# NIETZSCHE AND ANTIQUITY

## His Reaction and Response to the Classical Tradition

Edited by Paul Bishop

*Nietzsche and Antiquity*

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*Drei Dinge muß der Philologe, wenn er seine Unschuld beweisen will, verstehen, das Alterthum, die Gegenwart, sich selbst: seine Schuld liegt darin, daß er entweder das Alterthum nicht oder die Gegenwart nicht oder sich selbst nicht versteht. Erste Frage: versteht der Philologe das Alterthum?* ———

[The philologist must understand three things, if he is to prove his innocence: antiquity, the present, himself; his guilt lies in the fact he does not know either antiquity or the present or himself. First question: does the philologist understand antiquity? ———]

Nietzsche, KSA 8, 7[7], 127

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P. B.
Glasgow, May 2003

# Abbreviations

## Editions

KSA: *Kritische Studienausgabe: Sämtliche Werke*
KGW: *Kritische Gesamtausgabe: Werke*
KSB: *Kritische Studienausgabe: Sämtliche Werke*
KGB: *Kritische Gesamtausgabe: Briefwechsel*
BAW: *Frühe Schriften* (*Historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe: Werke*, 1-5)

## Individual Works

PTAG: *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks (Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen)*
BT: *The Birth of Tragedy* (*Die Geburt der Tragödie*)
UM: *Untimely Meditations* (*Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*)
HA: *Human, All Too Human* (*Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*)
D: *Daybreak* (*Morgenröthe*)
GS: *The Gay Science* (*Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*)
Z: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (*Also sprach Zarathustra*)
BGE: *Beyond Good and Evil* (*Jenseits von Gut und Böse*)
GM: *On the Genealogy of Morals* (*Zur Genealogie der Moral*)
TI: *Twilight of the Idols* (*Götzen-Dämmerung*)
CW: *The Case of Wagner* (*Der Fall Wagner*)
EH: *Ecce Homo* (*Ecce Homo*)
AC: *The Antichrist* (*Der Anti-Christ*)
WP: *The Will to Power* (*Der Wille zur Macht*)

## A Note on Translations

Unless otherwise stated, for most of Nietzsche's works the translations by Walter Kaufmann have been consulted: *The Portable Nietzsche* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1954), *Basic Writings of Nietzsche* (New York: The Modern Library, 1968), and *The Gay Science* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974). Otherwise, the translations by R. J. Hollingdale of *Untimely Meditations* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983), *Human, All Too Human* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986), and *Daybreak* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982) have been consulted. In the case of *Twilight of the Idols* and *The Antichrist*, both the versions by Walter Kaufmann (in *The Portable Nietzsche*) and by R. J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), and in the case of *The Will to Power*, the joint translation by Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale of *The Will to Power* (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), has also been consulted.

# Introduction

*Paul Bishop*

THIS COLLECTION OF PAPERS arose from the Twelfth Annual Conference of the Friedrich Nietzsche Society, on the theme of "Nietzsche and the Classical Tradition," held at the University of Glasgow in September 2002. The theme of Nietzsche's reaction and response to the world of Antiquity and to the concept of classicism—primarily Greek, as well as German—goes right to the core of his works. Nietzsche may have been a "modernist"; he may even have been a "postmodernist"; but in the nineteenth century, as far as the University of Basel was concerned, he was a "classicist"—or, more precisely, a philologist.

To be even more precise, he was a professor of philology. For in April 1869 Nietzsche, just twenty-four years old, began his appointment as Extraordinary Professor of classical philology as Basel University. On 28 May he gave his inaugural lecture, a discussion of the identity of Homer, which made a favorable impression on his audience. Or at least so he told his university friend, Erwin Rohde, and his mother, Franziska Nietzsche, in his letters to them of 29 May and mid-June: "Because of this inaugural lecture the people here have been convinced about a number of things, and with it my position, as I can clearly see, has been secured" (KSB 3, 15; cf. 13). Nietzsche's colleagues at Basel included the philologists Jacob Mähly and Hermann Usener and the ethnologist Johann Jakob Bachofen, as well as the historian Jacob Burckhardt and the theologian Franz Overbeck. To begin with, all seemed well. Writing just a few months later to Rohde in mid-July 1869, however, Nietzsche sounded a note of caution:

> With my "colleagues" I am having a strange experience: I feel among them as I used to feel among students: entirely without any need to get to know them more closely, but also without any envy: in fact, strictly speaking, I feel a small grain of contempt for them in me, with which indeed very polite and obliging intercourse goes quite well. [*An meinen "Collegen" mache ich eine seltsame Erfahrung: ich fühle mich unter ihnen, wie ich mich ehedem unter Studenten fühlte: im Ganzen ohne jedes Bedürfniß mich mit ihnen näher abzugeben, aber auch ohne allen Neid: ja genau genommen, fühle ich einen kleinen Gran von Verachtung gegen*

> *sie in mir, mit dem sich ja ein sehr höflicher und gefälliger Verkehr ganz gut verträgt.*] (KSB 3, 28)

Ten years later, in 1879, Nietzsche took early retirement, on grounds of ill-health. And, eventually, Nietzsche would express his dislike of academia in general, and of his colleagues in classics in particular, with corrosive irony when, following his mental collapse, he would tell Burckhardt: "In the end I would much rather be Professor at Basel than God" (*Zuletzt wäre ich sehr viel lieber Basler Professor als Gott*) (KSB 8, 577).

In the various ways documented and discussed by the papers in this volume, the classical world remained a reference-point, and a polemical point, throughout his later philosophical writings. Over a quarter of a century has passed since the publication of *Studies in Nietzsche and the Classical Tradition*, the last major collection of scholarship on the subject of Nietzsche and classicism.[1] As recent years have seen a renewal of interest in Nietzsche's early philological writings, prompted by the publication of his *Frühe Schriften* (BAW),[2] it seemed timely to undertake a reappraisal of Nietzsche's relationship to the classical tradition, both Greek and German.[3] Three particular questions arise when we try to do this.

First, there is *problematic nature* of history itself and of thinking historically, a problem to which Nietzsche devoted himself in the second of his *Untimely Meditations*, "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life." Writing just over a century later in his *Truth and Method* (*Wahrheit und Methode*) (1960), Hans-Georg Gadamer states the problem of thinking historically in the following terms:

> Historical consciousness fails to understand its own nature if, in order to understand, it seeks to exclude that which alone makes understanding possible. To think historically [*Historisch denken*] means, in fact, to perform the transposition that the concepts of the past undergo when we try to think in them [*die Umsetzung vollziehen, die den Begriffen der Vergangenheit geschieht, wenn wir in ihnen zu denken suchen*]. To think historically always involves establishing a connection between those ideas and one's own thinking.[4]

The tension between the past and the present; the difficulty, yet the necessity, of understanding concepts of the past in terms of the concepts of the present—these problems are. inevitably, inherent in any project to understand the values of classicism.

Second, there is the question of Nietzsche's *presentation* of antiquity in general and of the classical tradition in particular. It is likely that Nietzsche visited the site of Paestum, probably during the time of his stay in Sorrento in the winter of 1876 to the spring of 1877.[5] Nietzsche

chose to use the site of Paestum in his first volume of *Human, All Too Human* as an example of how "what is perfect [*das vollkommene*] is supposed not to have become":

> In the case of everything perfect we are accustomed to abstain from asking how it became: we rejoice in the present fact as though it came out of the ground by magic. Here we are probably still standing under the after-effect of a primeval mythological invention. We still *almost* feel (for example in a Greek temple such as that at Paestum) that a god must one morning have playfully constructed his dwelling out of these tremendous weights: at other times that a stone suddenly acquired by magic a soul that is now trying to speak out of it. The artist knows that his work produces its full effect when it excites belief in an improvisation, a belief that it came into being with a miraculous suddenness; and so he may assist this illusion and introduce those elements of rapturous restlessness, of blindly groping disorder, of attentive reverie that attend the beginning of creation into his art as a means of deceiving the soul of the spectator or auditor into a mood in which he believes that the complete has suddenly emerged instantaneously. —The science of art has, it goes without saying, most definitely to counter this illusion and to display the bad habits and false conclusions of the intellect by virtue of which it allows the artist to ensnare it. (HA I §145).

In this passage we can see some typically Nietzschean themes: the significance of the genealogical method; the interest in "illusion"; the fascination with the persistence of the "primitive" in the "modern," as well as the emphasis on the importance of becoming, rather than being, that is found in Goethe's thought, too.[6] Elsewhere, however, Nietzsche mentions Paestum as an example how "the Hellenic [is] very foreign to us" (*das Griechische uns sehr fremd*) (D §169). Nietzsche's focus, then, is on the difference between the ancient Greek sensibility and our modern sensibility, the difference in the sense of proportion; even if there is implicit, however, the idea that a return to this sense of proportion is both possible, and maybe even desirable.

Third, there is the question of the *purpose* of looking at the world of antiquity, of examining—and, perhaps, embracing—the values of classicism. In his famous essay "Literarischer Sansculottismus" (1795) Goethe problematized the concept of classicism, rejecting the term as applicable to any current German writers, but defining the link between classicism and national literature in unmistakably programmatic terms. If, in *The Gay Science* (§370) and *The Will to Power* (§846), Nietzsche tried to answer the question "What is Romanticism," he also tried in his *Nachlass* to define classicism in terms that are as personal—"to be classical, one

must possess *all* the strong, seemingly contradictory gifts and desires, but in such a way that they go together beneath one yoke"—as they are politico-cultural—"arrive at the *right* time to bring to its climax and high point a *genus* of literature or art or politics (not *after* this has already happened)"—and concluded that "one must not be a reactive but a *concluding* and forward leading spirit, saying Yes in all cases, even with one's hatred."[7] It is this structured and integrative approach to all senses, instincts, and capacities, that also lay, for example, behind Goethe's distinction in *Dichtung und Wahrheit* between mere growth and full development.[8]

By contrast, what Nietzsche finds most contemptible about the ancient Greek figure of Socrates is precisely—whatever Socrates himself may have claimed—the lack of any real mastery of his instincts, and, in fact, his hostility towards them. "*How* did Socrates become master over *himself?*" Nietzsche asked, and answered his own question as follows: "His case was, at bottom, merely the extreme case, only the most striking instance of what was then beginning to be a universal distress: no one was any longer master over himself, the instincts turned *against* each other" (TI Problem of Socrates §9). In short, "to *have* to fight the instincts—that is the formula of decadence: as long as life is *ascending*, happiness equals instinct" (TI Problem of Socrates §11). Thus it might well be thought that Nietzsche's insistence in his writings on the necessity of suffering (WP §910), and yet the possibility of happiness (AC §1), marks out, on an existential level, an affinity with classicism, an affinity underlined by his opposition to the anti-classical, or the Christian.

On these three questions of the *problematic* nature of history, Nietzsche's *presentation* of antiquity, and his *purpose* in turning our gaze towards the world of antiquity, the papers presented below take a variety of stances: this volume seeks to open up a debate that has stalled, not foreclose the necessary discussion to come, and to set out the numerous approaches and perspectives that are possible. The papers in the first section, *The Classical Greeks*, examine the theoretical and historical complexities of Nietzsche's relationship to the classical tradition. In the second section, *Pre-Socratics and Pythagoreans, Cynics and Stoics*, his reception of a number of specific traditions of antiquity is treated in more detail. The papers in the third section, *Nietzsche and Plato*, offer a plethora of perspectives on the question of Nietzsche's reading of his great philosophical predecessor. In the fourth section, *Contestations*, various problems emerging from Nietzsche's engagement with antiquity are discussed. Finally, the fifth section, *German Classicism*, asks what it means to speak of classicism in the German tradition, and examines the extent

to which Nietzsche can be seen to embrace a (German) classical aesthetic. So now, it is for the contributors to this volume to speak for themselves—and for the readers, as did the listeners at the conference, to judge for themselves.

## Notes

[1] James C. O'Flaherty, Timothy F. Sellner, Robert Meredith Helm (eds), *Studies in Nietzsche and the Classical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1976).

[2] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Frühe Schriften, 1854-1869* [BAW, 1-5].

[3] While some contributions touch on Nietzsche's reception of the Roman culture of antiquity, his reaction and response to the Roman world requires treatment in a separate volume.

[4] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Garrett Barden and John Cumming (London: Sheed and Ward, 1975), 358; Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1960), 374.

[5] See David Farrell Krell and Donald L. Bates, *The Good European: Nietzsche's Work Sites in Word and Image* (Chicago and London: U of Chicago P, 1997), 100-01.

[6] "Nothing is, nothing has become, everything is always becoming, in the eternal stream of change there is no rest" (*Nichts ist, nichts ist geworden, alles ist stets im Werden, in dem ewigen Strom der Veränderung ist kein Stillstand*) (WA 5.2, 22), as Goethe is recorded as saying in a conversation with Sophie von Schardt of 1805-1806. This statement is echoed by Nietzsche in *Human, All Too Human*: "Everything has become [*Alles aber ist geworden*]: there are *no eternal facts*, just as there are no absolute truths" (HA I §2).

[7] WP §848; KSA 12, 9[166], 433-34; compare WP §849; KSA 13, 11[312], 132.

[8] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *From My Life: Poetry and Truth. Parts One to Three*, trans. Robert Heitner [Goethe Edition, vol. 4] (New York: Suhrkamp Publishers, 1987), 64; WA I.26, 110-11.

# Section 1

# The Classical Greeks

# Nietzsche, Homer, and the Classical Tradition

*James I. Porter*

> *The fixed point around which the Greek nation crystallized was its language. The fixed point around which its culture crystallized was Homer. In both cases, then, we are having to do with works of art.* *(Nietzsche, 1872/1873) (KSA 7, 19[278], 506)*

## Why Homer?

IT IS SURELY something of a paradox that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* have been required reading in Western culture from its first beginnings, despite the complete mystery surrounding the circumstances of their date and authorship, and despite their obvious flaws and blemishes—the repetitions, inconsistencies, and irregularities which have led to their impeachment as products of a single mind.[1] All the uncertainties about Homer and his poems notwithstanding, their place in the cultural imagination in the West has been unrivaled. Indeed, as secular texts with no pretensions to revealed truth, and yet conferred with nearly Biblical stature, their status in world literature is almost unique.[2] How can we account for their enduring attraction? Whatever the answer, approaching the question will involve confronting the monumentality of the two poems—less their quality as great works of literature than their role as cultural icons, as signifiers of value, and as landmarks in the evolving relationship between literature and culture. A perspective such as this is an invitation to study the intellectual and cultural history of value.

For all these reasons, Homer was a natural attraction for Nietzsche in his early, philological phase and, to a lesser extent, later on. The pages that Nietzsche devoted to Homer in his philological notebooks, in his *Antrittsrede* at Basel in 1869 (published as "Homer and Classical Philology"), in parts of *The Birth of Tragedy*, and in his never-published essay from 1872 called "Homer's Contest," are all concerned with the formation of Homer as a locus of cultural value: indeed, they are an inquiry into the value of this value, which is to say of this supreme cultural value

in the West. Thus, to consider Nietzsche's assessment of Homer is not only to examine Nietzsche's place in the classical tradition; it is also to realize how Nietzsche looked upon the classical tradition as a fertile ground for cultural analysis and critique.

The present essay aims to set Nietzsche's interest in Homer against this wider background, according to three of the meanings that Homer held for Nietzsche. First, Homer is for Nietzsche a construct of classicism, which is to say of the idealizing reverence for Greco-Roman antiquity à la Winckelmann and others (this is how he appears, for instance, in *The Birth of Tragedy*—as "the dreaming Greek" at the height of his Apollonian powers). Second, Homer represents a foundational crux within the disciplined study of the classics, its primary axis and its *prôton pseudos*, or delusory point of departure (this is how he appears in Nietzsche's inaugural lecture on "Homer and Classical Philology"—as the object of what was then and still is known as the "Homeric Question"). And third, he presents a window onto the preclassical era of classical antiquity, of an age prior to that of Pericles and Phidias (Homer lived in the so-called Dark Age of Greece), but also of an age prior to Homer's own (Homer describes what we now call the Mycenaean Bronze-Age past). The upshot of this last point is that, in Nietzsche's eyes, Homer functions as a potential source of unsettling, unclassical values: these are sometimes hypostatized by Nietzsche as "*das vor-Homerische*," or "the pre-Homeric" age or spirit, for instance, in the essay "Homer's Contest" (1872), or else they are embodied in the proud figure of "the Greek noble" from *On the Genealogy of Morals*, who, in ways Iliadic, is also comparable to "the pre-Aryan" species of the same essay, with its "hidden core" of violent drives that, Nietzsche warns, are bound to "erupt from time to time" (GM I §11). Taken together, these three elements map out a progression in Nietzsche's thought: Homer as a product of classicism discloses an incoherence in the very idea of Homer, in his very conception, which idea in turn protects us against an alternative account of the Greek past, one that threatens us with its darker opacities (just what these opacities consist in remains to be seen).

Needless to say, Nietzsche's Homer is a polemically charged notion, and whatever sense it makes does so only within a nineteenth-century context. But in order to do this work of contextualization, I must offer a brief speculative sketch of Homer's reception from antiquity into the recent present, much of which will be Nietzschean in spirit—which is not to say that Nietzsche made or would have made all of the claims that I do. After all, Nietzsche is as much a symptom of the tradition as he is one of its most insightful readers and critics.

Threading through my reflections will be three recurrent themes, more or less parallel to Nietzsche's "three Homers," although here the reference is transhistorical (ancient and modern): first, the persistent *classicism* of Homer; second, the elements of *disavowal* that go into the construction and sustaining of Homer's ever-imaginary identity; and third, the utter *mystery* of Homer, his *unreachability*, and above all the *insolubility* of his definition. This last point needs to be underscored: Homer is the product of a particular kind of fascination, and by the same token he has been a compulsive and productive source of culture in the West since antiquity. Or at least he has been this until recently, if we believe a small but vocal minority who claim that contemporary classical scholarship has itself mystified Homer and killed him in the process, thanks to the waves of trendy theory, multiculturalism, and cultural nihilism which have finally swept over classical studies and turned Homer, the one-time fountain of value and meaning—of classically-centered knowledge—into a meaningless bibliographical citation. Despite this kind of concern, it has to be acknowledged that Homer was never, in fact, a stable entity from which a sure base of culture and learning could flow, and this was part of his attraction. (In Greek, *homerizein*, "to Homerize," after all can mean "to lie.") Homer's identity and his meaning were both radically uncertain and widely contested, so much so that we can say that Homer who, as we shall see, was less a person than an idea, cannot have existed prior to the debates about him and independently of them. Indeed, one suspects that with Homer the Ancients and Moderns have made a rather telling choice of object for contention, one that ceaselessly *authorizes* the imaginative work of culture. Culture is not just an arena of contestation. It is a deviously calculating and self-enabling thing. Homer, we can safely say, has been "good to think with." Nor does the fascination with Homer show any signs of abating.[3]

Still, there must be a bit more to the fascination with Homer than this. Surely other relics of antiquity are equally mysterious and unfathomable. So I want to add a further speculation, namely, that Homer is, and probably always was from his baptismal naming, an idea of something that remains permanently lost to culture—whether this be a Heroic Age, an ideal of unattainable poetic excellence, or a vague sense of some irretrievably lost past. It was only natural that Homer, the narrator of Troy, should become inseparably linked to the violent destruction of Troy. That destruction was complete, and its memory was traumatic for the ancient world—and, in different ways, for the modern world. So let us first consider briefly how Troy might have functioned as a trauma for Greece—not in a clinical sense, but in an imaginary sense, one that works

through the artifices of cultural memory—and then take up Homer's connection to this memory, which (all speculations aside) is an integral element of Homer's reception. Then we can turn to some of the implications these questions have had for modernity, and for Nietzsche in particular, whose three Homer's are, we might say, three expressions of, and three responses to, a classical trauma.

## Homer in Antiquity

Troy had two connotations in antiquity. It was known either as Homer had described it—as a vital, flourishing civilization, albeit one pitched on the brink of disaster—or as it appeared in dim memory and on the ground, by reference to its *aphanismos*, or obliteration. Troy's sacking was first mythologically and then conventionally the start of Greek history, the ground zero of relative dating within human time (indeed, it was directly tied to the end of the Golden Age and to the unrepealable division between immortal and human time), and so history began, oddly, but canonically and symbolically, in an obliteration. There is a lesson to be learned here, and it was frequently drawn. The orator Lycurgus could warn the Athenians in 331 BCE, in the direst of tones, of a fate similar to Troy's, involving brutal betrayal, destruction, and desolation: "Who has not heard of Troy? Who does not know that Troy—once the greatest city of its age, and the queen of Asia—has remained for all time uninhabited, since once for all it was razed by the Greeks?" (*In Leocr.* 62). The identification of Greece with the Trojan perspective is striking, but not unparalleled (and it was encouraged by the epics). Troy for Lucan, centuries later, was a paradoxical *lieu de mémoire*, a place where "even the ruins have perished [*etiam periere ruinae*]" (Luc. 9.969). In between stretched a long tradition of literary and pictorial allusions to the destruction of Troy, but it was Homer, not other poets, whose name was soldered to the catastrophic memory of Troy. Together they became a fixed point around which Greece's idea of itself would take form. (One need only glance at the northern Parthenon frieze in Athens, with its decorative motifs from the *Iliad*.) It is ironic, or simply telling, that the Greek sense of identity formed itself around a possible fiction.

Representing a loss that could not be confirmed but only imagined, the historicity of the Trojan War could be doubted, at least in its details if not as a whole. As if by attraction, Homer was himself felt as a strange loss, as grand and distant as Troy, and it was only inevitable that he should assume mythic proportions. One anecdote, probably Hellenistic in origin, relates how Homer's poems suffered near-total destruction due

to fire, floods, and earthquakes, as though Homer were not a text but a place. No other ancient author—and few places—enjoyed this kind of catastrophic fame. The survival of Homer's poems, it was felt, was in ways too good to be true. How real, in fact, *was* Homer? The historicity of Troy could be doubted in antiquity, but we have no direct evidence that Homer's historicity ever was. Still, the ancient view of history was plastic and accommodating in ways we can barely follow. Though never conceded to be a fiction during antiquity, Homer was in fact treated as both real and fictional at the same time: his historicity was etched around the borders with transcendental hues, and consequently Homer became more than real—he became surreal. Throughout antiquity Homer was a controversial entity, as much a myth as a person, but always a legend (the son of a river, of one of the Muses and Apollo, or of divine poets, and claimed by various places, he died unable to solve a children's riddle or from the debility of old-age), and ultimately a potent symbol, an idea, and a prize. Moreover, if, as is likely, Homer's name was added to his poems as an afterthought, possibly once they became fixed as texts, it seems equally likely that this is when the contests over his identity were launched. That is, Homer became uncertain—literally lost to memory—the moment he was named and found. In any event, slowly the Greeks began the work of framing, and variously laying claim to, a monumental Homer. In this enterprise they were building on the tendencies to revere, monumentalize, and idealize the heroic past which were the norm in the archaic period even prior to the creation of the Homeric poems, as the Dark Age hero-cults around Bronze Age sites suggest. The modern reception of Homer took its cue from here.

The uncertain question and meaning of "Homer"—Homer's *cultural* location—were the source of anxieties and debates throughout the whole of antiquity, which gave rise to a veritable Homer-industry not much different from our own. The monstrous, now (thankfully) lost, work in thirty volumes by Demetrius of Scepsis in the Troad (mid-second century BCE) is a case in point. Devoted at least in part to establishing the true location of Troy, this polemical and proudly local work was a commentary on a mere sixty-two lines from the Catalogue of the Ships in *Iliad* 2. The fury of Demetrius's historicism is telling (no doubt of different things). But it is only one exaggerated instance of a widespread tendency with roots in ancient legends and lore and in the earliest rationalizations of Homer. From Hesiod to the Second Sophistic, the Ancients do seem to have generated a good deal of their culture around what Nietzsche would later call the mere "hypothesis" of Homer (KGW 2.1, 256).

## The Modern Idea of Homer

The permanent loss that Homer embodied was felt more acutely as time went on, as Homer came to stand for the lost splendor of antiquity itself. But it was the particular achievement of modernity to name Homer finally as the idea that he always had been. The modern problem was provocatively summed up by Nietzsche in his inaugural lecture from 1869: in Homer, "has a person been made out of a concept [*Begriff*] or a concept out of a person?"[4] The problem named by Nietzsche was one that was racking the nineteenth century, both inside and outside of the academy, and it continues to flourish today. At issue was not the Homeric Question alone (namely, the questions: who composed the epics, when, and where? are they by a single author or the product of a tradition, if not a committee? and so on), but rather something deeper that was driving the question. What Nietzsche was getting at with his catchy and shrewd rephrasing of the Homeric Question, was the entire attitude of modernity to the study of "the so-called 'classical' antiquity," that "buried ideal world" which Classics was trying to bring to light in the contemporary present. The problem of Homer encapsulated this larger worry.

As powerful a grip as Nietzsche had on the problem of Homer, it was Giambattista Vico, and not Nietzsche, who first articulated the view, in 1730, that Homer was not a person but an idea (*un' idea*) created by the Greeks (though believed in by them).[5] The denial of Homer's historicity is for Vico tied to a denial of the historicity of the Trojan War as one more fiction from antiquity ("it never in the world took place"), but this does not prevent Homer from being somehow more *real* than Troy. Troy after all has vanished, while Homer's poems have not. But this cannot be right. Surely the Trojan War was no less "a famous epoch in history" for its never having happened. And so, in the last analysis both Homer and Troy have to be equally *real.* Not willing to let go of Homer entirely, unlike some of his French predecessors during the Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns (such as d'Aubignac, who dismissed Homer's existence altogether), Vico here is playing out the logic of disavowal that would typify Homer's reception for centuries to come, and which runs: "He was the best poet ever, but he never existed (and here are the proofs for both claims—his poems)."[6] Vico's simpler hypothesis, anticipating Friedrich August Wolf by half a century, is better known: it is that Homer's poems were the final product of a long tradition of oral composition and compilation (*The New Science*, §850-§872). But his sinuous, uncertain logic is equally an anticipation of Wolf and of the ana-

lytical tendency—and very likely of most readers of Homer today. It is the logic of the McGuffin (an impossible, nonexistent, and empty object), which as Hitchcock recognized governs larger parts of our lives than we are usually prepared to admit: ideas may be false and events may not occur, but their effects can be real, and at times they can be more compelling than the truth.[7] Thomas de Quincey nicely caught this logic of disavowal in a wry moment of his essay on "Homer and the Homeridae" (1841): "Some say, 'There never was such a person as Homer.'—'No such person as Homer! On the contrary,' say others, 'there were scores.'"[8]

## Homer, Historicity, and Classicism

It is tempting to say that one of the greatest achievements of modern thinking about Homer was its discovery, during the latter half of the eighteenth century, of the historicity of Homer's texts and his world. But, of course, this is only half of the story. For once it dawned on modernity that it might be possible to locate Homer in space and time, and in a way that antiquity never could, it remained to come to grips with this realization. Locating the by now thoroughly idealized Homer had innumerable implications, and not all of them were desirable. Archaeology eventually held out the promise of a solution, but this in turn created further dilemmas and no solutions. Reinserting the encumbered Homer of tradition into history was an arduous affair. Much of the progress (if that is the correct word) was made reluctantly, and often with as much backtracking as advances. To return to the language from which we set out, we might say that the traumatic loss that was embodied by Homer in classical antiquity became the traumatic prospect of Homer's possible *recovery* in the modern world. It was as if modernity suddenly had awoken from a dream, and was catching itself in the act. Formerly a comfortable notion, for instance an icon of naïve genius of the kind that Goethe and Schiller could romanticize, Homer—the very idea of him—suddenly became problematic, threatening, and consequently a source of fresh anxieties. In this new uncertainty was encapsulated the whole of modernity's relationship to the classical past, and so too its own historical self-image. Nietzsche's thinking and writing about Homer is focused by this concern, which he could characterize as "the frightfully beautiful Gorgon's head of the classical" (*das furchtbar-schöne Gorgonenhaupt des Klassischen*) (KGW 2.1, 251), a Thing that was at once alluring and disturbing, although the most frightening aspect of classical antiquity was the fact, which Nietzsche is only too happy to underscore, that its ideali-

zation is of historical manufacture. Nietzsche ceaselessly *historicizes* the classical ideal, and this is what makes his philology a form of conceptual terrorism, in addition to being a symptom of the age in which he lived.

Coming face to face with Homer the historical reality was painful, because it brought with it a "feeling of estrangement" (*Entfremdungsgefühl*) of the sort that Freud experienced when he stood for the first time among the ruins of the Acropolis: could all this really exist?[9] Indeed, as J. P. Mahaffy, author of the widely popular guide, *Rambles Through Greece* (1876; 2d ed, 1900), recognized upon going through a similar experience of his own, no monument in the Western cultural imagination could "sustain the burden of such greatness," and disappointment was bound to ensue.[10] Homer in the modern age had much the same status as the Acropolis—as would, eventually, that other acropolis, Troy. A monument in his own right, Homer bore an uncomfortable relation to historical reality. His reality was both affirmed and denied by classicism, both desired and unwanted, as was the case with all classical ideals. But Homer was a special case that stretched classicism to its limits. As a consequence, Homer occupied an uneasy place apart in the modern classicizing paradigm, and the strains showed. He came too early to be compared with the fully developed classicism of Phidias and Sophocles, but given his paradigmatic role even in the fifth century Homer's classicism could not be denied. In some ways prototypically classical, in others Homer could be felt to be both more and less classical than the classical authors of the fifth century—more authentically and more pristinely classical, if also representing a simpler, more naive, less developed form of classicism. To the humanist way of thinking, from Winckelmann and Humboldt to Richard Jebb and beyond, Homer could give a picture of the essence of the human mind ("for it is here that the seeds of the true Greek character actually lie"), while the details of Homeric psychology could be left unexplored—in part, for fear of what might be discovered there.[11]

Eager to leave Homer standing in the protective haze of noble simplicity, what exponents of classicism were warding off was the opposed extreme, which finds in Homer a prehistoric childlikeness that is more naïve than even children can be. (A caricature of this view was developed by Bruno Snell in *The Discovery of the Mind* [1946].) These are not really opposed views, but are merely two faces of a single coin (and can be found in Nietzsche's various portraits of "the Greeks").[12] For both tendencies derive from the classicizing Romantic paradigm of Homeric mentality, which gives rise to two mutually incompatible pictures: the view of the Homeric individual as something either less or more than a whole person. That is, the Homeric psyche could represent either an

early and superseded instance of the universal self (as it were, an imperfect and undeveloped version of the self) or a lost ideal of selfhood, one untainted by the ills of civilization and especially of modern life, that may or—more frequently—may not be reattained in the modern present (the self that was once, but no longer is). And behind these two views lies the ambivalent construction of the ancient Greek in relation to the modern self. The realization of either fantasy promised to bring with it incalculable terrors. And with the onset of archaeology, thanks to the energies of Heinrich Schliemann at Mycenae, Tiryns, and above all at the symbolically laden Troy, that promise finally seemed to be about to be made good.

## Troy and the Homeric Past: Jebb, Schliemann, and Nietzsche

But not if others could stop him first. Richard Claverhouse Jebb, the leading classicist in the English-speaking world and the future editor of Sophocles, was one of Schliemann's fiercest opponents. Various issues were in play: a boundary dispute between professionals and amateurs; a contest between disciplines (the study of material culture and physical remains as opposed to the study of literary culture and ideas); a clash between idealism and materialism (the new religion of the nineteenth century); and finally, after so many millennia, a palpable confrontation with the Homeric past. Yet there was even more at stake: classicism felt endangered. Which past was, properly speaking, Homer's? Schliemann's digs probed into archaic Greece, pushing the envelope of the modern contact with classical antiquity into the furthest reaches of the Bronze Age, well beyond what anyone gazing at the Elgin marbles, which were hung in the British Museum in 1817, could imagine. In search of Homer, Schliemann unwittingly pushed past him altogether. Nietzsche's resort to a preclassical and at times "pre-Homeric" era, replete with a terrifying psychological profile of its inhabitants, while anything but straightforward, had much the same effect: the received Homer was too tame for his tastes, too Apollonian and "cheerful," and insufficiently strange, brutal, and threatening—even if the image to which Nietzsche objects was that of a thoroughly classicized Homer, which is to say more a product of modernity than of antiquity.[13] Wilamowitz fiercely attacked Nietzsche in 1872 for his lack of historicism, but this is to miss the point.[14]

All criticisms notwithstanding, the discoveries of Nietzsche and Schliemann served to underline two deficiencies. First, the age of Homer, be this Homer's own or that of his epic world, had no place in

the going histories of Greece: it was all wrapped in a timeless gauze, lacking any real definition, and felt to be vaguely "classical." Second, preclassical Greece lacked not only a history but a way of conceiving it at all: there was no adequate picture of preclassical art available, and none of religion either. Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) and later on, in conscious echo, Walter Pater's *Greek Studies* (1895), began the work of establishing something like a preclassical aesthetics for the age of Homer and earlier. They also illustrated how difficult it was to wean any aesthetic appreciation of the Greek past from the classical models. With their celebration of "Asiatic" traits (irrationality, cruelty, and violence), but also of a certain abstractness and intricacy of design, and in their passage from the physical by way of the tactile to the (classically) sensuous again—all this wreathed in a penumbra of splendid loss, sublimity, and waste—both thinkers frequently treaded the line of archaic Romanticism, which came to be a new vogue and a modern cult of sorts, replacing an earlier era's aesthetic paganism, though in many respects indistinguishable from it.

But it was Schliemann beyond anyone else who presented to the modern world the specter of a Homer *redivivus*: now Homer would be shown to have been not a phantom but a material reality, as solid as the foundations of a rediscovered Troy. Asiatic by birth, would he even be recognizably *Greek* any longer? Forensic (and disturbingly racial) results aside, what Schliemann unearthed was both excitingly and frighteningly strange, and Jebb would have none of it. He disputed Schliemann's methods and challenged his findings. At the formal center of the dispute was the location of ancient Troy: Hisarlık according to Schliemann, Pınarbaşı. Mahaffy, backing Schliemann, would align Jebb with "those who are playing Demetrius's part," and by the strangest of inversions the nineteenth century found itself thrown back into the mid-second century BCE.[15] The *Saturday Review* of 28 January 1882 went a step further and dubbed the exchange "the new Trojan War."

## Homer and Philology

Parallel developments took place in philology, starting above all with Friedrich August Wolf, the founder of modern *Altertumswissenschaft* and the target of Nietzsche's criticism in the latter's inaugural lecture at Basel in 1869. Applying equal doses of skepticism and historical reasoning, Wolf set the tone of modern inquiry into the classics with a short and iconoclastic essay, the *Prolegomena ad Homerum* (1795), in which he argued that the Homeric texts had a long history of emergence that had

yet to be told, and that they were largely not the work of Homer.[16] Wolf's slim and never completed study enjoyed a *succès de scandale* that lasted well into the next century, not least because of the indecision it embodied, only some of which was rhetorically staged. Wolf's hesitations were genuine, but they were also complex. Homer, Wolf reasoned, must have been a simple and illiterate bard, but in the end he remains an unknowable cipher. Meanwhile, the monumentality of the Homeric poems, though undeniable, is for Wolf a mirage, the source of which can never be fully retraced: they are a paradoxical kind of monument, a sublime object, about which it can be said, along with Lucan, that "even the ruins have perished"—they exist only in our minds.[17] Instantly, the timeless Homer of popular and literary imagination became an object of scientific historical analysis and of damning critique, albeit on a somewhat irrational basis (Wolf was at bottom an intuitionist whose touchstone was his philological *sensus*, or "feeling," while his science was an *ars nesciendi*, or an "art of ignorance.") If the perplexities of Wolf's stance tended to be repeated rather than confronted by later generations (Nietzsche's inaugural lecture is a notable exception), it was nonetheless his historicist approach that swept the field. Henceforth, the Homeric texts themselves began to appear as something like an archaeological site, with layers of history built into them in a palpable stratigraphy: the disparate effects of multiple compositional layers (some, including Jebb, would call these "strata") and the intrusive hands of editors could all be felt in the poems. The temptation was to separate out these layers of accretion—indeed, just to detect them was already to prise them apart—with the result that Homer and his texts slowly unraveled, even if there was still something sublime about this heap of threads. Foucault's question, "What is an Author?," here found an early anticipation.

No longer a unitary author of unified texts, Homer was at the extreme rather a discursive effect, the function of institutional apparatuses and practices that had developed over time. The "Homer" of the classical philologists was only the latest transformation in the chain. Indeed, by the end of the century the "analyzed" Homer was such a commonplace that it had percolated into popular consciousness. In 1897, the novelist and essayist Samuel Butler published a strange book called *The Authoress of the Odyssey*, in which he argued that the *Odyssey* was written as a counter to Homer's *Iliad* by a woman who, "young, self-willed, and unmarried," had never left her modest home in Sicily and who strongly disagreed with Homer's portrayal of the second sex. Butler's self-styled "subversive" intervention in the debates of the big boys at Oxbridge, with his privileging of the tumbledown *Odyssey* over the manly *Iliad* and

his cavalier manipulation of the evidence (while strictly playing by the rules that sanctioned this very manipulation)—including his skillful deployment of what he referred to as "the Wolfian heresy" (the analytic approach to Homer's layered texts)—deserves to be recognized as a watershed of sorts in the history of classical scholarship, despite the stony silence his book received, and continues to receive, from professing classicists. *The Authoress of the Odyssey* is at the very least an extreme symptom of the age.

No longer a matter of the historicity of Homer and his world alone, it was the historicity and the frail contingency of an entire set of disciplines that was being brought into the public glare through philological inquiry and its various spin-offs. As Homer, the new disciplinary object, was being put to the test (and not least of all to the test of gender-bending), so too were the disciplines that sought to encompass him. A certain debasement of Homer was perhaps inevitable. At one extreme, folding Homer back into history again was felt as a loss: "We can no longer see the heroic age as the writers of the literary period in Greece beheld it—a golden distance in the history of their race, a beautiful mysterious background of law and religion. Far more remote in point of time, we yet discern the Homeric epoch more closely and minutely." So a wistful Andrew Lang could sigh in 1875, though it might as well have been Nietzsche writing.[18] At another extreme, Homer could be read as something like the first novelist, as the Assyriologist and classicist A. H. Sayce declared him to be in 1883: "The Iliad [seems to me to breathe] the spirit of Aristophanes. [...] To me the general tone of the Iliad sounds like that of Don Quixote" in its mockery of vanished Greek pieties.[19] This seems in retrospect to be just what Butler later set out to prove; indeed, for Butler humor and Homer were practically one word (one of his essays is titled "The Humour of Homer").[20] Both kinds of response doubtless came from a frustration, and exhaustion, with the dry and fruitless Homeric Question, even if the Homeric *problem*, properly speaking, persisted. But above all, as the century wore on one fact was growing clear: Homer was manifestly becoming part of the modern culture industry. By now firmly located centuries away from the stories he sang, Homer had become its alienated witness, and in his alienation he now stood closer to us. But just how close do we want to get to Homer?

## Nietzsche and Homer

Nietzsche's views of Homer from the late 1860s to the early 1870s, but also in the final decade of his writings, have to be understood in the light

of these developments and especially of these worries. Treating Homer for Nietzsche is a way of getting at the constitutional troubles of a discipline, which in turn stand at the end of a long history in the transmission and recovery of classical antiquity. As Nietzsche knows, the question as to whether Homer is in the first instance a person or a concept is in fact insoluble, and it is meant to stand, somewhat disingenuously, as an aporia: for the idea of Homer can never be thought except through the fiction of a person—he is, in fact, a "personified concept" (*ein personifizirter Begriff*).[21] Nietzsche's account of the emergence of Homer, in his various notes and in his lecture, is tortuous to retrace for this very reason: at any given point in his story Homer can be viewed as an *Idealwesen* (ideal entity), as a myth, or as a concept—that is, as an idea, a symbol, or even a "mask."[22] In the lecture on Homer, originally presented under the title of "On Homer's Personality" ("Über die Persönlichkeit Homers"), Nietzsche's enduring belief in both the insufficiency *and* the ineluctability of the subject (the philosophical category and fiction of the person) comes out as a reassertion of Homer's "personality"—or rather its inescapability—against Wolf's quasi-demolition of this entity. But what Nietzsche's broader history of Homer's emergence in antiquity traces is in fact the puzzlement of the Ancients in the face of a question they could not even coherently frame. The process is one of vacillation, as puzzlement turns into doubt, disillusionment, and demystification, which leads to the detection of contradictions in earlier traditions, then to the desperate resolution of these flaws of understanding in yet a further "error" of understanding, yet another mystification, which in turn becomes susceptible to further skepticism, and so on, endlessly into the present.[23]

Uncertain histories like these are Nietzsche's most familiar narrative tactic: in his later terminology, they map out a "genealogy," which is to say not a history but a logic of human belief—or rather of credulity, in the face of massive incredibility.[24] Genealogies, both in the case of Homer and in their later, more familiar uses by Nietzsche, map out the desperations of the human mind in the face of its own products. Nor is Nietzsche slow to generalize beyond the reach of his inquiry. "Which names," beyond those of Homer or Hesiod, he asks in the same notebooks, "turn out to be *personified concepts* in the history of literature?"[25] A decade on, the same question will be asked of constructions of the will to power, through the more familiar terminology of anthropomorphism (*Vermenschlichung*) and subjectivation.[26]

The logic of Nietzsche's position, and of this kind of genealogical inquiry, is nicely summed up in a notebook entry from 1868/1869: "As

one goes about solving the Homeric Question, the tendency is to reject the tradition"—the sum of ancient traditions about Homer's life and accomplishments—"because the tradition is contradictory. *But this contradictoriness*," he immediately adds, "*is itself a problem that demands to be solved. A history of the tradition explains these contradictions.*"[27] Nietzsche's approach to Classics and to its ideals is deeply historicizing. His target, consistently (indeed, unceasingly), is not the coherence of the classical tradition and its inheritances, but its contradictoriness. In his later years, Nietzsche would enlist Homer in other ways, for instance by pitting "Plato versus Homer" in a fundamental "antagonism" (the one representing the denial of life, the other representing "the instinctive deifier, the *golden* nature"), for instance, in *On the Genealogy of Morals* (GM III §25), or by pitting Homer (made to standing for pagan antiquity) against Christianity, as in a posthumous note from 1884.[28] Antiquity is a supple and ever-useful signifier for Nietzsche, and never fixed to one end. And yet, as with his other philological findings, Nietzsche never truly abandoned his youthful interest in the Homeric Question. One spectacular proof that he never did is a list he compiled in Sils Maria in August of 1885 while he was contemplating (as often, rather narcissistically) an edition of his own "Collected Writings." As its three juvenilia ("Erstlinge"), the list proposes *The Birth of Tragedy*, *Untimely Meditations*, and last but not least his inaugural lecture ("Rede über Homer"). The table of contents then continues down to his most recent publication, *Zarathustra* (KSA 11, 41[1], 669). The prominence of the short, controversial *Antrittsrede* on Homer from long ago in 1869 among all of these heavyweights is striking, to say the least.

So far, we have seen how Homer can, for Nietzsche, represent different and sometimes conflicting aspects of the transmission and even of the very conception of classical antiquity. But there is more to Homer than Homer for Nietzsche, as was also the case for the tradition into which he was aggressively inserting himself as a scholar. Homer has always been compelling not only for what he is but also for what came before him. This is his abyssal attraction. It has, for instance, always recognized (for the most part reluctantly, when it was not being disavowed), that Homer opens a window onto a whole world of violence and vengeance and onto what Nietzsche calls the "abysses [*die Abgründe*] of hatred." (Achilles' maltreatment of the corpse of Hector is just one instance; the Iliadic War as a whole is another.) Commenting on this attraction, Nietzsche asks in his essay "Homer's Contest," "Why did the entire Greek world exult in the battle-images of the *Iliad*?" (KSA 1, 784). The question, which is meant to embarrass, implies another, this time about classicism's *own* de-

votion to the *Iliad*, and its attraction to violence. In the same essay Nietzsche identifies as the fascinating core of Homer a pre-Homeric dimension (*das Vorhomerische*) that lies "*behind* the Homeric world" (KSA 1, 784). The notion of the "pre-Homeric," which appears in Nietzsche's writings between 1872 and 1875 and thereafter is dropped, is ambivalently logical and temporal in meaning, just as the notion of a world "behind" stands for both a grounding moment and a moment that ungrounds what it underlies (nor is the pre-Homeric restricted to preclassical Greece).[29] But as always in Nietzsche, the target is not just a reality of the past, but also its construction in the present: to ask what is pre-Homeric about Homer is to ask about the repressed fascinations of classicism itself. And at the limit, it is to ask about the very incoherence of classicism.

Nietzsche's point about the violence in and behind the *Iliad* is perfectly well taken. From even before Homer and well into Roman literature, the Trojan War was, as already mentioned, a myth of destruction that marked the end of the Golden Age and the painful separation of mankind from the divine. In some accounts, the Trojan War was provoked by Zeus in order to wipe out the human race, though he failed to do so—a story that Nietzsche knew well, but also knew how to comment on in a brief but fantastically conceived fable from 1874 that is worthy of Kafka, and that reads: "When Zeus created Achilles, Helen, and Homer, he was shortsighted and he failed to understand the human race. *The actual result was not the annihilation of mankind, but the birth of Greek culture*" (KSA 7, 38[7], 837; italics added). Once again, a traumatic act of violence is felt to ground a classical phenomenon.

In confronting the darker elements of the Homeric background, Nietzsche was not so much standing athwart his age as he was merely highlighting a recent trend that would have flourished even in his absence. Modern interpreters of Homer seem to have been increasingly drawn into Homer's past and its opacities. The most obvious instance comes in the study of Greek mythology and religion. From Grote and Gladstone to the Cambridge Ritualists and Gilbert Murray, the world of Homer threw long, dark shadows on a violent prehistory that was felt to have been more or less purged from the poems but legible in them. It would take the horrors of two world wars for the darker implications of these *fin de siècle* readings of Homer to be realized more immediately in the poems themselves, above all in the disenchanted readings produced by Simone Weil (1940-1941) and by Horkheimer and Adorno (1947).[30] The Vietnam experience led to a further reinterpretation.[31]

The various opacities and repugnancies that Homer represented for modernity could be figured in different ways. One of the more striking examples of this is the increasing attention that was paid to the obscurity of Homer's meanings at the level of his individual words, often in formulaic expressions (such as "swift-footed Achilles"): the most elusive of these were felt to be fossilized relics of a deeper, pre-Homeric past that no classical Greek, and possibly not even Homer, could understand. In the Victorian era, the awareness that Homer was in places literally unreadable took the form of archaicizing translations that mimicked in their unintelligibility that of Homer. A later residue of this same phenomenon is found some sixty years later in Milman Parry's view of the Homeric fixed epithet's essential lack of meaning; it is also the crux of the more recent debate between Bernard Williams and Bruno Snell.[32] At issue in all of these developments is the question of how we can communicate with the past. And standing behind this is the question whether Homer's Greeks are in any way like ourselves. Pressed to the extreme, these issues raise the problem of Homer's intelligibility today: can we even *understand* the Homeric mind? At stake is nothing less than our own self-definition.

These worries were always part of the Homeric tradition. But they took a peculiar form in Nietzsche's day. Nor was Nietzsche alone. Well before he went about brandishing his notion of the pre-Homeric and practicing a kind of conceptual terrorism with it, a shift in research interests in classics was slowly taking place, from the classical period to the earlier archaic age (at least in literature and philosophy), while the idea of prehistory—an archaeology of mankind—was generally coming into vogue (witness Daniel Wilson's *Prehistoric Annals* from 1851 and John Lubbock's *Prehistoric Times* from 1865).[33] And then there is Schliemann, who for better or worse put both archaeology and prehistory on the map in classics with his campaigns in Greece and in Asia Minor. The fates of Schliemann and Nietzsche are linked—despite Nietzsche's well-known absolute indifference to material culture in antiquity and to archaeology in particular. Let us, finally, consider these two personalities and their projects briefly.

In 1872, at exactly the time when Nietzsche published *The Birth of Tragedy*, Schliemann was making his spectacular discoveries in Troy. Everyone knows about the grievous accusations that surround Schliemann, but let us not be afraid to name the source of the problem: in trying to locate the historical Homer, in stooping to the level of material reality, in digging into the earth and laying down trenches in what he used to call the "*Urboden*," and in turning up dazzling but strange and

unidentifiable objects—let alone in opening up to view the world of money and material possessions and dispossessions—Schliemann was something like a classicist's worst nightmare.[34] The mere attempt to historicize timeless Homer could *only* have met with resistance and horror. It was a traumatic move, every bit as much as Nietzsche's insistence on the search for a darker "pre-Homeric background" to classical Greece was. Both projects—Schliemann's and Nietzsche's—were radically disorienting to going chronologies and value schemes, but no more so than the project of classicism itself, laden as it was with similar but unaccounted for incoherencies of all kinds. (Recall the awkwardness with which classicism dealt with Homer's pristine position: was he primitive or perfect?) Paradoxically, neither Nietzsche nor Schliemann was in fact trying to deny the classical ideal. On the contrary, they were obeying it religiously, and in a sense they were *overidentifying* with it (strategically in one case, unwittingly in the other)—and this, more than anything else, was their undoing. While they were exposing the harsher realities and contingencies of (or behind) classical Greece, both Schliemann and Nietzsche were excavating, so to speak, the unconscious and semiconscious layers of classicism. And for that they had to pay a heavy price.

We can go further and say that Schliemann was an event—a disaster—waiting to happen. To grasp this, one has to recognize how Schliemann occupied (and perhaps still occupies) a certain representative place in a larger symbolic economy in the modern world. We might say that he represented something like a stain or blot on the idealized image of ancient Greece and of modernity that the nineteenth century had produced for itself: he obscured the way Europe would have liked to see itself at the time, namely as the rightful successor to Greece and as the sole executor of its legacy. But if this is so, then it also is true that Schliemann could represent this tarnishing of a purer image, could be *recognized* as a stain, only if that stain was already in place long before Schliemann appeared on the scene. And it was. He merely occupied a preexisting place in a fantasy that Europe had long had about its own identity. That Schliemann boldly stepped into the breach is a sign of incontestable courage and daring. But he deserves none of the credit for having created the breach: that breach was already a constituent element in the fantasy of Europe. Nietzsche knew how to occupy this same breach in his own inimitable ways, not least of all by embracing and if need be embodying the multiple dilemmas of the Western classical imagination, as, for example, in the distinct uses he made of Homer, who was in any event a highly problematic category for Nietzsche, as we have seen. In acting as he did, Nietzsche was not setting out to revalue the values of

the classical tradition. He was merely content to let them run their course, and in this way betray themselves.

## Notes

[1] We might as well ask, with Murray, "Now why is it that the *Iliad* is a good poem when it has so many of the characteristics of a bad one?" (Gilbert Murray, *The Rise of the Greek Epic* (New York: Oxford UP, 1960), 242).

[2] This last point is well made by Walter Burkert in "The Making of Homer in the Sixth Century BC: Rhapsodes Versus Stesichorus," *Papers on the Amasis Painter and his World: Colloquium sponsored by the Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities and Symposium sponsored by the J. Paul Getty Museum* (Malibu, CA: J. Paul Getty Museum, 1987), 43-62 (43).

[3] See the catalogue volume by Joachim Latacz, *Troia—Traum und Wirklichkeit* [*Begleitband zur Ausstellung "Troia - Traum und Wirklichkeit," 17. März bis 17. Juni 2001, Stuttgart, Forum der Landesbank, Archäologisches Landesmuseum Baden-Württemberg*] (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2001); and see, too, the archived web-site: http://www.troia.de/.

[4] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Homer und die klassische Philologie" (1869) (KGW 2.1, 247-69 [257]).

[5] Giambattista Vico, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico: Translated from the third edition, 1744*, ed. and trans. Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1948), §873 (289).

[6] "But this does not make Homer any the less the father and prince of all sublime poets" (Vico, §823 [281]). Similarly, Vico writes that "though [the Trojan War] marks a famous epoch in history it never in the world took place" (§873 [289]).

[7] See Hitchcock as quoted in François Truffaut, *Hitchcock* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967), 98-100.

[8] Thomas de Quincey, *The Works of Thomas de Quincey*, vols 8-14, ed. Grevel Lindop (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2001), vol. 13, 18.

[9] Sigmund Freud, "A Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis" [1936], in *Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*, 24 vols (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-1974), vol. 22, 239-48.

[10] J. P. Mahaffy, *Rambles and Studies in Greece*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1900), 89.

[11] See Wilhelm von Humboldt, *Werke in fünf Bänden*, ed. Andreas Flitner and Klaus Giel (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1960-1981), vol. 2, 22; compare with Jebb's remark: "The Homeric Greek exhibits all the essential characteristics and aptitudes which distinguish his descendant in the historical age" (Richard Claverhouse Jebb, *Homer: An Introduction to the* Iliad *and the* Odyssey [1887], 6th ed.(Boston: Ginn, 1902), 38).

[12] See James I. Porter, *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2000), chapter 5 (225-88).

[13] For further discussion, see James I. Porter, *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future*; and *The Invention of Dionysus: An Essay on* The Birth of Tragedy (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2000).

[14] Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Zukunftsphilologie! Eine Erwidrung auf Friedrich Nietzsches "Geburt der Tragödie"* (Berlin: Gebrüder Borntraeger, 1872); reprinted in Karlfried Gründer (ed.), *Der Streit um Nietzsches "Geburt der Tragödie"* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1989, 27-55; translated by Gertrude Postl with notes by Babette E. Babich, "Future Philology," *New Nietzsche Studies* 4 (2000), 1-32.

[15] J. P. Mahaffy, "The Site and Antiquity of the Hellenic Ilion," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 3 (1882): 69-80 (78); cf. Richard Claverhouse Jebb, "Homeric and Hellenic Ilium," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 2 (1881), 7-43 (34).

[16] See the introduction to Friedrich August Wolf, *Prolegomena to Homer: 1795*, trans. Anthony Grafton, Glenn W. Most, and James E. G. Zetzel (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1985). For further discussion, see Anthony Grafton, "*Prolegomena* to Friedrich August Wolf," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 44 (1981): 101-29.

[17] F. A. Wolf, *Prolegomena*, 209.

[18] See Andrew Lang, "Homer and Recent Critics," *Fortnightly Review* 17 (January - June 1875): 575-90, where he addresses the historicizing and analytical streams of Homeric criticism (and singles out F. A. Paley of Cambridge: "For more than a century the Muse of Homer has been putting certain questions to each generation of her lovers—questions which seem to grow harder and more complicated as our knowledge and our materials for an answer increase. We can no longer see the heroic age as the writers of the literary period in Greece beheld it—a golden distance in the history of their race, a beautiful mysterious background of law and religion. Far more remote in point of time, we yet discern the Homeric epoch more closely and minutely" [575]).

[19] See A. H. Sayce, "The Age of Homer," *Journal of Philology* 12 (1883): 36-42, who sees in Homer "a mocking laugh which holds up to scorn all that had once claimed the deepest reverence of the Greek people" (37-38).

[20] Samuel Butler, "The Humour of Homer" (1892), in *The Shrewsbury Edition of the Works of Samuel Butler*, ed. Henry Festing Jones and A. T. Bartholomew, 20 vols (London: Jonathan Cape; New York: E. P. Dutton, 1923-1926), vol. 19, 239-71. Butler's colloquial prose translations of Homer (1898 and 1900) are part of the same process.

[21] BAW 4, 30.

[22] See BAW 4, 178-79; BAW 5, 193-202, 213-17, 221-31, 279.

[23] See the passages cited in the previous note. For a more detailed analysis of Nietzsche's lecture, see Porter, *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future*, 62-81.

[24] Nietzsche's term "genealogy," not coincidentally, derives from the early Greek genre of biographical inquiry dating from the sixth century onwards, of which Homer's variously reported *Lives* represent one of the more prominent instances, the best known of these being the Alcidamantine *Contest of Homer and Hesiod* (*Certamen Homeri et Hesiodi*), which Nietzsche innovatively wrote on and also edited, and to which the essay "Homer's Contest" (1872) is a provocative pendant. See "Der

Florentinische Tractat über Homer und Hesiod, ihr Geschlecht und ihren Wettkampf" (1870 and 1873) (KGW 2.1, 271-337; *Certamen quod dicitur Homeri et Hesiodi*, etc. (1871) (KGW 2.1, 339-64); and Ernst Vogt, "Nietzsche und der Wettkampf Homers," *Antike und Abendland* 11 (1962): 103-14.

[25] BAW 4, 30.

[26] See BAW 5, 224; KSA 13, 14[123], 304; KSA 12, 7[16], 301; and GS §109.

[27] BAW 5, 225.

[28] KSA 11, 25[293], 86; cf. KSA 11, 34[20], 427.

[29] Its last appearance is at KSA 8, 5[155], 83. On the recrudescence of the pre-Homeric in post-Homeric Greece and its larger symbolic meaning, see Porter, *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future*, 246-47.

[30] See Simone Weil, "L'*Iliade*, ou le poème de la force," in *La source grecque* (Paris: Gallimard, 1953), 11-42; Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Continuum, 1972).

[31] Jonathan Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* (New York/Toronto: Atheneum/Maxwell Macmillan, 1994).

[32] Milman Parry, *The Making of Homeric Verse: The Collected Papers of Milman Parry*, ed. Adam Parry (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1971); Bruno Snell, *Die Entdeckung des Geistes: Studien zur Entstehung des europäischen Denkens bei den Griechen* [1946], trans. *The Discovery of the Mind: The Greek Origins of European Thought* (New York: Dover, 1960); and Bernard Williams, *Shame and Necessity* [Sather Classical Lectures, 57] (Berkeley, CA: U of California P, 1993).

[33] See Michael Wood, *In Search of the Trojan War*, revised ed. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 1998), 51.

[34] A good index of this is Wilamowitz's reaction to Schliemann's findings, in his *Homerische Untersuchungen* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1884), where the prospect of a prehistoric ("pre-Doric") Greece, and, what is worse, one situated in barbarous, "Semitic" Asia and not on the mainland, is felt to open a view onto a "chaos" that is nothing short of "horrifying." This "negation" of the familiar, while real, finally has to be rejected as "having nothing or almost nothing in common with the Greece that our epic depicts" in its poetic imagination and that lives on in the still valid fantasy of classicism (415-16).

# "Unhistorical Greeks": Myth, History, and the Uses of Antiquity

*Neville Morley*

WERE THE GREEKS "unhistorical"? It depends, of course, on how that term is understood, but the writings of nineteenth-century historians—and not only, or even especially, ancient historians—suggest that they would have found the question absurd. In their eyes, the Greeks were not only "historically minded," but the inventors of the modern idea of history as a critical account of and reflection upon past events. There was some dispute about the precise dating of this invention.[1] Friedrich Creuzer, in his 1803 account of *The Historical Art of the Greeks*,[2] traced the origins of Greek historical thought back into the archaic period, to the epic poetry of Homer and his successors. Most writers, however, followed Friedrich W. J. Schelling in identifying Herodotus and Thucydides as the originators of the historiographical tradition. Both ancient authors emphasized the critical aspect of their enquiries, their attempts at distinguishing "myth" from real events; Thucydides, indeed, offered not only a model for historiography, but a manifesto, a prototype for historians' claims to authority in the face of competing accounts of the past.[3] His ringing declaration that methodology guarantees truth, even or perhaps especially when presented in a less rhetorically polished and pleasing form, has been quoted by historians ever since; it did not take much imagination for Leopold von Ranke and his followers to claim Thucydides as their forebear, the first "scientific historian." Jacob Burckhardt argued instead that historians like Thucydides were more enlightened than the Rankeans, but shared their assumption that true civilization begins with the consciousness of history.[4]

In the nineteenth century, therefore, there was little doubt that the Greeks were a historically-minded people, both interested in and critical of accounts of their past; how else could they have produced the first true historians? Little doubt, that is, except for that expressed by Friedrich Nietzsche. At several points in his early writings—in the second *Untimely Meditation*, "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life" (1874), and in the unpublished essay "We Philologists" (1875)—

he explicitly describes the Greeks as "unhistorical" (UM II §4; KSA 8, 5[70], 60). Moreover, this is presented as a positive attribute, another reason for envying the Ancients, as they were free from the "consuming historical fever" that is afflicting the modern world (UM II Foreword). Indeed, this characterization of the Greeks as unhistorical is vital to Nietzsche's pathology of modernity in his essay "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life." Without it, there would be no grounds for questioning modernity's own estimation of its level of cultural development and its historical practices, and no grounds for hoping that the situation could ever be transcended.

On the face of it, this is a serious weakness in Nietzsche's argument: not only does he want to question and combat what he sees as the modern over-valuation of history, but, in order to do so, he appears to rely on a characterization of Greek culture that goes entirely against the conventional interpretation. This seems all the more surprising since Nietzsche cites both Herodotus and Thucydides in his writings, and the history of the Peloponnesian War, especially the set-piece speeches, featured strongly in the nineteenth-century classical curriculum.[5] Most notably, Thucydides is presented in *Twilight of the Idols* as a favorite author and as a counterweight to Plato:

> My recuperation, my predilection, my *cure* from all Platonism was Thucydides every time. Thucydides and, perhaps, Machiavelli's Prince are my close kindred because of their absolute determination to pre-judge nothing and to see reason in *reality*, not in "reason," still less in "morality" [. . .] Nothing cures us more thoroughly of the wretched habit of the Greeks of glossing things over in the Ideal, a habit which the "classically educated" youth carries with him into life as the reward for his gymnasium training, than Thucydides. One must turn him over line by line and read his unspoken thoughts as clearly as his words; there is scarcely another thinker with so many hidden thoughts. In him the Sophist-culture, I mean the realist-culture, comes to its perfect expression; this inestimable movement in the midst of the "morality and idealism" swindle of the Socratic school that was then breaking out everywhere. Greek philosophy as the *décadence* of the Greek instinct; Thucydides as the grand reckoning, the last revelation of that strong, strict, hard realism that lies in the instincts of the older Hellenes. Courage when confronting reality is what in the end makes the difference between such natures as Thucydides and Plato: Plato is a coward in the face of reality, therefore he flees into the Ideal; Thucydides has himself under control, and so he keeps everything else under control. (TI What I Owe to the Ancients §2)

This act of appropriation could bear further analysis.[6] For it suggests that part of the answer to Nietzsche's idiosyncratic characterization of the Greeks as unhistorical is due to his reading of Thucydides, whom he regards, quite correctly according to modern thinking, not as a conventional modern historian concerned with the more or less distant past, but as a commentator on contemporary events. This had of course been noted by, among others, Hegel, in his characterization of "original" (*ursprünglich*) history: "Herodotus, Thucydides and other similar writers of history, who describe the actions, events and situations which they have experienced for themselves."[7] Nietzsche, however, seeks to abandon the label of "historian" altogether, presenting Thucydides as a student of the workings of human society—compare his remark in *Human, All Too Human* that "Thucydides rightly understood, in the Melian dialogue, that justice originates among roughly equal powers" (HA I §92). Moreover, Thucydides had intended his work to be "useful," to make a difference, to enable his readers to understand human nature so as to anticipate future events. It could not be more different from the sterile, passive pursuit of historical knowledge for its own sake that Nietzsche sees in the modern world: "We need [history] for life and for action, not for a comfortable turning-away from life and action" (UM II Foreword). We might conclude that, for Nietzsche, modern historians have misrecognized Thucydides as one of their own kind, and so mistakenly regard the Greeks as "historically minded"; he sees the work as something quite different from modern history, and so irrelevant to the question of whether the Greeks were "unhistorical."

It should also be noted that Nietzsche's particular understanding of the term *unhistorisch* does not in any way imply that the Greeks did not possess history. Historical consciousness is what separates humans from animals, even if it is sometimes experienced as a burden or a curse. Humans should not strive to return to the animal state and escape knowledge of the past, but rather learn to combine the historical and the unhistorical, to forget as well as to remember.

> Thus the animal lives *unhistorically*: for it is wrapped up in the present, like a number without any odd fraction left over; it does not know how to play a part, it conceals nothing and appears at every moment wholly and absolutely as what it is, and so it cannot be anything else but honest. (UM II §1)

> But in the smallest and in the greatest happiness there is always one thing that makes happiness happiness: being able to forget, or, to put it

> in a more scholarly way, the ability to feel unhistorically for its duration. (UM II §1)

The Greeks would not be human, let alone a model of cultural achievement, if they did not possess some consciousness of the past; however, they did not allow this virtue to "hypertrophy" or to dominate their culture—they had what Nietzsche refers to elsewhere as a "purity of historical feeling" (KSA 8, 5[36], 50). Nineteenth-century scholars, however, did not approach the topic in this way. They labeled the Greeks "historical" on the basis of their development of the genre of historiography, considered in isolation; Nietzsche labels them "unhistorical" as a result of considering the place of historiography in its wider social and cultural context.

In his own terms, therefore, Nietzsche is justified in labeling the Greeks unhistorical. However, these terms were not widely shared, either within the academic community or in society at large. The argument rests on an idiosyncratic reading of a key text, and on a particular set of assumptions about the nature of Greek society. It is nowhere elaborated or even stated explicitly; Nietzsche simply refers to the Greeks as "unhistorical," as if the idea was entirely unproblematic. It seems hard to believe that he was unaware of the provocative nature of his departures from the conventional account, and more detailed study of the passages where he uses the phrase suggests that it is deployed deliberately for its rhetorical effect, precisely because it contradicts widely-held views of antiquity.

The first passage to be considered comes from the second *Untimely Meditation*. Here Nietzsche is describing the "chaos" of modern culture and education, brought about by a surfeit of historical knowledge being pursued for its own sake rather than for the sake of "life":

> It is in reality not a true culture [*Bildung*], but only a kind of knowledge about culture; there is in it something of an idea of culture and a feeling for culture, but it produces none of the proper results of culture. [...] One imagines for example a Greek observing such a culture; he would perceive that for modern man "cultivated" and "historically cultivated" appear so closely associated that it is as if they were synonymous, and distinguished only by the form of the words. He would then state his proposition: it is possible for someone to be very cultivated and yet not historically cultivated—and men of today would think that they had not heard him correctly, and would shake their heads. That well-known little people of a not too distant past, I mean precisely the Greeks, in the period of their greatest strength tenaciously preserved their unhistorical sense. If a modern man was sent back into that world through enchantment, he would presumably find the Greeks very

> "uncultured"—by which of course the secret of modern culture, so carefully concealed, would be exposed to public ridicule: for we moderns have nothing at all of our own; only by filling and over-filling ourselves with someone else's times, customs, art, philosophies, religion and knowledge do we become anything worthy of notice, namely walking encyclopedias, as presumably an ancient Greek transported into our own time would regard us. (UM II §4)

For all that Nietzsche elsewhere in his writings denounces the unwarranted over-valuing of classical antiquity, he has no compunction about drawing upon such popular prejudices for rhetorical effect.[8] Greek culture was widely regarded as a pinnacle of human achievement, perhaps—an issue which had caused considerable anguish to such writers as Schiller, Herder, and Marx—a pinnacle impossible to recreate or surpass; the Greeks were held up as a model of human development and wholeness.[9] Nietzsche here takes this superiority as a given, and seeks to highlight the differences between Ancient and Modern such that modern man, because he differs from the Greek, clearly does not and cannot participate in a real culture.

Nietzsche claims that one can "understand one's own age better by means of antiquity" (KSA 8, 3[62], 31). The ancient world offers a means of both escaping and highlighting the assumptions and prejudices of modernity, demonstrating the possibility of alternatives—new ideas and other ways of thinking, other models of society and of human behavior. "For I did not know what point classical philology has in our age, if not to work through its untimeliness—that is, to work against the time and thereby on the time and, one hopes, to the benefit of a time to come" (UM II Foreword). Most obviously, however, he draws on philology as a means of criticizing complacent modernity through contrast with the antiquity that it idealizes and claims to emulate. Numerous examples could be cited; for example, there is the contrast, in *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, between the role of the philosopher in ancient society and his role in the modern one:

> There is a steely necessity which shackles the philosopher to a genuine culture—but what if such a culture does not exist? Then the philosopher is an unpredictable and hence terror-inspiring comet, whereas in the former case he shines as the chief star in the solar system of culture. Therefore the Greeks justify the philosopher, because only among them is he not a comet. (§1; KSA 1, 809)

Nietzsche, on the other hand, clearly is such a comet. Alternatively there is his redoubling of Homer in the section "Of the Land of Culture" in

*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: in the *Odyssey*, Achilles would rather be a day-laborer than a hero in the underworld (Book 11, 489-91), but Zarathustra would rather be a day-laborer in the underworld than live among the men of the present (Z II 14). Marx takes a similar approach in his critique of modernity; he, too, draws on antiquity as a means of developing a view of modernity from the outside, as seen in some of his readings of Aristotle, but above all he exploits bourgeois society's respect for all things classical, to undermine its sense of superiority.[10] "The Roman slave was held by chains; the wage-laborer is bound to his owner by invisible threads": modernity's complacent valuation of antiquity as great but morally flawed is turned on its head, so that we are seen to be still more flawed but less honest about it (compare Nietzsche on the modern "conceptual hallucination" of the "dignity of labor").[11]

To return to the passage above, the idea that the Greeks were uniquely unalienated from nature, from one another, and from their culture and society, was a convention, even a cliché, of classicism. Nietzsche's only innovation here is to ascribe this to their "unhistorical sense." This seems almost to invite the conventional historian's response that this is not an accurate account, that it goes against all the evidence. Such a response, by missing Nietzsche's point, precisely makes it: we moderns have historical knowledge without any sense of how to integrate it into our lives, any sense of what antiquity ought to mean to us.

The next passage I want to consider is from the unpublished essay "We Philologists":

> Greeks the geniuses amongst the peoples. Child-nature. Credulous. Passionate. Unconsciously they live for the creation of genius. Enemies of diffidence and gloominess. Pain. Unselfconscious behaviour. Their kind of intuitive insight into misery, despite their golden and brilliantly happy temperament. Profundity in their grasping and glorifying of things close at hand (fire, agriculture). Untruthful. Unhistorical. (KSA 8, 5[70], 60)

We might add to this passage the similar one in which Nietzsche remarks upon the Ancients' "purity of historical sense," referring surely to their ability to balance the historical and unhistorical and, where necessary, to forget:

> Selected points from antiquity: for example the power, fire and momentum in the ancient feeling for music (through the first Pythian Ode), the purity in their historical feeling, their gratitude for the blessing of culture, fire feasts, grain feasts. The refining of jealousy, the

> Greeks the most jealous people. Suicide, hatred of old age e.g. of penury. Empedocles on sexual love. (KSA 8, 5[36], 50)

As James Porter has argued, the disparity and incoherence of such lists of allegedly Greek characteristics—and, indeed, their humor—reflect their ultimate source: not antiquity, although some textual support might be found for all of them, but the conceits of scholars. "Models of historical projection, Nietzsche's Greeks betray the blemishes of their own construction": inconsistency, and even implausibility, is precisely the point.[12] Nietzsche does not seek to offer an alternative view of antiquity; rather, he seeks to expose the bad faith of all attempts at describing the ancient world that try to conceal their absolute dependence on modern conceptions and their hidden motives. Again, perhaps in these passages he is inviting the scholar's knee-jerk objections to reinforce his point: would it actually be any more or less misleading to describe the Greeks in precisely opposite terms, for example, as mature, dispassionate, truth-loving, and historical? The fact that ancient evidence could be adduced to support entirely contradictory positions exposes the fact that, in either case, the scholar generalizes from a particular reading of selected texts and chooses to highlight particular characteristics for his or her own purposes, from his or her own preoccupations and concerns. Why does it *matter* whether or not the Greeks are described as "historically minded," or Thucydides hailed as the founder of history?

One of the major concerns of Nietzsche's second *Untimely Meditation* is the question of the importance of the past, and stories about the past, for the present. Like Marx in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Nietzsche presents the past as a problem: as an impediment to change, a disincentive to action, a source of ennui and despair. The language of both writers is remarkably similar: they talk of the past in terms of nightmares, burdens, ghosts, the dead, the grave. They share an interest in the way that "historical actors" adopt the masks and slogans of the past as a spur towards action in the present, and a concern that this may, in the end, prove counterproductive, as the following illustrative extracts show:

> The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living.[13]

> Man, however, braces himself against the great and every greater weight of the past: this presses him down or bends him sideways, this burdens his step as a dark and invisible load. (UM II §1)

> The social revolution of the nineteenth century cannot draw its poetry from the past, but only from the future. It cannot begin with itself before it has stripped off all superstition in regard to the past. Earlier revolutions required recollections of past world history in order to drug themselves concerning their own content. In order to arrive at its own content, the revolution of the nineteenth century must let the dead bury their dead.[14]

> [. . .] the border at which the past must be left behind if it is not to become the gravedigger of the present [. . .] (UM II §1)

> They anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle-cries and costumes. [. . .] In the classically austere traditions of the Roman Republic, its gladiators [i.e., the French revolutionaries] found the ideals and the art forms, the self-deceptions that they needed in order to conceal from themselves the bourgeois limitations of the content of their struggles and to maintain their passion on the high plane of great historical tragedy.[15]

> He who no longer dares to trust himself but instinctively, instead of feeling, asks history for advice on how he should feel, gradually through timorousness becomes an actor and plays a role, and more often than not many roles, and so plays each poorly and shallowly. Gradually all congruence between the man and his historical domain is lost; we see impertinent little fellows going about with the Romans as if they were people of the same sort; and they burrow and dig in the remains of the Greek poets, just as if these *corpora* lay ready for their dissection and were as *vilia* as their own literary *corpora* must be. (UM II §5)

In many other respects, however, the interests and ideas of Marx and Nietzsche quickly diverge. Although Marx's analysis in the *Eighteenth Brumaire* does consider aspects of what one might term the psychology of history—the way in which it fulfills the needs and desires of those who turn to it—his main concern, here and elsewhere, is with ideology, the way that history is used to legitimize present institutions and customs and to present them as universal. He aims, above all, to establish the fundamental difference between ancient and modern societies, rejecting the attempts of political economists and historians to describe antiquity in the language of modern economics.[16] References to "ancient capitalism" are shown to be ideological statements, occluding differences and

presenting capitalism as a universal and eternal law of human nature. The pre-capitalist nature of antiquity—which Marx believes he has established by describing the past in accurate, non-ideological terms—shows that capitalism has not always existed, and raises the possibility that it will not always exist.

Nietzsche, on the other hand, though he certainly has an interest in the ideological function of historical narratives, is far more interested in the psychological aspects of historiography; indeed, he is one of very few writers to have considered this subject. All three of his types of history—the monumental, the antiquarian, and the critical—serve to meet different emotional and spiritual needs, and are described in terms of those needs. Although the main thrust of his essay is to contrast these "limited" approaches to the past, where history serves life, with the unbridled historical activity of the modern world, it is clear that the latter is equally determined by emotional drives concealed behind its ostensible concern with knowledge for its own sake. Historiography, like science and the modern faith in reason, functions as myth; it reassures us about our honored place in history as the heirs of the Greeks, and confirms that existence is meaningful. Part of Nietzsche's project is to expose such self-serving stories, whether the small illusion that historians are the faithful followers of Thucydides (and hence that their activity is legitimized by classical precedent) or the great illusion that History has direction or meaning. In "We Philologists" he writes:

> To know history now means: to recognize how all men have taken things too lightly who believe in a paradise. There is none. If human affairs proceed in an unruly and disordered way, do not think that a god intends this or that he is permitting it. (KSA 8, 5[16], 44)
>
> All history is up until now written from the standpoint of success and indeed with the assumption of a reason in that success. Also Greek history: we have as yet none. [...] Whoever does not understand how brutal and senseless history is will never understand the drive to make history intelligible. (KSA 8, 5[58], 56)

We project meaning onto history, we discern a direction in the course of events and hence interpret them as meaningful: "Greek history has always until now been written optimistically" (KSA 8, 5[12], 43). We cling to the illusion that this is true knowledge, that we are now free from myths, but this is bad faith: we deny the reality of the past as a meaningless parade of suffering by offering a spurious justification for it as the working-out of God's will or the triumph of reason in history or

the inevitable dialectics of class struggle.[17] Nietzsche criticizes all history, even those forms that do work in the interests of life, for detracting from and disguising the true nature of the past.

At the same time, however, he recognizes the necessity of these illusions, the fact that it is difficult to face reality without some kind of myth. The danger of the unrestrained historical sense is precisely that it destroys illusions and takes away the "atmosphere" that makes existence possible (UM II §7). We need myths, as *The Birth of Tragedy* argues (BT §23); but we must not accept them blindly and unquestioningly. At the end of his second *Untimely Meditation*, Nietzsche calls for modern youth to be educated in a necessary truth (in contrast to Plato's necessary lie in the foundation of his *Republic*): we have no culture, history is a sickness, we are being overwhelmed by the past. This generation must swallow the antidote of the historical and supra-historical, a painful but necessary cure:

> I turn in conclusion to the company of the hopeful, to recount to them through a parable [*Gleichniss*] the course and end of their healing, of their deliverance from the historical sickness, and with it their own history up to the point in time when they will again be sufficiently healthy to pursue history once more [...]. And how do we come to this goal? you will ask. The God of Delphi, right at the beginning of your journey towards that goal, calls out to you his saying "Know thyself!" It is a hard saying: for that God "conceals not and explains not, but only shows," as Heraclitus has said. What does he show you? There were centuries in which the Greeks found themselves in a danger similar to that in which we find ourselves, of being overwhelmed by the foreign and the past, and of running aground through "history." They never lived in proud isolation; their "education" was rather for a long time a chaos of foreign, Semitic, Babylonian, Lydian and Egyptian forms and concepts and their religion was a battleground of all the gods of the East—just as "German education" and religion is a chaos of every foreign thing and of the whole past, struggling with itself. Nevertheless, Hellenic culture did not become an aggregate, thanks to that Apollonian saying. The Greeks learned gradually to organize the chaos, because in accordance with the Delphic teaching they thought back to themselves, that is to say to their real needs, and they left the false needs to die out. So they again seized possession of themselves; they did not remain for long the overwhelmed heirs and epigones of the whole East; through the practical interpretation of that saying they became, after arduous struggle with themselves, the happiest enrichers and augmenters of the inherited treasure and the first-born and models of all cultured peoples to come. This is a parable for each one of us: he must organize the chaos within him, by thinking back to his real needs. (UM II §10)

This "parable" is reminiscent of Nietzsche's characterization of the "monumental history" that deceives by analogies and seductive similarities (UM II §2). It rests on what was at the time a radical view, and certainly a minority view, of Greek culture as having been heavily influenced by foreign elements, rather than being the product of autochthonous genius.[18] Even more awkwardly, he diagnoses the Greeks as suffering from a surfeit of history at a time when most contemporary scholars, Creuzer excepted, would have labeled them a "pre-historical" culture.

As history, this is implausible; but the account is offered explicitly as a parable, a new myth. If, as Nietzsche argues, we can never gain a true knowledge of the past, if our stories about it are always determined by our present concerns, then the main criterion for judging between different versions must be their "usefulness." One can idealize the Greeks as the first historians, a myth that serves to legitimize us and our activity as their heirs and as the culmination of what they began. It is no less misleading—since it is labeled as a parable, not as history—to idealize the Greeks as the exemplary unhistorical men, whose example stirs up dissatisfaction with the present and offers hope that the present state of affairs is not inevitable or inescapable. As in Marx's insistence on the differences between Ancient and Modern, classical antiquity is deployed both to disrupt and to reassure; it is reclaimed from those who stand accused of using it to reinforce the status quo and to defend their own interests, and used instead to inspire hope for the future. The difference is that Marx insists on the reality of his version of antiquity, whereas Nietzsche makes no such claim for his Greeks, and even goes out of his way to highlight their fictional status. The question remains: if a myth is known to be a myth, can it still work? "The images of myth must be the unnoticed, ubiquitous, demonic guards, under whose protection the young soul grows up, by whose signs the man interprets his life and struggles" (BT §23). Is the idea of the Greeks sufficiently powerful that it can be simultaneously turned upside-down and exposed as a fantasy, and still serve this purpose?

# Notes

[1] On the nineteenth-century reception of Greek historiography, see Arnaldo Momigliano, "Friedrich Creuzer and Greek historiography," in *Studies in Historiography* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966), 75-90, reprinted in *Studies in Modern Scholarship* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: U of California P, 1994), 1-14; Arnaldo Momigliano, "The Herodotean and the Thucydidean tradition," in *The Classical Foundations of Modern Historiography* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: U of California P, 1990), 48-53.

[2] Georg Friedrich Creuzer, *Die historische Kunst der Griechen in ihrer Entstehung und Fortbildung* (Leipzig: C. J. Göschen, 1803).

[3] Thucydides 1.21-22; on their historiographical methods, see Paul Cartledge, *The Greeks: A Portrait of Self and Others* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993), 18-35 and bibliography.

[4] In lectures delivered mainly between 1865 and 1871 and published posthumously: *Reflections on History*, trans. Marie Donald Mackie Hottinger (London: Allen and Unwin, 1943) and *Judgements on History and Historians*, trans. Harry Zohn (London: Allen and Unwin, 1959).

[5] See "We Philologists" (KSA 8, 5[6], 42); HA I §92, §261, §474; HA II Assorted Opinions and Maxims §223; GM I §11.

[6] Modern scholars have considered the relation of Thucydides to the Sophists and to Socrates and Plato, but not in these terms and, to the best of my knowledge, without reference to Nietzsche. See, for example, Simon Hornblower, *Thucydides* (London: Duckworth, 1987), 120-26.

[7] G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte* [*Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, vol. 12] (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), "Introduction" (11).

[8] For further discussion, see James I. Porter, *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2000), especially 1-31.

[9] See Reimar Müller, "Hegel und Marx über die antike Kultur," *Philologus* 118 (1972): 1-31.

[10] See George E. McCarthy, *Marx and the Ancients: Classical Ethics, Social Justice and Nineteenth-Century Political Economy* (Savage, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1990); and George E. McCarthy (ed.), *Marx and Aristotle: Classical Antiquity and Nineteenth-Century German Social Theory* (Savage, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1992). See also the extensive bibliography compiled by McCarthy in Neville Morley (ed.), *Helios* 26.2 (1999) [Marx and Antiquity]: 165-73.

[11] Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy: Vol 1* [1867], trans. Ben Fowkes (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), 719; and Nietzsche, "Der griechische Staat" [1871] (KSA 1, 764-65 and 767).

[12] Porter, *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future*, 248.

[13] Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Selected Works in One Volume* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1968), 93.

[14] Marx, *Eighteenth Brumaire*, 95.

[15] Marx, *Eighteenth Brumaire*, 93-94.

[16] Neville Morley, "Marx and the failure of antiquity," in Morley (ed.), *Marx and Antiquity*, 151-64.

[17] See Henry Staten, *Nietzsche's Voice* (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1990), 77-85.

[18] See Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilisation*, vol. 1, *The Fabrication of Ancient Greece, 1785-1985* (London: Free Association Books, 1987).

# Breeding Greeks: Nietzsche, Gobineau, and Classical Theories of Race

*Nicholas Martin*

IN A SECTION of *Daybreak* (1881), entitled "Purification of Race," Nietzsche writes:

> —There are probably no pure races, only races that have become pure, and these are very rare. The norm is crossed races [...]. Crossed races are also always crossed cultures, crossed moralities: they are in the main nastier, crueller and more agitated. Purity is the final result of countless adaptations, suckings-in and excretions, and the progress towards purity shows itself in the way the strength present in a race increasingly *limits* itself to certain selected functions [...]. The Greeks provide us with the model of a race and culture that has become pure: and hopefully one day a pure European race and culture will come about. (D §272)[1]

In view of later bastardizations of Nietzsche's thought, the most damaging of which were carried out by National Socialists, it is important to establish where his theory of cultural development, insofar as it relies on a racial theory, stands in relation to racial or racialist theories in late nineteenth-century Europe.[2] The most influential of these was Gobineau's. Joseph Arthur, Comte de Gobineau, who has been dubbed the "Father of Racism," lived from 1816 to 1882 and was therefore an almost exact contemporary of Richard Wagner. In their later years the two men became acquainted and to some extent allied, despite their differences over Wagner's *Parsifal*, though it was primarily after their deaths, and principally through the Bayreuth circle of Wagner's hard-line successors and disciples that Gobineau's theory of race and racial degeneration became more widely known.[3]

Gobineau wrote the bulk of his works between 1849 and 1872, while serving as a diplomat. His best-known, or most notorious, work, the four-volume *Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races* (*Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*), appeared between 1853 and 1855, while Gobineau was evidently an under-employed First Secretary at the French Legation in Berne. In the 1983 Pléiade edition of Gobineau's complete works, the *Essai* fills over one thousand densely printed pages.[4] It was

largely ignored in France but found a receptive audience in Germany, though not until the mid-1870s. While not swallowing Gobineau's thesis whole, Wagner was among those favorably impressed. Gobineau's ideas were heavily modified by the Bayreuth circle and other biological racists, and in this form they eventually found their way into National Socialist theories of so-called "racial hygiene" (*Rassenhygiene*).

The main ideas of Gobineau's *Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races* can be summarized in one sentence: the unsubstantiated notion is advanced that races are physically, intellectually, and spiritually distinct; the Germanic, or Aryan, race is declared supreme—it is "called upon" to dominate other races, Gobineau asserts[5]—and racial interbreeding is diagnosed as the root cause of the terminal cultural decline gripping nineteenth-century Europe.[6] The entry in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* neatly summarizes the received view of Gobineau and his influence. Its account of Gobineau's own views is accurate enough, yet it perpetuates some improbable assumptions about how ideas are transmitted, though in the case of the demonic figure of Wagner anything is possible, it seems:

> Of his abundant literary efforts, only his *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines* (1853-55) is now remembered. In this essay Gobineau simplified to the extreme current opinions on the "racial factor" in history and the hierarchy of races, white, yellow, and black. According to him, only the white or "Aryan" race, the creator of civilization, possessed the supreme human virtues: honor, love of freedom, etc., qualities which could be perpetuated only if the race remained pure. Though he held the Jews in no particular aversion, Gobineau believed that the Latin and Semitic peoples had degenerated in the course of history through various racial intermixtures. Only the Germans had preserved their "Aryan purity," but the evolution of the modern world condemned them, too, to crossbreeding and degeneracy. Western civilization must be resigned to its fate. The success of the *Essai* was posthumous and, predictably, assured by Gobineau's German admirers. Chief of these was Richard Wagner, who shared his cultural pessimism, and the literary society of Bayreuth, followed by a group of authors and anthropologists who founded the *Gobineau-Vereinigung* [Gobineau Society] in 1894. Gobineau's influence on recent history, and especially on anti-Semitic ideology, was due less to his dilettante philosophy of history than to the construction given it by German and other fanatics.[7]

Bryan Magee presents a more nuanced perspective in his recent discussion of the nature and extent of Wagner's anti-Semitism: "Many writers [...] allege that while working on *Parsifal* Wagner came under the influence of the most notorious racial theorist of the nineteenth century, Gobineau, and that this corroborates the [supposedly] racist character of

the opera. But in fact," Magee continues, "Wagner did no more than toy with Gobineau's ideas. As Barry Millington accurately tells us in his biography of Wagner: 'Gobineau became a regular and favoured visitor at Wahnfried [Wagner's mansion in Bayreuth], yet the better acquainted he and Wagner became, the more they realized that their views diverged.'" Magee concludes that "in any case Wagner had put on paper a detailed scenario for *Parsifal* before he knew anything at all about Gobineau."[8]

A number of questions present themselves: was Nietzsche influenced by Gobineau's theory, was he in any way responsible for perpetuating it, or should Nietzsche's name not be mentioned in the same breath as the propagators of biological racism? Was Nietzsche a racist in the sense that we now understand the term? As I hope to demonstrate, he was not, but Nietzsche's theory of cultural development is no less problematic for that. It entails ethical, social, and political consequences as unpalatable as any arguments based on race. One way of explicating Nietzsche's theory of cultural development is to examine his view of Gobineau, such as it was, and to attempt a comparison of their respective views of "race."

There is little agreement, even in recent criticism, concerning the nature and extent of Gobineau's influence on Nietzsche. Claims range from Römer's assertion that Nietzsche's theory of race owes "everything" (*alles*) to Gobineau,[9] through Ottmann's contention that Nietzsche's "racist vocabulary" (*rassistisches Vokabular*) owes something to the Frenchman (as well opening the way to much misunderstanding),[10] down to Schank's recent statement that "Nietzsche and Gobineau are worlds apart" (*Nietzsche und Gobineau sind doch durch Welten getrennt*).[11] Nietzsche appears to have read little, if anything, of Gobineau's work. He certainly did not possess the *Essai* or any other work by Gobineau, and the only references to his possible interest in the Gallic count are in his sister's *Das Leben Friedrich Nietzsches*, references which must be handled with some care.[12] As for Nietzsche's texts, Gobineau is mentioned just twice, once in a letter of December 1865 (KSB 2, 101), requesting the *Essai* for Christmas (because Schopenhauer mentions it), and again, but only in passing, in a letter to Heinrich Köselitz (Peter Gast) of 10 December 1888, praising the latter's article on Nietzsche and Wagner for the journal *Kunstwart*, in which Gobineau and French "noblesse" are cited as correctives to Wagner's "German-ness" (KSB 8, 516).[13]

Leaving the insoluble problem of "influence" to one side, it can be stated unequivocally that Nietzsche does not share either Gobineau's theory of race or his pessimistic conclusions regarding the future development of mankind. Gobineau believes that what he calls the white, yel-

low, and black races have fixed, biological characteristics. Through interbreeding the distinct characteristics of these races have become diluted, with disastrous consequences, he believes, for the "noblest" of the three, the white (Aryan, Germanic) race. Nietzsche's understanding of race is very different. Surprisingly, perhaps, for such an unsystematic thinker, Nietzsche provides his own definition in a *Nachlass* fragment from the spring of 1884:

> Because we are the heirs of generations which have lived under the *most diverse* conditions [*Existenz-Bedingungen*] we contain *in ourselves* a *multiplicity of instincts.* Whoever claims to be "authentic" is most likely an ass or a con man.
>
> The variety of animal characters: on average a *character* is the *consequence of a milieu—a firmly imprinted* ***role***, by virtue of which certain facts [*Facta*] are *emphasized* and *strengthened* over and over again. In the long run, there arises in this way *race:* i.e. provided that the surroundings do not change.
>
> With a change of milieu the *universally* most useful and applicable qualities *come to the fore*—or they die. This shows itself as a power of assimilation, even in unfavourable situations, but at the same time as tension, caution; the form lacks beauty.
>
> The European as such a Super-Race [*Über-Rasse*]. The Jew likewise; it is ultimately a *dominant* type, though very different from the simple, ancient dominant races, which had not changed surroundings. (KSA 11, 25[462], 136)

Unlike Gobineau, Nietzsche understands "race" to be the product primarily of social and environmental, rather than biological factors. Humans are not fixed biological specimens, in Nietzsche's view, but mutable and adaptable types; the mutations or adaptations may be for the worse, but they have the potential to be turned to the good. Here lies the most significant difference between Gobineau and Nietzsche. While Gobineau's *Essai* amounts to an elegy for the "white race" and its nobility, which is dying if not already dead, Nietzsche never tires of stressing the possibility that nobility (*Vornehmheit*), understood as an acquired rather than a biological characteristic, can be bred, educated and mobilized in the service of an—admittedly ill-defined—future. Nietzsche's view of race unconsciously opposes Gobineau's pessimism (the "pessimism of weakness," in Nietzsche's terminology) with his own "pessimism of strength."

Further evidence of Nietzsche's distance from Gobineau lies in his theory of cultural development, where Nietzsche's understanding of race comes into its own. The centrality of ancient Greece in Nietzsche's

outlook is crucial to any discussion of his theory of culture and its position relative to the racial discourse of his time. In his preparatory notes of 1875 to an essay entitled *We Philologists* (*Wir Philologen*), which Nietzsche hoped would become the fifth *Untimely Meditation* (it never appeared), he attacks once again the principal targets of his early cultural criticism: first, the shortcomings of the German education system, principally its production of classically educated epigones rather than classically educated creators; second, his fellow philologists' alleged view of antiquity as a corpus of dead material fit only for dissection; and, finally, the complacency of what passed for German culture in the 1870s, which Nietzsche believed had been bordering on arrogance since the Prussian victory over France in 1871 and the subsequent unification of Germany.[14] More important, these preparatory notes to *We Philologists* (KSA 8, 11-127) also contain a great deal of material on the exemplary nature of Greece. Nietzsche's preoccupation with the Greek cultural achievement began very early in his life and continued until the end. According to Nietzsche, the Greeks are the people touched by genius, they are naïve (in Schiller's sense of possessing childlike spontaneity and creativity), and they are inquisitive and passionate.[15] The conquerors of what would eventually be Greece had preserved their aggressive energy and mysterious mythology. The conquered were, in turn, able to redirect and channel the dark, aggressive energies of their new masters without stemming them altogether. This, Nietzsche asserts, underlies the creativity and cultural glory of pre-Socratic Greece, in other words of sixth-century Greece, not the later and, in Nietzsche's eyes, already decadent "Golden Age."

The importance of antiquity to theories of culture is nothing new, of course, but Nietzsche's conception of ancient Greece was genuinely original and immediately establishes a gulf between him and the majority of German Hellenists before him. Nietzsche accepts that Greeks of the Golden Age were serene (*heiter*). Unlike earlier Hellenists, however, with the important exception of Hölderlin, Nietzsche does not accept this serenity at face value.[16] He does not doubt that the Greek character was serene, but he disputes that this serenity was of untroubled origin. He emphatically rejects the received view that the ancient Greeks were a race of *carefree* Olympians. Their serenity, he claims, was in truth an Apollonian veil drawn over the dark, Dionysian depths of the Greek spirit. It was a hard-fought victory over despair and, in overlooking this storm before the calm, earlier Philhellenes, notably Goethe and Schiller and Winckelmann, had "failed to penetrate to the core of Hellenism and forge a lasting bond of love between German and Greek culture" (BT §20). This

core or essence of the Greek experience, which Nietzsche believed had been distilled in Aeschylean and Sophoclean tragedy, was a stark and desperate pessimism, veiled and made triumphantly bearable by Apollonian illusion.

The Greek achievement, according to Nietzsche, had been to confront and then overcome the dark wisdom of Silenus, as he explains early in *The Birth of Tragedy.* Silenus, Dionysus's companion, is eventually captured by King Midas who asks him what is the best and most desirable thing for man. With a hideous cackle Silenus retorts: "'The best of all things is something entirely beyond your grasp: not to be born, not to *be*, to be *nothing*. But the second-best thing for you—is to die soon'" (BT §3). By means of Apollonian art, Nietzsche asserts, the Greeks had been able to stand this desperate wisdom on its feet and say, "'the worst thing of all would be to die soon, the second-worst to die at all'" (BT §3) This speculative insight—that the Greek character was based on the ordering of chaos—informs Nietzsche's account of Greek cultural development and provides him with a model for the future racial and cultural development of Europe. As he writes in *Human, All Too Human*, "we must desire that life retain its violent character, that wild [Dionysian] power and energy be called forth" (HA I §235); and in an earlier note he comments that "the judgment concerning the worth of existence is the supreme result of the most powerful *tension in chaos*" (KSA 8, 5[188], 93; my emphasis).

This chaos of races and cultures, which was resolved by a more highly developed synthesis, is evident in Nietzsche's picture of early Greek history, where he speculates about events in the ninth and eighth centuries BCE, for which there is hardly any historical evidence. Deliberately challenging the by now clichéd view of the pure-bred, marbled Greeks' "noble simplicity and quiet grandeur,"[17] Nietzsche characterizes the "original inhabitants of Greek soil" as being

> of Mongolian extraction with tree and snake cult. The coast [was] garnished with a Semitic strip. Here and there Thracians. The Greeks took all these components into their blood—including all the gods and myths (in the Odysseus legends, some [are] Mongolian). The Doric migration is a *follow-up*, for everything had already been gradually inundated earlier. What are "pure-bred Greeks"? Is it not enough to assume that Italian peoples, coupled with Thracian and Semitic elements, became *Greeks*? (KSA 8, 5[198], 96)

This racial history of Greece is itself a synthesis, an amalgam of many sources.[18] As his own personal library and the borrowing records of the

Basel University library reveal, Nietzsche was an avid reader of contemporary works in the fields of ethnology, anthropology, and the history of religion.[19] He may well have borrowed some of Gobineau's ideas for his racial history of Greece, though Nietzsche's interpretation of, and extrapolation from, that history differs markedly from the Frenchman's culturally pessimistic outlook. Nietzsche's claim that there were "Mongolian" elements in Greece is consonant with Gobineau's assertion that there were eight racial components in the Greek population, which in turn derived from the three fundamental elements of the human race, namely, the white, the yellow, and the black.[20] Nietzsche's formulation that "the coast [of Greece was] garnished with a Semitic strip" also seems to echo Gobineau's statement in the *Essai* that Semites settled "along the coast of Greece."[21]

According to Nietzsche's hypothesis, the migrants who came to the land that was to become Greece were not "pure-bred Greeks" or fully-fledged Hellenes. Greek ethnic and cultural identity developed in Greece itself through a fortuitous, but also fortunate, mixing of races. This hypothesis rules out any explanation for the Greek achievement along the lines of fixed Indo-Germanic racial characteristics. In other words, Nietzsche explicitly rejects the notion that Greek culture was possible because the Greeks shared Indo-Germanic (that is, nineteenth-century European) bloodlines. This "Indo-Germanic" theory was widespread by the late nineteenth century and lent a spurious racial underpinning to the notion that "the Greeks were like us, only better at it." Nietzsche had no time for this smug and mistaken belief.

So far, so good, from a liberal twenty-first century perspective. Nietzsche's theory of culture—based on his Greek model—becomes somewhat murkier, however, when he turns his attention to the political organization of the Greek state as he construed it. This is most clearly articulated in his brief, unpublished essay "The Greek State" of 1872 (KSA 1, 764-77). Here Nietzsche posits a state, in which that conquering Dionysian energy is allied or married to the form-giving, Apollonian impulse of the conquered. The energy was fundamental, however, not least to keep in check the enormous number of slaves required for the production of great culture. Freed from daily toil, a small number of Greeks (approximately one-fifth of the population) was driven by this same energy to rivalry with one another and to the highest cultural achievements. In this manner, Nietzsche says quite openly, slavery was justified aesthetically, by the cultural products of the slave state.[22] The cultural producers had themselves been bred through a process of

cultivation, and at times in his early writings Nietzsche appears to present this as a viable template for Europe's future development.

The production of genius and, by extension, great culture is Nietzsche's touchstone and in turn provides a yardstick for what he later desired: the *Übermensch* (man conceived as a self-generating and self-renewing work of art), and the "Transvaluation of all Values" (*Umwertung aller Werte*). Peace, general prosperity, socialism, the modern state, democracy, and short-term educational reform do not satisfy Nietzsche's criteria for the production of genius. The reverse is true, he argues, because these leveling conditions tend to deaden the instincts of the exceptional, the culturally productive few. Genius can only arise, Nietzsche suggests, on the back of conditions as harsh and ruthless as those obtaining in nature itself. Yet, however questionable Nietzsche's vision of the Greek state may be, both as history and as a model for a political theory, it is not racist and nor is his study of anthropology, ethnology, and folklore. What needs to be faced now is the charge that Nietzsche makes political use of his anthropological and philological findings in order to propagate destructive caricatures or stereotypes of ethnic groups, with the aim of inciting fear and loathing.

Traditionally, a happy hunting-ground for Nietzsche's critics has been the first essay of his 1887 work *On the Genealogy of Morals* (*Zur Genealogie der Moral*). The most notorious passage in the *Genealogy* is Nietzsche's discussion of the "blond beast" in section 11 of that first essay, and is the one most often cited as "proof" that Nietzsche is an advocate of Aryan supremacy.[23] In fact, the blond beast is a metaphor—it is a lion—and does not refer to the physical characteristics of any particular race. (It is intriguing to contemplate the interpretations that might have resulted, had Nietzsche chosen a black panther as his metaphor instead of a lion.) The historical examples cited by Nietzsche of leonine men include Homeric heroes, Vikings, but also Roman, Arab, Germanic, and Japanese nobles (GM I §11). The offending passage comes a few lines later, though the inconvenient parenthesis is usually omitted:

> The deep and icy mistrust which the German [*der Germane*] arouses as soon as he comes to power, which we see again even today—is still the aftermath of that inextinguishable horror with which Europe viewed the raging of the *blond Germanic beast* for centuries (although between the old Germanic peoples and us Germans there is scarcely an idea in common, let alone a blood relationship). (GM I §11; my emphasis)

The difficulty here is that Nietzsche has driven a coach and horses through his own image by interpolating "Germanic" between "blond" and "beast," turning a metaphorical "Germanic lion" (a noble human being, who happens to be Germanic) into a literal description, or a racial stereotype, of a blond-haired Germanic man who has naturally bestial qualities. Nowhere else does Nietzsche argue for Germanic racial supremacy, so it is perhaps a slip of the pen. Taken out of context, however, it has proved a powerful weapon for both Nietzsche's critics and racially motivated adherents.[24]

In this first essay Nietzsche argues—or rather states—that, before the advent of Judeo-Christian values, humanity was composed of the strong and the weak, as it is now, but that before this watershed the strong naturally dominated the weak. Alluding to the slave revolt led by Spartacus in 73 BCE, Nietzsche asserts that in the Roman period this natural hierarchy was inverted and the weak came to dominate the strong by outwitting them. In the seventh section he calls this "the slave uprising in morality" (*der Sklavenaufstand in der Moral*). Judeo-Christian values are an invention, Nietzsche claims, to justify the dominion of the weak and the meek. The weak now dub themselves "good" and their former masters, the strong, are labeled "evil," whereas before the strong were "the good" and the weak simply "the bad." Nonsense, perhaps, but at least Nietzsche recognizes that the *status quo ante* of "good" and "bad" cannot be restored. Even if it were possible to reverse historical processes, Nietzsche would not desire a return to the age of marauding Huns and Vandals. He admires their brute strength and raw energy but is simultaneously aware, as careful reading of that first essay shows, that these noble conquerors are also barbarians and therefore, by definition, uncultured.

Nietzsche's ambivalent forays into the racial history of both ancient Greece and the Dark Ages were aimed at reshaping what he took to be an endangered present. In the social and political programs of democrats, anarchists, and socialists he detected the leveling, anti-cultural instincts of "slaves," of the "weak," re-emerging in different guises. He links the historical "slave revolt in morality" to Jews but does not construct an anti-Semitic myth from this. On the contrary, in Nietzsche's Greek-inspired model for Europe's future, Jews have a vital role to play. He despised anti-Semites, though it has to be admitted that his contempt was on a sliding scale determined by the relative vulgarity or sophistication of the anti-Semitic remarks in question. For example, Nietzsche became acquainted as early as 1868 with the works of the polymath, self-publicist and anti-Semite Eugen Dühring (he of Friedrich

Engels's *Anti-Dühring* of 1877). At the same time as preparing *We Philologists* in 1875 Nietzsche wrote scathing notes on anti-Semitic passages in Dühring's book *On the Value of Life* (*Der Wert des Lebens*) (1865). Dühring argues that there is a necessary correspondence of race, character, and religion, claims that Christ was not a full-blooded Jew, and conducts arguments over the extent to which Europe has already been "Judaized." In his extensive notes on Dühring's book Nietzsche goes to some lengths to distance himself from such views.[25]

Nietzsche blames Judeo-Christianity for bringing about an unhealthy, "life-denying" inversion of human values. He distances himself from both religions and fashions his own secular, "life-affirming" counter-framework, in which Dionysus, Zarathustra, and the *Übermensch* are the chief emblems. Nietzsche's fundamental quarrel, though, was with Christianity rather than Judaism. There is nothing directed against Jews in his writings to match the ferocity of the work he wrote almost as his epitaph, *The Antichrist*, which is subtitled "A Curse on Christianity" and ends with a piece of Nietzschean "legislation," subtitled "War to the Death against Vice: Vice is Christianity" (KSA 6, 254). Nevertheless, he tends to treat Christianity as an extension of Judaism, or even as its last stage (AC §24-§27). Christian anti-Semitism is therefore doubly repugnant to him. Anti-Jewish remarks in Nietzsche's writings are usually but not always associated with attacks on Christianity. He undoubtedly shared some of the anti-Semitic prejudices of his time, notably the idea that Jews controlled both the press and the financial system, though not all of Nietzsche's remarks on Jews and money are anti-Semitic.[26]

Positive comments on Jews in Nietzsche's writings are less hard to find. In a *Nachlass* note from 1885, for example, he declares the distinction between "Aryan" and "Semitic" races to be false and empty; the source of great culture, he says, is to be found precisely where races mix;[27] and, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, he begins a discussion by paraphrasing the anti-Semites of his day (and, indeed, our own) before demolishing their position:

> About the Jews, for example: listen.— I have never met a German who was favourably inclined towards the Jews; and however unconditionally all cautious and politic men may have repudiated real anti-Semitism, even this caution and policy is not directed against this class of feeling itself but only against its dangerous immoderation, and especially against the distasteful and shameful way in which this immoderate feeling is expressed—one must not deceive oneself about that. [...] The Jews, however, are beyond all doubt the strongest toughest and purest

> race at present living in Europe; they know how to prevail even under the worst conditions (better even than under favourable ones), by means of virtues which one would like to stamp as vices—thanks above all to a resolute faith which does not need to be ashamed before "modern ideas" [...]. A thinker who has the future of Europe on his conscience will, in all the designs he makes for this future, take the Jews into account as he will take the Russians, as the immediately surest and most probable factors in the great game and struggle of forces. [...] It would perhaps be a good idea to eject the anti-Semitic ranters from the country. (BGE §251)

However welcome or even surprising these remarks may be, they are a long way from the liberal embrace of other cultures and beliefs. Jews have a function to perform in creating Nietzsche's new Europe, which is to breed with other "healthy" Europeans so that their "best" elements or features may combine to form a new aristocratic caste.

It is clear that Nietzsche had a comparatively thorough knowledge of contemporary biology, evolutionary theory, and Darwinism (which he despised),[28] as well of racial doctrines and commonplaces in the humanities, comparative linguistics, the comparative history of religion, and ethnology. His own encyclopedic knowledge of ancient Greek texts and recorded history, whether he chose to adhere to it or not, should also not be overlooked. Nietzsche's belief that *acquired* characteristics could be passed on, and the related claim that the "purity" of a race was a late, hard-fought achievement rather than an innate quality, are central to his racial and cultural theory.

Nietzsche's Greek model makes it easier to see the place of Jews and Slavs in his racial history and posited future of Europe. Just as "pure-bred Greeks," the greatest cultural producers yet seen, were the result of a lengthy process, so Jews and Slavs would have to be "digested" or "ingested" in Europe by careful, intelligent crossing that would serve to "breed in" their good characteristics. It should be noted that, characteristically, Nietzsche never discusses the practical modalities of this process. Anti-Semitic propaganda and strident nationalism, as well as being fatuous, are inimical to this process, Nietzsche maintains, as they tend to drive their targets into isolation and resistance. Nietzsche was never philo-Semitic, the most that can be said is that he was an anti-anti-Semite.[29] Yet Jews, and indeed all Europeans, remain subservient to Nietzsche's vision of breeding a new aristocratic caste in Europe in line with his understanding of how the glory of Greece came about.

# Notes

[1] Translations in this paper are my own.

[2] A model example of the Nazi exploitation of Nietzsche's thought is Heinrich Härtle, *Nietzsche und der Nationalsozialismus* (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1937), which seeks to align Nietzsche with National Socialist ideas, or at least to claim him as an important precursor of them. For discussions of this appropriation, see K. R. Fischer, "Nazism as a Nietzschean 'Experiment,'" *Nietzsche-Studien* 8 (1979): 116-22; and Rudolf E. Kuenzli, "The Nazi Appropriation of Nietzsche," *Nietzsche-Studien* 12 (1983): 428-35.

[3] For Nietzsche's scathing view of these disciples and their organ, the *Bayreuther Blätter*, see *The Wagner Case*, "Postscript" (KSA 6, 44). The *Bayreuther Blätter* published more than sixty articles on Gobineau between 1878 and 1938, which are listed in Annette Hein, *"Es ist viel 'Hitler' in Wagner": Rassismus und antisemitische Deutschtumsideologie in den "Bayreuther Blättern"* [Conditio Judaica, 13] (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1996), 403-05.

[4] Gobineau, *Œuvres*, ed. Jean Gaulmier, 3 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1983), vol. 1, 133-1166.

[5] "The Germanic race was provided with all the energy of the Aryan type. This was necessary for it to carry out the role to which it was called [*La race germanique était pourvue de toute l'énergie de la variété ariane. Il le fallait pour qu'elle pût remplir le rôle auquel elle était appelée*]" (Gobineau, *Essai*, vol. 1, 1161).

[6] "The white race, considered in the abstract, has henceforth vanished from the face of the earth. [...] it is now represented only by hybrids; [...] the proportion of Aryan blood, already subdivided so many times, which still exists in our lands and which alone sustains our society is daily heading for the absolute limits of its power to be absorbed [*L'espèce blanche, considérée abstractivement, a désormais disparu de la face du monde.* {...} *elle n'est plus maintenant représentée que par des hybrides;* {...} *la part de sang arian, subdivisée déjà tant de fois, qui existe encore dans nos contrées, et qui soutient seule notre société, s'achemine chaque jour vers les termes extrêmes de son absorption*]" (Gobineau, *Essai*, vol. 1, 1163).

[7] *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1972). Gobineau also applied his "color-scheme" to social classes, where white stands for the aristocracy, yellow for the bourgeoisie, and black for the proletariat; apparently, Gobineau had been traumatized by the sight of workers' filthy black aprons and overalls during the 1848 revolution.

[8] Bryan Magee, *Wagner and Philosophy* (London: Penguin, 2001), 379-80.

[9] Ruth Römer, *Sprachwissenschaft und Rassenideologie in Deutschland* (Munich: Fink, 1989), 33; Römer provides no evidence from Nietzsche's texts for this claim.

[10] Henning Ottmann, *Philosophie und Politik bei Nietzsche* [Monographien und Texte zur Nietzsche-Forschung, 17] (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1987), 248.

[11] Gerd Schank, *"Rasse" und "Züchtung" bei Nietzsche* [Monographien und Texte zur Nietzsche-Forschung, 44] (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2000), 426.

[12] Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, *Das Leben Friedrich Nietzsches*, 3 vols (Leipzig: Naumann, 1895-97), vol. 2, 869, 886, and 889.

[13] Nietzsche's apparent lack of interest in Gobineau is well documented by Schank, 426-33.

[14] See, for example, the opening to Nietzsche's essay on David Strauß in 1873 (UM I §1).

[15] In a preparatory note to *The Birth of Tragedy* in 1871 Nietzsche writes that "the Greek world is more sincere and simple than that of other peoples and ages: what the Greeks have in common with geniuses is that, like children and as children, they are true and truthful [*die griechische Welt* {*ist*} *aufrichtiger und einfacher als die anderer Völker und Zeiten: wie überhaupt die Griechen das mit den Genien gemein haben, daß sie wie die Kinder und als Kinder treu und wahrhaftig sind*]" (KSA 7, 7[121], 168). For further discussion of Nietzsche's notion of Greek naïveté, see Nicholas Martin, *Nietzsche and Schiller: Untimely Aesthetics* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 31-35.

[16] For further discussion of Hölderlin's and Nietzsche's views of ancient Greece, see Edouard Gaède (ed.), *Nietzsche, Hölderlin et la Grèce* [Publications de la Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines de Nice, 34] (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1988).

[17] The term "noble simplicity and quiet grandeur" (*edle Einfalt und stille Grösse*) was originally coined by the German Hellenist J. J. Winckelmann in 1755, in the course of his argument for the superiority of Greek over Roman art; see Ludwig Uhlig (ed.), *Griechenland als Ideal: Winckelmann und seine Rezeption in Deutschland* (Tübingen: Narr, 1988), 36-37.

[18] Nietzsche gives a summary of this racial history, and references to his sources for it, in the notes to the final part of his lecture course "Encyclopaedia of Classical Philology" (*Encyclopaedie der klass*[*ischen*] *Philologie*), held at Basel in 1871 (KGW 2.3, 428-35).

[19] Giuliano Campioni, *Nietzsches persönliche Bibliothek* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2002); and Curt Paul Janz, "Friedrich Nietzsches akademische Lehrtätigkeit in Basel von 1869 bis 1879," *Nietzsche-Studien* 3 (1974): 192-203.

[20] The eight racial components of the Greek population identified by Gobineau are: aborigines, Hellenes, Thracians, Phoenicians, Arabs and Hebrews, Philistines, Libyans, Cretans and other islanders (Gobineau, *Essai*, vol. 1, 664-65). None of these elements was "pure," according to Gobineau, and he claims: "The glory of Greece was the work of its Aryan component, allied to Semitic blood; while the great exterior bulk of this nation resulted from the action of the somewhat Mongolized populations of the north [*La gloire de la Grèce fut l'œuvre de la fraction ariane, alliée au sang sémitique; tandis que la grande prépondérance extérieure de ce pays résulta de l'action des populations quelque peu mongolisées du nord*]" (661-62).

[21] "[Des colonies de Sémites] s'étendirent [...] le long du littoral de la Grèce" (Gobineau, *Essai*, vol. 1, 364).

[22] "The misery of the toiling people must be increased still further, in order to allow a small number of Olympian individuals to produce the world of art" (*Das Elend der mühsam lebenden Menschen muß noch gesteigert werden, um einer geringen Anzahl olympischer Menschen die Produktion einer Kunstwelt zu ermöglichen*) (KSA 1, 767).

[23] Härtle, for example, cites the passage to this end (*Nietzsche und der Nationalsozialismus*, 62).

[24] For further discussion of this unfortunate metaphor, see Detlef Brennecke, "'Die blonde Bestie,'" *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift* 20 (1970): 467-69; and T. J. Reed, "Nietzsche's Animals: Idea, Image, and Influence," in Malcolm Pasley (ed.), *Nietzsche: Imagery and Thought: A Collection of Essays* (London: Methuen, 1978), 159-219 (163-67).

[25] Nietzsche's notes on Dühring can be found in KSA 8, 9[1], 131-81.

[26] See the following *Nachlass* notes: KSA 7, 32[39], 766; KSA 9, 5[21], 185; KSA 10, 9[29], 354; KSA 11, 26[335] and 34[11], 238 and 457; KSA 13, 14[182], 365 and 369.

[27] "NB. Gegen Arisch und Semitisch. Wo Rassen gemischt sind, der Quell großer Cultur" (KSA 12, 1[153], 45). Ottmann correctly interprets this statement as evidence that Nietzsche was clearly an "anti-Gobineauist" (*Philosophie und Politik bei Nietzsche*, 251).

[28] In the David Strauss essay (1873) Nietzsche disparages Darwin as "the greatest benefactor of the most recent kind of humanity [*der grösste Wohlthäter der allerneuesten Menschheit*]" (UM I §9), and he later dismisses Darwin, Mill and Spencer as "upright but mediocre Englishmen [*achtbare, aber mittelmäßige Engländer*]" (BGE §253); for a detailed consideration of this issue, see Werner Stegmaier, "Darwin, Darwinismus, Nietzsche," *Nietzsche-Studien* 16 (1987): 264-87.

[29] For an analysis of Nietzsche's six principal objections to anti-Semitism, see Yirmiyahu Yovel, "Sublimity and *Ressentiment*: Hegel, Nietzsche and the Jews," *Jewish Social Studies* 3.3 (1997). Available: <http://www.uiuc.edu/unit/reec/wittgenstein/antisemitismvienna.html> (accessed 18 December 2002) (para. 63 of 85); see also Schank, 22-24.

# Ecce Philologus: Nietzsche and Pindar's Second Pythian Ode

*John Hamilton*

IT HAS BEEN FREQUENTLY demonstrated that the catastrophe of the First World War left German classical studies in a precarious position.[1] University philologists, who had been trained in the methods of historical research institutionalized by Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, invariably found themselves embroiled in a national *Bildungskrise*. Here the current demands of academic inquiry, restraining itself to a remarkable level of particularity and specialization, were divorced from the issues of moral and philosophical education formerly associated with the classical tradition. As a result classicists could expect attacks from two distinct angles among Weimar intellectuals. On the one side, there were voices such as Oswald Spengler's, heard already before the war—for example, in the youth movement and the debates over school reform—that denounced the *Gymnasium*'s emphasis on Greek and Latin as elitist and irrelevant.[2] Now, given the academy's excessive concentration on the minute historical details of Greco-Roman Antiquity, the discipline had been definitively cut off from the aims of society at large. Consequently, in the view of some devout anti-humanists, classical studies should be abandoned altogether. On the other side, there were those who still attached themselves to the philhellenic circle around the poet Stefan George. Although they also rejected the strictly historicist approach of Wilamowitz, they never relinquished a Greek ideal. Antiquity was not to be discarded, but re-vitalized—*eroticized*. In anticipation of the trends that would coalesce beneath the banner of *Lebensphilosophie*, George prophesied the redemption of the German Spirit in the hope of restoring the life that had been lost through decades of bookwormishness.[3]

Within the George *Kreis* the conflict was popularly allegorized by the feud between Schulpforta's famous rivals—Wilamowitz and Nietzsche. And among the figures summoned to fight for a counter-tradition and against the positivism of the academy were Pindar and his Romantic avatar, the poet who shared Nietzsche's thunderstruck fate—Friedrich Hölderlin.

The Hölderlin-Pindar renaissance, it should be remembered, began with the work of Norbert von Hellingrath, a twenty-one-year-old doctoral candidate at Munich, who in 1910 published the first edition of Hölderlin's Pindar translations in George's own *Verlag der Blätter für die Kunst*.[4] Hellingrath's subsequent *Prolegomena* to the translations readily demonstrated an affinity for current representations of Nietzsche and would, in fact, prove influential for the most significant trends in German thought, from the translation theories of Walter Benjamin to the poetological musings of Martin Heidegger. In tone, Hellingrath's characterization of the Theban lyricist is explicitly anti-academic:

> In the last years of Hölderlin's creativity, Pindar was first and foremost in his Hellenistic world. The translations are a testament (*Denkmal*) to this. They emerged from his need to capture in the living words of his own language, what vaguely spoke to him from antiquity, words difficult to animate. Thus, these experiments do not have the intention to convey something, least of all a story, not even the possibility of what a story concerns. For the poet, to whom more than any other the genius of the Greek language revealed itself, definitely did not grow in the Greek classes and lectures in our schools; there error upon error heaped up regarding the meaning of the words. What was hidden in them is truly born again with Hölderlin: the particular Pindaric shudder, the type of verbal movement, the peculiar rolling and storming of the words. Whoever can sense the difficulty of Hölderlin's success will hardly wonder when all the pieces cannot hold on to the same height and here and there exhaust his power.[5]

For the scholars who would gather under Werner Jaeger's so-called "Third Humanism," this vitalist counter-tradition anchored itself in Nietzsche's alternate philology, which could be deployed as a critique against many critiques.[6] It could fight against Wilamowitz's historical method that naively strove to reconstruct a past in some "pure" condition (as it had "really" been); against a Romantic aestheticization of antiquity along Winckelmannian lines; and against a new, Spenglerian skepticism that would reject the past altogether.[7] In the simplest of terms, these various versions of discontinuity with the past was to be supplanted by a vision of utter *continuity*, by what Nietzsche once called, in an explicit reference to Pindar's poetics, "the intensification of the present into the monstrous and the eternal" (KSA 8, 5[85], 63).

For Nietzsche this intensification was constituted by a certain *untimeliness*. In the foreword to the second of his *Untimely Meditations*, "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life" (1874), Nietzsche had written:

> It is only to the extent that I am a pupil of earlier times, especially the Greek, that though a child of the present time I was able to acquire such untimely experiences. That much, however, I must concede to myself on account of my profession as a classicist: for I do not know what meaning classical philology could have for our time if it was not untimely—that is to say, acting counter to our time and thereby acting on our time and, let us hope, for the benefit of a time to come.

The untimely experience that Nietzsche had through philology argues against both the positivist classicist and the skeptic. It reveals that both positions are premised on the same notion of the past as some kind of totality disjoined from the present. If the classical scholar would offer us the past as an objectively separate entity—something to be found in a museum, for example—and if the skeptic would persuade us that, because it is separate, the past should be relinquished once and for all, Nietzsche would insist that we can never be free from the past.[8] Nietzsche's "untimely" (*unzeitgemäß*) vision, therefore, would be a *non-timely* one, collapsing time into a timelessness, an *eternity* of sorts, that would never cease to be a power for the times. As he formulates it in the notes planned for the essay, "We Philologists," which would have been his fifth "untimely meditation" and the official, professional response to Willamowitz: "Give the philologist the job to understand *his* age by means of antiquity and his job will be an eternal one" (KSA 8, 3[62], 31).

Throughout Nietzsche's career, Pindar would serve as a privileged poet to express this kind of eternity. On the opening page of *The Anti-christ*, for example, we read:

> Let us look at each other in the face. We are Hyperboreans—we know well enough how far off we live. "Neither by land nor by sea will you find the way to the Hyperboreans"—Pindar already knew this about us. Beyond the north, ice and death—*our* life, *our* happiness. We have discovered happiness, we know the way, we have found the exit out of the labyrinth of thousands of years. Who *else* has found it? —Modern man perhaps? "I don't know my way, I am everything that doesn't know its way," sighs modern man. (AC §1)

In one sense, the labyrinth could be the external design that normative classicism has foisted upon Western culture. This is the South that Spengler, an intensive reader of Nietzsche, would blame for victimizing the cold North. By marking out a path to be followed, this maze historically has caused modern man to proceed under the direction of another's design, another's will.[9] But, as Nietzsche goes on to suggest, modern happiness is not necessarily grounded in finding one's own way. By means of a Pindar citation from the *Tenth Pythian*,[10] a distinction is made

between losing one's way and being lost in the way of another—between an *autonomous* errancy and a *heteronomous* errancy, if you will. The point is that the discovery of "our happiness"—and I would underline the *Lücke* or "gap" in *Glück*—lies precisely in *finding the way to get lost.*

What Nietzsche is essentially doing in this passage is *intensifying* the present by means of Pindar's verse. The same could be said of the subtitle Nietzsche uses for his autobiography*: Ecce Homo: How One Becomes what One Is* [*Wie man wird, was man ist*]. The line is a loose adaptation of a gnomic statement from the second *Pythian Ode*: γένο', οἷος ἐσσὶ μαθών ("Be the sort of man you learn to be," 72). In Nietzsche's appropriation, the line evokes Pindar's notorious "dithyrambic" spirit—first ascribed to the poet by Horace's famous ode and represented in the German tradition at least as far back as the work of Johann Gottlieb Willamov. This tradition sanctions the characterization of Pindar as a poet of getting lost, as the model for lyric digressiveness.[11] The impersonal form of the *Ecce Homo* subtitle ("How *One* becomes what *One* Is") further distinguishes this tradition from the "Ionic-Attic" heritage of lucidity and comprehensibility. Consider the following gloss from *Ecce Homo*, in the chapter "Why I am so Clever":

> That one becomes what one is presupposes that one does not have the remotest idea *what* one is. From the point of view even the *blunders* of life—the temporary side-paths and wrong turnings [*Nebenwege und Abwege*], the delays, the "modesties," the seriousness squandered on tasks which lie outside the task—have their own meaning and value. Where *nosce te ipsum* would be the recipe for destruction, self-forgetfulness, self-*misunderstanding*, self-diminution, -narrowing, -mediocratizing becomes reason itself. (EH Clever §9)

Pindar's gnomic imperative, transformed by Nietzsche into a programmatic description, is decidedly not the Delphic-Socratic maxim proclaimed in the second person: "Know Thyself." Pindar's verse, as solicited by Nietzsche, has nothing to do with rationality or legibility. It does not rest on some introspective, transparent concept of self. For Nietzsche, the value of Pindar's line lies precisely in the very textual detours it incites—the *Nebenwege und Abwege.*

I would like to take Nietzsche's subtitle as an invitation to re-read, however briefly, Pindar's second *Pythian Ode* in relation to the text of *Ecce Homo*. What immediately emerges is an association of this kind of errancy with the concept of "thankfulness" or *Dankbarkeit*. As I would like to suggest, this thematic connection between thankfulness and errancy underwrites an alternative relation to classical antiquity. In a word,

*gratitude names the possibility for enjoying a continuous relation to the past by means of relinquishing the calculability of the present.* A philology that thus abandons the idea of the past as a definable and defined object, be it an object for historical research (Wilamowitz) or for aesthetic contemplation (Winckelmann), is a philology that can teach us how to be *untimely.* That is, it demonstrates how to dissolve the discontinuities enforced by time—or again, how to "intensify the present into the monstrous and the eternal."

In the pages of "We Philologists," classical scholars are depicted as fundamentally out of touch with the times—interested solely in the past as an object available for scrutiny, the edifying applicability of which is entirely questionable. "If the public came to know what an untimely thing antiquity is, philologists would no longer be hired as teachers" (KSA 8, 5[55], 55). And Nietzsche, who held his position in Classical Philology at Basel from 1869 to 1879, never would cease from identifying himself accordingly. One finds a type of professional "exploitation"—which again is grounded in philology's untimeliness—that will allow Nietzsche to transform his discipline into a critical practice aimed at reintroducing a fiery vitalism. As I have begun to argue, the means is a turn to Pindar. Another note from the *Philologen* essay confirms this motivation: "Points selected from antiquity: e.g. the power, the fire, and the soaring in the ancients' feeling for music (through the first *Pythian Ode*)" (KSA 8, 5[36], 50). To speak in the language of *The Birth of Tragedy*, this spirit—the Schopenhauerian spirit of music—is also heard in the impersonal expression: "How one becomes what one is." It is a spirit that is *prior* to representations of the individual, as described in *Ecce Homo*: "That one becomes what one is presupposes that one does not have the remotest idea what one is." As the continuation to this passage suggests, the Pindaric errancy expresses not only a fundamental *incalculability*, but also, more specifically, colors Nietzsche's own entrance into a career of classical philology. That is to say, *Nietzsche's relation to antiquity is framed by a kind of unpredictability.* Thus he suggests in the following, allowing Schopenhauer to speak against himself:

> To "want" something, to "strive" after something, to have a "goal," a "wish" in view—I know none of this from experience. Even at this moment I look out upon my future—a *distant* future—as upon a smooth sea: it is ruffled by no desire. I do not want in the slightest that anything should become other than it is; I do not want myself to become other than I am. (EH Why I am so Clever §9)

Clearly, then, Nietzsche takes the γένοι', οἷος ἐσσὶ μαθών ("Be the sort of man you learn to be") as an imperative to renounce the will to foresee. He shakes Pindar's line out of its context—which becomes a *citation* in the strongest sense—and has it signify a program of incalculability. But what happens if this hermeneutic manipulation is applied back to the original context, back to Pindar's poem? Although the poem's interpretive tradition, beginning with the Hellenistic scholiasts, is far from unanimous, the differences of opinion generally concern topical details in the text. That is to say, most readings agree that the poem's central issue is the theme of *gratitude*, taking the gnome at line 72 to refer to the kind of public behavior one should adopt—"Show yourself in your action as the sort of man you have learned that you are."[12] In this respect, Nietzsche's push toward an idea of *unpredictability* not only distinguishes him from conventional interpretations, but also may elicit charges of misunderstanding and ungrammaticality. Indeed, his translation, "Be who you are" (*Werde der du bist*), which sets up an element of the unforeseeable, has been attacked as a flagrant abuse of what the Greek is saying.[13]

Has Nietzsche simply decontextualized and misread the line to suit his own philosophical exposition? Or is there a possibility that his repeated emphasis on the idea of incalculability might disclose something essential in Pindar's poem? It is important to note first that Nietzsche is not replacing the theme of gratitude with one of incalculability. On the contrary, the entire autobiographical project of *Ecce Homo* apparently sits beneath the rubric of thankfulness, as is clear from the brief prose-poem inserted between the book's Foreword and the narrative proper:

> On this perfect day, when everything has become ripe and not only the grapes are growing brown, a ray of sunlight has fallen on to my life: I looked behind me, I looked before me, never have I seen so many and such good things all at once [*auf einmal*]. Not in vain have I buried my forty-fourth year today, I was *entitled* to bury it—what there was of life in it is redeemed, is immortal. The *Revaluation of all Values*, the *Dionysus Dithyrambs*, and to recover, the *Twilight of the Idols*—all of them gifts of this year, of its last quarter even! *How should I not be grateful to my whole life?* —And so I tell myself my life.

As we shall see, the gratitude is at once perfectly Pindaric and unmistakably Nietzschean. It rests in a recognition of timelessness (or, untimeliness): looking behind and before, to the past and the present, only to collapse the two poles into a single vision of simultaneity—*auf einmal*. The lifeless past has been interred, so that the life in the past can enjoy

immortality in the present. Already it is evident that Nietzsche's appropriation of Pindar will touch upon both the philosopher's relation to the classical tradition as well as the idea of tradition *tout court*. To put the leading question in somewhat provocative terms: *What happens to the past when the present is intensified by that past?*

For centuries of Pindar scholars, the second *Pythian Ode*, composed for Hieron of Syracuse, has been considered one of the most difficult odes in the corpus. In his definitive Pindar edition of 1811-21, August Boeckh sets the tone that has provoked an inexhaustible chain of interpretations: "I will consider him a great Apollo, whoever will be able to take this poem covered in thick fog (*crassa caligine*) and place it in a clear light."[14] Basil Gildersleeve, for example, comments: "It is a strange poem, one in which divination and sympathy can accomplish little."[15] It is hardly a surprise that Nietzsche, with an ear for a Dionysian strand within the history of archaic Greek poetry, would choose to refer his readers to one of the darkest points in the tradition.

By far, the most troubling aspect of the ode is the excessive attention paid to negative exempla, specifically on the themes of ingratitude and slander. In addition to the lengthy story about the fate of the ungracious criminal Ixion, mention is made of Archilochus, the notorious lyric slanderer, which occasions extended reflection on the topic of blame. Rather than providing foil for the brilliance of Hieron's thankfulness and good will, the disproportionate weight of such darkness arguably would threaten the encomiastic project, burying the *laudandus* in—to use Boeckh's phrase—"a thick fog." Nietzsche no doubt enters this *caligo crassa*, certainly not to play the role of the Apollonian hermeneut, but to allow his autobiographical intentions to be pulled deeper into some Dionysian experience.

The poem can be divided into two main sections of unequal length. The caesura is quite emphatic, both syntactically and semantically: In the third epode at line 67 there appears the strongly punctuating word χαῖρε ("farewell")—a literal *Abschied*, conspicuously marked by asyndeton, which cuts the poem in two. When the text is so divided, it immediately becomes apparent that the ode's first part (1-67) is cluttered with the presence of the Olympian gods, while the latter part (67-96) fails to make a single mention of any god whatsoever.[16] Although it is typical of Pindar to address a divinity at the start of each song, no other *epinician* includes so many gods in so few lines. Here, within the space of the first two strophic systems one encounters "deep-battling Ares," "Artemis of the Rivers," "Hermes of the Games," "trident-lifting Poseidon," "golden-haired Apollo," "Aphrodite," "Zeus," and "Hera." Similarly, in

the latter half, no other *epinician* seems to suffer such a blatant evacuation of the divine. If the ostentatious presence of the gods in the first part expresses Hieron's mortal dependence on and his gratitude for divine help, the gods' send-off and the subsequent turn to the topic of slander express something different.

Before discussing the issue of slander and its place in the poem, it is important to foreground the notion of gratitude, represented by the word χάρις—a word cognate with the divisive χαῖρε. The term is central to the poem, having been introduced at the head of the first epode: "And reverent gratitude (χάρις) goes forth in some way in exchange for someone's friendly deeds" (17). Pindar further illustrates the idea with the figure of a Locrian maiden, who is said to cheer Hieron for having liberated her people from the incapacitating troubles of war (πολεμίων καμάτων ἐξ ἀμαχάνων, 19).

It is in the myth-section that immediately follows, however, where the theme of gratitude is most fully developed. This is accomplished by means of the negative example of Ixion: a paradigm of thanklessness. The narrative begins at the story's end, where Ixion is seen bound to his winged wheel, repeating for eternity the lesson that has been so harshly learned: "Always pay a benefactor with gentle recompense" (τὸν εὐεργέταν ἀγαναῖς ἀμοιβαῖς ἐποιχομένους τίνεσθαι, 24). The poem then goes back to relate in quick sketches the story of this man, who happens to be the first to have spilled kindred blood. When his new father-in-law comes to collect the appropriate marriage gifts, Ixion kills him, in order to marry the daughter without paying the expected price. The consequence for this crime, however, disrupts all our expectations. Instead of punishing Ixion for this cold murder, Zeus purifies him and bears him up to Olympus. In effect, Zeus has *rewarded* Ixion—a man who certainly does not merit such treatment. Among the gods, however, Ixion is quick to plan yet another act of ingratitude, to make a sexual advance on Hera. Having discerned Ixion's intentions, the father of the gods creates a "sweet lie" (ψεῦδος γλυκύ, 37)—a beautiful cloud fashioned in the form of the divine queen. Like his sister Coronis, Ixion falls into a deep "delusion" (ἀυάταν, 28; cf. *Pyth.* 3.25). He sleeps with this phantasm of a goddess and thereby fathers a monster, whose name, Kentauros ("cloud-poke") forever recalls its fantastic origin. The child will grow up to mate with "Magnesian mares" and thereby engender an astonishing race, half-man, half-horse—the Centaurs. Now for *this* second act of Ixion, raping but an *image* of Hera, our expectations again are confused. Even though the transgression this time is entirely hallucina-

tory, Zeus punishes Ixion, crucifying him upon a wheel that will spin forevermore in the darkness of the underworld.

Throughout his criminal career, Ixion had no gratitude for *eros.* In the case of his earthly marriage, he wanted something for nothing. He refused to *give* recompense to the bride's father, choosing to *take* his life instead. Upon Olympus, he falsely believed that Zeus's grace, his χάρις, would always be available. He counted on the recurrence of the divine gift, which once miraculously absolved him of kin-murder and granted him immortality to boot. He was convinced that, once forgiven, he would always be forgiven. In this way, Ixion is a radically perverse, yet prototypical, Christian. His overriding faith in infinite grace results from a false conception of the gods and their ways. For this reason, Pindar allegorizes such a faith as a love for an illusion, a "sweet lie," which is nothing less than an infatuation with a fantasy. It is a love, furthermore, that has serious consequences for mankind—the violent race of Centaurs, offspring of ingratitude, having been born literally without the attendance of the Graces (ἄνευ ... Χαρίτων, 42).

As it turns out, the figure of Ixion the cloud-chaser comes very close to Nietzsche's portrayal of the academic philologist. The use of the first person is telling:

> The veneration of classical antiquity [...] is all a magnificent example of Don Quixotism: and perhaps that is what Philology is, at its best. [...] We imitate chimera, and chase after a world of wonders that never really existed. (KSA 8, 7[1], 121)

In this characterization, Nietzsche refers to the classical objects of contemplation—both the objects of historical philology and the objects of aesthetic philhellenism—as imaginative constructs, not dissimilar to the "sweet lie" that seduced Ixion. When we continue through the *Second Pythian*, so I would argue, we learn that this kind of veneration turns not only on a perverse understanding of grace, but also, as the movement of Pindar's ode seems to suggest, is indicative of a desire for *calculability.* Ingratitude lies at the heart of false representations as well as a perverse belief in one's powers of expectation.

To demonstrate what I mean by "calculability," I move to the poem's next major topic—"slander." Upon giving an extended description of ingratitude in the story of Ixion, Pindar must make a transition to more direct praise of Hieron. The third triad therefore begins:

θεὸς ἅπαν ἐπὶ ἐλπίδεσσι τέκμαρ ἀνύεται,
θεός, ὃ καὶ πτερόεντ' αἰετὸν κίχε, καὶ θαλασ-
    σαῖον παραμείβεται

δελφῖνα, καὶ ὑψιφρόνων τιν' ἔκαμψε βροτῶν,
ἑτέροισι δὲ κῦδος ἀγήραον παρέδωκ'. ἐμὲ δὲ χρεών
φεύγειν δάκος ἀδινὸν κακαγοριᾶν·
εἶδον γὰρ ἑκὰς ἐὼν τὰ πόλλ' ἐν ἀμαχανίᾳ
ψογερὸν 'Αρχίλοχον βαρυλόγοις ἔχθεσιν
πιαινόμενον· τὸ πλουτεῖν δὲ σὺν τύχᾳ
πότμου σοφίας ἄριστον.
τὺ δὲ σάφα νιν ἔχεις ἐλευθέρᾳ φρενὶ πεπαρεῖν
....................................
βουλαὶ δὲ πρεσβύτεραι
ἀκίνδυνον ἐμοι ἔπος ⟨σὲ⟩ ποτὶ πάντα λόγον
ἐπαινεῖν παρέχοντι. χαῖ- ·
ρε

(*Pythian* 2.49-56; 65-67)

The god accomplishes his goal upon hoping for it,
the god, who reaches the winged eagle and moves
past the dolphin
at sea, and takes down any one of the haughty mortals,
but to others grants ageless glory. But I must
flee the vehement bite of slander,
for I have seen from a distance the blamer
Archilochus getting fat with offensive
hatred. And to have wealth obtained by fate
is the best subject for poetic skill.
You [Hieron] clearly have it to display with liberal mind.
....................................
And your mature counsels
allow me to praise you without risk up to the full account. Fare-
well.

The precise function of these lines has always been very difficult to determine. What is the "slander" (κακαγορία) that Pindar is denouncing? The ancient scholia would like to see a hidden reference to Bacchylides, who was considered to be Pindar's arch-rival (*Schol. ad P.* 2.97). If, to argue with more recent scholars, the strophe rejects the slanderous treatment of Ixion in order to praise Hieron, then we would have to admit that Pindar's censure of ingratitude is unjustified, which assuredly it is not.[17] Hieron is grateful for the gods' intercession on behalf of his victory, while Ixion is not thankful at all: to renounce the story of Ixion as some kind of mistreatment would be to repudiate the role of the gods in mortals' lives.

Of course, as a poet of praise, Pindar must distinguish himself from Archilochus, the paradigmatic poet of blame. But still, what exactly constitutes the slander to be rejected?

Nietzsche can help. If we take the subtitle of his autobiography as a direct invitation to read *Pythian* 2 as the intertext, that is, if we impose the theme of incalculability on to Pindar's expressions of gratitude and ingratitude, a strange possibility unfolds for the interpretation of this passage. To begin with, I reiterate the bold caesura at line 67—the χαῖρε[*khaire*], which not only lexically perpetuates the idea of thankfulness (χάρις [*kharis*]), but also effectively divides the poem in two. Since, in comparison with the first part of the ode, the second part is tellingly free of the divine, then the send-off can mean that it is the *pantheon itself* that has been dispatched. Pindar is not saying "farewell" to slander as much as he is bidding the gods good-bye. On this basis, the representation of divine power in lines 49-52 can be understood as a parody of justice and therefore as the real object of Pindar's repudiation. That is to say, it is this particular portrayal of the gods that is the "slander" to be renounced. A number of details may support this interpretation. To begin, as Wilamowitz himself observed, these lines allude to the famous prelude to Hesiod's *Works and Days*:[18]

> Μοῦσαι Πιερίηθεν ἀοιδῆσι κλείουσαι,
> δεῦτε, Δί' ἐννέπετε, σφέτερον πατέρ' ὑμνείουσαι.
> ὅντε διὰ βροτοὶ ἄνδρες ὁμῶς ἄφατοί τε φατοί τε,
> ῥητοί τ' ἄρρητοί τε Διὸς μεγάλοιο ἕκητι.
> ῥέα μὲν γὰρ βριάει, ῥέα δὲ βριάοντα χαλέπτει,
> ῥεῖα δ' ἀρίζηλον μινύθει καὶ ἄδηλον ἀέξει,
> ῥεῖα δέ τ' ἰθύνει σκολιὸν καὶ ἀγήνορα κάρφει
> Ζεὺς ὑψιβρεμέτης, ὃς ὑπέρτατα δώματα ναίει.
> (Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 1-8)

> Muses from Pieria who glorify in songs,
> come, tell of Zeus, hymning your father,
> through whom mortal men are both famous and unknown,
> sung and unsung, by the will of great Zeus.
> For easily he makes strong, while easily he crushes the strong,
> easily he humbles the distinguished one and fosters one obscure,
> easily he straightens the crooked and withers the courageous
> Zeus who thunders above and lives in a dwelling most high.

The unfortunate aspect of this theology is that, in granting omnipotence to Zeus, it sets the stage for moral expectations on the part of mortals. It leads to a parody of justice that would demand that distinguished men are *always* humbled, that the obscure are *always* fostered, and so on. This

idea of theology, in other words, renders the acts of the gods as perfectly calculable. And Pindar's version of this thinking underscores the exaggerated and therefore problematic nature of this view. First, he suppresses the important Hesiodic qualification—"by the will of great Zeus" (Διὸς μεγάλοιο ἕκητι, 4). With this parenthesis, Zeus's will is exposed as being entirely *arbitrary*. Sometimes the crooked remain crooked; sometimes the courageous stay fearless. Mortals have no access to this knowledge; and Archilochus's "hatred" is therefore exemplary, grounded precisely in the events that upset simplistic views of justice. Archilochus suffers from an incurable *ressentiment*.

Pindar's version of Olympian theology is a parody, first because it does not include the important Hesiodic limitation, "by the will of great Zeus." It overlooks the fact of theodicy. But one can further recognize the parodic nature of Pindar's version by considering the move toward abstraction. In the place of the specifically named Zeus, Pindar gives only the general term θεός ("the god"). It is repeated twice in initial position, implying that we are dealing with an ontological determination of the divine at best and a gross simplification (that is, rationalization) at worst. Pindar's brilliant trichotomy, universal in covering air, sea, and land ("eagle," "dolphin," and "mortal man"), only adds to the sense of abstraction. Finally, there is the δὲ at line 52, which given the semantics of ἐμὲ ... χρεὼν φεύγειν ("I must flee") should be taken as strongly adversative and most immediate, applying to what directly precedes. In other words, *what the poet must flee, what the poet must renounce or say farewell to, is the false conception of the divine as perfectly just.*

Pindar's argument, so construed, rests on the theme of grace, precisely because grace, by definition, cannot subsist in a perfectly just system. Recall that Ixion betrays a complete misunderstanding of grace when he expects it to be *infinitely* or *absolutely* inexhaustible. To believe that grace is always forthcoming is analogous to thinking that the wrongdoer is always punished. Accordingly, the crime of Ixion may be correlated to the offense of slander. Ixion's fantasy in heaven (falling in love with a cloud) corresponds to Archilochus's fantasy on earth (there is either perfect justice or no justice at all). The conviction of the gods' boundless power necessarily leads to dissatisfaction, resentment, and—as Pindar goes on to suggest—a tendency to slander. Slander is linked to ingratitude, insofar as both faults goad mankind into thinking that things should be otherwise. And both are implicitly anti-aristocratic. The slanderer and the ingrate, *in their extreme view of justice*, will not warrant privilege—either grace should be indiscriminate (for everyone at every

time) or it should not exist at all (everything must be *earned*). In this way, the slanderer has misread the story of Ixion. Zeus did not *punish* the crime of kin-murder, he cleansed it by divine fiat, even though in this case Ixion justly *deserved* punishment. The truth of Zeus's justice overwhelms the calculability of mortal expectation. By the same token, the punishment that Ixion did receive was for no crime at all, but rather for an *illusory* crime—the man, after all, seduced a mere cloud. A real crime is acquitted and a non-crime is sentenced.

Nonetheless, Ixion is chastised for something justifiable, namely his ingratitude. In the extended sense, this fault consists in a conception of grace so exaggerated that it became the very denial of grace. For if grace were infinite, there would be no such thing as grace. Ixion, then, is on a par with the slanderer. With stunning alacrity, Pindar demonstrates how the hubristic belief that all men deserve everything gives birth to the envious, hateful belief that no one should get anything.

Hieron is especially praiseworthy because he does not participate in these perversions of justice and divine benevolence. Pindar can therefore praise him, "without risk" (ἀκίνδυνον, 66). In a way, Pindar sends Hieron off as well with the imperative χαῖρε that abandons all the false theology. In place of the gods, it is the poet himself who plays the prominent role. Pindar distances himself from the slanderers and the envious who wrongly posit a *lex talionis* and believe in just gods with infinite power. Instead of preaching an eye for an eye—a mechanism doomed to cause dissatisfaction—Pindar offers a much simpler command, both memorable and quotable:

γένοι', οἷος ἐσσὶ μαθών.
    καλός τοι πίθων παρὰ παισίν, αἰεί
καλός. ὁ δὲ Ῥαδάμανθυς εὖ πέπραγεν, ὅτι φρενῶν
ἔλαχε καρπὸν ἀμώμητον, οὐδ' ἀπάταισι θυ-
    μὸν τέρπεται ἔνδοθεν,
οἷα ψιθύρων παλάμαις ἕπετ' αἰεὶ βροτῷ.
ἄμαχον κακὸν ἀμφοτέροις διαβολιᾶν ὑποφάτιες.
(*Pythian* 2.72-76)

Become the sort of man you learn to be.
    A monkey is beautiful, you know, to children, always
beautiful. But Rhadamanthys has fared well, because he was
allotted the blameless fruit of good sense, and within his heart
    he does not delight in deceptions,
the sort that always attend a mortal through the devices
    of whisperers.
Those who slander are an unconquerable evil to both.

Gone are the gods and the misguided conceptions of them. They have been given a "farewell"—a cut-off, an *Abschied*. The χαῖρε that Pindar pronounces, in causing the gods' departure, banishes the absolute system—the invariable "deceptions" (ἀπάταισι, 74)—that so many ascribe to them like children. "Those who whisper slander are an unconquerable evil to both the slanderers themselves and to those who believe them." Pindar, however, knows that every one should be what he is. Teleology (if I do this, I shall get that) is delusional. To seek perfect satisfaction, to demand absolute justice, is to fall in love with clouds. Ixion's Dantesque punishment reminds us to accept grace for what it is, to be gracious for what happens, unexpectedly, unpredictably. Hence, Nietzsche's gloss: "I do not want in the slightest that anything should become other than it is; I do not want myself to become other than I am."

The figure of Ixion is a relic from a world where gods once ruled by deception, where misreading was rampant. In Nietzsche's anti-Christian vision, Ixion's outstretched limbs bound to a four-spoked wheel cannot fail to recall Golgotha. Despite German philology's near-Christian sterility, despite its notorious asceticism, Nietzsche is committed to it. He continues to trust in what he sees as the discipline's most worthwhile aspect: "the art of reading well." By contrast, the mark of the theologian, as he writes in *The Antichrist*, "is his incapacity for philology" (AC §52). Accordingly, with *Ecce Homo*, the autobiographical project begins with a commitment to the words of others, where the Pindaric subtitle glosses Pilate's own fatal *envoi*. Nietzsche's commitment, too, is an act of gratitude, a gesture of friendship, like the philologist's *philia* that loves words. Herein lies Nietzsche's own dispatch, one that may serve as a corrective to the phantasmatic totalities pursued by historical classicists and humanists alike. For the man who has buried his forty-fourth year (and with it his career in a philological tradition too much in thrall to the effects of time), life is a gracious and untimely gift: "How should I not be grateful for my whole life? —And so I tell myself my life."

## Notes

[1] For a recent survey of the situation with pertinent bibliography, see Suzanne Marchand, *Down from Olympus: Archaeology and Philhellenism in Germany, 1750-1970* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1996), chapter 9 (302-40).

[2] See Carl Becker, *Kant und die Bildungskrise der Gegenwart* (Leipzig: Quelle und Meyer, 1924).

[3] On the brand of neo-humanism sponsored by George and his circle, see Franz Brecht, *Platon und der George-Kreis* [Erbe der Alten, 17] (Leipzig: Dieterich, 1929).

[4] George gave his encouragement and full financial support for Hellingrath's project. Hellingrath's aunt, Elsa Bruckmann, had introduced Norbert to Karl Wolfskehl in 1908, who in turn brought him to George the following year; see Achim Aurnhammer, "Stefan George und Hölderlin," *Euphorion* 81 (1987): 81-99.

[5] Norbert von Hellingrath, *Pindarübertragungen von Hölderlin: Prolegomena zu einer Erstausgabe* (Jena: Dieterich, 1911). See Benjamin's similar remarks in his essay "The Task of the Translator," in *Selected Writings*, vol. 1, 1913-1926, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1996), 253-63; and Heidegger's opening lecture to his seminar on *Hölderlin's Hymn "The Ister*," trans. William McNeill and Julia Davis (Bloomington, IN: U of Indiana P, 1996), 1-15. The manuscript of "Der Ister" was in fact discovered and first published by Hellingrath.

[6] See Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Blood for the Ghosts: Classical Influences in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London: Duckworth, 1982), 165.

[7] Jaeger, who replaced Wilamowitz's position at Berlin, outlines this history in his essay, "Classical Philology at the University of Berlin: 1870-1945," in his *Five Essays*, trans. A. Fiske (Montreal: Casalini, 1966), 47-74.

[8] For further analysis of Nietzsche's concept of untimeliness and its relation to professional philology, see James I. Porter, *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2000), 7 and *passim*.

[9] Compare with Spengler's remarks: "We West Europeans have offered up to 'the ancients' the purity and self-sufficiency of our art, which we only dare to create with a sidelong glance at the majestic 'model'; our images of the Greeks and Romans have always possessed the contents and feelings that we lacked or longed for in the depths of our own souls. One day an intelligent psychologist will recount for us the story of our fateful illusion, the history of what we have in each case revered as ancient. There are few tales more instructive for the intimate knowledge of the Western soul from Emperor Otto III, the first, to Nietzsche, [who was] the last, victim of the South" (Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes: Umrisse einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte*, vol. 1, *Gestalt und Wirklichkeit* (Munich: Beck, 1921), 41; cited and translated in Marchand, *Down from Olympus*, 307).

[10] ναυσὶ δ'οὔτε πεζὸς ἰών ⟨κεν⟩ εὕροις/ἐς Ὑπερβορέων ἀγῶνα θαυμαστὰν ὁδόν ("Neither going by ship nor foot could you find the wondrous way to the gathering of the Hyperboreans," *Pyth.* 10.29.) All Pindar citations throughout are

from Bruno Snell's and Herwig Maehler's eighth edition, *Pindari carmina cum fragmentis*, 2 vols (Leipzig: Teubner, 1987). All translations, unless otherwise noted, are my own.

[11] See Horace's famous *Pindargedicht*: "Monte decurrens velut amnis, imbres / quem super notas aluere ripas, / fervet immensusque ruit profundo / Pindarus ore ("From the mount descending like a river, which / the rain has fed over the well-known limits, / he boils and boundless crashes at the mouth / profound, Pindarus!", *Carm.* 4.2). Johann Gottlieb Willamov (1736-1777), a philologist at the University of Thorn, published his *Dithyramben* in 1763 as a proposed model for a boldly vitalized, Bacchic verse. His French contemporary, Denis Diderot, would define the term "Pindarique" in his Encyclopedia in an analogous fashion: "Le nom de Pindare n'est guère plus le nom d'un poëte que celui de l'enthousiasme même. Il porte avec lui l'idée de transports, d'écarts, de désordre, de digressions lyriques," *Encyclopédie*, art. "Pindarique" (in *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Garnier, 1876), 293).

[12] Glenn Most's explicative translation. His reading of the second *Pythian Ode* is among the most complete and persuasive interpretations of the poem to date, and includes a useful critical evaluation of previous readings with full bibliography (see *The Measures of Praise: Structure and Function in Pindar's Second Pythian and Seventh Nemean Odes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985); on line 72, see 101-03).

[13] Tellingly, Werner Jaeger accepts Nietzsche's translation without any qualms in *Paideia: Die Formung des griechischen Menschen* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1934-1947), vol.1, 285. See Gilbert Norwood's discussion, "Pindar, *Pythian* II, 72ff.," *The American Journal of Philology* 62 (1941): 340-43; and Erich Thummer, "Die zweite pythische Ode Pindars," *Rheinisches Museum* 115 (1972): 293-307.

[14] "Ille mihi magnus Apollo erit, qui carmen hoc crassa caligine tectum in clara posuerit luce" (August Boeckh (ed.), *Pindari opera quae supersunt*, 2 vols in 4 (Leipzig: Weigel, 1811-1821), vol.1, 477; also cited in Most, *The Measures of Praise*, 60).

[15] Basil Gildersleeve (ed.), *The Olympian and Pythian Odes* [1890] (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1965), 253. See also Reginald Burton, *Pindar's Pythian Odes: Essays in Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1962), 120-21.

[16] On this point, see Christopher Carey, *A Commentary on Five Odes of Pindar* (New York: Arno, 1981), 26.

[17] For the argument referring the "slander" to Pindar's treatment of Ixion, see Carey, *A Commentary*, 42; and Andrew Miller, "Pindar, Archilochus and Hieron in P. 2.52-56," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 111 (1981): 135-43 (137-39). This position is persuasively repudiated in Most, *The Measures of Praise*, 88-90.

[18] Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Pindaros* (Berlin, Zurich, Dublin: Weidmann, 1922), 289.

# Nietzsche, Aristotle, and Propositional Discourse

*Peter Yates*

> *The ascertaining of "truth" and "untruth," the ascertaining of facts in general, is fundamentally different from creative positing, from forming, shaping, overcoming, willing, such as is of the essence of philosophy. (WP §605)*

IN THIS ARTICLE I attempt to demonstrate that Nietzsche effectively criticizes Aristotle's championing of the primacy of "propositional discourse" as expounded in Book 4 of his *Metaphysics*. I take the primacy of propositional discourse to be the notion that the "proper" mode of philosophizing aims to establish true propositions about existence, knowledge, and the human being, through the application of rule-based procedures. The characteristic concern with rules, propriety, and necessity means that propositional discourse has a policing relationship with other modes of enquiry, arrogating to itself the power to decide which of them, if any, are "legitimate."

Nietzsche's criticism bites in several places, all of which are crucial to the conceptual architectonic of propositional discourse, but the treatment of them all is beyond the scope of this short article. I shall therefore focus on three instances where the relationship to Aristotle's version of propositional discourse is relatively clear. First, I treat Nietzsche's questioning of the willingness to halt the regress of questioning that is likely to accompany any quest for foundations for "proper" discourse which will guarantee its propriety. (In Aristotle's case, questioning stops at the law of contradiction, a law which Nietzsche does not always feel obliged to obey.) Second, I discuss Nietzsche's criticism of the notion that the truth/falsehood dichotomy is based on the correspondence, or lack of it, between propositional statements and "reality," focusing particularly here on the propositional statements which are the "truths" of logic. Nietzsche does this, I suggest, by attempting to consider the human being in her condition of embeddedness in both nature and culture. Third, he criticizes Aristotle's reliance on the being/non-being

he criticizes Aristotle's reliance on the being/non-being duality by countering it with a Heraclitean (and oxymoronic) metaphysics of becoming.

This article goes on to outline (with the broadest brush strokes) some of the ramifications of Nietzsche's attempt to displace the dominance of propositional discourse for the understanding of his wider conversation with the Greeks. Finally, I would like to offer the suggestion that contemporary debates about the proper mode of philosophizing resonate strongly with Nietzsche's meeting with Aristotle in a way that ought to make us suspicious of attempts to mine Nietzsche's oeuvre for puzzles to "analyze."

## Aristotle as Propositionalist

To begin with, it is necessary to show that Aristotle is indeed a champion of propositional discourse, or what I shall call a "propositionalist." In Part 1 of *Metaphysics* 4, Aristotle tells us that philosophy is "the science which investigates being as being and the attributes which belong to this in virtue of its own nature."[1] In Part 2 he produces a taxonomy of discourses which might possibly be properly philosophical and goes on to claim primacy for his own *science* of "being as being" against the other candidates: "Dialectic is merely critical where philosophy claims to *know*, and sophistic is what appears to be philosophy but is not" (*Metaphysics*, 4 §2; my italics). Philosophy as the science of being as being, then, can establish "knowledge" as a result of its enquiry, whereas dialectic can only proceed negatively and expose the pretensions of many, if not all, claims to knowledge, and sophistry only persuades without any regard for knowledge at all, even suggesting that there is no such thing as objective knowledge. In setting up this taxonomy of discourses, Aristotle implicitly raises the question of which discourse (if any) is to legitimate the others. Reading between the lines: that which produces "knowledge" is clearly superior to the others on the basis that it can, at least potentially, be certain about *their* scope and limits, that is, it can produce knowledge about them. Dialectic might seem to be able to do this, perhaps more effectively in view of its critical intent. But since, on Aristotle's view, it cannot offer true propositions about or in place of that which it criticizes, it only destroys doctrines, leaving uncertainty in their place. That which can produce *knowledge* will naturally supersede its somewhat violent and indiscriminate policing activity. For Aristotle, it is clearly better to end up with something rather than nothing.

But what is this knowledge that is so worthy of possession? Aristotle is not explicit here on this matter, but it is clear that we are to under-

stand it through an unproblematic relation it supposedly has to "truth." This is seen when the philosopher's task is rephrased a little further on in terms of the quest for truth: "There are certain properties peculiar to being as such, and it is about these that the philosopher has to investigate *the truth*" (4 §2; my italics). "Knowledge" on Aristotle's view, then, is the possession of true propositions. So what is the nature of the "truths" which will make us knowledgeable when we possess them? More generally, what are "truth" and "falsehood"?

In Part 7 Aristotle tells us: "To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true" (4 §7). The first thing to note in unpacking this statement is that truth and falsehood are *spoken*. They seem to be properties of statements. Second, criteria are given for establishing the truth or falsehood of particular statements: true statements *correspond* with "what is" whilst false ones fail to do so. Third, true statements may correspond with facts about other statements, reasserting their truth, if indeed they are true, and denying their truth if they are *in fact* false. Further, it should be noted in this definition that the being/non-being binary is presupposed even whilst its nature is what is at issue.

The binaries truth/falsehood and being/non-being are clearly crucial to the architectonic of Aristotle's science of being. But there is more: the science of being proceeds through the application of "rules of argument": "It belongs to the philosopher, i.e., to him who is studying the nature of all substance, to enquire also into the principles of syllogism" (4 §3). The first principle of syllogism that Aristotle arrives at is the law about which "it is impossible to be mistaken," the law of contradiction: "It is, that the same attribute cannot at the same time belong and not belong to the same subject and in the same respect" (4 §3).

Interestingly, a little further on the law is phrased differently in terms of what is possible for the thinking human subject: "It is impossible for the same man at the same time to believe the same thing to be and not to be." And in Part 6, Aristotle draws these two expressions of the law of contradiction together: "If, then, it is impossible to affirm and deny truly at the same time, it is also impossible that contraries should belong to a substance at the same time." Again, this amounts to saying that there is a correspondence between true propositional statements and "what is" in the "real" world, and specifically here, between a particular proposition of logic and the "real" world. In Part 8, Aristotle arrives at another principle of syllogism through a criticism of Heraclitus and Anaxagoras on truth. This is the law of excluded middle, but, to keep matters simple, I am going to restrict my treatment to the law of contradiction.

Clearly then, on Aristotle's view, the business of "proper" philosophy is to establish true propositions about being as being. This involves the groundwork of arriving at definitions of truth and falsehood and establishing the rules of argument.

## Nietzsche Against Foundations

Invoking the metaphor of philosophy as building, Nietzsche speaks of this *philosophical* groundwork in section 289 of *Beyond Good and Evil.* At what depth, he asks, can the philosopher stop his trench-digging in the full confidence that his foundations will be unshakeable, rendering his final edifice secure? Nietzsche taunts those who would give a definitive answer:

> "There is something arbitrary in his stopping *here* to look back and look around, in his not digging deeper *here* but laying his spade aside; there is also something suspicious about it." (BGE §289)

Aristotle disagrees. As far as he is concerned, there is a definite point at which the metaphorical spade is justifiably laid down as we attempt to secure our mode of enquiry into being. We cannot go on digging forever: the infinite regress of questioning must be halted or else we fall into irrationalism. The philosopher of being *must* be able to state "the most certain principles of all things" (*Metaphysics*, 4 §3), the first of which is the law of contradiction. But what justification is there for this laying aside of the philosophical spade? We stop digging here, according to Aristotle, because about this matter "it is impossible to be mistaken" (4 §3).

At this point Nietzsche (at least in some moods) might counter: "Can we ever be anything *but* mistaken?" The *seeming* impossibility of being mistaken about the law of contradiction might well be something that serves our interest, Nietzsche suggests repeatedly, rather than an *impossibility*, the assertion of which inscribes the law of contradiction onto being itself (see, for example, WP §410, §487, §493, and §494; GM III §13 and §18). This counter, which very *reasonably* suggests that we are ineluctably interested creatures, necessarily embedded in the conditions of our lives, does make Aristotle's halting of the regress of justifications at the law of contradiction on the grounds that contesting this law is impossible indeed look *suspicious.*

And this is the point to which Nietzsche's suspicion draws our attention: if we are to think of ourselves as embedded in the world and culture, then we must at least countenance the possibility that what we take

to be the laws of argument are more to do with what we ourselves will *permit* than the world. Why this matters to Nietzsche, and why it might matter to us, is because the need for secure foundations sends us on a chase after that which is free of interest and which is somehow not a perspective. And why this, in its turn, matters, is because it is an attempted flight from our humanity, a piece of ascetic life-negation (see, for example, AC §54).

## Nietzsche Against the Truths of Logic as Correspondence with Reality

Nietzsche elaborates his suspicion against propositional philosophy, this time with specific reference to Aristotle, in section 516 of *The Will to Power*:

> If, according to Aristotle, the law of contradiction is the most certain of all principles, if it is the ultimate and most basic, upon which every demonstrative proof rests, if the principle of every axiom lies in it; then one should consider all the more rigorously what *presuppositions* already lie at the bottom of it. Either it asserts something about actuality, about being, as if one already knew this from another source; that is, as if opposite attributes *could* not be ascribed to it. Or the proposition means: opposite attributes *should* not be ascribed to it. In that case, logic would be an imperative, not to know the true, but to posit and arrange a world that shall be called true by us.
>
> In short, the question remains open: are the axioms of logic adequate to reality or are they a means and measure for us to *create* reality, the concept "reality," for ourselves?—To affirm the former one would, as already said, have to have a previous knowledge of being—which is certainly not the case. The proposition therefore contains no *criterion of truth*, but an *imperative* concerning what *should* count as true. (WP §516)

Here Nietzsche anticipates Wittgenstein's insight of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* that the propositions of logic do not correspond to anything in the world.[2] Aristotle's belief that the law of contradiction tells us that it is "impossible that contraries should belong to a substance at the same time" (*Metaphysics*, 4 §6), that is, his belief that it tells us something about being, is upbraided for its question-begging. In Aristotle's enquiry being *qua* being is at issue, yet, when he considers the law of contradiction, it is assumed that something is already known about it. If this flaw in the argument rules out the law of contradiction as some-

how corresponding to the world, what, then, is the nature of the law of contradiction? Nietzsche's answer once again embeds the human being in the world as an interested creature. Looked at in this way, the law of contradiction is indeed *a law*, not of nature, but of behavior, an imperative that would police our thinking and speaking and banish, at least beyond the pale of "proper" philosophy, the kind of discourse that might say "Nature is war and peace" or even "one may doubt [...] whether there are any opposites at all" (BGE §2).

Against this regulation, Nietzsche claims for himself the right not to be "denied the stimulus of the enigmatic" (WP §470), the right to be contradictory which surely he avails himself of, and the right to write like a poet. Why does this matter? Again, the need for "something regulatory" (AC §54) is the sign of a personality or a culture in the grip of life-negation.

## Nietzsche against Being/Non-being

Aristotle attempts to meet possible objections to his propositionalist stance which question the presupposition of the being/non-being binary underpinning *Metaphysics* 4. Of particular relevance here is the objection he perceives to be implicit in Heraclitus's doctrine of eternal flux. The main feature of this objection is the notion that "all this world of nature is in movement and that about that which changes no true statement can be made" (*Metaphysics*, 4 §5). Aristotle's initial response is to concur that the doctrine of universal flux would, *if true*, indeed undermine the unity of substances with the result that propositional statements would be meaningless, but then to insist that it is *not* true. In reality, he argues, only the small portion of the universe in our immediate vicinity changes. His task, then, is to persuade the objectors to the propositionalist stance that "there is something whose nature is changeless," and that this is the proper concern of the science of being *qua* being. Later on in *Metaphysics* 4 he argues differently that both rest and change affect most if not all things, which means that many true propositional statements are true for a limited period of time only (4 §8). That Socrates is a man, for example, is no longer true: now we must say that Socrates *was* a man. The "unmoved mover," however, does not change and is therefore that about which *eternally* true propositions can be stated; and on the basis that its eternal nature endows it with the maximum of being, the implication is, it is the proper object of the science of being. And, as "the highest cause" referred to in *Metaphysics* 4 §1 which the science of being must seek out, it clearly also has the maximum of value.

This overall tendency to deny flux, either as to its reality or its value, is attacked by Nietzsche on numerous occasions. Moreover, he takes the Heraclitean line that universal flux undermines the compulsions of logic and therefore the right to dominance of propositional discourse. For example: "In order to think and infer it is necessary to assume beings: logic handles only formulas for what remains the same. That is why this assumption would not be proof of reality: 'beings' are part of our perspective" (WP §517). Not only would logic be undermined if universal flux obtained, it is hard to deny that it *does* obtain. In *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche develops this Heraclitean idea. The senses do not lie, he suggests, in that they present us with a world of stasis, that is, a world of being, as Heraclitus thought. Rather they present a world of becoming. It is our interpretive faculty driven by a near necessity which imposes being on the becoming of the world to make it manageable for us. Heraclitus was right about becoming but wrong about the cause of our falsification of it (TI "Reason" in Philosophy §2).

This championing of becoming over and against being is central to Nietzsche's project of reorienting Western culture on the basis of an evaluation. *The Will to Power* makes this clear: "One must admit nothing that has being—because then becoming would lose its value and actually appear meaningless and superfluous" (WP §708). But why then is Nietzsche hostile to the concept of being when it enables inference and hence all manner of pragmatic goods? A little further on in the same aphorism he tells us:

> Here one realizes that this hypothesis of beings is the source of all world-defamation (—the "better world," the "true world," the "world beyond," the "thing-in-itself"). (WP §708)

Against being, then, as a value and as a metaphysical principle, Nietzsche counterpoises becoming. This he sees as a necessary move in the struggle against life-negating culture. But being is a central part of the propositional architectonic. Without it, the rules of propositional discourse falter, and propositional statements become unsatisfactorily provisional, if not impossible. Propositional dominance is thereby undermined and simultaneously implicated in life-negation.

* * *

Nietzsche is often specific about his antipathy towards Socrates and Plato, but he mentions Aristotle far less. However, he can usefully be understood as being in opposition to Aristotle taken as the arch-

propositionalist. The dependence of propositional discourse for its primacy over other discourses on the concepts of truth as correspondence and falsehood as its lack, on the presupposition of the being/non-being binary, and on the necessity of rules of argument, is outlined in many places in Nietzsche's work, and each of these dependencies is questioned and countered. Often, in these engagements, Aristotle's presence can be detected, even if Nietzsche is not explicit about it. Furthermore, Nietzsche taunts the propositionalists over their need for secure foundations which are unobtainable without question-begging, by their own lights a transgression. Still less can they obtain them, if they are going to think about the human being as a being with interests arising out of her embeddedness in nature and culture, both of which are understood as in a state of flux. The meeting of Aristotle and Nietzsche confronts us with two mutually exclusive but equally "self-evident" propositions (I should say pseudo-propositions), that contradiction is somehow *wrong* and that everything changes. Each can form the starting point for creating a distinct mode of discourse, and each is enmeshed with an orientation toward life.

Now taking up a much broader brush, I want to outline some ramifications of the above discussion. In their ludic, contradictory, poetic, and metaphoric character, Nietzsche's writings clearly exemplify a mode of discourse utterly at odds with the propositional discourse of Aristotle. In their content, they often attempt to undermine crucial aspects of the propositional architectonic by pouring suspicion on them. In this, Nietzsche is indeed the disciple of Dionysus as which he characterizes himself (for example, in the 1886 "Preface" to *The Birth of Tragedy*), for the tendency to dissolve the categories of reason through which Nietzsche conducts one of his lines of attack on propositional discourse has, at its heart, the dissolution of identity into the eternal flux—particularly that of the ego, understood as a kind of proto-identity which is projected outwards to make a world of "things." By contrast, Aristotle's propositional discourse *depends* on individuation—both of the enquiring subject and of substances in general. Thus far it is Apollonian. But we should not think that Nietzsche versus Aristotle is Dionysus versus Apollo. Apollo is, after all, the useful brother of Dionysus, allowing ludic philosophers such as Nietzsche and Heraclitus to give form, however provisional, to the expression of their *enthusiasm*, to their poetry. The opposition here is not that between Apollo and Dionysus, which is an *agon*, rather than a gladiatorial contest heading towards the annihilation of one or other contestant. Aristotle's "sin" is not so much his Apollonianism, as rather his attempt to banish Dionysus, once and for all, through an intensification and refinement of Socratic logicism. The rele-

vant opposition here, then, is that between Dionysus and Socrates/Plato/Christianity, and it parallels that between Nietzsche's ludic philosophy and propositional philosophy. It also corresponds to the tension between the poles of the life-affirmation/life-negation binary by means of which Nietzsche conducts his evaluations.

If it is right that Nietzsche's opposition to propositional discourse is a part of his effort to disrupt the long tradition of life-negation he descries at the heart of our culture and to inscribe life-affirmation in its place, one wonders why commentators are still trying to strip Nietzsche's texts of their poetry, metaphor, and contradiction, in search of hidden "truth claims," as though the former were accidental and the latter essential. This still common maneuver, it seems to me, makes of Nietzsche the kind of propositional philosopher he is, in all phases of his work, trying to undermine.

## Notes

[1] In this paper I refer to the following edition: Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. William David Ross (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1924).

[2] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. David Francis Pears and Brian McGuinness) (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), sections 4.462, 6.1, and 6.11. See also *Twilight of the Idols*, "Reason" in Philosophy, §3.

# *Politeia* 1871: Young Nietzsche on the Greek State

*Martin A. Ruehl*

IN THE WEEKS leading up to the publication of his first major philosophical work, Friedrich Nietzsche seems to have been less concerned about the reception of its controversial arguments than about the design of the title page.[1] This was adorned by a vignette showing not an ivy-crowned Dionysus, as one might have expected, but the unbound Prometheus, or rather—Prometheus at the moment of his liberation. At the Titan's feet, there lies an eagle, rather clumsily drawn, whose curiously long neck has obviously just been pierced by one of Hercules' arrows. It is an ambiguous image that perhaps deserves more attention than it has hitherto received in Nietzsche scholarship.[2]

At first sight, the Prometheus vignette seems to be a more or less straightforward reference to Wagner's program of cultural emancipation and renewal, which Nietzsche propagated quite blatantly in the final chapters of his book. Aeschylus's *Prometheus* was Wagner's favorite Greek tragedy and a model for his *Gesamtkunstwerk* or "total artwork."[3] The figure of the unbound Prometheus, thus, evidently represents the deliverance of art from its humiliating fetters in modern, industrial society, which Wagner had heralded in his essay "Art and Revolution" (1849). Likewise, Nietzsche's comment, in section 10 of *The Birth of Tragedy*, that Prometheus was liberated by "the Herculean power of music" (BT §9), seems to be alluding to Wagner as a kind of *Hercules redivivus* whose musical drama would once again emancipate contemporary European *Kultur*.

But then, for Wagner, who had been deeply influenced by the ideas of Left Hegelianism and Anarcho-Socialism, the redemptive promise of the Prometheus myth clearly included the social sphere. In his 1841 doctoral thesis, the young Marx, who shared many of Wagner's early Left Hegelian views, had invoked Prometheus as "the foremost saint and martyr in the philosopher's calendar" and juxtaposed him and Hermes, the servile god of commerce.[4] Similarly, Wagner denounced Hermes as the fateful symbol of the modern industrial spirit that had enslaved German

art.[5] The cultural revolution that Wagner imagined in his "Aesthetic Writings" ("Kunstschriften") of the Zurich period was also a social revolution directed against a capitalist economy and an oppressive state.

*The Birth of Tragedy*, on the other hand, was almost completely silent on socio-political matters. Or was it? There are, in fact, two passages in the book, where Nietzsche briefly interrupts his lofty "Artistenmetaphysik" (artists' metaphysics) to issue a very topical warning of the perils of a proletarian revolution. The liberal slogans concerning the "dignity of work" and the "dignity of man," he writes, will provoke the contemporary "slave class" of workers to question their ordained fate and to avenge their (in Nietzsche's eyes, necessary) exploitation in a "terrible" revolt (BT §18). Nietzsche elaborated the thoughts expressed here in a short essay (not published until after his death) entitled "Der griechische Staat" ("The Greek State"). Composed early in 1871, this essay offered a quite different interpretation of the Prometheus myth, identifying the "vulture gnawing at the liver of the Promethean patron of culture" with the egalitarian rhetoric of socialists and liberals who refused to accept the "cruel-sounding truth that slavery belongs to the essence of a culture" (KSA 1, 767-68).

Suddenly the iconography of the title vignette appears in a different light. For one thing, Nietzsche referred to the bird at Prometheus's feet as a vulture—contrary to almost all versions of the myth. The vulture, however, was a prominent symbol in the family coat of arms of Wagner, who liked to see himself as the son of his more artistically inclined stepfather, the theatre actor Ludwig Geyer ("Geier" being the German word for "vulture").[6] The vulture-eagle of Nietzsche's vignette bears a striking resemblance to the bird on the title-page of Wagner's memoirs, which Nietzsche was proof-reading in the final months of 1870. Like a picture puzzle, the vignette of *The Birth of Tragedy*, seen from this different angle, all of a sudden reveals the contours of another famous Greek myth. In order to liberate culture, Nietzsche has to liberate himself from his *Über*-father Wagner and the anti-capitalist, egalitarian ideas that the latter continued to embrace twenty-three years after the failed revolutions of 1848-1849.

The ambiguities discernible in the iconography of the title vignette emblematize the larger ideological contradictions and conflicts going on beneath the seemingly apolitical surface of *The Birth of Tragedy*, with its Schopenhauerian metaphysics and its eulogies on Wagner. These contradictions will be explored below in close examination of what one might call the political "subtext" of Nietzsche's first book: the little essay on "The Greek State" mentioned above. A careful, contextualized reading

of this essay throws new light not only on *The Birth of Tragedy*, but also on Nietzsche's larger intellectual formation in the early 1870s.

First of all, "The Greek State" marks an early—and hitherto unnoticed—rupture in Nietzsche's relation to Wagner. Already during his "Tribschen honeymoon" with the composer, as we shall see, Nietzsche called into question the neo-humanist, emancipatory image of the Greek *polis* that formed such a central reference-point in Wagner's anti-capitalist aesthetics. This qualifies the chronology of Nietzsche's break with Wagner and, at the same time, emphasizes the ideological aspects of their fallout, which have hitherto been largely neglected, even by such authorities in the field as Dieter Borchmeyer and Jörg Salaquarda.[7]

The Nietzsche-Wagner break has traditionally been explained in the context of Nietzsche's disillusionment with Bayreuth at the *Ring* rehearsals in 1876; his distaste of Wagner's "genuflection before the Cross" in *Parsifal*; and quite simply, but most convincingly perhaps, his inability to accept Wagner's tutelage any longer as he came "into his own" philosophically. A little less traditional and much less convincing is Martin Gregor-Dellin's recent claim that the break was the consequence of Wagner's "mortally insulting" suggestion, in 1877, that Nietzsche's physical frailty, especially his bad eyesight, was due to excessive onanism.[8] What an analysis of "The Greek State" shows is that beyond the biographical and the boudoir, Nietzsche's break with Wagner had an important political component.

Second, the ideas—about the state, warfare, transgression, culture, the individual—that Nietzsche formulated in "The Greek State" betray the increasing influence of a new, important figure in Nietzsche's intellectual vicinity, one who soon came to rival Wagner: Jacob Burckhardt. Nietzsche scholars, so far, have either prettified or neglected Burckhardt's impact on Nietzsche's political thought. When he is mentioned at all in the relevant literature, he is usually credited with bringing about Nietzsche's critical re-assessment, after 1870, of the German state, indeed of the state as such,[9] and his transformation into a largely antipolitical cosmopolitan free spirit—"the good European." This role assigned to Burckhardt as the guardian angel saving Nietzsche's soul from the nationalist fiends of Tribschen and Bayreuth needs to be reconsidered.[10] "The Greek State" suggests that Burckhardt's impact on Nietzsche's thinking was deeply ambiguous and in many ways radicalized his anti-democratic, anti-modern views.

Third, there are important continuities between the political views Nietzsche expressed in "The Greek State" and the positions he took in his later writings. These continuities call into doubt the image of

Nietzsche as an essentially a-political thinker, concerned primarily with "self-fashioning"—an image projected by, *inter alia*, Walter Kaufmann, Alexander Nehamas, and Martha Nussbaum.[11] They also call into doubt the "indeterminate," endlessly malleable Nietzsche, the ironic Proteus and playful debunker of meta-narratives, presented by such postmodernist critics as Jacques Derrida and Gilles Deleuze.[12] As will be shown below, Nietzsche, in the different phases of his philosophical development, consistently upheld a number of deeply anti-egalitarian, illiberal views—views that he first voiced in "The Greek State." These anti-egalitarian continuities in his thought also make it very difficult, in my eyes, to appropriate him—as such political theorists as Mark Warren and Bonnie Honig have recently done[13]—as the prophet of a new "agonal," radical form of democracy.

* * *

Even though it contains the clearest and most elaborate statement of Nietzsche's political thinking in the early 1870s, the essay on "The Greek State" remains a little-known text,[14] so a brief summary of its central arguments seems in order. Drawing on Plato's *Republic*, Nietzsche glorifies the ancient Greek *polis* as an anti-socialist, anti-liberal archetype: a hierarchically structured, cruelly oppressive society, whose cultural excellence rested on the relentless exploitation of slave labor. Nietzsche leaves little doubt that he considers similar forms of oppression and exploitation to be necessary preconditions for the cultural regeneration of contemporary Europe: "In order for there to be a broad, deep fertile soil for the development of art," he writes, "the overwhelming majority has to be slavishly subjected to life's necessity in the service of the minority" (KSA 1, 767). Nietzsche identifies this minority as a tiny elite of great individuals endowed with artistic genius. To produce and protect such individuals in a caste-like society is the task of the state.

It is the state, according to Nietzsche, which overcomes the natural *bellum omnium contra omnes* (Nietzsche actually uses the Hobbesian phrase here) and "forces huge masses into such a strong cohesion that the chemical separation of society, with its pyramidal structure, has to take place" (KSA 1, 769). The state, with its "iron clamps," as Nietzsche puts it, both restrains and externalizes the violent instincts of its subjects, thereby establishing domestic peace, while perpetuating military conflict with other states. The latter, in Nietzsche's eyes, is not less important for cultural production than the former. Only out of a "war-like society,"

Nietzsche argues, will "the radiant blossoms of genius sprout forth" (KSA 1, 772).

Nietzsche concludes his essay by paying homage—and this is a rare moment indeed in his oeuvre—to Plato, who "through poetic intuition" grasped the "actual aim of the state" in his *Republic,* "the Olympian existence and constantly renewed creation and preparation of genius" (KSA 1, 776). Nietzsche explains the fact that Plato actually conceived this genius, not in terms of artistic excellence, but of wisdom and knowledge, by ascribing these judgments to Socrates, whose rejection of art Plato, "struggling against himself," adopted as his own (KSA 1, 776-77).

These somewhat idiosyncratic reflections on the Greek *polis* belonged to an early draft version, about a hundred and twenty pages long, of *The Birth of Tragedy*, entitled "The Origin and Aim of Tragedy" ("Ursprung und Ziel der Tragödie") (KGW 3.5, 142-55). On his return from a long vacation in Lugano (12 February–2 April 1871), Nietzsche stopped at Tribschen, Wagner's Swiss exile near Lucerne (3–8 April 1871), where "The Origin and Aim of Tragedy" was read and discussed with Cosima and Richard. Nothing is known about the content of these discussions and their impact on Nietzsche's subsequent revisions of the manuscript. But when he reworked "The Origin and Aim" for publication in April/May of that year, Nietzsche excluded the sections on the socio-political background to Greek tragedy in their entirety. This purged version of the manuscript was subsequently incorporated into *The Birth of Tragedy*, where political context, as we have seen, played but a marginal role.[15]

We can only guess why Nietzsche excluded these "political" sections from the manuscript, but it seems highly likely that he did so at the request of Wagner. The Master (as Wagner liked to be called) was the only figure in Nietzsche's intellectual vicinity at the time who was powerful enough to override his authorial intentions in such a way. That Nietzsche had intended the socio-political sphere to be an integral part of his analysis of ancient Greek civilization is evidenced by a number of notes in Nietzsche's unpublished papers, the *Nachlass.* Between the winter of 1869 and the spring of 1871, Nietzsche jotted down dozens of outlines for his planned book on Greek tragedy, which consistently included chapter headings on slavery and the state.[16] The importance he attached to this part of the book is further underlined by the fact that he carefully excerpted the relevant passages from "The Origin and Aim" in April 1871, labeling the new excerpt a "Fragment of an extended version of *The Birth of Tragedy.*"[17] This fragment was almost identical with the essay on "The Greek State" that Nietzsche offered as a present to Cosima Wagner in December 1872, as the third of the "Five Prefaces to Five

Unwritten Books": a luxurious, leather-bound manuscript in Nietzsche's best hand-writing.[18]

Nicely packaged though it was, Nietzsche's present did not go down well in Tribschen. On 1 January 1873 an irritated Cosima noted in her diary that Nietzsche's manuscript was "not amusing at all" and revealed a "clumsy abrasiveness" (*ungeschickte Schroffheit*).[19] There followed a three-week hiatus in the correspondence between the Master and his self-proclaimed disciple—something quite unusual during the halcyon days of their friendship in the early 1870s.

What exactly was so "abrasive" about this essay in Wagner's eyes? First, and perhaps foremost, "The Greek State" drew the composer's attention to the fundamental differences between his own conception of the *polis* and that of his supposed devotee and mouthpiece, Nietzsche. Despite his turn to Schopenhauerian pessimism in the 1850s, Wagner never really abandoned the idealized image of classical Greece projected by Winckelmann, Schiller, and Humboldt. Like these earlier neo-humanists, Wagner regarded the republican city-state of the fifth-century BCE as the necessary background to the moral and cultural perfection of Greek antiquity: a model of complete, harmonious social integration, a "free association of artistic individuals" (*freie künstlerische Genossenschaft*), as he called it in his essay on "The Artwork of the Future" (1849).[20] Much more emphatically than the neo-humanists, however, Wagner associated this cultural and moral perfection with the system of direct democracy practiced (as he saw it) in Periclean Athens. The principal means by which democratic Athens had achieved its high level of social integration, however, was cultural, not political: through the public performance of tragedy. In "Art and Revolution," Wagner described such a performance. "The Athenians," he wrote, "came together from the state assembly, from the courts of law, from the countryside, from the ships, from the camps of war [...] and filled the amphitheatre with thirty thousand men, to watch the performance of the most profound tragedy, the Prometheus, to gather before this mightiest artwork, to comprehend themselves and their own activity, to form the closest unity with their own essence, their corporation, their god."[21] Like the young Hegel in the early 1790s, Wagner conceived Greek tragedy as a popular festival (*Volksfest*) and an essentially democratic institution.

In all of these respects, then, Greek civilization represented an ideal for Wagner, a model and a potential remedy for the fragmented, alienated, and oppressed people of contemporary Europe. It only had one flaw in his eyes: the institution of slavery. The division between free man and slave, according to Wagner, was the reason for the decline of Athens

and—as he put it in decidedly Left Hegelian fashion—"the fateful hinge of world history."[22]

As we have seen, Nietzsche begged to differ. In fact, the conception of the *polis* as set out in "The Greek State" was almost the exact opposite of Wagner's. Wagner's ideal *polis* was classical Athens; Nietzsche, by contrast, praised Sparta and the military ethos expressed in its Lycurgian constitution. For Wagner, the *polis* functioned according to Aristotle's model republic, where citizens rule and are being ruled in turn; for Nietzsche, the model was Plato's aristocratic, coercive state. The cultural activities within the *polis*, according to Wagner, aimed at social integration and the creation of harmonious, ethical (*sittlich*) citizens; according to Nietzsche, the marvel of Greek culture depended on strict social segregation and the preservation of aggressive, competitive instincts within the population. Wagner considered slavery as a profoundly disturbing, but ultimately contingent, aspect of Athenian culture; Nietzsche regarded slavery as an essential feature of Greek civilization: the clearest expression of its inhuman, oppressive character, and the sine qua non of its artistic achievements.

The arguments developed in "The Greek State," then, possessed a considerable anti-Wagnerian force. For Nietzsche knew exactly where Wagner stood on the *polis*, from the early "Aesthetic Writings" of the Zurich period (which he had studied in 1870/1871) as well as from his conversations with the Wagners at Tribschen. The partial transcripts of these conversations in Cosima's diaries reveal the extent to which Wagner, in the 1860s and 1870s, continued to cherish the old philhellenist image of the *polis* he had expressed in 1849. Nietzsche, therefore, was taking issue with positions that were still central to Wagner's thinking.

However, "The Greek State" called into question not only Wagner's conception of the *polis*, but his politics as such. Nietzsche had interlarded his eulogy on Greek slavery with polemical attacks on socialism and its—in his eyes—preposterous insistence on the "dignity of work." He labeled the socialists "accursed tempters," because they had, as he put it, "destroyed the prelapsarian innocence of the slaves by handing them the fruit of the tree of knowledge" (KSA 1, 765-66). As proof-reader of Wagner's memoirs and copyist of the 1848 *Ur*-text of *Siegfried*,[23] Nietzsche was, of course, well aware of the composer's early anarcho-socialist leanings, his indebtedness, since the Paris years (1839-1842) to the thought of Saint-Simon, Fourier, and especially Proudhon, his participation in the Dresden riots of 1849, and his lasting friendship with the radical democrat and revolutionary August Röckel. In this respect, too, Wagner's thinking was characterized by a much higher degree of

continuity than some of his more conservative biographers, such as Curt von Westernhagen, would allow.[24] Despite various official retractions, especially for the sake of his royal patron Ludwig II, Wagner remained faithful to the basics of his early revolutionary thought, especially the ideal of a non-oppressive, non-exploitative society.[25] His early Rousseauian notion, first expressed in "The Artwork of the Future," that "we are all human beings and therefore equal,"[26] still permeated the later, the so-called "Regenerational Writings" of the early 1880s.[27] *The Ring*, begun in 1848 and completed in 1874, stands as a powerful testimony to his continuing anti-capitalist stance. The *Festspiele* at Bayreuth were conceived in a similar spirit: as popular festivals, "Volksfeste"; and the "Volk" Wagner defined as "all those who experience hardship [*Noth*]."[28] The proletariat, for him, evidently belonged to the alienated masses that were to be redeemed by the *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

Nietzsche's "Greek State," by contrast, explicitly denounced the egalitarian ideas of the French Enlightenment and the French Revolution as "completely un-Germanic" and "Romanically flat" (KSA 1, 773). Instead, it called for a radicalized form of capitalist exploitation, that is, a capitalism without the comforting rhetoric of "human rights." Since he depicted the slaves as quasi-ontologically different from the masters/artists, there was no sense—even though Nietzsche did not spell it out—that the former would in any way profit from, let alone participate in, the cultural productions of the latter. Indeed, as subjective agents, the slaves mattered only insofar as they posed a threat to the artistic achievements of that "small number of Olympian men": "If culture were left to the discretion of the people," Nietzsche speculated, the result would be "iconoclastic destruction"—"the cry of pity" of the oppressed masses, as he put it, would "tear down the walls of culture" (KSA 1, 768).

With this last image, Nietzsche was probably alluding to the rising of the Paris Commune, an event that strikingly brought to the fore the political differences between himself and Wagner.[29] At the end of May 1871, as Thiers's government troops were quelling the rising of the Commune in the infamous "Week of Blood," bourgeois newspapers around Europe published (greatly exaggerated) reports about acts of vandalism and arson attacks by the *fédérés*. The—as it turned out, spurious—news that the retreating Communards had set the Louvre on fire, and thus destroyed its precious artworks, threw Nietzsche in an almost existential crisis. In his letter of 27 May 1871 to his fatherly friend and academic superior in Basel, Wilhelm Vischer-Bilfinger, he explained why he had to cancel his lectures at the university the previous day: "The news of the past few days," he wrote, "was so terrible that I was in an unbearable mood. What

is one's significance as a scholar in face of such earthquakes of culture! [...] This is the worst day of my life" (KSB 3, 195).[30]

Arriving in Tribschen on 28 May, he told Wagner, in similar terms, that his entire existence as a student of classical culture had been rendered worthless by this act of proletarian iconoclasm.[31] Wagner listened with dry eyes. An old associate of Bakunin (who was rumored to be amongst the arsonists), he made it quite clear to his youthful friend that his own sympathies lay with the Communards.[32] As for the preservation of Europe's great cultural legacy: "If you are unable to paint pictures again," Wagner declared, "you do not deserve to possess them."[33]

Read against the backdrop of the Paris Commune and in the context of Wagner's *Zurich Writings*, Nietzsche's Christmas gift emerges as a veiled gesture of self-assertion, an oblique declaration of independence from his Master. And this, at a time when he supposedly still worked as a "camel" (to use an image from *Zarathustra*) in the service of Wagner. "The Greek State" thus qualifies the traditional chronologies of the Nietzsche-Wagner relationship, which posit the first rifts between both men around 1874/1875. But "The Greek State" also shows that Nietzsche's fall-out with Wagner had a political dimension. In most of the critical literature on the break, politics only come into play insofar as Wagner's anti-Semitism and nationalism are concerned. Nietzsche's critique of Wagner in the mid-1870s, accordingly, appears as that of a progressivist, cosmopolitan free spirit. As our reading of "The Greek State" suggests, however, this critique also contained a decidedly anti-modern, reactionary element.

Finally, "The Greek State" provides an important new interpretive perspective on *The Birth of Tragedy*, by highlighting the political implications of Nietzsche's Schopenhauerian terms, most notably his call for a rebirth of the tragic, pessimistic world-view of the Greeks.[34] For the latter-day industrial slaves in contemporary Europe, Greek pessimism obviously means acquiescence in their lot and renunciation of all "optimistic" attempts to change their social being. Perhaps the best way to understand Nietzsche's "tragic" message to the workers is to read it as an inversion of Marx's description of the emancipatory purpose of criticism in the *Critique of Hegel's "Philosophy of Right"* (1844). The purpose of criticism, Marx argued here, was to pluck "the imaginary flowers from the chain—not in order that man shall bear the chain without caprice or consolation, but so that he shall cast off the chain and pluck the living flowers."[35] Nietzsche evidently wanted to see the chain borne *without* consolation. For the masters, on the other hand, Nietzsche's tragic

world-view means the “heroic” determination not to succumb to pity or weakness in face of the “terrifying” facts of an exploitative society.

In the new foreword to the 1886 re-edition of the book, Nietzsche defined the central argument of *The Birth of Tragedy* as a repudiation of “all the known prejudices of our democratic age,” an attack on “the great optimistic-rationalist-utilitarian victory” and on “democracy, its political contemporary” (BT Attempt at a Self-Criticism §4). Nietzsche’s retrospective self-interpretations are generally to be taken with a grain of salt, but “The Greek State” reveals that there was indeed a profoundly anti-democratic message inscribed in *The Birth of Tragedy*, which was quite at odds with Wagner’s egalitarian, communitarian ideals. While officially propagating Wagner’s cause, Nietzsche had in fact already begun to tread new paths that would soon lead him away from Bayreuth and the artwork of the future.

* * *

His principal guide on these paths was Jacob Burckhardt. The central new concepts that Nietzsche developed in “The Greek State”—concerning the masses as a threat to Western civilization, the state as protector of “Kultur,” the relationship between culture and violence, and the great individual—were Burckhardtian concepts. Let us consider these concepts in turn, and examine how Burckhardt’s impact on Nietzsche’s political thinking made itself felt in this early essay.

The threat of a proletarian revolution was, as we have seen, only hinted at in *The Birth of Tragedy*, but played a prominent role in “The Greek State.” As a student in Leipzig (1865-1867), Nietzsche had observed the emergence of the German workers’ movement with critical interest.[36] Once he moved to Basel, however, this critical interest turned into outright rejection and anxiety, an almost paranoid fear of the “great slave and rabble rebellion,” as Zarathustra put it (Z IV 8; cf. BGE §46). Basel was a city rife with social conflict. Throughout 1869 and 1870, there were massive strikes in the local textile factories, and the small ruling elite of the city felt increasingly besieged by a rapidly growing and more and more politicized working population. In September 1869, four months after Nietzsche had given his inaugural lecture, the First International held its Fourth Congress in Basel. Amongst the attendants was Mikhail Bakunin.

Nietzsche came to see these events through the eyes of the Basel patricians, with whom he liked to associate: Wilhelm Vischer-Bilfinger, Johann Jacob Bachofen, and, most importantly, Jacob Burckhardt, whom

Nietzsche greatly admired and to whom he quickly developed a strong attachment.[37] Nietzsche, it seems, quickly embraced Burckhardt's apocalyptic visions of an impending proletarian revolution and his concerns about the process of become a mass society as a permanent threat to *Bildung* and *Kultur*. His responses to the social question as it posed itself in Basel in the early 1870s, and his views on the politics of the day were remarkably similar to Burckhardt's, as his published and unpublished writings as well as his correspondence during the Basel years (that is, 1869-1879) reveal. Like Burckhardt, Nietzsche rejected universal suffrage, the shortening of working hours (in Basel from twelve to eleven hours per day), the abolition of child labor, and the broadening of humanistic education, in particular the establishment of "educational associations" (*Bildungsvereine*) for workers.[38] As he put it in the notes for his lectures *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions*, given in 1872, "universal education is the stage prior to communism [...] the condition for communism" (KSA 7, 8[57], 243). Pauperization he regarded as a problem only insofar as it would prevent the worker "and his descendants" from continuing to work "for our descendants" (HA II Wanderer and his Shadow §286).

More important than these specific political issues, perhaps, were the larger concerns about "culture and anarchy" which Nietzsche gradually adopted from Burckhardt and which appear as a *leitmotiv*, for the first time, in "The Greek State." Again, the Paris Commune appears to have played a role in this process. The experience of the Commune, which had highlighted, as we have seen, Nietzsche's growing political estrangement from Wagner, brought him closer to Burckhardt. Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche recalls that on 27 May 1871, when the news of the Louvre fire reached Basel, Nietzsche immediately went looking for Burckhardt in St. Alban Vorstadt, to share his grief with the older colleague. Burckhardt, however, had already left his home to visit Nietzsche in Schützengraben. Eventually they met in Nietzsche's house where, as Elisabeth tells us, they discussed the fate of European culture—for about an hour or so, pausing from time to time to heave deep sighs.[39]

Whatever we make of Elisabeth's report, it seems that both men were united in their reaction to the Commune, and that Nietzsche followed Burckhardt in interpreting this event as an onslaught on the cultural continuity of *Alteuropa*, another manifestation of the destructive energies first unleashed by the French Revolution. In a letter of 2 July 1871, Burckhardt recalled "the terrible days [...] a month behind us [...] Yes, petroleum in the cellars of the Louvre and the flames in other palaces are an expression of what the Philosopher [i.e., Schopenhauer] calls 'the will

to live'; it is the last will and testament of mad fiends desiring to make a great impression on the world [...] The great harm was begun in the last century, mainly through Rousseau, with his doctrine of the goodness of human nature."[40] This association of Rousseau with the revolutionary movements of the nineteenth century became crucial for Nietzsche's later discussions of socialism and anarchism. It was in "The Greek State" that he made this connection for the first time.

That the state should function as a protector of culture was another central thought in "The Greek State." At first sight, it does not seem clear how Burckhardt, the great critic of state power, should have influenced Nietzsche in this respect. However, at a central point in his discussion of the *polis*, Nietzsche himself indicates his indebtedness to Burckhardt. Following his defense of slavery, Nietzsche states that violence belongs to the essence of culture as much as to the essence of power, which is "always evil" (KSA 1, 768). This was an allusion to Burckhardt's dictum, in the lectures *On the Study of History*, that "power is in itself evil."[41] We know that Nietzsche attended these lectures in the winter semester of 1870/1871, that is, just before he left for Lugano in February, and that he was deeply impressed by them (see his letter to Carl von Gersdorff of 7 November 1870 [KSB 3, 155]). But how does Burckhardt's thesis about state power as inherently "evil" fit into Nietzsche's essay, which calls for an all-powerful, coercive state?

To answer this question, we have to look a little more closely at Burckhardt's views on the state, which are, in fact, hardly as negative as they are often made out to be. When Burckhardt says that power is always evil, he is not rejecting political domination as such, but the Hegelian notion of the state as an embodiment of *Sittlichkeit* or morality. For Burckhardt, the origins of the State do not lie in any contractual agreement. "As far as we can see," he observes in his lectures, "violence is always first." There is but one relative justification for state power in Burckhardt's eyes—and that is "the necessity of achieving great objectives in foreign affairs, the preservation and protection of cultures which would otherwise perish and the promotion of certain sections of the people, themselves given to passivity."[42]

Burckhardt conceived this passive section of the people as a tiny elite of scholars and artists, whose cultural productivity depended on their elevated, privileged status vis-à-vis the great mass of common people. Such a hierarchical structure of society could only be upheld by state authority. Hence Burckhardt's claim that "under a durable tyranny, the arts and sciences thrive as well as or even better than in a republic; Greek culture would hardly have reached its full height without such [...] institu-

tions; even Athens needed its Peisistratean age."[43] The parallels to Nietzsche's essay on "The Greek State" are obvious and need not be spelled out. Burckhardt's comment on the cultural debt of Athens to the tyrant Peisistratos re-appears almost verbatim in Nietzsche's (never completed) fifth *Untimely Meditation*, "We Philologists." "Without the tyrant Peisistratos," Nietzsche muses here, "the Athenians would have never had tragedies" (KSA 8, 6[29], 109). This nexus between cultural excellence and political domination was a central thought in the essay on "The Greek State."

A third way in which the arguments in "The Greek State" reflect Burckhardt's influence concerns the *agonal* conception of Greek civilization, and the idea that war functions as a stimulus for culture. These were two important arguments in Burckhardt's lectures on "Greek Cultural History," which he first held in 1872, but the content of which he had already discussed at length with Nietzsche in 1871.[44] These discussions with Burckhardt were, again, reflected in "The Greek State," where Nietzsche described, with obvious relish, the Greek *agon* as "the bloody jealousy of one town for another, one party for another, this murderous greed of those petty wars, the tiger-like triumph over the corpse of the slain enemy" (KSA 1, 771). For Nietzsche, as for Burckhardt, these violent, destructive conflicts were catalysts for great cultural production, preparing the soil for the growth of genius. The exact connection between the dangerous, destructive forces of war and the creation of great art remains a little obscure, both in Burckhardt and in Nietzsche. Nietzsche, significantly, speaks of a "mysterious connection between state and art, political greed and artistic creation, battlefield and work of art" in "The Greek State" (KSA 1, 772).

Ten years earlier, Burckhardt, in his *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860), had detected a similar mysterious connection between the violent power struggles of the small tyrannical states of Northern Italy and the great cultural flowering of the Renaissance. Raphael's *Stanza d'Eliodoro*, he speculated, was inspired by the bloody street fighting between two warring aristocratic factions in Perugia in 1497.[45] Nietzsche studied (and plagiarized) Burckhardt's book on the Renaissance early in 1871,[46] in other words: just at the time that he was writing the first draft of "The Greek State." His idea of a causal relation between "artwork and battlefield" echoes Burckhardt's speculations in the *Civilization*.

Just as Nietzsche had acknowledged his debt to Burckhardt's lectures *On the Study of History* by quoting his dictum to the effect that "power is always evil," he paid homage to Burckhardt's book on the Renaissance by comparing the extreme agonal urge of the Greeks to that of "the men

of the Renaissance in Italy" (KSA 1, 771). This is important because the latter work, alongside the lectures *On Historical Greatness* (which Nietzsche also attended in the winter of 1870/1871), provided a crucial historiographical reference-point for Nietzsche's positive revaluation of the individual.

The second section of Burckhardt's *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, entitled "The Development of the Individual," was a paean to the emancipation of the individual from the various collective fetters that had restrained him in the Middle Ages. This, as it turns out, was the most heavily marked section in Nietzsche's copy of the book.[47]

If *The Birth of Tragedy* seemed predominantly concerned with the communitarian aspects of the Dionysian and depicted the individualizing force of the Apollonian as a mere illusion, "The Greek State" eulogized the great individual, both as artistic and as military genius. In this respect, Nietzsche's essay points to the "monumentalizing" (to use a concept of the second *Untimely Meditation*) representations of great historical figures (for example, Schopenhauer, Goethe, Napoleon, Friedrich II) in the later writings. Such concepts as "the great man" or "the great historical individual" quickly replaced Schopenhauer's metaphysical notions of will and representation, which lay at the heart of *The Birth of Tragedy*. It seems no exaggeration, therefore, to say that it was Burckhardt who awoke Nietzsche from his Schopenhauerian slumber.

A closer examination of these four themes in "The Greek State"—the fear of the masses, the notion of the state as protector of culture, the glorification of contest and war, the emphasis on the great individual—shows how powerful, how revolutionary Burckhardt's impact was on Nietzsche's thinking in the early 1870s. It also shows, however, that Burckhardt was not just—as he is often depicted—the Goethean father figure who helped Nietzsche to liberate himself from the neo-Romantic mythologies of Wagnerism. More than anyone else, it seems, Burckhardt led the young Nietzsche away from the emancipatory, humanist legacy of German philhellenism and towards a new kind of "aesthetic immoralism" as well as a fundamentally anti-democratic conception of politics and culture. If, to return to the iconography of the title vignette one more time, we want to credit Burckhardt with handing Nietzsche-Hercules the conceptual weapons to slay the Wagner-Vulture, we should acknowledge that these weapons were essentially double-edged.

* * *

So "The Greek State" was a transitional text with regard to Nietzsche's intellectual re-alignment in the early 1870s "from Wagner to Burckhardt," But it was also a seminal text. There were important continuities between the politics laid out in the early essay on "The Greek State" and those of his later writings. The glorification of war and the warrior ethos, the belief in the necessity of slavery for culture, and the notion of the creative genius as the product of a hierarchically structured society—these were ideas, first formulated in "The Greek State," that Nietzsche consistently upheld in his subsequent works. Let us briefly consider the place of these ideas in Nietzsche's oeuvre, one after the other.

First, war. On a purely rhetorical level, "war" is central motif in Nietzsche's writings. Military metaphors abound, especially in his last books. There Nietzsche describes himself as "dynamite" (EH Why I am a Destiny §1) and compares his philosophizing to his alleged activity as a gunner during the Franco-Prussian War (in fact, he was a medical orderly). On a more philosophical level, there is Nietzsche's fascination with Heraclitus's fragment that "war is the father of all things," which he invokes as a motto in *The Gay Science* (GS §92).[48] The warrior ethos is a defining characteristic of the "noble men" in *On the Genealogy of Morals* (GM I §5). In the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche also describes the birth of the state as an act of violent conquest—in terms strongly reminiscent of the relevant passage in "The Greek State": the "blond beasts of prey," invoked, notoriously, in the second part of the *Genealogy* (GM II §17), seem to be relatives of the "tiger-like warriors" of the earlier essay.

Second, the necessity of slavery. Again, this is a view that Nietzsche continues to embrace right up to 1888.[49] Even when he makes a temporary—and, it would seem, superficial—truce with socialism in *Human, All Too Human* (1878), he continues to envision a form of slavery, contemplating a "massive import of barbarian people from Asia and Africa" so that, as he puts it, "the uncivilized world continually serves the civilized world" (KSA 8, 25[1], 482). In *Daybreak*, he singles out China as a particularly well-suited source of immigrant workers, because of its great supply of "industrious ants" (D §206). He bewails the end of slavery in the United States after the Civil War and depicts the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as a misguided disciple of Rousseau (KSA 11, 25[178], 61). In *Beyond Good and Evil*, he argues that exploitation belongs to the essence of every society: it is an "*Ur*-fact of history" and "a basic organic function" (BGE §259).

Third, finally, and most important: "Rangordnung" (hierarchy or rank-ordering). This notion informs Nietzsche's radically inegalitarian plans for educational reform in 1872, as laid out in the lectures *On the*

*Future of Our Educational Institutions.* It is intimately connected with his belief, expressed in the second and third *Untimely Meditations*, that "the goal of humanity lies in its highest specimens" (KSA 1 §6). To achieve this goal, society has to be hierarchically structured, like the caste-society described in the Laws of Manu, which he holds up as an example for European civilization in *The Antichrist.* "A high culture," he remarks there, "is a pyramid"—an image that he had already used in "The Greek State" (AC §57; cf. KSA 1, 769). The notion of rank-ordering also informs Nietzsche's ethical doctrines: for instance, the claim, made in *Beyond Good and Evil*, that there are different moralities for different types of human beings (BGE §221). In a fragment of 1888, Nietzsche even goes so far as to identify his entire philosophical project with the notion of rank-ordering: "My philosophy," he writes, "aims at an ordering of rank, not at an individualistic morality" (WP §287; KSA 12, 7[6], 280).

Thus "The Greek State" not only shows Nietzsche at an important ideological crossroads, but also highlights a considerable continuity in his political thinking. It draws attention to a normative base underlying his ethico-political teachings, and thereby qualifies recent claims about the irreducibly protean character of his thought. In writing about the Greeks, Nietzsche formulated some of his most central—and some of his most disturbing—ideas.

## Notes

[1] See Nietzsche's letters to Carl von Gersdorff of 18 November and 23 December 1871, to Erwin Rohde of 23 November and 231 December 1871, and to Ernst Wilhelm Fritzsch of 27 November 1871 (KSB 3, 242-44, 259, 247, 255-56, 250).

[2] The only extensive discussion is Reinhard Brandt, "Die Titelvignette von Nietzsches *Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik", Nietzsche-Studien* 20 (1991): 314-28; but see the perceptive comments in Werner Ross, *Der ängstliche Adler: Friedrich Nietzsches Leben* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1980), 287.

[3] See Richard Wagner, *Mein Leben: 1813-1868*, ed. Martin Gregor-Dellin (Munich: List Verlag, 1963), 356; and Richard Wagner, *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen*, 10 vols (Leipzig: E. W. Fritzsch, 1871-1883), vol. 3, 15.

[4] Karl Marx, *Selected Writings*, ed. David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1977), 13.

[5] Wagner, *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen*, 23-24.

[6] Wagner, *Mein Leben*, 10-11.

[7] See Dieter Borchmeyer and Jörg Salaquarda (eds), *Nietzsche und Wagner: Stationen einer epochalen Begegnung* (Frankfurt and Leipzig: Insel, 1994), 1273-1386.

[8] See Martin Gregor-Dellin, *Richard Wagner: Sein Leben, sein Werk, sein Jahrhundert* (Munich: R. Piper, 1980), 748-59.

[9] See, for instance, Carl Pletsch, *Young Nietzsche: Becoming a Genius* (New York: Free P., 1991), 111-12.

[10] Ross, *Der ängstlicher Adler*, 313.

[11] See Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, 4th ed, (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1974); Alexander Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard UP, 1985); Martha Nussbaum, "Pity and Mercy: Nietzsche's Stoicism," in Richard Schacht (ed.), *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality: Essays on Nietzsche's "On the Genealogy of Morals"* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: U of California P, 1994), 139-67.

[12] See Jacques Derrida, *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*, trans. Barbara Harlow (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1979), and Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia UP, 1983).

[13] See Mark Warren, *Nietzsche and Political Thought* (Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT P, 1988), and Bonnie Honig, *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993).

[14] The only extensive study is Barbara von Reibnitz, "Nietzsche's 'Griechischer Staat' und das deutsche Kaiserreich," *Der altsprachliche Unterricht* 3 (1987): 76-89.

[15] See Barbara von Reibnitz, *Ein Kommentar zu Friedrich Nietzsche, "Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik" (Kap. 1-12)* (Stuttgart and Weimar: Metzler, 1992), 43-46.

[16] See, for example, KSA 7, 3[73], 5[42], 5[95], 7[85], 79-80, 103-04, 119, 158.

[17] "Fragment einer erweiterten Form der 'Geburt der Tragödie'" (KSA 7, 10[1], 333-49).

[18] The manuscript is preserved in the Goethe-Schiller-Archiv (Stiftung Weimarer Klassik), Weimar. A facsimile edition appeared in 1943 as Friedrich Nietzsche, *Fünf Vorreden zu fünf ungeschriebenen Büchern* (Berlin: W. Keiper, 1943).

[19] Cosima Wagner, *Die Tagebücher*, ed. Martin Gregor-Dellin and Dietrich Mack, 2 vols (Munich and Zurich: Piper, 1976-1977), vol. 1, 623.

[20] Wagner, *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen*, 198.

[21] Wagner, *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen*, 15; cf. 23.

[22] Wagner, *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen*, 33.

[23] See Cosima Wagner, *Tagebücher*, vol. 1, 401.

[24] See Curt von Westernhagen, *Wagner*, 2nd ed.(Zurich and Freiburg: Atlantis-Musikbuch-Verlag, 1979).

[25] For these continuities in Wagner's political thinking, see Udo Bermbach, *Der Wahn des Gesamtkunstwerks: Richard Wagners politisch-ästhetische Utopie* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1994).

[26] Wagner, *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen*, vol. 3, 41.

[27] See his qualification, in "Heldentum und Christentum" (1881), of Gobineau's racial theories (vol. 3, 276-77).

[28] *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen*, vol. 3, 59.

[29] Note that Nietzsche completed "The Origin and Aim of Tragedy," which contained the original version of "The Greek State," in the last week of March 1871, that is, after the Commune had been established on 18 March 1871. On Nietzsche's reception of the Commune, see Marc Sautet, *Nietzsche et la Commune* (Paris: Le Sycomore, 1981).

[30] Compare with the comments of Nietzsche's friend, Rohde, in his letter to Nietzsche of 18 May 1871 (KGB 2.2, 376-77).

[31] See Cosima Wagner, *Tagebücher*, vol. 1, 392. For Wagner's sympathy with the Communards, see also Cosima Wagner's letter to Nietzsche of 2 June 1871 (KGB 2.2, 382); cf. Cosima Wagner, *Tagebücher*, vol. 1, 181.

[32] Wagner, *Mein Leben*, 397-402.

[33] Cosima Wagner, *Tagebücher*, vol. 1, 392.

[34] See Hubert Cancik, *Nietzsches Antike: Vorlesung* (Stuttgart and Weimar: Metzler, 1995), 61-62.

[35] Marx, *Selected Writings*, 64.

[36] See Ross, *Der ängstliche Adler*, 145-49.

[37] The two best accounts of Nietzsche's relationship to Burckhardt still are Edgar Salin, *Jacob Burckhardt und Nietzsche* (Basel: Verlag der Universitätsbibliothek, 1938), and Alfred Wilhelm Otto von Martin, *Nietzsche und Burckhardt: Zwei geistige Welten im Dialog*, 4th ed.(Munich: Erasmus-Verlag, 1947). See also Curt Paul Janz, *Friedrich Nietzsche: Biographie*, 3 vols (Munich and Vienna: Carl Hanser, 1978), vol. 1, 321-26.

[38] See F. Naake, *Friedrich Nietzsches Verhältnis zu wichtigen sozialen und politischen Bewegungen seiner Zeit*, Diss. Jena 1986, 61, 86, 89.

[39] See Ross, *Der ängstliche Adler*, 312-13.

[40] Jacob Burckhardt, *The Letters of Jacob Burckhardt*, ed. and trans. Alexander Dru (Westport, CT: Greenwood P, 1975), 147.

[41] Jacob Burckhardt, *Über das Studium der Geschichte*, ed. Ernst Ziegler and Peter F. Ganz (Munich: Beck, 1982), 260.

[42] Burckhardt, *Über das Studium der Geschichte*, 257, 259. Cf. Nietzsche's claim, in "The Greek State," that "power gives the first right, and there is no right which is not fundamentally presumption, usurpation, and violence" (KSA 1, 770).

[43] Burckhardt, *Über das Studium der Geschichte*, 297.

[44] See Nietzsche's letter to Rohde of 21 December 1871 (KSB 3, 257); and Otto Crusius, *Erwin Rohde: Ein biographischer Versuch* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1902), 268. On Burckhardt's exchanges with Nietzsche on the Greeks, see also Felix Stähelin's introduction to Jacob Burckhardt, *Griechische Kulturgeschichte*, ed. Felix Stähelin, 4 vols (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1930), vol. 1, xxiii-xxix.

[45] Jacob Burckhardt, *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien: Ein Versuch*, ed. Konrad Hoffmann (Stuttgart: A. Kröner, 1988), 23-24.

[46] See his lecture notes for the "Encyclopaedie der klass[ischen] Philologie," held in the summer semester of 1871 (KGW 2.3, 347-53), which contains numerous unidentified excerpts from Burckhardt's *Kultur der Renaissance*, 138-40.

[47] In fact, Nietzsche possessed two copies of Burckhardt's book: both are preserved at the Anna Amalia Bibliothek, Stiftung Weimarer Klassik, Weimar. For Nietzsche's markings see Sign. C482a, especially 106-10.

[48] Burckhardt, *Über das Studium der Geschichte*, 344.

[49] See Ingo Christians, "Die Notwendigkeit der Sklaverei: Eine Provokation in Nietzsches Philosophie," *Nietzscheforschung* 4 (1998): 51-83.

# Nietzsche and Democritus: The Origins of Ethical Eudaimonism

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THE CENTRAL IDEA of this article emerges from my recent work on what a more thorough appreciation of Greek skepticism can contribute to our understanding of Nietzsche's views on truth and knowledge. There I examine, among other things, Nietzsche's campaign against philosophical dogmatism and argue that in general Nietzsche counsels us toward a suspension of judgment, or *epochê*, particularly with respect to questions of metaphysics. I propose that the best way to characterize Nietzsche's attitude toward metaphysical problems is on the model of skepticism in antiquity—particularly Pyrrhonian skepticism. My reading, if correct, has significant consequences for the interpretation of some of Nietzsche's best-recognized doctrines, for it will undermine arguments, current in the literature, that Nietzsche vigorously advances the kind of metaphysical theses ascribed to him under the headings of, say, "perspectivism" or the "will to power." Such theses, I maintain, are dogmas Nietzsche would disregard as (epistemically) unsustainable and even (psychologically) undesirable. Insofar as it adopts this posture, I argue, Nietzsche's work echoes a lengthy and robust tradition of skepticism in antiquity.

On further reflection, however, one might wonder how deeply Nietzsche could possibly have been impressed by this tradition, since he would apparently repudiate what the Greek skeptics describe as the very goal of their skeptical practice: namely, *ataraxia*, commonly understood as "freedom from disturbance" or "peace of mind." Nietzsche, as we know, has little patience for those who place the highest value on the avoidance of suffering. "One is *fruitful*," he proclaims in *Twilight of the Idols*, "only at the cost of being rich in contradictions; one remains *young* only on condition the soul does not relax, does not long for peace [...] Nothing arouses less envy in us than the moral cow and the fat contentment of the good conscience" (TI Morality as Anti-Nature §3). Few people have examined the issue of Nietzsche's relationship to the ancient

skeptics in any detail, but of those who have, all have noticed this potential objection. For example, even Conway and Ward, who make perhaps the boldest claim for the tightness of the philosophical connection between Nietzsche and Sextus Empiricus (the chief source and best-known proponent of Pyrrhonian skepticism), feel compelled to treat this as a point of departure between the two. They attempt to present both figures as "misunderstood skeptics" who employ *peritropê* (self-refuting argument) as part of a rhetorical strategy for defeating dogmatism in philosophy, and they think both Nietzsche and Sextus do so for therapeutic ends: dogmatism, they argue, is in Nietzschean terms "life-denying," and the cause of *tarachai* (troubles) in Sextus's terms.[1] Yet they conclude with the caveat that "[Nietzsche] does not agree [with Sextus] that tranquillity (*ataraxia*) constitutes psychic health. According to Nietzsche, the Pyrrhonian identification of the good life with quietude and tranquility is emblematic of nihilism. Ever the pathologist, Nietzsche contends that the desire for tranquility is symptomatic of decadence."[2] A similar chord is struck by Richard Bett, who makes more conservative claims about Nietzsche's indebtedness to the skeptics in his more recent (and more careful) look at the relationship between them. Citing Raoul Richter, whose 1904-1908 volumes on the history of skepticism begin with the Greeks and end with Nietzsche, he says, "Richter sees, of course, that temperamentally, or in terms of the practical attitudes and ways of life that they recommend, Nietzsche and the Greek skeptics are poles apart; the Greek skeptics, or at least the Pyrrhonian skeptics, recommend skepticism for the *ataraxia*, the untroubled existence, it supposedly promotes, whereas for Nietzsche the avoidance of trouble and strife is decidedly not a priority."[3]

If this view is correct, then Nietzsche would break with the Pyrrhonian tradition over an utterly indispensable component of their skeptical practice.[4] Sextus Empiricus calls *ataraxia* the "causal principle" of Pyrrhonism,[5] in the sense that the desire for this untroubled state of mind is what motivates people to study natural philosophy in the first place. Moreover, Sextus takes *ataraxia* to be the final aim of the skeptical way of life, where an aim is "that for the sake of which everything else is done or considered, while it is not itself done or considered for the sake of anything else" (PH 1.25). That Nietzsche parts company with the skeptics on the issue of the value of *ataraxia*, so this objection goes, makes it less likely that his skepticism (if such can be ascribed to him) is of this Greek variety—perhaps it is Humean or reflects a mixture of various types of skepticism.[6]

In my reply to this objection, I concede that Nietzsche does indeed reject many conceptions of "peace of mind." But the concept itself is an expansive one, and though Nietzsche will certainly reject some interpretations of it, he need not reject them all. As he reminds us in the same passage of *Twilight of the Idols*, what is commonly called "peace of soul" may be "in many cases [...] merely a misunderstanding—something *else* that simply does not know how to give itself a more honest name." "Peace of soul," he says, might be taken to stand for anything from "the beginning of weariness" to our "unconscious gratification for a good digestion," to "the quiescence of the convalescent for whom all things have a new taste and who waits," to "the decrepitude of our will, our desires, our vices. Or laziness persuaded by vanity to deck itself out as morality." But there is no reason why "peace of soul" may not as well indicate "the expression of ripeness and mastery in the midst of action, creation, endeavor, volition" (TI Morality as Anti-Nature §3).[7] If some variety of "peace of soul" can be shown to be compatible with a Nietzschean analysis of health and the good, then it is open to Nietzsche to embrace some version of skeptical *eudaimonia*, connecting his recommendations for our epistemic practice, as the skeptics do theirs, with his own account of our ultimate aim or end.

There is, however, little evidence to suggest that the Hellenistic philosophers, who nearly unanimously embraced *ataraxia* as the ideal state,[8] would have conceived of it in such positive, active terms as "ripeness" and "mastery in the midst of action [or] creation." Skeptical *ataraxia*, in particular, is most often cast in terms that emphasize its "calm and detachment," and the skeptic's life is as frequently described as one free of risk—and consequently, free of the excitement that accompanies risk. The skeptic pursues the study of natural philosophy not passionately but "quietly," on this received view. Rather than losing sleep over the riddle of nature's mysteries, the Pyrrhonian skeptic will "potter gently along doing a little mild investigating."[9] Then, with the achievement of *ataraxia* the skeptic experiences "a withdrawal from truth and real existence [that] becomes, in a certain sense, a detachment from oneself." Once he has attained *ataraxia*—according to this anesthetic characterization of that state—the skeptic's dispassionate life "will be a hollow shell of the existence he enjoyed, and was troubled by, prior to his skeptical enlightenment. Such is the price of peace and tranquility, however," concludes Burnyeat, "and the skeptic is willing to pay it to the full."[10] A Skeptical (or even a Stoic or Epicurean) sage of Hellenistic provenance maintains his tranquility and calm, it seems, at the cost of denying his passionate nature and by renouncing care and concern—precisely the

things that are prerequisite, we might suppose, for living the richest possible life and for taking on (to say nothing of succeeding in) great tasks. In short, *ataraxia* appears to be a thoroughly un-Nietzschean ideal.

But is there any precedent, among the predecessors of this view, for characterizing such a state in the positive terms Nietzsche sets out in the passage cited above from *Twilight of the Idols*, that is, for thinking of "peace of soul" in a way that is compatible with "ripeness" and "mastery"? There is, I believe, once we recognize that *ataraxia* has a more complex conceptual lineage than is sometimes appreciated. Its roots, from both the Epicurean and the Pyrrhonian branches, can be traced back directly to the pre-Platonic atomist philosopher Democritus of Abdera, who was thought to have argued for a conception of the ultimate good for human beings that is in many respects, as we will see, very like Nietzsche's own.[11] For all the fact that Democritus is recognized primarily as the innovator of ancient atomism (of course he impressed Nietzsche on account of this as well), the majority of the extant fragments (roughly two-thirds of those we have reason to regard as authentic)[12] are concerned with matters of ethics and moral psychology. These some two hundred fragments of Democritus have been said to "constitute the most important body of material for the history of philosophical ethics and psychology before the dialogues of Plato."[13] A contemporary of Socrates, Democritus shares the familiar Socratic concern for the care of the individual soul[14] and "is the earliest thinker reported as having explicitly posited a supreme good or goal, which he called 'cheerfulness' or 'well-being,' and which he appears to have identified with the untroubled enjoyment of life."[15] This position establishes Democritus's place at the head of a robust tradition of ancient ethical thought, namely ethical eudaimonism.

Eudaimonism is a position most people associate, not with Democritus, but primarily with Aristotle. He is the first figure in antiquity from whom we have whole surviving treatises devoted exclusively to ethics as an independent science, and who establishes at the beginning of his *Nicomachean Ethics* that the activity of every human life aims at some ultimate good. As far as the name of this good goes, he says, "most people generally agree; for both the many and the cultivated call it happiness [*eudaimonia*], and suppose that living well and doing well are the same as being happy."[16] Further developments of this view came to include, perhaps most famously, the atomistic hedonism of Epicurus and his followers, who make pleasure (and the absence of pain) the end of all human activity, and who motivate their physical theory by claiming that, if we subscribe to their atomistic picture of things, we shall be free from

the unhappiness attendant on the fear of death (and meddling gods), and live a more pleasant life as a result.

Despite many subtle, yet important, differences in their views, these philosophers and others who can rightly be called eudaimonists have in common three central claims. First, that there is some end (*telos*) or aim (*skopos*) to the activity that makes up an individual human life, specifically the attainment of some particular state of well-being; second, that this final end, however it is specified, operates as a normative constraint on our other activities—that is, the value of the projects we undertake is to be determined by their promotion of our progress toward our final end; and, third, that reflection on our final end or aim is the starting point for ethics proper.

Our actions and projects, according to this way of thinking about them, are to be evaluated by the contribution each makes toward shaping our life and character. What shape those things ought to take and the best methods for shaping them came to be described variously by the various schools of ethics in antiquity. (More recently, eudaimonism and its ancient proponents have benefited from renewed interest in them, as the popularity of contemporary Virtue Ethics has grown.)[17]

Now, one of Nietzsche's enduring preoccupations, and (as we know) a concern that spans his entire productive career, is with the "health" of human beings and with what constitutes their success or failure. It is in these strongly eudaimonistic terms that Nietzsche describes, in the Preface to the *On the Genealogy of Morals* how "the problem of the origin of evil haunted [him]," and how eventually it was transformed into a different problem, one about the nature of human flourishing and what contributes to or detracts from it: "under what conditions did man invent those value judgments good and evil? *and what value do they themselves have*? Have they inhibited or furthered human flourishing [*das menschliche Gedeihen*] up until now? Are they a sign of distress, of impoverishment, of the degeneration of life? Or, conversely, do they betray the fullness, the power, the will of life, its courage, its confidence, its future?" (GM Preface §3).[18] Nietzsche's project, in short, is to diagnose the condition of human beings—that is, whether they are "flourishing" or not—by treating their value systems as symptoms or signs of that condition.

In the Preface to the second edition of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche puts the same point a slightly different way. Stating that "a psychologist knows few questions as attractive as the one concerning the relation of health and philosophy," he proposes to treat philosophical systems as symptoms of psychological health and disease. Whether one intends it or not, he reminds the reader, one's philosophy is a sign of the state of

one's health: "For assuming that one is a person, one necessarily also has the philosophy that belongs to that person [...]. In some it is their deprivations that philosophize; in others, their riches and strengths" (GS Preface §2). Under Nietzsche's unyielding scrutiny, thinkers are classified into the categories "healthy" and "sick." His reflections on the issue of what constitutes their health or sickness, strength or weakness, are of particular importance here, since they are what make the notion of a scholarly practice or *Wissenschaft*'s having such a character as "gaiety" (*Fröhlichkeit* or *Heiterkeit*) make sense at all.[19] A *fröhliche Wissenschaft* is the irrepressible outward expression of a fundamentally "cheerful"—that is also to say, "healthy"—nature.

The expression of the ultimate good or flourishing of a human being in terms of the health of the soul and the identification of that state of health also as a state of "cheerfulness" both find a strong historical precedent in the writings of Democritus. In what remains of Democritus's reflections on ethics, the bulk of which we find preserved in the collections of the fifth-century CE anthologist Stobaeus (John of Stobi), Democritus posits as his conception of the ultimate good for human beings *euthumia*, which is most often translated as 'cheerfulness' (although its meaning is difficult to capture in a one-word translation). It might be rendered more literally by the phrase "being in good spirits," which accords well with other terms Democritus uses (though apparently with less frequency) to refer to the ultimate good, including *euesto* ("well-being") (D121; DK B257) and *eudaimonia* ("happiness") (D24; DK B170; and D25; DK B171). In their interpretations of Democritean cheerfulness later doxographers, notably Cicero and Stobaeus, chose the terms *tranquillitas* and its Greek equivalent *ataraxia* to summarize the condition of *euthumia*.

This doxographical maneuver, however, threatens to obscure the potentially important differences between *euthumia*, Democritus's preferred term for the ultimate good, and the *ataraxia* that the Hellenistic schools (the Stoics, Skeptics, and Epicureans) claimed their philosophical agendas would promote. While there may be a legitimate ancestry between the two concepts, it is important not simply to conflate *ataraxia*, a passive state that seems to be plainly incompatible with suffering, discomfort, and perhaps even strong feelings of any kind, with its more robust and, I want to argue, potentially more positive predecessor, Democritean *euthumia*. In what follows, I attempt to limn the boundaries of Democritus's conception of well-being and emphasize its common contours with Nietzsche's view. I begin by quoting Fragment 191—the longest extant fragment from Democritus on ethics—

somewhat at length, since it gives the fullest succinct account of what leads to *euthumia*, and what life is like for those who do not attain it:

> For men achieve cheerfulness by moderation in pleasure [*terpsios*] and by proportion [*summetria*] in their life; excess and deficiency are apt to fluctuate and cause great changes in the soul. And souls which change over great intervals are neither stable nor cheerful. So one should set one's mind on what is possible and be content with what one has, taking little account of those who are admired and envied, and not dwelling on them in thought, but one should consider the lives of those who are in distress, thinking of their grievous sufferings, so that what one has and possesses will seem great and enviable, and one will cease to suffer in one's soul through the desire for more. [...] Therefore one should not seek those things [e.g., wealth, fame], but should be cheerful at the thought of the others, comparing one's own life with that of those who are faring worse, and should congratulate oneself when one thinks of what they are suffering, and how much better one is doing and living than they are. For by maintaining that frame of mind one will live more cheerfully and will avert not a few evils in one's life, jealousy and envy and malice. (D55; DK B191)

Bracketing for the time being Democritus's advice to engage in what looks like a little therapeutic *Schadenfreude*,[20] we should note first that the achievement of *euthumia* is described as the achievement of a state of balance or symmetry (*summetria*) in the soul. A *psuche* that admits of such symmetry will be one not given to undergoing great changes or movements (*megalas kinêsias*); it will have stability. The concept of a soul that "does not move around" but "remains stable" is a curious one, and it is not impossible that is intended in a purely metaphorical sense. But since we know that Democritus has a materialist conception of the soul (like everything else it is comprised of atoms),[21] it is most reasonable to assume that he is speaking in terms of the soul's physical constitution and condition.[22] In any case, the use of physical language to describe the soul here is not out of place. It is also important to note that the Democritean *psuche* is not a closed system (it is neither detached nor insulated from external influences); as we know from Democritus's theory of perception, the *psuche* is constantly assailed by impressions which threaten to change its constitution and disrupt its harmonious state. Its ideal condition, therefore, will not be one of *rest* or *stasis*—Democritean psychophysics do not allow for such a state.[23]

So I submit that, for Democritus, the ideally conditioned soul is the one that demonstrates the greatest resilience or shock-resistance, and that this is how we should understand Democritus's requirement that the

cheerful *psuche* also be *eustathês* (stable). Most generally, *eustathês* carries the meaning of "well-based" or "well-built"; metaphorically, it conveys the sense "steady," "steadfast," or "firm." It might even be rendered by "firmly planted," and as a requirement of character it resonates deeply with Nietzsche's demand of "the lives of the best and most fruitful people and peoples" that they be first of all able to weather misfortune: "Examine the lives of [such people] and ask yourselves whether a tree that is supposed to grow to a proud height can dispense with bad weather and storms" (GS §19). Both thinkers recognize the sort of connection between "body" and "soul" that makes it natural to refer to the latter in terms that might at first seem appropriate only to the former. According to Nietzsche, the most admirable individuals demonstrate a quality of thought best captured by analogy not only to physical strength, but also grace or poise; for example, "by certain manners of the spirit even great spirits betray that they come from the mob or the semi-mob; it is above all *the gait and stride of their thoughts* that betrays them; they cannot *walk*" (GS §282; my emphasis). In thought just as in movement, one can be poised, graceful and confident, or else cumbersome, halting, lame, or weighed down by the "spirit of gravity."[24] For both these thinkers, the resilient *psuche* stands the best chance of maintaining lasting cheerfulness and health, insofar as balance or stability is the chief feature of that ideal condition.

The notion of characterizing "violent organic motion" in the soul as anathema to one's (mental) health is common in Greek medical treatises, according to Vlastos, who supports this reading of stability of the soul "not as a passive state but as a dynamic quality, able to withstand external shock without losing its inner balance." He is picking up here, surely, on an alternate meaning of *eustathês*, which in physiological contexts refers to a 'sound' or 'healthy' state of the body (as does *euthumia*). On the basis of further reports of Democritean physiology (mainly *via* Theophrastus), Vlastos cautions us "against defining the physiological optimum in terms of absolute rest. The opposite to the 'great movements' of [Fragment] B. 191 [quoted above] would therefore be a *dynamic equilibrium* [...]."[25] *Ataraxia*, by contrast, conveys none of this dynamic tension; it has the sense of a passive, resting state.

Moreover, *euthumia* (unlike *ataraxia*) needs to be understood as something like a dispositional property of *psuchai*, much as we would say "brittleness" is a dispositional property of glass. That is to say, there are certain conditions that will be prerequisite for the property's exhibiting itself—more specifically perhaps, certain adverse conditions. For Nietzsche, who constantly emphasizes that strength of character is devel-

oped and revealed under duress (even by suffering), the difference is crucial. Some people, Nietzsche asserts, "need open enemies if they are to rise to the level of their own virtue, virility, and cheerfulness [*Heiterkeit*]" (GS §169).[26] Such conditions are necessary to both the development and the demonstration of 'spiritual' strength. Similarly, it is not clear that the spirit who is *euthumos* (cheerful) could dispense with those conditions of adversity under which its resilience develops. Democritus thinks that, "ease is the worst of all teachers for the young," and that "thrift and hunger are useful" at the right time (D43; DK B178).[27] In that sense, a life entirely without suffering or difficulty may not be preferable from the standpoint of achieving cheerfulness and stability, although it is clearly preferable from the standpoint of *ataraxia*. The life of the Stoic sage or the Epicurean is compatible with suffering, as Lucretius is at pains to convey. But their feats of self-mastery, while impressive on some level, are accomplished primarily through the disassociation of the self from its circumstances. Pain can be managed or made tolerable, but all in all it is unwelcome: the Hellenistics are offering strategies for *managing* whatever cannot be *avoided*.

That attitude informs Nietzsche's view of the Stoics, at least, as ascetic figures and his rejection of their ideals: "Is our life really painful and burdensome enough to make it advantageous to exchange it for a Stoic way of life and petrification? We are *not so badly off* that we have to be as badly off as Stoics" (GS §326; cf. GS §306). Although Democritus describes "moderation of pleasure" as the route to *euthumia* in fragment 191, he should not be taken as advocating asceticism or what Nietzsche describes as "negative virtues," "virtues whose very essence it is to negate and deny oneself something," whether pleasant or difficult (GS §304). While *ataraxia*, a close relative of *apatheia* ("free from passions," "unaffected"), is frequently read as tranquility at the price of regrettable impoverishment, Democritus's *euthumia* conveys an openness to life with its full measure of pleasures and pains. "Moderation" in his sense means increased selectivity with respect to pleasure: "One should choose, not every pleasure," he says, "but pleasure in what is fine [*kalôn*]" (D71; DK B207).[28] The individual who chooses wisely, the cheerful soul, "rejoices [*chairei*] sleeping and waking, and is strong [*errotai*] and free from care [*anakêdês*]," while "the unwise live without delighting in their life" (D39; DK B174, and D64; DK B200, and see also D94; DK B230: "A life without feasts is like a long road without an inn"). For all these reasons, it is philologically imprudent to read too much of Stoic asceticism, Epicurean hedonism, or even Pyrrhonian *apatheia* back into the concept of *euthumia* offered by Democritus.

That Nietzsche found a wealth of intriguing material in the writings of this Greek atomist is clear. Democritus was a thinker of encyclopedic interests and he wrote on a wide range of subjects, as Nietzsche observes admiringly in his lecture on Democritus when he compares him to "a pentathlete in ethics, physics, mathematics, music and the arts."[29] As a young scholar, Nietzsche had recognized already the contribution of Democritus's rigorous system—which sought to banish religious and mystical explanation—to the "de-deification" of nature he would later encourage.[30] His thorough familiarity with the fragments of Democritus was the result of a number of years in the late 1860's spent poring over the issue of their authenticity and planning a (sadly unfinished) reconstruction of the atomist's philosophical system. Nietzsche's discovery of Democritus dovetailed fortuitously with his discovery of Friedrich Lange's *History of Materialism*, in which Democritus plays a central role, and his enthusiasm may have been inspired by Democritus's rigorous materialism though it was not confined to that arena: he attended carefully to Democritus's thoughts on music and rhythm, and to what Democritus had to say about ethics.[31] Among a series of notes on Democritus from 1867/1868, Nietzsche claims that the writings on ethics demonstrate the "core" of Democritus's thought.[32]

To return, then, to the objection I sketched at the beginning of this chapter: I hope here to have removed one of the central obstacles to accepting the influence of the ancient skeptics on Nietzsche's own epistemological attitudes. Though Nietzsche would clearly not accept *ataraxia* as an ethical ideal (at least not on the received interpretation of the role that concept played for the Hellenistic philosophers), he was free to adopt its immediate ancestor *euthumia*, which is significantly less burdened by the nihilistic overtones of its offspring. I have not had the opportunity here to discuss Nietzsche's reading of Democritus as a skeptic or Democritus's place within the Pyrrhonian tradition, but let me at least note Democritus's appearance in the ninth book of Diogenes Laertius's *Lives of the Philosophers*, which Nietzsche knew particularly well.[33] The succession described there establishes Democritus's historical ties to the tradition, by claiming for him an influence on Protagoras (directly), and on Pyrrho (*via* Metrodorus and Anaxarchus), who Diogenes says "used to refer to Democritus above all [...]".[34]

Late in his career, Nietzsche would still describe his "current way of thinking [as] to a high degree Heraclitean, Democritean, and Protagorean" (WP §428). We should note that what these three figures have in common is, first, that they contribute more than any other thinkers of whom we have record to the landscape of ethical thought and psychol-

ogy prior to Plato; and second, that all three figures play a pivotal role in the development of the skeptical traditions that arose after them (many founded by their students). While some have, in the case of Democritus, tried to deny any connection between the epistemological views, the atomism, and the ethics,[35] it is not difficult to draw the necessary connections (between the beliefs to which one assents and the quality of his or her life, where that quality is in large part determined by the condition of the *psuche*). Indeed, it is often difficult to resist doing so. While for the later Pyrrhonists skeptical practice is a route to *ataraxia*—understood in the anesthetic sense, so, for earlier figures in and around the same tradition (and Democritus has important connections in his own right to the skeptical tradition), the proper intellectual perspective on the world is at least a necessary part of our well-being. Whatever difficulty Nietzsche may have in accepting the Hellenistics' *ataraxia* as an ethical ideal, its immediate ancestor *euthumia* lends itself to a greater range of interpretive possibilities for understanding "the great health"—a sort of cheerfulness—toward which Nietzsche works in *The Gay Science*. He is, especially in his early work, clearly enamored of the Democritean worldview, and we see his time spent with the ethical fragments pay its dividends later, as the notion of "cheerfulness" grows up alongside the notion of *ephexis* in interpretation—both integral components of an "honest" and robust intellectual (or "spiritual") life.

## Notes

[1] Daniel W. Conway and Julie Ward, "Physicians of the Soul: *Peritropê* in Sextus Empiricus and Nietzsche," in Daniel W. Conway and Rudolf Rehn (eds), *Nietzsche und die antike Philosophie* (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 1992), 193-223 (193 and 203). "More important than any logical error is the *practical* error that dogmatism embodies. Nietzsche believes that an equation of 'life-threatening' with 'true', coupled with the priority dogmatism ascribes to truth, engenders for the dogmatists an *absurdum practicum*, i.e., a life devoted to the pursuit of conditions inimical to life itself" (203).

[2] Conway and Ward, "Physicians of the Soul," 216-17.

[3] Richard Bett, "Nietzsche on the Skeptics and Nietzsche as Skeptic," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 82 (2000): 62-86 (68). Adi Parush, one of the few other commentators to take up a focused investigation of this relationship, concurs: "Nietzsche sided with Pyrrho's attacks on the dogmatists, and because of these, called him the most original figure after the pre-Socratics [WP §437]. Nevertheless, Nietzsche is mockingly critical of the way of life he thinks Pyrrho prescribes. [. . .] It is true that [the Pyrrhonist's] *ataraxia* is based on living a quiet, unperturbed life, devoid of tension (which is probably why Nietzsche compares him to the Buddhist)"

("Nietzsche on the Skeptic's Life," *Review of Metaphysics* 29 (1976): 523-42 [534-35]).

[4] The "indispensability" of this ethical component is itself the subject of a lively debate, which I will not be able to address here. For now, it will surely not do any violence to the issue to take Sextus at his word when he treats the ethical objective of Pyrrhonism as integral to its practice.

[5] Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, trans. Julia Annas and Jonathan Barnes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1.12. Henceforth referred to as PH (for *Pyrrhoneae Hypotyposes*), followed by a chapter and section reference.

[6] Conway and Ward do not, it is true, draw this conclusion. Although they take note of the objection, they do not seem to regard it as particularly damaging. In their view, that Nietzsche roundly rejects the ethical goal of Pyrrhonism does not at all tarnish the skeptical appearance of Nietzsche's position. The few other commentators on this issue, however, seem to view Nietzsche's skepticism as less "Pyrrhonian" the more emphatic they see his rejection of anything like *ataraxia*; see especially Richard Bett, "Nietzsche on the Skeptics and Nietzsche as Skeptic"; and Parush, "Nietzsche on the Skeptic's Life."

[7] I thank Kathleen Higgins for pressing on me the flexibility that Nietzsche sees in this concept.

[8] See Gisela Striker for a more nuanced characterization of the significance of "tranquillity" for the various schools of Greek thought: specifically, that "tranquillity was in fact not a serious contender for the position of ultimate good in ancient times. Greek theories of happiness from Plato to Epicurus were attempts to spell out what sort of a life one would have to lead in order to have good reasons for feeling tranquil or contented; they were not recipes for reaching a certain state of mind" ("Ataraxia: Happiness as Tranquillity," *Monist* 73 (1990): 97-111 [97]).

[9] R. J. Hankinson, *The Sceptics (*London: Routledge, 1995), 30, 306, 30.

[10] Myles Burnyeat, "Can the Sceptic Live His Scepticism," in Malcolm Schofield, Myles Burnyeat, and Jonathan Barnes (eds), *Doubt and Dogmatism: Studies in Hellenistic Epistemology* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1980), 20-53 (41-42). For the most in-depth account to date of the complex history of *ataraxia* as a concept that resists two-dimensional analysis, see James Warren, *Epicurus and Democritean Ethics: An Archaeology of Ataraxia* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002).

[11] According to Diogenes Laertius's *Lives of the Philosophers* (9. 46), "Thrasyllus listed [Democritus'] works, arranging them in tetralogies as with the works of Plato." The works on ethics are said to include a treatise *Peri Euthumia* ("On Cheerfulness").

[12] The authenticity of many of these fragments has been called into question and the history of the authenticity debate has been particularly vexed. Every commentator on Democritean ethics has been compelled to address it at some time or another. The authenticity problem is, in fact, what first brought Nietzsche into contact with the Abderite; see James I. Porter, *Nietzsche and the Future of Philology* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2000), chapter 2 (82-126). For a good summary of the evidence, both *pro* and *contra*, on including the "Democrates" fragments and on other issues of authenticity, see Christopher Charles Whiston Taylor, *The Atomists: Leucippus and Democri-*

*tus, Fragments: A Text and Translation with a Commentary* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1999), 223-27. But see, too, Taylor's original interpretation, which relies heavily on the "Democrates" fragments ("Pleasure, Knowledge, and Sensation in Democritus," *Phronesis* 12 (1967): 6-27), as well as Charles Kahn, "Democritus and the Origins of Moral Psychology," *American Journal of Philology* 106 (1985): 1-31 [2-4]); Patricia Curd, "Why Democritus Was Not a Skeptic," in Anthony Preuss (ed.), *Essays in Ancient Greek Philosophy VI: Before Plato* (New York: State U of New York P, 2001), 149-69 (156, n. 17); and Julia Annas, "Democritus and Eudaimonism," in Victor Caston and Daniel Graham, (eds), *Presocratic Philosophy: Essays in Honour of Alexander Mourelatos* (London: Ashgate, 2002), 169-81. Here I concur with Annas's conclusion that "the shaky status of our evidence about Democritus's ethics can be greatly exaggerated" (169), and I will not address the issue further here.

[13] See Kahn, "Democritus and the Origins of Moral Psychology," who makes this claim for Heraclitus also, in spite of Heraclitus' notorious obscurity (1). All references to the fragments of Democritus and all translations quoted here and in what follows are from C. C. W. Taylor's *The Atomists: Leucippus and Democritus* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1999). For each citation, I provide the reference to Taylor's text first, with the Diels-Kranz concordances given afterward.

[14] "Blessedness [*eudaimonia*] and wretchedness [*kakodaimonia*] belong to the soul [*psychês*]" (D24; DK B170); "Blessedness does not reside in herds or in gold; the soul is the dwelling-place of the guardian spirit" (D25; DK B171).

[15] Taylor, *The Atomists*, p.227. This claim for Democritus's significance for ancient ethics may also be found, for example, in Gregory Vlastos, "Ethics and Physics in Democritus (Part One)," *Philosophical Review* 54 (1945): 578-92; and Kahn, "Democritus and the Origins of Moral Psychology." Striker raises doubts about whether Democritus advanced a systematic eudaimonism. She credits Epicurus, a later follower of Democritus, with being "the first philosopher who tried to bring tranquillity into the framework of an eudaimonist theory—significantly, by arguing that it is a sort of pleasure," and she is dubious that Democritus himself "produced anything like an argument to show that *euthumia* is the human good, the goal of life, or identical with happiness" ("Ataraxia," 98-99). However, for an extended discussion and defense of the claim that Democritus advanced a systematic ethical theory, see Michael Nill, *Morality and Self-Interest in Protagoras, Antiphon and Democritus* (Leiden: Brill, 1985). The most detailed and most recent treatment of the issue, however, is to be found in Warren, *Epicurus and Democritean Ethics*. Doxographical sources for Democritus' significance to ethics in antiquity include Cicero (*de Finibus*, 5.8.23 and 29.87), Seneca (*On Tranquillity of Mind*, 2.3), Theodoretus (*Cure for the Ills of the Greeks*, 11.6), Stobaeus (2.7.31, citing Arius Didymus), and Clement (*Miscellanies*, 2.130).

[16] *Nicomachean Ethics,* trans. Terence Irwin, second ed.(Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999), 1095a, 18-20.

[17] Let me note that Virtue Ethics and ethical eudaimonism, while importantly related, are not coextensive. All serious contenders for a virtue-based account of ethics are, it seems to me, versions of eudaimonism insofar as all of them must argue for *which virtues* we ought to recognize and cultivate in ourselves with an eye toward *the end* to-

ward which we as human beings strive (or should strive). One can be a eudaimonist, by contrast, without claiming that it is *virtue* that gets us to our proper end.

[18] Translated as *On the Genealogy of Morality* by Maudemarie Clark and Alan J. Swensen (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998).

[19] One of the few serious attempts to make good sense of this funny notion (that is, cheerful scholarship) is Kathleen M. Higgins, *Comic Relief* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000). In her commentary, Higgins makes a good case that Nietzsche is often consciously being funny in *Gay Science*, and that his doing so is an important part of the critical stance he takes toward the philosophical tradition, whose general stuffiness and pretentious "gravity" he means to parody. "Countering what he sees as the contemporary tragic cast of *Wissenschaft*, Nietzsche's 'gay science' is scholarship understood as comic" (51). Taking seriously Nietzsche's psychological claims in the Preface to *The Gay Science*, I want to extend this consideration and suggest that Nietzsche is here presenting "gay science" as an intellectual ideal precisely because it belongs to the ideal type of human being, and also by suggesting an historical precedent for this ideal in the ethical writings of Democritus.

[20] On Democritus's reputation for incessant and inappropriate laughter, see R. J. Hankinson, "La pathologie du rire: Réflexions sur le rôle du rire chez les médecins grecs," in Marie-Laurence Desclos, *Le rire des Grecs: Anthropologie du rire en Grèce ancienne* (Grenoble: Editions Jérôme Millon, 2000), 191-200.

[21] "[Democritus] says that the soul is the same as the mind, and is composed of the primary, indivisible bodies, and is a source of motion because of their smallness and shape. He says that the sphere is the most mobile of shapes, and that mind and fire are of the same nature" (107b; DK A101) [Aristotle, *de Anima*, 405a, 8-13].

[22] Charles Kahn expresses some skepticism about the conjecture advanced by Vlastos (as well as von Fritz) "that the *kinêseis* of the soul are ultimately to be interpreted in terms of its atomic constitution" ("Democritus and the Origins of Moral Psychology," 14). He suggests that the natural reading of *eustathês* in B191 is "in terms of lived experience, not psychophysics." Again though, I would urge that Democritus's materialistic view of the soul makes some such reading the most plausible. See the original argument for this position in Vlastos, "Ethics and Physics in Democritus (Part One)," 582-85.

[23] Vlastos concurs: the absolute rest of the Democritean soul is, on his view, excluded "through the intrinsic mobility of the soul-atom" ("Ethics and Physics in Democritus (Part One)," 585, n. 40). Of course, as James Porter has pointed out to me, the same is true of Epicurus, since their soul-atoms are the same atoms! Epicurus, nevertheless, endorses the "restful" or more anaesthetic conception of *ataraxia*. This discrepancy may go some way toward explaining why Nietzsche is more often critical of Epicurus, on the grounds that Epicureanism is nihilistic: for both Epicurus and Democritus, the soul-atoms coming into a state of complete rest *would just mean death*.

[24] See especially passages throughout *Zarathustra* on the "spirit of gravity." In *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche proclaims that "thinking has to be learned in the way that dancing has to be learned, *as* a form of dancing…" (TI What the Germans Lack §7). See also Nietzsche's statement, just prior to the above, that, "learning to *see*, as I understand it, is almost what is called in un-philosophical language 'strong will-power':

the essence of it is precisely *not* to 'will', the *ability* to defer decision [*die Entscheidung aussetzen* können]" (TI What the Germans Lack §6; Nietzsche's emphasis). One should note that the ability to withhold decision, with emphasis on "ability," is the Pyrrhonists' definition of their practice: "Skepticism is an ability [*dunamis antithetikê*] to set out oppositions among things which appear and are thought of in any way at all, an ability by which, because of the equipollence in the opposed objects and accounts, we come first to suspension of judgment and afterwards to tranquillity" (PH 1.8). The description of skepticism as an ability, rather than, say, a philosophical position or school of thought, is integral to the Pyrrhonist's attempt to steer clear of dogmas himself.

[25] Vlastos, "Ethics and Physics in Democritus (Part One)," 583 and 585 (my emphasis).

[26] Cf. also GS §56 and §338 ("if you experience suffering and displeasure as evil, hateful, worthy of annihilation, and as a defect of existence"), GS §340 on the "dying Socrates," GS §370 on "two kinds of sufferers," and GS §302: "With this Homeric happiness in one's soul one is also more capable of suffering than any other creature under the sun. This is the only price for which one can buy the most precious shell that the waves of existence have ever yet washed on the shore."

[27] See also: "Thrift and hunger are useful, and expense too at the right time. It is the mark of the good man to discern" (D93; DK B229); on education: "Children who are not allowed to take pains [...] would not learn letters or music or athletics" (D44; DK B179), and "learning achieves fine things through taking pains" (D47; DK B182); and on hard work: "All toils are pleasanter than ease, when people achieve the goal of their toil or know that they will reach it" (D107; DK B243).

[28] This position reveals a further difference with Epicurus, who says that he spits upon what is fine (*kalôn*) when it does not bring him pleasure, and thus brings out more clearly that Democritus is no Epicurean hedonist; see Tim O'Keefe, "The Ontological Status of Sensible Qualities for Democritus and Epicurus," *Ancient Philosophy*,17 (1997): 119-34.

[29] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers*, ed. and trans. Greg Whitlock (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2001), 123.

[30] "Of all the more ancient systems," he writes, "the Democritean is of the greatest consequence. The most rigorous necessity is presupposed in all things. [...] Now, for the first time the collective, anthropomorphic, mythic view of the world has been overcome" (*The Pre-Platonic Philosophers*, 125).

[31] As work by James Porter has demonstrated; see, in particular, chapter 2 ("The Poetry of Atomism and the Fictions of Philology") of his *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future* for a well-rounded account of Nietzsche's multi-faceted interest in Democritus, though especially in the critical potential of atomism.

[32] "*Die ethischen Schriften also zeigen, wie in der ethischen Seite der Kern sein<er> Philosophie liegt*" (BAW 3, 350).

[33] The Democritus presented in Diogenes Laertius is in some sense the most skeptical Democritus we have, and this is the Democritus of Nietzsche's seminars, as his source material indicates (*The Pre-Platonic Philosophers*, 120-30).

[34] Diogenes Laertius (9.67); see also Eusebius, who says, "Pyrrho started from Democritus in a sense" (*Praeparatio Evangelica*, 14.6.4). In *Against the Mathematicians* (7.53), Sextus records Democritus's claim "that everything is false, and every appearance and opinion is false," which contributed significantly to the acquisition of Democritus's skeptical reputation. Aristotle presents a fairly straightforwardly skeptical view he attributes to Democritus at *Metaphysics* 1009b 7, for the same reasons that Sextus reports that "the philosophy of Democritus is also said to have something in common with Scepticism, since it is thought to make use of the same materials as we do. For from the fact that honey appears sweet to some and better to others, they say that Democritus deduces that it is neither sweet nor bitter, and for this reason utters the phrase 'no more' [*ou mallon*], which is Sceptical" (PH, 1.213-14). But the fragment that has more than any other invited the skeptical readings of Democritus (both ancient and modern) is a bit of testimonia from Diogenes Laertius: "Democritus, getting rid of the qualities, where he says 'By convention hot, by convention cold, but in reality atoms and void' and again 'In reality we know nothing, for truth is in the depths'" (9.72).

[35] See in particular Julian Barnes, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (London: Routledge, 1979) as well as Cyril Bailey, *The Greek Atomists and Epicurus* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1928), against whom Vlastos argues in "Ethics and Physics in Democritus (Part Two)," *Philosophical Review* 55 (1946): 53-64.

# "Full of Gods": Nietzsche on Greek Polytheism and Culture

*Albert Henrichs*

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE DIED in Weimar on 25 August 1900, after a long and arduous mental illness. For almost twelve years, the once dashing professor and restless thinker had been reduced to a passive, mindless, and almost invisible existence, first behind the walls of mental wards, then in the house of his mother, and during the last three years of his life in a private villa at Weimar under the care of his sister. Physically robust but progressively demented, he was a stranger to himself and to others, largely oblivious to his own identity as well as to his past. His once so powerful mind had been put on hold, as it were, unable to think straight, to recollect, or even to read. Tragically, he did remember that he had written "nice books" and "many nice things."[1] Even in his darkest hours he continued to be deeply affected by music. During his last years, he slept much of the time and lived in unmitigated apathy. Apart from a small circle of family members and friends, he had next to no visitors and rarely recognized anybody. His connection with his environment was tenuous, amounting to a vague sense of familiarity at best. He was but a shadow of his former self when he died. Still, his death was widely noticed and reported. Who was Nietzsche at the time of his death, and how was he remembered by the rest of the world?

## A Flawed Obituary

One of many possible answers emerged on the other side of the Atlantic in the form of the obituary of Nietzsche in *The New York Times*, which appeared just one day after his passing under the title "Prof. Nietzsche Dead." The anonymous author was writing from Weimar. As would any obituarist worth his salt, he attempts to do two things: to characterize the merits of the deceased, and to give a biographical sketch of his life. The published product is a treasure trove of clichés, platitudes, and false statements that will either humor or irritate the reader:

Weimar, Aug[ust] 25.—Prof. Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, the philosopher, died here today of apoplexy.

Prof[essor] Nietzsche was one of the most prominent of modern German philosophers, and he is considered the apostle of extreme modern rationalism and one of the founders of the socialistic school, whose ideas have had such a profound influence on the growth of political and social life throughout the civilized world. Nietzsche was largely influenced by the pessimism of Schopenhauer and his writings, full of revolutionary opinions, were fired with a fearless iconoclasm which surpassed the wildest dreams of contemporary free thought. His doctrines however, were inspired by lofty aspirations, while the brilliancy of his thought and diction and the epigrammatic force of his writings commanded even the admiration of his most pronounced enemies, of which he had many.

Of Slavonic ancestry, Nietzsche was born in 1844 in the village of Rocken, on the historic battlefield of Lutzen. He lost his parents early in life, but received a fine education at the Latin School at Pforta, concluding his studies at Bonn and Leipsic. Although educated for the ministry, Nietzsche soon renounced all faith and Christianity on the ground that it impeded the free expansion of life. He then devoted his attention to the study of Oriental languages and accepted in 1869 a professorship at the University of Basel, Switzerland.

This position he held until 1876, when overwork induced an affection of the brain and eyes, and he had to travel for his health. During these years of suffering and while in distressed circumstances he wrote most of his works. Since 1889 Nietzsche had been hopelessly insane, living in Weimar, at the home of his sister, Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche, who has edited his works. For many years he was a close friend of Richard Wagner, the composer. His principal publications are "The Old Faith and the New," "The Overman," "The Dawn of Day," "Twilight of the Gods," and "So Spake Zarathustra," which is perhaps the most remarkable of his works."[2]

Nietzsche would have turned in his grave had he been able to see this obituary, which combines truths, semi-truths, and blatant falsehoods. It is true, of course, that Nietzsche was a prominent German philosopher, that he was influenced by Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), that he was brilliant, and that epigrammatic force is one of the most conspicuous features of his aphoristic prose style. But the truth must have deserted our obituarist as soon as he turned from Nietzsche's philosophy to his

life. He could not have known that the alleged Polish name ("Nietzky") and ancestry of the Nietzsche clan was a family myth, foisted on Nietzsche in his childhood and still endorsed by him when he was in his twenties. It was not until 1938 that this fantasy tale was debunked in a carefully documented monograph by Max Oehler, one of Nietzsche's cousins.[3]

But the obituarist could—and should—have known that Nietzsche lost his father, but not his mother, when he was four years old. Nietzsche's mother died in April 1897, a few years before Nietzsche's own death. The obituary condescendingly describes the elite boarding school that Nietzsche attended as a "Latin School," unaware that its students were steeped in Greek as well as Latin, and in other languages too. As for Nietzsche's declining years, it is simply inaccurate to suggest that he lived in Weimar at his sister's house for the duration of his illness; he was moved there from Naumburg only after the death of his mother. But what about Nietzsche's philosophical oeuvre? His works were already so well-known a hundred years ago that it is remarkable to find them misrepresented in his obituary. Its list of Nietzsche's "principal publications" includes three of his main works, but the so-called "Overman," Nietzsche's "Übermensch," is not a work but a concept. Yet it gets worse. The list is headed by *The Old Faith and the New*, a work not by Nietzsche but by David Friedrich Strauss (1808-1874), which Nietzsche attacked immediately after its publication in the first of his *Untimely Meditations* (1873).

Given the obituarist's negligence, it is hardly surprising that he ascribes to Nietzsche an academic career he never pursued. It is perfectly true that his family expected Nietzsche to become a minister. After all, he came from a long line of Protestant pastors both on his father's and on his mother's side. It is also true that Nietzsche abandoned theology along with his Christian faith while he was a student in Bonn. But what did he study instead? According to the obituary, he "devoted his attention to the study of Oriental languages and accepted in 1869 a professorship at the University of Basel, Switzerland." We are thus told that after studying *Orientalistik* Nietzsche became a professor of oriental languages in Basel. Nothing could be further from the truth. For Nietzsche had little talent for languages. He learned Greek and Latin well, but not without difficulty, and, apart from his native tongue, he did not speak any modern language fluently. At Schulpforta he learned Old Testament Hebrew on the side, but his teachers observed on his graduating diploma that "given his inadequate mastery of the grammar, [his Hebrew] appears at this point still immature."[4]

## Philology With a Vengeance

Nietzsche lacked the predisposition as well as the training to be an orientalist. In reality, he studied Classics at Bonn and Leipzig, and was appointed a full professor of Classics at the University of Basel in April 1869 when he was twenty-four years old. To this day he remains one of the youngest tenured Classics professors on record. For that reason alone he would be entitled to a permanent place in the annals of scholarship. During his Basel years he was a colleague of the eminent cultural and art historian Jacob Burckhardt (1818-1897), with whom he regularly shared walks and conversation. He became a close and lifelong friend of the radical historicist theologian Franz Overbeck (1837-1905), who renounced his church affiliation some three years into his own Basel professorship. He was also fortunate enough to teach such highly gifted students as Jakob Wackernagel (1853-1938), who was destined to become one of the greatest Indo-European linguists of his time. Nietzsche's tenure at Basel lasted for ten unhappy years, and was often interrupted by extended leaves of absence due to his fragile health, inner restlessness, and dissatisfaction with his role as a professional classicist. Less than two years after his appointment Nietzsche was ready for a change. When the philosophy chair at Basel fell vacant in 1871, he applied for the position, eager to abandon Classics and to profess philosophy, even though he had no formal training in philosophy himself. One can only wonder which course Nietzsche's career and indeed his entire life might have taken had he been successful in his bid.[5] But the chair went to the German high school teacher and Aristotelian Rudolf Eucken (1846-1926), who resigned it in 1874 to go to Jena and who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1908 for his philosophical work.

During his Basel period Nietzsche struggled to perform his professorial duties, which he did not like, and to maintain his reputation as a classicist, which had been badly tarnished early on by the adverse reaction to his *The Birth of Tragedy*, published in January 1872. In retrospect, the early controversy over *The Birth of Tragedy* did no harm to the book's long-term reception; on the contrary, it bolstered its reputation outside the field. Despite its problematic argument, *The Birth of Tragedy* remains Nietzsche's most enduring and most influential contribution to classical studies. As an academic teacher he lectured on an impressive range of topics that included not only Greek tragedy, Greek lyric poetry, and the history of Greek literature, but also Greek philosophy, the Presocratics, Plato, Greek and Roman rhetoric, Greek religion, and Latin grammar.

But his lecture courses attracted very few students—between two and nineteen, with an average of eight—and several never took place because nobody showed up.[6]

As a student at Leipzig, and again in his early Basel years, Nietzsche did highly respectable work on a number of conventional topics, including Homeric criticism, the ancient biography of Homer, and the sources of Diogenes Laertius, who wrote lives of the Greek philosophers.[7] When he was offered the Basel chair in February 1869, Nietzsche had no doctorate, let alone the habilitation. In other words, he lacked the two traditional prerequisites for an appointment to an academic chair. His own teacher and mentor, the eminent Latinist Friedrich Ritschl (1806-1876), intervened and persuaded his colleagues at the University of Leipzig to invoke a rarely used statute and to award Nietzsche the doctorate without a dissertation or oral defense, merely on the basis of his published work, which amounted to half a dozen articles in professional journals. By the end of March Nietzsche finally had his doctorate. Judged by his publications, Nietzsche was an expert on the ancient reception of Homer and on Greek philosophical biography. Except for Ritschl and a few close academic friends such as Erwin Rohde (1845-1898), nobody knew how gifted and how exceptional Nietzsche really was.

It did not help his standing as a classicist that most of the books and essays he published while teaching at Basel were not intended for a professional audience but aimed at the educated public. Apart from *The Birth of Tragedy* and related essays, Nietzsche's work during the Basel decade consisted mainly of a series of critical reflections known as *Untimely Meditations* (1873-1876), or if you prefer, *Unfashionable Observations*, in which he attacked the liberal theologian David Friedrich Strauss as a cultural philistine; expressed his anti-Hegelian and anti-teleological views on history and culture; and eulogized Schopenhauer as the ideal philosopher, and Richard Wagner as the great musical innovator, while recommending both of them as antidotes against the cultural malaise of his time.

Nobody who reads the four published pamphlets would come to the conclusion that its author was a classicist. Taken together, these meditations reveal a painful identity-crisis that transformed Nietzsche, who was distinctly unhappy academically and unfulfilled intellectually. While keeping up a respectable front as a classicist, he gradually discovered his true intellectual and moral self and turned almost imperceptibly into a cultural critic of the bourgeois establishment and its values. As early as 1873 he described the role of the philosopher as that of a physician who would cure the diseased German culture of his time (*der Philosoph als Arzt der*

*Cultur*) (KSA 7, 23[15], 545-46).[8] Was he thinking of Schopenhauer, or of himself? It is significant that his earliest philosophical work (*Human, All Too Human*) was first published in May 1878, shortly after he had dissolved his large Basel household and moved into a small apartment. Exactly one year later he submitted his resignation as Professor of Classics to the Basel authorities and began a new life as a restless traveler, independent spirit, and itinerant philosopher; this is the Nietzsche most people recognize.

A fifth meditation, originally conceived as the fourth in 1875 but never finished, bears the telling title *We Classicists* (*Wir Philologen*).[9] Successive draft versions survive in the form of notebooks. In them Nietzsche takes a devastatingly critical look at his own profession and disparages the mentality, mannerisms, and self-absorbed drudgery of the professional classicists of his time. Many of Nietzsche's acute observations on the unbridgeable gulf that separates the ancient Greeks from their modern interpreters remain true to this day. Classicists still recognize themselves in the mirror that Nietzsche held up to them and their discipline one-and-a-quarter centuries ago. In one of the most provocative of these aphorisms, Nietzsche addresses the relationship between a classicist's personal life and his work: "Hence personal experience is clearly an unconditional prerequisite for a classicist. Which means: the classicist must be a human being first in order to become productive as a classicist" (*So ist freilich das Erlebniss die unbedingte Voraussetzung für einen Philologen—das heisst doch: erst Mensch sein, dann wird man erst als Philolog fruchtbar sein*) (KSA 8, 3[62], 31). Nietzsche's postulate of an essential link between life and scholarship, between *Wissenschaft und Leben*, was anathema to the classicists of his time.

## Greek Polytheism

Several of the aphorisms in *We Classicists* consist of pithy observations on the nature of the Greek gods and on how Greek religion differed from, and converged with, Christianity in both its ancient and modern varieties. In Nietzsche's eyes, religion was a fundamental, but problematic, psychological concomitant of the human condition. A pastor's son turned agnostic, he was fascinated by religion in all its historical manifestations, and recognized it as an integral historical component of any culture.[10] Like some of the most progressive and anticlerical thinkers of his time, Nietzsche did not regard the Christian god or any other gods as autonomous supernatural beings, but as creations of the human psyche

and products of historical processes. "The gods were invented for the convenience of humans," Nietzsche says, "to lighten their heavy conscience" (KSA 8, 5[150], 81). The Greek gods were no exception: "Almost all the Greek gods are accumulations, layer upon layer, some firmly fused, others barely glued together. It does not seem possible to me to sort this out in a scholarly manner because no good method for such a procedure exists" (KSA 8, 5[113], 70). Nietzsche's views on the historical origins of the Greek pantheon are not substantially different from the views held today by historians of Greek religion such as Walter Burkert, who differentiates between Greek, Anatolian, and Near Eastern components in the makeup of the majority of Greek divinities.[11]

The Greek were polytheists who did not worship one god, but many, potentially an infinite number of them. In their eyes "everything is full of gods" (πάντα πλήρη θεῶν).[12] Nietzsche was thrilled by the polytheism of the Greeks because it set their religion drastically apart from the Christian monotheism he detested. In another fragment from *We Classicists* he takes aim at one of the greatest Hellenists of the nineteenth century, Friedrich Gottlieb Welcker (1784-1868). The author of a massive work on the Greek gods titled *Griechische Götterlehre* ("Greek Theology"), Welcker died in his eighties when Nietzsche was twenty-four years old and still a student at the University of Leipzig. After years of contemplation, Welcker had come to the fanciful conclusion that the earliest Greeks had worshipped the sky-god Zeus as their only divinity. The mere thought of a monotheistic stage in primitive Greek culture—an *Urmonotheismus*—irritated Nietzsche and made him lash out at the deceased Welcker: "How far removed from the Greeks you have to be to attribute to them the narrow-minded autochthony of O[tfried] Müller! How Christian, to maintain with Welcker that the Greeks were originally monotheists" (KSA 8, 5 [114], 70). Nietzsche was right. The discovery of Linear-B tablets from the second millennium BCE during the last fifty years has confirmed that the Minoan and Mycenaean Greeks of the Bronze Age worshipped a whole pantheon of gods that included Zeus, Hera, and Dionysos. Although neither the name nor the existence of a single Greek god can be traced beyond 1500 BCE, it is inconceivable that the earliest Greeks were anything but polytheists.

Nietzsche was intellectually attracted to the polytheism of the Greeks because it provided him with a viable historical and emotional alternative to Christianity.[13] Indeed, explicit comparisons between Greek paganism and Christianity, with emphasis on the dichotomy polytheism/ monotheism, can be found in several of his works, starting with a section on "The Religious Life" in *Human, All Too Human* of 1878 (HA I §108-

§144). Invariably, Nietzsche uses Greek polytheism to put Christianity in its place. He argues that the Greeks felt ennobled and elevated because they conceived and represented their gods as ideal mirror-images of themselves. Almost imperceptibly, he reverses the condemnation of the Olympian gods by such philosophers as Xenophanes and Plato, putting a decidedly positive spin on Greek anthropomorphism. By contrast, he considers Christianity "in the deepest sense barbaric, Asiatic, ignoble and un-Greek" because, unlike Greek polytheism, it oppresses and humiliates its followers by predicating their spiritual well-being on the intervention of a divine savior (HA I §114).[14]

He was convinced that the polytheism of the Greeks reflected well on them because it showed how imaginative and intelligent they were: "Greek polytheism requires much intelligence [*Geist*]. Naturally you save on intelligence if you have only one god" (KSA 8, 5[103], 67). One wonders how Nietzsche could have countenanced an argument that postulates a correlation between human intelligence and the number of gods worshipped by a given group and ascribes a scaled-down intelligence to all monotheists. Nietzsche evidently started a trend. A quarter of a century ago the German philosopher Odo Marquard published an essay *Praise of Polytheism* in which he emulates Nietzsche's tendency to play games with the concept of polytheism. Unlike Nietzsche, however, Marquard confuses polytheism with mythology and associates it with literature rather than religion.[15]

## Olympian versus Chthonian

Nietzsche recognized polytheism as a defining feature of Greek culture. In fact he argues in *Human, All Too Human* that the "recession" of the gods would cast a dark cloud over the lives of the Greeks: "Wherever the Olympian gods receded into the background, Greek life was more somber and more anxious" (*Wo die olympischen Götter zurücktraten, da war auch das griechische Leben düsterer und ängstlicher*) (HA I §114). As usual, Nietzsche has chosen his words carefully. The German antonyms of *düster* and *ängstlich* are *hell* and *heiter*, that is "bright" and "serene." Gods that fit this description are indeed familiar. *Hell* and *heiter* are two of the buzzwords used in German classicism of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century to characterize the radiance and serenity that Winckelmann, Goethe and Schiller associated with the supposedly carefree existence of the Olympian gods.[16] Despite his tendency to separate himself from the classicism that continued to rule at his time, Nietzsche

echoes the classicizing view of the Greek gods in *The Birth of Tragedy* when he characterizes Apollo as the "god of light" (*Lichtgottheit*) (BT §1) and identifies the Apollonian stages of Greek culture with the "serene Olympians" (*die heiteren Olympier*) (BT §4) and their "bright sunshine" (*heller Sonnenschein*) (BT §3).[17]

The gods maintained a ubiquitous presence throughout the long history of Greek civilization. It is inconceivable that Nietzsche would have thought of them as vanishing from sight even temporarily. His claim that Greek life lost its radiance and vigor when the Olympian gods receded makes sense only if he is drawing a tacit distinction between the Olympians and another category of gods known as "chthonian" and associated with the powers of the earth and with the underworld.[18] Was Nietzsche contemplating a time when the dominance of the Olympian gods gave way to the chthonian gods whose presence cast a shadow of anxiety over the emotional lives of the Greeks? Exactly such an evolution from an Olympian to a chthonian divine order is envisaged in his lectures on the "Encyclopedia of Classical Philology," which were given during the summer of 1871, that is shortly before the publication of *The Birth of Tragedy* (KGW 2.3, 341-437).[19] In an extensive footnote on consistency and change in the Greek conception of the gods he makes this amazing claim:

> The divine world of beauty generates as its supplement the chthonian gods [*Die Götterwelt der Schönheit erzeugt zu ihrer Ergänzung die chthonischen Gottheiten*]. More formless in themselves and more closely akin to the [underlying] concept, they become increasingly dominant and cause the entire Olympian world along with the heroes to dissipate into symbols of their own [that is, the chthonian gods'] secrets [*Diese ... verflüchtigen die ganze olympische Welt samt den Heroen zu Symbolen i h r e r Geheimnisse*]. (KGW 2.3, 415, n.37)

The distinction Olympian/chthonian appealed to Nietzsche because it corresponded to his own tendency to interpret Greek polytheism as a dynamic process involving complementary concepts and polar opposites. The polarity of Apollo and Dionysos in *The Birth of Tragedy* is the most spectacular instance of this tendency.[20] As James I. Porter has pointed out, the evolution from Olympian to chthonian divinities in the lectures of 1871 reverses the pattern found only months later in *The Birth of Tragedy*, where the "primeval divine order of terror" associated with the pre-Olympian Titans evolves into the Olympian "order of joy" generated by the Apollonian "impulse toward beauty" (BT §3).[21] Nietzsche's vacillation is understandable. To this day the origins of the Greek gods are

shrouded in prehistoric darkness. Romantic scholars such as Friedrich Creuzer (1771-1858), Karl Otfried Müller (1797-1840), and Johann Jakob Bachofen (1815-87) (from whom Nietzsche inherited the Olympian/chthonian dichotomy), agreed on the importance of the chthonian gods as a separate category distinct from the Olympians but disagreed on the nature and composition of the earliest Greek pantheon.[22] Speculation reigned supreme, which explains why Nietzsche produced his own theory and modified it in the course of 1871. He finally resolved the problem of the relative order of the Olympian and chthonian realms to his own satisfaction, not by insisting on the priority of one over the other, as his predecessors had done, nor by sublimating the two divine realms into a single metaphysical entity,[23] but by tacitly substituting "Titanic" for "chthonian" and by merging the Olympian/Titanic polarity with the Apollonian/Dionysian and with his scheme of an alternation of Dionysian and Apollonian stages in Greek culture. For the author of *The Birth of Tragedy*, both the Apollonian and the Dionysian constituted a beginning as well as an end, with the one succeeding the other in alternating cycles, until both joined forces to generate the age of tragedy (BT §4).

Nietzsche is ambivalent about the term "chthonian." Of paramount importance in his 1871 lectures on Classical Philology (KGW 2.3, 413-16; 2.5, 512), the term is used sparingly in his lectures on Greek religion of 1875/1876 (see below) and avoided altogether in *The Birth of Tragedy*. Of the analogous terms in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Titanic and Dionysian along with their antonyms are neither synonymous nor completely interchangeable. As used in *The Birth of Tragedy*, "Titanic" and "Olympian" describe two successive and antagonistic generations of divinities in the historical evolution of the Greek pantheon which correspond to deeply rooted human aspirations. By contrast, Dionysian/Apollonian are key concepts in Nietzsche's aesthetic theory and refer to two antithetical and yet complementary "artistic forces" (BT §2).

## For and Against Polytheism

Nietzsche's fascination with polytheism reached its climax in *The Gay Science* (1882). In a section titled "The Greatest Advantage of Polytheism," polytheism in general is praised as "the wonderful art and ability to create gods." As Nietzsche sees it, polytheism was invented to justify each human individual's right to self-assertion:

> The invention of gods, heroes, and overmen [*Übermenschen*] of all kinds, as well as near-men and undermen [*Neben- und Untermenschen*], dwarfs, fairies, centaurs, satyrs, demons, and devils was the inestimable preliminary exercise for the justification of the egoism and sovereignty of the individual: the freedom that one conceded to a god in his relation to other gods one eventually granted to oneself in relation to laws, customs, and neighbors. (GS §143)

With a bold sleight of hand Nietzsche has thus managed to de-deify polytheism and to transform it into a divine metaphor for human self-assertion and individualism. In the conclusion of his argument Nietzsche turns from polytheism to monotheism and holds the latter responsible for uniform norms imposed on gods and humans alike. These norms resulted in the arbitrary "doctrine of one normal human type" (*die Lehre von einem Normalmenschen*) and the equally arbitrary "faith in one normal god" (*der Glaube an einen Normalgott*). At this point Nietzsche's pro-Greek bias and anti-Christian sentiments are once again obvious. And finally, in the crescendo of his peroration, Nietzsche associates polytheism with freethinking (*Freigeisterei*) and pluralistic thinking (*Vielgeisterei*).[24] As far as I know this is Nietzsche's last word on polytheism. The year is 1882, a decade after the publication of *The Birth of Tragedy.*

Nietzsche uses the term polytheism sparingly in his work, and always as a conscious antonym of monotheism. Ironically, the word polytheism is a product of the monotheistic tradition, both ancient and modern.[25] Its application to Greek religion by Nietzsche is all the more remarkable. To this day it remains the exception rather than the rule among historians of Greek religion to call the Greek polytheistic belief system by its true name. No book on the Greek gods or Greek religion exists that incorporates the term polytheism in its title. This is not an accident but a case of deliberate avoidance. One can only speculate on the reasons for the continuing antipathy to the term, which is after all a perfectly good Greek word. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the word polytheism was applied predominantly to non-western religions, which were considered unconscionably primitive and heathen from a Christian point of view.[26] Because of its negative connotations, the term came to be regarded as tainted and therefore inappropriate for the classical Greeks and their equally classical gods. Seen in this context, actual book titles such as "The Faith of the Hellenes" (*Der Glaube der Hellenen*), "The Greeks and their Gods," and "Greek Religion" turn out to be conventional euphemisms designed to mitigate a truth that Nietzsche confronted with relentless missionary zeal.

Nietzsche's flirtation with the idea of polytheism was perhaps the most charming weapon in his personal crusade against the arbitrariness and arrogance of monotheism in its Christian form. Because of the general, indeed metaphorical, nature of much of Nietzsche's argument, specific Greek gods are rarely mentioned. Yet Nietzsche had an intimate knowledge of Greek religion, both on an antiquarian and a conceptual level. He dealt with the antiquarian aspects in two lecture courses on Greek religion, to which we shall return. These lectures are systematic, informative, and factual. With rare exceptions, they abstain from speculation, hypothesis, and conceptualization. The opposite holds true for *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche's most conspicuous and most controversial attempt to reinterpret and reconceptualize two of the most prominent Greek gods. Published in 1872, it created an immediate stir. The book recovered from the ensuing scandal and its aftermath, whereas Nietzsche's reputation as a classicist never did.

## The Polytheistic Program of *The Birth of Tragedy*

Undeniably a work of genius, *The Birth of Tragedy* has serious defects when judged on its scholarly merits. But it would be very unfair to hold it to such a standard. It is obvious that *The Birth of Tragedy* was never intended as a work of scholarship by its author. It lacks all the hallmarks of a scholarly book or article—it has no footnotes or references; the views of other scholars are never discussed; opinions of unprecedented temerity are presented without supporting evidence or argument; and misrepresentations bordering on deliberate falsehoods are common. As is well known, very few of the basic assumptions that underlie Nietzsche's argument stand up to scrutiny. It would amount to overkill to make Nietzsche once again the whipping boy of a narrow historicist criticism. Instead, we shall look at a single issue, Nietzsche's interpretation of Apollo and Dionysos, as an example of his creative and conceptually bold appreciation of Greek polytheism.

In retracing once again this central aspect of his argument, I will focus as far as possible focus on his positive contribution and ignore his mistakes. To be frank, I do not believe that anything Nietzsche says about the origins of tragedy, about Apollo and Dionysos as polar opposites and cultural icons, or about the identity of the suffering Dionysos with the tragic hero, stands up to scrutiny. These reservations do not prevent me from appreciating *The Birth of Tragedy*, but I read it as an ingenious piece of fiction that develops and exploits several imaginary sce-

narios and vividly dramatizes matters of great importance and equally great obscurity: the origins of tragedy; the inner dynamics of Greek culture in the archaic and classical periods; the status of literature and art in an early society; the nature of Dionysos; and most importantly for our purposes, the cultural significance of polytheism as seen by Nietzsche and its pivotal role in Nietzsche's construct.

The brand of polytheism that sets the tone for *The Birth of Tragedy* is not a product of the Greek imagination but of Nietzsche's own mind. He skillfully combines authentic Greek material with his own flights of fancy. For anybody interested in the modern reception of the Greeks, the hybrid produced by this meeting of the minds is almost more revealing than the real thing. I propose to take Nietzsche the would-be polytheist to task and to find out how well he practices in *The Birth of Tragedy* what he preaches in the more academic discussions of polytheism found in his lectures.

The key to an understanding of Nietzsche's polytheistic argument lies in sections 1-10 of *The Birth of Tragedy*, where three interrelated Dionysian scenarios are imbedded within a general polytheistic framework or matrix. The general framework is a highly condensed and abbreviated mirror image of Greek polytheism that consists of occasional references to cult or ritual, to dramatic performances in honor of Dionysos, and to the collective presence of the Olympian gods. Apart from the ubiquitous references to Apollo and Dionysos, only two Olympian divinities are mentioned by name, Zeus and Demeter (BT §10). The peculiar role Nietzsche assigns to Demeter paints a decidedly un-Olympian picture of her: "She rejoices again for the first time when told that she may give birth to Dionysos once more." According to an obscure Orphic myth, Zeus and Demeter were the parents of the so-called "third Dionysos" or Dionysos Zagreus who was torn apart by the Titans and restored to life when Demeter reconstituted his scattered limbs.[27] In a breathtaking synthesis that is indebted to Friedrich Wilhelm Schelling's symbolic understanding of the myth of Demeter and Dionysos, to Friedrich Hölderlin's notion of Dionysos as the god who comes (*der kommende Gott*), and to Schopenhauer's *principium individuationis*, Nietzsche takes the rejoicing Demeter as a universal existential symbol and interprets the "rebirth" of "this coming third Dionysos" (*diesem kommenden dritten Dionysus*) as the "end of individuation" and as a "premonition of a restored unity" (*die Ahnung einer wiederhergestellten Einheit*) (BT §10).[28]

By banishing two-thirds of the Olympians, that is, the vast majority of the gods in the Greek pantheon, from the pages of *The Birth of Tragedy* and from his polytheistic construct, Nietzsche privileges and high-

lights the two divinities that matter most to him, Apollo and Dionysos. Some ancient sources exclude Dionysos from the august circle of the twelve Olympian gods.[29] Nietzsche took advantage of this ambiguity when he classified Dionysos emphatically as "chthonian" in the lectures of 1871 but left his status deliberately vague in *The Birth of Tragedy*, where the Olympian/chthonian classification does not occur. Neither "Titanic" like other pre-Olympian gods nor "Olympian" like Apollo, the Dionysos of *The Birth of Tragedy* is sui generis. In the section on the Zagreus myth, Nietzsche playfully invents a new role for "the suffering Dionysos of the mysteries" by making him the procreator of gods and mortals: "From the smile of this Dionysos originated the Olympian gods, and from his tears the human race" (*Aus dem Lächeln dieses Dionysus sind die olympischen Götter, aus seinen Thränen die Menschen entstanden*) (BT §10).[30]

In keeping with his reductionist strategy, Nietzsche does not allow non-Olympian gods to clutter up his dualistic Apollonian/Dionysian plot. Of the numerous divinities that did not enjoy Olympian status, only Hades, Moira, Pan, and the Titans are mentioned. Hades (BT §11) and Moira (§3 and §9) are the two Greek gods most prominently connected with death and mortality, yet their role in *The Birth of Tragedy* is merely ornamental. Pan is equally irrelevant to Nietzsche's overall argument. The paradigmatic dictum "The great Pan is dead" (BT §11), quoted by Nietzsche from Plutarch, is not a true evocation of Pan as a pre-Hellenistic divinity and a member of the Dionysiac circle.[31] The death of Pan is adduced as a rhetorical flourish and a symbolic analogy to give weight to Nietzsche's own claim that "tragedy is dead!" (BT §11). The Titans appear repeatedly in their mythical roles as representatives of the pre-Olympian "order of terror" (§3-§4, §9) and as the murderers of Dionysos Zagreus (§10). Prometheus, the benefactor of humankind, is the only Titan who has an individual identity (§3-§4, §7, §9-§10).

Apollo and Dionysos are the only divinities that count in *The Birth of Tragedy*; they are the true protagonists. Nietzsche deliberately created a minimal version of polytheism that makes do with the smallest possible number of divinities, namely two. Needless to say, a polytheism that barely avoids the appearance of monotheism is an artificial construct and does not correspond to the actual cultic patterns of Greek religion.[32] I am using the word "protagonist" deliberately because it reflects my belief that Nietzsche's choice of two divinities rather than three or four as the driving forces in the unfolding drama of cultural tensions, antinomies, and opposites may have been consciously or unconsciously influenced by the polar patterns of Euripidean tragedy and by Euripides' tendency to

juxtapose or oppose two divinities in several of his extant plays. His *Hippolytos*, in which Aphrodite and Artemis function as polar opposites and divine personifications of sex and virginity, is a prime example. Without going into too much speculative detail, I venture to suggest that *The Birth of Tragedy* could be imagined as a tragedy with a cast of characters that includes three playwrights, two divinities, and one philosopher. Aeschylus and Sophocles play the good guys and Euripides the bad guy, while Socrates appears in a very ambivalent role. Apollo and Dionysos are "beyond good and evil," like true tragic gods. As stage-gods they make their respective epiphanies at the beginning and/or end of the play, the standard convention in Euripides.[33] In the successive episodes of the play, Apollo and Dionysos alternate their stage epiphanies, thus replicating the pattern of alternating Dionysian and Apollonian stages in Greek culture (BT §4). I am fully aware of the double irony of reconceptualizing *The Birth of Tragedy* as a drama with characters and a plot, and of recasting Nietzsche's Dionysian scenarios in the manner of Euripides. But what I just did to *The Birth of Tragedy* is hardly more inconceivable or far-fetched than what Nietzsche does in *The Birth of Tragedy* with Greek tragedy, myth, or polytheism.

## Three Dionysian Scenarios

The narrative core of the argument of sections 1-10 of *The Birth of Tragedy* consists of three overlapping scenarios in which Dionysos is the key figure. In the first of his Dionysian scenarios, Nietzsche reconceptualizes Apollo and Dionysos as polar opposites and as "art deities" (*Kunstgötter*), that is, divine personifications or incarnations of two different art forms (BT §1-§3). His scheme makes for innovative aesthetic theory, but it finds no support in Greek religion. The gods of Greek cult were often arranged in pairs, triads, or larger groups of ten or twelve. Thus Apollo could be paired with Artemis, or Demeter with Dionysos. While the divine brothers Apollo and Dionysos were worshipped as a pair of interconnected divinities at Delphi, they were never perceived as absolute conceptual opposites in antiquity. Nietzsche recognizes as much when he speaks of the Delphic "reconciliation of the two antagonists" (BT §2).[34] But there is ample precedent for such an opposition in the Romantic scholarship of the nineteenth century, which imagined Apollo as joyful and radiant and Dionysos as sad and somber.[35] Here and elsewhere, Nietzsche sees the Greeks through the filter of traditional interpretations that he inherited.

In his second Dionysian scenario Nietzsche takes the polarity of Apollo and Dionysos out of its synchronic isolation and applies it diachronically to a sweeping vision of Greek cultural history from the Bronze Age to the time of the tragedians. He perceives Greek culture as an alternating pattern of successive Dionysian and Apollonian periods (BT §4). Thus the Dionysian "Age of Bronze" precedes the "Homeric world," which is the product of the Apollonian aesthetic impulse. The age of the earliest lyric poets belongs to Dionysos, whereas the Doric art and world view of the sixth century marks a return of the Apollonian. As the highest art form achieved by the Greeks, tragedy represents the culmination of Apollonian and Dionysian synergies by combining both. There is no precedent, ancient or modern, for this breathtakingly bold revision of the myth of the ages in which cultural theory and literary history are combined under a thin layer of an almost allegorical polytheism whose deities have been transformed into abstract concepts, aesthetic icons, and eponymous cultural heroes.

Nietzsche's third Dionysian scenario is radically different, in part because it adopts an esoteric mythical construct that excludes Apollo. Its core consists of the Nietzschean version of the myth of the suffering Dionysos Zagreus who was dismembered by the Titans and restored to life again with divine help (BT §10).[36] According to Nietzsche, the suffering Dionysos reappears incarnate in every hero of tragedy because the tragic heroes "are mere masks of this original hero Dionysos" (§10). The tragic pattern of death and suffering is thus sublimated into a myth of eternal return and renewal. The existential symbolism of the Zagreus myth is transparent and echoed in one of the so-called Orphic gold tablets from Thessaly. Dating from the late fourth century BCE and buried with a dead woman, its opening verse reads, "Now you have died and now you have been born, thrice-blessed, on this day." (νῦν ἔθανεϲ καὶ νῦν ἐγένου, τριϲόλβιε, ἄματι τῶιδε.[37] A related afterlife text from the same period confirms that the boundaries between human and divine were always more fluid on the outer and more esoteric margins of Greek religion: "You have become a god from a human" (θεὸϲ ἐγένου ἐξ ἀνθρώπου).[38]

Polymorphous himself, Dionysos has become the signal deity of Nietzsche's polytheism. Does Nietzsche's preoccupation with Dionysos mean that he abandoned his polytheistic agenda and substituted a kind of "Dionysian monotheism" for it?[39] I do not think so. The suffering Dionysos of *The Birth of Tragedy* is defined through his conceptual antonym, Apollo. Another polytheistic feature of Nietzsche's Dionysos is his

tendency to multiply himself. If followed to its logical conclusion, Nietzsche's equation of Dionysos with every tragic hero implies that the suffering Dionysos is perpetuated and multiplied in his numerous human surrogates on the tragic stage. Instead of one Dionysos, there are now many, albeit in human disguise. Indeed, multiforms of the same deity are a hallmark of polytheism, and Greek and Roman mythographers differentiate between five divine bearers of the name Dionysos.[40] Nietzsche's own experience of Dionysos changed over the years, and so did his image of the god, from his first academic encounters with the Greek Dionysos or Dionysoses to the Dionysos of *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), to the "unknown god" of the *Dionysos-Dithyramben* (1888), and to Nietzsche's ultimate delusionary self-identification with Dionysos (1889)—"among Indians I was Buddha, in Greece Dionysos" (*Ich bin unter Indern Buddha, in Griechenland Dionysos gewesen*).[41]

## The Immortal Mortal

I have argued that, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche paints a highly imaginative and dynamic picture of polytheism which would revolutionize our understanding of Greek religion if it actually corresponded to any historical reality. Indeed, an enormous gulf separates Nietzsche's own play with polytheism from the actual manifestations of polytheism that existed in the real world of Greek religion as practiced. How conscious was Nietzsche of this discrepancy? The answer lies in Nietzsche's Basel lectures on Greek religion.[42] A preliminary and highly condensed treatment of this vast topic can be found in Nietzsche's 1871 lecture course on the "Encyclopedia of Classical Philology and Introduction to the Study of the Same" (*Encyclopädie der klassischen Philologie und Einleitung in das Studium derselben*) (KGW 2.3, 341-437). Under the rubric "On Religion and Mythology of the Ancients" ("Über Religion und Mythologie der Alten"), two of these lectures offer a rapid survey of Greek and Roman mythology and religion on ten packed pages, followed by an even briefer discussion of cults and rituals that covers fundamental religious institutions such as sacrificial rites and their classification, purification rituals, priesthoods, and the religious rites of families and kinship groups (KGW 2.3, 410-27).

Most of the information that Nietzsche provides echoes the standard reference works of the time, from which he borrowed freely.[43] Only once, in his discussion of the mystery cults of the "chthonian gods" Demeter and Dionysos, does Nietzsche anticipate one of the dominant themes of *The Birth of Tragedy*, namely the myth of the death and rebirth of Diony-

sos.[44] Immediately after an abrupt reference to the *immortality* of the soul (*Also Unsterblichkeit der Seele!*), he makes an astonishing statement about the *mortality* of Greek gods: "In the Dionysiac myths all gods were mortal. In other words, all individual gods [represent] as many transient manifestations of the one divine power that pervades nature. The Titans swallowed up Zagreus, and Zeus killed them: the human race originates from their ashes, whence the dual nature of humans [*daher die Doppelnatur des Menschen*]" (KGW 2.3, 414).

The programmatic term *Doppelnatur* reappears in section 10 of *The Birth of Tragedy*, where it refers to the dual nature of Dionysos himself—he is "wild" as well as "mild."[45] In an earlier passage, Nietzsche emphasizes the "amazing mixture and duality" (*die wundersame Mischung und Doppelheit*) of joy and sorrow in the emotions of Dionysos's ecstatic worshippers (BT §2).[46] It is tempting to assume a connection between the dual nature of Dionysos and the dual nature of Nietzsche's Dionysian humans. At least for the Nietzsche of the early Basel years, the fundamental dualities of life/death and good/bad that define the human condition in existential as well as moral terms were prefigured and preexperienced in the symbolic dismemberment and rebirth of Dionysos Zagreus, the "suffering god." As an "immortal mortal," Nietzsche's Dionysos paradigmatically represents both poles of the human existence and serves not only as an archetype of death, but also as an eternal reminder of the universal "will to live" (TI What I Owe to the Ancients §5).[47] One cannot but wonder how much, or how little, of Nietzsche's earlier conception of Dionysos was still on his mind when he signed his name as "Dionysos" on the so-called *Wahnsinnszettel* of January 1889.

## The Big Divide

Nietzsche's treatment of Dionysos in these lectures reveals how he reconciled his esoteric approach to this god with his perception of Greek religion as a whole. He does so by marginalizing Dionysos twice: first, by compartmentalizing him as a chthonian divinity, and second, with recourse to the recondite Zagreus myth by emphasizing the god's mortality, and thus his "suffering," an experience the god shares with mortals. At the same time, Nietzsche revalidates the chthonian gods, Dionysos included, by claiming that they were conceived by the Greeks as a necessary counterpart to the beautiful world of the Olympian gods.

The nine students who took the lecture course of 1871 must have been mystified by Nietzsche's enigmatic comments on Dionysos and by

the exceptional status he assigned to him. They could not have known that *The Birth of Tragedy* was taking shape while Nietzsche was giving his lectures, nor could they have guessed how controversial his views on Dionysos would prove in the not too distant future. *The Birth of Tragedy* appeared in January 1872, but its publication did not affect the way Nietzsche presented Greek religion as an academic teacher. Its key concept, the polarity of Apollo and Dionysos, is never mentioned in his full-fledged lecture course on Greek religion, which postdates *The Birth of Tragedy*. Announced as "Antiquities of the Religious Cult of the Greeks" (*Alterthümer des religiösen Cultus bei den Griechen*), these lectures were first delivered before eight students in the winter of 1875/1876, almost four years after *The Birth of Tragedy*. Nietzsche's declining health forced him to end this semester one month early. The same lectures were held again in the winter of 1877/1878 before six students under the abbreviated title "Religious Antiquities of the Greeks" (*Religiöse Alterthümer der Griechen*). Some thirty-five years later they were published posthumously under the title found in Nietzsche's autograph, "The Religious Worship of the Greeks" (*Der Gottesdienst der Griechen*) (KGW 2.5, 357-520). All three titles sound unbearably antiquated today, but they use the standard academic language of the period.

The difference between these lectures and the views expressed in *The Birth of Tragedy* is striking. The only important concept that can be found in both places is that of human surrogacy, which postulates that humans could play the role of gods and take their place in specially marked ritual contexts. In *The Birth of Tragedy* this concept is applied to the tragic hero, who represents the suffering Dionysos in Nietzsche's construct. In the lectures of 1875/1876, however, it is applied to the alleged ritual role of Greek priests, whom Nietzsche identifies with the divinities to whose cult they are attached: "During the principal day of the festival the priest is a representation of his god and enters into a mystical union with him [*geht ein mystisches Eins-werden mit ihm ein*]. [...] When the story of the cult's founding is enacted on the anniversary of its foundation, the priest *is* the god himself [*ist der Priester der Gott selbst*]. He wears the vestments of his god" (KGW 2.5, 462).

Nietzsche devotes a disproportionate amount of space to the discussion of the surrogate Greek priests and their ritual affinity to, and cultic identification with, the divinities they serve. On more than two pages he collects passages from Greek sources to illustrate "the original concept of the priest as a temporary incarnation of the god" (*die ursprüngliche Auffassung des Priesters als einer zeitweiligen Inkarnation des Gottes*) (KGW 2.5, 464). Several years after *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche was still ex-

ploring the Greek boundaries between human and divine, but it is significant that he abandoned the suffering Dionysos incarnate in the heroes of tragedy and replaced him with the priest who ritually represents his god. As far as divine/human surrogacy is concerned, the priest who "incarnates" a god by impersonating him must rank as a much more conventional figure, and a less interesting concept, than the "one truly existent Dionysos" who "appears in a multitude of figures" (*der eine wahrhaft reale Dionysos erscheint in einer Vielheit der Gestalten*) on the tragic stage (BT §10).

There can be no doubt that, in the lectures of 1875/1876, Nietzsche distanced himself from *The Birth of Tragedy* and its highly idiosyncratic treatment of Greek polytheism as much as he could, and that he did so essentially by ignoring his prior claims. The suppression of any reference to the duality of Apollo and Dionysos, to the suffering Dionysos, and to the alleged divinity of the tragic hero suggests that Nietzsche decided to play it safe and had abandoned the problematic model of Greek polytheism that forms the core of *The Birth of Tragedy.* Given the adverse reaction to his book, he was concerned about his reputation as a classicist and determined to make sure that he would be taken seriously as an academic teacher. His lectures on Greek religion reflect these concerns in that they offer a much more conventional and balanced assessment. The bold but distorted vision of Greek polytheism that makes *The Birth of Tragedy* such fascinating reading had to take second place.

This is not the only time that Nietzsche appears to be wearing two different hats when dealing with Greek gods. Apart from Greek religion, he had an invested interest in Greek philosophy, especially in the philosophers before Socrates, the so-called Pre-Socratics, a name and concept that he helped to promote. In his various lectures and publications on them he touches upon all the major aspects of their doctrines, including their views on the gods and religion. More than once, he waxes eloquent over Thales' principal doctrine, which he quotes in the unattested form "All is water" (*Alles ist Wasser*) and takes to mean "All is One" (*Alles ist Eins*).[48] He cites another dictum ascribed to Thales, one which is conceptually similar and equally apodictic: "Everything is full of gods."[49] Oddly, he does not to comment on it, perhaps because he considered its declaration of pantheism too elusive. Indeed, scholars continue to debate its meaning. Yet Nietzsche's silence is part of a larger pattern. Except for a passing reference to Pythagoras and Empedocles as quasi-gods, the Pre-Socratics are nowhere mentioned in his lectures on

Greek religion, nor does Nietzsche ever engage fully with them and their traditional role as persistent critics of the polytheistic belief system in his lecture series *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers* (Summer 1872, 1873, 1876).[50]

Nietzsche repudiated much of *The Birth of Tragedy* in his "Attempt at A Self-Criticism" of 1886. In one courageous gesture he distanced himself from his Basel years and indeed his work as a classicist. I began with the *New York Times* obituary of Nietzsche in which his identity as a classicist is completely ignored. This omission raises a bigger question: could Nietzsche have become the thinker that he was without his classical background? Or to put it another way: can one read and fully understand the mature Nietzsche without acknowledging that he started as a classicist? More to the point: in the end, does it matter that Nietzsche was once a classicist?

## Notes

[1] Raymond J. Benders and Stephan Oettermann, *Friedrich Nietzsche: Chronik in Bildern und Texten* (Munich and Vienna: Carl Hanser, 2000), 802-03. I am most grateful to Sarah Nolan and Bryce Sady for their help in preparing this paper.

[2] *The New York Times*, 26 August 1900. Professor William Allan alerted me to this obituary.

[3] Max Oehler, *Nietzsches Ahnen* (Weimar: Wagner, 1938); Curt Paul Janz, *Friedrich Nietzsche: Biographie*, 3 vols (Munich: dtv, 1981), vol. 1, 26-28; Hans von Müller, "Nietzsches Vorfahren," *Nietzsche-Studien* 31 (2002): 253-75.

[4] Janz, *Nietzsche: Biographie*, vol. 1, 76.

[5] Hubert Cancik, *Nietzsches Antike: Vorlesung* (Stuttgart and Weimar: J. B. Metzler, 1995), 20-21 and 33-34; Manfred Riedel, "Nachwort," in Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1994), 209-11.

[6] Johannes Stroux, *Nietzsches Professur in Basel* (Jena: Frommann, 1925), 94-101. The total number of matriculated students at the University of Basel in the 1870s was approximately two hundred.

[7] Cancik, *Nietzsches Antike*, 17-32.

[8] Janz, *Nietzsche: Biographie*, vol. 3, 369 and 376; Manfred Riedel, "Ein Seitenstück zur 'Geburt der Tragödie': Nietzsches Abkehr von Schopenhauer und Wagner und seine Wende zur Philosophie," *Nietzsche-Studien* 24 (1995): 54-61 (49-51).

[9] Hubert Cancik, "'Philologie als Beruf': Zu Formengeschichte, Thema und Tradition der unvollendeten vierten Unzeitgemäßen Friedrich Nietzsches," in Hubert Cancik and Hildegard Cancik-Lindemaier, *Philolog und Kultfigur: Friedrich Nietzsche und seine Antike in Deutschland* (Stuttgart and Weimar: J. B. Metzler, 1999), 69-84; Friedrich Nietzsche, *Unmodern Observations*, ed. William Arrowsmith (New Haven

and London: Yale UP, 1990), 305-87, whose translations I compared; Cancik, *Nietzsches Antike*, 94-106.

[10] Hubert Cancik, "Das Thema 'Religion und Kultur' bei Friedrich Nietzsche und Franz Overbeck," in *Philolog und Kultfigur*, 51-68.

[11] Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1985).

[12] Aristotle, *On the Soul* 411a8 = Thales, 11 A 22 Diels-Kranz; Plato, *Laws* 899b9.

[13] Johann Figl, "'Tod Gottes' und die Möglichkeit 'neuer Götter,'" *Nietzsche-Studien* 29 (2000): 82-101; Albert Henrichs, "Götterdämmerung und Götterglanz: Griechischer Polytheismus seit 1872," in Bernd Seidensticker and Martin Vöhler (eds), *Urgeschichten der Moderne: Die Antike im 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart und Weimar: J. B. Metzler, 2001), 1-19.

[14] On Nietzsche as a critic of Christianity, see Jörg Salaquarda, "Nietzsche and the Judaeo-Christian Tradition," in Bernd Magnus and Kathleen M. Higgins (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), 90-118.

[15] Odo Marquard, "Lob des Polytheismus: Über Monomythie und Polymythie," in Hans Poser (ed), *Philosophie und Mythos: Ein Kolloquium* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1979), 40-58; reprinted in Odo Marquard, *Abschied vom Prinzipiellen: Philosophische Studien* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1981), 91-116.

[16] Barbara von Reibnitz, *Ein Kommentar zu Friedrich Nietzsche "Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik" (Kapitel-12)* (Stuttgart and Weimar: J. B. Metzler), 226-28; Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die Geburt der Tragödie: Schriften zu Literatur und Philosophie der Griechen*, ed. Manfred Landfester (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1994), 534-36; Henrichs, "Götterdämmerung und Götterglanz," 12-13.

[17] The perplexing ambiguities of Nietzsche's anticlassicism are exposed in James I. Porter, *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2000), 248-65.

[18] Scott Scullion, "Olympian and Chthonian," *Classical Antiquity* 13 (1994): 75-119; Michael S. Silk and Joseph P. Stern, *Nietzsche on Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1981), 180-83; Porter, *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future*, 216-20, 377-79.

[19] See the exemplary analysis by Porter, *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future*, 167-224.

[20] Martin Vogel, *Apollinisch und Dionysisch: Geschichte eines genialen Irrtums* (Regensburg: Gustav Bosse, 1966); Silk and Stern, *Nietzsche on Tragedy*, 166-85; Reibnitz, *Kommentar*, 58-64.

[21] Porter, *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future*, 216; James I. Porter, *The Invention of Dionysus: An Essay on the Birth of Tragedy* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2000), 155.

[22] Renate Schlesier, "Olympische Religion und chthonische Religion: Creuzer, K. O. Müller und die Folgen," in *Kulte, Mythen und Gelehrte: Anthropologie der Antike seit 1800* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1994), 21-32 (22-25); Porter, *Nietzsche and the*

*Philology of the Future*, 216-17; Manfred Frank, *Der kommende Gott: Vorlesungen über die Neue Mythologie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982).

[23] As Porter argues in *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future*, 217-18.

[24] On Nietzsche's definition of the "new philosophers" as "free spirits" (*freie Geister*), see Alexander Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard UP, 1985), 60-73.

[25] Henrichs, "Götterdämmerung und Götterglanz," 5-6.

[26] Burkhard Gladigow, "Polytheismus," in: Hubert Cancik, Burkhard Gladigow and Karl-Heinz Kohl (eds), *Handbuch religionswissenschaftlicher Grundbegriffe*, 5 vols (Stuttgart, Berlin and Cologne: W. Kohlhammer, 1988-2001), vol. 4, 321-30.

[27] Diodoros 3.63.3 (cf. 3.64.1) = Orph. 59 F Bernabé; see Albert Henrichs, "Philodems 'De Pietate' als mythographische Quelle," *Cronache ercolanesi* 5 (1975): 5-38 (34-36); Reibnitz, *Kommentar*, 268-71.

[28] Like Schelling before him, Nietzsche departs from his Greek source and construes a contrast between Demeter's "eternal sorrow" (*ewige Trauer*) over the disappearance of her daughter Persephone and her rejoicing at the prospect of giving birth to Dionysos (BT §10). Demeter's dual emotions correspond to the "duality in the emotions of the Dionysian revelers" (BT §2). On Schelling in this context, see Frank, *Der kommende Gott*, 333 and 352, n. 31; Reibnitz, *Kommentar*, 270-71.

[29] Stella Georgoudi, "Les Douze Dieux des Grecs: variations sur un thème," in Stella Georgoudi and Jean-Pierre Vernant (eds), *Mythes grecs au figuré: De l'antiquité au baroque* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), 43-80.

[30] Nietzsche is paraphrasing and recontextualizing two anonymous hexameters from an Orphic poem quoted by Proklos on Plato's *Republic* 385, 1.127.29 Kroll = Orph. 545 Bernabé. It is Nietzsche, not Proklos, who identifies the unnamed god of this text with Dionysos (see Reibnitz, *Kommentar*, 265-66).

[31] Martina Adami, *Der große Pan ist tot!? Studien zur Pan-Rezeption in der Literatur des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts* (Innsbruck: Institut für Germanistik an der Universität Innsbruck, 2000); Reibnitz, *Kommentar*, 289-91.

[32] Reibnitz, *Kommentar*, 108-10.

[33] Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, *Tragedy and Athenian Religion* (Lanham, Boulder, New York, and Oxford: Lexington Books, 2003), 469-82.

[34] See Silk and Stern, *Nietzsche on Tragedy*, 178-80; Marcel Detienne, "Apollon und Dionysos in der griechischen Religion," in Richard Faber and Renate Schlesier (eds), *Die Restauration der Götter: Antike Religion und Neo-Paganismus* (Würzburg: Königshausen and Neumann, 1986), 124-32.

[35] Reibnitz, *Kommentar*, 61-64 and 71-74.

[36] On the myth of Dionysos Zagreus, see Alberto Bernabé, "La toile de Pénélope: a-t-il existé un mythe orphique sur Dionysos et les Titans?," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 219 (2002): 401-33; Reibnitz, *Kommentar*, 260-71; and Larry J. Alderink, *Creation and Salvation in Ancient Orphism* (Chico, CA: Scholars P, 1981).

[37] Christoph Riedweg, "Initiation—Tod—Unterwelt: Beobachtungen zur Kommunikationssituation und narrativen Technik der orphisch-bakchischen Goldblättchen,"

in Fritz Graf (ed.), *Ansichten griechischer Rituale: Geburtstags-Symposium für Walter Burkert* (Stuttgart and Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1998), 359-98 (392) [no. P 1-2 = Orph. 485-86 F Bernabé].

[38] Riedweg, "Initiation—Tod—Unterwelt," 394 [no. A 4 = Orph. 487 F Bernabé].

[39] By 1889, the end of Nietzsche's productive life, the dualistic view of Greek polytheism that permeates *The Birth of Tragedy* had indeed metamorphosed into "a kind of Dionysian monotheism" (Hubert Cancik, "Friedrich Nietzsches Mysterienlehre," in *Philolog und Kultfigur*, 35-49 [41]).

[40] Arthur S. Pease, *M. Tulli Ciceronis De Natura Deorum Libri III* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP), 1121-25 on Cicero, *De nat. deor.* 3.58.

[41] *Nietzsche: Chronik*, 730, from one of the "mad notes" Nietzsche wrote in Turin on 3 January 1889 as he lapsed into insanity.

[42] Richard Meister, "Nietzsches Lehrtätigkeit in Basel: 1869-1879," *Anzeiger der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, Phil.-hist. Klasse, 85 (1948): 103-21 (107); *Nietzsche: Chronik*, 353 and 416.

[43] "The lectures are in fact little more than a reflection in the mirror of his brilliant style of views widely accepted in his day" (William A. Oldfather, [review of volume 19 of the "Großoktav-Ausgabe" = Philologica 3], *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 12 (1913): 652-66 [653]). See Glenn Most, "Between Philosophy and Philology," *New Nietzsche Studies* 4 (2000): 163-70.

[44] In his lectures on the Pre-Socratics, Nietzsche differentiates between "the Olympian gods" and the "mystery gods" (*Mysteriengötter*), of whom he mentions only one, Dionysos Zagreus (KGW 2.4, 219-20).

[45] Reibnitz, *Kommentar*, 266-68.

[46] On the Romantic precursors of Nietzsche's polar interpretation of the Dionysiac psychology, see Reibnitz, *Kommentar*, 111-12.

[47] See Albert Henrichs, "'He Has a God in Him': Human and Divine in the Modern Perception of Dionysus," in Thomas H. Carpenter and Christopher A. Faraone (eds), *Masks of Dionysus* (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1993), 13-43 (27).

[48] PTAG (1873), §3 (KSA 1, 813); *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers*, §6 (KGW 2.4, 235-37).

[49] *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers*, §6 (KGW 2.4, 237) above, n. 17. Interpretations include W. K. C. Guthrie, A History of Greek Philosophy, vol. 1 (Cambridge UP, 1962), pp. 65-68, and Jaap Mansfeld, *Die Vorsokratiker I* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1983), p. 42. "Alles ist voll von Göttern" obviously provided the conceptual and stylistic matrix for Nietzsche's "Alles ist Wasser."

[50] *The Preplatonic Philosophers*, §3, §10, §11 (KGW 2.4, 219-23; 264; 284-86).

# Section 2

# Pre-Socratics and Pythagoreans, Cynics, and Stoics

# "An Impossible Virtue": Heraclitean Justice and Nietzsche's Second Untimely Meditation

*Simon Gillham*

AT THE BEGINNING of section six of "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life" Nietzsche asks two questions of "modern man," by which he means, in this context, contemporary historians and philologists. He asks, first, "whether on account of his well-known historical 'objectivity' [*Objektivität*] he has a right to call himself strong, that is to say *just* [*gerecht*], and just in a higher degree than men of other ages?" And second: "Is it true that this objectivity originates in an enhanced need and demand for justice [*Gerechtigkeit*]?" (UM II §6). Nietzsche uses the word "justice" here to refer both to the capacities of contemporary historians and to the adequacy of contemporary modes of historical explanation. He also implies a distinction between two conceptions of justice: justice as objectivity, the justice of the contemporary historian, and justice as strength, the kind of justice in which Nietzsche seems to be interested.

I shall attempt to clarify and explore this distinction here in four stages. First, I shall examine the way that Nietzsche uses his negative conception of justice as objectivity to underwrite each of the key distinctions that he makes in the opening sections of this second *Untimely Meditation*. Second, I shall briefly introduce the alternative conception of justice as strength, more specifically, justice as "an impossible virtue" (UM II §6), which Nietzsche develops in section six of the text. I shall argue that this positive conception of justice can be usefully elucidated by considering Nietzsche's lecture on Heraclitus, which dates from the same period as the second *Untimely Meditation*.[1] Thus the third stage in my argument will consist in an exposition of the particularities of Nietzsche's understanding of Heraclitean justice, focusing especially on the doctrine of conflagration. Finally, I shall attempt to connect the understanding of justice that Nietzsche develops in his Heraclitus lecture with the positive

conception of justice as strength that we find in section six of the second *Untimely Meditation*.

## Life, History, and Justice

There are, of course, two fundamental sets of distinctions in the second *Untimely Meditation*: the *perspectival* distinction between the unhistorical (*das Unhistorische*), the historical, and the suprahistorical (*das Überhistorische*); and the distinction between the three *modes of history*: the monumental, the antiquarian, and the critical. I call the first set of distinctions "perspectival," in part to echo Nietzsche's own terminology, but also to draw attention to the fact that Nietzsche is referring here to the fundamental value-creating perspective that underlies the possibility of any particular activity or judgment. I shall return to all this in more detail shortly. But first I want briefly to consider the other key term in the second *Untimely Meditation*, "life" (*das Leben*). Understanding what this word "life" means is, of course, no easy task, within or without Nietzsche's writings. Generally, Nietzsche's frequent use of the word "life" as an abstract noun has been understood by commentators as shorthand for "human life."[2] This ignores various places, not just in the notebooks, where Nietzsche extends the reach of life beyond the human, sometimes to encompass the organic as a whole, and sometimes, arguably, to embrace the totality of beings throughout the universe. In *On the Genealogy of Morals*, for instance, Nietzsche speculates that viewed from a distant star the earth would appear as "a nook of disgruntled, arrogant and offensive creatures filled with a profound disgust at themselves, at the earth, at all life" (GM III §11).

I want to draw out two senses of life that are relevant here, although I do not wish to suggest that these senses exhaust Nietzsche's use of the term. Both of these senses apply, even if we follow conventional wisdom and restrict the extension of life, as I will here, to the human. First, then, life refers either to the capacity for action or activity, or to that activity itself. Life in this sense of pure activity is always unhistorical. So Nietzsche writes in the opening section of the second *Untimely Meditation*: "The unhistorical is like an atmosphere within which alone life can germinate and with the destruction of which it must vanish" (UM II §1). The second sense of life is evaluative: it always seeks its own enhancement by creating values that will allow for ever more complex or richer forms of activity. It is in this second, evaluative, sense that Nietzsche is concerned with the uses of history for life, for history can aid

or hinder the creation of life-enhancing values. These two senses of life are inter-dependent at various stages in Nietzsche's account, as we shall see shortly.

Let us turn now to the first set of distinctions. Nietzsche introduces the unhistorical as "the womb not only of the unjust but of every just deed too" (UM II §1). He means by this that the capacity to act unhistorically is what grounds our ability to make and to act on evaluative judgments. Nietzsche considers three examples of passionately engaged practical activity; in each case, the lover, the general, and the painter can only realize their projects and ideals at the expense of any consideration of the wider context which surrounds them. But it is precisely this partiality that strikes the suprahistorical observer of history. Such a person "could no longer feel any temptation to go on living or to take part in history; he would have recognized the essential condition of all happenings—this blindness and injustice [*Ungerechtigkeit*] in the soul of him who acts" (UM II §1). If justice is clearly being associated here with the suprahistorical, that does not mean Nietzsche endorses this association. For suprahistorical justice, he very soon tells us, leads eventually to nihilism and withdrawal from action, to "satiety, oversatiety, and finally to nausea!" (UM II §1). Suprahistorical justice, then, the stance of disinterested objectivity, can neither give an adequate account of, nor provide the conditions for, the generation of a meaningful, that is, value-creating, mode of life. Though the creation of values relies on the expenditure of unhistorical activity, life in the evaluative sense, we said, must be historical. So what of the three modes of history that Nietzsche considers?

Essentially, the situation is that each mode of history will collapse into either the pure activity of the unhistorical or the indifference of the suprahistorical. Each mode of history embodies a particular value or set of values, and retains its efficacy for life only as long these values are in place. In their absence it will degenerate into a "devastating weed" (UM II §2). But this process of degeneration turns out to be intrinsic to the very project of pursuing the values in question. For each mode of history tends to reify the values that it embodies, and, in so doing, to disguise the contingency and fragility of these values. But once the specifically historical justification for a value or set of values vanishes, so the mode of history which embodies them must appeal to a set of purported timeless criteria to justify itself. Each mode of history will thereby degenerate into an attempt to impose its own specific values as eternally valid, in the process losing any claim to historical authority. Thus Nietzsche anticipates in the second *Untimely Meditation* the lesson he draws explicitly at the end of the *Genealogy*, and that he baptizes "the law of life": "All

great things bring about their own destruction through an act of self-overcoming" (GM III §27).

This process is easiest to see in the case of antiquarian history. Antiquarian history belongs to "a being who preserves and reveres" (UM II §2), but the consequence of attempting to preserve and revere the past is that such an attitude will harden into a kind of defensive fetishism in the absence of a due regard for the present. Under the strictures of an antiquarian worship of the past, piety descends into "a blind rage for collecting" (UM II §2), and history becomes life-denying. So antiquarian history eventually reduces to either an unhistorical mania for "the dust of bibliographical minutiae" (UM II §2) or a suprahistorical retreat from the present.

The process is more complex in the other two modes of history, but the pattern remains the same. Monumental history serves as an inspiration for "a being who acts and strives" (UM II §2). It teaches that "the greatness that once existed was [...] once *possible* and may thus be possible again" (UM II §2). But it can only do this at the expense of any historical specificity; in effect, history becomes mythical fiction. It is at this point in the text that Nietzsche famously introduces a prototypical version of eternal return:

> At bottom, indeed, that which was once possible could present itself as a possibility for a second time only if the Pythagoreans were right in believing that when the constellation of the heavenly bodies is repeated the same things, down to the smallest event, must also be repeated on earth [...]. Until that time monumental history will have no use for that absolute veracity [...]. (UM II §2)

Nietzsche quickly dismisses the hypothesis here, but it is worth noting that his later development of the idea of eternal return in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* serves to undermine the very distinction between the great and the petty on which monumental history depends. For Zarathustra must will the eternal return even of the contemptible last man to affirm fully his own becoming, rather than insisting on the eternal existence of the great (see Z III §13).

In the case of both monumental and antiquarian history, what we have seen is that the attempt to realize or preserve a distinctive set of values, and so more generally, to prove useful to life in an evaluative sense, collapses back into either an unhistorical disregard for the past or a suprahistorical withdrawal from the present. In the case of critical history, Nietzsche presents this problem explicitly in terms of justice. Critical history is required by those who are "oppressed by a present need" (UM II

§3) into challenging some specific formation of social power. Nietzsche writes:

> It is not justice which here sits in judgment; [...] it is life alone, that dark, driving power that insatiably thirsts for itself. Its sentence is always unmerciful, always unjust, because it has never preceded out of a pure well of knowledge; but in most cases the sentence would be the same even if it were pronounced by justice itself. "For all that exists is *worthy* of perishing. So it would be better if nothing existed." (UM II §3)

Nietzsche's argument here requires careful unpicking. Although suprahistorical justice and unhistorical life pronounce identical death sentences, they do so for different reasons. Life pronounces death to a particular privilege in order that it (that is, life) may flourish in a new form—its only concern is the way this privilege interferes with that flourishing. On the other hand, for suprahistorical justice "all that exists is *worthy* of perishing." The problem, however, is the familiar one that the attempt to sustain an evaluative mode of life collapses into suprahistorical nihilism. The attempt to deny the privilege of some aspect of the past cannot be securely circumscribed, for, given that we are as much the product of the errors of previous generations as their successes, "it is not possible wholly to free oneself from this chain" (UM II §3). The most we can hope for is to impose what Nietzsche terms a "second nature" (UM II §3) on the past, that is, to reinterpret it such that our present interests are inserted into it. But if this project is successful, it must also be self-defeating, for "every victorious second nature will become a first" (UM II §3). Even critical history, then, aspires to disguise its own contingent interests and recast itself in terms of supposedly timeless values.

In his discussion of the three modes of history, Nietzsche conflates justice with the suprahistorical, and injustice with the unhistorical. But his reason for so doing is not to underwrite the conception of justice as objectivity which was mentioned earlier, but, rather, to show the necessity of conceiving of justice in terms which emphasize the role of the historian rather than focus on the adequacy of a mode of historical explanation to a pre-given past. For this idea of a value-neutral past waiting to be uncovered denies the value-laden nature of historical inquiry. Furthermore, as we have just seen, although each mode of history necessarily embodies certain values, it must also necessarily tend towards the destruction of these values. Thus, a properly useful conception of justice in relation to history would need to take account both of the interested stance of the historian, and of the contingency and fragility of the values

which inform his or her practice. This alternative conception of justice as strength is the theme of section six of the second *Untimely Meditation*, to which I now turn.

## Justice as Strength

I shall restrict myself here to a brief summary of the four criteria of justice as strength that Nietzsche sets out in section six, rather than attempting a detailed analysis of Nietzsche's argument. This is because, as I have already claimed, Nietzsche's enigmatic remarks about justice in section six can best be clarified by reading them in the context of his lecture on Heraclitus, which I shall explore in detail in the next section. First, then, Nietzsche insists against the contemporary champions of objectivity that "only insofar as the truthful man possesses the unconditional will to justice is there anything great in that striving for truth which is everywhere so thoughtlessly glorified" (UM II §6). For, he goes on, "truth has its roots in justice" (UM II §6).[3] Nietzsche is not only objecting to the baser motives which can and, he claims, usually do motivate the quest for truth. His real point is that the historian requires an evaluative conception of truth. Crudely put, historical truth is created, not discovered, as the creative interpretation of the past formed out of the needs of the present. This leads to the second point, that such truth can only be created by those who have a capacity for creative action. Those who would judge must be capable of performing "some high and great deed" and in their capacity as historians they must exhibit "the outwardly tranquil but inwardly flashing eye of the artist" (UM II §6).

On both these points, we can regard Nietzsche as making a similar kind of criticism of conventional history to the one he makes elsewhere of conventional aesthetics: that it mistakenly privileges the perspective of the disinterested spectator, rather than the engaged perspective of the artist or historical agent (see GM III §6). Third, because the necessary seriousness which attends historical judgment is easily and usually confused with fanaticism, the true judge will inspire universal contempt. On this point, Nietzsche echoes Socrates: "The virtue of justice is [...] almost always mortally hated: while [...] the horde of those who only appear virtuous is at all times received with pomp and honour" (UM II §6). Again echoing Socrates, Nietzsche insists finally that by living through the difficulties attaching to his vocation the just man is an exemplary figure: "He has every moment to atone for his humanity and is tragically consumed by an impossible virtue—all this sets him on a solitary height as the most

*venerable* exemplar of the species man" (UM II §6). I want to turn now to Nietzsche's lecture on Heraclitus to illustrate a conception of justice that meets these four criteria.

## Nietzsche's Interpretation of Heraclitus

I shall focus on Nietzsche's understanding of the doctrine of conflagration in Heraclitus, particularly the role of hubris in that doctrine.[4] The term "conflagration" which, Nietzsche notes, is a Stoic invention, refers to the idea that the world alternates between "epochs in which a plurality of things strives for the unity of primal fire as a condition of miserable 'craving,' in contrast to those world epochs of satiety which have entered into the primal fire."[5] It is useful to supplement Nietzsche's citation here by referring to Kahn's translation of Heraclitus in which the following four fragments are grouped together:

> (K 119, DK 64) The thunderbolt pilots all things.
> (K 120, DK 65) Hippolytus (immediately following K 119, DK 64) [By "thunderbolt" he means the eternal fire. And he says this fire is intelligent (*phronimon*) and cause of the organization of the universe. He calls it "need and satiety" (K 120, DK 65). According to him "need" (*chresmosyne*) is construction of the world order, "satiety" (*koros*) is the conflagration (*ekpyrosis*). For he says ...] (What follows is K 121, DK 66)
> (K 121, DK 66) Fire coming on will discern (*krinei*, literally "separate") and catch up with all things.
> (K 122, DK 16) How will one hide from (*lathoi*, "escape the notice of") that which never sets?[6]

The key philological issues surrounding the doctrine of conflagration pertain to the understanding of justice that underlies this periodic destruction. But before we examine Nietzsche's discussion of it, we should make clearer the context, for Nietzsche prefaces his remarks on Heraclitean justice by returning at this point in the lecture course to offer a brief resume of the fragment of Anaximander: "Anaximander taught: 'Everything with qualities arises and perishes mistakenly: thus there must be a qualityless Being.' Becoming is an injustice and is to be atoned for with Passing Away" (PP, 63). The Anaximander fragment raises two questions for Nietzsche. First, how can it be that things with qualities arise from a thing without qualities? And second, why is the process characterized as unjust if it is the embodiment of an eternal lawfulness?

Nietzsche interprets Heraclitus as retaining Anaximander's cosmology, whilst rejecting the property dualism and nihilism that underlie it. Nietzsche argues that, if arising and perishing are both the effects of the same justice which supports the idea of a quality-less Being, then the split between Being and Becoming cannot be maintained. This is because it is only in virtue of their mutable properties that things can come into existence at all, and so justice requires the existence of changing things with changing properties. In this case, then, the arising and perishing of things with properties *expresses* the true nature of justice, rather than as serving as a punishment. "Thus Heraclitus presents a cosmodicy [*eine Kosmodicee*] over against his great predecessor, the teacher of the injustice of the world" (PP, 63). Cosmodicy, a term Nietzsche borrows from Erwin Rohde, refers to the self-justification of cosmic processes. Whitlock, in his translation of the lectures, offers the following gloss: "The term means a vindication of the goodness of the cosmos with respect to the existence of evil, as contrasted to 'theodicy'" (PP, 63). It is this notion of cosmodicy that can be used to connect Nietzsche's interpretation of Heraclitus to the problem of justice in the second *Untimely Meditation*. With this in mind, let us see first how he deploys it in relation to the doctrine of conflagration.

Nietzsche accepts the suggestion made by the contemporary philologist Jacob Bernays that Heraclitus calls the striving in all things "hubris," although he completely rejects Bernays's understanding of Heraclitean hubris. Bernays, Nietzsche claims, conceives of hubris in conventionally moral terms: "The world process as a whole is a cathartic act of punishment, then a satiety, the new hybris and new purification, and so on. Hence [there is] the most miraculous lawfulness of the world [...] a justice exonerating itself of its own injustice" (PP, 69). It is this last assumption that Nietzsche rejects, insisting that it is false to suppose that Heraclitus does not distinguish between justice and injustice and good and bad. Instead, he attributes to Heraclitus the following view: "To God all things appear as good while to mankind much appears as bad" (PP, 70). This is decisively not to saddle Heraclitus with a God's eye perspective of disengaged objectivity, for, crucially, cosmic strife must be understood in aesthetic rather than moral terms:

> Only in the play of the child (or that of the artist) does there exist a Becoming and Passing Away without any moralistic calculations [...]. The eternally living fire [...] plays, builds, and knocks down: strife, this opposition of different characteristics, directed by justice, may be grasped only as an aesthetic phenomenon. We find here a purely aesthetic view of the world. (PP, 70)

Although Nietzsche insists on the split between the divine and the human perspective, he nonetheless attributes to Heraclitus, as the mark of his greatness, the ability to transcend it by conceiving both of the doctrine of conflagration and of his own capacity for creative activity in cosmodicical terms: "The fire eternally building the world at play views the entire process similar to how Heraclitus himself views this entire process; consequently he attributes wisdom to himself. To become one with this intuitive intelligence [...] is wisdom" (PP, 71).

For Nietzsche, then, there are two conceptions of justice in play in Heraclitus. First, there is the justice of the trial by fire itself. In this basic respect, Heraclitus simply takes up Anaximander's cosmology. Fire is the basic condition of all that exists, and everything that is will periodically crave to return to this primal state. But whereas Anaximander interprets this as the operation of a retributive justice, Heraclitus firmly rejects this view in favour of an "immanent lawfulness" (*immanente Gesetzmäßigkeit*) (PP, 63), which finds expression both in the periodic destruction of the cosmos and in the acceptance of this by those few exceptional individuals who can come to see and to affirm the necessity of this world-process. But Nietzsche is at pains to point out that this does not rely on the just man adopting the same intentions as the cosmos, because, he insists, for Heraclitus the cosmos has no intentions. Heraclitus's model is of a non-teleologically determined cosmos which can be known or, rather, experienced, only by the artist or by the child at play. It is because of this notion of non-teleological necessity that Heraclitus does not provide "an ethic with imperatives" (PP, 73). Nietzsche, in fact, regards the moralizing interpretations of Heraclitus as the result of a misguided anthropocentrism. Instead, he attributes the following view to him: "The highest form of nature is not humanity but fire. There exists no clash. To the contrary, insofar as humanity is fiery, it is rational, insofar as he [man] is watery, he is irrational. There is no necessity, qua human being, that he must acknowledge the Logos" (PP, 74).

* * *

Let us now return to the second *Untimely Meditation*. We can see that the retributive conception of justice which we find in Anaximander, and which continues essentially unchanged throughout the tradition, right up to the contemporary philology of Bernays, is echoed in the view that associates justice with objectivity and with suprahistorical nihilism. For to oppose justice to life and to change is simply to reiterate the moralistic interpretation of hubris which Nietzsche rejects in his Heraclitus lecture.

But this does not mean that we must perform a complete *volte-face* and associate justice with the instinctual striving of unhistorical life. Rather, it means that we must conceive of historical time as cyclical, as the necessary repetition of cycles which are only intelligible as ceaseless strife and ceaseless justice. History is rendered meaningful by those individuals who can take on the responsibility for action in the face of this overarching necessity. It was, of course, precisely this problem which we posed before in terms of the impossible virtue of the just man. We can see more clearly now that what is at stake in Nietzsche's conception of the virtue of justice is not the volitional accomplishment of a great act in a completely unconditioned way, which is how this problem has sometimes been understood,[7] but rather the problem of submitting oneself to a dual necessity: on the one hand, to the necessity of a pure capacity for activity that requires a certain historical blindness, but also, on the other, to the necessity of creating values in a historical context. This dual necessity is, in fact, nothing more than the requirement to understand the historical contingency of our values and of value-creation generally. "The strongest comparison," Nietzsche writes, "is to the sensation whereby someone, in the middle of the ocean or during an earthquake, observes all things in motion" (PP, 74). But here we must pause and recall the contemptuous language that Nietzsche reserves in section six for those who do not have the strength to judge. Again, Nietzsche here is simply echoing Heraclitus. The many cannot face the Logos—only those who can recognize in themselves the same necessity that governs the world-process can judge impartially. The harsh and punishing judge does not indict the world as a whole, but only particular historical formations, and only in the knowledge that these formations themselves will be later judged, and must also perish. Thus the great act of the just man is a historical act that does not deny its own fragility, but, insofar as it is performed out of, or in accordance with, an understanding of the cyclical cosmic patterns of death and rebirth, it will be an act which has all the force of necessity. Every genuine historical act must be a great act in this sense, and every just judgment must have the force of a Last Judgment.

We can see, then, that Nietzsche's positive conception of justice in the second *Untimely Meditation* exhibits some important parallels with the cosmological view of justice we find in the Heraclitus lecture. The Nietzschean judge, like the Heraclitean sage, judges and acts out of an inner need that ultimately reflects both the creative play of the cosmic child (*das Weltkind*) and the inherent fragility and instability of human action and ambition. In Heraclitus, this conception of justice is grounded in the accordance between the just man and the creative strife

of the cosmos. For Nietzsche, justice is grounded in the two senses of life as active and evaluative. The former impresses on the historian the importance of pure unhistorical activity. The latter demands that historians abandon their cherished and dangerous ideal of a science of history, and devote themselves to the creative interpretation of the past in the name of the needs of the future. Those among them who resent this redefinition of their role show themselves to be not up to the task, just as previous and contemporary interpreters of Heraclitus have betrayed their own inadequacy by projecting their own moralism and nihilism onto him. But as Nietzsche reminds his students at the end of the lecture: "Heraclitus *describes* only the world at hand, in acceptance, in a contemplative well-being known to all the enlightened; only those unsatisfied by his description of human nature will find him dark, grave, gloomy or pessimistic" (PP, 74). Thus the Heraclitus lecture not only provides the inspiration for the positive conception of justice that Nietzsche develops in the second *Untimely Meditation*, but also provides a concrete example of what such a Heraclitean/Nietzschean justice would look like when applied to philology.

## Notes

[1] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers*, ed. and trans. Greg Whitlock (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2001) (KGW 2.2, 261-82). Henceforth referred to as PP, followed by a page reference. Whitlock's translations of Heraclitus's fragments are drawn from Philip Wheelwright, *The Pre-Socratics* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1996). Both Whitlock and Wheelwright follow the standard Diels-Kranz numbering of the fragments found in Hermann Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 7th edn with revisions by Walther Kranz, 3 vols (Berlin: Weidmann, 1954). Nietzsche lectured on the Pre-Socratics several times between 1871-1874. Whitlock argues that the written transcript of the Heraclitus lecture probably dates from 1872. Nietzsche composed the second *Untimely Meditation* in the latter half of 1873, and it was published in February 1874.

[2] This human-centered view of the word "life" in Nietzsche's writings, favored in much recent literature, is the corollary of a naturalized reading of the doctrine of will to power as a psychological thesis about human motivation. See, for example, Maudmarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990), 212-27; and Brian Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality* (London: Routledge, 2002), 136-46. For a different objection to construing "life" metaphysically which is more directly connected to the question of history, see Raymond Geuss, *Morality, Culture, and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999), 181-85.

[3] The connection between truth and justice is a key feature of Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche, although he bases his reading on two late fragments from the

notebooks, rather than the passage just cited from the second *Untimely Meditation*. See Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), vol. 3, chapter 21.

[4] My interpretation here draws freely on Whitlock's very useful commentary on the lecture (see PP, 204-23).

[5] Heraclitus, fragment 65 (PP, 68).

[6] Charles Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1979). (K refers to Kahn's numbering, DK to the Diels-Kranz numbering.)

[7] In a highly original and provocative reading, Phillipe Lacoue-Labarthe has linked this demand for the performance of a "great deed" with an impossible mimetic identification which marks the problem of culture-formation in the second *Untimely Meditation*: "It prescribes imitating the Greeks only up to the point where they have ceased being inimitable and have become responsible for the *imitatio* of the Ancients" ("History and Mimesis," in Laurence A. Rickels (ed.), *Looking After Nietzsche* (Albany, NY: State U of New York P, 1990), 209-31 [224]).

# Cults and Migrations: Nietzsche's Meditations on Orphism, Pythagoreanism, and the Greek Mysteries

*Benjamin Biebuyck, Danny Praet, and Isabelle Vanden Poel*

NIETZSCHE'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY *ECCE HOMO* is a strange book, in more ways than one. In its idiosyncratic tone it describes the many circumstances that influenced the course of his life, as well as the legacy the philosopher believed himself to have bequeathed to humankind. As such, the private and the philosophical, the past and the present, the thinker and the thoughts, become ingeniously intertwined. The most obvious example of this intertwining is the Greek deity Dionysus. In the section in *Ecce Homo* on *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche characterizes himself as the first person to have understood the Dionysian (EH BT §2), explaining it as a surplus of power, the eagerness and lust to destroy. Yet, whereas in the foreword he sees himself merely as the pupil of Dionysus (EH Preface §2), he tends gradually to emphasize his own "Dionysian nature" (EH Why I Write Such Good Books §5; I am a Destiny §2).

The meticulous investigations of such scholars as Mazzino Montinari have shown that, despite the discovery in the archives of Heinrich Köselitz in 1969, at least two pages of the text have been destroyed by Nietzsche's mother or his sister Elisabeth.[1] From her Nietzsche-hagiography, however—in most cases, a dubious source—we may infer that Nietzsche also explicitly identified himself with the torn god. In the last but one chapter of her *Der einsame Nietzsche*, entitled "The Illness," she discredited the entire *Ecce Homo* as a symptom of Nietzsche's "pathological delirium," thereby legitimizing her decision to annihilate "these curious phantasms," not to protect herself and her mother against the harsh criticism her brother had expressed, but to spare both his ethical and aesthetic sensibilities, in case he was later confronted with these pages.[2] What interests us is that, when the main themes of his philosophy had become part of his own life, as a form of delusional acting-out,[3] Nietzsche chose the myth of Dionysus Zagreus as a model and a mask, prefiguring his own destiny in a dialectic of annihilation and resurrection.

This explains his references to the Crucified, as well as elucidating the "eternal recurrence" as an instrument for the immediate intensification of his own existence. But it also hints at the prolonged meaning of his early confrontations with classical thinking, *and* at the processes by which Nietzsche transposed to the modern age particular forms of self-transformation inspired by cultural exchanges in ancient times.

When discussing the roots of his thinking—particularly those of his philosophy of eternal recurrence—Nietzsche restricts his genealogy to Heraclitus and the Stoics (EH BT §3). That said, he refers in precisely the same context to the afflictions of Dionysus Zagreus, with which he must have been familiar through the account of what he called the "fourth" Orphic *Theogony* and numerous other writings.[4] It seems that Nietzsche associated the figure of Dionysus directly with the religious-philosophical cluster of ideas formed by the Orphic anthropology of metempsychosis, its most prominent advocate Pythagoras, and the Pythagorean cosmology of the "circle of necessity." Yet he says nothing about this background, even though he had discussed the Pythagorean concept of recurrence in the second *Untimely Meditation*, in what is now considered to be one of the earliest explorations of this "eternalist" theorem (UM II §2). In this paper, we shall try and explain this "loud" silence in Nietzsche's discourse; we shall try to detect in what way *his* Dionysus relates to the Orphic traditions, what Orphism means for him, and why he persistently dismisses Pythagoreanism up to the point that he eventually keeps silent about it—for more than just a year.[5]

## Orphic Zealotry

The debate on what Orphism really was has always been an extremely lively one. Nowadays, scholars agree that there never was a coherent and homogeneous Orphic community, nor a specific, normative religious lifestyle or doctrine, but rather that Orphism designated a very diverse religious-philosophical movement that came into being as a result of a shift in religious consciousness in the late seventh or sixth centuries BCE.[6] The most important unifying factor of Orphism is its sacred writings, traditionally ascribed to the eponymous musician Orpheus. Some of these texts were known to Nietzsche, especially those collected in Lobeck's *Aglaophamus*, published in 1829.[7] At the heart of Orphic tradition lies a number of theogonies, displaying a multiplicity of narratives centering on the myth of the murder of Dionysus. From the viewpoint of the history of religions, this Dionysus figure is a syncretic one which can be traced back to various Mediterranean traditions (Thracian, Phrygian,

Cretan, and continental Greek), in which he represents both the destructiveness and the fertility of nature. As such, he is often identified with Zagreus and Sabazius, but also with Hades, or even with Zeus.[8] In one of the most influential Orphic theogonies, Dionysus is killed and torn into pieces by the Titans.[9] After having devoured their victim, the Titans are punished by Zeus and struck by his lightning. Out of the ashes of their bodies emerges the human race: a mixture of double origin, partly divine, partly mortal. Dionysus himself, however, is miraculously saved by his father, and enjoys the opportunity of rebirth. In the Orphic accounts, all this formed the point of departure for an anthropology based on a dialectic of primeval violence and resurrection, on the heritability of original sin, and on the necessity of purification and asceticism. Humankind was believed to be rooted in a cycle of *metempsychosis* or *metensomatosis*; after death, the immortal soul would go down to the underworld in order to be judged. The reward for a "good" life would be its incarnation in a higher form of life, and for those who could reach purity, this would eventually lead to the soul transcending the "circle of return." Those who did not embrace an ascetic lifestyle degenerated into lower forms of life, such as animals. In this sense, Orphism relied on a primarily moral evaluation of human existence.

Unlike contemporary scholars, Nietzsche was convinced that Orphism was one of the oldest traditions in Greek thought. In his *History of Greek Literature*,[10] he referred to the Orphic *Theogonies* as a prototypical illustration of the "semi-philosophical literature, a mixture of the mythical and the abstract" that preceded the activities of Anaximander, the first Greek philosopher known to have put his theories into writing (KGW 2.5, 181). According to Nietzsche, the Orphic *Theogonies* also predated Pherecydes of Syros, the sixth-century teacher of Pythagoras, and the best-known representative of this pre-philosophical literature. Nietzsche even disagreed with the common view that Orphism was post-Homeric—a view based on the observation that there are no references to Orpheus and Orphism in either the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* (KGW 2.5, 181). Homer's silence on the topic had, in Nietzsche's view, nothing to do with the sequence of historical events, but with a deliberate strategy founded on manifest lack of agreement between Orphic thought and the spirit of Homeric poetry. The fact that Orphism is only documented from the sixth century onwards was interpreted by Nietzsche as a historical coincidence. As is well known, the sixth century was central to Nietzsche's concept of a classical age, and the evidence suggests he refused to believe that Orphism was, in fact, a constituent part of this Greek revolution. He emphatically repeated that Orphism had, as he put

it, "emerge[d] from the dark" at the beginning of the sixth century and stepped into the light of our historical sources, but then again he insisted that certain hymns and an age-old Orphic *Theogonies* predated our documentation (KGW 2.5, 181; KGW 2.4, 220, n. 9).

Nietzsche's inclination to read Orphism as a pre-Homeric phenomenon is significant. The time in which he situates its origins was one of barbarism and cruelty, when human interaction was hardly, if at all, disciplined by forms of cultural negotiation, and when violence could occur at any moment. From *The Birth of Tragedy* we can infer that, for Nietzsche, this period was symbolized by Dionysus. He claims that traces of such Dionysian "civilizations" were present in the entire ancient world and were gradually translated into cultic celebrations consisting of "superabundant sexual unruliness," expressing, as a safety-valve, "a horrible mixture of sensuality and cruelty" (BT §2).[11] Although this "life-style" may seem an anthropological universal, not everyone responded to it in the same manner. The Orphic movement, Nietzsche claimed, originated precisely in the anxiety provoked by the unmitigated savagery of the pre-Homeric world and therefore, he argued in "Homer's Contest" (1872), it performed the characteristic gesture of turning away from it (KSA 1, 785). It is important to notice that, on this account, it is not so much the existence of horror and conflict that urges the Orphics to change their ways, but rather the visual immediacy of it.

This is the basis of Nietzsche's objections to Orphism: even if the Orphics express themselves in the form of allegories, they possess—or, rather, are limited to—the "ability to think abstractly and unplastically" (PTAG §3). The colorful plasticity of life has such a frightening effect on them that they withdraw the center of their existence from earthly reality. Hence the gods are no longer understood as living persons, but rather as abstract ideas—a tendency Nietzsche considers to be illustrated by the prose cosmology written by Pherecydes of Syros, whose account he describes as much more conceptual than its older, Hesiodic counterpart (KGW 2.4, 222).[12] Humans, in their turn, become abstracted into bodiless souls, migrating from one "physical prison" into another, but never fully expressing their individual essence in the material circumstances of daily life. On the contrary: the cause of their suffering lies in a past that precedes this life, and the reward to be gained is not attainable until after death. Ultimately, the cruel and conflictual nature of earthly existence makes life itself, from the Orphic viewpoint, completely worthless (KSA 1, 786).

But Nietzsche does not stop here: the Orphics' "disgust for life" can be traced back to their view that life is nothing more than a "penalty," an "indebtedness" (KSA 1, 785). Even though this penalty is incurred at

birth and is, as such, inescapable, it still forms the basis on which life itself is morally valued. Humans can only free themselves from "old sins" by doing penance, that is, by moderating their sensual experiences and cleansing themselves by leading an ascetic life (KGW 2.4, 255; cf. KSA 7, 16[24], 403). This total negation of earthly existence, which is regarded as nothing more than a futile intermission between sin and salvation—Nietzsche calls this in the context of Plato a "life-slandering, life-negating principle" (KSA 12, 7[9], 297)—runs completely counter to the basic intuitions of Nietzschean philosophy: the affirmation of the body; the rejection of all forms of metaphysical dualism; and the recognition of the fullness of life. Moreover, his interpretation of the death and rebirth of Dionysus differs fundamentally from the views of the Orphics. As we read in *The Birth of Tragedy*, the laceration of Dionysus proves for Nietzsche that the true nature of suffering lies in the fact that one is torn loose from the "primordial unity" (*das Ur-Eine*), the originary unity between humans and nature—or in philosophical terms, the *principium individuationis.* This alienation is greater than the actual pain one might experience as a result of any individual act of violence. For the Orphics, however, the pain of alienation is the trigger which radicalizes human individuation: for them, salvation is a strictly personal reward for a strictly personalized, purified way of life. This option turns individuation—a temporary form of being for Nietzsche's Dionysus—into a permanent state of being, and thus renders the reunification of humankind with the all-encompassing dynamics of life impossible.

## Pythagoreanism

The reaction of the Orphics to barbaric violence and suffering, their reluctance to look it directly in the eye, and their subsequent reversal of the ontological importance of "this world" and "the beyond" were, to Nietzsche, obvious symptoms of their weakness and reactive stance. Nonetheless, he admits that it was a long-lived movement, which in later ages presented itself in the public forum as well, as its appearance in sixth and fifth-century documents records.[13] Nietzsche interpreted this proliferation as a development towards further degeneration. Such was, for instance, the case with Onomacritus's attempt to adapt Orphism to popular belief. Nietzsche argued that this process of degeneration triggered a much more important reform of Orphic tradition, said to have been initiated by Pythagoras of Samos, the philosopher and religious leader in the sixth century (PTAG §10). Nietzsche's view of Pythagoras as a historical figure is decidedly idiosyncratic. In his survey of pre-

Platonic philosophy, there is no room for Pythagoras, because he did not take part in the ontological debate between Parmenides and Heraclitus, started by Anaximander's theory of the *apeiron*. Nietzsche concludes:

> Wholly apart stands, however, Pythagoras. [...] Hence, he is in no relation to the older philosophers, because he was no philosopher at all, but something else. Strictly speaking, he could be excluded from a history of philosophy. (KGW 2.4, 252)

With the vague characterization as "something else" Nietzsche refers to his role as religious reformer, deeply embedded in the Orphic tradition. Yet there was much discussion about the precise doctrines this reformer propounded, since it was unclear which tenets were derived from Pythagoras himself, and which should be ascribed to his religious followers. Porphyry, for instance, had argued in his *Vita Pythagorae* that three aspects of Pythagorean doctrine go back to the historical figure with reasonable certainty: the immortality of the soul, the transmigration of the soul, and the cyclic return of all historical events.[14] Many of Nietzsche's contemporaries, such as Erwin Rohde, accepted Porphyry's account of Pythagoras's three-partite doctrine as *minima historica* because of its "intelligent caution,"[15] but Nietzsche himself rejected this view. He was convinced there was an elementary distinction between the religious and the "scientific" aspects of Pythagoreanism. As for the historical Pythagoras, Nietzsche argued that his teachings were exclusively concerned with religious salvation (very much in line with those of the Orphic worldview): they contained instructions and regulations, by means of which humans could do penance for earlier transgressions, in order to allow them to escape the cycle of rebirths. With the same intention, Pythagoras also set up secret cultic ceremonies, revealing "sacred customs" to the believers. Nietzsche was convinced, however, that the cosmology of eternal recurrence, based on astrological and mathematical insights, was the result of later developments in Pythagoreanism, from about 450 BCE onwards.

Nietzsche's writings thus yield an ambiguous picture of Pythagoras. On the one hand, Nietzsche seems to appreciate the status of demi-god Pythagoras attributed to himself—for this allows us to appreciate a kind of intellectual self-confidence and greatness that we would otherwise never be able to imagine (KSA 1, 757-58 and 834). As such, Nietzsche celebrates Pythagoras, amongst others, as a "one-sided," pure thinker, in contrast to such "many-sided," mixed characters as Plato (PTAG §2). On the other hand, despite characterizing Pythagoras in the first volume of *Human, All Too Human* as one of the "the tyrants of the spirit" and

as a legislator (HA I §261), he repeatedly associates Pythagoreanism with the life-negating principles of Orphism, such as asceticism and self-purification (KSA 7, 16[17, 24], 399, 403; KSA 8, 6[12], 101). Much as with Orphism itself, Nietzsche tries to avoid classifying Pythagoras as part of "his" classical sixth century; in this case, he does not move the philosopher forward in time, but he displaces him from the Greek cultural world.

Already in his early sketches, Nietzsche ironically linked Pythagoras with the Chinese and connected him with an Indian world-view (PTAG §1 and §11).[16] The latter association may explain why Nietzsche suspected a Buddhist influence on Pythagorean thinking (KSA 11, 34[90], 449). Unlike the Buddha, however, Pythagoras did not seek to suppress or to deny the will, but rather attempted to turn the will against life itself, instead of celebrating life with it: the will is besmirched by asceticism and is used as a means to kill (KSA 7, 21[15], 527). This perversion of the will is consistent with Pythagoras's opposition to the typically Greek aversion to weakness and sentimentality: he represents a counter-movement, opposed to a "certain violence *against* weak, mild feelings" (KSA 11, 25[170], 59). Its notions of recurrence and metempsychosis are in line with those of its spiritual precursors, the Orphics, and illustrate the Pythagorean mentality, which eventually turns out to be equally life-denying and herd-like.[17] In the end, Nietzsche concludes, Pythagoreanism is guided by pity and weakness—Pythagoras himself is described as "melancholically compassionate" (PTAG §2); as such, Pythagoreanism is a necessary precursor to Platonism. For it is Pythagoreanism that corrupted Plato (KSA 7, 19[60], 438; KSA 11, 34[90], 449); not Socrates, but Pythagoras was Plato's "secret, enviously looked-at ideal" (KSA 9, 4[287], 171). In this sense, Nietzsche was able to discredit Pythagoreanism as one of the two "anti-Hellenic" decadent movements which took over after the decline of classical Greek culture (KSA 13, 11[375], 169). It was not until the second half of the 1880s, however, that Nietzsche explicitly connected Pythagoreanism with Christianity, hinting at a common basis in the depreciation of the senses (*Entsinnlichung*) (KSA 11, 34[90], 449).

The other decadent movement was the one which saw life as nothing more than an opportunity for aesthetic and erotic complacency, "the voluptuous, charming-malicious, splendor- and art-loving decadence" (KSA 13, 11[375], 169), which sought solace in an "effeminate flight from seriousness and horror" and a "craven complacency with easy pleasure" (BT §11). For this "post-classical" culture, Dionysus was no longer the god of the cruel and the fertile, but the exponent of unleashed

sexual activity, responsible for the "pale red color of cheerfulness" associated with Greek civilization that was seen by the early Church as the real "anti-Christian" strand. Nonetheless, it went hand-in-hand with the religious-philosophical movements that turned out to be the real breeding ground of Christianity.

## Modes of Migration

In the case of both Orphism and Pythagoreanism, dislocation—temporal or spatial—can be seen as an indication of Nietzsche's disapproval, yet it would be wrong to conclude that it was also one of the grounds for his aversion. Nietzsche's writings do not suggest that he defended the traditional image of a "pure" Greek culture or civilization, in which negative aspects of Hellenism are interpreted as the result of contaminating external cultural influence. The aphorism in *The Gay Science* entitled "The failure of the reformations" shows that quite the contrary is true—not the internal homogeneity of a civilization, but its cultural multiplicity is the most effective defense mechanism against the herd instinct used as a tool by religious reformers (GS §149). For Nietzsche, it is a crucial historical observation that neither the Orphic nor the Pythagorean movements—both relying on the believers' turning away from the cruel and savage reality of earthly, material existence—turned out to attract great numbers in terms of Greek social and religious self-understanding. The cause of this was the "higher culture" of the Greeks at that time, or, rather, the fact that they were in themselves "too multifarious." In other words, as opposed to the marginalized sects of their time—bearing witness in their cultural life-style to a fundamental weakness—the Greeks owed their strength to the complex composition of their cultural identity. This complexity was, in Nietzsche's view, a result of their specific mode of intercultural negotiation, which came to the fore both in the structure of their public life—the organization of the state—and in the ways in which they maintained their cultic conventions.

In order to trace the origins of Greek cultural identity, Nietzsche went back to those immemorial times characterized by barbarism and atrocity. He elaborated on the contrasts between Orphic "resignationism" and the "Hellenic genius" in the last of the "Prefaces to Five Unwritten Books," entitled "Homer's Contest" (KSA 1, 783-92).[18] The central theme of this text is the connection between culture, on the one hand, and the dualistic aspects of nature—its destructive and its productive power—on the other. Nietzsche takes issue with the traditional view that humanity (*Humanität*) raises people above their natural state and

separates them from their spontaneous and natural impulses, emphasizing instead the nobility of nature: "Man, in his highest and noblest powers, is wholly nature and bears within himself its uncanny double character." Precisely because they acknowledged the duality of human culture, Nietzsche continues, the Greeks were "the most humane men of the ancient era." Obviously, this does not mean that they renounced all forms of violence, but rather that they cherished certain kinds of cruelty, and always retained "a trait of cruelty, of tiger-like lust for destruction" (KSA 1, 783). When confronted with atrocity and savagery, symbolized by Dionysus, the Greeks did not look away, as the Orphics did; rather, they attempted to discipline this primordial violence into new forms of cultural behavior (KSA 1, 785-86). Precisely this manner of structuring intercultural exchange was the reason for the tragic "boom" in the sixth century—even more so than the famous dualism of the Apollonian and the Dionysian.

Before we go any further, it is important to note that the figure of Dionysus on which Nietzsche here focuses, Dionysus Zagreus, is indeed the god known to us from Orphic accounts and traditions, but that, for Nietzsche, he is in no way an Orphic deity.[19] Evidence for this claim is provided by the fact he presents Dionysus not only as a suffering, but in similar contexts also as a glorious, triumphant god. This emerges, for instance, from the description of Dionysian feasts in "The Dionysian World-View" (1870) and the symbolic prominence of the "violent" nature it displays:

> The Dionysus-feasts do not only conclude the alliance between man and man, they also reconcile man and nature. Voluntarily the earth brings its gifts, the wildest animals approach one another in a peaceful manner: panthers and tigers pull the carriage of Dionysus crowned with a garland of flowers. (KSA 1, 555; cf. BT §1, "under his yoke panther and tiger")[20]

The fact that the two animal representations of natural cruelty are present, in the first place to play their (subservient) role in the cultic event of the procession, shows that the Greeks' answer to the ominous question "what does a life of battle and victory want?" (KSA 1, 785) was not simply to participate in barbaric violence, but rather to exploit their confrontation with it as an instrument to conjure up more active forms of existence from within themselves. Thus it becomes clear that Nietzsche draws a radical line between the—Orphic—source on the one hand and the—Dionysian—phenomenon that arises from it on the other.

Many striking examples of the way in which the "Hellenic genius" dealt with the violent and cruel impulses it received from outside can be found in the lasting and pan-Hellenic popularity of the battle-scenes in the *Iliad*. To Nietzsche, they prove that the Greeks were aware of the dire necessity of an outlet for their hatred. Homeric accounts, however, do not testify to the Greeks' typically barbaric "cruel," "tiger-like," "sensual and dark" imagination (KSA 7, 16[24], 403; cf. KSA 1, 785), to an unbounded instinctiveness aimed at mere self-preservation; in contrast, they evoke the yearning of humans, deprived of any opportunity ever to cross the line between mortals and immortals, to outgrow their personal limitations by means of a never-ending rivalry with other human beings. In this manner, the Greeks succeeded in channelling their aggression and appetite for destruction, and managed to mitigate their animal cruelty. Thus Homer represents the earliest phase of a process of cleansing the primeval atrocity and of disciplining the human instincts—a process referred to by Nietzsche as the "Apollonian," here symbolically alluded to by the association between Homer and Delphi (KSA 1, 785; GS §84; KSA 7, 16[21], 401). Whereas the Orphics had paralyzed themselves through their radical repugnance against the "Dionysian barbarians," who—for them—were nothing more than an *external menace*, the "Dionysian Greeks" looked them in the eye and tried to derive benefit from them. The *visual* aspect of this gesture reminds us of the contemplative nature of the Apollonian as a whole. The immediacy of the confrontation between Greeks and barbarians does not imply there was some kind of recognition or identification between the two: Nietzsche emphasizes that between both lay an "immense abyss" (BT §2).

To elucidate this sharp contrast, he appealed to the theory of the two *Erides* formulated in the proemium of Hesiod's *Works and Days*.[21] One incarnation of the goddess Eris stimulates the barbarian drive to kill and to annihilate, linked here with the pre-Homeric state of affairs. The confrontation between two opponents is, in this case, reduced to the question of who will kill and who will be killed; what is at stake here is how to maintain one's physical integrity as it is, and how to eliminate (what) one's contestant (represents). Nietzsche claims that this "interaction" is irreconcilable with the "Hellenic genius," because it does not offer any opportunity to change oneself. This possibility, however, is provided by the second incarnation of Eris, the "kinder one," to be translated as "envy," but not to be judged as a moral value or defect. In this case, the "meeting" with one's opponent should be seen as a vital phase of self-renewal, of bringing oneself onto a higher level (KSA 1, 787). But what should be done with the contestant—always remembering the principle

that he should not be annihilated (as the barbarians would have done)? Here, we need to look more closely at Nietzsche's views on intercultural transaction.

In his genealogy of the tragic civilization of the Greeks, Nietzsche repeatedly alludes to migratory movements, recorded by nineteenth-century *Altertumswissenschaft*, which were said to have introduced foreign religious and cultic habits into the Greek world. Dionysus, for instance, was marked as an originally Phrygian or Thracian deity.[22] The success of the cults associated with this barbarian, uncultivated Dionysus was, to Nietzsche, precisely the impulse that triggered the process of civilization culminating in the tragic era:

> It would appear that the Greeks were for a while completely immune from the feverish excesses of those feasts, the knowledge of which came through to them by every land or sea route. What kept Greece safe was the proud, imposing image of Apollo, who in holding up the head of the Gorgon to those brutal and grotesque Dionysian forces subdued them. Doric art has immortalized Apollo's majestic rejection of all license. But resistance became difficult, even impossible, when finally similar urges began to break forth from the deepest substratum of Hellenism itself. From now on the function of the Delphic god developed into something much more limited: all he could hope to accomplish now was to wrest the destructive weapons, by a timely negotiated reconciliation, from his mighty opponent's hand. (BT §2)

The first thing to be noted here is the protection offered by Apollo, which is absolute, yet limited in time. Greek civilization could only defend itself by means of a total mobilization of its most characteristic cultural forces at this time: the Delphic god, rising full of pride. "Hold up to" (*entgegenhalten*) has a strong connotation of mutual equality between both contestants.[23] The total mobilization of the Apollonian at the borders of the Greek world, however, seems to have caused a cultural vacuity in the center of this world, conjuring up *from within*—"from the deepest substratum of Hellenism itself"—*analogous* impulses. This makes it clear that the Dionysian drives bubbling up within Greek civilization are not identical with the barbarian Dionysus. The former do not constitute an (external) menace to the security of the existing cultural identity, but rather complete it, bringing it to its full tragic magnitude. This fact emerges, for instance, in Nietzsche's observation that the quality of the Apollonian is directly connected with the Dionysian. Yet his characterization of the actual intercultural encounter remains relatively vague here; what does it mean, for example, to "negotiate a reconciliation," which is

the "most important moment in the history of Greek cults: wherever one looks, the symptoms of this revolutionary change become visible" (BT §2)?

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche does not elaborate the personified imagery of the two gods, who behave as if they were Homeric opponents, retaining, despite their reconciliation, a sharp sense of demarcation: "The two antagonists were reconciled: the boundary lines to be observed henceforth by each were sharply defined, and there was to be a regular exchange of gifts of esteem; fundamentally, however, the chasm was not bridged" (BT §2). The strong sense of the boundary between the contestants is understandable, if rather unusual—an impression reinforced by the curious modal extension "fundamentally" (*im Grunde*). Does Nietzsche mean that the borders are not crossed *only in principle*, or not crossed at all? To get a deeper insight into the nature of the transaction, we need to consult the descriptions Nietzsche gave of it on other occasions. Both in "The Dionysian World-View" and in "The Birth of Tragic Thought," he uses the (military) image of "the onrushing god" (*der heranstürmende Dionysos*) to depict the interaction between the two cultural identities (KSA 1, 556 and 583). The rush is experienced by Apollo, however, not as a threat, but as a means to expand his personal glory:

> Yet Apollonian Hellenism was never in a bigger danger than at the time the new god rushingly drew near [*bei dem stürmischen Heranzug des neuen Gottes*]. Never, in turn, did the wisdom of the Delphic god display itself in a more beautiful light. Opposing at first, he enwrapped the huge opponent in the most refined spinnings, so that the latter could barely observe how he rapidly changed into a state of near-imprisonment. [...] The more rapidly the Apollonian spirit of art developed, the freer was the opportunity for the brother god Dionysus to loosen his limbs. (KSA 1, 584; cf. 556).

From this wording we can derive much more than from the preceding account. Here Nietzsche makes clear that the "brother god," the Greek Dionysus, is not the same as the one who invaded Greece from Asia, and that his transformation is the effect of Apollo's intervention. For Apollo's radiance does not reach its summit until he gets the opportunity to enwrap the barbarian Dionysus into a cocoon. The imagery of "enwrapping" (*umspinnen*) is intriguing: Apollo behaves as if he were a spider, subtly, yet carefully, imprisoning the victim in his spinnings. But the spinning is of very high quality, which not only demonstrates the reverence the Delphic god has for his opponent, but also ensures that the latter does not feel degraded. Indeed, the very reverse is true: for Dionysus,

the enwrapping holds out the promise of an intrinsic renewal, like a silkworm moth that comes out of its cocoon. This explains why the strength of Apollo is interrelated with Dionysus's freedom, represented by the image of "loosening his limbs" (*seine Glieder lösen*), which can also be applied to other animals or insects immediately after they emerge from, for example, the egg. The picture Nietzsche draws here shows that Dionysus was indeed of foreign origin, but that the role he was to play in Greek tragic culture could be realized if, and only if, he was reinvented as a god of autochthonous descent.

Thus intercultural negotiation did not lead the Greeks to annihilate their opponent (the barbarian mode) or to remove him from their scope (the Orphic option): in both cases, the ultimate objective is the disappearance of the other, and the reinstallation of an original cultural homogeneity. Yet, as we have already seen, Nietzsche is acutely aware of the multifarious composition of cultural identities, so we can imagine that the way in which such diversity comes into being is related to the manner in which Apollo absorbed the foreign Dionysus. At this point, it is crucial to notice that Apollo did not only enrich himself and attain his ultimate glory, but at the same time saved Dionysus from final destruction: "This is the image of Dionysus re-created by Apollo, saved from his Asian dismemberment" (KSA 1, 559). In the end, Nietzsche's model of intercultural negotiation is consistent with the mythological tradition, which attributed to Apollo the role not just of Dionysus's opponent, but also of his rescuer.

Thanks to its model of intercultural transaction, which was based on the creative Eris, at once yearning for victory and on the look-out for opportunities to transform both its contestant and itself, Greek tragic culture was able to benefit from the many types of cultural interaction that existed in the ancient Mediterranean. After he had resigned his professorship in Basel and ceased to regard himself as a classical philologist, Nietzsche continued to use this model in his philosophical discourse, particularly in the context of the will to power and the eternal recurrence of the same. From the early 1880s on, he spoke of "absorption" (*Einverleibung*), the human capacity to turn a (philosophical) insight into an instinct by repeated, or even continuous, contemplation (for example, KSA 9, 11[41], 494). This concept of transaction turns out to be the driving force behind the many metamorphoses, personae, and masks with which the Nietzsche of the late 1880s is associated.

## Nietzschean Mysteries

The reconciliation negotiated between Apollo and Dionysus, and the divine brotherhood that emerged from it—in the final texts, reconceptualized as a temporary sexual union between lovers—was the basis for the entire political and religious system of the tragic Greeks. As for Apollo, the god of light, Nietzsche contends that, even though he was at work right from the (Homeric) beginnings of Greek culture, he did not remain the same, but was himself absorbed in a sequence of further transformations. We have already seen that Homer was an early representation of Apollonian order, and the same is true for Pythia, the Delphic oracle, Pythagoras (whose partly positive evaluation is affirmed here), and even the Thracian king Lycurgus, whose name alludes to Apollo Lukeios (KSA 7, 7[122], 175). The multiplicity of these transformational sequences indicates the extent to which Apollo was able to arrive at a rapprochement with the Dionysian "spirit," the symbol of constant change.

In a fragment from the *Nachlass* of the early 1870s, Nietzsche interprets the many metamorphoses of the Delphic god, and the ways in which he presents himself as the "preparative," "inductive," and "solitary" deity, as symptoms of what he calls an "Apollonian mystery order" (KSA 7, 7[122], 175-76). This "mystery order" is rooted in the deeper historical patterns which underlie all that happens, yet remain unseen for ordinary humans, who do not even know whether they are "actors" (*Mitspielende*) or "spectators" (*Zuschauer*). Yet precisely because of the fact that all humans are unaware of these patterns, so that this knowledge is both sacred and secret, this mystic tradition is an integral part of building a society or a nation, linked to Apollo as the "healing, atoning, warning god of states, who always keeps the state on its track." Insofar as it protects humans against the "appalling discovery," the unbearable "horrific brilliance," of the "truth" that strife and suffering have a deeper meaning and function, the role of the Apollonian mystery is to safeguard the social and political balances that mitigate natural instincts. The mystical counterpart to the Apollonian version is evidently the revolutionary Dionysian mystery cult, which consists in the total revelation of mystical knowledge to a select group of initiates—knowledge that can, however, only be presented to the wider masses in veiled, metaphorical language. The profanation of cultic knowledge can thus be seen as an act of social and political destabilization.

In order to describe the evolution of these cults, Nietzsche has recourse once again to the imagery of spinning; now, the Dionysian itself has turned into the active drive behind (and is not merely the object of)

transformational processes—represented by the metaphor of "spinning." In this manner, old Dionysian cults renew existing mystery practices: "This glow of ecstasy of the Dionysian orgies has spun itself as it were into the mystery cults" (KSA 7, 7[122], 176). The mysteries unveil the ambivalent nature of Dionysus himself, too, not only because he is the one "thrice born," but because he also combines mild government with violent excess (KSA 7, 7[123], 177). Only the *epopteis* have access to the annihilating insight into the meaning of Dionysus's suffering; they long for a divine rebirth, opening the doors to a new reunification of humankind with all that is—an absolute reversal of individuation. Once more Nietzsche demonstrates the importance of the interaction between both gods. The mere presence of the "god of states," Apollo, is not sufficient for the process of nation-building in Greece in the tragic age; only the combination of the two mystery traditions can lead to the required social and political equilibrium (KSA 7, 7[123], 178). The most important amalgam of these traditions is arguably the Eleusinian mystery cult.[24]

It is not surprising to see Nietzsche return to his central representations when he wants to explain how the degeneration of the tragic culture of Greece began. When discussing the impact of Socrates on tragic civilization in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche calls him the "new Orpheus," thereby alluding to the laceration of the famous singer by the Bassarids, the votaries of Dionysus, after he had betrayed their god and started worshipping Apollo, and to Lycurgus, whom we already met as an Apollonian metamorphosis (BT §12). Even though the Dionysian was, in many ways, superior in force and violence to the rationalizing opponent who challenged him—and who was destined to be subdued—it chose to continue its action, not as part of public society, but as an underground and secret movement.

Nietzsche emphasizes that this was not the end of the Dionysian: it had shown itself to be all too expert at (self-)transformation. On the contrary, it became part of a secret cult that gradually conquered the whole (classical) world (*ein die ganze Welt allmählich überziehender Geheimcultus*) (BT §12). It is not clear what Nietzsche might have meant with this cryptic wording; he may have been hinting at the success of degenerate forms of the Dionysian mysteries flourishing in the post-tragic era. Yet these always have negative connotations for him, whereas the fragment referred to above does not betray any such negativity. Perhaps he had in mind the cultic practices of ecstasy and reversal of individuation that have formed the constant, if illicit, undercurrents of Western civilization: mysteries focusing on orgiastic corporeality and the productivity of life.[25] In

our view it is precisely these issues Nietzsche wished to address with his notion of "eternal recurrence."

## Summary

In his investigations into the emergence of Greek tragic culture Nietzsche made a distinction between at least two Dionysus figures. The first, the barbarian Dionysus, symbolizes unmitigated violence and suffering; the second is the god who emerged from the intercultural negotiation with the Delphic god Apollo: "Yet in truth that hero is the suffering Dionysus of the mysteries" (BT §10). When dealing with Dionysus, Nietzsche also persistently refers to the godhead passed down to us by Orphic sources, yet this does not mean that he is, for Nietzsche, an Orphic god. Quite the contrary: his understanding of the tragic Dionysian is manifestly anti-Orphic. This leads us to conclude that—as far as his historical speculations are concerned—there was no intrinsic connection for Nietzsche between the source conveying information and the information it conveyed. The same pattern can be found with regard to Pythagoras, who is, for Nietzsche, a religious reformer trying to rehabilitate age-old Orphic customs and beliefs. Yet there is a wide gap between the religious leader and his followers, who corrupted his heritage. For Nietzsche, this does not open the door to renewed inspiration by Orphism or Pythagoreanism, even though they demonstrate points of belief which (at first sight, at least) come close to his own philosophical contentions. The models he discovered here were not viable, because they did not affirm life as it is, but subjected it to the logic of transmigration; because they denied the body and proclaimed asceticism; and, finally, because they stood for a type of transaction and negotiation that was incompatible with his own lasting concern to surpass the human. The inescapable conclusion is that, during his early research into classical thinking, Nietzsche discovered a tradition he could henceforth use as a model, or rather, as a counter-model, for the construction of a mystery tradition that reconciled the institutional and the revolutionary, the autochthonous and the foreign, the cultic and the ecstatic—his own Dionysian-Eleusinian mystery, which glorifies the naturalness of life, the violence *and* the fertility of the body, the cruelty and frenzy of sexuality. Nietzsche did not speak about his own construct, either; the reason for this being not that he was unsure or reluctant about it, but rather that he re-enacted the secrecy of the mystic revelation and concealed his "most abysmal thoughts" with care:

> The Greek called this whole long tremendous ladder, made of light and colour, of *happiness*, not without the grateful shivers of someone who is initiated into a secret, not without much caution and pious silence—by the divine name: Dionysus. (KSA 11, 41[6], 680-81)[26]

## Notes

[1] Mazzino Montinari, "Ein neuer Abschnitt in Nietzsches *Ecce Homo*," *Nietzsche-Studien* 1 (1972): 380-418.

[2] Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, *Der einsame Nietzsche* (Leipzig: Kröner, 1922), 522-23.

[3] See, for instance, in *Ecce Homo*: "But I confess that the deepest objection against the 'eternal return,' my true *most abysmal* thought, are always mother and sister" (EH Why I Am So Wise §3)

[4] See, for instance, his lectures on *Die vorplatonischen Philosophen* (KGW 2.4, 222).

[5] Apart from some brief references in the Spring of 1885 (KSA 11, 34[90], 449), one longer reference in the third book (published in 1882) and one marginal hint in the fifth book of *The Gay Science* (published in 1887) (GS §84 and §351), Nietzsche stopped writing about Pythagoras and Pythagoreanism in *Daybreak*, in which he—as it happens—recommends the beneficent effects of silence for those who want to learn to speak (D §347). A similar question has been raised by Patrick Moroney, who does not dwell on the meaning of Orphism and confines his argument to the topics of remembrance and anthropological dualism as incompatible with Nietzsche's philosophy (Patrick Moroney, *Nietzsche's Dionysian Aristocratic Culture: The Influence of Ancient Greco-Roman Thought on Nietzsche's Philosophy* (Maynooth: Kairos, 1986), 70-75).

[6] On the historical phenomenon of Orphism, see Alberto Bernabé, "Orphisme et Présocratiques: Bilan et perspectives d'un dialogue complexe," in André Laks and Claire Louguet (eds), *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie présocratique?* (Villeneuve d'Asq: Presses universitaires du septentrion, 2002), 205; Robert Parker, "Early Orphism," in Anton Powell (ed.), *The Greek World* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 483-510; and Mircea Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas*, vol. 2, *From Gautama Buddha to the Triumph of Christianity* (Chicago and London: U of Chicago P, 1982), 180-97. Eliade rejects the description of Orphism as a church and compares it with such other heterogeneous religious-philosophical schools as the Tantra movement in India (196).

[7] Nietzsche borrowed this book from the university library in Basel on November 7, 1869; see Luca Crescenzi, "Verzeichnis der von Nietzsche aus der Universitätsbibliothek in Basel entliehenen Bücher (1869-1879)," *Nietzsche-Studien* 23 (1994): 388-442 (392).

[8] Like Ludwig Preller, whose work *Griechische Mythologie*, vol. 1, *Theogonie und Götter* (Berlin: Weidman, 1860), he knew very well (KGW 2.3, 410), Nietzsche repeatedly depicts Dionysus as a chthonic god, the lord of the underworld, and finds

confirmation of this interpretation in the etymology of the name, which he reads as a lesbian-aeolian equivalent of "zonnuxos" (translated by Nietzsche as "der todte" or "der tödtende Zeus") and traces to the root "nek" (or "nekus," "nekros," all referring to death) (KSA 7, 3[82], 82).

[9] See August Lobeck, *Aglaophamus sive de Theologiae Mysticae Graecorum Causis* (Königsberg: Sumtibus Fratrum Borntraeger Regimontii Prussorum, 1829), 483: "majus et quasi canonicum opus."

[10] KGW 2.5, 1-353; here especially §11, "The philosophical literature" (180-224).

[11] Compare with "The Birth of Tragic Thought," where Nietzsche characterizes pre-Homeric feasts as a "natural cult, which means for the Asians the most savage unleashing of all raw and lower drives, a panhetaeric animal life, skipping for a fixed period of time all limits of human civilization" (KSA 1, 583-84); and his remarks in "Homer's Contest" on the possible degradation of the Hellene: "He becomes evil and cruel, he becomes vengeful and godless, in short, he becomes 'prehomeric'" (KSA 1, 792).

[12] Erwin Rohde, *Psyche: Seelencult und Unsterblichkeitsglaube der Griechen* (Freiburg and Leipzig: J. C. B. Mohr, 1894), 405-07, defends a similar view.

[13] In his *History of Greek Literature*, Nietzsche refers to the list of Orphic writings in Clement of Alexandria's *Stromateis* and the article in the *Suda*, under the heading "Orpheus." In the section on epic literature, he discusses the date of the Orphic *Argonautica* and tentatively situates it in the fourth century BCE (KGW 2.5, 35 and 181-82).

[14] KGW 2.4, 254; and Porphyry's *Vita* §19 (Porphyrius, *Vita Pythagorae*, ed. Edouard des Places (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1982), 44, r. 20-24; 45, r. 1).

[15] Erwin Rohde, "Die Quellen des Jamblichus in seiner Biographie des Pythagoras," *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* NF 26 (1871): 554-76 (554-56); and NF 27 (1872): 23-61.

[16] Nietzsche, however, did not take part in the typically nineteenth-century "orientalizing" revolution in classical philology (such as August Gladisch's *Die Hyperboreer und die alten Schinesen* (1841), *Die Eleaten und die Indier* (1844), *Empedokles und die Ägypter* (1858), *Herakleitos und Zoroaster* (1859), *Anaxagoras und die Israeliten* (1864), works which he mocked on several occasions).

[17] Compare its characterization as one of the "democratic-demagogic" tendencies (KSA 7, 23[14], 544); see Peter Durno Murray, *Nietzsche's Affirmative Morality: A Revaluation Based in the Dionysian World-View* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1999), 17-19.

[18] With the neologism "resignationism" (*Resignationismus*), Nietzsche criticizes the concept of Greek tragedy in Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation* (BT Attempt at a Self-Criticism §6).

[19] See Christian Kerslake, "Nietzsche and the Doctrine of Metempsychosis," in John Lippitt and Jim Urpeth (eds), *Nietzsche and the Divine* (Manchester: Clinamen P, 2000), 137-61, who asks: "Is it possible that throughout his life Nietzsche had really been talking about the *Orphic Dionysos?*" (154); similar positions are taken by

Murray, *Affirmative Morality*, 16; and by Günter Wohlfart, *Das spielende Kind: Nietzsche: Postvorsokratiker—Vorpostmoderner* (Essen: Die blaue Eule, 1999), 40.

[20] Although Nietzsche does not refer explicitly to "Dionysus Zagreus" in this extract, we find very similar observations on Dionysian feasts in his unpublished notes, in which he does—yet without naming either panther or tiger (KSA 7, 7[123], 177-78, which refers to "D<ionysos> Z<agreus>"). On the importance of the image of the tigers, see Alexander Aichele, *Philosophie als Spiel: Platon—Kant—Nietzsche* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2000), 115.

[21] Hesiod, *Works and Days*, ed. M. L. West (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1980), 95-96 (ll.11-26).

[22] See, for example, Friedrich Welcker, *Griechische Götterlehre*, 3 vols (Göttingen: Dieterich, 1857), 425.

[23] Compare with the discussion of *entgegenschauen* in Herman Siemens, "Agonal Configurations in the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*: Identity, Mimesis and the Übertragung of Cultures in Nietzsche's Early Thought," *Nietzsche-Studien* 30 (2001): 80-106 (81-82).

[24] For a critical and historicizing discussion of Nietzsche's "mystery teaching," see Hubert Cancik and Hildegard Cancik-Lindemaier, *Philolog und Kultfigur: Friedrich Nietzsche und seine Antike in Deutschland* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1999), 35-47.

[25] Compare with Nietzsche's references to "St. John's and St. Vitus's dancers" as medieval manifestations of this tradition (BT §1; KSA 1, 521; KSA 7, 1[1, 34], 10, 19); later, his opinion of these carnivalesque processions becomes much more negative, so that, in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, he discredits them as epidemic manifestations of mental illness, resulting from the ascetic prescriptions for penance and salvation (GM III §21; cf. KSA 8, 23[11], 406 and KSA 9, 11[114], 482).

[26] This article is part of the outcome of a research programme of the Fund for Scientific Research, Flanders (Belgium) [FWO-Grant No. G.0145.02]. The names of the authors are listed in alphabetical order. For an extended version of the argument presented here, see Benjamin Biebuyck, Danny Praet, and Isabelle Vanden Poel, "The Eternal Dionysus: The influence of Orphism, Pythagoreanism and the Dionysian Mysteries on Nietzsche's Philosophy of Eternal Recurrence" (forthcoming).

# Nietzsche's Cynicism: Uppercase or lowercase?

*R. Bracht Branham*

*I cannot exist without the oxygen of laughter. (Dawn Powell)*

*And given that even gods philosophize (a conclusion I have been drawn to many times), I do not doubt that they know a new and super-human way of laughing—at the expense of everything serious. (Nietzsche) (BGE §294)*

MY PURPOSE HERE in this article is to sketch an answer to the following question: what did Nietzsche mean when he wrote in *Ecce Homo* that his books attain here and there "the highest thing that can be attained on earth—Cynicism" (EH Why I Write Such Good Books §3)? At first glance, the idea that ancient Cynicism might be invoked here seems implausible. Were not the dogs, or Cynics, of antiquity the bluntest, crudest, least learned of the ancient schools of philosophy—assuming they can be called a philosophical school, which was doubted even in antiquity? And what survives of the Cynic classics of the fourth and third centuries BCE, aside from a few fragments of Crates and the scurrilous anecdotal traditions preserved in Book 6 of Diogenes Laertius's gossipy *Lives and Opinions of Famous Philosophers*? What could be here that Nietzsche could sink his canines into? Fortunately (for me), the case for the importance of the Cynics for Nietzsche on every level from literary style to philosophical stance has already been brilliantly made by Heinrich Niehues-Pröbsting.[1] I would like to revisit that case here with a view to supplementing and extending some of its key points by looking at Nietzsche through a Cynic lens, as well as at Cynicism through Nietzsche.

Pröbsting's account of Nietzsche and the Cynics has three principle elements: first, Cynic literature as an aesthetic precedent for Nietzsche's singular combination of styles; second, Cynic *askēsis* ("ascetics") as a source of moral techniques in Nietzsche's lifelong battle against pessimism; and third, the Cynic *parrhēsiast* ("freespeaker") as a model of

shameless honesty, a voice of enlightenment beyond Good and Evil. I want to reconsider the significance of the ancient Cynics for Nietzsche with reference to three related topics that will intersect Pröbsting's account at several points from various angles: first, the Cynic life of exile; second, Cynic practice as an antidote to the Christian or Platonic ascetic ideals; and third, the significance of Cynic laughter and the arts of the *spoudogeloios* ("seriocomic")[2] for understanding Nietzsche's self-conception as a writer and philosopher, especially from *The Gay Science* on.

First, it should be noted that Nietzsche uses only one word for Cynicism—*Zynismus*—and therefore does not distinguish its ancient from its modern forms orthographically, as is now common practice in German or English. This is potentially confusing, since the modern term derives from the ancient and overlaps its meaning in many ways, but nevertheless differs both in reference (for example, it does not denote a philosophical movement) and in connotation: it is most often used in a distinctly pejorative and tendentious sense, and is rarely used in self-descriptions that are not ironic. Yet the continuity between ancient and modern senses of the word is clearly exploited by Nietzsche and is relevant to the question I have posed, since one thing that Nietzsche intends to do by calling Cynicism "the highest thing that can be attained on earth" is to shock his readers into asking what he means by the term, what range of meanings is he here invoking? To call someone nowadays a cynic—with a small "c"—is an attempt to put him on the defensive, to suggest that he is blind to certain kinds of value, namely, those the speaker cherishes or claims to defend. One thinks of Oscar Wilde's aphorism on the modern cynic—"a cynic is someone who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing." But, of course, the Cynic—whether ancient or modern—sees himself as unmasking spurious values by helping us to see through them, an activity that has its own value. Perhaps it is not surprising that Nietzsche is often thought of as cynical, especially by those who know little of ancient Cynicism or its relation to the modern concept of cynicism.

## From Exile to Ascetics

As background to my principle topics, the significance of Cynic ascetics and aesthetics for Nietzsche, it is worth noting an existential theme that Nietzsche shared with Diogenes, Crates, and almost all the early Cynics, namely, that they embraced a life of exile, and not only as a necessary evil, but as a source of philosophical insight and the preferred mode of living for a philosopher. Of course, in antiquity exile from one's native

city was regarded not only as one of the worst possible misfortunes, but also as a disgrace. But when Diogenes was reproached for having been exiled from Sinope (for having defaced the city's coins with a large chisel stamp) he replied, "you miserable fool, that's how I became a philosopher!" Nietzsche might have said the same thing about his own, more voluntary, exile from academe and the fatherland. Just as Diogenes' Cynicism leads him to affirm his own exile—unthinkable to his contemporaries—so Nietzsche commends his *gaya scienza* "to those who have a right to call themselves homeless" (GS §377) and counts among the "enduring habits" he hates "owing to an official position, constant association with the same people" and, significantly, "a permanent domicile" (GS §295). For both philosophers, exile from the fatherland was the preferred mode of life. For Nietzsche, it was an escape from those "enduring habits" he found so stifling and a way of cultivating the virtue of solitude. For Diogenes, the shock of exile provided the impetus for him to invent the Cynic way of life. For both it was a liberation providing a critical philosophical perspective on their native cultures—Greek and German—and on what it means to be at home: *ubi bene, ibi patria* ("where I am happy, there is my fatherland") is a motto both could have endorsed. Moreover, through the experience of exile both became authentic *cosmopolitai* ("citizens of the cosmos"), a word which was evidently coined by Diogenes when asked where he was from.

Now the divorce of the philosopher from his fatherland (or polis) that the term *cosmopolitēs* was coined to express leads directly to the most familiar formula of Hellenistic philosophy, one associated particularly with the Cynics and Stoics, namely, that of "living in accordance with nature." As Leslie Kurke observes in *Coins, Bodies, Games, and Gold*, "for Diogenes and much of Hellenistic philosophy in his wake" the appeal of the recurring idea of "living according to nature" is essentially that "it liberates the individual [i.e., the philosopher] from his dependence on civic order. It is no longer the city [or the fatherland] that protects the individual from the randomness of fortune and guarantees his worth within a social order of value but his own reason and self-mastery."[3] Indeed, when asked what he had gotten out of philosophy, Diogenes responds: "If nothing else then at least this, to be prepared for every kind of luck" (DL, 6.63) (In *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche describes himself in similar terms as "always up to dealing with any chance event" [Why I am So Clever §3].) If Kurke's account of the political meaning of coinage is right, then Diogenes' act of defacing coins is in itself a symbolic rejection of the polis and its way of minting citizens. Be that as it may, the philosophic rejection of the fatherland that begins with Dio-

genes results directly from his perversely embracing the state of privation foisted on him by exile and redescribing it as a valued achievement—autonomy.

Now if Diogenes' disenchantment with the polis, with its *nomoi* and *nomismata*, as engendered by his experience of exile, leads to the Cynic reconception of *autarkheia* ("self-sufficing") from a collective civic virtue to a personal one, this is no less true of the Cynic idea of freedom. Just as *autarkheia* changes its meaning—is effectively defaced—when applied to a stateless individual living in exile, so too does freedom. Clearly, the Cynic understanding of freedom cannot be that of Plato, Aristotle, or the citizens of Athens, since its premise rejects the polis as the locus or source of freedom. Therefore, freedom cannot be a matter of legal status (or entitlement), such as that of being a citizen. The Cynic conception of freedom—"to use any place for any purpose" (DL, 6.22)—is a license to practice *autarkheia* free from that "most intimate of social fetters," shame (*aidōs*), the cornerstone of conventional Greek morality.

Accordingly, when nature calls, Diogenes famously does the business of Demeter and Aphrodite in public, eating, and masturbating in the agora. Notoriously, Diogenes said of public masturbation: "I only wish I could be free of hunger as easily by rubbing my belly" (DL, 6.69). Cynic freedom means to follow nature's bidding, undeterred by shame. As far as the body or nature is concerned, one need is, in principle, no better or worse than any other. They are givens. It is culture that creates a hierarchy of desires and the proprieties governing their tendency. Diogenes' response in this anecdote is characteristic, for it comically asserts the claims of nature as matters of fact while blithely ignoring the constraints of culture. They have no more claim on Diogenes then on any other canine. Here freedom and *autarkheia* go hand in hand with *anaideia*—Cynic shamelessness.

Now how does the Cynic response to exile through shame-free and self-sufficient living (that is, *anaideia* and *autarkheia*) bear on Nietzsche? In several ways, I think. Just as Nietzsche embraces the life of exile as the preferred way of life for a philosopher, that is, for him, so too does he cultivate *autarkheia*, or self-sufficiency, as a virtue. He makes this explicit in the preface to the second volume of *Human, All Too Human* where he speaks of his task as "defending life against pain"—a possible description of both Cynicism and Epicureanism—which required of him a "dietetic and discipline [...] a minimum of life, in fact an unchaining of all coarser desires, an independence in the midst of all kinds of unfavorable outward circumstances together with pride in being able to live surrounded by these unfavorable circumstances; a certain

amount of Cynicism, perhaps a certain amount of the doghouse" (HA II Preface §5). This passage bears comparison with his comments in *Ecce Homo* on the supreme importance those "little things" most philosophers have considered beneath their notice, namely "nutriment, place, climate, recreation, the whole casuistry of selfishness" (EH Clever §10). But no less significant in this respect is Nietzsche's heterodox evaluation of solitude as a virtue, which is, of course, a complete reversal of the classical view. After all, Aristotle had famously said (in the *Politics*) that a solitary life is fit only for a god or an animal, to which Nietzsche responded that there is a third case: one must be both (a god and an animal), that is, a philosopher to live alone (TI Maxims and Arrows §3). No less shamelessly Cynical is the last sentence of Book Two of *The Gay Science*: "As long as you are in any way ashamed of yourselves you do not yet belong amongst us" (GS §107), a sentiment Diogenes should have expressed but did not: he embodied it. The experience of exile—and, of course, chronic illness—led to these and other convergences, not only of Nietzsche's views, but of his moral praxis, with that advocated and exemplified by Diogenes. The term for these practices designed to promote *autarkheia* is, of course, *askēsis*, which I will now consider in another context.

## From Ascetics to Aesthetics

In his article on "Diogenes at the Enlightenment" Pröbsting points out that in a list of projects Nietzsche made while still in Leipzig the title "Pessimism in Antiquity" was recorded and supplemented by "or The Reclamations [*Rettungen*] of the Cynics" in parentheses. After considering several possible meanings, Pröbsting takes this title to refer to the strategies "the Cynic mobilizes against pessimism and its consequences" and argues that, under Schopenhauer's influence, Nietzsche came to see the essence of Cynicism "in the tension between pessimism and *eudaemonism*."[4] Nietzsche's interpretation (in the chapter "Ways of Dying" ["Todesarten"] in his lectures on Greek literature ["Geschichte der griechischen Litteratur," 3]) of an anecdote from Diogenes Laertius's life of Antisthenes (6.18) is used to illustrate this understanding of Cynicism. In the anecdote Antisthenes—who was regarded in antiquity as a founding Cynic and the teacher of Diogenes—is sick and dying of some disease. In despair he cries out, "who will release me from these pains (*ponoi*)?" and Diogenes replies "this," showing him a dagger. Antisthenes responds, "I said from my pains, but not from life."

Pröbsting reports Nietzsche's comments on the anecdote as "a very profound statement; one cannot get the better of the love of life by means of a dagger. Yet that is the real suffering. It is obvious that the Cynic clings to life more than the other philosophers: the 'shortest way to happiness' is nothing but the love of life in itself and complete needlessness with reference to all other goods."[5] While Nietzsche's reading is possible, it is not the most obvious way to take the anecdote. In Diogenes Laertius this story is immediately followed by the comment: "It was thought that Antisthenes showed some weakness (*malakoteron*) in bearing his disease [or putting up with it] through love of life" (*philozoia*). In other words, the anecdote is criticizing Antisthenes for complaining about *ponoi*/pains—which he had famously and Cynically declared a good thing (*agathon*), contrary to conventional usage, citing Heracles as an example (6.2)—when there was an obvious alternative, the dagger. The anecdote is thus taking him to task for dying un-Cynically by clinging to life desperately instead of either affirming his *ponoi*—the Cynic thing to do—or taking his exit, which is arguably Cynic as well, which is why it is Diogenes who furnishes the dagger.

Nevertheless, Nietzsche's summary of the Cynic ethos is profound. Cynic discipline or *askēsis* is meant to instill acceptance of life as it is and, as Nietzsche puts it, "needlessness with reference to all other goods." As Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé has argued in her monograph *L'ascèse cynique*, the physical conditioning of the self, the training (that is, *askēsis*) of the body for life as it is, namely, full of *ponoi* ("pains"), is fundamental to Cynic teaching and distinguishes it from the other Socratic schools (committed to the intellectualist position that "virtue is knowledge").[6] Nietzsche is naturally attracted to this eccentric asceticism in the service of life, since the Cynic *askēsis*—a metaphor taken from athletics—is almost the mirror image of the ascetic ideal that Nietzsche associated with Christianity (and other forms of idealism), which he spent so much of his time and energy deconstructing. In Cynicism Nietzsche finds a practical antidote to Schopenhauerian pessimism, a pagan "ascetics" that embodies the opposite evaluation of life based on the idea that nature has equipped us with all we need to be happy if we can train ourselves physiologically (that is, our *physis* or "nature") to live accordingly.

Cynic ascetics resonates with Nietzsche in other ways as well—as a form of discipline aimed at self-overcoming, at producing a new *anthropos* ("human being"). There are many anecdotes about Diogenes clearly implying that human beings in his sense are rare or non-existent. The most famous is the one adapted by Nietzsche in *The Gay Science* and made into a parable about the death of God. It is the story that Diogenes

once lit a lamp in broad daylight and went about saying, "I'm looking for a human being" (*anthropōs*) (6.41).[7]

Again, like Nietzsche, the Cynic rejects the contemporary way of being human for one in which the animal nature of man is fully embraced. Would not Diogenes have agreed with Nietzsche when he writes in *Beyond Good and Evil* that "more complete people" are, at any level, "more complete beasts" (or animals) (BGE §257)? There are famous anecdotes in which Diogenes treats animals as role models, and Nietzsche concedes in a meditation on forgetting in "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life" that "no philosopher is more justified than the Cynic: for the happiness of the animal, as the perfect Cynic, is the living proof of the rightness of Cynicism" (UM II §1). He takes this thought a step further in *Human, All Too Human* where he begins by observing that, as his name suggests, the practicing Cynic in "evading the demands of culture" approaches "the condition of the domestic animal," but that nevertheless the Cynic "raises himself high above the world of sensations of the animal" in two respects: first, "he feels all that lies in the charm of contrast," presumably between the Cynic and his contemporaries; and second, he "can in any event scold and grumble to his heart's content" (HA I §275), a pleasure "the artist of contempt" certainly appreciated (GS §379). With this observation we are now talking about Cynic aesthetics, to which I now turn.

## The *Spoudogeloios* and the Art of Philosophy

Cynicism at its core consists of two moments, perhaps induced by the experience of exile. They are, first, the discovery of "the comedy of existence," that is, that the accepted patterns of social life, hallowed by ritual and embodied in *nomos* ("custom" or "law"), "have no necessity," as Mary Douglas puts it;[8] and second, a literary expression of this discovery through the serio-comic forms of philosophical jesting and performance (or exhibitionism), parodic mockery, satiric scorn, and shameless honesty (or speech: *parrhēsia*) that extends even to the speaker himself, making the Cynic philosopher, as Nietzsche puts it in *Beyond Good and Evil*, a "buffoon without shame" (BGE §26). The word and the concept of the *spoudogeloios*, or serio-comic voice, speaking from outside the inherited dichotomies, as his oxymoronic name suggests, is, of course, a Cynic invention, and a philosophic role in which Nietzsche would cast himself increasingly as his thought matured, and as he undertook to speak from outside the confines of other dichotomous oppositions that underwrite such conventional value-judgments as Good versus Evil.

Let us begin, therefore, with "the comedy of existence." The most famous instance of this insight in Nietzsche is, of course, at the very beginning of *The Gay Science*: it is this recognition that makes *scienza gaya*, that is, that makes the Gay Science possible:

> You will never find anyone who could wholly mock you as an individual, even in your best qualities, bringing home to you to the limits of truth your boundless fly-like, frog-like wretchedness! To laugh at oneself, as one would have to in order to laugh *out of the whole truth*—to do that even the best so far lacked sufficient sense for the truth, and the most gifted had too little genius for that. But laughter may yet have a future. I mean, when the proposition "the species is everything and the individual is always nothing" has become part of humanity and this ultimate liberation and irresponsibility has become accessible to all at all times. Perhaps laughter will then have formed an alliance with wisdom, perhaps only "gay science" will then be left. For the present, things are still quite different. For the present, the comedy of existence has not yet become conscious of itself. For the present, we still live in the age of tragedy, the age of moralities and religions. (GS §1)

It is strange, to say the least, that Nietzsche claims that wisdom and laughter have never formed an alliance, that the "teachers of the purpose of existence" (GS §1)—the tragic poets, philosophers, and moralists—have never been mocked *in toto*, laughed at "out of the whole truth," since there is a locus classicus in the Cynic tradition, namely, Lucian's parodic fantasy *Menippus or the Descent to Hades*, where precisely this is done: it is in the encounter of the Cynic philosopher Menippus—the only philosopher expressly called *spoudogeloios* in antiquity—with the Theban prophet Teiresias in Hades. Menippus goes to Hades in search of wisdom, to consult Teiresias on the best kind of life for a man, after realizing that the laws contradict the poets and that the philosophers contradict each other and themselves. While crossing the Acherusian plain in search of Teiresias he discovers that "the individual is always nothing," as Nietzsche put it (TI Expeditions of an Untimely Man §3); all individuality is so completely effaced at death that the legendarily ugly Thersites is indistinguishable from the famously handsome Nireus: "Their bones were all alike, undefined, unlabelled and unable ever again to be distinguished by anyone." When Menippus locates Teiresias, the prophet of tragic wisdom, who sees the same things as Apollo in Sophocles, he has been converted to a Cynic perspective: he is laughing and tells the bewildered Cynic to forget the wise men—the teachers of the purpose of existence—and "to go on his way laughing a lot and taking nothing

seriously": *gelōn ta polla kai peri mēden espoudakōs* are Teiresias's last words to the philosopher. Only laughter, it seems, has a future.

Now Nietzsche had both these voices in him in their original potent forms: the shameless honesty of the Cynic jester unmasking the idols of the tribe with glee, and the prophet of tragic wisdom who would surpass all the other teachers of the purpose of existence, "all earthly seriousness heretofore," announcing "dreadful" truths. His mature work is an unceasing dialogue between his comic and tragic voices. In the end, I think the laughter and shameless honesty of the serio-comic jester prevails, or is it the vatic Zarathustra, Nietzsche's version of "the teachers of the purpose of existence? " Or did he succeed in synthesizing them both into a dialogic version of himself?

However we answer that question, it is clear that the art of the *spoudogeloios* becomes even more important for Nietzsche, beginning with *The Gay Science*, which has all the hallmarks of Cynic literature: it is a mischievous combination of the obscene and the prophetic, parodic verse and soaring prose, the personal and the transhistorical, logical analysis and ad hominem caricatures—a comically complex medley of many voices. Its serio-comic qualities are emphatically foregrounded in the second edition: Nietzsche seems to distance himself from his own portentiousness when he rewrites the phrase *incipit tragoedia*, used to introduce Zarathustra in the last book of the first edition, to read *incipit parodia* in the preface; and when he imagines in the last section of Book 5 the spirits of his own books saying "with malicious, cheerful, hobgoblin-like laughter" of his "great seriousness," of his operatic talk in the preceding section of the "destiny of the soul" and "tragedy": "we can't stand it anymore [...] stop, stop this raven-black music!" (GS §383). Their laughter signals a shift in tone in preparation for the ludic "Songs of Prince Vogelfrei," a sort of satyr-play appended to the incipient tragedy. Among the poems that frame the five books of prose, at least two can be read as Cynic parodies, most notably §34, "Seneca et hoc genus omne," and the song entitled "Fool in Despair." Thus the very structure of *The Gay Science* registers a serio-comic ambivalence: poems "in which a poet makes fun of all poets in a manner which is hard to forgive" (GS Preface §1), framing and inevitably qualifying the effect of five books of virtuoso prose on a huge range of subjects. It thereby raises one of Nietzsche's thematic questions: what can or should be taken seriously? And by whom?

Nietzsche's identification with the Cynics goes a step further in *Beyond Good and Evil*. In section 26 of Part Two, "The Free Spirit," to which I have been alluding throughout, he writes:

> If he is lucky, as befits a favorite child of knowledge, the philosopher will find real shortcuts and aids to make his work easier. I mean he will find so-called cynics—people who easily recognize the animal, the commonplace, the "norm" within themselves, and yet still have a degree of spiritedness and an urge to talk about themselves and their peers in *front of witnesses*:—sometimes they even wallow in books as if in their own filth. Cynicism is the only form in which common souls come close to honesty [*Redlichkeit*]; and the higher man must open his ears to every cynicism, whether coarse or refined, and congratulate himself whenever a buffoon [*Possenreißer*] without shame or a scientific satyr speaks out in his presence. (BGE §26)

He concludes this reflection by choosing "the laughing self-satisfied satyr" (that is, the Cynic) over the angry moralist as the more instructive and the more honest. Later, in Part Seven, "Our Virtues," he comments at the end of one section that "there is a drop of cruelty in every will-to-know" (BGE §229). He expands on this idea in the next section as follows:

> The sublime tendency of the knower who treats and wants to treat things in a profound, multiple, thorough manner. This is a type of cruelty on the part of the intellectual conscience and taste, and one that every brave thinker will acknowledge in himself, assuming that he has spent as long as he should in hardening and sharpening his eye for himself, and that he is used to strict discipline as well as strict words. He will say "There is something cruel in the tendency of my spirit";—just let kind and virtuous people try to talk him out of it! In fact, it would sound more polite [*artiger*] if, instead of cruelty, people were to accuse, mutter about and praise us as having a sort of "wild (or extravagant) honesty [*ausschweifende Redlichkeit*]"—we free, *very* free spirits—and perhaps this is what our reputation really will be—posthumously. (BGE §230)

The term *Redlichkeit,* translated "honesty" in both these passages, specifically suggests speech, frank and honest speech. Surely Nietzsche knew from Diogenes Laertius that when Diogenes was asked what *to kalliston*, the finest thing in the world, is, he replied with one word: *parrhēsia*. *Parrhēsia* means to say everything or anything on a topic and could be translated as "wild," "reckless," or "extravagantly honest speech," the kind that could, and did, get Cynics flogged, exiled, and even executed. *Parrhēsia* was the "right" of the aristocrat or of a citizen in a democratic state. Anyone else who laid claim to it did so at his peril. That is the point of the stories about Diogenes confronting Alexander and other power brokers—his courage for *parrhēsia*, which in his hands was nothing less than a license to satirize, insult, and unmask.

Nietzsche's serio-comic art reaches its zenith in the works of his last active year, particularly in *Twilight of the Idols: or How to Philosophize with a Hammer*, a book brimming with laughter, malice, and insight, as its witty title, parodying Wagner's apocalyptic *Götterdämmerung*, aptly suggests. To give only one famous example, in a single section entitled "How the Real World at Last Became a Myth," Nietzsche manages to give us a Menippean overview of the history of Western metaphysics, which is, as Michael Tanner observes, both "hilarious and unnervingly accurate."[9] Here humor has clearly become instrumental—and indispensable—to Nietzsche's mode of argument. In *The Case of Wagner*, the last work he would see through publication, Nietzsche actually characterizes his method as serio-comic, or, more accurately, "severo-comic," in his epigraph, adapted from Horace, in which Nietzsche has substituted the word *severum* for *verum* yielding the phrase *ridendo dicere severum*: "to say something severe with laughter." In its original form, *ridendo dicere verum quid vetat* (*Sermones* 1.24), Horace was defending his own literary methods in his *sermones* (or satires), asking rhetorically why he could not tell the truth with laughter, thereby invoking the essential Cynic (or serio-comic) idea that laughter (or humor) is a means of perception, a unique way of seeing the truth. Finally, Nietzsche identifies himself as a Cynic still more explicitly in the Postscript when he writes of Wagner's *Parsifal*: "One has to be a Cynic not to be seduced here; one has to be able to bite in order not to worship here. Well then, you old seducer, the Cynic warns you—*cave canem*." Thus Nietzsche's interest in Cynicism as a philosophical option, which begins, surprisingly, with its practical ascetic dimension (in the Preface to the second volume of *Human All Too Human*), leads him to embrace the shamelessness of the Cynic *parrhesiast* as a model of enlightened truth-telling about the animal nature of man, and ultimately to identify himself literally with the biting laughter of the dog-philosopher—making this paradigmatic Cynic stance all that saves him from the seductions of Wagnerian decadence.

To return to the question I posed at the outset: what Nietzsche meant when he called "Cynicism" his highest achievement, is exactly what he says. Specifically, this refers to his unmasking of the "higher swindle": "Have I been understood? What defines me, what sets me apart from all the rest of mankind, is that I have *unmasked* Christian morality" (EH Why I am a Destiny §7). Therefore, both his end—the supplanting of traditional morality—and his means, the shameless honesty and serio-comic stance of the buffoon who speaks truths, are deliberately and self-consciously Cynic—with a capital "C." This is why he calls himself in *Ecce Homo*, just as he had the Cynic *parrhesiast* in *Beyond Good*

*and Evil*, "a buffoon … and nonetheless […] the truth speaks out of me" (EH Destiny §1). A buffoon, because his *ausschweifende Redlichkeit* is applied even to himself. What other kind of philosopher would have admitted in print that the two people he knows best in all the world are also the most serious objection to his most significant idea? "I confess that the deepest objection to the Eternal Recurrence, my real idea from the abyss, is always my mother and sister" (EH Why I am So Wise §3)—it's enough to make one a Cynic! If we follow Nietzsche's lead, and rank philosophers based on their capability for laughter (BGE §294), who aside from Diogenes competes with Nietzsche at this "Olympian vice"?

## Notes

[1] See Heinrich Niehues-Pröbsting, *Der Kynismus des Diogenes und der Begriff des Zynismus* (Munich: Fink 1979); "Der kurze Weg," in *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* 24 (1980): 103-22; "The Modern Reception of Cynicism: Diogenes in the Enlightenment," in R. Bracht Branham and Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé (eds), *The Cynics: The Cynic Movement in Antiquity and Its Legacy* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: U of California P, 1996), 329-65.

[2] For the concept of the *spoudogeloios*, see R. Bracht Branham, *Unruly Eloquence: Lucian and the Comedy of Traditions* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard UP, 1989), chapter 1 (9-63); and "Defacing the Currency: Diogenes' Rhetoric and the *Invention* of Cynicism," in Branham and Goulet-Cazé (eds), *The Cynics*, 81-104.

[3] Leslie Kurke, *Coins, Bodies, Games, and Gold: The Politics of Meaning in Archaic Greece* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1999), 330-33.

[4] "The Modern Reception of Cynicism," in Branham and Goulet-Cazé (eds), *The Cynics*, 356.

[5] "The Modern Reception of Cynicism," in Branham and Goulet-Cazé (eds), *The Cynics*, 357. See KGW 2.5, 348.

[6] M.-O. Goulet-Cazé, *L'ascèse cynique: un commentaire de Diogène Laërce VI 70-71* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1986).

[7] See Pröbsting's excellent discussion of Nietzsche's adaptation of this anecdote in his parable of the madman in "The Modern Reception of Cynicism," in Branham and Goulet-Cazé (eds), *The Cynics*, 361-62.

[8] Mary Douglas, "The Social Control of Cognition: Some Factors in Joke Perception," *Man* 5.3 (1968); reprinted as "Jokes" in *Implicit Meanings* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), 90-114 (96).

[9] Michael Tanner, "Introduction," in Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 1992), ix.

# Nietzsche's Unpublished Fragments on Ancient Cynicism: The First Night of Diogenes

*Anthony K. Jensen*

IT HAS ALREADY been established by the recent work of Heinrich Niehues-Pröbsting that Nietzsche was fascinated by both original ancient Cynics and the various modern manifestations of cynicism.[1] Niehues-Pröbsting has done much to explore the ways in which Nietzsche adopted aspects of the typically Cynic literary paradigms, how he understood Cynicism as a tool of every genuine philosopher used to combat the life-negating affects of pessimism, and how Nietzsche occasionally fancied himself as a modern incarnation of Diogenes of Sinope, ancient Cynicism's probable founder. R. Bracht Branham has continued the effort in this volume with his article, "Nietzsche's Cynicism: Uppercase or lowercase." Thus far, however, it has only been possible to discuss a limited number of the relevant passages and aspects of this thematically multifaceted relationship. In his correspondence, as well as in the assembled *Nachlass* collections from both the Leipzig *Werke* and the more recent Colli and Montinari edition of the *Kritische Studienausgabe*, Nietzsche makes several significant references to Diogenes that lie outside the scope of Niehues-Pröbsting's focus. This is my point of departure.

Some of these allusions are simply one or two word citations that do not so much bear philosophic content as offer plain evidence that Nietzsche had Cynicism ready in his mind throughout his career in any number of contexts.[2] Some are contained in letters from his friends, almost as privately shared jests, whose importance lies in the fact that they reveal a certain easy familiarity with which his inner circle understood his personal admiration for Diogenes.[3] Some, however, are full-length aphorisms, which for whatever reason did not make their way into publication, but do have philosophical significance both in regard to Nietzsche's understanding of ancient Cynicism and his own philosophical development.[4] It is with this final type that I am concerned. Notably, in his most thoroughly developed unpublished fragments on Cynicism, Nietzsche

makes on separate occasions an allusion to what he calls "the first night of Diogenes." The first section of this article explains what Nietzsche meant by this reference and discusses the characteristic theme that phrase represents. The second treats Nietzsche's use of the initiation of Diogenes to contrast the academic ethos of philosophy in modern Germany with the existential stance of the paradigmatic ancient philosophers. As we will see, the two themes are ultimately related. And while this article is necessarily of narrow scope, I hope it will add another dimension to the continuing scholarship on the relationship between Nietzsche and ancient Cynicism.

## Simplicity and the Cynic *Askesis*

In a notebook entry in the winter of 1874, Nietzsche writes the following:

> I am thinking of the first night of Diogenes: all ancient philosophy was aimed at simplicity of life and taught a certain absence of needs, the most important remedy for all thoughts of social rebellion. In this respect, the few philosophical vegetarians have accomplished more for humanity than all the more recent philosophies taken together; and as long as philosophers do not muster the courage to seek an entirely different lifestyle and demonstrate it by their own example, they will come to nothing. (KSA 7, 31[11], 752)

This phrase, "the first night of Diogenes," is Nietzsche's chosen appellation referencing a digression in Plutarch's *Moralia*, in which Diogenes of Sinope was said to have been converted to Cynicism:

> A similar tale, too, they record about Diogenes of Sinope at the beginning of his devotion to philosophy. The Athenians were keeping holiday with public banquets and shows in the theatre and informal gatherings among themselves, and indulging in merry-making the whole night through, while Diogenes, huddled up in a corner trying to sleep, fell into some disturbing and disheartening reflections how he from no compulsion had entered upon a toilsome and strange mode of life, and as a result of his own act he was now sitting without part or parcel in all these good things. A moment later, however, a mouse, it is said, crept up and busied itself with the crumbs of his bread, whereupon he once more recovered his spirits, and said to himself as though rebuking himself for cowardice, "What are you saying, Diogenes? Your crumbs make a feast for this creature, but as for you, a man of birth and breeding, just because you cannot be getting drunk over there, reclining on soft and flowery couches, do you bewail and lament your lot?"

> Now when such fits of dejection become of infrequent occurrence and the objections and protests made by sound sense against them quickly come to our help, as though rallying after a temporary rout, and easily dissipate our depression and dismay, we may well believe that our progress rests on a firm foundation. [...] For to confront the world boldly is with some people possible only under the influence of anger or mental derangement; but to contemn actions which the world admires is quite impossible without real and solid wisdom.[5]

Several themes in these two passages are consistent with what Nietzsche has already discussed in his published materials on ancient Cynicism.[6] There is particular emphasis here on the notion of the Cynic's way of living simply. The Cynic's enlightenment rests in his recognition that simplicity of means is a surer path to happiness than either worldly possessions or lofty philosophies. The legend of Diogenes' enlightenment is repeated by Aelian (*Varia Historia*, 12.26), and is mentioned by Diogenes Laertius. "Through watching a mouse running about, says Theophrastus in the Megarian Dialogue, not looking for a place to lie down in, not afraid of the dark, not seeking any of the things which are considered to be dainties, he discovered the means of adapting himself to circumstances."[7]

These stories are significantly different in detail, and Nietzsche sees great value in aspects of each of their respective emphases. Immediately remarkable is the difference in dramatic settings. In the Diogenes Laertius version, the Cynic notices how the mouse is not afraid of the dark. Dramatically speaking, we may presume Diogenes is alone with the mouse, in the dark, somewhat shaken by the unknown, and looking for some type of consolation. Seeing the mouse, his spirits lift, he is reinvigorated, and he discovers in the mouse's simplicity the means to bravery amidst all of life's unpredictabilities. The temptation to be afraid of the uncertain is overcome by the bravery learned by the Cynic. In the Plutarch rendition, however, the setting is said to be a celebration, in which Diogenes, despite the various entertainments, notices only the mouse, busying himself with the crumbs from his plate. Now, there is no darkness to be afraid of here. The emphasis instead lies in Diogenes' fascination with the creature's ability to survive happily on very little. The mouse has no need for the lavishness of feasts when crumbs will suffice; so too, Diogenes has no need of lavish accommodations when his wine tub will provide shelter just as well. Thus, the emphasis of the Plutarch passage is on the Cynic ideal of simplicity; it overcomes the temptation to live the posh, comfortable life, which the majority of men would occasionally enjoy. Both are crucial elements in Nietzsche's reading, which

itself indicates that Nietzsche was acquainted with both accounts. I shall now turn to a discussion of Plutarch's emphasis on simplicity.

Diogenes at first laments the fact that he is unable to take part in the drinking and carousing. He observes that he has taken on a strange, arduous life, one much different from the comfortable lives of his colleagues. The arrival of the mouse lifts his spirits. A lowly undomesticated animal provides him an exemplar for his own philosophical nature. The mouse does not need extravagant fineries; it can be happy without being refined. It reminds Diogenes that, despite the unconventionality of his chosen lifestyle, his is indeed one worth living. With this Nietzsche agrees, "Life is hard to bear—but do not act so tenderly!" (Z I 7). The true philosopher, like the mouse, must be unconcerned with dainties, unconcerned with lying on soft and feathery couches, and for that matter, unconcerned with the comforts associated with the life of a professional scholar.

Nietzsche was not at all unfamiliar with the virtue of living simply. Indeed, throughout his writings he sought to make trivial matters in his own life seems less complicated. He writes, "Indeed, a minimum of life, an unchaining from all coarser desires, an independence in the middle of all kinds of outer nuisances, together with the pride in being able to live in the midst of all this disfavor: a bit of Cynicism perhaps, a bit of 'tub' [...]" (HA II Preface §5). Even Elisabeth Nietzsche recognized how her brother resembled Diogenes' teachings: "There is no doubt, at that time, my brother tried a little bit to imitate Diogenes in the tub; he wanted to find out with how little a philosopher could get by."[8]

What Nietzsche intended to imitate in his personal life was one of the overarching goals of ancient Cynicism. Living simply can only be achieved once all the superfluous minutiae of daily living are relinquished. As Nietzsche says in his letter to Erwin Rohde of 28 August 1877: "A person who has only a little time every day for his own principal affairs, and has to spend almost all his time and strength on duties which are simply unnecessary—such a person is not harmonious" (KSB 5, 278). One lives in a wine tub because it is easier than maintaining an estate. One envies a mouse that is content to eat the scraps off a table instead of spending hours preparing lavish feasts. However, because Nietzsche and Diogenes each hold the basic view that nature is cruel and fate tragic, one cannot simply relax in the calm of the storm. In order to detach oneself from material comforts, which are not easily relinquished, a true philosopher must harden himself in order to face the often unremitting conditions of nature. To accomplish this, the one who wishes a naturalistic simplicity must undergo a training in *askesis*, to make himself

hard and able to bear physical and mental cruelty. It was said of Diogenes that "in summer he used to roll himself over in hot sand, while in winter he used to embrace statues covered with snow, using every means of inuring himself to hardship" (*Lives*, 6.23). Thus, the ancient Cynic ideology was closely associated with rigorously training oneself in mind and body, in order to endure the hardest conditions, which a life in fearless accordance with nature would surely encounter. Without the recognition of the necessity of *askesis*, the philosopher is wont to fall into "some disturbing and disheartening reflections how he from no compulsion had entered upon a toilsome and strange mode of life." Nietzsche himself recognized the value of such Cynic training in the context of his own attempt at forging a philosophy of the future. "A mode of thought that prescribes laws for the future, for the sake of the future, is harsh and tyrannical towards itself and all things of the present" (KSA 11, 37[14], 589). And famously in the epilogue to the *Twilight of the Idols*, he says, "This new law-table do I put over you, O my brothers: Become hard!" (TI Epilogue; cf. Z III 12 §29). *Askesis*, then, serves as a brace against the ravages of a life without the comforting, yet at the same time burdensome, affects of common society. Like the mouse of Theophrastus's account, unafraid of the dark, frail as it may in reality be, the philosopher must appropriate a similar bravery in the face of the chaos of his acknowledged reality.

That tiny mouse, which Diogenes admired upon his initiation into the philosophical way of life, represents for Nietzsche true Cynic virtue, both because of the simplicity with which it attains satisfaction and the bravery with which it adapts itself to adverse circumstances. As Diogenes Laertius records, "On being asked what he gained from philosophy, he replied, 'This at least, if nothing else—to be prepared for every fortune'"(*Lives*, 6.63). Free from worries concerning ephemeral material possessions, creature comforts, and the acquisition of wealth, Diogenes and Nietzsche each find life most happy when it is most free and most closely tied to the earth. But because they share the common acknowledgement that nature itself is hard, tragic and cruel, they each realize that the freedom comes at the price of a tyrannical *askesis*, "to oneself and all things of the present." *Askesis*, then, is the means and the "absence of needs" is the desired end. Reflecting this view in a hilarious poem in his unpublished writings, Nietzsche, through the voice of Diogenes, says:

*Aus der Tonne des Diogenes:*

*"Nothdurft ist wohlfeil, Glück ist ohne Pries*
*Drum sitz' ich statt auf Gold auf meinem Steiß".*

From Diogenes' Tub:

"Happiness is priceless and the call of nature a slump
That's why, instead of on gold, I sit on my rump."[9]

## Ancient and Modern Philosophers

Another aspect of Nietzsche's reference to the "first night of Diogenes" is his appreciation of Diogenes as a philosopher whose thought has direct consequences for the way one should live. While it is uncertain whether he wrote anything,[10] it is clear from the ancient testimonies that Diogenes' popular influence stems from his charismatic character and the ideals he embodied by means of his unruly, shameless manner. This is a mark of sincerity for Nietzsche; Diogenes was a genuine philosopher because he *lived* what he believed. He tested his beliefs in action. This sentiment is echoed in the earlier quotation about the "first night of Diogenes," where the "few philosophical vegetarians" have accomplished more for humanity than all of these more recent academicians *precisely because* they have the courage to demonstrate their philosophy by the very example of their lives. The Cynic musters the courage to seek an entirely different lifestyle and demonstrate it by his own example; thus, by Nietzsche's reckoning, he will *not* come to nothing. Indeed, it is clear that Nietzsche considers Diogenes to be an example of the ancient philosopher as practicing sage in a comment on modern German philosophy. In a disjointed notebook entry from the winter of 1873, he writes:

> What effect has philosophy today exerted on *philosophers*?—They live just like all other scholars, even like politicians. They are not distinguished by any set of customs. They live for money. The five thinkers of the *Augsburger Allgemeine*. Just look at the lives of their highest specimens, Kant and Schopenhauer—are those the lives of wise men? It remains scholarship: they relate to their work as do performers, hence in Schopenhauer's case the desire for success. It is *comfortable* to be a philosopher: for no one makes demands of them. The first night of Diogenes. Socrates would demand that one bring philosophy back down to the level of human beings; either there is no popular philosophy, or only a very bad popular philosophy. What noticeable effect has philosophy had among the disciples of the philosophers, I mean edu-

cated peoples? We lack the best matter for conversation, a more refined ethics. *Rameau's Nephew*. (KSA 7, 30[18], 739)

The implicit contrast here is drawn between Diogenes' willingness to be the living example of the ideas he teaches, even though this means the hard life of *askesis*, and the merely academic philosophy whose representatives are Schopenhauer and Kant. It contrasts the academy with the idea of a conversion to a philosophical way of living, one in which thinking makes demands and has consequences for the thinker.

Noticeably, the mention of the "first night of Diogenes" is given without elaboration. It appears to be Nietzsche's shorthand, reminding him to draw the contrast out more thoroughly somewhere else, as though to insert this story into the larger context of comparing ancient and modern philosophers. The reference to *Rameau's Nephew* appears to be the same sort of reminder. In Diderot's Cynic masterpiece, the main character is just this sort of non-philosophical yet highly-cultivated man, who spends the majority of the book recounting his adventures, giving Cynical approbations, and generally acting the part of a modern French Diogenes. At one point of the work, during a debate concerning the proper education of a particular youth, the protagonist explains what the effects would be of ignoring Cynic principles. "I am sure that if I just let the little brute go his own way and told him nothing, he would want to be expensively dressed, eat sumptuously, be popular with men and loved by women, in fact to gather round all the pleasures of life."[11] In short, he would take on bourgeois airs, a desire for comfort, and a lust for success not unlike that which he ascribes to Schopenhauer. While hard evidence is beyond our reach, Nietzsche may well have had just this interpretation in mind. In any event, the allusions to "the first night of Diogenes" and *Rameau's Nephew* only make sense given the aforementioned connection of Cynicism to Nietzsche's conception of the ancient sage.

Even before his departure from Basel, Nietzsche had little but contempt for academic philosophers, who, in his mind, had detached themselves from the subjects which ought to have been their concern.[12] They relate to their work as performers do. Diogenes, on the other hand, like Heraclitus, Pythagoras, and Socrates before him, was respected as much for the philosophical *character* he embodied as the actual doctrines he may have held. It is just the opposite with such moderns as Kant, whose character, for Nietzsche, represents little more than a professional scholar—or worse yet, as he indicates, a politician. Kant's intellectual career was not intended to serve as a model of the best life for a wise man, by Nietzsche's standards, and this is symptomatic of the declining state

of German society that held him in esteem. On the other hand, his ethics, which belabor an unrealistically absolutist moral world order, and his epistemology, which denies the human being his comforting illusions of knowing things in themselves, splits apart the worlds of the things-in-themselves and that of the human understanding. Put baldly, it is no aid to the development of the wise man's soul. For Nietzsche, one cannot live a Kantian philosophy, and this by itself is evidence of its corruption—or, worse yet, of its inconsequentiality. Diogenes, too, would likely have agreed with these sentiments. "Those who say admirable things but fail to do them, he compared to a harp; for the harp, like them, he said, has neither hearing nor perception" (*Lives*, 6.64). Contrasting the two philosopher types again, Nietzsche says:

> If such thinkers are dangerous, it is clear why our university thinkers are not dangerous; for their thoughts bloom as peacefully in the shade of tradition "as ever a tree bore its apples." They do not frighten; they carry away no gates of Gaza; and to all their little contemplations one can make the answer of Diogenes when a certain philosopher was praised: "What great result has he to show, who has so long practiced philosophy and yet has hurt nobody?" Yes, university philosophy should have [engraved] upon its monument, "It has hurt nobody." But this is the praise one would rather give an old woman than to a goddess of truth! (UM III §8)

The contrast between ancient and modern philosophers is drawn most clearly here. Modern German universities hurt no one. They have a sense of shame, a sense of not wanting to offend, of polity, of decency. No one objects to the lives of these respectable scholars. It is just the opposite with Diogenes, and for that matter, with Nietzsche. The Cynics, or literally in the Greek, the dogs or *kunoi* [κύνοι], are so called because of their self-professed shamelessness. As for Diogenes, "at a feast certain people kept throwing bones to him as they would have done to a dog. Thereupon he played a dog's trick and urinated upon them" (*Lives*, 6.64). While a bit less drastic, Nietzsche acknowledged the virtue, "*What is the guarantee of attained freedom?* To be no longer ashamed of oneself" (GS §275). Besides their shamelessness, both men recognize themselves as potentially harmful, and this is another important theme from the quotation above. As for Nietzsche, delightfully ruminating on a recent review made by Josef Victor Widmann, he quotes the following: "The stocks of *dynamite* used in the building of the Gotthard Tunnel were marked with a black flag, indicating mortal danger. Exclusively in this sense do we speak of the new book by the philosopher Nietzsche as a dangerous

book."[13] And famously, in *Ecce Homo* he writes, "I am no man, I am dynamite" (EH Why I am a Destiny §1). As for Diogenes, he offends someone in nearly every anecdote attributed to him. For both, bold shamelessness and the willingness to induce offense for the sake of tearing down dead values are considered virtues. Like Nietzsche, Diogenes saw his way of life as potentially dangerous and offensive to those "without his ears." These are virtues absent in the modern academic institutions of Nietzsche's time, which is itself a mark of their characteristic inconsequentiality to the practicing sage.

By way of conclusion, then, we have understood what many of the ideas loaded into Nietzsche's phrase "the first night of Diogenes" were intended to portray. We can only speculate as to *why* Nietzsche never included this reference in his published writings, since he did, on numerous occasions, mention the influence of Diogenes and of Cynicism in general. In addition, the ideals, for which this phrase stands as a reminder, were hardly uncommon Nietzschean themes. But beyond simply guessing at his reasons, and while bracketing the debate over the status of the unpublished works, we must acknowledge here another significant aspect of Nietzsche's relationship to Cynicism, supplementing what Niehues-Pröbsting has already demonstrated. "The first night of Diogenes" represents for Nietzsche the moment at which the Cynic, who is admired for his shamelessness and as the living embodiment of his own ideology, is first enlightened to his philosophical calling, a calling which involves the hard life of *askesis* taken up for the sake of a freedom from all the coarser desires and nuisances of everyday living, a freedom derived from the simple life according to nature. In one final text, unpublished in his lifetime, Nietzsche says, in his letter to Georg Brandes of November 20 1888, "I have now told my own story with a cynicism that will make history. The book is called *Ecce Homo*."[14]

## Notes

[1] Heinrich Niehues-Pröbsting, *Der Kynismus des Diogenes und der Begriff des Zynismus* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1979), 250-78; and "The Modern Reception of Cynicism: Diogenes in the Enlightenment," in R. Bracht Branham and Marie-Odile Goulet-Cazé (eds), *The Cynics: The Cynic Movement in Antiquity and Its Legacy* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: U of California P, 1996), 329-65.

[2] For example: "Antisthenes says: it is kingly to tolerate malicious judgments about good actions" (KSA 7, 23[38], 556). This is the only content this notebook entry contains; there is no context whatsoever.

[3] In a letter to Nietzsche from Carl von Gersdorff on May 29 1874, we find the following remark: "[Hans] Richter was a more superficial [Peter] Gast: for then in another day he had vanished. He went like a musical Diogenes through Germany in order to visit men and virtuosos, voices and violins, gods and heroes, or such as he would like to become" (*Kritische Gesamtausgabe: Briefwechsel*, 2.4, 477).

[4] There is also evidence regarding their influence on Nietzsche's stylistic development in his lectures on *Die philosophische Litteratur* from 1874-1875. Here the Cynics are examined in the context of their literary developments in Satire and their *nekuia* [νέκυια] or conversations with the dead. While this is a worthwhile subject to examine in detail, space does not permit it here.

[5] Plutarch, *Moralia* 77-78; cited from Plutarch, *Moralia in 16 volumes*, ed. and trans. Frank Cole Babbitt, vol. 1 (London: William Heinemann, 1927), 415-17.

[6] I am thinking specifically here about what Niehues-Pröbsting says regarding the Cynic's boldness in confronting the world and the Cynic way of life as a remedy against pessimism. See Branham and Goulet-Cazé, *The Cynics*, 356-58.

[7] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*, trans. Robert Drew Hicks (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1925), 6.22. This work will henceforth be referred to as *Lives*. Diogenes Laertius offers yet another possible account of the way by which Diogenes came to be a philosopher. "When some one reproached him with his exile, his reply was, "Nay, it was through that, you miserable fellow, that I came to be a philosopher" (*Lives*, 6.49). Nietzsche does not mention this version.

[8] Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, *Der einsame Nietzsche* (Leipzig: A. Kröner, 1925), 81.

[9] KSA 9, 19[5], 675. My translation here attempts to maintain the spirit of the lyric more than exacting literal accuracy.

[10] There is no solid consensus on this point in the ancient testimonies. Sosicrates in the first book of his *Successions*, and Satyrus in the fourth book of his *Lives*, allege that Diogenes wrote nothing. Sotion in his seventh book declares that only some of what Diogenes Laertius attributes to him in his *Lives* is authentic (see *Lives*, 6.80).

[11] Denis Diderot, *Rameau's Nephew*, trans. by Leonard Tancock (London: Clays, 1966), 113. From the meager context given, it is impossible to know for sure precisely which passages of this work Nietzsche had in mind here.

[12] For instance, in a letter to Franz Overbeck of dated Summer 1886, Nietzsche writes: "In this university atmosphere, even the best people deteriorate" (KSB 7, 208) (see *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*, ed. Christopher Middleton (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1969), 256). [In his draft of this letter, Nietzsche had expressed his dislike for Germany—"Life in Germany is quite unbearable" —and added: "My contempt for humanity grows each time there in dangerous proportions, as soon as I come into contact with 'cultivated people'" (KSA 7, 204); Ed.]

[13] Nietzsche's letter to Malwida von Meysenburg of 24 September 1886 (KSB 7, 258), citing Widmann's review "Nietzsche's gefährliches Buch," *Der Bund* [Berne], volume 37, nos 256-57, 16-17 September 1886.

[14] KSB 8, 482; *Collected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche*, 326.

# Nietzsche's Stoicism: The Depths Are Inside

*R. O. Elveton*

*For as wood is the material of the carpenter, bronze that of the statuary, just so each man's life is the subject-matter of the art of living. (Epictetus)*

IN EXPLICITLY REFERRING to his philosophy as *eine Kunst des Lebens*, Nietzsche aligns himself with the great Hellenistic tradition of Stoicism. Of course, there are crucial differences. Nietzsche will offer a view of "nature" that is violently opposed to traditional Stoic doctrine. He will offer a very different estimation of the value of suffering. Finally, Nietzsche will adopt and transform one of the most significant consequences emerging from his genealogy of morality.[1] Nietzsche uncovers an "interiority" that will lead him to rewrite the Stoic formula of "live according to nature" into the new language of the will to power.

## Nietzsche and Epictetus

Before inquiring into Nietzsche's transformation of Stoicism, let us note some important affinities between Nietzsche and Stoic thought. In doing so, we will focus our attention on Nietzsche's relationship to Epictetus for three reasons. First, there is evidence that Nietzsche read Epictetus with some care.[2] Second, Epictetus's cosmology and view of human reason provide clear statements of a theory of the human will and its relationship to the world that Nietzsche explicitly criticizes. Finally, Epictetus's view of suffering offers a decisive point of contrast to the internalization of the human will identified in Nietzsche's genealogical account of guilt, suffering, and bad conscience.

Determining Nietzsche's relationship to the classical tradition is not simply a matter of identifying classical sources which either preoccupied him or otherwise exercised a strong influence on his thought. As Nietzsche's first major published work, *The Birth of Tragedy,* shows, he was not only concerned to develop a deeper, more adequate, and more

encompassing view of classical Greek culture, but also to provide evidence that the Greek world itself contained seeds of the subsequent spiritual decline marked out by the history of the Platonic/Christian traditions of the modern age. That Nietzsche will find positive traces of a "nobility" of will in Stoic thought reflects his view that the world of Greece and Rome contains a provocative measure of spiritual luminosity. However, as we shall also see, we can readily identify Stoicism's view of inwardness as an early stage of the moral phase of Nietzsche's genealogy that is subsequently transformed by the ascetic ideal and the Christian experience of moral suffering. Nietzsche is perhaps more profoundly interested in developing an account of the "effects" of the classical tradition (in the spirit, perhaps, of Gadamer's *Wirkungsgeschichte*) than he is in simply extolling the value of the classical world. For Nietzsche, Stoic thought is suggestive of spiritual strength, but is also superficial, with fateful consequences.

In spite of his rejection of the metaphysical pretensions of the Stoics, Nietzsche is in agreement with several of the most decisive elements of Stoic philosophy. They are united in stressing that ideas have consequences for life. While such a view can be traced back to the pre-Socratics and Socrates, it is a constant feature of such Stoic texts as Epictetus's *Discourses*. Virtually every page of the *Discourses* exposes one idea or another to the test of whether it aids or weakens the soul's self-mastery.

> If indeed one had to be deceived into learning that among things external and independent of our free choice none concerns us, I, for my part, should consent to a deception which would result in my living thereafter serenely and without turmoil [...].[3]

> The falseness of a judgment is for us not necessarily an objection to a judgment [...]. The question is to what extent it is life-promoting, life-preserving [...]. (BGE §4)

It is perhaps only a slight exaggeration to suggest that virtually every page of Nietzsche's work exercises a similar test. Both Nietzsche and Epictetus move quickly, even aphoristically, from one thought to another, exploring their consequences from the perspective of some criterion of "self-mastery." More substantively, both Nietzsche and Epictetus preach a nobility of the individual soul that involves harshness toward oneself,[4] self-discipline, self-honesty, and a fearless recognition of the situatedness of human existence.

The resulting centrality of spiritual independence—as reflected in the following passage from Epictetus: "'Yes, but my nose is running.' What

have you hands for, then, slave? Is it not that you can wipe your nose?" (Discourses, 47)—is therefore a persistent theme for both. There are scattered references to Epictetus and Stoicism throughout Nietzsche's published works. There is also clear evidence in the *Nachlass* that Nietzsche took up a rather serious reading of Epictetus in 1881. And in one of his direct references to stoicism, he aligns the self-discipline of the stoic with his "virtue" of honesty:

> Honesty, supposing that this is our virtue from which we cannot get away, we free spirits—well, let us work on it with all our malice and love and not weary of "perfecting" ourselves in *our* virtue, the only one left us. [...] And if our honesty should nevertheless grow weary one day and sigh and stretch its limbs and find us too hard, and would like to have things better, easier, tenderer, like an agreeable vice—let us remain *hard*, we last Stoics! (BGE §227)

Finally, both Epictetus and Nietzsche view this goal of radical independence and self-mastery as being tinged with a profound fatalism. The Stoic doctrine of *amor fati* is well-known: "But [...] things about us being as they are and as their nature is, we may, for our own part, keep our wills in harmony with what happens" (Discourses, 93). Nietzsche's doctrine of the eternal recurrence, perhaps the most pointed expression of his conception of the situatedness of human existence, is easily read as a statement of his fatalism (see BGE §56 and §232).

## Genealogy: Intention, Guilt, and Inwardness

The Stoic distinction between what is mine and within my power, and what is external to me and beyond my power, reflects a metaphysics of both nature and self Nietzsche severely criticizes. For Epictetus, nature is to be understood as a purposefully designed rational *cosmos.* Correspondingly, the self is to be understood as a rational will that is able to comprehend the cosmos and master itself in suspending all impulses to interfere with the natural order. Self and World form an opposition that is bridged in the philosophical comprehension of the rational soul's deeper unity with the justice and rationality of nature.

It is the rationality of this will and cosmos that Nietzsche directly attacks. The Platonic myth of a rationally designed cosmos clearly survives in Epictetus's repeated appeals to the teleology discoverable in nature. This metaphysical view is dismissed by Nietzsche as one of the Christian/Platonic West's central philosophical prejudices. It is countered by

Nietzsche's new "metaphysics" of the will to power. As a first step in departing from the Stoic dictum, "live according to nature," he asks:

> "According to nature" you want to *live*? O you noble Stoics, what deceptive words these are! Imagine a being like nature, wasteful beyond measure, indifferent beyond measure, without purposes and consideration [...]—how *could* you live according to this indifference? [...] In truth, the matter is altogether different: while you pretend rapturously to read the canon of your law in nature, you want something opposite [...]. Your pride wants to impose your morality, your ideal, on nature [...]. (BGE §9)

Nietzsche is equally critical of the notion of "self" invoked by the Stoic. Since this is a topic to which we shall return, it will suffice here to note the radical critique Nietzsche articulates against the very conception of an "isolated," "atomistic" soul, belief in which is significantly aided by our being misled by the linguistic need for a grammatical subject.[5]

Nietzsche will largely surrender the Stoic's self/world formula. If we take his metaphysics of the will to power as an unequivocal ontology, then Nietzsche's nature becomes the will to power and the "self" is only a particular manifestation of this "will." Even so, as we shall now see, Nietzsche's notion of the will takes on a distinctively non-Stoic dimension by eliminating the oppositional nature of this relationship.

The broad outlines of Nietzsche's genealogy of morals are well-known and need not be repeated here. Less well-known, perhaps, are the "creative" moments identified by this genealogy. The slave revolt in morality is not only responsible for the lack of spiritual depth in modern Christian/democratic culture, it is also responsible for the invention of a new "self" which can serve as a first step in leading a few "beyond good and evil."

The fundamental Stoic opposition between what is mine (my will and what falls under its direct control) and not-mine reduces the self in a one-dimensional and artificial way. It is my attitude, my inner composure, that is reflective of my individual power. From this perspective, my actions in the world elude me and are not a significant part of me. What I am is not so much what I do, but my rational attitude toward what I do, and my rational attitude toward what is done to and what happens to me. While Nietzsche does not offer a specific genealogical characterization of this feature of the Stoic will, it can be easily identified as an early phase of the spiritually reactive movement of the weak against the strong that constitutes the second stage in Nietzsche's genealogy, the moral period. In place of an aristocratic doing, the Stoic celebrates an inner dis-

tancing from events that creates a more "inward" aristocratic virtue. Not having inherited the Christian categories of evil and sin, the Stoic opts for an aloof and solitary purity of heart that is proof against the taint of the worldly course of events.

It is the historically later view of the moral dimension of "intention" that, in Nietzsche's view, clearly plays a decisive role in the moral stage of the genealogy of morality:

> In the last ten thousand years, however, one has reached the point, step by step, in a few large regions on the earth, where it is no longer the consequences but the origin of an action that one allows to decide its value. On the whole, this is a great event which involves a considerable refinement of vision and standards; it is the unconscious aftereffect of the rule of aristocratic values and the faith in "descent"—the sign of a period that one may call *moral* in the narrower sense. [...] Surely, a reversal achieved only after long struggles and vacillations. To be sure, a calamitous new superstition, an odd narrowness of interpretation, thus became dominant: the origin of an action was interpreted in the most definite sense as origin in an *intention* [...]. (BGE §32)

This movement is paralleled in *On the Genealogy of Morals* with a complementary development: "All instincts that do not discharge themselves outwardly *turn inward*—this is what I call the *internalization* of man: thus it was that man first developed what was later called his 'soul'" (GM II §16).

The genealogical movement involving intentionality and internalization is a fateful one because it is accompanied by a yet further development. In place of the earlier, one-dimensional Stoic purity of will, this "new superstition" becomes affiliated with the genealogical factor of "sinfulness."[6] It was the creature of guilt

> who had to turn himself into an adventure, a torture chamber, an uncertain and dangerous wilderness—this fool, this yearning and desperate prisoner became the inventor of the "bad conscience." But thus began the gravest and uncanniest illness, from which humanity has not yet recovered, man's suffering *of man, of himself*—the result of a forcible sundering from his animal past, as it were a leap and plunge into new surroundings and conditions of existence [...]. Let us add at once that, on the other hand, the existence on earth of an animal soul turned against itself, taking sides against itself, was something so new, profound, unheard of, enigmatic, contradictory, *and pregnant with a future* that the aspect of the earth was essentially altered. (GM II §16)

What Nietzsche refers to as an earlier "inner world," "originally as thin as if it were stretched between two membranes, expanded and extended it-

self, acquired depth, breadth and height, in the same measure as outward discharge was *inhibited*." Stoic inwardness is transformed by this newly invented depth into an all encompassing inwardness which poses a new task to a new form of "self."

There is a further complexity as well. One of Nietzsche's central problems in *On the Genealogy of Morals* concerns the meaning of the "ascetic ideal." How, Nietzsche asks, it is possible for the will, essentially a life-affirming force, to become deflected back upon itself in a radically life-threatening way? His answer is that the will would rather will its own negation than not will at all. This is perhaps less paradoxical and self-contradictory than it at first appears. A will that wills its own negation is arguably an incoherent will. But a will that must discharge its energy and is prevented from doing so may indeed be self-destructive, but it is not obviously incoherent.

For our purposes, it is less important to decide whether Nietzsche's genealogy witnesses to a series of purely contingent historical events or uncovers an underground metaphysical existence of the "will." What is important is that Nietzsche draws upon this newly emergent genealogical factor as a prelude to the stage of existence which projects "beyond morality." I will assume, then, as Nietzsche suggests, that the new superstition of moral intentionality (the birth of deontic ethics), together with the invention of an inner world of sinfulness measured by the consciousness of guilt, are indeed products of a chain of events that follow upon the initial emergence of the stage of morality. The most important consequence of this process is the elimination of the one-dimensional opposition between what is mine and what is not-mine, and a new conception of the will as boundless, "ready for every venture, […] with fore- and back-souls into whose ultimate intentions nobody can look so easily, with fore- and backgrounds which no foot is likely to explore to the end" (BGE §44).

## No "Doer" Behind the "Doing"

Intentionality and guilt have exercised a long-term process of discipline. It is, Nietzsche speculates, perhaps necessary that "there should be obedience over a long period of time" in order to produce something "that makes life worth living." What results is a "European spirit […] trained to strength, ruthless curiosity, and subtle mobility" (BGE §188). Above all, this new spirit is blessed with the art of interpretation.

It is perhaps no accident that Kant's moral theory and its focus upon the unconditional respect of the moral will for the moral law should also

stress the ever-present "dear self." Although it is the moral intent (maxim) that determines the moral worth of any act, every real act of willing is surrounded by the empirical swirl of desire. Actual motivations inevitably involve more than Kant's pure moral consciousness. Although Nietzsche does not explicitly refer to this feature of Kantian theory, it is precisely this kind of self-suspicion that Nietzsche now wishes to transform into a new microscopy of the self.[7] We are to eliminate a focus on conscious intentionality and turn our spiritual gaze upon the non-intentional.

> But today—shouldn't we have reached the necessity of once more resolving on a reversal and fundamental shift in values, owing to another self-examination of man, another growth in profundity? [...] After all, today at least we immoralists have the suspicion that the decisive value of an action lies precisely in what is *unintentional* in it, while everything about it that is intentional, everything about it that can be seen, known, 'conscious,' still belongs to its surface and skin—which, like every skin, betrays something but *conceals* even more. In short, we believe that the intention is merely a sign and symptom that still requires interpretation—moreover, a sign that means too much and therefore, taken by itself alone, almost nothing. (BGE §32)

The Stoic's self-transparency is overturned and replaced with a self-suspicion now radically transformed into an impassioned self-interpretation and self-experimentation. There is no clearly defined "doer" hidden beneath this skin of non-intentionality: "There is no 'being' behind doing, effecting, becoming; the 'doer' is merely a fiction added to the deed—the deed is everything" (GM I §13).

What is the nature of the boundless text that this transformed self-suspicion is called upon to interpret? It is the text which, in order to be lived, must be translated back into nature: the human will as will to power:

> To translate man back into nature; to become master over the many vain and overly enthusiastic interpretations and connotations that have been so far scrawled and painted over that eternal basic text of *homo natura*; to see to it that man henceforth stands before man [...] with intrepid Oedipus eyes and sealed Odysseus ears, deaf to the siren songs of old metaphysical bird catchers who have been piping at him all too long, "you are more, you are higher, you are of a different origin!" (BGE §230)

The effect of this "translation" is a profoundly complex one. On the one hand, Nietzsche's rejection of traditional soul-atomism, his elimination

of any doer behind the doing, would appear to dispense entirely with anything like a self. If to translate humanity back into nature is to translate humanity into a blindly striving nature, is this not to create a humanity that consists of a purely blind "doing" that is, indeed, less a doing than a mere happening? On the other hand, Nietzsche repeatedly characterizes his effort to overcome the overt nihilism of the ascetic ideal as the effort to transform the "deeper, more inward" (GM III §28) spirit achieved by the ascetic's suffering, not into something simply "outward," but into a new kind of inwardness. It is the inwardness of the ethical/Christian stage that allows Nietzsche to speak of its serving as a means for "the creation of more favorable conditions for being here and being man" (GM III §13).

## The Value of Suffering

We have now seen Nietzsche's genealogical account in sufficient detail to directly address his rejection of the Stoic account of suffering. In reflecting on various analyses of suffering in Western thought, Nicolas Berdyaev notes the following:

> The problem of suffering and escape has always been central for religious and philosophical ethics. In the Western pre-Christian world the Stoics are particularly interesting in this respect. Stoicism is the doctrine of self-salvation and of the attainment of peace or "apathy." Stoic morality testifies to a very high level reached by man's moral consciousness, but in the last resort it is a decadent and pessimistic morality of despair, which sees no meaning in life; it is inspired by the fear of suffering. One must lose sensitiveness to suffering and become indifferent—that is the only way out.[8]

Berdyaev continues by contrasting a "redeeming" suffering that leads to life, and an "evil" suffering that leads to death. He concludes with the following reference to Nietzsche: "All the sufferings sent to man [...] may serve to purify, raise and regenerate him. But suffering may finally crush man, destroy his vitality and make him feel that life has no meaning whatever. Nietzsche says that it is not so much the suffering as the senselessness of it that is unendurable."

Even before his analysis of the ascetic ideal in *The Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche took issue with the Stoic account of suffering. In two companion notes from the fall of 1881, Nietzsche contrasts his view of heroism with Stoicism:

> *Heroism* is the strength to suffer pain and *to add to it.*
>
> *Stoicism's* calculated endurance is a symptom of injured strength; one measures out one's inactivity to tip the scales against pain—a lack of heroism that always struggles against (and does not simply suffer) one who "freely seeks out" pain. (KSA 9, 12[140, 141], 600)

A later note spells out Nietzsche's criticism of Stoic doctrine in detail:

> I believe that we do not understand Stoicism for what it really is. Its essential feature as an attitude of the soul—which is what it originally was before being taken over by philosophy—is its comportment toward pain and representations of the unpleasant: an intensification of a certain *heaviness* and *weariness* to the utmost degree in order to weaken the experience of pain. Its basic motifs are *paralysis* and *coldness*; hence a form of anesthesia. The principal aim of Stoic edification is to eliminate any *inclination to excitement*, continually to lessen the number of things that might offer enticement, to awaken distaste for and to belittle the value of most things that offer stimulation, to hate excitement as an enemy; indeed, to hate the passions themselves as if they were a form of disease or something entirely unworthy; for they are the hallmark of every despicable and painful manifestation of suffering. *In summa*: *turning oneself into stone* as a weapon against suffering and in the future conferring all worthy names of divine-like virtues upon a statue. What significance can be attached to embracing a statue in the wintertime if one has become entirely deadened against the cold? What significance can be attached to one statue embracing another? If a Stoic attains the character he seeks—*for the most part he already possesses this character* and therefore chooses *this* philosophy—the loss of feeling reached is the result of the *pressure of a tourniquet.* I am very antipathetic to this line of thought. It undervalues the value of *pain* (it is as useful and necessary as pleasure), the value of stimulation and suffering. It is finally compelled to say: everything that happens is acceptable to me; nothing is to be different. There are *no needs over which it triumphs* because it has killed the passion for needs. All of this is expressed in religious terms as a complete acceptance of God's actions (for example, Epictetus). (KSA 9, 15[55], 652-53)

Nietzsche's acceptance of a "redeeming" suffering reflects his attempt to retain the intensified inwardness of the ascetic ideal and to resituate it and transform it into a view of the self as incomplete, transitory, and self-creative. It is no longer a matter of developing an enduring personal character and a self-possessed "second nature," but of an active struggle to surmount the multiplicity and strength of frequently (or inevitably) conflicting desires and internal forces. It is no longer the mastery of self-

control or the ideal of a measured endurance that is the aim of the will to power, but that of a perpetually developing self-creativity whose model is the attainment and shattering of creatively formed complexes and delimitations of the world as will. For Nietzsche, suffering and internal rupture become the measure of self-attainment, not the creation of a fixed boundary between a clearly identifiable "mine" and "not-mine."

Indeed, one way to understand this new inwardness (Nietzsche's "internalization of man") is to construe it precisely as an overturning of the Stoic mine/not-mine formula. One result would clearly be the questioning of the very concept of self-control so central to Stoic philosophy. It would be a mistake to read Nietzsche as offering a new version of an ethics of self-control. The depths confronting the will are indeed "inside," for Nietzsche's will is boundless. Yet it is the "world" that is now inside as well: "The world viewed from the inside, the world defined and determined according to its 'intelligible character'—it would be 'will to power' and nothing else" (BGE §36). What is mine and not-mine has no hold on a Nietzschean will. I am not simply to oppose my self to nor withhold my self from the world that confronts me, but am to accept it as a world that profoundly extends into my own "depths," challenging me to rethink and reinterpret my "interior" life.

The virtue that I am now called upon to exercise is the virtue of "interpretation," of creatively shaping my "world," of self-experimentation,[9] of exercising certain forms of self-limitation, not in order to uncover any underlying and invariable "ego" or "will," but in order creatively to expand and re-form to my will. Nietzsche's metaphysics of the will to power is perhaps best understood, not as a traditional metaphysics that attempts to determine the essential characteristics of the being of things and the nature of consciousness, but as an effort to erase a distinction whose usefulness has now run its course. If everything is will to power, if all becoming is metaphysically innocent and eludes traditional philosophical and religious categories, then I can regain my "true" will only by embracing the vast non-intentional multiplicity and indefiniteness "within" me.

We must, of course, address a reasonable question. If Nietzsche is referring to a new "reversal," might not this reversal consist of a reversal of the interiority created by morality and the ascetic ideal? And would this not be a new form of "exteriority"? If hitherto the will has been obstructed, would not the removal of these obstructions introduce a new era of an "unobstructed will," one which is free to direct itself toward new "exteriorizations"? It is not difficult at this point to interpret what Heidegger and others in Germany during the period between the two

world wars thought to be their historical destiny as just such a Germanic "will to power," an "externalization" of the will to power understood historically, collectively and culturally.[10]

Here we must be cautious. The celebration of power and its alignment with a "folk-community" and the German nation, characteristic of the period in Germany prior to the First World War through the Third Reich, would appear to be quite antithetical to Nietzsche's mature writings. A will to endure suffering and death sounds Nietzschean, but to endure suffering and death for the sake of race and soil appears to be opposed to Nietzsche's reading of the genealogy of morality. Nietzsche's genealogy holds most, if not all, forms of community suspect. Moreover, there are ample passages in which Nietzsche is critical of the "blood and soil" nationalism epitomized by the Third Reich.

We referred above to Nietzsche's conception of a "European spirit [...] trained to strength, ruthless curiosity, and subtle mobility." In Part 8 of *Beyond Good and Evil*, "Peoples and Fatherlands," Nietzsche returns to the theme of "we 'good Europeans,'" a theme which is sharply distinguished from the German spirit. In noting that the democratization of Europe has produced the most ordinary and mediocre men, Nietzsche calls attention to the fact that it has also provided the breeding-ground for exceptional men. "I meant to say: the democratization of Europe is at the same time an involuntary arrangement for the cultivation of tyrants—taking that word in every sense, including the most spiritual" (BGE §242). It is possible to construe this passage as opening the door to a form of political tyranny. Yet the outcome of Nietzsche's genealogical analysis suggests that these "good Europeans" will see beyond the "atavistic attacks of fatherlandishness and soil addiction" (BGE §241). The implication is that tyranny, understood in the "most spiritual" sense, is not the tyranny of a political leader operating within the framework of community and fatherland, but the self-tyranny of the emerging free soul who has succeeded in transforming the inwardness born of suffering into a new form of self-mastery. The contrast between subtler and deeper forms of the will to power and its more crude manifestations mirrors the importance of the genealogy of interiority:

> And if a few individuals of such noble descent are inclined through lofty spirituality to prefer a more withdrawn and contemplative life and reserve for themselves only the most subtle type of rule (over selected disciples or brothers in some order), then religion can even be used as a means for obtaining peace from the noise and exertion of *cruder* forms of government, and purity from the *necessary* dirt of all politics. (BGE §61)

Historical situatedness for Nietzsche is less inclusive of the "fatherland" than it is of the spiritual decline of the West and the need to assert the individual self over and against community and society. This yields a priority to Nietzsche's emphasis upon the genealogical consequences of internalization. Although Nietzsche's relationship to Stoicism has now grown somewhat distant, it is still the Stoic tradition of self-mastery, rather than mastery over others, that provides the context within which Nietzsche's criticism of the classical tradition works out the logic of its genealogical analysis.

## Notes

[1] Since Nietzsche's genealogy is central to my analysis, I will largely focus my discussion on two of Nietzsche's later and most overtly genealogical texts, *Beyond Good and Evil* and *On the Genealogy of Morals.*

[2] I am greatly indebted to Thomas Brobjer's forthcoming study, "Nietzsche's Reading of Epictetus," for this information.

[3] Epictetus, *The Discourses as Reported by Arrian: Books I-II* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1998), 35. Hereafter cited as Discourses with a page reference.

[4] "Perhaps hardness and cunning furnish more favorable conditions for the origin of the strong, independent spirit and philosopher than that gentle, fine, conciliatory good-naturedness and art of taking things lightly which people prize, and prize rightly, in a scholar" (BGE §39).

[5] "Is it not permitted to be a bit ironical about the subject no less than the predicate and object? Shouldn't philosophers be permitted to rise above faith in grammar?" (BGE §34).

[6] "This man of the bad conscience has seized upon the presupposition of religion so as to drive his self-torture to its most gruesome pitch of severity and rigor" (GM II §22).

[7] Nietzsche associates "microscopic self-examination" with a "genuinely religious life" (BGE §58).

[8] Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Destiny of Man* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1954), 118.

[9] "One should not dodge one's tests, though they be the most dangerous game one could play and are tests taken in the end before no witness or judge but ourselves" (BGE §41).

[10] For a detailed study of the centrality of Nietzsche's thought for the formulation of the ideology of the Third Reich, an ideology partially formulated and shared to some extent by Heidegger, Jaspers, Thomas Mann, Scheler and others, see Domenico Losurdo, *Heidegger and the Ideology of War: Community Death and the West* (Amherst, NY: Humanities P, 2001).

# Section 3

# Nietzsche and the Platonic Tradition

# Nietzsche and Plato

*Laurence Lampert*

NIETZSCHE READ PLATO differently from the way we do, and I am persuaded he read him correctly. The chief difference in Nietzsche's reading follows from a distinction he made basic but that we scholars have not generally credited. As a report on Nietzsche's view of Plato, my contribution depends on that distinction, so I shall sketch it briefly. It is expressed most clearly toward the end of "We Scholars," the chapter in *Beyond Good and Evil* that distinguishes scholars from the philosopher. The long aphorisms of that chapter are a gathering argument, which peaks with aphorism 211 where two philosophers are named: Kant and Hegel, the glory of German philosophy. But Nietzsche uses those honored names to distinguish them from "genuine" philosophers. They are "philosophical laborers." Philosophical labor reaches that high, up to Kant and Hegel as its noble models. As great and rare as they are, they lack what characterizes the still more rare genuine philosopher. As philosophical laborers they remain within the already existing value-creations of a Christianized Platonism. Philosophical labor is "an immense and wonderful task in whose service every subtle pride, every tough will can certainly satisfy itself," but it is not the highest task.

The statement following the elevated description of the philosophical laborer is the most emphatic in the book, two lines of italics building toward a rhetorical peak. "*Genuine philosophers are commanders and legislators.*" Nietzsche's description of such commanding and legislating makes clear that it is no mere *self*-legislation; it has nothing to do with the modern notion of autonomy that counsels one to invent one's own values and character—a merely modern idea according to Nietzsche, the typically American fiction, he said, according to which all of us are free to make ourselves whatever we fancy (GS §356). Genuine philosophers say "Let it be thus!" This does not apply primarily to themselves, nor does it in any way mean that *nature* is somehow malleable to human will, for the statement continues: "They first determine the Where To? and the For What? of humanity." What genuine philosophers command in legis-

lating the Where To and the For What of humanity are the values human beings live by, values that horizon and house whole peoples.

Nietzsche highlights the difference between philosophical laborers and genuine philosophers through the temporal focus of their respective tasks. Philosophical laborers "overpower the past" whereas genuine philosophers create the human future, "everything that was and is serves them as means, as instrument, as hammer." The whole of the human past becomes serviceable as the means for hammering the human future into a desirable shape. "Their 'knowing' is *creating*, their creating is a giving of laws."

When Nietzsche states what a genuine philosopher is, he issues no invitations: nobody is told to do anything except understand a cardinal truth. The description of the genuine philosopher reports to scholars of philosophy an experience that is bound to remain unrepeatable to virtually all of us. It is not given in order to create a new aspiration in us, but to create a new recognition of what philosophy is in its highest reaches as both insight and deed.

This is my introductory point: to understand Plato as Nietzsche did it is necessary for us philosophical laborers—that is not an insult: who among us is a Kant or a Hegel?—to see Plato as a genuine philosopher who said to his times "we have to go that way," the simple words Nietzsche employed in the next aphorism to characterize the deeds of the philosopher.

So I should like us to take seriously, at least for a moment, what may not, at first sight, seem at all persuasive. Let me also add a second, hard-to-accept point about Nietzsche's Plato as a creator of values: he is one of those legislators of morality who afforded himself the right to lie, to lie morally for what he took to be the good of his people. Montaigne, who understood Plato the same way Nietzsche did, says that Plato played this game of noble lying for the good of society with his cards pretty much on the table.[1]

The study of *this* problem, the problem of morality as advocated by the greatest teachers of morality, is, Nietzsche said, "the great, *uncanny* problem which I have pursued farthest." There, in *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche says how he first began to think about this aspect of the creation of values: "A small and basically modest fact first gave me access to this problem: the so-called pious fraud [...]. Neither Manu nor Plato nor Confucius, nor the Jewish and Christian teachers, have ever doubted their *right* to lie" (TI Four Great Errors §5). In Nietzsche's view, philosophy traditionally and pervasively practiced pious fraud as part of its esotericism because it believed in the indispensability of the noble lie for

social order. Moral fictions were necessary to direct the fears and hopes of citizens into decent, public-spirited practices; *Platonic* moral fictions appealed to a permanent moral order and called in moral gods as agents of punishment and reward. Describing Plato's use of such beliefs, Montaigne said they were "as useful for persuading the common herd as they are ridiculous for persuading Plato himself."[2] "That's all over now," Nietzsche said, very simply, in describing the consequences of the greatest recent event, the death of God (GS §357). Noble lying is no longer viable among us, guided as we are by the virtue of *Redlichkeit* (honesty). What is necessary, however, is for us to recognize the pervasive place of pious fraud in our tradition—which also means in Plato.

Those are the two points of my introduction: that Nietzsche's Plato is the genuine philosopher, who said at the fountainhead of our whole civilization: We have to go that way, a way that sustains the fictions of a permanent moral order and of immortal souls to contemplate it and bear the punishment or reward meted out by the very gods for our behavior. Nietzsche is not indignant about these great facts of our history, nor is he morally outraged. As a philosopher he *sees* them, sees their consequences, and asks himself, "What is to be done now?"

This article focuses on *Beyond Good and Evil* and interprets the main aphorisms in which Nietzsche deals with Plato as our genuine philosopher. It focuses on a book because Nietzsche's books have a neglected quality: they are well thought-out assemblages of thoughts whose structure and order matter. They present in the orderly arrangement of individual aphorisms what Nietzsche, in his letter to Georg Brandes of 8 January 1888, called "the long logic of a completely determinate philosophical sensibility"; they are not "some mishmash of a hundred varied paradoxes and heterodoxes" (KSB 8, 228). I focus on *Beyond Good and Evil* because, next to *Zarathustra*, it is Nietzsche's most important book, for it deals comprehensively with his mature thought. Unlike *Zarathustra* it can name names; it can say in its own way what Nietzsche said in a letter to Franz Overbeck of 9 January 1887, a few months after *Beyond Good and Evil* appeared: "And it's all Plato's fault; Plato is the greatest *malheur* of Europe," our greatest misfortune (KSB 8, 9).

## Preface

The preface to Nietzsche's "Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future" assigns Plato a singular role in our past. It names Plato and Platonism six times while naming only one other person, Socrates, and naming him

only as the possible corruptor of youth, one youth, Plato. According to the preface, Western history is essentially a two millennia-long reign of Platonic dogmatism and a few centuries of successful fight against it.

The chief theme of the preface is philosophy as the love of truth, or, more exactly, philosophers as lovers of truth. Nietzsche charges that philosophers have been poor or unworthy lovers of truth insofar as they have been dogmatists. Dogmatic philosophy thus becomes the theme but as something that now lies on the ground, dying. "Let us hope," says the hopeful preface, that our long subjection to our dying dogmatism has been our childhood or apprenticeship, out of which we can mature—into fit lovers of truth.

When Nietzsche names Platonism as *our* childish dogmatism he says immediately, "Let us not be ungrateful to it." Why not be ungrateful to "the worst, most durable, most dangerous" of all errors so far? The answer may be inferred from what Nietzsche says next: namely, that while Western civilization sleeps through the great event of freeing itself from the dangerous error of Platonism, that freeing has produced a wakefulness that makes possible a new creative task for philosophy.

Before indicating that task, Nietzsche lingers over the author of our superlative error, Plato, and affords him praise than which he has no higher: Plato is "the most beautiful growth of antiquity." But Greek antiquity is the most beautiful growth of our species for Nietzsche. Plato is the single most beautiful growth of our species. And then comes a question: Was the beautiful Plato corrupted by the wicked Socrates, asks the wicked physician, Nietzsche? Nietzsche will later convict Socrates of corrupting Plato; in the preface he merely suggests what made Plato's error so dangerous.

The error itself is "Plato's invention of the pure mind and the good in itself." Nietzsche says nothing more to explain Plato's invention, as if no one needs to take that invention seriously any more because the fight against Plato has been won. In its popular form that fight against Plato was the Enlightenment fight against Christianity, a Platonism for the people. These staccato announcements suggest an inference about the great danger of the worst of all errors that the book confirms: that Platonism was the most dangerous of all errors because it paved the way for a sovereign religion to rule in our civilization. The philosopher Plato invented a notion of *Geist*, of mind and spirit, that dogmatically maintained that the human mind could be so purified of its prejudices and limitations that it could gaze upon a permanent unitary ground of all things. This dogmatic epistemology and ontology—inventions regarding knowing and being which, Nietzsche will suggest, may *not* have been

Plato's ultimate view of things—are dangerous for cultural and political reasons. The dogmatic philosophy that allowed this dream to be dreamed proved vulnerable to capture by religion; Platonism paved the way for the rule of religion over philosophy. In the compacted view of Western history that Nietzsche here suggests and that the book, to a degree, spells out, Platonism is the decisive event in our whole spiritual history partly because the dangerous dream that it thought salutary cost the West its greatest achievement: the Greek enlightenment as sheltered and carried forward in Rome, but killed off by Christianity.

So where do we stand now? Nietzsche's preface suggests that we stand in the ruins of two millennia of Platonic dogmatism and a few centuries of successful spiritual warfare against it. The wakeful few—Nietzsche himself—stand there and ask: Where might things go from here? The preface suggests what the book elaborates: the great spiritual tension caused by the modern fight against Christianity could be dissipated by the democratic Enlightenment itself in its pursuit of a life of comfortable self-interest embraced by a populace that dreams itself equal and free and wise—and *that* is the greatest of all dangers for which Platonism may be ultimately blamable. On the other hand, the great tension of the present could lead one to take up the ultimate or most demanding task and shoot for the most distant goal. That task falls to those whom the preface most concerns, lovers of truth. Out of the present liberation which is also a great danger, could come not only the overcoming of Platonism, but the overcoming of post-Platonism through the successful attainment of at least part of the philosopher's essential goal, the wooing and winning of truth by her fit lovers.

The preface thus ends suggesting we need some new Plato, a nondogmatic lover of truth, whose teaching aspires to the scope and influence of Plato's and whose present task is threefold. First, the historical task of understand the role and fate of dogmatic Platonic philosophy in our spiritual history. Second, that historical understanding makes visible the fundamental task pursued by Plato and all philosophers, namely, the passionate pursuit of truth herself—the central task. Finally, there is the practical task that falls to the genuine philosopher, grounding culture on philosophy. The preface as a whole, with its focus on Plato, suggests the awesome possibility that the fate of Platonism, our childish dogmatism, opens the possibility of true maturity, a true interpretation of nature generated by a successful wooing of truth by her lovers, and a Plato-like effort to build a global culture on that interpretation. How does the book itself elaborate these Platonic themes of its preface?

## §7: Plato and Epicurus

Plato first appears in the opening chapter, "On the Prejudices of Philosophers," in aphorism 7, the first of three dealing with ancient philosophy; all three treat ancient philosophy as theater, a production staged for a wider audience. These aphorisms on ancient philosophy follow the aphorisms on philosophy generally, in which philosophy, the most intellectual-spiritual pursuit, was criticized for prejudice against its own roots in drives and passions. Aphorism 6 ended that series by calling philosophy the highest lust to rule, a basic Nietzschean point—and not a criticism. Aphorism 7 turns to the contest for rule that was arguably fundamental in ancient philosophy, the contest between Platonism, the heir to Socratic moralism that tied philosophy to the supernatural, and Epicureanism, heir to Democritus and the Greek scientific or naturalist tradition based on an ontology of atomism. Epicurus's defeat in this fateful philosophical contest doomed Europe to the dogmatic Platonism from which it is only now awakening.

Nietzsche uses a superlative: "I know of nothing more poisonous than the joke Epicurus permitted himself against Plato and the Platonists: he named them *Dionysiokolakes.*" Nietzsche partially explained the joke. Literally and stage-front, he says, Epicurus's joke calls Plato and the Platonists "'flatterers of Dionysios,' or tyrants' accessories and ass-kissers." But behind the curtain it intimates, "they're all *actors*, there's nothing 'genuine' about them (for *Dionysokolax* was a popular name for actors)." So Nietzsche's explanation takes us this far: Epicurus's poison joke makes its point by adding one iota to the popular name for actors, devotees of the god of theater, Dionysos. We can push Nietzsche's explanation a bit further: Epicurus was moved to malice against Plato and the Platonists because their acting talents successfully won over the tyrant whose ass they kissed—not Dionysius of Syracuse but the public, which Plato suggested was the master tyrant. If every great philosophy is a passion to rule, it is clear why a discrepancy in acting talent so ate at Epicurus: Plato, his rival, came to rule through the stage, through the great acts of pious fraud that persuaded the many that Plato's was the divine philosophy and Epicurus's only a demonic atheism. Plato won this war between gods and giants because of his acting talent, acting as if he believed the uplifting moral tales he told. Plato's acting ability gave his philosophy a means to rule that the teacher of *ataraxia* could not help but envy.[3]

To me it is instructive that this remarkable aphorism treats the greatest battle of ancient philosophy, the contest between Socratic moralism

and Epicurean naturalism on which the fate of our whole civilization eventually turned, by a little joke hinging on one iota. Nietzsche's economic and whimsical way of presenting the pivotal event in our history is an emblem of his demanding style: he is willing partially to explain the joke, but the bulk of what it entails must be filled in by the reader.

Here I can mention only briefly aphorism 14, a version of the battle of ancients and moderns in which Nietzsche sides with Plato against the moderns, against the implicit ontology of modern physics and biology, a materialism based on trust in the senses. By contrast, "the charm of the Platonic way of thinking, which was a *noble* way of thinking, consisted precisely in resistance to obvious sense evidence." The aphorism suggests what Nietzsche aims at: where both Platonism and modern sensualism failed—to give an explanation of the world—Nietzsche aims to succeed. Still, Platonism was subtle and nuanced in overpowering the world by placing a web of concepts over the mob of the senses, whereas modern sensualism is crass and, unlike Nietzsche's explanatory philosophy, "has nothing but rough work to do."

## §28: Plato and Aristophanes

The next aphorism to deal at some length with Plato is 28. Occurring early in the second chapter, on "the free mind," it is one of a series that introduces modern free minds to true free-mindedness, the liberation of mind achieved by the very greatest minds. Typical of such minds is a presto tempo that treats the deepest problems with a rapidity foreign to most minds—and the language of the rapid is untranslatable. Nietzsche gives many examples of such minds and the problem of translating their work, but the one he names first and last is Aristophanes. He calls him "that transfiguring, complementary mind" in a book that singles out the complementary human being as the peak of humanity "in whom the *rest* of existence is justified" (BGE §207). In aphorism 28 Aristophanes justifies something specific: for his sake, Nietzsche says, "one *forgives* the whole of the Hellenic for having existed, provided one has understood in all its depths all that here requires forgiveness and transfiguration." What especially required forgiveness and transfiguration in the Hellenic Nietzsche indicates immediately by reflecting on Plato in the context of Aristophanes: "Nothing has caused me to meditate more on *Plato's* secrecy and Sphinx-nature than a happily preserved little fact." Nietzsche the presto unriddler was set to dreaming about Plato's hiddenness and Sphinx-nature by this little fact: "Under the pillow of his death-bed was

found no 'Bible,' nor anything Egyptian, Pythagorean, or Platonic—but a volume of Aristophanes."

What does it mean that Plato secreted Aristophanes under his pillow, that what Plato loved and kept as his own, hiding the fact from others, was Aristophanes? Part of the answer must lie in what Nietzsche says was *not* under his pillow, namely, that with which Plato chose to be identified, the Egyptian, Pythagorean, Platonic. The little fact transfigures Plato in relation to Platonism. Plato, master of tempos, introduced a foreign tempo into the Hellenic, one that had already arrived in the Pythagorean but that Plato made more persuasive in such dialogues as the *Phaedo*, which took up and reinforced the otherworldly themes of a dying Pythagoreanism.

Nietzsche's final words in aphorism 28 are: "How could even Plato hold out in life—a Greek life to which he said no—without an Aristophanes?" The foreign moralism that Plato introduced into Greek life could be no consolation to Plato himself, however much he judged it a necessary consolation for others. Knowing what the dying Plato hid under his pillow, Nietzsche infers that what he later called Plato's "higher swindle," Plato's Platonism, was not what the swindler himself held (TI What I Owe to the Ancients §2). Still, for the sake of what Plato loved, even his anti-Hellenic swindle of such consequence and magnitude can be forgiven. Is this Nietzsche's ultimate stance toward Plato—the most dangerous of all errors can be forgiven Plato for the sake of Aristophanes whom Plato loved, hiding his love? To place this transfiguring suggestion about the author of our dogmatism in an aphorism on the difficulty of translating a presto tempo suggests that such matters always remain Sphinx-like, riddles whose solution demands risking an answer. Nietzsche does not handle Plato's *swindle* as a riddle, he condemns that teaching of otherworldliness as openly and vehemently as he can; but he handles Plato's *hiddenness* riddlingly, as the hiddenness of a different tempo that can be pointed to, even if it can hardly be believed. This aphorism on the difficulty of translating a presto tempo suggests in its own presto fashion how Plato might be penetrated, Plato, whose success depended on being impenetrably Egyptian, Pythagorean, Platonic. Nietzsche, "a complete skeptic about Plato" (TI Ancients §2), is not a cynic about Plato. Plato's disastrous dogmatism seems to have had its origins not in the base but in the noble, in his kinship with the complementary man, Aristophanes. Nietzsche's riddling aphorism thus suggests that behind the most dangerous of all errors lurks a philosopher who (as Nietzsche suggests elsewhere), because he is a philosopher, is moved by motives of philanthropy and solicitude for others, for a whole culture whose gods are dying; he is

not moved by the motive of revenge, the poisoned motive that drove that most successful of all Platonists, St Augustine (GS §359).

Nietzsche's riddling reflection on Aristophanes and Plato, on Plato's hiddenness or esotericism, is separated by a single aphorism, number 29, from his explicit reintroduction of the theme of philosophic esotericism and its inescapability, aphorism 30. Aphorism 29 speaks of the victorious hero of the labyrinth, some Theseus, who in his solitary independence does not succumb to the Minotaur of conscience and tear himself apart, as those who are not fit for such independence must. This aphorism does not invite anyone to independence; it warns against it, confident that those "who *have to*," as Nietzsche says, will seek it anyway. The successful solitaries are the few philosophers and they all, like Plato, kept the secrets of their labyrinth. To a degree Nietzsche betrays those secrets in the next aphorism, number 30, an aphorism that is nearly didactic in betraying the forbidden knowledge of esotericism.

Aphorism 30, thus prepared, begins: "Our highest insights"—*ours*, that is, the insights of the successful solitary, the hidden presto thinker, the rare philosopher—"must—and should—sound like follies, possibly like crimes, when they come without permission to the ears of those who are not the kind for them." Philosophers are unavoidably judged useless or vicious, as Plato's Socrates himself put it (*Republic* 487d). Nietzsche's next sentence states how philosophers everywhere responded to this inevitable judgment against them: they distinguished exoteric and esoteric, because they recognized that, if they stated their highest insights openly, it was only proper that they be ridiculed as mad or persecuted as criminal. Philosophers had every right to hide their highest insights.

But now? *Now*, in the midst of the democratic Enlightenment, the very possibility of philosophy itself is threatened, *now* it is necessary to live dangerously and tell the truth about philosophy's esotericism. Nietzsche betrays, in two steps, the esoteric or criminal truth that philosophy kept hidden. First, in criminal violation of the principle of equality, esotericism hid that it is not primarily about inner and outer but about high and low, an exclusive view down from above measuring the common view up from below. Second, and worse, in criminal violation of the principle that the meaning of life is the overcoming of suffering, esotericism hid the view down from above which judges that suffering, the whole of human woe rolled into one, *may* not be tragedy and may not necessarily draw from the highest viewer the passion of pity. If life is not a tragedy from which we need to be delivered, then the meaning of history is not the overcoming and elimination of suffering. Suffering may even be necessary to human achievement, may even need to be willed.

To say that is to "live dangerously," to incite "war for the sake of [these] thoughts and their consequences" (GS §283), the desired result of the war being the preservation of the rarest: the view from above not skewed by pity, the philosopher's view. By betraying philosophic esotericism or telling the truth about it, Nietzsche betrays *Platonism*, Plato's exoteric teaching, Plato's solution to the unavoidable judgment against the philosopher that he is mad or criminal.

## §190 and §191: Plato and Socrates and the Natural History of Morality

The longest treatment of Plato and Platonism occurs in two connected aphorisms, 190 and 191, that stand early in the chapter "On the Natural History of Morality." Why place the longest reflection on Plato in the chapter on the natural history of morality? The answer seems to be that Plato secured the Socratic turn, *the* decisive event in the history of Western morality, the turn to morals and politics within Greek philosophy that transformed the Greek achievement. Plato's invention of Platonism is an event within a broader phenomenon, the Socratic turn, or Socratic moralism as Nietzsche calls it. Here we learn how Socrates corrupted the most beautiful growth of antiquity. *The Birth of Tragedy* called Socrates "the one turning-point and vortex of all so-called world history" (BT §15). These aphorisms in "On the Natural History of Morality" express Nietzsche's mature understanding of that turning-point as a turn within Greek history away from the Homeric or genuinely Hellenic toward something alien, an imported moral view that prepared the way for Christianity and, eventually, for modern ideas.

These two aphorisms can be fruitfully entered only if one recognizes the gulf separating Nietzsche's Socrates and Plato and the Socrates and Plato of mainstream modern scholarship. The same two matters are crucial: Nietzsche's awareness of pious fraud in the greatest moral teachers, and his view that a philosopher's ambition reaches as high as saying to his whole culture, "we have to go that way." In aphorisms 190 and 191, Platonism is the pious fraud that set Western culture on the way it actually took.

The key to Nietzsche's thoughts here seems to me to be his judgment that Plato is "the most daring [or rash, *verwegenste*] of interpreters." As an interpreter, the noble Plato did everything he could to interpret something refined and noble into Socrates' moral teaching.[4] He took "the whole Socrates" only the way a composer "picks a popular

tune from the streets, in order to vary it into the infinite and impossible, namely, into all his own masks and multiplicities." Plato's Platonism dared to add the infinite and impossible to Socrates' moralism; it added an ontology and a theology, securing Socratism in a transcendence ostensibly accessible to intellect. *This* is the rashness of the most rash of all interpreters: Plato tied philosophy itself to what he knew was the moral lie that the cosmos was a moral order. Plato is not guilty of revenge, Nietzsche's most serious charge; but he is guilty of recklessness, of tying philosophy, the attempt to understand the whole rationally, to the irrational.

Immediately following this claim about Plato as interpreter comes the line of poetry that ends aphorism 190 and prepares aphorism 191, a line that is a little jest, "Homeric at that," Nietzsche says, that nicely expresses in Greek Nietzsche's claim about Plato as interpreter. "What is the Platonic Socrates," Nietzsche asks, "when not *Plato in front, Plato in back, and in the middle Chimaira*." This Homeric jest, the pivot on which the two aphorisms hinge, replaces the nouns of Homer's line describing the Chimera as "in front lion, in back serpent, and in the middle female-goat" (*Iliad*, Book 6, l.181). The most daring of interpreters embroidered a shelter to enclose a Socrates who was in himself a Homeric monster. "Plato's hiddenness and Sphinx-nature" led him to guard his master with a Plato-like front and rear, part of the successful theatrics so envied by Epicurus, the act that made philosophy moral and therefore palatable to pious citizens like those who executed Socrates.

The next aphorism, number 191, elaborates on the Platonic Socrates. It begins with the problem of faith and knowledge, but takes it more deeply than the religious form in which it has come down to us through Christianity. For Nietzsche, the problem of faith and knowledge first appeared in "the person of Socrates" as the problem of instinct and reason; this problem, Nietzsche says, divided "the intellectual world long before the rise of Christianity." This historical point is indispensable to Nietzsche's understanding of Western history and Plato's place in it. On one side of a great divide stand those who followed "Socrates and his disease of moralizing"; on the other side stand those who carried forward "the height attained in the disposition of a Democritus, Hippocrates, and Thucydides [which] was not attained a second time" (KSA 11, 36[11], 554), but to which Epicurus was heir. In another context Nietzsche refers to this side as "the *culture of the sophists*, which means the *culture of realists*," and while this culture reached its peak in Thucydides, Nietzsche says, it represented, as a whole, an "invaluable movement in the midst of the Socratic schools' moralistic and idealistic swindle which was then breaking out on every side" (TI Ancients §2). Nietzsche's Plato is the

most successful of the Socratics, the philosopher who possessed the "greatest strength that a philosopher till now has had to expend!" and who set "all theologians and philosophers on the same track"—the track of Socratic moralizing rooted in an impossible transcendence.

This historical argument in which Plato is the decisive event is outlined with greater detail and a different emphasis toward the end of *The Antichrist* where Nietzsche describes the battle within imperial Rome between Christianity and the Greek enlightenment as preserved within Rome. Focusing the poles of that fight on Christianity and Epicureanism, Nietzsche says: "Epicurus would have won, for every respectable mind in the Roman Empire was an Epicurean" (AC §58). "Then Paul appeared," Nietzsche says, and that changed everything: "The whole labor of the ancient world *in vain*: I have no word to express my feelings about something so tremendous" (AC §59). That labor of the ancient world was preliminary labor, Nietzsche contends, preparation for a culture based on science; "all the scientific *methods*, were already there; the great, the incomparable art of reading well had already been established—that presupposition for the tradition of culture, for the unity of science; natural science, allied with mathematics and mechanics, was well along on the best way—the *sense for facts*, the last and most valuable of all the senses, had its schools and its tradition of centuries." When Nietzsche said to the unbelieving theologian Overbeck "it's all Plato's fault," this is what he means: Plato's reckless defense of Socratic moralism, tying it to the infinite and impossible, prepared the way for Christianity's victory over Rome, the imperial safe-keeper of the greatest gains of the Greek enlightenment. That victory, six centuries and more after Plato, justifies saying "it's all Plato's fault"—*all* meaning primarily the loss of the scientific civilization being built on Greek and Roman beginnings.

I will merely mention Nietzsche's other major historical point about the process that began with Plato's rash interpretation of Socratic moralism: he ties the rise of the modern to Christianity with its teaching of equality and elevation of the virtue of pity. The link is more than historical; Nietzsche's physio-psychology roots the kinship of Christianity and modernity in the fundamental passion for revenge, the instinct to avenge oneself on a life judged profoundly objectionable. The *all* for which Plato is to blame includes modern ideas, according to Nietzsche's natural history of morality. That natural history of morality thus fulfills the hint of the preface: it puts Socrates on trial again and judges, from the ultimate consequences, that Socrates *did* deserve his hemlock for the corruption of Plato, his rash defender whose defense prepared the way for the

triumph of base instincts over noble instincts by putting reason at their disposal.

* * *

Nietzsche's Plato wrote esoterically and invented Platonism as an instrument of philosophical rule. That is, in Plato's "hiddenness and Sphinx-nature" Nietzsche found a philosopher he could praise as a "monster of pride and sovereignty" (GS §351). Yet Nietzsche saw grounds for two possible condemnations of Plato. The first arose from his judgment as a historian. Plutarch, writing five hundred years after Plato in the midst of the Roman extension of the Greek enlightenment, could claim that Plato's Platonism saved Greek science from the persecution of the pious like those who executed Socrates (see Plutarch, "The Life of Nicias," 23.5). For his part Nietzsche, writing almost two millennia after Plutarch, and after the Western experience of Christianity, judged Plato's Platonism a cure that contributed to the disorder it was meant to treat.[5]

The second possible condemnation of Plato arose from Nietzsche's judgment as a physician: Platonism *could* testify to a sickness in its inventor because of its anti-truth, anti-life character. But the question of Plato's sickness, posed in the preface of *Beyond Good and Evil*, seems definitively countered by a statement written a few months after the completion of *Beyond Good and Evil* and published in the fifth book of *The Gay Science*. This sounds like the physician's final diagnosis of Plato as, summarizing his critique of idealism, Nietzsche says: "All idealism to date was something like a sickness, unless it was, as it was in the case of Plato, the caution of an overrich and dangerous health, the fear of *powerful* senses, the prudence of a prudent Socratic" (GS §372). *Caution* born not of sickness but of a very special health lay behind Plato's idealism, the "great health" on which Nietzsche ended *The Gay Science* a few pages later (GS §382). *Fear* also lay behind Plato's idealism, but not a fear that his own senses would overpower his judgment (the aphorism opened by referring to Odysseus's act of stopping the ears of his friends in order to spare them the irresistible temptation of the Sirens' song to which Odysseus kept his own ears open while having himself tied to the mast). Plato's fear is Odyssean fear for his friends, fear for a whole civil order threatened by ruin through the death of its gods. Plato's idealism, Plato's Platonism, dictated by caution and fear, took the shape it did because of Plato's *Klugheit*, the prudence and cleverness of a Socratic, a superprudence that wrapped the insufficiently prudent Socrates, the executed Socrates, in a still more sheltering riddle.

In Nietzsche's final judgment, Plato is absolved of revenge, the moral motive of the indignant, and credited with a philanthropic impetus: Plato's claim to possess wisdom—the pure mind and the good in itself—was a claim made to comfort the unwise with the assurance that the wise possess wisdom (GS §359). But if Plato can be absolved of revenge and credited with the philanthropy of the genuine philosopher, he cannot be absolved of being rash in employing the disease of moralism as an antidote. For his strategy for defending philosophy by tying it to the infinite and impossible has now put philosophy itself at risk. Rash Plato thus leads to rash Nietzsche, a genuine philosopher prepared to act on behalf of philosophy and its place in the world, the place of the rational or reasonable in a human world governed by unreason. Nietzsche's judgment against Plato is the judgment of one philosophical "moralist" against another, that is, one "*im*moralist" against another "immoralist," each knowing the indispensability of morality, of good and bad, for the valuing beings, human beings. And Nietzsche *acts* on the model of Plato.

Did Nietzsche understand Plato adequately? Did Nietzsche's practice of the great art of reading well bring him to an understanding of Plato that we would all do well to entertain as possibly true? I think the answer is "yes." But the only way to that answer is through a study of the dialogues that is open to that possibility. Nietzsche's Plato, it seems to me, displays himself open to a reading of the dialogues that appreciates their esoteric character and the ambitions of the genuine philosopher to create values.

One more question follows the question, "Did Nietzsche understand Plato adequately?" This is the most important question: "Can Nietzsche's understanding of Plato help lead to a truer understanding of what both Plato and Nietzsche aimed at, a truer understanding of man and the world?" That, it seems to me, is a question that can drive the noble work of philosophical labor on Plato and Nietzsche.

## Notes

[1] Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Essays*, trans. Donald Murdoch Frame (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1958), "The Apology of Raymond Sebond," 379.

[2] Montaigne, *Essays*, 379.

[3] The contest between Plato and Epicurus reappears in a way at the end of the chapter on religion (BGE §62). What must be done now is not what Epicurus did: we cannot afford to be mere observers like Epicurean gods. Instead, it is necessary to act, to do what Plato did and act as a philosopher acts by providing a popularized teaching, a religion that is ruled by philosophy.

[4] Socratism is described in this aphorism as a teaching fit for the rabble but Nietzsche makes clear that Socrates himself is far from naïve, far from holding Socratism to be true as well as useful.

[5] That interpreters of Plato as competent, as different, and as separated by time as Plutarch, Montaigne, and Nietzsche all read Plato in a similar way should inspire contemporary scholars to pay more attention to the view they share, the view also held by other great readers such as Francis Bacon and Descartes.

# Nietzsche, Nehamas, and "Self-Creation"

*Thomas A. Meyer*

IN HIS RECENT book, *The Art of Living* (1998), Alexander Nehamas develops a generalized interpretation of Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophical relationship with the figure of Socrates as he presents himself through Plato's early and middle dialogues.[1] It is Nehamas's contention that Nietzsche experienced ambivalent and somewhat unsettled attitudes towards Socrates, an ambivalence that lingers throughout his philosophical career. At its heart, the problem of Socrates is, on Nehamas's interpretation, that Socrates inspires the highest degree of both criticism and praise to which Nietzsche appears to rise in his writing, one which he reserves for either exemplary or decadent individuals. Looking out into a culture that frequently strikes him as hostile to life, strength, and the will, Nietzsche finds in Socrates an embodiment of such qualities of dialectical reasoning and of willful determination as to treat Socrates as one of the great individuals to have affected world history. And yet, at the same time, Socrates inspires in Nietzsche moments of regret, even contempt, for the hostility to life his philosophy may have helped introduce into western culture.

To more properly to describe this mixture of responses to the Socratic legacy, Nehamas introduces a picture of Nietzsche's many and sometimes varied terms of praise, one which will help explain, he believes, why it is that Nietzsche could only extend this level of praise quite rarely in his work. In this article, I shall examine the picture of exemplary or superlative life that Nehamas attributes to Nietzsche, a picture with which, he suggests, both Nietzsche and Socrates arguably matched. Nehamas's notion of a process of self-creation, through which both Nietzsche and Socrates are supposed to have passed, is a centerpiece of his view, and by no means a simple matter to assess. However, what Nehamas calls self-creation, a process that leads us away from psychic tyranny and towards the harmonizing and mutual attunement of all of our conflicting impulses and instincts, does not appear to be a necessary condition for the greatness or exemplary individuality Nietzsche discusses in his later works. Rather, according to his own testimony, Nietzsche him-

self appears not to have completed such a process of self-creation, and hence it is questionable, I will suggest, to suppose that Socrates also did. Therefore, I conclude that Nehamas's conception of self-creation, which he argues occupies a central place in the art of living, is mistaken, both about Nietzsche's view of greatness, and about Nietzsche himself.

Nehamas's discussion in *The Art of Living* attributes to Nietzsche a view of "how one becomes who one is" which connects this principle of perfectionism with the notions of self-mastery and style that appear throughout Nietzsche's work. According to Nehamas, Nietzsche's criticisms of Christianity and Western culture reveal a commitment to the importance and value of lives that have put forth "the long, hard effort to give what Nietzsche calls 'style to one's character,'" a project of self-mastery through which a certain superlative kind of self is formed (139). The self-creation Nehamas describes has rid itself of anything that resembles "the subjugation of desire," having no use for the "extirpation" or "excision" of our impulses or instincts to which Nietzsche objects when he sees them involved in the practice of Christian morality and asceticism (139). Becoming who one is, in its highest form, involves us in creating for ourselves what Nehamas calls a classical picture of a "harmony of opposites": true self-mastery requires moderating the impulses, acculturating them into mutual accommodation and respect, giving everything of which one consists some voice in self-government (138-39).

Nehamas regards Nietzsche's critique of Christian culture as hostile to the imbalance and "tyranny" between the impulses that was valorized in Christian morality and the ascetic ideal. To oppose this view of the good life, Nietzsche commits himself to the importance of forming a "harmony between [one's] various impulses" (141), a harmony Nehamas links to the presence of unity in an individual.

To achieve his end, to become who he was, Nietzsche first had to accomplish at least two subsidiary tasks. The first was to put together absolutely everything he was faced with—events peculiar to him alone, such as accidents of birth and growth, health and sickness, choices made consciously and unconsciously, friendships made and lost, works composed or left unfinished, features liked and despised—into a single, unified whole that he could affirm. (The conception of such a single, unified whole underlies, after all, the classical ideal of totality.) The second task presupposed by the effort to become who one is requires that the whole one constructs, the self one fashions, be significantly different from all others. If it is not, then one is not distinguishable from the rest of the world: as Nehamas puts it, one has not become an individual (141-42).

Becoming who one is, for Nehamas, is a project that involves admitting and recognizing what one is like, what attitudes and experiences, impulses and desires have contributed to one's history, regardless of the pride or dismay this acknowledgment may inspire. This mass of interests and attitudes is one we need somehow to bring into unity, a unity that will make "interpretative sense" (Nehamas, 3). Such a unity, he argues, Nietzsche has described as a signal of the highest form of style in his aphorism entitled "One thing is needful" (142):

> To "give style" to one's character—a great and rare art! It is practiced 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. [...] In the end, when the work is finished, it becomes evident how the constraint of a single taste governed and formed everything large and small. Whether this taste was good or bad is less important than one might suppose, if only it was a single taste! (GS §290).

For Nehamas, this passage from Book Four of *The Gay Science* states nothing less than Nietzsche's "ethical ideal," which Nehamas construes as the final product in the project of becoming who one is (139). For we cannot become who we are without giving style to ourselves, without incorporating or including all of our impulses, however weak or strong, into the activities and projects we set for ourselves, without giving each of them a voice so they are not entirely stifled, subjugated, excised or "destroyed" by the lives we pursue (139). If we can do so, and bring this kind of style into our character, we will have created a harmony among the impulses that could otherwise fall into "anarchy," "civil war" (to use Montaigne's metaphor) and "tyranny, not peace" (139). This harmony, together with the quality of uniqueness and individuality that needs to accompany it, characterizes the "ethical ideal" of becoming who one is which Nietzsche's texts expound as their basis for a critique of the Judeo-Christian tradition and its decline.

Nehamas holds that both Nietzsche, and more problematically Socrates, satisfy the requirements for self-mastery that his interpretation describes. Nehamas asserts that "Nietzsche believes he has himself attained a state of harmony," and does not challenge this interpretation in the course of his discussion. A point of interpretive significance for Nehamas, however, concerns Socrates' place in the ranks of self-mastery and style. As Nehamas reads the Nietzschean texts on Socrates, he hears ambivalence on the question of Socrates' treatment of his own instincts and drives. The dialectical tendencies in Socrates' character, so his interpreta-

tion runs, take the form of the impulse to ask for— and give—reasons at odds with whatever beliefs or attitudes he encounters that appear to lack sufficient reasons in their defense, that appear to be impulsive and, ultimately, rooted in a person's interests and desires. Socrates, on this view, has to be seen as at odds with himself, as attacking, ultimately, his own extra-rational nature, as an individual caught in a war against himself: Socrates' ugly face is an outward reflection of the total chaos within. Reason is just his means of keeping that chaos at bay. His face reflects an anarchy of instincts, a civil war (to return to Montaigne's metaphor) that resulted in tyranny, not peace (139).

At the same time, however, as Socrates appears to offend against the harmony preferred in Nietzsche's "ideal," he also stands as one of the great individuals, one of the very few genuine philosophical thinkers, to have stepped into the course of world history. Mentioning the famous discussion of philosophers in *Beyond Good and Evil* as representatives for the bad conscience of their times, Nehamas expresses surprise at Nietzsche's enduring admiration and respect for Socrates, suggesting that the strength of Socrates' challenge to the "values and fashions of his age" makes Socrates "as surely an immoralist in relation to his world as Nietzsche wished to appear in relation to his own. And now the neat and extreme contrast Nietzsche has drawn between Socrates and himself begins to lose its clear outlines" (152).[2] Ultimately, Nietzsche cannot exclude Socrates from the small circle of individuals who possess self-mastery and style, due to the force and spontaneity of his dialectical engagements: here, at least, "Socrates had succeeded in living as 'instinctively' as Nietzsche claimed he had lived himself" (154). Consequently, Nehamas concludes that Nietzsche feels ambivalence towards Socrates, and that his relation to the classical tradition begun by Socrates combines admiration for Socrates' character together with hostility toward the privileging of reason with which his name became, through Plato, associated.

My contention here is not only that Nietzsche, and arguably also Socrates, do not meet the requirements of the ethical ideal that Nehamas has described, but that Nietzsche's view of becoming who one is differs from the view Nehamas identifies in Nietzsche's writing. Nietzsche's conception of his own character reveals a picture, first of all, not so much of peace and harmony as of conflict and war. As he sees himself in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche is divided between health and decadence:

> Apart from the fact that I am a decadent, I am also the opposite. My proof for this is, among other things, that I have always instinctively chosen the *right* means against wretched states; while the decadent

> typically chooses means that are disadvantageous for him. As *summa summarum*, I was healthy; as an angle, as a speciality, I was a decadent. The energy to choose absolute solitude and leave the life to which I had become accustomed; the insistence on not allowing myself any longer to be cared for, waited on, and *doctored*—that betrayed an absolute instinctive certainty about *what* was needed above all at that time. I took myself in hand, I made myself healthy again: the condition for this—every physiologist would admit it—is that *one be healthy at bottom*. A typically morbid being cannot become healthy, much less make itself healthy. [...] This *dual* series of experiences, this access to apparently separate worlds, is repeated in my nature in every respect: I am a *Doppelgänger*, I have a "second" face in addition to the first. *And* perhaps also a third. (EH Why I am So Wise §2-§3)

Nietzsche's health and his decadence oppose one another, even threaten one another, as he struggles with the direction for his projects and philosophical undertakings to pursue. Harmony and peace do not appear in this glimpse Nietzsche offers into his past, and it is, at least in a preliminary sense, a question as to what might unify the whole of which his different faces are the parts. Instead, Nietzsche sees part of his philosophical strength as expressed in his capacity to occupy the perspectives of both the healthy and the decadent: "Now I know how, have the know-how, to *reverse perspectives*: the first reason why a 'revaluation of values' is perhaps possible for me alone" (EH Why I am So Wise §1).

The distinctive philosophical enterprise in much of Nietzsche's later work could perhaps be an outgrowth of, and conditioned by the presence of, opposed and even battling perspectives in his character. Indeed, the image of a divided Nietzsche, a *Doppelgänger*, might appear to be one of the places to look for an understanding of Nietzsche's moments of ambivalence, though Nehamas does not consider this possibility. Rather, Nehamas views Nietzsche as believing in the harmony of his instincts and tendencies, a supposition that denies to Nietzsche, I would contend, any of the anarchy that real decadence ushers in.

Nietzsche's declared periods of decadence would seem to disrupt the harmony for which Nehamas is looking in his conception of Nietzsche's persona. And the emphasis, in his reading, on harmony would also seem to suggest that Nietzsche construes his struggles with decadence as matters of "mutual attunement and respect" between what he, Nietzsche, chooses in health, and what the "instinct of decadence" calls him to prefer. Nietzsche would need to harmonize the potential harmony of health with what is the apparent disharmony of decadence, were he to comply with the reading Nehamas presents. Must we suppose decadence and

health to come to peace in order for Nietzsche to attain his highest state? And is, in the end, Nehamas's harmony entirely necessary?

The further difficult question, then, for Nehamas's view in *The Art of Living* concerns the (in)compatibility of his interpretation of the harmony of the impulses with Nietzsche's texts on self-mastery, style, and greatness. To begin with, in his quotation of Nietzsche's passage on style in *The Gay Science*, Nehamas excises with an ellipsis a key portion of Nietzsche's account. Style, here, is again a matter of shaping one's character:

> Here a large mass of second nature has been added; there a piece of original nature has been removed—both times through long practice and daily work at it. Here the ugly that could not be removed is concealed; there it has been reinterpreted and made sublime. Much that is vague and resisted shaping has been saved and exploited for distant views; it is meant to beckon toward the far and immeasurable. (GS §290)

Nietzsche's conception of style involves not so much harmony, and certainly not Nehamas's harmony without destruction, as it does arrangement. We arrange, like artists, what is available to us in our character, without a prejudice against excision or burial, seemingly without the need for harmony as Nehamas envisions it. Indeed, the presence of this harmony, this "peace" Nehamas lauds, can be difficult to locate in Nietzsche's treatments of self-mastery and the will:

> In an age of disintegration that mixes peoples indiscriminately, human beings have in their bodies the heritage of multiple origins, that is, opposite, and often not merely opposite, drives and value standards that fight each other and rarely permit each other any rest. Such human beings of late cultures and refracted lights will on the average be weaker human beings: their most profound desire is that the war they *are* should come to an end. Happiness appears to them, in agreement with a tranquilizing (for example, Epicurean or Christian) medicine and way of thought, pre-eminently as the happiness of resting, of not being disturbed, of satiety, of finally attained unity [...]. (BGE §200)

It is unclear to me that Nehamas, with his harmony of opposites, unity, and peace, comes out on the right side of this passage. For Nietzsche, the tension and struggle that may develop between tendencies of our character has the potential to generate losses, but losses are welcome if they line the path toward greatness:

> In humankind *creature and creator* are united: in humankind there is material, fragment, excess, clay, dirt, nonsense, chaos; but in humankind there is also creator, form-giver, hammer hardness, spectator divinity, and seventh day: do you understand this contrast? And that *your* pity is for the "creature in humankind," for what must be formed,

> pity is for the "creature in humankind," for what must be formed, broken, forged, torn, burnt, made incandescent, and purified—that which *necessarily* must and *should* suffer? And *our* pity—do you not comprehend for whom our *converse* pity is when it resists your pity as the worst of all pamperings and weaknesses? (BGE §225)

Nietzsche's affection for great suffering, for form-giving and the will, reveals a picture of superlative life heavy with oppression, burning, breaking, and hardness. Again, the images of peace and harmony seem puzzling ingredients of Nehamas's view. It does not seem that every impulse in our character receives a voice in self-government, as Nehamas would suppose, and the difficulty is not simply in his choice of metaphor. For Nietzsche's treatments of the will, as they appear in passages such as these, do not focus on the nurturing or protection of every one of our impulses and tendencies from destruction. Rather, to express the point provisionally, if we are uncovering a greater intensity of the feeling of power, then the loss of one voice seems to have the possibility for Nietzsche of being redeemed by the life of others. Nehamas does not see what could redeem the destruction of a fragment of our character, and does not dwell on the difference between his harmonious view of self-creation and Nietzsche's treatments of creation and the will in *Beyond Good and Evil*, and on the difference between goodness and greatness in Nietzsche's texts in general.

In conclusion: in *The Art of Living*, Nehamas makes two questionable claims in his interpretation of Nietzsche. First, he supposes that to some extent, both Nietzsche and Socrates can been seen to create a unified self in which their impulses receive cultivation rather than destructive mismanagement; yet, Nietzsche, the *Doppelgänger*, takes himself to be inhabited by conflicting perspectives of health and decadence; Socrates, for his part, in the *Phaedo*, speaks of the Bacchants and of self-denial as purveying the right practice of philosophy, almost as Nietzsche will talk of Dionysus and Christ. To speak of harmony here seems doubly mistaken, if decadence or self-denial involves anarchy in the end. Second, the picture of harmony and unity Nehamas develops in his reading of Nietzschean self-mastery, style, and greatness stands in contradiction to those texts in Nietzsche's writings where greatness calls us to destruction and war. Nehamas offers a voice to every impulse; Nietzsche has more tolerance, though, for their selective subjugation and removal from our character. It is possible that the real ambivalence Nehamas observes in Nietzsche's relationship with Socrates is something that we could begin to describe more faithfully in new terms, those of envy and respect, two perspectives that informed much of Nietzsche's philosophical enterprise.

Nietzsche's candor, if it is candor, in *Ecce Homo*, raises for us, I believe, a series of difficult interpretive questions, namely of how best to read the perspective from which he blesses or berates; of when, if at all, his decadence may have entered his philosophical work; and of whether—in a moment of decline—he could have found in Socrates a hardness, severity, and tyranny that was for him too much. These are, I believe, the real questions that the interpretation offered by Nehamas should lead us to pose.

## Notes

[1] Alexander Nehamas, *The Art of Living: Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1998). Parenthetical references are in the text are to this work.

[2] For further discussion of Nietzsche's image of Socrates in *Beyond Good and Evil*, see the contribution by Laurence Lampert, "Nietzsche and Plato," in this volume.

# God Unpicked

*John S. Moore*

THE RETURN TO the ancient Greeks is something Nietzsche, like many others before and some after him, long considered to be the special destiny of Germans.[1] The aim may seem not altogether unreasonable, if ascribed to the perceived superiority of nineteenth-century German scholarship, rather than to racial qualities or some supposed metaphysical quality of the language. While the British may have thought of themselves as the true heirs of the ancient Greeks, following Lord Elgin's acquisition of the Parthenon sculptures, it was the Germans who were developing the scholarship. German philology apparently brought the prospect of understanding what the Greeks really were like. But between us and the ancient world stood 2000 years of God. The world before Judaism and Christianity entices as in many respects a happy time. In the section in *The Gay Science* entitled "German hopes," Nietzsche expresses the hope the Germans might live up to the original meaning of "Deutsche," that is heathen, and consummate the work of Luther by becoming the first non-Christian nation of modern Europe (GS §146).

The proclamation that "God is dead" opens up the prospect of a return to antiquity. Nietzsche has much more in mind than the mere institution of atheism, which would not by itself open such a prospect of recreating such happiness. The return to a pagan sense of life is not so easily accomplished. To recover the joyousness and creative excellence of the Greek achievement would seemingly involve a more detailed unraveling of assumptions. There is an image of Greek life as something supremely creative, excellent, and pleasurable. That Christianity had brought about a depression of the human spirit was hardly an original view. The suggestion would not have been strange to readers of William Edward Hartpole Lecky's *History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne* (1869), translated and widely used as a textbook in German universities. Also from the 1860s were Swinburne's famous lines: "Thou has conquered, O pale Galilean; the world has grown gray from thy breath; / We have drunken of things Lethean, and fed on the fullness of death".[2] Many would acknowledge that Christianity's victory had

meant repression both intellectual and instinctual. The God it sets over us and claims to interpret owes much to Plato. Christianity, Nietzsche tells us in the preface to *Beyond Good and Evil*, was Platonism for the masses: "But the fight against Plato—or to speak plainer and 'for the people' the fight against millennia of Christian ecclesiastical pressure (for Christianity is Platonism 'for the people'), this fight created in Europe a magnificent tension such as had not existed elsewhere" (BGE Preface). In some sense or other, he thought, Plato had taken a wrong turning. So much is clear. However, what exactly he might have meant by this has, like other parts of his philosophy, been subject to widely different interpretations.[3] So what is his real objection to Plato's thought, and what would he put in its place? Having unpicked the idea of God, to what could we revert? Should it be to something different in the way of metaphysics, or a far simpler return to roots? Heidegger appears to have understood going back to the Greeks in terms of a revival of pre-Socratic philosophy, seeing Nietzsche himself as a dead end, last of the heirs of Plato.[4] Nevertheless, it might seem that Heidegger himself owed a great deal to Nietzsche in formulating such an aim.

On another view there was indeed an understanding we can recapture, but it was in terms of Pindar rather than of Parmenides, something like an identification with raw ambition. The competitive ideal of life extolled in Pindar—and lived by him[5]—was, according to Nietzsche, brought to a fuller development with Socrates.[6] The glory of an Olympic victor pales before that of a conqueror of minds. Conscious will to power takes various forms; beyond the Pindaric hero, there is Socrates. From the viewpoint of the enjoyment and the practice of power, the persuasion of others may well be a more satisfying exercise than the experience of a warlord. We are not to consider the power available to the barbarian to be so superior to that available to civilized men, though various purposes are served by the myths civilized men create about barbarians.

In Pindar, a view of life as will to power and mutual striving is lyrically expressed. Nietzsche liked to see philosophy and its origin, certainly after Socrates, as rooted in this same approach to life. Accordingly, we may include the formation of the God-idea as the product and expression of this competitive will to power, rather than solely as a challenge and an alternative to that interpretation (which on another level it is). Its significance becomes clearer the more directly it is related to human ambition and mutual aggression.

In *Daybreak* Nietzsche asks rhetorically: "He who does not hear the continual rejoicing which resounds through every speech and counterspeech of a Platonic dialogue, the rejoicing over the new invention of *ra-*

*tional* thinking, what does he understand of Plato, of the philosophy of antiquity?" (D §544). With his portrayal of Socrates, Plato seems to have done more than almost anyone to promote the idea of philosophy as a matter of dispute and close argument. Tracing the origin of philosophy in mutual striving, we may look at the God-idea under two opposed aspects. On the one hand it is an expression of creative power, traceable to Socrates' and Plato's solutions to various philosophical questions (cf. BGE §191). The other face is the nihilistic, slave God-idea, God as an intolerable demand. This, too, has a Platonic source. To Nietzsche it epitomizes regrettable mental habits and practices which have become firmly established. It embodies one of the most effective weapons of moral coercion that it is possible to employ in the struggle of all against all.

Even professedly atheistic science is still in thrall to the Platonic/Christian God, in the form of an uncriticized idea of "moral truth" which "enchants and inspires" (see the preface to *Daybreak*). In *The Gay Science*, in a passage he reiterates in *On the Genealogy of Morals* (GM III §24, where he also alludes to the preface of *Daybreak*), he writes:

> Even we seekers after knowledge today, we godless anti-metaphysicians, still take our fire, too, from the flame lit by a faith that is thousands of years old, the Christian faith which was also the faith of Plato, that God is the truth, that truth is divine.—But what if this should become more and more incredible, if nothing should prove to be divine anymore unless it were error, blindness, the lie—if God himself should prove to be our most enduring lie?— (GS §344)

Notoriously, there is a tyrannical strain in Plato which excites resistance.[7] This is at its worst in *The Laws*, supposedly his last book, where Socrates is not even mentioned. Many readers have deplored Plato's totalitarianism and his justification of religious persecution. Plato puts across his objectives in terms of an interest of all, as if they derive from a unitary vision of truth, justice and freedom. In *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche speaks of "Plato, when he convinced himself that the 'good' as *he* desired it was not the good of Plato but 'the good in itself,' the eternal treasure that some man, named Plato, had chanced to discover on his way!" (WP §972).

Among all perspectives, Plato's is presented by him as the only authenticating one, with its claim to "truth." One demands that other people accept one's own idea on the ground that it derives from "the ideal" and thereby embodies truth, justice, and so on. We are tempted to blame Plato for not sticking to his own rational standard. For, like an overmighty politician, his ambition and intellectual strength lead him away

from the aristocratic republic of free argument towards the establishment of a sort of personal despotism. He wishes to form humanity after his own image.

Nietzsche floated the presumably anachronistic suggestion that Plato came across the Jews in Egypt and learned something from them.[8] The idea of the one right dogma fits in with Plato's vision. Direct visionary intuition into truth has been identified as an oriental, that is, an un-Greek, idea.[9] That was the pre-philosophical way of getting wisdom. But here is something much more than a mere reversion to barbarism. The essence of the Platonic fallacy is in the nihilism which supports such a claim. Nihilism is described by Nietzsche as the idea that there is no truth.[10] It may seem paradoxical to accuse Plato of this. But it is the absence of recognized truth on the ordinary everyday understanding that leaves the path open for dogmatic claims. For if there is no truth, then anything can be truth.

Faced with the Babel of the innumerable different ideas of justice to be found in the world, we may seek some means of deciding what we are to go along with. Aiming to influence our decision are those who know exactly what they want, and are determined the rest of us should accede to it. In their program to persuade us, they seek first to undermine any appeal to objective fact, calculating that in such a climate they will be able to win because no one else will have any firm ground to stand on. Theirs is a God that embodies just this nihilistic will to authority. Told you can believe anything, why should you refuse to swallow this? There may be a suggestion that it rises superior out of chaos, that it embodies a quality of "sublimity," sign and proof of its right to command us spiritually. But once we identify the refined weapons of the weak, the God of the dialecticians, designed specifically to take advantage of confusion, God himself comes across as a nihilistic idea.[11]

It is this dogmatic demand, the weapon put into the service of claims that are often highly presumptuous and exceptionable, that is the biggest objection to Plato's Ideal, and the God that embodies it. There are people with an overwhelming desire that some demand be accepted, whether they speak for established power and authority, or for a passionate reforming ambition. In the modern world, both the latest policies of government and the shrill certainties of ressentiment may equally aspire to the universal moral authority formerly held by religion. Every rhetorical device may be employed to that end, all propaganda, all dialectical wiles. If there is no truth, how may such passion be resisted? Nietzsche has his own resentment, in that he abhors some of these claims, heartily despises

the suggestion he must go along with their presumption. So wherein lies the remedy?

Against the God of monotheism we might want to consider possible alternative myths, different gods, perhaps. Rather than the intolerant and oppressive God of the Jews and Christians, we might favor a more congenial one, such as, for example, the Gnostic God of the Pleroma that subsists above the mendacious and malignant Ialdabaoth worshipped by the ignorant.[12] The quest for Gnostic-style liberation offers a myth that strikingly illuminates the human condition from the perspective of the will to power. Itself claiming a good basis in Plato, such a doctrine might be taken as a Nietzschean value, even as the Nietzschean alternative or revaluation of values. But that would be to miss Nietzsche's most original argument, his claim to expose the lies and falsifications in the position of his opponents.

Some might want to understand rejection of Plato in terms of a desire to return to the state of affairs before Plato wrote, as if Plato had never written.[13] There is a crudely reactionary quality to such an unlikely program. Before Plato, the world was open to Plato, to close it against him would require a new doctrine. Suppose we decide his arguments were empty and those he attacked were right, to uphold such a view completely transforms the latter. Some treat Nietzsche as an anti-Plato, as well as an Antichrist, invoking him for a sort of multicultural pluralism. There is an obvious appeal to the young of an attack on the father-figure Plato, it speaks to the kind of desire young people have to legitimize all kinds of alternative perspectives. In support of this is the idea of the decline that takes place with age, and also that the passion of youth brings a potentially greater happiness than anything available later, even if it is hardly ever fulfilled.

Perspectivism, taken as a supposedly Nietzschean dogma to the effect that all perspectives are valid may appeal to some as an attractive alternative to God. Not only is there little basis for such a move beyond assertion, but validating everything is actually what is most to be avoided. Overemphasis on Nietzsche's perspectivism, with its visual metaphor may suggest that he thinks different "looks" are all valid, and any number of different ones may be compatible. Yet commonly a position is far more than just a look, in that it involves demonstrably false claims. The will-to-power perspective candidly admits to roots in raw ambition and desire based on personal interest. It convicts other perspectives of falsification, targeting especially such as make appeal to an ideal standard of freedom, justice or truth. Nietzsche's own perspective asserts itself as an interest, but does not claim to be an interest of all. Concepts of justice and truth

do not need such authentication, they are part of the context in which we all live. In a healthy state there is no opposition between desire and interest.

Perspectivism does not have to be taken as a way of authenticating all sorts of different views and opinions. In the chapter "On Those Who are Sublime" Zarathustra tells us that all life is a dispute about taste—"And do you tell me, friends, that there is no disputing of tastes and tasting? But all of life is a dispute over taste and tasting" (Z II 13)—and Nietzsche has no intention of letting us out of this. He has his own strong views for which he wishes to fight, and for positions which would negate his own, he aims to uncover their errors and deceptions. This does not suggest a project to reverse Plato,[14] backtracking and trying an alternative set of presuppositions, but rather to confront and argue him out.

The way to undo the corruption introduced by Plato does involve reaffirmation of a classical value. By analogy with athletic competition, Nietzsche upholds the ancient idea of life as conflict, as *agon*, which is to be erotically celebrated and enjoyed (TI What I Owe to the Ancients §3). Such a conception is eristic, after the good Eris mentioned in *Homer's Contest.*[15] This is not just a proposed ideal, but something in which he is already completely immersed. He is engaged in continuous argument against his adversaries. This is still what he is doing when he turns savagely on Plato in *Twilight of the Idols* and accuses him of wrecking the splendid agonal culture (TI What I Owe to the Ancients §2). We can see how the openness of this competitive spirit is handicapped when all competition has to be mediated through some dogma, even should it be an attractive one. Nietzsche's remedy is to express and communicate the objection, and discover specific errors involved in the nihilistic doctrine that there is no truth. He seeks out mistakes of psychology, definite tendencies to lie and mislead. Truth emerges in the objective facts that have been overlooked and which it is the most compelling interest of dissidence to uncover.

Nietzsche's religious opinions have an evidently personal character. "*If* there were gods, how could I endure not to be a god!" asks Zarathustra, "*Hence* there are no gods" ("On the Blissful Islands"; Z II 2). The origin of his objection to Plato is to be found in his own feeling, not from some insight or vision into an overall picture he claims the right to call "justice" or "the truth." To say that what drives him is a biographical question, is by no means to invalidate or to relativize his conclusions. For it is in such competitive feeling and mutual resentment, that we can trace the origin of philosophy together with other creative

achievement: "Every talent must unfold itself in fighting: that is the command of Hellenic popular pedagogy, whereas modern educators dread nothing more than the unleashing of so-called ambition."[16] Nietzsche's interpretation of the tyrannical urge owed much to his experience of Wagner, whom he also described as a tyrant.[17] He resents the coercive claim in a position that tries to rule out the possibility of his sort of protest.

In insisting on selfish motives, Nietzsche is not advocating crime, or trying to subvert society. Concepts of morality and justice may be explained in terms of desire and the conflict of interest, as forms of life, without need of philosophical authentication. In reducing everything to desire, he would deny that he is removing some linchpin of social order, an essential cement that holds off chaos. People dispute whether anyone really is guided and restrained by morality, or whether moral ideas are only the expression of desire and interest. Nietzsche's view is that someone who argues for a moralistic view of life, as if only that can protect us against intolerable evil, is essentially to be thought of as expressing his ambition for his own ideas (see, for example, WP §304-§308, under the section title "How Virtue is Made to Dominate"). Some criminals may be attracted to Nietzsche, but the picture of the will as basically a criminal will, is not one Nietzsche endorses.

It would be a grotesque simplification of the will-to-power doctrine to read it as asserting that everything a philosopher wants, he wants only because he wants to impose his power upon others. Everything is will to power, but the tyrannical urge is not universal. Pure tyranny is not even desirable from the viewpoint of the tyrant, the obvious lesson of Hegel's master and slave dialectic. Desiring power one will need something over which to exercise it. Enjoyment of power does not necessarily entail the arbitrary character of the tyrant. Of course, there are other factors in Plato, and what he led to. In attributing the motive behind a thought as will to power, we bracket out all more detailed and specific descriptions of motivation. This is far from to deny the truth or meaningfulness of such descriptions. The claim is that the will-to-power perspective offers a way of uncovering psychological realities. In Plato's case, we see ambition in a raw and unmediated state. The reason why Plato wants so much of what he wants is to do with the unfettered nature of his desire. His philosophy is like an artistic creation. He lived early enough to play the artist-tyrant, with a blank canvas (HA I §261).

Much of Plato's philosophy has its origin in the shortcomings of the city state, in the frustration of the will that is experienced by those of original and independent mind. This would presumably apply to those

committed to the Socratic program of disputation faced with the *doxa* or opinion in which they are invited to acquiesce, for all its promise of power. The Socratic motive puts them at odds with the authority of the democracy, with its oppressive demand to submit to an ever-changing doctrine. In the very rejection of current society, official reality, there is felt a need to insist upon a pure alternative idea, upon a reality which is outside and above the given *doxa*. In this move we may trace the origin of the whole religious history of the West. Here is the source of this idea of religious truth, which comes to be most tyrannically conceived. On the basis of this Platonic thought derives a long tradition of contemplative mysticism. We may see how deep study, such as Heidegger's, of a mystic like Meister Eckhart, might well provoke intriguing speculations as to how it might all have been different.[18]

In section 261 of the first volume of *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche wrote of the tyrannical urges of the Greeks. Every Greek, he suggested, desired to tyrannize over other people. Philosophers, too, desired this, and this explains much in Plato. Only Solon said he despised individual tyranny, though he sublimated his tyranny as a lawgiver. Plato became frustrated and extremely embittered ("full of the blackest bile") in old age, he says, as a result of the thwarting of his political ambition (HA I §261). We might see this as a limitation of the classical culture, and, by extension, of the Renaissance that imitated it. Nietzsche admits to his own raw ambition rooted in personal factors. Inspired by this, he challenges Plato, and takes on his argument. For Plato himself, the God idea would not be experienced as repressive; it was the perfect expression for his own despotic will. The nasty old men in *The Laws* agree that no old person doubts the truth of religion (*Laws*, 10, §888). Against God, Nietzsche pits the *Übermensch*.[19] We may see this as an attack, not on Plato's whole achievement, but on what was tyrannical in him. We can hardly take a purely hostile attitude to someone who has been so seminal and creative. We do not simply reject him to return to the chaos of opinion.

Plato's tyrannical tendency is the source of much that is repellent, not just in Plato, but in a great part of the tradition to which he gave rise. (An instructive instance is Gemistos Plethon, godfather of the Italian Renaissance, who not only invented a new religion to replace Christianity, but demanded the death penalty for people who would dispute it.)[20] Nietzsche's objection to it is not rooted in some abstract principle, such as a prohibition on tyrannizing, but in the way it conflicts with his own feeling and ambition. His remedy is honesty about the will to power. With the aristocratic republic of the intellect we set up barriers to dog-

matic assertion being accepted as truth. These barriers are formed not by theories, but by truths, in the most ordinary sense of the word. The assumption of spiritual authority represents denial of my own power and my own desire. To refute it, I must insist upon that from which its proponents avert their eyes.

First, Nietzsche needs to outline his desires and objectives, which is what he does in *Zarathustra*, his answer to the Bible (EH Preface §4). His program for the reform of civilization will follow Plato's example and begin by trying to get people to share his own tastes and understanding, not from any virtuous principle of benevolence (still less malevolence), but from the most self-conscious will to power. In renouncing tyranny he is far from renouncing the aim of making others like himself. Of course, he would like others to accept his objection to the God of the Jews and Christians. What he wants of people is ultimately reducible to his own desire.

This argument naturally relates to his own position in the world. Though opposing the claim of the old against the young and disdaining Plato's old men, he would not give uncritical support to the demands of rebellious youth. For Nietzsche, there is much to value, and also much folly to deplore, in the rebellion of the young. Extreme individualism may easily turn into its opposite. One suspects this is an issue of which Plato may have had some understanding, having himself once been the rebellious young man. And what happened in Athens prefigured what was to happen in other times and places. There are aspects of youthful energy Nietzsche would want to encourage as well as those he would want to resist or rechannel.

Indeed, his aim is very far from that of wanting simply to undo Plato and happily to acquiesce in every ugly form of city-state decadence he had been concerned to overcome. In Plato there is much that is very attractive as well as what is hateful. And much of what he says is far from the mere will to triumph of a party, rather it enriches human experience by opening new possibilities of understanding and enjoyment. We may identify what is hateful as something quite specific. This does not mean replacing Plato's dogma by an alternative one that legitimizes relativistic chaos. We need to concentrate specifically on the unacceptable claims it supports, always bearing in the back of the mind the objections one has to tendentious and coercive moral and political demands. A Nietzschean is most likely to feel a lot of sympathy for Plato's frustration with the ruling power, while rejecting his solution. Nietzsche wants to fight Plato on his own ground, exposing the hidden dishonesties involved in the coercive societies of *The Republic* and *The Laws*.

In Plato's *Republic*, the sophist Thrasymachus paints a portrait of "the unjust man" (*Republic*, 1, §344). Readers of Nietzsche may be struck by a certain resemblance to the *Übermensch* (just as Glaucon's portrait of the "just man" uncannily prefigures the career of Jesus). While it may well be true, as Plato argues, that Thrasymachus is wrong, and has quite failed to draw a picture of the highest happiness, it is worth asking why anyone might ever have thought otherwise. He expresses a kind of taboo-breaking resistance to coercive morality. Even the unjust man is a dimension of present desire. That is to say, his desirability is the expression of present needs, and represents a particular perspective. On this interpretation, Thrasymachus is resisting something. He expresses, if incompetently, a sort of Nietzschean protest. To the question why the amoral tyrant might appear to embody the highest happiness, we say that he does, insofar as he has overcome something that needs to be overcome. Thrasymachus makes a valid point as well as an invalid one. Reason = virtue = happiness is not a sound equation (TI Problem of Socrates §4 and §10). In the identification of the *Übermensch* as the summit of human achievement, there is some truth to be discovered that counters and undermines the moralizing pretensions of orthodox religion.

Evoking the *Übermensch*, who is a sort of tyrant, does not entail prostration before his despotic authority. In some moods, at least, Nietzsche is hopeful that times have changed since Plato's day, and confident that the threat of tyranny is receding and enough allies may be found. In *Human, All Too Human* he writes:

> What took place with the ancient Greeks (that each great thinker, believing he possessed absolute truth, became a tyrant, so that Greek intellectual history has had the violent, rash and dangerous character evident in its political history) was not exhausted with them. Many similar things have come to pass right up to the most recent times, although gradually less often and hardly any longer with the Greek philosophers' pure, naïve conscience. For the opposite doctrine and scepticism have, on the whole, too powerful and loud a voice. The period of the spiritual tyrant is over. In the domain of higher culture there will of course always have to be an authority, but from now on this authority lies in the hands of the *oligarchs of the spirit*. Despite all spatial and political separation, they form a coherent society, whose members *recognize* and *acknowledge* one another whatever favourable or unfavourable estimations may circulate due to unfavourable public opinion and the judgements of the newspaper and magazine writers. The spiritual superiority which formerly caused division and enmity now tends to *bind*: How could individuals assert themselves and swim through life along their own way, against all currents, if they did not see their like

> living here and there under the same circumstances and grasp their hands in the struggle as much against the ochlocratic nature of superficial minds and superficial culture as against the occasional attempts to set up a tyranny with help of mass manipulation? (HA I §261)[21]

Nietzsche's argument is, of course, applicable to dogmatizing interpretations of his own writings, and could even be turned against himself, if ever, relaxed from the competitive feeling that has driven him, he were tempted to play the tyrant on his own account. Much of what he wrote can too easily be detached from the argumentative frame and used to construct new forms of dogmatism, which may be rich in possibilities, but arouse justifiable resentment for their arbitrary presumption. Reading Nietzsche, one may occasionally find it hard to resist the doubt that perhaps he really meant, as others would have it, the opposite of what we take him to have meant. In this case, his own argument can be employed against the confusion his words themselves induce. Certainly, by this standard, to present his ideas as philanthropy, to speak as if "the good" as he wanted it, was not Nietzsche's good, but "the good in itself" (call it health or whatever), "the eternal treasure which a certain man of the name of Nietzsche had chanced to find on his way!," must be misrepresentation. If the period of the spiritual tyrant really were at an end, such ways of thinking should have no future.

## Notes

[1] See, for example, *The Birth of Tragedy*, §19-§20; "Why the Germans of all people discovered the Greek spirit (the more one develops a drive the more attractive does it become to plunge for once into its opposite)" (WP §92); and: "We are growing more Greek by the day [...] Herein lies (and has always lain) my hope for the German character)" (WP §419).

[2] From the "Hymn to Proserpine," in *Poems and Ballads* [First Series] (London, 1866).

[3] See, for example, the contributions by Laurence Lampert and Thomas Brobjer in this volume.

[4] See George Steiner, *Heidegger* (London: Fontana, 1978), 27-30.

[5] "And just as the youths were educated through contests, their educators were also engaged in contests with each other. The great musical masters, Pindar and Simonides, stood side by side, mistrustful and jealous [...]" (*Homer's Contest*; KSA 1, 791; trans. Walter Kaufmann in *The Portable Nietzsche* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1982), 37).

[6] "I have intimated the way in which Socrates could repel, it is therefore all the more necessary to explain that way that he exercised fascination. That he discovered a new

kind of *agon*, that he was the first fencing master in it for the aristocratic classes of Athens, is one reason. He fascinated because he touched on the agonal instincts of the Hellenes, he introduced a variation into the wrestling matches among the youths and young men. Socrates was also a great erotic" (TI Problem of Socrates §8).

[7] "The whole of history teaches that every oligarchy conceals the lust for *tyranny*; every oligarchy trembles with the tension each member feels in maintaining control over this lust. (So it was in *Greece*, for instance: Plato bears witness to it in a hundred passages—and he knew his own kind—*and* himself ...)" (GM III §18).

[8] See "It has cost us dear that this Athenian went to school with the Egyptians (or with the Jews in Egypt?)" (TI What I Owe to the Ancients §2); and the note where he says Plato was "already marked with Jewish bigotry (—in Egypt?)" (WP §202).

[9] "Asia still does not know how to distinguish between truth and poetry, and does not perceive whether its convictions stem from its own observations and proper thinking, or from fantasies" (HA I §265).

[10] "A philosopher recuperates differently and with different means [...] he recuperates, e.g., with nihilism. Belief that there is no truth at all, the nihilistic belief, is a great relaxation for one who, as a warrior of knowledge, is ceaselessly fighting ugly truths. For truth is ugly" (WP §598).

[11] "Petty people's morality as the measure of things: this is the most disgusting degeneration culture has yet exhibited. And this kind of ideal is still hanging over mankind as 'God!!'" (WP §200).

[12] See Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963) chapter 8, "The Valentinian Speculation" (174-205).

[13] Read in isolation, section 2 of "What I Owe to the Ancients" in *Twilight of the Idols*, where the dismissal of Plato is especially scathing, might suggest this idea.

[14] Against this may be cited the following passage where he speaks of Plato as Marx does of Hegel: "To be sure it meant turning truth upside down, denying perspectivity (the basic condition of a all life) to speak of spirit and the Good as Plato had spoken of them" (BGE Preface). What it means to "turn truth upside down" is not exactly transparent, and not only would the passage's incompatibility with the interpretation here given have to be shown, but any proposed alternative is presumably subject to argument.

[15] "And not only Aristotle but the whole of Greek antiquity thinks differently from us about hated and envy, and judges with Hesiod, who in one place calls one Eris evil—namely, the one that leads men into hostile feats of annihilation against one another—while praising another Eris as good—the one that as, jealousy, hatred, and envy, spurs men to activity: not to the activity of fights of annihilation but to that activity of fights which are *contests*"(KSA 1, 787; *The Portable Nietzsche*, 35).

[16] As Nietzsche puts it in "Homer's Contest" (KSA 1, 789; *The Portable Nietzsche*, 37).

[17] See *The Case of Wagner*: "The actor Wagner is a tyrant; his pathos topples every taste, every resistance. Who equals the persuasive power of those gestures?" (§8). And in the *Nachlass* of 1874 he writes that Wagner is "the tyrant who suppresses all individuality other than his own and his followers" (KSA 7, 32[32], 765).

[18] For further discussion of Heidegger's intellectual origins, see Theodore J. Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger's* Being and Time (Berkeley: U of California P, 1995).

[19] See "On the Blissful Islands": "Once one said God when one looked upon distant seas; but now I have taught you to say: overman" (Z II §2).

[20] See Christopher Montague Woodhouse, *George Gemistos Plethon: The Last of the Hellenes* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1986), especially 28, 78, 322-56.

[21] Translated by Marion Faber and Stephen Lehmann (Lincoln, NE U of Nebraska P, 1984).

# Nietzsche's Wrestling with Plato and Platonism

*Thomas Brobjer*

NIETZSCHE'S RELATION TO Plato has received much attention, and it is often argued that he enters into a sort of *agon*, or competition, with Plato. Although there is some truth in such a view, I wish to argue the opposite case—first, that Nietzsche did not have a personal engagement with Plato (unlike the case with many other ancient Greeks, including Socrates, and with several modern philosophers such as Schopenhauer, Lange, Kant, Emerson, and Hartmann); and second that, on the whole, he only set up a caricature of Plato as a representative of the metaphysical tradition (including Christianity) to which he opposed his own. Most of those who have written on Nietzsche and Plato have assumed a much greater personal involvement from Nietzsche's side.

I shall begin by summarizing Nietzsche's knowledge of and engagement with Plato, and show that he had a good knowledge of Plato's writings, but little *engagement* with his philosophy. Already from early on Nietzsche seems to have rejected Platonic philosophy. Next, I shall summarize the content of Nietzsche's extensive lecture-series on Plato, which has hitherto received little attention, especially in the English-speaking world, and highlight some of the characterizations of his interpretation of Plato. Then, I shall discuss the late Nietzsche's relation to Plato's political philosophy. Finally, I shall discuss the frequent claim that Nietzsche sympathized with the Platonic "characters" and opponents, the Sophists Thrasymachus and Callicles. Nietzsche never refers to them in his published writings or general notes, but in the lecture-notes he discusses and criticizes their views.

## An Overview of Nietzsche's Knowledge of and Engagement with Plato

Plato is the philosopher to whom Nietzsche referred more frequently than any other, with the exception of Schopenhauer. He also had a de-

tailed knowledge of Plato and his philosophy. However, at no place in Nietzsche's published writings does he carry out an extended discussion or critique of Plato. Nietzsche's relation to Plato has received much attention, the Weimar bibliography (2001) listing some sixty-nine items (books and articles) which deal with it. Most of them concern what Nietzsche says about Plato in his published books. Here I shall discuss four questions or aspects which have not received much attention: Nietzsche's early encounter with Plato (and the relative lack of personal engagement), his lecture-notes on Plato, the late Nietzsche's relation to the *Republic* and finally his relation to the Sophists, especially Callicles and Thrasymachus.

It is often taken for granted that Plato was the first philosopher who influenced Nietzsche, but that was not the case. Emerson influenced him profoundly before Plato (from 1862 onwards). But Plato was the second important philosopher to influence him; a few years earlier, Nietzsche had found Schopenhauer in late 1865. This interest in Plato appears to have begun during Nietzsche's last year at Schulpforta, in 1863/1864. His very first references to Plato come—surprisingly late—from that year, when he asked permission to buy and have bound the first two volumes of Plato's dialogues in Greek, edited by Hermann. This edition consists of six volumes, and all six are in Nietzsche's private library. It seems likely that he also bought the last four volumes at or around this time. In his notebook from 1863 he writes that he plans to read the *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Euthyphro* (possibly in Greek) during the holidays. The *Symposium* seems soon to have become his favorite dialogue. In August 1864 Nietzsche wrote an essay entitled "The Relation of Alcibiades' Speech to the Other Speeches of Plato's *Symposium*" ["Ueber das Verhältniß der Rede des Alcibiades zu den übrigen Reden des platonischen Symposions"][1] and in the short biography, "Mein Leben," which he wrote at the occasion of leaving Pforta after six years, he states: "I remember with the greatest pleasure the first impressions of Sophocles, Aeschylus, Plato, especially in my favorite piece, the Symposium, and then the Greek lyricists" (BAW 3, 68).

Nietzsche's interest in philosophy, and in Plato in particular, is also confirmed by his teacher of Greek at Pforta, Karl Steinhart (1801-1872), who was himself an important Plato scholar and wrote many articles on Plato, as well as editing the complete works of Plato. In a letter of recommendation for Nietzsche (and Paul Deussen) written to the professor of philosophy at Bonn, Carl Schaarschmidt (1822-1909), a former student of Schulpforta, Steinhart wrote, perceptively: "The other, *Nietzsche*, has a profound and capable nature, enthusiastic for philoso-

phy, in particular the Platonic, in which he already is quite initiated. [...] He will with pleasure, especially under your guidance, turn to philosophy, which after all is the direction of his innermost drive."[2]

Yet, with the exception of the school-essay of 1864, Plato is hardly ever mentioned by Nietzsche, either in letters, notes, or other school-essays, before and during his time at Pforta. It seems likely that his interest in, and perhaps enthusiasm for, Plato began only during the last few months at Pforta and, as such, was somewhat exaggerated, both by Nietzsche himself in his short autobiographical sketch, and by Steinhart, who sympathized with Plato and wrote the letter of recommendation to another philosopher similarly inclined towards Plato.

At Bonn, Nietzsche attended two courses on Plato in 1865, one given by Schaarschmidt and another by the classicist Otto Jahn (1813-1869).[3] These lectures—to the extent Nietzsche attended them—do not seem to have made any mark on his writings of the time. More generally, during his years as a university student, 1864-1868, Nietzsche made a large number of references to Plato, but almost all of them are scholarly and oriented towards questions of classical philology, not directed at Plato himself or his thinking.[4] Rather, Nietzsche used Plato and his writings at this time to discuss other topics, especially Theognis and Democritus.[5] The notes from the last year as student, 1868, also contain a relatively large number of lists of future plans and courses to give. Plato, together with many other topics, is often mentioned in these lists. These references, however, say almost nothing about Nietzsche's view of Plato. Such an absence of Plato's philosophy in Nietzsche's thinking and writing at this time is, perhaps, surprising. (Other philosophers he read at or around this time, such as Emerson, Schopenhauer, Lange, Kant and Hartmann received much more explicit mention and praise.) To be sure, Plato is mentioned in his letter of 15 April 1868 to Friedrich Zarncke, the founder and editor of the *Literarische Centralblatt für Deutschland*, as one name in a list of ten ancient writers who "stand close to me," implying that Nietzsche would be willing and able to write reviews of books about them (the other names mentioned are Hesiod, Theognis, the elegiac poets, Democritus, Epicurus, Diogenes Laertius, Stobaeus, Suidas, and Athenaeus), but Plato is not emphasized in any way (KSB 2, 266). Plato is also discussed in letters between Nietzsche and his friend Paul Deussen, who planned and wrote his dissertation about Plato. However, Nietzsche's statements in the correspondence show little or no enthusiasm, and in fact he advised Deussen against such an undertaking.

It is not until after Nietzsche became professor in Basel in 1869 that we find evidence of a more serious consideration of Plato, Platonic phi-

losophy, and Platonic questions in their own right and for their own sake—or, perhaps more accurately, for the sake of teaching them. He began to teach Plato at the *Pädagogium* already during the first term in Basel, in the Summer term 1869, and at the University during the sixth term, the Winter term 1871/1872. The other stimulus for thinking about Plato at this time was his work on *The Birth of Tragedy*. At this stage we see Nietzsche's more independent views about Plato begin to emerge. These views are both positive and negative, but the negative seem to prevail. In 1869 and 1870 he refers to Plato's ethical optimism, associating him with Socrates and Euripides as a theoretical man (KSA 7, 3[93-94], 85), a view which he would later express in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872). He also refers at this time to Plato's hostility to art, a claim which he was to repeat a number of times in the following years (KSA 7, 5[43], 104; cf., for example, KSA 7, 19[138], 23[16], 28[6], 463, 545, 619). In early 1871 he continued to hold Socrates, Euripides, and Plato responsible for the separation of the Apollonian and the Dionysian, that is, for the disintegration of Greek culture, which is essentially the same argument as the one above where he refers to them as theoretical men (KSA 7, 7[70], 154). And in a letter to Erwin Rohde, written shortly after 21 December 1871, he claims: "Lately I have gained a number of fundamental insights about Plato" (KSB 3, 257). Just before this letter, Nietzsche had made his most spectacular early statement in regard to Platonism in the following note written in 1870/1871: "My philosophy, *inverted Platonism* [*umgedrehter Platonismus*]: the further away from true being, the more pure, beautiful, better it is. The life of appearance as goal" (KSA 7, 7[156], 199). However, Nietzsche's references to Plato after this statement are by no means significantly more critical than his earlier statements. His attitude seems to have been both positive and negative, although some of the more positive statements may reflect his need as a teacher and lecturer to provoke the interest of his students.

In the early 1870s, then, Nietzsche was intensively involved in reading Plato and preparing lectures about him and his thinking.[6] He discussed and summarized all of the Platonic dialogues for his students, and discussed Plato's life and thinking in detail—but for the most part it is Nietzsche, the conscientious teacher, not the iconoclastic philosopher, who speaks in these lectures. At the University Nietzsche lectured on Plato four times between the Winter terms 1871/1872 and the Winter term 1878/1879. Although he used essentially the same lecture-notes, he did continue to think about and read Plato during these and the following years.[7] In June 1877 he read Plato's *Laws* and, in April 1878, he received, and read, Plato's *Apology of Socrates* which he had ordered (his

copy of it is heavily annotated). During the Summer term 1878, furthermore, he also held a course on the latter work; but, as he was often ill at this time, his extant lecture notes consist of no more than a single printed page.

When, in 1870, his colleague as Basel, the professor of philosophy Gustav Teichmüller (1832-1888), accepted a post in northern Germany, Nietzsche decided to apply for the second chair of philosophy which then became vacant. In a letter, probably written in January 1871, to "Ratsherr" Wilhelm Vischer-Bilfinger, he emphasizes that his true purpose lies in philosophy, and that he feels that he is better suited for a chair in philosophy than for the purely philological one he was then occupying. He also states that, in his philological studies, he had preferred issues relevant to the history of philosophy or to ethical or aesthetic problems, mentioning the pre-Socratics, Plato, and Aristotle, and adding that, of modern philosophers, he had studied with special interest Kant and Schopenhauer (KSB 3, 174-78). However, Nietzsche was not even considered as a possible candidate for the post, which was subsequently filled by the philosopher Rudolf Eucken.

Interestingly, and in contrast to his reception of Emerson, Schopenhauer, Lange, and Kant, Nietzsche's early letters show no enthusiasm and make no value-judgment in regard to Plato or Platonic thinking. The two most interesting statements in his correspondence before 1887 (when he began more explicitly to criticize Plato in his letters) can be found in 1882 and 1883 respectively. In his letter to Lou Salomé of 16 September 1882, he writes:

> My beloved Lou, your idea of reducing philosophical systems to the status of personal records of their authors is a veritable "twin brain" idea. In Basel I was teaching the history of ancient philosophy in *this* sense, and liked to tell my students: "This system has been disproved and it is dead; but you cannot disprove the *person* behind it—the person cannot be killed." Plato, for example. (KSB 6, 259)

This statement seems to emphasize and illuminate Nietzsche's ambivalent view of Plato: his rejection of most of his philosophy, but profound respect for his character. That Nietzsche actually taught Plato in this manner will become apparent below. Perhaps still more interesting, and certainly more surprising, is his statement in his letter to Franz Overbeck of 22 October 1883, written after the publication of the first book of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and during work on the second: "While reading Teichmüller"—probably *Die wirkliche und die scheinbare Welt* (1882) which he had borrowed from Overbeck—"I am continually dumb-

founded with astonishment by *how badly* I know Plato and how much Zarathustra *platonizes* [πλατονίζει, *platonizei*]" (KSB 6, 449). (Teichmüller, who argued for a metaphysical philosophy, continually discusses Plato in the book Nietzsche mentions.) Yet Nietzsche continued to regard Plato and Platonism as representing an opposing philosophy to his own—and although his many references to Plato in the notebooks and books continue to be both negative and appreciative, the critical ones are in the majority. In early 1884, for example, he writes: "Without Platonism and Aristotelianism no Christian philosophy" (KSA 11, 25[257], 79); and in the summer and autumn of the same year, he notes: "Fight against Plato and Aristotle" (KSA 11, 26[387], 253). Somewhat surprisingly, then, in *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886) Nietzsche broke this pattern when he made a number of consistently positive comments in praise of Plato. For instance, he refers to "the Platonic mode of thinking" as "a *noble* mode of thinking" (BGE §14), and he describes Plato as "the most intrepid of interpreters" (BGE §190).[8] However, after *Beyond Good and Evil* almost all of his comments became negative and hostile once more. In 1887 he spoke of Plato as "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 the instinctive deifier, the *golden* nature" (GM III §25). In his letter to Overbeck of 9 January 1887 he exclaims that Plato is "Europe's greatest misfortune" (KSB 8, 9). And in his last year of writing, 1888, Nietzsche summarizes much of his attitude by opposing Plato to Thucydides: "*Courage* in face of reality ultimately distinguishes such natures as Thucydides and Plato: Plato is a coward in face of reality—consequently he flees into the ideal; Thucydides has *himself* under control—consequently he retains control over things" (TI What I Owe to the Ancients §2; cf. D §168).

In another letter from 1887, thanking Paul Deussen for an olive-leaf and fig-leaf from the Academy in Athens which he had sent Nietzsche for his birthday, Nietzsche claims to be proud to have such an enemy and opponent: "Perhaps this old Plato is my true great opponent? But how proud I am to have such an *opponent*!" (16 November 1887; KSB 8, 200). Plato's philosophy, expressed in the form of dialogues, can be interpreted in many different ways. On the whole, Nietzsche interpreted him conventionally as a metaphysical idealist and moralist, and he knew that this was, to a large extent, a caricature of the historical Plato, with which he used to contrast his own philosophy.[9]

## Nietzsche's Lecture-Notes on Plato

The texts and notes for these lectures, given between 1871/1872 and 1878/1879, have received little attention. It is true that, if one expects them to contain an account of Nietzsche's interpretation of Plato and his philosophy, they are bound largely to seem a disappointment. Nietzsche was only twenty-seven or twenty-eight years old when he first wrote and delivered them, and he was much occupied with other teaching duties. Furthermore, the purpose of the lectures was to introduce students to Plato, and therefore they primarily contain not Nietzsche's own interpretation, but rather general summaries of Plato's writings and philosophy, based mainly on secondary literature and on restatements of Plato's texts. Furthermore, it should be remembered that the courses were given to students of classical philology rather than of philosophy. In fact, it is sometimes difficult to know just what in the notes is Nietzsche's voice, what is secondary literature (on which he built his lectures), and what is mere paraphrase of Platonic and other works. And no detailed examination of the extent of Nietzsche's dependence of secondary literature for his Plato-lectures has yet been carried out. My remarks here, then, can only be preliminary in nature.

Nietzsche held the lecture-series entitled "Introduction to the Study of the Platonic Dialogues [*Einführung in das Studium der platonischen Dialoge*]" no fewer than four times, albeit under slightly different titles: in the Winter semester 1871/1872, the Winter semester 1873/1874, the Summer semester 1876, and finally the Winter semester 1878/1879 (KGW 2.4, 1-188). We cannot see any real changes in them over time, although a few later additions are given as such. The great majority of the notes must have been written for the first occasion and thereafter, on the whole, the text probably remained unchanged.

These lectures consist of two parts, together covering about 180 pages of printed text. The notes begin with a brief introduction of about two pages, and these are of great interest. Here he emphasizes his interest in the man Plato, rather than in his philosophy: "Examinations of this kind are either aimed at the philosophy or at the philosopher; we want the latter: we only use the system [to understand the person]. The man is still more remarkable than his books [*Bei Untersuchungen der Art ist es entweder auf die Philosophie oder auf den Philosophen abgesehen; wir wollen das letztere: wir benutzen das System nur. Der Mensch noch merkwürdiger als seine Bücher*]" (KGW 2.4, 7).

The early Nietzsche (that is, from circa 1869-1876) was sympathetic to metaphysics, or at least to a sort of metaphysics of aesthetics, and he

agreed with Kant's attempt to find the limits of reason (to give room for these other artistic and subconscious aspects of life). Already on the first page of the notes he writes:

> The theory of ideas [*Die Ideenlehre*] is something enormous, an invaluable preparation for Kantian idealism. Here is taught, with every means, including that of myths, the correct opposition between Ding-an-sich and appearance: with which every more profound philosophy begins. (KGW 2.3, 7)[10]

Early in the introduction Nietzsche also emphasizes that Plato is a substitute for the great writings of the pre-Socratic philosophers whose writings have been lost.[11]

In the introduction, and further on in the lectures, Nietzsche insists that Plato, although an artist, was primarily motivated by ethical and political objectives: "We should not regard him as a systematic thinker [...], but as a political agitator" (KGW 2.4, 9).[12] It is in this spirit that he also claims: "*The Republic* is much more of a fundamental text [*Hauptschrift*] than the *Gorgias* or the *Symposion*, but nonetheless on a much lower aesthetic level" (KGW 2.4, 14). The early Nietzsche also frequently discussed the *Republic*, but from the middle of the 1870s onwards it seems that he loses interest in it. His interpretation of Plato as primarily an ethical and political thinker is part and parcel of Nietzsche's opposition to Plato, as Nietzsche himself emphasized the importance of aesthetic perspectives and to a large extent ignored ethical and political aspects and questions. In the introduction to his lectures we also find the claim that "Plato is as an author the most richly talented writer of prose" (KGW 2.4, 8). This view goes clearly against his critique of Plato as a stylist in the section of *Twilight of the Idols* entitled "What I Owe the Ancients," but already in later parts of these lecture-notes he foreshadows his later views.[13]

The lectures themselves open with an extensive discussion (about twenty pages) of the secondary literature: "§1. The More Recent Platonic Literature." Here about twenty works are discussed, most or all of them read and used by Nietzsche. He discusses, in some detail, the answers of different authors answers to such questions as the authenticity of the dialogues, their chronology, and so on. (Nietzsche regards the *Phaedrus* as the earliest dialogue.)[14] In a second section (circa thirty pages) Nietzsche turns to a discussion of Plato's life, examining when Plato was born and died, and his education. The discussion here is mostly of a fairly detailed philological character. Thereafter, in the longest section (some one hundred pages), the individual dialogues are sum-

marized, usually on a couple of pages, and are sometimes briefly discussed. This section begins with the *Republic* (fifteen pages), but most dialogues are only summarized, with little or no analysis, discussion, or comment, although Nietzsche sometimes adds a few brief remarks.

Philosophically speaking, the most interesting part or chapter of the lecture-notes is the second part, entitled "Plato's Philosophy as Witness to the Man Plato [*Platos Philosophie als Hauptzeugniß für den Menschen Plato*]" (about forty pages). It opens with these words, written above the title: "In the first chapter we have made the problems generally known, reference to *my* thesis. To be able to correctly understand the *life* we need to have a *psychological* overall picture as point of reference [*Regulativ*]" (KGW 2.4, 148). Nietzsche goes on to discuss different influences on Plato (Heraclitus, Cratylus, Socrates, the Pythagoreans, and so on.), and he summarizes Plato's position as follows:

> Picture the perfect philosopher. He lives completely among pure abstractions, sees and hears nothing any longer, values no longer what other humans value, hates the real world, and attempts to spread his contempt. [...] [Plato] fights for life and death against all existing political organizations [*alle bestehenden Staatsverhältnisse*] and was a revolutionary of the most radical sort. [...] Very soon a tyrannic streak can be seen. (KGW 2.4, 154)

Nietzsche discusses and rejects the thesis that Plato was fundamentally driven by aesthetic considerations (KGW 2.4, 156-61), and instead he foregrounds the ethical and the political.

In several further sections he looks at the importance for Plato of the "Ideenlehre" and of the immortality of the soul, and of the conclusion that life is determined by a metaphysical assumption, as shown, for example, in the myths of the *Republic*, *Phaedo*, and *Gorgias*. Thus Nietzsche treats and interprets Plato in a relatively conventional manner, namely, as a metaphysical philosopher.

During the Summer semester 1878 Nietzsche also taught the course "Plato: Apology." Only a single page of notes is still extant for this course which, due to Nietzsche's illness, is likely to have been sketchy (KGW 2.5, 521-24). In it Nietzsche offered high praise of this particular dialogue, regarding it now as the greatest of Plato's dialogues (whereas, earlier, this position had been held by the *Symposium* and the *Republic*).

## Nietzsche's Critique of Plato's Views of Politics

It is frequently assumed that Nietzsche sympathized with Plato's view of politics, as that is presented in the *Republic*. The most obvious indication of this is his description and apparent affirmation of the Laws of Manu and its society of castes (AC §56-§58; TI The "Improvers" of Mankind), which demonstrate significant affinities with views put forward in Plato's *Republic*.

Nietzsche's apparently similar statements here, taken together with his elitism and anti-democratic values in general, seem to make it almost impossible to deny that this, or something akin to it, constitute a political ideal for him. This is also how most commentators have interpreted it, some of them explicitly pointing out the similarity with Plato's political views. For instance, Bruce Detwiler uses Nietzsche's words about Manu in *The Antichrist* as to argue that Nietzsche's antipolitical stance is a limited one. On the basis of *The Antichrist*, it would seem, he claims that Nietzsche's "ideal order appears to resemble Plato's."[15] Then again, E. R. Dodds, in an appendix to his edition of Plato's *Gorgias*, claims that Nietzsche "doubtless viewed with sympathy the proposal of the *Republic* for the establishment of a caste society [cf. AC §57]."[16] Equally, Ofelia Schutte argues in *Beyond Nihilism* from Nietzsche's words about the Tschandalas that he, like Plato, "would want to see all human beings bred for a specific function—as in the castes celebrated by him."[17] Equally, Mark Warren, in his important study, *Nietzsche and Political Thought*, sees, as do most commentators, Nietzsche's politics as kindred with Plato's, and related to the Laws of Manu: "Nietzsche develops this model of political culture in later works to the extent that he could be charged with advocating a culturally totalitarian model of society—one not so different from the one that emerges from a literal reading of Plato's *Republic*."[18] Finally, Henning Ottmann, in his detailed and interesting study *Philosophie und Politik bei Nietzsche*, says relatively little about Nietzsche and Manu, but nonetheless clearly regards it as an ideal for Nietzsche, commenting on the similarity between the ancient Indian caste system discussed by Nietzsche on the one hand and Plato on the other, and arguing that neither means caste in a biological sense.[19]

For all that, there exist important reasons—based on textual criticism, contextual reading, comparative reading (comparing Nietzsche's statements here with his view of other cultures and caste-societies), the study of Nietzsche's notes and early drafts for the texts in *The Antichrist* and *Twilight of the Idols*, and finally political-philosophical considerations—to question such an interpretation. Making use of

Nietzsche's notebooks, where he severely criticizes the Laws of Manu, I have shown elsewhere that this was *not* Nietzsche's political ideal. His main object in *The Antichrist* and *Twilight of the Idols* was to criticize Christianity and modernity and thus the Laws of Manu, which were used as a contrast, came to appear much more as Nietzsche's ideal than they actually were.[20]

The fact that Nietzsche, contrary to appearances, did not approve of the Laws of Manu, takes away many of the arguments for the case that the mature Nietzsche sympathized with the political views expressed in the *Republic*. Nietzsche was aware of the similarity between the Laws of Manu and Plato's *Republic*, and it cannot be denied that Nietzsche, when he mentions Manu in these sections, is also thinking of Plato's *Republic*. Not only is Plato explicitly mentioned at the end of section 55 in *The Antichrist*, which introduced this discussion, he is also mentioned in a number of *Nachlass* notes relating to Manu, and in a letter Nietzsche wrote on 31 May 1888 to Peter Gast: "Even Plato appears to me in all the main points only to have been *well educated* by a Brahman" (KSB 8, 325). The context for this remark was Nietzsche's reading of a French translation of the Lawbook of Manu by Louis Jacolliot, and in several notes written in early 1888 while reading Jacolliot's *Les législateurs religieux* (1876), Nietzsche emphasizes not only that "Plato is completely in the spirit of Manu," but also that in Egypt Plato had been directly influenced by this manner of thinking (KSA 13, 14[191], 378).[21] He mentions explicitly that Plato copied "the castes" and "the caste-morality" from this sort of thinking; while, in another note, with the title "Toward a Critique of the Laws of Manu," he once again associates Plato with Manu and voices a strong critique:

> The whole book rests on the holy lie; [...] The most cold-blooded self-control has here been effective, the same sort of self-control which Plato had when he thought out his "Republic" [.] "One must want the means when one wants the end"—all law-givers have realized this politician-insight.
>
> The classical pattern of thought here is specifically *Aryan*: we must thus make the most well-constituted and self-controlled sort of human being responsible for the most fundamental lie that has ever been created ... One has copied it almost everywhere: the *Aryan influence* [i.e., the pattern of the Laws of Manu] has ruined the whole world ... (KSA 13, 15[45], 439-40)

The association of Plato with Manu in these sections is not an indication of Nietzsche's approval of Manu, but forms rather part of his critique of

Plato who, according to Nietzsche, also based his thinking on priest-morality and priestly structures.

Now, this rejection of Plato's politics is also visible in the fact that, despite Plato being one of the persons he most frequently mentions and discusses in his writings, Nietzsche almost never mentions Plato's political utopia and the *Republic* after the middle of the 1870s. So the young Nietzsche was influenced by Plato's *Republic*, both in his views of education and politics, but he changed his views at the latest by the time of *Human, All Too Human* (1878), and instead criticized the work, especially its political aspects.[22] This lack of reference to Plato's political thinking—and this, in spite of the fact that both Nietzsche and most commentators regard it as Plato's *magnum opus*, and see ethics and politics as the center of Plato's own motivation for philosophizing—is consistent with our interpretation of Nietzsche as, in the main, the non- and anti-political thinker he himself claims to be.[23] Those who interpret Nietzsche more politically have a case to answer.

## Nietzsche's Relation to Plato's Opponents, the Sophists—especially Callicles and Thrasymachus

There seem to be many reasons for Nietzsche to have an interest in, and a sympathy for, the Greek Sophists. As a professor of classical philology Nietzsche certainly did not lack knowledge about them, and one of his contributions to classical philology was his critical edition of the *Certamen*, containing his arguments that it was written by the Sophist Alcidamas, a student of Gorgias, and not, as had previously been thought, during the late Hellenistic period. One of Nietzsche's major ancient interests was rhetoric, an area in which the Sophists, of course, played an important role.[24] Another interest was the pre-Socratic philosophers, which would also have included the Sophists. Between 1867 and 1871 Nietzsche compiled a detailed and massive index to twenty-four volumes of the classical philological journal *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie*, which included at least fourteen articles about the Sophists which Nietzsche must presumably have read.[25]

When we take Nietzsche's philosophy into consideration, our expectation about his interest in the Sophists increase still further. The most obvious similarities or kinship between Nietzsche's philosophy and that of the Sophists are: relativism and the denial of the distinction between a "real" and an "apparent" world; the denial of the distinction between a real and an apparent truth and knowledge (for example, in their rejection of Plato's distinction between *episteme* and *doxa*);

of Plato's distinction between *episteme* and *doxa*); skepticism in general and especially about morality; subjectivism; skepticism about religion; an interest in language and rhetoric; and an emphasis on the importance of power. The last point has led some commentators to identify some of Nietzsche's views with those of Callicles and Thrasymachus (see below). Furthermore, one might expect that Nietzsche's anti-Socratic and anti-Platonic views would make a sympathy with, or at least a discussion of, the Sophists very likely.

However, Nietzsche actually shows little interest in the Greek Sophists, and when he directs his attention toward them, it is often more in criticism than in praise.[26] In Nietzsche's several lists of his own intellectual predecessors—which include, for example, Heraclitus, Empedocles, and Anaxagoras—the Sophists are always missing, and in his almost countless references in praise of ancient Greek culture and of the "ancient Greek masters" the Sophists are absent in all, with the single exception of those from his last active year, 1888. Nietzsche's low degree of interest in the Sophists is, aside from his few references to them, evident in both his study "Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks" (*Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen*) and in his lectures "The pre-Socratic Philosophers" (*Die vorplatonischen Philosophen*), where he has chapters or sections dealing with the most important pre-Socratic philosophers, but none for Protagoras, Gorgias, or the Sophists as a group.[27] This lack of interest is just as apparent in his reading. In several books in his library Nietzsche has annotated pages near to, but not those actually dealing with, the Sophists. This is, for example, true for George Grote's *Geschichte Griechenlands* (6 volumes, 1850-1856). Then again, in his copy of Max Heinze's study *Der Eudämonismus in der griechischen Philosophie* (1883) Nietzsche has cut open the pages in the chapter dealing with Socrates, but not those dealing with the Sophists. This lack of interest can also be seen in the scarcity of Nietzsche's references to the Sophists before 1888, when he read Victor Brochard's *Les sceptiques grecs* (1887), as a result of which he made a few highly positive comments in praise of the Sophists in his last active year.

I believe that the reasons for this lack of interest included both the traditionally negative view of the Sophists up to and including the nineteenth century—after all, Sophist was a derogatory term—and the fact that their thinking was not well known. To put it another way, one could say that, on the whole, Nietzsche seems to have accepted the general view of the Sophists as superficial thinkers until 1888 and his reading of Brochard's study.

Sometimes it is claimed that Nietzsche's thinking was inspired by, and has affinities with, that of Callicles in Plato's *Gorgias* and of Thrasymachus in the *Republic*, especially their emphasis on power and egoism, and the view that "might is right."[28] This claim is, however, unlikely to be correct. For much of it seems to be based on a one-dimensional interpretation of the question. One is either for altruism or egoism, either for the many or the few, either for the weak or the strong, either for or against power and the powerful. With such a simplification, Nietzsche perhaps ends up being close to Callicles and Thrasymachus. But the question is much more complex, and Nietzsche, of course, realized this, and therefore did not sympathize with them, in spite of his skeptical attitude to Plato's attempted solution. There are four counter-arguments, of which the last is based on Nietzsche's references to these thinkers in his lecture-notes, which have not previously been fully utilized.

First, if Nietzsche had sympathized with Callicles and Thrasymachus, his lack of interest in the Sophists in general is, to say the least, remarkable. Instead, such a lack of interest implies that Nietzsche remained uninterested in or negatively disposed towards Callicles and Thrasymachus. Second, and more specifically, Nietzsche never mentions Callicles and Thrasymachus in his books, notes and letters—unlike, for example, Machiavelli, whom he mentions and praises—although he, of course, knew about them. This, too, makes it highly unlikely that he sympathized with them. He does not even, as is the case with Cesare Borgia, use them provocatively. Third, both Callicles and Thrasymachus argue that it is right to maximize one's own sensual pleasure (happiness), in other words, for a form of egoistic utilitarianism. Nietzsche may have agreed with them that there is no metaphysical justice and right, but he was nevertheless a severe critic of utilitarianism:

> Whether it be hedonism or pessimism or utilitarianism or eudaimonism: all these modes of thought which assess the value of things according to *pleasure* and *pain*, that is to say according to attendant and secondary phenomena, are foreground modes of thought and naiveties which anyone conscious of *creative* power and an artist's conscience will look down on with derision.(BGE §225)[29]

Instead, Nietzsche believed in self-development and self-overcoming (a supreme value for him). It is more likely that he regarded Callicles as a nihilist (that is, as holding no values), and/or as an anarchist/socialist/rebel, none of which is a position for which Nietzsche had any sympathy. Callicles' emphasis on the satisfaction of one's desires is, for Nietzsche, part of a slave-mentality and a slave-morality. In con-

trast to Callicles—who simply reverses the conventional moral position from one of altruism to one of egoism—Nietzsche sets up an alternative set of values for the best, the exceptions, the masters, values based on insight, sublimation, culture and self-development, and on having a will and a purpose.[30]

Finally, in Nietzsche's lecture-notes we do in fact on several occasions find references to Thrasymachus and to Callicles. Although it is often difficult to say with certainty where Nietzsche's own views and values are expressed in his lecture-notes, it certainly seems that he was critical of, and rejected, both of them and their philosophical positions. In his discussion and summary of Plato's *Republic*, Nietzsche speaks of Thrasymachus as follows: "A friend of long talking, greedy for money: represents the unbridled subject, a holy right does not exist, therefore he has a tendency to tyrannical order of rule. He is completely defeated and behaves then without honor" (*Freund langer Reden, geldgierig: vertritt das schrankenlose Subjekt, ein heiliges Recht giebt es nicht, daher neigt er zu tyrannischen Maßregeln. Er wird völlig überwunden u. benimmt sich dabei würdelos*)" (KGW 2.4, 56). This does appear to be the statement of someone who approves of Thrasymachus's argument. On the next page, where Nietzsche summarizes the first book of the *Republic*, he writes: "It examines what justice is *not*" (KGW 2.4, 57); in other words, Nietzsche does not accept Thrasymachus's argument about what justice is. Then again, in his lectures on Greek rhetoric ("Geschichte der griechischen Beredsamkeit"), Nietzsche discusses the historical Thrasymachus, and comments on the Platonic character Thrasymachus, describing him as being "arrogant, petty, stupid, impudent" (KGW 2.4, 374). This, too, suggests that Nietzsche did not support, or feel an affinity with, the Platonic Thrasymachus.

Nietzsche's rejection and critique of Callicles is even more clear and fundamental. In a section entitled "Plato as moralist [*Plato als Ethiker*]" he writes:

> The cardinal claim of the Sophists is the *identity* of ἡδύ [*hedu*, pleasure], the agreeable, and ἀγαθόν [*agathon*, the good]. This is especially clear in *Gorgias*: if Kallicles had to accept the difference between *hedu* and *agathon*, he would unwillingly have had to retreat also from all the other Sophistic claims. The evidence against the identity can be found in *Gorgias*, *Philebus* and the *Republic* [*Der Kardinalsatz der Sophisten ist die* Identität *von* hedu *angenehm und* agathon. *Klar wird dies besonders im Gorgias: hatte einmal Kallicles die Verschiedenheit von* hedu *u.* agathon *zugestehen müssen, so muß er unwillig zurückweichen, auch in*

> *allen übrigen Sätzen der Sophistik. Die Beweise gegen die Identität finden sich im Gorgias Philebus und Republik*] (KGW 2.4, 171).

After the quoted sentence, Nietzsche spends more than a full page on arguing, using apparently both his own and Plato's arguments, that pleasure is not identical with the good. Thus, Nietzsche seems not to have been influenced by, nor to have sympathized with, Thrasymachus and Callicles.

This examination of Nietzsche's knowledge of, and his statements regarding, Plato, shows that he was more informed about, but less engaged with, Plato than many have assumed and claimed. Although Nietzsche had an interest in and respect for the elusive person Plato, he made almost a caricature of Plato's philosophy—with little or no distinction between that philosophy, Platonism, and neo-Platonism—in order to use it as an example of a metaphysical position opposite to his own. Furthermore, Nietzsche also emphasized that Plato's thinking was fundamentally and primarily determined by moral and political concerns, but Nietzsche, after the mid-1870s, showed little interest in and sympathy for his political thinking. Finally, I have argued that Nietzsche was not influenced by, nor felt kinship with, the characters Callicles and Thrasymachus, used by Plato to present counter-positions to his own.[31]

## Notes

[1] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe: Werke* [BAW], vol. 2, 420-24.

[2] Nietzsche, *Kritische Gesamtausgabe: Briefwechsel*, vol. 1.4, 338.

[3] No notes by Nietzsche are extant from Jahn's course, "Plato's *Symposium*," and only a few pages from Schaarschmidt's course, "Plato's Life and Teaching." These notes have not yet been published, but are to be found in the Goethe-Schiller Archive in Weimar.

[4] The longest and most extensive direct discussion of Plato is in BAW 4, 93-97, where Nietzsche elaborates on Thrasyllus's edition of Plato's dialogues in the form of tetralogies—all as part of his study of Democritus.

[5] The most interesting notes are a few where Nietzsche asserts the contrast between Plato and Democritus, and claims that Plato wanted to burn Democritus's books. It is likely that Nietzsche here took sides against Plato, though that is not stated explicitly. Once he claims that Plato did not burn them, although he wanted to, since it was already too late, but that later Christianity had the texts destroyed. "This was the worst malice of supernaturalism" (BAW 3, 363; cf. 347). We can see that Nietzsche already at this early stage connects Plato and Platonism with Christianity, something that he also later did (for example, in the preface to *Beyond Good and Evil* of 1886).

[6] Compare his letter to Richard Wagner of 18 November 1871 (KSB 3, 245-46).

[7] Nietzsche's knowledge of Plato, at least after 1871, was so detailed and extensive that it is often difficult to determine when he later refers to, or briefly quotes or paraphrases, Plato, if this comes from reading at that time or from his previous knowledge. My argument here rests on a very conservative estimate of Nietzsche's continued reading of Plato, based mainly on the evidence of statements in his correspondence.

[8] Further examples of Nietzsche's comments in *Beyond Good and Evil* in praise of Plato include his reference to "this loveliest product of antiquity" (BGE Preface), his description of Plato's "strength" as "the greatest strength any philosopher has hitherto had to expend" (BGE §192), and his inclusion of Plato among the "royal and splendid hermits of the spirit" (BGE §204). That said, Nietzsche's references to Plato in his notes from 1886 do not reflect such a positive view of Plato. For further discussion, see Laurence Lampert's paper on "Nietzsche and Plato" in this volume, which offers an argument based on a reading of aphorisms from *Beyond Good and Evil.*

[9] In autumn 1887 he notes: "Plato zum Beispiel wird bei mir zur Carikatur" (KSA 12, 10[112], 521).

[10] This is the very first page of the lecture-notes. A similar statement is made about the relation between Plato and Kant, but in regard to morality and a moral "beyond," in a footnote on page 88. In his lectures entitled "Encyclopaedie der klassischen Philologie," first held in the summer of 1871 (and possibly repeated in 1873/1874), Nietzsche recommended philologists to study philosophy and to see the grand perspectives. For this he especially recommended the unity of Plato's and Kant's thinking, and he affirms their idealism.

[11] It is not known for certain if Nietzsche held his lectures on the pre-Socratic philosophers for the first time in the Winter semester 1869/1870 or during the summer semester 1872. He announced them for the first occasion, but seems not to have held them until the later one.

[12] Compare also his later comments about Plato as an ethical philosopher (KGW 2.4, 161 and 170).

[13] See, for example, his remarks that the Platonic dialectic can be boring or amusing, and that his dramatic power is often grossly estimated (KGW 2.4, 15 and 161). Most likely his praise in the introduction was merely conventional, and directed at his students, while the later views reflect more his own.

[14] See, for example, KGW 2.4, 16, 49 and 168.

[15] Bruce Detwiler, *Nietzsche and the Politics of Aristocratic Radicalism* (Chicago and London: U of Chicago P, 1990), 63 and 111.

[16] Plato, *Gorgias*, ed. E. R. Dodds (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1959; 1966), 388.

[17] Ofelia Schutte, *Beyond Nihilism: Nietzsche without Masks* (Chicago and London: U of Chicago P, 1984), 156.

[18] Mark Warren, *Nietzsche and Political Thought* (Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT P, 1988), 69. Warren also quotes a longer section from *The Antichrist*, §56, where Nietzsche discusses Manu.

[19] Henning Ottmann, *Philosophie und Politik bei Nietzsche* [Monographien und Texte zur Nietzsche-Forschung, 17] (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1987), 276-78.

[20] See Thomas Brobjer, "The Absence of Political Ideals in Nietzsche's Writings: The Case of the Laws of Manu and the Associated Caste-Society," *Nietzsche-Studien* 27 (1998): 300-18.

[21] Cf. KSA 13, 14[175], 14[204], 14[213], 362, 386-87, 390.

[22] See "Socialism with regard to its means" and "The evolution of the spirit feared by the state" (HA I §473 and §474), and "Can property be reconciled with justice?" (HA Wanderer and His Shadow §285).

[23] Nietzsche states: "I, the last *antipolitical* German," in a text which was long regarded as part of *Ecce Homo*, "Why I Am so Wise," §3, and as such published in earlier versions of that text and in the English translations of that work, but which now, in the critical edition of Nietzsche's works (KGW and KSA), has been replaced by another text and placed instead in the commentary volume (KSA 14, 472). In his letter to Erwin Rohde of 27 October1868, Nietzsche mentions the Biedermann family, from whom he was renting a room in Leipzig and with whom he ate dinner, and remarks on their political interests: "To my consolation, however, there is *hardly* any talk of politics, since I am no ζῷον πολιτικόν [*zoon politikon*] and against such things [politics] have a porcupine nature" (KSB 2, 331). Then again, in his letter to Theodor Curti of July/August 1882, he writes: "No man can in regard to *these* things [political-social questions] live *more* 'in a corner' than I: I never speak about them, I do not know the most well-known events and do not even read newspapers—I have even made a privilege out of all this!" (KSB 6, 241-42). And in his letter to Louise Ott of 7 November 1882, he asks: "Or do you advise me against coming to Paris? Is it not a place for hermits, for human beings who want to walk calmly around with a life-task and absolutely not worry about politics and the present age?" (KSB 6, 272).

[24] The Sophists are mentioned by Nietzsche in a scholarly manner in several of his lectures, for example, on Plato, on the pre-Socratic philosophers, on Aristotle's rhetoric, on the study of classical philology ("Encyclopaedie der klassischen Philologie"), on ancient rhetoric, etc. They are discussed most extensively in the lectures "Geschichte der griechischen Beredsamkeit" (held during the Winter semester of 1872/1873) (see KGW 2.4, 363-411; the Sophists are discussed on 370-84). Nietzsche here follows the classicist Friedrich Blass closely, whom he knew personally and whose books he possessed and are still to be found in his personal library.

[25] See Thomas Brobjer "Nietzsche's Forgotten Book: The Index to the *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie*," *New Nietzsche Studies* 4 (Summer/Fall 2000): 157-61.

[26] For a longer discussion of this point, see Thomas Brobjer, "Nietzsche's Disinterest and Ambivalence towards the Greek Sophists," *International Studies in Philosophy* 33 (Fall 2001): 5-23.

[27] For Nietzsche's lectures on the pre-Socratic philosophers, see KGW 2.4, 209-362. Nietzsche did not include the Sophists in these lectures, and he seems not to have intended to include them in his planned (but never executed) continuation of this series on the Socratic schools. Compare with his conclusion to the lecture-series on "Die vorplatonischen Philosophen" (KGW 2.4, 360-61).

[28] Most well known is probably E. R. Dodds's appendix in his edition of Plato's *Gorgias*, entitled "Socrates, Callicles, and Nietzsche" (387-91).

[29] Compare with the following *Nachlass* note: "Hence man does not act *due to happiness* or *due to utility* or to avoid discomfort [*Unlust*]: rather a *certain amount of power* is brought forth and reaches for a way to be released. That which one calls 'goal,' 'purpose' is in truth the *means* for this involuntary previous explosion. [...] *Eudaimonism*"—which for Nietzsche is equivalent to hedonism and utilitarianism—"is hence the result of *imperfect observation*. One does *not* act due to a will for pleasure: *that is, however, the illusion of the actor*" (KSA 10, 7[77], 268-70).

[30] Nietzsche does not reject egoism as such, but, consistent with having an alternative set of values, he judges every specific egoism according to the value of the one who is egoistical. See the section in *Twilight of the Idols* entitled "The natural value of egoism" (TI Expeditions §33).

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# On the Relationship of Alcibiades' Speech to Nietzsche's "Problem of Socrates"

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IN THIS ESSAY I will be arguing that, late in his career, Nietzsche viewed Socrates as the most profound exemplar of what he called a "Caesarian cultivator"—the strongest type of human being who can come to be in an age of cultural decline (BGE §207).[1] Rendering that somewhat controversial thesis plausible, however, is only the secondary goal of my essay. What, in the context of the governing theme of this volume, I am more interested in rendering plausible, is the interpretive method I employ to argue for that thesis. I will offer a reading of the "Problem of Socrates" section of *Twilight of the Idols* that stresses a profound intertextual relationship between Nietzsche's apparently polemical treatment of Socrates and the *Urbild* for any such apparent polemic against Socrates, Alcibiades' ambiguous encomium to Socrates in Plato's *Symposium*. We know from an essay written during his time at *Schulpforta*, entitled "On the Relationship of Alcibiades' Speech to the Other Speeches in Plato's *Symposium*," that the young Nietzsche considered Alcibiades' speech to be the key to understanding the *Symposium*. We also know that the dialogue was his professed *Lieblingsdichtung* at that time. Moreover, as James Porter has recently stressed, the *Symposium* provides "a virtual leitmotif" for *The Birth of Tragedy* and the *Nachlass* materials related to its creation.[2] I want to suggest that a similar intertextual relationship exists between Alcibiades' speech in the *Symposium* and the "Problem of Socrates" section of *Twilight of the Idols*—a work in which Nietzsche explicitly claims to be returning to the insights first expressed in *The Birth of Tragedy*. I will try to show, not only how a recognition of this intertextual relationship will help to undermine the polemical surface of Nietzsche's account and reveal a more complex critique of Socrates' relation to his culture and our culture; but also, how Nietzsche's argument helps us to uncover more or less subterranean currents in Plato's dialogue as well.

In "The Problem of Socrates," Nietzsche claims that the thought that the "wisest men of all times" are "types of decline" (*Niedergangs-*

*Typen*) first occurred to him in relation to Socrates and Plato, whom he had recognized in *The Birth of Tragedy* as decadents and symptoms of the decline in Greek tragic culture that had preceded them (TI Problem of Socrates §2). We know, however, from *Ecce Homo* that Nietzsche also conceived of himself as a decadent, necessarily related to the decadence of his time, while at the same time representing the strength to overcome or transform this decadence (EH Why I Am So Wise §1-§2). I suggest that we must understand Nietzsche's critique of Socrates' decadence as revealing the same bivalent character. But, in order to make this argument, we must first turn to the surface meaning of Nietzsche's critique, and in particular, to Nietzsche's reflection on Socrates' surfaces—to Socrates' ugliness, and to the beauty Alcibiades saw through Socrates, as through a shadow.

## Old and Young

Socrates' dying words in Plato's *Phaedo* are "Crito, we owe a cock to Asclepius," and "The Problem of Socrates" begins with Nietzsche's paraphrase and interpretation of these words: "Even Socrates said as he died, 'Living—that means being sick a long time. I owe a rooster to the savior Asclepius.'" For Nietzsche, it seems, Socrates' last words express the judgment that life is worthless, the same judgment, he says, reached by "the wisest sages of all time:" "Always and everywhere we have heard the same sound coming from their mouths—a sound full of doubt, full of melancholy, full of fatigue with life, full of hostility to life" (§1). This *consensus sapientium* regarding the worthlessness of life has seemed in the past a testament to the truth of this judgment. For Nietzsche, however, this agreement indicates something about the "wise": they share a common "physiological" type, a decadent type, and their judgment is a symptom of decay. Nietzsche writes:

> These wisest men of all ages—they should first be scrutinized closely. Were they all perhaps shaky on their legs? late? tottery? decadents? Could it be that wisdom appears on this earth as a raven, inspired by a little whiff of carrion? (§1)

What I would like to point out here is the way Nietzsche characterizes the decadence of the "wise" as a "physiological" senescence; he represents the corruption of the "wise" not only through the metaphor of illness, but also through the metaphor of old age. This metaphor points us in two directions, to two different senses Nietzsche gives to the meta-

phors of old age in his work. First, it reminds us of Nietzsche's lament in "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life" (1874) that the German culture of his time, as a *historical* culture, took as its model the "Alexandrian world" rather than the "original ancient Greek world of greatness" and that his contemporaries were "pupils of declining antiquity" (UM II §8). Instead of regarding themselves as "the heirs of the astonishing powers of antiquity," human beings of late modern historical culture "live as pale and stunted late descendants of strong races coldly prolonging their life as antiquarians and gravediggers." "Historical culture," Nietzsche writes, "is indeed a kind of inborn grey-hairedness, and those who bear its mark must instinctively believe in the *old age* of mankind" (UM II §8). As the rest of the history essay makes clear, what Nietzsche means when he refers to the congenital "old age" conferred by a historical culture on its members is the "ironic self-awareness" of oneself as a late and contingent product of a historical culture, a culture defined by great figures from its now distant past. In comparison with these paradigmatic figures, the human being of a historical culture looks, to himself as well as to his contemporaries, like a mere epigone:

> Late descendants of that sort do indeed live an ironic existence: annihilation follows at the heels of the limping gait of their life; they shudder at it when they rejoice in the past, for they are embodied memory yet their remembrance is meaningless if they have no heirs. Thus they are seized by the troubled presentiment that their life is an injustice, since there will be no future life to justify it. (UM II §8)

Nietzsche tentatively suggests later in the same passage that this sense of "lateness" is due, at least in part, to the residuum of Christian eschatology speaking through the mouthpiece of "historical culture":

> What is there in a couple of thousand years [...] which permits us to speak of the "youth" of mankind at the beginning and the "old age" of mankind at the end? Is there not concealed in this paralyzing belief that humanity is already declining a misunderstanding of a Christian theological idea inherited from the Middle Ages, the idea that the end of the world is coming, that we fearfully await the Last Judgment? (UM II §8)

Moreover, in a passage that calls to mind his claim in *The Birth of Tragedy* that the *dying* Socrates became the new ideal for noble Greek youth (BT §13), Nietzsche characterizes Christianity as a "religion which of all the hours of a man's life holds the last to be the most important, which prophesies an end to all life on earth and condemns all who live to live in the fifth act of a tragedy." "Christianity," according to Nietzsche, "re-

jects with a shrug everything still coming into being and smothers it in the awareness of being a latecomer and epigone, in short of being born grey-haired" (UM II §8).

Second, the metaphor points forward to a quite different sense of "old age" invoked in Nietzsche's treatment of the "genius" as the *genuine heir* to the powers of antiquity in the section of *Twilight of the Idols* entitled "Skirmishes of an Untimely Man." In aphorism 44, entitled "My Conception of Genius," Nietzsche maintains that Napoleon was able to become "the only master" in France because he was "the heir of a stronger, older, more ancient civilization that the one which was then perishing in France," and he continues:

> Great men are necessary; the age in which they appear is accidental; that they almost always become masters over their age is only because they are stronger, they are older, because for a longer time much was gathered for them. The relationship between a genius and his age is like that between strong and weak, or between old and young; the age is relatively always much younger, thinner, more immature, less assured, more childish. (TI Skirmishes §44)

Throughout Nietzsche's work, the defining characteristic of the "genius" is his relation to the time in which he lives. The ability of the genius to look toward the future enables him, even if he lives in a time of decline, to have a different relation to his past than the average human being of a historical culture. He, more than any of his contemporaries, is "embodied memory," but his "remembrance" is not meaningless, because he can see beyond the limits of his own time and culture to the future of humanity and the future possibility of great human beings. Even more than the historical man described in the history essay, the genius has an "ironic self-awareness" of the limitations of his time and his culture, but he can look beyond the limitations and contradictions of his own time and see these very limitations and contradictions as "a bridge" and "a great promise."

We can begin to understand the significance of Nietzsche's metaphor of old age for the problem of Socrates by turning briefly to an aphorism in *Beyond Good and Evil*, where we can see both of the above-mentioned senses of "old age" and "ironic self-awareness" at work in his account of Socrates as a philosopher in contradiction to his time:

> More and more it seems to me that the philosopher, being *of necessity* a man of tomorrow and the day after tomorrow, has always found himself, and *had* to find himself, in contradiction to his today: his enemy was ever the ideal of today. (BGE §212)

The way in which the philosopher opposed "the ideal of today," Nietzsche claims, was by exposing "how many lies lay hidden under the best honored type of their contemporary morality, how much virtue was *outlived*." According to Nietzsche, the representatives of this "outlived" (*überlebt*) virtue are "old" and "ironically self-aware" in the sense in which a man who self-consciously identifies with the values embodied in a historical culture is "old" and "ironic." All such men can do, as "conservatives," is point back, nostalgically, to a virtue in which they no longer really believe:

> In the age of Socrates, among men of fatigued instincts, among the conservatives of ancient Athens [*unter conservativen Altathenern*] who let themselves go—"toward happiness," as they said; toward pleasure, as they acted—and who all the while still mouthed the ancient pompous words to which their lives no longer gave them any right, *irony* may have been required for greatness of soul, that Socratic sarcastic assurance of the old physician and plebeian who cut ruthlessly into his own flesh, as he did into the flesh and heart of the "noble," with a look that said clearly enough: "Don't dissemble in front of me! Here—we are equal." (BGE §212)

It is clear in this passage both that Socrates' "irony" involves a kind of self-awareness, and that this "ironic self-awareness" is diametrically opposed to the debilitating self-consciousness of the historical man. On the contrary, it is a *"boshafte Sicherheit*," translated above as "sarcastic assurance," but more literally a "malicious certainty,"[3] and, far from being a source of weakness, it is, perhaps, a condition for greatness of soul.

According to Nietzsche in "The Problem of Socrates," the sages' pronouncement upon life shows more than their physiological degeneration. What these wise men have failed to grasp is that a judgment regarding the value of life "can, in the end, never be true: they have value only as symptoms," and he continues:

> One must by all means stretch out one's fingers and make the attempt to grasp this amazing finesse, *that the value of life cannot be estimated*. Not by the living, for they are an interested party, even a bone of contention, and not judges; not by the dead, for a different reason. (§2)

As Nietzsche writes later in the book: "One would have to occupy a position *outside* life, and on the other hand to know it as well as one, as many, as all who have lived it, in order to be allowed even to touch upon the problem of the *value* of life." Our values, Nietzsche argues, are expressions of a particular kind of life. When we posit values, "life itself is forcing us to posit values, life itself is valuing by means of us" (TI Moral-

ity as Anti-Nature §5). Merely to pose the question of the value of life shows the ignorance of the sages, their *lack of wisdom.* However, in enunciating this critique of the "wise men," Nietzsche indicates that he has somehow left the problem of Socrates behind.[4] "Indeed?" he asks, "all the great wise men—they were not only decadents but not wise at all? [*sie wären nicht einmal weise gewesen?*] But I return to the problem of Socrates" (TI Problem §2).

## Ugliness and Beauty

Nietzsche returns to the problem of Socrates by turning to Socrates' appearance, an appearance of commonness and ugliness. "Socrates belonged to the lowest class: Socrates was plebs. We know, we can still see for ourselves, how ugly he was" (§3). Socrates' ugliness, a sign of plebian descent, "in itself an objection, was among the Greeks almost a refutation"—which leads Nietzsche to the question, "was Socrates a Greek at all?" "Ugliness," Nietzsche tells us, "is often enough the expression of a development that has been crossed [*gekreuzt*], thwarted by crossing." Furthermore, Socrates' ugliness indicates his kinship to "a typical criminal." "Was Socrates," he asks, "a typical criminal?" (§3). In support of this contention, Nietzsche refers to a story, which seems to have originated in the lost Socratic dialogue *Zopyrus* of Phaedo of Ellis,[5] in which the Thracian physiognomist Zopyrus claims on the basis of Socrates' looks alone that Socrates had criminal instincts—"that he contained all bad vices and cravings within him." And in the story, Socrates admits as much.

The brute "physiognomy" of this characterization, capped off by Nietzsche's interpretation of Socrates' *daimonion* as an "auditory hallucinations," is, however, intentionally hyperbolic. The superficiality of the treatment, and our reaction to it, makes concrete Nietzsche's next point about Socrates. "Everything about him is exaggerated, *buffo*, a caricature; at the same time everything is concealed, ulterior, subterranean" (§4). While Nietzsche does not expand on this comment, he indicates its importance by linking it immediately to his effort to comprehend "what idiosyncrasy" was the source of the Socratic equation reason = virtue = happiness (*Vernunft* = *Tugend* = *Glück*), "that most bizarre of all equations" that is opposed to all the instincts of the earlier Hellenes.

Nietzsche's emphasis on the distinction between what is comical and what is covert in his attempt to understand Socrates and Socrates' profound influence on his contemporaries has, as I have suggested, a specific

Platonic precedent: it seems almost to paraphrase Alcibiades' encomium to Socrates in Plato's *Symposium*. Here Alcibiades offers his praise of Socrates by means of a likeness (*di' eikonon*); he likens both Socrates and his speeches to the statues of Sileni and satyrs sold in the marketplace which, when split down the middle, reveal tiny statues of the gods. This parallel reminds us at once of the two most famous examples of Socrates' power to enchant noble Athenians, of Alcibiades and Plato, and thus indicates to us a wrinkle in the surface of Nietzsche's account of Socrates' ugliness. In aphorism 20 of "Skirmishes of an Untimely Man," Nietzsche writes, "nothing is ugly except the degenerating man," and he continues: "Every suggestion of exhaustion, of heaviness, of age, of weariness; every kind of lack of freedom, such as cramps, such as paralysis [...] all evoke the same reaction, the value-judgment, 'ugly'" (TI Skirmishes §20).

The ugliness of degeneration, Nietzsche tells us, inspires hatred in the person who perceives it. This hatred, however, is not described as directed at an individual, but rather to the degeneration of a human type. "Here," Nietzsche writes, "a feeling of *hatred* leaps forth: whom do human beings hate here? But there is no doubt: they *hate the decline of their type* [*Niedergang seines Typus*]" (TI Skirmishes §20). We are thus confronted with a paradox in Nietzsche's account of Socrates' ugliness. Ugliness, Nietzsche says, inspires hatred; however, according to Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Socrates inspired "ardent devotion" in Plato (BT §13) and, according to the *Symposium*, in Alcibiades. Moreover, a number of deliberate parallels between Nietzsche's treatment of Socrates in "The Problem of Socrates" and his treatment later in *Twilight* of Julius Caesar—whom he calls "the most beautiful type" (TI Skirmishes §38)—render questionable the apparent force of Nietzsche's account of Socrates' ugliness [6] If Socrates' ugliness did not provoke in Plato and Alcibiades a hatred of *Socrates* himself as "the decline of their type," towards whom was their hatred directed? Alcibiades' speech in the *Symposium* suggests that the ugliness he confronted in association with Socrates belonged less to Socrates than to Alcibiades himself, and that the hatred Socrates inspired in Alcibiades was a hatred directed towards what was degenerate in Alcibiades. In the *Symposium*, Plato has Alcibiades say this of Socrates:

> He compels me to agree that, although still lacking much myself, I take no care for myself and busy myself with the affairs of the Athenians. So I forced myself to stop my ears and take flight, as if from the Sirens, in order that I might not sit here and grow old beside him. I have experienced before this human being alone something that no one would

> have believed that I had in me—to feel shame before any one at all. Only before him do I feel shame. (*Symp.* 216a-216c)

The word translated in this passage as "to feel shame" is a form of the verb *aischunô*, related to the noun *aischos*, which can be translated as "shame, dishonor" or as "ugliness, deformity."

In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche places Socrates among those philosophers who oppose themselves to the ideal of their "today" by ruthlessly exposing "how much virtue was *outlived*," bringing to light the difference between "the ancient pompous words" which their contemporaries still mouthed and the lives which no longer gave them any right to these words (BGE §212). Socrates exposed the contradiction between the ideals through which a young nobleman such as Alcibiades justified and glorified his existence and the actual life Alcibiades led; thus Socrates made it seem to Alcibiades, as Alcibiades says in the *Symposium*, that his life as he had led it was not worth living (*Symp.* 216a1). This, it seems, is the key to understanding Nietzsche's account of Socrates' "ugliness," and its implicit relation to the beauty Alcibiades claims to have seen "inside" that ugliness. In Nietzsche's terms from *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Socrates was the outward manifestation of the *bad conscience* of his time. In the company of Socrates, those noble youths who associated with him were able to catch a glimpse of "the delight in imposing a form on oneself," the "uncanny, dreadfully joyous labor of a soul voluntarily at odds with itself" (GM II §18). And thereby they received as well a glimpse of "beauty," through a consciousness of their own "ugliness." "After all," Nietzsche writes, "what would be 'beautiful' if the contradiction had not become conscious of itself, if the ugly had not first said to itself: 'I am ugly'?" (GM II §18).

In the *Symposium*, Alcibiades claims that, although he offers his likeness of Socrates for the sake of truth, it will most likely be mistaken for ridicule. Nietzsche's "The Problem of Socrates" seems to offer just such a likeness of Socrates. It is, like Alcibiades' speech, a qualified praise of Socrates that allows itself to be taken for ridicule. In fact, the movement of Nietzsche's argument seems to walk in the shadow of Alcibiades' speech; Nietzsche uses Alcibiades' speech as a stalking-horse in his hunt for Socrates and Plato, and his argument follows Alcibiades' lead as he turns from Socrates' comic looks to his comic looking speeches. According to Nietzsche, "with Socrates Greek taste changes in favor of dialectics," and he asks: "What really happened there?" It seems easy enough for to Nietzsche to *describe* what happened: "above all," he writes, "a *noble* taste is thus vanquished; with dialectics the plebs come to the top"

(TI Problem §5). "Dialectical manners," which seem equivalent in this passage to "presenting one's reasons" for acting as one acts, were considered *bad manners* before Socrates; they were distrusted. Moreover, they were considered ineffectual and ridiculous: "Wherever authority still forms a part of good bearing, where one does not give reasons but commands, the dialectician is a kind of buffoon: one laughs at him, one does not take him seriously" (§5). But Nietzsche immediately makes clear to us that this *description* is superficial and has not really answered the question. For Socrates "was the buffoon who *got himself taken seriously*." So Nietzsche asks once more: "What really happened there?"

Again the comparison with Alcibiades' speech proves instructive. Alcibiades offers an account of how Socrates was able to persuade, how he *seduced*, not only Alcibiades, but other noble Athenians as well. He likens Socrates not only to statues of satyrs, but also to the satyr Marsyas. Marsyas composed melodies which, because they were divine, had the same power to possess and to reveal who was in need of initiatory rights, whether they were played by a great musician or the poorest one. Socrates' words, like Marsyas's melodies, amaze and possess, even if they are transmitted by a very poor speaker; Socrates surpasses Marsyas, however, because he needs no flute to charm his auditors, he accomplishes his seduction with words alone (*Symp.* 215b-d). Where Nietzsche claims that, before Socrates, no-one took the dialectician seriously, Alcibiades claims that "whenever we hear the speeches of anyone else, no matter how good a speaker he is, just about no one gets concerned." But whenever anyone hears Socrates' speeches, whether spoken by Socrates or by any other speaker, no matter how poor, the auditor is awestruck. This is because, Alcibiades claims, Socrates' speeches, as much as Socrates himself, resemble the Sileni found in the marketplace; their brutish and comical outer hide conceals a divine inner core.

Alcibiades does not know if anyone else has "opened" Socrates up and seen the little gods inside him, but he claims that he glimpsed them one day and thought them divine and golden, perfectly beautiful and amazing. However, if one reviews the details of Alcibiades' speech, it is in no way clear that he has seen anything in Socrates other than the inverted mirror of his own ugliness. Alcibiades does not recall, for example, his own experience of a Socratic speech whose coarse outer covering revealed, on reflection, a profound insight. The story Alcibiades recounts of his own glimpse at Socrates' inner gods is, rather, the story of Socrates' resistance to Alcibiades' profound physical charms. The beauty Alcibiades sees is a godlike moderation (*sôphrosunê*) he attributes to Socrates; Socrates shows himself to be divine, Alcibiades claims, because he de-

spises (*kataphronei*) whatever wealth, honors, or physical beauty a man may have, even that of the most beautiful and honored Athenian of his time, Alcibiades himself. In Nietzsche's terms, what Alcibiades sees in Socrates, what Socratic irony mirrors for Alcibiades, is Alcibiades' own degeneration, the contradictions in his soul transformed into an ideal. Alcibiades sees in Socrates not Socrates' own moderation, but a moderation which is the negation and critique of his own immoderate soul; what Alcibiades loves in Socrates is the complement of the hate he feels for what is ugly in himself. In Plato's terms, the same thought could be expressed this way: Socrates' effect on Alcibiades seems to be the converse of the *elenchus* he carries out with Agathon. Socrates makes Agathon admit that, insofar as love loves and desires the beautiful, love lacks and does not have the beautiful (*endeês ar' esti kai ouk echei ho Erôs kallos*) (201b2). Conversely, in Alcibiades' case, insofar as Socrates makes Alcibiades see that he is deficient, that he is very much lacking something (*hoti pollou endeês ôn*) (216a6), Alcibiades sees that which he lacks as something he loves and desires; that is, he sees it transformed into a vision of the beautiful.

The contempt that Alcibiades sees in Socrates for wealth, honor, and physical beauty does not, however, only inspire praise for Socrates' godlike moderation. It also inspires him to call Socrates an insolent (*hubristês*), a charge which would be a clear condemnation in the mouth of just about anyone *but* Alcibiades. Nietzsche follows Alcibiades here as well, when he asks:

> Is the irony of Socrates and expression of revolt? Of plebian *ressentiment*? [...] Does he *avenge* himself on the noble people whom he fascinates? As a dialectician one holds a merciless tool in one's hands; one can become a tyrant by means of it; one compromises those one conquers. (TI Problem §7)

According to Nietzsche, the dialectician renders the intellect of his opponent powerless. Moreover, both Nietzsche and Alcibiades claim that Socrates could not be refuted (BT §13; *Symp.* 216b3; cf. *Prot.* 335c3). Yet, once again, Nietzsche indicates that this is not the whole story: "Indeed? Is dialectic only a form of *revenge* in Socrates?"

## Agon and Eros

The next section of "The Problem of Socrates" opens: "I have given to understand how it was that Socrates could repel: it is therefore all the

more necessary to explain his fascination" (§8). He begins to explain Socrates' fascination by claiming, in quick succession, that "he discovered a new kind of *agon*," and that "Socrates was also a great erotic." That there is a connection between these two claims is implied by the fact that they are included together in one short aphorism, the second shortest in "The Problem of Socrates." Moreover, despite the few words that are devoted to the claim that Socrates discovered a *new kind* of *agon*, that is, a new kind of struggle for mastery, the importance of this claim for Nietzsche can hardly be overestimated. For together these two claims point us towards Nietzsche's conception of the will to power, and the connection between conscience, mastery, and affirmation, and thereby they indicate that Socrates belongs with the Jews (cf. §6) and Nietzsche himself as revaluers of all values. The internal connection and necessary relation between agonism and eros can be seen, first, in Nietzsche's claims about the relation between Judaism and Christianity in *On the Genealogy of Morals*:

> From the trunk of that tree of vengefulness and hatred, Jewish hatred—the profoundest and sublimest kind of hatred, capable of creating ideals and reversing values, the like of which had never existed on earth before—there grew something equally incomparable, a *new love*, the profoundest and sublimest kind of love—and from what other trunk could it have grown? One should not imagine it grew up as the denial of that thirst for revenge, as the opposite of Jewish hatred! No, the reverse is true! That love grew out of it as its crown, as its triumphant crown spreading itself farther and farther into the purest brightness and sunlight, driven as it were into the domain of light and the heights in pursuit of the goals of that hatred—victory, spoil, and seduction [...]. (GM I §8)

Second, it links Socrates to Nietzsche's own confrontation with Christianity and "Platonism." In the preface to *Beyond Good and Evil* he writes:

> But the fight against Plato or, to speak more clearly and for "the people," the fight against the Christian-ecclesiastical pressure of millennia—for Christianity is Platonism for "the people"—has created in Europe a magnificent tension of the spirit the like of which has never yet existed on earth: with so tense a bow we can now shoot for the most distant goals. (BGE Preface)

## Socrates' Self-Mastery

With these connections to the Judeo-Christian "slave revolt in morals," and to Nietzsche's own hopes for a revaluation of all values, we come to the essential issue in Nietzsche's confrontation with Socrates—Socrates' relation to his age and culture. And in the next aphorism of "The Problem of Socrates," Nietzsche expands his reflection on Socrates' power to fascinate to include this relation:

> But Socrates guessed even more. He saw *through* his noble Athenians: he comprehended that his own case, his idiosyncrasy, was no longer an exception. The same kind of degeneration was quietly developing everywhere; old Athens was coming to an end. And Socrates understood that all the world *needed* him—his means, his cure, his personal artifice of self-preservation. Everywhere the instincts were in anarchy; everywhere one was within five paces of excess [*fünf Schritt weit vom Exzeß*]: *monstrum in animo* was the general danger. "The impulses want to play the tyrant; one must invent a *counter-tyrant* who is stronger." (TI Problem §9)

Nietzsche then returns to the story about Zopyrus, the Thracian physiognomist. When Zopyrus told Socrates that his features proclaimed him to be "a cave of bad appetites," Socrates "let slip a word which is the key to his character." Socrates said that Zopyrus was right, all the vices Zopyrus saw in his features were, in fact, native to him. But Socrates tells Zopyrus that he has mastered them all. "*How*," Nietzsche asks, "did Socrates become master over himself?" (§9)

As I have indicated above, Nietzsche's description of Socrates and Socrates' relation to his age in this aphorism is almost identical to his description of Julius Caesar and Caesar's relation to his age in aphorism 38 of "Skirmishes of an Untimely Man." This aphorism is entitled "My Conception of Freedom," and it begins with Nietzsche's familiar critique of the "leveling" tendency of liberal democratic institutions, institutions which, he claims, become illiberal as soon as they are firmly established:

> Their effects are known well enough: they undermine the will to power; they level mountain and valley, and call that morality; they make men small, cowardly, and hedonistic—every time it is the herd animal that triumphs with them. (TI Skirmishes §38)

However, Nietzsche argues, liberal institutions have the opposite effect when they are still being fought for, because war educates for freedom:

> For what is freedom? That one has the will to assume responsibility for oneself. That one maintains the distance that separates us. That one becomes more indifferent to difficulties, hardships, privation, even to life itself. (§38)

And it is in this context that Nietzsche describes Julius Caesar and his age in words which directly parallel his description of Socrates:

> The highest type of free men should be sought where the highest resistance is constantly overcome: five steps from tyranny [*fünf Schritte weit von der Tyrannei*], close to the threshold of the danger of servitude. This is true psychologically if by "tyrants" are meant inexorable and fearful instincts that provoke the maximum of authority and discipline against themselves; most beautiful type: Julius Caesar. (§38)

These two related aphorisms about Socrates and Caesar, and their relation to their times, point us toward another two related aphorisms in *Beyond Good and Evil*, which will make clear both how radical, if covert, Nietzsche's praise of Socrates is, and how closely Nietzsche links his conception of his own philosophical task to his understanding of Socrates.

First, in aphorism 200 of *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche describes what kind of human beings can come to be in "an age of disintegration that mixes races indiscriminately." The boundaries of a "race," in this passage, are defined for Nietzsche primarily by the dominance within some group of a given mode of valuation. Hence what Nietzsche is interested in here, when he writes of races being mixed, is the collision of disparate modes of valuation, a collision that brings with it a debilitating skepticism concerning the legitimacy of any values as such. In such an age and culture, Nietzsche argues, human beings are in themselves battlegrounds for "opposite, and often not merely opposite, drives and value standards that fight each other and rarely permit each other any rest" (BGE §200). Torn by these opposite values and drives, such human beings will be, on average, weaker than the human beings that preceded them. "Their most profound desire," Nietzsche writes, "is that the war they *are* should come to an end." However, this war in oneself can have profoundly different meanings for another type of human being, a stronger type that appears in precisely the same ages as the weaker type and owes its origin to the same causes:

> But when the opposition and war in such a nature have the effect of one more charm and incentive of life—and if, moreover, in addition to his powerful and irreconcilable drives, a real mastery and subtlety in waging war against oneself, in other words, self-control, self-outwitting [*Selbst-Überlistung*], has been inherited or cultivated, too—then those

> magical, incomprehensible, and unfathomable ones arise, those enigmatic men predestined for victory and seduction, whose most beautiful expression is found in Alcibiades and Caesar [...]. (BGE §200)

In this aphorism, Alcibiades joins Julius Caesar as the human beings in whom one finds the "most beautiful" expression of the stronger type of human being in an age of degeneration. The most beautiful expression, Nietzsche writes, not the greatest or most profound expression, for it is in Socrates, it seems, that one must find the greatest and most profound expression of this type of human being.[7] It is Socrates who was "the extreme case" of inexorable and fearful instincts at war with one another; who, nonetheless, learned to master his instincts, and seemed to offer the promise of this self-mastery to others; who was, Nietzsche tells us in *The Birth of Tragedy*, "thoroughly enigmatical, unclassifiable, and inexplicable" (BT §13); and whom, in the final aphorism of "The Problem of Socrates," he calls "this most brilliant of all self-outwitters" (*dieser Klügste aller Selbst-Überlister*) (§12).

There is more evidence in *Twilight of the Idols* that seems to support the claim that Socrates is Nietzsche's exemplar for this stronger type of human being in an age of decline. Nietzsche ends "The Problem of Socrates" with a claim about the wisdom of Socrates' courage to die, and it seems that his description later on of the right kind of death—"death freely chosen, death at the right time, brightly and cheerfully accomplished amid children and witnesses" (TI Skirmishes §36)— can only be a reference to Socrates' death as described in the *Phaedo*.[8] Even Nietzsche's question about whether Socrates was a "typical criminal" (*ein typischer Verbrecher*) (TI Problem §3) seems to be, in the context of *Twilight of the Idols*, covert praise of Socrates.[9] If this interpretation is correct, however, it seems we are left with a number of questions. First, what remains of Nietzsche's critique of Socrates, that is, why is Socrates still a "problem" rather than a solution? Second, what is the significance of Nietzsche's claim that we find in Alcibiades and Caesar more beautiful, though less profound, expressions of the stronger type than Socrates? Finally, why does Nietzsche conceal his praise of Socrates behind such antagonist surfaces, and how does this relate to how he conceives the difference between the rhetorical needs of Socrates' time and his own decadent era? The answers to these questions will, however, have to wait for another occasion.

## Notes

[1] Werner Dannhauser, Pierre Hadot, Walter Kaufmann, and Alexander Nehamas are among the recent commentators who have argued that Nietzsche's thought was decisively influenced by his confrontation with Socrates. Hadot, in his essay *The Figure of Socrates,* suggests a line of interpretation which is similar to the one I will pursue here, when he writes, following Bertram, that "one of Nietzsche's masks was certainly Socrates himself; [...] the same Socrates who, he tells us, 'is so close to me, that I am almost always fighting with him.'" However, Hadot does not explicate precisely in what way Socrates was a "mask" for Nietzsche, or what kind of "mask" he was. Nor do any of the above authors give an adequate account of the dual character of Nietzsche's rhetoric in his critique of Socrates in the late works. In particular, those authors who claim that Nietzsche identifies with Socrates do not adequately account for the polemical surface of the treatment of Socrates in *Twilight of the Idols.* In this context, it is Kaufmann's interpretation, and Dannhauser's response to that interpretation, that I have profited from the most. My article can be seen as an attempt to defend an interpretation of Nietzsche's account of Socrates that is similar in many respects to Kaufmann's against Dannhauser's claim that "Kaufmann's interpretation suffers from a neglect of the obvious and massive surface meaning of Nietzsche." See Ernst Bertram, *Nietzsche, Versuch einer Mythologie* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1985); Pierre Hadot, "The Figure of Socrates," in *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, trans. M. Chase (Oxford : Blackwell, 1995), 147-78 (151); Werner J. Dannhauser, *Nietzsche's View of Socrates* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1974); Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1988), 391-411; and Alexander Nehamas, *The Art of Living: Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1999), 128-56.

[2] James I. Porter, *The Invention of Dionysus: An Essay on the Birth of Tragedy*, (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2000), 111.

[3] Compare with *On the Genealogy of Morals*, where the "great health" of the "*redeeming* man of great love and contempt" is described as "a kind of sublime wickedness, an ultimate, supremely self-confident mischievousness in knowledge" (*einer Art sublimer Bosheit selbst, eines letzen selbstgewissesten Muthwillens der Erkenntniss*) (GM II §24).

[4] See Dannhauser, *Nietzsche's View of Socrates*, 210.

[5] See Charles H. Kahn, *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue: The Philosophical Use of a Literary Form* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge UP, 1998), 10.

[6] Compare: "Everywhere the instincts were in anarchy; everywhere one was within five paces of excess [*fünf Schritt weit vom Exzeß*]: *monstrum in animo* was the general danger. 'The impulses want to play the tyrant; one must invent a *counter-tyrant* who is stronger'" (TI Problem §9), with: "The highest type of free men should be sought where the highest resistance is constantly overcome: five steps from tyranny [*fünf Schritte weit von der Tyrannei*], close to the threshold of the danger of servitude. This is true psychologically if by 'tyrants' are meant inexorable and fearful instincts that provoke the maximum of authority and discipline against themselves" (TI Skirmishes §38). I return to these passages later on in my essay. See also §31, where Nietzsche's

account of the regimen "by which Julius Caesar protected himself against sickliness" calls to mind Alcibiades' description of Socrates on campaign (*Symp.* 219e ff.).

[7] The suggestion that Alcibiades plays the role of a metonymic substitute for Socrates in this aphorism gains force when we compare with a passage from Nietzsche's notebooks from the time of the composition of *Beyond Good and Evil.* In this note it is Socrates, rather than Alcibiades, who is placed in the company of Caesar, Leonardo da Vinci, and Friedrich II, and the note deals with precisely the contrast we have been focusing on between surface and depth in Nietzsche's understanding of Socrates: "I think that I sense [*Ich glaube zu fühlen*] that Socrates was deep—his irony was above all the necessity of appearing superficial, so that he could have dealings with human beings at all—; that Caesar had depth; perhaps also the Hohenstaufen Friedrich II: certainly Leonardo da Vinci; to no small degree Pascal, who died only thirty years too early to laugh to scorn, out of his magnificent wicked soul, Christianity itself, as he had done earlier in his youth to the Jesuits" (KSA 11, 34[148], 470). In his discussion of this aphorism, Kaufmann perceptively comments on the "enigmatic reference to Alcibiades—in a place where one might expect the mention of Socrates" (Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, 294, n. 10).

[8] See Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, 403; and Xenophon's *Apology of Socrates*, 7.

[9] In an aphorism in "Skirmishes of an Untimely Man" entitled "The Criminal and What is Related to Him," Nietzsche describes "the criminal type" (*der Verbrecher-Typus*) as "the type of the strong human being under unfavorable circumstances: a strong human being made sick" (TI Skirmishes §45). The criminal, on Nietzsche's account, is a human being of powerful drives and instincts who, in "our tame, mediocre, emasculated society," comes to experience his characteristic way of being with suspicion and fear, because "he always harvests only danger, persecution, and calamity from his instincts." This leads, in the case of the criminal, to "physiological degeneration." However, Nietzsche also describes in this aphorism how "all innovators of the spirit" must experience within themselves this same conflict with the dominant values of their time and pass through a stage of development which brings them in proximity to "that type which is perfected by the criminal." The conclusion of this aphorism makes clear that Nietzsche is referring to the same individuals he refers to in *Beyond Good and Evil* as "Caesarian cultivators" (BGE §207): "Almost every genius knows, as one stage of his development, the 'Catilinarian existence'—a feeling of hatred, revenge, and rebellion against everything which already *is*, which no longer *becomes.* Catiline—the form of pre-existence of *every* Caesar" (TI Skirmishes §45).

# Section 4

# Contestations

# Dionysus versus Dionysus

*Dylan Jaggard*

OVER TIME NIETZSCHE was to change his mind about a number of things he had fervently advocated in his first book *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872). His enthusiasm for Wagner's operas and his advocacy of Schopenhauer's metaphysics of the will were the two most notable follies of Nietzsche's youth. One thing the later Nietzsche claimed he had definitely got right in this book, however, was his understanding of the Dionysian. I will argue in this article that, although there are certain continuities between Nietzsche's early and later characterizations of Dionysus, there are a number of very important differences. I shall look at Nietzsche's account of the Dionysian in *The Birth of Tragedy*, argue that this early conception is fundamentally a metaphysical conception, and examine Nietzsche's rejection of metaphysical activity in *Human, All Too Human*. Finally, I shall offer an account of Nietzsche's later conception of the Dionysian and his attempts to match up this conception with his earlier understanding. I want to argue that Nietzsche's later Dionysus is in some respects radically different from the one that featured in his early book on tragedy.

## The Early Nietzsche and Dionysus

In *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche offers an account of the origins of tragedy in ancient Greece. He begins the book by identifying two different aesthetic tendencies in nature (BT §1). The first of these tendencies manifests itself naturally within dreams. Our dreams offer up a range of appearances that are representations of the real waking world. Nietzsche calls this first natural aesthetic tendency the Apollonian, after Apollo, the Greek deity said to preside over such natural phenomena. Nietzsche characterizes the domain of the Apollonian as the domain of images and illusions. When this natural tendency is given artistic expression, it gives birth to the plastic arts of sculpture and painting, and also the literature

of epic poetry. According to Nietzsche, dreams represent reality and the plastic arts and epic poetry represent dreams. The second natural aesthetic tendency that Nietzsche identifies manifests itself during states of intoxication. This tendency is called the Dionysian and is named after Dionysus, the Greek god of wine. Nietzsche conceives the essence of the Dionysian in terms of the breaking down of the barriers of individuation. During Dionysian festivals the individual is swept along by a wave of intoxication. They temporally lose all consciousness of their own self and instead become one with the primal unity that the early Nietzsche takes to be the essence of reality. This natural Dionysian tendency is given artistic expression in music, which Nietzsche contends offers us a representation of the inner being of the world.

These two natural aesthetic tendencies correspond roughly to Schopenhauer's characterization of the world as both representation and will.[1] The world as representation is a world of mere appearances. The world as will is the world as it truly is in itself. The Apollonian sphere incorporates all that belongs to the world as representation. In this realm we find individual objects such as tables and chairs, as well as individual human beings. This realm, according to Schopenhauer, is essentially an illusion. We are all not, in fact, separately existing human beings at all. Rather, we are simply the phenomenal manifestation of a universal will. It is this will that Schopenhauer thinks is the essence of reality proper. For the early Nietzsche, the Dionysian sphere corresponds to the realm of this primal will. Nietzsche further borrows from Schopenhauer the belief that music offers us a representation of the essential nature of the reality that lies beyond the illusionary phenomenal realm. Nietzsche tells us, "music is distinguished from all the other arts by the fact that it is not a copy of the phenomenon, [...] but an immediate copy of the will itself" (BT §16). Unlike Dionysian states of intoxication, then, Dionysian music does not give us direct access to the will. However, Nietzsche has a tendency to speak of music as if it actually gives us such direct access. The Dionysian state, whether in the form of intoxication or of music, enables us briefly to understand that our individuality is an illusion and that we are all in fact part of the same primal unity. Nietzsche therefore identifies the Dionysian with the truth, and the Apollonian with deception.

What these aesthetic tendencies do for human beings, Nietzsche contends, is to provide relief from the suffering that is inherent in the human condition. What, we might wonder, is the cause of this suffering? Nietzsche seems to suggest that the fact that we are individuated means that we are essentially divided from the primal unity that is the essence of who we are. This separation is the cause of our suffering. Dionysus him-

self was torn apart by the Titans, and Nietzsche uses this image of the suffering god to represent human suffering. He writes, "we are [...] to regard the state of individuation as the origin and primal cause of all suffering, as something objectionable in itself" (BT §10). This is not the whole story, however, for Nietzsche also talks of the "pain and contradiction" of the primal unity itself (BT §5). The pain suffered by the primal unity clearly cannot be due to its being individuated because it is by its very definition a unified being. This necessary unity also makes rather mysterious the nature and identity of the possible contradictions to which the primal unity might be subject. Nietzsche does not appear to give us any clues that might answer these concerns. He does, though, tell us something about how the primal unity overcomes its suffering. It does so by creating distracting illusions the contemplation of which allows it to forget its pain and contradiction. These distracting illusions make up the phenomenal world that we as individuated human beings inhabit. As Nietzsche puts it, "we may assume that we are merely images and artistic projections for the true author, and that we have our highest dignity in our significance as works of art—for it is only as an *aesthetic phenomenon* that existence and the world are eternally *justified*" (BT §5).

How does art help us mere mortals to overcome the suffering caused by our individuation? Apollonian art aids us by providing us with distracting images, the contemplation of which enables us to forget about our sorry condition. These images are illusions that seduce us and lead us away from the terrible truth of our individuated existence. According to Nietzsche, the epic poets created the Olympian gods with the express purpose of enabling the Greeks, not merely to bear their existence, but rather to love it (BT §3). The Apollonian arts, then, relieve us of our suffering using the same method that the primordial will uses to relieve its suffering. In contrast, the Dionysian art of music enables us to contemplate the primordial oneness of all individuated being. It does this by pulling us away from the phenomenal realm so that we can gain access to the realm of things as they are in themselves. While the Apollonian relieves us of the suffering caused by our illusionary individuation via the creation of deeper illusions, the Dionysian temporarily quenches our thirst for unity by offering us sips of the draught of primordial oneness. Nietzsche tells us: "I see Apollo as the transfiguring genius of the *principium individuationis* through which alone the redemption in illusion is truly to be obtained; while by the mystical triumphant cry of Dionysus the spell of individuation is broken and the way lies open to the Mother of Being, to the innermost heart of things" (BT §16). In other words, the Apollonian and the Dionysian pull us in opposite directions. This is why

Nietzsche characterizes their relationship as antagonistic. Yet what they aim to achieve is the same thing, namely, the relief of human suffering.

Yet there is a problem with Nietzsche's Dionysian solution to suffering. Nietzsche believes that, once we have experienced the unity that is found in Dionysian states, we can, when we return to our separate existence, be overcome by feelings of nausea (BT §7). This occurs both during states of extreme intoxication and when we listen to especially emotive music. He suggests that, if someone of a particularly sensible disposition were just to listen to the music of the Third Act of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*, they might well expire (BT §21). According to Nietzsche, after one has experienced a taste of the primal oneness of all being, one cannot bear to go on living as a mere individual. From now on refer I shall to this as the "Dionysian Problem." Nietzsche's solution to this problem is to be found in his account of tragic theatre. The Dionysian Problem is, however, not the only difficulty that Nietzsche has to confront in his discussion of tragedy. There is also the age-old aesthetic question of why it should be pleasurable to watch the horrific events that unfold during the enactment of tragic theatre. And I shall call this problem, for reasons that will soon become apparent, the "Apollonian Problem."

According to Nietzsche, tragic theatre is the offspring of the temporary union of the Dionysian and the Apollonian. The Dionysian Problem—that of the nausea and resignation experienced after Dionysian states—is solved by the Apollonian elements found in tragedy. The Apollonian Problem—the question why it is pleasurable to witness a tragedy—is solved by the Dionysian elements found in tragedy. The chorus of tragic theatre is a product of Dionysian forces; it is a representation of the reunification of the individual with primordial oneness. The chorus, although made up of different individuals, speaks and moves as one entity. The presence of this chorus causes the audience to imagine themselves transformed into satyrs, the mythical followers of Dionysus. As a result of the musical chants of the chorus, the audience not only feels itself united as one, it also begins to feel as if it were in the presence of Dionysus himself. In order that Dionysus might actually phenomenally appear, though, the Apollonian element must also play its role. The chorus and the audience, aided by Apollo, are able to behold the appearance of Dionysus. This vision of the god is a harmonious combination of the Apollonian and the Dionysian. Without Apollo, the god of images, Dionysus could not appear. Nor would his appearance be possible without the Dionysian music of the chorus providing the original model for this appearance. The Apollonian vision is merely a representation in visual form of the Dionysian sounds (BT §8).

Nietzsche holds that, in Greek tragic theatre, Dionysus appears masked on the stage in the guise of the tragic hero (BT §10). The pain and suffering felt by the tragic hero is merely a manifestation of the pain and suffering felt by the god himself. Hence, for Nietzsche, the tragic hero represents to the members of the audience the horror of individuation, whilst the chorus enables them to become one with the primal unity. The members of the audience view the unfolding of the events on the stage from the perspective of primordial oneness. In this state, they are relieved temporarily from the suffering that they normally endure as individuals, but they also feel the pain of the primordial will. At the same time, they witness the suffering of the individual tragic hero on stage. Because they are viewing the suffering of this individual from the perspective of primordial oneness, they gain an insight that would not normally be open to them. Had they seen the suffering of the individual tragic hero from the perspective of their own individuality, they would find it unbearable. However, from the perspective of the will and its suffering, they understand the suffering of the hero to be a sublime spectacle that relieves the suffering of the will. Hence the Dionysian element in tragedy, the music of the chorus, offers a solution to the Apollonian problem of how it is that watching tragedy is pleasurable. The audience does not feel the pain of the tragic hero; rather, they feel the pain of the primordial will. Yet they also feel the relief from that pain that results from the phenomenal spectacle of the destruction of the tragic hero. The witnessing of a tragedy enabled the Greeks to see individuated suffering from the perspective of reality itself and, from this perspective, such suffering became an aesthetic phenomenon. In other words, during tragedy the Greek was able to see the "big picture," and the place human existence has within that big picture. When the Dionysian spectators return to their own individual existence, they will not be overcome by feelings of nausea, because they realize that their individual existence is justified as an aesthetic spectacle for the primordial will. It is the destruction of the Apollonian images—the characters on the stage—that enables the Dionysian spectator to understand this. Hence the Apollonian elements provide the solution to the Dionysian Problem. Nietzsche tells us:

> Dionysian art [...] wishes to convince us of the eternal joy of existence: only we are to seek this joy not in phenomena, but behind them. We are to recognize that all that comes into being must be ready for a sorrowful end; we are forced to look into the terrors of the individual existence—yet we are not to become rigid with fear: a metaphysical comfort tears us momentarily from the bustle of the changing figures. We are really for a moment primordial being itself, feeling its raging desire for existence and

> its joy in existence; the struggle, the pain, the destruction of phenomena, now appear necessary to us, in view of the excess of the countless forms of existence which force and push one another into life, in view of the exuberant fertility of the universal will. (BT §17)

For Nietzsche, tragic theatre offered the Greeks a powerful aesthetic antidote to the poison that is human existence. Tragedy does not overcome pessimism about existence with optimism. Instead, tragedy turns pessimism about existence into an art form. The suffering of the tragic hero is the product of the creativity of the Greek pessimistic impulse. To see the tragic hero suffer at the hands of merciless fate gave the Greek, not a sense of optimism, but rather a sense of awe and wonder at the uncanny nature of human existence, which results directly from their becoming one with the primordial will behind the world of appearances. The goal of tragedy is not to relieve our suffering, but rather to give meaning to our suffering, and by so doing to enable us to love our existence because of, rather than in spite of, our suffering.

The implications of Nietzsche's account of the nature of Greek tragedy stretch beyond the realm of aesthetics. The book as a whole casts a suspicious glance over science. Again, this is something that Nietzsche borrows from Schopenhauer. If, as Schopenhauer believes, the phenomenal world is a mere illusion, and science deals only with this realm, then science fails to get at the true nature of reality. Science, according to the young Nietzsche, might discover all there is to know about the phenomenal world, but at that point it will also discover that it has achieved nothing (BT §15). So for the young Nietzsche, as for the young Wittgenstein (himself an admirer of Schopenhauer), all scientific questions might have been answered yet the problems of life would remain. Nietzsche believed that only tragedy can give us a real insight into these problems. Science is under the impression that it offers a true account of the nature of the world. But this self-image is a delusion. Nietzsche believes that only tragedy can get at the real truth about the nature of reality.

According to the early Nietzsche, it was science that caused the downfall of tragedy. The figure of Socrates is singled out as the number one suspect in the suspicious death of Greek tragedy. The scientifically-minded Socrates, armed with that most pernicious of all moral equations, "Knowledge = Virtue = Happiness," set about destroying what he saw as a dangerous and morally dubious art form (BT §12-§14). Whereas, for Nietzsche and the tragic poets, suffering is inherent in the very nature of the human condition, Socrates argued that, if we use our reason correctly, there is nothing that can harm us; it is only ignorance, and not

fate, that causes us to suffer. If we cure our ignorance, then we can cure our suffering. By understanding the world correctly, we can change it for the better. In thinking in this manner, Socrates is fundamentally an optimist, and it is his optimism that is radically opposed to the tragic pessimism of Greek tragedy. Nietzsche believed that this Socratic optimism dismantled tragedy from the inside when the tragic poet Euripides incorporated it into his plays. For Nietzsche, Euripides' plays were written with the intention of showing that the suffering endured by the tragic heroes was down to their lack of understanding. If they had reasoned correctly, then they would not have suffered so. What the optimistic tragedy of Euripides thus lacked was, above all, the Dionysian element of tragedy, the acknowledgement of the inherent suffering caused by our individuation. Aesthetically speaking, this means that what Euripides did was to remove music from tragedy (BT §14). As the young Nietzsche saw things, only the musical tragedies of Richard Wagner could save the modern age from the omnipotence of science.

For the early Nietzsche, then, the notion of the Dionysian has several different associations. Dionysus presides over the realms of intoxication, of music, of will, and of truth, the latter understood in the sense of something transcendent that lies beyond the illusions of the phenomenal world. The young Nietzsche plants the Dionysian in a world other than the world within which we individuated human beings find ourselves situated. In other words, the Nietzsche who wrote *The Birth of Tragedy* conceives of the Dionysian as a fundamentally metaphysical notion.

## Metaphysical, All Too Metaphysical

Nietzsche's critique of the Schopenhauerian metaphysics that permeated *The Birth of Tragedy* was outlined in the first volume of *Human, All Too Human* (1878). Nietzsche came to reject almost everything that he had said in his earlier book. To begin with, he no longer wanted anything to do with any supposed deeper reality beyond the world of appearances. When the middle-period Nietzsche seeks truth, he does not seek it in the realm of the thing-in-itself, a realm he now repudiates. Furthermore, his attitude to science undergoes a complete reversal. Whereas, in his first book, he thought art represented the only hope for the decadent culture of his day, in his middle period, sometimes referred to as his positivist phase, Nietzsche embraces science as the answer to everything. "The scientific man," he tells us, "is the further evolution of the artistic" (HA I §222). Not surprisingly, talk of Dionysus is abandoned in this book.

Early on in *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche attempts to demolish the metaphysical pretensions of his book on tragedy. He asserts "everything has become: there are *no eternal facts*, just as there are no absolute truths. Consequently what is needed from now on is *historical philosophizing*, and with it the virtue of modesty" (HA I §2). So here, Nietzsche is arguing for an historical philosophy in opposition to metaphysical (i.e., Schopenhauerian) philosophy. Why does Nietzsche also demand the virtue of modesty? Well, because he argues that this historical philosophy, like the natural sciences from which Nietzsche states it "can no longer be separated" (HA I §1), will not aim at a grand theory of reality as a whole, but aim instead gradually to uncover "unpretentious" but nonetheless important truths. The valuing of such truths as opposed to grand metaphysical claims, he now contends, is the mark of a higher culture (HA I §3). Nietzsche casts a critical gaze at Schopenhauer when he writes: "It is probable that the objects of the religious, moral, and aesthetic sensations belong only to the surface of things, while man likes to believe that he is in touch with the world's heart" (HA I §4; see also HA I §10). This criticism of Schopenhauer also applies to *The Birth of Tragedy*. If we want to understand music or tragedy, we need to look not to metaphysical primordial being, but to the natural world.

Nietzsche also alters his characterization of science as a Socratic enterprise. He tells us: "Philosophy separated itself from science when it posed the question: what kind of knowledge of the world and life is it through which man can live happiest?" (HA I §7). Socratic philosophy might be about equating knowledge with happiness, but science, as Nietzsche now understands it, is all about truth. Nietzsche's mistaken early belief in the shortcomings inherent in science resulted from his understanding of science as an enterprise that takes place only within what he had erroneously considered to be an illusory phenomenal realm. With his rejection of metaphysical activity, truth can lie now only in this phenomenal realm, and science becomes the only way to get at it. The early Nietzsche had also identified science with Socratic optimism. Science, as he had understood it, attempts to make us happy by understanding and correcting the world. Although he would assert that it is true that science can be used to further the goal of happiness, Nietzsche also argues that this need not necessarily be so. It is not, he contends, the fault of science that it has been adopted as the champion of optimism. He argues that the modern conception of science has as its goal "as little pain as possible, as long life as possible—thus a kind of eternal bliss" (HA I §128). This concern for happiness, Nietzsche suggests, has led to the application of "a ligature to the arteries of scientific research" (HA I §7). What

Nietzsche now wants is for science to be freed from the constraints imposed upon it by the goal of happiness. His skepticism concerning the possibility of achieving this goal is something he carries over from his first book.

Although *Human, All Too Human* represents his first sustained engagement with Christianity, it is not the case, contrary to what Nietzsche would later claim, that in his book on tragedy he treated Christianity with a "careful and hostile silence" (BT Attempt at a Self-Criticism §5). There is, for example, an explicit reference in section 23 of *The Birth of Tragedy* to the Lutheran Reformation. Interestingly, Nietzsche identifies this movement with a re-awakening of the Dionysian tendency. He also implicitly refers to Christianity when he is discussing the Olympian gods, stating that "whoever approaches these Olympians with another religion in their heart, searching among them for moral elevation, even for sanctity, for discarnate spirituality, for charity and benevolence, will soon be forced to turn his back on them, discouraged and disappointed" (BT §3). Clearly, the other religion he has in mind is Christianity. Here, then, Nietzsche is making a clear demarcation between the Christian religion and the religion of the Greeks. What is equally interesting is that, in *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche explicitly identifies Schopenhauer's philosophy with Christianity (HA I §26). Given that Nietzsche attempted in his first book to read Schopenhauerian themes into Greek religious practices, it looks as if the young Nietzsche must therefore have gone badly wrong somewhere. In this early book he implicitly separates the religion of the Greeks from Christianity, whilst interpreting the former religion as a religion that puts Schopenhauerian metaphysics into practice. Perhaps Nietzsche has changed his mind in his later book and now thinks that the Christian and Greek religions are effectively the same? Yet this is certainly not the case, as in *Human, All Too Human* he explicitly outlines the differences between the two religious systems. He argues that, whilst the gods of the Greeks were simply a celebration of the human character traits admired by them, Christianity belittles human beings by comparing them to a divine standard to which they cannot live up (HA I §114). This remark ties in with what he implies about Christianity in his early book on tragedy. Those seeking "moral elevation" from the Olympian gods will be disappointed.

Nietzsche's error in *The Birth of Tragedy*, then, would seem to center on his attempt to read Schopenhauerian themes into the religion of the Greeks. However, things are not that simple. The Olympian gods which Nietzsche opposes to the Christian worldview are the product of the Apollonian creative impulse. They belong unreservedly to the phenome-

nal world of appearances; they have nothing to do with any metaphysical realm beyond. Nietzsche does not understand them to be Platonic ideas or anything of that sort.[2] For Schopenhauer, what is valuable about all non-musical forms of art, is that they express the essence or Idea of things. A painting or epic poem is valuable for Schopenhauer, because it reveals a universal truth. For the early Nietzsche, on the other hand, what is valuable about such works of art is that they give us comforting illusions rather than truths. The Schopenhauerian aspects of the young Nietzsche's interpretation of Greek religion come not with its Apollonian elements but rather with its Dionysian elements. The early Nietzsche believed that the Dionysian tragedy of the Greeks enabled them to gain access to the underlying true nature of the world. If, however, the middle-period Nietzsche identifies Schopenhauer's metaphysics with Christian religion, and his earlier account of the Dionysian is deeply influenced by this metaphysics, then one has to wonder what the relationship between the Dionysian in that book and Christianity is. As I have already noted, the early Nietzsche identifies the Reformation with Dionysus. One might perhaps be tempted to conclude that the Dionysian there is actually closely related to Christianity.

This temptation is, I think, one that ought to be resisted, although, as we shall see, there are undoubtedly similarities between Nietzsche's early account of the Dionysian and Christianity. Before we can tackle this issue, we must ask first why it is that the middle-period Nietzsche thinks that Schopenhauer's metaphysics is really just a form of Christianity. According to Nietzsche, Schopenhauer's doctrine of the resignation of the will is a secular echo of the Christian teaching about renouncing our earthly pleasures in favor of the greater joys to be had in the world beyond. To be sure, Schopenhauer does not promise us a heaven beyond, but what he *does* promise us is an escape from the suffering of this world. Schopenhauer and the Christian both deny the importance of our worldly existence, because they believe it to be a wrong path, on the grounds that there is a deeper truth, beyond this world. For the Christian, this deeper truth is God. For Schopenhauer, this deeper truth is the will. In both cases, when we grasp these deeper truths we are able to renounce our interest in this world of suffering, a world that is, essentially, an illusion.

The early Nietzsche, unlike either Schopenhauer or the Christian, certainly attempts to affirm our worldly existence. Indeed, it is worth pointing out that what I have called the Dionysian Problem arises for Nietzsche precisely because he wants to show how the Greeks were able to overcome world-denying nausea. Nietzsche's account of tragedy,

though indebted to Schopenhauer, is certainly opposed to the latter's advocacy of the renunciation of the will. While Schopenhauer curses the suffering inherent in human existence, Nietzsche tells us that the Greek was able to affirm his existence through his participation in the audience of tragic theatre. The notion of affirming existence is something that runs through Nietzsche's entire corpus. However, we must not allow this, as some commentators have done, to deceive us into thinking that the concept of the Dionysian remained unchanged from Nietzsche's early to his later works.[3] Nietzsche may encourage us to believe this, but I think that, on this issue, he is not entirely to be trusted. Let me now attempt to justify this claim by looking at the later Dionysus.

## Dionysus versus Dionysus

Nietzsche's later works really begin with *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883-1885). Because this work is unlike anything else Nietzsche published, however, it is common practice to argue that the post-*Zarathustra* works are really where the later Nietzsche begins. Strictly speaking, though, many of the ideas that are associated with this later phase actually first appeared in a work of Nietzsche's positivist phase, *The Gay Science* (1882). Since the subject of this paper is the Dionysian, I shall focus on the post-*Zarathustra* works in which this concept appears for the first time since *The Birth of Tragedy*. What I want to argue is that Nietzsche's later understanding of the Dionysian is, in many ways, radically different from the one that appears in his first book. This reading is strictly in opposition to Nietzsche's own account, which stresses the continuity between the early and later understandings.

I shall begin by outlining what I take to be Nietzsche's new understanding of the Dionysian. Whereas, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Dionysus's realm was a world of things-in-themselves, for the later Nietzsche Dionysus becomes something that is very much a part of the world we human beings inhabit. One might say that Dionysus moves from the realm of things-in-themselves to the realm of appearances, except that Nietzsche came to regard this very distinction as a problematic metaphysical antithesis (see "How the 'Real World' at last Became a Myth" in *Twilight of the Idols*). What one can certainly say is that, in the early Nietzsche, Dionysus belonged to the realm of being, but that, in the later Nietzsche, Dionysus belongs to the realm of becoming. Although the early Nietzsche attempted through Dionysus to affirm the world of becoming, this affirmation occurred only from the perspective of primordial

being. With the later Dionysus the world of becoming is affirmed purely from within the perspective of becoming. Where the early Dionysus was identified with Schopenhauer's "Will," the later Dionysus is associated with Nietzsche's notion of the "Will to Power."[4] Both the early and later notions of Dionysus are linked with creativity. However, the creativity of the early Dionysus is the creativity of a metaphysical god, who creates the natural world as a means to relieve his own suffering. The creativity with which the later Dionysus is associated is purely the creativity of the active human being. The Dionysian as it appears in Nietzsche's early works is something quite specific, but the later Nietzsche uses the Dionysian in a much broader manner as a term to refer to various different aspects of his later philosophy.

Nietzsche's "Attempt at Self-Criticism" was added as a preface to the 1886 edition of *The Birth of Tragedy*. In this addition Nietzsche offers his own selective reading of what was going on in his first book. What he finds most problematic about this book is its questionable Romanticism. He also regrets the use of Schopenhauerian and Kantian terminology. Despite its flaws, though, Nietzsche still thinks that, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, he was on the right track. He argues that the Dionysian as it featured in his early book was a fundamentally anti-Christian notion. His reasons center on his notion of an aesthetic justification for existence. Whilst Christianity offers only a moral interpretation and justification for existence, the early Nietzsche argued that it is only justifiable in aesthetic terms. For the young Nietzsche, the heroes of tragedy are doomed to their fate, precisely because there is no course of action they can take that would be the right thing to do (BT §9). So it is fair to say that, insofar as Nietzsche's book on tragedy offers an aesthetic interpretation of existence, it is anti-Christian. Nietzsche himself puts the point as follows:

> In the book itself the suggestive sentence is repeated several times, that the existence of the world is *justified* only as an aesthetic phenomenon. Indeed, the whole book knows only an artistic meaning and crypto-meaning behind all events—a "god," if you please, but certainly only an entirely reckless and amoral artist-god who wants to experience, whether he is building or destroying, in the good and in the bad, his own joy and glory—one who creating worlds, frees himself from the *distress* of fullness and *overfullness*, and from the *affliction* of the contradictions compressed in his soul. The world—at every moment the *attained* salvation of God, as the eternally changing, eternally new vision of the most deeply afflicted, discordant, and contradictory being who can find salvation only in *appearance*: you can call this whole artists' metaphysics arbitrary, idle, fantastic; what matters is that it betrays

> a spirit who will one day fight at any risk whatever the *moral* interpretation and significance of existence. (BT Attempt §5)

Here Nietzsche restates his notion of the aesthetic justification of existence. The god who finds salvation only in appearance is precisely Dionysus. He creates the phenomenal world in order to relieve his own suffering. Now, Nietzsche is prepared to admit that the story he tells in *The Birth of Tragedy* is a somewhat far-fetched metaphysical story, yet still he maintains that the spirit of the book is fundamentally anti-Christian. The fact that he wants to give an aesthetic interpretation of existence as opposed to a moral one does not let him off the hook. What Nietzsche neglects to point out in his "Attempt at a Self-Criticism" is that the amoral god who delights in appearances does not himself belong to the world of appearances. His creative deeds are communicated from a beyond, a realm of things-in-themselves. The Olympian gods, whose father is Apollo, can certainly stake a claim in this world. This is why one finds that Nietzsche's opinions about the relationship between the Greeks and the Olympians show a remarkable continuity throughout his works. The Dionysus of Nietzsche's first book, though, does not belong to this world, but to another. It is only in the later works that Nietzsche transports him to the world of appearances. The later Nietzsche might own up to the clumsiness of his earlier metaphysical and Schopenhauerian formulations, but what these admissions also do is mask the unmistakably important role that the metaphysical valuation of reality has to play in *The Birth of Tragedy*. Moreover, it is interesting to note that the enthusiasm Nietzsche expressed for science in his middle period did not survive in his later works. He became convinced that the will-to-truth that drives scientific research was really just a manifestation of Christianity's metaphysical faith-in-truth (GM III §25). The later Nietzsche was very fond of rooting out the hidden Christian presuppositions in the thinking of others, but it seems that he was loath to apply the same rigor when it comes to his own earlier writings.

Perhaps this latter accusation of dishonesty is a bit too hasty. Toward the end of his "Attempt at a Self-Criticism," Nietzsche introduces a conception of Christianity that defines the Christian simply as someone who denies the here-and-now. Surprisingly, he applies this understanding to his own younger self. He does not, however, apply it to his early understanding of Dionysus, but rather to his early Romanticism.[5] As Nietzsche himself puts it, "But my dear sir, what in the world is romantic if *your* book isn't? Can deep hatred against 'the Now,' against 'reality' and 'modern ideas' be pushed further than you pushed it in your artists'

metaphysics?" (BT Attempt §7). Romanticism, Nietzsche goes on to argue, can only end in Christianity. But he then invokes the name of Dionysus as an antidote to metaphysics, Romanticism, and Christianity. The problem is that, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Dionysus is up to his neck in metaphysics. His affirmation of the phenomenal world takes place from a world beyond. The Earth, the now, reality—all are affirmed in *The Birth of Tragedy*, only because they are affirmed from the Dionysian perspective which, in this early book, is undoubtedly an otherworldly perspective. The Dionysian perspective of the later works is an attempt to affirm this world from within the perspective of this world. If the natural world can only be affirmed with reference to another metaphysical world, then, according to the later Nietzsche, one has only succeeded in denying the natural world. This is precisely what the earlier Nietzsche did, and he did it in the name of Dionysus.

Throughout his career Nietzsche continued to defend his use of Dionysus in *The Birth of Tragedy*. In *Twilight of the Idols* (1888), for example, we find him referring to his early book on tragedy as "my first revaluation of all values" (TI What I Owe to the Ancients §5). Here, for the first time, Nietzsche explicitly links the Dionysian with his notion of the eternal recurrence:

> It is only in the Dionysian mysteries, in the psychology of the Dionysian state, that the *basic fact* of the Hellenic instinct finds expression—its "will to life." What was it that the Hellene guaranteed himself by means of these mysteries? *Eternal* life, the eternal return of life; the future promised and hallowed in the past; the triumphant Yes to life beyond all death and change; *true* life as the over-all continuation of life through procreation, through the mysteries of sexuality. For the Greeks the *sexual* symbol was therefore the venerable symbol par excellence, the real profundity in the whole of antique piety. (TI What I Owe §4)

Nietzsche takes the willing of the eternal recurrence of all events to be the highest affirmation of human existence that is possible. He opposes this notion to the Christian notion of eternal life, according to which the Christian finds redemption from his or her bodily existence in a blissful afterlife. In this passage, Nietzsche refers to sexuality as the Greek antidote to the rejection of our this-worldly existence. While the Christian is ashamed of his or her bodily instincts, and slanders them in the name of religion, the Greeks actually celebrate and affirm these instincts as part of their religion. As Nietzsche comments: "It was Christianity, with its *ressentiment* against life at the bottom of its heart, which

first made something unclean of sexuality: it threw *filth* on the origin, on the presupposition of our life ... " (TI What I Owe §4).

Given that Nietzsche, in *Twilight of the Idols*, is again linking his latest account of the Dionysian with his earlier account in *The Birth of Tragedy*, we should expect to find a celebration of sexuality in this early book. And the young Nietzsche does not disappoint us, for, in his discussion of the satyr, he acknowledges the "reverent wonder" with which the Greeks contemplated this symbol of "the sexual omnipotence of nature" (BT §8). However, if we understand this celebration in its proper, Schopenhauerian context, we can see that there are metaphysical connotations connected with the celebration of sexuality in this early book which are not present in the account Nietzsche gives in *Twilight of the Idols*. Schopenhauer believed that sexual union was one way of escaping, however briefly, from our individuated existence. That the young Nietzsche has this in mind, is confirmed by his telling us that the satyr as a sexual symbol "proclaims wisdom from the very heart of nature" (BT §8). So here, once again, we find that the early Dionysus points us to the beyond, whereas the later Dionysus is embedded in this world.

As regards the eternal recurrence, Nietzsche certainly talks in *The Birth of Tragedy* of the Dionysian in relation to "the eternal joy of existence" (BT §17). This eternal joy can only occur because the Greeks related their existence to the Dionysian realm of the primordial will that lies beyond their individual existence. It is only insofar as the eternal destruction of phenomena relieves the suffering of the primordial will that individual existence can have any value. The eternity of phenomenal existence is affirmed, not from within the perspective of this existence, as is supposed to be the case with the eternal recurrence, but rather from an eternal perspective outside our this-worldly existence.[6]

The question we must ask is: why is the later Nietzsche so reluctant to acknowledge the otherworldly influences that permeate his first book? The answer to this question is perhaps straightforward. Given that Nietzsche was to proclaim himself the anti-Christian *par excellence*, it would have been too embarrassing for him to have to admit that he had not always been so fervently opposed to the otherworldliness that shapes the Christian world-view. Nietzsche would like to think that he had, by instinct, always understood the decadence inherent in Christian interpretations of existence. Yet this is not the case. We might ask whether this really matters. Given Nietzsche's assaults on Christianity for its lack of honesty and self-deception, we must argue that it does indeed matter (cf. EH Preface §3). That Nietzsche offers hints about the possible Christian leanings inherent in his early Romanticism, though, perhaps suggests

that this accusation of dishonesty is a little unfair. However, it is noteworthy that Nietzsche sees his Romanticism as *leading to* Christianity rather than as *starting from* such a position. Even more interesting, in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* Zarathustra himself is willing to confess his own earlier denial of this world in the name of "a suffering and tortured God" (Z I 3). In this work, which falls just after Nietzsche's middle period, Dionysus has yet to reappear in the form that he would in the "Attempt at a Self-Criticism" and *Twilight of the Idols.* In these later works, Nietzsche seems to want to forget about Zarathustra's confession and to give the reader the impression that he had never accepted any kind of otherworldliness. While Zarathustra turns his rejection of his own former otherworldliness into a positive self-overcoming, the later Nietzsche simply wants to hide it. The reason for Nietzsche's evasiveness, I would suggest, is that he felt the need to keep Dionysus free from otherworldly associations. Nietzsche's autobiography famously ends with him opposing Dionysus to what he calls "the crucified" (EH Why I am a Destiny §9). Given that he believes himself to be a disciple of Dionysus, whose creed demands a rejection of all things Christian, his early identification of Dionysus with a redemptive world beyond would appear to amount to blasphemy.

* * *

We should not be misled by Nietzsche's attempts to convince us that his later and earlier understandings of Dionysus are essentially identical: there are undoubtedly many important differences between them. Nietzsche's early conception of Dionysus represented an attempt to affirm our worldly existence from an essentially otherworldly perspective. It is only from a perspective outside the natural world that the early Dionysus is able to redeem the ancient Greeks from the horrors of their individual existence. Nietzsche's later understanding of Dionysus is all about giving meaning to human existence from within the perspective of that existence. From the point of view of Nietzsche's later philosophy, his early understanding of the Dionysian cannot possibly be described as a real affirmation of existence.[7]

# Notes

[1] The definitive statement of Arthur Schopenhauer's philosophy is to be found in his *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. E. F. J. Payne, 2 vols (New York: Dover, 1969). For essays exploring the relationship between Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, see Christopher Janaway (ed.), *Willing and Nothingness: Schopenhauer as Nietzsche's Educator* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998).

[2] Julian Young argues that Nietzsche's aesthetic understanding of the Apollonian is identical with Schopenhauer's account of non-musical art (see his *Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992), 32-33 and 43). Schopenhauer believed that non-musical art forms could give us access to Platonic Ideas. Plato would argue against Schopenhauer that only philosophy can give us access to the Ideas, and that art actually takes us further away from them. I believe that Nietzsche's talk of illusion and dreams would tend to suggest that his understanding of non-musical art is much more in line with Plato's than Schopenhauer's. However, where Plato thinks that such illusions are harmful, the early Nietzsche thinks they are useful, and in any case it seems unlikely that the latter would have much truck with any such Platonic Ideals.

[3] See, for example, Martha Nussbaum, "Transfigurations of Intoxication: Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and Dionysus," in Salim Kemal, Ivan Gaskell, and Daniel M. Conway (eds), *Nietzsche, Philosophy and the Arts* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998), 36-69 (63).

[4] In a famous passage Nietzsche seems to want to replace Schopenhauer's "Will" with his own "Will to Power," so that the latter, like the former, would belong to the realm of things in themselves: "The world seen from within, the world described and defined according to its 'intelligible character'—it would be 'will to power' and nothing else" (BGE §36). If Nietzsche is here really arguing for this understanding of the "Will to Power," then he would be contradicting the many other passages in which he scoffs at any notion of getting beyond our this-worldly perspectives. For my part, I believe that in this passage he is simply being provocative. Notice that the phrase "intelligible character" appears in scare quotes, suggesting that Nietzsche is here, as elsewhere, mocking the idea that the world has an intelligible character at all.

[5] For a book-length study of Nietzsche's relationship to Romanticism, see Adrian Del Caro, *Nietzsche Contra Nietzsche: Creativity and the anti-Romantic* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1989).

[6] Julian Young believes that, in *Twilight of the Idols*, "Nietzsche ends up with a view of the human condition indistinguishable from that expressed in *The Birth of Tragedy*" (*Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art*, 140). Young argues that Nietzsche's later position regarding Dionysus returns to that outlined in his first book, on the grounds that the later Nietzsche talks of the breaking down of individuality and affirms the idea of unity (136). For Young, the later Dionysus, like the earlier one, is associated with being (139). I would argue that this reading is mistaken. Nietzsche talks about unity regarding the affirmation of the unity of one's entire life and the entire history of the world. As Zarathustra remarks, "Did you ever say Yes to one joy? O my friends, then you said Yes to *all* woe as well. All things are chained and entwined together, all

things are in love" (Z IV 19 §10). The affirmation of the eternal recurrence is concerned with unity, but it is a unity affirmed from the perspective of an individual life, and it has nothing to do with the perspective of primal unity used to affirm existence in *The Birth of Tragedy*.

[7] I should like to express my gratitude to the AHRB for funding my research. I would also like to thank James Cuthbert, Dario Galasso, Ken Gemes, David Owen, and Joel Smith for comments on an earlier draft of this article.

# Rhetoric, Judgment, and the Art of Surprise in Nietzsche's *Genealogy*

*Fiona Jenkins*

THERE IS LITTLE that is self-evident about the terms in which Nietzsche judges the Western tradition of moral thought. Clearly, he seeks to expose the false pretensions of morality, its lies, illusions, delusions, fabrications, and fictions; and he hints that much greater things will follow on morality's demise. His writing forcefully evokes the conditions of human existence that lead him to pass a negative judgment on the morality of the "weak" and the "sick." We are acquainted, through the extraordinary pungency of his expressive style, with his contempt not only for many forms but many nuances of life—for "life" appears in Nietzsche's inimitable sketches as life compressed, compromised, and revealed in its smallest gestures, by the poses its actors strike, betrayed by its petty comforts, compensations, and tastes. But for all that, Nietzsche's own perspective is always hard to pin down. The meaning of the terms "slave" and "noble" in *On the Genealogy of Morals* is, at least in part, given by the stark antithesis between the contemptible figure and the glorious one, judgments which often structure his commentary on morality. Nonetheless, these terms of judgment do not themselves remain static or unqualified, because other terms of judgment are brought to bear on them, qualifying their force. Thus the slaves who are "sick" are also "clever" (GM I §10); the perversity of the ascetic priest makes man "interesting" (GM I §6); Nietzsche even vouches for the value of the experience of sickness and suffering for the development of human spirituality (GS, Preface; BGE §225 and §270). The overall view of the "value" of Nietzschean values is never as clear as it may originally seem. In the practice of "genealogical" enquiry, all evaluative standards give the impression of being subject to violent confrontations and extreme reversals. Indeed, Nietzsche's retrospective pride in the *Genealogy* lies in its "art of surprise," its dramatic pace:

> Every time a beginning that is calculated to mislead: cool, scientific, even ironic, deliberately foreground, deliberately holding off. Gradually more unrest; sporadic lightening, very disagreeable truths are heard rumbling in the background—until eventually a *tempo feroce* is attained in which everything rushes ahead in a tremendous tension. In the end, in the midst of perfectly gruesome detonations a new truth becomes visible every time amidst thick clouds. (EH GM)

It is presumably a deliberate result, then, if Nietzsche's writings present us with a series of puzzles. And what I shall argue here is that we must not lose our sense of surprise at the conclusions Nietzsche invites us to draw, whether these be "new truths" or "sporadic lightening"; indeed, I want to show that the impression the above passage conveys of the atmosphere of his thought and writings must be strictly attended to as the landscape of an entire passage of affect, desire, and reasoning through which his work conducts us, a landscape through which we pass ignorantly or naively when we fail to notice the rhetoric and drama of his work.

Reading his work as drama, then, but also as rhetoric and especially as deploying the strategies of forensic rhetoric against the characters distributed in the landscape, one aim in this article will be to highlight connections between Nietzsche's early interest in classical strategies of rhetoric and related conceptions of language (as evidenced in the lecture course "On Rhetoric" delivered at Basel in 1873) and the play of forensic rhetoric and strategies of "realism" at work in the artful "making-appear" of "new truths" in the *Genealogy.* Here Nietzsche himself will become a character of his own writing, as orator, dramatist, and player on the scene. Second, I should like to use this restaging of his text to pass some comments on the text as allegory of the problem and risk of judgment in the kind of modernity that Nietzsche so forcefully insisted must confront its own undermining of foundations, its deep instability and uncertainty about the future. What revealing the dramatic form of Nietzsche's genealogy allows us to acknowledge, perhaps, is the *imperative* of its art of surprise, demanding that we be surprised at ourselves as well as open to surprise; surprised at our own malleability and willingness to attend to those "dark rumblings" that threaten to persuade us all too easily against the deep moral convictions of our traditions. If we lose this sense of surprise at ourselves—at our being persons who are also personae, less readers than characters interpellated by the text—then, I suggest, we shall have missed something of the point of Nietzsche's genealogical oratory.

The two aspects of this commentary may be linked from the outset by noting Nietzsche's disdain for the hypothesis concerning the origin of

moral judgments he ascribes to the "English psychologists," who seek a principle that might ground a newly secularized power and right of moral judgment in the criterion of "utility." This hypothesis, remarks Nietzsche, fails not only to attend to the discontinuities and ruptures that shatter all such efforts to derive a current value from the context in which it originally served (GM II §12) but to notice the "plain" truth that:

> It was the good themselves, that is to say, 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 the low, low-minded, common and plebeian. It was out of this *pathos of distance* that they first seized the right to create values and to coin names for values: what had they to do with utility! (GM I §2)

As Nietzsche describes it here, the judgment of value in its proper "origin" is creative, self-reflexive, and is at once expressive and constitutive of a way of being. "Utility" as a criterion of judgment is *twice* displaced by the hypothesis Nietzsche presents as rival to the English version. For, first, it gives way to the "more originary" articulation of *glorious and noble* versus *plebeian and base*, ascribing judgments of utility *only* to the latter life-form. But, second, the hypothesis effects a *disavowal* of the "use" that is arguably served by such a mode of evaluation. For if the designations "good" and "bad" are an expression of power on the part of rulers that posits the self-evidence of a "pathos of distance" and of the hierarchy of social relations, it thereby entrenches and legitimates the *status quo*. Value as constitutive and expressive of being is not *reducible* to a consideration of "utility"; nonetheless, the *usefulness* of this mode of judgment in ideologically securing a certain configuration of power may be a vital aspect of its socio-political reproduction. Whatever is being said about this truly "originary" articulation of value must be treated with more than a grain of suspicion. It remains the case, however, that where this interpretation of the source of values differs fundamentally from the view of the English psychologists, is in respect of Nietzsche's reminder that utility neither provides some trans-historical criterion of judgment nor can it provide a universal one. We must always ask—*useful to whom, in what respect and at what moment in time?*

The warning is well-heeded. Even so, this might be an apt moment to recover a sense of surprise at where this perspective "beyond good and evil" invites us to go. What such terms of judgment as "good" and "evil" permit us is straightforward condemnation of such actions as the "murder, arson, rape and torture" of which Nietzsche is prepared to say (stretching the point to its limit that we must always ask "to whom?")

that the nobles are "innocent" as the beast of prey is innocent (GM I §10). The *Genealogy*, however, offers us a psychology of the moralist that again aims to relativize such unequivocal judgments. According to Nietzsche, the moral outlook is justified only by the craven fear of those likely to be victims, and such fear does not present a moral absolute but rather something at once linked to one's perspective and of the order of decision: for, "who would not a hundred times sooner fear where one can also admire than not fear but be permanently condemned to the sight of the ill-constituted, dwarfed, atrophied and poisoned?" (GM I §11).

Here, I would suggest, it is as characters dramatically interpellated by Nietzsche's text, *positioned* as aesthetic spectators of world history, that we should analyze the thought held out to us. It is a position that does not require us to be convinced of the argument—indeed, perhaps the gravest mistake here would be to be "convinced" as though such an argument had been made. Ask yourself again: *Who* would not a hundred times *sooner* fear where they can also admire—? Why, *you*, the aesthetic spectator of a scene from which you are detached by history itself. *You*, who find yourself strangely attracted by this "primeval" scene, this myth of innocent power abroad; *protected* from its critical force by your willingness to identify modernity with the "noble" innocence of power; yet also *exposed* to it to the extent that Nietzsche is clearly also mocking modern man for his condition of slavery, the atrophy of his aesthetic existence bought at the price of his "morality," deriding him for the transposition of values that now secures the innocence of power through a moral form of legitimation more relative, equivocal and unstable than it acknowledges itself to be.

The structure of interpellation at work here may also be linked to Nietzsche's insistence that what matters in determining both the "value" and the "character" of an action is not what is done but whom it is done by (TI Expeditions of an Untimely Man §33). No actions are good or bad in themselves, nor have any character in themselves apart from that which is taken from or reflected by the idea one already has of the agent—hence "one and the same 'crime' can be in one case the greatest privilege, in another a stigma" (WP §292). All is thrown back upon the person and on the constitutive/expressive character of value judgments concerning the person. In a classic strategy of forensic rhetoric, the act becomes a "sign" of the person, so that the idea one has of the agent forms the starting point for interpreting her actions rather than being its outcome.[1] Likewise, the first essay of the *Genealogy* depicts for us a world in which "noble" status ensures that everything a person does is justifiable. Comparable comments in the second essay remark on how the

Greeks justified "bad" acts performed by nobles—"'He must have been deluded by a *god*,' they concluded finally"(GM II §23). Conversely, the status of the slave ensures that all his actions are "bad." To the nobles, the slave is in every case a "liar"(GM I §5); what he says cannot be taken at face value. The genealogy Nietzsche gives of noble morality's concept of the "truthful" derives the right to this self-description from a root term *esthlos* meaning "good" in the sense of "brave." It signifies, Nietzsche claims, "one who is, who possesses reality, who is actual, who is true; then with a subjective turn, the true as the truthful" (GM I §5; cf. BGE §260). The typical character trait of the noble, indeed, is said to be "truthfulness," this concept carrying echoes of past bravery and noble deeds.

But who could know the truth of such a history? For here the translation has occurred of a "concept denoting political superiority" into a "concept denoting superiority of soul" (GM I §6). Conversely, lying is said in the first essay to be an expedient for a being of the slave's type, driven as he is by the concerns of utility. Such base concerns are disavowed in the slave's postulation of an other-worldly realm and source of judgment no less than in his attempt to redefine the interpretation of act-agent relations by postulating a "doer" behind the deed, radically severing agent from act. Yet everywhere we encounter paradox, as Paul de Man's reading of Nietzsche has especially forcefully brought out, precisely through its attention to the rhetorical and linguistic ambiguity of such thoughts. The slave's re-evaluative gesture not only, as Nietzsche remarks, conceals his lack of real power to act, but simultaneously *does* act against the noble evaluative structure by refusing its very different construction of act-agent relations. This is a much more complex set of strategies of move and counter-move than we will allow if we take Nietzsche in his role as narrator and commentator on the scenes of the *Genealogy* as in any direct sense our authoritative guide to the "value of the values" these scenes display in contestation and competition with one another.

Indeed, one might fruitfully enquire how this *noble* structure of self-affirmation and disavowal is echoed in the modern moral rhetoric of good and evil that works to entrench the assumption that the innocence of power vindicates whatever violence is done to secure it (I think, particularly, of President George W. Bush's now infamous words, "we are good, they are evil," which perhaps transgresses the logic of both slave and noble or perhaps utilizes both evaluative structures at once). The question of just how Nietzsche sees *both* noble and slavish elements, with their often competing, but perhaps sometimes *complementary*, structures of legitimation, as at work in modernity, could appropriately be raised

here. More to the point, however, it seems important to examine how, viewed in this way, Nietzsche's text sets up a web of hypotheses to counter those of modernity's self-images of morality, figuring them as slavish, debased by their utility, and so forth. And, further, how it does so in such a way as to play with the reader's self-identifications and investments in those images, again throwing attention on the person/personae of the reader in a manner that is flattering and insulting in almost equal measure.

The effectiveness and affectivity of Nietzsche's argument—the way in which it offers psychological explanations of morality and its mode of evaluation that are at best possible, and renders them plausible, even likely, eventually probably "true"—present highly interesting phenomena. By "affectivity," I mean the reflexive benefits that accrue to the reader on the basis of finding Nietzsche's arguments to be convincing, that is, to be successful in revealing "truths" of determinative importance. Thus, for example, one might say that Nietzsche's argument flatters the reader by implying the nobility of recognizing oneself as free to determine the "value" of values, without deference to the "slavish" assumption that there are values that bear an absolute force "in themselves." At the very least, we are invited to recognize that the conflict we experience between the sets of values marked by the titles "slave" or "noble," "Jew" or "Roman," is itself the "decisive mark of a 'higher nature,' a more spiritual nature" (GM I §16). If we do not pass moral judgment upon the values of power, strength, or beauty, this is represented by Nietzsche as a sign of our maturity, truthfulness and, indeed, of our own strength. We are "realists." The antitheses of realism are sentimentalism, melodrama, propaganda, childishness, Romanticism—all qualities of Christianity in Nietzsche's view. These categories indicate the seriousness of certain failures of taste; they refer to errors of discrimination (again, shifting attention to the agent of judgment) that may indicate traits of pretension, self-satisfaction, immaturity, hypocrisy, pomposity, or narrow-mindedness. The realist is wary of all those failings which share the common feature of cowardly misjudgment, an erroneous estimation of oneself, of others, of existence as such, misjudgment that honesty and maturity would enable one to avoid. The source of misjudgment may be too extravagant or too poor an estimation of one's own power; it may reflect a lack of experience or weariness with life; it may derive from a need to deceive or compensate oneself. Such "errors" reflect failings that are culpable precisely to the degree of deserving contempt—no more by way of condemnation and no less by way of disrespect; for they are "weaknesses." And who, if the dilemma is presented in

this way would not rather consider themselves on the side of the realists and look down on the bad taste of the "*bonhomme*"—"good natured, easy to deceive, a little stupid, perhaps" (BGE §260).

The position of the creative judge of values might thus appear as a privileged position offered to the reader of Nietzsche's text. Questions of taste are irreducibly important here, but so too is the way in which strength is conceived as bound up with truthfulness. We are asked by Nietzsche to "face" the truth of a situation our moral inheritance leads us to deny. The truth is "ugly." On such grounds Nietzsche is even prepared to admire the English psychologists, "investigators and microscopists of the soul, [...] fundamentally brave, proud, and magnanimous animals, who know how to keep their hearts as well as their sufferings in bounds and have trained themselves to sacrifice all desirability to truth, *every* truth, even plain, harsh, ugly, repellent, unchristian, immoral truth—for such truths do exist" (GM I §1). Yet here we encounter a further intriguing wedge that Nietzsche seems to seek to drive between his own position and theirs.

That, as "magnanimous animals," the English psychologists are self-trained in sacrificing the conditions of our pride in man, does not wholly augment faith in our powers of judgment; this, however, is the description Nietzsche gives of what alone might be considered worthy in their contribution to a realist science. His irony is directed at the self-undermining effects of their worthy investigations into the origins of value-sentiments. For what these psychologists neglect to uncover, implicitly damaging their own credibility, is precisely the origin of values in a source which *warrants* pride, namely in *nobility*. In their "voluntary or involuntary" dedication to the task of "dragging the *partie honteuse* of our inner world into the foreground and seeking the truly effective and directing agent least where the intellectual pride of man would *desire* to find it," they neglect to secure the conditions on which their own powers of judgment and mode of existence could even begin to command respect. One role played, then, by Nietzsche's introduction of an "originary" value-creating nobility into the genealogy of morals may be to avoid this consequence of brutal investigation into the "hidden" motives of moral action; namely that we should reduce all schema of evaluation to something base, humanly meaningless, serving only the functions of survival. As such, "nobility" might figure as a site of resistance to one debilitating result of modern historical self-consciousness.

Nietzsche's "realists" are not simple pragmatists about values; they do not reduce judgment to its "utility." Besides the Sophists,[2] Nietzsche mentions "Thucidides and perhaps the *Principe* of Machiavelli" as "be-

ing related to me closely by their unconditional will not to deceive themselves and to see reason in reality—not in 'reason', still less in 'morality'" (TI What I Owe to the Ancients §2). Realism differs from pragmatism, insofar as it holds onto this truthfulness that might, as Nietzsche frequently notes, in fact run against our practical interests. Although realism and pragmatism can be allies, the one serving an analytic function within a sphere dominated by the other, where realism is the dominant partner, the merely pragmatic is most likely to be indicative of the base. The genre of realism is one that secures the veracity of the author's viewpoint in part through establishing a point of honor—its "honest" resistance to what is easy, comfortable, or simply useful to believe. Thus the "glorious" action of nobility, the "indifference to and contempt for security, body, life and comfort" (GM I §11), crucially demonstrates the realism of nobility contrasted so sharply with what is "more good-natured, more prudent, more comfortable, more mediocre, more indifferent" in modernity, the sight of which, Nietzsche adds, "makes us weary of man" (GM I §12). For, "the condition of the existence of the good is the lie: put differently, not wanting to see at any price how reality is constituted fundamentally" (EH Why I am a Destiny §4).

The conviction that attaches to realism, then, also operates in the mode of anticipation, as a promise of what we might see if, for once, we opened our eyes, a promise which fascinates and terrifies with its evocation of an awesome liberation from illusions and deceit. Nietzsche, despite his critique of Platonism, is not above invoking this more Platonic version, albeit in inverted form. That we would "prefer" to believe things otherwise demonstrates the authenticity of that which we demand to be admitted as real; and elements of this desire to see into the "real nature" of things is present in both the ascetic ideal, and in tragedy as Nietzsche reads it. Here realism and idealism form antagonistic, but also potentially complementary, pairs, no less than do the logic of slave and the logic of noble morality: "Zarathustra is more truthful than any other thinker. His doctrine and his alone, posits truthfulness as the highest virtue; this means the opposite of the *cowardice* of the 'idealist' who flees from reality" (EH Why I am a Destiny §3); and—how readily Platonism is inverted, owing to the persistence of this schema!

We are perhaps now in a position to link some of these dramatic and oratorical structures, so characteristic of Nietzsche's writings, to some elements of his own study of ancient rhetoric, notes for a lecture course that possibly was never delivered.[3] The signs of truthfulness are readily portrayed by those who seek to convince an audience, less by discursive demonstration of a truth than by qualities attaching to the orator him-

self. Nietzsche analyzed such strategies at length in his course. In successful—that is, convincing—rhetoric, the persona and performance of the orator are all important. There must be a "prudent" relation of the effect of sincerity and artistry. The effect of sincerity is produced by the imitation of naturalness:

> The listener will believe in the earnestness of the speaker and the truth of the thing advocated only if the speaker and his language are adequately suited to one another: he takes a lively interest in the speaker and believes in him—that is, that the speaker himself believes in the thing, and thus is sincere. Therefore, "appropriateness" aims at moral effect, clarity; and purity at an intellectual one: one wants to be understood, and one wishes to be considered sincere. (RL, 37)[4]

This effect of sincerity, however, must be tempered with an element of speech apparently in tension with it; an "artistic" aspect must be in play, if the audience is to be fully convinced. It is not enough to appear "'reasonable and sincere.' The impression of being superior, in freedom, dignity and beauty" must also be produced. The tension between the two principles is precarious. The effect of "naturalness" (or of naturalism?) achieved by using language which is as far as possible from suggesting any rhetorical device, risks being undone by language which is too noble, beautiful or impressive. Nietzsche therefore suggests that the power of rhetoric is "playing at the boundaries of the aesthetic and the moral: any one-sidedness destroys the outcome. The aesthetic fascination must join the moral confidence; but they should not cancel one another out: the *admiratio* [admiration] of the combatant is a basic means of the *pithanon* [persuasion]" (RL, 39). The aptness or naturalism of language counteracts the impression that a device is being deployed. Yet within the very same speech the use of devices counterpoints and draws attention to the orator's special capacity to indicate the real or even to elevate it to perfection.

I should like to highlight that this passage is not any simple analogy with Nietzsche's own oratorical powers, as though we might debunk his text by pointing out the rhetorical strategies it self-consciously uses. For not only is Nietzsche's understanding of the importance and the qualities of rhetoric more nuanced than any such instrumentalist reading would suggest, but my point in drawing attention to Nietzsche's study of classical rhetoric is to highlight the subtleties of the speech-situations of the *Genealogy*, both internally, with respect to the conflicts between genres dramatically depicted in its scenes, and in what I have called the dramatic structures of interpellation with respect to the author's and narrator's

presence in the text and the relation of that text/author/narrator to its reader. The profound ambiguities of rhetoric's persuasiveness are illuminating, both as guides to the structure of the *Genealogy's* drama, and as demonstrating how forces in tension must shape our response to and implication *in* that drama of modernity's crisis. Here suspicion can indeed be directed against the persuasiveness of rhetoric, but only as a subtle suspicion, one sensitive to the complex character of the "new truths" revealed by rhetoric—for these emerge less from anything directly advocated by its *means* but rather from the very *form* and operation of persuasiveness itself. For Nietzsche, I take it, we have in the end to ask ourselves what we would want to be persuaded by, who might persuade us and what might we become through being persuaded of certain possibilities. This aspect of his ethical thought tempers some of his more skeptical drives.

The orator counts on the audience's confidence in certain sorts of person; moral confidence is won through the appearance of truthfulness, a veracity signaled as *conviction* and hence *sincerity* by the portrayal of oneself as calm, stable and modest—the depiction of oneself as "one," neither stirred nor disturbed by emotions, nor subject to delusions, and in essence what one appears to be, an honest man. Yet the capacity to portray this persona most successfully will depend, ironically, upon a lack of self-identity: "The true orator speaks forth from the ethos of the persons or things represented by him." His art is an "interchange of persons," an "exchange of egos, as with the dramatist" (RL, 35). The art of imitation displaces the need to prove his credibility on independent grounds onto a *depiction* of integrity—of being at one with oneself. *Ethos*, then, contrasts with *pathos*, the former belonging with an effect of speech that induces a willing belief through the impersonation of what is calm and at one with itself, rather than through the arousal of emotion: it suggests "a calm attitude of mind, the expression of a noble mentality. You are dealing with a friendly and modest man [. . .] the mere look and word of a decent man often outweighs countless enthymenes as regards credibility" (RL, 131). "After a successful orator has spoken," Goethe is cited as remarking of the characters in Sophoclean tragedy, "the audience has the impression that his cause was the most just and the best" (RL, 37). And here the person who convinces is never far from the persona who makes his case. According to Nietzsche, when Euripides found the immediate pathos of tragic drama was no longer sufficiently secure to verify the reality of the action, he "put the prologue before the exposition, and placed it in the mouth of a person who could be trusted: often some deity had to guarantee the plot of the tragedy to the public, to re-

move every doubt as to the reality of the myth—somewhat as Descartes could prove the reality of the empirical world only by appealing to the truthfulness of God and his inability to utter falsehood" (BT §12). In this way "understanding" (*nous*) is enabled to create an order placed more highly than the tragic action itself, forcing tension and even competition between the two orders of significance, fatefully resolved, as *The Birth of Tragedy* seeks to convince us, by Socrates. Paul de Man comments that the same humanistic pattern applies to *The Birth of Tragedy* itself which thus echoes, even as it reveals the instability of, the rhetorical modes it alludes to.[5] The *Birth*, according to de Man, is a text based on the authority of a human voice, which receives this authority from its allegiance to a quasi-divine figure (95). Yet in as much as the text seeks to undermine that authoritative voice, "the narrative falls into two parts or, what amounts to the same thing, it acquires two incompatible narrators. The narrator who argues against the subjectivity of the lyric and against representational realism destroys the credibility of the other narrator, for whom Dionysian insight is the tragic perception of original truth" (98).

A similarly doubled structure might be taken to characterize the vertiginous arguments and dramatic scenes of the *Genealogy*, as, indeed, de Man also hints. Since this narrative instability is fairly well-covered ground in Nietzsche scholarship, I shall comment briefly on its relation to the interpellation of the reader. Nietzsche uses numerous strategies to draw the reader onto the jury which judges the slave revaluation in values, effecting thereby an "exchange of egos" that is made quite explicit in the stage directions of the text. The engagement of the reader in determining Nietzsche's own intentions and opinion can be charted through the role played by obvious ambiguities, contradictions, and paradoxes that are left up to the reader to resolve. But it is also worth considering the direct role played by such rhetorical devices as *aposiopesis*, "becoming silent," by which, as David Allison puts it, "the speaker seems unwilling or unable to say anything," thus forcing the reader to "supply additional cognitive, emotional and semantic material to complete what was initially written or spoken." As Allison remarks:

> More than most tropes which demand a similar obligation on the part of the audience, the figure of aposiopesis is incomplete in a dramatically temporal fashion. It capitalizes on the inertia of expectation, the demand for propositional completeness: namely, that the semantic content of the utterance be expressed or acknowledged completely. [...] [T]he audience feels itself obliged to complete the utterance.[6]

This obligation to *complete* stands in tension—but sometimes a complementary tension (a structure we have noted elsewhere in the *Genealogy*)—with the "art of surprise" that may manifest itself in the *mode* of completion. To notice, this, however, we must withdraw a little from our interpellation by the text to consider how we are being implicated in it. The tactic of "becoming silent," to allow the reader to guess or imagine a thought too dreadful for expression, or in order to allow a figure who stands in for the reader to speak, is used very obviously throughout Nietzsche's writings, nowhere with more stunning aplomb than in those passages of the *Genealogy* which implicate the reader in an indictment of "slave-morality" by positioning him or her as witness to the vile life and the "Bad air! Bad air!" of the "workshop where ideals are manufactured" (GM I §14).

The reader-figure in this passage is prompted by the narrator-guide to observe more closely the scene presented to him in a "false iridescent light." The narrator-guide meanwhile, asserts his own passivity before the scene commanding only that our representative should speak of what he sees: "Now speak! What is going on there? Say what you see [...] now I am the one who is listening." Our representative indeed *cannot* see, but only hear, as he peers into the "dark workshop," and detects that a "saccharine sweetness clings to every sound," a taste which is made to seem repugnant (evoking sentimentalism, Romanticism, etc.). Even if he cannot see, however, he hears "for himself" how "weakness" is being "lied into something *meritorious*" and "impotence which does not requite into 'goodness of heart'; anxious lowliness into humility, subjection to those one hates into 'obedience'" (GM I §14). This he hears as rhetoric exposed, denuded of its inventive, creative powers that might once have clothed the lie by constructing it as a "new truth." The reader seems barely to need the discreet prompting he is given to observe "these cellar rodents full of vengefulness and hatred." And although he has only words to go on, he is invited and encouraged to imagine he can go beyond them—"If you trusted simply to their words, would you suspect you were among men of *ressentiment*?" By such means, the reader-figure is brought to recognize as self-evident an "insight" that is actually premised on blindness; he is complicit in a series of transpositions read off from a scene he cannot see, and where he appear at once as independent witness and as fully dependent on the narrative authority who guides him: "[Reader figure]: 'I understand; I'll open my ears again (oh! oh! oh! and *close* my nose). Now I can really hear what they have been saying all along." *Really* hear what they have been saying, note, not hear what they have been *really* been saying; for the conversion to interpretative superiority (to a hermeneutics of suspicion) is secondary to "opening one's ears"

to hear what *anyone* could hear who actually *wanted* to (this being the premise of Nietzschean realism *qua* rhetoric of bravery versus cowardice).

In this passage it is the intrepid reader who "sees" behind every so-called virtue the necessity which brought it to be named, though not, we might note, without some urgent prompting from the narrator, whose overt presence on the scene may even evoke a comic interlude in the dark business of the *Genealogy* (as a scene from *Götterdammerung* is ironically revisited).[7] Indeed, we might note another mode of the "exchange of egos" operative in this passage. For the work of transformation ascribed to the slave (hidden laborer in the workshop of ideals) is in the current moment being performed in reverse by the reader's alter ego, whom Nietzsche tellingly calls "Mr. Rash and Curious [...] man of the most perilous kind of inquisitiveness." Intrepid, yes, but also perhaps less noble than he therefore imagines himself to be, this reader, "Mr. Rash and Curious"; could he have failed to attend properly to the "art of surprise," the sting in the tail of Nietzschean genealogy, which mocks him even as it leaves him to complete the work of the argument, making it his own as the narrator disappears into another scene? The skeptical debunking of the particular rhetoric of slave-morality leaves him vulnerable to, and naïve concerning, the several ways in which a rhetorical power might reposition his own gestures. In the position of mastery he imagines himself to assume, he not only remains entirely implicated in an *unseen* web of words, but fails to ask himself what it is he might better be persuaded of.

But what, in the end, is to be concluded from all this? It is certainly not my intention to suggest that we, like "Mr. Rash and Curious," perform a merely debunking reading of the rhetoric of Nietzsche's text, as though that would guard against a persuasiveness that has now been rendered suspicious. However, there are important consequences of paying attention to the rhetorical subtlety of Nietzsche's writing, and particularly, I have suggested here, insofar as it evokes and operates through the play of person and persona, around the questions that arise concerning act-agent interaction, and the modes in which we affectively are invested in decisions taken here. At least for some readers, the Nietzschean text presents a commanding oratorical presence, which may leave them open to becoming the butt of his jokes, rather than the heroes of integrity they are led to imagine themselves to be through the flattery that is equally present in the text. To be sensitive to the "art of surprise" is, at least, to be aware of this possibility of comic reversal. But, as with all great comedy, there is a deeper side to undergoing this kind of experience, and, as I have commented previously in distinguishing Nietzsche's self-conception from the one he ascribes to the English genealogists, his

aim is not, ultimately, to display us as "animals self-trained in sacrificing our pride." Tragic-heroic possibilities continue to beckon the man of courageous integrity and realist vision, even as the very pursuit of such a self-image leaves a person hopelessly vulnerable to exposure as mere persona, as one who, in seeking to be what he is, neglects awareness as to how what he is not—his capacity for dissimulation, for instance—may simultaneously express and constitute him. In the first essay of the *Genealogy*, this instability of identity is set against a strong rhetoric implying that identity draws upon deep structures of "nature"—"slave" or "noble" are at once essences and constructs, as dependent for their being on the creative modes of evaluation they are able to establish as "truths" as on the re-inscription of such gestures as necessary. And yet, what Nietzsche also shows in the *Genealogy*, is how this rhetoric can be redeployed to open up questions about the kinds of beings we should *like* to be, about the images to which we are drawn, about the kind of rhetoric we would *want* to find convincing. The *Genealogy* might, therefore, be taken as an allegory for, exercise in, and recourse against the historically self-conscious situation of secularized modern readers, whose very integrity as "scientific" perusers of the human soul leaves them open to the comic *dénouement* that awaits such animals self-trained in sacrificing their pride.

If we lose our sense of surprise, we may fail to see this possibility *as* comedy, and, by the same token, lose our ability to discriminate between the many possibilities and orders of realism, integrity, and courage, thus losing sight of the promise that Nietzsche's *Genealogy* nonetheless holds out for a *persuasion* of nobility that might be recovered by our age.

## Notes

[1] On the rhetorical strategies governing description of act-agent interaction and dissociation in forensic rhetoric, see Chaïm Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation* (Notre Dame, IN: U of Notre Dame P, 1969), 300-04.

[2] For further discussion of Nietzsche's reception of Sophist thought, see Thomas Brobjer's essay, "Nietzsche's Wrestling with Plato and Platonism," in section 5 of this volume.

[3] The complete text is published in translation in *Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language*, ed. and trans. Sander L. Gilman, Carole Blair, and David J. Parent (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989). Henceforth cited in the text as RL.

[4] Cf. Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 3.7.1408a: "Aptness of language is the one thing that makes people believe in your story: their minds draw the false conclusion that you are to be trusted from the fact that others behave as you do when things are as you describe them; and therefore they take your story to be true, whether it is so or not."

[5] See Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke and Proust* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1979).

[6] David B. Allison, "Have I been Understood?", in Richard Schacht (ed.), *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality: Essays on Nietzsche's* Genealogy of Morals (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U of California P, 1994), 460-68 (460 and 464).

[7] A thought I owe to Duncan Large.

# How Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals* Depicts Psychological Distance between Ancients and Moderns

*David F. Horkott*

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE WAS a clear-sighted diagnostician, whose penetrating analysis encompassed the history of European culture from the archaic age of the Greeks to his own day. His analysis was guided by this central insight: that the manner by which a culture interprets suffering is an index of its spiritual health. Using this diagnostic benchmark, Nietzsche was sure that Greek tragedy (as performed during the archaic age) functioned as a showcase for the artistic genius and robust health of that ancient culture. Modern Europeans, on the other hand, do not live in a culture characterized by tragic art and, as a consequence, are not as fit as those splendid and powerful humans of the past.

Nietzsche explained the decline of the spiritual health of European culture in *On the Genealogy of Morals: A Polemic*. Published in 1887, *On the Genealogy of Morals* is simultaneously an account of the development of modern morality, as well as a detailed pathology of modern Europe's sickness. This is a very different work from *The Birth of Tragedy*, published over a decade and a half earlier in 1872. Nevertheless, both works highlight Nietzsche's unwavering conviction that the health of a given culture is best measured by the manner in which it gives suffering meaning.

Since, as he believed, we are members of a thoroughly contaminated culture, Nietzsche felt it necessary to present his ideas in therapeutic form. What is needed most right now are thinkers who understand that the revaluation of values is necessary, and who can will the destruction of current forms of human existence. This entails a problem, however: current culture promotes compassion at the expense of spiritedness. *On the Genealogy of Morals* is a polemic that attacks modern morality with the intention of arousing spiritedness in us.

## Nietzsche's Concern with the Interpretation of Suffering

The best way to approach *On the Genealogy of Morals* is to consider its reading to be an intense session with a "de-programmer." This analogy is fitting, because Nietzsche believes our weak minds have succumbed to the psychological manipulations of a pernicious cult (the ascetic ideal), and he seeks to liberate us, using any and all means available. According to Nietzsche, moderns live under the intimidating psychology of the ascetic ideal. But just as a member of a cult can be kidnapped and confined to a room where she or he may face the relentless energy of a professional de-programmer, so we, in these essays, face Nietzsche's cunning therapy. Nietzsche is willing to use lies and partial truths in his therapy. After all, what makes someone vulnerable to a cult's power is psychological naïveté. Nietzsche seeks to cure his readers of psychological innocence, by exposing them to his guile, and by making them aware that they are participants in a psychological war. In sum, the form and content of *On the Genealogy of Morals* reflect Nietzsche's Dionysian version of spiritual therapy.

In the latter portion of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, he announced that the protracted decline of modern European culture was approaching a catastrophic level. In order for our culture to avoid an utterly debilitating version of nihilism, current values must be reinterpreted, using an awareness of the psychological difference between Ancients and Moderns. The key for understanding this difference is to look at how cultures, past and present, have given suffering meaning. The procedure adopted here will be to examine the modern interpretation of suffering first.

The modern interpretation of suffering and the development of morality are inextricably connected in the three essays comprising *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Each essay is a masterpiece of psychological illumination that explains how suffering was given a series of moral interpretations. The titles of the essays—the first entitled "Good and Evil, Good and Bad," the second "Guilt, Bad Conscience, and the Like," and the final essay "What Is the Meaning of Ascetic Ideals?"—suggest that *On the Genealogy of Morals* is a collection of independent inquiries; however, the moral interpretation of suffering (*Leiden*) is a prominent and repeated theme that unifies them at a deep level.

What is it that makes an interpretation of suffering a "moral" one? For Nietzsche, a moral interpretation of suffering is one that derives meaning from the activity of blaming. Blaming makes sense only in a

moral context. So each essay details how blaming functioned in our past, that is, how various psychological responses to suffering influenced the growth and development of our highest values. In the first essay, slaves blame their masters; in the second, those possessing a bad conscience blame themselves. The final essay describes the most spiritual and systematic development of blaming—it tells the story of the ascension of the ascetic ideal, and how life itself is eventually blamed by those living under its power.

## Synopsis of Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals*

Blaming others first acquired cultural significance within master/slave relations. As slaves suffered under the rule of masters, they reacted to their suffering by blaming those in power for possessing demonstrable strength. Aggression and power came to be understood as evil, while meekness and weakness were increasingly considered to be morally superior attributes. In the first essay, Nietzsche traces the origin of modern/democratic culture to *ressentiment. Ressentiment* is a response to suffering that cultivates imaginary revenge—it is a profoundly negative response to suffering, which nevertheless possesses an amazing potency. Blaming others created a world of meaning so powerful that a culture built on it displaced aristocratic/noble culture; blaming others was an activity that gave rise to values, ideals, virtues, doctrines, and symbols that overpowered "noble" psychology. Specifically, blaming others fueled the development of moral psychology. Even though blaming sounds negative to our ears—it was the activity of blaming that created and elevated our moral status. After all, it is much more gratifying to blame a moral agent.

In the middle essay, Nietzsche explains how those who originally came to power through the development of the moral conscience faced the problem of how to deal with that conscience in themselves. In this essay, Nietzsche describes a psychological shift within the activity of blaming. Given that the slave revolt in morality was successful—it was no longer meaningful to blame the masters. Masters had been hated for having power, but that situation was to change. Interestingly, Nietzsche asserts that the activity of blaming did not cease when slaves gained the upper hand. Instead, the activity of blaming was redirected. Now the procedures for blaming were put to a new purpose: self-blaming. From this redirection of blaming there emerged the bad conscience, as blaming was turned back onto those who felt themselves to be sufferers. In par-

ticular, the concepts of guilt and duty were intensified and internalized by their special connection to Christian monotheism. The redirection of blaming in European culture created a vicious impulse: those possessing a bad conscience sought punishment as a means for relieving their sense of guilt.

In the final essay, blaming others and self-blaming is succeeded by blaming one's origins. Blaming one's origins is tantamount to blaming one's self. And blaming one's origins is tantamount to blaming life. Thus the third essay synthesizes the psychological lessons learned from blaming others and from self-blaming. When one blames one's origins, one experiences the potency that comes from blaming others along with the gratification discovered in self-blaming. According to the ascetic ideal, our origins—that is, life itself—is judged to be morally defective. Nietzsche's account of the ascetic ideal is profoundly fascinating. Just as a badly wounded soldier changes his or her goals from overcoming the enemy to trying to stay alive—so ascetic strategies were redirected from increasing spiritual power to maintaining a subsistence existence.

Nietzsche has a special fondness for ascetic individuals and for ascetic ideals. The resolute will of the ascetic priest to transform life is something Nietzsche genuinely appreciates. For asceticism has provided the most significant means for humans to overcome their animal-level existence—ascetics do not shrink from their psychological endowment, but flourish in it! Somewhere along the line, however, ascetic ideals stopped functioning as a means for spiritual growth, and became something willed as an end in itself (Nietzsche called this ultimate goal "*the* ascetic ideal"). In other words, the object of human desire was altered within Europe's history. Instead of desiring to transform themselves, Europeans longed for life itself to be different. The thrust of the final essay is that the ascetic ideal is a highly refined moral interpretation of suffering that extends culpability to life itself.

*On the Genealogy of Morals* is the story of how a series of moral interpretations of suffering reached their highest development in the ascetic ideal. The ascetic ideal is a degenerate form of asceticism. Instead of restricting our natural impulses for the purpose of focusing energy, the ascetic ideal chokes all other drives for the simple purpose of choking them. Furthermore, the ascetic ideal is comprehensive—it extends its influence to all members of European culture. In the past, philosophers had cheerfully employed ascetic strategies. Indeed, all types of higher life have had some connection with ascetic ideals. But now *the* ascetic ideal exerts its power over all types of higher life—including artists. The ultimate problem with the ascetic ideal is that its development no longer

serves human life. The cause of this problem lies in Europe's cultural history. At some point in the development of our moral consciousness, the will to torment was combined with asceticism. This coupling established the ascetic ideal as a monstrous, tyrannical power over the hearts and minds of Europeans.

The ascetic ideal views *all* suffering under the perspective of guilt. This is a far more comprehensive interpretation of suffering than is found in *ressentiment* or the bad conscience. Indeed, Nietzsche detected a terminal form of nihilism in the systematic triumph of the ascetic ideal. In sum, a succession of moral interpretations of suffering is responsible for the hypertrophy of man's moral sense to such an extent that modern Europeans are currently "demoralized." Nietzsche's polemic does not target modern morality so much as it aims to arouse spiritedness in us. *On the Genealogy of Morality* compares the psychological habits of the Ancients to the Moderns with a view toward opening up new possibilities for human existence.

## The Ancient Understanding of Suffering

The ascetic ideal permeates modern culture to the point that Moderns wish they were a different kind of creature, living in a different kind of world. This longing to be a new kind of human being is dear to Nietzsche's heart. The trouble lies in this fact: the most effective means used by humans to date for self-transformation has been based on hating one's self, and by discounting the value of earthly existence. This problem is not one that modern Europeans inherited from the archaic Greeks.

These ancient Greeks were psychologically naïve; but they were healthy. Such healthy Greeks did not possess the highly developed moral conscience that later Europeans would come to possess—but neither did they regard themselves as sinners. Moderns, as a result of hundreds of years of deep religious influence, live with a bad conscience. In a twisted way, those who feel guilty find pleasure in their own suffering. The Greeks provide proof that a healthier type of human being, operating with a different attitude toward suffering, is an actual possibility for humans. However, Nietzsche does not wish for Moderns to become less naïve—even if that were possible. Rather, his intention in *On the Genealogy of Morals* is to enable Moderns to create a new meaning for suffering. This is the question Nietzsche's genealogical essays seek to answer: "How does one attain the health of the Greeks despite the fact that one can no longer live in their psychological naiveté?"

The first part of Nietzsche's answer lies in his treatment of the historical development of the human conscience. He starts with this given: Europeans came to possess a bad conscience. In other words, for hundreds of years Europeans have embraced the notion that they were sinners whose guilt was so great that an eternity in hell could not settle their debt before a Holy God. Applying critical philosophy to human psychology, Nietzsche asks: "What conditions were necessary for the possibility of the emergence of the bad conscience?"

One of the requirements for the development of conscience, good or bad, is—memory. Nietzsche offers a fascinating account of the price humans have paid for overcoming their forgetfulness, so that they could remember a few basic rules. It took a long time and a lot of work, but humans finally attained a memory for appropriate behavior in a civilized society. Memory is necessary, but not sufficient, for explaining the emergence of the bad conscience. In the middle essay, Nietzsche takes great care to list the requirements for the development of the conscience in general (apart from the development of the *bad* conscience). For the conscience to develop as the "bad" conscience, its history needed to have contact with religious ideas. However, Nietzsche uses the Greeks to make an important point: not just any religious ideas will suffice for the emergence of the bad conscience. He bolsters this contention by comparing the theological imagination of the Greeks with that of later Europeans. Once again, the interpretation of suffering is central to Nietzsche's thinking.

In sections 6 and 7 of this second essay, Nietzsche argues that only a particular interpretation of suffering was sufficient for the development of the bad conscience. For instance, the Greeks did not blame themselves for being sinners. On the contrary, when the Greeks did something shameful, they blamed the gods for contributing to human foolishness. Additionally, life was made cheerful in ancient times by the joy found in making or seeing others suffer. This is difficult for Moderns to understand, because our attitudes have been moralized—we are ashamed of our cruel instincts. The presence of suffering is now used as an argument against existence, whereas suffering used to function as a seduction to life. It is just about impossible for Moderns to attain a vivid comprehension of how cruelty provided a festival pleasure for people in the past. The thirst for cruelty used to be considered a normal quality of human nature. Formerly, humans had a clear conscience toward suffering.

The function of all interpretations of suffering is to overcome the meaninglessness of suffering. Both the Ancients and the Moderns share a hatred of senseless suffering. To this end, both the Ancients and the

Moderns employed their theological imagination. But here the contrast is telling. The Ancients pushed their religious thinking in a different direction; they interpreted suffering in terms of public spectacle. Nietzsche calls the Greeks a people of spectacles (*Schauspieler-Volk*) (GM II §7). According to Nietzsche, all Greek tragedies were intended as festival plays. The senselessness of suffering was overcome in the idea that suffering provided a festival game (*Festspiel*) for the gods (GM II §7). According to Nietzsche, gods were invented so that suffering would have a divine audience. The distribution of the gods ensured that there was no unwitnessed suffering. The gods were recognized as friends of cruel spectacles. The Greeks felt that every evil was justified as a sight that edified some god. Indeed, the Greeks offered their gods the pleasures of cruelties. These offerings sometimes took the form of poetry, drama, or philosophy. Homer, for instance, interpreted the Trojan Wars as festival plays for the gods and godlike poets.

In more modern times, the concept of the monotheistic God effectively sharpened the consciousness of guilt. For Nietzsche, we feel guilty when we experience our animal instincts as hostility, rebellion, or insurrection against the Creator. But the gods do not have to be used for self-violation. The Greeks were noble, and their gods functioned in a noble manner. Greek gods deified the animal in us. Furthermore, the Greek gods functioned to ward off the bad conscience, and thereby increased feelings of joy and freedom. The gods were used, in other words, to make life easier for human beings. In fact, the gods were made responsible for evil and for wretched fate. Instead of the concept of sin the Greeks embraced foolishness. Even foolish behavior was attributed to divine deception. For centuries the Greeks blamed their deities in the face of every incomprehensible atrocity or wanton act by which some of their peers had dirtied themselves. It was easier for the Greeks to think that the gods were bad than for them to think they were bad themselves. The Greek gods did not assume mankind's punishment, but more nobly took mankind's guilt.

Finally, the second part of Nietzsche's solution comes into view. We can achieve the health of the Greeks by going forward instead of backward. Naiveté is lost forever—we cannot jettison our highly refined moral sensibility and live in the childlike world of the Ancients. Instead, we need to develop another layer within our psyche—we need to develop a new conscience that lies underneath our moral conscience. This is what Nietzsche had in mind when he said that the bad conscience is an illness as pregnancy is an illness (GM II §19). The bad conscience is not only a

precursor to the ascetic ideal—it must be the precursor to a new, post-moral conscience.

## Summary

Nietzsche was alarmed by the fact that modern culture has fallen completely under the power of the ascetic ideal. The problem the ascetic ideal is that it sustains the desire for overcoming our limitations by pitting our amazing psychological endowment against our animal nature. The means to our greatest self-overcoming have been self-hatred and self-torture. The Greeks sanctified their earthly nature—and it was unthinkable in their psychological framework to question the nobility of their origins. The Greeks felt themselves to be noble and instinctually imputed nobility to their origins. The ascetic ideal replaces the ultimate goal of self-improvement with self-denial. More than ever, Europeans need to gain strength from their predecessors.

# Nietzsche's Aesthetic Solution to the Problem of Epigonism in the Nineteenth Century

*Burkhard Meyer-Sickendiek*

> *For almost two generations, the age following Goethe's death in 1832 has been regarded as the Period of Epigones. Large revolutions and a general renewal, a reestablished German empire and a certain maturity in some of the intellectual developments within that period were necessary before this view, according to which a l l recent poetic work and all attempts in that field had been n o t h i n g b u t an echo and a reimagining of classical forms and contents taken from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, could be widely replaced by a different conviction and some better judgment.*[1]

LITERARY HISTORIAN ADOLF Stern's reflection, which begins his essay "Germany's Literature from Goethe's Death to the Present" (1885), gives a precise description of the ambivalence embodied in the category of "epigonality." The central place that this concept was given in literary criticism of the nineteenth century is due to a form of prejudice, for the "conviction" that literature post-Goethe must be epigonic is at best a superficial, a dubious "judgment." This follows from the foundations on which such an assessment rests, which in turn depends upon an *intellectual history* that would explain the term "Period of Epigones" and specifies its use in the nineteenth century.[2] For a long time, the concept was related to the idea that an age of cultural bloom is being followed by an epigonic period, an idea which reaches back to Karl Leberecht Immermann's original coining of the term. As early as 1836 his novel, *Die Epigonen*, focuses on a certain "period," namely "the last eight or nine years before the July revolution" of 1830.[3] Immermann defines the Restoration, and the luxuriousness of a cultural end-time implied by that phrase—"sickened by a certain intellectual exuberance"—by adapting the

ancient Greek term *epigonoi*, in his classification of the epigone, "the blessing and un-blessing of the future generations [*Nachgeborenen*]."[4] Just how crippling the abundant cultural inheritance of a highly advanced culture is to any creative energy, and how indispensable, on the other hand, the sense of a state of cultural *commencement* is, was seen clearly by Goethe, even before Immermann. Seemingly anticipating the epigonic problem of his successors, Goethe said in his conversation with Johann Peter Eckermann of 15 February 1824 that he had enjoyed the *privilege* of living when he was eighteen years old in an eighteen-year-old Germany; and the famous phrase "America, you've got it better," relates to the figurative dead hand of traditional European culture. While Goethe, as implied by Eckermann's record of this conversation, was able to avoid such problems, at least during his younger years, Immermann was forced to face the difficult situation created by his cultural successorship. "Our time," a letter to his brother Ferdinand in April 1830 reads, "standing on the shoulders and the efforts of our predecessors, is sickened by a certain cultural exuberance. It is an inheritance, easily acquired, and in that sense we are epigones. This has resulted in a rather strange and lingering illness, the depiction of which by all means is the aim of my work."[5]

Friedrich Nietzsche famously adopted Immermann's diagnosis in his second *Untimely Meditation*, entitled "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life," which appeared in 1874, just short of forty years after *Die Epigonen* was first published. Nietzsche treats the epigonic mindset of his time—the so-called *Gründerzeit*—in various ways. The second section speaks of the "artistically inert types" of the period (UM II §2); the fifth section, of the "dangerous belief [...] that we are late arrivals and epigones" (UM II §5); the sixth section criticizes "the thin shrill sound of the strings" in present times (UM II §6); while the eighth section tells of "us, the late comers, the faded last shoots of more powerful and more happily courageous generations" and the time's typical "belief that one is a late comer of the age" (UM II §8). All these phrases, according to Nietzsche, describe "that illness which has come over humanity in recent times as a result of an excess of history" (UM II §10). Hence the main thesis of this essay is that the "supersaturation of an age in history" results in a "mood of irony about itself," "an even more dangerous cynicism," and the "always dangerous belief [...] that we are late arrivals and epigones" (UM II §5).

But I shall advance here a different thesis: namely, that *Nietzsche is a theorist of epigonic aesthetics.*[6] In Nietzsche's writings, a paradigm-shift distinguishes the texts of early and his middle period, starting with the

criticism of epigones typical of his contemporaries—recall his commentary on Euripides in *The Birth of the Tragedy*—and ending in an aesthetic concept of epigonality exemplified in Adalbert Stifter's *Der Nachsommer* (1857) and Goethe's late work. So Nietzsche's reflections on the epigonic problem should be discussed from a different perspective, reaching from the early rejection of latecomers and epigones shared by his contemporaries (*Untimely Meditations*) to a tendency which, beginning in *Human, All Too Human*, sees the epigone as a type whose aesthetic ability is superior even to that of the "genius." This *transvaluation* is driven, not merely by Nietzsche's criticism of the concept of "genius," but, more important, by his reflections on phenomena associated with that problem: the relation of "art and Restoration," the growing appreciation for the "baroque," the notion of "autumnality" [*Herbstlichkeit*], "slowness," "conventionality," and "boredom," as well as some basic statements on the "sunset of art."

What, in Nietzsche's view, constitutes negative epigonality? It is largely what he defines as "an old person's occupation [...], that is, looking back, tallying the accounts, balancing the books, seeking consolation in what used to be through memories, in short, a historical culture" (UM II §8). Such an occupation (or lack of it) is unequivocally rejected in Nietzsche's metaphor of "rumination": in the opening section of the second *Untimely Meditation*, he says that a "person who wanted to feel utterly and only historically would be like [...] the beast that has to continue its life only from rumination to constantly repeated rumination" (UM II §1). Such "rumination"—which might be called *mere rumination*—is epigonic in the sense that Nietzsche despises, for it fails to reanimate either the person who ruminates, or the object of these ruminations. Nietzsche understands such an epigonality, as his contemporaries do, in terms of a deficiency, a lack of ability, corresponding to his thesis that modern man suffers from a "weakened personality":

> For we modern people have nothing at all which comes from us. Only because we fill ourselves with foreign ages, customs, arts, philosophies, religions, and discoveries do we become something worthy of consideration, that is, walking encyclopedias, as some ancient Greek lost to our time would put it. (UM II §4)

Now what happens when Nietzsche switches tack, rethinking that "unpleasantly strange thought that we are epigones" instead as a "great" thought? That question is answered only very tentatively in the second *Untimely Meditation*, in the eighth section where Nietzsche is concerned, first of all, with the content of epigonality. Here he describes

epigones "as the heirs and followers of an astonishing classical force," and connects this definition to his differentiation of an "Alexandrian-Roman culture" from an "ancient Greek original world of the great, the natural, and the human." The latter, obviously related to the Dionysian principle elaborated in *The Birth of Tragedy*, is paradigmatic for Nietzsche: if we regard that "ancient Greek original world" as "a legacy appropriately ours, there could be nothing greater or prouder for us than to be its followers" (UM II §8). While this argument does not define epigonality as an artistic principle—that does not come until *Human, All Too Human*, some four years later—it nevertheless prepares one important aspect of his redefinition of epigonality. For the epigone that Nietzsche positively appreciates does not refer to the culture of a known or rather a *recent time*; instead, he follows on the track of a certain *distant relation*, going "back behind and above this Alexandrian world" (UM II §8). The difference is a decisive one, for the quality of the repeated tradition has changed: now, it is no longer a mere rumination, but signifies a kind of *remembrance*.

This form of a *remembering repetition* is central to Nietzsche's positive re-evaluation of the epigonic idea in his aphorisms on aesthetics in the section "From the Soul of Artists and Writers" in the first volume of *Human, All Too Human*. The reflections on this kind of "remembering repetition" are unconnected to the ethic or religious context in which they appear in, for instance, Kierkegaard;[7] their exclusive concern is the characterization of a specifically "epigonic" form of fantasy, as shown in the following aphorism, "How poets ease life":

> Poets, insofar as they too wish to ease men's lives, either avert their glance from the arduous present, or else help the present acquire new colours by making a light shine in from the past. To be able to do this, they themselves must in some respects be creatures facing backwards, so that they can be used as bridges to quite distant times and ideas, to religions and cultures dying out or dead. Actually, they are always and necessarily *epigones*. Of course, some unfavorable things can be said about their ways of easing life: they soothe and heal only temporarily, only for the moment; they even prevent men from working on a true improvement of their conditions, by suspending and, like a palliative, relieving the very passion of the dissatisfied, who are impelled to act. (HA I §148)

If this aphorism turns the epigone into an archetype of the poet, and declares epigonality to be the principle of poetic art, insofar as it "eases," then this offers an explanation of Nietzsche's shift. For such a definition corresponds to what is probably the most important premise of *Human, All Too Human*: Nietzsche's deduction of art from the, for him, obsolete

cultural phenomena of religion and metaphysics. Art is defined as an heir to certain religious and metaphysical notions; but this affiliates it with an obsolete quality, a taste of "that-which-has-been."[8] The poet of "*Human, All Too Human*" can no longer "forget" epigonality, as opposed to the one described in the second *Untimely Meditation* (UM II §6). He is amongst those who are "necessarily *epigones*," because art itself belongs to them: it has become a "conjurer of the dead," merely "touching up extinct, faded ideas," reviving "the old feeling" and making the "heart [beat] to an otherwise forgotten rhythm" (HA I §147). But this is all dependent on the following condition:

> Whatever has grown out of religion, and near it, cannot grow again, once religion has been destroyed. At the most, late stray shoots can mislead us to delusions about it, as does the intermittent memory of the old art; a condition that may well betray the feeling of loss and privation, but is no proof of any force from which a new art could be born. (HA I §239)

The associated term of the "sunset of art," however, implies an aesthetic-theoretical reflection which is rather more profound than is usually assumed. That Nietzsche's "non-metaphysical" modernity could relate to art in no other form than that of cultural memory, is not the last word on the matter; it is, rather, Nietzsche's first, and it leads into an extensive reflection upon the possibilities of an art and a fantasy of an end-time as a whole, the main aspiration of *Human, All Too Human*. The apodictic claim that "the intermittent memory of old art" is no proof "of any force from which a new art could be born" is fundamentally revised in other parts of the work.

Those aphorisms in which Nietzsche discusses examples of a "memory of the old art"—one on Goethe, "The Revolution in Poetry" (HA I §221), and one on Stifter, "The Poet as a Guide for the Future" (HA II Assorted Opinions and Maxims §99)—offer us an inversion of his thesis. For it is by nothing other than the memory of true art that a better, an *anti-revolutionary* aesthetic can be achieved. The "mature artistic insight" that Goethe received "in the second half of his life," his classicist period, is based on precisely the principle of a "remembering repetition" that embodied the most negative kind of epigonality in the second *Untimely Meditation*. In this "more mature" period, Nietzsche writes in a new appreciative tone, "[Goethe] lived in art in the memory of true art: his poetry was an aid to his memory means for remembering, for understanding the old, long bygone ages of art. His demands were unfulfillable due to the force of the new age; but his ache for this was abolished by his

joy, that they once *had been* fulfilled and that we can yet partake of that fulfillment" (HA I §221). This is identical, almost verbatim, to those actions that the second *Untimely Meditation* regarded as "epigonic" and as "an old person's occupation"; it is no different from "seeking consolation in what used to be through memories, in short, a historical culture" (UM II §8).

So the collection *Human, All Too Human* provides evidence of an aesthetic-theoretical self-correction, in which Nietzsche inverts some of the convictions and judgments that were central to his early writings. The epigonic problem is obviously a main issue in this "transvaluation of all values." For the condemnable "rumination" of the second *Untimely Meditation* is now redefined as an artistic ideal with reference to Goethe's late writings: "No new subjects and characters, but rather the old long-familiar ones, in ever enduring reanimation and reformation: that is art as Goethe later understood it, as the Greeks and even the French practiced it" (HA I §221).

Similarly, like Goethe, Adalbert Stifter plays an important role in Nietzsche's middle phase. And, like Goethe's *oeuvre*, the novel *Der Nachsommer* belongs to Nietzsche's "treasury of German prose," that small number of literary texts that are worth of several re-readings, according to the famous aphorism from the section of *Human, All Too Human* entitled "The Wanderer and His Shadow." Few writings share that honor: "Lichtenberg's aphorisms, the first book in Jung-Stilling's biography, […] Gottfried Keller's *Leute von Seldwyla*—and that will be all for the time being" (HA II Wanderer §109).

Only one piece of prose is elevated among this select number, namely Goethe's writings, led by his conversations with Eckermann, "the best German book there is." Of the other works listed here, it is only Stifter's novel that Nietzsche will mention again in one breath with Goethe: "I have," Nietzsche writes in October 1888, "absorbed Adalbert Stifter's 'Nachsommer' with deep affection: in fact, it is the only German book *after* Goethe that has any magic for me" (KSA 13, 24[10], 634). I want to show that Stifter's novel is not only important for Nietzsche's aesthetics, but is itself concerned with developing a strategy of epigonic writing. Stifter's own commentary implies that the attempt to distance oneself from epigonality, to overcome it—as was the case with Immermann—collapses in this novel, and he arrives at a conscious affirmation of epigonic methods. In a letter to his publisher Gustav Heckenast of February 1858, Stifter notes:

> My work is far from Goethe's, from his greatness of content and his beautifully clear form: but it was written with a Goethe-like love of art, conceived and thought-out with a heartfelt devotion to calm, pure beauty. These things have been all but lost in today's fiction and can be found only in the old masters' writings.[9]

This letter shows that Stifter was prepared to adhere in his writing to a literary paragon: the "devotion to calm, pure beauty," of which he speaks, refers to the oeuvre of the "old master"—Goethe. So the "love of art," which inspired the writing of *Der Nachsommer*, is defined as something heteronymous: it is not "genuine" Stifter, but rather—or so the quoted passage suggests—"essentially" Goethe. Although Stifter's *Der Nachsommer* is far from attaining the level of literary accomplishment achieved by Goethe, it remains the expression of an attempt to get as close as possible to that artistic ideal, even to the point of total identification. The paradox of such a self-evaluation is striking: the exemplary mastership is unattainable. What Stifter might have meant in that phrase, "Goethe-like love of art," can be gleaned from a first glance at *Der Nachsommer*.

Central elements of "Weimarer Klassik,"[10] stylized as an aesthetic or national pedagogic ideal during the second half of the nineteenth century, shape Stifter's novel.[11] What makes *Der Nachsommer*'s characters higher human beings is the fact that they share thoughts first discussed in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Among them is the idea of beauty as a symbol of morality; of an aesthetic education as a realization of one's humanity; of a study and imitation of natural beauty, parallel to the organizing principles of nature, on the one hand, and to the mimesis of nature that Winckelmann found in the art of the "Ancients," on the other.[12] They constitute a discursive community located in the a-historical idyll of the Sternenhof and the Asperhof, the dwellings of two families that are bound by this friendship. But the "Goethe-like love of art" shapes not just content, but also form: in unequalled faithfulness, Stifter adopts the norms of the *Bildungsroman*; without the premises of this genre, *Der Nachsommer* would have been inconceivable. The novel includes both the topos of the journey and the motif of the wandering main character, whose developing education, under the guidance of Freiherr von Risach, constitutes a large part of the story. That motif gives structure to the one, strictly chronologically arranged narrative line (the only exception being the chapter entitled "Der Rückblick"). Heinrich Drendorf's education involves an experience with the sphere of nobility, life in a castle, exposure to classic paintings, texts, and sculptures, and—last but not least—the didactic efforts of some noblewomen. The "devotion to calm, pure beauty" that Stifter cites in his let-

ter to Heckenast can be critically identified as a reminiscence of Goethe's artistic ideal that might well be called classicist. Or to put it another, equally relevant way: as an epigonic fantasy.[13]

Nietzsche ascribes to *Der Nachsommer* a "misty-eyed and pure autumnality in enjoyment and maturing" and an "October-sun that reaches into the spiritual," and these phrases are not simply inspired by the book's title (KSA 13, 24[10], 634). Nietzsche's notes from September 1879, the same period in which he recommended the novel to Heinrich Köselitz (Peter Gast), show that he was thinking of one particular character in the novel when he made those associations—namely, Heinrich Drendorf's fatherly friend, Gustav von Risach, to whom the title refers. In these notebooks one entry, entitled "Short Summer," reads as follows: "Some men's natures are blessed with summertime but for a moment: they had a late spring, and shall have a long autumn. They are more spiritual creatures" (KSA 8, 46[3], 616). So the term "autumnality" is Nietzsche's metaphor for the epigonic fantasy on which *Der Nachsommer* depends. Goethe and Stifter are "so wholesome" for Nietzsche, because they "enjoy" old subjects and characters, and "let them mature" in their writings, according to the formula that says that "poets, insofar as they wish to ease men's lives, [...] are always and necessarily *epigones*." For Nietzsche (as well as, incidentally, for Stifter), epigonic writing is a form of therapy for the writer's own soul, and one that endows it with its literary and aesthetic attraction.

So there are at least three reasons why Nietzsche can be called a theorist of "epigonic aesthetics." First, the anti-revolutionary impulse of such aesthetics is connected to "easing one's life," which constitutes, according to Nietzsche, the main aesthetic aim and effect of epigonic writing. Second, it has been shown, in reference to Stifter's *Der Nachsommer*, how that novel, which held great importance for Nietzsche's aesthetics, is itself an effort towards an epigonic strategy in fiction. And third, epigonic aesthetics is the positive counterpart to the decadent aesthetics that Nietzsche condemned in Richard Wagner's music. For although both versions—epigonality as well as *décadence*—are bound to the "end-time," the "sunset of art," at least one difference is apparent: whereas Wagner tries to overcome that end-time disposition, Goethe and Stifter consciously *delve* into the same element. If the ambivalent "greatness" of Wagner's music lies in his finding a "replacement art" that was "impossible, forbidden, during the earlier, pre-classical and classical ages," then it is characteristic for Goethe's and Stifter's late work that it connects with those "pre-classical and classical ages" by way of memory or repetitive continuation (HA II Assorted Opinions §144).

One criterion for identifying these diverging forms of art can be found, according to Nietzsche, primarily in their aesthetic effect. While Wagner's music, enveloped in its ambition to surpass what went before, necessarily creates a "baroque" effect, Goethe's and Stifter's writings seem "autumnal" and "calm," due to their reliance on a bygone tradition. Nietzsche's condemnation of Wagner, and of the "tyranny" of his music,[14] is based on his interest for this mild, "autumnal" mood of the repetitive fantasy. It shows a "richness" that differs from the "pomp" of Wagner's baroque music by "easing men's life"; whereas Wagner, at least since the late 1870s, is no more than an "illness" to Nietzsche.[15] This background further explains Nietzsche's thesis that "poets, insofar as they wish to ease men's lives, [...] are always and necessarily *epigones*" (HA I §148). For Goethe and Stifter are epigonic in this "easing" sense; as "creatures facing backwards," they can achieve that which is forever unattainable to Wagner's music: they are "recreational" and "wholesome," as he put it in his letter to Heinrich Köselitz of 19 April 1887 (KSB 8, 60). We have seen on what this aesthetic effect depends: "baroque" and "overburdened" is what art becomes whenever it tries to surpass its own tradition; autumnal and mild, whenever it remembers its own tradition and repeats it. Only in the latter case, the end-time disposition itself becomes the subject matter; only then, "autumn and withering" become art's aesthetic effectiveness, its autumnality (HA II Assorted Opinions §171).

It should not be overlooked that these aesthetic reflections from *Human, All Too Human* constitute but an episode in Nietzsche's *oeuvre*. As soon as work on *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* begins, some categories regain a relevance that they had been denied in this collection: the concepts of "inspiration," of the "genius," but also that of the Dionysian *mythos* from *The Birth of Tragedy*. And although in one passage of his late *oeuvre*, the Epilogue to *The Case of Wagner* (1888), Nietzsche seems to refer to the distinction made in the 1870s between epigonic aesthetics and the aesthetics of *décadence*—"there is an aesthetics of *décadence*, and there is a *classical* aesthetics"—Nietzsche's argument in the 1880s is rather more bold and general than was the case in *Human, All Too Human*.

If the "*classical* aesthetics" of the late period is always connected to "the sign language [...] of *ascending* life, of the will to power as the principle of life" (Epilogue to *The Case of Wagner*), then this amounts to a reanimation of the *vitalism* of his earlier years, which had become totally irrelevant for the aesthetic-theoretical queries of the middle phase. More problematic, however, is the question that led to the distinction of epigonality and *décadence* in *Human, All Too Human* in the first place:

what possibilities remain for an art forever condemned to carry the mark of its own "sunset"?

In this respect, Nietzsche distinguishes a restorative from an exuberant treatment of tradition or tradition's "inheritance": the former is true in the case of Goethe and Stifter, the latter in the case of Wagner. This distinction probably holds the greatest promise for elaborating a literary theory. And what Nietzsche deduced from these notions—the autumnal, mild, slow element expressing a restorative, and the baroque-overburdened (or "ugly-sublime")[16] element expressing an exuberant continuation of a given tradition—gives us some concepts of relevance to any discussion of Nietzsche and the classical tradition. That Nietzsche always makes use of prefigured forms and motifs is indisputable; but what are the conditions of having recourse to such prefigurations? This is a question that might be easier to answer, if we introduce an assessment of value into our discussion of Nietzsche and the classical tradition, by reanimating for our discourse the category of epigonality. Nietzsche's relation to the classics could be considered as "anti-epigonic" in the traditional sense: this is the case in *The Birth of Tragedy*, which is written with a positive attitude to Wagner. And it could be considered as "epigonic" in that new, and positive, sense I have tried to demonstrate above: this is the case in *Human, All Too Human*, which is written with a positive attitude to Goethe and to Stifter.[17]

## Notes

[1] Adolf Stern, "Die deutsche National-Literatur vom Tode Goethes bis zur Gegenwart," in August Friedrich Christian Vilmar and Adolf Stern, *Geschichte der Deutschen National-Literatur*, 25th edn (Marburg: Elwert, 1901), 489-560 (491).

[2] Günther Heintz, "Epigonendichtung," in Diether Krywalski, *Handlexikon zur Literaturwissenschaft* (Munich: Ehrenwert, 1974), 111.

[3] Karl Leberecht Immermann, *Die Epigonen: Familienmemoiren in neun Büchern*, ed. Peter Hasubek (Munich: Winkler-Verlag, 1974), 497.

[4] Immermann, *Die Epigonen*, 669. For the concept of epigonism as a form of intertextuality in Immermann, see Markus Fauser, *Intertextualität als Poetik des Epigonalen: Immermann-Studien* (Munich: Fink, 1999).

[5] Immermann, *Die Epigonen*, 669.

[6] For further discussion of this theory of epigonic aesthetics, see Burkhard Meyer-Sickendiek, *Die Ästhetik der Epigonalität: Theorie und Praxis wiederholenden Schreibens im achtzehnten Jahrhundert: Immermann—Keller—Stifter—Nietzsche* (Tübingen: Francke-Verlag, 2001).

[7] For the concept of repetition in Kierkegaard, see Eckhard Lobsien, *Wörtlichkeit und Wiederholung: Phänomenologie poetischer Sprache* (Munich: Fink, 1995).

[8] See Karl-Heinz Bohrer, *Der Abschied. Theorie der Trauer: Baudelaire, Goethe, Nietzsche, Benjamin* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1996), 37.

[9] Adalbert Stifter, *Ein Dichterleben aus dem alten Österreich: Ausgewählte Briefe Adalbert Stifters*, ed. Moriz Enzinger (Innsbruck: Wagner'sche Univ.-Buchdruckerei, 1947), 165.

[10] See Helmuth Widhammer, *Realismus und klassizistische Tradition: Zur Theorie der Literatur in Deutschland 1848-1860* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1972), 48-50.

[11] See Wilhelm Voßkamp, "Klassik als Epoche: Zur Typologie und Funktion der Weimarer Klassik," in Hans-Joachim Simm (ed.), *Literarische Klassik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988), 248-77.

[12] For the conception of "Weimarer Klassik" in the nineteenth century, see Klaus L. Berghahn, "Von Weimar nach Versailles: Zur Entstehung der Klassik-Legende im neunzehnten Jahrhundert," in Reinhold Grimm and Jost Hermand (eds), *Die Klassik-Legende: Second Wisconsin Workshop* (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1971), 50-78; Wilfried Malsch, "Klassizismus, Klassik und Romantik der Goethezeit," in Karl Otto Conrady, *Deutsche Literatur zur Zeit der Klassik* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1977), 381-408; Maximilian Nutz, "Das Beispiel Goethe: Zur Konstituierung eines nationalen Klassikers," in Jürgen Fohrmann and Wilhelm Voßkamp (eds), *Wissenschaftsgeschichte der Germanistik im neunzehnten Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart, Weimar: Metzler, 1994), 605-37; and Karl Robert Mandelkow, *Goethe in Deutschland: Rezeptionsgeschichte eines Klassikers*, vol. 1, *1773-1918* (Munich: Beck, 1980).

[13] See also Cornelia Blasberg, *Erschriebene Tradition: Adalbert Stifter oder das Erzählen im Zeichen verlorener Geschichten* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach, 1998).

[14] See Franz-Peter Hudek, *Die Tyrannei der Musik: Nietzsches Wertung des Wagnerischen Musikdramas* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1989).

[15] See his letter to Mathilde Maier of 16 July 1878, where he writes of "jene metaphysische Vernebelung alles Wahren und Einfachen […], dazu eine ganz entsprechende Barockkunst der Überspannung und der verherrlichten Maßlosigkeit—ich meine die Kunst Wagner's" (KSB 5, 337-38).

[16] For these strong motifs of ugliness und disgust in Nietzsche, see Winfried Menninghaus, *Ekel: Theorie und Geschichte einer starken Empfindung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1999), 225-74.

[17] I should like to thank Stephan Packard for his help in preparing the English translation of this paper.

# From Tragedy to Philosophical Novel

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THE STUDY OF Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* has been widely pursued, but largely in terms of its place in Nietzsche's philosophy and with regard to its contribution to philosophical aesthetics. These concerns are not ignored here, but the topic of literary genre needs to be addressed. A book about tragedy is a book about literary genre. Its role in introducing a philosophical position, and beginning a remarkable philosophical work, should not distract us from the question of genre. As in the previous works of Aristotle, Schlegel, Schelling, and Hegel, the study of genre cannot be properly abstracted from the philosophical context. It is important to note the concepts of literary genre have been developed in philosophical works, and that the question of literary genre is a key point in the meeting of philosophy and literature.

*The Birth of Tragedy* is concerned with much more than the origin of ancient Greek tragedy. As no one can fail to notice, it is much more than a philological study of an historical genre. It is important not just to be attentive to the philosophical context of the discussion of tragedy. It implicitly engages with issues about aesthetics and philosophy coming out of the Jena Romantics and Hegel, and establishes the ground for a genre of philosophical writing, integrating the novel and Platonic dialogue, and which refers to the Jena ideal of the philosophical novel. *The Birth of Tragedy* is as concerned with the death of the genre as its birth. However, this should not be taken as nostalgia for the era of Greek tragedy. The story of death is a story of renewal and recurrence. The nostalgia for a naïve and natural Greek age is in some respects challenged, though it should also be acknowledged that such an ideal exists in Nietzsche and lasts throughout his work, but always in tension with the undermining of the naïve and the natural. There is always a search for the innocent origin in Nietzsche, the moment of birth, as in "Of the Three Metamorphoses" which begins Zarathustra's discourses: "Why must the preying lion still become a child? The child is innocence and forgetfulness, a new beginning, a sport, a self-propelling wheel, a first motion, a sacred Yes" (Z I

1). The child is the beginning, but follows the lion and the camel, so can never be the pure origin, and this is the character of tragedy.

The Apollonian heroic age was exemplified in the Homeric epic, which Nietzsche classifies as naïve according to Schiller's distinction between naïve and sentimental, taken up by Friedrich Schlegel and other Jena Romantic Ironists.[1] For Schlegel and others, the naïve classical epic is contrasted with the sentimental modern novel. That novel is traced back to the Platonic dialogue. The structure of the novel is treated as irony—taking Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (1615) as a model—and is traced back to Socratic irony. There is a significant silence in Nietzsche about this kind of argument. The elevation of the novel in the Jena Romantics (and Schelling) had already been criticized by Hegel, who, along with Kierkegaard, condemned the Romantic Ironists in general. In both cases, though, the work of the Romantic Ironists and the way they responded to that work is a central issue. Nietzsche must have been familiar with the Hegelian position, but clearly was never aware of Kierkegaard as more than a name. The silence on the issue, however, is suspicious, just as is the silence on the status of the novel in Hegel's *Aesthetics* (1829).[2]

Nietzsche referes to August Wilhelm Schlegel in sections 7 and 8 of *The Birth of Tragedy*. However, this does not raise the issues of Romantic irony and the theory of the novel, and A. W. Schlegel's contributions in that respect were very secondary compared with his brother's. A. W. Schlegel's views themselves are only introduced as a starting-point to a discussion of the ideal spectator. In section 7, Nietzsche refers to A. W. Schlegel's theory of the chorus as an ideal spectator, in order to reject it, on the grounds that the origin of tragedy is the satyr chorus. If tragedy originally was only a chorus, how can the chorus be distinguished from the rest of the drama as the ideal audience?

> The chorus as such, without the stage—the primitive form of tragedy—and the chorus of ideal spectators do not go together. What kind of artistic genre could possibly be extracted from the concept of the spectator, and find its true form in the "spectator as such"? The spectator without the spectacle is an absurd notion. (BT §7)

However, in section 8, A. W. Schlegel's theory returns when the chorus is identified as the only onlooker of the tragic action: "The chorus is the 'ideal spectator' insofar as it is the only beholder, the beholder of the visionary world of the scene" (BT §8). There is a spectator without a spectacle, in the sense that there is no spectacle in tragedy, only the invocation of Dionysian visions, themselves an expression of intoxication

and loss of self. The average conception of spectator and spectacle has to be revised before A. W. Schlegel's conception can be applicable.

The original chorus without the hero refers to the Dionysian origins of tragedy. Dionysian intoxication, and the experience of nothingness, is what is not in images, is not representable, and is not Apollonian. The tragic hero, the Prometheus-Titan figure, is a mask for the god of what cannot be staged. Staging is a rupture, with the original oneness of the Dionysian awareness of the universe, behind individuation and particular will. The dramatist is essentially someone who can speak out of the bodies and souls of the spirits created in a constant and vivid play. That play is the characteristic of the poet, the dramatist transforms the self into what speaks through the individuals appearing in that play.

> At bottom, the aesthetic phenomenon is simple: let anyone have the ability to behold continually a vivid play and to live constantly surrounded by hosts of spirits, and he will be a poet; let anyone feel the urge to transform himself and to speak out of other bodies and souls, and he will be a dramatist. (BT §8)

Not only is the drama removed by one stage from the inner world of the dramatist, it is removed from the musicality which is the only form that can express the Dionysian. The satyr chorus is a displacement from the poet's visions, music, and the Dionysian loss of self. Tragedy repeats that displacement, and the displacement is repeated in Euripides: where the spectator comes on stage (BT §11) and Socratic knowledge takes over from tragic contradiction. There must already be a tension between the appearance of the tragic hero and Greek resistance to individuals on the tragic stage: "The Platonic distinction and evaluation of the 'idea' and the 'idol,' the mere image, is very deeply rooted in the Hellenic character" (BT §10).

Although Euripides kills tragedy under the influence of Socrates, Greek tragedy is formed by what Plato recognized, the distinction between image and idea. Nietzsche appears implicitly to equate the distinction between being and the veil of illusion with the Platonic distinction between idea and the illusions of perception. This must follow Schopenhauer's approving use of the Platonic distinction and the Kantian distinction between the thing-in-itself and appearances (see, for example, *The World as Will and Representation* [1859], vol. 1, §5 and §31). The thing-in-itself and the idea are equated by Schopenhauer with what lies behind the illusions of Maya in Hindu scriptures (vol. 1, §5), which evidently inspired Nietzsche's account of the Dionysian in Section 1 of *Birth of Tragedy*. The attachment to Schopenhauer seems to have al-

lowed a high evaluation of Plato, which foundered after the rupture with Schopenhauer's philosophy and Wagner's aesthetics of national culture.[3] The Schopenhauerian emphasis on nothingness and will never disappears from Nietzsche's thought, but its role is transformed as Nietzsche comes to emphasize the triumph over nothingness. Even Socrates' and Plato's later role is ambiguous: "The fanaticism with which the whole of Greek thought throws itself at rationality betrays a state of emergency: one was in peril, one had only *one* choice: either to perish or—be *absurdly rational!*" (TI Problem of Socrates §10). Plato acted from the most Nietzschean of motives to defend life, to exert will in the active project of enhancing life's power, the defense of the idea against the decay of instinctive images.

The distinction between image and idea structures the hero's position in tragedy, which is in a contradiction between particularity and universality. The individual attempts to reach the universality of law and wisdom. This requires sin and crime, however, since the particular individual's relation with the ethics and law of universality must be to negate it. Here Nietzsche follows on from Hegel's discussion of morality and ethics (*Moralität* and *Sittlichkeit*), in particular the sections in the *Philosophy of Right* (1821) concerning crime and negative infinite judgment (§95), and the evil of subjectivity (§139-§140).[4] Nietzsche clearly resists the dialectical subordination of particularity to universality, as does Kierkegaard, particularly in *Fear and Trembling* (1843) and *Either/Or* (1843). Nietzsche took nothing directly from Kierkegaard, but they share a resistance of autonomous individuality to the heteronomy of dialectically established universality in law and ethics. In both cases, they are concerned with the dilemmas which arise from Kant's attempts to ground ethics and law in the giving by the particular autonomous rational will of rational universal rules to itself, in opposition to anything particular in the particular will. Again the question of Hegel and the novel arises. Why did Hegel resist the novel? Because, unlike epic, it rests too clearly on the conflict between hero and universal order?

Both Kant and Nietzsche established aesthetics as the place between nature and culture. As culture progresses in history, it becomes increasingly dominant over nature, and the human community must become increasingly aesthetic. The tragic in nature is a way of conceiving how that can happen without losing the force of the natural, what must be there for culture, law, representation and aesthetics to become established. The tragedy is both non-representative, because it is a representation of dreams and of intoxication, and representative, because it is a representation of the Greek landscape of mountains and valleys (BT §8). Nature appears in the tragedy as the Dionysian struggle against the Apol-

lonian, itself repeating the mythical struggle of Titans against Olympians, and of Prometheus against the Olympians. Nature cannot appear in a pre-cultural, pre-representative state, but neither can there be the representation without nature. The Apollonian forms themselves must come from our nature, and its dreams, just as Dionysian music comes from the nature of our bodies. For there to be art and culture, there must be a return of the opposition, and unity, of Apollo and Dionysus.

In Nietzsche, tragedy is a way in which the law-breaking Dionysian impulse can join with the Apollonian: "Dionysus no longer speaks through forces but as an epic hero, almost in the language of Homer" (BT §8). This also suggests a reading of Homer's epics, maybe their heroes are masks of Dionysus, but it took the arrival of a specifically Dionysian art to reveal this. The epic heroes are lawbreakers struggling with universality as they try to be individual. In the Homeric world of the gods, the heroes are Prometheans who take from the divine and give to the human. The epic shows that to be human is to be criminal, as to be human is to exceed bounds and measure, and then attempts to introduce the measure which is the basis of the Apollonian. Tragedy makes explicit what is already implicit in earlier genres: it is in itself poetry as criticism, an Ideal of the Jena Romantics. The laws of the epic world are shown to be limited in their universality, which is why the hero is struggling against the world.

As Nietzsche suggests in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, the Homeric epic is a festival for the gods (GM II §7). That is, a festival of cruelty as they enjoy the sufferings of Odysseus and other heroes. *On the Genealogy of Morals* is very suggestive with regard to the status of the ancient Greek world in *The Birth of Tragedy*. As in Nietzsche's first book, there is a Rousseauian concern with the trauma of socialization. The formation of community, the departure from nature in order to enter history, marks the human as a suffering animal. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, this is expressed in a series of steps which alienate humanity from itself in representation, following Rousseau's structure of the displacement of man from nature, the displacement of man from solitude through the social contract, the displacement of man from the unified community of the social bond in representative politics. This pattern can be seen in the following passage:

> The Greek man of culture felt himself nullified in the presence of the satyric chorus [*des Satyrchors*]; and this is the most immediate effect of the Dionysian tragedy, that the state and society and, quite generally,

> the gulfs between man and man give way to an overwhelming feeling of unity leading back to the very heart of nature. (BT §7)

It is significant that section 7 begins with a dismissal of Schiller's view that the tragic performance refers to the democracy of the Greek city. Nevertheless, the analysis of tragedy in Nietzsche depends on an opposition between participation and representation, natural and social man, which is Rousseau's.[5]

Nietzsche recognizes in relation to Schiller that the idea of tragic performance, as a democratic community, has been at stake. Nietzsche rejects the democratic idealization of tragedy, but that does not mean we should overlook the political aspects, which include a consideration of what it is to participate in a community, or to struggle for such a thing as a guiding principle or regulative ideal. *The Birth of Tragedy* should certainly be read in conjunction with Aristotle's *Politics* and *The Poetics.* Nietzsche's attitude towards politics was to treat it as a superficial distraction, but that of course should not distract us from the widely recognized political implications of his work.[6]

The structure of both *Genealogy* and *Birth of Tragedy* is of a distancing of man from natural humanity, though the concept of humanity itself tends to presume a distance from the natural. These are the themes of German Idealism after Rousseau, continued by Nietzsche in his concern for reconciling the cultural and the natural, which co-exists with the urge to transcend the natural. The first essay of the *Genealogy* establishes an active ethic of the master, as characterizing the Homeric hero. The master is characterized by an absence of the *ressentiment* that characterizes the cultured man. The master takes revenge for any slight immediately avoiding the pain inherent in the inability to take revenge for offences. The master names himself as good and the slave as bad. He only recognizes limits on his actions with regard to other masters in the same group. Apart from this, unlimited cruelty against slaves and enemy masters is permitted, discharging the pain otherwise stored up in *ressentiment.* This portrait is derived in the first place from the Homeric epics and exposes the forces inherent in Apollonian form. The presentation of pure affirmation, active forces, and freedom from *ressentiment* is, however, an idealization, a dialectical device. As the third essay of the *Genealogy* makes clear, the master is just as much at the origin of the priest and the morality of *ressentiment* as the slave. At most, the master is one step closer to man the natural animal, just as the mask of Dionysus, the tragic hero can only be one step closer to the community of being behind the veil of individuation. What defines *ressentiment* is that man cannot live

with other men as cultured, without the language, memory, and institutions which are consciousness burned into animal instincts. Consciousness is the turning of those instincts against themselves, their self-restraint in *ressentiment*, the constitutive nature of cultural man as filled with unfulfilled revenge against that repression, directed in violence against other humans. The universalization inherent in culture, which individuates through subordination to the law, is what the *Übermensch* tries to take up as something given by the autonomous value-creating, self-legislating individual (GM II §24).

The Dionysian provides something beyond universality, described in the terms of Schopenhauer, but which we can trace back to Hegel's absolute, Kant's sublime (itself a harmonization of nature with the transcendental sphere), supersensible ethics, and reason. The Dionysian refers to an unrepresentable experience of law before law, the absolute before universality. The unrepresentable is the nothingness, death, and negation, which are the source of dialectic in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807). From Nietzsche's point of view, that encounter with death and nothingness is experienced by the Greeks in a joyful way, which should distinguish it from any later metaphysical, otherworldly, and dialectical view that denies life and individuality. The arguments are not easy to distinguish, though, for they both refer to a subordination of the empirical self to a higher self through death and nihilism. The difference may be in Nietzsche's retention of the repeated moments at the limits of law, representability, and individuation, which cannot be incorporated into law. This difference is expressed by an emphasis on the non-naïve and non-natural in the ancient Greek world: a world which is not self-contained, and can only express its Dionysian underside through the arrival of the Dionysian cult from Anatolia (BT §1). That difference itself expresses a difference already in Hegel.

In Hegel the epic, defined with respect to Homer, is given a very elevated value; while the novel is not defined, though examples are mention in passing, dismissive manner. The status of the novel, tragedy, or any other literary genre, never receives, with the possible exception of "The Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life" (1874), any sustained treatment anywhere else in Nietzsche. However, the concepts of epic, poetry, tragedy, Platonic dialogue, and novel are all at stake in *The Birth of Tragedy*, and the careful examination of these as classical genres is highly necessary and absolutely unavoidable in determining what philosophical writing is for the later Nietzsche, and what genre it is that he is writing.

The genre that is elevated is tragedy, which is elevated in comparison with the naïve genre of Homeric epic. The naïve becomes the Apollonian: the representation of what is seen in dreams though the artistic creation of measure, law, and boundaries, the bringing of the chaotic overabundance of being into the light and into order. The opposite of the naïve is the sentimental, according to the taxonomy of Schiller and Jena Romanticism. However, the naïve is the classical and the sentimental is the modern, and Nietzsche shows no wish to undermine this by reading the sentimental into the classical age. Nevertheless, just as in the case of the Jena Romantics, the exploration of what is not naïve undermines the supposed naïveté of the naïve itself:

> Intention doesn't exactly require any deep calculation or plan. Even Homeric naïveté isn't simply instinctive; there is at least as much intention in it as there is in the grace of lovely children or innocent girls. And even if Homer himself had no intentions, his poetry and the real author of that poetry, Nature, certainly did.[7]

> The Homeric "naïveté" can be understood only as the complete victory of Apollonian illusion: this is one of those illusions which nature so frequently employs to achieve her own ends. (BT §3)

The account of Homeric epic in Nietzsche aims to question the self-containment of the Apollonian-naïve, and does so with an unacknowledged (unconscious?) allusion to Friedrich Schlegel. An unattributed near-quotation from Schlegel serves as the epigram, or subtitle, to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: "A book for everyone and no one" (compare this with *Critical Fragments*, §85: "Every honest author writes for nobody or everybody").[8] This provides a strong hint that the reading of Nietzsche in relation to Schlegel, and to Jena Romanticism in general, is a highly necessary task.

Schlegel's comments on Homer anticipate a Hegelian line of argument about the impossibility of a purely natural consciousness, following on himself from Fichte's argument in *The Science of Knowledge* (1794) about negation, the absolute, and circularity as conditions for all positing. Nietzsche follows in the wake of this Idealist and Romantic philosophy, without acknowledging it, just as Hegel failed to acknowledge what he owed to Fichte and the Jena Romantics.[9]

The Jena Romantics referred themselves to the Fichtean reading of Kant's philosophy, establishing a Kantian aesthetics distinct from the aesthetic Kant established in the Third Critique. The Jena Romantic movement itself did not last long, largely associated as it was with

contributions to the journal *Athenäum* between 1798 and 1800. Its tendency in critical writing, and in the Jena Romantics' own novels, toward a restless multiplication of relative forms in the search for the absolute, was quickly criticized by Hegel as a "bad infinite." Kierkegaard added to this critique in his *Concept of Irony* (1841), and, even in the twentieth century, Carl Schmitt made an important critical examination of the political aspects in *Political Romanticism* (1925).[10] That Hegel, Kierkegaard, and Schmitt thought it necessary and important to make these critical examinations, shows that Romantic Irony was itself part of the constitution of their own thought, and they were therefore obliged to find a way of distinguishing their work from it. The Jena Romantics themselves found it necessary to resort to religious and political conservatism over time, in order to escape from the self-undermining play of Irony. Their dilemmas were also in Nietzsche, as are those of the great Romantic theorist of language and politics, Wilhelm von Humboldt. The study of Humboldt along with the Jena Romantics is imperative in the interpretation of Nietzsche.

*The Birth of Tragedy* can be read as a justification for a way of writing philosophy, a way that appears in this text, and in all Nietzsche's subsequent texts. That way of writing philosophy is the philosophical novel, already posited in Jena. The Romantic origins may have been a source of embarrassment to Nietzsche, since he only mentioned Romanticism to condemn it as hysterical and governed by *ressentiment*, apparently preferring the pose of classical severity, itself somewhat questionable, given his own early questioning of the definitions of the classical. In some respects, Nietzsche's approach to literary genre is less rhapsodic and more Hegelian that the Romantic Ironists. *The Birth of Tragedy* emphasizes the distinctions between genres and authors, even while appealing to a version of the philosophical novel and the goal of a genre, which includes all genres: the genre that abolishes itself, because it is the end of all genres. Such an idea can only be a regulative ideal, since the absolute genre would be beyond the relativity of any particular kind of writing that can be experienced.

The tragic unifies the Apollonian and the Dionysian, the epic and the satyr chorus. The Socratic dialectic undermines tragedy through the agency of Euripides. Consciousness, virtue, and wisdom are made equivalent—so denying the tragic insights, reducing both the Apollonian and the Dionysian to effects rather than forms of being. This appeared in the tragedies of Euripides which bring the spectator on stage. The spectator no longer participates in the music and being of the Dionysian, because the spectator is now just that—appearing as a chorus, which merely

views action, already explained in the prologue. That spectator is now Socrates, so reducing the tragic to consciousness, virtue, and their beauty. The bringing of the spectator on stage brings the Socratic philosopher on stage, who becomes the exemplar of dialectic philosophy in Plato. The Dionysian now becomes naturalistic effects, and the Apollonian becomes logical schematism (BT §14). The discussion of that reduction occurs just after the discussion of Platonic dialogue in a return to Euripides. Some uncertainty is suggested about whether to regard the Platonic dialogue as the continuation of Euripides' decadent tragic, or as its overcoming.

However, the Socratic death of tragedy allows the birth of Platonism. Plato the poet, who, according to legend, burned his poetry under Socrates' influence, can now take on Socratic dialectic as the basis of a philosophical-literary genre (BT §14). The daemonic Socrates himself is under the influence of his own inner daemon, the daemon of instinct, which negates Socrates' rationalism. That daemon turns Socrates away from reducing everything to conscious knowledge, according to his cyclopean vision, and to turn towards music.[11] The Socratic rationalism itself turns him into a Cyclops, identified by Homer, and by Aristotle invoking Homer, as what lies on the limits of humanity. An extreme of dialectic leads to a one-sidedness which is both godlike and animal-like, as is appropriate to the sons of the sea-god, Poseidon. The Homeric Cyclopes live isolated from each other, without law or community, feeding themselves and keeping to their own caves. Socrates isolates himself from the Dionysian experience of the contradictions and underlying nothingness of being. He cannot join the Dionysian loss of self, which established an absolute community, and cannot even join the repeated displacements of the Dionysian in the satyr chorus or the tragic performance. Socrates' daemon is a counter-daemon, who leads him towards the community, which must rest on something before law and individuation. Now there is the possibility of rising above schematism and naturalistic effects.

The Socratic death of tragedy provides two sources of new philosophical-literary inspiration: the philosopher who plays music; the dialectician who writes dialogues. Socrates returns to the Dionysian, Plato creates a new unity from the genres of Greek literature (BT §14). On one side, the Euripidean tragedy forms the basis of the novel, through the low characters such as the Graeculus, the cunning servant who is a debased form of Odysseus (BT §11); on the other side, the Dionysian returns underground in a tradition of rites and excesses. Plato's dialogues form their own basis for the novel, which seems to be an ambiguous legacy. The dialogue rises above the Aesopian fable where it begins (and

which was the only literary form Socrates admired), through bringing in all other forms (BT §14). Plato's metaphysics was anticipated in the tragic resistance to an image of a particular individual. This seems to stand in contrast to Nietzsche's later condemnation of everything Platonist, but maybe a distinction can be made between their philosophy turned into a system, and their own living and writing of philosophy, which would be compatible with the later self-image of Nietzsche as anti-Plato. (In turn, this distinction accords with Heidegger's account of the relation between the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, and the way it was later turned into a metaphysical system). It is possible to formulate a Nietzschean goal of philosophical literature after the death of tragedy (see "What I Owe to the Ancients," especially §5; and compare with "The Problem of Socrates," in *Twilight of the Idols*). It is a literature which emphasizes the plurality of styles within one style; the impossibility of natural forms; the contradictory nature of any naïve approach; the conflict between particularity and universality; the ideal of the hero caught between particularity and universality in necessary crime; the struggle with the empirical self; the struggle with the death and nothingness necessary to rise above mere sensibility and given laws; an individuality torn between itself and community; and a representation exploring its unrepresentable origin. Philosophical writing in Nietzsche is dialectic and music, dialogue and poetry, law and intoxication. The Socratic combination of rational criticism and the daemonic is the model and counter model of Nietzscheanism:

> To translate man back into nature; to become master over the many vain and overly enthusiastic interpretations and connotations that have so far been scrawled and painted over that eternal basic text of *homo natura*; to see to it that man henceforth stands before man as even today, hardened in the discipline of science, he stands before the *rest* of nature, with intrepid Oedipus eyes and sealed Odysseus ears, deaf to the siren songs of old metaphysical bird catchers who have been piping at him all too long, "you are more, you are higher, you are of a different origin!"—that may be a strange and insane task, but it is a *task* [...]. (BGE §230)

Nietzsche's discussion of the birth and death, and return, of tragedy, gives many pointers to philosophical aesthetics and the study of literary genres. The account of universality and particularity, of hero and law, points towards the kind of development of Hegelian concepts that enabled Lukács to form an account of the novel in *The Theory of the Novel* (1920). With the help of Nietzsche, Lukács was able to turn Hegelian

concepts into an account of hero and world in the novel, as a continuation of epic form. Nietzsche's account of Platonic dialogue as a literary genre and in the origins of the novel point toward Bakhtin's account of Socratic Dialogue, Menippean Satire and Polyphonic Novel in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1963); his account of the place of the Dionysian in European culture and literature point towards Bakhtin's account of the Carnivalesque in his Dostoevsky book and, more particularly, in *Rabelais and His World* (1965). At the most general level, through *The Birth of Tragedy* it is possible to look back to Vico's interpretation of law and history through Homer in *The New Science* (1744); and forward to Lukács on epic and novel, the appropriation of Homer in Joyce and the philosophical reflection on the novel and genre in *Ulysses* (1922) and *Finnegans Wake* (1939). Vico had already provided the suggestion of the recurrence of the early Greek struggle to establish law and language out of the violence and muteness of the earliest stages of humanity. The stages of gods, heroes, and peoples will keep returning in the tension between law and force, language and gesture.

As Nietzsche suggests in "The Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life," we can struggle with the weight of history through a return to the creation of history in ancient Greece. As youth (as the Young England, Young Italy, and Young Turks of the nineteenth century), we try perpetually to return to the moment where we are not imitating what is given by history. Our nature is not one of dissimulation. This must be a regulative ideal, but one which is the only way to recover the force necessary for creating forms. Otherwise, we will become Alexandrians, repeating the commentary of forms. These epochs and currents in Nietzsche only label ideals, we cannot be purely Dionysian any more than we can be purely Alexandrian. The regulative ideals inherent in the tragic-Dionysian provide a bridge between ideals and the experience of particularity, which includes the philosophy of the philosophical novel: the philosophy of style, poetry, irony, dialogue, fragments, wit, the comic, and the sublime, the relative and the absolute. Naturalism returns to a Dionysian reaching after the essence of nature, schematism returns to the Apollonian creation of images and forms. The philosopher is struggling to unify music with poetry, the universal with the particular, but only in the constant opposition of these forces: the contradiction which philosophical writing should bring into life with the force of its writing.[12]

Not only is our view of literary genre expanded by *The Birth of Tragedy*, the genre of tragedy and the concept of genre, but so is our view of philosophical writing. All those who have used style in writing philosophy can be read from this perspective. Since there can be no philosophy

without style, this leads to a reading of all of philosophy. However, in particular it leads us to the pre-Socratics, Plato, Augustine, Pascal, Hegel, Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, and Derrida. It should open up philosophy to the essayists, poets, and storywriters, as it already has, but there is still much to do. It should lead us, not just to admire their style, but also to understand why philosophy cannot avoid the issue of what it is to write philosophy, and therefore what it is to write. It leads to the question of what writing might be, in itself, and how we must be concerned with what is shown and not just said. It is the showing which Nietzsche thematizes as the Dionysian. None of this should, lead us to a rhapsodizing forgets concepts, logic, and dialectic, but it suggests that these elements only have force and applicability with regard to showing, forms, and force.

## Notes

[1] See also the development of concepts of classicism in Winckelmann and Lessing, as discussed in Dennis Sweet, "The Birth of *The Birth of Tragedy*," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 60 (1999): 345-59.

[2] See my forthcoming paper, "The Novel and Hegel's Philosophy of Literature."

[3] Michel Haar argues that Nietzsche had broken with Schopenhauer at this stage (*Nietzsche et la métaphysique* (Saint-Amand: Gallimard, 1993), chapter 2); while Julian Young argues that Nietzsche had not (*Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992), chapters 1 and 2). In any case the citations here of Schopenhauer were used by Nietzsche, whatever the frame of interpretation that is used.

[4] Benjamin is therefore mistaken in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (1925), "*Trauerspiel* and Tragedy," II, Sections 1-10, in suggesting that Nietzsche excluded the ethical (cf. II, 3) (*The Origins of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London: Verso/NLB, 1977), 100-20 and 104-06). However, Benjamin does recognize that Nietzsche linked tragedy with the philosophy of history and distinguishes modern drama from tragedy. Since Benjamin's comments on law and ethics in tragedy read like a development of Nietzsche's comments, the oversight is all the more surprising. One possible explanation is that Benjamin's emphasis on an absolutist Kantian-Judaic basis to morality binds him to leave everything else aside, as the violence of law and the destructiveness of unredeemed time.

[5] There is brief support for this view in Alexis Philonenko, *Nietzsche: le rire et le tragique* (Paris: Livre de Poche/Librairie Générale Française, 1995), 24 and 35.

[6] Those implications should rise above old clichés about fascism and more recent ones about Post-Modern anti-liberalism, based on no real knowledge of, or engagement with, liberalism in all its aspects (see my review article, "Liberalism after Nietzsche and Weber," *Angelaki* 2 (1996): 129-40).

[7] Friedrich Schlegel, "Athenäum Fragments," §51 (*Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Peter Firchow (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1991), 24); cf. Katherine Wheeler (ed.), *German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism: The Romantic Ironists and Goethe* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984), 45.

[8] "Jeder rechtliche Autor schreibt für niemand oder für alle" (Schlegel, *Philosophical Fragments*, 10); cf. Wheeler (ed.), *German Aesthetic and Literary Criticism*, 42.

[9] Haar refers to this passage (*Nietzsche et la métaphysique*, 247), but not to Schlegel; Hegel is dismissed in this chapter ("*La joie tragique*"); and Kant and Schelling on the sublime are invoked. A footnote gives a very brief reference to the Jena Romantics, but only to August Wilhelm and Friedrich Schlegel (72, n. 34). Solger, Richter, Tieck, and Novalis are left out, all of them having substantial reputations, at least as great as that of A. W. Schlegel. Furthermore, Haar overlooks Nietzsche's description of *The Birth of Tragedy* as Hegelian in the discussion of this work in *Ecce Homo* (EH BT §1), and unwisely ridicules Deleuze's attempt to work on Nietzsche's philosophy as a response to Hegelianism in *Nietzsche et la philosophie* (see Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (London: Athlone, 1983); cf. Haar, 243).

[10] See Carl Schmitt, *Political Romanticism*, trans. Guy Oakes (Cambridge, MA: MIT P, 1986).

[11] For a study of music in Nietzsche's life and work, see Georges Liébert, *Nietzsche et la musique* (Paris: Quadrigue/Presses universitaires de France, 2000).

[12] See *The Birth of Tragedy* on Heraclitus (BT §24). This passage is highlighted both by Young (*Nietzsche's Philosophy of Art*, 51) and by Rogério de Almeida (*Nietzsche et le paradoxe* (Strasbourg: Presse universitaire de Strasbourg, 1999), 22). However, their approaches are very distinct. Young emphasizes a supposed break between a Schopenhauerian, early Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy* and his later philosophy, while Almeida emphasizes a continuity in Nietzsche's philosophy referring back to Kant. Young refers to Analytic Philosophy, Almeida refers to Continental Philosophy, but both take Kaufmann as a starting point in Nietzsche commentary. Haar's *Nietzsche et la métaphysique* (particularly chapter 8) should also be consulted with regard to the supposed continuity of Nietzsche's thought, which continues to take *The Birth of Tragedy* as a model.

# Nietzsche, Interpretation, and Truth

*David M. A. Campbell*

NIETZSCHE HAS RIGHTLY been singled out recently for his discussion of "truth,"[1] but, given that talk of "truth" depends on his view of interpretation, this article considers whether he is finally interested instead in practice.[2] Nietzsche writes epigrams and the like to deter others from representing his thinking as an organized true-or-false statement and, wary of transcendentalism, he offers the "perspectivist" alternative that we interpret what matters to us in terms of things, their properties and in general "truth" and "reality." In this context I shall look both as his account of linguistic meaning and, against an Aristotelian background, at his relation to the notion of "truth" in art. If interpretative practice is his ultimate term, not merely a means to understanding "truth," talk of what it is for a self to be, and to excel, similarly derives from self-interpretation. Nietzsche does not often use terms such as "interpretation" and "self-interpretation," but they are current and seem to fit. I take for granted to some extent a Heideggerian reading of Nietzsche. I go on to consider in these terms his discussion of religion and morality. Perhaps "will to power" as a desire for control explains perspectival "mythmaking" better than what it is to be a human being and, in religion, a human soul, yet his notion of "excellence" compares in some ways with Aristotle's. I refer particularly to *The Birth of Tragedy* and *On the Genealogy of Morals*, and I do not simply interpret Nietzsche but try to develop his argument, consistent with what he says, and to show that his salient interests are to some degree unified (GM Preface §2)

In *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche contends that order, reason, and restraint originate in turbulent passion, as if to question the classical aesthetic of the eighteenth century, but the deeper aim is to explain as an interpretation Plato's account of "truth." Knowledge of "Forms" behind this confused everyday world provides a generically divine freedom from its imprisoning "cave"; a trained mind can read off the intelligible structure of reality, and find a transcendent and "other," or unintended, foundation for our intentions. "Reason" is cognitive, "the truth" is the schema of the Forms or "Being" of things, and statements are true if

they correspond with fact or Being. Nietzsche denies that a real world we can know somehow transcends everyday "appearances"; further, Plato's distinction between knowledge and its objects is not self-explanatory, and gives the mind no role in determining what counts as an object. In his view, this is determined by interpretative intentions or "mythmaking" perspectives. Thus the target of his attack is not only transcendence, but transcendentalism, that is, the assumption of an unintended reality as an ontologically prior condition of experience.

On his account, a sentence is true if it corresponds with fact, but what counts as a fact is constituted by our intentions. Each thing is to be understood first as a potential instrument to felt needs, whether physical as for food and drink, or psychological as for order and meaning. In this way, he provides a utilitarian account of talk of objects as meeting such needs, and a role for the mind in knowledge as responding to them. The inarticulate feelings with which interpretation starts cannot be analyzed, but the process is rational as producing recognizable, organized sense. What there is, and its significance for us, are interdependent; facts are read in, not simply read off, from a preconceived reality; and knowledge does not predetermine practice, but follows from it (BT §1). Similarly, there is no pre-packed self or standard of individual "excellence": what one becomes is contingent on self-interpretation based on "passions" particular to oneself. Thus the mystery is not that things are *as* they are, having properties, and standing in certain relations to one another, but that they *are* at all, as originating in our ability to interpret potentialities.

Nietzsche later discusses "nihilism." Since Christianity is "Platonized" and "God is dead," there is no transcendent reason to care about Plato's cave or to make sense of its contents. Catharsis could make it more bearable by sublimating its confusion (as in singing the blues) but Aristotle's claim that dramatic tragedy purges "pity and terror" is despair of freedom in another guise. If there is no transcendence, there can be no cave, and for the nihilist the sublime is to be found in ecstasy, not truth; instead of bringing order from confusion, abandon it in orgies. Nietzsche's reply both to both nihilism and to Plato assumes that "passion" entwines with "reason" all the way down to our physiology, and, without passion, reason is impotent. We make sense of the world, the self, and morality in view of what we want and what motivates us, not simply by arguments and what we think; in this way, reason derives from passion.

A "passion" in this context is not a casual craving or heedless addiction, but enduring, though not continuous, like a mood. There are things (and persons) that matter to us and we tend to act, and our own

benefit is not the aim, but a bonus; one can pursue a vocation to write, for instance, even if one does not enjoy writing and no-one gains. Nietzsche uses the German word which also occurs in the expression "the passion of Christ": *Leiden*. One is ready to suffer for what one cares about, the feeling of care can itself be painfully acute, and one is "hard" enough to deny oneself pity and any pleasures not contributing to ends that matter to one. To have "passion" is to care about something or other in this way, and we articulate whatever we care about as objects of knowledge and ends of action, in propositions we choose to call "true," insofar as we can get away with doing so. "Truth" is initially disclosed within a framework of qualitative meaning, based on felt interests and thus contingent on interpretative intentions, not on a transcendental ground. Nietzsche's discussion of knowledge has two stages: first, Plato's "truth" is a lie; and second, "truth" in ordinary talk is a perspective.

## Knowledge

For Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy*, the world is inherently meaningless, a cause for "terror and horror" overcome only by an artistic minority who provide meaning and values for the species without prior guidelines, as a writer, for instance, might invent a literary form (HA I §222). Nietzsche's deeper interest is not beauty, but the harmony it supplies, for art provides a feeling of order we regard as objective, once we forget its origin. The claim that the world is rule-governed is true empirically, not transcendentally, but more profoundly expresses epistemological and moral practice.

The eighteenth century saw beauty in order, balance, civility, and reason, as exemplified by formal gardens; the reaction found tranquil delight in the sublime disorder of crags, cataracts, and cracks of thunder. Nietzsche argues reductively to the order in beauty and lack of forms and limits in the sublime, and while Plato's aim is "noble" his means, a formulaic notion of "truth," is a noxious sublimate, just as in chemistry a solid is sublimated to become gas. There is, in the end, only what Nietzsche later calls "will to power," an endless cycle of control and consumption, unstructured and indifferent to us (WP §634-§636); this circularity is reflected in the "eternal" recurrence of every state of the universe. Plato devises static, non-utilitarian "truth" to overcome such disorder, but he contradicts himself since, in order to do so, this inert means must also be dynamic. In any case he is "lying," to use Nietzsche's sometimes overheated language, in presenting such "truth" as independent of human intentions, since it depends on his own intentions. Simi-

larly, moral beliefs we call true for ordinary purposes could not depend on his lie. His exalted aim of bringing form and felt meaning to what is otherwise formless and futile, is supplanted by his controlling means of dogmatic formulae for the ineluctable facts and values of unintended Being to which we allegedly answer. What we ordinarily call "truth" is instead grounded in interpretation of the burgeoning process of "Becoming." Nietzsche presents Plato as a sort of mythmaker, though this label does not let us distinguish the Forms from, say, Jungian archetypes. He eliminates Plato's fraudulent pretence of "truth" by reducing it to his intentions and, in this way, deconstructs "metaphysics," though his reductive argument is self-defeating in form: eliminating the explanandum implies elimination of the explanans, there being nothing left then that does any explaining.

The second stage of his discussion of knowledge concerns perspectivism, which he announces in his "Attempt at a Self-Criticism," published in the 1886 edition of *The Birth of Tragedy*. A "perspective" is an expression of will, but not simply mindless: it is any defensible framework of meaning conceived through the prism of passions particular to oneself. In a similar way, a literary essay is good or bad in its own terms, not right or wrong by a prior template. Anyone can initiate or contribute to a perspective beguiling enough to be mistaken for universal truth. Perspectives can be incompatible, though each may be corrected, not by independent criteria, but from other perspectives; to this extent, they are not obsessive or reclusive, but objective relatively to us. There is nothing contradictory or pernicious in regarding an intended perspective as objective for practical purposes, yet philosophically an 'illusion' in the sense of a myth or perspective.

Nietzsche speaks here of "fiction," though he does not mean fiction in general, but mythmaking as an imaginative practice necessary to make sense of experience. The common-or-garden, ordinary notion of the world can be understood as a myth, in the sense that, without it, no particular factual or evaluative judgments would be intelligible, and so could not be called "true" or "false." For example, we could not otherwise say truly or at all that a certain object has a particular shape. Plato justifies belief in the everyday world on the basis of a particular myth of eternal, rational Forms. Nietzsche replies that "only as an aesthetic phenomenon is the world justified eternally" (BT §5): that is, particular truths depend on the intentional art or practice of mythmaking, not on a particular myth as for Platonists and others (such as materialists). His objection is partly that such a myth or perspective is allegedly unintended, unlike the "myth" of the ordinary world as he himself intends it. But he also rejects

the implicit assumption that there can be only one "truth" or notion of "reality," since more than one such notion must be possible (and infinitely many are possible). He does not offer alternative perspectives displaying in detail radically diverse content, but may not need to do so, since his principal aim is to show only that such alternatives are logically possible; perhaps, indeed, he could not do so, if, in practice, we can give content to the notion of reality in only one way, for instance, as phenomenal.

Admittedly one can overstate the view that Nietzsche's final term is practice, but a glance at how it might develop could be useful. His perspectivism creates logical space in which to doubt the assumption that there can be only one "truth" or "reality." Thus if belief in the existence of our ordinary world expresses a prior condition of particular judgments concerning things in this world, and if we speak of this belief as "true," we need not confuse this use of the word "true" with its application to these judgments. This cautionary, skeptical view agrees with Poellner's negative conclusion that "Nietzsche's most persistent and uncompromising attacks are directed against [...] false interpretations of the real [and he] strongly urges resistance against such [...] revisions."[3] Nietzsche's argument, however, is also positive, suggesting that this belief in a world is, properly speaking, not a true or false proposition, since it cannot be proved or disproved; to deny it would be ridiculous rather than false. Instead, to state such a belief is to express a practice: we first interpret experience in terms of things, their properties, and so on, and particular experiences as "of" particular objects; particular interpretations are then expressed in true-or-false, empirically testable, judgments. (A comparison with Thomas Reid comes to mind here, as well as with the later Wittgenstein.) Thus he not only "abolishes" transcendental truth-claims, but also offers an alternative to reconstructing them in terms of other sorts of truth-claim or finally in terms of "truth" at all. For this reason alone, he cannot be said to aim at a pragmatist theory of truth, for instance.

The claim that "there is ultimately only will to power" is true—and privileged—just as the claim deriving from it that "there is a world" is true; but their analysis does not end with their truth, but with their "meaning" or practical function of sense-making. Otherwise, in holding both that will to power is reality, and that the idea of will to power is a perspective—even if a privileged perspective—Nietzsche might seem to vacillate between realism and idealism, and perhaps to contradict himself. Such positions, however, belong to a "metaphysical" tradition he rejects, and he stands or falls as proposing instead that we understand talk of "truth" as a practice. Maudemarie Clark, for instance, considers whether Nietzsche's view that "being" and "truth" are fictions contradicts his

"common sense realism,"[4] but this problem is resolved if we take him to offer an account of epistemological practice rather than simply of truth.

Will to power is a circular cosmic process of control and consumption, unlike Plato's line from ordinary things to the *telos* of their Forms, and therefore has a foundational role unlike that of the Forms. For Plato, knowledge is cognition of the Forms, and virtue is conformity with them, but, for Nietzsche, knowledge and virtue do not correspond in these ways to a pre-existing differentiated scheme: rather, will to power is manifested in us as differentiating and controlling interpretative activity. As he puts it, willing the eternal recurrence of an inherently formless world "overcomes" its disorder. Will to power is not a single perspective, as Plato's metaphysics is, but a potential which may be actualized in various and, in some cases, incompatible, perspectives. It is also our basic drive and motivation, stronger in some than others, and expressed in passions we interpret; we are primarily agents, and "power" is the basis for choice as implying controlling agency (not unimpassioned, effortless choice, such as flipping a coin). In this sense, the process by which we create meaning and become what we are, is the foundation of diverse perspectives. Interpretative practice is the more or less fixed pole to which a constellation of truth-claims relates in various ways, whether eliminable like Plato's or not. "Truth" is, then, the differentiated product of interpretation, not simply equivalent to it. The key to Nietzsche's disagreement with Plato is the notion of interpretation rather than the notion of truth, that is, a contrast between what we do and do not intend rather than what is or is not true.

Nietzsche's account of the origin of "truth" in interpretation is incomplete, however, for there must be something already more or less individuated to interpret which is not of our making, or the notion of interpretation is empty. If old jokes are the best, for example, they are best by virtue of their familiar content, not simply their conventional form. Such individuated potentiality would then be part of what is meant by the "truth" of things (a point central to Heidegger's work). Furthermore, in reducing belief in transcendental "truth" to illusion motivated by a need for control, he assumes, wrongly, that a causal explanation for a belief could invalidate it, just as he dismisses altruism as an attitude produced by "slaves." A disposition to jig, for example, does not make a man's belief that jigging is good for him either fanciful, if it keeps him fit, or true, if he risks a stroke. All of this suggests that what we ordinarily call the "truth" concerning knowledge and values does not depend on will to power in nature, the mind, and society, in quite the way that Nietzsche supposes.

## Language

Nietzsche expands this theory of interpretation by sketching a nominalist account of semantic meaning (GM I §2). We first thematize and name things or objects according to our interests. The term "forest" (my example) may have been originally the name given to a foraging area, but we forget the user's interest and suppose that the term means simply "woodland." Such a "name" does not mean just what anyone wants, but expresses connotations for the user, and by convention comes to denote whatever conjures them up, though many are forgotten. We then form the notion of truth as the adequacy of statements to these objects. This brief account of linguistic practice points more widely towards the utilitarian function of talk of "truth" and away from its alleged metaphysical function of referring to transcendental objects.

Talk of things is, then, metaphorical, not as indicating their independence, but as conveying in a socio-cultural form our intention to speak of causally related, self-identical units; concepts and their criteria of use are shared, though not universal.[5] Nietzsche explains such talk by its force, that is, by will to power, differentiated in interpretation. Anyone may contribute to a tradition of interpretation, yet what it is for a thing to be is relative to us as a species, not absolute as having a character independently of our intentions. For any object, to be is both to manifest will to power, and be reduced to it. For Aristotle, the actuality of a thing is fulfilling its *telos* and so explaining the potentiality to be that thing, but, for Nietzsche, we understand things by interpreting their potentialities. It would be absurd to suppose that we first say, "This is a tree," and then look for the predicates: we first understand any object relationally, as for instance serviceable, then treat it as occurrent by convention. Saying it "exists" expresses, in conventional form, our intention to speak of it as over against us, instead of overlooking it as instrumental, as, for example, one overlooks a door in turning the handle and going through. The same sentence can, then, both be true and express our intention, and the questions what a thing is "in itself," and whether it exists "in itself," apart from interpretation, are misleading. In effect, Nietzsche distinguishes a judgment as representing fact and as a mental act expressing interest or power. As he puts it: "We can say nothing about the thing itself [...] a quality exists for us"; "Knowing is nothing but working with the favorite metaphors. But in this case first nature and then the concept are anthropomorphic. [...] We produce beings [*Wesen*]."[6] Truth as correspondence between judgment and fact depends on expressive perspectives, and the fundamental work of the mind is not cognition of pre-

existing truth, but satisfaction of the will to power through creative interpretation of experience. In this way Nietzsche "abolishes" Being, Forms, and essences.[7]

Nietzsche does not, however, provide a test by which to distinguish necessary from merely conventional perspectives. In other words, if we suppose that he goes some way to explaining why our judgments have a form at all, he does not say why they must have the form they do have. One might, for example, try to fill in his utilitarian account of linguistic meaning by explaining so-called "necessary" truths, such as the statement that "2+2 = 4" or the rule of non-contradiction, as those in which we have a special interest. In that case, one difficulty is to know how "special" a truth has to be before it can be called "necessary." Conventionalism may be able to explain variable concepts such as "east," but not non-negotiable concepts, such as identity, or the necessary role played in talk of a world by such rules as non-contradiction. Platonists would go further: conventionalism cannot explain why, in order to talk about anything, we must necessarily refer to the meaning of the term for it, or what is called its "essence." Similarly, Nietzsche claims that the use of categories such as "thing," "property," and "relation" in fact suits our interest as a species, but he fails to consider how they can be called *necessary* for talk of a world. A parallel difficulty is that he would presumably suppose that the phenomenal character of the actual world we experience in fact "originates" in will to power, but he does not explain why this world *must* have such a character. In these ways he fails to ask what we must necessarily, not merely conventionally, mean if we are to speak intelligibly at all.

On the other hand, such questions concerning "necessity" are metaphysical in a narrower sense than Nietzsche's, as logically prior conceptual conditions of experience. His psychology and praxis concern the content and structure of experience, rather than its alleged source in prior ontological conditions, and to this extent he succeeds, rightly or wrongly, in escaping transcendentalism. They are also necessary prior conceptual conditions, however, implying that whatever counts as an experience must be both felt or qualitative, as based on passion, and, as interpreted, active or practical rather than merely passive. In this sense he is metaphysically, as opposed to transcendentally, objectivist.

## Art

Nietzsche's interests in art and truth call for discussion of the notion of truth in art. For this purpose, I place together recognized artworks and any objects seen aesthetically, and assume that, for the classical tradition,

an aesthetic object is not simply what the viewer says it is, but meets certain objective tests, such as balance and proportion; aesthetic judgment is not simply interpretation, but in this sense concerns truth. We may also assume that recognized artworks are in their own way as much objects as any other sorts of object: a building which fails aesthetically is still an object and still art but, like a reproduction or fake, not an object in the sense of one for the catalogue. To say that there is truth in art would, then, seem to mean that an aesthetic object presents truth as other things do. Thus, for Plato, beauty in something consists primarily in its meeting a standard for anything of its kind: it instantiates the timeless truth of a universal and ultimately the Form of the Good, Fine, or Beautiful (*to kalon*). Mimetic art, such as vase-painting, however, copies instances of universals, and so is "at a third remove from reality" (*The Republic* 597e), and he grudges the accolade of "truth" to artistic representation.

A difficulty facing Plato is that aesthetic attributes, whether of an individual or species, are one-off and incorrigibly particular. In this respect, aesthetic objects neither meet nor fail to meet the test of being an instance of a universal, except as the substantively singular "I," for instance, is a universal term. Fitzroy MacLean, for example, remarks in *Eastern Approaches* on the "purity of line" of the Tower of Death minaret in Bokhara, lauding the line on its own account, not only for approaching a general ideal.[8] For Plato, the alternatives are straightness conforming to a universal or arbitrary formlessness, yet this line is particular without being arbitrary, meeting tests such as restraint and order. Aristotle thought that Plato overemphasized the universal; Nietzsche goes so far as to reduce universal truths to particular interpretations, which would let him distinguish aesthetic truths as particular. The question is, then, whether we are entitled to speak not only of aesthetic interpretation, but also of truth in art, spelled out in terms of tests, such as proportion, which are central to the classical aesthetic.

In a *locus classicus* Aristotle applies these tests to ethics (*Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 2, §5-§9). His "mean" moderates desires and actions, so that one interprets each situation, and guides feelings and actions away from excess and defect. Moderation does not contrast with enthusiasm, for example, but with being carried away by enthusiasm. Restraint is sometimes today regarded as a necessary evil, staving off unwelcome consequences of lack of restraint, and as self-imposed to one's preferred degree, consistent with tolerating lack of restraint in others. For Aristotle, however, restraint is absolute, not a matter of degree, since in avoiding excess and deficiency we "hit the mark" of what is right; as essential to desiring and acting rightly, restraint is thus a good in itself, not a *pis al-*

*ler*. Furthermore, since the mean is defined by its relations to excess and deficiency, a structured context is required to place and fix it, and it is proportionate whereas they are disproportionate. Whether the proportions are symmetrical in a given case depends on the circumstances: six pounds of meat, for instance, is the "arithmetical" mean between two and ten, but eight may be right for a heavyweight athlete; it can sometimes be right to steer further from a besetting temptation than if one is not tempted, and moral proportion does not entail only one kind of form. Aesthetic proportion on these lines in, say, a piece of sculpture, is a matter of balance, for instance, rather than of symmetry; at the same time, entropy in nature and tragedy in drama are classical forms implying decline, and Duke Ellington's "Happy Anatomy" title implies neither symmetry, balance, nor downbeat decline, but upbeat pleasure in dancing.

What is right is also appropriate to the circumstances or fitting; the individual and society, then, make sense as prospering, instead of being senselessly self-defeating. "Fit" here is not a "fitness in things," a rightness in the world being as it is and not otherwise, whether implying Plato's "intelligible" Being or, for instance, Leibniz's "principle of sufficient reason." For Aristotle, moral beliefs concern what is right, not what is true transcendentally; virtue is not conformity with Plato's universal "truth," but acting with practical wisdom from right particular desires. He connects practical reason and transcendence—not the transcendental—believing that what is more than human may be too high for us, yet that we should "strain every nerve to put on immortality as far as we can" (*Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 10, §7). Practical reason brings happiness, if in a "secondary" sense, and "happiness" is the usual translation of *eudaimonia*, whose etymological root implies the presence of the god or *daimon*. Nonetheless, the good for man is bound down to mundane particular matters; virtue is, in this respect, unlike theology and astronomy, for instance. Perhaps it was Samuel Beckett who said, "What do I know about man's destiny? I could tell you more about radishes."

The minaret's line is straight for practical purposes, but in meeting classical tests, its singular "purity" seems also to transcend both usefulness and ordinariness; ideals such as straightness, balance, and restraint seem, then, to be ends, not mere means to overcome resistance and cope, as which Nietzsche might see them. Aesthetic objects are historical, since they have a place in the history of their genre, and producing them takes time; yet so-called "inspiration," for instance, is outside time, just as choice is outside the causal, temporal sequence; in this case, we can also speak of timeless truth in art. Although interpretation is a skill (*techne*) which the interpreter controls, aesthetic inspiration and, indeed,

aesthetic seeing do not seem to be simply skills, or to be simply controlling or uncontrolling. J. S. Bach, for instance, was supremely creative, yet he said that he kept "stumbling on tunes"; and beauty is not only interpreted in contemplation but can overwhelm us. Nietzsche's perspectival objectivism can, perhaps, accommodate inspiration so far as, in his terms, Bach stumbled on musical perspectives; the problem is, rather, that if aesthetic excellence is, in his view, only a form of control, one could retort that we also contribute to other ends, and the gap between control and excellence has to be explained in ways which an interpretative theory does not seem to allow.

Given Nietzsche's reduction, however, the cognitive form of aesthetic judgments is not misleading. One's judgment that a certain woman is beautiful, for instance, can be "true" in a sense involving interpretation, that is, as "mythical" or perspectival "illusion," not empty or deceptive delusion. A perspective is valid so far as it is "strong," both motivationally, expressing strong feeling on which we tend to act and prevail, and also conceptually, withstanding critical assessment from other perspectives—such as the classical aesthetic—and in this way meeting "objective" tests. Like Hume, Nietzsche suspends commitment to whatever beliefs about the world might imply if taken transcendentally, but we cannot do without some form of cognitivism in art.

## Self

Nietzsche uses a historical metaphor to "explain" the self and morality (GM Preface §1-§2). One cannot properly be a self without caring about something or other, and "originally" the autonomous few interpreted their aristocratic "passions" in terms of their chosen, "willed" project of ruling. They ruled, not by force, but by "decreeing" the meaning of "good" and "bad," according to their likes and dislikes: "The noble type of man experiences *himself* as determining values; he does not need approval; it judges, 'what is harmful to me is harmful in itself'; he knows himself to be that which first accords honor to things; he is *value-creating*" (BGE §260). Nietzsche contrasts these noble individuals with "priests" whose terms "pure" and "impure" express an inactive character and consequent self-loathing, and whose "will to truth" is the engine of Western culture, but is ultimately decadent (GM I §6). The majority are reactive "slaves," taking their standards from the ruler, just as some write and the rest read; when united, they replace his regime with decadent altruistic ethics and democratic politics. The tragedy is that democracy

cannot accommodate remarkable people. In *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche writes:

> High and independent spirituality, the will to stand alone, even a powerful reason are experienced as dangers; everything that elevates an individual above the herd and intimidates his neighbor is henceforth called *evil*; and the fair, modest, submissive, conforming mentality, the *mediocrity* of desires attains moral designations and honors. (BGE §201)

And he returns to this point in *On the Genealogy of Morals*: "The ever spreading morality of pity [was] the most sinister symptom of a European culture that had itself become sinister" (GM Preface §5 ); adding further that "the word 'good' was definitely not linked from the first and by necessity to 'unegoistic' actions" (GM I §2). We can take Nietzsche's doctrine of autonomy seriously without having to endorse these views of religion and democracy.

Life-enhancing values originate in the self-interpretation of any autonomous character. We understand ourselves in terms we choose, not as mere specimens of a universal human nature, and give our lives sense by imaginative acts interpreting passion. We understand moral terms by looking back to character, not ahead to profit or conformity with a rule or universal ideal. Nietzsche assumes shared concepts, but we may suppose for present purposes that one does not simply perform as for an audience: one can to an extent feel and act "authentically" as honest with oneself and autonomous. If his doctrine is, then, that no-one of good character is dependent, taking without contributing, its ground must be that stealing is wrong, although this is not how Nietzsche likes to put it, thinking instead in terms of control or empowerment. He is explicit about other aspects of such a character, however: one refuses pity and favors, and never sees oneself as guilty of anything needing to be forgiven.

A youth interpreting his love of horses to train as a jockey, for instance, has enduring faith in his vocation as a public, not merely personal, good, and acquires a sense of himself and a set of values and obligations. Nietzsche is not concerned with material success, wise career choice, or where one's talents lie, but with the source of values in self-interpretation: not the mere act of self-styling, but the daily labor of forging one's character from recalcitrant material. An "artistic plan" or "style" somehow holds together desires, motives, and interests without resolving their fundamental conflicts.[9] Such virtue has an agonistic structure of felt meaning and is what may be called "spiritual" (unless there is

a better term) rather than "moral," although Nietzsche speaks of "aesthetic" excellence. It follows that a sense of self and of obligation is not, in the first instance, a cognitive disposition, but the product of commitment to an end one already cares about; in this way one "becomes what one is."

Those who say that universal reasoning is fundamental to self-understanding mean to exclude selfishness, that is, making exceptions in one's own favor. Nietzsche begins with passion particular to oneself, but defends neither selfishness nor irrationality. His point is that, simply as universal, such reasoning is not equipped to reflect the nature of self-understanding. Contrary to Plato, no particular description of the self could apply to everyone: one is to be understood in terms of one's own motives and intentions, and excellence cannot be taught. Nietzsche is not saying that one just chooses oneself: good character depends on hard work, and one does not just choose the language in which one expresses oneself. One is first this man or this woman, making sense of oneself and one's world, overcoming resistance and gaining what control one can, and attaining pride in oneself by implementing projects one cares about. Life, then, has meaning in proportion to strength of character: large-souled pride is supreme virtue, and humility the depth of vice. One would have thought that pursuing what one cares about is self-forgetting, so that autonomy, integrity, and the like, entail humility, not simply pride. Indeed, since Nietzsche is a determinist, to be controlling in fulfilling passions is equally to be vulnerable to their power. Instead, we are fully human only if we also have free choice; if one is wronged, for example, one is not simply determined to see oneself as injured, but one can also forgive. Nietzsche holds, however, that as controlling one initiates, or at least contributes to, traditions, and the self is original and even creative. Diversity is a natural, but not necessary, consequence, and he adds it expressly in the form of perspectivism.

Obligation to others depends, for Nietzsche, on self-regard, not on transcendental universal reasoning. One is not reclusive or exclusive, and does not treat others simply as they deserve: not for the sake of inclusion, sadly, but from a joyful sense of life overflowing into courtesy, congeniality, and so on. Brimming over with vitality, one is motivated to undertake and honor obligations to others (GM II §2); for instance, one feels equal to the challenge of a job or to the demands of marriage, and signs a contract, and the obligation to meet it stems from the signing. Nietzsche connects passion and rules by presenting obligation as a voluntary undertaking, and explains, in a way not available to objectivists such as Plato or, for example, Kant, why anyone would want to fulfill them. It does not follow that obligation reduces to arbitrary choice: rather, be-

cause it is situated, it cannot be arbitrary. This account, however, fails to consider that some obligations do not depend on choice: routine examples are, for instance, that one has obligations to parents without having chosen to be a son or daughter, and we are obliged to obey the law (as distinct perhaps from bad laws), without having contracted to do so. Such obligations are greater than we are as "external" to us, not as enlarging or extending us as for Nietzsche. Furthermore, obligation is, on his account, voluntary as founded on the self rather than imposed, but insofar as obligation is not voluntary he fails to justify this role for the self. And whilst his doctrine of impassioned caring may exclude selfishness in principle, treating the self as the foundation of virtue and obligation would be self-serving in practice.

For Nietzsche, mental life is primarily a matter of overcoming resistance and disorder, not of cognition; to oversimplify, this suggests that there is, in the end, only control or "will to power" in ethics and politics as in knowledge. In that case, however, he fails to take account of certain limits to control: for example, we do not simply create meaning, since we could not act or think, if the world did not already make minimal sense; self-understanding is shaped not only autonomously but also by others responding to us; one's situation is not all of one's making. Awareness of such limitations lets one recognize gratefully what is other than oneself, including other persons, engage with them in reciprocal trust and mutual obligation, and acknowledge one's debt and accountability. Indeed, this lack of a sense of "otherness" and "external" obligation seems small-minded, not large-souled, as Nietzsche assumes. To recognize only control is, in effect, to deny, mistakenly, that what comes under our control is also held in trust, and that we can be called to account. Saying that actions are right insofar as they enhance one's control, wrongly runs together character with knowing what you want and how to get it. There is more to being an individual than having your own way—we also submit and give—and distinguishing what we do and do not control permits a balance between hopeful determination and realistic faith.[10]

## Religion

One consequence of this argument is that religion is not simply controlling, as it is for Nietzsche's Platonized version, but a balance and interplay between control and its limits. A proficient composer can write music which produces in the unsuspecting listener elation, melancholy, or whatever; for Nietzsche, religion is similarly controlling, whether "unwholesome" or not (GM I §6). Given that there is more to character and

and a sense of the world than control, however, this misrepresents Judaism and Christianity, the religions he chiefly has in mind. For example, a theme of the Book of Job is that we should not only be controlling, but should submit in awe and trust; the Gospels, similarly, exhort us to act compassionately, not merely on the premise of control, as when blaming God for permitting pain. Nietzsche understands belief in a just, benevolent God wrongly as a controlling reason concerned with reward and punishment for our acting justly and benevolently; on the contrary, as based on passion (of a sort often compared to a child's trusting affection), it primarily *motivates* us so to act.

*The Antichrist* might seem to indicate a balance between compassion and control. Nietzsche previously excoriated "gentle" Jesus, but portrays him here as having both a controlling "instinct" of "life" and uncontrolling suffering and love "*with* those, *in* those who are doing evil to him" Yet against this view of his intentions, he goes on to dismiss "the Church" which teaches uncontrolling "faith" in divine "forgiveness of sin" (AC §32-§37). Thus he misses the contest and interplay for all-too-human men and women between such faith and control. His focus on "Platonized" religion yields insight more into the role of interpretation and "mythmaking" in knowledge and the self, than into what it is to be a human being and, should we say, a human soul. The source of this weakness is perhaps that while he rightly resists the anthropomorphic transcendentalism of "Platonized" religion, he does not consider closely enough that this is just what the Abrahamic religions already reject.

## Morality

Nietzsche pillories "morality" based on "reason," but confusingly so, since *The Birth of Tragedy*, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, and other works suggest an ethic of virtue or "excellence" which could also be called "morality," though resting instead on passion (GM I §10; D §551). One creates standards guided by one's passions and a sense of one's worth, not by the end or *telos* of a universal conception of human nature, as for Aristotle; to be just is to give each her due, according to her self-interpretation. Critics of perspectivism point out that *ex hypothesi* being situated provides no criteria for choosing perspectives, or guidance on whether, for instance, to offer opinion as a member of one's social class, religious group, or political party.[11] Nietzsche would reply that we cannot always be told what to do, and he rejects transcendental sources for duty. He is not, in any case, asking the non-philosophical question, "Which passions test right actions, or good ends?" Instead, what counts

as a true moral or "aesthetic" judgment is a matter of creative interaction with one's situation as one experiences it, not simply of implementing mechanically a prior text or received repertoire. Thus, for instance, one is not honest in acting only from reasons for being honest, or generous if one's giving is merely calculated, but only if being honest and generous matter to oneself in particular. There is no particular description of moral virtue which could apply to everyone, and virtue cannot be taught. No-one with vitality and autonomy would accept Plato's universal Form or Idea of Good as the ground for her intentions, but would rather ground her idea of good in her own intentions, based on passions particular to herself. Virtue is, then, the strength of her contribution, not agreement of her desires and actions with a preconceived foundation as for Plato or, for that matter, Kant.

Nietzsche rejects cold, passionless security in favor of mortal hope and fear: self-preservation is "weakness" and risk-taking "strength." You have to be made of stern stuff, meeting heady challenge, ready to suffer and ruthless! Our tendency to feel pity is not a reason to treat all equally, but there can be no equal rights or universal regard for each person or pebble on the beach, since acting from pity stunts self-development, and to be virtuous is to stand out in one's own character as excellent, not simply to resemble others. He accepts human frailty and limited rationality as facts, and for many these are reason to treat all alike; but he argues that we are also unequal and ought to treat each as he or she is, namely, unequally. He calls such virtue "aesthetic" rather than "moral" on the assumption that "morality" implies equality.

There is nothing unusual or contradictory in being both exceptional and altruistic, however, and while Nietzsche is right to point to a cost, his pitiless "superman" is subhuman in a sense, even supposing that he is admirable "aesthetically." For in dismissing moral guilt and shame, for example, as inferiority feeling at odds with pride, Nietzsche's virtue ethic confuses feeling particular to individuals with moral approval and disapproval. Moral values are distinguished by their universality from non-moral values—a preference for a certain brand of cigar, for example, is hardly "moral"—and thus apply equally.

Yet the line between individual (aesthetic) virtue and moral virtue is not always as clear as it is here, and if we can speak of his "ethics," he compares with Aristotle in emphasizing passion and its physiological base. For Nietzsche, passion can be intense, but neither is Aristotle's "moderation" a damper: sometimes, the proportionate response is, for instance, to become very angry. For Aristotle, one interprets one's experienced situation with a view to the mean, before one can be said to

agree or not with the objectively wise rule. Since the rule is itself right as agreeing with the mean, this might seem circular; yet what counts as a true moral judgment depends, at least in part, on one's interacting with one's circumstances. Thus his notion of morality, as is Nietzsche's, is not simply a matter of implementing unintelligently a prior text we read off, but non-cognitivist so far as moral judgments are first read in. And while Nietzsche is objectivist, so far as perspectives are relative not simply to us, but to critical comparison with one another, so also is Aristotle, so far as the mean is relative not simply to private preference, but to practical wisdom.

Nietzsche, however, would, if at all, call actions "right," only insofar as we care about them and they express a sense of life, that is, if they enhance our power or control; "rightness" is, then, a maximizing rather than moderating concept. For Aristotle, by contrast, the rightness of desires and actions "hits the mark" of moderation absolutely, and "rightness" is a limiting concept. So far as he is impatient of such intuitionism, Nietzsche misses both the sense in which actions may be absolutely or "simply" right or wrong, and the relation of good character to independent tests of right action, such as moderation. Yet, inconsistent with this, he relies on common intuition to distinguish, for example, exceptional from mediocre, and indeed twisted, ability.

On the other hand, good character does not depend merely on fulfilling one's passions, whether such fulfillment is "happiness," as for Aristotle, or "excellence," as for Nietzsche. To take an extreme example, a mother who does not feel love for her children, for whatever reason, nonetheless loves them, if she does right by them. The point of this example is not that passion is less desirable than action; but that good character depends on regard for persons, not merely on fulfilling one's own passions.[12]

## Notes

[1] See, for instance, Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy* (Cambridge UP, 1990), and Peter Poellner, *Nietzsche and Metaphysics* (New York: Oxford UP, 1995). Also Bernard Williams, for example, refers to Nietzsche's rejection of a Platonist view of "truth" and "truthfulness" in *Truth and Truthfulness* (Princeton, NJ, and London: Princeton UP, 2002), chapter 1.

[2] This paper is a sequel to one entitled "Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Meaning," which I gave to the 9th Annual Conference (1999) of the Friedrich Nietzsche Society.

[3] Peter Poellner, "Perspectival Truth," in John Richardson and Brian Leiter (eds), *Nietzsche* (New York: Oxford UP, 2001), 85-117 (117). See also Chapter 6 of his *Nietzsche and Metaphysics* (Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 1995), 266-305.

[4] Clark, *Nietzsche and Truth on Philosophy*, 40.

[5] Compare with Hans Vaihinger, *The Philosophy of "As If"* [1911], trans. C. K. Ogden (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, and Trubner, 1924).

[6] KSA 7, 19[156] 468; and KSA 7, 19[228, 235-36, 237], 490-91, 493-94. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Philosophy and Truth: Selections from Nietzsche's Notebooks of the Early 1870's*, ed. and trans. Daniel Breazeale (New Jersey and London: Humanities Press International, 1979), §101, 37; §149-§151, 50-52.

[7] See Richard Schacht, *Nietzsche* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983), chapter 3, (especially 140-56); and Arthur C. Danto, *Nietzsche As Philosopher* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), chapter 4, especially §6 and §7.

[8] Fitzroy Maclean, *Eastern Approaches* (London: Penguin, 1991), 146.

[9] Nehamas usefully highlights Nietzsche's view that one's chosen "style" draws conflicting motives together in an "artistic plan," but assumes wrongly that the result is "a harmonious self" (Alexander Nehamas, *The Art of Living: Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault* (Berkeley, CA and London: U of California P, 1998), 150. For further discussion of this point, see in this volume Thomas A. Meyer's contribution, "Fatalism and the Art of Living: Nietzsche and the Turn from Socrates."

[10] See David Campbell, "Kierkegaard, Freedom and Self-Interpretation," in James Giles (ed.), *Kierkegaard and Freedom* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2000), 43-57.

[11] For a recent critical discussion, see David Simpson, *Situatedness: Or, Why We Keep Saying Where We're Coming From* (Durham: Duke UP, 2002).

[12] My thanks to those who kindly commented on an earlier draft of this article, particularly Mary Haight and John Moore.

# Nietzsche's Remarks on the Classical Tradition: A Prognosis for Western Democracy in the Twenty-First Century

*Mark Hammond*

IN THIS ARTICLE I consider several statements Nietzsche made about the classical tradition, which form the basis of Nietzsche's prognosis for the future. This prognosis, I shall argue, is composed of both a political prognosis of the state in terms of liberal democracy, and a scientific prognosis of the human being as a living biological system. In the first part I consider the following four statements regarding the classical tradition: first, one made by Nietzsche in a lecture in 1872 on ancient rhetoric; second, and third, statements made by him in *Daybreak*; and finally, a statement found in the first volume of *Human, All Too Human* (aphorism 472). Taken together these remarks form the basis of Nietzsche's prognosis of the state. Then, in the second part of this paper, I shall examine Nietzsche's prognosis of the human being examined through the prism of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

* * *

The first of Nietzsche's remarks about the classical tradition to be considered here pertains to orators, and their influence in antiquity.[1] It appears in are on ancient rhetoric given by Nietzsche in the winter semester of 1872, where he quotes a statement the ancient orator Diodorus is thought to have said:

> "No one will be able easily to name a higher prerogative than oratory. For it ... is by oratory alone that one individual acquires authority over many; but in general everything appears only as the speaker's power represents it."[2]

To this, Nietzsche next adds a remark attributed to Callisthenes on being an orator for Alexander the Great, namely:

> "[T]hat he [Callisthenes] held in his hands the fate of Alexander and his deeds in the eyes of posterity. He had ... [come] to win the admiration of men for [Alexander], and belief in Alexander's divinity depended ... on what he, the orator, made known about his deeds [...] [Orators] control 'opinion about things' and hence the effect of things upon men; they know this."[3]

These quotations raise the following question: if orators controlled opinion about things in antiquity, then who controls opinion about things in the contemporary world? The obvious answer is that the media controls opinion about things, and hence the effect of things upon people. Several questions converge here, and not all of them can be answered in a brief essay. For example, there is the question of actually defending the claim that the media controls opinion about things—and hence the effect of things on people; for it could be objected that we have yet to put forward an argument showing this to be the case. Another question is this: assuming the media does control opinion about things, then what controls the media? Both questions are outside the scope of the present essay. Instead let us consider the question: what effect has the media's control of opinion about things had on the western world? The reason we have for considering this question is because it has already been answered by Nietzsche. In *Daybreak* he wrote:

> Today one can see coming into existence the culture of a society of which *commerce* is as much the soul as personal contest was with the ancient Greeks and as war, victory and justice were for the Romans. The man engaged in commerce understands how to appraise everything without having made it, and to appraise it *according to the needs of the consumer*, not according to his own needs; "who and how many will consume this?" is his question of questions. This type of appraisal he then applies instinctively and all the time: he applies it to everything, and thus also to the productions of the arts and sciences, of thinkers, scholars, artists, statesmen, peoples and parties, of the entire age: in regard to everything that is made he inquires after supply and demand *in order to determine the value of a thing in his own eyes.* This becomes the character of an entire culture, thought through in the minutest and subtlest detail and imprinted in every will and every faculty: it is this of which you men of the coming century will be proud [...]. (D §175)

Nietzsche's claim that commerce is the soul of our culture is metaphorical. Accordingly, further analysis of it is necessary if we are to make sense of it. What does it mean to say that commerce is the soul of our culture? Another aphorism from *Daybreak* helps to make sense of this metaphor:

> The means employed by the lust for power have changed, but the same volcano continues to glow [...] and what one formerly did "for the sake of God" one now does for the sake of money, that is to say, for the sake of that which *now* gives the highest feeling of power and good conscience. (D §204)

In other words, to say that commerce is the soul of our culture might mean that we now do things for the sake of commerce just as we formerly did things for the sake of God. Nietzsche's quote prompts us to ask the question: is it true? Do we now do for the sake of money what we formerly did for the sake of God? In a word, *yes*, and the classical tradition can help to verify this.

In his book *Greek Architecture* A. W. Lawrence explains how the purpose of the Greek temple in Hellenic architecture "was to house a deity, not to accommodate worshippers."[4] Later on, in Gothic architecture, a similar concern for constructing buildings for the sake of God also shows itself. Consider, for example, David Watkin's statement in his book offering *A History of Architecture*:

> The growth of intellectual life in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, culminating in the philosophy of St Thomas Aquinas was accompanied by numerous writings on religious mysticism and spirituality. This fruitful confrontation of spirit and matter was given overwhelming expression in the great cathedrals built in stone yet aspiring heavenwards.[5]

In the contemporary world, however, the buildings that reach into the heavens are no longer temples and cathedrals—they are, rather, bank towers, corporate headquarters, and, up until September 11, 2001, world tradecenters, all of which house money and its concomitant family of conceptual relations, not God. Admittedly, these skyscrapers are different from those that were built in antiquity; yet, in a certain sense, skyscrapers do accommodate worshippers, it is just that today we call them employees, and they do not simply worship, they also work.

Another example of doing for money today what we formerly did for the sake of God is make sacrifices. In biblical times Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son Isaac to the God of the Old Testament. Today, people confirm in their actions, time and again, a certain willingness to sacrifice their families, marriages, friends, colleagues, co-workers, and even their freedom for the sake of money and all it can buy.[6]

The fourth remark made by Nietzsche about the ancient world is aphorism 472 in the first volume of *Human, All Too Human*. In this aphorism, entitled "Religion and government," Nietzsche asks: "What if that quite different conception of government such as is taught in *democ-*

*ratic* states begins to prevail?" His answer to this question comes later in the same aphorism when he says:

> Finally—one can say this with certainty—distrust of all government [. . .] will impel men to a quite novel resolve: the resolve to do away with the concept of the state, to the abolition of the distinction between private and public. Private companies will step by step absorb the business of the state: even the most resistant remainder of what was formerly the work of government (for example its activities designed to protect the private person from the private person) will in the long run be taken care of by private contractors. Disregard for and the decline and *death of the state*, the liberation of the private person (I take care not to say: of the individual), is the consequence of the democratic conception of the state; it is in this that its mission lies. [. . .] We ourselves have seen the idea of familial rights and power which once ruled as far as the Roman world extended grow ever paler and more impotent. Thus a later generation will see the state too shrink to insignificance in various parts of the earth. (HA I §472)

Nietzsche's prognosis for the democratic conception of the state is decline, death, and ultimately privatization. Here it is worth digressing slightly to contrast Nietzsche's prognosis from the prognosis advanced by Francis Fukuyama in *The End of History* (1992) that liberal democracy is the prognosis, not only of the next century, but for the rest of history as such.[7]

In his recent book *Our Posthuman Future* (2002), Fukuyama attempts to remedy some of the flaws contained in his thesis put forward in *The End of History*.[8] The principle flaw—how can you talk about the end of history if there is no end to science?—is addressed in relation to the human genome project, and the implications it will have on the future of liberal democracy. In doing this, Fukuyama begins with the following quotation from *The Will To Power*:

> From now on there will be more favourable preconditions for more comprehensive forms of dominion, whose like has never yet existed. And even this is not the most important thing; the possibility has been established for the production of international racial unions whose task will be to rear a master race, the future "masters of the earth";—a new, tremendous aristocracy, based on the severest self-legislation, in which the will of philosophical men of power and artist-tyrants will be made to endure for millennia—a higher kind of man, who thanks to their superiority in will, knowledge, riches, and influence, employ democratic Europe as their most pliant and supple instrument for getting hold of the destinies of the earth, so as to work as artists upon "man" himself. Enough: the time is coming when politics will have a different meaning. (WP §960)

The first thing to say about this quotation is that Fukuyama begins his book with only the last sentence: "Enough: the time is coming when politics will have a different meaning." By omitting the rest of the passage, Fukuyama subtly shifts the focus away from the problem of the human being, and the work that the philosophical men of power and artist-tyrant types will, through the research and development of science and technology be performing on the human being. Instead, by focusing our attention squarely on the meaning of politics, Fukuyama implicitly asks the following questions. What does it mean to say that politics will have a different meaning? What will that meaning be? And when will politics experience this change in meaning?

If these questions are what Fukuyama is implying by beginning his book this way, then our previous analysis of aphorism 472 of the first volume of *Human, All Too Human* has already answered them. If, by politics, is meant liberal democracy, then decline, death, and privatization is the different meaning that politics now has. In this sense, then, the meaning of politics has already been defined. What remains unanswered is the question of the prognosis of the human being under the conditions of a privatized state. Before turning to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and the extent to which that work replies to this question, let us sum up what has been said thus far.

Our aim was to advance Nietzsche's prognosis of the state. The foundation for this prognosis was laid with the modern-day orators who control opinion about things, the media, and it was suggested that, through its control of opinion about commerce, the media has helped to deify it. The media has, in fact, done this so successfully that we now do for the sake of money what we formerly did for the sake of God. For Nietzsche, the consequence of promoting a liberal democracy on a global scale is the privation of the state, or "globalization," as it is euphemistically called. It is from within this context of an increasingly privatized state that we will now consider *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and its teaching of the *Übermensch.*

* * *

In a letter to his friend Franz Overbeck of 10 February 1883, Nietzsche described *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as a work of "poetry, and not a collection of aphorisms" (*eine Dichtung und keine Aphorismen-Sammlung*) (KSB 6, 326). Moreover, due to its four-book structure, it is possible to determine further *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as a work of epic poetry. However, it is what distinguishes *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* from all epic poetry

since Homer that interests us here. For what, in Nietzsche's own words from his letter to Overbeck of 26 August 1883, is most distinctive about *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is that "there has not been since Voltaire such an outrageous attack on Christianity—and, to tell the truth, even Voltaire had no idea that one could attack it in *this* way" (KSB 6, 436).

In what way does Nietzsche attack Christianity in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*? The short answer to this question is that his attack is essentially an overcoming of Christianity. To see this attack in action, consider the following words of Zarathustra:

> *I teach you the superman*. Man is something that should be overcome. What have you done to overcome him?
>
> All creatures hitherto have created something beyond themselves: and do you want to be the ebb of this great tide, and return to the animals rather than overcome man?
>
> What is the ape to men? A laughing-stock or a painful embarrassment. And just so shall man be to the superman: a laughing- stock or a painful embarrassment.
>
> You have made your way from worm to man, and much in you is still worm. Once you were apes, and even now man is more of an ape than any ape. (Z Prologue §3)

The first clue to understanding the way in which Nietzsche critiques Christianity can be found in the premise that "all creatures hitherto have created something beyond themselves." If this premise is true, it raises the question: what will we create that is beyond ourselves? Zarathustra teaches that we will create the *Übermensch*. How is it possible for us to create the *Übermensch*? Nietzsche's comments in the quotation above about human beings making their way from worm to man implies that the answer to this might have something to do with Darwin's theory of evolution. However, this should not be taken to imply that Nietzsche simply appropriated in an uncritical way Darwin's theory of evolution; he did not.

Rather, what Nietzsche endorsed about Darwin's theory was the way he had based it on the historical and thus temporal way of the world. Nietzsche, however, thought the credit for this should be attributed more to Hegel than to Darwin. In *The Gay Science* he writes:

> Let us take [...] the astonishing stroke of Hegel, who struck right through all our logical habits and bad habits when he dared to teach that species concepts develop *out of each other*. With this proposition the minds of

> Europe were preformed for the last great scientific movement, Darwinism—for without Hegel there could have been no Darwin. (GS §357)

Nietzsche disagreed with the over-emphasis that Darwin's theory placed on the principle of natural selection. For Nietzsche the principle of the will to power made a more significant difference to evolution than did Darwin's principle of "natural selection." As he puts it in *Beyond Good and Evil*, "physiologists should think before putting down the instinct of self-preservation as the cardinal instinct of an organic being. 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).

A later note in the *Will To Power* provides more of an explanation as to how we will create the *Übermensch* when Nietzsche says that "it is not the victory of science that distinguishes our nineteenth century, but the victory of scientific method over science" (WP §466). Thus it is through the scientific method's ability to calculate and predict the future behavior of an entity, and determine its past behavior, that helps explains how it will be possible for us to create the *Übermensch.*

In the nineteenth century, Nietzsche probably believed that the way the human being would be overcome would be through a combination of mechanical and biological sciences, perhaps in the manner of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. In the contemporary world, however, there are at least two sciences that appear to provide the greatest promise for overcoming the human being: genetics and artificial intelligence. The former has as its goal the transformation of the human being into a healthier and more efficient machine; the latter, the transformation of a machine into a conscious entity that thinks. At any rate, it is not so much which science it is that overcomes the human being, but rather the fact that the human being will be overcome, that Nietzsche emphasizes:

> Most men represent pieces and fragments of man: one has to add them up for a complete man to appear. Whole ages, whole peoples are in this sense somewhat fragmentary; it is perhaps part of the economy of human evolution that man should evolve piece by piece. But that should not make one forget for a moment that the real issue is the production of the synthetic man. (WP §881)

According to this passage, the real issue is the production of the synthetic man, or Zarathustra's *Übermensch.* In the light of the issues discussed in the first part of this paper, the decisive question to ask is: who is going to control the means of human reproduction in the future, private corpora-

tions or the state? (A subsidiary question might be: what role will parents play in this process?)

Let us briefly consider one objection that could be raised to my suggestion that it is primarily the teaching of the *Übermensch* and the scientific character of Nietzsche's critique of Christianity found in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* which distinguishes it from Voltaire's critique and that of others. This objection is based on Nietzsche's claim in *Ecce Homo* that the basic conception of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is the idea of eternal recurrence (EH TSZ §1). If this is the case, then to argue that *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* revolves around the teaching and production of the *Übermensch* is simply wrong; for if the basic conception of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is the doctrine of the eternal return, then the more plausible interpretation to advance is that this metaphysical doctrine is what *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* revolves around, since eternal recurrence is the basic conception of this work. Accordingly, what distinguishes Nietzsche's critique of Christianity as found in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* from Voltaire's and others' critiques would be Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal recurrence, and not, as we have argued above, his teaching of the *Übermensch.*

A closer look at what Nietzsche actually said in *Ecce Homo* about his doctrine of the eternal return and how it relates to the teaching of the *Übermensch*, and the production of the synthetic man, reveals, however, this objection to be superficial. For Nietzsche goes on to say that this doctrine expresses "the highest formula of affirmation that can possibly be attained" (EH TSZ §1). This further determination of the eternal return, as the highest formula of affirmation that can possibly be attained, relates directly to one of Zarathustra's teachings about the *Übermensch* in the chapter entitled "On the Three Metamorphoses." In this chapter, Zarathustra speaks of a "sacred yes," when he says about the actual process of producing the synthetic human being: "For the game of creation, my brothers, a sacred 'Yes' is needed: the spirit now wills *his own* will, and he who had been lost to the world now conquers his own world" (Z I 1).

Clearly a "yes" that is sacred is not just any affirmation, but rather, the highest affirmation possible. According to Zarathustra, human beings as a whole need this kind of affirmation, in other words, the highest possible affirmation there is for overcoming the human being. Why should this be? Nietzsche evades this question directly, although one possible reason for this may be because the only kind of "yes" that is commensurable with the global task of overcoming the species—that is, building a scientifically and technologically superior type of human being—is a "yes" that is sacred. What Nietzsche does say, however, in an aphorism entitled "Private and public morality" in volume 1 of *Human, All Too*

*Human*, is what could happen to the human being, if the "yes" to scientifically and technologically overcome it is not sacred:

> Since the belief has ceased that a God broadly directs the destinies of the world and that, all the apparent twists and turns in its path notwithstanding, is leading mankind gloriously upward, man has to set himself ecumenical goals embracing the whole earth [*ökumenische, die ganze Erde umspannende Ziele*]. The former morality, namely Kant's, [...] is a theory like that of free trade, presupposing that universal harmony *must* result of itself in accordance with innate laws of progress. Perhaps some future survey of the requirements of mankind will show that it is absolutely not desirable that all men should act in the same way, but rather that in the interest of ecumenical goals whole tracts of mankind ought to have special, perhaps under certain circumstances even evil tasks imposed upon them.—In any event, if mankind is not to destroy itself through such conscious universal rule, it must first of all attain to a hitherto altogether unprecedented *knowledge of the preconditions of culture* as a scientific standard for ecumenical goals. Herein lies the tremendous task facing the great spirits of the coming century. (HA I §25)

In other words, not only must the affirmation to overcome the human being be a "sacred yes," it must also be affirmed by humanity as a whole. Total mobilization must, somehow, give way to total affirmation. It must be total because if the affirmation is partial—that is, if only a part of the population pursues the goal of the *Übermensch* scientifically and technologically—then the consequences could be disastrous for the planet. Nietzsche's recommendation for guarding against this—that we must first of all attain to a hitherto altogether unprecedented knowledge of the preconditions of culture as a scientific standard for ecumenical goals—is beyond the scope of this present discussion. Suffice it to say that agreement has yet to be reached on how scientific research should follow such an ecumenical goal as Nietzsche's conception of the *Übermensch*. Stem cells, human embryos, xenotransplantation, and cloning are all genetic phenomena that the human genome project promises to lay bare—and whether it does, only time will tell.

We based Nietzsche's prognosis for the future on a prognosis of the state and a prognosis of the human being. The prognosis of the liberal-democratic conception of the state is decline, death, and rise of privatization. The prognosis of the human being is its scientific and technological overcoming in the dual directions of AI and genetic engineering. Taken together, these make up Nietzsche's prognosis of our future.

# Notes

[1] I have discussed these quotations from Nietzsche's lectures in the context of the influence of the ancient Sophists in my study, *A Heideggerian Phenomenological Investigation of Money* (New York: Edwin Mellen, 2002), 66.

[2] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On Rhetoric and Language*, trans. Sander L. Gilman, Carole Blair, and David J. Parent (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989), 213.

[3] Nietzsche, *On Rhetoric and Language*, 213; cf. Callisthenes, Arran 4 c.1D.

[4] Arnold Walter Lawrence, *Greek Architecture* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1996), 84.

[5] David Watkin, *A History of Western Architecture* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1986), 126.

[6] For further discussion of these quotations about architecture and of the example of Abraham, see Hammond, *A Heideggerian Phenomenological Investigation of Money*, 171-72. My analysis here builds on conclusions established in my study of Heidegger.

[7] Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Bard, 1992).

[8] Francis Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002).

# Section 5

# German Classicism

# The Invention of Antiquity: Nietzsche on Classicism, Classicality, and the Classical Tradition

*Christian J. Emden*

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, Karl Christ and Suzanne Marchand argued, on different occasions, that the German reception of antiquity is marked by three general factors which shaped the philological enterprise throughout the 1800s: a tendency toward aesthetic idealization, the demand for rigorous scholarship, and an ideological appropriation of antiquity.[1] Although it might be difficult, perhaps even impossible, to disentangle these three factors, they each represent a complex, semiconscious, cognitive field that develops as a reaction to very specific historical and intellectual circumstances. Irrespective of whether we approach antiquity from an aesthetic point of view, from a scholarly perspective, or in terms of the political *imaginaire*, what is at stake is the attempt to (re-)formulate the relationship between antiquity and modernity, or, more generally, between past and present. Although this problem is as old as antiquity itself, it leads to far-reaching questions within the discourse of classical scholarship in nineteenth-century Germany, which perceives itself as both "scientific" and "historicist" at the same time.

As a professor of Greek language and literature who taught at the University of Basel and the local *Pädagogium*, Nietzsche was certainly unable to avoid this problem, and his own attempts to come to terms with the idea of "antiquity" as a cultural point of reference led him substantially to rethink the notion of a "classical tradition" against the background of its fragile conceptual foundations.

Nietzsche's interest in the relationship between antiquity and modernity is certainly not an isolated phenomenon. For such earlier scholars still indebted to the educational ideals of the German Enlightenment as Friedrich August Wolf and August Böckh, the cultural value of studying ancient Greece did not require any specific cultural justification, and, toward the middle of the nineteenth century Nietzsche's own teachers,

Friedrich Ritschl and Georg Curtius, reaffirmed the wider educational merit of classical philology as the sound foundation for the neo-humanist paradigm introduced by Wilhelm von Humboldt in the early 1800s.[2] In many cases, this relentless emphasis on the educational value of classical studies throughout the nineteenth century contains a hidden political program centered on a somewhat numinous cultural identity: embedded in the contemporary discourse of *Bildung* and *Kulturpolitik*, and fostered by the rise of the German research university, it is often difficult to distinguish between classical scholarship and an aestheticized "Philhellenism."[3] Against this background, it becomes increasingly obvious that the idea of a "classical antiquity" in nineteenth-century Germany is itself the product of a wide range of complex social and intellectual constellations: inasmuch as antiquity continues to be related to modernity it might be suggestive of a certain historical continuity, but upon closer inspection it soon becomes clear how uncertain the idea of "antiquity" is in the first place.

Although many classical scholars in the nineteenth century were interested in the history, as well as the theoretical foundations, of their own discipline, and although they had much interesting to say about the notion of philology, few classicists seem actually to have felt the need to discuss the idea of classicality in detail. Nietzsche's own tentative references to a presumed classical tradition, which can be found throughout his philological writings and lectures, are no exception to this general trend—at first sight, at least. His lecture-series *The Greek Lyric Poets* (*Die griechischen Lyriker*), which he delivered at least six times between the summer semester of 1869 and the winter semester of 1878/1879, is a case in point. Without much reflection he simply remarks that his presentation is concerned with poetic texts from the "classical period of the Hellenic age" (KGW 2.2, 107). A similarly uncritical notion of classicality appears in his voluminous lectures on the *History of Greek Literature* (*Geschichte der griechischen Litteratur*) of 1874/1875, when he describes the rather long period from Homer to the rise of the Roman Empire simply as the "classical age" (KGW 2.5, 22 and 31). Seen from this perspective, his ideal of things classical seems merely to mirror the largely unquestioned standing of German classicism among nineteenth-century philologists.

This trend seems to become even more apparent in the *Encyclopedia of Classical Philology* (*Encyclopaedie der klassischen Philologie*), his introductory lectures of 1871, when he relates the classical character of Homeric poetry and of Homer himself directly to the classicist conception of Greece exemplified by the works of Goethe and Schiller (KGW 2.3, 403). Very much in line with what his own teachers had to say, Nietzsche's under-

standing of classicality also epitomizes the demand for a rigorous scholarly approach, and stresses the educational merits of any such undertaking. A prominent example can be found, once more, in his encyclopedic introduction to the history and methods of philology. In a somewhat circular argument he suggests, for instance, that the "classicality of antiquity" is in itself the basic precondition of the philological enterprise, since the scholarly and educational purpose of philology consists in understanding that which is perceived to be "classical" (KGW 2.3, 345 and 368).

Against the background of what we have said so far, Nietzsche's notion of classicality is a direct result of the intellectual and ideological factors which determined the self-conception of philological scholarship in nineteenth-century Germany. Thus, such commentators as J. P. Stern and M. S. Silk argued that his image of ancient Greece should be located firmly within the context of the classical ideal represented by both Winckelmann and Wolf.[4] But this is only one possible way of looking at Nietzsche's relationship to what is generally termed the "classical tradition." By contrast, focusing in particular on the *Encyclopaedie der klassischen Philologie*, James I. Porter has suggested that Nietzsche is highly critical of the classical ideal promoted by, among others, Wolf and Humboldt. In contrast to such a homogeneous image of Greece, Porter has maintained, Nietzsche himself regards the "aesthetic illusion of classical antiquity" as a "site of deepest incoherence." Thus Nietzsche is supposed to be successful in exposing the "impossibility of the classical ideal" and, as a result, in undermining the ideological and historical illusions of traditional philological scholarship.[5]

It seems, then, that there are two mutually exclusive ways of viewing Nietzsche's relationship to the classical tradition. On the one hand, it is possible to argue that he continues the aesthetic and ideological commonplaces of German classicism; and on the other, there is also much evidence for assuming that he is quite critical of this particular intellectual background. Things are, however, more complicated, and we need to consider the notion of classicality in more detail, especially with regard to its ideological dimension. Only then will we be able to reassess Nietzsche's idiosyncratic concept of "classicality" as a specific explanatory model within the discourse of philology as an interpretive enterprise.

The general understanding of what is "classical" is, in many respects, linked to the Latin *classicus*, which develops on two different but interrelated levels.[6] The first meaning of *classicus* emerges towards the middle of the sixth century BCE when—as described by Cicero, Livy, and Aulus Gellius—the Roman king Servius Tullius divided his citizens into five classes, according to their respective property and wealth. *Classici* are the

"men of the first class" (*primae* [...] *classis homines*).[7] Here, classicality is a question of social superiority. This aspect is also central to the second meaning of *classicus* when Aulus Gellius, in the second century CE, introduced his famous analogy between social standing and the quality of literary style, according to the abridged formula *classicus scriptor non proletarius*.[8] Right from the beginning, then, classicality is a metaphorical construct that can easily be adapted to different discursive contexts, but this metaphorical quality also leads to far-reaching implications, which have a profound impact on later conceptions of classicality.

At the center of *classicus* stands the structural distinction between "us" and "them," which is increasingly converted into the conceptions of historical difference and, at the same time, the need for cultural continuity. A prominent example from Roman antiquity might be the *Ara Pacis*, the so-called "Altar of Augustan Peace," built around 13-9 BCE. Its magnificent exterior is clearly modeled on the Parthenon frieze in Athens, and it obviously seeks to establish a continuity between the reign of the Emperor Augustus and the past grandeur of the Athenian *polis*. But this continuity is not limited to Augustan Rome, for the altar itself becomes a prime model for later architectural decorations depicting the political and cultural might of the Roman Empire.[9] In other words, the *Ara Pacis* becomes the historical point at which difference is inextricably linked to continuity.

It is easy to see how this interplay between difference and continuity could turn into the far more fundamental opposition between antiquity and modernity, which continued to fuel the poetic and political imagination of Western Europe, culminating, first of all, in the Renaissance rediscovery of antiquity, and, finally, in the *Querelle des anciens et des modernes* of the eighteenth century. "Classicism" and "classicality" not only entail an aesthetic program based on an idealization of ancient Greece, but they are also the product of a complex tension between historical difference and cultural continuity. Furthermore, it becomes increasingly clear that the ideal of classicality is largely restricted to the imitation of ancient Greece as well as, with growing historical distance, of Rome. Cultural processes outside Greek and Roman antiquity are not at all considered to be in any way of a classical nature. There is no "classical Egypt," and the illusionary idealization of "classical antiquity" as relating to Hellenism and the Roman Empire has survived any attempts towards a more critical, or at least balanced, point of view.

The ideological dimension of classicality is, however, not the only implication which complicates our understanding of this concept. For it is also marked by a certain vagueness and indeterminacy which inevitably

marks all theoretical and historical attempts to come to terms with the extension of the classical tradition. In much the same way as our understanding of antiquity changes over time, our conception of classicality is necessarily shifting, and the emergence of a classical ideal in the course of the eighteenth century is a decisive development that, needless to say, has a profound impact on the conception of classicality among philologists in nineteenth-century Germany, and therefore also on Nietzsche.

In his *Reflections on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture* (*Gedancken über die Nachahmung der Griechischen Wercke in der Mahlerey und Bildhauer-Kunst*) (1755), which was to determine the course of aesthetics and the general conception of Greek antiquity over the next decades, Johann Joachim Winckelmann proposed his well-known idea that a true aesthetic taste for beauty originated first and foremost in Hellenic Greece. This very specific understanding of beauty is dependent on the ideas of wholeness and perfection which he discovered in Greek sculpture and regarded as a main attribute of Greek antiquity as a whole.[10] Within the aesthetic and archaeological discussions of the eighteenth century, still largely dominated by antiquarians and amateur collectors, Winckelmann's position represents a decisive shift from a speculative aesthetics, which regards the work of art either in purely normative terms of "beauty" or as a symbolic representation of quasi-religious values, to an archaeological aesthetics, which sees such works of art as the product of very specific cultural circumstances—even if Winckelmann's assumptions about these cultural circumstances were, to put it mildly, rarely supported by sound historical evidence. It is rather difficult, for instance, to regard Periclean Athens—a society marked by autocracy and slavery—as the prime example of a culture marked by social harmony and freedom, based on a primordial unity of art and nature. But despite these and other fallacies, Winckelmann's image of Greece shaped many aspects of the European imagination of antiquity deep into the nineteenth century. This conception of Greek antiquity in terms of a static, ordered, and formal beauty—centered on the notions of "serenity" and "grandeur"—fell on very fertile ground and, in the discussions of the late eighteenth century, was transformed into the ideology of classicality.[11]

Writing after Winckelmann, and preparing the ground for the aesthetic beliefs in the early 1800s, Friedrich Schiller gave this paradigm of classicality a new twist, by erecting a fairly strict opposition, of a far more fundamental nature than Winckelmann's own assumptions, between antiquity and modernity. In his essay *On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry* (*Ueber naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*) of 1796/1797, he not only conceived of ancient Greece as the preeminent cultural paradigm that is

supposed to influence and advance humanity, but moreover he presented this paradigm as a sharp contrast to the alienation and fragmentation of life he detected in his own time. Even though he criticized an unfounded imitation of Greek models and ideas in modern literature, and even though he distanced himself from Winckelmann's historical understanding of Athenian culture, Schiller endorses a powerful homogeneous idealization of Greek antiquity.[12]

The echoes of Winckelmann's and Schiller's reflections can also be felt in August Wilhelm Schlegel's lectures *On Dramatic Art and Literature* (*Über dramatische Kunst und Litteratur*), which he delivered in Vienna in 1808, but an more interesting case are his brother's earlier studies on ancient literary history, *On the Value of the Study of the Greeks and Romans* (*Vom Wert des Studiums der Griechen und Römer*) (1795/1796) and *On the Study of Greek Poetry* (*Ueber das Studium der griechischen Poesie*) (1797), which explicitly thematize the relevance of a supposedly Greek form of self-cultivation for modern times. Schlegel emphasizes the enormous merit of a return to the classical ideal with regard to the education of modern individuals and society as a whole: studying Greek and Roman antiquity essentially leads to an understanding of everything that is "grand," "noble," "good," and "beautiful," and therefore it also establishes an ideal of humanity to which modern society should always aspire.[13]

The lure of a presumed classicality to be discovered among the Greeks determined the course of philological scholarship well into the 1870s. In fact, the German conception of philology as the "science of antiquity" (*Altertumswissenschaft*) and the suggestive construction of an ideal "classical tradition" are so closely linked, that the ideological commonplaces of Philhellenism are, in many respects, the highly problematic foundations for the rationalization and specialization of philological scholarship in nineteenth-century Germany.

Seen against this background, we can discern several reasons why the idealization of Greek antiquity was such an important factor in aesthetics and philological scholarship from the 1750s to the 1870s. First of all, the canonization of ancient Greece is, in many ways, the result of a historical logic which seeks to identify a particular "age" as a fixed cultural point of reference. As Rainer Warning has argued, notions of classicality which operate within this historical logic ultimately serve the establishment of a historical identity.[14] Classicality provides a form of historical order. The present, in other words, can never be "classical," but it is inevitably "modern." The very definition of modernity—be it in positive or negative terms—requires a relatively homogeneous imagination of its other.

Second, this ideal of classicality is composed of an artificial, albeit not completely arbitrary, selection of texts, authors, styles, artists, and cultural artifacts which, taken as a whole, represent the construction of a canon of cultural identity and historical continuity.[15] Indeed, it is difficult to imagine any form of historical identity, or historical consciousness, that would be able to operate without this logic. Historical identity, as questionable as it might be, inevitably needs to rely on collective imaginations of particular historical periods, which are, in turn, embedded in a complex network of ideological and institutional structures.

And third, we also need to realize that, to a considerable degree, the homogeneous vision of things Greek, which is almost exclusively based on metaphors of harmony, freedom, and unity, represents a direct reaction to the revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, while, on an ideological level, it aims to compensate for the disintegrated social circumstances and political self-conceptions around 1800—the imagination of Athenian unity is pitted against the actual particularism of the German states, and this intellectual configuration continues to influence the political *imaginaire* until the formation of a unified Germany in 1871.

Nevertheless, especially within the discipline of classical scholarship in nineteenth-century Germany, the classicality of the Greeks and Romans is far from clear, and a coherent concept of the classical is nowhere to be found. Wolf, for instance, clearly seeks to limit classical antiquity to Greece and Rome, ardently denying that there are any noteworthy artistic, philosophical, or scientific developments in Egypt, Persia, or Palestine.[16] In contrast, Böckh seems to adopt a less restricted point of view, inasmuch as he suggests that philological scholarship should always aim at a comprehensive cultural history of antiquity, but—much like Wolf before him—he does not seem to give much weight to the oriental background of Greek thought and culture.[17] August Gräfenhan, however, wholeheartedly emphasizes the important influence of Egyptian and, as he terms it, "Asian" thought for the intellectual and cultural foundations of Greek antiquity.[18] Considering the trajectory from Wolf at the end of the eighteenth century to Gräfenhan in the middle of the nineteenth, it is interesting to note that the ideological construction of a specifically Greek classical tradition began to be more seriously questioned, when an ever-increasing interest in the results of comparative linguistics and the study of religions, coupled with a growing awareness for the historicity of philological discourse itself, slowly transformed central commonplaces within the historical perspective of classical scholarship. Keeping in mind what we have said so far, it therefore seems reasonable also to assume

that Nietzsche's own relationship to the notion of a "classical tradition" developed, throughout the 1870s, on several different levels.

As we have already seen, in his introductory lectures on philological scholarship Nietzsche points out that, in order to gain some form of timeliness, the study of ancient literature needs to compare, say, the epics of Homer to the works of Goethe and Schiller, and it can only do so since Homer, Goethe, and Schiller represent some sort of exemplary, and perhaps even normative, literary style, which can be seen as "classical." Thus he begins to suggest, somewhat curiously, that by being truly "modern" in following the cultural paradigms introduced by the classicism of the late eighteenth century, we will ideally be able to develop the appropriate critical tools to understand Greek antiquity and to sense its fundamental importance for the formation of modern culture (KGW 2.3, 368). It is thus not surprising that he should recommend us to read Homer through the eyes of Schiller, and that he continues to insist on Lessing's *Laokoon* (1766/88) and Goethe's *Italienische Reise* (1816-1817), especially the pages on Sicily, as central points of reference for the mental map of Greek classicality (KGW 2.3, 403).

Although Nietzsche might draw on a body of well-established clichés, which he employs in order to conceal his more vivid image of archaic Greece as it appears in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), it would be counter-productive to discount the ideology of classicism as a profound influence on his understanding of classicality. Seen from this perspective, his relationship to German Classicism is not at all ambiguous. Even though he might regard with some suspicion the idea of "Hellenism" or, more specifically, "Hellenocentrism," as it developed in the age of Goethe, claiming it is both theoretically superficial and historically ill-informed (KSA 7, 3[76] and 32[67], 81 and 778), his anger is directed less against Winckelmann than against the epigonal revival of classicism and its ideological foundation myths among the nineteenth-century German *Bildungsbürgertum*. In 1870/1871, he in fact demands that we should follow Winckelmann's example (KSA 7, 7[66], 153), and in this respect we are able to realize that he does indeed endorse, at least to some extent, what we are able to call a homogenization of Greek antiquity.

As already indicated above, Nietzsche's appropriation of German Classicism represents only one level, however, of his position vis-à-vis the idea of a classical tradition. The second level is largely marked by his understanding of the exemplarity of ancient Greece—an aspect we need to examine in more detail. In the *Encyclopaedie der klassischen Philologie* he explicitly notes that the task of the philological enterprise consists in learning from the Greeks and in using ancient Greek culture as an exam-

ple (KGW 2.3, 437). But this emphasis on exemplarity implies a widening of the scope of philological scholarship, which now has to deal also with the relationship between "ancient" and "modern," and attains a new consciousness for the historicity of cultural identities. If, in other words, philology is able to deliver a critical examination of the past, then it can only do so in relation to, and from the viewpoint of, modern times.

Against this background, the notions of classicality and exemplarity acquire a new structural dimension that stands in clear contrast to the perceived normative status of the classical tradition. For Nietzsche, ancient Greece—archaic as well as Hellenic—is "classical," precisely because it is able to hold up a mirror to the present, and understanding this mirror-image might ideally also shed some much-needed light on the difficult conditions of modernity and its ideological preconceptions about the past. When he speaks of learning from the Greeks, he has no intention of amassing factual knowledge about antiquity, or of demanding a return to a numinously lost grandeur, but learning from antiquity means, above all, to examine the heterogeneous and unstable foundations of the present cultural conditions. The exemplary nature of ancient Greece leads us to consider Greek antiquity as an example for the dynamics of cultural processes within Europe, which finally dissolves the close link between the exemplary status and the normative character of the classical tradition.[19] As such, the presumed exemplarity of Greek antiquity continues to be an indispensable point of reference for Nietzsche's understanding of the philological enterprise as an interpretive discourse.

It is, therefore, certainly true that Nietzsche wishes to subvert, at least to some extent, traditional notions of classicality. But it is hardly possible to extrapolate from his critical stance towards the ill-defined paradigms of classicism to the view that his work represents a precursor of, say, Martin Bernal's much more recent attempt at "correcting" the ideological bias of traditional philological scholarship, which—at least from the perspective of intellectual history—has led to bewildering debates about the "Afro-Asiatic roots of classical civilization."[20] One of the main ironies of these ferocious debates has certainly been the attempt to replace a homogeneous, "hellenocentric" vision of Greece by an equally homogeneous, Afrocentric one, which is as unreliable, and as ideologically reductive, as the former. No serious classical scholar, not even in Nietzsche's time, would deny that ancient Greece is strongly influenced by other Mediterranean and Asian cultures.[21] Considering the vehemence of the recent discussions about the supposedly conservative nature of much classical scholarship, and considering the enthusiasm with which Nietzsche's contributions are greeted as a subversion of traditional phi-

lology, it might be reasonable to adopt a more cautious approach: above all, Nietzsche wishes to show that ancient Greece, in itself as well as with regard to its relationship to modern European culture, is far more heterogeneous and complicated than it is generally assumed to be. He does not wish for—indeed, he heavily criticizes—the exclusion of other cultural developments outside the Mediterranean Greek world in the narrower sense; but he is also very much aware of the fact that he needs to limit his own historical perspective to an area that he actually understands.

As is often the case with Nietzsche's conception of antiquity, his notion of classicality, and his acute awareness for the fact that any such classicality remains a mental construct, were heavily influenced by his teachers, Friedrich Ritschl and Georg Curtius, who were, after all, two of the most prominent figures in nineteenth-century classical scholarship. Ritschl, for instance, noted in his seminal *On the Latest Development in Philology* (*Ueber die neueste Entwickelung der Philologie*) of 1833 that any assumption of a classical tradition in the narrow sense of the term would, necessarily, be of an artificial nature, since it rests on an uncritical and nostalgic admiration of antiquity which is far from being scholarly rigorous. Instead, he pointed out, we need to be aware of the very fact that classicality is a historical construct, which serves to differentiate Greek and Roman antiquity, as more or less distinct historical spheres of influence, from what he terms "oriental" antiquity. Ritschl's use of the term "oriental," one might argue, invites new criticism, for he seems to fall into the ideological trap of what Edward Saïd and others, operating within a postcolonial framework, have termed "latent orientalism."[22] But, again, we need to be cautious about such arguments, for Ritschl himself by no means regarded what he termed "oriental" as culturally inferior. He was far from advocating any imperial claims towards the Eastern Mediterranean, and he was also suspicious of a notion of "classicality" that is, in any case, highly unstable.

The ideological nature of a classical tradition prevents, in Ritschl's eyes, a more historically sophisticated vision of Greek antiquity as embedded in complex cultural contexts. Historical difference should not be confused with cultural inferiority, and he did not at all intend to ignore, say, Egypt or Persia, for he immediately demanded the inauguration of what he programmatically called an *orientalische Alterthumswissenschaft*, that is, a scholarly approach to "oriental" antiquity and its profound influence on the constitution of Greek and Roman culture as a whole, which had thus far been lacking in nineteenth-century philological scholarship.[23] Ritschl's vision of antiquity is, in a word, cosmopolitan. His historical imagination was directly influenced by the political program of the

German Enlightenment, and, considering the tone of his article, it seems that German Romanticism and its nationalist framework did not play a particularly prominent role in the formation of his thoughts.

In an equally programmatic lecture with the title *On the Significance of the Study of Classical Literature* (*Ueber die Bedeutung des Studiums der classischen Literatur*), delivered as his inaugural address at the University of Prague in 1849, Curtius adopted an equally cosmopolitan point of view, going one step further in emphasizing the interdependence of classical scholarship, biblical criticism, and the study of oriental languages and cultures. As he explicitly noted, such interdependence widened the historical perspective of the philological enterprise in the light of recent research in adjacent fields of research, so that understanding Greece and Rome would come ultimately to rely on examining the complex cultural processes and spheres of influence from Egypt to India, and even China.[24] Although Curtius himself was mainly interested in Indo-European lines of tradition, he underlined on another occasion that the restriction of "classical scholarship" to Greek and Roman antiquity in the widest possible sense was, in fact, a pragmatic, or economic, necessity. Faced with an enormous geographical area of cultural transmissions, and with an immense amount of available material and artifacts, the philological profession would, he believed, need to economize its historical perspective in one way or another, and the philologists themselves would have to compartmentalize their research according to a relatively distinct geographic area, such as Greece, Italy, Egypt, Persia, and so on. This would also prevent, Curtius underlined, the unfortunate reduction of antiquity to Greece and Rome, which had dominated the discipline of classical scholarship through its close link with the aesthetic ideology of German Classicism. Antiquity, in other words, is always more complicated than its retrospective historical *imaginaire*.[25]

The pragmatic positions of Ritschl and Curtius suggest that Nietzsche's own approach does not really represent a complete subversion of mainstream classical scholarship in nineteenth-century Germany. From our own, limited perspective at the beginning of the twenty-first century, and after the fanciful theoretical debates which occupied our attention during the last decades of the previous one, it might seem that Nietzsche was an enthusiastic advocate of radically remodeling the tradition of classical scholarship. But, if we had so argued, we would have fallen into the trap of Nietzsche's often polemically laden remarks. Considering what we have said so far, his historical perspective is certainly challenging, but we also need to realize that it is challenging precisely

because it is a reaction to a very specific intellectual environment and to very specific historical circumstances.

The growing skepticism with which Nietzsche viewed the ideology of classicism in nineteenth-century Germany becomes more obvious if we turn to the fragmentary notes for an unfinished "Untimely Meditation," entitled *We Philologists* (*Wir Philologen*), a project which engaged Nietzsche around March 1875.[26] In seemingly in sharp contrast to his earlier remarks in the *Encyclopaedie der klassischen Philologie*, here he chastises any undue idealization and homogenization of Greek and Roman antiquity, which is clearly directed against Wolf's earlier stipulations that classical scholarship should exclude non-Greek and non-Roman influences:

> It is difficult to justify the *preference* [*Bevorzugung*] usually accorded to antiquity: for it is the result of prejudices:
>
> 1. of ignorance toward non-classical antiquity [*des sonstigen Alterthums*],
> 2. of a false idealization of a humanist view of humankind [*Humanitäts-Menschheit*] in general; while Indians and Chinese are certainly more humane,
> 3. of scholarly arrogance,
> 4. of the traditional admiration, which began during Roman times,
> 5. of an opposition towards, or in order to support, the Christian church,
> 6. of the impression left by the philologists, and the nature of their work, over the work centuries: it seems that it really must be a gold mine.
> 7. Practical skills [*Fertigkeiten*] and theoretical knowledge [*Wissen*] acquired from it. A preparatory school for science [*Wissenschaft*].
>
> In summa: partly from ignorance, false judgments and deceptive conclusions, and also because of the self-interests of a particular caste [*Interesse eines Standes*], that of the philologists.
>
> *Preference* also accorded to antiquity by the artists, who involuntarily projected the sense of proportion and sophrosyne as a property of the entire ancient period. The pure form. Similarly because of the writers.
>
> *Preference for antiquity* as an abbreviation of the entire history of mankind [*Abbreviatur der Geschichte der Menschheit*], as though it was an autochthonic entity [*Gebilde*], which could serve as the standard for all that is becoming [*alles Werdende*].
>
> In fact, *the very foundations for this preference are now gradually being made to disappear* [*beseitigt*], and even if this might not have been

> noticed by the philologists themselves, it becomes increasingly apparent outside their circles. Historiography [*Historie*] has had an effect; and linguistics has triggered the biggest change [*Diversion*], if not defection among the philologists themselves. [...] In the form in which it has *hitherto* existed, classical scholarship is becoming *extinct*: it has lost its very own foundations [*ihr Boden ist ihr entzogen*]. (KSA 8, 3 [4], 14-15)

The exclusion, he proclaims, of other Mediterranean and Asian cultures, beyond the supposedly classical tradition of Greece and Rome, leads to a fairly limited understanding of antiquity which is, ultimately, founded upon the undue idealization of a presumed ideal of humanity, and which is, furthermore, supported by the aesthetic imagination of a homogeneous classicality. Against this background, the foundation of classical scholarship needs to be regarded as a largely ideological construct fueled by a variety of factors wholly unconnected to the actual study of antiquity, such as the political admiration for the Roman Empire, its relationship to Christianity, and the assumption that the long tradition of classical scholarship itself sanctions its quasi-scientific authority.

As such, Nietzsche also rejects the idea that this restricted historical perspective is able to provide any detailed insight into the cultural history of humanity. He also points out, however, that the reduction of "antiquity" to ancient Greece and Rome, and the ideological program connected herewith, are coming to an end, because of an epistemological shift—triggered, for instance, by the rise of historicism and comparative linguistics—that fundamentally changes the intellectual framework within which philological scholarship operates. Nietzsche is doubtful with regard to the future of philology—unless, that is, philology itself is able to read the signs of the time.

Although it seems, at first sight, that Nietzsche puts forth these ostensibly "radical" views only in the mid-1870s, after the publication, and the fateful reception, of *The Birth of Tragedy*, we still need to be cautious. If, for example, we turn to his notebooks of the period 1867/1868, when he was still a student at the University of Leipzig, we are able to find a range of general observations about the status of the philological enterprise which, on the one hand, betray the influence of Ritschl and Curtius, and, on the other, show Nietzsche's own awareness of the fundamental intellectual changes taking place in the second half of the nineteenth century. This awareness becomes especially obvious in a passing remark about the state of philological research in the light of contemporary developments, such as comparative linguistics and scientific models of explanation (KGW 1.4, 57[30], 397-98).

Whereas the philological criticism of previous centuries was able successfully to limit itself—at least according to Nietzsche—to the reconstruction and authentication of significant source material, the pressing need for a fundamental re-orientation of the humanities in the middle of the nineteenth century, which was triggered by the unprecedented success of the natural sciences in German research institutions, inevitably required an equally far-reaching transformation of philological scholarship as an interpretive discourse. In particular, the still relatively young discipline of comparative linguistics, he claims, is able to provide an explanatory model, which can investigate the origins and conditions of culture. The future of philology, then, consists in finding "an access to the problems of thought" (KGW 1.4, 57[30], 398), that is, philology needs to be transformed into an essentially anthropological enterprise, focusing on the complex ways in which cultural mentalities are formed, and in which these cultural mentalities are reflected in specific artifacts and historical processes. What is at stake here, is a break with seemingly traditional philological paradigms that is reminiscent of the opposition between *Wortphilologie*, that is, Gottfried Hermann's conception of classical scholarship as textual criticism, and *Sachphilologie*, that is, August Böckh's and Karl Otfried Müller's insistence that classical scholarship must take other material into account in order to gain a more comprehensive picture of antiquity.[27]

This might perhaps be surprising, but Nietzsche's tentative demand to revise the scope of philology during his final years as a student of Ritschl and Curtius at the University of Leipzig continues to shape his view of classical scholarship as an interpretive discourse, well into the 1870s. As a consequence, not only does his conception of the philological enterprise become increasingly anthropological in orientation, but he also demands a critical historicization of our image of antiquity vis-à-vis our own cultural conditions and intellectual environment:

> Of course, classical scholarship as a science of antiquity [*Wissenschaft um das Alterthum*] cannot last indefinitely, since its material is being exhausted. What cannot be exhausted, however, is the incessant attempt of each age to accommodate antiquity, to measure itself against it. If we assign the philologist the task of assessing *his own* age through a reflection on antiquity [*vermittelst des Alterthums*], then his task is of a timeless nature. —This is the antinomy of philological scholarship: we have approached *antiquity* always exclusively from the perspective of the *present*—and now we should understand the *present from the perspective of antiquity*? [...] But most importantly: *the drive for classical*

> antiquity can only come from a knowledge about the present [*durch Erkenntnis des Gegenwärtigen*]. (KSA 8, 3[62], 31)

As we can see, Nietzsche's revision of the relationship between antiquity and modernity also revises the historical perspective of the philological enterprise, and this re-orientation of classical scholarship has two important consequences.

First, this passage from the fragments of *Wir Philologen* exemplifies once more Nietzsche's move away from the homogeneous vision of antiquity which dominated German Classicism and the ideology of classicality in the narrow sense of the term. Thus, his use of the term "classical antiquity" is, above all, a pragmatic one which, in the absence of any other explanatory construction, seeks to conceptualize Greek and Roman antiquity in its entirety. This also means that he neither fully accepts nor fully rejects the notion of classicality, for he is aware of its ideological problems as well as its descriptive function.

Second, Nietzsche's demand for a fundamental re-orientation of classical scholarship also introduces a new dimension into his thought, which becomes increasingly important throughout the 1870s, and which is directly connected to a more historicist perspective on antiquity. But again, we need to be cautious. Nietzsche's image of antiquity has often been regarded as an aestheticized idealization of archaic Greece and as embodying a peculiar mixture of classicism and foggy Wagnerian mythology. Ultimately, such an interpretation leads to the assumption that Nietzsche's understanding of antiquity develops within the context of a metaphysics of art, and much attention has been paid to this particular aspect. This is only possible, however, if we focus almost exclusively on his writings on tragedy, and if we are ready to disregard his more theoretical reflections on the status and future of philology as an interpretive discipline.[28] Rethinking Nietzsche's image of antiquity requires us to acknowledge the tension between antiquity and modernity that informs his attempt to shift the philological enterprise from textual criticism to a historicization of culture. The reason for this peculiar tension is not at all that he is unable to make up his mind about antiquity, but the double-bind of historical difference and cultural continuity which, right from the beginning, marks any understanding of antiquity as a supposedly classical period.

It would be wrong, or at least highly reductive, to regard Nietzsche's image of ancient Greece largely as a problem of ideology. He neither strictly follows the paradigms of classicism, nor does he really subvert the notion of classicality. Rather, his ever changing approach to antiquity,

together with his repeated attempt to reformulate its relation to modernity, serves as a springboard to questions regarding the possibility of historical understanding. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the fragments of *Wir Philologen*, when he explicitly notes: "In order to explain the current cultural conditions [*die gegenwärtigen Culturzustände*], it is necessary to look backwards" (KSA 8, 3[67], 33). This attempt to look backwards, and to adopt a retrospective point of view which is able to read the present through the eyes of its very own historical development, will be able to show—ideally, at least—how much the present is haunted by the past, and how much the modernity of the nineteenth century is haunted by what, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Aby Warburg came to term the unconscious "afterlife of antiquity."[29]

The consequences of Nietzsche's attempts to come to terms with the very idea of a classical tradition are all too obvious, for they finally culminate in a demand to revise the scope of philology as an interpretive discourse. The ways in which he seeks to formulate, especially in his *Encyclopaedie der klassischen Philologie* of 1871, a conception of classicality that can still serve as a theoretical point of reference for the philological enterprise in the second half of the nineteenth century, ironically leads him to abandon any normative definition of classicality, which is increasingly replaced instead by the notion of exemplarity. The latter undoubtedly forces him to take the historicity of philological discourse more seriously, so that the philological enterprise itself becomes embedded in a quite different theoretical framework. Philology, then, not only provides the critical tools for the study of antiquity, but it prepares a genealogical perspective on the *longue durée* of cultural mentalities, which already begins to surface in the fragments of *Wir Philologen*: "A very precise retrospective analysis will lead us to the realization that we are the multiplication of many pasts [*Ein sehr genaues Zurückdenken führt zu der Einsicht, dass wir eine Multiplication vieler Vergangenheiten sind*]" (KSA 8, 3[69], 33-34). In other words, Nietzsche's theoretical reflections on the classicality of ancient Greece sharpen his own critical perspective on the status of historical knowledge, and thus prepare much of the ground for his later model of genealogy. [30]

# Notes

[1] See Karl Christ, *Geschichte und Existenz: Einführung in die Geschichtswissenschaft* (Berlin: Wagenbach, 1991), 35, and Suzanne L. Marchand, *Down from Olympus: Archaeology and Philhellenism in Germany, 1750-1970* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1996), 7.

[2] See Friedrich August Wolf, *Vorlesungen über die Altertumswissenschaft*, ed. Johann Daniel Gürtler (Leipzig: Lehnhold, 1831-39), vol. 1, 31; August Böckh, *Encyklopädie und Methodologie der philologischen Wissenschaften*, ed. Ernst Bratuschek, 2nd edn (Leipzig: Teubner, 1886), 10 and 257; Friedrich Ritschl, "Zur Methode des philologischen Studiums," in *Opuscula Philologica* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1866-79), vol. 5, 19-32; and Georg Curtius, "Ueber die Bedeutung des Studiums der classischen Literatur," in *Kleine Schriften*, ed. Ernst Windisch (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1886), 89-109. On Humboldt's neo-humanist paradigm, see David Sorkin, "Wilhelm von Humboldt: The Theory and Practice of Self-Formation (*Bildung*)," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 44 (1983): 55-73.

[3] On the intertwining of classical philology and German classicism, and its effect on the contemporary aesthetic consciousness, see Heinz Schlaffer, *Poesie und Wissen: Die Entstehung des ästhetischen Bewußtseins und der philologischen Erkenntnis* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1990), 173. A subtle interpretation of the aesthetic paradigms involved in this intellectual field can be found in David Ferris, *Silent Urns: Romanticism, Hellenism, Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2000).

[4] See J. P. Stern and M. S. Silk, *Nietzsche on Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1981), 21-24.

[5] James I. Porter, *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2000), 185 and 195.

[6] Latin texts are quoted according to the respective editions in the Loeb Classical Library.

[7] Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae*, 6.13.1; cf also Cicero, *De re publica*, 2.12.39, and Livius, *Ab urbe condita*, 1.42.5 and 1.43.2

[8] See Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae*, 19.3.5.15.

[9] For a more detailed interpretation of the *Ara Pacis* which also focuses on the urban topography of the imperial city, see Diane Favro, *The Urban Image of Augustan Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), 262.

[10] See Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Gedancken über die Nachahmung der Griechischen Wercke in der Mahlerey und Bildhauer-Kunst* (1755), in *Kleine Schriften, Vorreden, Entwürfe*, ed. Walter Rehm (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1969), 29 and 38.

[11] See Winckelmann, *Kleine Schriften, Vorreden, Entwürfe*, 43 and 45. On the historical background and the implications of this formula, see Reinhard Brandt, "'… ist endlich eine edle Einfalt, und eine stille Größe,'" in Thomas W. Gaethgens (ed.), *Johann Joachim Winckelmann, 1717-1768* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1986), 41-53.

[12] See Friedrich Schiller, "Ueber naive und sentimentalische Dichtung," in *Werke: Nationalausgabe*, ed. Liselotte Blumenthal and Benno von Wiese (Weimar: Böhlau,

1943-), vol. 20, 430 and 439. On Schiller's image of Greece and his relation to Winckelmann's classicism, see Carsten Zelle, *Die doppelte Ästhetik der Moderne: Revisionen des Schönen von Boileau bis Nietzsche* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1995), 188.

[13] See Friedrich Schlegel, *Vom Wert des Studiums der Griechen und Römer*, in *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, ed. Ernst Behler, Jean-Jacques Anstett and Hans Eichner (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1958-), vol. 1, 625, 631 and 639. See also August Wilhelm Schlegel's continuation of Winckelmann's and Schiller's positions that can be found in his *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur: Kritische Ausgabe*, ed. Giovanni Vittorio Amoretti (Bonn: Schröder, 1923), vol. 1, 13.

[14] Rainer Warning, "Zur Archäologie von Klassiken," in Wilhelm Vosskamp (ed.), *Klassik im Vergleich: Normativität und Historizität von Klassiken* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1993), 446-65 (especially 448 and 456).

[15] See Pascal Weitmann, "Die Problematik des Klassischen als Norm und Stilbegriff", in *Antike und Abendland* 35 (1989): 150-86 (especially 163).

[16] See F. A. Wolf, *Darstellung der Alterthumswissenschaft, nebst einer Auswahl seiner kleinen Schriften und literarischen Zugaben zu dessen Vorlesungen über die Alterthumswissenschaft: Als Supplementband zu dessen Vorlesungen*, ed. Samuel Friedrich Wilhelm Hoffmann (Leipzig: Lehnhold,1833), 12 and 14.

[17] See Böckh, *Encyklopädie und Methodologie der philologischen Wissenschaften*, 57.

[18] See August Gräfenhan, *Geschichte der klassischen Philologie im Alterthum* (Bonn: König, 1843-50), vol. 1, 368 and 407.

[19] On this link between exemplarity and normativity, see Rainer Warning, "Zur Hermeneutik von Klassiken", in Rudolf Bockholdt (ed.), *Über das Klassische* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1987), 77-100.

[20] See Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, vol. 1, *The Fabrication of Ancient Greece, 1785-1985* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1987). See also the discussions in Jacques Berlinerblau, *Heresy in the University: The "Black Athena" Controversy and the Responsibilities of American Intellectuals* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1999), and Mary Lefkowitz, *Not Out of Africa: How Afrocentrism Became an Excuse to Teach Myth as History* (New York: Basic Books, 1996).

[21] In this respect, it might be a little too strong to argue, as Porter, in *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future*, does, that "Nietzsche effectively 'outs' classical studies, especially in their German form, [...] through the reflection in his writings of the racism and nationalism that run like an unbroken thread through classical philology from its modern inception to well beyond Nietzsche" (274).

[22] See Edward Saïd, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978). See also, more recently, Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London: Verson, 1992), and John M. MacKenzie, *Orientalism: History, Theory, and the Arts* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1995).

[23] See Ritschl, "Ueber die neueste Entwickelung der Philologie," in *Opuscula philologica*, vol. 5, 1-18 (especially 15). The article was originally delivered as a lecture at the University of Breslau in 1833.

[24] Curtius, "Ueber die Bedeutung des Studiums der classischen Literatur," 105.

[25] Curtius, "Ueber die Geschichte und Aufgabe der Philologie," in *Kleine Schriften*, 110-31 (126 and 128).

[26] On the fragments of *Wir Philologen*, see especially Hubert Cancik's *Nietzsches Antike: Vorlesung* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1995), 94, and "'Philologie als Beruf': Zu Formengeschichte, Thema und Tradition der unvollendeten vierten Unzeitgemäßen Friedrich Nietzsches," in Tilman Borsche, Federico Gerratana, and Aldo Venturelli (eds), *"Centauren-Geburten": Wissenschaft, Kunst und Philosophie beim jungen Nietzsche* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1994), 81-96.

[27] See Wilfried Nippel, "Philologenstreit und Schulpolitik: Zur Kontroverse zwischen Gottfried Hermann und August Böckh," in Wolfgang Küttler, Jörn Rüsen, and Ernst Schulin (eds), *Geschichtsdiskurs* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1993-99), vol. 3, 244-53.

[28] The difficult status of Nietzsche's vision of things Greek becomes painstakingly obvious when Tracy B. Strong concludes that Nietzsche is investigating Greek antiquity "in the manner one might consult the blueprint of a house one is interested in radically remodeling," but subsequently suggests that it is "not accurate to say that Nietzsche's vision of things Greek is essential to his understanding of the present" (*Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration* (Berkeley, CA: U of California P, 1988), 136 and 189). Ironically, Strong spends a third of his study on Nietzsche's image of Greek antiquity.

[29] See Aby Warburg, "Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg: Vor dem Kuratorium (21. August 1929)," in *Ausgewählte Schriften und Würdigungen*, ed. Dieter Wuttke (Baden-Baden: Koerner, 1979), 307-09.

[30] For critical interventions, I wish to thank audiences at the University of Glasgow, Cambridge University, and Rice University, especially James I. Porter, Neville Morley, Duncan Large, John H. Zammito, Uwe Steiner, and Stephen Crowell. Furthermore, I am grateful to Paul Bishop for his patience.

# Nietzsche and the "Classical": Traditional and Innovative Features of Nietzsche's Usage, with Special Reference to Goethe

*Herman Siemens*

IT IS HARD to overestimate the importance of the terms "*klassisch*," "*das Klassische*," "*Klassicismus*," and related words in Nietzsche's thought. They occur around 336 times in the *Studienausgabe* (KSA), with relatively concentrated use in the periods 1870–1876 (especially UM I) and 1887–1889. In their different contexts and meanings, they serve almost as an index of his chief concerns in different phases of his thought, from the critique of classical philology, the question of classical education (*Bildung*), the (self-)emancipation from nineteenth-century Romanticism (especially Schopenhauer and Wagner), the question of health and sickness, the critique of Christianity and "slave morality," to the overcoming of nihilism through art as counter-movement.

Part 1 of this essay will offer a brief overview of the different, context-related meanings of these words in Nietzsche's vocabulary. Here, the main concern will be their relation to established usages. To what extent does Nietzsche follow traditional or established usages of "*klassisch*," and to what extent does he depart from them with innovative or idiosyncratic meanings? In general innovative uses of "*klassisch*" occur *either* as polemical redefinitions of the concept in established uses, that is, as reversals (*Umkehrungen*) or as transvaluations (*Umwertungen*); *or* they occur in connection with specifically Nietzschean problems, motifs, and insights (for example, nihilism, master and slave moralities). It is Goethe, above all, who elicits Nietzsche's most concentrated and complex preoccupation with the classical, and in Part 2 I shall focus on this relation. Beginning with Goethe as a person, to whom Nietzsche both ascribes and denies the epithet "*klassisch*," I compare their respective uses of "*klassisch*," concentrating on two topics: ancient Greek culture, and the opposition between Romantic as sick and classical as healthy. In both cases there are strong affinities and differences that contribute to Goethe's decisive influence on Nietzsche's understanding of the classical.

In the case of the Romantic versus the classical, however, Goethe's opposition is polarized and transformed beyond recognition in connection with specifically Nietzschean themes and concerns: the opposition between excess and lack, European nihilism, music, and especially the problem of *décadence*, symbolized by Wagner. This is a good example of how Nietzsche gives his own meaning to words in connection with his own philosophical problems and insights. Finally, in Part 3 I shall turn to the question of "classical taste" or "style." Although Nietzsche's pronouncements vary greatly with their contexts, a number of general features related according to a "family resemblance" can be charted.

## The Meanings of "*klassisch*" / "*das Klassische*"

In Nietzsche, as in standard nineteenth-century usage, the terms "*klassisch*"/"*das Klassische*" frequently refer to elements of German or European *high culture*: classical philology, classical antiquity, the *Gymnasium* system of classical education or *Bildung*, the classics of German literature, and seventeenth-century French Classicism. In Nietzsche's letters, the epithet "*klassisch*" also occurs in common *idiomatic* usage with its "superlative and typifying connotations," for example, when he writes of a "classical tailor" or describes Turin as a "classical place."[1] Nietzsche's use is sometimes neutral, but usually it is clearly evaluative. On occasion it is negative or ironic, expressing criticism or skepticism, but often it is positive, following common usage to name what is outstanding and rare (*selten*), masterful (*Meisterschaft* [KSA 13, 16[29], 490]), complete (*vollkommen*), or exemplary (*vorbildlich*, *mustergültig*). Certain uses, mainly positive, are idiosyncratic and innovative. In the late *Nachlass*, for instance, "*das Klassische*" is an "absolute value-term" (*Wertbegriff*) virtually synonymous with "power" (*Macht*),[2] and allows Nietzsche to investigate the conditions for anti-nihilistic ideal- and value-formation. But in his *published* works after *The Gay Science* (1882), Nietzsche seems reluctant to use the word "*klassisch*" to name his own, innermost thoughts ("*mein proprium und Ipsissimum*"), since it "has become too overused by far, too round and unrecognizable" (GS §370). Thus, the phrase "classical taste" (*klassischen Geschmack*) in a preparatory draft to TI is replaced by "ancient taste" (*alten Geschmack*) in the published text (KSA 13, 24[1], §9, 626; and TI Ancients §3). Furthermore, there is a remarkable drop in frequency of "*klassisch*"/"*das Klassische*" in the published works after *The Gay Science* (20 as against 92 occurrences until and including *The Gay Science*).

An overview of Nietzsche's writings shows that the terms *klassisch/"das Klassische"* occur mainly in eight contexts. In what follows I shall restrict myself to five of them,[3] focusing on the relations between Nietzsche's uses and common or existing usages.

(1) *classical philology*: Nietzsche's early conception of classical philology is informed by a critical stance toward the present, and a program of cultural reform focused on art and *Bildung*.[4] In the tradition of *Neuhumanismus* (F. A. Wolf), classical philology is inseparable from the harmonious formation of the youth's expressive powers as described in the third *Untimely Meditation*: the educator is to discover the pupil's "central power, but also to prevent it from destroying the other powers," to ascertain "the law of his higher mechanics" so as to "transform [*umbilden*] the whole human being into a living, dynamic solar and planetary system" (UM III §2). In reality, however, philology as Nietzsche came to learn and practice it was an historical and linguistic *Wissenschaft* concerned with textual critique, and the tension between this work and the holistic *Bildungs*-claim is a central preoccupation of Nietzsche's writings throughout the 1870s. The declared hope in Nietzsche's "*Antrittsrede*" of unifying these "initially inimical, forcefully conjoined drives" proves unsustainable, and they are soon polarized in irreconcilable conflict.[5] Usually, Nietzsche sides with F. A. Wolf for a practical,[6] language-oriented *Bildungs*-philology against science and learning (*Wissenschaft/Gelehrsamkeit*),[7] demanding that teachers be as classical (that is, exemplary) as their subject;[8] at other times he takes a more sober, historical line based on the results of *Wissenschaft* and propounds a generalized skepticism regarding culture in modernity.[9] In "*We Philologists*" ("*Wir Philologen*"), notes to the planned fifth *Untimely Meditation*, Nietzsche outlines a genealogy of philology and proposes a class division within philology between philosopher-philologists, concerned with such essential problems as the "value of life," and the *Wissenschaftler* who provide them with material (KSA 8, 3[63], 31-32). Hereafter, classical philology recedes from Nietzsche's concerns, arising only in connection with further discussions of classical *Bildung*. It is worth noting that Nietzsche uses his title as "Ordentlicher Professor der Classischen Philologie an der Universität Basel" on title pages of non-philological works right up to the fourth *Untimely Meditation*.

(2) *classical education* (*Bildung, Erziehung*): Nietzsche's early views on classical education illustrate how established meanings of the word "klassisch" can be combined with Nietzsche's own concerns to form a curious hybrid. On the one hand, his early *Bildungs*-ideal can be placed in the idealist tradition of Wilhelm von Humboldt and F. A. Wolf, with

its emphasis on total “expressivist” self-realization; the cultivation of practical ability over learning; language learning (*Sprachunterricht*); and the Greeks.[10] But he also deviates from this tradition in his confrontational attitude to the present, his rejection of the humanist belief in human goodness and the pessimistic emphasis (shared with Jacob Burckhardt) on the “evil background” (*bösen Hintergrund*) of (Greek) culture.[11] Contemporary classical *Bildung* is often criticized for its scientific orientation, at odds with true *Bildung*; for teachers who are not exemplary; for teaching “*Altertumsstudien*” when boys are too young; and for neglecting practical instruction in the “mother tongue” (*Muttersprache*). In the second of his lectures *On the Future of our Educational Institutions* (*Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten*) (1872), Nietzsche argues that disciplined practice of the “*Muttersprache*” via the German Classics (Goethe, Schiller, Lessing, Winckelmann) is needed to develop the “sense of form” (*Sinn für die Form*) that gives access to Greek antiquity, the “one and only home of *Bildung* [*Bildungsheimat*]” (KSA 1, 691). By 1875, he has rejected the privileged status of classical antiquity and the educational role of philology (KSA 8, 7[6], 123-25). In the first volume of *Human, All Too Human*, it is re-affirmed in a completely new sense as a propaedeutic to *Wissenschaft* or a “gymnastics of the head” (HA I §266). In *Daybreak*, classical *Bildung* is charged with neglecting “moral reflection” and the cultivation of practical abilities—a real “*Können*”—in favor of mere knowledge (*Wissen*) of what people could do at that time. This knowledge is, moreover, dismissed by Nietzsche, who emphasizes how alien and inaccessible the Greeks are to us today (D §195). In the later works, Nietzsche’s views on classical *Bildung* are shaped by the polemical opposition: idealism—realism. For example, *Twilight of the Idols* recommends Thucydides’ “reason in reality” (*Vernunft in der Realität*) against the idealist (Platonic) bias of classical *Bildung* (TI Ancients §2). This realist critique comes to a head in *Ecce Homo*, where the “idealist” goals of classical *Bildung* are dismissed in favor of the “question of nutrition [*Ernährung*]”: “Exactly how do you have to nourish yourself, in order to reach your maximum of force [*Kraft*], of virtù in the Renaissance style, of moraline-free virtue?” (EH Why I am so Clever §1).

(3) *classical antiquity* (“*das klassische Alterthum*,” “*Zeitalter*,” “*Periode*,” and so on): It is, of course, around Nietzsche’s conception of classical antiquity that his views of classical philology and *Bildung* revolve. From the start, Nietzsche places the Greeks into “aggressive” confrontation with the present for the sake of cultural reform (KSA 1, 687). Whereas Rome teaches us “how things became what they are” (*wie es so*

*wurde*), Greece shows us "how totally other it can be" (*wie ganz anders es sein kann)* (KSA 8, 5[64], 59), serving, in its very otherness, as a standard for evaluating the present.[12] Thus, philology is criticized for an apologist tendency that underlines the affinities between antiquity and contemporary values; the "correct starting point," Nietzsche writes, "is the reverse [*umgekehrte*]: namely, to start out from the insight into modern perversity [*Verkehrtheit*] and look back" (KSA 8, 3[52], 28). There is a conscious tendency in Nietzsche to instrumentalize Greek antiquity as a "collection of classical examples" (*classische Beispielsammlung*), a "means *to understand ourselves*, to judge our time and thereby to overcome it" (KSA 8, 6[2], 97);[13] on the other hand, Nietzsche's openness to the radical alterity of the Greek world, maintained throughout his writings, makes his attitude to classical antiquity more than just a presentist appropriation cloaked as history.[14] Against the superficial and ineffective picture of Greece propagated by classical-Hellenic philology and classical aesthetics (BT §16; KSA 8, 5[124], 73), and against the distortions wrought by Christian and humanist interests (KSA 8, 5[60, 107], 58, 67-68), Nietzsche contends that a "hidden entrance" (KSA 7, 5[115], 125) is needed—the Dionysian *Untergrund*. With his concept of the Dionysian, Nietzsche concentrates all those aspects previously denied or marginalized in the reception of Greek culture: the ugliness, the contradictions, the pessimism, excess, and so on.[15] The affirmative inclusion of the Dionysian, as the subterranean center of gravity in Greek culture, explodes the normative claims of classical aesthetics and with it, classical-Hellenic philology, so that Heidegger can write: "Nietzsche is the first [...] who released the 'classical' from the misinterpretation of classicism and humanism."[16] What then *does* the "classical" mean for Nietzsche?

In the first place, it designates a specific period or epoch of Greek history, as in common usage. The classical period has usually been identified with the Hellenistic-Roman period (starting in the latter half of the fourth century), with the Platonic/Aristotelian fourth century, or with the Periclean age beginning with the Persian wars of 480 BCE.[17] Although Nietzsche's views on this point are subject to variation, the overwhelming tendency is to *displace* the "classical" age towards the two centuries of the "Tragic Age"; that is, the fifth and especially the sixth centuries. In several early notes, he refers specifically to the period *before* the Persian Wars, through which the *agon* of small city-states was undermined, and with it the conditions for great individuals to emerge.[18] As the nomenclature for a specific period of Greek history, then, the "classical" undergoes an important temporal shift in Nietzsche's usage. But for Nietzsche, as for most writers, the term "*klassisch*" in this sense is insepa-

rable from evaluative and normative connotations: the Tragic Age names the high point of Greek culture, and its normative-instructive value is maintained by Nietzsche, at least in his early years. Combining these meanings, we can speak of a *transvaluation (Umwertung)* of classical antiquity in Nietzsche toward the Tragic Age of fifth and sixth century Greece *against* Platonic, Alexandrian, and Latinized Greece.[19] A creative mimesis (*Nachahmen*, *Nachschaffen*) of the tragic Greeks is promoted by Nietzsche as long as he believes in their unique classical status.[20] Around 1875 their status is relativized under the influence of unorthodox philological and ethnological readings, and mimesis is rejected as unproductive: a "very precise thinking-back [*Zurückdenken*] leads to the insight that we are a multiplication of many pasts," so that "the creator can certainly borrow from everywhere so as to nourish himself." [21] The turn away from mimesis is also a turn towards modernity—"our foundation is new as against all earlier times" (KSA 8, 3[76], 38)—and the achievements of *Wissenschaft* that comes into its own in *Human, All Too Human*.[22] Much later, Nietzsche revisits the otherness of the Greeks in the context of style, this time in order to *reject* their normative claim as classical models ("their manner is too alien, [...] too fluid to work in an imperative, in a 'classical' way"), commending instead Romans like Sallust and Horace, who with a minimum of expressive signs achieved a maximization of communicative energy.[23]

(4) *the classical in opposition to Christianity (and Wagner), as pagan, Roman, noble* (*heidnisch, römisch, vornehm*): There is, in fact, a clear shift from Greece to Rome in Nietzsche's concept of the classical across his work. It is connected by Politycki to his increasing antagonism to Wagner and Wagner's contempt for the Romans: the further he felt from Wagner, the closer he felt to the Romans.[24] But it has, more importantly, to do with the strategic shift in Nietzsche's critique of modernity: from the (more or less) unmediated confrontation between antiquity and the present in early years, to an increasing concern with the provenance of current values in the intervening period of Christianity. And it is to Rome, rather than to Greece, that Nietzsche looks for the obvious ally in his critique of Christianity. Evidence for this interpretation comes first from the following oppositions, in which the classical is associated with the first term: Rome—Judaea (GM I §16); paganism—anti-paganism (*Heidenthum—Anti-Heidenthum*), noble—ignoble, power—pessimism of the oppressed (KSA 13, 11[294, 295], 114-17); active—reactive (KSA 12, 9[112], 400); master morality—Christian morality, affirmative—negative (*verneinend*) (CW, Epilogue); immorality—moral stature (KSA 12, 9[166], 433-34). Indirect evidence comes from Nietzsche's attitude

to the Greeks in his later years. As we have seen, they become too "alien" or "fluid" to be binding or at all relevant to the present—*except* where they can be opposed to Christianity, as in the Dionysian celebration of sexuality discussed in *Twilight of the Idols*.[25] The cluster "classical"—"noble"—"pagan"—"Roman" thus plays a largely critical, anti-Christian role for Nietzsche. As we shall see, it also plays a more positive role, as a model for an anti-nihilistic ideal-formation based on total Dionysian affirmation (for example, KSA 13, 16[32], 492-93). In both contexts, it illustrates well how the meaning of a word like "*klassisch*" can shift across Nietzsche's writings, and, specifically, how it can take on highly idiosyncratic, innovative meanings and connotations in connection with specifically Nietzschean concerns and themes.

(5) *classical German authors* ("*neue deutsche Klassiker*," "*unsere Klassiker*," "*classische Prosaschreiber*," or "*Autoren*"): In his early years Nietzsche shares Schopenhauer's view of German as "a beautiful, old language in possession of classical writings" (UM I §11), affirming the German Classics (Goethe, Schiller, Lessing, Winckelmann) and their "mysterious [...] bond" with Greek genius (KSA 1, 691). By the time of *Ecce Homo*, however, "*deutsch*" and "*klassisch*" are seen as contradictory (EH Clever §1; KSA 13, 24[1], 626). An important turning point seems to be 1876, with Nietzsche's self conscious turn away from German to French and Russian literature. But even the young Nietzsche cannot be identified with the contemporary cult of the classics and its nationalistic overtones.[26] In the first place, his intent is polemical: with Schopenhauer he opposes German Classicism to the "shabby jargon of our noble 'present'" (a reference to the authors of the *Gründerzeit*, such as David Strauss and Karl Gutzkow) (UM I §11), and to the scholarly *Bildung* of his day (UM I §1). But, more important, the standard view of the German classics as "completers" (*Vollender*), as a "foundation" for German culture, is *reversed* by Nietzsche: they are classical, not as "finders" (*Findende*) to be emulated, but as "searchers" (*Suchende*) who demand a "further searching" (*weiter suchen*) for "the authentic, originary German culture."[27] The notion of searching or striving (*Suchen, Streben*) was indeed current among literary historians (for example, Rudolf von Gottschall, Julian Schmidt), but only as an empty gesture, the condition for a finding within a static conception of effortless genius. Nietzsche's emphasis is on effort, pressures, struggle, experimentation, and the real absence of a unified German style.[28] Curiously, it is as searchers or "cultivators" (*Anpflanzer*) that the German "*National-Litteraturen*" (Herder, Wieland, Schiller, Lessing, Klopstock, *not* Goethe) are then denied the title "classical" in "The Wanderer and his Shadow" (following Saint-

Beuve), where Nietzsche returns to the traditional notion of classics as "completers" (HA II Wanderer §125). This notion recurs after 1880, usually in epochal accounts of culture; it signifies not a cancellation of *Suchen*, but a perspective-shift to its results. For Nietzsche, however, the work of art is never completely separable from its production. The late rejection of German classicism as idealist can be traced to 1880, where Nietzsche accuses Schiller and Humboldt of a disguised "hatred of natural nakedness," of "pseudo-noble gestures and [...] voices" and a "feigned grace" (*Haß gegen die natürliche Nacktheit, edel verstellten Gebärden und* [...] *Stimmen, vorgebliche* [...] *Gräcität*) (KSA 9, 9[7], 410-11)—in contrast, that is, to Goethe and Schopenhauer. But as early as 1876 he distinguishes "great writers" (*grosse Schriftsteller*)—such as Goethe—in whom language is alive, from "classical writers" (*kl. Schriftsteller*) in whom language is dead (KSA 8, 18[28], 321). Nonetheless, it is fairly clear from both texts and letters that Nietzsche wished himself to be regarded as a classical author.[29]

## Goethe

It is Goethe, who elicits Nietzsche's most concentrated and complex preoccupation with the classical. It is characteristic for Nietzsche to apply the terms "*klassisch*", "*das Klassische*" or "*Klassiker*" less to Goethe as poet, than to Goethe the person or "*Mensch*," and to contrast him with Schiller, often identified with opposed concepts, such as *Romantik* (for example, KSA 13, 11[315] and 15[12], 133 and 411-12). In an early note, Goethe's development from "impetuous naturalism" (*ungestüme Naturalismus*, that is, the *Sturm und Drang*) to his "severe dignity" (*strenge Würde*) in later years is seen as exemplary (*vorbildlich*) (KSA 7, 29[119], 685-86). But otherwise, it is just the latter in whom Nietzsche sees characteristics of the classical. These include nobility (*Vornehmheit*) in contrast to Wagner (for example, KSA 8, 27[52], 496); being well turned-out (*Wohlgeratensein*) as a consequence of "harmonious total development" (*harmonische All-Entwicklung*) (KSA 10, 1[108], 37); calmness (*Ruhe*) (KSA 11, 26[245], 215); an "unchristian," "pagan," "Yes-saying," or "deification of totality and of life" (*Vergöttlichung des Alls und des Lebens*), including his "fatalism" (GS §357; KSA 11, 38[7], 605; KSA 12, 9[178], 443); and the conjugation or "equilibrium" (*Gleichgewicht*) of "all strong, apparently contradictory gifts and desires" (*aller starken, anscheinend widerspruchsvollen Gaben und Begierden*) (KSA 12, 9[166], 433). However, Goethe is also too modern to be wholly classical—he is a "manifold human being" (*vielfacher Mensch*), a "most inter-

esting chaos" (KSA 12, 9[119], 404). On the one hand, he lacks certain important characteristics, for instance, synthetic unifying power, "hardness," immorality, "coldness," or "hatred towards feeling" (*Verhärtung, Verböserung des Menschen*, *Kälte*, *Haß gegen Gefühl*) (KSA 13, 11[312], 132-33); on the other hand, he has other characteristics of our time—for example, *Humanität*—that disqualify him (KSA 13, 15[68], 451). Nietzsche's reservations should not simply be seen as a consequence of the increasing concern with power and immoralism in his later work; already in the third *Untimely Meditation*, the "Goethean human being" is too passive, the "contemplative [...] not the active human" (UM III §4), in contrast to Rousseau and Schopenhauer: "If our task were to glide over life as best we can, there would be recipes, the Goethean especially. It is beautiful to *contemplate* things, but terrible to *be* them" (KSA 7, 32[67], 778). Turning to Goethe's actual uses of "*klassisch*"/"*classisch*" and related words, there are important connections with Nietzsche's usage on at least five points.[30]

(1) *ancient Greek culture*: Goethe's view of classical completion (*Vollkommenheit*) in Greek culture and its "healthy" constitution was clearly inspirational for the young Nietzsche. The opposition (in the *Winckelmann* essays of 1805) between the wholeness, this-worldliness, and closeness to action of the Greeks, and the fragmentation, otherworldliness, and reflexivity of moderns is largely shared by Nietzsche, especially in the early confrontations of antiquity with the "theoretical age" of modernity. But already, however, this picture was relativized, if not falsified,[31] by Nietzsche's exploration of the Dionysian, and strong criticisms of the classicism of Goethe, Schiller, Winckelmann, Herder, and Hegel are to be found both early and later, from 1887 onward.[32]

Goethe and others are criticized for their false naturalism (the confusion of cause and effect), their lack of psychology and their exclusion of the Dionysian as the explosive ground against which the classical ideal was erected as both a protective measure and a celebration. In Nietzsche's late work, these criticisms coincide with his own preoccupation with the ground for the classical as an anti-nihilistic style of ideal-formation, pursued in connection with such concepts as nobility, master morality, the pagan and the Roman.[33] But it should be emphasized that Nietzsche's transvaluation of classical antiquity towards the Tragic does *not* involve a Romantic rejection or reversal of classicism and its values into their opposite. The function of the Dionysian is not to displace or undermine the ideals of classical aesthetics in favor of excess and darkness; it is to *explain* them by asking: what "monstrous need" did they answer? (BT §3). For as Nietzsche remarks in his letter to Erwin Rohde

of 16 July 1872: "This world of purity and beauty did not fall from heaven" (KSB 4, 23). Or as he put it in a lapidary note: "There is no beautiful surface without a terrible depth" (*Es giebt keine schöne Fläche ohne eine schreckliche Tiefe*) (KSA 7, 7[91], 159). We can therefore say that Nietzsche *falsifies* Goethean classicism as a natural given, an autonomous and exclusive quality of Greek culture, insofar as he *relativizes* it to the Dionysian as an achievement. Some texts emphasize the former, others the latter.

(2) *the political-cultural conditions for the classical*: Goethe was highly skeptical of the feasibility of the classical in modernity. The possibility of the classical (or the "*classiche Nationalautor*") depends on political-historical conditions: a unified nation with a high degree of culture, both lacking in Germany.[34] According to Elrud Kunne-Ibsch, a "*weltanschauliche*, sociological and aesthetic concept of unity [*Einheitsgedanke*]" is also presupposed by Nietzsche for the classical.[35] Certainly, the classical is often relativized to specific periods of specific national cultures,[36] sometimes in politicized contexts where the value of the national is questioned in favor of the *Übernationale* or European.[37] Goethe's enduring skepticism is also shared by Nietzsche: he is *least* skeptical in his early years, especially when considering Goethe himself (!), Schiller, Leopardi, Winckelmann, Wagner, Schopenhauer, and the "philologist-poets of the Renaissance";[38] he is probably most skeptical in section 223 of *Beyond Good and Evil*, where the classical appears as one of many "costumes" worn by the nineteenth century, none of which fits. And even in the late *Nachlass* where the classical names art as the counter-movement to nihilism, it is cast as *futural* possibility, within a "future aesthetics" (*zukünftige Aesthetik)* (KSA 13, 12[1], 200).

(3) *in relation to time, as calm, being in becoming* (*Ruhe, im Werden das Sein*): For Goethe, the classical is bound up with an experience of finitude and limits, and the attempt at an innerworldly suspension of time (*not* transcendence), embodied by the Greek gods as human, but unchanging, immortal forms. There is even a hint of the eternal recurrence when he refers "classical words" to the desire to express "feeling and event as eternally recurring" (*Gefühl und Ereignis als ewig wiederkehrend*).[39] Nietzsche, too, uses such Apollonian terms as "eternity," "eternalize," "calm," "petrification," "being" (*Ewigkeit*, *Verewigen*, *Starrmachen*, *Sein*, "aere perennius," *Verlangsamung des Zeitgefühls*) to describe the classical.[40] In this respect, Nietzsche shares the impulse of German classicism to grasp "being in becoming" (*im Werden das Sein*).[41] In *The Gay Science*, however, he argues that the longing for (innerworldly) Being is neither necessary nor sufficient for art to be classical;

rather, what counts is whether the creative force stems from excess (classical or "apotheosis" art) or from lack, poverty (Romantic art) (GS §370). Moreover, Nietzsche also harbors a competing Dionysian affinity with pre-classical *Werden*, with Baroque, and with the Wagnerian quest for a "dynamic style" (*Stil der Bewegung)* (KSA 7, 32[27], 762-63; and his letter to Richard Wagner of November 1872 [KSB 4, 90-92]).

(4) *universalism*: Against restrictions of the classical to Occidental culture, the late Goethe developed a more universalistic use that recognized oriental and world literature. In Nietzsche, the classical is applied mostly to Occidental culture, but in his letter to Paul Deussen of 16 March 1883, he describes Deussen's book on the Vedanta teaching as the "classical expression of what is for me the most alien way thinking" (KSB 6, 342). Moreover, ancient Greek culture, usually regarded as the source of both classical and Occidental culture, was not, in Nietzsche's view, autochthonous or isolated, but the successful result of intercultural negotiation or "fruitful learning" from surrounding cultures (PTAG §1).[42] At any rate, from 1875 onward, as we have seen, he maintains that "we are a multiplication of many pasts" (KSA 8, 3[69], 34), not just Greek culture.

(5) the classical versus the Romantic, healthy versus sick: "*klassisch*"/"*das Klassische*" as a typological semiotic for the overcoming of *décadence* and nihilism: the late Goethe first coined the opposition between the Romantic as sick and the classical as healthy.[43] This opposition is so important to Nietzsche, especially from 1885 on, that it constitutes the sixth main context for his use of the terms "*klassisch*"/"*das Klassische*"[44] Despite important differences, Goethe is an undeniable influence on Nietzsche's formulations of the opposition. Where Nietzsche departs from Goethe, it is in connection with specifically Nietzschean themes and problems. These departures involve a radicalization of Goethe's terms which explode the framework for Goethe's opposition. In some cases, however, it can be argued that Nietzsche uses Goethe's own medical and physiological views to take the equation of health and the classical beyond Goethe's own conception.

Politycki, for example, emphasizes that Nietzsche has a "*typological* conception of '*Klassik*' [...] which, in complete abstraction from cultural connotations and used for the 'psychological delineation' of the healthy, noble and in every respect desirable kind of life, is always thought in opposition to an equally ahistorical-typological understanding of '*Romantik*.'"[45] This is certainly true of some notes in the late *Nachlass* (such as KSA 13, 14[25], 229-30), but Nietzsche's typological understanding of "*das Klassische*" (and "*Romantisch*"/ "*Romantik*) is usually tied to cul-

tural conditions in one way or other. The opposition "*das Klassische*"—"*Romantische*" is first thematized in 1875 in connection with Wagner, who is never far from Nietzsche's thoughts on this topic (KSA 8, 12[8], 248). But for Nietzsche, the *idea* of Wagner becomes separate from the actual person, and the opposition "*das Klassische*"—"*Romantische*" is situated in a generalized, quasi-cyclical, periodic model of cultural development. For Nietzsche, "*das Klassische*" means less a definable form of style, than the expression of a powerful culture at its peak in general terms.[46] Around 1887, Wagner and "*das Romantische*" become synonymous with the sickness of the modern European type as a chaos of opposed values (for example, KSA 13, 14[7], 221; CW, Epilogue); the terms "*klassische*"/"*das Klassische*" are, then, used to designate the controlled management of inner oppositions, that is, a counter-type, often with reference to the future.[47] For Goethe, it is not music, but painting that first provokes his critical engagement with Romanticism, and poetry that becomes his chief preoccupation.[48] Despite this important difference, the opposition with the classical is always deeply evaluative and polemical for both authors, and Goethe's opposition can be discerned in a good many of Nietzsche's formulations. This especially so for the correlative opposition of health versus sickness or *décadence*, but Goethe's influence can also be discerned in other correlative oppositions used by both writers. For Goethe, these include: first, "clear" ("pure," "true") versus "unclear" ("confused," "mystical," "nebulous," "untrue"); and second, "cheerful" versus "serious".[49] For his part Nietzsche associates classical style with such intellectual terms as "lucidity," "logic," "clarification," "mathematics," "reason," and "spirit."[50] However, by referring these terms to a synthesizing impulse—a "will to simplification" (KSA 13, 11[31], 17-18), "to force one's chaos to become form" (KSA 13, 14[61], 246-48)—Nietzsche also builds the Goethean terms for "*das Romantische*." *into* his concept of the classical, as a "hatred" or "contempt" for "detail, complexity," or "that which is manifold, uncertain, roaming, foreboding" (*Haß gegen das Vielfache, Unsichere, Schweifende, Ahnende*; *Verachtung des Details, des Complexen, des Ungewissen*) (KSA 13, 11[312], 132). Here Goethe's *entire opposition* is situated in a radicalized picture of the classical that is characterized by tension and polarization, rather than by Goethean harmony. Like Goethe, Nietzsche often connects the classical with an affirmative, light-hearted attitude through such expressions as "classical happiness," "noble light-heartedness," "happiness of the spirit," and the "visibility of happiness."[51] Goethe's opposition with Romantic "seriousness" becomes in Nietzsche the opposition between "a

pessimism of strength, a classical pessimism" and the "Romantic pessimism" of weakness and exhaustion (KSA 13, 14[25], 229-30).

These two examples illustrate how Goethean terms are taken up and radicalized by Nietzsche in a conception of the classical that is marked more by polarization and tension than by harmony. This tendency is even more pronounced in connection with the correlative opposition between health and sickness. In *The Gay Science*, Goethe's opposition between classical health (*gesund*, *derb*, *tüchtig*) and Romantic sickness or weakness becomes the opposition between excess (*Überfülle*, *Überfluss*, *Luxus*, and so on) and lack (*Verarmung*, *Hunger*, *Entbehren*) (GS §370). In the "Epilogue" to *The Case of Wagner*, this physiological opposition is then connected with an opposition of evaluative types: ascending life (*Fülle/Überreichtum an Kräften*) conditions an "affirmative" attitude, while descending life "negates." According to Nietzsche, *both* are necessary; the danger lies with those (Wagner) who "are not willing to perceive [*empfinden*] these oppositions as oppositions."

These texts show how the opposition "*das Klassische*"—"*Romantische.*" takes on a distinctive meaning in connection with Nietzschean themes (the importance of opposition or tension in general, the opposition between excess and lack) and the specifically Nietzschean problematic of Dionysian life-affirmation as the basis for anti-nihilistic ideal-formation (*Idealbildung*). In this context "*das Romantische.*" and "*das Klassische*" become a semiotic for the *décadence*, nihilism, and life negation of the present, and their overcoming or counter movement (*Gegenbewegung*), respectively. Through this radical extension of the opposition, Nietzsche takes it well beyond the Goethean framework. But as the texts also show, Goethe's most important influence was to direct Nietzsche's attention to the *conditions for the creation and evaluation of art*. What Goethe, on his Italian journey, calls "classical ground" (*der klassische Boden*) is given a physiological turn by Nietzsche and becomes the question of the "biological presuppositions" for art: what is "the measure of power" (*Maass von Kraft*) in Romantic and classical types? This physiological turn suggests a further twist in Nietzsche's relationship to Goethe, one that complicates yet deepens their relation considerably.

For it may well be that Nietzsche draws on Goethe's own physiological and medical insights in order radicalize the Goethean conception of the "*das Klassische*"—"*Romantische.*" opposition. Evidence for this suggestion comes from the striking parallels between Goethe's and Nietzsche's medical views that find their way into Nietzsche's concept of the classical, but do not (to my knowledge) appear in Goethe's own formulations of the classical. First, the opposition between excess and lack

in section 370 of *The Gay Science* does not appear as such in Goethe's "*das Klassische*" —"*Romantische*" opposition, but it *is* clearly expressed in his distinction between the "physiological" and the "pathological" perspectives: the former is the scientist's, who views nature "in its fullness [*Fülle*] and health"; the latter is the doctor's, who views nature as "sick and lacking [*mangelhaft*]." Second, the central preoccupation with life-affirmation in *The Case of Wagner* is very close to Goethe's concept of health as being open, being turned-to-the-world (*Weltzugewandtheit*), and the ability to react correctly (*richtiges Reagieren*), as opposed to the withdrawal and negation (*Eingezogenheit, Abwendung von der Welt, Negieren*) of the "hypochondriac." And finally, Nietzsche's claim that the "Ro." and the "*das Klassische*" are both necessary—*as oppositions in tension*—forms a sharp contrast to Goethe's desire for closure and his efforts to put the discord between classicists and Romantics aside in favor of self-formation (*bilden*). However, Nietzsche's affirmation of tension *does* resonate strongly with Goethe's view that health and sickness, the normal and the abnormal, belong together "like two poles within which life plays out its possibilities," and that sickness is often a necessary "detour" (*Umweg*), even a stimulant, towards health.[52] Clearly, these suggestions require further, detailed research; but, if correct, they indicate that it is only by thinking "through and against" Goethe,[53] that Nietzsche radicalizes the Goethean opposition of the classical and the Romantic.

## "*Klassischer Stil*," "*klassischer Geschmack*": General Features

In conclusion, I shall remark on the expressions "classical style" and "classical taste." These, and similar expressions (especially "great style" [*der grosse Styl/Stil*]), are used and discussed intensively in the late *Nachlass*, in connection with the problem of overcoming nihilism. But they also recur across Nietzsche's writings in a variety of contexts, reflecting an enduring—if not exclusive—affinity and preoccupation with classical style/taste. Although his pronouncements vary greatly with context, classical style/taste is associated with a number of general features according to a "family resemblance." As such, Nietzsche's concept of classical style or taste brings together several of the meanings, features and connotations of the words "*klassisch*"/"*das Klassische*" discussed above. In some respects, Nietzsche's concept of classical style or taste corresponds to established meanings, for example, as calm (*Ruhe*); other features are specific to Nietzsche (for example, immorality); and several features of

classical taste—"logic," "reason," "hatred towards feeling"—elicit highly unusual, atypical affirmations of terms or concepts normally criticized by Nietzsche. Understanding his use of "classical style"/"taste" is thus often difficult, since for Nietzsche works of art are inseparable from the conditions and processes of production, and it is sometimes unclear which of them is meant. Taken together, however, the terms "classical style"/"taste" exhibit at least ten general features in Nietzsche's vocabulary, related here according to family resemblance.

(1) *in relation to Latin and Roman authors*: In the first *Untimely Meditation* Nietzsche rejects Strauss as a "classical prose writer," in part because his style cannot be translated into Latin, unlike Kant's and Schopenhauer's (UM I §11). In *Twilight of the Idols*, Roman authors (Sallust, Horace) are named "*klassisch*": their style is exemplary for its "minimization of means of expression combined with a maximization of their energy" (TI Ancients §1).

(2) *in relation to absolute norms / laws, as commanding, but also submission*: The few occasions on which Nietzsche affirms equality and (pleasure in the) submission before absolute norms occur in the context of classical style / taste.[54]

(3) *in relation to time, as calm, being in becoming* (*Ruhe, Sein im Werden*): See my discussion in Part 2, section 3, in connection with Goethe's use of "*klassisch*"

(4) *in relation to intellectual / cognitive qualities*, such as lucidity, logic, mathematics, reason ("great style"): See my discussion above in Part 2, section 5, on the classical versus the Romantic.

(5) *in relation to happiness* (*Glück*): On the connection of classical style with an affirmative, light-hearted attitude, see too my discussion above in Part 2, section 5, on the classical versus the Romantic.

(6) *in relation to feeling (Gefühl), as coldness (Kälte)*: classical style is often connected with control, even aversion, towards feeling, and such corresponding terms as "non-pathological form" (*unpathologisch wirkende Form*) (KSA 7, 9[98], 310); "measure" (*Maass*) (GM III §22), "coldness," "hatred towards feeling" (KSA 13, 11[312], 131-33); and "cool self-sufficiency" (*kühle Selbstgenügsamkeit*) (KSA 13, 11[294], 114).

(7) *in relation to (the feeling of) power*: classical style (like "the great style") is often connected with a surfeit and /or a feeling of power/ strength (*Macht*, *Kraft*), with the Will to Power, or a "will to greater strength" (*Wille zur Verstärkung*) as its ground.[55]

(8) *in relation to a plurality of powers, as simplification* (*Vereinfachung*), *synthesis*: classical style is often connected with synthetic powers

that bind together conflicting impulses in the creator and ignore details for the sake of formal simplicity and unity; thus "simplicity [*Einfachheit*] of style" (KSA 8, 5[44], 52; UM I §11); "to mirror a collective state [*Gesammtzustand*]" (KSA 12, 9[166], 433-34); a "will toward simplification [*Vereinfachung*]" (KSA 13, 11[31], 18); "hatred toward the manifold" (*Haß gegen das Vielfache*), "logical-psychological simplication" (*logisch-psychologische Vereinfachung*), a "contempt for detail, complexity, uncertainty" (*Verachtung des Details, des Complexen, des Ungewissen*) (KSA 13, 11[312], 131-32); "the simple, the strict, the great style" (*den einfachen, den strengen, den großen Stil*) (KSA 13, 14[7], 221); "simplification, abbreviation, concentration" (*Vereinfachung, Abkürzung, Concentration*) (KSA 13, 14[46], 240); "to force one's chaos to become form" *(sein Chaos zwingen, Form zu werden*), and (similar to "the great style") "logical, simple, unambiguous" (*logisch, einfach, unzweideutig*) (KSA 13, 14[61], 247; cf. KSA 12, 9[166], 433-34; KSA 13, 11[138], 63-64).

(9) *in relation to sexuality / sexual desire* (*Geschlechtigkeit, Wollust*): classical style is often connected with sexuality as its ground, as in Nietzsche's discussions of "*Orgiasmus*" (KSA 13, 14[35], 235); of "sexual interest" as the basis for classical French literature (TI Expeditions §23; KSA 13, 14[46], 240); and on erotic relations as the ground of classical Greek culture (HA I §259).

Finally, (10) *in relation to morality, as fearless morality*: classical style is often construed as intrinsically immoral, in connection with such terms as "hardness," "the human being becoming more evil" (*Härte, Verböserung des Menschen*) (KSA 13, 11[312], 132-32); "fearlessness" (*Furchtlosigkeit*) (KSA 13, 14[25], 230); and "beyond good and evil" (*jenseits von Gut und Böse*) (KSA 13, 16[32], 493).

## Notes

[1] Matthias Politycki, *Umwertung aller Werte? Deutsche Literatur im Urteil Nietzsche's* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1989), 226. The subsequent quotations are from Nietzsche's letters to Emily Fynn of 6 December 1888 and to Heinrich Köselitz of 7 April 1888 (KSB 8, 506 and 285). Further references are given by Politycki, who notes the dramatic increase of this usage in the letters of 1888.

[2] H. E. Gerber, *Nietzsche und Goethe* (Bern diss. 1953), 126; cited in Politycki, *Umwertung aller Werte?*, 228.

[3] An additional sixth context, Goethe's use of the term in the context of the opposition between the classical and the Romantic, is discussed in Part 2 below. I shall leave

out Nietzsche's treatment of French Classicism, and the highly idiosyncratic use of the classical to be found in some preparatory notes to UM II from the *Nachlass* of 1873 (KSA 7, 29[24, 29, 31, 38], 635, 636-67, 637-38, 640-41). Here "*Kl.*"/ "*der Trieb nach dem Klassischen*" occur in connection with historical consciousness. In specific detail, they name (i) the historicity of human life: elementary processes of concept-formation based on memory ("*das "historische" Urphänomen* [KSA 7, 29[29], 636]); or (ii) a mode of historical consciousness, a way to view the past, opposed to "the antiquarian." In this meaning it has features of both the "overhistorical" (*Überhistorische*) and the "monumental" perspective of the second *Untimely Meditation* (UM II §2), and the opposition "*Kl.*"—"*Antiquarisch*" is an undifferentiated precursor to the distinction monumental–antiquarian history in the second *Untimely Meditation*. For further discussion, see Jörg Salaquarda, "Studien zur zweiten Unzeitgemässe Betrachtung," *Nietzsche-Studien* 13 (1984): 1-45.

[4] For further discussion, see Viktor Pöschl, "Nietzsche und die klassische Philologie," in Hellmut Flaschar, Karlfried Gründer, Axel E.-A. Horstmann (eds), *Philologie und Hermeneutik im 19. Jahrhundert*, 2 vols (Göttingen: Vandenhoek und Ruprecht, 1979), vol. 1, 141–55; and Hubert Cancik, "'Philologie als Beruf': Zu Formengeschichte, Thema und Tradition der unvollendeten vierten Unzeitgemässen Friedrich Nietzsches," in Tilman Borsche, Federico Gerratana, Aldo Venturelli (eds), *"Centauren-Geburten": Wissenschaft, Kunst und Philosophie beim jungen Nietzsche* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1994), 81-98.

[5] *Homer und die klassische Philologie* (1869) (KGW 2.1, 253).

[6] *Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten*, Lecture 2 (KSA 1, 689); KSA 7, 9[151] and 28[4], 331 and 617.

[7] KSA 7, 5[28] and 14[15], 99 and 380-81; *Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten*, Lecture 2 (KSA 1, 681 and 689).

[8] KSA 7, 7[74, 75], 155; *Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten*, Lecture 3 (KSA 1, 704); KSA 8, 5[138], 75; UM III §8.

[9] KSA 8, 3[76], 5[15, 55, 156, 157], 37-38, 43-44, 55-56, 83-84.

[10] Pöschl, "Nietzsche und die klassische Philologie," 142-44. On expressivism see Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1975), chapter 1, especially 13-25. Taylor's term is derived from Isaiah Berlin's use of "expressionism" ("Herder and the Enlightenment" [1965], in Isaiah Berlin, *Vico and Herder: Two Studies in the History of Ideas* (New York: Viking P, 1976), 143-216).

[11] KSA 8, 3[17, 12] and 5[191, 194], 19, 17-18, 94-95; KSA 7, 38[1], 834-35.

[12] For similar statements by others see also Gustav Billeter, *Die Anschauungen vom Wesen des Griechentums* (Leipzig and Berlin: Teubner, 1911), 318, including Friedrich Schlegel's comment, "The Romans are nearer to us and more comprehensible than the Greeks" (Friedrich Schlegel, *Seine prosaischen Jugendschriften, 1794-1802*, ed. Jakob Minor, 2 vols (Vienna: C. Konegan, 1882), vol. 2, 190).

[13] Matthias Politycki, *Der frühe Nietzsche und die deutsche Klassik* (Straubing and Munich: Donau-Verlag, 1981), 194-96.

[14] Dieter Jähnig, "Nietzsches Kunstbegriff (erläutert an der 'Geburt der Tragödie')," in Helmut Koopmann and Josef Adolf Schmoll (eds), *Beiträge zur Theorie der Künste*

*im 19. Jahrhundert*, 2 vols (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klosterman, 1972), vol. 2, 34.

[15] Politycki, *Der frühe Nietzsche und die deutsche Klassik*, 196.

[16] Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, 2 vols (Pfullingen: Neske, 1961), vol. 1, 150. See Politycki, *Umwertung aller Werte?*, 224; Giorgio Colli, "Nachwort" in KSA 1, 901-19 (910); and compare KSA 8, 3[12], 17-18.

[17] Billeter, *Die Anschauungen vom Wesen des Griechentums*, 371-72; Jähnig, "Nietzsches Kunstbegriff," 39.

[18] See especially KSA 7, 2[6], 46; KSA 8, 6[35], 112; and see Colli's "Nachwort" (KSA 1, 911-12).

[19] BT §19 and §21; UM II §8; KSA 7, 8[38], 14[28], 19[15], 237, 387, 420; KSA 8, 5[47], 53; HA I §259; *Die vorplatonischen Philosophen*, §1 (KGW 2.4, 215). On 400 BCE as the turning point for Nietzsche's *Umwertung*, see also Jähnig, "Nietzsches Kunstbegriff," 39; and Ernst Langlotz, "Über das Interpretieren griechischer Plastik," *Bonner Universitätsschriften* 7 (1947): 5-20 (8).

[20] KSA 7, 19[15], 420; *Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten*, Lecture 3 (KSA 1, 704) on the difference between the Greeks and others. For further discussion, see Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, "History and Mimesis," in Laurens Rickels (ed.), *Looking After Nietzsche* (Albany: State U of New York P, 1990), 209–31. This interpretation is contested in Herman Siemens, "Agonal Configurations in the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*: Identity, Mimesis and the *Übertragung* of Cultures in Nietzsche's Early Thought," *Nietzsche-Studien* 30 (2001): 80-106.

[21] KSA 8, 3[69] and 7[1], 33-34 and 121. Compare KSA 8, 7[6] and 3[16], 123-24 and 19; but also the more positive KSA 8, 3[39, 74] and 5[171], 25, 35, 89-90. For Nietzsche's sources—such as E. B. Tyler, Ludwig Preller, and H. D. Müller—see Andrea Orsucci, *Orient-Occident: Nietzsches Versuch einer Loslösung vom europäischen Weltbild* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1996), 28-29, 42-44.

[22] KSA 8, 5[5, 15, 155-163] and 3[76], 42, 43-44, 83-86, 37-38. See also D §199 on the superiority of the medieval over the Greek noble.

[23] TI Ancients §1 and §2; KSA 13, 24[1], 615-32; and Politycki, *Umwertung aller Werte?*, 225.

[24] Politycki, *Umwertung aller Werte?*, 225.

[25] TI Ancients §4-§5; KSA 13, 24[1], 615-32. See also GM III §22, where the Church Fathers' dismissal of Greek classical literature is used by Nietzsche to argue against the New Testament as classical. "Classical taste" does not, however, preclude God for Nietzsche; in connection with Voltaire, he opposes the Christian God as a "caricature and disparagement of the divine" (KSA 13, 11[95], 44).

[26] Politycki, *Der frühe Nietzsche und die deutsche Klassik*, 64, and *Umwertung aller Werte?*, 221.

[27] UM I §2; KSA 7, 27[65], 606; compare KSA 8, 15[3], 279.

[28] KSA 7, 27[66], 606-07; compare Politycki, *Umwertung aller Werte?*, 227.

[29] KSA 9, 15[40], 648; his letters to C. G. Naumann of 26 June 1888 and to Meta von Salis of 22 August 1888 (KSB 8, 343 and 396); and TI Ancients §1.

[30] Hans-Dietrich Dahnke and Regine Otto (eds), *Goethe-Handbuch*, 6 vols (Stuttgart and Weimar: Metzler, 1998), vol. 4/1, 603-606, lemma: *Klassik/Klassisches.*

[31] BT §3 and §20; KSA 7, 3[76] and 32[67], 81 and 777-78; KSA 8, 5[60], 58.

[32] KSA 13, 11[312], 14[35], 24[1], 132, 235, 615-35; TI Ancients §3-§4.

[33] CW Epilogue; KSA 13, 11[31, 312], 16[32], 24[1], 17-18, 131-32, 492-93, 615-35.

[34] *Litterarischer Sansculottismus* (1795), cited in *Goethe Handbuch*, vol. 4/1, 603-04.

[35] Cited in Politycki, *Umwertung aller Werte?*, 229.

[36] KSA 8, 41[34], 589; KSA 9, 4[260], 164-65; KSA 12, 9[166], 433-34; D §161.

[37] KSA 11, 35[84], 548; HA II Wanderer and his Shadow §125 and §132; HA II Assorted Opinions and Maxims §144; KSA 10, 12[1], 398.

[38] KSA 8 3[15, 70, 71, 76], 5[109, 111, 167], 6[14], 19-20, 34-38, 69, 88-89, 102-03.

[39] See the section entitled "Cipher" ("*Chiffer*") in Goethe's commentary on his West-Eastern Divan (*Noten und Abhandlungen zu besserem Verständniß des West-östlichen Divans*) (1819).

[40] KSA 9, 8[14], 386; GS §370; TI Ancients §1; KSA 13, 14[46], 240.

[41] Herbert Cysarz, "Klassik," *Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturgeschichte*, ed. Werner Kohlschmidt and Wolfgang Mohr, 4 vols (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1958-1984), vol. 1, 852-58.

[42] For further discussion, see the paper "Cults and Migrations: Nietzsche's Meditations on Orphism, Pythagoreanism and the Greek Mysteries" by Benjamin Biebuyck, Danny Praet, and Isabelle Vanden Poel in this volume, especially their discussion of Dionysus.

[43] *Maximen und Reflexionen* §863 and §1031; and his conversation with Johann Peter Eckermann of 2 April 1829.

[44] For example, KSA 12, 9[112, 166], 400, 433-34; KSA 13, 11[31, 312], 14[46], 17-18, 131-33, 240. In fact, even before 1885 this opposition is used by Nietzsche to explore the classical as (the peak of) strength, where "an agreeable feeling of strength [*wohliges Gefühl von Kraft*] is the norm," against the "periods of decline" (*Verfall*) or "weakness" (*Schwäche*) (KSA 9, 4[260], 164-65; HA II Wanderer §217; KSA 12, 9[166], 433-34).

[45] Politycki, *Umwertung aller Werte?*, 117; compare KSA 13, 14[25], 229-30.

[46] Ingeborg Beithan, *Friedrich Nietzsche als Umwerter der deutschen Literatur* (Heidelberg: Carl Winters, 1933), 125.

[47] KSA 12, 9[166], 433-34; KSA 13, 11[31, 138], 14[61], 17-18, 63-64, 246-48; and KSA 12, 8[3], 329-31.

[48] Gertrud Hager, *Gesund bei Goethe: Eine Wortmonographie* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1955), 25.

[49] (1) *klar, rein, wahr* versus *unklar, verworren, mystisch, nebulose, unwahr*; (2) *heiter* versus *ernst* (Hager, *Gesund bei Goethe*, 23 and 25).

[50] *Lucidität, Logik, Klären* (KSA 13, 11[312], 131-33); *Mathematik* (KSA 13, 14[61], 246-48); *Vernunft, Geistigkeit* (KSA 13, 16[29], 489-91). See also "dialectic and unfolding of thoughts" (HA II Assorted Opinions §144); "to bring reason to the world" (*die Welt vernünftigen*) (CW Epilogue); Nietzsche's praise of "strict logical clarity of thought [*Nüchternheit*]" and "simplicity and taughtness of thinking" *contra* Strauss's language as "illogically tangled" (*unlogisch zerfasert*) (UM I §11); and Nietzsche's self-thematization as the "will to consistency" (*Wille zur Consequenz*) (KSA 13, 14[25], 229-30).

[51] *das klassische Glück, vornehme Leichtfertigkeit* (KSA 13, 11[294], 114); *Glück in der Geistigkeit* (KSA 13, 11[312], 131-33); *Sichtbarkeit des Glücks* (KSA 13, 11[31], 17-18); as well as "self-affirmation" (*Selbstbejahung*), "being well-turned-out" (*Wohlgerathensein*) (KSA 13, 11[138], 63); "affirmative" (*Ja sagend*) (KSA 12, 9[166], 434); and compare KSA 13, 14[7] and 16[32], 221 and 492-93.

[52] Cited in Hager, *Gesund bei Goethe*, 11; 10-13; 24; 19; 20-21.

[53] To paraphrase Nietzsche on Wagner: "*durch ihn gegen ihn*" (UB IV §7).

[54] KSA 9, 7[217], 8[14, 51], 362, 386, 393-94; KSA 13, 14[61] and 16[29], 247 and 489-90 on law (*Gesetz*); UM I §11 on an artistically rigorous style of culture (*Kulturstil*), and uniformity of expression (*Gleichartigkeit der Aeusserungen*). But see also KSA 9, 8[62], 396, where Nietzsche criticizes this attitude in the name of a polymorphous conception of health.

[55] GS §370; KSA 12, 9[166], 433-34; KSA 13, 11[31] and 11[138], 17-18 and 63 (also "the great style"); KSA 13, 11[312] and 24[1], 131-32 and 626-27.

# Conflict and Repose: Dialectics of the Greek Ideal in Nietzsche and Winckelmann

*Dirk t. D. Held*

EUROPE'S NEED FOR a revised foundation-myth became imperative when it began to be reshaped by the forces of modernity. These forces emerged during the eighteenth century and, by the nineteenth, had transformed Europe materially, politically, and culturally. Appropriate to a period of such revolutionary change, Greece provided a critical component for a new myth of Europe which Rome did not: discontinuity. This was because Greece was disconnected from the ideological underpinnings of ecclesiastical and judicial authority bestowed on European institutions by Roman antiquity. Greek antiquity appeared as a form of estrangement. Moreover, when Greece emerged from beneath the cloak of Ottoman power, it appeared so removed from the greatness of its classical past (in the opinion of contemporary observers, even the Greek people were distinct from the ancient Hellenes) that Greek antiquity offered, if not a *tabula rasa,* at least one sufficiently amenable to accommodate various narratives and formulations.

The most profound and far reaching formulations of Greek antiquity and what Greece meant for Europe were developed by Johann Joachim Winckelmann and Friedrich Nietzsche. Winckelmann aroused the enthusiasm in Germany and elsewhere for things Hellenic and invented the notion of the modern Greek ideal. He championed the Apollonian, celebrating the Apollo Belvedere as the image of "the most beautiful deity" (*der schönsten Gottheit*).[1] Nietzsche, champion of the Dionysian, reimagined and re-situated Hellenism by dislodging it from the ethereal orbit, where Winckelmann had placed it, and abandoning the marmoreal solidity of Winckelmann's Greeks to imbue archaic Greece with a dynamism and vitality more suitable to the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Because Nietzsche is considered to be one of the modern world's "masters of suspicion,"[2] he is widely regarded as a debunker of ideals and deflator of aspirations. Nevertheless, he too fashioned out of Greece a normative reference point by which European modernity was to be

measured. Nietzsche did this in opposition to the prevailing views of German Hellenism, particularly as they pertained to the supposed serenity and cheerfulness (*Heiterkeit*) of the ancient Greeks, as well as in opposition to the common celebration of Greek rationalism. While acknowledging the nobility of the struggle undertaken by Goethe, Schiller, and Winckelmann to achieve *Bildung*, Nietzsche maintains:

> [They] failed [...] to penetrate the essential core [*in den Kern des hellenischen Wesens einzudringen*] of Hellenism and to create a lasting bond of love between German and Greek culture [...] Completely ineffectual fine words are wasted in flirting with "Greek harmony," "Greek beauty," "Greek cheerfulness." (BT §20)

Nietzsche displayed similar animus towards the usurpation of Greek antiquity by the professional academics, accusing them, for example, of abandoning the Hellenic ideal and perverting the aim of classical studies.

Though scarcely inattentive to other cultural and political issues, both Winckelmann and Nietzsche privileged the aesthetic domain of Greek culture. It is true that Nietzsche focuses on Greek *words*, those appearing in literature and philosophy, while Winckelmann directs our attention to Greek *images*, primarily those of the plastic art of sculpture, the visual beauty of which he believed permeated Greek life.[3] Despite differences in focus and objectives, illuminating connections can be drawn between the Hellenic projects undertaken by Winckelmann and Nietzsche. I will examine certain metaphors they share, though with different intent—those of conflict and repose, surface and depth. Then, I shall discuss passages from Winckelmann's work, before turning to Nietzsche. The goal is to achieve a deeper understanding of how their respective visions of the Greek ideal were formed, and to appreciate the cogency of the conflicting attitudes and presentations of the ancient Greeks. This will reveal how different cultural and historical forces affected discourse about Greek antiquity at critical junctures in the development of its modern narrative.

The Greek ideal has been characterized by one scholar as the pursuit of "cultural identity [...] through an interaction with classical Greece."[4] Formulations (or constructions) of Greece served as carriers of normativity. They were generally framed as ideals; indeed, in the case of Winckelmann, Greece satisfied a "quest for perfection."[5] Because formulations of Greek antiquity imposed an idealized cultural identity onto a base of disparate material and political situations, "Greece" (and *a posteriori* the Greek ideal) remained a contested rather than a unified concept. The resultant fictions, if you will, reflect different cultural and historical needs.

Nietzsche himself in a notebook entry from 1888 underlines this, claiming that when the comedies of Winckelmann's and Goethe's Greeks, along with Victor Hugo's Orientals and Scott's thirteenth-century Englishmen, are uncovered, it will become evident that all are false historically, though in modern terms all true (KSA 13, 11[330], 140). To be sure, fictions about antiquity will include some contrived by Nietzsche himself.

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Weimar classicism has been accused of creating a vision of "antiquity as stasis."[6] The charge seems especially true for Winckelmann, whose *Reflections on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture* (*Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst*) (1755) included the famous claim that the most distinctive feature of Greek masterpieces was "a noble simplicity and quiet grandeur" (*eine edle Einfalt und eine stille Größe*).[7] From this well-spring emerged the legacy of Hellas as the embodiment of ideal harmony, not only aesthetically, but politically as well. This remained true, despite the historical periodization of artistic development which Winckelmann presented in his *History of Ancient Art* (*Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*) (1764). Because Winckelmann, in the *Reflections*, had paradoxically invited his contemporaries to imitate what was in essence inimitable, aesthetic progress was rendered stillborn. Art subsequent to the classical period could never reach the highest levels of quality because what a recent writer described as "the logic of a larger historical imperative"[8] would prevent this from being achieved.

The representation of antiquity as static and unreachable presented an appealing alternative to those experiencing revolutionary turmoil in the eighteenth century. As Schiller wrote to Herder on 4 November 1795, "it seems to me a great triumph for the poet that he creates his own world and, through the agency of Greek myths, remains the kinsman of a distant, foreign and ideal age, since reality could do nothing but befoul him."[9] The sentiment was echoed by Wilhelm von Humboldt:

> I have always had a revulsion against interfering in the world and an urge to stand free of it, observing and examining it. This led me naturally to feel that only the most unconditional self-control might give me the *standpoint outside the world* that I should need. [...] These notions were first awakened in me by antiquity, later they kept me in relation to the ancients for evermore.[10]

Greek antiquity conceived as a form of stasis is the direct result of Winckelmann's influential conceptualization of beauty. He entitled a section of his *History of Ancient Art* "on the essence [*das Wesentliche*] of art."[11] Under this heading, he inquired after the characteristics of beauty, and conceded that success in the inquiry demanded knowledge of beauty's essence. But this is difficult to take hold of, since "the idea of beauty is like an essence extracted from matter by fire" (*ein aus der Materie durchs Feuer gezogener Geist*). This essence is to be found not in color, which merely assists beauty, but in shape (*Formen*). Moreover, Winckelmann asserted that beauty lies in the harmony of parts not only with each other but with the whole of creation. He writes in *History of Ancient Art* that since "all beauty is heightened by unity and simplicity [...] everything which we must consider in separate pieces, or which we cannot survey at once [...] loses some portion of its greatness."[12]

By virtue of this provision, beauty becomes a form of perfection accessible to the divine, but never to mortals, for whom the notion can only remain imprecise. Adding to beauty's imprecision is the further characteristic of an absence of determinate features. This is apparent when Winckelmann makes the following comparison: "Beauty should be like the best kind of water, drawn from the spring itself; the less taste it has, the more healthful it is considered since it is purified of all foreign components."[13] Consequently, beauty is imagined as some invisible essence that obliges those in pursuit of it to seek an ideal—and here we are compelled to resort to Platonic language—that was transcendent even while remaining immanent in the object. Beauty is transformed into "a thing superior to our intellect."[14]

As we have said, beauty *per se* is not on the form's surface, the part of an object that gives rise immediately to visual stimulation in the observer, thereby creating aesthetic sensation. Rather, as Winckelmann sees it, beauty functions in three ways: it envelops a work; it displays its material origins; and it shrouds its hidden depths. To demonstrate this point, he adduces a technique Michelangelo used in copying statues, by which both the original and the material from which the copy will be made are immersed in water. Slowly the level is lowered around each, thereby enabling the sculptor, bit by bit, to map the original onto the copy being formed. On the basis of this comparison, Winckelmann concludes that "the true feeling for beauty is like a liquid plaster cast which is poured over the head of Apollo touching every single part and enclosing it."[15]

However, in contrast to a mirror whose surface planes reflect and bring objects to light, water "beneath [the] soft plasticity of a slight motion of surface waves [...] *conceals.*"[16] Paradoxically, then, water's purity

and transparency allow it to render invisible and imperceptible the very entity being sought. The link between liquidness and the indeterminate has been emphasized by Barbara Stafford, who refers to Winckelmann's description of the Apollo Belvedere, the muscles of which are described as being "like melted glass in scarcely visible waves" (*wie ein geschmolzen Glas in kaum sichtbare Wellen*), accessible more to feeling (*Gefühle*) than to sight (*Gesichte*). The beautiful contour becomes "drenched with an invisible liquid energy charge."[17] Winckelmann points out regarding the unity of contour in youthful, androgynous forms that the edges of figures flow indiscernibly into one another, so that it is not possible to distinguish with precision the nature of the outlines. Contour and silhouette evoke "the shadow of absence, of an invisible divinity."[18]

The highest achievement of art is its capacity to make visible the invisible and divine.[19] Apprehension of this invisible and divine demands that the viewer's own inner sense be "purified of all other purposes for the sake of beauty."[20] Winckelmann maintains that this inner sense, which may seem dark and unfathomable, is at least malleable, and when refined through reflection it becomes attuned to beauty whose "perfection [...] lies in a gentle rise and fall which consequently affects our perception uniformly, guides it gently."[21] The constant interplay between surface and interior entailed by Winckelmann's conception of artistic beauty has the result that all of his descriptions of art works display "a constant antinomy between appearance and true being, between the visible and the invisible."[22]

A further dimension of Winckelmann's attentiveness to what is interior is found when he remarks in the *Reflections* about the inner depths of the sea: "The depths of the sea always remain calm [*ruhig*] however much the surface might rage."[23] Regarding the Laocoön, Winckelmann observes that still and profound depths lie beneath the figure's surface anguish. Alex Potts points out that the imagery most often used by Winckelmann to indicate the imperturbability and repose of an ideal figure is a calm expanse of sea covering unknowable depths. He observes how "the smoothly modulated surfaces of the finest Greek ideal become like a gently rolling swell, simultaneously calm and redolent of a power that might easily be stirred into raging fury."[24]

This image is adjusted in the *History of Ancient Art* to "evoke the idea of an apparently smooth surface modulated imperceptibly by a powerful, gently surging swell."[25] Yet even in that work, Winckelmann insists that "stillness is the state most true to beauty, just as it is to the sea," adding that those wishing to grasp this beauty must put their own "soul [into a state of] quiet contemplation, abstracted from all specific im-

ages."[26] Art requires stillness in the object if its peculiar nature is to be expressed, and stillness in the observer's soul if it is to be discerned.

Winckelmann provides a chromatic analogue to the stillness at the center of beauty. Having admitted that the essence of beauty is not color but shape, he proceeds to the further observation: "Since white is the color which reflects the greatest number of light rays, and consequently makes itself more sensitive, so too a beautiful body will be the more beautiful the whiter it is."[27] Not only has Winckelmann demonstrated commitment to an ontology of beauty, but here he states his dedication to an aesthetic of purity. This is a central part of his version of the Greek ideal, for he treated the whole of ancient Greek culture as representative of such an aesthetic of purity.

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Winckelmann's dream of Apollonian purity crumpled under the strains of modernity. A vexed concept itself, modernity has been depicted not only as a rejection of antiquity, but as fundamentally incompatible with and superior to antiquity.[28] Whether these assertions are true or not, Winckelmann's Greek ideal was not capable of providing a satisfactory aesthetic after Europe had undergone revolutionary transformations. These included industrialization, political upheaval, the compression of time and space, new social and economic structures: all led to unprecedented forms of life.[29] Fracture and rupture stirred deeper resonances within this new age than did stillness and purity. Winckelmann's harmony of the whole was rejected in favor of the fragmentary, open-ended, and unfinished. Consequently, his increasingly inadequate view of Greek antiquity would have to be abandoned, and the model of Greece be reformulated, were it to secure any foundational relationship to modern Europe.

Nietzsche was himself anxious over the "fluid, unpredictable social dynamic in modernity,"[30] and condemned many of its characteristic phenomena. Examples come readily to hand. He spoke damningly in *Daybreak* of a society in which commerce had replaced the Greek art of war as the form of personal contest (D §106). In *Human, All Too Human*, he decries "machine culture" for engendering "a despairing boredom of soul" and teaching idleness, and adds that machines abase us (HA Wanderer and his Shadow §220 and §288). In the essay "Schopenhauer as Educator," he frets over the increasing velocity of life and the cessation of contemplativeness and simplicity (UM III §4). Likewise, in *The Gay Science*, he denounces "breathless haste" as the distinctive vice of the new world and adds that, in America, "one thinks with a watch in one's hand,

even as one eats one's midday meal while reading the latest news of the stock market; one lives as if one always 'might miss out on something'" (GS §329). Nowhere under these conditions of life could Winckelmann have found the quiet contemplation he thought necessary for grasping beauty.

When Nietzsche said that German philosophy exhibited a fundamental form of homesickness (*Heimweh*), he conceived this as a response to disquiet over the conditions of modern life. In light of modernity's alleged rejection of antiquity as argued by Robert B. Pippin and others, Nietzsche offers us a surprise with his location of that lost home: "One is no longer at home anywhere; at last one longs back for that place in which alone one can be at home, because it is the only place in which one would want to be at home: the *Greek* world!" (WP §419). What did Nietzsche believe he could reclaim in the Greek world? His efforts might be considered in part a form of nostalgia for lost unity and wholeness, an aspiration pursued earlier in depth by Hegel in reaction to the Enlightenment's objectification of nature. This had given rise to a series of schisms: those of body and soul, reason and feeling, reason and imagination, thought and senses; the stream of life had been split into disparate eddies.[31]

The Greek world sought by Nietzsche was to be free of such antinomies. Nor would it be bathed in the ethereal glow which typified German Hellenism. Nietzsche asks regarding Schiller, Wilhelm von Humboldt, Schleiermacher, Hegel, and Schelling: "What do they have in common, what is it in them that seems to us, as we are today, now so insupportable, now so pitiable and moving?" His answer shows that Nietzsche regarded the detachment of the ancient world prized by these pillars of German culture as unnatural and lifeless:

> Their desire for brilliant, boneless generalities, together with the intention of seeing everything (characters, passions, ages, customs) in as beautiful a light as possible—"beautiful," unfortunately, in the sense of a vague and bad taste which nonetheless boasted of a Greek ancestry. It is a soft, good-natured, silver-glistering idealism [*Idealismus*] which wants above all to affect noble gestures and a noble voice. (D §190)

Schiller, in his sixth letter on *The Aesthetic Education of Man* (1795), had noted how the unity of faculties experienced in classical antiquity had been divided up by moderns through their pursuit of specialization. This left each individual fragmented rather than whole. Nietzsche sharpens and develops the point when he argues in the essay "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History" that "the most characteristic quality of modern

man" is "the remarkable antithesis between an interior which fails to correspond to any exterior and an exterior which fails to correspond to any interior—an antithesis unknown to the peoples of earlier times" (UM II §4).

This antithesis leads to the individual's cultivation of the inner world which manifests itself as subjectivity. This situation is regarded by Nietzsche as chaotic and false. To him, the antithesis of inner and outer does not exist in the natural, "living" world, and our absorption with it leads Nietzsche to conclude that modern culture is devoid of life. With his position, Nietzsche rejects the absoluteness of the antinomy between appearance and being, the visible and invisible which, as we have seen, underlies Winckelmann's aesthetic of purity.

Such an antinomy between appearance and being lay at the foundation of the nineteenth-century academic view of classical antiquity. The objective of academic investigation of the historical, literary, philosophical records of antiquity was to reach into the ancient world and to take hold of its essential truths. The set of diverse and comprehensive interrogations of the past was subsumed under the term *Altertumswissenschaft*, which denoted an all-inclusive study of the ancient world. These exhaustive inquiries were deemed the only way to grasp the reality and essence of antiquity. This spirit was prominent in the study of ancient texts. The specifically literary legacy of Winckelmann's aesthetics of purity motivated the work of some important philologists during the nineteenth century, and thus would have impacted the professional environment of Nietzsche's early career. It is the phenomenon we can call "white philology," that is to say, a philology of purity. The perspective is expressed in Theodor Bergk's goal of "cleansing" (*säubern*) texts for the purpose of eliminating error, as well in Friedrich Ritschl's specification of philology's goal as "purification and cleansing" (*Reinigung und Säuberung*).[32] This was the philological path, so the doctrine maintained, that would reach that "essential core [*den Kern des hellenischen Wesens*] of Hellenism" in the passage cited earlier. But this was the path to the Greeks which Nietzsche must have had in mind as he excoriated the "Alexandrian man who is basically a librarian and proof-reader, sacrificing his sight miserably to book-dust and errors" (BT §18).

To Nietzsche, no genuine cultural achievement could emerge in the modern world if it had to be mediated by a false antithesis of inner and outer. Cultural achievement is drowned in the depths of modern subjectivity when these depths lack outward effect (UM II §5). Such disjunctions replicate themselves many times and are manifested as the enervated state of modern life. Nietzsche warns us: "Compare for once

the heights of your capacity for knowledge with the depths of your incapacity for action" (UM II §9).

* * *

We saw that, in Winckelmann's imagination, surfaces place the observer in a position inviting entry into the inner essence of a work of art. Surfaces attune the observer to the realization of where and how beauty's essence is situated in that work. In describing the Laocoön, Winckelmann refuses to recognize any sign of rage on the figure's face or in his bearing, despite the great pain being experienced. The face of the Laocoön is credited instead with the expression of inner serenity. Indeed, the grandeur of Laocoön's soul and his physical pain are distributed uniformly and simultaneously over his body.[33] And as was pointed out, a powerful resonance operates in Winckelmann's writings between the stillness of beauty and the stillness within the one reflecting on that beauty.

This configuration of the relation of surface to depth is displaced by Nietzsche, whose view of surface inverts Winckelmann's judgment in the *Reflections* regarding the Laocoön. Nietzsche's attitude is revealed in a notebook entry of 1870-71: "There is no beautiful surface without a terrible depth [*ohne eine schreckliche Tiefe*]" (KSA 7, 7[91], 159). Nietzsche thus construes the relation of exterior to interior in a manner opposite to Winckelmann. This in turn affects how he views human nature. Reflecting the Heraclitus fragment which states that you will not find the limits of the soul even if you travel every road, so deep is its *logos*,[34] Nietzsche questions in the essay "Schopenhauer as Educator" how humans can find themselves, since they are creatures "dark and veiled," adding that "if the hare has seven skins, man can cast off seventy times seven and still not be able to say 'this is really you, this is no longer outer shell'" (UM III §1).

Conveying his animus against Platonism, Nietzsche felt that the early Greeks had avoided the misguided search for essence through their acceptance of what lay on the surface. In a well-known passage from *The Gay Science*, he exclaims:

> Oh those Greeks! They knew how to *live*: what is needed for that is to stop bravely at the surface, the fold, the skin; to worship appearance, to believe in shapes, tones, words—in the whole Olympus of appearance! Those Greeks were superficial—*out of profundity!* [*aus Tiefe!*]. (GS Preface §4)

He affirms this as the stance which explorers of the spirit like himself must take. As he holds to shapes, tones, and words, so he, too, is a Greek, and an artist.

* * *

Nietzsche moved to an ontological inversion of the relation between surface and depth as it was espoused by Winckelmann. Behind Laocoön's "intense suffering" evident from "his muscles, sinews, and veins" as the poison from the serpent's bite courses through his blood, lie stillness, calm, and repose.[35] For Winckelmann, they are what comprise the statue's beauty. Nietzsche radically restructured this relation of surface appearance to what lies concealed beneath by re-valorizing the role of appearance. Apollo, named the "shining one," is described by Nietzsche as the divine image (*Götterbild)* of the *principium individuationis* and his "gestures and gaze speak to us [...] of the pleasure, wisdom, and beauty of 'semblance' [*Schein*]" (BT §1).

In this case, says Nietzsche, the calm and repose of individuals are brought through the "will of Apollo" by virtue of the plastic power of boundary making. That is, by virtue of the Apollonian we experience the lived reality of phenomena and gain (the semblance of) individual identity. Apollonian semblances constitute therefore a reality dependent on boundaries of individuation (BT §4). But the calm and repose of the Apollonian is insecure, for it cannot remain impervious to the Dionysian movement and stirrings (*Regungen*) (BT §1) which will erase our subjectivity; nor ultimately can it resist "the flood-tide of the Dionysian" which must "destroy periodically all the small circles in which the one-sidedly Apollonian will attempted to confine Hellenic life" (BT §9).

Winckelmann's Platonism sustained him in believing that there was an ineffable essence of beauty in works of art. Nietzsche may follow him to the extent of acknowledging the indeterminateness of the ground of being, but there the similarities end. Nietzsche speaks of a primordial unity (*das Ur-Eine*),[36] but he treats it as radically discontinuous with semblance. Moreover, he characterizes it in terms of movement as well as contrast and contradiction (*Widerspruch*), even primal pain (*Urschmerz*) (BT §4). This should not surprise us, since the full title of the book is *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music*. Music as an art form is necessarily dynamic, since it unfolds through time, and harmony works through tonal contrast. Disunity and conflict are at the core of his primordial unity, to the extent that Nietzsche calls "eternal, primal pain [...] the only ground of the world" (BT §4). When describing Raphael's

*Transfiguration*, he avers that the semblance illustrated in the painting is a "reflection of the eternal contradiction, which is the father of all things." This is another of Nietzsche's reminiscences of the premier philosopher of contradiction Heraclitus, who famously called war the father and king of all (*polemos pantôn men patêr, pantôn de basileus*).[37] This dynamism is what lurks in the terrible depths he warned of in the 1870-1871 notebook.

A similar suspicion of depths is apparent when Nietzsche turns in *The Birth of Tragedy* to Schopenhauer's example of the boatman on the storm tossed sea. Winckelmann's imagery of the sea had invoked its invariably calm depths, no matter what the upheavals on its raging surface, and he used this image in the *Reflections* when explicating his formula "a noble simplicity and quiet grandeur" (*eine edle Einfalt und eine stille Größe*). Nietzsche sees no such calmness when he turns to Schopenhauer's illustration of how humans are trapped in the veil of Maya, and he quotes the following passage:

> Just as the boatman sits in his small boat trusting his frail craft in a stormy sea that is boundless in every direction, rising and falling with the howling, mountainous waves, so in the midst of a world full of suffering and misery the individual man sits, supported by and trusting in the *principium individuationis.* (BT §1)

The calmness of the boatman (not of the sea's depths) is the product of trust in illusion and semblance. The boatman's semblance of control is over a frail craft that is at the mercy of forces he cannot command. Nietzsche hastens to add that the boatman is "trapped" within his craft and would be seized with horror, were he to lose the safety of his illusions about the phenomenal world. Apollo as god of the *principium individuationis* provides the redemptive vision of calmness and control to the man being tossed on the sea, but the Apollonian gestures are merely evidence that underlying everything is a "whole world of agony" (BT §4)! We ourselves are an appearance (*Erscheinung*) (BT §4), and are, indeed, trapped in a semblance which is demanded by the primordial unity for its release and redemption.

* * *

This has been an account of two Greek ideals, formed in part from the same elements. It is a story of how two discourses about Greek antiquity were shaped by separate histories and the cultural burdens of their authors.

In conclusion, belief in a reality which lies beyond human comprehension is a theme whose roots reach back to the earliest stages of Western philosophy. Winckelmann's Neoplatonic thesis that beauty (*Schönheit*) lies beyond understanding, in depths towards which surface phenomena direct us, but to which they are not capable of fully conveying us, is part of that tradition. While acknowledging these restrictions, Winckelmann was, at the same time, convinced of the power of Greek art to manifest the divinity of beauty in a visible form. Winckelmann's entire project on the art of the Greeks was devoted to showing how this was so, and the outcome was an internally coherent and influential portrayal of what came to be known as the Greek ideal.

For his part, Nietzsche rejected much of the account of Western philosophy which underlay his predecessor's achievement, in particular the link to Platonism. Nietzsche's condemnation of aesthetic Socratism, the doctrine that "in order to be beautiful everything must be reasonable" or comprehensible (*alles muß verständig sein um schön zu sein*) (BT §12), is part of this rejection. Like Winckelmann's beauty, Nietzsche's Dionysian can be said to lie beyond reason and understanding, but it does so as a form of radical discontinuity with phenomena. The primordial oneness (*das Ur-Eine*) is, as we have noted, inchoate and indeterminate, and expressible only through Apollonian illusion. Nietzsche replaces the formal, tensionless unity comprising Winckelmann's concept of beauty with the dynamic dualism of the Apollonian and Dionysian. They are the wellspring of the aesthetic beauty in Greek tragedy, the source of the music in the title of his first book.

A last point: unity is found by both Nietzsche and Winckelmann in the annihilation of self-consciousness. For Winckelmann, unity of being lifts the individual out the quotidian into the empyrean, as it were; it arises out of the fantasy of mythic subjectivity in an imaginary antiquity, and in a body freed from conflict and opposition.[38] For Nietzsche, it was reached through Dionysian abandonment of restraint and the collapsing of all boundaries into the primordial unity, into the ground of being. Both versions are Greek; both are modern.

# Notes

[1] Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1972), 162.

[2] Vincent Descombes, *Modern French Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1980), 3. Marx and Freud are also included under this rubric.

[3] M. S. Silk and J. P. Stern, *Nietzsche on Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1981), 5.

[4] Ernst Behler, "The Force of Classical Greece in the Formation of the Romantic Age in Germany," in Carol G. Thomas (ed.), *Paths from Ancient Greece* (Leiden: E J. Brill, 1988), 119-39 (119).

[5] Silk and Stern, *Nietzsche on Tragedy*, 6.

[6] Anthony Stephens, "Socrates or chorus person? The problem of individuality in Nietzsche's Hellenism," in G. W. Clarke (ed.), *Rediscovering Hellenism: The Hellenic Inheritance and the English Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989), 237-60 (246).

[7] Winckelmann, *Reflections on the Imitation of Greek Works* (La Salle: Open Court, 1987), 33; [= J. J. Winckelmann, *Kleine Schriften* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1968), 43].

[8] Alex Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal: Winckelmann and the Origins of Art History* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1994), 193.

[9] Friedrich Schiller, cited in Stephens, "Socrates or chorus person?", 246.

[10] Wilhelm von Humboldt, *Humanist without Portfolio: An Anthology of the Writings of Wilhelm von Humboldt*, ed. Marianne Cowan (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1963), 400 (emphasis added) [= *Gesammelte Schriften*, 17 vols (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1968), vol. 15, 456].

[11] Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*, 139.

[12] Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*, 148-49.

[13] Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*, 150.

[14] Winckelmann, *Monumenti Antichi*, quoted in Anthony Vidler, "'The Hut and the Body': The 'Nature of Architecture' from Laugier to Quatremère de Quincy," *Lotus International* 33 (1972): 105-11 (105).

[15] Winckelmann, *Monumenti Antichi*, quoted in Vidler, "'The Hut and the Body,'" 105. Winckelmann discusses the process in *Reflections on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture*, ed. E. Heyer and R. Norton (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1987), 51-53 [= J. J. Winckelmann, *Kleine Schriften, Vorreden, Entwürfe*, ed. Walther Rehm (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1968), 51-52].

[16] Barbara Maria Stafford, "Beauty of the Invisible: Winckelmann and the Aesthetics of Imperceptibility," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 43 (1980): 65-78 (67).

[17] Stafford, "Beauty of the Invisible," 76, citing *Geschichte der Kunst*, 162.

[18] Stafford, "Beauty of the Invisible," 67 and 77.

[19] Stafford, "Beauty of the Invisible," 74.

[20] Winckelmann, *Monumenti Antichi* (cited in Vidler, "'The Hut and the Body,'" 105).

[21] Vidler, "'The Hut and the Body,'" 105. Compare what Winckelmann says in the *Reflections on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture*: "The concepts of unity and completeness in the nature of antiquity will purify and make more meaningful the concepts of those things that are divided in our nature. By discovering their beauties [the artist] will be able to bring them into harmony with perfect beauty, and [. . .] will become a rule unto himself [*er wird bei Entdeckung der Schönheiten derselben diese mit dem vollkommenen Schönen zu verbinden wissen und durch Hülfe der ihm beständig gegenwärtigen erhabenen Formen wird er sich selbst eine Regel werden*]" (21; Winckelmann, *Kleine Schriften*, 38).

[22] Stafford, "Beauty of the Invisible," 68.

[23] Winckelmann, *Reflections on the Imitation of Greek Works*, 33 [= *Kleine Schriften*, 43].

[24] Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal*, 2.

[25] Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal*, 256, n. 3.

[26] Winckelmann, *History of Ancient Art*, 165.

[27] Winckelmann, *History of Ancient Art*, 148.

[28] Robert B. Pippin, *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem* (Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 5 and 19.

[29] Eric Hobsbawn, *The Age of Revolution: Europe 1789-1848* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1962) offers an excellent account.

[30] Pippin, *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem*, 35.

[31] Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1975), 23.

[32] See James I. Porter, *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2000), 294, n. 41.

[33] Winckelmann, *Reflections*, 33-35 [= *Kleine Schriften*, 43].

[34] Fragment 45, in Hermann Diels and Walther Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 10th edn (Berlin: Weidmann, 1952), 161

[35] Winckelmann, *History of Ancient Art*, 361.

[36] BT §4. For a list of various phrases used by Nietzsche for this idea, see Barbara von Reibnitz, *Eine Kommentar zu Friedrich Nietzsche "Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik" (Kapitel 1-12)* (Stuttgart: Metzler Verlag, 1992), 143-44.

[37] Fragment 53, in Diels/Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 162. For a pertinent account of Nietzsche's use of Heraclitus, see Alexander Aichele, *Philosophie als Spiel: Platon, Kant, Nietzsche* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2000).

[38] Potts, *Flesh and the Ideal*, 150.

# Nietzsche's Ontological Roots in Goethe's Classicism

*Friedrich Ulfers and Mark Daniel Cohen*

THE STUDY OF intellectual history has a penchant for resorting to schools. It is our tendency to group the highest temperature thought into movements, to find it fallen in bunches across the lawn of historical periods, to locate it collecting in masses, as if the probings, suspicions, and sudden insights of individual theorists were varied growths emerging from but one plant per era. We think of schools of thought, and we cut our predecessors to fit the Procrustean bed we have made for them. But it is specific ideas that come from the brains of specific thinkers, and the characterization of thought by periods of shared belief and bias is not only vastly general and vague, but also deceptive and falsifying. No substantive thinking can be so distilled, as no compound can be drawn down to a single element. And thought possesses the compounded complexity of its source—of a living personality. It is an enhancement of inner life, filled and sensed with contradictions, guesses, misdirections, hints, inadvertent gestures, rethinkings, leaps of faith, and intuitions. And when we miss so much, we miss more—we miss what does not fit the character we expect to find. There are often secret traditions of thought that run against the grain of the period in which they occur, and often, they exercise more influence in their eventuality than the dominant view—they accomplish more to direct, to make possible, the future.

Our preference for farming intellectual history into rows of single-purposed periods, into eras of like-minded thought, compels distortions of appreciation nowhere so great as in our conceptions of Romanticism and classicism. And when we turn to authors whom we place in high position within those constructed movements of ideas, we wipe away from our comprehension, as if with a wet cloth, all their idiosyncrasies and specificities of imagination, all the details of their creations of intellect—presumably the very thing we are attempting to highlight and disclose through our researches.

It is the general and unconsidered judgment that Goethe lays the paradigm for the German Classical author, whereas Nietzsche is judged to be anything from the last Romantic to the first postmodern theorist. But a more considered examination will reveal that neither thinker fits his assigned category with less than the full individuality that is evidenced by every other aspect of his work, and that these two figures of a presumed opposite temperament are remarkably similar in intellectual character. More specifically, a careful examination of their thought indicates that Nietzsche and Goethe held virtually identical assessments of classicism, and that both attempted its practice in their work—attempted to be classical in much the same sense.

In seeking to determine an authentic conception of Nietzsche's classicism, it is imperative to look toward the figure of Goethe as pivotal for Nietzsche's definition of the term. Nietzsche's position issues from a rejection of the form of classicism that is generally recognized as "Weimar Classicism,"[1] a conception of classicism that revolves around the notion of "a noble simplicity, tranquil serenity,"[2] as understood by Winckelmann to denote the hallmark characteristics of Greek art, characteristics that also constitute the tenor of several of Goethe's dramas, such as *Torquato Tasso*, *Egmont*, and *Iphigenie auf Tauris.*

Nietzsche's indictment of Weimar Classicism begins as early as *The Birth of Tragedy*, in which he contends that such a characterization of Greek Classicism—as imbued with an optimism he calls, in a passage which makes an implicit reference to Winckelmann, "cheerfulness" (BT Attempt at a Self-Criticism §1)—is a misrepresentation of Greek culture in its tragic age, an error in appreciation because of its one-sidedness, its emphasis on the static and lifeless. Specifically, Nietzsche's objection is that this conception omits the Dionysian, which he considers a complementary, and necessary, aspect of classical Greek culture: "One could say that the concept 'classical'—, as Winckelmann and Goethe coined it, not only did not explain the Dionysian element, but excluded it from it" (KSA 13, 14[35], 235).

For Nietzsche, to speak of an authentic concept of the classical is to reintegrate the excluded (destructive) Dionysian element with the (constructive) Apollonian one, thus re-creating a contradiction of incommensurables, a dynamic combining of incompatibles, an *Ineinander,* or "entanglement" (KSA 7, 7[196], 213) of contrary values or tendencies that he situates at the core of the tragic world view in Greek culture. It is this contradiction or interlacing of opposites, constituting the ground of pessimism, that Nietzsche deems worthy of designating as classical,

though he concedes that "the word 'classical' offends my ears, it is far too trite and has become round and indistinct" (GS §370).

In redefining classicism as a "different kind of pessimism, a classical type," Nietzsche contrasts it with a "Romantic" pessimism. For Nietzsche, "Romantic pessimism"—with its focus on suffering, the suffering of one who "revenges himself on all things"—is as one-sided as Winckelmann's conception of classicism with its emphasis on cheerfulness (GS §370). Nietzsche's corresponding indictment of Romantic pessimism, then, is that it stresses turmoil and torment at the expense of what for him is the necessary complement, namely, joy and rapture. classicism becomes the name for the complementarity that constitutes, as the *Ineinander* of health and disease, an "overflowing health" (BT Attempt §1), or "the great health" (GS §382): a health that encompasses both growth and decay—a full-bodied, full-blooded health that acknowledges the authentic nature of life.

Nietzsche's classicism of pessimism is one with which Goethe identifies, at least implicitly, after his Weimar phase. Goethe's complaints against both Romanticism and classicism, considered as unambiguous alternatives, are remarkably close to Nietzsche's. In the consideration of a simple opposition of Romanticism and classicism, Goethe weighs in against what he feels is a one-sidedness on the part of the Romantics: their excessive tendency toward the disintegrative at the expense of a complementary integrative perspective. It is with regard to this view that Goethe, in a conversation with Johann Peter Eckermann on April 2 1829, describes the classical as "healthy" over against the Romantic as "diseased." To be sure, this might be read as maintaining the opposition between classicism and Romanticism as one between health and disease. However, such a reading is quickly obviated by the view Goethe expresses in an essay from 1820, "*Klassiker und Romantiker in Italien, sich heftig bekämpfend*," in which he states that the classicist, in his "clinging" to the "inimitable works" of antiquity, runs the danger of ending in "a form of fixity and pedantry": "whoever is preoccupied with the past only is in danger of pressing to his heart as dried up that which has died and has become mummy-like for us."[3]

Ultimately, it is Goethe's intent not to take sides in the opposition of classicism and Romanticism—or the opposition of "naïve"(objective) and "sentimental" (subjective) poetry, as delineated by Schiller.[4] Rather, Goethe wants "to temper this quarrel in a way that it is equalized without the loss of one side," as he puts it in his *Maxims and Reflections*.[5] The *Gleiche* (the same or equal)—which amounts to a synthesis whereby one side is not absorbed into the other by way of a Hegelian *Aufhebung*

(meaning both "absorption" and "elimination")—is comparable to the non-sublatable dialectic of Nietzsche's contradiction, or *Ineinander*, of Apollo and Dionysus.

What Goethe aspires to is the position of "conciliator" between the opposites. According to a conversation with Eckermann on 16 December 1829, Goethe attempts this mediation between Romanticism and classicism in the Helena Act of *Faust II*. There, "both forms of literature were to show forth in equal measure and constitute a kind of reconciliation." It is clear from an examination of the text of the play that such a "reconciliation" does not mean a full and stable resolution of tensions, but rather a dynamic intertwining of opposing forces, an irresolvable integration of incompatibles—a state comparable to that which Nietzsche describes as "higher than any reconciliation" (Z II 20).

By clear implication, Goethe aligns himself with the Nietzschean "classical pessimism" and its core proposition: the integration of opposing tendencies of thought into an internally contradictory and productive whole. And it must be noted, for all Nietzsche's doubts regarding Goethe, whom he frequently saw as an unrepentant classicist in the sense of the unambiguous cheerfulness of false antiquity, Nietzsche also saw the more sophisticated thinker, the less over simplifying poet of the classical, when he acknowledged Goethe as "the last German for whom I feel reverence" (TI Skirmishes of an Untimely Man §51). Nietzsche makes his meaning unmistakable when he adds that "[the belief of] such spirit who has *become free* [...] I have baptized [...] with the name of *Dionysus*" (TI Skirmishes §49).

In and of themselves, such disputes and alignments concerning classicism and Romanticism are matters of literary etiquette. Classicism is, in essence, an issue of style, and, in the final assessment, the shared values of Goethe and Nietzsche that come under the rubric of "classicism" amount to a similarity of taste and of judgment regarding the relative worth and implication of specific cultural manners. But it would signify nothing more regarding their similarity as thinkers were there not further and more substantial similarities of content shared by their works. A broader analysis of their writings reveals precisely such a confluence of thought—a closeness of view on substantive matters that directly reflects the values they both ascribed ultimately to classicism. In essence, Nietzsche and Goethe did not just describe classicism similarly—they both adopted what they saw as its recommendations and employed it similarly.

The deeper and, to many, more surprising alignment of view between Nietzsche and Goethe is over their conceptions of the world—

conceptions that directly reflect the classicist values which both recommended. To say this is to say that Nietzsche and Goethe agreed to a significant degree in their views on ontology, on the essential structure and inherent processes of reality—that they agreed on the nature of the truth of the world. It is also to say that, in much of his work at least, Goethe functioned in the same sense as Nietzsche, as a thinker attempting to penetrate the truth of the real, and that both thinkers took classical values not merely as preferable as a matter of style but as more accurate, as more revealing and reflective of the nature of reality—that they took classicism as not just a better approach to literary composition but as an improved explanatory principle—that they took it seriously.

This assertion is based on the view of Nietzsche as an ontologist, as a philosopher whose principal project was to disclose the nature of the truth behind appearances—a position the authors of this paper have previously argued.[6] Despite Nietzsche's rhetorical denial of the possibility of "truth," it appears clear to us that the philosopher's thoughts on morality, culture, aesthetics, religion, and a variety of other topics pertinent specifically to the concerns of human communities, are rooted in the assertion that the human being is a part of nature and is operational according to the rules by which any portion of nature functions. Specifically, Nietzsche's is a processual philosophy that presents the autogenerative creation of all appearances out of an intrinsic drive to manifest and denies the possibility of material substance, of stabilized integrity of structure, of mechanical causality, and of unambiguous presence. He is, in short, a philosopher of the integration of Becoming and Being, of the world and all its portions as fleeting manifestations of the Will to Power. His views regarding the more "human" issues of his concern are informed by his positing of both the Will to Power and the impossibility of substance as necessary explanatory principles regarding any field of eventuality. Even a cursory examination of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, or Nietzsche's arguments regarding aesthetics and logic in *The Birth of Tragedy*, will indicate the degree to which Nietzsche is an unremitting philosopher of the real.

What is astonishing about Goethe's philosophy of the world, considering the author's stature as a principal classical author in the Western European tradition, is that it is in agreement with Nietzsche's on virtually every point. Goethe's philosophical views on the world are, at best, roughly laid out, appearing largely in his scientific writings—in both his essays and books on botany, morphology, meteorology, and his *Theory of Colours*, in which he disputed Newton's theory of optics, as well as in the several of his poems devoted to his scientific views—works that he con-

sidered as more significant than they were generally estimated to be at the time or have been since. Underlying his very concept of science and appropriate scientific practice is a processual philosophy that is specifically autogenerative and acausal. Upon analysis, the convergence with Nietzsche's views is so great that one can suspect the presence of direct influence. To all appearances, Goethe sets the template for Nietzsche's ontology.

Of course, such influence is impossible to assume, and requires the evidence of direct testimony from the later thinker, testimony we have not found. It also must be considered that Nietzsche was deeply reliant in his thought on *Naturphilosophie* and specifically on Schelling, whose works Goethe read along with much of *Naturphilosophie*. The possibility of both authors having been similarly influenced is at least as great as that of Nietzsche obtaining portions of his ideas from Goethe. Nevertheless, the presence of such a degree of alignment in their views, considering as well the degree to which we know Nietzsche was familiar with the works of Goethe, suggests a field promising for further research.

Despite certain differences in their final assessments of the implications of a dynamical process as the essential reality behind appearances—or, more in the case of Goethe, as the ultimate causal agency underlying physical manifestation—a review of Goethe's thought demonstrates that he manages to coincide almost directly with the majority of Nietzsche's ontological assertions. The number of such alignments is so large, and the complexity of their agreement is so great, that in this paper only the most cursory analysis can be offered, and only the briefest overview of Goethe's position can be given. Nevertheless, it should be noted, even if only in passing, that Goethe asserts a broad selection of typically Nietzschean propositions: internal contradiction as the essential condition of all evident reality; the rejection of the mechanistic explanation of the world; the inherence of interpretation in all knowledge; the influence of each event on all other events; the denial of determinism and teleology; the casting of all knowledge for its functional value to human existence; the inadequacy of reason alone as an interpreter of reality; the importance of the philosophy of Heraclitus; creation by means of an internal strife; the perspectival nature of all knowledge; the essential quality of every physical manifestation as representing a quantity of force; and even the view of the world as aesthetic in its essential nature.

The core of Goethe's processual philosophy of the world is formulated in two propositions: polarity (*Polarität*) and intensification (*Steigerung*). Polarity is a property attributed by Goethe to all phenomena. It is the aspect of their nature by which they are kept in a constant

state of flux through the confluence of attractive and repulsive forces, which appear to constitute in his view the very nature of the material world. As a result, all phenomena exist in a process of confrontation between those opposing forces, either externally or internally—a process that combines them in a manner detrimental to one of the phenomena or both or neither, and separates them again, compelling transformations that keep all phenomena in a continuous state of Becoming. As Goethe presents it in his essay "*Polarität*": "Whatever appears in the world must divide if it is to appear at all. What has been divided seeks itself again, can return to itself and reunite. This happens in a lower sense when it merely intermingles with its opposite, combines with it; here the phenomenon is nullified or at least neutralized."[7] The effect of the process is to render a world of fundamental contradiction, in which everything we meet "springs from an unfathomable, limitless, humorous, self-contradictory being,"[8] a world in which "we find that nothing fixed, static, or precisely delineated occurs and that every thing is in a ceaseless state of flux. [...] That which is formed is straightway transformed again [...]."[9] The similarity to Nietzsche's denial of substance and of the possibility of stable beings, as well as his integration of Becoming and Being and his dynamic, processual philosophy, is distinct.

Intensification, or *Steigerung*, appears in Goethe's works primarily as an attribute of living organisms. *Steigerung* is the property of an internal striving within organic phenomena: their tendency, in their continual state of flux, to push toward ever more complex, ever more beautiful forms of manifestation—their tendency to flourish. It is a vertical urge, in Goethe's language, "a state of ever-striving ascent."[10] The result is to introduce novelty into the world. In speaking of the union of opposites after a division due to polarity, Goethe observes: "However, the union may occur in a higher sense if what has been divided is first intensified: then in the union of the intensified halves it will produce a third thing, something new, higher, unexpected."[11] In this language, one can easily recognize Nietzsche's conception of the over-ruling of the law of contradiction—whereby neither one alternative nor the other becomes paramount, but instead a third thing—and one can also hear echoes of Nietzsche's conception of self-overcoming.

The property of *Steigerung* operates against a background of the inner tendency to form, which Goethe saw as operative in all organisms—what he called the "formative impulse."[12] It is the inner impulse, an a-causal principle of causality, by which every organism takes its form according to its own laws, rather than by fiat or dictation from some outside power. As Goethe put it in the poem "Metamorphosis of Animals":

"Deep within the more noble creatures, indeed, a power / Dwells enclosed in the holy ring of vital formation. / Here are the limits no god can alter, honored by Nature."[13]

Yet, for Goethe, there is something other than the gods that can alter the intrinsic form of the organism. Under the intensification of the *Steigerung*, the organism may unpredictably strive to alter its form: "Deep within, however, a spirit may seem to be wrestling: / How shall he rupture the ring and cause the forms to be random, / Random the will?"[14] Here, one can see that the conception of the *Steigerung* is close, even functionally identical, to Nietzsche's Will to Power in its function as the inner drive that directs the development of organisms to a far greater degree than does "a mere reactivity, [...] [an] inner adaptation to external conditions." To focus on external conditions, Nietzsche complains, "one overlooks the essential priority of the spontaneous, aggressive, expansive, form-giving forces that give new interpretations and directions" (GM II §13).

Ultimately, for Nietzsche, the Will to Power was the essential reality of the world, the underlying truth of things—not merely of organic things, but of all apparent "things"—the existence of which is merely apparent, substance and integrity of form being nothing more than the human interpretation of the general flux of pulsating and universal will. Although Goethe is clear that polarity applies to all material reality, there are little more than a few indications that *Steigerung* applies to the inorganic world. Testimony of the striving of self-overcoming in all matter is given in Goethe's "A Commentary on the Aphoristic Essay 'Nature,'" in which he asserts that "matter has the faculty of dynamically rising to higher levels,"[15] and clear evidence of the claim occurs in the poem "Universal Soul," in which Goethe directly asserts the universal nature of intensification: "With godlike courage all things come to mean / A self-surpassing, whither all must strive: / The fruitless water wishes to be green / And every particle of dust is live."[16] This may be the moment in which Goethe comes closest to Nietzsche's sense of the Will to Power as operational in all evident material existence, his sense of the world "as a certain definite quantity of force and as a certain definite number of centers of force" (WP §1066).

Nevertheless, to Goethe the evidence of the operation and influence of the *Steigerung* is nowhere so clear as among human beings, so much so that at moments he acquires a suspicion of a higher development, a striving upward, above the level of the human—in short, precisely Nietzsche's conception of the *Übermensch*. In a conversation of 14 June 1809 recorded by Johannes Daniel Falk, Goethe speculates on the possi-

bility of Nature rolling the dice with the human form, and the echoes of Heraclitus—a figure admired by Goethe and Nietzsche alike—can be heard throughout: "The skeletons of some marine animals show plainly that, even while designing these, Nature was already feeling her way toward the higher idea of land animals. [...] You can imagine Nature standing at a gaming-counter, as it were, constantly shouting 'Double' and continuing to play with her winnings in all her domains with unfailing luck *ad infinitum*. The stone, the animal, the plant—after a number of such lucky throws they are all put at stake again; and who knows but that man himself is not in his turn just another throw for higher winnings?"[17] The inference seems inescapable for Goethe. He views every animal as intrinsically perfect. As he writes in "Metamorphosis of Animals": "Every animal *is* an end in itself, it issues / Perfect from Nature's womb."[18] Yet every animal is subject to the striving of the spirit wrestling within, wrestling to make the will random—every animal in its perfection strives toward metamorphosis. And, as Goethe has Ottilie write in her diary in *Elective Affinities*: "Anything perfect in its kind must transcend its kind; it must become something different, something incomparable."[19] The supersession of the human seems a logical inevitability for Goethe, exactly as it would come to seem for Nietzsche.

Despite the incidental, numerous coincidences between the ontological philosophies of Nietzsche and Goethe, the essential coordination of view is in the broad outlines—in the processual nature of world that both acknowledged. As noted, both saw that process-oriented vision of the world as engaging an essential contradiction in things, a combining and confronting of opposing forces that does not negate the forces involved but holds them in a dynamic balance. To employ a term of Goethe's, it is a vision of the "harmonics" of the world, and it is, in the views both of these thinkers came to hold, a classical view, for, in both cases, it combines alternatives into a greater whole, it harmonizes, in a dynamical striving posture, opposing tendencies—precisely what both thinkers came to see as the essence of classicism.

Yet despite the principal field of agreement, there are fundamental differences in their visions of such harmonics. For Nietzsche, all material and integrity of form are functions of human language and the human viewpoint—they are not portions of the world as it is.[20] Nietzsche's is a world strictly of Will to Power. The world is purely a dynamism that generates appearances which are specific to whatever interacts with them. All possibilities of appearance are confined to the viewpoint from which they appear. In the end, the world is in itself an inconceivable seething cauldron of the will to throw up manifestations, perspectivally specific,

that are dissolved as they are created, that come to be as they pass away, that come to be and pass away, as it were, at the same time, in the same gesture. However, for Goethe, the material articles of the world are real—objects exist—but they reveal themselves to be in a constant state of change, of flux, powered by an inner drive to transform, an inner drive not unlike the way in which Nietzsche's Will to Power may be momentarily and inferentially suggested to human senses, which are bound to see a world of extensive space populated by persistent objects.

The most significant difference between these two applications of the classical can be seen in the degree of success Nietzsche and Goethe achieve in executing an ontological philosophy in accordance with it. On closer examination, it becomes clear that Nietzsche was the more sophisticated in his method, that he achieved a subtler integration of opposing powers—an integration that does not dissolve the very point of their opposition—in short, that he accomplished a more successful classicism.

The difference in approach can best be illuminated by examining the way in which the two thinkers dealt with science, for it is by way of accommodating science in their philosophical systems that both Nietzsche and Goethe fulfill and explicate, bring forward, their ontological positions. It is also the field in which they both attempt the most demanding and significant of all integrations of oppositions: the folding-together of the subjective and the objective, of the mind and the world it considers, of the thinker and the thing to be thought. And it is precisely here that Nietzsche displays the greater sophistication of conception.

It was Goethe's intent to redefine the practice of science. It was his interest to return the science he saw as far too mechanistic, arid, and arithmetic to what he termed the "living quality" of direct experience. In his *Theory of Colours* he complains, referring to the difficulties conceptual thought introduces for the understanding: "Yet, how difficult it is to avoid substituting the sign for the thing; how difficult to keep the essential quality still living before us, and not to kill it with a word."[21] Goethe's alternative approach is to include and incorporate into his scientific theorizing all the elements of the encounter with the phenomena being investigated, to investigate the qualities of experience rather than the abstract quantities of the data acquired by scientific procedure. In his *Theory of Colours*, he disputes Newton's optics as dealing with the abstract—meaning, unobservable—entity of light, rather than with colors, the direct experience we attribute to light. Goethe's aim is to renounce, and offer an alternative to, the bloodlessness of science.

The reactions to Goethe's scientific project, then and since, have been predictable. Most who comment on his work have simply dismissed

it as not being science. Werner Heisenberg, creator of the Uncertainty Principle and one of the primary contributors to Quantum Theory in the twentieth century, wrote about the discrepancy of view between Goethe and Newton. Among commentators on Goethe, Heisenberg would know more of science than most. And yet, his objections to Goethe's approach are no more illuminating than the others. He observes that Goethe can be "reproached" legitimately for not being scientific, in that his work did not lead to real control of optical phenomena, and that he did not separate the subjective from the objective. For Heisenberg, such qualities are among the defining marks of the scientific approach.[22] Yet, this is argument by mere insistence. Goethe does not *seek* to control phenomena or separate the subjective from the objective—these precisely are among the aspects of the scientific conception that Goethe is putting in question. Simply to accuse him of exactly what he is trying to do is not to answer him, nor is it to locate an error in his procedure, which is the only way to answer convincingly—to demonstrate that what Goethe is attempting is unworkable.

Yet, such an error is committed, and it comes in Goethe's attempt to integrate the subjective and the objective, one of the very matters over which he chooses to dispute science. Goethe, like Nietzsche, accepts that there is a world in existence—he is no idealist. And he believes that the entire array of human sensory apparatus ought to be used to probe it. For Goethe, the human animal is a data-gathering device of, at least, potential reliability. Knowledge from all the senses is acceptable, requisite, if science is to retain the living quality of direct experience. As he noted in conversation with Friedrich Wilhelm Riemer on 28 June 1809: "In one word, our senses themselves do the real experimenting with phenomena, testing them and proving their validity, insofar as phenomena are what they are only for the respective sense in question. Man himself is the greatest, most universal physical apparatus."[23]

The difficulty with Goethe's approach is that, having blended the subjective and the objective, he has no means for separating them again, and so he cannot attribute anything he perceives directly to the object. And yet, this is exactly what he assumes he can do in his investigations into botany and morphology—he assumes he is speaking, with experiential insight, about the plants and animals that are his concern. Put differently, he cannot distinguish in principle between a perception and a reaction. All his observations and responses possess the same status—they float in a kind of limbo, with no specification of their site, of the field to which they are to be attributed. In short, he has moved his science out of the field of the ontological and into the field of the phenomenological—

into the nether land of experience somewhere between the object and the subject. As Elizabeth Wilkinson has argued, for Goethe, "reality is neither in the subject nor in the object but in the activity-between."[24]

This leaves Goethe, when he returns to the object to attribute qualities to it, to practice a naive acceptance of it in all the qualities of its appearance. His blending of the subjective and the objective is a considered position, an attempt to place the two in a dynamical balance so that neither possesses a paramount influence. Yet he has established no intellectual mechanism for limiting the influence of the subject on the observation—his objects come to his attention having been thoroughly filtered by the subjective, thus providing him with no pure object with which to counterbalance it. By naively accepting the object as it appears, Goethe resurrects the subject uncritically and without limitation, after having commanded its limits through the posited balancing with the object. This failure puts him in no position to make any attributions concerning the object itself, no reliable observations concerning the plants, animals, or meteorological events to which he turns his attention. Yet he does desire to make such attributions—they are the very point of his version of science, of any version of science. Goethe's integration of the subjective and the objective is thus not so much a profitable contradiction as a logical absurdity.

Ironically, the limitation of the influence of the subjective is also the very point of the scientific method that Goethe has disputed. His failure to execute such a limiting of the subject may well issue from his condemnation of the scientific method—of its refusal to reflect the full range of human response to the object—but the absurdity of his position demonstrates why that method is indispensable to the investigation of the world, and why Goethe's own method is self negating, resisting rather than aiding the achieving of his own purpose. This is the error of simply claiming a position without then working through its logical implications, and it is an error Nietzsche eliminated from his work.

Nietzsche's response to science was far more understanding—his reactions to and remarks upon ongoing scientific issues and disputes of his time run through much of the *Nachlass*. He learned from it a great deal more about how to establish an ontology that accommodates what science has revealed and, in particular, how to integrate in a productive and dynamic balance the objective and the subjective. Nietzsche extracts his ontology from a body of thought that includes the science of his day by theorizing a moving of the site of subjectivity from the human mind to the world as a whole. The subjective becomes an aspect, not of the human psyche, but of the universe in its entirety. Human mentality, the

human perspective, becomes simply one instance of subjectivity and simply one set of phenomena, comparable to any other. This immediately places subjectivity on an equal footing with objectivity—they become two aspects of the same "thing" and, by definition, must be in a balance. And it removes any possibility, as long as Nietzsche remains consistent with his premises, of a naive acceptance of the object as it appears. Appearance is implicitly rejected as a basis for ontology, which would seem to be an obvious position. But it is an obvious position only after Kant, and Nietzsche's advantage is that he had digested Kant, whereas Goethe, by his own admission, had not.

Without the possibility of resorting to naive appearances, Nietzsche is left to infer his ontological propositions based on deduction from observations, philosophical propositions, and scientific theories, all of which are accepted and qualified as mere phenomena. Put simply, where Goethe trusts implicitly the full range of human sensibility, Nietzsche trusts logic as a procedural means for philosophy. In this, Nietzsche foresaw what would become scientific procedure. For decades now, physics has logically inferred facts that are in principle, or due to circumstance, unobservable, for example, the structure of the DNA molecule.

More to the point, Nietzsche's combining of the subjective and the objective through the consideration of both as comparable phenomena, and accepting naively neither the appearance of the world nor the reactions of human sensibility, is the more sophisticated method of their interpenetration. Specifically, his conception of Pathos—the heart of his universal subjectivity and the single explanatory principle he offered concerning Will to Power[25]—accomplishes what Goethe attempted to achieve in his revaluation of scientific procedure: the integration of subjectivity with objectivity, so as to enhance our insight into the world, into the nature of the real.

Procedurally, what distinguishes Nietzsche's method of integration from that of Goethe is his successful elimination of hierarchy, achieved through a logical structure sufficiently sophisticated to avoid the law of unintended consequences and escape the fate of Goethe's thought—the fall into an unwitting re-establishment of a hierarchical relation between subject and object. Nietzsche's construction, in fact, arrives at the conclusion it claims to accomplish. That elimination of hierarchical relationship is the essence of the classical enterprise, as conceived under the transvaluation of Nietzsche and Goethe, for it permits the treatment of implicitly incomparable elements as though they were comparable aspects of a complex phenomenon. Nietzsche's greater success at the integration places him in a distinctive position in intellectual history—not so much as

the last Romantic or the first postmodernist, but as the first, fully accomplished, modern classicist.

It also places him in a position potentially more distinctive, a position of more extensive pertinence to the history of modern thought. For it places him at the heart of a movement of viewpoint and intellectual posture that encompasses not just philosophy, and not just his own period, but the larger field of artistic and philosophical development of the twentieth century. As the modernist movement began in the arts, a small number of poets, visual artists, and composers claimed a self-alleged classicism—figures such as the poets T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, the painter Piet Mondrian, and the composer Igor Stravinsky. The meaning of classicism for the majority of these innovators was the same: an artistic method, and an ontological view to which that method was appropriate, that was indebted to Heraclitus for the foundation of its message and artistic import, a view of reality as a dynamic and non-hierarchical interlacing of opposing forces. In the case of a number of these figures—in particular, Eliot and Mondrian—the classical message went so far as to constitute a self-acknowledged mysticism.

This is as much as to say that, at the heart of modernism in the arts, there is the suggestion of a secret intellectual tradition, of a development of thought and sensibility that has gone largely unacknowledged. And that buried classicism, which appears to have been passed on from one innovator to another, bears all the hallmarks of the classicism claimed by Goethe and Nietzsche. Recognition of that submerged river of thought may force a redefinition of our current intellectual climate, and, considering Nietzsche's greater success at fulfilling the demands of the program he shared with Goethe, it may locate Nietzsche at the heart of that reevaluation. As Nietzsche foresaw as early as *The Birth of Tragedy*, we may, in the western European tradition, be living in a classical time, and, if so, as the earliest fully accomplished modern classicist, Nietzsche may have done more than has been hitherto realized to direct, to make possible, the future.

## Notes

[1] See Dieter Borchmeyer, *Weimarer Klassik: Portrait einer Epoche* (Weinheim: Beltz Athenäum, 1994).

[2] J. J. Winckelmann, *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1999), 20, 22 (translation by the authors). Winckelmann's study of the Laokoön sculpture (1755), with its emphasis on "simplicity," becomes the very foundation of classicism, particularly Weimar Classicism.

[3] Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke* [Münchner Ausgabe], 33 vols (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1986), vol. 11.2, 259.

[4] See Friedrich Schiller, *On the Naive and Sentimental in Literature*, trans. Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly (Manchester, UK: Carcanet New Press, 1981)

[5] Goethe, *Maximen und Reflexionen* (ed. Hecker), §346.

[6] In their paper "The Energeticist Model of the Universe as Perpetuum Mobile and Nietzsche's Notion of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same," presented at the Eleventh Annual Conference of The Friedrich Nietzsche Society, held at Cambridge University, Cambridge, England, in September 2001.

[7] Goethe, "Polarity," in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Scientific Studies*, ed. and trans. by Douglas Miller (New York: Suhrkamp Publishers, 1988), 155-56 (156).

[8] Goethe, "A Commentary on the Aphoristic Essay 'Nature,'" *Scientific Studies*, 6-7 (6).

[9] Goethe, "Preface to the first issue of Morphology," quoted in Goethe, *Wisdom and Experience*, selected by Ludwig Curtius, trans. and ed. Hermann J. Weigand (New York: Pantheon Books, 1949), 91.

[10] Goethe, "A Commentary on the Aphoristic Essay 'Nature,'" *Scientific Studies*, 6.

[11] Goethe, "Polarity," *Scientific Studies*, 156.

[12] Goethe, "The Formative Impulse," in *Scientific Studies*, 35-36.

[13] Goethe, "Metamorphosis of Animals," in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Selected Poems*, ed. Christopher Middleton (Boston: Suhrkamp/Insel Publishers, 1983), 161 (translation by Middleton).

[14] Goethe, "Metamorphosis of Animals," *Selected Poems*, 161.

[15] Goethe, "Elucidation of the Aphoristic Essay on Nature," quoted in *Wisdom and Experience*, 130.

[16] Goethe, "Universal Soul," *Selected Poems*, 167 (translation by Middleton).

[17] Quoted in Goethe, *Wisdom and Experience* (Biedermann, *Goethes Gespräche*, vol. 2, no. 1185).

[18] Goethe, "Metamorphosis of Animals," *Selected Poems*, 161.

[19] Goethe, *Elective Affinities*, trans. Elizabeth Mayer and Louise Bogan (South Bend, IN: Gateway Editions, 1963), chapter 27 (226).

[20] "Subject, object, a doer added to the doing, the doing separated from that which it does: let us not forget that this is mere semeiotics and nothing real. Mechanistic theory as a theory of motion is already a translation into the sense language of man" (WP §634).

[21] Goethe, *Theory of Colours*, trans. Charles Lock Eastlake (Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT P, 1990), §754 (302).

[22] Werner Heisenberg, "The Teachings of Goethe and Newton on Color in the Light of Modern Physics," in *Philosophical Problems of Quantum Physics* (Woodbridge, CT: Oxbow P, 1979), 63-64.

[23] Goethe, *Wisdom and Experience*, 123 (Biedermann, vol. 2, no. 1189).

[24] "The Poet as Thinker: On the Varying Modes of Goethe's Thought," in Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L. A. Willoughby, *Goethe: Poet and Thinker* (London: Edward Arnold, 1962), 133-52 (137).

[25] "The will to power not a being, not a becoming, but a *pathos*" (WP §635).

# Nietzsche's Anti-Christianity as a Return to (German) Classicism

*Paul Bishop*

> *People always talk of the study of the ancients; but what does that mean, except that it says, turn your attention to the real world, and try to express it—for that is what the ancients did.*[1]

WHAT IS CLASSICISM? Goethe believed he knew the answer: as he put it in one of his maxims and aphorisms, *Klassisch ist das Gesunde, romantisch das Kranke* ("Classicism is healthy, Romanticism is sick").[2] And in conversation with Johann Peter Eckermann on 2 April 1829, he expanded on his famous definition of "classicism," and his distinction between it and "Romanticism," with reference to the concepts of "sickness" and "health":

> I call the classic *healthy*, the Romantic *sickly*. In this sense, the *Nibelungenlied* is as classic as the Iliad, for both are vigorous and healthy. Most modern productions are Romantic—not because they are new; but because they are weak, morbid, and sickly. And the antique is classic—not because it is old; but because it is strong, fresh, joyous, and healthy.[3]

This definition of "classicism" had a clear influence on Nietzsche,[4] who regarded the conversations with Eckermann, as opposed to Luther's translation of the Bible (BGE §247), as "the best German book there is" (HA II Wanderer and his Shadow §109). And in Nietzsche's writings we also find a complex engagement with the values of classicism, and an interpretation of cultural phenomena in terms of a matrix of sickness and health.

## A Philology of the Future?

The origin of his distinction between "classicism" and "Romanticism," Goethe claimed on 21 March 1830, was, in fact, Schiller's treatise *On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry* (1796). One of the central ideas in this essay is the contrast between the past era of the human mind with the pre-

sent era in its history. In that past, as conceived by Schiller, humankind lived in a world in which it was both at one with the world and with itself. (In psycho-anthropological terms, this is what Lévy-Bruhl would call *participation mystique.*)[5] In Schillerian terms, this state is "naïve" (or, in Hegelian terms, "immediate"). By contrast, in the present humankind is separated, or "alienated,"[6] from itself, and from the world, by consciousness. Thanks to thought, reflection, ratiocination, we approach the world in a "sentimental" way (or, in Hegelian terms, live in a "mediate" way). Corresponding to these two modes of being, "naïve" and "sentimental," there are two kinds of art. According to Goethe, Schiller's distinction between the "naïve" and the "sentimental" forms the basis of the distinction between the "classical" and the "Romantic," the point being not just an historical argument about the development of mind, but about the co-existence of two modes of art. For as Goethe told Eckermann on 16 December 1829, using the form of argument called "binary synthesis,"[7] both the "classical" and the "Romantic" are equally valid terms, but true "classicism" subsumes them both into a higher form.[8]

Thus Schiller was aware, as Gadamer was later,[9] of the hermeneutic problem of understanding the past. And so, in his turn, was Nietzsche, who understood well that, as James I. Porter has put it, "classicalness exists alone for a modern subject."[10] In his "Encyclopedia of Classical Philology" (1871), Nietzsche makes this point about the orientation of philology towards the present, and even the future, as follows:[11]

> The study of the ancient authors and monuments is central for [the future teacher]: the understanding of the *classical* is his goal [*das Verständniß des* Klassischen *sein Ziel*]; let him measure the value of comparative language studies accordingly. Whilst the critical-hermeneutic method is nothing but the correct form for approaching antiquity. To this end he studies grammar, in order to be able feel his way into the expressions of antiquity [*in den antiken Ausdruck hinein zuleben*]: he is concerned with what is characteristically Greek and Latin in comparison with our modern world. For it is *for us* that we speak of "classicism," for our modern world [*Denn* für uns *reden wir von Klassicität, für unsere moderne Welt*] [...] (KGW 2.3, 390)

In what Nietzsche says here we can find a clear echo of Humboldt's reiteration of Weimar Classicism's position, as expressed in his letter to Goethe of 23 August 1804, where he points out that Horace probably found Tibur more modern that we do Tivoli:[12]

> Schelling has, I think, said somewhere that classical antiquity is the remains of an original, superior human species, and there is some truth to

> this; every comparison between the modern and the ancient is feeble, because for us it is no longer the same genus that embraces both. [...] But it is only a deception if we ourselves wished to be inhabitants of Athens and Rome. Only from the distance, only separated from everything everyday, only as what is past—only thus can antiquity appear to us [*Nur aus der Ferne, nur von allem Gemeinen getrennt, nur als vergangen muss das Altertum uns erscheinen*].[13]

And Nietzsche had earlier pointed to this contradiction within classical philology in his lecture on "Homer and Classical Philology" (1869):

> Life is worth living, says art, the most beautiful seductress; life is worth knowing, says science [*Das Leben ist werth gelebt zu werden, sagt die Kunst, die schönste Verführerin; das Leben is werth, erkannt zu werden, sagt die Wissenschaft*]. In this comparison emerges the inner contradiction, which often makes itself so heart-rendingly felt, in the concept and, accordingly, in the activity governed by this concept of classical philology. If we adopt a scientific attitude towards antiquity, if we try to understand with the eye of the historian what has become, or to categorize, as naturalists would, the linguistic forms of ancient masterworks, to compare them, at any rate to reduce them to several morphological laws: we always lose what is wonderfully educative about, yes, the real fragrance of the atmosphere of antiquity, we forget that ardent stirring, which led our thought and our pleasure with the power of instinct, the fairest charioteress, to the Greeks. From this point we should notice a quite specific and, to begin with, very surprising antagonism, which philology most of all has reason to regret. For precisely out of those circles on whose assistance we must rely the most, the artistic friends of antiquity, the warm admirers of Hellenic beauty and noble simplicity, tend from time to time to become loud in disgruntled tones, as if precisely the philologists themselves were the real enemies and destroyers of antiquity and the ideals of antiquity. (KGW 2.1, 251-52)[14]

The solution to this hermeneutic problem of the past and present lies, Nietzsche believed, in the present. In his "Encyclopedia," for example, Nietzsche made explicit links between the classicism of Greek antiquity and the classical tradition of eighteenth-century Germany, recommending that "the aspiring classicist, who must first become a '*moderner Mensch*' in order to become a philologist," read Winckelmann, Lessing, Schiller, Goethe, and Kant (KGW 2.3, 345 and 368):[15]

> What a difficult task it is to prepare somebody for the enjoyment of antiquity! [...] Keep him entirely away from literary texts and from *realia*. Instead, make modern writers accessible to him, make him a thoroughly modern individual, and bring the present alive for him [*ihm die Gegenwart anschaulich machen*]. (KGW 2.3, 345)

And further on Nietzsche elaborates on this idea:

> What most effectively encourages the individual to become receptive to antiquity is to *be a modern individual*, to be really in touch with the *great figures of modernity*. Particularly important is the intimate familiarity with Winckelmann, Lessing, Schiller, Goethe, so that we may, with them and from them, feel what antiquity means for the modern individual [*was das Alterthum für den modernen Menschen ist*]. We must stimulate the drive, the longing [*Wir müssen den Trieb, die Sehnsucht erregen*]. (KGW 2.3, 368)

Initially, this program for the aspiring classicist seems indeed to be a "paradoxical" one. Viewed, however, from the perspective laid out in the never completed essay "We Philologists" (1875), this program makes, as Porter explains, "perfect sense":[16] "This is the antinomy of philology: one has to understand *antiquity* only *in terms of the present*—but also the *present in terms of antiquity*?" (*Dies ist die Antinomie der Philologie: man hat das* Alterthum *thatsächlich immer nur* aus der Gegenwart *verstanden—und soll nun die* Gegenwart aus dem Alterthum *verstehen*?) (KSA 8, 3[62], 31). Likewise, in his lectures "On the Future of our Educational Institutions" (1872), Nietzsche had declared:

> One can be aware today in an horrific general sense that our scholars have fallen from and sunk below that height of *Bildung*, which the Germans, with the efforts of Goethe, Schiller, Lessing, and Winckelmann, were able to attain. [...] It can be shown that the sole value these men have for a true educational institution has, for half a century and longer, not been mentioned, let alone recognized—the value of those men as the preparatory leaders and mystagogues of classical *Bildung*, in whose hands alone the true way leading to antiquity, can be found. [...] The feeling for what is classical Greek [*das Klassisch-Hellenische*] is such a rare result of the most intense educational struggle and artistic talent that it is only through a crude misunderstanding that the *Gymnasium* can claim to awaken this feeling. (KSA 1, 685-87)[17]

Thus, in that discourse of modernity in which Nietzsche participates, "classicism" has come to represent a particular set of values, whether or not it is, in fact, historically accurate to ascribe them to Greek and Roman art.[18] For Nietzsche, classical philology—the study of Greece and Rome—was useful, not because it led to an understanding of those (historical) cultures, but because it led to an awareness of (classical) values. For Nietzsche, classicism holds high in particular the value of "perfection," not as something that "has become—as his comments on the

temples at Paestum show (HA I §145; D §169)—but rather as something that resides in the very act of "becoming" what something truly is.

## Classicism vs. the "Two-World" Theory

Nietzsche, it seems to me, was thus well aware of the hermeneutic problem of the approach to the past, as articulated, in different ways, by Goethe and Schiller. Rightly, then, James Porter has pointed to the "unanimity" of the "tradition" in classical studies in Germany in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, to which both Goethe and Nietzsche belong.[19] Both men participate in what one might call a "hermeneutics of identification" —as Goethe wrote to Herder in July 1772: "Pindar is where I live these days" (WA IV.2, 15); or as Nietzsche put it in his "Encyclopedia," "The task is to re-live" (*Hineinleben ist die Aufgabe*) (KGW 2.3, 345). Then again, right at the beginning of the first section of *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* (1873), Nietzsche cites Goethe (alongside Wagner) as "a favored model" for the understanding of the classics, and the essay is rich in allusions to Goethe (KSA 1, 804 et passim).[20]

Underpinning this hermeneutic, however, is a fundamental epistemological stance adopted by both Goethe and Nietzsche (and, I would argue, classicism). This stance is characterized by distrust of the "metaphysical separation," which holds that "the world which we experience through the senses is not the full reality, and that *behind* this world there is another, non-sensory world, which is the intelligible origin of what appears as the sensory world."[21] According to Heidegger, this separation represents the origin of Western metaphysics,[22] which subscribes to the "two-world" theory, which "separates the sensible and the intelligible into two different worlds of unequal ontological status," such that "the sensible world is subordinated to the higher intelligible world and is dependent on it for its being."[23]

This approach is rejected by Goethe, both in principle and in his scientific practice. For example, in one of his most famous maxims, Goethe argues that "the supreme achievement would be: to grasp that everything factual is already theory."[24] Correspondingly, Nietzsche writes in his *Nachlass*: "Against positivism, which halts at phenomena—'There are only *facts*'—I would say: No, facts are precisely what there is not, only interpretations" (WP §481; KSA 12, 7[60], 315.)[25] (We find this view expressed, in another section as "we never encounter 'facts'" [WP §477; KSA 13, 11[113], 53].) In his maxim, Goethe goes on to say that "one should not go looking behind phenomena: they themselves are the the-

ory" (*man suche nur nichts hinter den Phänomenen: sie selbst sind die Lehre*)." And similarly, Nietzsche inveighs against the two-world approach as it has developed from Plato.

In *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche sets up an opposition between Plato and Homer: "Plato versus Homer: that is the complete, the genuine antagonism—there the sincerest advocate of the 'beyond,' the great slanderer of life; here the instinctive deifier, the *golden* nature" (GM III §25). And in *Twilight of the Idols* Nietzsche condemned the idea of the "other" world as one of the "concept-mummies" (*Begriffs-Mumien*) with which the philosophers have been playing for thousands of years: "When these honorable idolators of concepts worship something, they kill and stuff it; they threaten the life of everything they worship." Such "Egypticism" (*Ägypticismus*) reveals itself in "their hatred of the very idea of becoming": "What is, does not *become*; what becomes, *is* not …" (TI "Reason" in Philosophy §1). But Heraclitus, Nietzsche claims, was right—there is no being: "The 'apparent' world is the only one: the 'real' world has only been *lyingly added* …" (§2). The villains here, then, are Plato and Kant; the hero is Heraclitus.

There are further significant parallels between Goethe and Nietzsche in terms of their scientific, and ultimately, ontological principles.[26] In another famous maxim, Goethe speaks of the need to supplement Kant's critiques of reason with a critique of the senses;[27] Nietzsche goes further, railing against any attacks in the name of "morality" on the senses and the body (TI "Reason" in Philosophy §1-§2), and praising the orgy, procreation, and "the mysteries of sexuality" (TI What I Owe to the Ancients §4).[28] Then again, elsewhere in his writings, Goethe, following Hume,[29] declares that even such notions as "cause and effect" are problematic: "Our most basic and necessary concept —that of *cause* and *effect*—leads to numerous and repeated errors in application."[30] And he contrasts this approach with that of the ancient Greeks:

> The Greeks spoke of neither cause nor effect in their descriptions and stories—instead, they presented the phenomenon as it was.
>
> In their science, too, they did not perform experiments, but relied on experiences as they occurred.[31]

Similarly, in *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche offers a trenchant critique of causality (WP §545-§552),[32] writing in one aphorism that "both the deed and the doer are fictions" (*sowohl das Thun, als der Thäter sind fingirt*) (WP §477; KSA 13, 11[113], 54). Even the fundamental notion of an "object" or "thing" becomes problematic for both Goethe and

Nietzsche, for we do not know "objects," we only know the "effects of objects." In his "Preface" to *On the Theory of Colours*, Goethe wrote:

> In reality, any attempt to express the inner nature of a thing is fruitless. What we perceive are effects, and a complete record of these effects ought to encompass this inner nature. We labor in vain to describe a person's character, but when we draw together his actions, his deeds, a picture of his character will emerge.[33]

Likewise, in *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche presents the same idea in an even more radical form:

> The properties of a thing are effects on other "things":
> if one removes other "things," then a thing has no properties,
> i.e., there is no thing without other things,
> i.e., there is no "thing-in-itself." (WP §557; KSA 12, 2[85], 104)

For Nietzsche, the disastrous dualism of the Platonic world-view had been taken up and intensified by Christianity —which he notoriously described as "Platonism for 'the people' [*Platonismus fürs 'Volk'*] (BGE Preface)—and, more recently, by Kant, who was, "after all, a *cunning* Christian [*ein* hinterlistiger *Christ zu guter Letzt*]" (TI "Reason" in Philosophy §6). In passage after passage —his "four theses" in *Twilight of the Idols* (TI "Reason" in Philosophy §6), his description in the same work of "how the 'true world' finally became a fable," and, in a sequence of aphorisms in *The Will to Power* (WP §568, §579, §583, §586)[34]—Nietzsche explores what he calls the "senselessness [*Unsinn*] of all metaphysics," namely "the derivation of the conditioned from the unconditioned" (WP §574; KSA 10, 8[25], 342). And he presents Plato as a kind of artist who inverts the whole meaning of "reality":

> Plato measured the degree of reality by the degree of value and said: The more "Idea," the more being. He reversed the concept "reality" and said: "What you take for real is an error, and the nearer we approach the 'Idea,' the nearer we approach 'truth.'"—Is this understood? It was the greatest of rebaptisms; and because it has been adopted by Christianity we do not recognize how astonishing it is. Fundamentally, Plato, as the artist he was, preferred appearance to being! lie and invention to truth! the unreal to the actual! But he was so convinced of the value of appearance that he gave it the attributes "being," "causality" and "goodness," and "truth," in short everything men value. (WP §572; KSA 12, 7[2], 253)

Thus behind Goethe's and Nietzsche's admiration for the classical Greeks lies a common epistemological and ontological stance. There is,

however, a further implication to this stance, for their assertion of classical ideals involves not only a rejection of the "two-world theory," but along with it the elaboration of an anti-Christian stance. After all, as Nietzsche wrote, "Goethe is the last German for whom I feel any reverence: he would also have felt three things which I feel—and we also understand each other about the 'cross'" (TI Skirmishes of an Untimely Man §51).[35]

In other words, we should see Nietzsche's anti-Christianity as being intimately bound up with his assertion of classical ideals. Both his condemnation of Christianity and his acclaim for classicism are stated in the most vigorous terms in one of Nietzsche's most controversial late texts, *The Antichrist* (1888)—a work which opens with a quotation from Pindar, and contains allusions to Horace and Aristotle.[36] And if there is no reason to doubt Nietzsche's anti-Christian stance, so there is no reason to doubt his assertion of classical values, however problematic both those values and their assertion may be in themselves and, indeed, may have been understood as so being by Nietzsche himself.

## The Antichrist

One of the clearest statements of Nietzsche's assertion of classical ideals can be found in *The Antichrist*, where he utters a cry of distress from a world-historical perspective:

> The whole labor of the ancient world *in vain*: I have no words to express my feelings at something so dreadful. —And considering its labor was a preparation, that only the substructure for a labor of millennia had, with granite self-confidence, been laid, the whole *meaning* of the ancient world in vain! … Why did the Greeks exist? Why the Romans? (AC §59)

After this arresting opening, Nietzsche's deep lament moves from the general to the more specific, citing the existence of *methods*[37] as the great contribution of the ancient world to the development of humanity and, in particular, the art of reading:[38]

> All the presuppositions for a scholarly culture, all scientific *methods*, were already there; the great, the incomparable art of reading well had already been established—that presupposition for the tradition of culture, for the unity of science; natural science, allied with mathematics and mechanics, was well along on the best way—the *sense for facts*, the last and most valuable of all the senses, had its schools and its tradition of centuries. (AC §59)

Now, given what Nietzsche has said elsewhere about there being no "facts," only "interpretations," this passage might, at first sight, seem

surprising; but the context shows that Nietzsche is talking, not in a crude empiricist way about "givens," but about the foundation of intellectual discipline. In doing so, he evokes the image of the hand and the eye, found elsewhere in his work,[39] and evocative of a central topos of German classical thought:[40]

> What we today have again conquered with immeasurable self-mastery—for each of us still has the bad instincts, the Christian ones, in his system—the free eye before reality, the cautious hand, patience and seriousness in the smallest matters, the whole *integrity* in knowledge—that had already been there once before! More than two thousand years ago! *And*, in addition, the good, the delicate sense of tact and taste. *Not* as brain drill! *Not* as "German" education with loutish manners! But as body, as gesture, as instinct—as reality, in short. *All in vain!* Overnight nothing but a memory! (AC §59)

In this passage, the contours of Nietzsche's understanding of classicism become clear: it is to do with "reality" in an immediately, physically present, way; it is to do with co-ordination of physical and mental capacities, "em-bodied" in "gesture" and "instinct"; it is, then, in those Schillerian terms with which Nietzsche was familiar,[41] *aesthetic*. And, for Nietzsche, the aesthetic is not to be seen (in Romantic terms) as something opposed to life, but as the highest expression of life itself—the world, so to speak, is an aesthetic phenomenon:

> Greeks! Romans! nobility of instinct, of taste, methodical investigation, genius for organization and government, the faith in, the *will* to a future for mankind, the great Yes to all things, visibly present to all the senses as the *Imperium Romanum*, grand style no longer merely art but become reality, truth, *life* … (AC §59)

And Nietzsche goes on to inveigh against the "cunning, stealthy, invisible, anemic vampires" of Christianity; against "petty envy become master"; against "the whole ghetto-world of the soul suddenly *on top*"; against that "Christian agitator," St. Augustine;[42] and he concludes with an encomium of Islam.[43]

What Nietzsche identifies here as the greatest achievement of the classical world, method and the art of good reading, is highlighted elsewhere in *The Antichrist* where he stresses the importance of philology, and the disastrous consequences of what he regards as the bad philology of the Christian tradition. For example, in section 52, Nietzsche writes that one of the marks of a theologian is the "incapacity for philology"—philology, that is, meant as, "in a very broad sense, the art of reading well—of reading facts without falsifying them by interpretation, without

losing caution, patience, delicacy, in the desire to understand" or, as he puts it, "philology as *ephexis* [= undecisiveness] in interpretation" (AC §52). As a vivid illustration, Nietzsche writes: "The manner in which a theologian, in Berlin as in Rome, interprets a 'verse of scripture' or an event—for example, a victory of the armies of the fatherland, in the higher light of the Psalms of David—is always so audacious that a philologist can only tear his hair" (AC §52). Here, Nietzsche restates an argument he had put forward in *Daybreak* in a section entitled "The Philology of Christianity":

> How little Christianity educates the sense of honesty and justice can be gauged fairly well from the character of its scholars' writings: they present their conjectures as boldly as if they were dogmas and are rarely in any honest perplexity over the interpretation of a passage in the Bible. Again and again they say "I am right, for it is written"—and then follows an interpretation of such impudent arbitrariness that a philologist who hears it is caught between rage and laughter and asks himself: is it possible? Is this honorable? Is it even decent? —How much dishonesty in this matter is still practiced in Protestant pulpits, how grossly the preacher exploits the advantage that no one is going to interrupt him here, how the Bible is pummeled and punched and the *art of reading badly* is in all due form imparted to the people: only he who never goes to church or never goes anywhere else will underestimate that. (D §84)[44]

As an example of the non-theological or even anti-theological interpretation of the Bible he proposes, in section 48 of *The Antichrist* Nietzsche offers a reading of the opening chapters of Genesis, not in terms of an account of the "Fall of Man," but instead of "the story of God's mortal terror of *science*" (AC §48). According to Nietzsche, "the beginning of the Bible contains the *entire* psychology of the priest" (AC §49), and his interpretation, as well as belonging to a sequence of re-readings in *The Antichrist*—of the "real" history of Christianity and of the conversion of St. Paul (AC §39-§43),[45] and of well-known passages from the New Testament (§45)—also implicitly recapitulates his argument in *The Birth of Tragedy* and in *The Gay Science* that there is, in Christianity itself, something that ultimately undermines it from within.[46]

Nietzsche's writings in his *Nachlass* reaffirm his definition of Christianity as anti-classicism and, as such, "anti-paganism": "Christianity only takes up the fight that had already begun against the *classical* ideal and the *noble* religion" (WP §196; KSA 13, 11[295], 115).[47] For what ultimately triumphs in Christianity is, according to Nietzsche, Judaism, Platonism, the mystery cults, and asceticism (WP §214; KSA 12, 11[364], 161). Elsewhere, Nietzsche makes plain his distaste for the New Testament:

> However modest one may be in one's demand for intellectual cleanliness, one cannot help feeling, when coming into contact with the New Testament, a kind of inexpressible discomfiture: for the unchecked impudence with which the least qualified want to raise their voice on the greatest problems, and even claim to be judges of such things, surpasses all measure. The shameless levity with which the most intractable problems (life, world, God, purpose of life) are spoken of, as if they were not problems at all but simply things that these little bigots *knew*! (WP §201; KSA 12, 10[204], 581)

Not surprisingly, then, Nietzsche sets up as a criterion of a "classical" sensibility the attitude one adopts towards the New Testament (about which Tacitus was famously scathing):[48]

> How one reacts to the New Testament is a test of whether one has any *classical taste* in one's bones (cf. Tacitus); whoever is not revolted by it, whoever does not honestly and profoundly sense something of *foeda superstitio* in it, something from which one withdraws one's hand as if to avoid being soiled, does not know what is classical. (WP §175; KSA 12, 10[181], 565)

As if to seal the argument, Nietzsche adds: "One must feel about the 'cross' as Goethe did" (see above).

## Classicism and Aesthetic Justification

If, in *The Gay Science* (GS §370) and *The Will to Power* (WP §846), Nietzsche tried to answer the question "What is Romanticism?", he also tried in *The Will to Power* to define classicism in politico-cultural terms:

> To think through, without prejudice or indulgence, in what soil a classical taste can grow. Hardening, simplification, strengthening, making man more evil: these belong together. Logical-psychological simplification. Contempt for detail, complexity, the uncertain. (WP §849; KSA 13, 11[312], 132)

Given this definition, it is not surprising that elsewhere in *The Will to Power* Nietzsche chooses, as he more famously does elsewhere (TI Skirmishes §49), Goethe as an icon of his "Dionysian" philosophy:

> If anything at all has been achieved, it is a more innocuous relation to the senses, a more joyous, benevolent, Goethean attitude toward sensuality [*eine freudigere wohlwollendere Goetheschere Stellung zur Sinnlichkeit*]; also a prouder feeling regarding the search for knowledge, so that the "pure fool" is not given much credit. (WP §118; KSA 12, 7[7], 285)

Nietzsche's own more positive attitude towards sensuality, which also has its counterpart in an earlier work (TI What I Owe to the Ancients §4), is stated elsewhere in the *Nachlass* in terms of the opposition between Christianity and classical Athens:

> The Christian priest is from the first a mortal enemy of sensuality: no greater antithesis can be imagined than the innocently awed and solemn attitude adopted by, e.g., the most honorable women's cults of Athens in the presence of the symbols of sex. The act of procreation is the mystery as such in all nonascetic religions: a sort of symbol of perfection and of the mysterious design of the future: rebirth, immortality [*eine Art Symbol der Vollendung und der geheimnißvollen Absicht, der Zukunft (Wiedergeburt, Unsterblichkeit)*] (WP §148; KSA 12, 8[3], 331)

For identical reasons, in *The Antichrist* Nietzsche lavishes praise on the Lawbook of Manu,[49] in which "all the things on which Christianity vents its unfathomable meanness—procreation, for example, women, marriage—are here treated seriously, with respect, with love and trust" (AC §56).

An example of what Nietzsche called the "Goethean attitude" toward the senses can be found, for example, in the maxim that "the highest intention of art is to show human forms, in as *sensually* meaningful and beautiful a way as is possible" (*die höchste Absicht der Kunst ist menschliche Formen zu zeigen, so* sinnlich *bedeutend und so schön, als es möglich ist*).[50] In this sense, then, classicism ultimately provides the basis for Nietzsche's famous statement, repeated on three occasions in *The Birth of Tragedy* — "that the existence of the world is *justified* only as an aesthetic phenomenon" (*dass nur als ästhetisches Phänomen das Dasein der Welt* gerechtfertigt *ist*) (BT Attempt at a Self-Criticism; cf. BT §5 and §24).

## Notes

[1] Goethe, conversation with Eckermann of 29 January 1826 (*Conversations of Goethe with Johann Peter Eckermann*, ed. J. K. Moorhead, trans. John Oxenford [1930] (New York: Da Capo Press, 1998), 126).

[2] Goethe, *Maxims and Reflections*, ed. Hecker, #1032. See R. H. Stephenson, "Weimar Classicism's Debt to the Scottish Enlightenment," in Nicholas Boyle and John Guthrie (eds), *Goethe and the English-Speaking World* (Rochester, NY, and Woodbridge: Camden House, 2002), 61-70 (61)

[3] *Conversations of Goethe*, 305. On 29 January 1826, Goethe had associated "sickness" with "subjectivity," contrasted with which "every healthy effort" is "directed from the inward to the outward world": "The poet [...] deserves not the name while he only speaks out his few subjective feelings; but as soon as he can appropriate to himself, and express, the world, he is a poet" (126-27). For a discussion of the possible influence of this passage on Nietzsche's thinking about the body, see Robert Gooding-Williams, *Zarathustra's Dionysian Modernism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 130.

[4] Nietzsche is also clearly thinking of Goethe's definition when he writes: "*Classical and Romantic.*—Both those spirits of a classical and those of a Romantic bent—these two species exist at all times—entertain a vision of the future: but the former do so out of a *strength* of their age, the latter out of its *weakness*" (HA II Wanderer and his Shadow §217).

[5] See the work of the French sociologist Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1857-1939), especially *Les Fonctions mentales dans les sociétés inférieures* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1910).

[6] See Vicky Rippere, *Schiller and "Alienation"* (Bern, Frankfurt am Main, Las Vegas: Peter Lang, 1981).

[7] For the term "binary synthesis," see Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L. A. Willoughby, "Appendix 3," in their edition of Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1982), 350.

[8] "In these earlier acts [of *Helena*] the chords of the classic and Romantic are constantly struck; so that, as on a rising ground, where both forms of poetry are brought out and in some sort balance one another, we may ascend to *Helena*. The French [...] now begin to think aright on these matters. Classic and Romantic, say they, are equally good: the only point is to use these forms with judgment, and to be capable of excellence—you can be absurd in both, and then one is as worthless as the other" (*Conversations of Goethe*, 335).

[9] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Garrett Barden and John Cumming (London: Sheed and Ward, 1975), 358.

[10] James I. Porter, *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future* (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2000), 182.

[11] In this sense, then, for Nietzsche philology was a "philology of the future" (compare with the title of Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff's critique of *The Birth of Tragedy* in *Zukunftsphilologie!* (*Philology of the Future!*) (1872).

[12] Humboldt, letter to Goethe of 23 August 1804, in *Briefe an Goethe*, ed. Karl Robert Mandelkow, 2 vols (Hamburg: Christian Wegner Verlag, 1965-1969), vol. 1, 417. Humboldt refers here to the opening of Horace's second Epode, *Beatus ille, qui procul negotiis* ("Happy is whoever is far away from business") (Horace, *Oden und Epoden: Lateinisch und Deutsch*, ed. Walther Killy and Ernst A. Schmidt, trans. Christian Friedrich Karl Herzlieb and Johann Peter Uz (Zurich and Munich: Artemis-Verlag, 1981), 324). In a note from the *Nachlass* for Winter 1883-1884, Nietzsche seems to echo this idea of a dialectic of *nah* and *fern* (KSA 10, 24[1], 643).

[13] For a commentary on Humboldt's conception of classicism, see Porter, *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future*, 189 and 418.

[14] The opening sentence of this passage is echoed later in *The Birth of Tragedy*, at the end of §17.

[15] Porter, *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future*, 176.

[16] Porter, *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future*, 179.

[17] See Porter, *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future*, 202.

[18] For an overview of the relevant literature on classicism, see R. H. Stephenson, "The Cultural Theory of Weimar Classicism in the Light of Coleridge's Doctrine of Aesthetic Knowledge," in Paul Bishop and R. H. Stephenson (eds), *Goethe 2000: Intercultural Readings of his Work* (Leeds: Northern Universities P, 2000), 150-69.

[19] Porter, *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future*, 180.

[20] Porter, *Nietzsche and the Philology of the Future*, 397, n.110.

[21] See Henri Bortoft, *The Wholeness of Nature: Goethe's Way of Science* (Edinburgh: Floris Books, 1996), 180 (cf.18, 21, 33, 70, 214 and 251). For a more differentiated discussion of Goethe's position on transcendence, see R. H. Stephenson, *Goethe's Conception of Knowledge and Science* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP,1995), 58-59.

[22] "It was in the Sophists and in Plato that appearance was declared to be mere appearance and thus degraded. At the same time being, as *idea*, was exalted to a suprasensory realm. A chasm, *chorismos* [χωριμός], was created between the merely apparent essent here below and real being somewhere on high." Like Nietzsche, Heidegger blames Christianity for instrumentalizing this divide: "In that chasm Christianity settled down, at the same time reinterpreting the lower as the created and the higher as the creator. These refashioned weapons it turned against antiquity (as paganism) and so disfigured it. Nietzsche was right in saying that Christianity is Platonism for the people" (Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1959), 106).

[23] Bortoft, *The Wholeness of Nature*, 180.

[24] *Maxims and Reflections*, #575. See R. H. Stephenson, *Goethe's Wisdom Literature: A Study in Aesthetic Transmutation* (Bern, Frankfurt am Main, New York: Peter Lang, 1983), 76-81 and 191-92.

[25] As Karl Löwith pointed out in "Nietzsche im Lichte der Philosophie von Ludwig Klages," *Reichls philosophischer Almanach* 4 (1927): 283-348 (326).

[26] For further discussion of this aspect, see the contribution "Nietzsche's Ontological Roots in Goethe's Classicism" by Friedrich Ulfers and Mark Daniel Cohen in this volume.

[27] *Maxims and Reflections*, #468. See Stephenson, "Weimar Classicism's Debt to the Scottish Enlightenment," 67-68.

[28] It is only inasmuch as Goethe is said to have excluded the orgiastic from his image of the Greeks that Nietzsche writes: "*Consequently Goethe did not understand the Greeks*" (TI What I Owe to the Ancients §4). In a note in the *Nachlass* for Summer 1883, Nietzsche makes a link between the ancient mystery-cults and the idea of the eternal recurrence: "*I have discovered Hellenism:* they believed in the *eternal recurrence!* That is the *belief of the mysteries!*" (KSA 10, 8[15], 340). For further discussion, see the contribution "Cults and Migrations: Nietzsche's Meditations on Orphism, Pythagoreanism, and the Greek Mysteries" by Benjamin Biebuyck, Danny Praet, and Isabelle Vanden Poel in this volume.

[29] Stephenson, *Goethe's Conception of Knowledge and Science*, 1-2.

[30] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Scientific Studies*, ed. and trans. Douglas Miller [Goethe Edition, vol. 12] (New York: Suhrkamp Publishers, 1988), 309; WA II.11, 103.

[31] Goethe, *Scientific Studies*, 308; WA II.11, 370.

[32] KSA 11, 36[25], 561-62; KSA 12, 2[145], 138; KSA 12, 2[158], 143; KSA 12, 2[193], 162; KSA 11, 36[26], 562; KSA 12, 2[83], 102; KSA 13, 14[98], 274-76; KSA 12, 9[91], 383-86.

[33] Goethe, *Scientific Studies*, 158; WA II.1, ix.

[34] KSA 13, 14[93], 270-71; KSA 12, 8[2], 327-28; KSA 13, 14[103], 280-82; KSA 13, 14[168], 350-54.

[35] As KSA 14, 434 points out, Nietzsche alludes here to Goethe's *Venetian Epigrams*, §29:

> *Vieles kann ich ertragen. Die meisten beschwerlichen Dinge*
> *Duld ich mit ruhigem Mut, wie es ein Gott mir gebeut.*
> *Wenige sind mir jedoch wie Gift und Schlange zuwider,*
> *Viere: Rauch des Tabaks, Wanzen und Knoblauch und* [*Christ*]
> ("Many things I can endure; they are burdensome, yet for the most part
> Patiently I can submit, bowing to heaven's decree.
> But there are just four things, like wormwood and gall I abhor them:
> Reeking tobacco-smoke, bugs, garlic and Christ on the cross")

(Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Erotic Poems*, trans. David Luke (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997), 88-89).

[36] "Neither by land nor by sea will you find the way to the Hyperboreans" (AC §1); cf. Pindar, *Pythian Odes*, 10. 29-30. For Horace, see AC §57 (cf. Horace, *Satires*, 1.9.44); and AC §58 (cf. Horace, *Odes*, 3.30.1); for Aristotle, see AC §7 (cf. Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1449b 27-28). In this paper I use both Hollingdale's and Kaufmann's translations of *The Antichrist*.

[37] "Methods, one must repeat ten times, *are* the essential, as well as being the most difficult, as well as being that which has habit and laziness against it longest" (AC §59); cf. "The most valuable insights are the last to be discovered; but the most valuable insights are *methods*" (AC §13).

[38] As Nietzsche puts it: "*Learn* to read me well! [lernt *mich gut lesen!*]" (D Preface); cf. GM Preface §8 and HA II Wanderer and his Shadow §87. See also the aphorism "The Art of Reading" in *Human, All Too Human*: "It was only when the art of correct reading, that is to say philology, arrived at its summit that science of any kind acquired continuity and constancy" (HA I §270).

[39] See, for example, his remark in *The Gay Science* that "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); cf. "The Night Song" in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*: "My eye no longer wells over at the shame of those who beg; my hand has grown too hard for the trembling of filled hands" (Z II 9).

[40] See the coordination of eye and hand celebrated in Goethe's seventh poem in the *Roman Elegies* cycle: "Marble comes doubly alive for me then, as I ponder, comparing, / Seeing with vision that feels, feeling with fingers that see" (*Dann versteh' ich den Marmor erst recht: ich denk' und vergleiche, / Sehe mit fühlendem Aug', fühle mit sehender Hand*) (Goethe, *Erotic Poems*, 14-15). See Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L. A. Willoughby, "Goethe's 'Pindar' Letter to Herder, July 1772" [1961] and "'The Blind Man' and the Poet" [1962], in *Models of Wholeness: Some Attitudes to Language, Art and Life in the Age of Goethe* (Oxford, Bern, Berlin: Peter Lang, 2002), 99-125 and 127-42.

[41] For further discussion, see Paul Bishop and R. H. Stephenson, *Friedrich Nietzsche and Weimar Classicism* (Camden House, forthcoming).

[42] Compare with Nietzsche's comments on the *Confessions* in his letter to Franz Overbeck of 31 March 1885 (KSB 7, 34).

[43] "If Islam despises Christianity, it is a thousand times right to do so: Islam presupposes *men* ..." (AC §59). This thought is picked up and developed in the following section (AC §60).

[44] Nietzsche is presumably thinking of, for example, of the discourses of St. Augustine on the Psalms, or the treatise of St Ambrose, *On the Mysteries*, which read the events of the Old Testament as a figure.

[45] Compare with the aphorism "The first Christian" (D §68).

[46] In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche argues that the Socratic spirit of science undermines itself, revealing the need for tragic insight (BT §15), and that, *mutatis mutandis*, the loss of myth undermines the creativity of culture (BT §23); and in *The Gay Science* he writes: "You see what it was that really triumphed over the Christian god: Christian morality itself, the concept of truthfulness that was understood ever more rigorously [...]" (GS §357).

[47] Compare with *The Will to Power*, §147, where Nietzsche identifies with paganism the "affirmation" of and "innocence" in the natural, and with Christianity "unnaturalness," pointing to Petronius, Nero's "arbiter of taste" (*elegantiae arbiter*) and au-

thor of the *Satyricon*, as an example of such "innocence" (KSA 12, 10[193], 571); or §438, where Nietzsche claims that the struggle undertaken by Epicurus against "paganism" was, in fact, a struggle against "pre-existing Christianity," and argues: "Not the 'moral corruption' of antiquity, but precisely its *moralization* is the prerequisite through which alone Christianity could become master of it. [...] Christianity has grown out of psychological decay, could only take root in decayed soil," compared with which paganism/classicism is, presumably, healthy (KSA 13, 16[15], 486-87).

[48] See KSA 9, 6 [299], 274 (cites Tacitus, *Annales*, 14, 144); KSA 9, 6[311], 277 (cites Tacitus, *Historiae*, 5, 4-5); and the "Epilogue" to *The Case of Wagner* (cites Tacitus, *Annales*, 15, 144). This passage concerns the aftermath of the fire in Nero's Rome, where Nero went looking for scapegoats and, finding the Christians, took savage reprisals against them. From Tiberius onward, Tacitus is strongly opposed to the Roman principate, so the passage (especially the final sentence in this chapter) should be read in this light. That said, Tacitus does refer to the practices of Christians as a pernicious superstition ("exitiabilis superstitio")—the word "foeda" does not occur in this passage—but this may be an official, rather than his own, viewpoint. (I am grateful for this information to my colleague, Mr. Graham Whitaker, of Glasgow University Library.) In terms of close reading, then, does Nietzsche's use of this passage conform to his own strictures about interpretation—or does it provide an (ironic) example of the kind of (mis)use Nietzsche castigates elsewhere?

[49] Cf. *Twilight of the Idols*, The "Improvers" of Mankind, §3-§4.

[50] *Maxims and Reflections*, #1352.

# *The Dioscuri*: Nietzsche and Rohde

*Alan Cardew*

> *Ihr edeln Brüder droben, unsterbliches*
> *Gestirn …*
>
> You brothers, always noble, immortal now
> Among the stars…[1]

IN TRUE ROMANTIC fashion the friendship of Friedrich Nietzsche and Erwin Rohde was mythologized. Fellow students of philology at Leipzig in the mid 1860s, sharing the same passion for Greece, for Wagner and for Schopenhauer, the two were inseparable. Their teacher, Professor Friedrich Ritschl, called them "the Dioscuri." In a letter to Rohde from Basel in November 1872 Nietzsche suggests that Ritschl, Burckhardt, Immermann, and even some "Florentine ladies" have noted the pair's "Orestes and Pylades relationship χαλεποῖσιν ἐνὶ ξείνοισι (among the forbidding foreigners) and they rejoice over it" (KSB 4, 86).[2] In the same letter Nietzsche praises Rohde's essay in defense of *The Birth of Tragedy*—and Nietzsche reports that Immermann has always considered Rohde's stuff (*deine Sachen*) to be as good as Nietzsche's own. In a letter one year later Nietzsche, sick after a journey and filled with resentment against life, consoled himself with their friendship:

> Really, if I had not my friends, I wonder whether I should not myself begin to believe that I am demented. As it is, however, by my adherence to you I adhere to myself, and if we stand security for each other, something must ultimately result from our way of thinking—a possibility that the whole world had doubted. […] Truth to tell I live through you, I advance by leaning on your shoulders.[3]

Here we catch an echo of the staunch and proverbial friendship of the heroic two, who together took on Fate and the order of things, revenged the murder of Agamemnon, confronted the Furies, and rescued Iphigenia from Tauros.

Already some questions arise. Which of the two, Nietzsche or Rohde, was Orestes and which was Pylades? Initially, we may think that Orestes and Nietzsche, the greater partners in heroic and philosophic enterprise, are the natural pairing, but is this so? Is it the other way round? First of all, we should consider in what ways were Nietzsche and Rohde similar, in what ways were they different? If Rohde's "stuff" was really as good as Nietzsche says, should we consider him equally? Although there is a Nietzsche Society of Great Britain, should there not also be a Rohde Society of Great Britain? Is Rohde's major work *Psyche: The Cult of Souls and Belief in Immortality among the Greeks* (*Psyche: Seelencult und Unsterblichkeitsglaube der Griechen*), which was published between the years 1890 and 1894, as important as *The Birth of Tragedy*? Is Rohde's *Psyche* the truly untimely work?

At the very least, a consideration of Rohde's work, written by someone so close to Nietzsche for so many years, and dealing with Apollo and Dionysos, and Plato and Homer, would seem to be an opportunity to amplify some aspects of *The Birth of Tragedy.* It might also reveal some aspects of Nietzsche's classicism and, perhaps, contradict some others.

But, before proceeding to a consideration of *Psyche*, and trying to find some answers to these questions, it is first necessary to reflect a little more on their mythologized, classical friendship, and their actual, nineteenth-century friendship. To return to Ritschl's name for Rohde and Nietzsche, "the Dioscuri." This is rather different from the pairing of Orestes and Pylades, being not a friendship between a Hero and a brave Prince, but a brotherhood between Immortal and Mortal. What the Dioscuri meant for German philology of the time, and how the classical world regarded duality, can be illuminated by looking at the work of Johann Jakob Bachofen, a friend of Nietzsche in Basel, and in particular the former's essay on ancient mortuary symbolism, *Versuch über die Gräbersymbolik der Alten* of 1859. Leda coupled with her mortal husband Tyndareus, shortly before she was raped by Zeus in the shape of a swan. As a result Leda lay three eggs, two of which had a mortal and an immortal content—the first contained Helen and Clytemnestra, and the second the Dioscuri: Castor and Pollux (in German, Kastor and Polydeukes). Helen and Castor were immortal, and Clytemnestra and Pollux, mortal. Together Castor and Pollux had many adventures but eventually Pollux was slain. Castor refused to accept the death of his brother, and struck a deal with Zeus that he would share his heavenly status with the dead Pollux. One brother would spend a day in Avernus while the other was on Olympus, and the next day they would swap over, mortal and immortal by turns. In his essay Bachofen considers the symbolism of the egg in an-

tiquity—or, more properly in Bachofen, the antiquity of antiquity. The egg is the most original and primal symbol of the beginning of time: "The religion of the egg is a symbol of the material source of all things, of the ἀρχγὴ γενέσεως."[4]

The primordial egg of the Orphic mysteries is half white and half black/red, encompassing the light and dark sides of nature, they are colors "which flow into each other as unremittingly as life and death, day and night, becoming and passing away."[5] Brothers, companions, twins, such as the Dioscuri, embody this duality. Their life is called ἑτερημερία because of their daily shift between heaven and hell.[6] There is no sense of what has lately been called "otherness" in this duality. For the twins of the ancient world, "Opposition is true Friendship."[7] Such oppositions do not, according to Bachofen, exist merely in proximity, but one within another.

> Death is the precondition of life, and only in the same measure as destruction proceeds can the creative power be effective. In every moment becoming and passing away operate side by side. The life of every earthly organism is the product of a twofold force, creative and destructive. Only insofar as the former takes away can the latter restore.[8]

Likewise, Plutarch in *Isis and Osiris* writes:

> Everywhere in the mysteries and sacrifices, among the Greeks as well as the barbarians, there are two fundamental beings and opposing powers, one of which leads with the right hand and straight ahead, while the other turns about and leads backwards.[9]

For Bachofen the Dioscuri embody two forces that are inextricably linked in the cycle of existence in which every departure contains a return. The classical view of an opposition which is essentially complementary is found in the accounts given of duality in the work of both Nietzsche and Rohde, as is the nature of the Return. In their actual friendship, there was a movement from enthusiastic brotherhood toward a gradual estrangement, and then to a more articulated, but more distant, relationship.

* * *

In a letter Nietzsche sent to Rohde from Naumburg on 3 November 1867, he describes in detail his artillery training; how he cared for the horses in the stables, and how well he rode his horse Balduin without the need for a saddle or a riding whip. At the end of the letter Nietzsche re-

flects on how he and Rohde parted on the banks of the Leipzig river—how, it seems, they set up there a memorial to their friendship which bore words supplied by Nietzsche, splendid words (*die festlichen Worte*) which have, he says, "proved victorious" (KSB 2, 235). The words are taken from Pindar's second *Pythian Ode*, line 72: γένοι' οἷος ἐσσὶ μαθών. The reference to the ode may well be connected to the substance of the letter. The final part of the ode is a *Kastoreion*, a song in celebration of an equestrian victory, so named after Castor's prowess as a charioteer. "Become the being you are" is linked with Nietzsche's celebrated injunction: "You shall become the person you are" (*Du sollst der werden, der du bist*) (GS §270).[10] The conclusion of the letter shows how closely this central theme of Nietzsche's philosophy, an expression perhaps of its telos, is identified with Rohde:

> Who knows when changeful fate will bring our paths together again—may it be very soon, but whenever it may happen, I shall look back with joy and pride to a time when I gained a friend οἷος ἐσσὶ [such as you are]. (KSB 2, 235)[11]

In 1870 Nietzsche had suggested founding with Rohde "a colony of wise men," a "new Greek Academy" that would be set up on an "idyllic island." It would be a brotherhood of men living and working for each other, sharing each other's pleasure. This philosophic colony, which brings to mind Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche's attempt to set up a new Fatherland in Patagonia, was to be a true "isle of the blest."[12] But Rohde was not enthusiastic.

Rohde did, however, show enthusiasm for Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*, and it was he who was to be the book's champion and defender. In May 1872 the young, aristocratic philologist Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff launched an attack on Nietzsche's work, a few months after its publication. Wilamowitz's pamphlet *Zukunftsphilologie*—philology of the future—derived its title from a slighting reference to Wagner's *Zukunftsmusik*; and it attacked Nietzsche, not only because of his passion for Wagner, but on the grounds that the work was unscholarly, illogical, and a mixture of journalism and preaching. Rohde, who had previously produced a review of *The Birth of Tragedy* comparing it to the best work of Wagner and Schopenhauer, took up the philological agon and produced a counterblast to Wilamowitz: *Afterphilologie*. The defense was on the grounds that Nietzsche's work was truly scholarly, arguing that the classical past should be interpreted on a wider, modern philosophical basis, rather than be the narrow focus of objective philol-

ogy. Antiquity and contemporary culture should not be isolated from one another.[13]

In 1870 Nietzsche first invited Rohde to share the "magical world" of Triebschen, but by 1876 it was Rohde who became for Wagner and Cosima the more important of the two Dioscuri on the Olympus of Bayreuth. Both Wagner and Cosima were worried about Nietzsche's close relationship with Rohde, and Wagner urged Nietzsche to marry and produce children.[14] The summer of 1876 saw the crisis in, and transformation of, the relationship between Rohde and Nietzsche—not only was there the debacle of Nietzsche's proposal of marriage to the singer Mathilde Trampedach, and Nietzsche's eclipse and sickness at the Bayreuth festival, but there was also the shock of the news of Rohde's sudden engagement to Valentine Framm.

Nietzsche was moved to write a poem "Der Wanderer" about the sudden change in his relationship with Rohde, which he included in the letter he sent to Rohde on 18 July 1876, congratulating him on his engagement. This letter moves from enthusiasm for the coming marriage, "you have found her and have found therewith *yourself*," to the most abandoned melancholy (KSB 5, 176-77). In the poem that follows the congratulations, a wanderer takes comfort from the song of a bird as he walks at night through the mountains; it has enticed him with its music and its greeting. But it turns out the song has nothing to do with the wanderer but is intended for a mate. The harshest lines of the completed poem were not included in the letter: "I am luring a woman from the heights—What's that to you!" (*Ein Weibchen lock ich von den Höhn—Was geht's dich an?*). The bird eventually shows pity, and the poem ends with its cry "The poor, poor wandering man!" (*Der arme, arme Wandersmann!*).[15]

At this time, Nietzsche began work on the section of *Human, All Too Human* entitled "The Wanderer and his Shadow", and in his letters to Rohde in the subsequent years Nietzsche played the role of the solitary outcast, anchorite, and the well-worn Romantic role of the Wanderer. But, like the personification of the Dioscuri, it went far beyond Romantic affectation. They were still complementary opposites; Nietzsche, the youngest professor at Basel, had become the outcast, while Rohde had become a successful career academic, moving from Kiel, to Tübingen, to Heidelberg, what Nietzsche called "the Rohde of the future."[16] In one touching letter, of 22 February 1884 from Nice, Nietzsche thanks Rohde for sending him a charming photograph of his child:

> I felt as if you were shaking me by the hand, gazing at me sadly all the while—sadly, as if you meant to say: "How is it possible that we should have so little in common now, and that we should be living as if in different worlds! And there was a time when—"
>
> The same thing, dear friend, has happened in regard to all the people I love; everything is over, it all belongs to the past, it is all merely merciful indulgence now. We see each other still, we talk in order to avoid being silent. Truth, however, glances from their eyes, and these tell me (I hear it well enough): "Friedrich Nietzsche, you are quite alone!"[17]

However, the period of what Hubert Cancik has called the time of "estrangement" (*Entfremdung*) was well underway.[18] Three years later sentiment was abandoned when Rohde had the temerity to describe the work of Hyppolyte Taine as "jejune." Nietzsche, who championed Taine, condemned this as "frantically stupid." Cordiality and trust were never fully restored though the correspondence limped on. After Nietzsche's "*Umnachtung*," Rohde supported Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche in her work on the Nietzsche Archive; and also, in 1893, Rohde produced his lifework, *Psyche: The Cult of Souls and the Belief in Immortality* (*Psyche: Seelencult und Unsterblichkeitsglaube der Griechen*) (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1890-1894).[19]

* * *

*Psyche* does not mention Nietzsche, despite treating Apollo and Dionysos at some length. It seems a very different work from *The Birth of Tragedy*, it could not possibly be described by a Wilamowitz as a tract or something from the newspapers. Whereas the hundred page long *The Birth of Tragedy* lacks proper footnotes and lamentably does not even have a bibliography, the seven hundred plus pages of *Psyche* are utterly secure. The work is an immense citadel, a scholarly Mycenae, defended by cyclopean blocks of references, appendices, and voluminous reading. Karl Jaspers, in his account of the friendship between Rohde and Nietzsche, contrasts the two, describing them as "representatives of two distinctive worlds." After their early years together at Leipzig, Nietzsche alone maintained the idealism of youth, "leaving concrete reality as his faith in his task assumes existential import. Rohde grows old, bourgeois, and skeptical. Hence courage is a fundamental trait in Nietzsche, plaintive self-irony in Rohde."[20]

The edifice of *Psyche* seems to bear out Jasper's analysis, a monument to mistrust, secure from attack by classicists from any direction. But, though outwardly forbidding, within this philological fastness are pas-

sages as dramatic as anything in *The Birth of Tragedy*. It was Rohde's work that inspired Thomas Mann's description of Aschenbach's Dionysian dream in *Death in Venice*. The passage which influenced Mann deserves to be quoted at some length.

> The festival was held on the mountain tops in the darkness of night amid the flickering and uncertain light of torches. The loud and troubled sound of music was heard; the clash of bronze cymbals; the dull thunderous roar of kettledrums; and through them all penetrated the "maddening unison" of the deep-toned flute, whose soul Phrygian *aulêtai* had first waked to life. Excited by this wild music, the chorus of worshippers dance with shrill crying and jubilation. We hear nothing about singing: the violence of the dance left no breath for regular songs. These dances were something very different from the measured movement of the dance-step in which Homer's Greeks advanced and turned about in the *Paian*. It was in frantic, whirling, headlong eddies and dance-circles that these inspired companies danced over the mountain slopes. They were mostly women who whirled around in these circular dances till the point of exhaustion was reached; they were strangely dressed; they wore *bassarai*, long flowing garments as it seems, stitched together out of fox-skins; over these were doeskins, and they even had horns fixed to their heads. Their hair was allowed to float in the wind; they carried snakes sacred to Sabazios in their hands and brandished daggers or else thyrsos-wands, the spear-points of which were concealed in ivy-leaves. In this fashion they raged wildly until every sense was wrought to the highest pitch of excitement, and in the "sacred frenzy" they fell upon the beast selected as their victim and tore their captured prey limb from limb. Then with their teeth they seized the bleeding flesh and devoured it raw. (Rohde, 257)

There is detachment here: the precise notes on Bassarid dress-sense; the carefully worked out contrast with the measured Apollonian dance; the citations and footnotes, which run to about five hundred words. Whereas Aschenbach's dream in Mann's novella is that of a participant: all references removed, but—following the order of Rohde's passage, from mountains, to drums, to dances, to flutes, to dress— Aschenbach partakes of the feast: "Yes, it was he who was flinging himself upon the animals, who bit and tore and swallowed smoking gobbets of flesh—."[21]

Both passages, Mann's and Rohde's, seem to echo Nietzsche but, on reflection, one is too literary, the other too scholarly. Yet there are distinct similarities. Aschenbach's predicament is partly due to an outbreak of Asiatic cholera: Nietzsche links the Bacchic outbreak to St. Vitus Dance in medieval Germany (BT §1); Rohde, too, makes this connection, and extends it to Sufism. He quotes from Rumi, "Who knows the

power of the dance dwells in God." Rohde does not seek to depotentiate the extremes of Dionysian religion through scholarship, rather he seeks to explore the phenomenon in every possible way. He speculates on the nature of possession, of *ekstasis*, *alienatio mentis*. In this he becomes the great influence on E. R. Dodds's *The Greeks and the Irrational* (1951):

> The worshippers [...] in furious exaltation and divine inspiration, strive after the god; they seek communion with him. They burst the physical barriers of their soul. A magic power takes hold of them; they feel themselves raised high above the level of their everyday existence; they seem to *become* those spiritual beings who wildly dance in the train of the God. (Rohde, 258)

His whole intent in the work is to discover how the cult of ancestral spirits gradually became the notion of the immortal soul, and how individuals turned away from this world to another. It is a movement he often deplores, and yet one with which he feels strong sympathy:

> In fact if the truth were told we should rather have to admit that it is easier for us to sympathize with such overflowing of sensation and all that goes with it than with the opposite pole of Greek religious life, the calm and measured composure with which man lifted up heart and eye to the gods, as the patterns of all life and the patrons of a serenity as brilliant and unmoved as that of the clear heavens themselves. (Rohde, 255)

His position is complex, and shifts with his account of the changes that took place in the development of Greek religion. But he is neither for the terror of the Dionysian, nor for the noble simplicity of Winckelmann. His real opposition is between the spiritual and the worldly. In an earlier chapter on the Eleusinian mysteries, he is resolutely against religion and otherworldliness which, in the manner of his twin, are said to be life-denying:

> The great festival when it was over left no sting behind in the hearts of the initiated. No requirement of a new manner of life, no new and peculiar condition of conscience was theirs on its account; no strange revaluation of values, contradicting the general opinion of the time, was learnt there. There was a total absence of that which (if we rightly understand the word) gives to the doctrines of sectarian religion their force and persuasiveness—*paradox*. Even the prospect of future bliss opened to the initiated did not divert them from the normal tenor of their existence. It was a genial prospect; not a compelling demand drawing all things to itself and turning men away from ordinary life. The light that fell from beyond was not so blinding that it made all things on this earth seem dark and mean. If in the decadence of Greek

> culture—and even among the people of Homer—ideas hostile to this life made their appearance and in many places acquired weight and influence; if some men began to think death superior to this life, and this life, of which alone we can be assured, as merely a preparation, a land of passage to a higher life in the world invisible—for all this the mysteries were not responsible. It was not they, nor their feelings and surmises awakened by their pictures and performances, that dulled the beauty of this earth for the enthusiasts "intoxicated with otherworldliness," or made them strangers to the instincts of life and sanity prevailing in older and unspoiled ages of Greek life. (Rohde, 228-29)

Is this passage, free of the scholarly constraints of the bulk of the text, written in support of—or against—Nietzsche, is the criticism of "the revaluation of all values" a covert attack? We know that Nietzsche sent Rohde each new book he produced, and Rohde certainly read them. Or, rather, is it a text generated by the same classical suppositions, the same life-world as Nietzsche's work?

True to the myth of the Dioscuri, the work is complementary to *The Birth of Tragedy*, but one is hard put to say if it is similar yet different, or, different yet similar. On the surface, it seems that Rohde has emerged from the Plutonian world of scholarship that underpins the effusions of the aesthetic philosopher. It might be said that *Psyche* is a massive footnote to *The Birth of Tragedy*. It certainly does not seem to be the work of a fleetfooted freethinker, but, set against Nietzsche's far sketchier characterization of the rites of Dionysos, Rohde's account given above is, for all its careful detail, closer to the frenzy of *The Bacchae*.

* * *

What is characteristic of *Psyche* is one that Rohde admired in Greek civilization. There is a courageous ability to confront the unpalatable; all difficulties and oppositions can be absorbed:

> The Greeks neither at any time experienced a movement from within that caused a violent recoil from the path which they had chosen, nor were they ever diverted by the overwhelming might of an invading force from the natural course of their evolution. Out of their own natural feelings and reflexion this most intellectually gifted nation evolved the great ideas that nourish succeeding centuries. They anticipated all later ages. The profoundest and boldest, the most devout as well as the most irreverent speculations as to the nature of God, the world and men have their origin among the Greeks. But this excessive many-sidedness led to a general condition of equipoise in which individual factors restrained or balanced each other. Whereas the most violent im-

> pacts and sudden revolutions in the history of civilization are given by just those nations who are only able to embrace one idea at a time and who, confined in the narrow limits of their fanaticism, throw everything else overboard. (Rohde, 88)

The severest test for Rohde was the tide of Thracian Dionysos, the first ripples of which he detects in Homer. Its "subversive and transforming power" grew in to "a spring flood" which "broke down all dykes." Rohde compares it to the power exercised by Buddhism, Christianity, or Islam "over peoples on whom they laid their grip," but the Greeks were not overcome by monotheism because "the Greeks amalgamated—much was learnt while nothing was quite forgotten" (Rohde, 100-02). This ability to absorb and integrate necessarily makes Greek religion complex and difficult to explicate—rather like trying to make sense of the Erechtheion.

Rohde admires Homer, in that the two Homeric epics offer a spectacle of order, which avoids that complex localized religion and those prolix mythological accounts that are all so puzzling when reading Pausanias. Homer with his "clear-sighted vision" fulfilled his poetical task of "reducing confusion and superfluity to uniformity and symmetry of design—the very task which Greek idealism in art continually set before it": "In [Homer's] picture Greek beliefs about the gods *appear* absolutely uniform, as uniform as dialect, political condition, manners and morals" (Rohde, 25). According to Rohde, a period of "Homeric reason" displaced a superstitious earlier cult of ancestors, which was reduced in Homer to mere vestigial shades in Odysseus's trench. Rohde has a Rousseauean view of human development, believing, rather paradoxically, that what makes man truly himself is man's ability to change. Poets such as Homer were themselves the agents of further change:

> Indeed, these very clear-headed men, belonging to the same stock which in later ages "invented" (if one may be allowed to put it so) science and philosophy, were already displaying a mental attitude that distantly threatened the whole system of that plastic representation of things spiritual [i.e., the Olympian gods] which the older antiquity had laboriously constructed. (Rohde, 28)

The Homeric, Winckelmann-like moment is Rohde's equivalent to Nietzsche's form-creating Apollo. But Rohde's own account of Apollo is very different from that of Nietzsche.

Bachofen in *Das Mutterrecht* (1861) juxtaposed Apollo's "immutable repose and clarity," his spiritual beauty, with the sensuous appeal of Dionysos's materiality and phallic exuberance. As in *The Birth of Tragedy*, it

was Dionysos that historically replaced, indeed overwhelmed, Apollo: "Instead of the Apolline age, it was a Dionysiac age that dawned [...] Dionysos assimilated all other cults, and finally became the focus of a universal religion which dominated the ancient world."[22] Rohde takes an opposing view; it was the Apollo at Delphi who—displaying the Greek power of absorbing the foreign—absorbed Dionysos, however wild.

Rohde is sensible that Apollo is far from the idealized, aesthetic dream figure that we encounter in *The Birth of Tragedy*. Apollo has ousted the chthonic cult of Python at Delphi, absorbing the mantic, ecstatic powers of the Pythoness in the oracle; embodying a loss of self before the coming of Dionysian intoxication. Delphi had become the center of religious power, the spiritual, political, and geographic center in Greek religious life. Part of the influence of Delphi was shown in "a deepening moral sense": the famous Adages inscribed on the temple at Delphi—know thyself, nothing too much, never give bail—pointed to a greater "religious sense" than was found in the Homeric age.

But ideas we find in Nietzsche are never far away. On one level, the religion of Apollo represents a necessary illusion which conceals, if not quite the Dionysian abyss, but still a loss of will:

> It is as though the Greeks went through a period such as most civilized nations go through at some time or other, and such as the Greeks themselves were to repeat more than once in following centuries—a period in which the mind after it has at least succeeded in winning its freedom from disquieting and oppressive beliefs in invisible powers shrinks back once more. Under the influence of adversity it feels the need of some comforting illusions behind which it may take shelter and be relieved in part of the burden of responsibility. (Rohde, 157-58)

The grave of Dionysos was shown at Delphi, and for three winter months of the year Dionysos ruled at Delphi in the Hyperborean absence of Apollo. Rohde shows how Delphi promoted the Dionysian religion where it previously was unknown. This was the supreme example of Greek integration and absorption. Thus, we find Aeschylus in a fragment (143) hailing: "ivy-crowned Apollo, the Bacchic-frenzied prophet" (Rohde, 291). Rohde concludes:

> It was a gentler and more civilized Dionysos whom Delphi popularized and even helped to re-shape; the extravagance of his ecstatic abandonment was pruned and moderated to suit the more sober temper of ordinary city-life, and the brighter, daylight festivals of urban and countryside worship. Hardly a trace of the old Thracian worship of ecstasy and exaltation is discoverable in the Dionysiac worship of Athens.

> In other places, and especially in the districts ruled over by the Delphic Apollo himself, Dionysiac worship preserved more of its primitive nocturnal wildness. (Rohde, 288-89)

In a Dioscuri-like interweaving of contraries, it is Dionysos, rather than Apollo, who now becomes the source of otherworldliness, of aesthetic and spiritual development:

> Even Art, the highest expression of the courage and pride of life, drew much of its inspiration and its aspiration towards the infinite from the worship of Dionysos; and the drama, that supreme achievement of Greek poetry, arose out of the choruses of the Dionysiac festival. (Rohde, 285)

We seem to be shading into Nietzsche, as we do in Rohde's account of the spiritual experience of the worship of Dionysos. The ἔνθεοι possessed by *enthusiasmos* live and have their being in the god: "While still retaining the finite Ego, they feel and enjoy to the full the infinite powers of all life" (Rohde, 259-60).

While the original Thracian worship of Dionysos had an intellectual torpor, which favored deathlike states, the Thracians famously greeted birth with mourning and death with rejoicing, for them like Nietzsche's Silenus, for mortals "dying seemed so fair": "There was a trace of such a depreciation of the earthly life of mankind in comparison with the joys of a free-spirit existence" (Rohde, 264). The Greeks added reflection to the Dionysian experience and came up with a religious experience of Oneness:

> Reflexion upon the nature of the world and of God, the changing and deceptive flow of appearance with the indestructible One Reality behind it; the conception of a divinity that is One, a single light that, divided into a thousand rays and reflected from everything that it, achieves its unity again in the soul of man. (Rohde, 266)

But it was the second wave of Dionysian religion from Thrace, associated with Dionysos Zagreus, a wave far more secret and stealthy than the first, that moved towards a religion in which the Psyche became a soul, and individuals who had performed the necessary *katharsis* and participated in the mysteries could attain life beyond death and something approaching immortality. Rohde links this to the Orphic mysteries.

Dionysos Zagreus, known as the twice-born, Zagreus Dimita, known as the Dionysos of the two mothers, embodied in his life the pattern of religious poems, the "Theogonies":

> These Orphic Theogonies described the origin and development of the world from obscure primordial impulses to the clear and distinct vari-

> ety-in-unity of the organized kosmos, and it described it as the history of a long series of divine powers and figures which issued from each other (each one overcoming the last) and succeed each other in the task of building and organizing the world until they have absorbed the whole universe into themselves in order to bring it forth anew, animated with one spirit and, with all its infinite variety, a unity. (Rohde, 339)

This teaching offered a pattern of purification and transformation by which the soul is freed from the body. It became the duty of the Orphic mysteries for man to free himself from the chains of the body, though not through asceticism, which Rohde considers un-Greek. The process of *katharsis* is not a moral one, merely a leaving-behind of earthly consideration. Thus, the long twisting path of contraries and opposites in Rohde comes to the separation of the soul and the body, which was consolidated in the work of Plato. It was a separation which Rohde generally deplored as life-denying—but the source of that separation, the ultimate differentiation, is in the Dionysian, not the Apollonian.[23]

Throughout *Psyche* we catch echoes of Nietzsche and *The Birth of Tragedy*, but it is not a matter of augmentation or simple opposition; rather, on the principle which Rohde so admires in the Greeks, it is one of inclusion, reflecting the variety-in-one which united reflection and enthusiasm.

* * *

Rohde died, before Nietzsche did, in 1898. When Elisabeth went to tell her sick brother of his death, he looked at her "with large sad eyes: 'Rohde dead? Oh!' he said softly [...] a big tear slowly rolled over his cheek."[24]

The friendship had begun to become more distant and had started to perish and dwindle years before, at the time of Rohde's engagement to Valentine Framm and the poem "Der Wanderer" discussed above. During this period, Nietzsche was working on the last part of *Human, All Too Human*, entitled "The Wanderer and his Shadow." The link is too close for us not to look for some identification of the Shadow with Rohde.

This work by Nietzsche does not mention Rohde but the intimacy of close friendship is clear throughout the text. The Shadow, like the bird in the contemporary poem, has more than a little of an idealized Rohde in it. For his part, Rohde was deeply moved by "*Der Wanderer und sein Schatten*." According to Otto Crusius, the collection of aphorisms, its framing dialogue and lyrical style, had an immediate personal effect. Rohde felt that in Nietzsche's work contentment and happiness had been wrested free, "desperately quickly," "ere it was dark and the sun and

shadows departed." Rohde saw it, and other works Nietzsche sent him at this time, as a compensation for Nietzsche's hermit-like existence. His writings could no longer be seen as the academic work of scholarly investigation, but as "a way out" for a rejected, miserable inner life (*das zurückgewiesene leidenschaftliche Innenleben*) of a hermit. Rohde, it seems, had a sense that Nietzsche had had to become two personalities; something which was confirmed by a communication of Nietzsche in 1883 where he spoke of his "double nature" (*zweite Natur*), something which, as Crusius suggests, Rohde had already surmised, and which had already been presaged in *Daybreak*:

> *First nature.* – The way in which we are educated nowadays means that we acquire a *second nature*: and we have it when the world calls us mature, of age, employable. A few of us are sufficiently snakes one day to throw off this skin, and to do so when beneath its covering their *first nature* has grown mature. With most of us, its germ has dried up. (D §455)

Rohde had been rendered external to Nietzsche's world. Just as Nietzsche had once been the respectable academic foil to Wagner, so now it was Rohde who was the respectable complement to Nietzsche. Nietzsche frequently exhorted Rohde to produce long and serious works. Nietzsche's "transformation" in a sense meant that the figure that Rohde now represented, the earlier Nietzsche, had been absorbed into Nietzsche's psychic economy. The philologist had become the *doppelgänger* of the philosopher.

* * *

"The Wanderer and his Shadow," written at the point of the loss of intimacy with Rohde, is pervaded by wistfulness and *Sehnsucht*, and has none of the epinician tone of much of Nietzsche's writing. In the opening dialogue there is, like the classical Dioscuri, an intermingling of light and dark:

> *The Wanderer:* [...] I love shadow as much as I love light. For there to be beauty of face, clarity of speech, benevolence and firmness of character, shadow is as needful as light. They are not opponents: they stand, rather, lovingly hand in hand, and when light disappears, shadow slips away after it.
> *The Shadow:* And I hate the same thing you hate: night. I love mankind because they are disciples of light, and I rejoice in the gleam that burns in their eyes when they discover and acquire knowledge, indefatigable knowers and discoverers that they are. That shadow all things cast

> whenever the sunlight of knowledge falls upon them—that shadow too am I. (HA II Wanderer and his Shadow)

The dialogues are ironic, though not of the sustained, Platonic kind—but laconic, relying on mutual knowledge to sustain their shadowy irony—irony being here the shadow of the surface meaning:

> I believe I understand you, even though your expressions are somewhat shadowy [. . .] Good friends now and then exchange an obscure word as a sign of agreement which to any third party is intended for an enigma. (HA II Wanderer and his Shadow)

At what might be termed the most brilliantly illuminated part of the work there is a passage which has, with Heideggerian hindsight, the quality of *aletheia*, a seemingly unmediated vision of antiquity—of the fortunate fields as later described by Rohde in *Psyche*, but there are overtones of distinct cultural reference, of Hölderlin's *Hyperion*, of Poussin and Claude Lorraine—the brilliant idyll comes with aesthetic shading. It is aesthetically knowing, a clock is intruded, it is a time, it is now. It seems innocent, but it is carefully composed to make a philosophical point. It has Romantic *Ironie—Illusionstörung*—yet it is, nonetheless, Arcadian:

> *Et in Arcadia ego.* I looked down, over waves of hills, through fir-trees and spruce trees grave with age, towards a milky green lake: rocky crags of every kind around me, the ground bright with flowers and grasses. A herd of cattle moved and spread itself out before me; solitary cows and groups of cows farther off, in vivid evening light close to the pinewood; others nearer, darker; everything at peace in the contentment of evening. The clock indicated nearly half-past five. The bull of the herd had waded into the white, foaming brook and was slowly following its precipitate course, now resisting it, now yielding: no doubt this was its kind of fierce enjoyment. The herders were two dark-brown creatures Bergamask in origin: the girl clad almost as a boy. To the left mountain slopes and snowfields beyond broad girdles of woodland, to the right, high above me, two gigantic ice-covered peaks floating in a veil of sunlit vapor—everything big, still and bright. The beauty of the whole scene induced in me a sense of awe and of adoration of the moment of its revelation; involuntarily, as if nothing were more natural, I inserted into this pure, clear world of light (in which there was nothing of desire or expectation, no looking before and behind) Hellenic heroes; my feeling must have been like that of Poussin and his pupil: at one and the same time heroic and idyllic.— And that is how individual men have actually *lived*, that is how they have enduringly *felt* they existed in the world and the world existed in them; and among them was one of

> the greatest of men, the inventor of an heroic-idyllic mode of philosophizing: Epicurus. (HA II Wanderer and his Shadow §295)[23]

The light declines with the day—and at the end of the work, in the concluding dialogue, we have the final interchange between Wanderer and Shadow. It is time to part. The Wanderer asks the Shadow what he might do to please him. "Is there nothing you want?" The response we are told is the same as that made by Diogenes to Alexander the Great to the same question, "could you move a little out of the sunlight, I am feeling too cold." The Shadow asks the Wanderer to step under some trees and look at the mountains; the sun is sinking. With the light gone under the trees, so too is the Shadow, for a shadow is a thing of light. The brilliant vision of classicism and the ideal of an interdependent friendship have fled. The Wanderer cries out "*Wo bist du? Wo bist du*?"[25] These last words recall Schiller's lament for the classical world in the poem "Die Götter Griechenlands":

> *Keine Gottheit zeigt sich meinem Blick,*
> *Ach, von jenem lebenwarmen Bilde*
> *Blieb der Schatten nur zurück.*
>
> No God reveals himself to me;
> Of that warm, living image
> Only a shadow has remained.

But even the shadow has departed. *Schöne Welt, wo bist du?*

## Notes

[1] Friedrich Hölderlin, "The Dioscuri" ("Die Dioskuren"), in *Poems and Fragments*, trans. Michael Hamburger, 3rd ed. (London: Anvil Press Poetry, 1994), 170-71.

[2] The label "Dioscuri" recurs in the early letters between Rohde and Nietzsche, such as the letter from Rohde to Nietzsche of 10 September 1867, in which Rohde sees Nietzsche and he sharing the same pedestal—in the manner of the statues of the Dioscuri.

[3] KSB 4, 187; Friedrich Nietzsche, *Selected Letters*, ed. Oscar Levy, trans. Anthony Mario Ludovici (London: Heinemann, 1921), 92.

[4] Johann Jakob Bachofen, "An Essay on Ancient Mortuary Symbolism," in *Myth, Religion, and Mother Right* [Bollingen Series, 84], trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967), 21-65 (25).

[5] Bachofen, *Myth, Religion, and Mother Right*, 26.

[6] See Bachofen's discussion of the Dioscuri as an image of justice in *Das Mutterrecht*: their "ἑτερημερία (daily alternating life) is an image not only of the alternation between life and death, day and night, that governs the world, but also of the highest justice, in recognition of which the surviving brother voluntarily shares his immortality with the dead one" (*Myth, Religion, and Mother Right*, 188). The understanding of the interrelation of manifestation, non-existence, being and non-being, with justice anticipates the way of thought in Heidegger's interpretation of the Anaximander fragment.

[7] "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," in William Blake, *Complete Writings, with Variant Readings*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1966), 157. Further information on the Dioscuri may be found in J. Rendel Harris, *The Cult of the Heavenly Twins* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1906). Also, Yuri Stoyanov, *The Other God: Dualist Religion from Antiquity to the Cathar Heresy* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 2000), which discusses dualism in the cult of the Dioscuri and in the religion of Zoroaster, is particularly pertinent; as is, too, Fernand Chapouthier, *Les Dioscures au service d'une Déesse, étude d'iconographie religieuse* (Paris: Boccard, 1935).

[8] Bachofen, *Myth, Religion, and Mother Right*, 26.

[9] Bachofen, *Myth, Religion, and Mother Right*, 27. It is worth citing the preceding passage: "Romulus and Remus also represent the bright and dark side of nature. And Hermes' hat, half black and half white, corresponds to his twofold nature, by virtue of which he dwells alternately in the luminous height and in the empty chambers of the underworld. Like Castor and Pollux, the sons of Oedipus rule by turns. The flame of the altar separates into two pillars, eternally blowing in opposite directions. Silenus, captured in the rose garden, tells Midas the secret of the well of grief and the well of joy." The mention of Silenus is an interesting

supplement to the reference to this dark wisdom cited by Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy*.

[10] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1974), 219. Pindar's line in full is γένοι' οἷος ἐσσὶ μαθών, translated by William Race in the Loeb edition as "Become such as you are, having learned what that is" (Pindar, *Olympian Odes; Pythian Odes*, ed. and trans. William H. Race (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1997), 239). Conway renders the line "Be what you are" (Pindar, *The Odes and Selected Fragments*, trans. G. S. Conway and Richard Stoneman (London: Everyman, 1997), 109), which is closer to Kaufmann's earlier translation of Nietzsche's axiom in his biography of the philosopher: "*What does your conscience say?*—'You shall become who you are'" (Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, 3rd edn (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP), 159). Kaufmann draws a link both with Pindar and Hegel, but there seems to be an important difference between the Nietzsche and the Pindar versions. In the *Pythian Ode* the poet is serving, as it were, as the poetic conscience of the subject of the poem, Hieron. The poem is a reproach to Hieron, the ruler of Aetna and Syracuse, who, it would appear from Maurice Bowra's interpretation of the Ode, has preferred Pindar's rival Bacchylides' work as a poet. Bowra detects "eruptive violence" in Pindar's Ode, and comments on its "uncontrolled changes of mood, its constant return to a central core of anger, distrust and contempt. Despite its high praise for Hieron's victory and for his qualities in war and peace, it cannot hide that Pindar is in torment and quite unable to control his resentment at insult and injury. [...] He feels that in making such a choice [i.e., of Bacchylides] Hieron has gone against his own nature and he begs him γένοι' οἷος ἐσσὶ μαθών, 'O find, and be, yourself,' a practical application of the Delphic motto γνῶθα σεαντόνᾶ (Maurice Bowra, *Pindar* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1964), 135-36). The line is poised between the tales of Tantalus and Ixion, who have failed to govern, or govern themselves, with prudence, and the wise judge of the dead Rhadamanthys. In Nietzsche's version, Pindar has become the voice of conscience, the utterance has become psychologized. How may we then associate it with the figure of Rohde? Is Nietzsche still at the Pindaric stage, a dialogue with another person rather than with the Self? If anything, the conversation between the Wanderer and his Shadow, discussed later in the paper, is a middle point between the two. There is an interesting discussion of γνῶθα σεαντόν and Pindar's third *Pythian Ode* in Eliza Gregory Wilkins, *"Know Thyself" in Greek and Latin Literature* (Chicago and London: U of Chicago P, 1917), chapter 7 (52-59), which might have a further bearing on Nietzsche's version.

[11] Nietzsche proudly signs the letter "Friedrich Nietzsche, Cannoneer, 21st Batt., Cavalry Div. of Field Artillery Reg. No. 4." The letter brings to mind how Rohde and Nietzsche, when students at Leipzig, used to appear in matching riding-costume, with riding crops—according to Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, "like two young gods" (see Karl Jaspers, *Nietzsche: An Introduction to the Under-*

*standing of his Philosophical Activity*, trans. Charles F. Wallraff and Frederick J. Schmitz (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1965), 59).

[12] See the discussion in Joachim Köhler, *Nietzsche and Wagner: A Lesson in Subjugation*, trans. Ronald Taylor (New Haven and London: Yale UP 1998), 116. Taylor notes that "the isles of the blest" was the subtitle of Johann Jakob Heinse's *Ardinghello* (1787).

[13] A full account of the attack and defense of Nietzsche's work is given in M. S. Silk and J. P. Stern, *Nietzsche on Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1981), 95-98. Silk and Stern examine the puns involved in Rohde's title *Afterphilologie*—"*After*," apart from being a symmetrical opposition to Wilamowitz's joke on future (*Zukunft*), has the sense of pseudo or false, with a rather daring pun on the word for "anus."

[14] Köhler, *Nietzsche and Wagner*, 103-05.

[15] For the full text of the poem and the circumstances of its composition, see Philip Grundlehner, *The Poetry of Friedrich Nietzsche* (New York and Oxford: Oxford UP, 1986), 64-70. His translation is given here.

[16] Friedrich Nietzsche, letter to Rohde of 24 March 1881 (KSB 6, 76); *Selected Letters*, 135.

[17] KSB 5, 478-70; *Selected Letters*, 172.

[18] Hubert Cancik, "Erwin Rohde—ein Philologe der Bismarckzeit," in Wilhelm Doerr and Otto Haxel (eds), *Semper Apertus: Sechshundert Jahre Ruprechts-Karls-Universität Heidelberg, 1386-1986: Festschrift in sechs Bänden* (Berlin and New York: Springer, 1985), vol. 2, 436-505 (468).

[19] Erwin Rohde, *Psyche: The Cult of Souls and Belief in Immortality among the Greeks* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1925). Henceforth cited as Rohde. *Psyche* was published in two volumes. The first appeared in 1890 in Freiburg im Breisgau published by Verlag J. C. B. Mohr, the second volume came out in the winter 1893/1894. Rohde wrote the preface to the first edition (dated Heidelburg, 1893) at the beginning of the second volume, which can lead to a confusion of editions. The first volume ended with chapter 7 and the second volume began with chapter 8—this division was kept in the one-volume second edition of 1897, and subsequently it became the regular break in the book marked as part one and part two. In his preface to the first edition (appended to the second 1893/1894 volume) Rohde points out that the division between volumes, and the subsequent parts, reflects a basic division in the text. The full title of the book, *Psyche: The Cult of Souls and Belief in Immortality among the Greeks* (*Psyche: Seelencult und Unsterblichkeitsglaube der Griechen*), is broken down into two by Rohde; he says that the two parts could have been kept separate, that is, "The Cult of Souls" and "Belief in Immortality," "as they have been" in the two volumes. The two themes have a common start, yet they are usually distinct. Rohde's observation here is worth quoting in full: "The Cult of Souls and the conception of immortality may eventually come together at some points, but

they have a different origin and travel most of the way on separate paths. The conception of immortality in particular arises from a spiritual intuition which reveals the souls of men as standing in close relationship, and indeed as being of like substance, with the everlasting gods. And simultaneously the gods are regarded as being in their nature like the soul of man, i.e. as free spirits needing no material or visible body. (It is this spiritualized view of the gods—not the belief in gods itself as Aristotle supposes in the remarkable statement quoted by Sextus Empiricus, AdV. Mathematicos, iii, 20 ff.—which arises from the vision of its own divine nature achieved by the soul καθ′ ἑαντήν relieved of the body, in ἐνθονσιασμοί and μαντεῖαι.) And this conception leads far away from the ideas on which the Cult of Souls was based" (Rohde, ix.). The division of the two volumes is therefore essential to the architecture of the book as a whole, and recapitulates in physical form the revolution in Greek religion which the book describes.

[20] Jaspers, *Nietzsche*, 61.

[21] Thomas Mann, *Death in Venice*, trans. Helen T. Lowe-Porter (London: Secker and Warburg, 1928), 76.

[22] Bachofen, *Myth, Religion, and Mother Right*, 116; cf. the discussion in Silk and Stern, *Nietzsche on Tragedy*, 313.

[23] Hubert Cancik, in his account of the significance of *Psyche*, sees it as a vital part of the development of psychology, not only in its designation of the development of the soul, but also in its discussion of loss of self and *katharsis.* Apart from being a "*Kristallisationspunkt*" of his school of philology, Cancik argues that Rohde's work marks the appearance of a new "epoch of psychology"—that connected the philosophy of the will and the unconscious that he shared with Nietzsche. He links Schopenhauer, Eduard von Hartmann, and Wilhelm Wundt with the later psychology of Pierre Janet, Freud and Bernays (Cancik, "Erwin Rohde—ein Philologe der Bismarckzeit," 474-75).

[24] *Friedrich Nietzsches Briefwechsel mit Erwin Rohde*, ed. Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche and Fritz Schöll, 3rd edn (Leipzig: Insel-Verlag, 1923), xx.

[25] The concluding words are most strongly reminiscent of Schubert's setting of Schiller's poem (D 677) which Nietzsche almost certainly knew. Nietzsche also must have known Schubert's setting of Johann Mayrhofer's "Lied eines Schiffers and die Dioskuren" (D 360); see Richard Wigmore, *Schubert: The Complete Song Texts* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1988):

| | |
|---|---|
| *Dioskuren, Zwillingssterne,* | Dioscuri, twin stars, |
| *Die ihr leuchtet meinem Nachen,* | Shining on my boat, |
| *Mich beruhigt auf dem Meere* | Your gentleness and vigilance |
| *Eure Milde, euer Wachen.* | Comfort me on the ocean. |

| | |
|---|---|
| *Wer auch fest in sich begründet,* | However firmly a man believes in himself, |
| *Unverzagt dem Sturm begegnet,* | However fearlessly he meets the storm, |
| *Fühlt sich doch in euren Strahlen* | He feels doubly valiant and blessed |
| *Doppelt mutig und gesegnet.* | In your light. |
| *Dieses Ruder, das ich schwinge,* | This oar which I ply |
| *Meeresfluten zu zerteilen,* | To cleave the ocean's waves, |
| *Hänge ich, so ich geborgen,* | I shall hang, once I have landed safely, |
| *Auf an eures Tempels Säulen.* | On the pillars of your temple. |

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