence of things called 'works of art'. For Nietzsche, the world is beautiful only from the perspective of man, and only if, as it were, it throws back the image of man's beauty – which is the only beauty (TI IX.9). For Nietzsche, beauty is the perfection of "*ascending* life" (CW Epil), or the "*over-abundance of life*" (GS 370); ugliness, on the other hand, consists in the "*impoverishment of life*" (*ibid.*).[54] On this interpretation, then, when Nietzsche adopts the aesthetic perspective, the world is simply a configuration of abundant or impoverished life. Nehamas' formulation is certainly consistent with this picture – it is, indeed, an expression or an aspect of it. But because of that, it fails to capture, what is for Nietzsche, the more fundamental nature of the aesthetic.

It will have been noticed the ease with which Nietzsche moves from aesthetic values ordinarily conceived (beauty / ugliness) to vitalistic values as conceived by him (abundance / impoverishment). But if we take another look at the concept of the 'aesthetic', that move will look considerably more motivated. In its involvement with sensation and taste, the aesthetic is concerned with that aspect of man in which his embodiment comes to the fore. Sensation is the glow of embodiment, so to speak – in sensuous perception the body reveals, in palpable form, its identity *as* a body. Beauty is a perfect sensation, and perfect sensations are those in which the self-disclosure of the body is at its most perfect. And it is precisely this condition of perfect palpability – "sensuality" (*Sinnlichkeit*) (GM III.8), "heightened ... excitability" (TI IX.8) – that constitutes, in part, what Nietzsche calls the 'overabundance of life'. (There is a concomitant

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54 The conception of beauty as abundance (*Fülle*) can also be found in Friedrich Schlegel's aesthetics (1849: 413-24).

"overabundance of soul" (BGE 240) that Nietzsche would call the 'spiritualisation' of perfect sensuousness). Nietzsche's move, then, from the aesthetic *qua* beauty to the aesthetic *qua* abundance, is mediated by the concept of sensation (and the concept of embodiment which it presupposes) that is already implicit in the very idea of the 'aesthetic'.[55]

Nietzsche emphasises the idea of the fundamental connection between the aesthetic and life in *The Case of Wagner*. He writes: "Aesthetics is tied indissolubly to these ... presuppositions", where the presuppositions to which he refers are "*ascending* life" and "declining life" (CW Epil). This echoes the Heideggerian remark concerning the perspicuity of art – which, as I have now shown, is at bottom the perspicuity of the aesthetic. For Nietzsche, then, aesthetic values are transparent to the basic values that constitute life because they are 'tied indissolubly' to those basic values. This is my interpretation, then, of Nietzsche's *vitalistic aestheticism*, the perspective in which the aesthetic appears in its most basic form. In the following section, I will outline the role that it plays in Nietzsche's struggle with the problem of value.

## VI

It is worth stressing Kaufmann's point that Nietzsche's engagement with value does not produce something that we would be inclined to call a 'value theory'. Although Nietzsche does touch upon some of the problems

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55 Nietzsche articulates this thought, or something very like it, in *On the Genealogy of Morals*. For Nietzsche, the Schopenhauerian aesthetic is basically the view that "sensuality is ... suspended as soon as we enter the aesthetic condition" (GM III.8). Nietzsche claims, in contrast, that sensuality is actually the "ingredient" from which the "remarkable sweetness and abundance characteristic of the aesthetic condition might well descend" (GM III.8). In fact, as he goes on to confirm, abundance *does* descend from sensuality – albeit sensuality in "transfigured" form (*ibid.*). Thus he writes in *Beyond Good and Evil*: "The sense of the tragic gains and wanes with sensuality [*Sinnlichkeit*]" (BGE 155).

that one might expect to find in such a theory, he does so always in the broader context of *culture*.[56] As Michael Tanner observes, "Nietzsche's overriding concern ... [is] ... with the typology of cultures."[57] Thus, through the critique of specific cultural values Nietzsche hopes to assess the overall worth of the culture itself, and so to interpret the culture as being of a certain 'type', valuable or otherwise. It is to the cultures of ancient Greece, Christianity and modernity that Nietzsche returns again and again. For Nietzsche, then, values are primarily a cultural phenomenon; and his interest in cultural values compels him to examine, what are for him, their most important documents: the ethical and the artistic. The latter is distinct from, but closely related to, the aesthetic as I have described it. I will turn to the artistic in the discussion of Nietzsche's critical aesthetics below. It is the ethical that I want to consider first; for it is in Nietzsche's critique of, specifically, *moral* value that we can come to an understanding of the role that the aesthetic plays in his philosophy of value.

Nietzsche writes – in his 'autobiography' *Ecce Homo* – that *Daybreak* "begins my campaign against *morality*" (EH D.1). In that book – subtitled 'Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality' – Nietzsche's interest in morality comes to prominence, and is exemplified, in his final period, by what has come to be regarded as his key text, *On the Genealogy of Morals*. In the preface to that work, Nietzsche writes that there is "nothing which more *rewards* being taken seriously" than "the problems of

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56 For example, one of the consequences of perspectivism is that, through the dissolution of the fact/value distinction, the general question 'what is value?' is raised. See Michael Tanner's discussion of perspectivism (1990: 20).

57 Tanner, 1990: 20-1. Thomas Mann writes that "Nietzsche was, above all, a great critic and philosopher of culture" (1959: 148). He goes on to say that the "dominant notion in [Nietzsche's thought] is that of culture, which is equated almost with life itself. Culture for Nietzsche is the aristocracy of life; and linked with it, as its sources and prerequisites, are art and instinct" (1959: 151).

morality" (GM Pref 7). And he demands that "we need a *critique* of moral values, *the value of these values should itself, for once, be examined*" (GM Pref 6). Through the critique of morality, Nietzsche believes that he is able to "reveal ... the most precious realities of cultures and inner worlds" (TI VII.1). Morality, then, is an exemplary instance of cultural value.

It is on the basis of the contrast between the aesthetic and the moral that we can come to understand the role that Nietzsche's vitalistic aestheticism plays in his critique of morality. The basic distinction between aesthetic and moral values is marked by the indissoluble tie that exists between the aesthetic and life. There is no such intimacy between moral values and life. Morality, of course, is also the manifestation of life, but its relation to the "presuppositions" of life – ascendancy and degeneracy – is, for Nietzsche, complex and obscure (CW Epil). There is a second, and related, contrast between the aesthetic and the moral. Because the aesthetic is bound so closely to the presuppositions of life, its range or sphere is necessarily coterminous with that of life. Morality, by contrast, is tied to the life of one culture, or set of cultures, thus, in Nietzsche's words, the "sphere of so-called moral values" is necessarily "narrower" than the all-encompassing sphere of the aesthetic (*ibid.*).

Given the foregoing, I argue that there are three ways in which Nietzsche's vitalistic aestheticism plays a part in his critique of moral values. Firstly, Nietzsche looks at morality aesthetically, or through the prism of aesthetic value. Since the aesthetic is transparent to life, when Nietzsche views moral phenomena in aesthetic terms, he hopes to *apprehend* their value – their abundance or impoverishment – unambiguously. For Nietzsche, the non-aesthetic examination of morality

will be fraught with obscurity, since morality does not possess the perspicuity of the aesthetic with regards to the fundamental values of life. In chapters four and five I discuss this broadly methodological role of the aesthetic.

Secondly, the aesthetic not only provides Nietzsche with a means to perceive value, it allows him to produce a *critique* of value. It is primarily in this sense that the aesthetic can contribute to the task of "total critique" that, as we saw earlier, Deleuze attributes to Nietzsche.[58] Overabundance is Nietzsche's standard of value and he evaluates all moral and cultural phenomena according to this criterion. Broadly speaking, Nietzsche's claim is that the morality of Western culture – Christian-based morality – is symptomatic of the impoverishment of life; and he comes to this view, in part, by attending to the aesthetic aspects of morality, for it is in those aspects that he claims to see impoverishment in all its nakedness. But through the aesthetic, Nietzsche also attempts to evaluate all cultures (Greek, Christian, modern) with the same standard of value – since the sphere of the aesthetic is wider than that of morality. In Nietzsche's late works, the criterion of life becomes especially prominent. And as Nietzsche's vitalism increases in importance, so does his aestheticism. I examine these questions, once again, in chapters four and five.

Thirdly and finally, the aesthetic provides Nietzsche with an *ideal*. For Nietzsche, Christian-based morality is corrupted by impoverished life, but since that morality – in the post-Enlightenment era – is in auto-destruction through the loss of faith, we are actually in the state of the self-

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58 Deleuze, 1983: 1.

impoverishment of impoverishment – i.e., nihilism. The struggle to overcome nihilism is predicated on the instatement of overabundant forms of life – and, so, the instatement of the aesthetic. For Nietzsche, only a new ethic, based on a "*classical* aesthetics" – the aesthetics of abundance – could lift us out of the "aesthetics of *décadence*" that we now inhabit (CW Epil). And it is in this sense that Nietzsche offers hope to – as Kaufmann puts it – "the value problem which stares our generation in the face".[59]

To close this section, I would like to provide an answer to a question I asked earlier. Given that Nietzsche's central concern is with the problem of value, and since the aesthetic is itself predicated on value, the aesthetic would appear to be implicated in the problem. So how can it then be a part of the solution? We have seen that it is the cultural values of morality that are, for Nietzsche, problematic; they spring from a life-denying, and so impoverished mode of life, and they are currently in a state of decline. But is it not the case that impoverishment – in the form of ugliness – is an aesthetic value? In this sense, then, aesthetic values *are* part of the problem of morality, since ugliness is intimately bound up with the degenerate life that underpins morality.

But that may not be problematic for Nietzsche, since, although ugliness is an aesthetic value, it represents, for him, the impoverishment of the aesthetic. In his *Nietzsche's Conscience*, Aaron Ridley draws the distinction between Nietzsche's aesthetic in its "purely descriptive" form and in its "normative form."[60] Thus, for Nietzsche, the aesthetic in its descriptive sense refers both to beauty-abundance and ugliness-

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[59] Kaufmann, 1956: 102.

[60] Ridley, 1998: 94.

impoverishment; while, in its normative sense, it refers only to what the aesthetic *should* be (or has been in its consummate form): beauty-abundance. And it is Nietzsche's normative aesthetic that provides him with a standard of value.[61] Having said that, the descriptive aesthetic does contribute to Nietzsche's attempt to solve the problem of morality. Through ugliness, so Nietzsche suggests, the descriptive aesthetic allows the clear apprehension of impoverishment, as well as its evaluation *as* impoverishment with respect to abundance – which is revealed by beauty. And finally – in its normative form – the aesthetic offers the way out of impoverishment, which is the construction of a beautiful, fully abundant life.

## VII

In the foregoing, I have given a deeper sense to Nehamas' conception of Nietzsche's aestheticism – i.e., his vitalistic aestheticism – and outlined the various tasks that it performs in his critique of morality. In the remainder of my introduction, I want to discuss the main features of Nietzsche's *critical aesthetics*, and then show how they relate to both his vitalistic and Hellenic aestheticism.

The most striking feature of Nietzsche's critical aesthetics is his emphasis on the artist, rather than the spectator. *On the Genealogy of Morals* provides us with the clearest expression of this idea; against the spectatorial aesthetics of Kant, Nietzsche wants to "envisag[e] the

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[61] It is important to bear in mind that ugliness does not play a purely negative role in Nietzsche's aesthetics. Nietzsche draws a distinction between an ugliness from ugliness (romantic art) and an ugliness from abundance (tragic art), and he is nauseated only by the first type of ugliness. I discuss the positive role to which ugliness can be put in my accounts of Dionysian tragedy in chapter one and tragic philosophy in chapter three.

aesthetic problem from the point of view of the artist (the creator)" (GM III.6). Citing the note from *The Will to Power* where Nietzsche writes, "In all philosophy hitherto the artist is lacking" (WP 811), Heidegger calls Nietzsche's emphasis on the artist the "guiding principle of [his] teaching on art."[62] That is certainly true – but why does Nietzsche adopt such a principle? Historically speaking, Nietzsche's philosophy of the artist – and, with it, his high regard for genius – is of romantic provenance. Monroe Beardsley clearly believes that Nietzsche's desire "to probe ... the deep sources of artistic creation, the nature of the impulse to make works of art" is fundamentally romantic.[63] But although Nietzsche's concern with the artist has its roots in romanticism, this is not to say that his late concept of the artist actually *is* properly romantic, rather than 'post-romantic' – i.e., 'classical', or 'Dionysian', as Nietzsche would have us believe.

As I argue in chapter one, Nietzsche's philosophy of the artist can be best understood in properly aesthetic terms. For Nietzsche, the overabundance of life at its most intense is *Rausch*, the intoxication, rapture or frenzy of, as Nietzsche puts it, the "entire machine" (TI IX. 8) – the entirety of man. This experience is most intense in those who create beauty and it is shared, or can be shared, by the recipients of beauty. Nietzsche thinks that the activity of creation is the most exalted activity, and in particular, the creation of values. That activity, indeed, is what is urgently required in an epoch characterised by valuelessness; the ultimate creator, God, is dead, and we must take his place. But Nietzsche is anxious that properly *aesthetic* values are created – i.e., those that spring from the abundance of life, and so are life-affirming – and not a set of 'anti-aesthetic'

62 Heidegger, 1991: 70.

63 Beardsley, 1966: 276.

values that are predicated on the denial of life or impoverishment. If we bear in mind the aesthetic basis of the artist, it is then possible to understand Nietzsche's motivation in his attack on Kantian and Schopenhauerian spectatorial aesthetics.

Nietzsche's rejection of the Kantian aesthetic emerges from his belief that the concept of 'disinterestedness' represents the corruption of the aesthetic by life-denying values – values that are characteristic of morality. Aesthetic disinterestedness is a form of selflessness, which Nietzsche interprets literally as the denial of the self, the putting to one side of the interests of the self. By contrast, interestedness – translated into the terms of Nietzsche's aestheticism – is another word for the abundance of life. To be self-interested is to affirm the self, and self-interest springs from the abundant life of the self. So, for Nietzsche, disinterestedness, in its denial of the self, is an expression of the impoverishment of the self. Schopenhauer's conception of the aesthetic condition – in which the "individual [loses] himself" and becomes a "*pure*, will-less, painless, timeless *subject of knowledge*"[64] – is, for Nietzsche, a conspicuous and especially damaging expression of the life-denying Kantian doctrine.[65]

Nietzsche's valuation of interestedness over disinterestedness provides us with an explanation for his rejection of spectatorial aesthetics. Kant and Schopenhauer's inherent slavishness – their irreducible attachment to the virtues of self-denial – compel them to interpret the

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64 Schopenhauer, 1969: 179 [§34].

65 The impoverishment – or the 'moralisation' – of aesthetics that Kant and Schopenhauer represent, has been described by Aaron Ridley as a "kind of slave revolt in aesthetics" (1998: 88). The authentic aesthetics of overabundant life has been vanquished by the values of slave morality which, as Nietzsche tells us in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, emerge from the resentful hatred of life.

aesthetic in terms of, what is from their perspective, that which is most readily describable *as* self-denying – the spectator. There is a basic sense in which spectatorship involves self-denial; the spectator – when experiencing the art of another – is occupied with the interests of another, and so places his own interests momentarily to one side. For Kant and Schopenhauer, then, the spectator becomes the locus of aesthetic value – or, as Nietzsche puts it, Kant "inadvertently introduced the 'spectator' himself into the concept 'beautiful'" (GM III.6). Nietzsche's valuation of interestedness, however, forces him to reject the spectator as the central component of the aesthetic, and to replace him with the artist. And once the artist – the self-interested artist – is interpreted as the determiner of aesthetic value, Nietzsche then goes about re-valuing the spectator as interested.[66]

There is one more aspect of Nietzsche's artist's aesthetics that I want to mention. It involves the reinterpretation of a central Kantian doctrine in light of Nietzsche's emphasis on the artist. For Kant, beauty is a particular configuration of *form*, or, as he puts it, "beauty should actually concern only form".[67] Nietzsche inherits Kant's formalism, but activates the concept, as it were, through his philosophy of the artist. The Nietzschean artist creates forms and imposes forms on formless material, i.e., he transforms material. As we will see in chapter one, transformation is basic to Nietzsche's concepts of the artist *and* the will to power.

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66 It should be noted, however, that Nietzsche does not reject disinterestedness and spectatorship outright; what he rejects is disinterestedness and spectatorship as conceived by Kant and Schopenhauer. I make this point clear in chapter one. Nietzsche writes favourably of the "disinterested malice" of those "ancients" who took "great festival pleasure" in "*cruelty*" (GM II.6); and he affirms spectatorship in the form of the "divine spectators" (GM II.16) – or the "spectator divinity" (BGE 225) – who were invented by the ancients to give sense to their suffering (GM II.7).

67 Kant, 1987: 69 [§13].

## VIII

The second feature of Nietzsche's critical aesthetics that I want to consider is his twofold conception of the artist. There are artists who create from the "*overabundance of life*", and those whose art springs from the "*impoverishment of life*" (GS 370). As we have seen, this contrast between vitalistic values is Nietzsche's basic macro-opposition. Since I have already described the main features of Nietzsche's abundant artist, I will outline, in what follows, his apparent opposite: the impoverished artist – or, as Nietzsche likes to call him, the romantic artist.

For Nietzsche, the impoverished artist hates both life and himself and it is precisely when such hatred becomes creative that romantic art is born. The romantic artist, Nietzsche tells us, is one of the "ill-constituted, disinherited, and underprivileged" (GS 370), which is to say that he is lacking life and he suffers from that lack – that impoverishment – of life. The impoverished artist's hatred of life, then, is his envious hatred of that which he lacks; while his self-hatred is the hatred of the pain and valuelessness of 'disinheritedness' – of impoverishment. Nietzsche suggests that the suffering of impoverishment is eased through the creation of art, which he conceives as an act of revenge. The romantic artist – in creating art – revenges himself on life and this brings forth such enormous pleasure that he is momentarily redeemed from his suffering. Nietzsche thus concludes that impoverished aesthetics are fundamentally hedonistic.

Romantic art is the archetypal degenerate art, and, for Nietzsche, Wagner is the foremost exemplar of romanticism. In *The Case of Wagner*,

the composer is presented as a case study of the decadence of modernity – of the fragmentary, self-delusive and moral decadence of modernity. In addition, Wagner provides Nietzsche with a vivid example of the paradox of the impoverished artist. This is manifest – in *The Case of Wagner* – in Wagner's relation both to mythic nobility and the slavishness of his redemptive interpretations of life; and in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, in Wagner's multiple relation to the ascetic ideal. And it is in his treatment of Wagner that we become acquainted with Nietzsche's conception of the work of art. The art work is viewed as a *symptom* of the artist's basic life impulses – abundant or impoverished – and in the case of Wagner, it is a symptom of the degeneration of life which results from the corrosive effects of modernity, or the ascetic ideal. In contrast, art that celebrates life and that exemplifies a perspective in which modern or ascetic values are viewed as 'below' – or as the degenerate values that, for Nietzsche, they in fact are – is symptomatic of the abundance of life.

In light of Nietzsche's broadly semiotic conception of the artwork, it can be said that he is not an *internalist* – internalism being the view that artistic value is dependent on properties that are internal to art. For Nietzsche, the value of art resides in its connection to life – its vitalism – and that life will be either amoral (abundant) or moral (impoverished). The indissoluble tie between the aesthetic and life grounds Nietzsche's semiotic view of art. Nietzsche, then, is an *externalist*, which is the view that artistic value is dependent on properties external to art. In this sense, he is more of a Platonist, rather than an acolyte of the internalist aestheticism of 'art for art's sake' that pervades the nineteenth century. In general, it can be said that Nietzsche conflates art work and artist, and treats the art work as a

complex reflection – on one level, strikingly clear, on another level, tantalisingly obscure – of the artist's soul.

I will close my account of the critical aesthetics by considering another way in which Nietzsche draws the distinction between the abundant and impoverished artist. As I mentioned a moment ago, Nietzsche adopts elements of Plato's theory of art and employs them in his critique of Wagner. But a modified Platonism actually runs throughout Nietzsche's philosophy of art. He interprets the artist and the work of art in terms of the dichotomy of truth/untruth; the artist possesses the will to untruth and the art work is the embodiment of a set of untruths. And part of the value of the artist consists in his willing untruth authentically – that is, with a good conscience. Impoverished artists, however, are those artists who are racked with self-hatred at their false existence, and Nietzsche interprets this self-hatred as their implicit affirmation of the ascetic – the life-denying – idealisation of truth. Nietzsche values untruth because it is intrinsic to life, and he interprets the idealisation of truth – in the form of the ascetic ideal – as a rampant species of life-denying transcendentalism. Heidegger's claim that Nietzsche's philosophy is "inverted Platonism" finds application in this context.[68] But as I will show in chapter three, Nietzsche's late philosophy is not so much an inversion of Platonism as its detranscendentalisation.

Although in the broader philosophical context it is informative to describe this element of Nietzsche's aesthetics as 'neo-Platonic', Nietzsche has his own term for this aspect of his thought. In *The Birth of Tragedy*,

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68 Heidegger, 1991: 154.

Nietzsche already conceives of the artist in terms of untruth, and there he employs the word *Schein* – 'appearance', or 'semblance' – to denote that aspect of the aesthetic he calls "Apollonian" (BT 1). An Apollonian-like conception of art is present in each period of Nietzsche's writing. I will, then, refer to this element of Nietzsche's late aesthetics as Apollonian. But – as I argue in chapter three – since Nietzsche abandons the metaphysics that gives the word its specific sense in *The Birth of Tragedy*, the late Apollonian must be sharply distinguished from the early.

## IX

In this section, I want to consider the question of the relation of *interdependency* that exists, so I claimed earlier, between Nietzsche's critical aesthetics and his aestheticism. And when that relation is clarified, I will – in the following and final section – outline the principal questions that guide my thesis.

Nietzsche's vitalistic aestheticism is his most general conception of the aesthetic. From this perspective, beauty and ugliness are conceived only in terms of life – and, specifically, the life of humanity – and not in terms of objects called 'art works'. Nietzsche's vitalistic aestheticism allows him to call 'beautiful' things which we do not ordinarily consider to be beautiful – presupposing, as we generally do, the eighteenth century 'fine art' conception of beauty. All the things that the beautiful-abundant man creates will be beautiful and full; his soul is beautiful, and so is his life, as well as his customs and ethics, his institutions and laws. And if he happens to create something that we would be inclined to call 'art', that too will be beautiful. It is in this sense, then, that Nietzsche's vitalistic aestheticism is

necessarily prior to, and grounds, his philosophy of art and artist – his critical aesthetics. Vitalistic aestheticism is the conceptual foundation for his philosophy of art.

If we approach the question from the opposite direction, however, then we can see that it is *also* the case that Nietzsche's vitalistic aestheticism is dependent on his philosophy of art and artist. How does Nietzsche come to the idea that beauty is intimately bound up with life? Given that, according to Nietzsche's various genealogies of modernity, contemporary culture is characterised by the degeneracy of degeneracy – i.e., the uglification of ugliness – where is beauty to be found? The answer, for Nietzsche at least, is simple: in works of art. "Art is the great stimulus to life", he writes in the *Twilight of the Idols*, "the meaning of art ... is *life*" (TI IX.24). On this interpretation, then, Nietzsche's vitalistic aestheticism is viewed as a generalisation, or an expansion, of his critical aesthetics. Nietzsche's experience of art is such that he comes to the conclusion that art is bound to life, and this tells him something crucial about the general nature of life itself. Art exemplifies the idea that beauty is tied to abundant life, and Nietzsche uses this idea to ground his general claim that all abundance is tied to beauty – that abundant life is inherently aesthetic. And since Nietzsche evaluates all things in terms of 'life', he then proceeds to evaluate all things in terms of that which is closest to life, and so which gives him the best idea of what 'life' actually is. And that is the aesthetic. It is in this way, then, that Nietzsche's direct concern with art – his critical aesthetics – can be said to lay the ground for his vitalistic aestheticism. Nietzsche's aesthetic philosophy of life is a generalisation of his philosophy of art.

The interdependence of Nietzsche's critical aesthetics and his vitalistic aestheticism can be summarised as follows. Vitalistic aestheticism philosophically grounds the critical aesthetics *and* the critical aesthetics provide the compulsion for the adoption of vitalistic aestheticism. It is the multi-perspectival nature of Nietzsche's thought that impresses upon us the holistic structure of his aesthetics. But is not the 'interdependence' of the two elements of Nietzsche's aesthetics just a straightforward and vicious circularity? Nietzsche claims that artistic beauty is the abundance of life because vital beauty is the abundance of life, and he arrives at that second claim by interpreting artistic beauty as the abundance of life. It would appear, then, that Nietzsche's aesthetics are fundamentally question-begging. There are two ways of defending Nietzsche from this charge. Firstly, one could retract the claim that the vitalistic and the critical aesthetics are interdependent, and state – perhaps more believably, but certainly less interestingly – that Nietzsche's critical aesthetics are the foundation and source of his aesthetic philosophy of life. In my view, however, such an expedient fails to capture the irreducibly holistic nature of Nietzsche's aesthetics. The second way of defending Nietzsche is to suggest that his circularity is not malign. And this is what I will attempt to show.

In section III, where I discussed Nehamas' conception of Nietzsche's exemplarity, I claimed that it is acceptable to view Nietzsche as exemplifying his doctrine of perspectivism. He does this, simply, by practising perspectival philosophy. Nietzsche suggests that "life", in part, is "based on ... points of view, and the necessity of perspectives" (ASC 5). Thus we can interpret Nietzsche's exemplification of perspectivism as his attempt to exemplify life in the form of a living philosophy – a philosophy

that is a "ruling structure that *lives*" (GM II.17). And Nietzsche's attempt to create a living philosophy – and so one that is life-affirming – is a central part of his attempt to distance himself from the philosophical tradition. For Nietzsche, dogmatic philosophy denies perspective and so denies life. With respect to the mutual interdependence of Nietzsche's two aesthetics, then, my claim is that in the context of a living philosophy such mutuality is valuable and not vicious. Indeed, to reject Nietzsche's aesthetics on the grounds that they are viciously circular commits one to rejecting much, if not all, of Nietzsche's philosophy *qua* living philosophy. Many, of course, would welcome that opportunity and simply resist Nietzsche's thought. And there is not really anything one can say to stop them. The value of Nietzsche's living philosophy can only be ascertained by tasting that philosophy. But that, of course, is not to say that it will be to everybody's taste.

The interdependence of his aesthetics, then, enables Nietzsche to call the beautiful-abundant man (whether he actually creates *fine* art or not) an 'artist', and his creations (his soul, his life, his ethics) 'works of art'. And the beautiful-abundant man will share the characteristics of Nietzsche's artist: his formalism, Apollonianism, and, underpinning these, his immanence – his detachment from the life-denying values of morality. For Nietzsche, however, modernity is characterised by the presence of impoverished artists – those who exemplify the "aesthetics of *décadence*" (CW Epil). The ascetic priest of *On the Genealogy of Morals* is one such artist, as are the slaves, to a certain, and lesser, extent. And Wagner is another. But there also appear in Nietzsche's writings those "artists of life" (BGE 57) – those who exhibit the "highest art of living" (AC 57) – who are properly aesthetic, abundant and beautiful. Here, I think of the nobles

and state-founders of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, and, unexpectedly, the figure of Christ in *The Anti-Christ*. And, of course, Nietzsche's more well known aesthetic ideals: the *Übermensch* ('superman' or 'overman') of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and the Dionysian pessimist.

I have explained, then, the relation between Nietzsche's vitalistic aestheticism and his critical aesthetics; but where does Nietzsche's *Hellenic* aestheticism fit into this account? Hellenic aestheticism is Nietzsche's tendency to look at the world through, what he takes to be, the values of pre-Socratic Greek literature. While vitalistic aestheticism is concerned with beauty-abundance and ugliness-impoverishment, Hellenic aestheticism is constituted by the following affirmative values: 'nobility', 'greatness', 'glory', 'tragedy', 'reverence', and 'gratitude'. As I mentioned previously, Nietzsche runs the vitalistic and the Hellenic together and gives the name 'Dionysus' to the hybrid of concepts that are thus created. Nietzsche's Hellenic aestheticism is the point at which his vitalistic aestheticism and his critical aesthetics meet in explicit fashion. The idea of 'nobility' (*Vornehmheit*) – which I examine in chapter five – is the most conspicuous example. The following concepts – drawn from Nietzsche's critical aesthetics – migrate towards the concept of nobility; artist, creator of values, imposer of forms, adorer of appearances – as well as the vitalistic concept of abundant life *and* the aesthetic concept of beauty. Nietzsche's Hellenic aestheticism, then, can be described as his *aestheticization* of the broadly ethical concepts – 'nobility', 'greatness', 'gratitude' etc. – that he draws from pre-Socratic Greek literature. The noble is an artist, as well as being a great individual, and his greatness consists partly in his identity as an artist.

## X

My thesis is concerned to illuminate the extent to which Nietzsche's aestheticism, in both its forms, is equipped to fulfil the task that Nietzsche sets it: the task of the critique of morality. Can aestheticism apprehend and evaluate morality? And what sort of ethical ideal does it offer? To lay the ground for those questions – tackled in the second half of the thesis – I will provide, in the first half, an account of Nietzsche's critical aesthetics. In that account, I attempt to preserve Nietzsche's fundamental opposition of abundance and impoverishment, since that opposition is presupposed in his aesthetic critique of morality. The dichotomies of abundant/impoverished life and ascending/declining life find their correlates in Nietzsche's critical oppositions of power/impotence, strength/weakness, health/sickness, Dionysian/romantic and noble/ascetic. However, in his highly insightful *Nietzsche's Voice*, Henry Staten draws attention to Nietzsche's struggle to preserve his basic evaluative oppositions. Staten writes that Nietzsche, in the face of impoverishment and decline, "throws up boundaries and barriers" and "idealises health and strength."[69] This general tendency, though, is mitigated by an "inevitable countermovement" on Nietzsche's part, which "keeps finding the principle of corruption deep within the *sanctum* of health and strength."[70]

I begin, in chapter one, with Nietzsche's conception of the artist of abundance; I discuss the exalted nature of intoxicated creation and the artist's intimate relation to the will to power. The impoverished artist – as exemplified by Wagner – is the subject of the second chapter. It is

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69 Staten, 1990: 168.

70 Staten, 1990: 145.

Wagner's alleged histrionism – his peculiarly insidious promulgation of untruth – that Nietzsche takes issue with; and, in chapter three, I continue the examination of artistic untruth – though in its healthy form – in the context of the ascetic ideal. I suggest that the abundant artist seeks out immanent and ugly truth and rewards himself with superficiality and untruth. In chapter four, I provide an extended account of Nietzsche's vitalistic aestheticism; I consider the relation between the artist and the work of art, the aesthetic and the vital, and the aesthetic and the moral. Nietzsche's ethical ideal of nobility – which, I argue, is grounded in his vitalistic aesthetic – is the subject of the fifth chapter. I suggest that the noble discipline of great suffering provides Nietzsche with a life-affirming countermovement to decadent morality. And, finally, in my conclusion, I discuss the various problems that plague Nietzsche's aesthetics, the most important of which is the manifest instability of his key value-dichotomies of health/sickness, power/impotence and noble/ascetic. And it is this fundamental instability that threatens to dissolve Nietzsche's distinction between the abundant artist and the impoverished artist.

# Chapter One

## The Artist of Abundance

In this chapter, I begin my account of Nietzsche's critical aesthetics by discussing his concept of the Dionysian artist – the supremely healthy artist who creates from the abundance of life. As a preface to this discussion, I examine Nietzsche's rejection of the spectator-based aesthetics that is linked to the concept of 'disinterestedness'. Nietzsche suggests that the experience of art and beauty is, and can only be, interested and that those who claim that they are viewing art in a disinterested fashion are, in fact, manifesting a peculiar type of interest. Nietzsche advocates, instead, an aesthetics of the artist in which the spectator adopts the artist's perspective on art and thus experiences art creatively from an abundance of manifold interest.

In section III, I turn to Nietzsche's artist's aesthetics; and I show how the Nietzschean spectator exemplifies the artist's perspective by mirroring himself in works of art. Thus, it is through mirroring that the Nietzschean artist proper creates works of art. Nietzsche conceives of the artist of abundance as a form-giver, as one who transforms external things until

they reflect his internal beauty. I call this form of Dionysian art the 'art of being'. It is precisely the artist's need to impose forms that Nietzsche calls 'art'; and, in section V, I elucidate this idea by discussing the condition from which the artist creates – 'intoxication'. The Dionysian artist is intoxicated with, and suffers from, the overabundance of life, and he creates art so as to ease the pressure of the distension of overfullness. I conclude my account of the artist of abundance by describing the second type of art that he creates: tragedy or the 'art of becoming'.

In the final sections of the chapter, I explore Nietzsche's concept of 'life' by, first of all, examining his fundamental value-oppositions of ascending/declining life and abundant/impoverished life. I suggest that Nietzsche's concept of higher life emerges from his consideration of both the quality and quantity of life. Finally, in section IX, I discuss Nietzsche's conception of life as the will to power. I argue that the will to power is best understood as a creative or form-giving force and so is, for Nietzsche, an inherently aesthetic concept.

## I

In the third essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche advances the idea of an aesthetics of the artist. This idea is presupposed, but never explicitly formulated, in much of his preceding reflections on aesthetics. Nietzsche writes that

> Kant, like all philosophers, just considered art and beauty from the position of 'spectator', instead of viewing the aesthetic problem through the experiences of the artist (the creator), and thus inadvertently introduced the 'spectator' himself into the concept 'beautiful'. (*ibid.*)

For Nietzsche, the 'aesthetic problem' centres around the concepts of 'art' and 'beauty', and he claims that Kant takes a mistaken approach to this problem by 'considering art and beauty' from the perspective of the 'spectator'. Nietzsche claims, instead, that we should view art and beauty 'through the experiences of the artist (the creator)'. What, exactly, is Nietzsche proposing here? It is clear that there is a fundamental sense – indeed, a common sense – in which all philosophical aesthetics is a spectatorial aesthetics, since the aesthetician is not the creator of the art that is his object of philosophical interest. Nietzsche is drawing a distinction, then, between different spectatorial perspectives. There is the spectatorial perspective proper – that Nietzsche associates with the Kantian aesthetic – which is mistaken; and then there is the 'artist's perspective' – the perspective in which art and beauty are viewed in terms of the artist's experiences – which Nietzsche seems to advise the spectator to adopt.

There are two further points from the cited passage that require clarification. Firstly, the central element of the artist's perspective is the 'experience' (*Erfahrungen*) of the artist. Since Nietzsche conceives of the artist as a 'creator', the concept of experience, in this context, refers to the creative experience of the artist. For Nietzsche, the creative act of the artist is conditioned by the nature of the artist's experience; and he attaches greater value to these, as it were, 'pre-art object' experiences than to the object itself. Secondly, Nietzsche's claim against Kantian spectatorial aesthetics rests ultimately on a more general claim concerning the nature of beauty or aesthetic value. According to Nietzsche, Kant, in his emphasis on the spectator, 'inadvertently' confuses the concepts of 'spectator' and

'beauty' in such a way that the spectator becomes the ground of beauty – that is, the determinant of aesthetic value. Nietzsche, reversing Kant's move, separates beauty from the spectator – releasing it from its spectatorial fetters, as it were – so that beauty may be determined from the artist's perspective. Nietzsche's claim is that the creator of aesthetic value – the artist – is also the determinant of aesthetic value. So, the spectating aesthetician, by viewing art from the artist's perspective, will be able to evaluate art from the perspective in which it is given value.

There are two types of spectator: the Nietzschean and the Kantian. Nietzsche calls his spectator – exemplified in the *Genealogy* by "Stendhal" and "Pygmalion" (GM III.6) – the "genuine 'spectator'" (GM III.6). Thus I shall refer to Kant's spectator as the 'non-genuine spectator'. Nietzsche argues, then, that Kant – one of the "philosophers of beauty" (*ibid.*) – is not "sufficiently familiar" (*ibid.*) with the genuine spectator. In other words, Kant is not a genuine spectator of art – meaning simply that, unlike Stendhal, he lacks "any refined first-hand experience [*Erfahrung*]" (*ibid.*) of the beautiful – that is, of art. This is due to the fact, so Nietzsche thinks, that Kant is, first and foremost, an epistemologist, and thus "th[inks] he [is] honouring art" (*ibid.*) when he interprets it in terms of the epistemological concepts of "impersonality and universality." (*ibid.*) As a consequence of such interpretative manoeuvres, so Nietzsche claims, Kant defines beauty as "pleasure *without interest*", as disinterested pleasure – "*le désintéressement*" (*ibid.*) – a pleasure that lacks the manifold interests of the genuine spectator. Thus, Kant's non-genuine spectator is, in actuality, the epistemologist, who is non-genuine because he interprets art exclusively in epistemological terms. Nietzsche's claim, then, is that the concept of beauty – as defined from the perspective of the epistemologist

– will either describe only "one point about the aesthetic condition" (*ibid.*) and thus be an incomplete concept, or will just misdescribe that condition altogether.[1]

Nietzsche then introduces Stendhal, "a genuine 'spectator' and artist" (*ibid.*), who "once called the beautiful *une promesse de bonheur*" (*ibid.*). Stendhal's aesthetic experience will be an "abundance [*Fülle*] of vivid authentic experiences, desires, surprises, and delights in the realm of the beautiful" (*ibid.*). Stendhal is not an epistemologist, but an artist, and this is exemplified in the "great *personal* fact" (*ibid.*) of his experience of art, the 'promise of happiness'. Stendhal, then, is an abundantly interested spectator. Nietzsche posits a link between Stendhal's identity as an artist and his capacity for genuine spectating. The implication is that Stendhal is a genuine spectator because he is an artist, which is to say that when he experiences art he does so *as* an artist – from, in other words, the artist's perspective.

What is the relation between Nietzsche's interested spectators, artist's perspective spectators and genuine spectators? It seems that genuineness is tied, ultimately, to interest – thus a spectator is genuine because he is an interested spectator. However, since (as I will show in the following section) the artist *qua* creator is the exemplar of aesthetic interestedness, it follows that the artist's perspective is the most genuine perspective. So it can be said that a spectator is genuine if he is an artist's perspective spectator. Thus, the relation between the concepts of interested spectator and artist's perspective spectator is that the former

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[1] Jacques Derrida – in *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles* – provides a familiar image of the aesthetician as epistemologist. He writes that: "Before art, the dogmatic philosopher, a maladroit courtesan, remains, just as did the second-rate scholar, impotent, a sort of old maid" (1978: 77).

describes the general category of which the latter is the highest subcategory. 'Artist's perspective', then, means initially 'most' or 'abundantly interested perspective', which, at its most extreme, Nietzsche calls the intoxicated aesthetic experience. In what follows, I will describe the link between Nietzsche's notions of 'genuineness' and 'interest' with two related arguments. The first claims that interestedness is genuine because Nietzsche regards disinterestedness as non-genuine. And, in the following section, I will explain the genuineness of interest in terms of its affinity with the artist's perspective.

Nietzsche thinks of the interested perspective as genuine because he is suspicious of the very possibility of its opposite, the disinterested perspective. But, having said that, he does seem, at times, to acknowledge its possibility. He speaks of Kant as stressing "one point about the aesthetic condition ... *le désintéressement*" (*ibid.*), and of Schopenhauer as describing only "*one* effect of the beautiful, its calming effect on the will" (*ibid.*). But, as we will see, Nietzsche only acknowledges disinterestedness in the sense in which he conceives it and not in accordance with the Kantian conception of disinterestedness as "impersonality and universality" (*ibid.*). Nietzsche *denies* the possibility of Kantian disinterestedness and interprets it, instead, as a particular form of interestedness. Thus, Schopenhauer – who Nietzsche claims "did not free himself from the spell of the Kantian definition" (*ibid.*)[2] – manifests a desire *for*, and "the very strongest, most personal interest" (*ibid.*) *in*, aesthetic

[2] Heidegger claims that Nietzsche acquires his conception of Kantian beauty through Schopenhauer and that Schopenhauer misinterprets Kant. Thus, "Schopenhauer plays the leading role in the preparation and genesis of that misunderstanding of Kantian aesthetics to which Nietzsche too fell prey and is still quite common today" (1991: 107). However, whether or not Nietzsche was well versed in the third *Critique* is beside the point. His point, rather, is to lay open the psychological presuppositions of the desire to interpret beauty as disinterestedness – which Kant clearly does by drawing a distinction between the "pure disinterested liking that occurs in a judgement of taste [and] a liking connected with interest" (1987: 46 [§2]) – and which Schopenhauer consummates.

disinterest. His desire for aesthetic disinterest, Nietzsche suggests, is "*to gain release from a torture*" (*ibid.*), that is, to counteract his "*sexual* 'interestedness'" (*ibid.*). Nietzsche's attack on disinterestedness in the *Genealogy* is foreshadowed in *Beyond Good and Evil*, where he criticises those philosophers who have lent to the term 'disinterestedness' a "mystical-transcendental expression" (BGE 220), instead of "positing the naked truth ... that the 'disinterested' action is an *exceedingly* interesting and interested action" (*ibid.*).

Disinterestedness is non-genuine, then, because it is an illusion. And this is because Nietzsche regards interestedness as necessarily connected to living embodiedness. According to Nietzsche's remarks concerning perspectives, the notion of "contemplation without interest" (GM III.12) is "completely unthinkable" (*ibid.*), since it demands a view from nowhere – a god's eye view – that is necessarily unavailable to embodied beings who always contemplate things from a particular point of view, and so in terms of a particular set of interests. Disinterestedness, then, is a form of interestedness and, for Nietzsche, the desire for disinterest is a symptom of a particular type of interest. This point is made clear in Nietzsche's critique of *l'art pour l'art* – which is, historically speaking, the French interpretation of Kantian disinterestedness. Nietzsche says: "*L'art pour l'art* means: 'the devil take morality!' – But this very hostility betrays that moral prejudice is still dominant" (TI IX.24). Similarly, the Kantian and Schopenhauerian hostility to interest – in the form of the concept of disinterestedness – is a sign that a particular type of interest is at work. An interest that is, for Nietzsche, fundamentally impoverished since it seeks –

albeit necessarily unsuccessfully – to deny interest as such, to deny embodiedness.[3]

So disinterestedness is a non-genuine spectatorial stance for two reasons. On one level, Nietzsche might allow the use of the term in its weak, non-Kantian, sense as a "calming effect on the will" (*ibid.*), but such an effect is only "*one* effect of the beautiful" (*ibid.*) and, for Nietzsche, certainly the least 'interesting'. But on a second level, disinterestedness as Kant conceives it, is an impossibility and thus literally non-genuine. Moreover, it is a sign of the desire to negate the basic condition of human life. It follows, then, that interestedness – Stendhal's 'promise of happiness' – is the genuine conception of the aesthetic experience and thus, for Nietzsche, interested spectators are the only genuine spectators.

## II

The second way of explaining the genuineness of interest depends upon a slightly different sense of 'genuine', where it means 'exemplary' rather than 'real'. Nietzsche would rank interested spectators according to the type of interested perspective they exhibit. The lowest would be those who interpret their interest as disinterest – Kant is the outstanding member of this group. The next group of spectators, higher in rank than the preceding group, are exemplified by Stendhal in his general definition of beauty. His

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[3] Nietzsche's objection to disinterestedness is, to widen the context, an application of his more general opposition to, what he sees as, the unconditionality of Kant's concept of the beautiful. Nietzsche states that the "'beautiful in itself' is not even a concept, merely a phrase" (TI IX.19) and, elsewhere, that "the 'beautiful in itself' is a figment of the imagination, like all of idealism" (CW Epil). Nietzsche's own view is that "Nothing is so conditional, let us say *circumscribed*, as our feeling for the beautiful" (TI IX.19). So in redescribing disinterest as a symptom of interest, Nietzsche is analysing the unconditional *as* symptomatic of the conditional. But it is not only that, it is symptomatic of a conditionality that is fundamentally impoverished. This reinterpretive move is basic to Nietzsche's overall strategy with regards metaphysics.

is a far more interested perspective on art. However, the most interested perspective, the perspective that possesses an 'abundance' of interest, is the artist's perspective on his *own* work. Nietzsche takes Pygmalion as an illustration of this point. Spurned by Aphrodite, Pygmalion creates an ivory sculpture of her to satisfy his sexual interests and desires. His creation can be seen, then, as both child – in the sense that as an artist-mother he gives birth to art – *and* lover in one. The relation of Pygmalion to his art, then, is one of extreme and multifarious interest, and, for Nietzsche, this is true of all (authentic) artists – the artist *qua* creator is the apotheosis of aesthetic interest

Since Nietzsche reinterprets disinterest as interest, it then follows that *all* spectators are interested in one way or another. And the second sense of 'genuine', which I have just outlined, serves to distinguish the higher from the lower ranked interested spectators. Thus, those interested spectators who exhibit an abundance of interest will be genuine; and since the artist is the exemplar of aesthetic interest, this is equivalent to saying that interested spectators are genuine because they experience art as an artist creates and experiences his own work. Thus, the genuinely interested spectator will occupy the artist's perspective. Non-genuinely interested spectators – i.e., those Kantians who interpret their interest as disinterest – will remain outside the artist's perspective.[4]

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[4] Julian Young and Ivan Soll share the same confusion with regard to Nietzsche's aesthetics of the artist. Young asks: why must "aesthetics ... be done *only* from the artist's point of view. Why should it not be done from *both* perspectives? Why should there not be both a spectator's aesthetics and a creator's ... ?" (1992: 120). Soll argues that Nietzsche's "*replacement* (rather than *enhancement*) of the usual spectator-based aesthetics with a creator-based aesthetics is problematic. Do we not need both – particularly if they are, as he insists, not the same?" (1998: 109). There are at least two mistaken assumptions that ground Young's and Soll's earnest pleas for spectatorial aesthetics. Firstly, Nietzsche, as we have seen, does *not* reject spectatorial aesthetics as such, he rejects Kant's and Schopenhauer's spectatorial aesthetics of disinterestedness. He rejects it because it is false and because it betokens the denial of life. So, if Nietzsche is correct, it is unintelligible to demand *both* a (Kantian) spectator's aesthetics and a Nietzschean creator's aesthetics, since the first is an illusion. Secondly, since, for Nietzsche, all spectators are interested to some extent and so creatively respond to art, 'spectatorial aesthetics' is always already an artist's aesthetics. In other words, there are only creative spectators. The distinction

Nietzsche's demand that we should adopt the artist's perspective, then – to experience art and beauty with the same intensity of experience as the artist in creation – is his demand that we be creative spectators of art, rather than lifeless recipients. In an unpublished fragment from *The Will to Power*, he writes that "only the receivers of art have formulated their experience of 'what is beautiful?' In all philosophy hitherto the artist is lacking" (WP 811). To be a creative spectator of art is to be one who knows the business of creativity and so the vitalistic presuppositions – i.e., what is, for Nietzsche, the *value* – of certain modes of creation. And if the work of art has been created from the abundance of life – if it is a great work of art – then the genuine and creative spectator will possess a spectatorial experience that is akin to the artist's experience of abundant life. Thus, the interested experience of the spectator will be an "abundance of vivid authentic experiences, desires, surprises and delights in the realm of the beautiful" (GM III.6). It is precisely this that is the condition of the creative artist and, for Nietzsche, the Dionysian artist is the exemplar of this condition. The *Erfahrung* of the artist is the experience of abundance and intoxication. As Nietzsche says, these feelings act as an "indispensable" precondition "for any sort of aesthetic activity or perception" (TI IX.8) – that is, genuine spectatorial perception.

The first meaning, then, that we can give to the idea of Nietzsche's 'artist's aesthetics' is that it is an interested aesthetics – but not only that. Since Nietzsche interprets disinterest as a form of interest, all aesthetics

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between good and bad spectators is the distinction between abundantly creative spectators – who are intoxicated – and weakly creative spectators – Derrida's "maladroit courtesans" who stand before art (1978: 77).

becomes interested. 'Artist's aesthetics', then, means something more, namely, an aesthetics of abundant interest – an aesthetics of *Fülle*.

## III

Nietzsche replaces the Kantian conception of beauty as disinterested pleasure with the conception of beauty as abundantly interested pleasure. As we have seen, for Nietzsche, all spectators are interested to some degree, so I will refrain from employing the Kantian distinction of interest/disinterest, since, for Nietzsche, it is redundant. The Nietzschean spectator will be referred to hereafter as simply the 'spectator' and the present section is devoted to a discussion of this figure. Through the mediation of the spectator's and creator's analogous relation to beauty, I will move the focus of the discussion to the artist of abundance. In showing the congruence between Nietzsche's creator and spectator, I will attempt to show that Nietzsche regards the authentic spectator as a copy of the creator.

In the *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche circumscribes the field of aesthetics:

> Nothing is beautiful, only man: on this piece of naïvety rests all aesthetics, it is the *first* truth of aesthetics. Let us immediately add its second: nothing is ugly but *degenerate* man – the domain of aesthetic judgement is therewith defined. (TI IX.20)

One can begin to unpack the statement that 'only man is beautiful' by interpreting it, first of all, as a general ontological claim about the existence of beauty as a value. Nietzsche states: "Man believes that the world itself is

filled with beauty – he *forgets* that it is he who has created it" (TI IX.19). So it is man alone who has "bestowed beauty upon" the world (*ibid.*) – he has, in Nietzsche's words, "*anthropomorphized* it: that is all" (*ibid.*).[5] For Nietzsche, beauty originates from "man's pleasure in man" (*ibid.*) – the self-pleasure of man – and is subsequently applied to the extra-subjective, the object or the world. Nietzsche's point, however, is that in the externalisation of beauty – its bestowal, or the creation of "sublimated forms" (*ibid.*) – man is still taking pleasure in himself. There are two concepts of beauty here, then: the internal and the external. External beauty is beautiful to the extent that it is related, in some way, to internal beauty, to man's self-pleasure. Thus, Nietzsche writes: "In the beautiful, man sets himself up as the standard of perfection; in select cases he worships himself in it" (*ibid.*).[6] The externalisation of beauty is described by Nietzsche as man's "*deepest* instinct" (*ibid.*). He links beauty, or man's "self-expansion" (*ibid.*), to his "self-preservation" (*ibid.*), and says that a "species *cannot* do otherwise than affirm itself alone in this manner" (*ibid.*). If beauty as self-expansion is the 'deepest instinct' of man, then it follows that the beautiful (the aesthetic) precedes the good (the moral). This is an aspect of what I call Nietzsche's vitalistic aestheticism – the view that the aesthetic is inextricably linked to life.

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5 We find this thought in Book IV of *The Gay Science*. The "higher human being", Nietzsche writes, "fancies that he is a *spectator* and *listener* who has been placed before the great visual and acoustic spectacle that is life; he calls his own nature *contemplative* and overlooks that he himself is really the poet who keeps creating this life" (GS 301).

6 The 'select cases' that Nietzsche is perhaps alluding to here is the gods. As the creation of man, the gods will be the sum of man's perfections – including beauty. Thus man will worship himself through his gods. See footnote 11.

In the section from the *Twilight of the Idols* that I have been discussing, Nietzsche speaks of both the creator and the spectator of beauty – though it is possible to distinguish, at any given moment, who is at the forefront of his mind. The spectator of beauty, who takes pleasure in his own subjectivity through beauty, exhibits a perspective on beauty that is a copy of the creator's perspective on beauty: both externalise their internal beauty in an act of "bestow[al]" (*ibid.*). Whilst the spectator bestows his beauty by forming *judgements* of beauty, the artist bestows his beauty by *creating* beautiful or 'sublimated forms'. As we will see, Nietzsche suggests that the bestowal of beauty is "prompted" by "gratitude and love" (GS 370). So although abundance is the first and most basic quality that the spectator and the artist share; there is a second way in which the spectator is a copy of the artist. Nietzsche's model of spectatorship – judgement as grateful bestowal – is based on artistic creation. When the spectator adopts the artist's perspective he does not actually create beauty, rather, he does the next best thing, he makes judgements of beauty. His judgements are formed, however, in precisely the manner that the artist creates, by the bestowal of beauty as an expression of gratitude. The idea that judgement *qua* bestowal is the spectator's version of creation is confirmed by the fact that Nietzsche uses the same term to describe both processes. They are both forms of *mirroring*.

## IV

Nietzsche describes the spectator's activity of bestowal in the following terms.

> Man thinks the world itself is overwhelmed with beauty – he *forgets* he is its cause. He alone has bestowed beauty on it – oh! but a very human, all-too-human beauty . . . Basically man mirrors himself in things, he thinks anything that reflects his image back to him is beautiful: the judgement 'beautiful' is *the vanity of his species* ... (*ibid.*)

Nietzsche conceives of judgement as bestowal. To judge something as beautiful is to bestow beauty upon that thing – it is to *recognise* one's image in an external object.[7] This is why the judgement of beauty is a 'vanity', since to be skilled at such judgement is to be skilled at seeing oneself, Narcissus-like.[8] In bestowing beauty upon an object one is simultaneously bestowing beauty upon oneself, one is giving oneself a gift. The Nietzschean spectator, then, bestows beauty by externalising his internal beauty, his self-pleasure. The relation between internal and external beauty is one of reflection; the spectator bestows the value of beauty – he forms judgements of beauty – on those things that mirror his internal beauty – thus, external beauty (in art and nature) is a reflective surface. Nietzsche describes the object as a mirror of the subject and so

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[7] Heidegger has indirectly remarked upon Nietzsche's mirroring. He says that, for Nietzsche, the beautiful "is what we find honourable and worthy, as the image of our essential nature" (1991: 112).

[8] Henry Staten discusses the "narcissistic" element in Nietzsche, the idea that "expended energy always has a self-reflexive aspect" (*ibid.*). Nietzsche applauds the innocent – that is, the apparently amoral – nature of the artist's self-interestedness, selfishness and egoism. In the *Genealogy* he speaks of the "artists' egoism that has the look of bronze and knows itself justified to all eternity in its 'work', like a mother in her child" (GM II.17).

reverses Schopenhauer's claim that in aesthetic contemplation the subject becomes a 'clear mirror of the object'.[9]

The spectator, then, externalises his beauty by bestowing it upon those external things that mirror his beauty. Turning now to the artist of abundance: what role does mirroring play in his externalisation, or creation, of beauty? Nietzsche provides a description of the creative act in the following passage.

> In this state we enrich everything out of our own plenitude: whatever we see, whatever we want, we see swollen, crammed, strong, supercharged with energy. Man in this state transforms things until they reflect his power – until they are reflections of his perfection. This *need* to transform into perfection is – art.[10] (TI IX.9)

The 'state' to which Nietzsche refers is 'intoxication' and it will be discussed in the following section. I want to discuss, first of all, the relation between the other elements of the passage. In the previous section it was shown that, for Nietzsche, beauty is self-pleasure and the act of creation is the

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9 The concept of mirroring occurs in both the Platonic and the Schopenhauerian philosophies of art. For Plato, mirroring is associated with *mimesis* and is presented as the artist's shrewd way of creating appearances. "You could do it quickly and in lots of places, especially if you were willing to carry a mirror with you, for that's the quickest way of all. With it you can quickly make the sun, the things in the heavens, the earth, yourself" says Socrates (Republic, 596 d-e). For Schopenhauer, the concept of mirroring is employed in the second part of the aesthetic experience; when the contemplating, will-less subject becomes coextensive with the object. "We lose ourselves entirely in this object, to use a pregnant expression", Schopenhauer writes, "in other words, we forget our individuality, our will, and continue to exist only as pure subject, as clear mirror of the object, so that it is as though the object alone existed without anyone to perceive it" (1969: 178[§34]). Julian Young has remarked on Nietzsche's objection to the "pure passivity" (1992: 123) of Schopenhauerian mirroring. But Young neglects to mention Nietzsche's active concept of mirroring – that which I have been tracing in this section. Nietzsche, like Schopenhauer, can be interpreted as collapsing the subject/object distinction with the concept of mirroring. Whilst Schopenhauer collapses the subject into the object, the pure subject, as it were, becomes the object; Nietzsche does the reverse, by making the object a mirror of the subject.

10 In the section entitled 'The Work of Art as Product of Human Activity' in the *Aesthetics*, Hegel writes: "man brings himself before himself by *practical* activity, since he has the impulse ... to produce himself and therein equally to recognise himself. This aim he achieves by altering external things whereon he impresses the seal of his inner being" (1975: 31).

externalisation of this internal beauty into 'sublimated forms'. We are now in a position to flesh out this conception. In the cited passage, Nietzsche describes creation as the transformation of 'things' – in other words, to externalise is to transform. The process of transformation is brought to a close at a specific time, namely, when that which is undergoing transformation has become a mirror of the artist's 'power' – that is, when the artist's internal beauty is mirrored externally. Internal beauty, then – or the artist's 'perfection' – is conceived by Nietzsche as *power*. Since beauty is self-pleasure, power may also be described as self-pleasure. It is the pleasure of power – the pleasurable feeling of power, or, as we will see, the feeling of abundant power. Nietzsche then goes on to offer a definition of art. It is not the 'work of art' itself, but rather the *need* to create perfection. It is not an external need – 'need' in the sense that the artist is obliged to act in a certain way – but internal need. The artist has to create, he needs to create. Art is need.

Nietzsche categorises the type of Dionysian creation now under consideration – i.e., the formation of external mirrors to reflect internal beauty – as creation that is prompted by "the desire to fix, to immortalize, the desire for *being*" (GS 370). (The second type – creation that arises from the "desire ... for *becoming*" (*ibid.*) – will be considered in section VII.) For Nietzsche, then, the desire for being, or the "will to *immortalize*" (*ibid.*) is "prompted" – in the Dionysian – "by gratitude and love" (*ibid.*). Moreover, Nietzsche states that the "essence" (CW Epil) of all of "*beautiful*, all of *great* art ... is gratitude" (*ibid.*).[11]

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[11] For Nietzsche, gratitude is one of the basic qualities of the healthy noble. In the passage under discussion, the feeling of gratitude that prompts great and beautiful art is directly linked to noble morality which is "rooted in a triumphant Yes said to oneself – it is self-affirmation, self-glorification of life; it also requires sublime symbols and practices" (CW Epil). I discuss the aesthetics of noble gratitude in chapter five.

I remarked earlier that bestowal occurs both in the Nietzschean spectator and artist. Bestowal and externalisation are two descriptions of the same process, the former being the interpretation of this process from the perspective of the concept of 'gratitude' (*Dankbarkeit*). This concept is presupposed by bestowal. How does gratitude, then, relate to creation – to artistic bestowal?[12] The concept of 'gratitude' may be elucidated from two perspectives. Firstly, there is that which occasions gratitude, in other words, the answer to the question: why am I grateful? Secondly, there is the question of how one expresses, or performs the act of, gratitude. The Dionysian artist is grateful precisely because of his own well-being – his internal beauty, his feeling of abundant power. When the artist feels grateful he wants to show his gratitude by giving thanks; and the Dionysian's way of giving thanks is to give the only thing that he *can* give, indeed, the only thing that is his to give – his internal beauty, his feeling of power. The artist, then, gives thanks by bestowing his internal beauty. But on whom, or on what, does he bestow his beauty – whom does he thank? The artist thanks himself. He bestows beauty upon the world, but since he has made of the world a mirror of himself, he simultaneously bestows beauty upon himself. He thanks himself through the "self-expansion" (TI IX.19) of internal beauty – that which originally occasioned his gratitude. He thanks himself, in other words, by creating, by

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12 The link between bestowal and gratitude is made by Nietzsche in the following passage on the non-Christian – that is, healthy – conception of God. "A people which still believes in itself still also has its own God. In him it venerates the conditions through which it has prospered, its virtues – it projects its joy in itself, its feeling of power on to a being whom one can thank for them. He who is rich wants to bestow; a proud people needs a God in order to *sacrifice* ... Within the bounds of such presuppositions religion is a form of gratitude. One is grateful for oneself: for that one needs a God" (AC 16).

mirroring himself in the world and thereby "spread[s] a Homeric light and glory over all things" (GS 370).[13]

In this section, then, I have made the transition from the Nietzschean spectator *to* the artist of abundance, from the externalisation of beauty *qua* judgement to its externalisation *qua* creation, from spectatorial gratitude to the artist's gratitude, and from the spectatorial mirror to the creator's mirror. In the territory of the Dionysian artist proper, then, internal beauty – the only authentic beauty – is described by Nietzsche as the pleasure of abundant power.

## V

To understand why Nietzsche describes art as the internal need to create, it is necessary to elucidate the state of the artist at the time of creation. This is the condition of 'intoxication' or *Rausch*. Nietzsche's use of the concept goes back to *The Birth of Tragedy*, where it is associated with the Dionysian and contrasted with the Apollonian dream state. Nietzsche uses 'intoxication' as an "analogy" (BT 1) for the Dionysian "collapse of the *principium individuationis*" (*ibid.*), which results in the union with the ultimate metaphysical reality of existence. More relevant for the present discussion is that, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, intoxication is conceived as a "physiological" phenomenon (*ibid.*). Thus Nietzsche illuminates the transcendent through its antithesis – the sticky immanence of *Rausch*. However, by the time that Nietzsche comes to write the *Twilight of the*

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[13] Nietzsche states that the will to immortalize "requires a dual interpretation" (*ibid.*). Thus, the Dionysian's 'art of being' is distinguished from its romantic counterpart, where the romantic "revenges himself on all things by forcing his own image, the image of his torture, on them, branding them with it" (GS 370). Thus, the romantic also creates images of himself – not, however, through mirroring but through 'branding' or 'forcing'. This mode of creation will be explored in the following chapter.

*Idols*, he has unmasked the metaphysical (the unconditional) as a function of the immanent (the conditional); and so it is only the second conception of intoxication that remains. Nietzsche writes:

> For art to exist, for any sort of aesthetic activity or perception to exist, a certain physiological precondition is indispensable: *intoxication*. Intoxication must first have heightened the excitability of the entire machine: no art results before that happens. All kinds of intoxication, however different their origin, have the power to do this ... The essence of intoxication is the feeling of plenitude [*Fülle*] and increased energy. (TI IX.8)

Intoxication, then, in its 'essence' comprises two things; 'plenitude' or abundance (*Fülle*) and 'increased energy' – which we may translate as 'increased power'. To the extent that intoxication is an increase in power, it is also an increase in the internal beauty of the artist – and so in his feeling of self-pleasure. Intoxication, however, is described as both a feeling *and* a physiological disposition. Nietzsche would conceptualise the relation between these two entities as symptomatic; that is, spiritual, psychological, or affective intoxication is a symptom of the body's physiological intoxication. The relation between the psychological and the physiological is complex in Nietzsche. Broadly speaking, though, unless he employs the term 'physiology', we must read Nietzsche as thinking primarily of the psychological – albeit with bodily metaphors to stress its physiological foundation. Indeed, the title of the aphorism under discussion is 'Towards a psychology of the artist', so this confirms, then, that we are inhabiting the realm of embodied spirituality.[14] Intoxication, then, is a precondition of art,

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[14] There is another motivation behind Nietzsche's vocabulary of physiology. It serves, so he hopes, as an amoral discourse. Nietzsche – as physician, vivisectionist, and symptomatologist – takes up this perspective so that he can describe man in terms that are 'beyond good and evil'. Thus, man is abundant or impoverished, powerful or impotent, healthy or sick. Nietzsche's vocabulary of physiology is his "resistance to the shamefully *moralized* way of speaking" (GM III.19). He describes aesthetics as "a kind of applied physiology" (NCW 2). But I prefer to conceive of this idea – the link between the aesthetic and the physiological body – in more general terms, namely in terms of the connection between the

indeed a necessary precondition, since Nietzsche states that "no art results before [intoxication] happens" (*ibid.*). Since Nietzsche defines art as the need to create, intoxication can be seen as a necessary condition of this compulsion. I will now isolate the concept of intoxication, insofar as that is possible, and explicate the hierarchy between its various manifestations.

In the *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche identifies a number of different "kinds of intoxication" (*ibid.*) that may be distinguished by their origin and context. How are these to be related to the essence of intoxication as the feeling of abundance? We may clarify this relation by considering the literal meaning of intoxication. *Rausch* means – as in drunkenness, for example – that the subject is 'narcoticised'. Etymologically, intoxication just means to be poisoned, which means that a foreign or external substance has entered the subject. Thus, we have a distinction, first of all, between the external narcotic and the subject. There is a further contrast between the non-intoxicated or 'sober' subject and the intoxicated subject, which leads to the distinction between the narcotic and the intoxicated subject – or between the narcotic as *cause* and its subjective *effect*. It is this final contrast that I will use to elucidate Nietzsche's sense of intoxication.

Nietzsche's use of intoxication ranges from the literal to the figurative. The main shift in meaning is from the concept of an external narcotic to that of an internal narcotic. The subjective effect of intoxication is always the same, it is the "feeling of plenitude" (*ibid.*). Starting, then, with Nietzsche's literal employment of 'intoxication'. He

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aesthetic and life – Nietzsche's vitalistic aestheticism. As we will see in chapters four and five the vitalistic aesthetic is also amoral.

names two external narcotics: the "influence of narcotics" proper and "meteorological influences, for example the intoxication of spring" (*ibid.*). Here the cause of intoxication is external. There is a second group of external narcotics whose status as such is not as clear. These are "sexual excitement, the oldest and most primitive form", "great desires", "feasting .. contest", "extreme agitation", "cruelty" and "destruction" (*ibid.*). What is the narcotic in these examples? Desire, cruelty etc. are related to an external *object*, namely, that which is desired or that to which cruelty is directed. Without this external object there would be no abundant feeling of desire or cruelty – the external object, in other words, is a necessary condition of this type of intoxication. In the cases of self-desire, self-cruelty, the object is, of course, internal; but, paradigmatically, one thinks of desire and cruelty as concepts that refer to some thing beyond the subject – the sexual object, the victim of cruelty. It is these external objects that, in the sense of making *possible* intoxication, cause intoxication; therefore, they are also external narcotics, though in a slightly modified sense. As we will see, 'sexual excitement' is the most important of this group – Nietzsche sees the "orgy" (TI X.5) as basic to the Dionysian art of becoming.

Sexual excitement, however – as with all the other external narcotics – is distinguished from the only, properly speaking, *internal* narcotic, the narcotic of, what Nietzsche calls, "an overloaded and distended will" (*ibid.*) – namely, the narcotic of abundance itself. As we will see, the terms of Nietzsche's Dionysian vocabulary – 'overloaded' and 'distended' included – can be reduced to the basic concepts of abundance and overabundance. To be overloaded is to be overabundant such that one's will is swelling outward, distended. Thus, in this most extreme, and so exemplary case, the abundant will (the narcotic) *causes* the feeling of

abundance (intoxication) – that is, the "intoxication of the will" (*ibid.*). Thus, the condition of the will is identical to the feeling it induces. One is in a position to say: 'I am my own drug' – one embodies the narcotic with which one becomes intoxicated. Alternatively it can be said that when the narcotic is internal the opposition of intoxicant/intoxication collapses: the narcotic (cause) and intoxication (effect) are the same thing. Intoxication (the feeling of abundance) *is* the intoxicant (the abundant will), the feeling of abundance is abundance itself – the effect is the cause. Conversely, one can say that the cause is just the effect, that abundance is just the feeling of abundance.

## VI

The feeling of intoxication, then, is the feeling of abundance and power that results from, or just *is*, the internal narcotic of an abundant will. Intoxication is the necessary condition of art and art is the need to create. Thus, intoxication is the necessary condition of need. But why is it necessary for the artist to be intoxicated in order to be compelled to create? It is because the condition of intoxication – the condition of an overabundant will – is such that creation is necessary to *ease* the distension caused by such abundance. I will now examine the Nietzschean concept of abundance so as to clarify this idea.

Nietzsche claims that all art (and philosophy) is a "remedy and aid in the service of either growing or declining life" (NCW 5). Art presupposes "suffering and sufferers" (*ibid.*) and there are two types of sufferer:

> first, those who suffer from the *overfullness* [*Überfülle*] *of life* – they want a Dionysian art and likewise a tragic view of life, a tragic insight – and then those who suffer from the *impoverishment of life* and seek ... romanticism in art and insight ... (GS 370)

In the epilogue to *The Case of Wagner*, Nietzsche makes the point again in slightly different terms. He states that "*ascending* life" (CW Epil) – in place of 'growing life' – will "resist from the profoundest depths the virtues of declining life" (*ibid.*); while "declining life" will "hate everything that justifies itself solely out of abundance, out of the overflowing riches of strength" (*ibid.*). Nietzsche describes Dionysian art as "*classical*" (*ibid.*) and interprets romanticism as symptomatic of "*décadence*" (*ibid.*).

The opposition of ascending/declining life is the most fundamental dichotomy in Nietzsche's aesthetics – and, indeed, in the philosophy of his final period. It is closely related to the duality of abundance/impoverishment, and as I will show, they are best made sense of together. 'Overabundance' (*Überfülle*) is an extension, or intensification, of the basic concept of the Dionysian artist – *Fülle*. The distinction between these terms is important, for it describes the becoming of the Dionysian artist or his development over time. In what follows, I will provide a sketch of this process of becoming.

In the cited passage Nietzsche conceives of all artists as 'sufferers', who are distinguished only by the determinant of suffering, which is either the overabundance or the impoverishment of life. This notion of 'suffering from overabundance' is central to the condition of the becoming of the Dionysian. Thus we may ask, with Nietzsche, how is it possible "to suffer precisely from overfullness?" (ASC 1). The state of overabundance must be

seen as the peak of a process of growth or ascension. The Dionysian embodies growing or ascending life, thus he will grow to a state, first of all, of abundance and then overabundance. The imagery that Nietzsche employs to describe this process of growth is physiological. Thus, life grows or ascends within the boundaries of the Dionysian and as it becomes abundant, distension will occur through the swelling of life. At the beginning of this process of growth, the Dionysian, perhaps, will not suffer; however, if growth continues in such a way that internal life becomes overabundant, the increasing distension will induce suffering. The Dionysian artist suffers from an excess of internal life, it has grown and overgrown such that he is obese with existence. The question then remains as to how art will be a 'remedy and aid' to the suffering of overabundance. Nietzsche describes the Dionysian artist as

> an entirely reckless and amoral artist ... who wants to experience, whether he is building or destroying, in the good and in the bad, his own joy and glory – one who, creating worlds, frees himself from the *distress* of fullness and *overfullness* and from the *affliction* of the contradictions compressed in his soul.
> (ASC 5)

To release the pressure of distension, or the 'distress of fullness and overfullness', the artist simply has to create, to expel units of life – literally, to express. Now we are in a position to understand why Nietzsche interprets art as the need to create and intoxication as a necessary condition for such a compulsion. The Dionysian artist suffers from, *and* is intoxicated by, overabundant life – his own overabundant will. Thus, the feeling of suffering and the feeling of overabundance (intoxication) can be interpreted either as two descriptions of the one feeling, or as two feelings that are simultaneously experienced. In other words, either pleasurable

intoxication is a form of suffering, and suffering a form of pleasurable intoxication; or the *pleasurable* feeling of intoxication is one effect of the overabundance of which the *painful* feeling of suffering is a second and distinct effect. Either the Dionysian collapses pleasure into pain and vice versa, or he derives pleasure and pain from the same thing.

In conclusion, then, the artist of abundance, on one level, is compelled to create to relieve the suffering of overabundance. But since the feeling of overabundance (intoxication) is pleasurable, by reducing his overabundance he is also reducing his self-pleasure. The reduction of suffering, it seems, is not the goal of intoxicated creation. In other words, the Dionysian artist is not hedonically motivated. He creates or 'explodes', rather, so as to ward off possible *self-hypertrophy* – that which will inevitably result from the perpetual growth of his internal life. Art is need because the artist must create so as to counter possible neurosis from overfullness.[15]

## VII

Nietzsche's Dionysian artist creates two forms of art. In section IV, I discussed his 'art of being', that is, the art in which the "desire to fix, to immortalize, the desire for *being* prompted creation" (GS 370). The artist expresses his self-gratitude by bestowing upon the world the image of his overabundant beauty. And he does this by transforming external material

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15 Henry Staten has called Nietzsche's overflowing individual the "'explosive' version of nobility" (1990: 137). The Dionysian artist, like Nietzsche's Greeks, possesses "inner *explosivity*" in the form of an overabundant life (TI X.3). As does Nietzsche's genius: "Great men, like periods of greatness, are explosives storing up immense energy" (TI IX.44). The condition that I have called the 'hypertrophy' of the artist – when he is prevented from exploding or creating – may be seen as what Nietzsche calls the "Dionysian madness", the Dionysian's "neuroses of *health*" (ASC 4). The idea is that the artist becomes so full of life that he becomes sick. His overabundant health, paradoxically, makes him ill.

until it mirrors his beauty (or perfection, or power). But, for Nietzsche, there is a Dionysian art that arises from the "desire for *destruction*, change, and becoming" as an "expression of an overflowing energy" (*ibid.*). This is "Dionysian art" in the form of a "tragic view of life, a tragic insight" (*ibid.*) – or, what I will refer to as, the Dionysian 'art of becoming'. This section is dedicated to an examination of this form of Dionysian art.

For Nietzsche, tragedy is an art of becoming in the sense that it is the representation of the becoming of human life in the form of the images of the tragic destruction of human life. Through the intermediary of the artist, tragedy is life's "*sacrifice* of its highest types" (TI IX.5), namely, the sacrifice of noble or great individuals. In genealogical terms, Nietzsche conceives of tragedy as a version of primitive – that is, pagan – "religious cruelty" where "one sacrificed human beings to one's god, perhaps precisely those whom one loved most" (BGE 55). And he claims that tragedy is still grounded in cruelty, though in aestheticised or "spiritualiz[ed]" form (BGE 229). Thus, in *Beyond Good and Evil* he writes that what "constitutes the painful voluptuousness of tragedy is cruelty" (*ibid.*), and in the *Twilight of the Idols*, he suggests that the "tragic poet" pours a "draught of sweetest cruelty" (TI IX.24). The tragedian, then, exercises his cruelty by performing the ritual destruction, the sacrifice, of life's highest types and thereby creates the art of becoming, an art that exhibits human becoming through the representation of the necessary sequence of life and death. In what follows, I will flesh out this basic conception of the art of becoming.

As we have just seen, Nietzsche conceives of tragedy as a descendant of pagan religious cruelty, and in the *Twilight of the Idols* he

supplements this idea by emphasising the orgiastic nature of the Greek "Dionysian mysteries" (TI X.4). The "rites, symbols, and myths" of the Dionysian Greeks were, for Nietzsche, of "orgiastic origin" (*ibid.*). In other words, "that element out of which Dionysian art [i.e., tragic art] evolved" was "the orgy" (*ibid.*). Nietzsche psychologises the orgiastic nature of the Dionysian mysteries and suggests that tragic art be understood in analogous terms. He writes that "the psychology of the orgiastic as an overflowing feeling of life and strength, within which even pain still has a stimulating effect, gave me the key to the concept of *tragic* feeling" (TI X.5). Nietzsche's claim, basically, is that the tragic artist is so abundant with life and strength that even pain 'still has a stimulating effect'. Which is to say that the tragedian's overabundance of life is precisely that which provides the conditions for his exercise of pain and cruelty.

For Nietzsche, however, tragedy is not simply an abundance of life that can endure pain, rather, it is one that actively seeks pain, and that exercises self-cruelty as a test of strength. Nietzsche makes this point clear in the following passage from the *Twilight of the Idols*, where he reconstructs the "psychology of the tragic poet" (*ibid.*).

> *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 *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)

In this passage, Nietzsche speaks of both the tragic artist and spectator, but given his conflation of artist and spectator within the 'artist's perspective' – discussed in sections I and II – we may ascribe the experience of the spectator of tragedy to the artist. Nietzsche conceives of the tragic artist, then, as a kind of artist-warrior or artist-hero who 'singles out' the 'victorious condition' of 'bravery' in the 'face of a powerful enemy'. The enemy is the 'fearsome and questionable' image of the necessary destruction of humanity's highest types. The tragic artist seeks out this enemy and in so doing 'seeks out suffering', for in the face of such an enemy he experiences 'great hardship'. It is in this way that the tragedian manifests his self-cruelty, since in actively confronting the fearsome he inflicts pain and suffering upon himself. But, for Nietzsche, the strength of the tragic artist is such that he displays 'fearlessness' in the face of the problem of necessary destruction. And it is this victorious condition that the artist glorifies and celebrates. He exemplifies, in other words, the "inexhaustibility" of man "through the *sacrifice* of [man's] highest types" (TI IX.5). When the tragic artist glorifies and celebrates the destruction of abundant life – in the form of the death of the noble and great individual – he also "[a]ffirm[s] .. life even in its strangest and sternest problems" (*ibid.*). For Nietzsche, then, tragedy is a festival and orgy of destruction in which both artist and spectator celebrate their strength in the sacrifice of those whom they love most.

I would like to close this section by describing the relation between Nietzsche's Dionysian art of being and art of becoming. Since Nietzsche describes "intoxication" as the "precondition" for "aesthetic activity" (TI IX.8), it is clear, first of all, that both forms of art arise from the intoxication of the abundance of life. But that would appear to be where the similarity

ends, since it is equally clear that Nietzsche construes the art of being as the creation of *beauty* and the art of becoming as the creation of *ugliness*. For Nietzsche, tragic art "brings to light much that is ugly, hard, questionable in life" (TI IX.24), it is the realm of the "evil, absurd, and ugly" (GS 370), and thus the manifestation of the "*craving for the ugly*" (ASC 4). Given that Nietzsche claims that "nothing is ugly but *degenerate* man" and thus that the "ugly is understood as a sign and symptom of degeneration" (TI IX.20), does it not then follow that the Dionysian creator *qua* artist of ugliness is *not* abundant with life, but is in fact a degenerate or an impoverished artist? Moreover, if we conceive of the creation of tragedy in terms of the reflective model of creation associated with beauty, it would appear that in the creation of ugliness the Dionysian artist is merely reflecting his inner ugliness – his "exhaustion", "weariness", "dissolution" and "decomposition" (*ibid.*).

I suggest, in defence of Nietzsche's tragic artist, that a crucial distinction should be made between the various ways in which ugliness is represented. For Nietzsche, the impoverished artist will "attenuate" ugliness and make it "consumptive" (TI IX.9) – that is, starve ugliness of the little life that it possesses. However, in the Dionysian artist's celebration and glorification of ugliness, he infuses it with his own abundance of life. In the condition of intoxication the artist "enriches everything out of [his] own abundance: what [he] sees ... [he] sees swollen, pressing, strong, overladen with energy" (TI IX.9). The tragic artist, then, enriches ugliness through his "excess of procreating, fertilising energies" (GS 370) and he does this precisely by reflecting his internal beauty and perfection upon the ugly surface that *is* death and destruction. The narratives of the inevitable destruction of greatness that comprise tragedy are narratives

that have been enriched with abundant life, and thus they are perfect and exalted narratives – that is: "sublimated forms" (TI IX.19). And it is part of the test of strength of the tragic artist to discover to what extent he is able to glorify and celebrate ugliness in this way.

In conclusion, then, Dionysian art of being and art of becoming are overlapping forms of art that both arise from abundant life. While the artist of being seeks only to immortalise his power and beauty, the artist of becoming seeks to employ his power and beauty so as to enrich and celebrate ugliness in the form of tragic destruction.

## VIII

With the picture of the Dionysian artist complete, I would like, in this section, to explore the basic presuppositions of his internal dynamic, namely, the expressions 'ascending life' and 'overabundance of life'. As I have pointed out, for Nietzsche, 'life' is primarily embodied psychological, spiritual or affective life. Turning to the opposition of ascending/declining life, it can be said that these terms do not signify stable and unchangeable objects, but rather unstable and changeable events. They are concepts, that is, of 'becoming'.[16] But, becoming in what sense? Is it a becoming more and less or a becoming higher and lower? In other words, it is not

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16 'Becoming' is a concept that Nietzsche employs against the "idiosyncrasies of philosophers" (TI III.1): the "*honour*" (*ibid.*) they bestow upon the value of *being*. In the *Twilight of the Idols*, the history of philosophy is conceived as the "escape from sense-deception, from becoming, from history, from falsehood" (*ibid.*). Nietzsche's point is that the philosophical dehistoricisation of 'becoming' *to* 'being' results in the creation of "conceptual mummies" (*ibid.*); concepts that are devoid of content, and are thus, from the very start, concepts that the philosopher "cannot get hold of" (*ibid.*). Nietzsche offers a genealogical critique of the concept of 'being', locating its origins in the "metaphysics of language" (TI III.5), which is defined as "*reason*" (*ibid.*). Heidegger claims that "All Being is for Nietzsche a Becoming"(1991: 7). If it is the case, then, that Nietzsche does make 'becoming' an unconditional value – as Heidegger implies – then Heidegger's claim must be taken seriously. But it is not clear that Nietzsche does. I tackle this question in chapter three.

immediately clear whether Nietzsche is drawing a distinction between life's *quantity* or *quality* in his macro-opposition of ascending/declining life. In isolation that dichotomy suggests qualitative difference; to ascend is to become higher, superior and exalted, whereas to decline is to become lower, inferior and abased. But in the context of Nietzsche's other oppositions – growing/declining life, abundance/impoverishment – and his model of intoxication and creation, he seems to be describing only a quantitative contrast. But surely Nietzsche would want to draw a distinction between overflowing gold and overabundant ordure?[17]

Since Nietzsche understands his own philosophical task in terms of the attempted "solution to the *problem of value*, the determination of the *order of rank among values*" (GM I.17), the question of the nature of value – of whether it is grounded in quantity or quality – is, for him, a crucial one. Michael Tanner has written that Nietzsche is "certainly not concerned with the *quantity* of life around – if anything, he would prefer there to be much less, and of a superior order. But what is a superior order of life?"[18] Following Tanner, I will suggest that Nietzsche is committed to a distinction between qualitatively distinct types of life. But, having said that, I believe that quantity still functions in his evaluation of life – and it

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17 Gilles Deleuze has discussed the problem of quantity and quality in Nietzsche. From a reading of Nietzsche's unpublished speculations on a 'theory of forces', he identifies Nietzsche's ambivalence on this question. On one level, Nietzsche writes that all "values ... are everywhere reducible to [a] numerical and quantitative scale" (WP 710); but, on another level, he claims that the "reduction of all qualities to quantities is a nonsense" (WP 564). The way I read this contradiction is that, in the first note, Nietzsche is in 'demystifying mode' and nihilistically reduces all value to number; but, in the second note, he recognises the vulgarity of such a move, and makes his more characteristic stand for the possibility of exalted values. Deleuze solves the problem by claiming that: "Forces have quantity, but they also have the quality which corresponds to their difference in quantity: the qualities of force are called 'active' and 'reactive'" (1983: 42). For Deleuze, active/reactive is Nietzsche's key distinction. I think Deleuze is mistaken and I give my reasons for that view in chapter five.

18 Tanner, 1994: 65.

has to, given the centrality of Nietzsche's dominantly quantitative notions of 'abundant life' and 'growing life'.

My claim is that for there to be better life, there must first be more life; in other words, a large quantity of life is a precondition for a higher type of life. And the distinction between a merely abundant life and an abundant life of a higher order depends upon the manner in which abundant life is organised, configured, constrained or disciplined.[19] Abundant life that is not disciplined into a "whole" – *Ganze* – (CW 7; GM II.17; BGE 257), while being quantitatively superior to impoverished life, is qualitatively inferior – and so categorically distinct – to an abundant life that *has* been disciplined into a whole. Basically, my claim is that qualities of abundant life are distinguished on the basis of *style*. And that is a question that I examine at length in chapters four and five. It can be said, then, that Nietzsche's artist of abundance – who is his vitalistic ideal – possesses an abundance of life that is disciplined into a whole and so he represents a higher order of life.

I would now like to return to the question of what exactly 'life' denotes in the phrases 'ascending life' and 'overabundance of life'. The category of 'life' has been delimited to the class of embodied psychological material: but what type of psychological material constitutes 'life'? If we examine the other expressions that Nietzsche employs in the context of the Dionysian aesthetic, we may find an answer to our question. Nietzsche speaks of the "overflowing riches of strength" (CW Epil) and elsewhere of

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[19] If quantity leads to a distinction in quality, then it follows that an impoverished life can grow into an exalted abundant life and the latter may decline into a degenerate life. Which means that there is no essential – in the sense of immutable – distinction between types of life. This is consistent with Nietzsche's rejection of essential and stable value-dichotomies. In *Beyond Good and Evil* he writes that the "fundamental faith of the metaphysicians is *the faith in opposite values*" (BGE 2).

"strength, overflowing health, overgreat fullness" (ASC 4). Ascending life is described as "the will to power as the principle of life" (CW Epil) and we already know that the intoxicated artist mirrors his "power" (TI IX.9). In addition, we find Nietzsche discussing the "overflowing energy" (GS 370) of the Dionysian and defining intoxication as the "feeling of plenitude and increased energy" (TI IX.8). So, there are various candidates for the psychological stuff that is growing or is abundant: 'strength' (*Stärke*), 'health' (*Gesundheit*), 'power' or 'will to power' (*Wille zur Macht*), and 'energy' (*Kraft*).

A hierarchy can be formed between these terms. Strength and health may be described as particular applications of the more general concepts of power and energy. In other words, one requires power and energy to be healthy and strong – in Nietzschean terms, health and strength, perhaps, are merely symptoms of power and energy. So only the latter two concepts remain. It is not necessary, however, to attempt to separate these terms, for it is clear that Nietzsche employs them interchangeably. And since power has already been shown to be of importance in the aesthetic, I will continue to employ this term. Thus, it can be said that the Dionysian artist suffers from the overabundance of life *qua* power: it is power that grows within him. In the following section, I would like to close this chapter by exploring Nietzsche's concept of the will to power as it functions in the artist of abundance.

## IX

The will to power is, perhaps, Nietzsche's most well known doctrine. Commentators have been divided as to its precise meaning and as to the

role it plays in Nietzsche's mature philosophy. Thus, Heidegger interprets the will to power as a metaphysical doctrine; he claims that, for Nietzsche, it is the "basic character of all beings ... the essence of Being".[20] While Walter Kaufmann insists that Nietzsche's "notorious conception"[21] of the will to power is "not a 'metaphysical' one in that sense of the word which contemporary Positivists would attach to it".[22] Rather, it is an "empirical concept"[23], but remains, nonetheless, the "single basic principle" of Nietzsche's "final philosophy".[24] As I suggested in the introduction, those commentators who take *The Will to Power* seriously generally conceive of the doctrine in ontological, metaphysical or even cosmological terms. In Nietzsche's published writings, however, the will to power is delimited to life and invariably to the physio-psychological life of human beings. That is how I interpret the term and, as I hope to show, the aesthetic plays a defining role Nietzsche's conception of the will to power.

Nietzsche uses the term 'will to power' in three basic ways and the following passages from *Beyond Good and Evil* and *The Anti-Christ* contain exemplary instances of these usages.[25]

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20 Heidegger, 1991: 3-4.

21 Kaufmann, 1956: 153.

22 Kaufmann, 1956: 177.

23 *Ibid.*.

24 Kaufmann, 1956: 152.

25 The will to power makes its first appearance in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. In Part One, Zarathustra says: "A table of values hangs over every people. Behold, it is the table of its overcomings; behold, it is the voice of its will to power" (Z I.15). And in Part Two, in the chapter called 'Of Self-Overcoming': "Only where life is, there is also will: not will to life, but – so I teach you – will to power!" (Z II.12). Nietzsche, anxious to distance himself from Schopenhauer, rejects the Schopenhauerian 'will to life' – or "will-to-live" (1969: 275 [§54]) – in favour of his own will to power.

> an incarnate will to power ... will strive to grow, spread, seize, become predominant ... because it is *living* and because life simply *is* will to power ... (BGE 259)

> Suppose, finally, we succeeded in explaining our entire instinctive life as the development and ramification of *one* basic form of the will – namely, of the will to power, as *my* proposition has it ... (BGE 36)

> What is good? – All that heightens the feeling of power, the will to power, power itself in man ... What is happiness? – The feeling that power *increases* – that a resistance is overcome. (AC 2)

The first passage supplements the argument that was made in the previous section. For Nietzsche, 'life' – whether it be strength or health – is ultimately reducible to the will to power, because 'life simply *is* will to power'. So the will to power constitutes the fundamental character of life and so is not confined to ascending life. It can be said, then, that the ascending will to power is linked to abundant life, while the declining will to power is related to the impoverishment of life. Or, as Nietzsche puts it in *The Anti-Christ*, "life itself [is] instinct for growth ... for accumulation of forces, for *power*: where the will to power is lacking [in force] there is decline" (AC 6). In the second passage, Nietzsche advances the will to power as a psychological concept. He suggests that the 'entire instinctive life' of man can be explained by one 'basic form of the will', which he calls the will to power. This is the conception of the will to power *qua* "fundamental instinct" of man (GS 349). Finally, in the third citation – once again, in psychological terms – Nietzsche identifies the will to power with the 'feeling of power' (*Machtgefühl*). When life is ascending, there is the feeling that 'power increases', that the will to power is heightened. This, then, is Nietzsche's concept of will to power *qua* feeling or affect.

The Dionysian artist is the exemplar of the will to power in its positive or authentic form. Since he is the embodiment of ascending and overabundant life, and since life is the will to power, it follows that he represents the will to power in its ascending and abundant forms. Basically, in Nietzsche's artist of abundance, "the will to power as the principle of life" (CW Epil) appears in non-compromised and pure form. Given that the will to power strives "to grow, spread, seize, become predominant" (BGE 259), we can come to a deeper understanding of the intimate link between the artist and the will to power by asking: in what way does the will to power grow?

Richard Schacht suggests that the term 'power' (*Macht*) – as a constituent of the expression 'will to power' (*Wille zur Macht*) – is "closely related" to *machen* (from which the English word 'make' is derived) "which is among the richest and most suggestive basic verbs in the [German] language".[26] *Machen* "can mean", Schacht continues, "such things as 'to produce', 'to form', 'to construct', 'to create', 'to effect', and much more besides."[27] Schacht advises, however, that we should exercise caution and not simply conflate "the will to *Macht*" with "the will to *machen*".[28] However, it is clear from the following passages, that, for Nietzsche, *machen* is central to his understanding of the way in which the will to power grows and expands.

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[26] Schacht, 1983: 225. Keith Ansell-Pearson has made a similar observation. He writes that *Macht* is "derived from the verb *mögen*, meaning to want or desire, and the word *möglich*, meaning potential (it is also related to *machen*, meaning to make or create). For Nietzsche 'power' exists as potentiality, so that in the term 'will *to* power' the word 'power' denotes not simply a fixed and unchangeable entity, like force or strength, but an 'accomplishment' of the will overcoming or overpowering itself" (1994: 46).

[27] Schacht, 1983: 225.

[28] *Ibid.*.

> life itself is ... overpowering of what is alien and weaker ... imposition of one's own forms ... and at least, at its mildest exploitation ... 'Exploitation' ... is a consequence of the will to power ... (BGE 259)

> life ... *will to power*, is ... the essential priority of the spontaneous, aggressive, expansive, form-giving forces that give new interpretations and directions ... (GM II.12)

The one conception of the will to power that is common to both of these important passages – the second one being Nietzsche's only extended discussion of the concept in *On the Genealogy of Morals* – is the will to power as a 'form-giving force' which operates by imposing its 'own forms' upon what is 'alien'. It seems, then, that the sense of *machen* as 'to form' is, for Nietzsche, fundamental to the will to power. Life ascends, which is to say expands and grows, through the expansive form-giving forces of the will to power. The will to power, then, is basically the 'will to form' or the 'will to impose one's own forms' through the activity of form-giving.

The concept of form-imposition takes us back to the Dionysian artist who "transforms things until they reflect his power – until they are reflections of his perfection" (TI IX.9); and, as we know, for Nietzsche, the "*need* to transform into perfection" is "art" (*ibid.*). The artist, then, is the embodiment of the abundance of life *qua* will to power, and so is the embodiment of the abundance of form-giving power. The internal growth of the artist's form-giving power leads to his becoming distended with such power, and it consummates itself in the creative act, where the artist discharges his form-giving powers in the transformation of external things (that which is 'alien') until they reflect his perfection. The Dionysian artist, then, ascends or grows in two related senses. Firstly, his internal life is

growing and, secondly, when it overflows the boundary of his individuality he grows and expands in the sense that he reflects his own image in external things.

This is one element of what I call Nietzsche's vitalistic aestheticism; the idea that the artist of abundance is the exemplary embodiment of the "will to power as the principle of life" (CW Epil) – of the will to form the world through the imposition of one's own forms. Given the foregoing, then, Julian Young's claim that in "Nietzsche's later philosophy of art ... [i]nterestingly ... the 'will to power' turns out to be relatively *un*important" is not so much 'interesting' as 'false'.[29]

I would like to close this chapter by describing how the two senses of the will to power – instinct and feeling – appear in the artist of abundance. As we have seen, Nietzsche suggests that it is his "proposition" that "our entire instinctive life" can be understood as the "development and ramification of ... the will to power" (BGE 36). This means that the manifold instincts of the artist are to be understood as expressions and subdivisions of the "fundamental instinct" of the will to power (GS 349). While in non-artists this fundamental instinct may be concealed or corrupted by other instincts, it is clear that in the case of the artist the will to power is sovereign. He manifests the "*need* to transform

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29 Young, 1992: 1. On one level, it is perfectly understandable why Young is suspicious of the will to power. He goes on to say: "it has always seemed to me" that the will to power "is a notion which figures much more prominently in commentaries than in [Nietzsche's] texts themselves" (Young, 1992: 1-2). That is very true, and what Young is suspicious of – as, indeed, I am – is the will to power as construed by those commentators who take the unpublished notes collected in *The Will to Power* as Nietzsche's coherent 'theory of will to power.' But Young, confusedly, extends his distaste for the will to power *qua* ontology or cosmology over the will to power (as conceived in Nietzsche's published writings) *qua* life, instinctive or affective life. In Nietzsche's final period – in which, as Daniel Conway has made clear, "Nietzsche evinces his ever-strengthening commitment to a form of vitalism" (1998: 35) – wherever 'life' appears in his text, and it appears frequently, 'will to power' necessarily appears, albeit implicitly. As I show in chapter three, although Young protests against the use of *The Will to Power*, he draws from it an idea that props up his entire thesis, namely, that Nietzsche 'returns' to Schopenhauer.

into perfection" (TI IX.9), and since transformation or form-giving *is* the basic expression of the will to power, in the artist the will to power manifests itself as an instinctual need.

There is a second way in which the instinct of the will to power appears in the Dionysian artist. In my account of Dionysian intoxication, in section V, I drew a distinction between the artist's "overloaded and distended will" (TI IX.9) as the internal narcotic and the "feeling of plenitude and increased power" which Nietzsche calls the "essence of intoxication" (*ibid.*). I suggest that the distinction between the abundant will (narcotic) and the feeling of abundant power (intoxication) can be understood in terms of the contrast between the will to power as instinct and as feeling. The abundant will is the instinct of the will to power in abundant form, or the abundant power to impose forms as *potentiality*. This is what the artist's power consists in. Thus, the statement that the artist's instinct for form-giving is bulging with life is equivalent to the statement that the artist's instinct to exercise his will to power is abundant with life. The artist is powerful because his instinct for creation is overabundant, and his overabundant instinct is precisely the drug that intoxicates him – that gives him the *feeling* of the abundant power to create.

For the Dionysian artist, then, there is no discrepancy between the reality of power (abundant instinct of will to power) and the appearance of power (feeling of abundant will to power). Indeed, as I argued in section V, in the exemplary case of the artist, intoxicant and intoxication, instinct and feeling, reality and appearance collapse. In the rarefied condition of intoxication – the "heightened ... excitability of the entire machine" that is

the "precondition" for "aesthetic activity" (TI IX.8) – feeling becomes instinct and instinct feeling. And in collapsing feeling and instinct in his artist, Nietzsche accords him the highest honour, for he makes him a "*whole* human being", and so at the same time a "more whole beast" (BGE 257).[30]

[30] In the following passage from *Beyond Good and Evil*, we can witness the collapse of instinct and feeling in Dionysian intoxication in terms of unconscious necessity and conscious freedom. Nietzsche writes that: "Artists seem to have more sensitive noses in these matters, knowing only too well that precisely when they no longer do anything 'voluntarily' but do everything of necessity, their feeling of freedom, subtlety, full power, of creative placing, disposing, and forming reaches its peak – in short, that necessity and 'freedom of the will' then become one in them" (BGE 213).

## Chapter Two

## Nietzsche *Contra* Wagner

This chapter is devoted to an exploration of the impoverished creator, or, as Nietzsche often calls him, the romantic artist. Nietzsche conceives of romantic art as symptomatic of the impoverishment of life and he singles out Wagner as the exemplar of romanticism. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche honours Wagner's art as that which had initiated the "*rebirth of tragedy*" (BT 19), but in his mature period, Wagner becomes the "*artist of décadence*" (CW 5) – the representative of all that is degenerate in modern culture. This chapter is, in part, an interpretation of Nietzsche's late Wagnerian criticism, but an interpretation that is guided by the more general purpose of elucidating the nature of impoverishment.

I begin – in sections I to III – with an account of 'hatred', 'revenge', and 'redemption', those concepts that make up Nietzsche's conception of impoverished aesthetics. The romantic artist is found to be a hedonist, that is, one who creates art to redeem himself from the pain of his suffering and impotence. I then move into the terrain of Nietzsche's Wagnerian criticism, specifically the two tracts, *The Case of Wagner* and *Nietzsche Contra*

*Wagner*. Section IV is devoted to a discussion of Wagner's music which Nietzsche understands as music in the miniaturist style, afterwhich, I turn to Nietzsche's account of the dramatic element of Wagner's art. Nietzsche conceives of Wagner as both an actor and a liar; and in section V – as a preface to my discussion of Wagner – I examine Nietzsche's general concept of the actor and draw a distinction between Dionysian and romantic histrionism. For the impoverished artist, acting is found to be another means to the redemption from the self.

Section VI is devoted to Nietzsche's claim that Wagner – in his use of mythic and Christian elements – fails to distinguish between that which Nietzsche regards as the necessary opposites of ascending life (mythic nobility) and declining life (Christianity). Nietzsche interprets this failure as symptomatic of Wagner's instinctive falseness, and such falseness, for Nietzsche, defines the modern soul. In the final section, I attempt to make sense of Nietzsche's claim that Wagner is both a romantic liar – that is, one who seeks redemption in mythic nobility – *and* an instinctive falsifier of mythic nobility and Christianity. I conclude that Wagner's instinctive falsification of mythic nobility allows him to promulgate the lie of modern nobility – and seek redemption therein – with a good conscience.

## I

The late Nietzsche wants to reclaim tragic-pessimistic art from the impoverished hands of his former mentors, Schopenhauer and Wagner. Nietzsche identifies the "distinctive character" (GS 370) of Schopenhauerian "philosophical pessimism" and Wagnerian "German music" (*ibid.*) as their "*romanticism*" (*ibid.*). Thus Nietzsche formulates the

distinction between his own tragic-pessimistic philosophy, "*Dionysian* pessimism" (GS 370), and the Schopenhauerian-Wagnerian variety thereof, which he calls "romantic pessimism" (GS 370; HA II Pref 7). As we know, Dionysian pessimism arises from the overabundance of life, but of what is romantic pessimism an expression? Or – as Nietzsche asks – "*what is romanticism?*" (GS 370). The romantics are characterised initially as "those who suffer from the *impoverishment of life*" (*ibid.*). I will briefly characterise the concept of impoverishment (*Verarmung*) in isolation, before going on to discuss the condition in relation to its principal manifestations.

As we saw in chapter one, the opposition of abundant/impoverished life is a quantitative distinction that grounds Nietzsche's qualitative opposition of ascending/declining life. The term 'impoverishment' functions in Nietzsche's vocabulary of romanticism much like 'abundance' in the Dionysian. For the abundant artist, 'health' and 'strength' are concepts that presuppose the abundance of life or power; likewise, romanticism's 'sickness' and 'weakness' are dependent upon the master concept of 'impoverishment'. The romantic artist's sickness and weakness, then, are functions, or expressions, of his underlying impoverishment. So, emerging from Nietzsche's macro-opposition of abundance/impoverishment is the aesthetic dichotomy of Dionysian/romantic artist. The impoverished artist – in relation to the Dionysian artist – has little power and suffers precisely from this lack; but not only that, in addition, he embodies the state of perpetual decline.

As with the Dionysian, we may distinguish between different stages of romantic becoming. In *The Case of Wagner*, Nietzsche describes the

effect that Wagner's art has on its audience – who are also, by virtue of their esteem for Wagner, impoverished. Nietzsche speaks of Wagner's "inventiveness ... in the art of goading again those who are weariest, calling back into life those who are half dead" (CW 5). And elsewhere, he refers to a time when he himself was impoverished, "I was sick, more than sick, namely, *weary* ..." (NCW 8). As we have seen, sickness is a function of impoverishment, thus to be 'more than sick' is to be more than impoverished. An analogy can be drawn, then, between romantic 'weariness' and the Dionysian state of *Überfülle*. As the Dionysian moves from an initial abundance to a later overabundance, so the romantic moves from impoverishment to the condition of, as it were, '*over*-impoverishment' – this is Nietzsche's concept of 'weariness'.[1] The overfull Dionysian – who is continually becoming more – avoids hypertrophy through the outward expulsion of his inner life. What is the fate of the weary and exhausted romantic who continues to decay, whose inner life is wasting away? As Nietzsche suggests, the weary are 'half dead', thus weariness is a form of living death; the romantic is a corpse animated only by that small quantity of life which seeks redemption precisely from the condition of living death. Weariness is the romantic condition *in extremis*, and the romantic artist – zombie-like – is of next to no value within the evaluative schema of Nietzsche's vitalism.

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[1] Nietzsche uses *Müdigkeit* and *Ershöpfung* for 'weariness'. In the preface to *The Case of Wagner*, he describes that which is "hiding under [morality's] most sacred names and value formulas: impoverished life, the will to the end, the great weariness [*die große Müdigkeit*]" (CW Pref). And in the *Twilight of the Idols*, he characterises the necessity "to react to a stimulus" as "already sickliness, decline, a symptom of exhaustion [*Erschöpfung*]" (TI VIII.6), and suggests that the aesthetic judgement 'ugly' is elicited by any "sign of exhaustion [*Erschöpfung*], of heaviness, of age, of tiredness" (TI IX.20).

## II

In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche writes: "Regarding all aesthetic values I now avail myself of this main distinction: I ask in every instance, 'is it hunger or superabundance that has here become creative?'" (GS 370). The distinction of superabundance/hunger is a variant of Nietzsche's opposition of abundance/impoverishment. In *Nietzsche Contra Wagner*[2] – where the passage from *The Gay Science* is included – Nietzsche modifies this evaluative distinction in the following way:

> Regarding artists of all kinds, I now avail myself of this main distinction: is it *hatred* against life or the *excess* of life which has here become creative? (NCW 5)

The positive or Dionysian term remains the same in both passages, it is literally 'overflow'; and as I have shown in chapter one, the overflow of life is the direct consequence of the overabundance of life.[3] However, the antithetical term – 'impoverishment' – undergoes two transformations; first, to 'hunger' and then to 'hatred'. I will not dwell on 'hunger', since it remains within the quantitative dimension of impoverishment – that is, to be hungry for life presupposes a lack of life. Instead, I will explore the concept of 'hatred' as this offers a further perspective on impoverishment.

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[2] *Nietzsche Contra Wagner* was Nietzsche's final book and was completed shortly before his collapse. I will quote Nietzsche's characterisation of it from his preface: "All of the following chapters have been selected, not without caution, from my older writings – some go back all the way to 1877 [i.e., Book I of *Human, All Too Human*] – perhaps clarified here and there, above all, shortened. Read one after another, they will leave no doubt either about Richard Wagner or about myself: we are antipodes" (NCW Pref).

[3] The Dionysian term that appears in both passages is *Überfluß*. In *The Gay Science*, Kaufmann translates it as 'superabundance' and in *Nietzsche Contra Wagner* as 'excess'. *Fluß* means 'river' or 'stream', and figuratively it means 'flow'. Thus *Überfluß* means literally 'overflow'.

Nietzsche's concept of romantic hatred has two components; external hate or the hatred that is directed outward, and self-hate or the hatred that is directed inward. I shall discuss these in turn. Nietzsche takes the 'hatred against life' to be a symptom of the impoverishment of life. As we have seen, the impoverishment of life denotes a lack of vitality and romantic hatred is directed toward life; thus the romantic hates precisely that which he lacks, that in which he is "poorest" (*ibid.*). We may further illuminate the concept of hatred by considering the types of art in which it is manifested. As we saw in chapter one, Nietzsche categorises all art as either the art of destruction (tragedy) or the art of immortalization (the beautiful) – the artist creates either an art of becoming or being. Nietzsche claims that the

> desire for *destruction*, change, and becoming can be ... the hatred of the ill-constituted, disinherited, and underprivileged, who destroy, *must* destroy, because what exists, indeed all existence, all being, outrages and provokes them. (*ibid.*)

Romantic art of becoming, then, arises from hatred. 'Existence' – Nietzsche means here 'abundant existence' – 'outrages and provokes' the romantic; this is because existence possesses something, or *is* something, that the romantic does not possess, or *is* not.[4] We can specify the type of hatred that Nietzsche is describing: it is an *Ur*-envy. One is envious not of the vitality of an individual, one is envious of vitality *per se* – envy is directed toward all that is vital, namely, all that lives abundantly. The romantic is

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4 There is an ambiguity in the cited passage that is worth clarifying immediately, since it is ubiquitous in the late Nietzsche. It is the statement that '*all* existence' outrages and provokes the romantic, when it makes more sense to say that it is actually – at least to begin with – only *abundant* existence that does so. Elsewhere we find Nietzsche stating that "declining life ... hates everything that justifies itself solely out of abundance" (CW Epil). Properly speaking, then, 'life' ('existence' etc.) refers both to the abundant *and* the impoverished varieties, but Nietzsche rarely uses it in this way – if ever. When 'life' is not qualified by the predicate 'impoverished' it means invariably 'abundant life', and so in this case.

'disinherited, and underprivileged', he is not – for whatever reason – one of the 'inheritors' of vitality, he has not been 'privileged' with the gift of abundant life. The psychology of the romantic is that of the brat: 'if I can't be abundant, I will destroy all that is abundant' – thus romantic-tragic art is born from hatred. For example, in the Wagnerian *oeuvre*, Nietzsche would claim that the *Ring* cycle comes closest to fulfilling the basic condition of the romantic art of becoming. Wagner – through his hero Siegfried – is outraged by all tradition, for it is the cause of "all misfortune" (CW 4) in the world. Thus, tradition as such, or the old world of the gods, must be destroyed.[5] Impoverishment and hatred are linked, then, in the following way: hatred is a symptom of lack, a hatred of that which is lacking; impoverishment is precisely this lack, and life, that which is lacking.

The romantic artist is the embodiment of a primal envy of life. This is the dominant feeling of the romantic. But what type of act is the romantic aesthetic act? What kind of deed does existence provoke the romantic to commit? For the impoverished artist, the creative act is an act of revenge – he revenges himself against life precisely because he is deprived of life.[6]

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[5] A political concept connects Nietzsche's interpretation of the *Ring* and his conception of a romantic art of becoming. In *The Gay Science*, having outlined the latter, he closes with the remark: "To understand this feeling, consider our anarchists closely" (GS 370). Nietzsche, in general, interprets anarchism as a brand of socialism, and socialism as just another form of Christianity, though, couched in 'modern' terms. In *The Case of Wagner*, Nietzsche produces a socialist, or 'revolutionary' interpretation of the *Ring* , thus anticipating Shaw's famous interpretation in *The Perfect Wagnerite* of 1898. The "revolutionary ideologist" (CW 4) manifests the romantic's envious hatred of all life, and so must destroy life through revolution. In the *Ring*, 'life' as such, consists in "'old contracts' ... customs, laws, moralities, institutions" (*ibid.*), that is, the entire "old world" (*ibid.*) of the gods – the world of Wotan. The impoverished interpret this old world as the cause of "all misfortune in the world" (*ibid.*) – more properly, *their* misfortune. Thus, Siegfried – the "typical revolutionary" (*ibid.*) – is the agent of revolt, he declares "war against 'contracts'" (*ibid.*), "overthrows everything traditional" (CW 4). So *Götterdämmerung* – the "twilight of the gods for the old morality" (*ibid.*) – is romantic hatred in revolutionary garb; it is (to use a phrase that Nietzsche applies to Wagner elsewhere) the "cynical rebellion ... of which only those are capable who suffer most bitterly" (NCW 1). A *bitter* suffering, is a resentful and hateful suffering, thus a suffering from impoverishment.

[6] As we will see in chapter five, the concepts of 'hatred', 'revenge', and 'resentment' (*ressentiment*) play a central role in Nietzsche's reconstruction of the slave's psychology in *On the Genealogy of Morals*. I claim, in that chapter, that Nietzsche presents the slave as an impoverished artist of morality.

The object of his hate and revenge are the same, that in which he is most deficient. Nietzsche describes only the romantic art of being in terms of revenge, though it is clear that the art of becoming can also be so described (i.e., one revenges oneself against life by creating narratives where life undergoes destruction). The art of being of the romantic artist – Nietzsche describes it as "*romantic pessimism* in its most expressive form" (GS 370) – arises from the "tyrannic will of one who suffers deeply" (*ibid.*) and

> who struggles, is tormented, and would like to turn what is most personal, singular, and narrow, the real idiosyncrasy of his suffering, into a binding law and compulsion – one who, as it were, revenges himself on all things by forcing his own image, the image of his torture, on them, branding them with it. (*ibid.*)

For the Dionysian, the art of being is an expression of self-gratitude. The Dionysian artist mirrors his own beauty in external things. As the Dionysian thanks himself through mirroring, so the romantic avenges himself through 'branding'. It is by burning the image of his torture into all external things that the romantic takes "revenge ... for some inner contamination" (BGE 269) – the contamination of his impoverishment. The romantic artist of being, then, 'suffers deeply', his life is torture. Thus when he sees that there are external things which are not tortured – i.e., the abundant, the vital – he attributes to them the cause of his torture. The logic of accountability is here combined with the envious hatred characteristic of the impoverished – blame must be apportioned, and revenge must be exacted so as to 'pay back'. The romantic says: 'all things – abundant life – are to blame for my tortured state, thus I will avenge myself on all things by branding them with my impoverishment'. The

romantic, then, externalises his inner impoverishment through branding, discharging the little life that is in him. All abundant life now has the mark of the impoverished seared into it. It would appear that Nietzsche has Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* in mind in the account of the art of being; Wagner revenges himself on the beautiful (i.e., abundant life) by branding it with the image of his own tortured suffering.[7]

In summation, the principal expression of artistic impoverishment is romantic hatred, a hatred from lack, against that which is lacking – life. This hatred has two expressions: the arts of becoming and being, where revenge against life occurs through the creation of, respectively, images of the destruction of abundant life and branded images of abundant life – that is, images branded with impoverished life. I will now turn to the second aspect of romantic hatred – self-hatred.

## III

The idea of romantic self-hate can be inferred, first of all, from the need of the artist to escape from himself, or to achieve "redemption [*Erlösung*] from [himself] through art" (GS 370). For Nietzsche, romantic redemption comes in two forms; first, through enclosure within "optimistic horizons" (*ibid.*),

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[7] There are various reasons why Nietzsche would think of *Tristan* as the paradigmatic case of the romantic art of being. First of all, Nietzsche describes this category as the most "expressive form" (GS 370) of romantic pessimism – and it is clear, as Michael Tanner has suggested, that it is "*Tristan* which is always the touchstone for Nietzsche" (1996: 6). Nietzsche describes the work as "emphatically Wagner's *non plus ultra*" (EH II.6). Secondly, Nietzsche says of *Tristan*: "The world is poor for anyone who has never been sick enough for this 'voluptuousness [*Wollust*] of hell': it is permitted, it is almost imperative, to employ a formula of the mystics at this point" (*ibid.*). Nietzsche says of the art of being that it is a form of revenge and that revenge itself is "the most voluptuous [*wollüstigste*] kind of frenzy for those so impoverished" (NCW 5). In chapter one, I described how, for Nietzsche, the spectator is a copy of the artist; thus, our experience of *Wollust* in the face of *Tristan* is a copy of Wagner's own *Wollust*. The phrase 'voluptuousness of hell' captures perfectly the tortured eroticism – the cocktail of suffering and sensuality, pain and pleasure – that pervades all aspects of the work. Thus Wagner, with *Tristan*, revenges himself on all abundant life – that is, 'healthy' voluptuousness – by branding it with the image of his own hell, transforming it into a 'sick voluptuousness', or a voluptuousness of hell.

for example, religion or logic; and second, through *Rausch*: "intoxication, convulsions, anaesthesia, and madness" (*ibid.*) – this is the impoverished counterpart to the abundant intoxication of the Dionysian. I shall confine my attention to this second form of romantic redemption.

How, then, is romantic intoxication a form of redemption? When – through self-intoxication – the artist transforms his impoverished self into another self (the intoxicated self), he redeems himself *from* himself and escapes momentarily from his impoverishment. Romantic intoxication is the "escape into forgetfulness from an all-too-faithful memory" (BGE 269) – as Nietzsche put its elsewhere – where the memory is of one's own impoverishment. Intoxicatory redemption connects the two forms of romantic hatred – that is, the external and the internal varieties – and so is of great importance for the account of the romantic artist. The connection is made in the following passage in which Nietzsche names the principal form of romantic intoxication. Nietzsche writes that

> those who suffer from the *impoverishment* of life ... demand of art and philosophy ... frenzy, convulsion, and anaesthesia. Revenge against life itself – the most voluptuous kind of frenzy [*Rausch*] for those so impoverished! (NCW 5)

Revenge, as we saw in the previous section, is the aesthetic act of the romantic, directed against that which the romantic lacks, and therefore hates – all life, all that is external to the romantic. In the above citation we find that revenge plays an additional role; being the most 'voluptuous kind of intoxication' for the impoverished, and, bearing in mind that romantic intoxication is basically redemptive, revenge also serves to redeem the romantic from himself. Through revenge, the romantic artist not only

objectifies his hatred against the external world, but also, in his "demand" (*ibid.*) for the ecstasies and frenzies of revenge, he manifests his need to escape from himself – and so manifests his hatred of himself. Thus, revenge serves two purposes simultaneously, the infliction of pain on the outer, and the redemption from the inner.

Nietzsche advances the concept of romantic self-hatred in direct terms. In *The Case of Wagner*, with reference to Christianity (for Nietzsche, the greatest expression of impoverishment), he writes: "*Le moi est toujours haïssable*" (CW Epil) – 'The self is always hateful'. The phrase is taken up in *Nietzsche Contra Wagner*, where Nietzsche discusses Flaubert as romantic artist. Flaubert possesses the "instinctive judgement deep down: '*Flaubert est toujours haïssable, l'homme n'est rien, l'oeuvre est tout*" (NCW 5) – 'Flaubert is always hateful, the man is nothing, the work is all'.

But why is it that the impoverished self is always hateful? To answer this, we must turn to the more general question of the relation of external hate to self-hate. It would appear that external hate arises first, and that only then is it followed by self-hate – in other words, romantic hatred is reactive, and not active.[8] The hatred of the romantic is initiated by that which is outside of him, he is violently envious of all external abundant life. External vitality makes him conscious of his own inner impoverishment *as* impoverishment, it makes him conscious (and keeps reminding him) that he is something poorer, something lower in value.

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[8] While I have some general doubts as to the strict alignment of Nietzsche's distinctions of abundant/impoverishment and active/reactive, it is nevertheless correct to call the romantic, like the slave of the *Genealogy*, 'reactive'. As we will see in chapter five, it is not Nietzsche who aligns these distinctions in strict fashion, but Deleuze.

External life, as it were, 'brings the truth home to him'. Thus, self-hatred emerges from this consciousness of poverty, of being 'disinherited and underprivileged'. The romantic self is always hateful then, because, first of all, it is a lower and poorer self.

We saw in the preceding chapter how the beautiful originates from "man's pleasure in man" (TI IX.19), i.e., the self-pleasure of the artist of abundance. The romantic, by contrast, possesses only self-pain. The pain of impoverishment is precisely the pain of being lower, and the pain of being unable to change, in any substantial way, that state of affairs. It is the pain of impotence or powerlessness. The self is always hateful, then, second of all, because it is painful. And it is with the dichotomy of pain/pleasure that we can pull together the two varieties of romantic hatred and complete our discussion.

In *The Gay Science* – after providing various descriptions of the romantic's basic needs – Nietzsche makes the following remark: "Thus I gradually learned to understand Epicurus, the opposite of a Dionysian pessimist" (GS 370). For Nietzsche, Epicurus stands as a symbol of the morality of hedonism (including its nineteenth century utilitarian manifestations).[9] Since Epicurus is the opposite of the Dionysian pessimist, and since the romantic is also antithetical to the Dionysian, we can hypothesise that the romantic is also a hedonist. The romantic suffers from pain, the pain of impoverishment and worthlessness. The ultimate motivation for his action, then, is to lessen this pain. Romantic aesthetic creation is fundamentally hedonistic and the aesthetic act of revenge

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[9] Nietzsche calls the "Christian ... [who] ... follows the principle of hedonism" a "kind of Epicurean" (NCW 5).

brings forth two varieties of pleasure simultaneously. Firstly, the basic pleasure of vengeance ('revenge is sweet'), of destroying or branding that which makes one feel poor, lowly and thus pained. Secondly, it is the more complex pleasure that arises from the redemptive aspect of revenge. The pleasure of vengeance is of such an intensity – it is 'voluptuous', ecstatic, frenzied – that it serves to intoxicate the romantic, leading to an even greater pleasure – the pleasure of redemption from the self. The romantic – drunk with revenge – forgets himself, his own impoverishment, and thus forgets or escapes his own pain. He is 'anaesthetised'. This process, however, is utterly paradoxical. The pleasure of revenge is a pleasure that is best experienced in the condition of sobriety – when the palate is at its most sensitive, as it were – when revenge can be savoured. However, for the romantic, the pleasure is such that he forgets what he is and so forgets the why and what of revenge. The romantic's pleasure in revenge is superseded, washed away, by the wave of voluptuousness that accompanies the moment of redemption from the self.

To close, then, the principal expression of artistic impoverishment is romantic hatred. And such hatred is both external (where it is a hatred that issues from lack against that which is lacking – life) *and* internal (where it is a hatred that issues from lack against the valuelessness and the pain of that lack). The romantic hates both the abundance that lies outside, and the impoverishment that lies within. The suffering of impoverishment is eased by the creation of art, which is an act of revenge. This act confers overwhelming pleasure upon the romantic and redeems him from his impoverishment.

## IV

For Nietzsche, one artist stands above all others as the exemplary romantic artist, or "*modern artist par excellence*" (CW 5), and that is Wagner. Nietzsche describes Wagner as the "*artist of decadence*" (*ibid.*), and, thus, a *prima facie* description of the 'case of Wagner' itself is that it is a variation of the "problem of decadence" (CW Pref).[10]

If Wagner is the artist of decadence, we can ask: what properties does Wagner possess such that he is – not only *a* decadent artist – but *the* decadent artist? We saw in section II how Wagner can be seen to manifest romantic hatred, by interpreting the *Ring* and *Tristan* as examples of, respectively, artworks of becoming and being. In *The Case of Wagner*, however, Nietzsche goes on to identify a whole variety of other qualities that are signs of Wagner's alleged impoverishment. These symptoms may be divided, for simplicity, into two groups, corresponding to the two basic elements of the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* – music and drama. I will consider these in turn. For Nietzsche, Wagner's musical decadence consists in the miniaturism of his music, while Wagner's drama, so Nietzsche claims, is the manifestation of a decadent theatricality. For Nietzsche, the second manifestation of Wagner's alleged impoverishment – which I label 'Wagnerian histrionism' – is the more vicious, and his music serves to accentuate and reinforce it. Although it is, perhaps, artificial to separate the two.

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[10] As Daniel Conway has pointed out (1997: 57), Nietzsche borrowed the term *décadence* from the French psychologist Paul Bourget, and used it in his published works only in his final year of creativity, 1888. It is important to stress that Nietzsche's use of the term does not denote the introduction of a new concept or problem as such. 'Decadence' is synonymous with the terms 'degeneration', 'decline', 'decay', and thus indicates a restatement of the problem of decline in terms that Nietzsche presumably regarded as more 'contemporary', or French.

The question of miniaturism is, for Nietzsche, the "question of *style*" (CW 7), or, more properly, the conceptualisation of what he considers to be a 'non-style'. Nietzsche expounds miniaturism in terms of the whole/parts dichotomy; put succinctly, miniaturism occurs when "life no longer dwells in the whole" (*ibid.*). It is the style whereby the parts are constituted such that they are attributed value – i.e., infused with "life" (*ibid.*) – "at the expense of the whole – the whole is no longer a whole" (*ibid.*). Miniaturism, then, being *the* "style of *decadence*" (*ibid.*) characterises, for Nietzsche, all modern practice: it can be found in literature, morality, politics, and – music.[11] Nietzsche describes Wagner as "our greatest *miniaturist* in music who crowds into the smallest space an infinity of sense and sweetness" (*ibid.*), Wagner expresses the "very minute and microscopic aspects of the soul" (NCW 1) – he is, indeed, the "master of the very minute" (*ibid.*). Nietzsche's concept of miniaturism is best understood as his interpretation of the Wagnerian 'leitmotif' – that is, the technique whereby Wagner organises his musical form around a set of leading and recurring themes.[12] Wagner replaced the 'classical' form of opera – the recitative/aria structure – with the "infinite melody" (NCW 3) of leitmotifs

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11 "What is the sign of every *literary decadence*?" Nietzsche asks. "The word becomes sovereign and leaps out of the sentence, the sentence reaches out and obscures the meaning of the page, the page gains life at the expense of the whole ... But this is the simile of every style of *decadence*: every time, the anarchy of atoms, disgregation of the will, 'freedom of the individual', to use moral terms – expanded into a political theory, '*equal* rights for all'" (CW 7). A miniaturist philosophy, arguably, will look much like Nietzsche's own aphoristic thought. We witness here the self-referentiality of Nietzsche's diagnosis, his complicity in the decadence that he describes. Daniel Conway's *Nietzsche's Dangerous Game* (1997) is devoted to this problem in the context of a Nietzschean political philosophy.

12 Although Wagner employs the leitmotif technique in all of his mature works, it has come to be associated with the *Ring* cycle. Wilhelm Furtwängler said of the *Ring*: "It is the most absolute theatre music imaginable, and gives birth to that series of concentrated Leitmotifs, basic to the point of abstraction, which have so impressed themselves on the public's mind" (1991: 63). It seems that Furtwängler is in agreement with Nietzsche's formal analysis of miniaturism. Nietzsche speaks of crowding 'into the smallest space', Furtwängler of concentration. Likewise, Adorno echoes the Nietzschean account of the leitmotif: "The leitmotivs are miniature pictures, and their supposed psychological variations involve only a change of lighting" (1981: 45).

(and secondary thematic material).[13] The leitmotif – which Nietzsche calls Wagner's "small unit" (*ibid.*), or "polyp in music" (CW 1) – is a 'motivated' unit – in other words, it is associated with an extra-musical object, be it a character, thing, idea or emotion in the drama.[14]

For Nietzsche, the defining characteristic of the Wagnerian leitmotif (other composers had used such a technique) is its concision. In Wagner's leitmotifs the "exuberance of life [is] pushed back into the smallest forms" (*ibid.*), so Nietzsche claims. And it is precisely here, in the alleged 'smallness' of Wagner's music, that we may begin to find an answer to the question: why is miniaturism the 'style of decadence'? Since it is not immediately apparent why it should be.[15] To rephrase the question: what qualities does the miniaturist music of Wagner possess such that it is an expression of the impoverishment of life? I will answer this question in two parts: first, by showing how miniaturism can be interpreted as a direct expression of the simple lack of life; and second, by showing how miniaturism – as the product of a particular psychological state,

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13 For Nietzsche, the decadence of miniaturism is related to the Wagnerian 'infinite melody', a term that denotes the fluidity and extended continuity of Wagner's music. For Nietzsche, the infinite melody represents "the complete degeneration [*Entartung*] of the rhythmic feeling, *chaos* in place of rhythm" (*ibid.*).

14 For example, the leitmotif from the *Ring* which is associated with Wotan's spear. It is a three bar phrase of more or less even descending notes in the bass. The onomatopoeic character of the leitmotif is described by Carl Dahlhaus, who writes that it is suggestive of "someone striding forward with the point of the weapon levelled ready for use" (1979: 116). Whilst the leitmotif is mimetically related to the physical employment of the spear, in psychological terms one can interpret it as representing Wotan's power. As Adorno suggests, then, the Wagnerian leitmotif is best understood in "allegorical" terms (1981: 45). The 'spear' motif can first be heard soon after Wotan's appearance in the cycle, in scene II of the *Rheingold*. It makes its most memorable appearance, however, at the end of the second scene of Act III of *Siegfried*, where Wotan – as the Wanderer – confronts Siegfried and momentarily blocks the hero's way with his outstretched spear.

15 Michael Tanner interprets Wagner's miniaturism as symptomatic of a "sophisticated" vitality (1979: 190). Tanner writes: "Wagner has a kind of primitive vitality, as well as the more sophisticated kind which led Nietzsche to describe him accurately, though with spiteful intent, as a wonderful miniaturist. He *is* that and increasingly so, so that the textures of *Meistersinger* and *Götterdämmerung* are more continuously and richly contrapuntal than any other music since J. S. Bach" (*ibid.*).

shrewdness (*Klugheit*) – can be indirectly identified as a symptom of impoverishment.

The miniaturist style is the small style, it is the endpoint of the decline of the whole to the part, of the great into the quotidian – it is the degeneration of, what is for Nietzsche, the supremely healthy form: the 'grand style'.[16] For Nietzsche, the grand style (*der große Stil*) is the opposite of the miniaturist style, it is precisely the style in which the whole is 'sovereign'. "The highest feeling of power and security finds expression in that which possesses *grand style*" (TI IX.11), Nietzsche writes in the *Twilight of the Idols*, where he eulogises architecture as the ultimate expression of the grand style – as "a kind of rhetoric of power" (*ibid.*). The grand style in music, then, will be an architectural whole – an "organic form" (CW 7) – constructed *as* a whole, and not from a set of self-sufficient parts, or leitmotifs.[17] The grand musical style "builds, organizes, finishes: thus it constitutes the opposite of the polyp in music, the 'infinite melody'" (CW 1). For Nietzsche, it is precisely this style that Wagner "fears" – i.e., "the transition of music into the architectonic" (HA II.134). As we will see,

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16 Heidegger devotes chapter 17 of *The Will to Power as Art* to a discussion of Nietzsche's concept of the grand style. He writes: "What Nietzsche calls the grand style is most closely approximated by the rigorous style, the classical style" (1991: 125). Heidegger is correct to align the grand with the classical style. In the context of music, Nietzsche is no doubt thinking of Viennese classicism as his paradigm of musical style.

17 An objection can be made to Nietzsche's theory of miniaturism, one that touches upon the more general problem of writing about Wagner. In the theory of miniaturism, Nietzsche is taking a single part of the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* and evaluating it *in isolation*. This is a characteristicaliy anti-Wagnerian strategy. As Furtwängler says, "how shrewd of Nietzsche suddenly to conjure up the image of the 'real', 'great' composers and to talk about structure, discipline and organic artistic wholes'!" (1991: 77). Thomas Mann has also noted this practice (1985: 107). Nietzsche makes a parallel move with respect to Wagner's text – invoking, at times, both Goethe and Flaubert. It is possible to defend Nietzsche against this charge. Although he does have a tendency to isolate the various components of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, it is generally for the purpose of making Wagner look as small and incompetent as possible. Such shock tactics, however, are secondary to Nietzsche's central objection. Nietzsche thinks that the miniaturist style is actually a product of Wagner's theatricality, i.e., the total work of art will *inevitably* be dominated by the theatre and so by the audience. Nietzsche calls this "*theatrocracy* – the nonsense of a faith in the precedence of the theatre", and he calls the theatre "a form of demolatry in matters of taste ... a revolt of the masses" (CW PS). (Nietzsche borrows the concept of 'theatrocracy' from Plato (Laws III, 701a)). In the broader perspective, then, Nietzsche objects to the concept of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* itself and this supersedes his malicious critique of its various components.

Nietzsche also employs the concept of 'grand style' in the context of Wagnerian drama, as the representation of human greatness and nobility.

Nietzsche interprets the miniaturist style as the degeneration of the grand style – as "the decline of the power to organize" (CW PS II). Since the grand style is the style of power, it follows that the miniaturist style is, at the very least, the style of lesser power – though, more properly, it is the style of impoverishment. It seems that Wagner simply does not have the abundance to create and build totalities, "he gains small units ... he animates these" (CW 7), and "this exhausts his strength" (*ibid.*), as Nietzsche puts it. Thus, Wagner's inner life is drained by the creation of miniature leitmotifs – this, for Nietzsche, is a sign of his lack of life *ab initio*.

One can counter Nietzsche here by saying: Wagner, far from being a miniaturist, is surely the most formidable modern exponent of what Thomas Mann called 'grandeur'.[18] Nietzsche, however, does not deny that Wagner's forms *appear* "great, sublime, gigantic" (CW 6), his claim, rather, is that Wagner's grand forms are not authentically grand. It is that the Wagnerian whole has been emptied of vitality: the "whole no longer lives at all: it is composite, calculated, artificial" (CW 7). For Nietzsche, Wagner's grandeur is a false grandeur. Indeed, Wagner embodies the "*lie* of the great style" (CW 1). I will be discussing Wagner's capacity for lying – his 'histrionism' – in the following section. For the moment, however, I would like to bring to a close my reflections on miniaturism by showing how

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[18] For Mann, Wagner epitomised the nineteenth century's "strong predilection for ... the monumental, the grand production on a massive scale" (1985: 92), indeed, it was precisely "grandeur" (*ibid.*) that was the "hallmark and essence of the age" (*ibid.*).

Nietzsche understands it as the product of an impoverished psychological state – 'shrewdness'.

In reading *The Case of Wagner*, one cannot fail to notice the frequency, and malice, of Nietzsche's references to Wagner's *Klugheit* – his shrewdness, cunning or cleverness. Wagner "sides shrewdly with the higher virgin" (CW 3); his use of the "word 'drama' in his writings is ... a bit of shrewdness" (CW 9), indeed, his writings *in toto* are a "course in *shrewdness*" (CW 10); and there is only "*shrewd* stupidity" (CW 9) between the "strong scenes" (*ibid.*) of his operas. Only toward the end of the text does Nietzsche reveal – though he does not need to – that in Wagner's case, "cunning [is] the expression of *impoverished life*" (CW PS II). One would be inclined to think of cleverness as a highly desirable quality, so why does Nietzsche interpret it negatively? It is because the impoverished individual, being short on life, is compelled to conserve his energy, to use it sparingly – that is, shrewdly.

Wagner exemplifies, so Nietzsche claims, the 'economy of decadence'; he creates "in accordance with a technical economy" (CW 9), he is a "master" and "model ... of economy" (CW 8), and a "*shrewd* host" (*ibid.*) such that nobody "equals [his] talent for presenting a princely table at modest expense" (*ibid.*). The 'princely table' that Wagner presents is his opera, but it only appears princely, or rich, whilst in reality it is presented at 'modest expense' – i.e., from poverty and impoverishment. Miniaturism is the aesthetic manifestation of this economy of decadence, the miniaturist style allows Wagner to create the image of the grand style (or, "merely 'represented' tables" (*ibid.*) – to pursue Nietzsche's dining metaphor), with as little expenditure of energy as possible – through the conglomeration of

'small units'. Thus, Wagner lacks "*substance*" (*ibid.*), he "does not give us enough to chew on" (*ibid.*), meaning that 'substance', a 'princely table', the grand style, all presuppose abundance – that which Wagner does *not* have. Conversely, the abundant artist – the overfull and overflowing Dionysian – will be the "paragon of a squanderer" (*ibid.*) – he is the one that *must* give.

Such is Nietzsche's conception of miniaturism, a conception that he attributes to Wagner's music to demonstrate its wholly decadent character. I will now go on to consider Nietzsche's critique of the dramatic element of the Wagnerian music-drama. Herein lies, what is for Nietzsche, the core of Wagner's decadence – his histrionism.

## V

In *The Case of Wagner*, Nietzsche writes that the "decay of the artist" finds expression in the following "formula":

> the musician now becomes an actor, his art develops more and more as a talent to *lie*. I shall have an opportunity ... to show in more detail how this over-all change of art into histrionics is no less an expression of physiological degeneration (more precisely, a form of hystericism) than every single corruption and infirmity of the art inaugurated by Wagner ...
> (CW 7)

Nietzsche uses the term 'decay' to denote the decadence of the artist, so the connection between impoverishment and acting could not be more explicit. The capacity for acting – or the talent for lying – is an expression of impoverishment. Nietzsche then goes on to claim that the 'change of art

into histrionics' is an expression of 'physiological degeneration' thus tying acting, not only to the psychological, but to the 'psycho-physiological'. So lying becomes, for Nietzsche, another symptom of impoverishment – with hatred, revenge, shrewdness and miniaturism. It is worth pointing out the ease with which Nietzsche moves from the concept of 'acting' to the concept of 'lying'. Granted, there is a sense in which actors do lie, but an observer of the act, being conscious that it *is* (only) an act, will interpret that act *as* an act – and not as the truth. Is there not a distinction between an actor and a charlatan, a Thespian and a hustler? For Nietzsche, however, the 'case of Wagner', turns precisely on the dissolution of this distinction – Wagner is the "Cagliostro of modernity" (CW 5; Epil).[19]

What, then, is Nietzsche's conception of the relation between vitality and lying? Perhaps it can be reconstructed as follows: vitality is inversely proportional to the capacity for lying, so the more talented liar (the false) is lacking in vitality, and so is greatly impoverished, whilst the less talented liar is not so lacking in vitality, and thus is not so impoverished. And finally, he who does not lie (the truthful) would then be abundantly vital. Does Nietzsche, then, align the distinction between abundance and impoverishment with the truthfulness/untruthfulness dichotomy? If so, he makes a puzzling move – since it is a move that places him back inside the tradition of Western philosophy.[20] If non-lying and lying mirror abundance and impoverishment, then truthfulness is the higher

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19 Furtwängler observes the step that Nietzsche makes from the actor to the charlatan. Wagner, he says, "was a play-actor, a Thespian, the greatest illusionist the world had ever seen ... But play-acting, Nietzsche went on, is a form of lying, and the situation is at its worst when an actor begins to believe his own lies" (1991: 78-9).

20 When it comes to criticising Wagner, it seems that Nietzsche goes through a series of Platonic relapses – and here is the first suggestion of such a relapse. Plato castigates mimetic art for its lack of truth (Republic X).

value and untruthfulness the lower. Whilst Nietzsche's conception of truth remains a complex, and, perhaps, open question, it can be said – with a degree of certainty – that his conception thereof will not be so lacking in sagacity as the conception here presented, namely, telling the truth is good, lying is bad. Indeed, when Nietzsche claims (and he does often) that "all of life is based on semblance, art, deception, points of view ... and error" (ASC 5), he is making a reversal of the foregoing valuation. The desire for truth (the "truthfulness of God" (*ibid.*)) is a symptom of impoverishment – and falsehood, since "life *must* continually and inevitably be in the wrong" (*ibid.*), is linked with ascending life.

The *prima facie* problem that I have just described is further compounded when we see that Nietzsche has a tendency to treat *all* artists – and not only decadent artists – as actors. This tendency becomes manifest in *The Gay Science*, where Nietzsche says – in a section entitled "*On the problem of the actor*" (GS 361) – "I felt unsure ... whether it is not only from this angle that one can get at the dangerous concept of the 'artist'" (*ibid.*). So, Nietzsche feels reasonably sure that it *is* 'only from this angle' – the 'problem of the actor' – that one can gain insight into the artist, implying that there is, to a greater or lesser extent, an element of the actor in all artists. Indeed, Nietzsche sketches a genealogy whereby the "pre-history of the artist and often enough even of the 'genius'" (*ibid.*) is bound up in the "histrionic instinct" (*ibid.*). But this is highly problematic, since if acting is an expression of impoverishment, and if all artists are – in varying degrees – actors, then it follows that all artists are impoverished.[21] But, surely, we cannot attribute such a view to Nietzsche, the consummate

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[21] Once again, Nietzsche seems to veer into Platonic territory. In this case, the wholesale devaluation of the artist on the grounds that he deals in untruth.

aesthetic philosopher; indeed, is it not manifestly the case – as the possibility of the Dionysian artist bears out – that *not* all artists are impoverished? But then how do we account for this apparent contradiction?

If we reflect further upon the aphorism from *The Gay Science* and think back to my account of romantic hatred, a solution to our problem will be forthcoming. Nietzsche characterises the actor with the following words:

> Falseness with a good conscience; the delight in simulation exploding as a power that pushes aside one's so-called 'character', flooding [*überfluthend*] it and at times extinguishing it; the inner craving [*Verlangen*] for a role and mask, for *appearance* ... (*ibid.*)

So, first of all, the actor lies with a 'good conscience', which is to say that he does not experience the displeasure of guilt when deceiving – in fact, it is precisely with pleasure (or, 'delight') that acting begins. The actor's pleasure in wearing a mask is such that the pleasure 'explodes' (becomes instantly transformed) into a 'power' that displaces the character. It is the nature of this displacement, then, that serves to distinguish the different senses of histrionism. The *first* displacement of the character – the 'pushing aside' – can occur only through the 'flooding' of the character with power; while the *second* displacement occurs when the power of simulation is such that it 'extinguishes' the character. There is, then, a displacement of character that retains the character, and a displacement of character that extinguishes the character. My claim is that it is on the basis of this distinction that a line can be drawn between a Dionysian and a romantic form of histrionism. Simulation can lead either to the inundation of the

character with power *or* the extinction of the character with power. This is the distinction between acting as a means to character-abundance or character-extinction. One can ask: what character-types are drawn to these two states? It is, respectively, the Dionysian and the romantic. To be flooded, or overflowing with power is exactly the condition of Dionysian *Rausch* – though here we have its histrionic variety. Nietzsche betrays his Dionysianism through his use of the *über* prefix – indeed, immediately after the citation he goes on to describe the "excess [*Überschuß*] of the capacity for all kinds of adaptations" (*ibid.*). Thus we have a conception of, what Nietzsche calls elsewhere, "Dionysian histrionism" (TI IX.10).

The Dionysian actor, then, desires the overabundance of soul that results from acting; the romantic actor, however, desires the extinction of the soul – he wants the mask to displace him such that he becomes the mask. If we think back to section III above, we find that this is a manifestation of the internal variety of romantic hatred. But in the present case, the self-hating romantic achieves redemption from himself through simulation. We might call this 'histrionic redemption'. The third clause of the citation from *The Gay Science* also refers to the romantic actor: instead of a mere 'delight in simulation', we have a sombre 'inner craving' for simulation. The term, *Verlangen*, means also 'longing' and 'yearning', and so is synonymous with *Sehnsucht* – the tortured *sehnen* that is basic to Wagner's *Tristan*.[22] The concepts of 'redemption' and 'yearning' are central to the romantic pathos: the romantic yearns for redemption from the pain of his own suffering. And this comes in two parts. Firstly, the creation of

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22 In Act III of *Tristan und Isolde*, in his second monologue, Tristan cries: 'Sehnen! Sehnen! / Im Sterben mich zu sehnen, / vor Sehnsucht nicht zu sterben! (Yearning! Yearning! / While dying to yearn, / but not to die of yearning!)'. It was F. Schlegel – at the very end of the eighteenth century – who identified *Sehnsucht* as central to 'modern art', or 'romantic art' as he later came to call it.

art, as we have seen, brings forth intoxicatory redemption, whereby the romantic – drunk with revenge – obliterates himself in voluptuousness; secondly, the pleasure of histrionism, as we now see, is such that it transforms itself into a power that redeems the romantic from himself – the romantic becomes his role, mask and appearance.

With the distinction between the Dionysian and romantic actor, we are now able to understand Nietzsche's claim that the concept of the artist is profoundly linked to the concept of the actor, without thereby damning all artists as decadents. To conclude, then, it is not acting as such that is impoverished – rather, only a certain variety of acting.

## VI

Nietzsche calls Wagner a "first-rate actor" (CW 8), an "incomparable *histrio*" (*ibid.*) – indeed, "the most enthusiastic mimomaniac ... who ever existed" (NCW 2). If Wagner is the exemplary romantic, then, embodying an "actor's genius" (CW 8), we would expect Nietzsche's concept of Wagner *qua* actor to be in accord with the aforementioned characterisation of the romantic actor. How, then, does Wagner manifest the romantic self-hatred that underlies histrionic redemption? What masks and surfaces does the decadent Wagner use to extinguish his own character? It is precisely that which, in the first place, is the cause of romantic hatred, that which is external to the impoverished one and to which he looks up: abundant life.[23] Wagner dons the mask of abundance

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[23] That Nietzsche considers the need for abundance as a sign of the lack of abundance is confirmed by the following passage from *Beyond Good and Evil*: "Among artists and scholars today one finds enough of those who betray by their works how they are impelled by a profound desire for what is noble; but just this need *for* what is noble is fundamentally different from the needs of the noble soul itself and actually the eloquent and dangerous mark of its lack" (BGE 287).

– he acts the role of the abundant – so that he can redeem himself. He does not, however, appropriate just any surface of abundance, according to Nietzsche he appropriates *the* surface of abundant life – *myth*. It is in this way that Wagner becomes, so Nietzsche claims, the paradigm of the romantic actor. Nietzsche describes it as "Wagner's appropriation of old sagas and songs ... his reanimation of those Scandinavian monsters" (NCW 4). Elsewhere, Nietzsche characterises Wagner's acting-lying as the "*lie* of the grand style" (CW 1); not only in music but also in drama does Wagner crave grandeur. In the present case, the grandeur of mythic nobility and heroism.

Wagner not only promulgates the lie of the grand style, but he also, Nietzsche argues, exemplifies the falseness of duplicity. Wagner's art is not only and purely a mask of abundant life, it is a *hybrid* mask, a mask on the surface of which is also inscribed, that which Nietzsche calls, the "most convinced, most painful affirmation of decadence" (CW Epil), the "need for *redemption*, the quintessence of all Christian needs" (*ibid.*). Nietzsche describes the hybridity of Wagner's dramatic surface as follows:

> To make eyes at master morality, at *noble* morality (Icelandic saga is almost its most important document) while mouthing the counterdoctrine, that of the 'gospel of the lowly', of the *need* for redemption! (*ibid.*)

Wagner's sustained use of the concept of redemption (*Erlösung*) in his works – Nietzsche calls Wagnerian opera "the opera of redemption" (CW 3) – appears puzzling in light of the conception of the romantic actor. Given that, for Nietzsche, Wagner is himself an impoverished romantic seeking redemption, surely the mask of mythic nobility will meet his need. So why does Wagner wear a hybrid mask of abundant and impoverished

symbols? It seems that Wagner cannot achieve total redemption from his own impoverishment if he becomes a mask that is itself partially impoverished.[24] But what if the need for redemption is *not* interpreted as an expression of impoverishment? This is Nietzsche's claim. Wagner interprets the need for redemption as part of the abundant mode of existence, of the mythic – which is to say, Wagner collapses expressions of impoverishment into expressions of abundance and vice versa, and in so doing manifests the falseness of duplicity. Wagner's falseness consists in his treating (what are for Nietzsche) the necessarily antithetical values of abundance and impoverishment as of a piece. Thus: Wagner 'makes eyes' at noble morality – an expression of abundance – whilst 'mouthing' its opposite, Christian morality – an expression of impoverishment. Wagner, as Nietzsche puts it, possesses "that deceitfulness of instinct which *refuses* to experience these opposites as opposites" (*ibid.*); and since such falseness is instinctive he is wholly oblivious to it. Thus Wagner manifests "such *innocence* among opposites" (*ibid.*), as Nietzsche continues. This singularly extravagant, indeed radical, form of romantic acting is Wagnerian histrionism.

So Wagner, firstly, voluntarily promulgates the lie of the grand mythic style; and, second, he involuntarily exemplifies the more general falseness of the failure to distinguish between mythic (abundant) and Christian (impoverished) symbols. Whilst the romantic lie of the grand style is voluntary, the falseness of instinct is involuntary and cultural – "it defines modernity" (*ibid.*) writes Nietzsche. The heart of the 'case of

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[24] There are two concepts of 'redemption' at work here: first, that of Wagner the romantic artist, and, second, that of his *dramatis personae*. For Nietzsche, as we have seen, all impoverished artists – in their capacity as self-haters – will crave for redemption; it just happens that in the case of Wagner this craving has become *more than* explicit. Since Nietzsche generally conflates the artist and work, the two concepts of redemption in the end become the one and the same symptom of impoverishment.

Wagner' consists in the relation between these two concepts. Before I go on to explicate that relation, it is necessary to examine Wagner's music-dramas so as to provide at least some evidence to support Nietzsche's bold and so far unsubstantiated claims. Nietzsche takes the following statements as read: first, that Wagner appropriates Icelandic saga and that such sagas are a document of noble morality; and second, that Wagner's opera is the 'opera of redemption'. It is these claims that I will now venture to substantiate.

It is evident that Wagner appropriated various myths for his opera. There are those that served as the source for *Tristan und Isolde*, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* and *Parsifal*, and then there are the Nordic myths used in the *Ring* – it is here that Wagner appropriates, specifically, the Icelandic saga.[25] Wagner used three texts – overlapping in subject matter – to construct the drama of the *Ring*: the *Nibelungenlied*, the *Prose Edda* and the *Volsunga Saga*. I will briefly consider the last text. To state the question again, why does Nietzsche think that the *Volsunga Saga* is a document of noble morality and, consequently, of abundance? We can approach this question by examining a short passage from the early essay *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth*, where Nietzsche, though not referring directly to saga – but to myth – nevertheless provides an answer to our question. Nietzsche says that "myth is not founded on a thought" (UM IV.9), but rather,

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[25] Wagner based *Tristan und Isolde* on Gottfried von Strassburg's epic *Tristan* (c.1200); *Die Meistersinger* has as its main source, not a romance or tale, but a seventeenth century text on the historical mastersingers – *Von der Meister-Singer Holdseligen Kunst* by Wagenseil; and, finally, *Parsifal* is derived from Wolfram von Eschenbach's medieval epic *Parzival*. I have drawn this information from Müller and Wapnewski, 1992.

> it is itself a mode of thinking; it communicates an idea of the world, but as a succession of events, actions and sufferings. *Der Ring des Nibelungen* is a tremendous system of thought without the conceptual form of thought. (*ibid.*)

Nietzsche's view is that myth is a mode of thought that takes the form, not of thought itself, but of 'events, actions and sufferings', thus pointing to the primacy, in myth, of action. Nietzsche's claim, then, is that the 'philosophy' or 'world-view' of myth is manifested precisely through action. Here, Nietzsche produces a variant of the Aristotelian hierarchy of action over character: "tragedy is *mimesis* not of persons but of action and life; and happiness and unhappiness consist in action".[26] Aristotle is referring, of course, to Greek tragedy; but tragedy is, along with saga, a mythic form, and the general feature that I am now describing refers to myth as such. These observations, then, take a similar form: world-views, characters, moralities are exemplified in their entirety through deeds and the interaction of deeds. An examination of the *Volsunga Saga* will confirm this claim. The character of Sigurd is revealed not through a set of 'psychological portraits', but rather through his 'actions and sufferings'. There is no Sigurd *beyond* his slaying of the dragon and seizure of the gold.[27]

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26 Poetics 6.

27 Sigurd – who becomes Siegfried in Wagner's *Ring* – is the central figure of the *Volsunga Saga*. On his first appearance we have an exemplary instance of the mythic mode of action over character. "And when all the most renowned men and kings in the ancient sagas are named, Sigurd must be counted the foremost in strength and accomplishments, in zeal and valour" (Byock, 1990: 56). It is, then, outward acts of strength – Sigurd's accomplishments or deeds – from which we can infer Sigurd's character attributes of 'zeal' and 'valour'. Thus, when Sigurd "hewed both men and horses and went through the ranks, so that both his arms were bloody to the shoulder" (Byock, 1990: 62), we can take precisely Sigurd's hewing as an exemplification of his valour. Furthermore, that Sigurd is nothing beyond or behind his deed, is evident in his relation to the other characters in the saga: the "news of [Sigurd's] magnificent deed, that he had killed the terrible dragon, had now spread throughout all lands" (Byock, 1990: 73); and Brynhild – whom Sigurd had awoken and from whom he had received wise counsel – likewise conceives of Sigurd as just the sum of his acts: "she embroidered her tapestry with gold and on it stitched stories of the noble deeds that Sigurd had wrought: the slaying of the serpent, the seizing of the gold, and the death of Regin" (Byock, 1990: 73-4).

I have described here a general feature of myth, a feature that Icelandic saga exemplifies – but what has this to do with noble morality? Why does Nietzsche claim that Icelandic saga is "almost its most important document" (CW Epil)? It is precisely the feature of myth that we have been discussing that Nietzsche, in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, ascribes to noble morality. The noble individual is exemplified through a set of deeds, whilst the slave posits a distinction between himself, the doer, and his actions, the deed.[28] Icelandic saga, then, is a 'document' of noble morality, and since such morality is the "sign language ... of *ascending* life" (CW Epil), so Icelandic saga is itself an expression of abundance and vitality. But the question still remains as to the concept of redemption as it appears in Wagner's work.

In *The Case of Wagner*, Nietzsche states that Wagner's "opera is the opera of redemption. Somebody or other always wants to be redeemed in his work: sometimes a little male, sometimes a little female" (CW 3). Nietzsche then goes on to list Wagner's works, sardonically characterising in each instance the variety of ways in which the theme of redemption is handled. Wagner introduces the theme of redemption in his early romantic opera *Der Fliegende Holländer*; the Dutchman, condemned by Satan eternally to wander the oceans, seeks redemption – which must come in the form of the self-sacrificial love of a woman. As Nietzsche puts it, the opera "preaches the sublime doctrine that woman makes even the most restless man stable; in Wagnerian terms, she 'redeems' him" (*ibid.*). Turning

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[28] Nietzsche interprets the doer – or the subject – as "merely a fiction added to the deed" (GM I.13), a fiction created by slave morality so that it can interpret its own "weakness as freedom" (*ibid.*). Nobility, however, is exemplified in its set of actions, it is just the sum of its deeds, making the concept of the distinct 'subject' redundant. Thus, slave or Christian morality maintains a distinction between doer/deed, and noble morality does not. The identity of the mythic character and the Nietzschean noble individual is a function of what I called in the introduction Nietzsche's Hellenic aestheticism. Nietzsche seems to be constructing noble morality out of myth and thus is performing his own reanimation of the archaic, albeit from tragic Greek – and not, as with Wagner, Scandinavian – 'monsters'.

to Wagner's final work, *Parsifal* – composed over forty years later – the redemption theme is given a more complex treatment. The work begins with the Knighthood of the Grail in a tragic condition of impotence, manifested by Amfortas – the ruler of the Grail community – who lies suffering with an unhealing wound inflicted by Klingsor – the enemy of that community. Parsifal – the 'innocent fool' – redeems Amfortas and so the Knighthood, by, first of all, resisting the sexual advances of Kundry – who is herself redeemed from damnation precisely as a consequence of Parsifal's resistance. As Nietzsche puts it, with customary derision, "old corrupted females prefer to be redeemed by chaste youths" (*ibid.*).[29]

I have described the surface of Wagner's art as a hybrid of myth and redemption – expressions of, respectively, noble and Christian morality, of abundance and impoverishment. For Nietzsche, Wagner's instinctive or involuntary falseness consists in the conflation of these two antithetical representations. Nietzsche regards the opposition of abundance and impoverishment as "*necessary*" (CW Epil) and likewise the opposition between expressions of these values. He claims that these psycho-physiological tendencies are like "ways of seeing" (*ibid.*) that cannot be denied by rational argument: "One cannot refute Christianity; one cannot refute a disease of the eye" (*ibid.*) he writes. The noble, then, will necessarily have an "instinctive aversion *against* decadents" (*ibid.*), as – so Nietzsche suggests – the "Noble Romans experienced Christianity" (*ibid.*). And the reverse will also be – and, indeed, must be – the case. Not

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[29] Senta – who eventually redeems the Dutchman – sings of his plight in her Ballad: 'Like an arrow he flies / without aim, without rest, without peace! / But redemption may one day come to the pale man, / if he but find a woman on earth true unto death. / Oh, when will you find her, wan mariner?' *Parsifal* ends famously with the line: 'Erlösung dem Erlöser!' – 'Redeemed the redeemer!'. This adds a third layer of redemption to the work: Parsifal redeems Amfortas, the Knighthood, Kundry and, it seems, himself. Thus in Wagner's final work, redemption becomes self-reflexive: Parsifal redeems himself through his redemption of others.

treating these opposites *as* opposites, then, is to affirm these two perspectives simultaneously. If Wagner is abundant, then he would not use impoverished symbols (such as the theme of redemption) to affirm his abundance, but rather, being abundant, he would oppose such impoverishment.

The distinction between authenticity and inauthenticity is of use in this context. An authentic noble will necessarily and involuntarily oppose Christian values and vice versa. However, a noble who does not oppose Christian values is not an authentic, but an inauthentic noble. Similarly, a Christianity that is presented as not opposed to noble morality is an inauthentic Christianity – a false Christianity. Nietzsche would claim that Wagner 'Christianises' myth through the psychologisation of mythic individuals, and he does so both dramatically (in the primacy of the theme of redemption) and musically (in the mimesis of thought and affect in the leitmotif).[30] Consequently, Wagner neutralises myth, that is, deprives myth of its fundamental characteristic, the primacy of action, and therefore of its status as the principal document of an ascending and abundant life. Moreover, by enveloping his quasi-Christian characters – yearning for redemption – with the surface of nobility and strength, Wagner makes a mockery of the truly impoverished nature of authentic redemption. Such is Nietzsche's assessment, then, of the hybridity of Wagner's art.

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30 Thomas Mann's division of psychology and myth in Wagner echoes Nietzsche's antithesis of slave-ascetic/noble. However, Mann finds in Wagner's integration of the two – and he makes reference to Nietzsche's own combining of myth and psychology – the source of Wagner's enduring philosophical-aesthetic value: "Two forces have combined to elevate [Wagner's art] to these heights, two forces and brilliant accomplishments that one might suppose to be mutually hostile ... I refer to the forces of *psychology* and *myth*" (1985: 96).

## VII

I would like to close my discussion of Nietzsche's account of Wagnerian histrionism by describing the relation between Wagner's lie of abundance (the grand style) and the falseness involved in his failure to distinguish between abundance and impoverishment. It is important to draw a distinction, first of all, between a lie (*Lüge*) and a falsehood (*Falscheit*). A lie is a conscious falsehood, known by the liar to be false, yet presented as true; a falsehood is just an error, an unconscious misrepresentation. For Nietzsche, Wagner's lie of abundance is voluntary and his falseness is instinctive and so, properly speaking, not a lie. The lie/falsehood distinction, then, can be drawn using the opposition of conscious/unconscious. The term Nietzsche uses – *Instinkt-Doppelzüngigkeit* – though translated by Kaufmann as "deceitfulness of instinct" (CW Epil), means, more properly, a 'double-dealing' or 'duplicitous instinct'. It is not an instinct that deliberately sets out to mislead – an instinct that 'knows the truth', yet nevertheless deceives – it is just an erroneous instinct, though one that is, for Nietzsche, disastrously false – since it is false about the most fundamental value conditions of life. The lie is an expression of romantic self-hatred, the romantic lies so as to extinguish his character. (We have here, in other words, the histrionic redemption that I described in section VI.) This is not the case with the falsehood: the instinctive falseness of the unity of abundance and impoverishment is a cultural lie that, for Nietzsche, defines the modern condition – it is something in which we are all implicated. The lie of abundance, then, is a property only of the *romantic* character type, and the instinctive contradiction of values describes the *modern* character type. As I said earlier, the core of the Nietzschean 'case of Wagner' is found in the

relation between these two concepts. I will now venture to elucidate this relation.

First of all, it is worth pointing out that there is an inconsistency between the two character types. The romantic lie of abundance presupposes that a conscious distinction is drawn between impoverishment and abundance, whilst the modern instinctive falseness involves the unconscious failure precisely to make the same distinction. So there is a simultaneous knowledge and ignorance of the same thing, albeit on different psychological levels. The concept of 'instinctive falseness' creates a certain amount of friction within Nietzsche's account of romanticism; it seems to be at odds with both intoxicatory and histrionic redemption.

Thinking back to my account of romantic hatred in sections II and III, it is clear that external hate begins precisely from a recognition that that which lies outside – abundant life – is distinct from the impoverishment that lies within. The romantic artist thus revenges himself on abundant life by creating either images of the destruction of abundant life, or images of abundant life branded with impoverished life. And the intoxicatory pleasure elicited by such revenge redeems the romantic from the pain of his impoverishment. So intoxicatory redemption presupposes – indeed, *begins* with – the abundance/impoverishment duality. Similarly, the romantic actor wishes to extinguish his impoverished character by wearing, and escaping into, the mask of abundant life. The impoverished Wagner, then, is conscious of his own impoverishment and wishes to lie it away with the lie of the grand style, therefore Wagner *must* be able to distinguish between abundance and impoverishment.

Wagner's consciousness of the dichotomy of abundance/impoverishment, then, is somehow swept aside by his unconscious ignorance of it. He consciously knows something, in other words, that unconsciously he is ignorant of. Indeed, Wagner's knowledge of the distinction makes possible the promulgation of its falsification – he creates art from the pain of the distinction, yet his art expresses an instinctive ignorance of it. Put succintly, in the case of Wagner the duality of abundance/impoverishment *creates* the conditions for its own *dissolution*. How are we to interpret the contradiction between Nietzsche's romantic and modern? It is not a contradiction *per se*: what we have before us is a conscious distinction and an *un*conscious conflation of that distinction. If both were either conscious or unconscious then there would be a contradiction, but they are not. Assuming that Nietzsche possesses a stable opposition of conscious/unconscious, it is certainly possible for something to be known on the conscious level, and yet falsified on the unconscious level.

So far I have been assuming an identity between that which is consciously known and that which is unconsciously falsified and I have then posited a discrepancy between them. By challenging this assumption, however, we can come to a more accurate and subtle interpretation of the discrepancy. The distinction of conscious/unconscious is a variation of the appearance/reality opposition and part of the logic of the second, and canonical, opposition is precisely to exploit discrepancy. Thus, consciousness is an appearance that *veils* the reality of the unconscious. In light of this, Nietzsche's claim concerning the relation between the romantic and the modern becomes: it is the juxtaposition of a conscious

and apparent knowledge with an unconscious and real ignorance. The romantic has a conscious grasp of *an* opposition of abundance/impoverishment, but his instinctive failure to grasp *the* opposition is betrayed through his art. In other words, what Wagner consciously knows and what he unconsciously does not know are two different things. Wagner's own duality of abundance/impoverishment – that which makes him feel impotent and valueless and so compels him to make art – is a weak appearance of Nietzsche's strong and real opposition of abundance/impoverishment.

To return to the romantic lie and the modern falseness – for Nietzsche, the heart of the case of Wagner – I will now attempt to clarify their relation. It is, in the most general terms, one of dependency: the romantic lie is dependent upon the modern falseness, and it can be characterised, most pertinently, in historical-cultural terms. Wagner – a man of the nineteenth century – is a romantic artist who creates in the epoch of Western modernity, an epoch that, according to Nietzsche's genealogical analyses, is the outcome of a predominantly Christian, and so impoverished, mode of existence. When Wagner resurrects myth – the paragon of abundant life – when he appropriates surfaces that originate from a mode of life that is supremely vital and abundant, he is doing so in an age that was inaugurated only through the destruction of *precisely this* abundant mode of life. In short, Wagner creates surfaces of the exemplary vitality of life, in an era in which the opposite value – the impoverishment of life – dominates. As Nietzsche mourns: "Things are bad generally. Decay is universal. The sickness goes deep" (CW PS II). Nietzsche describes Wagner's modern falsity as "counterfeiting in the imitation of big forms for which nobody today is strong, proud, self-assured, *healthy* enough" (CW

PS II). For Nietzsche, it is precisely in Wagner's unquestioning appropriation and promulgation of nobility that his instinctive falseness becomes manifest.

To believe in the heroic and epic nature of mankind in the modern context brings with it the highly problematic implication that nobility is *possible* in the modern context. It is precisely this which is the lie of the grand style: Wagner makes us believe in the lie that authentic nobility is a contemporary possibility, when it is not. As Nietzsche admits: "What can be done well today, what can be masterly, is only what is small. Here alone integrity is still possible" (*ibid.*). In the age of impoverishment – in the modern age of the quotidian, the bourgeois, of efficiency and use value – the heroic is but a dream: moreover, it is a dream that brings about yet more decay. Wagner – and this is a separate point – by "making us feel what it would be like to live with a radically different set of values" – i.e., noble values – as Michael Tanner has suggested, in fact, belittles us further.[31] The transient sensation of living with an epic intensity actually has the effect of ramming down our throats our own modern impotence and smallness.

The modern revival of the grand style, then, implies the contradictory belief in the possibility of a 'modern nobility', which is the belief in a 'Christian nobility' – or, an *impoverished abundance*. It is to fail to distinguish between these "*necessary* opposites" (CW Epil).[32] As we

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[31] Tanner, 1996: 209. Nietzsche, of course, can be accused of doing exactly the things that he accuses Wagner of doing. This is the problem of the self-referentiality of decadence that I touched upon earlier. I discuss this problem – in the form of Nietzsche's recourse to redemption – in the conclusion to this thesis.

[32] Nietzsche's insistence that the oppositions of abundance/impoverishment and noble/Christian morality are necessary sits uncomfortably with his claim in *Beyond Good and Evil* that "the fundamental faith of the metaphysicians is *the faith in opposite values*" (BGE 2). I would like to make two comments about this point. Firstly, as I have previously indicated, when Nietzsche attacks Wagner he is, it seems, forced to adopt quasi-Platonic positions. In this case, by manifesting his faith in opposite values, Nietzsche appears to betray his "*metaphysical faith*", which is also the "faith of Plato" (GS 344).

have seen, Wagner's instinctive falseness is played out in his works, redemption (an expression of self-hatred) and nobility (an expression of self-love) are presented without conflict. So Wagner's lie of the grand style *presupposes* the duplicitous falseness of affirming both abundance (the grand style) and impoverishment (Christianity-modernity) simultaneously. The modern instinctive falseness makes possible and enables Wagner to create in the 'grand style' innocently, with a good conscience. The cultural involuntary falseness is a necessary condition for the voluntary lie of Wagner's histrionic redemption. The romantic is the exemplary voice of the modern – or, as Nietzsche says: "Through Wagner modernity speaks most intimately" (CW Pref).

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Secondly, although in his critique of Wagner, Nietzsche affirms the necessary opposition between abundance and impoverishment, it is clear that in his wider philosophy he pushes this dichotomy to breaking point and thus affirms, tacitly, its contingency and mutability. I demonstrate this in my conclusion. We must conclude, then, that in the wider context of his philosophy as a whole, the quasi-metaphysical basis of Nietzsche's attack on Wagner is undermined. The fact that Nietzsche, in that attack, is forced into a philosophical position that he strives elsewhere to overcome can be interpreted as symptomatic of his recognition that Wagner's project and his own are intimately related. It seems that to repudiate Wagner, Nietzsche is forced to repudiate himself.

# Chapter Three

## Art, Truth and Tragic Philosophy

The question of the relation between art and truth lay at the heart of Nietzsche's first book, *The Birth of Tragedy*, and surfaced again in his middle period, most explicitly in *The Gay Science*. By 1886, however, when Nietzsche had cause to reflect upon *The Birth of Tragedy* – he wrote a preface, the 'Attempt at a Self-Criticism', for a new edition of the book – the problem acquired a new urgency and became a central component of the aesthetics of his final phase. The question of art and truth – "so terrifying to Nietzsche", as Erich Heller points out – is a profound one.[1] This chapter is a survey of this complex problem.

In the context of art, Nietzsche is involved primarily with two conceptions of truth: the metaphysical, that kernel of the ascetic ideal of which he is highly critical; and the pessimistic, his own realist conception of truth – that it is 'ugly' – to which he is overwhelmingly drawn. I begin with a discussion of the relation between art and truth in the context of

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[1] Heller, 1988: 158. Heidegger cites in full the unpublished note of 1888 to which Heller refers, Nietzsche writes: "Very early in my life I took the question of the relation of *art* to *truth* seriously: and even now I stand in holy dread [i.e., 'terror'] in the face of this discordance" (1991: 142).

the ascetic ideal. Here, the mature Nietzsche gives new voice to the Apollonian aesthetic of *The Birth of Tragedy*; art is conceived as the will to untruth, in contrast to the faith in metaphysical truth of asceticism. In the middle part of the chapter, I examine Nietzsche's critique of metaphysical truth in the context of his rejection of the 'real world', and I follow this with an account of his perspectivism. In these sections, my purpose is to show that Nietzsche arrives at a broadly 'realist', or common sense, view of truth. I then turn to Nietzsche's own pessimistic conception of truth and argue that it does not commit him to any metaphysical, or ascetic, presuppositions. I close the chapter by outlining Nietzsche's tragic philosophy or Dionysian pessimism. I interpret tragic philosophy as the seeking out of the degenerate man in the higher man; and, as with Nietzsche's conception of tragedy, I construe it as the ritual destruction of those whom one loves most.

## I

Nietzsche, in the third essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, asks: "What is the meaning of ascetic ideals?" (GM III.1) and goes on to discuss how the ideal of asceticism figures in various character-types. The ascetic ideal is a multi-faceted phenomenon, but in the end Nietzsche tells us that it is founded upon the faith in metaphysical truth. In this section, I will be concerned to illuminate that faith as Nietzsche describes it; and in the following section, I will discuss the relation between the artist and the ascetic ideal.

The nature of the relation between truth and the ascetic ideal becomes explicit only towards the end of the third essay, when Nietzsche

begins to speculate as to the existence of a counter-ideal. I will outline, by way of introduction and for the sake of simplicity, only the "provisional formulation" (GM III.13) of asceticism. Nietzsche writes that the ascetic priest "treats life as a wrong road ... as a mistake", that is, he devalues "our life ... 'nature', 'world', the whole sphere of becoming and transitoriness" and "he juxtaposes it ... with a quite different mode of existence which it opposes and excludes, *unless* it turn against itself, *deny itself*" (GM III.11). There are two points that emerge from this passage. First of all, asceticism is an interpretation of life; as Nietzsche puts it in the following section, asceticism "will look for error precisely where the instinct of life ... posits truth" – in the "real and actual" (GM III.12). In other words, life as ordinarily (or instinctively) conceived – the life of everyday experience – is interpreted as an error. Thus, that which is said to oppose and exclude life – i.e., to lie 'beyond' life – is valued at the expense of *this* life. The 'beyond' is the transcendental realm. Secondly, asceticism is a procedure for remedying the erroneousness of life: life must deny itself. Self-denial "counts as a bridge" to what is interpreted as the "right" mode of existence (GM III.11). The "ascetic life" (*ibid.*), then, is "life *against* life" (GM III.13) so as to approximate, in earthly form, the transcendental – that which may be characterised as the life of 'pure spirit'. As Nietzsche puts it in the closing lines of the *Genealogy*; "this longing to get away from all appearance, change, becoming ... all this means ... *a will to nothingness*" (GM III.28). The phenomenon of asceticism is, for Nietzsche, "monstrous" (GM III.11).

Nietzsche gives an extended account of the "calamitous effects" (GM III.23) of the ideal through the figure of the ascetic priest, and then asks: "*where* is the opposing will that might express an *opposing ideal*?"

(*ibid.*). It seems that "modern science ... as a genuine philosophy of reality", which has survived "without God, the beyond, and the virtues of denial", offers an ideal that is opposed to asceticism (*ibid.*).[2] On the contrary, Nietzsche insists. Science "is not the opposite of the ascetic ideal but rather *the latest and noblest form of it*" (*ibid.*). His claim is that "science and the ascetic ideal, both rest on the same foundation ... the belief that truth is inestimable and cannot be criticised" (GM III.25). Those apparent "*counteridealists*" that Nietzsche labels the "unbelievers" (GM III.24) – "atheists, anti-Christians, immoralists" *et al* (*ibid.*) – may oppose the "exteriors" (GM III.25) of the ascetic ideal (God, the beyond, self-denial), but are "unconditional about *one* thing ... truth" (GM III.24). Thus, it is their rigid "faith in truth" – that is, their "unconditional will to truth" (*ibid.*) – that betrays the unbelievers' complicity in the metaphysical foundations of asceticism. For them, truth is 'inestimable', which is to say, it stands as an "absolute value" (*ibid.*). Truth as an absolute is something that is wholly unconditioned by, and so essentially independent of, all contingencies, and so it is something that must subsist outside of life, and so must be transcendent of life. The belief in truth as an absolute value, then, carries with it the supposition of a transcendental realm; the unbelievers' faith in truth is thus "the faith in a *metaphysical* value" (*ibid.*). It is more accurate to say, then, that modern science, by relinquishing the appearances of the ascetic ideal, has brought to light its "*kernel*" (GM III.27): truth as unconditionality.

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[2] *Wissenschaft*, as Walter Kaufmann points out, is the word that Nietzsche employs for 'science'. It does not mean 'science' in the conventional sense, but, in general, any scholarly or systematic knowledge. Thus, the humanities, insofar as they are scholarly, methodical, and systematic are also *Wissenschaft*. Nietzsche used the word in the title of one of his books, *Die fröhliche Wissenchaft* – 'The Gay Science'.

In a passage from *The Gay Science*, from which Nietzsche quotes at this point in the *Genealogy*, the metaphysics of asceticism is formulated in terms of 'untruth' and 'life'. For Nietzsche, it seems "as if life aimed at ... error, deception, simulation, delusion ..." (GS 344), that is, untruth in its multiple guises. This should not be interpreted as the strong and highly questionable claim that the essential basis or purpose of life is untruth. Nietzsche simply observes that in our everyday life, untruth – as a plurality of deceptive appearances – is manifestly present. And since 'untruth' can gain meaning only in contrast to 'truth', it is clear that life also encompasses truth – but of an *immanent* variety. (Nietzsche affirms the presence of non-metaphysical truth – as will be made clear below – at the beginning of the *Genealogy*. When speaking of "plain, harsh ... truth", he tells us that "such truths do exist" (GM I.1)). The valuation of truth as an absolute, then, in denying the possibility that untruth may be of value for life, also denies life. When asceticism values unconditional truth, and so the transcendent, it invests all value in the unconditional and so strips life of value. As Nietzsche puts it, ascetic idealists "*affirm another world* than the world of life, nature, and history [i.e., immanent life]", and insofar as they do that, "must they not by the same token negate its counterpart, this world, *our* world?" (*ibid.*).[3] Thus we return to the earlier picture of the ascetic interpretation of life, the wholesale devaluation of 'this world', the 'world of life', in favour of a transcendental world, a "*nothingness*" (GM III.28).

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[3] As Nietzsche writes in *The Anti-Christ*: "If one shifts the centre of gravity of life *out* of life into the 'Beyond' – into *nothingness* – one has deprived life as such of its centre of gravity" (AC 43). Or, in more direct terms: "with the 'Beyond' one *kills life*" (AC 58).

## II

As conceived in the final pages of the *On the Genealogy of Morals*, the relation between art and the ascetic ideal, and so between art and truth *qua* metaphysical value, seems fairly straightforward. Having made the point that asceticism and science are "*necessarily* allies" that "can only be called in question together" (GM III.25), Nietzsche begins his parenthetic remark on art as follows:

> *Art* ... in which precisely the *lie* is sanctified and the *will to deception* has a good conscience, is much more fundamentally opposed to the ascetic ideal than is science ... (*ibid.*)

This remark echoes two passages from *The Gay Science*. In Book II, Nietzsche conceives of art as the "*good* will to appearance" (GS 107), and in Book V (in a section that we came across in the preceding chapter), he speaks of "[f]alseness with a good conscience" (GS 361). But what, in fact, we have before us is the mature Nietzsche's restatement of the "Apollonian" (BT 1) conception of art advanced in *The Birth of Tragedy* – art as *Schein*, that is, appearance or semblance. Art, then – as a set of lies or deceptions – exhibits the artist's 'will to deception'; and since the ascetic ideal is founded upon the will to truth, it is clear why Nietzsche should see art as 'fundamentally opposed' to the ascetic ideal. This point is deepened when we consider the claim that the artist's will to deception – or, will to untruth – has a 'good conscience'. Nietzsche qualifies the will to untruth in this way so as to eliminate from art proper the 'artist' who might will untruth with a bad conscience. Such an artist, when he reflects upon his immersion in untruth, will think ill of himself and acknowledge his will to deception with reluctance. One will view untruth in this way only if one

takes the view that truth is, in all cases, the higher value. Thus, to have a bad conscience about one's will to untruth is still to presuppose the ascetic, the absolute valuation of truth *over* untruth. Nietzsche provides a sketch of such a pseudo-artist – who is a manifestation of the romantic or impoverished artist – at the beginning of the third essay in the figure of Wagner.[4]

The artist whose will to untruth has a *good* conscience, however, does not presuppose the unconditional will to truth and value of truth. This artist, unlike his ascetic counterpart, is simply drawn to appearances and untruths – like Nietzsche's Greeks, he will "adore appearance [and] believe in ... the whole Olympus of appearance" (GS Pref 4) – and he does not suffer in affirming them *as* appearances and untruths. So it would seem that this artist – a variant of the artist of overabundance – in his valuation of untruth, thereby values and affirms life – since, as we have seen, life comprises untruth, that is, "error, deception, simulation" (GS 344). Thus, the artist is the only purely immanent creature that we come across in the third essay of the *Genealogy*, since his earthly adoration of appearance prevents him from being corrupted by ascetic life-denying metaphysics. The force of this claim is worth pondering for a moment. "Apart from the ascetic ideal", Nietzsche writes in the closing section of the *Genealogy*, "man, the human *animal*, had no meaning ... The meaninglessness of suffering, *not* suffering itself, was the curse that lay over mankind so far – *and the ascetic ideal offered man meaning*!" (GM III.28). It is extraordinary, then, to find a

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4 "Whoever is completely and wholly an artist", Nietzsche writes, "is to all eternity separated from ... the actual ... one can understand how he may sometimes weary to the point of desperation of the eternal 'unreality' ... of his innermost existence – and that he may well attempt ... to lay hold of actuality" (GM III.4). The weariness that is induced by being immersed in 'unreality', in untruth, and the attempt to lay hold of 'actuality', the truth, signifies the artist's ascetic valuation of truth over untruth. This artist, then, manifests the will to untruth with a bad conscience.

category of 'human animals' that have escaped the universality of the ascetic ideal. But there *are* such animals: the adorers of untruth – the artists. But even then, it seems, they cannot escape the shadow of the ideal; as Nietzsche writes earlier, asceticism is "so universal that all the other interests of human existence seem, when compared with it, petty and narrow" (GM III.23). In this context, then, Nietzsche is ambivalent about the value of art with respect to the metaphysical truth that underlies the ascetic ideal. Artists are to be applauded for not being absorbed by the dominant life-denying transcendentalism of the ascetic ideal; but, given the profundity of that ideal, any counter-ideal will appear 'petty', 'narrow' – indeed, superficial. For Nietzsche, then, the artist – the lover of appearance and untruth – is the supreme life-affirmer, but since life-denial is what gives mankind a purpose, he remains an eccentric, but interesting, deviation from humanity's primary struggle for meaning.[5]

The apparent pettiness of non-ascetic ideals, however, should not blind us to the fact that, in the broader context, art must and does remain for Nietzsche the seed from which a counter-ideal may emerge. "Art is the great stimulant to life" (TI IX.24), he writes in the *Twilight of the Idols*; and in an unpublished note that captures this redemptive function of art,

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[5] The distinction between the good artistic will to untruth and the bad artistic will to untruth – which I touched upon a moment ago – allows us to understand Nietzsche's enigmatic assessment of the artist in the opening sections of the third essay of the *Genealogy*. Nietzsche asks: "What, then, is the meaning of ascetic ideals? In the case of the artist, as we see, *nothing whatever!* . . . Or so many things it amounts to nothing whatever!" (GM III.5). In the first case, the artist is excluded from the ascetic ideal. His good will to untruth excludes him from the unconditional will to truth that is the kernel of the ascetic ideal. In the second case, there are two important senses in which the ascetic ideal means 'many things' to the artist. Firstly, as "valets of morality" (*ibid.*) they will appropriate the ascetic ideal in many forms. For example, Nietzsche claims that Wagner embraces chastity (denial of body is denial of life), and, more generally, that he is transfixed with redemption (denial of self altogether). But, at least in the case of Wagner, this, for Nietzsche, is only an act, or at best a contradiction. Wagner is committed to eroticism, the body and life, but promulgates the anti-erotic, anti-body and anti-life doctrine of asceticism. Secondly, because the artist has a bad conscience about his identity as an artist – which Nietzsche calls the "*typical velleity* of the artist" (GM III.4) – it is clear that, as I have already pointed out, he does presuppose the unconditional will to truth, and hence *is* an ascetic idealist. But he is one who cannot commit himself to it fully, for that would involve his denying his 'artist-hood'.

Nietzsche says: "Our religion, morality, and philosophy are decadence [i.e., ascetic] forms of man. The *countermovement*: *art*" (WP 794). The possibility that the ascetic will to nothingness can be replaced by an artistic will to life is the possibility, indeed, of an *aesthetic ideal.* Nietzsche takes this possibility seriously, and I explore this central Nietzschean theme in chapter five. For the moment, I want to consider a question that the idea of an 'aesthetic ideal' presupposes.

Given the pervasiveness of the ascetic ideal, it is reasonable to ask *how* is it possible that a class of humans have escaped, so effortlessly it seems, its clutches? The artist must indeed be an exceptional animal. Is not Nietzsche here just giving rein to his life long predilection for art? Two sets of questions emerge. Firstly, is art *simply* the 'will to deception'? Does Nietzsche provide any support for this claim? It might well be the case that, at bottom and despite all appearances to the contrary, art, like science, is a cognitive activity that attempts to lay hold of the truth. Secondly, assuming that art *is* fundamentally attached to untruth, is a good will to untruth actually possible, or might there still be, lurking beneath it, a form of asceticism? An answer to the first set of questions will be found in the second half of this chapter, where I argue that Nietzsche does admit of a link between art and truth. The following section will be taken up with an answer to the second group of questions, where I will consider only what is the most obvious way in which the artist's will to untruth may be collapsed back into asceticism.

## III

Heidegger, taking his cue from a remark that Nietzsche makes in his sketches for *The Birth of Tragedy*, claims that Nietzsche's "entire later philosophical position" is "inverted Platonism" and that "during the last years of his creative life [Nietzsche] labours at nothing else than the overturning of Platonism."[6] Heidegger's claim can be employed to challenge Nietzsche's contrast between asceticism and art. The objection will be: art, as the product of Nietzsche's 'overturning' of asceticism, is in fact only an 'inverted asceticism'. What Nietzsche goes on to say in his parenthetic remark on art in the *Genealogy* appears to lend support to such an objection. Having just claimed that art is "much more fundamentally opposed to the ascetic ideal than is science" (GM III.25), Nietzsche writes that this thought

> was instinctively sensed by Plato, the greatest enemy of art Europe has yet produced. Plato versus Homer: that is the complete, the genuine antagonism – there the sincerest advocate of the 'beyond,' the great slanderer of life; here its instinctive deifier, the *golden* nature.[7] (*ibid.*)

Plato is, for Nietzsche, the progenitor and exemplar of the ascetic ideal, the "faith of Plato" was that "truth is divine" (GS 344), hence Plato viewed truth as an "absolute value" (GM III.24).[8] Furthermore, Plato 'instinctively sensed' the threat that art posed to the unconditional will to truth.

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[6] Heidegger, 1991: 154.

[7] In *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche writes, similarly, that: "Whoever approaches these Olympians with another religion in his heart, searching among them for moral elevation ... will soon be forced to turn his back on them ... For there is nothing here that suggests asceticism, spirituality, or duty. We hear nothing but the accents of an exuberant, triumphant life in which all things, whether good or evil, are deified" (BT 3).

[8] As Socrates says to Glaucon: "no one is to be honoured or valued more than the truth" (Republic X, 595c).

Nietzsche here refers to Plato's philosophy of art, which is in effect a renunciation of art for the very reason that it deals in untruth, and so is dislocated from the truth of the Forms.[9] Plato is thus the 'greatest enemy of art'. Nietzsche then forms an opposition between Plato and Homer, between Plato the ascetic idealist and Homer the artist, between the Platonic will to truth and the Homeric will to untruth. The objection to Nietzsche, then, would run as follows: the 'complete' and 'genuine antagonism' between Plato and Homer exists only at the level of the truth/untruth dichotomy, that is, Homer *unconditionally* values untruth, as Plato unconditionally values truth. As I have pointed out, both untruth *and* truth, conceived immanently, sit unproblematically in "this world, *our* world" (GS 344). So when Homer unconditionally values untruth, he *denies* immanent truth – and in so doing "*affirm[s] another world* than the world of life" (*ibid.*). Moreover, Nietzsche has already written that it is in art that the "*lie* is sanctified" (GM III.25). Homer, then, as an artist, sanctifies untruth, which is to say, he sets it apart as sacred and circumscribes it in such a way that it remains uncorrupted and unconditioned. In metaphysical terms, then, there is nothing to differentiate the artist from the ascetic. They both deny aspects of the 'world of life' – truth and untruth respectively – in favour of their opposites which are 'transcendentalised', that is, removed to antithetical spaces in an immutable 'beyond'. Thus, in accordance with Heidegger's suggestion, Nietzsche inverts Platonism – the artist is an 'inverted-ascetic'.

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[9] Plato writes that "an imitator ... knows nothing about that which is but only about its appearance" (Republic X, 601b). He categorises poetry, like painting, as a mimetic art, and claims that art is "third in succession from the throne of truth" (597e) and so the mimetic artist's "creations are poor things by the standard of truth and reality" (605b). Plato famously concludes that he is compelled to "banish [poetry] from our commonwealth" and thus perpetuates the "long-standing quarrel between poetry and philosophy" (607b).

My response to this argument concerns the interpretation of the 'complete' and 'genuine antagonism' between Plato and Homer. It should be noted, to begin with, that the Heidegger-inspired argument fails to take into account the second part of the citation. Nietzsche goes on to call Plato the "sincerest advocate of the 'beyond', the great slanderer of life" and he calls Homer "its [i.e., life's] instinctive deifier, the *golden* nature" (*ibid.*). Nietzsche's claim, then, is that Homer deifies life. And it is clear that 'life' here means the "world of life" (GS 344) – i.e., everyday experience – since Nietzsche tells us that Plato, the ascetic idealist, slanders it by sincerely advocating the 'beyond' – the metaphysical world. I will argue that in Homer's deification of life he is affirming the value of *all life*, that is, life in both its untruth *and* truth. And while he – or the artist in general – may also sanctify untruth, his broad deification of all life supersedes, or provides the proper context for, his narrower sanctification of only one part of life.

In what sense, then, is Homer's deification of life an affirmative valuation of all life? Nietzsche conceives of Homeric-type art in terms of the Dionysian art of being – examined in chapter one – in which the desire for being is "prompted ... by gratitude and love" (GS 370). Such art "will always be an art of apotheoses [*Apotheosenkunst*]", Nietzsche writes, "spreading a Homeric light and glory over all things" (*ibid.*). The art of being, then, is an 'art of apotheoses', which is to say, an art of deification. When the artist of being deifies life, he is making of life a deity or god, and this means that the value that the artist gives to 'all things' – that is, all life – will be identical to the value that he gives to god. What, then, is the sense and form of that latter valuation?

It must be stated, first of all, that the type of deity that is the creation of the Dionysian art of being is not the Christian, or a Christian-type, God – which Nietzsche calls "nothingness deified" (AC 18) – but the "proud pagan God" (AC 17) such as the gods of the Greeks. As in all art of being, in which "man mirrors himself in things" and "thinks that anything that reflects his image back to him is beautiful" (TI IX.19), so the pagan gods are "reflections of noble and autocratic men, in whom *the animal* in man felt deified" (GM II.23). For Nietzsche, then, man creates god in his own image, and so god is a reflection of "all the qualities that [have] become palpable" in man (GM II.19). Our question, then, becomes deferred for a second time. Since man – or the artist of being, or Homer – has deified life, the value that he gives to life will be identical to the value that he assigns to god. And we have just learnt that god is a reflection of man. It will be the case, then, that the value that man assigns to god will be a reflection of the value that man attaches to himself or his *own life*. Thus, our question now becomes: what value does man attach to himself?

The artist of being values himself in two interrelated ways. Firstly, Nietzsche tells us that the art of being is "prompted ... by gratitude and love" (GS 370) – thus man is grateful for, and loves, himself. In this context, the art of deification is prompted by man's *self-love*. Nietzsche conceives of love as the "spiritualization of sensuality" (TI V.3), that is, a type of spirituality that is always embedded in the sensual or the erotic. More specifically, Nietzsche understands love as the "lust for possession" (GS 363) or "avarice" (GS 14), thus love is a kind of erotic-spiritual urge to possess. Secondly, Nietzsche writes that: "*The noble soul has reverence for itself*" (BGE 287) and, as we know, Nietzsche understands the healthy artist of being and the noble in identical terms. Thus, the artist – who will

possess the "*instinct of reverence*" (BGE 263) – will revere himself, that is, regard himself with profound respect as that which is exalted. My claim is that the value that the artist of being assigns to himself is a hybrid of the types of value that are given to the self when it is loved and revered.

In *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche writes that "reverence is a bridge to love" (GM I.10), and thereby establishes the intimate bond that, for him, exists between the two concepts. But at the same time he seems to make reverence only a precondition for love, a stage that one passes through and leaves behind as one enters a next and higher stage called 'love'. But I suggest, instead, that we should understand reverence as a presupposition of love. In other words, for Nietzsche, to love is also and always to revere. The artist of being – and so Nietzsche's Homer – will value himself or his own life, then, in the following way. In his self-reverence and self-exaltation the artist raises himself to the status of the *highest value* in the order of rank of values. He regards himself and his life as a glorious object – i.e., as a prize possession. Since he is already in possession of himself, so to speak, his self-love is the desire that he remains – in one form or another – the exalted self that he is so that he can remain an object of erotic-spiritual lust. An object, in other words, that is worthy of possession.

The artist of being, then, reveres and loves himself as an object of exalted value. And since god, his creation, is a reflection of himself, when he reveres and loves god he thereby reveres and loves himself through god, his mirror image. Nietzsche writes that Homer is life's "instinctive deifier" (GM III.25), which is to say that Homer makes of life a deity. In other words, Homer mirrors himself in "all things" (GS 370) – that is, in all

life. It follows, then, that he will revere and love all life as he reveres and loves himself: as that which is of exalted value. The value that Homer gives to life, then, is an extension, or an expression, of the value that he gives to himself. Or, alternatively, his valuation of life is his self-valuation writ large. Nietzsche makes it clear that when the artist of being mirrors himself in things, he mirrors *all* of his qualities: "all the qualities that [have] become palpable in [himself]" (GM II.19). And as with all human beings, the qualities of untruthfulness and truthfulness will have become palpable in the artist. Thus, when he values life as a reflection of his untruthfulness and truthfulness, he will value life in all its untruth *and* truth. Homer, then, values all life – the immanent world, "this world, *our* world" (GS 344) – in both its untruth and truth, and so does *not* deny the immanent truth of life in favour of a transcendental untruth.

The 'complete' and 'genuine antagonism' between Plato and Homer, then, is the antagonism that exists between one who slanders life by affirming the unconditionality of truth *and* one who deifies truth and untruth – that is, reveres and loves life in all its truth and untruth – as a reflection of his self-reverence and self-love. Homer's affirmative valuation of *both* the truth and untruth of life, then, means that he will recognise that in some circumstances truth is valuable (at the expense of untruth) and that in other circumstances untruth is valuable (at the expense of truth). In other words, he will possess a *conditional* valuation of truth and untruth. Thus, the ascetic unconditional will to truth is contrasted with the artistic conditional will to truth. The artist does not "overestimate" (GM III.25) truth, and insofar as he possesses a will to truth, it will be conditional. And it follows from the artist's conditional valuation of truth that he will recognise that in some cases truth is *not* valuable – i.e., when the

conditions that make truth valuable are not forthcoming. And when such conditions are not forthcoming, the artist simply performs – what is for the neo-Apollonian Nietzsche – his more usual task of valuing untruth. Though it is evident that art, by its very nature, is biased in favour of appearance and untruth, it is *not* an unconditional bias. In the Homeric deification of all life, then, there is no denial of one part of life in favour of its transcendentalised opposite. The artist has no recourse to a metaphysical 'beyond' of untruth, and so inhabits only 'this world', the immanent world. Thus, the artist – contrary to Heidegger's implication – need not be an inverted-ascetic.

I would like to close this section by returning to Nietzsche's claim that in art the "*lie* is sanctified" (*ibid.*). In the Heidegger-inspired argument, the sanctified is construed as the unconditioned. In other words, that argument claims that when the artist sanctifies untruth he sets it apart as sacred and circumscribes it in such a way that it is unconditioned. It is now clear, in light of the foregoing argument, that the artist does not regard untruth as an unconditional value, since he values all life and thus regards untruth and truth as of conditional value. How, then, are we to interpret the concept of 'sanctification' as Nietzsche employs it? I suggest that Nietzsche uses the term simply to emphasise the fundamental bias – which is not to be confused with an unconditional bias – that the artist has for untruth. This point can be explained in the following way. The artist's deification of life is an expression of his reverence and love of life, and similarly, his sanctification of untruth is an expression of his especial reverence and love of untruth. In short, 'sanctification' – like 'deification' – should be construed in terms of a pagan religiosity and *not* a Christian one. For the Christian, the sanctified object is sacred in the sense that it is of

unconditional value; whereas, for the pagan, the sanctified object is sacred in the sense that it is regarded as possessing great value, as that which is the proper object of reverence and love. Thus, the artist, like Nietzsche's Greeks, simply "adore[s]" untruth, "the surface, the fold, the skin" (GS Pref 4). And he does not make of it an absolute value, since in the broader perspective he also adores life's untruth and truth.

In conclusion, then, the artist's deification of life serves to protect life from the 'anti-life' of the ascetic ideal. The ascetic affirmation of a transcendental world corrupts this world by making it subservient to the transcendental world. Life must be deified – revered and loved as an exalted value – so that it may avoid being corrupted and devalued by that other world, by 'nothingness'. Thus, we must interpret Nietzsche's rigidity about life's value – in the form of the artist who deifies life – as indicative of his struggle to keep asceticism at bay.

## IV

Art is intrinsically at odds with the metaphysical truth that is postulated by the ascetic ideal – here, the relation between art and truth is nil. And since metaphysical truth is embedded in a life-denying, impoverished mode of existence, art is all the better for keeping its hands clean of asceticism's 'other-worldliness'. Nietzsche points out, however, that the metaphysical conception of truth is a 'nothingness', a 'lie'. It is actually the case, then, that art is opposed to a lie, an untruth; so does it not then follow that art is more on the side of *truth*? I will consider that question in sections VI – VII below. Before doing that, however, I want to clarify Nietzsche's own position with respect to truth – the position from which he is able to call

ascetic truth a lie. In this section, I will describe how Nietzsche rejects asceticism and arrives at a broadly realist conception of truth; and then, in section V, I will show how Nietzsche's view of truth is consistent with his perspectivism.

Nietzsche's conception of truth underwent considerable transformation throughout his philosophical career. For the young Nietzsche of *The Birth of Tragedy* – still under the aegis of the Schopenhauerian metaphysic, and by virtue of that, the Kantian – the distinction between the 'will' (or, for Kant, the 'thing-in-itself') and 'representation' (or, 'appearance') was very much alive, though not always explicitly in those terms. At this stage, Nietzsche believed that the Dionysian element of tragedy could give "insight into the horrible truth" (BT 7), the "eternal core of things, the thing-in-itself" (BT 8). But as Maudemarie Clark has written, in *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, Nietzsche's claim that "truths are illusions of which we have forgotten that they are illusions" (TL 1) – from the unpublished 'On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense' – remains, for many, Nietzsche's ultimate assessment of truth. But Clark argues that Nietzsche's early "denial of truth results from his acceptance of ... the conception of truth as correspondence to the thing-in-itself."[10] Thus, Nietzsche held the traditional correspondence theory of truth in its metaphysical form; and when he concluded that, as Clark puts it, "linguistic expressions do not correspond to things-in-themselves",[11] and considered such correspondence "unobtainable in principle",[12] he proceeded simply to categorise all true expressions as

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10 Clark, 1990: 22.

11 Clark, 1990: 82.

12 Clark, 1990: 134.

illusory. Nietzsche began to free himself of this view, however, in *Human, All Too Human* – where he adopted an "agnostic position regarding transcendent truth"[13] – but as Clark suggests, it was not completely, and unambiguously, abandoned until after *Beyond Good and Evil*, when Nietzsche arrived at his final position. I will characterise that position by discussing how Nietzsche abandoned the metaphysical version of the appearance/reality distinction that grounded his early view of truth.

In the fourth section of the *Twilight of the Idols*, entitled 'How the 'Real World' Finally Became a Fable', Nietzsche presents a six stage history of the concept of the 'real world' – the metaphysical world of true being. In the first three stages, we find the Platonic, Christian, and Kantian interpretations of the concept; and in the last three, Nietzsche's characterisations of it as it figures in his own work. Stage four, as Clark points out, represents Nietzsche's agnostic position with regards to metaphysical reality, as found in *Human, All Too Human.*[14] The final two stages summarise the treatment of the concept in, respectively, *Beyond Good and Evil* and the works that follow it. Stage five reads – without Nietzsche's parenthesis – as follows:

> The 'real world' – an idea no longer of any use, not even a duty any longer – an idea grown useless, superfluous, *consequently* a refuted idea: let us abolish it! ... (TI IV)

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13 Clark, 1990: 97.

14 Stage four reads: "The real world – unattainable? At any rate unattained. And since unattained also *unknown*. Hence no consolation, redemption, obligation either: what could something unknown oblige us to do?" (TI IV). Clark says that the "occupant of stage (4) argues that the true [i.e., real] world plays no cognitive, and therefore, no practical role, but does not deny its existence" (1990: 112), and matches it with the following claim from *Human, All Too Human*: "It is true, there could be a metaphysical world; the absolute possibility of it is hardly to be disputed" (HA 9).

Nietzsche claims that the concept of the 'real world' is 'superfluous', and so is to be abolished, and thereby articulates the disjunction which is to be found between his early-to-middle and late philosophy. But by what route does he arrive at the conclusion that the 'real world' is superfluous? The conception of the 'real world' that Nietzsche rejects is the Kantian *Ding-an-sich*, the world as it is in itself, completely independent of all its possible appearances. Appearance – the world as it is actually experienced – veils the 'real world', which is logically inaccessible to sensation and cognition. 'Reality', then, is transcendent of all possible experience, it is a metaphysical ground that lies 'beyond' experience. The problem with this concept of 'reality' is that it is self-contradictory. According to the definition of the 'real world', the conception of the 'real world' is *itself* an appearance – a linguistic or cognitive representation – *of* the putative 'real world'. If the concept of the 'real world' is true, then, and given that that concept is an appearance of the 'real world', it follows that the 'real world' is in fact *not* independent of all its possible appearances, in which case there is no 'world as it is in itself', there is no 'real world'. In short, if the concept of the 'real world' is true, it is false.

Nietzsche has a similar, but not identical, thought when he writes that the "thing-in-itself ... involve[s] a *contradictio in adjecto*" (BGE 16). The 'thing' in the term 'thing-in-itself' denies the possibility of its own 'in-itselfness', because a 'thing' is precisely that which is *not* 'in-itself'. A thing is always already an appearance – i.e. the percept or concept of a 'thing' – that forecloses the possibility of its alleged reality – its 'in-itselfness'. It is not possible, then, to conceive of the 'real world' *as* the world as it is in itself, without refuting that conception. We can only conceive of *appearances* of the 'real world'. Thus, Nietzsche writes "what could I say

about any essence [i.e. reality] except to name the attributes of its appearance" (GS 54). For Nietzsche, then, the concept of the 'real world' is superfluous because it is self-refuting and so means nothing. It is in fact a lie; the "'apparent' world is the only one: the 'real' world has only been *lyingly added*" (TI III.2).

Nietzsche, having abolished the 'real world', overlooks an important consequence of its abolition. In stage six of his history, however, it is taken care of:

> We have abolished the real world: what world is left? the apparent world perhaps? . . . But no! *with the real world we have also abolished the apparent world!* (TI IV)

In stage five of Nietzsche's history of the 'real world', he has removed the term 'reality' from the metaphysical appearance/reality distinction, but continues to use the term 'appearance'. That term, however, only gains sense in contrast to the concept of 'reality' that has been abolished. There are only appearances *of* something, such that when that something is removed – in this case 'reality' – so too are its appearances *qua* appearances. Nietzsche has abolished the 'real world' and what was formerly known as the 'apparent world' is now all that remains. Or, to put it differently, the 'other world' of the transcendental thing-in-itself has dropped out of the philosophic world view, and we are left simply with "this world, *our* world" (GS 344) – the "actual world" (TI III.6). And *that* is the world as ordinarily conceived, the world of everyday experience. Nietzsche now inhabits (in stage six of his history) empirical reality; "what subtle instruments for observation we possess in our senses!" (TI III.3), he

writes in the *Twilight of the Idols*, "we have decided to *accept* the evidence of the senses" (*ibid.*).[15]

Given the foregoing, what is the mature Nietzsche's position on truth? As we have seen, Nietzsche rejects the idea of a 'real world', which is to say, he rejects the concept of true being conceived metaphysically. Thus, the ontological conception of truth *qua* true being is absent from Nietzsche's later thought. This leads to a change in the content, but not the structure, of his conception of truth *qua* relational property. That is, Nietzsche still presupposes the notion of truth as correspondence – *not* as correspondence to the thing-in-itself, but simply to reality as conceived by common sense. Transcendent truth, then, has been rejected, and with it the metaphysical appearance/reality distinction that grounded the young Nietzsche's assertion that "truths are illusions of which we have forgotten that they are illusions" (TL 1). For the mature Nietzsche, truths are *not* illusions in that strong metaphysical sense. The truth/falsity dichotomy, as well as the appearance/reality distinction, have been detranscendentalised, and now function only in the world of experience. Thus, for Nietzsche, there *are* truths.

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15 Maudemarie Clark has revealed the confusion in Heidegger's account of Nietzsche's rejection of the 'real world'. She writes that "Heidegger's influential interpretation" (1990: 115)) is at odds with her own. Clark claims that the post-*Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche possesses basically a realist conception of truth, having rejected his earlier claim that all truths are illusions. As we have seen, this movement is echoed in stages five and six of TI IV. Nietzsche's "history of the 'true' world", Clark says "indicates that he gives up ascribing reality to any world other than the empirical world (stage 5), *and* that he recognises that this requires him to relinquish his claim that the empirical world is illusory (stage 6)" (1990: 114). For Clark, Heidegger slides "from the 'supersensuous world' [i.e., the metaphysical world of the thing-in-itself] to the 'supersensuous world of spirit'" (1990: 116). It seems that, for Heidegger, Nietzsche's abolition of the apparent world in stage six is *not* a recognition that once the 'true' metaphysical world drops out, the term 'apparent' in 'apparent world' loses its sense. Heidegger claims, instead, that Nietzsche abolishes the apparent world to render the hierarchy of the apparent (sensuous) world *over* the true (supersensuous – spiritual) world – Nietzsche's alleged 'inverted Platonism' – superfluous. Nietzsche must "advance beyond himself and beyond sheer abolition of the supersensuous", writes Heidegger (1991: 208). But, as Clark observes: "Of course, Nietzsche is not telling us to revere the senses and renounce spiritual concerns ... Heidegger gives us no basis for interpreting [Nietzsche's] history of the 'true' world in terms of this issue" (1990: 117). Heidegger, then, misinterprets stage six of that history by confusing 'human spirituality' with 'metaphysical world'.

For Maudemarie Clark – whose account I have largely relied on here – Nietzsche's assumptions about truth as correspondence commit him only to two fairly straightforward beliefs. Firstly, the "equivalence principle" – that, for example, 'existence is horrible' is true, if and only if existence is horrible – and "common sense realism" – the view that reality exists independently, though not in the metaphysical sense, of people.[16] That Nietzsche adopts a common sense view on truth might come as a surprise to some – to those who view Nietzsche as an iconoclast on all philosophical fronts – but should not, if it is recalled that Nietzsche's attacks on truth are directed at the metaphysical conception of truth. In addition, it is evident that Nietzsche, as we saw in his examination of asceticism, is far more concerned with the "*value* of truth" (GM III.24), rather than with its nature. Indeed, as we witness in the opening section of *Beyond Good and Evil*, he views the former question as prior to the latter. That means viewing truth – and presupposing a 'working concept' of the nature of truth – in the broader context of culture and life, rather than in the confines of epistemology. And it is in this sense that Nietzsche really is iconoclastic.

## V

As I have shown, Nietzsche rejects the distinction of appearance/reality in its metaphysical form that grounded his early denial of truth. But, for many, Nietzsche's doctrine of 'perspectivism' is the mature expression of precisely that denial of truth.[17] The perspectivist thesis is drawn generally from

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16 Clark, 1990: 40

17 Clark observes that "both Richard Schacht and Alexander Nehamas interpret perspectivism so that it implies the falsification thesis" (1990: 151). By 'falsification thesis', Clark means the view that

Nietzsche's terse statement, in the *Nachlass*, that "facts are precisely what there is not, only interpretations" (WP 481).[18] By substituting 'truths' for 'facts', and 'illusions' for 'interpretations', it would appear that Nietzsche, once again, rules out the possibility of truth. In what follows, I will give a brief account of perspectivism and argue that it *is* consistent with a straightforward view of truth. Answers to two of the more standard objections to the view will also be provided.

The only extended account of perspectivism, at least in Nietzsche's published work, occurs in the third essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals*; Nietzsche has just introduced the ascetic priest and in the following section he deviates into the territory of epistemology. As we will see, a full appreciation of the context in which perspectivism is presented goes a long way to dispelling potential misunderstandings of its meaning. Nietzsche objects to the ascetic conception of knowing as "contemplation without interest", and labels "contradictory" its alleged result, "knowledge in itself" (GM III.12).[19] This is because it demands

> that we should think of an eye that is completely unthinkable, an eye turned in no particular direction, in which the active and interpreting forces, through which alone seeing becomes seeing *something*, are supposed to be lacking;

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"human knowledge distorts or falsifies reality" (1990: 127). If true knowledge is false with respect to reality, then it follows that our truths are falsities. It is then a short step to the claim that 'truths are illusions' – the early Nietzsche's denial of truth.

18 For example, see Nehamas, 1985: 42.

19 Later in this section, Nietzsche characterises 'contemplation without interest' in Schopenhauerian terms as the "pure, will-less, painless, timeless knowing subject" (GM III.12). Christopher Janaway has read this section of the *Genealogy* in terms of its Schopenhauerian "subtext" (1998: 27). Janaway suggests that in Nietzsche's account of perspectivism, he "uses Schopenhauerian means to counter Schopenhauer. The thesis of the dependence of intellectual knowledge on the will [i.e., perspectivism] is Schopenhauer's own achievement. For him there should be no will-less objectivity" (1998: 36). Thus, Janaway reveals the ambiguous relation that holds between Schopenhauer and the mature Nietzsche; and advises that, in this context at least, "it would be wrong to speak of [Nietzsche's] outright rejection of Schopenhauer" (*ibid.*).

> these always demand of the eye an absurdity and a nonsense. There is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective 'knowing' ... (*ibid.*)

Nietzsche, then, sets up an analogy between seeing and knowing – or employs a visual metaphor for knowing, as has been previously noted[20] – and bases his critique of 'contemplation without interest' upon this visual model. Contemplation without interest, or disinterested knowing, is a component of the ascetic world-view and is thus founded upon the metaphysical distinction of appearance/reality that, as we saw in the preceding section, Nietzsche rejects. Basically, the view is: to contemplate the truth of the world as it is in itself, the knower must relinquish his extra-cognitive identity (his interests, his "will", "each and every affect" (*ibid.*)) and thus his 'active and interpreting forces', so as to apprehend reality as reality – and so gain 'knowledge in itself'. In short, Nietzsche claims that disinterested knowing is an impossibility, a "nonsensical absurdity" (*ibid.*) – his crucial claim being that there is *only* interested knowing. Cognition is always bound up with (what are for the ascetic) extra-cognitive interests – as David Owen puts it "*logos* is entwined with *eros*"[21] – and the supposed denial of those interests *is itself* another interest, or set of interests, making itself felt. For Nietzsche, the ascetic distinction between cognitive and extra-cognitive interest is simply unintelligible. As he puts it in *Beyond Good and Evil*: "The will to overcome an affect is ultimately only the will of another, or of several other, affects" (BGE 117). In the way that an eye, to attain a pure vision, must deny its own identity *as* an eye, and so

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20 "A striking characteristic of this passage", writes Clark, "is its highly metaphorical character. In calling knowledge 'perspectival', Nietzsche uses a visual metaphor to say something about knowing" (1990: 129). In *Nietzsche, Politics and Modernity*, David Owen opens his discussion of what he calls 'A Perspective Theory of Affects' with the claim that "Nietzsche's perspectivism may be understood as a deployment of the perceptual metaphor against epistemology" (1995: 32).

21 Owen, 1995: 33.

become 'an eye turned in no particular direction', so disinterested cognition, in its attempt to deny all interest, denies itself *as* cognition. An eye is always turned in a particular direction, and so views things from a particular standpoint: 'there is *only* a perspective seeing'. And, similarly, a knowing is always an interested knowing, a knowing from a specific position and point of view, hence there is '*only* a perspective knowing'.

Knowledge, then, presupposes a knower, and to know, the knower must be positioned within the world, and to be positioned within the world is to occupy a particular position – and *that* is to be an intersection (or embodiment) of a particular set of interests. To claim that all knowledge is perspectival is simply to claim that the hoped-for ultimate perspective, the 'god's eye' perspective, is self-contradictory, just as the thing-in-itself is found to be. Perspectivism, then, is a description of the state of knowledge as it is, as against the delusions of ascetic epistemology; or, as Aaron Ridley sums it up, "perspectivism represents an *analytic* of knowledge rather than a redefinition of it".[22] Understood in those terms, Nietzsche's argument is perfectly intelligible. And if there is any doubt that this is what it actually means, one need only read the next line of the unpublished note that was previously cited: "facts are precisely what there is not, only interpretations. We cannot establish any fact 'in itself': perhaps it is folly to want to do such a thing" (WP 481). Nietzsche does not deny the existence of fact as such, then, only of 'fact in itself' (transcendental knowledge); he does not reject truth as such, only transcendent truth. We can know the world, but not as it is in itself, hence our knowledge of the world is always an interpretation of the world, never a complete and final description.

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22 Ridley, 1998: 113.

It is the word 'interpretation', however, that, for some, causes anxiety. It seems, for them, that knowledge is devalued if it is construed as 'only' interpretation. But when Nietzsche says that there are no facts, *only* interpretations, he does not mean 'only' in the sense of 'merely', and so imply that interpretations are of little value. He means 'only' in the sense of – given that there is no 'fact in itself' – 'that is all there possibly can be'. Ultimately, such objections arise from those who presuppose "knowledge in itself" (GM III.12), and so beg the question. An interpretation *might* be false, but it does not then follow that it *is* false, thus many of our interpretations of the world will be true – in the sense that they conform to the relevant standards of rationality. Bearing that in mind, one can only describe knowledge *qua* interpretation as 'merely' an interpretation, if one demands absolute – that is, transcendental – criteria for knowledge, if one demands a complete and final description of the world. But that is precisely what perspectivism denies.

A second objection to perspectivism claims that it leads to relativism. The argument might run as follows: since all knowledge is perspectival – i.e., all knowledge is from a point of view, from a specific set of interests – and since there are many competing claims to knowledge, how are we to determine which is true and which false? The truth of an interpretation is *relative* to the perspective in which it is advanced, thus we are left with a multiplicity of 'incommensurable' perspectives that are all equally true. There is certainly no doubt that Nietzsche – who, in one form or another, devoted his entire philosophical career to the question of the "the *order of rank among values*" (GM I.17) – would not allow such a democracy of perspectives. But the question remains, does perspectivism

allow it? The answer is no. It must be said, first of all, that there *are* incommensurable perspectives, perspectives whose interests, and standards of rationality, are so distant from each other that it would be otiose to attempt a comparison. But there are other perspectives which, though distinct, are close enough to invite comparison. For example, those that make contrasting claims about the same thing, albeit in perspectivally distinct terms. In that case – and in the absence of a transcendental gauge of truth – one must look to a third perspective, a 'meta-perspective', to bring the two conflicting perspectives together in such a way that they are commensurable, and so their competing claims to knowledge may be assessed.[23] That is precisely how a hierarchy of perspectives is formed, and how one interpretation, when found to be lacking, is replaced with another. That, indeed, is one of the ways in which truth is sought. But a potential 'infinite regress' is set up, of course, where conflicting meta-perspectives demand comparative evaluation, *and* their meta-perspectives, and so on. However, beneath that argument again lurks a yearning for the god's eye perspective, for that which is required by those who are in need of an absolute and final evaluation of all things. There is little doubt, however, that Nietzsche is acutely sensitive to such a need; and that his thought may be seen as a set of attempts to overcome the consequences of the loss of the transcendental measure of value – of the fact that "God is dead" (GS 125; 343).

To conclude, then, perspectivism involves only the denial of transcendent truth, not truth as such. And it is important to bear in mind

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[23] I have produced here a variant of Clark's argument in the section of her chapter on perspectivism entitled 'Perspectivism and Incommensurability'. She says "for any two conflicting perspectives, there may be a third perspective that is neutral to what is at issue between the two. Where such a third perspective exists, the two perspectives are commensurable" (1990: 141).

that Nietzsche's brief remarks about "perspective 'knowing'" (GM III.12) are best viewed as a single component (the epistemological) of his much broader critique of the phenomenon of life-denial, of asceticism. As Erich Heller puts it, Nietzsche's concern with knowledge is the concern with the "*psychology and ethics of knowledge*".[24] Thus, as it features in Nietzsche's works, perspectivism is far from being a 'theory of knowledge' in the strict sense of that term.[25]

## VI

In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche identifies the "faith of Plato" as the faith that "God is the truth, that truth is divine" – and then asks: "But what ... if God himself should prove to be our most enduring lie?" (GS 344). For Nietzsche, 'God' – along with the 'real world' and 'transcendent truth' – *is* a lie. "The 'apparent world' is the only one", he writes in the *Twilight of the Idols*, "the 'real world' has only been *lyingly added*" (TI III.2). These ascetic concepts are all lies that have persisted inasmuch as the ascetic ideal has persisted in one form or another. Humanity, then, secured its meaning on earth through a set of illusions, and attendant practices, that spoke of a hatred of life, an impoverishment of life. And in revealing this truth about the guiding concepts of asceticism, Nietzsche sees himself as uncovering an all too real truth, indeed, an ugly truth about mankind. It is this conception of truth, the pessimistic, that I want to consider in the remainder of the chapter.

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24 Heller, 1988: 8.

25 In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche writes: "Philosophy reduced to 'theory of knowledge', in fact no more than a timid epochism and doctrine of abstinence – a philosophy that never gets beyond the threshold and takes pains to *deny* itself the right to enter – that is philosophy in its last throes, an end, an agony, something inspiring pity. How could such a philosophy – *dominate!*" (BGE 204).

As we saw in section II, the artist is dislocated from the transcendent truth that is conceived by asceticism, and since that truth is a lie, it then becomes possible that the artist might bear some relation to actual, and immanent, truth. I will argue that Nietzsche thinks that the artist, in the form of the tragedian, *is* capable of uncovering ugly truths. Indeed, Nietzsche styles himself as the "first *tragic philosopher*" (EH BT.3), as one who shatters time worn illusions so as to reveal the ugly truths that lie beneath. And he labels this tendency of his thought – "*Dionysian* pessimism" (GS 370).

In the opening section of the first essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche speaks of "plain, harsh, ugly, repellent, unchristian, immoral truth", and states that "such truths do exist" (GM I.1). Nietzsche thinks that the *Genealogy* has unearthed such truths; in *Ecce Homo*, he characterises it as an "art of surprise", where "very disagreeable truths are heard grumbling", until "[i]n the end ... a *new* truth becomes visible" (EH GM). Elsewhere in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche asserts that "the truth speaks out of me. – But my truth is *terrible*" (EH IV.1); and, finally, in a famous unpublished note of 1888, he writes simply: "Truth is ugly" (WP 822). Truth, then, can be 'plain' or 'new', as well as 'unchristian' and 'immoral', but it can also be 'terrible' and 'ugly'. And it is evident that Nietzsche is concerned overwhelmingly to reveal truths of the latter kind. Some commentators, notably Julian Young, have interpreted this as signifying Nietzsche's return to the metaphysical pessimism of his youth.[26] But surely

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[26] Erich Heller and David Owen presuppose a similar view to Young's. Heller writes that "the 'truth' in Nietzsche's saying [that 'truth is ugly'] obviously means the true character of existence, and not merely this or that experience in our individual lives that may shock us to death" (1988: 159). For Heller, when Nietzsche says that 'truth is ugly', he makes a metaphysical claim about the 'true character of existence', not about ugliness as experienced. Owen describes the mature Nietzsche's pessimism from "strength" as a "reflexive questioning of the meaning of the world of existence as such" (1994: 59). But in order to do

Nietzsche cannot be saying that truth is *essentially* ugly – i.e., that truth-in-itself is ugly – since, as we have seen, he rejects the concept of metaphysical truth as self-contradictory. Moreover, there are not *only* ugly truths, but also 'plain', 'immoral', and 'new' truths. Nietzsche adopts various perspectives on truth, then, and although the perspective in which truth is found to be ugly is, perhaps, the most important, it is still one "affective interpretation" (GM III.12) amongst others. In light of Nietzsche's explicit rejection of the metaphysical tenets of ascetic epistemology, then, it seems strange to attribute to Nietzsche – solely for the reason that he is attracted to ugly truths – a metaphysical pessimism. But Young – in *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art* – does just that; he attempts to show how "in the end, reluctantly and making every rhetorical effort to disguise this from us ... [Nietzsche] came back ... to [Schopenhauerian] pessimism."[27] Although I doubt that Nietzsche's perspectivism renders Young's argument at all defensible, I will reply to it – on its own terms – since in the course of doing so important questions are raised.

It is undeniable that the mature Nietzsche expresses a renewed interest in the central ideas of *The Birth of Tragedy*: pessimism, the Dionysian-Apollonian, and the tragic. When, in 1886, he reflected upon his first book and wrote the 'Attempt', he reincorporated those ideas back into his work, forcing them into the new context of his post-*Zarathustra* philosophy. As Silk and Stern put it, the 'Attempt' "involved a

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that, one must adopt a perspective that enables one to view 'existence as such', and that can only be the metaphysical perspective, the 'God's eye' perspective. Both Heller and Owen, then, unproblematically attribute to the final Nietzsche a metaphysical pessimism.

27 Young, 1992: 3. The following passages reveal the 'metaphysical pessimism' of the young Nietzsche and Schopenhauer. Nietzsche writes that the "Dionysian man" has "once looked truly into the essence of things" and so gained "true knowledge, an insight into the horrible truth" (BT 7). And, for Schopenhauer, "human life ... is essentially suffering in many forms and a tragic state in every way" (1969: 323[§59]).

reinterpretation of *The Birth of Tragedy* in terms of [Nietzsche's] subsequent outlook."[28] But although Nietzsche re-employs the pessimistic terminology of his youth, it does not then follow, as Young would have it, that the use of such terms "absorb us, once more, back into the world of *The Birth of Tragedy*."[29] To mark the difference between that world and his current world, Nietzsche contrasts (Schopenhauerian) "romantic pessimism" with his own "*Dionysian* pessimism" (GS 370). Young's argument is basically a denial of that distinction; he claims that "what is common to both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche is romanticism, 'romantic pessimism'."[30] Young argues that, for Nietzsche, "pessimism ... is regarded, ultimately, as true", and he suggests that "the truth about human existence is, in the end, as 'ugly' for Nietzsche as it is for Schopenhauer."[31] Existence is indeed ugly for Schopenhauer. His pessimism amounts to the claim that the ultimate truth – the truth-in-itself – about existence, and not only human existence, is ugly. And so, allegedly, for Nietzsche. Young's view originates (quite apart from his penchant for Schopenhauer) from the emphasis that he lays on the unpublished note, where Nietzsche's dictum that "Truth is ugly" (WP 822) appears. A counter-argument, then, must commence there.

The phrase, 'truth is ugly', because of its concision, is ambiguous. To initiate his argument, Young must elicit from it the claim, 'truth is essentially ugly' – but Nietzsche, quite clearly, does not say that. He says simply that 'truth is ugly', and that can be taken to mean, 'truth is essentially ugly', or

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28 Silk and Stern, 1981: 119.

29 Young, 1992: 134.

30 Young, 1992: 150.

31 Young, 1992: 149.

'some truth is ugly', or 'all truth is ugly' (which is not to be confused with the first). In the absence of a context, it is impossible to decide which it is most likely to mean, or should mean. And it is precisely the question of context that brings about the demise of Young's argument. He sets out with a defined position regarding the *Nachlass* – and then ignores it. In his introduction he writes: "(1) no interpretative thesis must be based on *The Will to Power* alone, and (2) passages from that work must never be given interpretative precedence over passages from published works."[32] If Young had followed his own strictures he would have utilised a passage that tells us, in no uncertain terms, what the concept of the 'ugly' actually means for Nietzsche. Given, then, that Young claims to give 'interpretative precedence' to the *Twilight of the Idols* in his account of Nietzsche's mature aesthetic, it is odd that nowhere does he cite the following: "Nothing is beautiful, only man ... the *first* truth of aesthetics. Let us immediately add its second: nothing is ugly but *degenerate* man" (TI IX.20). Nietzsche then adds "the domain of aesthetic judgement is therewith defined" (*ibid.*). That is a fairly crucial passage to ignore in an account of 'Nietzsche's philosophy of art', but given the momentum of Young's argument, it seems that he is compelled to ignore it. The question remains, however, as to the meaning of the note; now that we have a context in place – one that Young ought to endorse – how should we interpret the remark that 'truth is ugly'?

Nietzsche says that 'nothing is ugly but degenerate man'; so strictly speaking, and giving full precedence to that claim, one would be forced simply to abandon the formulation that 'truth is ugly'. Only degenerate man

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32 Young, 1992: 4.

is ugly, and truth is not degenerate man – therefore, truth is not ugly. But that argument misses the point. A reconsideration of its premises, however, will remedy that, and give an insight into Nietzsche's Dionysian – or, perhaps, 'anthropological' – pessimism, while serving also to counter Young's claim. Nietzsche attaches ugliness to the degenerate man, which is to say, the ugliness of the world is conditional upon the existence and activity of the degenerate man. In the preceding section of the *Twilight of the Idols*, entitled 'Beautiful and ugly', Nietzsche writes "Man has *anthropomorphized* the world: that is all" (TI IX.19). Nietzsche's general claim, then, is that value has no ontology outside of value-creating humanity. It is nonsensical, then, to claim that the world-in-itself is ugly, and so that the truth about the world is ugly. In other words, the truth about the world is not that it is essentially ugly, thus truth is *not* essentially ugly. But, as we have seen, Nietzsche's claim is far stronger than that: the world is not essentially anything, since it is a 'nonsensical absurdity' even to make such a statement. So, contrary to Young's interpretation, for Nietzsche, truth as such is not ugly. Nietzsche is not a metaphysical pessimist – he does not 'come back' to Schopenhauer.[33]

That Nietzsche is not making a metaphysical claim about the truth of the world is confirmed by the opening paragraph of the unpublished note, which Young also ignores. In the "total drama of life" (WP 822), Nietzsche writes, "the 'good man' represents ... a form of *exhaustion*" (*ibid.*). Nietzsche then goes on to welcome the "consistency of

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[33] Nietzsche's denial of the possibility of the perspective from which we may take stock of the value of the world as such is made explicit in two passages. First, when he criticises "modern [i.e., Schopenhauerian] pessimism", he says: "We laugh as soon as we encounter the juxtaposition of 'man *and* world'" (GS 346). Second, in a consideration of Socrates' 'pessimism': "value judgements concerning life, for or against, can in the last resort never be true ... *the value of life cannot be estimated.* Not by a living man, because he is a party to the dispute" (TI II.2).

Christianity in conceiving the good man as ugly" (*ibid.*). The 'good man' is the exhausted man, and, as we saw in the preceding chapter, exhaustion is another mode of degeneracy. In the note, then, it is primarily degenerate man who is ugly; and if Young had examined it in its entirety – and in the macro-context of the *Twilight of the Idols* – he would have been unable to draw his false conclusion. Given Nietzsche's perspectivism, and his anthropology of value (which is, in fact, a particular application of his perspectivism), he can regard only *some* truths as ugly – and there are others which are plain, or unchristian, or new. The fact that Nietzsche thinks, as he evidently does, that ugly truths are the most important – to the extent that he seems to believe that 'all truths are ugly' – requires an alternative explanation, then, to that provided by Young. And that is a question that I will attempt to provide an answer to in the following and final section, where I will discuss Nietzsche's tragic philosophy and its relation to ugly truth.

## VII

In the *Twilight of the Idol*s, Nietzsche suggests that tragic art "reveals much that is ugly, hard, questionable in life" (TI IX.24).[34] To reveal the ugly in life is to reveal an ugly truth about life. Thus, it is clear that Nietzsche sees the tragic artist as having access to, and laying bare, ugly truths and, given that this is Nietzsche's most frequent characterisation of tragedy, the laying bare of ugly truths can be interpreted as the tragedian's principal task. However, the unpublished note I examined in the previous

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[34] Whenever the tragic artist – who is the central instance of the Dionysian or overabundant artist – comes into view, Nietzsche employs a specific, and recurring, set of terms. 'Ugliness' and 'terror' are, as we have seen, associated with truth, but they occur repeatedly in the context of "*Dionysian* pessimism" (GS 370) along with 'questionable', "problematic", "evil" (ASC 1) and "strange" (EH BT.2).

section would appear to deny art this purpose. The second – and most well known – part of the note reads:

> For a philosopher to say, 'the good and the beautiful are one', is infamy; if he goes on to add, 'also the true', one ought to thrash him. Truth is ugly.
>
> We possess *art* lest we *perish of the truth*.[35]
>
> (WP 822)

Echoing a passage from *Beyond Good and Evil* – in which he claims that "those who would know [existence] completely would perish" (BGE 39) – Nietzsche states that so as to prevent our perishing from the ugly truth we possess art as a refuge from the ugly truth. Nietzsche construes 'art' here very broadly: it is that which can beautify or "shroud", "sweeten", "blunt" and "falsif[y]" ugly truth in such a way that it – and so life in general – is made tolerable or endurable. This is a variation of Nietzsche's neo-Apollonian conception of art, another instance of which – art as sanctified untruth – was discussed in sections II and III in the context of the ascetic ideal.[36] The idea that Apollonian art beautifies ugly truth, however, is consistent with the claim that the function of tragic art is to reveal ugly truth. The Apollonian aesthetic does not deny the possibility that art is capable of grasping ugly truths, rather it presupposes that ugly truth has already been grasped. Put succinctly, in order to beautify ugly truth – the function of the Apollonian – one must have first revealed it – and *that* is the function of tragic or Dionysian art.

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[35] Erich Heller writes: "This utterance, at once crystalline and tumultuous, brilliant and violent, was written by Nietzsche in 1888, the year preceding his mental collapse. It is contained in one of the posthumous notes that have been collected in *The Will to Power* and has the resonance of last words, words spoken or cried out with the assured despair or hope that allows of no debate ..." (1988: 158).

[36] As the Apollonian Greeks of *The Birth of Tragedy* "knew and felt the terror ... of existence" (BT 3), and thus "had to interpose between [themselves] and life the radiant dream-birth of the Olympians" (*ibid.*), so the artist of *The Will to Power* fragment interposes between himself and truth, 'art' – lest he is destroyed by the ugly truth about life.

In his mature period, Nietzsche conceives of the Apollonian aesthetic – or *la gaya scienza* as he likes to refer to it – as the "reward of a long, brave, industrious and subterranean seriousness" (GM Pref 7) and it is to be used "for the purpose of restoration" (HA II Pref 5). Thus, having plumbed the subterranean depths wherein ugly truth – that is, degeneracy – resides, Nietzsche views his return to the beautiful surface as a reward for this strenuous activity. And while in the realm of beautiful surfaces, Nietzsche restores his strength so that he may plumb the depths again and thus continue the arduous task of 'subterranean seriousness'. The process of employing Apollonian appearance in the service of tragic reality manifests itself, so Nietzsche suggests, differently in different individuals. Thus he asks: "what do *you* know ... of how much falsity [i.e., appearance, Apollonian art] I shall *require* if I am to continue to permit myself the luxury of *my* truthfulness [i.e., reality, tragic art]?" (HA I Pref 1). Like his Greeks, then, the Apollonian Nietzsche is "superficial – *out of profundity*" (*ibid.*).

Nietzsche claims that it is the principal task of tragic art to reveal ugly truths. As I have already pointed out, Nietzsche thinks of himself as the "first *tragic philosopher*" (EH BT.3) and it is the concept of tragic philosophy that I want to examine in the remainder of this section.[37] In this context the distance between Nietzsche and his tragic artist – and so

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[37] Nietzsche introduces the idea of 'tragic philosophy' in *Ecce Homo*. Having just cited some of his own remarks on tragedy from the *Twilight of the Idols* (TI X.5), Nietzsche writes: "In this sense I have the right to understand myself as the first *tragic philosopher* [tragischen Philosophen] – that is to say the extremest antithesis and antipode of a pessimistic philosopher. Before me this transposition of the Dionysian into a philosophical pathos did not exist: *tragic wisdom* was lacking" (EH BT.3). The following citations imply the concept of tragic philosophy. Firstly, Nietzsche describes philosophy in 'tragic' terms (see footnote 34), it is "a seeking after everything strange and questionable in existence" (EH Fore 3). And, secondly, he insists repeatedly that he is the "last disciple of the philosopher Dionysus" (TI X.5; BGE 259; EH Fore 2), and Dionysus, as we know, is the god of tragedy (TI X.4-5).

between philosophy and art in general – narrows. In an attempt to characterise the basic nature of tragic philosophy, I will consider two things: Nietzsche's philosophical *praxis* (along with his generally insightful descriptions of this *praxis*) and his concept of the tragic artist. Although these two elements diverge in various and important ways, I suggest that the element which they *do* share – the general tendency that Nietzsche labels "*Dionysian* pessimism" (GS 370) – is the kernel from which Nietzsche's tragic philosophy arises.[38] In what follows, I will centre my discussion around two closely related questions. Firstly, how are ugly truths revealed and what is their characteristic nature? And, secondly, what, for Nietzsche, is the purpose and value of practising this mode of philosophy?

Nietzsche writes that tragedy "reveals" truths (TI IX.24); and, elsewhere, he describes the Hellenic "*craving for the ugly*" as the "severe will of the older Greeks to pessimism, to tragic myth, to the image of everything underlying existence that is frightful ... destructive" (ASC 4). Since Nietzsche tells us that "nothing is ugly but *degenerate* man" (TI IX.20) – and so, derivatively, the ideals, practices and works of degenerate man – it can be said that tragic philosophy seeks to reveal the presence of the degenerate man in those areas of human life (culture) in which his presence is not immediately apparent. Thus, tragic philosophy employs the canonical philosophical distinction of appearance/reality. It 'reveals' the 'underlying' truth of an ideal, practice, or work to be degenerate – which is

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[38] For example, there is a formal distinction between tragic art and tragic philosophy. For Nietzsche, authentic tragedy is always poetical-musical, while tragic philosophy will always be in the form of philosophical prose. Thus the aesthetic resources of tragic art – and so its powers of persuasion and seduction – are unavailable to the tragic philosopher. We may grasp this distinction in terms of the contrast between Wagner's art and Nietzsche's philosophy. Having said that, in broadly *cognitive* terms, for example, tragic art and tragic philosophy admit of an overlap. Nietzsche calls the tragic insight – in art and philosophy – the "*profoundest*", and the "insight most strictly confirmed and maintained by truth and knowledge" (EH BT.2).

to say, a non-ugly appearance is found to mask an ugly reality. Or, more properly, that which was hitherto considered to be reality – a non-ugly reality – is now revealed to be an appearance of an underlying reality that is ugly and so degenerate. Viewed in this way, tragic philosophy is simply Nietzschean critique, a mode of critique that achieves its ends through historical and psychological (or 'symptomatological') interpretation – through, in other words, *genealogy*.

Nietzsche's interpretation of the ascetic ideal, for example, is the genealogical unmasking of that which is seen to be of high value as the product of that which is low in value – degeneracy. Nietzsche calls that ideal – as exemplified by Christianity – a "great thing" (GM III.27), in comparison to which "all the other interests of human existence seem ... petty and narrow" (GM III.23). Moreover, the ascetic ideal possesses enormous "*power*" (*ibid.*) and it was the only ideal that could answer the question: "why man at all?" (GM III.28). Nietzsche then attempts to reveal the ugly truth that lies behind the apparent greatness and power of the ascetic ideal. He argues that "*the ascetic ideal springs from the protective instinct of a degenerating life*" (GM III.13). Nietzsche's own craving for the ugly, then, is his need to locate the degenerate man at the root of higher value.

But it is clear that, for Nietzsche, tragic philosophy is not only critical philosophy. We can begin to come to an understanding of the wider significance of tragic philosophy by considering the following passage from *Beyond Good and Evil*.

> The more a psychologist – a born and inevitable psychologist and unriddler of souls – applies himself to the more exquisite cases and human beings, the greater becomes the danger that he might suffocate from pity. He *needs* hardness and cheerfulness more than anyone else. For the corruption, the ruination of the higher men ... is the rule: it is terrible to have such a rule always before one's eyes. The manifold torture of the psychologist who has discovered this ruination, who discovers this whole inner hopelessness of the higher man ... – may perhaps lead him one day to turn against his own lot, embittered, and to make an attempt at self-destruction ...[39]
> (BGE 269)

In this passage, Nietzsche describes how the psychological unriddling of the 'higher men' inevitably leads to their 'corruption' and 'ruination'. In other words, inside every great individual, Nietzsche finds a degenerate and impoverished individual pulling the strings. Michael Tanner has written that "we tend to take pleasure in the notion that great men are, in various ways, human, all too human."[40] Tanner continues by suggesting that "we take revenge on the greatness of men ... by prying into them with an intensity of scrutiny from which no one would emerge unscathed."[41] In light of Tanner's unriddling of the unriddler, is not Nietzsche's self-proclaimed tragic philosophy merely the petty revenge of the small upon the great? A revenge, moreover, that is motivated by the desire for pleasure? If we take the cited passage seriously, however, it is clear that

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39 Nietzsche's claim that the psychologist needs 'hardness' and 'cheerfulness' reaffirms the importance of the Apollonian surface – where cheerfulness is experienced – for tragic philosophy. The final thought of the cited passage is echoed in the following aphorism, also from *Beyond Good and Evil*: "Whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster. And when you look long into an abyss, the abyss also looks into you" (BGE 146).

40 Tanner, 1990: 23.

41 *Ibid.*. Elsewhere Tanner writes that Nietzsche's demythologisation of Wagnerian myth is a "game that Nietzsche is expert at playing, one of his fundamental strategies for dealing with the depressing nature of the world he saw surrounding him. Yet it is not a hard game to play; its chief snag, after a time, seems to be that it is too hard to lose" (1996: 65). I provide a reply to Tanner in the main text. But I will observe here, in defence of Nietzsche, that he recognises when it is appropriate and inappropriate to the play the belittling game. Nietzsche writes that "it is characteristic of more refined humanity to respect 'the mask' and not to indulge in psychology and curiosity in the wrong place" (BGE 270).

Nietzsche takes no pleasure in demystifying greatness, and that it does not involve revenge as much as torture – self-torture. Nietzsche speaks of the "manifold torture of the psychologist" and describes as "terrible" that the "ruination of the higher men ... is the rule" (*ibid.*). What Nietzsche is describing, it seems to me, is the ruination of "precisely those whom one love[s] most" (BGE 55), that is, one's heroes. And here we return to tragedy. Nietzsche's psychological unriddling of the higher man is his "*sacrifice*", or ritual destruction, of humanity's "highest types" (TI X.5). And we can only understand Nietzsche's "*craving for the ugly*" (ASC 4) – his reduction of greatness to degeneracy – in terms of the tragic artist's craving for the ugly.

Tragic philosophy, like tragic art, is a form of self-cruelty. It arises from the will to seek out and confront ugliness or degeneracy – that which will cause one to suffer, or, for Nietzsche, in the most extreme cases, to 'perish'. It is the "*will*" that Nietzsche in *Beyond Good and Evil* calls "a kind of cruelty of the intellectual conscience and taste" (BGE 230). It is, in other words, philosophy practised as a "severe discipline", in which the "courageous thinker" (*ibid.*) disciplines himself through self-cruelty, through confronting that which causes him pain.[42] The tragic philosopher sacrifices greatness by revealing it to be intimately related to degeneracy. And by destroying the higher man in this way he confronts the ugly and

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[42] Nietzsche describes the self-referential dimension of tragic philosophy – or 'courageous pessimism' – in the following passage: "I thus ... took sides *against* myself and *for* everything painful and difficult precisely for *me*: – thus I again found my way to that courageous pessimism that is the antithesis of all romantic mendacity, and also, as it seems to me today, the way to 'myself', to *my* task" (HA II Pref 4). Speaking of *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche writes: "psychology is practiced with admitted hardness and cruelty [*Grausamkeit*]" (EH BGE.2). And in *The Case of Wagner*, in his domestication of Wagnerian myth, Nietzsche writes: "'But the *content* of the Wagnerian texts! their mythic content! their eternal content!' – Question: how can we test this content, this eternal content? – The chemist replies: translate Wagner into reality, into the modern – let us be even crueler [*grausamer*] – into the bourgeois!" (CW 9). Is not Nietzsche also exercising self-cruelty in his cruelty to Wagner?

painful truth that in all hitherto examined cases, the "ruination of the higher men ... is the rule" (BGE 269).

For Nietzsche, the value of tragic philosophy is twofold. Firstly, as with tragic art, Nietzsche suggests that it is only the strong who are able to sacrifice those whom they love most. Thus, tragic philosophy is an expression of power, or as Nietzsche puts it, a "pessimism of *strength*" (ASC 1). The philosopher affirms his own strength through the destruction of higher value and the confrontation with impoverished value. Secondly, for Nietzsche, the practice of the "discipline of suffering" (BGE 225) – the self-cruelty that is involved in the practice of tragic philosophy – is, from the perspective of life, highly desirable. For it is only such a discipline that, so Nietzsche claims, "has created all enhancements of man so far" (*ibid.*). Tragic philosophy *qua* discipline of suffering, then, is a fundamentally life-affirming philosophy, since, for Nietzsche, it is life-enhancing. Thus, from out of the ritual destruction of the highest values, there emerges the possibility of a new set of values. "I obey my Dionysian nature", Nietzsche writes in *Ecce Homo*, "which does not know how to separate doing No from saying Yes" (EH IV.2). The idea that creation necessarily presupposes destruction is fundamental to the Nietzschean tragic insight.[43]

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[43] As Nietzsche writes at the close of the second essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals*: "But have you ever asked yourselves sufficiently how much the erection of *every* ideal on earth has cost? How much reality has to be misunderstood and slandered ... how much 'God' sacrificed every time? If a temple is to be erected *a temple must be destroyed*: that is the law – let anyone who can show me a case in which it is not fulfilled!" (GM II.24).

# Chapter Four

## Vitalistic Aestheticism

The principal concern of this chapter is to reconstruct and clarify Nietzsche's conception of the relation between aesthetics and morality. In this reconstruction, I move from Nietzsche's critical aesthetics to his vitalistic aestheticism, which is his broadest and deepest conceptualisation of the aesthetic. The idea that art is intimately bound up with life makes up the core of Nietzsche's vitalistic aestheticism. He arrives at many of his more penetrating conclusions with respect to moralities and cultures by viewing these phenomena through the prism of his vitalist aesthetic.

I begin with a brief account of Nietzsche's characteristic mode of interpretation, or 'symptomatology' as it is often labelled. Nietzsche gives critical priority to art over and against morality in his diagnosis of culture. Although this tendency runs throughout his writings, it is best exemplified by *The Case of Wagner*, where the composer is presented as *the* symptom of decadent modernity. I turn then to the more general question of the contrast between aesthetic value and moral value. Nietzsche establishes an indissoluble bond between vital and artistic activity, and suggests that no

such bond exists between the vital and the moral. I begin to make sense of this idea in terms of Nietzsche's claim that the work of art is an embodiment of the instinctive valuations of the artist. And it is the question of the constraint of vital instinct that supplies the basis for Nietzsche's contrast between art and morality. I argue, first of all, that the lack of moral constraint in the realm of the aesthetic leads to the free squandering of the artist's instinct. But although the artist is not morally constrained, he possesses, nonetheless, a constraint of his own – the artistic constraint of style. Thus, I attempt to show that moral constraint is wholly instinct-resistant, while artistic constraint actually cultivates instinct. It is in this sense that aesthetics is distinct from morality. In the final section of the chapter, I bring the creative, aesthetic, and stylistic aspects of Nietzsche's vitalistic aestheticism together, in preparation for my account of his critique of morality and aesthetic counter-ideal that will occupy the following chapter.

## I

Nietzsche's concern with morality is the central manifestation of his deeper philosophical concern with culture and the value of cultures. He construes morality (*Moral* or *Sittlichkeit*) in its broadest, or neutral, sense in terms of the notion of 'custom' (*Sitte*). Thus, in a passage from *Human, All Too Human* to which he refers in the preface to *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche writes: "To be moral, to act in accordance with custom ... means to practice obedience towards a law or tradition established from of old" (HA I.96). Tradition presupposes a people or community and customary action is "above all directed at the preservation of a *community*" (*ibid.*). In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche criticises the "science of morals" for not

posing, what is for him, the central question of moral philosophy: "the problem of morality itself" (BGE 186) or of the "*value* of morality" (GM Pref 5) as he puts it elsewhere. Thus he asks for a "*typology* of morals" (BGE 186); the moral philosopher must assess the relative value of diverse moralities so as to ascertain the value of the morality of his own culture.

Nietzsche, then, is concerned above all to evaluate contemporary Western morality, and his most sustained effort in this direction occurs in *On the Genealogy of Morals*. I will begin by briefly characterising Nietzsche's method of 'genealogy' (which may be understood as the principal form of typology) so as to place Nietzsche's symptomatological mode of interpretation into context. Nietzsche's demand for a "*critique* of moral values" is his demand for a knowledge of

> the conditions and circumstances under which the values grew up, developed and changed (morality as consequence, as symptom, as mask, as tartufferie, as illness, as misunderstanding; but also morality as cause, as remedy, as stimulant, as restraint, as poison) ... (GM Pref 6)

In this passage, Nietzsche loosely characterises what 'genealogy' as a critique involves.[1] It must bring under its purview, firstly, the conditions of the origin of a value, and, secondly, the subsequent development of that value. Psychology – within the context of an historical account – is the principal tool through which values are interpreted. In the parenthesis, Nietzsche names the various perspectives that may be adopted to interpret

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[1] This passage may be read along with section 12 of Essay Two where Nietzsche undertakes a more sustained discussion of "historical research" (GM II.12). He makes explicit his opposition to that mode of history that confuses the "purpose" for the "origin" (*ibid.*). In the preface he calls the latter an "upside-down and perverse species of genealogical hypothesis, the genuinely *English* type" (GM Pref 4). Nietzsche's method of genealogy has been given much attention. The most high profile treatment is Foucault's 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History'. For a response to Foucault, see Geuss, 1999, 'Nietzsche and Genealogy'; and for a wider survey of the concept of genealogy, see Schacht, ed., 1994.

the birth and development of moral value, the two basic categories being morality as 'consequence' and as 'cause'. Morality "as symptom" (*ibid.*), then, is Nietzsche's initial conceptualisation of the category of morality as consequence. It is, then, a little misleading to suggest, as Daniel Conway does, that Nietzsche's genealogy of morals "represents a first ... attempt to deploy the 'objective' critical method that would soon evolve into symptomatology."[2] As we will see shortly, symptomatology *does* come to assume greater importance for Nietzsche; but this represents, however, not the evolution of genealogy into symptomatology, but rather the growth of one component of genealogy. Nietzsche continues to practice historico-psychological critique subsequent to the *Genealogy*, most explicitly in *The Anti-Christ*.[3]

In the *Twilight of the Idols*, where Nietzsche embarks upon a synoptic overview of his philosophy, the growing importance of the conception of morality as symptom becomes manifest. The following passage fleshes out the claim – from *Beyond Good and Evil* – that moralities are "merely a *sign language of the affects*" (BGE 187). Nietzsche writes that

> as *semiotics* [moral judgement] remains of incalculable value: it reveals the most precious realities of cultures and inner worlds which did not *know* enough to 'understand' themselves. Morality is merely sign-language, merely symptomatology: one must already know *what* it is about to derive profit from it. (TI VII.1)

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2 Conway, 1997: 37.

3 In *The Anti-Christ*, Nietzsche tackles the "problem of the *origin* of Christianity" (AC 24); and presents the "history of Israel" as a "typical history of the *denaturalising* of natural values" (AC 25).

Morality, then, is 'merely symptomatology', or more accurately, morality is conceived as a set of symptoms that when correctly interpreted reveal the 'most precious realities of cultures and inner worlds'.[4] Those unenlightened individuals who do 'not know enough to understand themselves', are those who have not taken the step of conceiving morality – their morality – as a problem. They will possess at best only a superficial understanding of themselves; and they are exemplified, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, by those "moral philosophers" who have "never laid eyes on the real problems of morality" (BGE 186). The symptomatologist, on the other hand, who has taken a step back from morality and so is in a position to assess its value, will have a deeper understanding of the individual, and of cultures. The symptomatologist is a "vivisectionist of the spirit" (GM III.4), to apply one of Nietzsche's self-descriptions. There is one further point that I want to make about this passage. Although Nietzsche claims that the semiotic interpretation of morality reveals the "most precious realities of cultures and inner worlds" (TI VII.1), his primary aim is to reveal the inner worlds of *cultures* rather than individuals. As we will see, he does this by attending to individuals who are representative or exemplary of a culture. Nietzsche's rationale is that the macro-reality of a culture is most readily grasped by attending to the micro-reality of figures who exemplify that culture.[5]

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[4] In a sense the conception of morality as symptom presupposes a prior evaluation of morality. The concept of a symptom is associated primarily with medicine, and in that context symptoms are invariably symptoms of disease. To view morality as a symptom, then, presupposes the view that it is the result of, or is related to, 'illness'. This point is confirmed by Nietzsche's remark that 'one must already know what' morality is about 'to derive profit from it'. For Nietzsche, (slave) morality is a sickness and thus, insofar as his attention is turned to morality, Nietzsche styles himself as a "physician" (CW 5). Nietzsche's symptomatology, then, is not only a perspective from which specific moral values may be criticised, it is *already* a critique of morality as such. It should be said, however, that Nietzsche – as is evident from the citation – associates 'symptomatology' with the more neutral 'semiotics'. In this sense, there can be both symptoms and "signs of ascent and decline" (EH I.1). Unless otherwise indicated, I will employ 'symptomatology' in this neutral sense.

[5] Daniel Conway writes: "Nietzsche apparently conceives of peoples and ages as *macro*-capacitors, of which their constituent souls, or *micro*-capacitors, are reproductions in miniature" (1998: 68). As I argue in section II, while individuals are miniature reproductions of a culture, for Nietzsche, individuals are of interest only to the extent that they also exemplify the commanding needs or instincts of a culture.

In the following lines from Book V of *The Gay Science*, which are earlier than both of the passages discussed so far, Nietzsche describes the characteristic interpretative movement which lies at the core of what he would later call 'symptomatology'. He writes

> my eye grew ever sharper for that most difficult and captious form of *backward inference* ... from the work to the maker, from the deed to the doer, from the ideal to those who *need it*, from every way of thinking and valuing to the commanding need behind it. (GS 370)

Translating this passage into semiotic terms; it can be said, first of all, that symptomatology operates within the conceptual structure of the appearance/reality distinction. A symptom is that which appears to us, to which we have direct access, and when it is 'decoded', it reveals a hidden reality, to which we have only indirect access by means of the symptom.[6] For Nietzsche, all thought and valuation – in the form of works, deeds, ideals – are symptoms of a 'commanding need' which resides in an individual – makers, doers, idealists. Nietzsche infers backwards from the symptom (appearance) *to* the need (reality) which prompted that symptom. And that need will arise from either a simple lack of life – impoverishment – or, an excess of life – abundance.

In this passage Nietzsche conceives of symptoms as manifestations of need, but in the same section he speaks of "desire" and "will" (GS 370), and elsewhere, of "impulses" (TI VII.2), "drives" (TI IX.45) and "instincts"

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[6] Gilles Deleuze – who is so taken with this Nietzschean technique that he claims that the "whole of philosophy is a symptomatology"– draws a distinction between an appearance and a symptom. He says that a "phenomenon is not an appearance ... but a sign, a symptom which finds its meaning in an existing force" (1983: 3).

(CW 5). Add to this Nietzsche's claim, cited earlier, that "moralities are ... a *sign language of the affects*" (BGE 187), and it becomes clear that there are a number of psychological phenomena that can stand as the reality behind the symptom. As Richard Schacht has observed – in his account of Nietzsche's "theory of affects" – Nietzsche "employs such terms as 'affects', 'drives' and 'instincts' more or less interchangeably."[7] While Schacht is right to underline the fact that Nietzsche does not possess any systematic 'theory of affects', there is, nevertheless, one important contrast that informs much of Nietzsche's psychology. Nietzsche claims that "our entire instinctive life" can be explained "as the development and ramification ... of the will to power" (BGE 36). In chapter one I drew a distinction between the will to power *qua* instinct and the will to power *qua* feeling or affect. The opposition of instinct/affect is best understood in terms of the dichotomy of unconscious/conscious (or involuntary/voluntary) and is presupposed by Nietzsche in much of his psychological observations. These dualities are fundamental: all of the terms that were listed above take on both instinctive and affective forms. Nietzsche claims that the "instincts" are the "foundation of the affects" (BGE 258); thus, for example, the instinctive need for power will manifest itself as the affective need for power, and the latter is spiritualised or transfigured into works, deeds and ideals. However, as we saw in chapter two, there can be a discrepancy between conscious affect and unconscious instinct and it is clear that Nietzsche is primarily concerned with the latter. This is the life and reality

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[7] Schacht, 1983: 317. Daniel Conway has managed to make some sense of the hierarchy between these terms by drawing a distinction between "drive or impulse (*Trieb*) and instinct (*Instinkt*)" (1998: 30). Conway suggests that Nietzsche's "writings from the year 1888 suggest the development of [this] subtle distinction" (*ibid.*). While "drives and impulses themselves remain 'invisible' ... the instincts admit of indirect empirical observation by virtue of the traces they manifest in detectable, public patterns of behaviour" (1998: 31). Drives, then, are 'deeper' than instincts. The proper investigation of these questions would necessitate an entire book. For the purposes of my examination of Nietzsche's aesthetics, the contrast between conscious affect/unconscious instinct is sufficient. Thus, I will suppress Conway's distinction between Nietzschean *Trieb* and *Instinkt*.

that he attempts to lay bare in his semiotic 'depth psychology'.[8] Makers, doers, idealists may possess all manner of affective needs, but, as we will see in section IV, Nietzsche wants to reveal the commanding need – or the commanding instinct – that lies behind them.

Nietzsche's symptomatology, then, emerges as one element of his larger critical method of genealogy, and its initial application is to moral values. Such valuations are symptomatic of an underlying life – ascending or declining – and by revealing those fundamental life-conditions, Nietzsche claims that he is able to evaluate moral values according to his criterion of 'life'. As we have seen, it is not only morality that is symptomatic of life, but "every way of thinking and valuing" (GS 370), thus, art too, "the work" (*ibid.*), can reveal the basic needs that, for Nietzsche, constitute life. As we will see, the artwork is not merely one of many equally informative symptoms, it is *the* privileged index of life. In the following section, I will begin to explain why Nietzsche gives methodological precedence to the aesthetic.

## II

*The Case of Wagner* is a critique of Wagner's art, but it is more than that. It is also a critique of modernity. For Nietzsche, modern European culture is characterised by decadence, it is, in other words, an example of lower culture. In the preface to *The Case of Wagner* Nietzsche writes:

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[8] In *The Case of Wagner*, Nietzsche's suggests that Wagner has a conscious (and affective) grasp of a version of the dichotomy of abundance/impoverishment, but his unconscious (and instinctual) failure to grasp the dichotomy in its proper (i.e., Nietzschean) form is betrayed through his art.

> Nothing has preoccupied me more profoundly than the problem of decadence – I had reasons. 'Good and evil' is merely a variation of that problem. Once one has developed a keen eye for the symptoms of decline, one understands morality, too ... one understands ... impoverished life ... (*ibid.*)

Nietzsche's preoccupation with decadence is his preoccupation with the problem of modern culture, and 'good and evil' is a 'variation' of that problem. The expression 'good and evil' is Nietzsche's shorthand for "slave morality" (GM I.10) – that which he had previously scrutinised in *On the Genealogy of Morals*. For Nietzsche, "morality" – contemporary morality that is – is an array of "symptoms" that speak of "decline" and "impoverished life" (CW Pref). Since good and evil is "merely a variation" (*ibid.*) of the problem of decadent culture, it follows that the problem admits of variation – of, at the very least, one more manifestation. For the Nietzsche of *The Case of Wagner*, the question of the value of modernity is addressed most pertinently by turning to another of its variations: art. And that involves turning away from morality as such. Nietzsche asks: "confronted with the labyrinth of the modern soul, where could [the philosopher] find a guide more initiated ... than Wagner?" (*ibid.*). In the *Genealogy*, morality is Nietzsche's supreme guide to decadent modern culture, but in *The Case of Wagner*, morality is replaced by art. Nietzsche writes:

> Through Wagner modernity speaks most intimately ... having forgotten all sense of shame ... one has almost completed an account of the value of what is modern once one has gained clarity about ... Wagner. (*ibid.*)

Art in the form of Wagner, then, is not only one more variation of the problem of decadent modernity, it is the most privileged one, since

decadence 'speaks *most* intimately' through Wagner – and so more intimately than it speaks through morality. Elsewhere Nietzsche writes: "Our physicians ... confront their most interesting case in Wagner ... a very complete case" (CW 5); and he calls Wagner the "*most instructive case*" in the "*diagnosis of the modern soul*" (CW Epil). For Nietzsche as philosopher of culture, then, Wagner is an extraordinarily rich and exemplary specimen of the "impoverished life" that underpins modernity (CW Pref).

In *The Case of Wagner*, Nietzsche gives semiotic priority to Wagner's art in the determination of the value of modern culture. This is not to say that Wagner's art *per se* is more valuable than contemporary morality, only that his art possesses methodological value in the interpretation of modernity. Nietzsche's backward inference from symptom *qua* Wagnerian work of art is not as fraught with complexity – i.e., it is less "difficult" (GS 370) – than his inference from symptom *qua* contemporary moral deed or ideal. A number of questions now arise. Why does Nietzsche think that he can gain access to the "*modern soul*" (*ibid.*), and not only Wagner's soul, through the interpretation of his art? It seems that, for Nietzsche, Wagner somehow *exemplifies* the modern soul. But there is a basic sense in which all members of modern culture represent that culture. So what makes Wagner more exemplary than any other modern figure? We may then ask: bearing in mind that it is Wagner's art through which modern culture speaks most intimately, is it right to infer from this, and attribute to Nietzsche, the general claim that artists as such are the most instructive cases in the diagnosis of culture? And if that inference is correct, what properties does art possess such that it is more intimate with culture than is morality? In the remainder of this section, I will supply an

answer to the first question by describing Nietzsche's concept of an exemplar of culture. And in the following section, I will show that Nietzsche privileges art as such – not only Wagner's art – in the evaluation of culture. This is because Nietzsche thinks that art is related to the underlying life – in a way that morality is not – that gives culture its value. In other words, art is more transparent to the instincts of ascending or declining life of which cultures are an expression.

In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche explicates his mode of critique – or "practice in warfare" as he puts it – in "four propositions" (EH I.7). Only two of these are of relevance to the present discussion. Firstly, Nietzsche says that he "attack[s] only causes that are victorious" (*ibid.*); and, secondly, that he "never attack[s] persons", but only "employ[s] the person as a strong magnifying glass with which one can make visible a general but furtive state of distress" (*ibid.*). These two propositions make up Nietzsche's concept of an 'exemplar of culture'. Nietzsche, then, confines his attention to 'victorious' causes, to those figures who are a "*success*" (*ibid.*) within a culture, and so are valued by that culture. But, at least in the case of "Wagner's *success*" (CW 6), the bond between culture and exemplar of culture is much stronger than that. In Wagner's art "all that the modern world requires most urgently is mixed in the most seductive manner" writes Nietzsche (CW 5). Wagner thus responds to the most urgent requirements, or the needs, of modern culture – his art is the drug that modernity craves. On this interpretation, it can be said that a cultural exemplar is a figure that a culture values highly because that figure gratifies the culture's most urgent needs. To exemplify a culture, a person

must exemplify – in whatever form – the most urgent needs of a culture.[9] This is what distinguishes the cultural exemplar proper from the figure who exemplifies a culture simply by being a part of that culture. Although that figure will exemplify certain needs of a culture, it takes a victorious figure to bring forth and crystallise the most urgent and, perhaps, "commanding need" of a culture (GS 370). As we will see, Nietzsche regards art as particularly efficacious in this respect. For Nietzsche, then, an exemplar of culture is a "strong magnifying glass" who reveals "general ... state[s] of distress" (EH I.7). In other words, the exemplar embodies cultural (i.e., 'general') needs (i.e., 'states of distress'). In the exemplary individual the general is crystallised into a particular, and more concrete, form. This is Nietzsche's conception of an exemplar of culture – of that figure who embodies, and so is symptomatic of, the "most precious realities of cultures" (TI VII.1).

## III

For Nietzsche, it is not only Wagner's art that is exemplary of modern culture, art as such is a manifestation of the vital instincts that ground and give value to culture. But since morality is *also* an expression of the life of a culture, why does Nietzsche privilege art as the most "intimate" cultural expression, as that which has "forgotten all sense of shame" (CW Pref)? It is because Nietzsche thinks that art is inextricably bound up with life. This idea, which I call Nietzsche's *vitalistic aestheticism*, is presupposed in

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[9] By embodying that which satisfies cultural need, rather than the need itself, Wagner's art exemplifies cultural need inferentially. As we have seen, Nietzschean interpretation is characterised by the inference from the craved (symptom-appearance) to the craving (life-reality). But it is also possible for an individual to exemplify the cultural need itself (as opposed to the needful).

much of what he writes. It is given unambiguous expression, however, in the epilogue to *The Case of Wagner.*

> In its measure of strength every age also possesses a measure for what virtues are permitted and forbidden to it. Either it has the virtues of *ascending* life ... Or the age itself represents declining life ... Aesthetics is tied indissolubly to these ... presuppositions: there is an aesthetics of *décadence*, and there is a *classical* aesthetics ... In the narrower sphere of so-called moral values one cannot find a greater contrast than that between a *master morality* and the morality of *Christian* value concepts ... (CW Epil)

I would like to draw three points from this passage. Firstly, Nietzsche draws a distinction between different ages on the basis of his fundamental dichotomy of ascending/declining life. For Nietzsche, the term 'age' is interchangeable with the concept 'culture', and the distinction between an age that represents ascending life and one that exemplifies declining life is thus parallel to the contrast between higher and lower culture. Secondly, Nietzsche claims that aesthetics is 'tied indissolubly to these presuppositions', that is, the presuppositions of life: ascending or declining. This is a crucial claim – and herein lies the essence of Nietzsche's vitalistic aesthetic. To say that there is an indissoluble tie between the aesthetic and life is to say that such a tie does not admit, under any circumstances, of dissolution or decomposition. The strength of the link between aesthetics and life, in other words, is of such magnitude that it endures throughout all changes in conditions. This claim should be interpreted, I believe, as representing the most basic of Nietzsche's characterisations of the aesthetic. It is given slightly different expression in the *Twilight of the Idols*, where Nietzsche writes that the "meaning of art [is] *life* ... a *desideratum of life*" (TI IX.24). The third and final idea that I want draw from the cited passage is centred on the relative value-spheres of aesthetics

and morality. Having linked aesthetic value to the presuppositions of life, Nietzsche then turns to moral values, "the narrower sphere of so-called moral values" (*ibid.*) as he puts it. For Nietzsche, the sphere of moral values is narrower than that of aesthetic values, so the sphere of aesthetics is *wider* than that of morality. This point is echoed in an unpublished note from *The Will to Power* in which Nietzsche conceives of art as "freedom from moral narrowness" (WP 823). I will return to the question of the relative value-spheres of aesthetics and morality in a moment.

In the citation from *The Case of Wagner*, Nietzsche claims that aesthetics is tied indissolubly to life, but he says nothing as to the relation between morality and life. However, although morality, like all human endeavour, is an expression of life, my claim is that Nietzsche thinks that morality is *dissolubly* tied to the presuppositions of life.[10] Morality may be a "sign-language" (TI VII.1), but it is a language that veils and so obscures the fundamental life of which it is a manifestation. Life remains hidden, in other words, under the valuations of morality.[11] The link between morality and life, then, is weaker than that between the aesthetic and life. This point is reinforced by an unpublished note from *The Will to Power* where Nietzsche reformulates the idea of the intimacy between the aesthetic and

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[10] The idea that morality is not intimate with life is implied by the movement of the cited passage from *The Case of Wagner*. If the aesthetic is inextricably bound to life, and if the aesthetic is *then* distinguished from morality – albeit in different terms – is there not then some *prima facie* justification for entertaining the view that the distinction between aesthetic value and moral value occurs *also* in the context of life? In my view there is.

[11] In *The Case of Wagner*, Nietzsche writes that when one "understands morality", one also "understands what is hiding under its sacred names and value formulas: impoverished life" (CW Pref). And in the *Genealogy*, he speaks of "a secret garden the existence of which no one suspected" that lies beneath the "value judgements good and evil" – that is, beneath slave morality (GM Pref 3). The life of which morality *qua* contemporary morality is an expression – impoverished life – is 'secret' and is 'hiding' beneath the value formulas of morality; indeed, the underlying life of morality is concealed to the extent that its 'existence' – its actual nature and value – was never 'suspected'. Thus, morality obscures the life from which it arises.

life in terms that are consistent with the passage cited above. Nietzsche writes:

> The phenomenon 'artist' is still the most transparent: – to see through it to the basic instincts of power, nature, etc.! Also those of religion and morality! (WP 797)

When one looks at the artist, Nietzsche claims, one is able to 'see through' the artist to the 'basic instincts of power' (*Grundinstinkte der Macht*) since the artist is the 'most transparent' phenomenon.[12] As we know, the instinct for power or the will to power is central to Nietzsche's concept of 'life'. Thus, aesthetic phenomena (in the form of the artist) are those that are most transparent to life. This is different to the claim that the aesthetic is "indissolubly tied" to life (CW Epil), but the two ideas are closely related. It is as a result of the unbreakable link between the aesthetic and life that the aesthetic is transparent to life. If the tie between aesthetics and life was to dissolve, then life would become detached from the aesthetic, with the result that aesthetic phenomena would no longer be a window to, or be transparent to, life. Or, conversely, it can be said that, for Nietzsche, aesthetics is connected to life in such a fashion that the aesthetic is transparent to life. If the aesthetic, then, is the "most transparent" phenomenon (WP 797), it follows that the phenomena of religion and morality are, at the very least, less transparent to life – but, more accurately, opaque to life. For "impoverished life" to remain "hiding under [morality's] most sacred names and value formulas" (CW Pref), it must be the case that

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[12] Heidegger cites the same fragment and makes it the first of his "five statements on art" (1991: 69) which is: "Art is the most perspicuous and familiar configuration of will to power" (1991: 71). He interprets the idea of the perspicuity of art in terms of creativity: "To be an artist is to be able to bring something forth ... It is as though in bringing-forth we dwelled upon the coming to be of beings and could see there with utter clarity their essence" (1991: 69). Heidegger's interpretation is correct as far as it goes, but he does not explain, as I attempt to below, how artistic creativity is *able* to bring forth an 'essence' with utter clarity.

morality acts as a mask that obscures its own underlying life. The distinction, then, between the aesthetic and the moral with respect to life can be summarised as follows. The *transparency* of the aesthetic in relation to life arises from the indissoluble bond that exists between the two; while the dissoluble link between morality and life results in the *opacity* of morality with respect to life.

This, then, is the basic structure of Nietzsche's vitalistic aestheticism – and concomitant non-vitalistic ethics – and it has important methodological consequences. Firstly, by attending to art, as opposed to morality, Nietzsche claims to have found a direct link to the fundamental instinctual life of a culture, and, therefore, to the value of the culture itself. Secondly, the transparency of the aesthetic, and the opacity of morality, with respect to the vital, means that Nietzsche is in a position to evaluate morality in aesthetic terms. This can be done in two ways. As in *The Case of Wagner*, the value of morality *qua* expression of culture can be ascertained through the evaluation of culture which Nietzsche conducts in the context of art. Nietzsche's interpretative movement is from art (symptom) *to* ascendant or degenerate instincts (life) *to* culture (expression of life) *to* morality (cultural expression of life).[13] But, more importantly, Nietzsche attempts to evaluate morality *directly* through his vitalistic aesthetic. He attends to the aesthetic aspects of morality, since this gives

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[13] In his final period Nietzsche says very little about the concept of 'culture' itself; but in the first of the *Untimely Meditations*, he advances a conception that is consistent with my argument. "Culture is, above all", Nietzsche writes, "unity of the artistic style [*künstlerischen Stiles*] in all the expressions of the life of a people ... the opposite of culture ... is lack of style or a chaotic jumble of all styles" (UM I.1). Nietzsche conceives of culture, then, *from the outset* in terms of the aesthetic – in terms of 'artistic style'. Art is Nietzsche's index of life, and life is his standard of value. To conceive of *a* culture is always to conceive of a type of culture, and to do that Nietzsche must conceive of the culture in terms of the life of which it is an expression. Since art is the most direct expression of life, Nietzsche conceives of culture artistically and this allows him to conceive of a culture as being of a certain type or value. For Nietzsche, then, culture is already a set of expressions that possess artistic style. Or, alternatively, culture is the style of one of its expressions – art – writ large across the totality of its expressions.

him a direct route to the vital, or instinctive, ground of morality, and thus to the type of life – ascending or declining – from which morality emerges and which it obscures. Nietzsche points to the idea of the aesthetic interpretation of morality (and religion) in the unpublished fragment cited above. He claims to be able "to see through [the phenomenon artist] to the basic instincts of power ... Also those of religion and morality" (WP 797).[14] In other words, by looking at religion and morality aesthetically, Nietzsche thinks that he can grasp their value, their 'basic instincts of power'.

It is with the notion of the "aesthetic interpretation" (ASC 5) of morality that we can understand Nietzsche's claim that the sphere of moral values is "narrower" than that of aesthetic values (CW Epil). The inextricable bond between the aesthetic and life means that the sphere of aesthetic value is as wide as the sphere of vitalistic value, which is to say that aesthetics is coterminous with life and so present, in one form or another, in all cultures. The values of a certain morality, however, are tied to a specific culture (or cultures), and thus do not possess the global range that, for Nietzsche, aesthetic values have. And it is this quality of the aesthetic, so Nietzsche reasons, that provides the broader perspective within which the comparative interpretation and evaluation of moralities can occur.

In *The Case of Wagner* Nietzsche simply asserts that the aesthetic is a direct index of the vital. And throughout his final period he gives little clue as to precisely what is involved in this assertion. In the following

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[14] Heidegger makes this the third of his five statements on art; "According to the expanded concept of artist, art is the basic occurrence of all beings; to the extent that they are, beings are self-creating, created" (1991: 72). Once again, Heidegger grasps Nietzsche's idea, but does not show how, or in what way, Nietzsche observes the "other configurations of will to power" through the artist (1991: 71). I attempt to do this in chapter five.

section, I will begin to illuminate the vitalistic aesthetic in the context of Nietzsche's conception of the relation between artist and art. And I will then attempt to reconstruct, from the various hints that Nietzsche *does* give, his answers to the following questions. In what sense is aesthetics inextricably bound up with life in a way that morality is not? What properties does the aesthetic possess, and morality lack, such that it is a peculiarly direct symptom of life?

## IV

Nietzsche's claim that "aesthetics is tied indissolubly to [the] presuppositions" of life (CW Epil) is also the claim that the work of art is inextricably bound up with the fundamental life of the artist. In chapter one, I discussed Nietzsche's formulation of this idea as it appears in the *Twilight of the Idols*; Nietzsche states that the artist "transforms things until they reflect his power – until they are reflections of his perfection. This *need* to transform into perfection is – art" (TI IX.9). Although this idea is articulated in the context of the artist of abundance, it is also applicable to the impoverished artist.[15] Nietzsche conceives of artistic expression *per se* as the need to transform external things until they reflect the internal life of the artist. The externally transformed thing – art – thus ends up being a *reflection* of the artist's internal life. Here we have an alternative formulation of the claim that the "phenomenon 'artist' is still the most transparent"; the art work is a transparent reflection of the artist such that

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[15] In these sections from the *Twilight of the Idols* – entitled 'Towards a Psychology of the Artist' – Nietzsche refers to "a specific anti-artisticality of instinct – a mode of being which impoverishes and attenuates things and makes them consumptive" (TI IX.9). The impoverished artist, then, transforms from need, but he transforms things until they reflect his 'perfect impoverishment' and he thereby 'impoverishes and attenuates things'. The 'perfection' of the impoverished artist, is, from Nietzsche's position, an 'anti-perfection' – a consummation of inner degeneracy and ugliness.

one can "see through [art] to the [artist's] basic instincts of power" (WP 797). For Nietzsche, the link between the aesthetic and life, then, presupposes the view that there is a fundamental continuity between the artist and the work of art. However, Nietzsche is not unambiguously committed to this view. At times, he points to discrepancies between artist and art. In this section, I would like to examine briefly Nietzsche's ostensibly 'expressionist' conception of the relation between artist and art so as to establish the precise meaning of his claim that art is a reflection of the artist.

In the opening sections of the third essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche appears to drive a wedge between the artist and his creations. He argues that in the determination of the relation between artist and art, one should

> guard against confusion through psychological *contiguity* ... a confusion to which an artist himself is only too prone; as if he himself were what he is able to represent, conceive, and express. The fact is that *if* he were it, he would not represent, conceive, and express it ...[16] (GM III.4)

Nietzsche draws a distinction between what an artist is and what he is able to create. He objects to the view that there is a simple 'psychological contiguity' between the artist and his creation; claiming, instead, that there is a discontinuity between the two. But he then goes on to make the stronger claim that the fact that the artist *does* create a certain thing is a

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16 This is a variant of an argument advanced by Plato in the *Republic*. Socrates says that if the poet "truly had knowledge of the things he imitates, he'd be much more serious about actions than about imitations of them, would try to leave behind many fine deeds as memorials to himself, and would be more eager to be the subject of a eulogy than the author of one" (Republic X, 599b).

sure sign that the artist *is* not that thing.[17] The art work, then, is not a reflection of the artist's perfection, rather, the perfection of his art is a symptom of precisely the artist's own lack of perfection. It seems that art is not transparent to the inner life of the artist, but, instead, is an opaque mask – the artist is "disguised by his creations" (BGE 269).

Nietzsche seems to be locked in a contradiction: is art mask or reflection? The short answer is: it is both. Or, in other words, Nietzsche is actually advancing two different and compatible views. The "confusion through psychological *contiguity*", for Nietzsche, is "a confusion to which an artist himself is only too prone" (GM III.4). The artist, then, is confused about the nature of the relation between himself and his art. This idea is confirmed in Nietzsche's earlier claim that "[i]nsight into the origin of a work concerns the physiologists and vivisectionists of the spirit; never the aesthetic man, the artist!" (*ibid.*). We should never look to the artist to gain 'insight into the origin of a work' – i.e., the relation between himself and his art – since he is 'only too prone' to 'confusion' in this area; he does "not *know* enough to 'understand'" himself, to employ a phrase that I examined earlier (TI VII.1).[18] We should look instead, so Nietzsche argues, to the 'vivisectionist of the spirit', namely, the symptomatologist or psychologist –

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[17] This claim is questionable. Nietzsche goes on to say that "a Homer would not have created an Achilles nor a Goethe a Faust if Homer had been an Achilles or Goethe a Faust" (GM III.4). Nietzsche's claim, then, is that if, for example, Homer was an Achilles – or, if Homer shared the relevant qualities of an Achilles such that Homer could perform the heroic deeds of an Achilles – then Homer would not merely create a literary Achilles, but, instead, he would get on with *being* an Achilles, which is to say that he would perform heroic deeds. Nietzsche assumes – like Plato before him – that performing heroic deeds is superior to creating literary representations of heroic deeds. It is possible, however, that Homer actually was an Achilles, but nevertheless (and for whatever reasons) chose to create a literary heroic life, rather than actually live an heroic life. This thought goes back to *Human, All Too Human*, where Nietzsche writes: "It is always as between Achilles and Homer: the one *has* the experience, the sensation, the other *describes* it" (HA I.211).

[18] The artist's ignorance as to the nature (value, meaning) of his own art is a pervasive theme in Nietzsche's aesthetics. In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche writes that the artist "utters stupidities about [his works] and himself – utters them and believes them. This seems to me to be almost the norm among fertile artists – nobody knows a child less well than its parents do" (GS 369).

since such questions like the origin of a work *are* his 'concern'. In the *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche reveals his own approach to the question of the psychology of artist and art.

> A psychologist asks ... what does all art do? ... 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? Or is it not rather the prerequisite for the artist's being an artist at all . . . (TI IX.24)

For Nietzsche, art does something. It strengthens or weakens certain valuations by selecting and highlighting certain things with determinate value. The instinct of the artist is necessarily bound up with this procedure: artistic creation *is* instinctive valuation. Here Nietzsche conceives of the artist in terms of his basic concept of man, the "creature that ... evaluates and measures" – the "valuating animal as such" (GM II.8). I want to stress Nietzsche's emphasis on the instinct of the artist, or his "most deep-seated instinct [*unterster Instinkt*]" (*ibid.*) as he goes on to call it. Art is an instinctive strengthening or weakening of valuations such that through art the artist betrays or discloses the character of his fundamental instinct or "commanding need" (GS 370). In other words, art is the "personal confession of its author and a kind of involuntary and unconscious memoir" *of* the artist's most deep-seated instincts (BGE 6) – to apply one of Nietzsche's more well known remarks. It is in this sense, then, that Nietzsche claims that the artist *is* continuous with his art. Thus there are two conceptions of the psychological contiguity of artist and art; firstly, that of the artist, which is apparent and confused; and secondly, that of the psychologist, which is deep and illuminating.

Nietzsche, then, does not think that there is a complete discrepancy between artist and art. He claims only that the (romantic) claim that the artist *is* what he is able to express is false. Instead, it is at the level of the valuating instinct where the continuity between artist and art resides. On this interpretation, the art work becomes a kind of map of the artist's instinctive life through which the psychologist can ascertain "in what order of rank the innermost drives [*innersten Triebe*] of his nature stand in relation to each other" (*ibid.*) In conclusion: on one level, art is a mask of the artist's internal life *qua* express-able or affective life; and on a deeper level, art is a reflection of the artist's internal life *qua* dischargeable or instinctive life.

## V

In the preceding section, I made sense of Nietzsche's vitalistic aestheticism in the context of his philosophy of art. A work of art is a reflection of, and is transparent to, the artist's instincts and this supplies some *prima facie* evidence for the claim that the aesthetic is tied indissolubly to the instinctual presuppositions of life. But this still leaves the broader question as to the specific properties that art possesses, and morality lacks, that *makes* it transparent to life. The vitalistic distinction between art and morality can be drawn in terms of the concepts of constraint and freedom. There are two arguments that I want to advance. The first claims that the relative lack of constraint in the aesthetic realm – the autonomy of artistic practice – means that the artist's instincts and drives can manifest themselves more freely and directly. But this argument is found to be, at best, only a provisional explanation of the contrast, since Nietzsche is deeply committed to the notion of the artistic constraint of *style*. The

second argument – which I advance in the following section – involves the idea that the instincts of the artist are constrained such that they are cultivated or overladen with life; morality, on the other hand, constrains the instincts by inhibiting and attenuating them. The distinction between art and morality, then, rests on the contrast between the quality of constraint as well as the quantity of constraint.

As we have seen, Nietzsche thinks of morality *per se* as a pattern of agency that is regulated by custom. Obedience to law or tradition is the stamp of moral action and such obedience contributes to the preservation of the community. The extent to which the moral agent is obedient is the extent to which his action is constrained. However, constraint occurs not only at the level of agency, but also and more fundamentally, at the level of instinct. For Nietzsche, morality is "instinct-resistant" (TI II.11); and although it cultivates some instincts – for example, the "herd instinct of obedience" (BGE 199; GM I.2) – Nietzsche regards such instincts as profoundly antagonistic to, what is for him, the commanding instinct of man – the will to power. Insofar as it is possible to speculate as to the appearance of this instinct in native form, Nietzsche suggests that the "incarnate will to power ... strive[s] to grow, spread, seize, become predominant – not from any morality or immorality but because it is *living* and because life simply *is* will to power" (BGE 259). In its free state, instinct *qua* will to power is an instinct that strives to grow and expand by the "imposition of [its] own forms" (*ibid.*). Nietzsche claims, elsewhere, that the will to power is also the "*instinct for freedom*" (GM II.18). Instinct,

then, in its fundamental form is the instinct for free self-expansion, the free imposition of its own forms.[19]

Morality as such constrains the instinct for free self-expansion, or as Nietzsche puts it "morality itself ... dam[s] up such enormous strength" (BGE 262). The self-expansion that occurs in the moral realm is, from the perspective of the will to power, *not* authentically free.[20] Art, however, is that realm in which this instinct, in principle, is allowed to flourish. In other words, through the creation of works, the artist "strive[s] to grow, spread, seize, become predominant" (BGE 259), and such free self-expansion occurs not in a moral or immoral way, but simply out of the "commanding need" for self-growth (GS 370). As we saw in chapter one, Nietzsche aligns the instinct of will to power with artistic creativity and thus affirms his vitalistic aestheticism. The instinct of will to power involves the free "imposition of one's own forms" and self-expansion (BGE 259) – the artist "transforms things [i.e., imposes forms] until they mirror his power" (TI IX.9), and man's "*most deep-seated* instinct", the instinct for "self-expansion [*Selbsterweiterung*]", *is* the creation of "beauty" (TI IX.19). Artistic agency, then, is an agency that is wholly oblivious to moral constraint, it is not so much immoral as "*extra-moral*" (BGE 32; 201) or "supra-moral" (BGE 257). Or, as Nietzsche puts it in an unpublished note,

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19 Thus Nietzsche writes famously that it is not entirely correct to think of the "instinct for self-preservation as the cardinal instinct ... A living thing seeks above all to *discharge* its strength – life itself is *will to power*; self-preservation is only one of the indirect and most frequent *results*" (BGE 13).

20 From the perspective of life, Nietzsche regards even noble or master morality as minimally instinct-resistant. The nobles are held "sternly in check *inter pares* by custom, respect, usage" (GM I.11). And while the noble custom of "[r]efraining mutually from injury, violence, and exploitation and placing one's will on a par with [those] similar in strength and value standards" may become "good manners among individuals", Nietzsche claims that this custom – a minimum requirement of morality – "really is – a will to the *denial* of life, a principle of disintegration and decay" (BGE 259). But from another perspective Nietzsche is able to write that "*healthy* morality ... is governed by a vital instinct" which removes "obstructions and hostilities" to life, while it is only "*Anti-natural* morality" that turns "precisely *against* the vital instincts" (TI V.4).

art, like nature, exemplifies "magnificent *indifference* to good and evil" (WP 850).

But what property, or properties, does art possess such that the instinct for unlimited growth is morally unconstrained and so free? It is the peculiar *autonomy* of art with respect to morality. In *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche formulates the idea of the autonomy of artistic practice in mimetic terms. The "innermost existence" of the artist is characterised by "unreality", writes Nietzsche, "[w]hoever is completely and wholly an artist is to all eternity separated from the 'real', the actual" (GM III.4). This claim is made in the context of the relation between the artist and the ascetic ideal, and it is the reality *of* the ascetic ideal that the artist is separated from. And since the ascetic ideal is, for Nietzsche, the most pervasive manifestation of morality, it follows that the artist is "to all eternity separated from" moral reality (*ibid.*). "To place himself in the service of the ascetic ideal", Nietzsche writes, "is ... the most distinctive *corruption* of an artist that is at all possible" (GM III.25). Therefore, the *un*corrupted artist is non-ascetic, the artist in his native form is extra-moral; thus Nietzsche writes, in an unpublished fragment, "[a]rt as freedom from moral narrowness and corner-perspectives" (WP 823).

The freedom of the artist's instinct for self-growth means that he is free to squander (*vergeuden*) any number of instincts that, from the perspective of morality, will be immoral or moral. And he is free to cultivate and discharge (*auslassen*) such instincts because they are channelled into works of art – aesthetic objects or events. The artistic discharging of an 'immoral' instinct, for example, is permissible because it does not occur in the realm of morality – i.e., the realm in which such instincts are

impermissible and so constrained. The autonomy of artistic practice allows the artist to cultivate that 'immoral' instinct, or, alternatively, he inhabits a space in which that instinct is allowed to flourish, delimited only by his native vitality, which will be either abundant or impoverished.[21] And, in mimetic terms, he is free to discharge that instinct in the form of a representation of deed or a system of deeds.

On this interpretation, then, the inextricable link between art and life rests on the autonomy of the aesthetic. The instincts of the artist are given free reign in the unconstrained sphere of artistic creation. The art work, then, is a transparent reflection of the instinctual life of the artist, because he is free to discharge those instincts as the instincts that they are. And in so doing the artist instinctively "*strengthens* or *weakens* certain valuations" (TI IX.24), valuations that, from Nietzsche's perspective, will be either ascending or declining. The instinctual freedom of the artist, however, does not make him valuable as such. At this stage, the artist is only of methodological value in the symptomatology of culture. The moral agent, on the other hand, is constrained to act in accordance with custom, and such activity is fundamentally antagonistic to the instinctive life of man.[22] By constraining the commanding instinct for free self-expansion,

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21 The moral agent does not only inhabit the moral world, but also the real world. Thus, there are two senses in which his actions are constrained. Firstly, the actions of the moral agent *qua* agent are delimited by the character of actual and possible action. The unreality of art, however, allows the artist to imagine an unlimited agency – for example, divine agency, as in the case of the Homeric and Wagnerian gods. Secondly, the actions of the moral agent *qua* moral agent are constrained by morality as such, by human custom. Once again, it is possible for the artist to create representations of morally free, or extra-moral, agents. Nietzsche interprets Wagner's creation Siegfried in this way; he represents a "declaration of war against morality" (CW 4), he is the "*very free* man" who is "too free ... too *anti-Catholic* for the taste of ... cultured peoples" (BGE 256).

22 Henry Staten observes that this aspect of Nietzsche's thought is "compatible with contemporary psychological and political liberationism of various sorts; beyond the repressive structures of historical culture lies the promise of a fully 'self-actualized' humanity" (1990, 15-16). But as we will see, there is a pervasive tendency in Nietzsche's philosophy that runs counter to this quasi-romantic notion of natural freedom beneath cultural constraint. For Nietzsche, nature as such presupposes constraint, thus a fully self-actualised humanity is also a *cultural* possibility.

morality also constrains a whole range of other instincts that are conditioned by that sovereign instinct. The constraint of such instincts is the constraint of life. Morality, then, is a phenomenon that resists and represses life, that pushes life away. And it is in this sense that morality is weakly bonded to life. The opacity of morality with respect to life, then, is not that morality masks a freely self-expanding life, but that it constrains the free expansion of life from the outset. And if life is constrained, it is difficult to ascertain whether that life is authentic free self-expansion (ascending life) *or* an impoverished life that hides in the form of constrained self-expansion.

This is the first sense in which art is distinguished from morality. But is not Nietzsche over-idealising the artist? The idea of free artistic squandering of instinct is acceptable in principle, but is it an actual and immanent possibility? Nietzsche is certainly aware of the difficulty of an entirely extra-moral aesthetics. And this is made clear in the following passage from the *Twilight of the Idols* where he inveighs against the apparently extra-moral aesthetic of French romanticism.

> *L'art pour l'art.* – The struggle against *purpose* in art is always a struggle against the *moralising* tendency in art, against the subordination of art to morality ... But this very hostility betrays that moral prejudice is still dominant. When one has excluded from art the purpose of moral preaching ... it by no means follows that art is completely purposeless, goalless, meaningless, in short *l'art pour l'art.*[23] (TI IX.24)

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[23] Monroe Beardsley writes that "The phrase *L'art pour l'art* was apparently used first by Benjamin Constant, in his *Journal intime* (February 10, 1804; not published until 1895), and in a context that connected the theory with Kant" (1966, 285-6). Thus the slogan originated in France as an interpretation of the Kantian aesthetic of disinterestedness. Jürgen Habermas calls Nietzsche "an advocate of *l'art pour l'art*" (1987: 93). Either Habermas has not read the *Twilight of the Idols* or he has read it and forgotten it.

In this passage, Nietzsche advances two interpretations of supra-moral aestheticism. Firstly, he points to the difficulty of detaching art, in any comprehensive fashion, from moral valuation. The struggle against the 'subordination of art to morality', and thus the struggle *for* the dominion of art over morality, 'betrays that moral prejudice is still dominant'. Even though, in principle, the artist is capable of producing an art that is unconditioned by morality, in practice, such a feat is at the very least extraordinarily difficult. The artist, after all, inhabits the world of moral reality and one would expect that his aesthetic valuations are not unrelated to the moral valuations that he is compelled, when not making art, to submit to. In *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche makes this point by describing artists as "valets of some morality" (GM III.5); and by claiming that the "*corruption* of an artist" by morality – in the form of the "ascetic ideal" – is "one of the most common forms of corruption" (GM III.25).

But Nietzsche actually interprets the 'hostility' to morality – or, the need to be hostile to morality – as a symptom of morality itself. What, then, of Nietzsche's own hostility to morality in the form of the prioritisation of the aesthetic over the moral? When he affirms that moral valuation is inescapable for the devotees of *l'art pour l'art* he implies that it is inescapable as such. But he then goes on to say: "[w]hen one has excluded from art the purpose of moral preaching" (TI IX.24) – and thereby implies that it *is* possible to exclude morality from art. Once again, Nietzsche appears to be consumed by a paradox. But, in fact, he is not. For Nietzsche, it is senseless to claim that it is possible to escape *absolutely* from morality, for the simple reason that – as we saw in the preceding chapter – the concept of 'absolute' (unconditional truth, thing-in-itself) is

self-contradictory. Hence the instincts are in one form or another related to or conditioned by instinct-resistant morality. But once we accept that, we can still talk meaningfully of a distinction between aesthetic and moral values and thus exclude morality – not in an absolute sense, but in a real sense – from art.[24] Thus, it is still possible for an artist to be extra-moral, but it is not possible for him to wipe the slate clean of morality and so be an utterly free and supra-moral creator, as the French romantics would have it.

## VI

The lack of moral constraint in the realm of the aesthetic means that the artist's instinctual life is free to flourish and be squandered in works of art. However, while it is true that the artist is not *morally* constrained, it does not then follow that the artist is entirely without constraint. In other words, it is possible for there to be an *artistic* constraint that, like morality, may resist various instincts (though not the dominating instinct for self-growth or creation) and thus result in the opacity of art with respect to life. In this section, I argue that there *is* artistic constraint, but far from inhibiting and obscuring the instincts of the artist, it actually cultivates them and so makes them more explicit. Or, to put the point differently, the lack of constraint in the aesthetic means not only that the instinctive life of the artist is free to flourish, but also that through the refinement of his unique style the artist thereby cultivates, and so makes more perspicuous, his instincts.

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[24] For Nietzsche, modern artists are inevitably moralized. In the years 1886-7, he claimed that Wagner's *Ring* exemplified certain valuations that were extra-moral in character. But Wagner became moralized when, with *Parsifal*, he "suddenly sank down, helpless and broken, before the Christian cross" (NCW 8) and thus became an actor of the ascetic ideal. As we saw in chapter two, however, in *The Case of Wagner* (1888) Nietzsche interprets Wagner as moralized from the very beginning.

In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche rejects the notion of "*laisser aller*"– unconstrained freedom – and claims instead that "all there is or has been on earth of freedom ... in the arts as in morals, has evolved only by virtue of the 'tyranny of ... arbitrary laws'" (BGE 188). He then goes on to reinforce the point:

> Every artist knows how far from the feeling of letting himself go his 'natural' condition is, the free ordering, placing, disposing, forming in the moment of 'inspiration' – and how strictly and subtly he then obeys thousandfold laws which precisely on account of their severity and definiteness mock all formulation in concepts ... (*ibid.*)

Nietzsche claims that in creation – or the moment of 'inspiration' – the free activity of the artist consists in strict (and subtle) obedience to a set of severe and definite laws. The artist is constrained to the extent that he is obedient to such laws, and since his obedience is strict, it follows that the artist is strictly constrained. The freedom of artistic creation, then, consists precisely in its strict constrainedness; or as Nietzsche puts it in an unpublished note from *The Will to Power*, "artistic genius [is] the greatest freedom under the law" (WP 834). We have, then, two senses of artistic freedom; firstly, the artist is free from the constraints of morality; and, secondly, the artist is free as a result of artistic constraint, or "the constraint of style" (GS 290) as Nietzsche puts it elsewhere. The second sense of freedom does not only refer to the conventions of various art forms, but at a deeper level and conditioned by that, it involves the constraint that the artist imposes upon his entire instinctual life. And it is that more fundamental notion of constraint – "constraint and perfection under a law" (*ibid.*) – that I want to examine. My claim is that the first type of artistic freedom is a precondition for the second type; in other words, the artist's

freedom from moral constraint enables him to constrain and to cultivate his instincts extra-morally.

In what sense does the constraint of instinct lead to the freedom of instinct? The absence of constraint of instinct, for Nietzsche, is the state of "anarchy among the instincts" (BGE 258). In this condition the internal life of man is consumed by conflict and contradiction.[25] An instinct will have developed only to the extent that it is able to suppress an opposing instinct, but this state of dominance will be isolated and temporary. For Nietzsche, when there is instinctual anarchy, the "instincts contradict, impede, destroy one another" (TI IX.41). A victorious instinct will be assailed from all sides by other instincts attempting to make themselves felt, and so will eventually be vanquished. Freedom occurs only when the tyrannical instincts associated with the will to power "rule over other instincts" (TI IX.38), when there is a "dominating instinct whose demands prevail ... against those of all the other instincts" (GM III.8).[26] The tyrannical instinct represses other instincts at will, and establishes an "order of rank [of] the innermost drives" (BGE 6).[27] There may still be instinctual

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25 Nietzsche writes that "Socrates' decadence is signalled ... by the avowed chaos and anarchy of his instincts" (TI II.4) and he characterises modernity in general as such an anarchy. It will be noticed that Nietzsche generally employs political and/or military terms to describe the instinctive life of man.

26 In the section entitled 'My Idea of Freedom' in the *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche writes: "Freedom means that the manly instincts which delight in war and victory rule over other instincts, for example, the instincts for 'happiness'" (TI IX.38). Nietzsche calls the 'tyrannical' instincts of the will to power (which is one of the principal manifestations of what Henry Staten labels "Nietzsche's tyrannophilia" (1990: 109)) "pitiless and terrible instincts which require the maximum of authority and discipline to deal with them" (*ibid.*). In an aphorism from *Beyond Good and Evil*, he writes: "To our strongest drive, the tyrant in us, not only our reason bows but our conscience" (BGE 158).

27 How will an instinct come to dominate? Or how will an anarchy of instincts change into an oligarchy of instincts? Applying Nietzsche's account of the development of the "*bad conscience*" in *On the Genealogy of Morals* (GM II.17), it can be said that when instincts are unable to be discharged externally they turn inward. Nietzsche calls this the "*internalization* of man" (GM II.16) and with it man becomes self-conscious. Man will be conscious, then, of the destructive anarchy of instincts that he is, and should he desire to overcome that state of inner anarchy, he will consciously tyrannise his instincts. The tyrannical instinct of the will to power, then, rises to consciousness and in this form it is able to create an oligarchy of instinct. In other words, the conscious "*creator*" in man tyrannises the unconscious "*creature*" in man (BGE 225).

conflict, but since it is regulated by the dominating instinct, it will be a law-governed conflict as opposed to an anarchic conflict. Nietzsche suggests that the constraining of an instinct or drive is the time "during which a drive learns to stoop and submit, but also to *purify* and *sharpen* itself" (BGE 189). The tyranny or constraint of the instincts, then, stimulates them to purify and sharpen themselves – in preparation, perhaps, for renewed conflict. And it is in this sense that constraint of instinct leads to freedom of instinct. The instincts are compelled – under a system of law and domination – to purify themselves, that is, to cultivate themselves in such a way that their essence is brought to the fore. In short, instinct is *free to become what it is*, to apply the subtitle of Nietzsche's 'autobiography' *Ecce Homo*.[28] The instincts are free to become their purer, sharper – their essential selves. In the state of perpetual and anarchic conflict, however, an instinct is always only a provisional version of itself, it is unable, from the outset, to become what it is. Before I go on to describe how this model of constraint and cultivation finds its paradigmatic expression in artistic practice, I will attempt to dispel an objection that, if correct, has serious consequences for my argument.

Freedom of instinct presupposes constraint of instinct, which is to say, constraint is a necessary precondition for freedom. But if that is taken as a general rule, it follows that both artistic constraint *and* moral constraint will lead to freedom of instinct. If morality constrains the sovereign instinct of life (the will to power), and if constraint leads to the liberation and cultivation of instinct, it then follows that the moral constraint of the will to power leads to the cultivation of the will to power.

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[28] The subtitle of *Ecce Homo* reads: 'How One Becomes What One Is'. It is an enigmatic statement, but I hope that my reflections on the cultivation of instinct will illuminate it to some extent.

Thus, life *qua* instinct for power is, if not actually manifest in morality, active beneath its surface, waiting to discharge itself. This argument threatens to dissolve the vitalistic distinction that I have been striving to draw between art and morality. However, that distinction can be preserved by introducing a contrast between types of morality.

It is not morality *per se* that constrains the instincts in such a way that the instincts are cultivated, but only a certain type of morality, which Nietzsche describes as the only "*healthy* morality" (TI V.4). He gives it the title of "master" (BGE 260) or "noble morality" (GM I.10). Noble morality is, in a fundamental sense, the spirit of the artistic and the aesthetic made concrete in ethical form. Or, to put it another way, it is the expansion of the vitalistic aesthetic – of the artist as the embodiment of vital instincts – into the sphere of morality. Nietzsche wants to imagine a type of morality that is wholly predicated on life, and since, for Nietzsche, art is where authentic life is manifest, he constructs an artistic ethics and calls it 'master' or 'noble' morality. Art is distinct from noble morality in that the artist squanders instinct in works of art, while the noble squanders instinct in the construction, and the preservation, of a mode of living. The vitalistic distinction between art and noble morality, however, dissolves *precisely because* noble morality is the aesthetic made moral.

In the case of contemporary morality, however, the vitalistic distinction between art and morality is stable. As we saw in section II, it is contemporary – or "*décadence* morality" (TI IX.35) – that, for Nietzsche, obscures the impoverished life of which it is an expression. Decadent morality is the declining ancestor of a form of morality that was, for Nietzsche, already degenerate: "slave morality" (GM I.10). And, depending

upon which facets of decadent morality Nietzsche wants to emphasise, he calls it "Christian morality" (AC 24), "herd morality" (BGE 201), or "ascetic morality" (GM Pref 4), i.e., the morality that is enshrined in the "ascetic ideal" (GM III.1). My claim is that decadent morality has a form of constraint that does *not* liberate and cultivate the instincts. Thus, the distinction holds between artistic constraint and moral constraint *qua* decadent morality. In what follows, I will outline decadent morality's peculiarly anti-vitalistic mode of constraint.

Decadent morality constrains life, but the constraint that it imposes upon life – if, indeed, it can still be described as just a constraint – is total and final. The resistance to the instinct of the will to power that is characterised by all morality is made by decadent morality *the* first principle of morality – it is a fundamentally "*Anti-natural* morality" (TI V.4). Decadent morality is the contradiction of "life *against* life" (GM III.13) in which the will to power is turned against itself so as to attain ultimate dominion over the will to power. In other words, all of the forces that are contained in the instinct for self-expansion are directed against that instinct so as to repress self-expansion at all costs. Decadent morality, then, does not constrain life in such a way that life "learns to stoop and submit, but also to *purify* and *sharpen* itself" (BGE 189). Rather, it imposes a constraint upon life in such a way that life, paradoxically, is purified and sharpened precisely so as to repress such purifying and sharpening. As Nietzsche puts it in the context of asceticism: "an attempt is made to employ force to block up the wells of force" (GM III.11). Basically, life cultivates life in order to hold itself forever in submission. Thus, the (more than) dissoluble link between morality and life, and so the opacity of morality with respect to life, appears in consummate form. *Décadence*

morality virulently short-circuits a potential ascending life at the very root, and it provides a comfortable hiding place for the life that is already short-circuited – impoverished life.

In light of the preceding argument, a distinction can be drawn between types of constraint. Firstly, there is the total constraint of decadent morality that does not liberate or cultivate the instincts, or if it does, only to fetter them with ever-increasing virtuosity. Secondly, there is artistic constraint – or the "constraint of style" (GS 290) – where the instinct of the will to power is turned against itself not perpetually, but temporarily, so as to perfect and sharpen itself. This sovereign instinct will then tyrannise other instincts and thus create the conditions for their liberation through cultivation. It is in this sense that Nietzsche speaks favourably of a constraint that enables life to flourish. Thus, there is the "cultivating influence, always destructive as well as creative and form-giving" (BGE 61); there are the "*new philosophers*" with their "over-all attempts of discipline and cultivation" (BGE 203); and there are "strong and dangerous drives" that must be "trained and cultivated to make them great" (BGE 201).[29]

I will close this section by relating the notion of artistic constraint to the indissoluble tie between art and life. How does the constraint that allows the instincts to become what they are manifest itself in artistic practice? This is a question that demands an extended answer, but I will attempt to provide an outline of an answer in what follows. There are two types of artistic constraint, firstly, the (external or given) constraint of a

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29 The phrase 'discipline and cultivation' – *Zucht und Züchtung* –is the title of Book IV of *The Will to Power*. It is rendered by Kaufmann and Hollingdale as 'Discipline and Breeding'.

particular tradition and form of art; and, secondly, the (internal or native) constraint of the artist's individual style. The constraint of an art form is, in general, purely formal and serves principally as a minimal and intelligible structure through which the artist can discharge (*auslassen*) his instincts.[30] An art form is, amongst other things, a particular means for the artistic squandering (*vergeuden*) of instinct. But since this squandering is not morally constrained, the artist is capable of tapping those instincts that are resisted by morality – namely, the vital instincts. Within this open structure the artist will find his own style; he will move, as it were, from an anarchy of instincts (non-style) to an oligarchy of instincts (style), where an order of rank is established among his instincts. And the process of stylistic development and refinement is precisely the process of *the cultivation of instinct*. This procedure is conditioned both by the demands of a particular art form, and by the sort of person the artist is – for Nietzsche, abundant or impoverished.

The artistic cultivation of instinct, then, is the procedure whereby the artist compels his instincts to become what they are, to bring forth their fundamental nature. This is a practice that morality inhibits. The artist is not only free to squander instinct, he is free to squander purer and sharper instinct. And it is in this sense that the aesthetic is indissolubly tied, and so

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30 It could be argued that an art form is already an expression of the moral valuations of a certain culture. Nietzsche implies this view in his valorisation of drama – specifically Greek tragedy – and in his revealing silence about the novel. As we saw in chapter two, Nietzsche interprets mythic drama as an inherently ascending – i.e., extra-moral – form of art. The moral distinction between doer and deed is, for Nietzsche, absent in the entirely active worlds of, for example, *Oedipus Rex* and the *Nibelungenlied*. In contrast, Nietzsche probably viewed the novel as an already moralized art form. Michael Tanner suggests that Nietzsche's intolerance for the quotidian means that Nietzsche "is unable to fit the nineteenth-century art form *par excellence*, the realistic novel, into any artistic category" (1994: 67). It seems that, for Nietzsche, the conventions of the novel necessarily preclude the realisation of an 'heroic landscape'. Henry Staten attempts to redeem Nietzsche from the charge that his "clinging to the idea of tragedy and the tragic hero while substantially ignoring the novel is a reactionary stance at once literarily and politically" (1998: 249). Staten argues that "Nietzsche verges on a thought of *unheroic heroism*" (1998: 253), and that it is not completely implausible to suggest that Nietzsche might have found Dionysus in Joyce's *Ulysses*.

transparent, to the instinctual presuppositions of life. The extra-moral realm of art allows the artist to journey into the deepest recesses of his soul, to chip away at the constraints that morality imposes upon his instinctive life, and through the imposition of his own constraint of style to bring forth the essence of his instincts. The indissoluble link between art and life consists in the power of art to cultivate life, to allow life to flourish in its sharpest form. "Art is the great stimulant to life" (TI IX.24) writes Nietzsche – in other words, art is the greatest stimulant to the cultivation of instinct.

## VII

In this final section I would like to bring together the various strands of Nietzsche's vitalistic aestheticism. There are three senses in which art and life are inextricably bound.[31] Firstly, there is the *creative* sense, which was discussed in chapter one and in section V above. Life is the creative instinct of the will to power which, in its native form, creates through self-expansion or the imposition of its own forms. Secondly, the *aesthetic* sense, which I advanced in the introduction. For Nietzsche, abundant life and impoverished life are necessary preconditions for, respectively, the value judgements of beauty and ugliness. Thirdly, there is the *stylistic* sense of vitalistic aestheticism, which I have been tracing in the second half of this chapter. Art is the realm in which instinctual life is stimulated to grow: thus art is the embodiment of cultivated life.

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[31] In fact, there are four senses. The fourth being the artist's instinct for untruth – the *Apollonian* sense – which was described in chapter three. In this section, for the sake of brevity and simplicity, I suppress this aspect of the vitalistic aesthetic. I will return to it, however, in the following chapter in the context of noble self-discipline.

It is crucial to observe that Nietzsche interprets *all* artists in terms of the three senses of vitalistic aestheticism. In other words, all artists are creators, beautifiers, and instinct-stylists, and thus they all manifest a form of life that is on a basic level abundant and ascendant. But if all artists – by their very nature – are abundant, does this not dissolve Nietzsche's basic distinction between artists who create from the "*overabundance of life*" and those who create from the "*impoverishment of life*" (GS 370)? It does not. Aaron Ridley has drawn a distinction between Nietzsche's aesthetic in its "purely descriptive" form and in its "normative form."[32] And Nietzsche presupposes this distinction when he establishes an order of rank among artists.

For Nietzsche, if it is the case that the artist *can* be the exemplar of the vitalistic principle of the aesthetic, it follows, therefore, that this is what the artist *should* be. Those artists that exploit to its fullest potential his vitalistic prescription Nietzsche calls 'abundant' or 'Dionysian'. This, in Ridley's words, is Nietzsche's normative aesthetic. Those artists, however, that do not exploit Nietzsche's prescription he labels 'impoverished' or 'romantic'. And such artist's fall outside his normative aesthetic, but simply by virtue of their being artists, they remain within his descriptive aesthetic. The abundant artist, then, is an authentic artist, while the impoverished artist is an inauthentic artist; or, to adopt Nietzsche's more habitual usage, the abundant artist is simply 'the artist' and the impoverished artist is 'the anti-artist'. But since the impoverished artist *qua* artist is to a certain extent life-affirming and so abundant, the distinction between types of artist rests, properly speaking, on the dichotomy of abundant abundance (for the Dionysian artist) and impoverished abundance (for the romantic artist). In

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[32] Ridley, 1998: 94.

the conclusion, I will examine the difficulties that the impoverished artist poses for Nietzsche's aesthetics.

What, then, is the relation between the three components of Nietzsche's vitalistic aestheticism? This question can be answered by drawing a distinction between the *purely* vital and the *humanly* vital aspects of the aesthetic. Or, in other words, by identifying those elements of the vitalistic aesthetic that represent Nietzsche's conception of life in general and those that manifest his conception of a particular form of life, human life. As we have seen, Nietzsche conceives of life as the will to power. In *Beyond Good and Evil* he writes: "life is *essentially* appropriation, injury, overpowering of what is alien and weaker; suppression, hardness, imposition of one's own forms ... [life] will strive to grow, spread, seize, become predominant" (BGE 259). And in *On the Genealogy of Morals* he refers to the "essential priority [in life] of the spontaneous, aggressive, expansive, form-giving forces that give new interpretations and new directions" (GM II.12). The primary activity of the will to power is self-expansion, and this is achieved through the activation of the form-giving forces, the imposition of the forms of a particular will to power. Nietzsche attempts to interpret self-expansion in terms that resist "all sentimental weakness" (BGE 259), and thus claims that the imposition of one's own forms amounts to no more and no less than the overpowering of what is *not* one – appropriation, injury, suppression, domination, seizure. Another term for the self-expanding activity of the will to power is creativity; and if we employ 'to create' in its primary sense it means simply to bring forth, to grow, to expand. The fundamental activity of life, then, is self-expansion through the imposition of life's own forms, and such self-expansion is also a creation.

Nietzsche conceives of the artist as simply the embodiment in human form of the self-expanding principle of life. Thus it is the *creative* sense of vitalistic aestheticism that is the most basic, it is here that human activity exemplifies in purest form the activity of life as such. In the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche describes the "organisers who build states" as the most "involuntary, unconscious artists there are", and calls "their work ... an instinctive creation and imposition of forms" (GM II.17). And in the *Twilight of the Idols*, he conceives of form-imposition in terms of the artist's "power to ... transform" (TI IX.10). But human self-expansion differs from vital self-expansion in one crucial respect. Man is the "valuating animal as such" (GM II.8) and within the system of human communication that is called 'language', he has invented a word which captures the peculiar value that he attaches to himself and so to the products of his self-expansion. He calls them *beautiful*. "Basically man mirrors himself in things", writes Nietzsche "he thinks anything that reflects his image back to him is beautiful" (TI IX.19); moreover, man "transforms things until they reflect his power – until they are reflections of his perfection" (TI IX.9). It can be said, then, that it is the subjectivity of human self-expansion that distinguishes it from vital self-expansion. Man's valuating instinct ranges over his manifold sensations and perceptions. The experience of the perfect sensation of the power for self-growth he calls 'beauty', in contradistinction to the imperfect sensation of the lack of power for self-growth, which he designates as 'ugliness'.

The movement from the creative component of the vitalistic aesthetic (the impositions of life's own forms) to the properly aesthetic component (the imposition of beautiful forms) occurs with the

subjectivisation of life in the form of the sensing and valuating animal: man. He exemplifies vital self-expansion in a self-conscious manner. It seems, then, that the only difference between the will to power and the human will to power is that self-conscious man has made that instinct and affect his sovereign value in his order of rank of values. But if we introduce the *stylistic* aspect of Nietzsche's vitalistic aestheticism, it will become clear that man is also the cultivator of vital life, as well as its exemplar. Man is a form-giver not only in the sense that he imposes his own forms on others, but also in the sense that he imposes his own forms upon himself. Self-reflexive form-giving is the tyrannical instinct of the will to power imposing the constraint of style upon the entire instinctual life of man. When man does not squander his form-giving power externally, he turns that power inward and constrains his instincts in such a way that they are cultivated. Under the constraint of style, his instincts are incited to become purer, sharper and fuller. In other words, they are perfected and beautified. Thus, when man resumes external self-expansion, he imposes not only his own forms upon the world, but also his own perfected forms.

The three senses of Nietzsche's vitalistic aestheticism are deeply intertwined. In the creative sense, man is simply an exemplification of the self-expanding principle of life. The aesthetic and the stylistic senses of the vitalist aesthetic, however, point to the peculiarly human dimension of the power for self-expansion. The sensation of the power for self-growth is designated as the highest value and called 'beauty'; while the power for self-growth turned inward manifests itself in the constraint and perfection of the internal life of man. The name that Nietzsche gives to man in his most vital form is *artist*. And the concept of 'artist' is simply the intersection of the creative, aesthetic and stylistic elements of Nietzsche's vitalistic

aestheticism. As we saw in section III, the indissoluble link between vital activity and artistic activity has important consequences for Nietzsche's critique of morality and for his post-moral ideal. To assess the value of different moralities with respect to life, Nietzsche attends to their artistic and aesthetic aspects. He asks: how do moralities create values? What is their mode of form-imposition? Do they employ self-reflexive form-imposition so as to inhibit or cultivate the vital instincts? In the first half of the following chapter, I will attempt to show how Nietzsche's vitalistic aestheticism contributes in a decisive way to his formulation of the contrast between noble and slave morality. And in the second half of the chapter, I will suggest that Nietzsche's ethical ideal of nobility is informed both by his vitalistic and Hellenic aestheticism.

# Chapter Five

## Suffering and Nobility

Within the perspective of the vitalistic aesthetic, Nietzsche attempts to assess the value of diverse cultures and moralities according to the same standard of value. Moreover, when Nietzsche imagines what a healthy culture and ethic might look like, his imagination is directed by the values of his vitalistic aestheticism. This chapter is devoted to an examination of this bipartite function of Nietzsche's aesthetics as it operates within his moral philosophy: the aesthetic as mode of critique and as ideal. As we will see, Nietzsche's most fascinating and disturbing claims emerge in the context of morality, and their emergence is conditioned to a considerable extent by his aesthetic.

In the first part of the chapter I attempt to show how the aesthetic contributes to Nietzsche's critique and conception of morality. I argue that the genealogical method is, in part, an evaluation of the creative or artistic impulse; and that Nietzsche's contrast between noble and slave morality – as advanced in *Beyond Good and Evil* and *On the Genealogy of Morals* – is deeply rooted in his distinction between abundant and impoverished

aesthetics. He comes to the view that slave morality is fundamentally degenerate, I argue, by evaluating it in terms of the precepts of his vitalistic aesthetic. In section IV, I provide an outline of Christianity, the transcendental offspring of slave morality. Through an examination of the Christian concepts of 'redemption' and 'guilt' viewed as a response to suffering, I conclude that Christianity, despite all appearances to the contrary, is hedonically motivated. Following a brief discussion of the demise of Christianity and the condition of nihilism, I then attempt to characterise contemporary morality as Nietzsche sees it – *décadence* morality. And I argue that decadent morality remains within the shadow of Christianity's hedonic interpretation of suffering.

The second half of the chapter is devoted to the key aspects of Nietzsche's noble ideal – or Hellenic aestheticism – which I interpret as arising from his vitalistic aestheticism. In section VI, taking my cue from a passage in *Beyond Good and Evil*, I suggest that Nietzsche's conception of the noble discipline of great suffering offers an immanent and post-hedonic countermovement to both Christian and decadent morality. This discussion is followed by a broader account of the basic elements of Nietzschean self-stylisation. Sections VII and VIII examine, respectively, the deceptive and transformative modes of Nietzsche's concept of the constraint of grand style. And at the end of the chapter, I try to make sense of the amoralism that flows inevitably from Nietzsche's aestheticization of morality. I conclude that if we are impressed by Nietzschean aesthetic nobility, then we must accept the possibility of its more troubling aspects – that is, barbaric aestheticism.

# I

Nietzsche opens the first essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals* with an attack on the "moral genealogy" (GM I.2) of the "English psychologists" (GM I.1), and in so doing he tells us much about the guiding role that the aesthetic plays in his moral philosophy. For Nietzsche, English genealogy boils down to the claim that originally "one approved unegoistic actions and called them good from the point of view of those to whom they were done ... those to whom they were *useful*" (*ibid.*).[1] There are two parts to this claim. Firstly, the value judgement 'good' is applied to actions and, secondly, actions are called 'good' from the perspective of the recipient of the action. Nietzsche counters this by arguing that the "judgement 'good' did *not* originate with those to whom 'goodness' was shown", but instead, "it was 'the good' themselves ... who felt and established themselves and their actions as good" (*ibid.*). In *Beyond Good and Evil*, he underlines this claim and asserts that "moral designations were everywhere first applied to *human beings* and only later, derivatively, to actions" (BGE 260). In his critique of English moral genealogy, Nietzsche makes a set of moves that are analogous to those that he makes later in the *Genealogy* with respect to Kantian aesthetics. Nietzsche claims that both seek the basis of value in the wrong place. For the English genealogist, the value judgement 'good' originated in "those to whom [good actions] were done" (GM I.2), while Kant "considered art and the beautiful purely from [the point of view] of the 'spectator'" (GM III.6).[2] Nietzsche opposes 'spectatorial' ethics and

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[1] Whether or not this is an accurate summary of the position of the 'English psychologists' is beside the point. The point is, rather, that there is an *alternative* approach to the question of the origin of moral valuations – whether English or not – against which Nietzsche defines his own approach.

[2] The full passage, which I discussed in chapter one, reads: "Kant, like all philosophers, instead of envisaging the aesthetic problem from the point of view of the artist (the creator), considered art and the beautiful purely from that of the 'spectator', and unconsciously introduced the 'spectator' into the concept 'beautiful'" (GM III.6).

aesthetics with the claims that, respectively, the value 'good' arises from the good, and, as we saw in chapter one, 'beauty' arises precisely from those who are beautiful.

One could interpret the parallelism of Nietzsche's approaches to ethics and aesthetics as simply a function of his own non-English variety of genealogy. Nietzsche, as it were, brings his 'correct' genealogical method to bear on the question of moral and aesthetic value, and, unsurprisingly, conceives of their origin in the same way. But that, I think, is to attribute to Nietzschean genealogy a methodological neutrality that it does not possess, indeed, that it cannot possess, if we bear in mind Nietzsche's remarks concerning "perspective 'knowing'" (GM III.12). Michael Tanner observes that Nietzsche's "preoccupation with 'genealogy', understood in its broadest sense, is a preoccupation with the nature of the creative ... impulse."[3] Or, to rephrase Tanner's point, Nietzsche psychologises the origin of value, which is to say, he claims that value can originate only from the creative impulse of humanity. But Nietzsche does *more* than that – or that is my claim. Nietzsche aestheticizes the (psychological) origin of value, by which I mean, he conceives of the creative impulse in terms of the *artistic* impulse. Artistic creativity is, for Nietzsche, the paradigmatic form of creativity or the exemplification of creativity as such. As we saw in the preceding chapter, the artist is the human embodiment of the self-expanding, the creative, principle of life. Thus, Nietzsche can *only* conceive of creativity in its human form *as* artistic creativity. And this

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[3] Tanner, 1982: xiii.

means that Nietzsche's vitalistic aestheticism in the form of the creative impulse *qua* artistic impulse is already built into his concept of genealogy.[4]

Genealogy, then, is the search for the origin of value which is the search for the creation of value, and, for Nietzsche, the paradigmatic creator of value is the artist. In short, genealogy is the perspective in which Nietzsche looks at the origin of value through the prism of the artist.[5] To establish the origin of moral values, then, Nietzsche conceives of them as created and he conceives of their creation in terms of the only model of creation that is available to him – artistic creation.[6] And that model – in the case of the Dionysian artist – is structured by the idea that art is a "reflection" of the artist's "power" or "perfection" (TI IX.9). Thus, only the perfect or the beautiful can create beauty, hence Nietzsche reasons that only the good can create goodness.[7]

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[4] In my account of the relation between genealogy and the aesthetic I will focus only on genealogy *qua* origin of value and not genealogy *qua* development of value. It is clear, however, that the latter sense of genealogy can also be interpreted in aesthetic terms. The development of a value can be understood as the narrative of its various appropriations and reinterpretations by certain constellations of will to power which appropriates and reinterprets precisely through form-giving. Aaron Ridley has suggested such a conception of genealogy: "If Nietzsche's chief concern in the *Genealogy* is to understand how certain valuations of human existence have won out over others, his attention, necessarily, must be focused on art" – art, that is, in the sense of "the imposition of form on raw material" (1998: 86). Spengler adopted a Nietzschean-inspired approach to philosophical history and called it the "*morphology of world-history*" which considers the "*morphological relationship* that inwardly binds together the expression-forms of *all* branches of culture" (1991: 5-6).

[5] And here we get a further sense of the remark that Nietzsche makes in the unpublished note, discussed in chapter four: the "phenomenon 'artist' is still the most transparent: – to see through it to the basic instincts of power ... Also those of ... morality" (WP 797). Thus, Nietzsche performs a genealogy of morality – that is, an 'artisticality' of morality – so that the instinctual life that gives a morality its value can be detected, he hopes, with relative ease.

[6] Nietzsche makes some etymological speculations to support his claim that only the good are able to create 'goodness'. He claims that "everywhere 'noble', 'aristocratic' in the social sense, is the basic concept from which 'good' in the sense of ... 'with a soul of a high order' ... necessarily developed" (GM I.4). He provides, however, scant evidence. My claim that it is his artistic model of creation that informs his conception of the creation of moral value seems to me to be a stronger *philosophical* explanation for his adopting the position. While some etymology may point the right way for Nietzsche in this regard, his philosophical concept of the self-expanding will to power – exemplified in human form by the artist – surely settles it for him.

[7] In light of my argument, the passage from the *Genealogy* in which Nietzsche criticises Kantian spectatorial aesthetics has a peculiarly self-referential quality. If genealogy is the search for the artistic impulse, the genealogy of art becomes the artistry of art.

The thought that Nietzsche, by way of a genealogy of morality, is performing an *aesthetics of morality* should come as no surprise in light of the breadth of Nietzsche's vitalistic aestheticism. Nietzsche claims that the sphere of moral value is "narrower" than that of aesthetic value and this is because the aesthetic is "tied indissolubly" to life (CW Epil). This quality of the aesthetic has wide-ranging methodological consequences, one of which I have been tracing in this section under the title 'genealogy'. The global range of the aesthetic – the fact that it is, for Nietzsche, coextensive with life – means that different moralities can be made sense of and evaluated in terms of their aesthetic properties. And in the case of the genealogy of morals, the aesthetic property of morality that galvanises Nietzsche's attention is the creative impulse *qua* artistic impulse. This is precisely what occurs in the first essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Nietzsche examines two distinct moralities – noble and slave – in terms of their artistry. For Nietzsche, nobles and slaves are creators of moralities, which is to say, they are artists in the field of moral valuation. And he conceives of, and evaluates, their moralities in terms of the various models of artistic creation – the Dionysian and the romantic – that I examined in chapters one and two. In the following section, then, I will discuss Nietzsche's account of the birth of the noble valuation of 'good and bad' and show how that account is informed by Nietzsche's Dionysian aesthetics of abundance.

## II

We have learnt that goodness – of character, of 'soul' – is a precondition for the creation of the value judgement 'good'. But who are the good and what does their goodness consist in? Nietzsche writes that it was

> the noble, powerful, high-stationed and high-minded, who felt and established themselves and their actions as good, that is, of the first rank, in contradistinction to all the low, low-minded, common, plebeian. It was out of this *pathos of distance* that they first seized the right to create values and to coin names for values ... (GM I.2)

It is the noble who are good and it is precisely their goodness that enables them to seize the 'right to create values', which is to say, to create the values of good and bad. The nobles apply the value 'good', first of all, to themselves and then "derivatively" to their actions (BGE 260). Nietzsche conceives of goodness, then, as a feeling and calls it the 'pathos of distance', which is the "protracted and domineering fundamental feeling on the part of a higher ruling order in relation to a lower order" (*ibid.*). In the first instance, goodness is the feeling of superiority of a political ruling order – thus the value 'good' means 'superiority' or 'highness'.[8] Conversely, the value 'bad' simply refers to that which is not superior or higher, namely the lower order, the "ruled group" (BGE 260) – or "the slaves" as Nietzsche comes to call them (GM I.9). This, then, is the origin of the value-

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[8] I have deliberately ignored the political dimension of nobility. The noble creator of value can be interpreted as the Dionysian artist *politicized*. Noble value-creation is conceived as a "right" (*Recht*), a "lordly right" (*Herrenrecht*) that emerges simply from the fact of political superiority (GM I.2). However, whilst the power of the noble is in the first instance political, Nietzsche wants his nobles to occupy an elevated position above the crude realities of political domination. He wants, in other words, their values to be more than merely a reflection of political power. Thus he writes that a "concept denoting political superiority always resolves itself into a concept denoting superiority of soul" (GM I.6). Thus 'good' also means 'superiority of soul', or "high-minded[ness]" (GM I.2) – which is to say "nobility of soul" (GM I.5). And it is precisely nobility of soul, and not political nobility, that is the concern of the present chapter.

dichotomy of good/bad which is an expression of "noble morality" (GM I.10) or "*master morality*" (BGE 260) – that which Nietzsche calls "the sign-language of what has turned out well, of *ascending* life, of the will to power as the principle of life" (CW Epil).

Nietzsche conceives of the noble mode of value-creation in terms of the Dionysian art of being, discussed in chapter one. This point is made explicit in the following passages from *Beyond Good and Evil* and *The Case of Wagner*.

> [noble] morality is self-glorification. In the foreground there is the feeling of abundance [*Fülle*], of power that seeks to overflow, the happiness of high tension, the consciousness of wealth that would give and bestow ... The noble human being honours himself as one who is powerful, also as one who has power over himself ... (BGE 260)

> Noble morality, master morality ... is rooted in a triumphant Yes said to *oneself* – it is self-affirmation, self-glorification of life; it also requires sublime symbols and practices, but only because 'its heart is too full.' All of *beautiful*, all of *great* art belongs here: the essence of both is gratitude. (CW Epil)

In these two passages, Nietzsche gives full voice to his Hellenic aestheticism. The noble is powerful and overabundant – his 'heart is too full' – and he is conscious of, and grateful for, his power and wealth. From this feeling of self-gratitude, the noble is compelled to give thanks for himself, so he gives the greatest thing that he *can* give – himself. The noble bestows himself upon the world through creation, through the expansion of values that originally he only applied to himself. The 'high tension' of the noble's overabundance of power consummates itself in the "burning eruption of the highest rank-ordering, rank-defining value judgements"

(GM I.2), where the value 'good' is created and given a name. Thus his symbols (art) are beautiful and his practices (morality) are good, for the simple reason that the noble is both beautiful and good. And through his creations the noble honours himself, glorifies himself, and affirms himself as one who is powerful and thus fully vital.[9]

Noble morality is the attempt, on Nietzsche's part, to imagine a morality that is wholly predicated on life. It is "rooted in a triumphant Yes said to *oneself* – it is self-affirmation" (CW Epil). The noble is life-affirming in the sense that he is wholly self-affirming and he affirms himself by self-propagation through the creation of values that are reflections of himself. As we saw in the preceding chapter, the experience of the perfect sensation of the power for self-growth (creation) man calls 'beauty', and the products of self-expansion are designated, accordingly, as 'beautiful'. Thus, from this perspective, when the noble self-expands by giving a name to his actions, those actions are, in the first instance, 'beautiful'. But in the context of a community where action is regulated by custom – that is, by morality – the beautiful actions of the noble are called 'good'. 'Goodness', then, is simply 'beauty' forced into a moral context – or, to put it in slightly different terms, noble morality is the Dionysian aesthetic *made* moral.[10]

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[9] Michael Tanner writes of this passage, and of Nietzsche's conception of noble morality in general, that "Nietzsche is attempting to formulate the conditions under which we may hope to recover a conception of greatness, above all that kind of greatness which we associate with creativity" (1990: 22). I examine the concept of 'greatness', in the form of Nietzsche's idea of the "discipline of great suffering" (BGE 225) in section VI below.

[10] Nietzsche conceives of the nobles as "*whole* human beings" (BGE 257) in which beauty and goodness are merely modulations of each other. Nietzsche's "aristocratic value-equation" is "good = noble = powerful = beautiful = happy = beloved of God" (GM I.7). However, the slave revolt in morality has brought about the division of the noble unity of goodness and beauty as well as the degeneration of goodness. Thus he writes in an unpublished note: "For a philosopher to say, 'the good and the beautiful are one', is infamy; if he goes on to add, 'also the true', one ought to thrash him" (WP 822). For Nietzsche, 'goodness' now means 'unegoistic', 'selfless', 'disinterested' – i.e., life-denying. Whereas authentic 'beauty', so he claims, has managed to retain some of its power: it is 'egoistic', 'self-full', 'interested' – life-affirming.

In this section, then, we have seen how Nietzsche's conception of noble morality arises from the life-affirming precepts of his vitalistic aesthetic and thus constitutes that which I have labelled as his Hellenic aestheticism. The nobles create their value-dichotomy of good/bad in a manner that is symptomatic of the life that has "turned out well, of *ascending* life" (CW Epil). Hence Nietzsche regards noble morality as the only "*healthy* morality" (TI V.4). In the following section, I will complete my account of Nietzsche's genealogy of morals – or artistry of morality – by discussing that mode of moral valuation which originated with the "lower order" – the slaves (GM I.2).

## III

The moral value-dichotomy of 'good' and 'evil' is the invention of the "slaves" (GM I.9), of those who are ruled by the noble class, and it is the cornerstone of what Nietzsche calls "slave morality" (GM I.10). As we will see, Nietzsche argues that slave morality eventually overturned and superseded the prior morality of the nobles, thus he conceives of the emergence of the duality of good/evil as the "*slave revolt in morality*" (GM I.7). I will structure my discussion of slave morality around two questions; firstly, the psychological preconditions for slave creation, and, secondly, the actual character of slave creativity with respect to noble creativity.

Like all Nietzschean artists, the slave creates only when he is compelled to create, and we can begin to understand the exact nature of his compulsion by considering the nature of slavery. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche characterises the slaves as "subjects and instruments" (BGE

257) and as the "violated, oppressed, suffering, unfree" (BGE 260). The slave is subjugated by his master and his experience is constituted by the suffering from subjugation, oppression and violation. At this stage the slave is not able to create values; for that, a set of more potent affects are required and in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche conceives of three interrelated affective conditions that have the potential to become creative. These are "*ressentiment*" (GM I.10) and what Nietzsche describes as the "submerged, darkly glowering emotions of vengefulness and hatred" (GM I.13).[11] Recalling the romantic artist that I discussed in chapter two – in whom the "hatred against life ... become[s] creative" (NCW V) and who "revenges himself on all things" (GS 370) – it becomes immediately clear that, in the form of the slave, we are confronted with a mode of creation that is fundamentally impoverished. However, impoverished creativity *per se* is distinguished from its specifically moral-political form – slave creativity – by the presence, in the slave, of *ressentiment*. And, for Nietzsche, it is precisely when "*ressentiment* itself becomes creative and gives birth to values" that the "slave revolt in morality begins" (GM I.10).

Although Nietzsche characterises the slave as the "man of *ressentiment*" (GM I.10), it is not *ressentiment* as such that the slave exemplifies, but rather a specific type of *ressentiment*. If *ressentiment* "should appear in the noble man", Nietzsche writes, it "consummates and exhausts itself in an immediate reaction, and therefore does not *poison*" (*ibid.*). In other words, 'noble *ressentiment*' is immediately discharged because the nobles are free to discharge it; whereas slave *ressentiment* is pent-up precisely for the reason that the slaves are not free to discharge it

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[11] Nietzsche always uses the French word *ressentiment* (resentment).

– it is the "*ressentiment* of natures that are denied the true reaction, that of deeds" (*ibid.*).[12] It is the bondage of the slave, then, his inability to discharge freely any of his affects, that allows his resentment to grow and expand. The slave resents that which is the cause of his suffering, the noble, and his protracted suffering and, therefore, his protracted resentment means that he is perpetually "direct[ing his] view outward instead of back to [him]self" – that is, outward to the "hostile external world" that *is* his master (*ibid.*). And when his hatred and *ressentiment* for his master expands in such a way that revenge upon the master becomes a necessity, it is precisely then that "*ressentiment* ... becomes creative" (*ibid.*).[13] These are the psychological preconditions for slave creation.

The slave is unable to exact physical revenge upon his master, or, rather, if he does he will no doubt then be rewarded with his own annihilation. While that might seem preferable for some slaves, there will be others who will have recognised that they are, in effect, "denied the true reaction, that of deeds" and so will "compensate themselves with an imaginary revenge" (*ibid.*). The slave revenges himself on his master by creating the concept of an ultimate badness – 'evil' – and foisting it upon his master, who is denounced as "*the Evil One*" (*ibid.*). And when the slave has interpreted the noble as 'the evil one', he then calls himself 'good',

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[12] Nietzsche employs the notion of self-reflexive form-giving – the stylistic aspect of vitalistic aestheticism that was discussed in chapter four – to distinguish noble from slave *ressentiment*. He writes: "To be incapable of taking one's enemies, one's accidents, even one's misdeeds seriously for very long – that is the sign of strong, full natures in whom there is an excess of the power to form, to mould, to recuperate and to forget ... Such a man shakes off with a *single* shrug many vermin that eat deep into others" (GM I.10). Thus, the noble is able to forget, he practices "active forgetfulness" (GM II.1), that which Nietzsche describes at the beginning of the second essay of the *Genealogy* and calls a "form of *robust* health" (*ibid.*). And Nietzsche conceives of active forgetting in terms of self-reflexive form-giving, the "power to form, to mould" (GM I.10). This power is absent in the slave, he is unable to forget – thus *ressentiment* poisons him. *Ressentiment* itself, then, is not a symptom of impoverishment, only protracted – or 'non-re-formed' – *ressentiment* is.

[13] Aaron Ridley distinguishes between a "noncreative form of *ressentiment* which precedes, and is a condition of, the creative form of *ressentiment*" (1998: 23). My account of the growth of *ressentiment* into a creative affect, while not identical to Ridley's, is consistent with it.

for the simple reason that he is the opposite of 'evil'. Here Nietzsche attempts to draw a contrast between noble and slave creation on the basis of the distinction between the "*active*" and "*reactive* affects" (GM II.11). Noble morality creates *first* its "positive basic concept" of 'good' and only then creates its "negative concept ... 'bad'" (GM I.10) as an "after-production, a side issue, a contrasting shade" (GM I.11); whereas slave morality creates as "the original thing, the beginning, the distinctive *deed*" (*ibid.*) its negative concept of 'evil', and only *then*, "as an afterthought and pendant" (GM I.10) its positive concept of 'good'.[14] Nietzsche draws a distinction, then, between an active form of creation that affirms itself by creating the image of itself, and a reactive form of creation that, in the first instance, denies itself by creating a negation of itself.

Such, then, is the origin of the dichotomy of good/evil which is a "revers[al]" (GM I.8), an "inversion" (GM I.10) of the noble valuation of good/bad. The slaves revalues the 'good' of noble morality (the nobles) as

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[14] It was Gilles Deleuze who first argued that the distinction of active/reactive "is of the greatest importance and it is always found at the centre of Nietzsche's philosophy" (1983: 54). He claims that "*active* and *reactive* designate the original qualities of force [and] *affirmative* and *negative* designate the primordial qualities of the will to power" (1983: 53-4). Henry Staten has shown that "Deleuze has ignored the textual specificities of Nietzsche's writing" (1990: 16) by attributing to Nietzsche an essential value-dichotomy, since in the *Genealogy* there is a crossing of opposites (strength/weakness, health/sickness, active/reactive). This occurs most obviously, so I argue, in the alleged pure 'activeness' of the noble. The notion of a purely active and spontaneous mode of creativity sits uncomfortably with the idea of the "*pathos of distance*" (GM I.2), that feeling of political superiority that is said to give rise to noble creation. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche describes the pathos of distance as that "which grows out of the ingrained difference between strata – when the ruling caste constantly looks afar and looks down upon subjects" (BGE 257). In other words, the noble becomes aware of his own superiority precisely "in relation to a lower order" (GM I.2). It is not possible, then, for 'good' to be created *first* and for 'bad' to *then* be created as an "after-production, a side issue, a contrasting shade" (GM I.11), since it is precisely the consciousness of "ingrained difference" (BGE 257) that is a precondition for the creation of 'good'. In short, in Nietzsche's political model of noble creation, the values of 'good' and 'bad' can only arise simultaneously, whereas in his artistic model, 'good' is created first and 'bad' second. And insofar as the noble – so as to gain the sense of his own superiority – "constantly looks afar" (*ibid.*) and *not* at himself there is a reactive element in his mode of creation. Raymond Geuss makes a similar point when he claims that the slaves are a "social-psychological necessity" for the nobles to "create positive values" (1999: 192) and notes the tension between the pathos of distance and active willing (1999: 174). But the noble may be redeemed by observing that there is a 'Dionysian' form of reactivity associated with intoxication where the "essential thing remains the ease of the metamorphosis, the inability *not* to react ... to understand every suggestion" (TI IX. 10). Elsewhere, Nietzsche writes that the "inability *not* to react to a stimulus, is itself another form of degenerescence" (TI V.2). Thus, Deleuze's monolithic interpretation of the active/reactive duality fails to capture the more delicate nature of its functioning in Nietzsche's text.

'evil', and the 'bad' of noble morality (themselves, the slaves) as 'good'. The slave is the embodiment in moral form of the "aesthetics of *décadence*" (CW Epil) – of the hatred of life, and thus the "*impoverishment of life*" (GS 370), turned creative. The impoverished artist and the slave both manifest a hatred for that which they are not and that which they desire to be: power, strength, health. The impoverished artist of 'being' "revenges himself on all [powerful] things by forcing ... the image of his torture on them, branding them with it" (GS 370), and this is his mode of creation. Likewise, the slave revenges himself on the noble by branding him with the image of his own (the slave's) tortured suffering at the hands of the noble. In the realm of his imagination, the slave transforms that which is powerful (the unbranded noble) into that which is evil (the branded noble). Or, as Nietzsche puts it, the 'evil' of slave morality is "precisely the noble, powerful man, the ruler, but dyed in another colour ... seen in another way by the venomous eye of *ressentiment*" (GM I.11).

In this and the preceding section, I have attempted to show the extent to which the evaluative concepts of Nietzsche's moral philosophy are guided and informed by the concepts of his vitalistic aestheticism. The genealogy of morals is the vitalistic evaluation of moralities on the basis of their modes of creativity. Nietzsche's conception of the will to power as the self-expanding principle of life compels him to locate the primitive origin of the value 'good' *in* the good, noble and powerful. And he suggests that the value 'good' was taken away from the noble by the slaves with their corrupted form of creativity that was capable of "reversing" (GM I.8) the original and healthy noble valuation. Nietzsche insists that the "*slave revolt in morality* ... has a history of two thousand years behind it and ... we no longer see it because it – has been victorious"

(GM I.7) – victorious, that is, "over all *nobler* ideals" (GM I.8). In other words, a set of artists were overrun by a group of anti-artists who managed to convert the artists to their impoverished view of the world.

## IV

Slave morality arises from the vengeful hatred for nobility, for "all that represents the *ascending* movement of life ... power, beauty, self-affirmation" (AC 24). In saying "No to what is 'outside'" – that is, in saying 'No' to nobility – slave morality also says 'No' to life, and "*this* No", Nietzsche tells us, "is its creative deed" (GM I.10). Thus, slave morality is a fundamentally life-denying morality and its hatred of life – cultivated and structured by the "ascetic priest" (GM III.15) – reaches its apotheosis in the concept of a transcendental being: God.[15] Thus, through a set of arcane procedures that Nietzsche does not render clear, slave morality, in the hands of a "*priestly* caste" (GM I.6), was systematised into a religion that was transcendentally grounded: Christianity. For Nietzsche, the triumph of slave over noble is a symbol of the historical triumph of Christianity over the ideals of Græco-Roman antiquity. In what follows, I will, first of all, provide an outline of Nietzsche's conception of Christianity in terms of the concepts of 'redemption' – which Nietzsche calls the "quintessence of all Christian needs" (CW Epil) – and 'guilt'. And I will then describe Nietzsche's account of the demise of Christianity – that momentous event

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[15] In the first instance, Nietzsche suggests, the slaves create God so as to attain an ultimate "imaginary revenge" (GM I.10) upon their masters – but they do not call it revenge. What the "men of *ressentiment* ... believe in and hope for is not the hope of revenge", Nietzsche writes, "but the victory of God, of the *just* God, over the godless" (GM I.14). At this stage, the slave gives sense and value to his suffering at the hands of his master by conceiving of an other-worldly "kingdom of God" (GM I.15) into which his godless master will pass and suffer eternal punishment for his godlessness and his subjugation of the children of God – the slaves. On this interpretation, the concept of God arises from the hatred of life *qua* nobility and is conceived as the torturer (punisher) of life *qua* nobility. Nietzsche makes this point more than clear in the lengthy citation of Tertullian that occupies section 15 of the *Genealogy*.

of the 'death of God' that ushered in the crisis of value that Nietzsche dubs 'nihilism'.

At the close of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche writes that the "meaninglessness of suffering, *not* suffering itself was the curse that lay over mankind so far" – man demanded an answer to the question "*why* do I suffer?" (GM III.28). While the noble morality of Græco-Roman antiquity met this demand in a way that, for Nietzsche, was life-affirming, Christianity did precisely the opposite. The "Christian", Nietzsche observes, "interpret[s] a whole mysterious machinery of salvation into suffering" (GM II.7); he invents for himself the "phantasmagoria of anticipated future bliss" in the form of the kingdom of God "which serves to console [him] for all the suffering of life" (GM I.14). In the life "beyond death" (GM I.15), the Christian imagines that he will find compensation for his earthly suffering by bathing in the "eternal bliss" (*ibid.*) of the kingdom of God. Christian salvation, then, presupposes the concept of an immortal soul that, beyond death, is redeemed from earthly suffering.[16]

The redemptive interpretation of suffering is supplemented by the ascetic priest's religious "reinterpretation of suffering" as the "*feeling of guilt*" (GM III.20). Nietzsche claims that "every sufferer instinctively seeks a cause for his suffering" (GM III.15); so the question '*why* do I suffer?' becomes 'what is the cause of my suffering?' The sufferer

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16 For Nietzsche, then, Christian redemption is a concept that interprets suffering as part of the compact with God. The Christian reasons: 'You, God, have made me suffer for my earthliness (my body and desires) and I give my suffering to you so that, beyond death, you will repay me my suffering by inviting me into your kingdom where I will share with you eternal bliss'. The Christian denies life ascetically; he interprets life as a mistake, as without value, as something that he must endure so as to receive his reward in the kingdom of God where value-in-itself resides. But since God is a lie, the Christian's "desire for a *unio mystica* with God" (GM I.7) is, for Nietzsche, "*a will to nothingness*" (GM III.28) – one that involves an "imaginary *teleology*" (AC 15).

> receives a hint from ... the ascetic priest, the *first* hint as to the 'cause' of his suffering: he must seek it in *himself*, in some *guilt*, in a piece of the past, he must understand his suffering as a *punishment*. (GM III.20)

The seemingly paradoxical consequence of interpreting suffering as guilt is that it brings "fresh suffering with it, deeper, more inward, more poisonous ... suffering" (GM III.28). But Nietzsche's point is precisely that man can withstand any amount of suffering, as long as it is assigned a meaning. The Christian is guilty of "sin" (GM III.20), of perpetrating an 'evil' deed, and God – in the form of his mouthpiece on earth, the priest – 'punishes' him by making him suffer. Thus, the Christian interprets his suffering at the hands of God as a punishment for 'sin', and so believes that he is the cause of his suffering. He thereby doubles his suffering, since he is pained both by his 'sin' and his guilty status as a "sinner" (*ibid.*). While it might appear that Christianity is, in a certain sense, affirming life through the cultivation of life *qua* suffering, Nietzsche argues that the "system of procedures" (GM III.20) that are driven by the concepts of 'guilt' and 'sin' are guided ultimately by the hedonistic "cry for 'redemption'" (*ibid.*) – by the Christian desire to *escape* suffering.

For Nietzsche, ascetics "inflict as much pain on themselves as they possibly can out of pleasure in inflicting pain" (GM III.11), which is to say that there is an economy of pain and pleasure in the ascetic which is motivated by the desire for pleasure. In other words, the ascetic is, despite all appearances to the contrary, a *hedonist*.[17] The ascetic and the Christian

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[17] Nietzsche makes explicit his claim that ascetic Christianity is hedonistic in the following passage from *Nietzsche Contra Wagner*: "Thus, I gradually learned to understand Epicurus, the opposite of a Dionysian Greek; also the Christian, who is, in fact, only a kind of Epicurean, and, with his 'faith makes blessed', follows the principle of hedonism as far as possible – far beyond any intellectual integrity" (NCW 5). And in *The Anti-Christ*, Nietzsche calls the "doctrine of redemption" a "sublime further evolution of hedonism on a thoroughly morbid basis" (AC 30). Recalling my discussion of romantic intoxicatory redemption in chapter two, it is clear that Nietzsche regards both the romantic artist and the Christian as hedonists.

thirst for "*more* pain" (GM III.20) precisely so as to make the redemption from the suffering of pain all the more pleasurable. Their pleasure in pain is the anticipatory pleasure that looks forward to the ecstasies they will taste when they are redeemed from the large quantity of self-inflicted pain that they now suffer. Thus, Nietzsche suggests that the Christian "follows the principle of hedonism as far as possible" (NCW 5). Christian hedonism is entirely nihilistic, since the final redemption – the entry into the kingdom of God – is the actual annihilation of the self in death. And those moments of redemption that are experienced in this world are an escape and denial of the Christian self. The ecstasy that is sought completely obliterates the self, and its ultimate goal, so Nietzsche claims, is the "Christian *desideratum* ... [of] ... 'peace of soul'" (TI V.3) – which is "the hypnotic sense of nothingness, the repose of the deepest sleep, in short *absence of suffering*" (GM III.17). Such, then, is Nietzsche's conception of the Christian interpretation of suffering.

In the penultimate section of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche contemplates the demise of Christianity at its own hands.

> All great things bring about their own destruction through an act of self-overcoming: thus the law of life will have it, the law of the necessity of 'self-overcoming' in the nature of life ... In this way Christianity *as a dogma* was destroyed by its own morality; in the same way Christianity *as morality* must now perish, too: we stand on the threshold of *this* event.[18] (GM III.27)

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[18] Nietzsche calls Christianity 'great' and thus acknowledges – from the broad perspective of world-history – its unsurpassable power for conquest. Elsewhere in the *Genealogy* he calls Judeo-Christianity the "secret black art of truly *grand* politics of revenge" (GM I.8) and refers to the "monstrous nature" of the power of the ascetic ideal (GM III.23).

Nietzsche describes the self-destructive consequence of the "Christian faith ... that God is truth, that truth is *divine*" (GS 344). Driven by the faith that truth is of "unconditional" value (GM III.24), the ascetic ideal of unconditional truth-seeking emerges from its cloak of Christian religiosity in the form of science which turns against the Christian God and reveals Him as a lie. "After Christian truthfulness has drawn one inference after another", Nietzsche continues, "it must end by drawing its *most striking inference*, its inference *against* itself" (GM III.27), and at that point a "*new problem arises*: that of the *value* of truth" (GM III.24). It is in this way, then, that Christianity overcomes itself, with the result that God, absolute truth and the very notion of transcendental value as such is left in tatters. Nietzsche is more than aware of the paradoxical meaning of the event of the death of God. It could lead to "breakdown, destruction, ruin, and cataclysm" (GS 343), but at the same time he finds in it a "new and scarcely describable kind of light, happiness, relief, exhilaration, encouragement, dawn" (*ibid.*).[19] Nietzsche's ambivalence to the death of God rests on his view that it involves the demise of one form of nihilism and the potential emergence of another form.

There are at least three senses of 'nihilism'. Firstly, there is the "suicidal nihilism" that Nietzsche links to the "tremendous void" of "meaninglessness" (GM III.28) or the "*horror vacui*" (GM III.1). Human existence is without meaning or value – man is unable to impose, or has not yet imposed, a structure of values upon the world. Secondly, there is the nihilism of the "will to nothingness" (GM II.24; III.14), which is to say

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[19] It is in Book III of *The Gay Science* that Nietzsche – in the form of "the madman" (GS 125) – first proclaims that "God is dead" (*ibid.*). And he opens Book V of that book, written in his final period, with the words: "The greatest recent event – that 'God is dead', that the belief in the Christian god has become unbelievable – is already beginning to cast its first shadows over Europe" (GS 343).

that there *are* values, but Nietzsche interprets them as predicated upon the denial of life, the "nihilistic devaluation of all life" (TI IX.21). Such is the nihilism of the ascetic ideal and Christianity. Thirdly, there is nihilism as the process of the "self-overcoming" (GM III.27) – or the self-devaluation – of value, and this is the process through which Christianity has moved.[20]

Nietzsche's fear that "breakdown" and "destruction" (GS 343) may issue from the self-devaluation of Christian value is the fear that Western man will not replace the values he has overcome. He will still live by the set of moribund Christian values that are left in the wake of God's death *or* he will descend into a peculiarly modern state of nihilistic valuelessness – or a mixture of both. But the "exhilaration" and "dawn" (*ibid.*) that Nietzsche finds in the collapse of Christianity is based on his belief that Christianity is founded on a set of nihilistic, life-denying values. Christianity replaces the nothingness of meaninglessness with the meaningful will to nothingness; its demise, therefore, raises the possibility that Western man can cultivate a will to life and impose a set of life-affirming values upon the world. It is this second task toward which Nietzsche's philosophy is directed. It is urgently required that the rigorous scrutinising of value should occur, an activity that is driven by the desire for a "solution of the *problem of value*, the determination of the *order of rank among values*" (GM I.17). But when Nietzsche surveys the state of contemporary value, however, he finds, to his dismay, that his prediction of "ruin and cataclysm" (GS 343) is the more likely to unfold. In the following section, I will identify Nietzsche's

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20 This idea – to which I referred in the introduction – is given clear expression in the following fragment from *The Will to Power*: "What does nihilism mean? *That the highest values devaluate themselves*. The aim is lacking; 'why?' finds no answer" (WP 2). This note was composed in 1887 and so is contemporary with the *Genealogy*.

principal reasons for claiming that contemporary morality is basically a decadent form of Christian morality.

## V

Nietzsche regards suffering as an ineradicable fact about human existence. In *On the Genealogy of Morals*, he tells us that man "*suffered* from the problem of his meaning", but he "also suffered otherwise, he was in the main a sickly animal" (GM III.28); and in *Beyond Good and Evil* he affirms that man is "that which *necessarily* must and *should* suffer" (BGE 225). We have seen that Nietzsche's reconstruction of the Christian solution to the problem of suffering is predicated on the concepts of 'redemption' and 'guilt'. And in both cases Christianity "follows the principle of hedonism as far as is possible", Nietzsche writes, "far beyond any intellectual integrity" (NCW 5). Whether in transcendental redemption (where earthly suffering is "eternally indemnified" (GM I.15) in the bliss of the kingdom of God) or in earthly redemption (where the concept of guilt creates more suffering precisely so as to enrich the escape from it) the ultimate and underlying struggle of Christianity, its 'peace of soul', is the "grand *struggle against the feeling of displeasure*" (GM III.17).[21]

Nietzsche regards the struggle to eliminate suffering – given that suffering is an irreducible fact about human life – as not only life-denying, but also as utterly nonsensical. "You want, if possible – and there is no

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21 In *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche describes five ascetic "forms and methods" for combating displeasure (GM III.17). First, "the means that reduce the feeling of life in general to its lowest point" – i.e., "*redemption*" (*ibid.*). Second, "*mechanical activity* ... 'the blessings of work'" (GM III.18). Third, the "prescribing of a *petty pleasure* ... [e.g.] doing good, being useful" (*ibid.*). Fourth, the "*formation of a herd*" which lifts the individual "above ... his aversion to *himself*" (*ibid.*). Five, an "*orgy of feeling*" (GM III.19) which immerses the human soul in "terrors, ice, flames, and raptures to such an extent that it is liberated from all petty displeasure" (GM III.20). 'Guilt' and 'sin' are the principle orgies of feeling.

more insane 'if possible' – *to abolish suffering*" (BGE 225) he writes in *Beyond Good and Evil*. Nietzsche suggests that redemption from suffering, the "hypnotic sense of nothingness" (GM III.17), has been interpreted by the religious mentality as the union with the transcendent – for Christianity, the communion with God. My claim is that it is precisely the basic commitment of contemporary morality to hedonism that makes it a *degenerate* form of Christian morality and *not* a post-Christian morality. God is the sublime symbol of the escape from suffering. And yet when Western man has killed God, and with it any conception of a transcendental realm of "*another world*" that is opposed to "this world, *our* world" (GS 344), instead of fully acknowledging the basic character of 'this world' and so the fact that suffering is inescapable – *man still clings to*, and mouths the words, of the Christian doctrine of the elimination of suffering. But that doctrine only makes sense with the presupposition of God. In a godless world such a doctrine, as Nietzsche puts it, is "insane" (BGE 225).

"Christianity is a system", Nietzsche writes in the *Twilight of the Idols*, "a consistently thought out and *complete* view of things. If one breaks out of it a fundamental idea, the belief in God, one thereby breaks the whole thing to pieces" (TI IX.5). Thus, the death of God necessitates a *new* understanding of suffering. But instead, ancient hedonism persists and we are left with an inauthentic form of Christian morality. For Nietzsche, this inauthenticity manifests itself in at least three ways. Firstly, if Western man really believes that suffering is eliminable, then he must still affirm – however implicitly – a concept of the transcendental.[22] It is not called

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22 I support this claim with an argument that is analogous to that presented in chapter three with respect to truth and untruth. The will to the elimination of suffering – that is, to view suffering, in all circumstances, as objectionable and undesirable – presupposes the *unconditional* will to happiness (or

'God', but manifests itself under a different name; for example, the utilitarian demand for "the general welfare", "the happiness of the greatest number" (BGE 228), or the more mundane presupposition that 'achievement', 'success', and 'love' necessarily result in 'happiness'.[23] Decadent morality possesses all the nihilistic trappings of Christian morality, but self-deceptively insists that it is enlightened – that is, properly secular and humane. In this instance, Nietzsche ranks decadent morality lower than Christian morality, which is at least an "honest expression of decadence" (CW Epil), rather than an innocently mendacious one. Secondly, Western man might not believe in the eliminability of suffering and so, at least in this context, will have properly overcome the transcendental. He does not, however, seek a new understanding of suffering, but instead mouths the doctrine of redemption in seductively 'new' terms while not believing it, or else he revels in the bankruptcy of that doctrine. In this case, through indolence or exhaustion or kitschiness or whatever, man retains a value that he knows to be without meaning. This is the worst species of decadent morality. It has one foot in that "suicidal nihilism" of valuelessness (GM III.28) that I described earlier, but does not have the courage for suicide. Instead it ambles complacently along and in some places calls itself 'post-modernism'.

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pleasure etc.). Thus the eudaemonist believes in the absolute value of happiness, the hedonist in the absolute value of pleasure, and it is precisely this that constitutes their implicit transcendentalism. Nietzsche refers to the concept of an 'implicit transcendentalism' in the context of the unconditional will to truth of science. Science claims that it has overcome Christianity, but it is actually Christianity *qua* will to truth in its most perfect and sharpest form.

23 For Nietzsche, the hedonic interpretation of life is ubiquitous: "Whether it is hedonism or pessimism, utilitarianism or eudaemonism – all these ways of thinking measure the value of things in accordance with *pleasure* and *pain*" (BGE 225). In the *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche writes famously: "If we possess our *why* of life we can put up with almost any *how*. – Man does *not* strive after happiness; only the Englishman does that" (TI I.12). Ivan Soll – in his paper 'Nietzsche on Cruelty, Asceticism, and the Failure of Hedonism' – has observed that Nietzsche's theory of the will to power offers an "importantly different alternative to *psychological hedonism* ... [which] in one form or another has long dominated our thinking about human behaviour. The alternative psychology of will to power was offered not only for its explanatory superiority but also for its potential to liberate us from a broadly and deeply rooted error" (1994: 169). My account of ascetic hedonic self-cruelty is broadly in line with Soll's. But Soll does not explore the possibility of noble non-hedonic self-cruelty, as I do below.

The third and final sense of decadent morality, while seemingly as deplorable as those just described, nevertheless possesses an internal dynamic that, for Nietzsche, offers some hope. It is the "instinctive contradiction" (CW Epil) of opposing values that I described in chapter two. Decadent morality – for Nietzsche, most spectacularly through Wagner – "make[s] eyes at ... *noble* morality ... while mouthing the counterdoctrine, that of the 'gospel of the lowly', of the *need* for redemption!" (*ibid.*). Nietzsche claims that noble morality and slave-Christian morality are "*necessary* opposites" (*ibid.*). However, when that distinction makes its first appearance in his final period (in *Beyond Good and Evil*), Nietzsche writes of "the interpenetration and mutual misunderstanding of both" and of their occurring "directly alongside each other – even in the same human being, within a *single* soul" (BGE 260). Which is to say that there are 'residues' of noble valuation in the dominantly slavish perspectives of contemporary man. So, through the nurturing of those dormant seeds of nobility it is possible that an overturning of decadent morality could take place.

Those who do not possess sufficient self-knowledge to recognise the 'instinctive contradiction' of opposite values within them, Nietzsche calls decadent. He also calls decadent those who *do* recognise their moral hybridity but whose "most profound desire is that the war [of values] they *are* should come to an end" (BGE 200). However, Nietzsche looks favourably upon those individuals who unflinchingly take up the war of values that they are and who understand their task – in the epoch that follows the death of God – as guided by the "the determination of the *order of rank among values*" (GM I.17). He writes that "today there is

perhaps no more decisive mark of a '*higher nature*', a more spiritual nature, than that of being divided in this sense and a genuine battleground of these opposed values" (GM I.16). Thus, out of the contradictory and hybrid nature of decadent morality, Nietzsche suggests that a properly post-Christian and so life-affirming set of values may emerge; a 'higher nature' that may authentically overcome God as the redeemer of all suffering and employ suffering within a noble economy of life in such a way that life is cultivated.

In the following section, I will describe how Nietzsche advances a concept of ethical 'greatness' that is opposed to the moral 'goodness' that he finds in decadent modernity. My argument is framed by the following brief but trenchant remarks of Michael Tanner: "Nietzsche's fundamental concern throughout his life was to plot the relationship between suffering and culture", Tanner writes, and correlative with this concern is his "interest in greatness rather than goodness".[24] "Greatness ... involves putting pain to work; goodness involves attempting to eliminate it", Tanner concludes.[25]

## VI

It is out of the fertile matrix of Nietzsche's vitalistic aestheticism that his conception of nobility arises. The way of the noble is the way of the artist and, as we saw in chapter four, the artist is the locus of the creative, form-giving, and cultivating forces. The Nietzschean "*noble ideal*" (GM I.16), in other words, is grounded in his conception of an *aesthetic ideal*. Or, as I

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[24] Tanner, 1994: 27.

[25] *Ibid.*.

put it in the introduction, Nietzsche's concept of nobility – the central component of his Hellenic aestheticism – is Greek nobility aestheticized. And in the context of the battleground of opposite values that characterises decadent morality, Nietzsche symbolises the struggle between the aesthetic-noble and the moral-slave in the words that close *Ecce Homo*: "Have I been understood? – *Dionysus against the Crucified*" (EH IV.9).[26]

But in what way can a noble aesthetics – or a "*classical* aesthetics" (CW Epil) – combat the decadence of an inauthentic Christianity, that which provides the seemingly irremovable foundation of contemporary morality? Or, as Nietzsche puts it: "today – is greatness *possible*?" (BGE 212). In the following passage from *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche provides the beginning of an answer to this question:

> The discipline of suffering, of *great* suffering – do you not know that only *this* discipline has created all enhancements of man so far? That tension of the soul in unhappiness which cultivates its strength ... its inventiveness and courage in enduring, persevering, interpreting, and exploiting suffering, and whatever has been granted to it of profundity, secret, mask, spirit, cunning, greatness – was it not granted to it ... through the discipline of great suffering? In man *creature* and *creator* are united: in man there is material, fragment, excess, clay, dirt, nonsense, chaos; but in man there is also creator,

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[26] In Nietzsche's final period, the notion of an aesthetic ideal is generally referred to with the name 'Dionysus'. This is a complex name that is not only a hybrid of the vitalistic and Hellenic aesthetics, but of the broad perspective within which the attempted tragic affirmation of life takes place – the "*supreme affirmation* born out of fullness" (EH BT.2). The idea of an aesthetic counter-ideal is explicit in the following passages. In the *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche writes: "Schopenhauer [represents] a brilliantly malicious attempt to bring to bear in the service of a nihilistic devaluation of all life precisely the counter-examples, the great self-affirmations of the 'will to life', the exuberance-forms of life. He interpreted *art*, heroism, genius, beauty ... tragedy as consequences of the 'denial' of the 'will', or the need to deny it" (TI IX.21). And in the *Genealogy*, in a passage I examined in chapter three: "*Art* ... is much more fundamentally opposed to the ascetic ideal than is science ... Plato versus Homer: that is the complete, the genuine antagonism ... (GM III.25). Finally, in two unpublished notes from *The Will to Power*: "Our religion, morality, and philosophy are decadence forms of man. The *countermovement: art*" (WP 794); "An anti-metaphysical view of the world – yes, but an artistic one" (WP 1048).

> form-giver, hammer hardness, spectator divinity, and seventh day: do you understand this contrast? (BGE 225)

There are three points that I want to draw from this passage. Firstly, Nietzsche describes in unambiguous terms his aesthetic conception of man. In man there is a division between 'creature' and 'creator' or 'material' and 'form-giver', which is to say, man is both art (aesthetic artefact) *and* artist (aesthetic power).[27] Nietzsche goes on to state that it is the "creature in man" that must be "formed ... forged ... purified" (*ibid.*) – in other words, disciplined and cultivated – by the creator in man. Here we confront, albeit in slightly different terms, the stylistic component of Nietzsche's vitalistic aesthetic that I examined in chapter four. Man *qua* creator imposes the "constraint of style" (GS 290) upon man *qua* creature and thereby "cultivates [his] strength" (BGE 225), his instinctive or affective life. Secondly, Nietzsche introduces the concept of 'greatness' (*Größe*) and characterises it in terms of the concept of 'suffering' and his aesthetic conception of man. Nietzsche writes that it is the "creature in man ... which *necessarily* must and *should* suffer" (*ibid.*), thus the "discipline of suffering" (*ibid.*) is precisely the disciplining of the suffering creature in man *by* the discipliner, the creator in man. And it is "only *this* discipline", Nietzsche tells us, that "has created all enhancements of man", i.e. that has granted man his "greatness" (*ibid.*). Thus, Nietzsche makes the vitalistic aesthetic a necessary and sufficient condition for greatness.

The third and final point that I want to make about the citation is that through the concept of greatness Nietzsche establishes a link between

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[27] Although it is tempting to align the dichotomy of creator/creature with the 'battleground' duality of noble/slave, it should be resisted. While it is clear that the creator must be dominantly noble, the creature in man will be both noble and slave.

the vitalistic aesthetic and nobility (*Vornehmheit*). Elsewhere in *Beyond Good and Evil*, he writes that "today, being noble ... pertains to the concept 'greatness'" (BGE 212). In other words, the concept of 'being noble' belongs to, or is to be classed with, the concept of 'greatness'. Since the vitalistic aesthetic – in the form of the 'discipline of suffering' – is a necessary and sufficient condition for greatness, and since nobility pertains to greatness, it follows that nobility belongs to the artistic discipline of suffering. In other words, the concept of nobility – as I suggested at the opening of this section – emerges from the broader and deeper ground of Nietzsche's vitalistic aestheticism.[28]

In what way, then, does the discipline of great suffering offer an authentic counter-movement to Christian-ascetic hedonism and its contemporary derivatives? The distinction between the noble and the ascetic interpretations of suffering, as I shall now refer to them, is underpinned by the contrast that I drew in the preceding chapter between artistic constraint and the constraint of decadent morality. Nietzsche's concept of the discipline of great suffering, basically, is the idea of the artistic "constraint of style" (GS 290) conceived from another perspective – namely, the perspective of suffering. In what follows, I will combine these two models in an attempt to distinguish the noble interpretation of suffering from the ascetic variety thereof. I will outline, first of all, the suffering of Nietzsche's 'creature in man', before turning to the more problematic status of his 'creator'.

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28 This point enables us to understand the broader claim that Nietzsche makes at the beginning of the section from *Beyond Good And Evil* under discussion. Nietzsche writes that hedonism etc. are "ways of thinking that ... everyone conscious of *creative* powers and an artistic conscience [*Künstler-Gewissens*] will look down upon not without derision" (BGE 225). In other words, from the perspective of Nietzsche's vitalistic aestheticism – in this case, the self-creating noble who forms and disciplines pain (and pleasure) – pain as such is not the problem. The problem, rather, is how to put pain to work, creatively, in the service of life.

The single goal of the constraint of style is to stimulate the growth of *life*. It is, then, irreducibly life-affirming and it stimulates life by constraining the instincts in such a way that they are purified and sharpened, which is to say, cultivated and perfected. We have now learnt that it is not only the instinctive life of man that is constrained, but the "creature in man", his entire inner life – his "material, fragment, excess, clay, dirt, nonsense, chaos" (BGE 225). And we have also learnt that this procedure is extraordinarily hard, since it involves the self-infliction of pain and so a tremendous quantity of suffering: "great suffering" (*ibid.*). The discipline of great suffering, then, is precisely the suffering that attends the constraint of style. The creator in man constrains the creature in man, and in so doing constrains his pleasures – and therefore causes the creature to suffer. But such discipline of the suffering of constraint also "cultivates [the] strength" of the creature through "endur[ance], persever[ence]" (*ibid.*), as well as cultivating that which gives rise to the creature's pleasures. And in both cases, vital life is cultivated. While it is the case that the cultivation of those instincts or affects that give rise to pleasure will thereby result in the cultivation and purification *of* pleasure, it must be emphasised that the cultivation of pleasure as such is *not* the goal of noble discipline. The noble may come to embody the fullness of life and this will certainly give him pleasure, but it is the fullness of life itself that is the purpose of the discipline of suffering. And more frequently than infrequently the noble will actually suffer from the abundance of life. Nietzsche underlines this point in his claim that it is possible "to suffer" precisely "from the *overabundance of life*" (GS 370).

I have shown, then, how Nietzsche's conception of the suffering of the creature is completely indifferent to any hedonic imperative. And this follows from Nietzsche's assertion that the "creature in man" is "that which *necessarily* must and *should* suffer" (BGE 225). But what about the creator? Nietzsche does not state that it is necessary that he too should suffer. This leaves open the possibility that the discipliner of suffering, like the ascetic, takes pleasure in making himself (as creature) suffer. Nietzsche makes it clear that there *is* a pleasure of discipline, in the following passage from *On the Genealogy of Morals*.

> This secret self-ravishment, this artists' cruelty, this delight in imposing a form upon oneself as a hard, recalcitrant, suffering material and in burning a will, a critique, a contradiction, a No into it, this uncanny, dreadfully joyous labour of a soul voluntarily at odds with itself that makes itself suffer out of joy in making suffer ... (GM II.18)

Nietzsche describes, once again, the self-reflexive form-giving of the discipline of suffering. But with two additions. Firstly, the creator of the passage from *Beyond Good and Evil* becomes the artist and the process of imposing a form upon oneself is conceived as the artists' cruelty. Secondly, Nietzsche indicates that there is pleasure involved in the artist's self-cruelty; it is a 'self-ravishment', a 'delight', a 'dreadfully joyous labour of a soul' that 'makes itself suffer out of joy in making suffer'. Thus it is the case that the creator in man who brings to bear the discipline of suffering upon the creature in man, and so himself, does so "out of joy in making suffer" (*ibid.*).

There seems, then, to be little to distinguish the noble from those ascetics who "inflict as much pain on themselves as they possibly can out

of pleasure in inflicting pain" (GM III.11). The noble takes pleasure in making himself suffer; and so he performs the discipline of great suffering upon himself precisely, it seems, so as to experience *great* pleasure. And this would suggest that pleasure is his ultimate goal. But the procedure whereby he gains access to great pleasure is, like the procedures of the ascetic, "in the highest degree paradoxical" (GM III.11). On this interpretation, the noble discipline of suffering is actually the redemption from suffering, since the noble experiences such an enormous quantity of pleasure in his suffering that his suffering is obliterated. At this point the distinction between noble and ascetic has all but collapsed.

Nietzsche suggests that form-giving as such – which is necessarily attended by the infliction of suffering – is joyful and pleasurable. If we take into account his extended treatment of cruelty in the *Genealogy* (GM II. 6-7) together with his claim, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, that "everything we call 'higher culture' is based on the spiritualisation of *cruelty*" (BGE 229), it becomes clear that artistic self-cruelty is his most fundamental conceptualisation of self-reflexive form-giving. When man indulges in noble self-discipline, or ascetic "self-flagellation" (GM III.11), or the "painful voluptuousness of tragedy" (BGE 229), or the "most delicate shudders of metaphysics" (*ibid.*), for Nietzsche, he is "secretly lured ... by those dangerous thrills of cruelty turned *against oneself*" (*ibid.*). Thus, the stylistic component of Nietzsche's vitalistic aestheticism can be understood as a masochistic aestheticism: in the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche calls "self-torture" our "distinctive art" (GM II.24).

Nobility and asceticism, then, issue from the same artistic will to pleasurable self-cruelty. That would appear to seal the fate of the noble.

But that, I think, is to ignore the fundamental distinction between the noble and the ascetic – their differing relation to *life*. The pleasure that the noble experiences in imposing a form upon himself is precisely the pleasure of the knowledge that his self-cruelty is of such a type that his inner life is cultivated. The cultivation of life is his goal and while that may result in the pleasure of the abundance of life, it will also result, as we have seen, in the suffering from the overabundance of life. In short, the noble joy in suffering is the joy in the enhancement of life, and the enhancement of life brings with it joy, but also suffering. Conversely, the pleasure that the ascetic takes in self-cruelty is the pleasure of the total *denial of life*. On one level, the ascetic is cruel to himself because in cruelly denying himself (his senses, his body, his instincts) he is attempting to attain a purity of spirituality that he interprets as a coming closer to the purity of God. On another level, the pleasure that he takes in making himself suffer through self-denial is the anticipatory pleasure of his being redeemed from all suffering. And this occurs through either earthly redemption – the "hypnotic sense of nothingness" (GM III.17) – or transcendental redemption – which he interprets as the "*unio mystica* with God" (GM I.6). And in that state he is not only redeemed from suffering, but from life itself.

To conclude: the noble affirms the necessity of suffering precisely for the "enhancement" of life (BGE 225) and it is in this way that he overcomes the "meaninglessness of suffering" (GM III.28). Suffering is meaningful because in the discipline of suffering, life is constrained and so cultivated and perfected. And while pleasure is a necessary part of this process, the noble economy of pleasure and pain is directed at the expansion of life, strength and power. Thus, the noble interpretation of suffering represents a countermovement to the Christian concept of the

redemption from suffering and the underlying hedonism of decadent morality.

## VII

In man "there is material, fragment, excess, clay, dirt, nonsense, chaos" (BGE 225). Here Nietzsche characterises contemporary decadent man, whose "*décadence* is signalled", as he claims that Socrates' was, "by the avowed chaos and anarchy of his instincts" (TI II.4). "Such human beings of late cultures", Nietzsche writes in *Beyond Good and Evil*, "will on average be weaker human beings" (BGE 200), since, in the post-Christian era of value-anarchism, value fights value and the powers of instinct and affect are consumed in this war without purpose. To replace chaos with order, anarchy with oligarchy, weakness with strength, Nietzsche advances his aesthetic ideal of noble discipline and constraint. I would like, in this and the following section, to broaden my examination of noble discipline and to illuminate the type of human being that Nietzsche desires, and thinks is possible, in the age of disintegration.

In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche writes that to impose the "constraint of style" (GS 290) upon oneself is to

> 'give style' to one's character – a great and rare art! It is practised by those who survey all the strengths and weaknesses of their nature and then fit them into an artistic plan until every one of them appears as art and reason and even weaknesses delight the eye. Here a large mass of second nature has been added; there a piece of original nature has been removed ... Here the ugly that

> could not be removed is concealed; there it has been reinterpreted and made sublime.[29] (GS 290)

Once again, Nietzsche links greatness to the aesthetic. The art of imposing the constraint of style upon one's character is a great art (*große Kunst*), and insofar as one has achieved some success in this art, one has attained a certain measure of greatness. To impose the constraint of style is a severe and "long practice" (*ibid.*) and, for it to be the expression of greatness, it must presuppose a tremendous amount of suffering. As I claimed earlier, the noble discipline of great suffering is precisely the suffering that attends the constraint of style and Nietzsche stresses that only those "strong and domineering natures" will be able to attain "such constraint and perfection under a law" (*ibid.*).

The procedures of giving style to the character correspond to those discussed in the discipline of nobility, and they are twofold. Firstly, nature is 'added' or 'removed' – "formed" or "torn" (BGE 225) – through the imposition of form. The character thereby undergoes concrete transformation. Secondly, ugly nature that cannot be removed is either 'concealed' or 'reinterpreted', that is, in each case given a type of "mask" (*ibid.*). Here, the character has undergone transformation through deception. Both of these modes of constraint will occur simultaneously and sometimes on the same piece of nature. In the following section, I will discuss the concretely transformative mode of stylisation; but I want, in the remainder of this section, to explore the idea of style as deception and so

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[29] I have already quoted from this key passage in this and the previous chapter. It occurs in Book IV of *The Gay Science* from Nietzsche's middle period and it lays out in plain terms the general theme of self-creation that is of the utmost importance for the mature Nietzsche.

bring together some key themes of Nietzsche's aesthetics that I have been tracing in my project.

When Nietzsche advises his noble stylist to conceal or reinterpret his weakness and ugliness he is asking him to place a mask of untruth over his ugly truth. Here, Nietzsche's Apollonian aesthetic of art as appearance or illusion manifests itself.[30] But the idea of lying away one's weakness seems to conflict with noble discipline which, as I have argued, operates outside the "principle of hedonism" (NCW V). It is all too easy to escape the truth of one's weakness through self-deception and thereby indulge, decadently, in a "*petty pleasure*" (GM III.18). Moreover, Nietzsche interprets religion itself as a "falsified, thinned down, transcendentalized, deified" image of life and he suggests that "the *homines religiosi* might be included among [Apollonian] artists, as their highest rank" (BGE 59). In other words, God is a lie.[31] It seems, then, that the decadents and the priests have the monopoly on concealment and reinterpretation. But, in fact, they do not. Although Nietzsche is committed to truth, he identifies and advocates at least two forms of self-deception. Firstly, there is self-deception as *la gaya scienza* ('refreshment' or 'reward') that strengthens and sharpens the commitment to truth. I discussed this in chapter three. Secondly, Nietzsche recognises that it is inevitable that all human beings are flawed in some way and so suggests that there is a need for self-deception. I will give an account of this need in what follows.

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[30] To conceal one's weakness or ugliness with a mask or reinterpretation is to lie them away, and the stylist who manifests the "delight in simulation ... that pushes aside [his] ... 'character'", Nietzsche calls an "actor" (GS 361). As we saw in chapter two, Nietzsche regards Wagner as the modern actor *par excellence* and relates Wagner's "degeneration" to his "histrionics" (CW 7).

[31] In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche writes that the "'life in God' .. would appear as the subtlest and final offspring of the *fear* of truth, as an artist's worship and intoxication before the most consistent of all falsifications, as ... untruth at any price" (BGE 59).

To be able to deceive oneself authentically about oneself presupposes, first of all, that one has attained self-knowledge. The constraint of style necessarily assumes that one has made a "survey" of *all* the "strengths and weaknesses of [one's] nature" (GS 290). Nietzsche claims that modernity is characterised by individuals who have not even reached this stage of self-stylisation – all "they are capable of is a *dishonest* lie" (GM III.19), he writes in the *Genealogy*. The noble stylist, however, possesses a high level of self-knowledge and so his concealments and reinterpretations will be "genuine, resolute, 'honest' lie[s]" (*ibid.*).[32] Thus, from the outset, style requires the utmost discipline, since knowledge, and *a fortiori* self-knowledge, is hard won. But how does the stylist know that he has attained to a degree of self-knowledge that has passed beyond the "*dishonest mendaciousness*" that is characteristic of "modern souls" (*ibid.*)? Nietzsche suggests that self-knowledge is attained precisely when one recoils in terror at oneself and so is *compelled* to lie.

In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche writes that "it might be a basic characteristic of existence that those who would know it completely would perish" (BGE 39). And although Nietzsche talks here of existence, authentic self-knowledge presupposes that one knows one's place in 'existence', which is to say that the self *as* an exemplar of existence is also its microcosm. Nietzsche then goes on to say that:

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32 The passage, from *On the Genealogy of Morals*, in which Nietzsche draws the distinction between the honest and dishonest lie reads as follows: "Our educated people of today, our 'good people' do not tell lies – that is true; but that is *not* to their credit! A real lie, a genuine, resolute, 'honest' lie ... would be something far too severe and potent for them: it would demand of them what one *may* not demand of them, that they should open their eyes to themselves, they should know how to distinguish 'true' and 'false' in themselves. All they are capable of is a *dishonest* lie" (GM III.19).

> the strength of a spirit should be measured according to how much of the 'truth' one could still barely endure – or to put it more clearly, to what degree one would *require* it to be thinned down, shrouded, sweetened, blunted, falsified.[33] (*ibid.*)

Nietzsche is proposing an order of rank of 'spirits' according to the criterion of 'how much' self-truth can be endured. Or, as he puts in *Ecce Homo*: "How much truth can a spirit *bear*, how much truth can a spirit *dare*? that became for me more and more the real measure of value" (EH Fore 3). Those sovereign nobles who exemplify the highest 'strength of spirit' are able, at the upper limit, to endure all their ugly truths. But Nietzsche implies that such a concept of nobility is a falsification. Protracted exposure to one's manifold weakness and ugliness – which we all possess in the "age of disintegration" (BGE 200) – would cause one to "perish" (BGE 39), out of the state, perhaps, of "suicidal nihilism" (GM III.28). Thus: "We possess *art* lest we *perish of the truth*" (WP 822), to quote that fragment from *The Will to Power*. Shrouding, sweetening – concealment and reinterpretation – are necessary for all (modern) individuals. Those that can flourish with the minimum of self-deception are 'noble'; while those who have once glimpsed their inner nature and proceed to shroud it completely and perpetually are decadent. They are the *homines religiosi*, whom Nietzsche ranks higher than their innocent and ignorant modern descendants.

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[33] This idea is foreshadowed in a section entitled 'Our Ultimate Gratitude to art' from Book IV of *The Gay Science*. Nietzsche writes: "*Honesty* would lead to nausea and suicide. But now there is a counterforce against our honesty that helps us to avoid such consequences: art as the *good* will to appearance ... As an aesthetic phenomenon existence is still *bearable* for us, and art furnishes us with eyes and hands and above all the good conscience to be *able* to turn ourselves into such a phenomenon" (GS 107).

## VIII

While there are some basic character traits that cannot be removed – "some granite of spiritual *fatum*" (BGE 231), Nietzsche calls them – and so must be reinterpreted or endured; there are other pieces of "original nature" (GS 290) that can be removed or altered through the transformative mode of noble self-stylisation.[34] For example, take a particularly "hard" and "recalcitrant" (GM III.18) piece of ugly or weak "dirt" (BGE 225) – perhaps an item of Christian-moral "nonsense" (*ibid.*). It cannot, in the first instance, be "removed" (GS 290), or "formed", or "broken" (BGE 225) and its presence is inimical to the potentially ascending life of the stylist, and precisely for that reason it causes him to suffer. The protracted exposure to this pettiness or dirt induces protracted suffering, and, as we have seen, it is precisely the discipline of suffering that is the training ground for the cultivation of strength. When the stylist is strong enough he will remove that piece of dirt, *not* because it makes him suffer, but only because it provides a barrier to the flourishing of his life. It is in this way that the noble stylist "exploit[s] suffering" (*ibid.*) – not to combat suffering as such, but to place suffering in the service of ascending life.

Nietzsche writes that the stylist will constrain himself according to an "artistic plan" that is governed by the "constraint of a single taste" (GS 290). But what sort of 'artistic plan' or style does Nietzsche have in mind?

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[34] In his essay 'The Paradox of Fatalism and Self-Creation in Nietzsche', Brian Leiter suggest that Nietzsche's call for self-transformation "sits uneasily" with his view that the "basic character of each individual's life is fixed in advance in virtue of an individual's nature, that is, the largely immutable physiological and psychological facts that make the person who he is" (1998: 219). Leiter's claim demands an extended reply, but I will say that I am in agreement with his general thesis. The 'spiritual *fatum*' of an individual – that which cannot be transformed – are those basic factors that "circumscribe" or constrain self-transformation (1998: 224). But Leiter's argument has force against only those accounts that construe Nietzschean transformation as, in principle, free and unconstrained. In this and the previous chapter, I have already built the concept of constraint – in the form of the artistic constraint and discipline of style – into my conception of Nietzschean self-transformation and self-creation.

For the "strong and domineering natures" (*ibid.*) there is only one style: the grand style.[35] Nietzsche describes the characteristics of the grand style in the following two passages. The first is in the context of the "artists of violence and organizers who build states" (GM II.18) in the *Genealogy*; and the second, in his celebration of architecture in the *Twilight of the Idols*.

> Their work is ... a ruling structure that *lives*, in which parts and functions are delimited and co-ordinated, in which nothing whatever finds a place that has not first been assigned a 'meaning' in relation to the whole. (GM II.17)

> The highest feeling of power and security finds expression in that which possesses *grand style*. Power which no longer requires proving; ... which is oblivious of the existence of any opposition; which reposes in *itself* ... a law among laws: *that* is what speaks of itself in the form of the grand style. (TI IX.11)

Nietzsche's advocacy of the grand style is the central manifestation of his attempt to replace the "aesthetics of *décadence*" (CW Epil) with a "*classical* aesthetics" (*ibid.*).[36] But Nietzsche is ambivalent about the term 'classical'. In *The Gay Science* he writes: "the word 'classical' offends my ears, it is far too trite and has become round and distinct" (GS 370). He replaces it with the term "*Dionysian*" (*ibid.*).[37] The grand style, then,

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35 *Große*, of course, also means 'great'. Hollingdale renders *der große Stil* as 'the grand style'; while Kaufmann and Duncan Large (in the recent Oxford translation of the *Twilight of the Idols*) translate it as 'the great style'. 'Grand' seems preferable to me. I would argue that it is more suggestive of the noble voluminousness, the aesthetic *grandeur*, that Nietzsche is after in the context of style.

36 As we saw in chapter two, Nietzsche calls the "anarchy of atoms" that is the "style of *decadence*" the "*miniaturist*" style (CW Epil), and argues that it is the degeneration of the grand style.

37 Nietzsche's objection to the term 'classical' is a function of his more general distaste for the conventional German view of Greek culture. Nietzsche calls Winckelmann's interpretation of the Greeks – which he renders as "repose in grandeur ... ideal disposition ... sublime simplicity" – as a "*niaiserie allemande*" (TI X.3), to which even Goethe subscribes (TI X.4). With his emphasis on the, as he sees it, Dionysian undercurrent of Greek culture, Nietzsche attempts to locate a darker and more explosive element in Hellenism that resides beneath its Winckelmannesque Apollonian surface.

describes a structure in which all the parts are related to the whole, which is to say, each part is given meaning only in relation to the total sum of parts which *is* the whole. It is precisely this "artistic plan" (GS 290) that Nietzsche demands that the noble stylist impose upon his character or soul; since, after all, the "noble caste ... were more *whole* human beings" (BGE 257). And when the grand style is imposed upon his soul, the stylist will then have achieved "greatness of soul" (BGE 212) as the expression of the "highest feeling of power" (TI IX. 11), since the constraint of the grand style presupposes discipline, severity and hardness.[38]

Nietzsche, then, advances a formal requirement for greatness of soul. Insofar as he mentions content, it is only in terms of the diverse nature of the parts that make up the whole of the grand style. "Precisely this shall be called *greatness*", he writes in *Beyond Good and Evil*, "being capable of being as manifold as whole, as ample as full" (BGE 213); and, similarly, "the greatness of man" consists "precisely in his range and multiplicity, in his wholeness in manifoldness" (*ibid.*). Thus, wholeness – the identity of the whole character – breathes life into its manifold parts and thus manifests itself in each and every part. And, simultaneously, the multiplicity of parts is precisely that which makes up the identity of the whole. In short, the unitary whole lives in the multiplicity of parts which constitutes the unitary whole. It is precisely this quality of soul that Nietzsche finds in Goethe – "he disciplined himself into a whole" (TI IX.49) – and it is the principal reason why Nietzsche admires him.[39]

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[38] For Nietzsche, it seems that the ultimate expression of the grand style was the Roman Empire. The "*Imperium Romanum*" was the "most admirable of all works of art in the grand style, [it] was a beginning, its structure was calculated to *prove* itself by millennia" (AC 58), it was "grand style no longer merely art but become reality, truth, *life*" (AC 59).

[39] In the *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche writes that what Goethe "aspired to was *totality*; he strove against the separation of reason, sensuality, feeling, will (– preached in the most horrible scholasticism by Kant, the antipode of Goethe); he disciplined himself to a whole, he *created* himself ... Goethe

The noble soul is a work of art in the grand style that is ever finding new expedients for expansion. Even that which was once advanced as the principal argument against existence – suffering – is exploited by the noble and put to work in the discipline of great suffering. Each and every part of the noble soul is stamped with the identity of a unique individual and since the noble is driven to expand and to ascend, every part of him vibrates with the intensity of becoming. Insofar as he can endure his ugly truths, he inserts them within the grand architecture of his soul where they give meaning to his wholeness, and his wholeness, in reciprocation, gives meaning to them. This is Nietzsche's noble ideal: irreducibly vitalistic – indissolubly aesthetic. But it is precisely the aesthetic foundation of nobility that gives rise to a serious problem, which I will examine in the following and penultimate section of this chapter.

## IX

Alexander Nehamas has observed that Nietzsche's "idea of giving style to one's character ... raises the notorious problem of his immoralism, his virulent contempt for traditional moral virtue, and his alleged praise of cruelty".[40] Although it is far from evident that Nietzsche has contempt for moral virtue *per se*, Nehamas has a point – Nietzsche conceives of

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conceived of a strong, highly cultured human being, skilled in all physical accomplishments, who, keeping himself in check and having reverence for himself, dares to allow himself the whole compass and wealth of naturalness, who is strong enough for this freedom ..." (TI IX.49).

[40] Nehamas, 1985: 191. Keith Ansell-Pearson has pointed to the limitations of Nietzsche's aestheticism in the context of political theory. For Ansell-Pearson, "Nietzsche's political programme of a new aristocratic legislation relinquishes any concern with legitimising itself except in problematical aesthetic terms of the 'self-overcoming of man'" (1994: 42-3). "The main problem [with] conceiving politics as an aesthetic activity", Ansell-Pearson continues, is that "actions are prized ... simply in terms of their performative or glorious dimensions" (1994: 44), and thus "action is deprived of substantive moral content" (*ibid.*).

greatness only in formal terms.[41] However, it has been argued – for example, by Martha C. Nussbaum – that Nietzsche's formal aestheticism does *not* lead to immoralism, or, more properly – amoralism. As Nussbaum puts it, Nietzsche's aestheticism is not an "amoral aestheticizing" of life, an "overturning of all moral and political categories in the name of detached aesthetic values."[42] And this is because, so she claims, Nietzsche "actively scorns the detachment of the aesthetic from the practical, and ridicules the notion of art of art's sake".[43] Nussbaum thus concludes that Nietzsche "repudiates [the] separation" of the "aesthetic sphere ... from the ethical or social" since not to repudiate that separation would be to offer a "reductive view of the aesthetic" – and it is precisely that which, according to Nussbaum, Nietzsche 'actively scorns'.[44] I would like to consider Nussbaum's claims before going on to discuss, in more general terms, Nietzsche's amoralism.

Nussbaum's argument rests on a confusion. Although she is correct to claim that Nietzsche rejects both the aesthetic as conceived by the 'art for art's sake' movement *and* the 'detachment of the aesthetic from the practical', she confusedly conflates these two claims. For Nietzsche: "*L'art pour l'art* means: 'the devil take morality!'" (TI IX.24). Nietzsche, then, on one level, rejects the disjunction of the aesthetic from the moral advanced

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41 Michael Tanner describes as "vulgar" and "widely held" (1994: 28) the view that Nietzsche was an immoralist. He bases his claim that Nietzsche was not an immoralist on an aphorism from Nietzsche's middle period text *Daybreak*. Nietzsche writes: "It goes without saying that I do not deny – unless I am a fool – that many actions called immoral ought to be avoided and resisted, or that many called moral ought to be done and encouraged – but I think that the one should be encouraged and the other avoided *for other reasons than hitherto*. We have to *learn to think differently* – in order at last, perhaps very late on, to attain even more: *to feel differently*" (D 103). Nietzsche affirms: "I ... deny immorality" (*ibid.*).

42 Nussbaum, 1998: 59.

43 *Ibid.*.

44 Nussbaum, 1998: 60.

by the slogan 'art for art's sake', and, on another level, the detachment of the aesthetic from the practical. Nussbaum, however, runs the two together and so suggests that in retaining the link between the aesthetic and the practical, Nietzsche thereby retains the link between the aesthetic and the moral. But that is a mistaken inference. For Nietzsche, the 'practical' is a wider category than the moral, it is simply vital activity – or life; thus, while there is certainly moral practice, there is also the possibility that there is *a*moral practice. So, while Nietzsche may reject the amoralism of 'art for art's sake', it does not then follow that he rejects amoralism as such. Contrary to Nussbaum's conclusion, then, Nietzsche's non-reductive view of the aesthetic is the view that the aesthetic sphere is inseparable or non-detachable from the practical and the vital, and *not* that it is inseparable from the "ethical or social".[45]

It would appear that Nehamas' claim is correct, Nietzsche's aestheticism in the form of the "idea of giving style to one's character" does raise the problem of amoralism.[46] For Nietzsche, greatness consists in the imposition of the constraint of the grand style upon one's character. One is great because one has a 'great soul' that has been fashioned by, and embodies, the overfullness of life. This means that as long as the manifold parts of the soul, which may include, for instance, the disposition to cruelty, are related to the whole, then it follows that the disposition to cruelty is accorded honour as a constituent of greatness.[47] Here, greatness and

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45 *Ibid.*.

46 Nehamas, 1995: 191.

47 Michael Tanner makes the same point in his discussion of Nietzschean self-stylisation. Tanner writes: "Can someone who has ... a wholly deplorable character still pass [Nietzsche's] tests for having style? If Nietzsche's criteria were purely formal, that is, all the bits fit together and it does not matter what they are individually, then the appalling answer would seem to be yes" (1994: 44).

goodness, aesthetics and morality diverge. In the aestheticization of morality we pass into a realm of value that is, as Nietzsche puts it, "*extra-moral*" (BGE 201) or "supra-moral" (BGE 257).

In making sense of Nietzsche's alleged amoralism, it must be stated, from the outset, that he does not advocate a quasi-romantic 'return' to ancient nobility, to that "noble caste" who were always the "barbarian caste" and thus who were "more *whole* human beings" and so "at every level, 'more whole beasts'" (BGE 257). The "*historical sense*" (BGE 224) in Nietzsche is too strong for him to think that Christian-moral history can be simply eradicated. Nietzsche is concerned with the question of what form of nobility and greatness we might create *today*. He writes: "today, being noble ... pertains to the concept 'greatness'" (BGE 212), and he asks: "today – is greatness *possible*?" (*ibid.*). Thus, there is a distinction between ancient and contemporary nobility. But while it is true that Nietzsche's genealogical conception of nobility forbids the return to noble barbarism, it does not then follow that his *aesthetic* conception of nobility precludes a form of non-ancient barbaric agency. The grand style and the precepts of Nietzsche's vitalistic aestheticism, as we have just seen, are compatible, arguably, with a non-ancient form of noble barbarism. There is a clash, then, between the historicism of genealogy and the ahistoricism of the aesthetic, and it is this quality of the aesthetic that leaves open the possibility of a peculiarly modern form of noble barbarism.

The troubling questions that we must now face are twofold. Can we extract the idea of a barbaric aestheticism from vitalistic aestheticism without destroying the sense and import of Nietzsche's philosophical grappling with value? And why should we want to do that? My answer to

the first question is no. And here I am in agreement with Henry Staten who has argued – though for reasons different to mine – that "we cannot simply excise Nietzsche's paean on cruelty and domination from his meditations on greatness, nobility and activeness."[48] I will give my own reasons for affirming that view in a moment, but I want now to consider the second question.

Nietzsche gives us at least two of the things that he claims that Wagner, "in the most seductive manner", gives to the "exhausted" peoples of decadent modernity: "the *brutal* ... and the *innocent*" (CW 5). On one level we are seductively drawn to Nietzsche's fantasies of noble and "glorious brutality", as Thomas Mann puts it, since we can indulge in our own fantasies of brutality through Nietzsche.[49] But on another level, we recoil in terror from those fantasies, taking refuge from the brutal Nietzsche in the innocent Nietzsche – the childlike idealist who makes a stand for value. Since Nietzsche is always and irreducibly both of these things at the same time – and much more besides – and since we value him precisely for his being so: why do we want to excise his brutality? I suggest that it is because we find it hard to contemplate that there might be a 'healthy' form of barbarity, a brutality and cruelty which is a part of beauty, nobility and greatness – as opposed to a 'sick' form of brutality that issues from ugliness, hatred and revenge.[50] And the reason that we find that hard is due to the fact that, as Nietzsche points out, we are moral.

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48 Staten, 1998: 242.

49 Mann, 1959: 174.

50 This, if anything, is a candidate for a Nietzschean 'ugly truth'. But while it is ugly to contemplate the union of nobility and barbarity, it is perhaps uglier to recognise – or so I suggest – the brutality that resides in all of us.

It is precisely Nietzsche's point – both intensely unsettling and psychologically brilliant – that it is possible that barbarism and nobility *are* deeply linked. The God that once told us that the noble barbarian is "*the Evil One*" is now dead (GM I.10). So apart from our deeply entrenched and virtually inescapable moral prejudice, there is no other philosophical basis for our wanting to deny the possibility that nobility is linked to barbarism. Thus, the answer to my second question is: it is our morality that compels us to excise barbarism from nobility – precisely that which Nietzsche challenges.

In light of the foregoing remarks, we are now in a position to answer my first question. Can we extract the barbaric from the vitalistic aesthetic without undermining the sense and force of Nietzsche's critique of value? Can we not just state, with Thomas Mann, that "Nietzsche's glorification of barbarism is simply an excess of his aesthetic drunkenness"? [51] That is, interpret barbarism as a "grotesque error" in Nietzsche's thought, as something that is non-essential to, and so extractable from, his reflections upon aesthetics and morality? [52] I think not. While it is possible, of course, simply to ignore Nietzsche's barbarism, and to emphasise the more harmless consequences of his vitalistic aesthetic, I suggest that the cost – for Nietzsche, and arguably for those who take him seriously – is too high. As Mann points out, it is precisely Nietzsche's "Dionysiac aestheticism" that makes him the "greatest critic and psychologist of morality in the history of thought."[53] In my view, if we are impressed with Nietzschean nobility, then we must accept its more

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[51] Mann, 1959: 172.

[52] Mann, 1959: 177.

[53] Mann, 1959: 156.

troubling possibilities. If we affirm one part of Nietzsche – 'the innocent', 'the critic', 'the psychologist' – then we have to take on board the totality of Nietzsche, including 'the brutal'. But it should be emphasised that the vitalistic aesthetic as I have presented it, does not actively affirm or glorify barbarism, it only leaves open the *possibility* of barbarism.

To conclude this section, I will close with the words of Thomas Mann whose essay 'Nietzsche's Philosophy in the Light of Recent History' ends with an examination of, as Mann suggests, the "close relationship ... of aestheticism and barbarism."[54] I have just claimed that if we are drawn to Nietzschean aesthetic nobility, then we are forced to assent to its possibly barbaric consequences. But there are some who would interpret those consequences precisely as decisive grounds for the rejection of Nietzschean nobility as such. 'If it is possible that greatness leads to brutality', they will say, 'then we are better off without greatness'. And this, more or less, is how Mann concludes his essay. "How time bound, how theoretic and inexperienced, Nietzsche's romanticizing of evil seems to us today", Mann writes.[55] "We have made the acquaintance of evil", Mann continues, "and are no longer such aesthetes that we need to be ashamed of subscribing to the good".[56]

## X

In this chapter, I have sought to provide answers to the principal questions of my thesis. Which are: can Nietzsche's vitalistic aestheticism apprehend

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54 Mann, 1959: 172.

55 Mann, 1959: 176.

56 *Ibid.*.

and evaluate morality? And what sort of ethical ideal does it offer? In the opening section, I described how Nietzsche's aestheticism – in the form of the creative impulse *qua* artistic impulse – is built into his concept of genealogy. Nietzsche's genealogy of morality, then, is the evaluation of the artistry of morality. Nietzsche's nobles are abundant artists, their work of art noble morality; his slaves are impoverished artists and their work of art is slave morality – that from which contemporary morality, according to Nietzsche, is derived. The evaluative force of Nietzsche's genealogy is provided in full by his vitalistic aestheticism, while its critical force is supplied by his psychology. Thus, insofar as Nietzsche's genealogy of morals compels us to reflect seriously about our ethical values and the order of rank of values, the aesthetic – which makes up the evaluative core of genealogy – has fulfilled its task.

But what of Nietzsche's ethical ideal of nobility. Does it represent an authentic countermovement to the life-denying ideals of Christian-based morality? As I suggested, Nietzsche draws the concept of 'nobility' from the ancients, activates the concept with his vitalistic aesthetic, and thereby creates his Hellenic aestheticism. The contemporary noble is an artist of the soul who makes of himself a work of art in the grand style. A central element of his artistry is his moulding and forming of suffering in such a way that it is given meaning as a fundamental constituent of his struggle for self-enhancement. Decadent morality, however, with its hedonic presuppositions, denies the value of suffering and in so doing denies the value of that which is an irreducible part of life itself. Thus, the extent to which Nietzsche's aesthetic model of the individual (the noble who creatively manipulates his suffering) is distinct from the moral individual (the ascetic who attempts to redeem himself from suffering), is

the extent to which Nietzsche's aestheticism provides the foundation for his countermovement to decadent morality. In other words, if we take seriously Nietzsche's idea of the noble discipline of great suffering, then we must also affirm the value of his vitalistic aesthetic in the creation of a counter-ideal to the ascetic ideal.

In the conclusion, I will discuss some of the basic problems that plague Nietzsche's aesthetics. These problems centre around the fundamental instability of his key value-dichotomies and they arise, seemingly inevitably, from his own text. They emerge, that is, from Nietzsche's compulsive and insatiable probing of the question of value.

## Conclusion

Nietzsche paints a portrait of mankind as the species that has perfected the art of self-cruelty. "We modern men are the heirs of ... self-torture of millennia", he writes in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, "that is what we have practiced longest, it is our distinctive art perhaps, and in any case our subtlety in which we have acquired a refined taste" (GM II.24). Our cruelty, then, is our "artist['s] cruelty" (GM II.18) – and the practice of self-cruelty is our 'distinctive art'. This masochistic aestheticism is, for Nietzsche, something that necessarily attends the enclosure of man "within the walls of society and peace" (GM II.16). And since it is impossible to return to the purely instinctive activity that Nietzsche attributes to the "artists of violence and organizers who build states" (GM II.17), the artistry of masochism has now become the irreducible activity – the 'instinctive' activity – of man. Nietzsche argues that self-cruelty can be placed in the service of either ascending life or declining life; in the former case, it is the noble self-discipline of the enhancement of life, in the latter, the ascetic self-flagellation of the escape from life. History has bound us to the sickness of ascetic self-torture and Nietzsche finds his only solace in the image of a healthy self-cruelty – nobility – that will provide, so he hopes,

the redemption from ascetic sickliness. For Nietzsche, in other words, only "*Dionysus*" can redeem us from "*the Crucified*" (EH IV.9).

I would like to close my account of Nietzsche's aesthetics by identifying some of the key tensions that reside therein. I argue, in sections I and II, that in Nietzsche's recourse to the concept of redemption he is perpetuating the life-denial of impoverished life; and I also examine the broader problem of his complicity in the decadence that he diagnoses. In section III, I discuss the basic instability of Nietzsche's key evaluative opposition of abundance and impoverishment and its derivatives: power/impotence, health/sickness, strength/weakness. Nobility is found to be inherently fragile, while asceticism – in the form of the ascetic priest – is revealed as powerfully creative. I then examine how the instability of Nietzsche's macro-dichotomy is manifested, at the deepest level, in his aesthetics. From the broad perspective of his vitalistic aestheticism, the distinction between the abundant and the impoverished artist finally collapses.

## I

At the close of the second essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche describes how man "seized upon the presupposition of religion" – "[g]uilt before *God*" – "so as to drive his self-torture to its most gruesome pitch of severity" (GM II.22). The climax of Nietzsche's sustained examination of ascetic self-cruelty is reached in the following passage:

> whoever can still bear to hear ... how in this night of torment and absurdity there has resounded the cry of *love*, the cry of the most yearning rapture, of redemption [*Erlösung*] through *love*, will turn away, seized by invincible horror. – There is so much in man that is hideous! – Too long, the earth has been a madhouse! (*ibid.*)

Nietzsche, once again, recoils at the paradox – the 'absurdity' – of Christianity. Accompanying the subtle and life-inimical procedures of self-cruelty that were developed by the ascetic priest, there emerges that "agony of the tortured heart" in the form of the "cry for 'redemption'" (GM III.20). As if the cultivation of life-denying suffering is not absurd enough; the Christian creates suffering precisely so as to give his yearning for redemption from all suffering the ultimate meaning, the most anguished meaning – redemption through 'love', that is, God. The "need for *redemption*" – which Nietzsche calls the "quintessence of all Christian needs" – is the "most convinced, most painful affirmation of decadence in the form of sublime symbols and practices" (CW Epil). Nietzsche can only 'turn away' at the absurdity of asceticism's hedonic self-cruelty 'seized by invincible horror'.

In response to the "gloomy, black, unnerving sadness" (GM II.22) that Nietzsche feels at man, he finds respite, first of all, in the life-affirming interpretation of suffering of the "noble Greeks" (GM II.23). He then turns to the present, and asks:

> Is [great health] even possible today? – But some day, in a stronger age than this decaying, self-doubting present, he must come to us, the *redeeming* man of great love and contempt, the creative spirit ... whose isolation is misunderstood by the people as if it were flight *from* reality – while it is only absorption, immersion, penetration *into* reality, so that, when he one day emerges again into the light, he may bring home the *redemption* [Erlösung]

> from this reality: its redemption from the curse that the hitherto reigning ideal has laid upon it. This man of the future, who will redeem us not only from the hitherto reigning ideal but also from that which was bound to grow out of it, the great nausea, the will to nothingness, nihilism ... (GM III.24)

The 'redeeming man' of 'great love', 'contempt' and creativity to which Nietzsche refers is the man of nobility that I examined in the preceding chapter. Nietzsche points out that the 'isolation' of the redeeming man – the noble standing apart and away from others – is not an ascetic 'flight from reality', but rather an 'immersion' in reality. And the reality that this man redeems us from is not, as with the ascetic, reality as such, but the reality of the 'hitherto reigning ideal', which we may take to be the ascetic ideal. As the ascetic, who in the torments of self-inflicted suffering, yearns for "redemption" from reality itself "through *love*" (GM II.22), so Nietzsche is tormented by the reality – the seeming indestructibility of life-denying values – of the ascetic ideal and calls for the redemption from that ideal and that which is 'bound to grow out of it' – nihilism.

Given Nietzsche's claim that the need for redemption lies at the heart of the Christian world-view, it is bizarre to find him invoking redemption in what appears to be a mood of total earnestness. Nietzsche writes that the redeeming man "*must come one day*" (GM II.24), which is to say that, for Nietzsche, redemption is a must. And if we must be redeemed, then it follows that we stand in need of redemption. It would appear, then, that Nietzsche manifests a need for redemption in the form of the redeeming man. Thus, Nietzsche, in his needful call for the redemption from the ascetic ideal – that which encloses the Christian need for redemption – is calling for the redemption from redemption, and thereby reiterates the Christian doctrine of redemption.

The problem is compounded when we remind ourselves of the vehemence with which Nietzsche attacks Wagner precisely for his appropriation of the concept of redemption. Nietzsche claims that Wagner "mouth[s] ... the 'gospel of the lowly' ... the *need* for redemption" (CW Epil) without knowing what authentic redemption – Christian redemption – actually means. "If Wagner was a Christian", Nietzsche writes, "then Liszt was perhaps a Church father ... *redemption* ... has nothing to do with such buffoons" (*ibid.*). Nietzsche is the self-proclaimed "Antichrist" (GM II.24), so when he invokes redemption, is he not merely mouthing that doctrine and so indulging in his own species of buffoonery? Indeed, when we consider the parity between Wagner's Siegfried and Nietzsche's "man of the future" (*ibid.*), it would appear that the contrast between the Wagnerian ideal and the Nietzschean ideal collapses. Siegfried is "hard" and "healthy" (BGE 256), while the man of the future embodies "compelling strength" and "great health" (GM II.24). Siegfried "redeem[s]" the "old God" (CW 3) and thereby abolishes "*all ill*" (CW 4), while the man of the future redeems us from the "curse" (GM II.24) of life-denying ideals, which Nietzsche calls the "most terrible sickness that has ever raged in man" (GM II.22).[1] If Nietzsche claims that the conception of Siegfried as the redeemer is Wagner's deceitful mouthing of the doctrine of redemption, than he would have to concede that in his image of the man of the future, he is *likewise* deceitfully mouthing that doctrine. Nietzsche's recourse to the concept of redemption, then, entangles him in both the authentic

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[1] Bertrand Russell has commented, sardonically, on the resemblance between Nietzsche's and Wagner's ideals. He writes that Nietzsche's "general outlook ... remained very similar to that of Wagner in the *Ring*; Nietzsche's superman [i.e., the redeeming man] is very like Siegfried, except that he knows Greek. This may seem odd, but that is not my fault" (1945: 760-3).

decadence of Christianity and the decadent decadence that he attributes to Wagner.

## II

Daniel Conway – whose book *Nietzsche's Dangerous Game* is devoted to the question of Nietzsche's "self-referential critique of modernity"[2] – has written that the "claim to expertise in matters of decadence must ... call itself into question, for only decadent philosophers formulate theories of decadence."[3] Conway suggests that Nietzsche's "account of decadence thus stands as sufficient confirmation of its self-referential ambit and application."[4] In the context of the present discussion, then, we can interpret Nietzsche's recourse to the notion of redemption as a particularly conspicuous example – perhaps, given its centrality, a paradigmatic example – of his letting slip his "self-control" and "mastery" in "waging war" with his own decadence (BGE 200). In the highly charged climactic sections of essay two of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, when Nietzsche recoils in horror at the "absurdity" (GM II.22) of ascetic self-cruelty, he loses self-control and allows his own decadent tendencies to erupt in the form of an unashamed "yearning" for redemption (*ibid.*). It is as if the extended dissection of decadence in its most "hideous" and "black" form (*ibid.*) has drained the energy of Nietzsche the diagnostician, and he collapses broken, able only to counter decadence with yet *more* decadence.

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2 Conway, 1998: 2.

3 Conway, 1998: 103.

4 *Ibid.*.

This seems to be the harshest estimate that we can make of Nietzsche's "*redeeming* man" (*ibid.*) – and, indeed, of Nietzsche himself. Some would argue, as Conway has pointed out, that Nietzsche's "problem of self-reference [is] vicious", and so they attempt either to rescue Nietzsche from the charge of decadence or employ the alleged fact of his decadence as an expedient to reject his project outright.[5] As we will see, I do not endorse either of these positions; although, I would like to pursue the first option for a moment. Assuming that Nietzsche's apparent decadence is vicious and so in need of excision, I want to examine whether his recourse to redemption actually *is* symptomatic of his complicity in the ascetic tradition that he so violently attacks.

It does not follow from Nietzsche's invocation of redemption that he is calling for the same *type* of redemption that Christianity calls for. While it is clear, in other words, that Nietzsche regards the "*need* for redemption" as the "quintessence of all Christian needs" (CW Epil), this does not mean that redemption *per se* has Christian copyright. We must ask: what does Christianity seek redemption from? And what does Nietzsche seek redemption from? It is evident that they seek redemption from antithetical

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[5] Conway, 1998: 2. Alexander Nehamas' *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* represents – through the notion of exemplarity – the most elaborate attempt to get Nietzsche off the hook of decadence. "Nietzsche exemplifies through his own writings one way in which one individual may have succeeded in fashioning itself – an individual, moreover, who, though beyond morality, is not morally objectionable" (1995: 8). Thus, Nietzsche, through his unique style(s) of writing, exemplifies his individuality, that is, his status as an individual 'beyond morality', beyond the "dogmatic tradition he so distrusted" (*ibid.*). In other words, beyond decadence. I give my reasons for rejecting this view at the end of the section. Jürgen Habermas represents the opposite pole to Nehamas. Habermas questions the possibility of separating the Dionysian from the romantic – for Nietzsche, the healthy from the decadent. The "recourse to Dionysus as the god who is coming [i.e., the redeeming man]", Habermas writes, is of "Romantic provenance" and, furthermore, the Dionysian 'revival' "acquires its critical point ... from a context that was already well developed in early Romanticism" (1987: 88, 92). Although Nietzsche, in the end, attempts to "distance himself from the Romantic use of these ideas" – Habermas asks: "But wherein does the Dionysian differ from the Romantic?" (1987: 88). Thus, for Habermas, Nietzsche perpetuates the decadence of romanticism through his proclamation of Dionysus as the redeemer. And it is on the basis of Nietzsche's alleged decadent romantic aestheticism, that Habermas interprets him as having leapt "out of the dialectic of enlightenment" (1987: 87) and into "Postmodernity" (1987: 83). Habermas, however, fails to take into account the fact that Nietzsche views his own project as distinct from the "German hostility to the Enlightenment" (D 197). "This Enlightenment we must now carry further forward", Nietzsche writes (*ibid.*).

objects. "The Christian", Nietzsche writes, "wants to be *rid* of himself" (*ibid.*), that is, he wants to be redeemed from himself. The life of the Christian is one of suffering and self-resentment; thus, in short, the Christian seeks redemption from life *qua* hateful Christian self. Christian redemption, then, is fundamentally life-denying. Nietzsche, conversely – in the figure of the "*redeeming* man" of "great health" (GM II.24) – wants to be redeemed precisely from the "reality" of the life-denying ideal of Christianity and "that which [is] bound to grow out of it ... nihilism" (*ibid.*). The redeeming man is the symbol of life-affirmation and health *as* the redemption from life-denial and sickness. So while the Christian needs to escape from life into anti-life, Nietzsche needs to escape from anti-life into life. Nietzsche, then, inverts Christian redemption. We can thus interpret his life-affirming appropriation of the life-denying doctrine *par excellence* as a piece of "mischievousness" and ironic "wickedness" (*ibid.*) on his part. 'Nietzschean redemption', therefore, is not a symptom of decadence, but, rather, is Nietzsche's not-so-secret laughter of superiority at Christianity, as well as a very earnest call for the enhancement of life.

Those committed to rescuing Nietzsche from complicity in the decadence that he diagnoses would, no doubt, welcome the argument I have just presented. But I am not so committed. If we scratch at the surface of this argument it will become clear that Nietzsche, in fact, is sinking deeper into decadence. The anti-life that Nietzsche seeks redemption from is a *form of life* nonetheless. In seeking redemption from the impoverished life of asceticism, Nietzsche is *denying* impoverished life; and since life-denial is intrinsic to impoverishment, Nietzsche, in his denial of impoverishment, is perpetuating it.

According to his own conception of decadence, then, Nietzsche himself is decadent. Moreover, as Conway points out, Nietzsche is the "first serious critic of modernity to acknowledge his own complicity in the cultural crisis that he reveals and attempts to address."[6] In *The Case of Wagner*, Nietzsche writes: "I am, no less than Wagner, a child of his time; that is, a decadent: but I comprehended this, I resisted it. The philosopher in me resisted" (CW Pref). And in *Ecce Homo* he affirms: "I am a *décadent*, I am also its antithesis" (EH I.2) – "I have a subtler sense for signs of ascent and decline than any man has ever had ... – I know both, I am both" (EH I.1). There is no question, then, of Nietzsche being an exemplar of the ideal of post-ascetic nobility that he advances in his writings. And it is unintelligible – given that he was a nineteenth century European – that he could be. Nietzsche can only be – and, in my view, is – a "genuine battleground" of the "opposed values" (GM I.16) of nobility and asceticism, health and decadence. And his writings attest to the struggle of values that he is: a struggle that attempts – in the wake of the departure of transcendental value – to make sense of what is valuable and to affirm that which is interpreted to be valuable. From this perspective, then, the fact that Nietzsche is decadent – as, of course, we all are – is yet another reason why we should take him extremely seriously. He knows whereof he speaks.

## III

Nietzsche pushes the conflict of ascending and declining values to the point at which an intelligible distinction between types of value all but

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6 Conway, 1998: 2.

disappears. It is this question that I want to examine in this and the following section. Throughout my project I have presupposed that Nietzsche's macro-opposition of abundance/impoverishment admits of sufficient stability so as to be evaluatively cogent. This macro-opposition grounds Nietzsche's dualities of power/impotence, health/sickness, strength/weakness, Dionysian/romantic and noble/ascetic. The crossing of these dichotomies is most evident in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, where Nietzsche lifts his investigation of the question of value and of opposing values to a new height.

At the beginning of the first essay of the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche tells us that the "noble" are "powerful" (GM I.2) in both physicality and soul and they possess an "overflowing health" (GM I.7). While the "priestly-noble" (*ibid.*) – i.e., the "brooding" and "internalized" noble (GM I.6) – is "*unhealthy*", "sick" (*ibid.*) and "impotent" (GM I.7). By the time we reach the final sections of the third essay, however, we find Nietzsche claiming that the ascetic ideal "believes ... in its absolute *superiority of rank* over every other power" (GM III.23) and he asks: "What is the meaning of the *power* of this ideal, the monstrous nature of its power?" (*ibid.*). Something, then, has occurred in the intervening pages of the *Genealogy* to allow the impotent priests to usurp the powerful nobles and claim the nobles' power for themselves. In an attempt to reveal the basic instability of Nietzsche's evaluative oppositions, I will examine the fragility of nobility, first of all, and then the power of the ascetic.

The slave revolt in morality occurs when the slaves convert the nobles to their values. The slaves were more clever than their noble masters and their conceptual ingenuity was nurtured by the priestly caste and

consummated in the concepts of 'free will', 'responsibility', 'guilt' and 'God'. While it is clear that this cunning world-view was eventually adopted by the nobles and brought about their downfall, there is more to the slave revolt than simply the victory of the clever over the stupid. For Nietzsche, there is something inherently fragile in the overflowing health of the noble and powerful. "The sick represent the greatest danger for the healthy" (GM III.14), Nietzsche writes, and he then asks:

> when would [the men of *ressentiment*] achieve the ultimate, subtlest, sublimest triumph of revenge? Undoubtedly if they succeeded in *poisoning the consciences* of the fortunate with their own misery, with all misery, so that one day the fortunate began to be ashamed of their good fortune and perhaps said to one another: 'it is disgraceful to be fortunate: *there is too much misery!*' ... the sick should *not* make the healthy sick ... but this requires above all that the healthy should be *segregated* from the sick, guarded even from the sight of the sick, that they may not confound themselves with the sick. (GM III.14)

Nietzsche aligns the oppositions of healthy/sick, fortunate/miserable – which we may take to correspond to the dichotomy of noble/slave – and suggests that, so as to prevent the 'poisoning' of the healthy by the sick, the healthy should be 'segregated' from the sick. However, it is precisely when the healthy *are* exposed to the sick – and when the "pathos of distance" (*ibid.*) begins to crumble – that the corruption of the healthy occurs. Thus, it seems that, like Nietzsche's artist, the healthy are all too "easily corrupted" by the sick (GM III.25).

At this point, the alleged status of the healthy as the powerful becomes highly problematic. If the healthy require segregation from the sick so as to maintain their health, does this not reveal a fundamental *impotence* in the health of the healthy? In the *Twilight of the Idols*,

Nietzsche writes: "Only excess of strength is proof of strength" (TI Fore). Which is to say that only an excess of health – i.e., the type of health that remains healthy throughout protracted exposure to sickness – is symptomatic of authentic health. It seems, then, that the fact that the healthy require pampering through segregation – the noble "wanting to be by oneself ... standing alone" (BGE 212) – means that they are not properly healthy. In this context, a crossing of Nietzsche's fundamental oppositions occurs. Abundant life and health are found to possess a core of weakness and impotence, while impoverished life and sickness are revealed to be strong and powerful. In other words, nobility is prone to corruption and thereby reveals its impotence, while slavishness, in its "tyranny over the healthy" (*ibid.*), is an expression of sickly power.

As Henry Staten has pointed out, the "real protagonist" of *On the Genealogy of Morals* is the ascetic priest, whom Staten claims is "neither merely noble nor merely slave" and who thus "confounds the distinction between the economy of the master and that of the slave".[7] It is, no doubt, partly for this reason that when the ascetic priest is introduced in the third essay, Nietzsche writes: "we are now face to face with the actual *representative of seriousness*" (GM III.11). In chapter five, I described how the ascetic priest was able to make – as Nietzsche puts it – the "human soul resound with heart-rending ecstatic music" in the form of his "exploitation of the *sense of guilt*" (GM III.20).[8] But the essence of the

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[7] Staten, 1990: 48.

[8] Nietzsche's reference to 'heart-rending ecstatic music' is not an idle one. We think immediately of Wagner and it is evident that Nietzsche conceives of Wagner and the ascetic priest along similar lines. They are both shepherds of a sick herd and both employ the art of sorcery to seduce and manipulate their sick congregation. The ascetic priest is an "ancient mighty sorcerer in his struggle against displeasure" and every "painful orgy of feeling ... stood in the service of the sorcerer" (GM III.20). Nietzsche calls Wagner "this old sorcerer! This Klingsor of all Klingsors!' (CW PS) and exclaims "Ah, this old sorcerer, how much he imposed on us" (CW 3). And both the ascetic priest and Wagner are voluptuaries (GM III.12; EH II.6) and inducers of hypnotic states (GM III.17; CW 7).

ascetic priest's paradoxical and "monstrous power" (GM III.23) resides in the scope of his ideal – of which 'guilt' is but one component – and its relation to impoverished life.

For Nietzsche, the power of the ascetic priest is, in the first instance, an instinctive power that is fundamentally creative and which gives rise to an interpretation of existence that serves to protect and conserve impoverished life. And with his life-protecting ideal, the priest then assumes power over those who are in need of protection. He becomes the shepherd of the sick herd. "*Dominion over the suffering* is his kingdom" (GM III.15), Nietzsche writes. In the following passage, Nietzsche describes the instinctive and the shepherding power of the priest. He writes that

> *the ascetic ideal springs from the protective instinct of a degenerating life* which tries by all means to sustain itself and to fight for its existence ... That this ideal acquired such power and ruled over men as imperiously as we find it in history ... expresses a great fact: the *sickliness* of the type of man we have had hitherto ... The ascetic priest is the incarnate desire ... to be in a different place ... – it is precisely this *power* that enables him to persuade to existence the whole herd ... of all those who suffer of themselves, by instinctively going before them as their shepherd ... this ascetic priest, this apparent enemy of life, this *denier* – precisely he is among the greatest *conserving* and yes-creating forces of life. (GM III.13)

The ascetic priest's protective instinct – from which his ideal emerges – is a creative power bent on the furtherance of degenerating life. And since the degenerate man is, for Nietzsche, the rule among men, it follows that the priest is one of the 'greatest conserving and yes-creating forces of life'. The ideal that emerges from the priest's creative-protective instinct is the ascetic

interpretation, and mode, of existence. By positing the existence of a transcendental world in which all value resides, the priest divests *this* world entirely of value. The ascetic life is lived in accordance with the belief that the earthliness of man – his body, instincts, desires, beauty and becoming – are without value and so must be denied. For those who are already sickly, then, the ascetic priest offers an interpretation of life that assigns value to their sickness. The sickly manifest degenerating life, which is to say that they lack 'earthliness', thus they seize hold of the ascetic ideal because it tells them that earthliness is without value, and that they should deny it – i.e., deny that which they are too sickly to possess in the first place. It is in this way that the ascetic priest becomes the shepherd of the sick herd.

The ascetic priest is the most potent hybrid of sickness and power that we find in Nietzsche. He "must be sick himself", Nietzsche writes, "he must be profoundly related to the sick – how else would they understand each other?" (GM III.15). But, as Nietzsche continues, "he must also be strong, master of himself even more than of others, with his will to power intact, so as to be both trusted and feared by the sick, so as to be their ... tyrant, and god" (*ibid.*). The ascetic priest, then, brings about the dissolution of Nietzsche's key distinctions. He is sickly – that is, both degenerating and impoverished – but he is far from weak. Rather, he is strong, masterful and abundantly creative and he uses his will to power – as creator and shepherd – so as to protect and conserve impoverished life. Thus the priest is the conglomeration of noble and ascetic.

## IV

The weakness of abundant life and the power of impoverished life casts a tragic shadow over Nietzsche's aesthetics of abundance. In this section, I will describe how the concept of a creative degeneracy – in the form of 'ugliness' – lies at the very heart of Nietzsche's aesthetics. And in the following section, I would like to make some general and closing remarks on Nietzsche's aesthetics as a whole.

The Dionysian artist who creates from the overabundance of life is the creative principle of Nietzsche's vitalistic aestheticism embodied in pure form. Nietzsche interprets life as the will to power, as that which seeks to expand through the imposition of its own forms upon that which is alien. The self-expansion of life is the bringing-forth of life – it is life creating itself anew. The name that man gives to the perfect sensation of the power for self-expansion is 'beauty'; while the imperfect sensation of the lack of such power is 'ugliness'. Nietzsche's aesthetic, at this stage of development, possesses a mythic simplicity. Man is defined simply by his activity, his power to create or not to create; and the interaction of man with man and man with nature is that of the *agon*, of competing constellations of self-expanding will to power that struggle against each other so as to appropriate, overpower, and impose forms. The inner world of man, at this stage, is without depth, and insofar as he has an inner world, it is, Nietzsche writes, "as thin as if it were stretched between two membranes" (GM II.16).

Nietzsche's pure concept of the Dionysian artist of overabundance is a psychological ideal. Or, alternatively, it is Nietzsche's interpretation of one aspect of the psychology of creativity that, ordinarily, is immersed in

other manifold and complex psychological processes. Nietzsche, as it were, singles out that which he takes to be the essence of creativity – vitalistic self-expansion – and tells us that this is what is most valuable in man. However, when Nietzsche moves from the psychological to the genealogical perspective, he finds that vitalistic self-expansion is compromised at every turn. And the name he gives to that which changes the rules of the grand *agon* of competing centres of self-expansion is 'morality'. But in his reconstruction of the 'pre-moral' period of mankind, Nietzsche situates, in embodied form, his favoured psychological conception of overabundant creativity in the form of the "artists of violence and organizers who build states" (GM II.18). Nietzsche celebrates these "involuntary, unconscious artists" whose "work is an instinctive creation and imposition of form" as those who "exemplify that terrible artist's egoism that has the look of bronze and knows itself justified to all eternity in its 'work'" (GM II.17).

However, the final and greatest work of the artists of violence – which is to say, for Nietzsche, the final moment of pure vitalistic creativity – is the state. They weld a "hitherto unchecked and shapeless populace into a firm form" and thus create the "oldest 'state' ... as a fearful tyranny" (*ibid.*). And by creating the state – by enclosing man "within the walls of society and peace" (GM II.16) – these pure artists also create morality, and thus bring about the destruction of their own form of creativity and beauty. In the moral epoch, man is unable to self-expand externally, thus his creative instinct for self-expansion turns inward, with the result that his inner world "expand[s] and extend[s] itself, acquire[s] depth, breadth, and height" (*ibid.*). The new artistry of self-cruelty is thus born. The transition

from the pre-moral to the moral, then, is the transition from Nietzsche's vitalistic aestheticism to his masochistic aestheticism

Under the dominion of morality, man's power for self-expansion is curtailed. And since the imperfect sensation of the lack of the power to self-expand is 'ugliness', it then follows that man is 'ugly'. But Nietzsche suggest that from this ugliness a new beauty is created. He writes:

> This secret self-ravishment, this artists' cruelty ... brought to light an abundance of strange new beauty and affirmation, and perhaps beauty itself. – After all what would be 'beautiful' if the contradiction had not first become conscious of itself, if the ugly had not first said to itself: 'I am ugly'? (GM II.18)

Man creates beauty, then, from the consciousness of his own ugliness. For Nietzsche, "nothing is ugly but *degenerate* man" (TI IX.20), thus it is from degeneracy that man 'brings to light an abundance of strange new beauty'. It is precisely at this point that Nietzsche's aesthetics of abundance in its pure and uncontaminated form is finally relocated in the degeneracy that, for Nietzsche, necessarily attends morality. There is *no* pure artist or aesthetics of abundance. There is only the impoverished artist who strives to be abundant and beautiful.[9]

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[9] This is the broadest sense in which impoverishment *qua* morality undercuts abundance *qua* aesthetics. But once it has been accepted that a 'pure abundance' is an impossibility, we can still talk of abundant forms of life emerging from the now irremovable context of morality. As I have shown, however, even in those forms of abundance that presuppose morality – i.e., nobility – Nietzsche finds another form of degeneracy. One that, perhaps, is the descendent of the original degeneracy that resulted from the enclosure of man.

## V

In the introduction I drew a distinction between Nietzsche's critical aesthetics and his aestheticism. The distinction between reflecting on the aesthetic and reflecting in broadly aesthetic terms appears, on the face of it, to be of little consequence. If my account of Nietzsche's thought is correct, the two types of aesthetics will be merely expressions of each other – their relation will be one, in other words, of mutual interdependence. But, at the same time, if Nietzsche's aesthetics is to teach us anything – if it is to give to the aesthetician or philosopher of art a different sense of his task – surely it is that by thinking aesthetically a whole new set of philosophical possibilities are opened up. Nietzsche dissolves the frame of the work of art and from this seemingly counter-intuitive dissolution he compels the aesthetician to reflect upon life. No doubt Nietzsche would claim, but not in these terms, that the philosopher of life is always already an aesthetician, and that either he is unaware of that fact or he is aware and attempts to suppress it. Nietzsche's aestheticism, however, invites us to bring to bear upon the world those sets of values that we should acknowledge as fundamental to our identity as living creatures – aesthetic values. And while it is certain that Nietzsche's unique way with these values can never be, nor should ever be attempted to be, imitated, it is clear nonetheless that after Nietzsche, aesthetics need not be relegated to the periphery of philosophy. Nietzsche has shown us, in other words, what aesthetics can be. As Thomas Mann puts it, Nietzsche's "Dionysiac aestheticism" made him "the greatest critic and psychologist of morality in the history of thought."[10]

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10 Mann, 1959: 156.

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