NIETZSCHE, HEIDEGGER, AND DAOIST THOUGHT

CROSSING PATHS IN-BETWEEN

KATRIN FROESE

Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Daoist Thought

SUNY series in Chinese Philosophy and Culture

Roger T. Ames, editor

Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Daoist Thought

Crossing Paths In-Between

Katrin Froese

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Abbreviations

Martin Heidegger

BT	*Being and Time*
BDT	*Building, Dwelling, Thinking*
CP	*Contributions to Philosophy*
EP	*The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking*
ID	*Identity and Difference*
IM	*Introduction to Metaphysics*
LH	*Letter on Humanism*
MFL	*The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*
N 1	*Nietzsche Volume 1: The Will to Power as Art*
N 2	*Nietzsche Volume 2: The Eternal Return*
N 3	*Nietzsche Volume 3: Will to Power as Knowledge and Metaphysics*
N 4	*Nietzsche Volume 4: Nihilism*
ET	*On the Essence of Truth*
OWL	*On the Way to Language*
OM	*Overcoming Metaphysics*
PLT	*Poetry, Language, and Thought*
PR	*Principle of Reason*
QCT	*Question Concerning Technology*
WM	*What is Metaphysics*
WCT	*What is Called Thinking*

All references to Heidegger are by page number.

Laozi

DDJ	*Tao-Te-Ching*

All references to Laozi are by section number.

Friedrich Nietzsche

A *The Antichrist*
BGE *Beyond Good and Evil*
BTr *The Birth of Tragedy*
EH *Ecce Homo*
GS *The Gay Science*
GM *On the Genealogy of Morals*
HAH *Human, All too Human*
Z *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*
TI *Twilight of the Idols*
WP *The Will to Power*
All references to Nietzsche are by section number.

Zhuangzi

Zh *The Book of Chuang-tzu*
All references to Zhuangzi include section and page number.

Introduction

Globalization has become one of the most pervasive catchwords of the modern era, and refers not only to the interpenetration of markets, technology and information but also to the proliferation of ideas that increasingly spill over boundaries. Although technological innovation has greatly increased the rapidity and facility with which in theory at least, the cross-fertilization of cultures becomes possible, the exchange of ideas has not always been reciprocal to say the least. The West has a dubious history of approaching other cultures from a self-proclaimed position of superiority, and treated other civilizations with condescension and contempt. Edward Said has pointed out that the "'Orient' is a Western construct . . . whose purpose is to reinforce and justify Western power."[1] Born out of the uneasy relationship between the West and Islam, Said's analysis exposes the manner in which imperialistic tendencies have skewed attitudes towards so-called other modes of thinking which are analyzed primarily in relation to the West's agenda for global domination. In Said's view, it is no coincidence that the interest in Oriental cultures blossomed at the height of European colonization. This is indeed a powerful critique. The triumphalism after the end of the Cold War, which makes the adaptation to the global capitalist system the main measure of progress is a disturbing testament to Said's accusations.

Nevertheless, Fred Dallmayr and J. J. Clarke point out that the unabashed imperialism with which the West has often approached non-Western cultures is not a monolithic tendency, for Asian thought has not only been incorporated by Western thinkers but has also helped to shape the Western tradition itself. There is no doubt that the agenda of domination, while forcing the flow of ideas from West to Asia, could not completely contain a flow in the reverse direction which inevitably led to a rethinking of Western ideas and the infiltration of Asian modes of thinking into the Western philosophical consciousness. Neither tradition is monolithic and uniform and as Karl Jaspers asserts, there was a remark-

able flowering of ideas during the time he refers to as the axial age, when philosophy came onto its own in different parts of the world. This suggests that cultural exchange may have been at the heart of the development of the philosophical tradition itself.

The messianic zeal to spread Western culture and religion unwittingly spawned reverse tendencies, namely to invoke non-Western culture as a way of critiquing the West. J. J. Clarke points out that the desire to convert the souls of unbelievers to the Christian faith initiated the exploration in the West of Chinese ways of thinking. He cites the Jesuit missionaries as examples, who went to China with the intent of winning new converts to Christianity. While not downplaying the imperialistic nature of their mission, he points out that the Jesuits were neither single-mindedly myopic nor bigoted and sent back many reports expressing their esteem for Chinese culture. Even though dialogue with Chinese thought was seen as a necessary step in the process of conversion, there was at least an attempt to blend cultures rather than to stamp out Chinese philosophy altogether.[2] Clarke cites the example of early missionaries such as Mateo Ricci who attempted to adopt Catholic rituals to Confucian customs and practices. Many Chinese classics were translated into European languages by Catholic missionaries.

Not all interaction with the China grew out of missionary zeal. Many thinkers from the Enlightenment era invoked Chinese philosophy to provide an alternative standpoint from which to criticize Western institutions and practices. While not contemptuous, these interpretations of Chinese philosophy were often skewed as the example of Voltaire clearly brings to light. Confucianism was hailed by him as a truly rational form of social order in contrast to the superstitious tendency that marred Christian religion. He therefore falsely superimposed onto Confucian thought the dualism between reason and faith that was so pronounced in the France of his time. Since Confucian doctrine did not show any evidence of the religious fervour he was more familiar with, he assumed it must be built on the edifice of logic and reason.[3] This completely ignores the fact that Confucianism did not operate on the basis of abstract principles of the kind that the Enlightenment held in high esteem, but rather was predicated on social behaviour and rituals intended to ensure that harmony was continuously created out of social interaction. While patterns of behaviour were prescribed, this was a contextualized social order, rather than one based on abstract reason. In fact, had Voltaire had a deeper understanding of Confucian philosophy, he may very well have been more dismissive of it.

Leibniz is an example of a Western philosopher with a more sophisticated understanding of Chinese philosophy. He conceived of the world as a living being composed of monads, thereby explicitly challenging the mechanistic view of the cosmos that was prevalent during this time. Each monad interacted harmoniously with other monads and the interdependence of the cosmos's parts rather than their atomistic self-sufficiency was stressed. Thus, the whole was neither conceived of as a sum of its individual parts, nor was it reduced to a logical pattern to which each monad conformed. Joseph Needham points out that Leibniz saw the universe in terms of an uninterrupted flow which has neither beginning nor end.[4] This resonates powerfully with the ideas contained in the Chinese classic the *Yijing* which underscores the wholeness that develops out of the interconnection between things. Rather than positing separate entities which become the building blocks of the cosmos, it describes various states of existence which are constantly being transformed into other states. Because Leibniz provides an account of the whole that is based on interconnected processes, he is a maverick within the Western philosophical tradition.

The tendency to invoke foreign thinking to revitalize one's own tradition is not a phenomenon that is unique to the Western world. The influence of Western thinkers in the May Fourth movement in China is one obvious example. Critics of the Confucian tradition frequently drew upon the literature and philosophy of the West. While Western thinkers used Asian philosophy in order to criticize an approach predicated largely on atomization and abstraction, Chinese thinkers invoked Western philosophers to criticize a tradition which they thought undermined individual creativity and led to social stagnation. For example, Lu Xun eagerly drew upon the writings of philosophers such as Friedrich Nietzsche, and writers such as Henrik Ibsen, to criticize a Confucian social order which had become morally bankrupt. Individuals, capable of defining ideals in his view should contribute to the dawn of a new social order which would transcend the passive obedience to tradition.[5] His famous *Diary of a Madman* has strong Nietzschean overtones and is palpably influenced by Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra.* The story condemns the oppressive nature of Confucian culture and metaphorically refers to it as a man-eating society where the strong devour the weak. The madman, like Zarathustra, is a social outcast who sees the truth of the society that others refuse to see.

Another critic of the Confucian order, Li Shicen adopted a Nietzschean understanding of nihilism and argued that Confucian values

had been devalued by rendering people phlegmatic, docile and uncritical. His criticisms of Confucian culture echo Nietzsche's complaints regarding the herd mentality which discourages critical reflection and functions through empty mimicry. Li Shicen argued that Confucian demands to act in accordance with the mean expressed the "depravity of hypocrites and slaves." He criticized the Chinese propensity to associate individualism with self interest.[6] However, Li did not crudely pit Western individualism against Chinese collectivism. In fact, Li's interpretations of Nietzsche prove to be much more subtle than those of many Western interpreters. He rejected the view that Nietzsche's thought was responsible for German militarism and World War I[7] and recognized that Nietzsche was not extolling a life of solipsism and radical individualism. According to Li, cultivating uniqueness and individuality was also a way of affirming the cosmos as a whole. Thus, social responsibility and individual creativity were not conceived of as polar opposites in Li's thought. He criticized what he deemed to be the Chinese tendency to equate individualism with self-interest which failed to acknowledge that self-affirmation can also provide a way of acknowledging one's responsibility to one's environs.[8]

The example of Li Shicen attests to the fruitful possibilities for cross-cultural thought. It is interesting to note that sometimes thought that is culturally alien can shed considerable light on one's own tradition, particularly when one is dealing with thinkers who are not part of the mainstream. Hannah Arendt once pointed out that the best book on Heidegger had been written by the Indian philosopher J. L. Mehta. Roger Ames illustrates that an examination of Chinese thought, which we more readily accept as foreign, can help sensitize us to the truly exotic nature of a thinker such as Nietzsche.[9]

Many thinkers look to the world outside when their own society is deemed to be in need of renewal. Contemporary Western philosophy and culture is also in dire need of such rejuvenation as the sinister side to the West's agenda for global dominance becomes increasingly apparent. Eurocentric ways of thinking are being challenged as we are confronted with the possibility of global environmental catastrophes and the frightening spectre of wars which leave no corner of the globe untouched. Not surprisingly this has also generated the desire for a global peace which celebrates diversity and permits ongoing dialogue between cultures. Traditions are not to be abandoned, but rather are to be reinterpreted in light of the interaction between various cultures.

Hans-Georg Gadamer is one well-known proponent of intercultural dialogue and is becoming a major source of inspiration for the study of

cross-cultural philosophy in the West. In his book *Das Erbe Europas* (*The Legacy of Europe*), he insists that "we must learn to respect the other and otherness. This entails an ability to admit that we could be wrong."[10] While critical of Europe's historical tendencies to impose its vision on the globe, he insists that European unity must be preserved, for two world wars had demonstrated the danger of nationalist and ethnic fragmentation. Nevertheless, this should be a unity of diversity which celebrates the rich multicultural heritage of the continent. For this reason, Gadamer is adamantly opposed to the establishment of any global or indeed European language. While every culture is in need of horizons that help to establish a unique identity that it can claim as its own, he argues that these horizons should be evolving and malleable rather than static and rigid. One's own tradition needs to be continuously both reinterpreted and strengthened in light of its exposure to what is foreign to it. Indeed, in Gadamer's view, unity depends on diversity, just as diversity depends on unity: "you learn from those who learn from you . . . My judgement is always enriched by the judgement of others. This is the soul of hermeneutics."[11]

Thinkers of the Kyoto school in Japan, such as Keiji Nishitani and Nishida hold views that closely parallel those of Gadamer. While their thought emerges out of the tradition of Buddhist philosophy, they are very receptive to Western thought and strive to bring about a kind of cultural synthesis between the West and Asia. Nevertheless, they insist that both Asia and the West should maintain their respective traditions while at the same time recognizing that these are in dire need of the kind of regeneration that cross-cultural dialogue can produce. Nishitani's analysis of Mahayana and Zen Buddhism contains powerful echoes of Heidegger as well as German Idealism while his interpretations of Nietzsche and existentialist philosophers such as Sartre and Kierkegaard resonate powerfully with the insights of Buddhism. Nishitani accredits this ability for fostering cultural dialogue with the unique position of Japan which has inherited vastly different cultures. He claims that this "puts a heavy responsibility on our shoulders: to lay the foundations of thought for a world in the making, for a new world united beyond differences of East and West."[12] The rejuvenation of one's cultural heritage is necessary as a way of stemming the nihilistic tide that Nishitani thinks has gripped the not only the West but also the East in the aftermath of two world wars. Cultural dialogue provides a possibility for reinfusing our world with meaning and preventing the kind of stagnation of ideas that leads us to assume that the cosmos itself is meaningless.

COMPARATIVE METHODS

Gadamer and Nishitani both claim that meaning depends on a sense of global unity but insist that this unity must be based on diversity and difference rather than on cultural homogenization. Local traditions ought not to be abandoned, but rather need to be reinterpreted in light of the dialogue with the other. The development of what is sometimes referred to as a global monoculture is intensely disturbing to them. Despite contemporary rhetoric extolling the virtues of multiculturalism, the fields of philosophy and political theory have been notoriously slow in expanding their horizons. This is not only due to philosophical chauvinism, but can also be attributed to an emphasis on specialization that has dissuaded thinkers from venturing into unfamiliar terrain, in which language difficulties alone pose significant cultural barriers. But as Gadamer warns, we must learn to be wrong, and not remain myopically wedded to the familiar for fear of making erroneous judgements.

Therefore, in order to widen the scope of philosophical knowledge, it is necessary to eschew the comforts of the specialist and expert and delve into unfamiliar territory for the perspective that the stranger can offer of one's home is not necessarily an invalid one. Heidegger once lamented that Japanese intellectuals had a much better appreciation of his concept of nihilism than many of his Western colleagues. In fact, if we need to turn to Western philosophical heavyweights to provide a justification for a kind of cross-cultural curiosity, then thinkers such as Heidegger, Gadamer and Nietzsche provide all the intellectual fodder that one needs. For both Nietzsche and Heidegger, the sense of *Unheimlichkeit*, or *not* being at home, while sometimes painful, is a necessary part of the creation of meaning. Since meaning is conceived by both of these thinkers as a process of renewing connections with the world one is in, an encounter with "foreign civilizations" is very fruitful in this regard. While Heidegger acknowledges the tremendous importance of being connected to a particular place, he also insists that such connection demands a constant revisiting of one's home which in turn necessitates a departure from it. We can only return to a place that we are not afraid to leave.

Undoubtedly the task of pursuing comparative philosophy is a delicate one, and one must be weary of the tendency to either exaggerate or underestimate differences between philosophical traditions. Furthermore, we must readily admit that we can never gain objective insights into either other traditions or our own. By stepping outside familiar terrain, one is better able to see one's own home with the eyes of a stranger, and thereby

is able to expose presuppositions that had been left previously unexamined because they were simply taken for granted. Such a move can also help to reveal those assumptions that have become part of what Heidegger calls "fore-knowledge." These are ideas that are relayed to us, not via explicit pedagogical methods, but that we absorb almost unthinkingly by virtue of the fact that we are born into a certain cultural context. Every philosophical tradition is predicated on assumptions that are intuited as well as learned. At the same time, being immersed in a tradition gives one an outlook that is different than that of the stranger. Comparative philosophy works under the assumption that neither insiders nor outsiders can claim objective validity. Furthermore, inside and outside cannot be so neatly disentangled, for cultural horizons always emerge out of an encounter with what is foreign and thus the inside is part of the outside and the outside part of the inside to a greater extent than one is often prepared to acknowledge. Thinkers such as Gadamer celebrate the fuzzy nature of our horizons which are not only ways by which we distinguish ourselves from others, but also meeting places where dialogue produces a constant shifting of boundaries.

In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer presents dialogue as the method of fostering relations between "familiar" and "alien" cultures. Dallmayr argues that his eagerness to promote a "fusion of horizons" (*Horizontverschmelzung*) impels him to attenuate difference by focussing on the commonalities between cultures.[13] For Gadamer, the horizon represents the particular vantage point from which a finite being sees the world. As human beings, we are always dependent upon ideas which have been transmitted to us (*Überlieferung*) but at the same time also thrive on those ideas that come to us from the "outside" and which are often incorporated into existing frameworks. While Gadamer takes it for granted that we always manifest certain predispositions when approaching the object of our understanding, he maintains that an awareness of our own foreknowledge makes it easier for the other to "present itself in all its otherness and thus assert its own truth against one's own fore-meanings."[14] This suggests that a fusion of horizons may not always be possible and that the radical difference of the other must also be acknowledged. Yet, at the same time, inherited customs and traditions are not simply endpoints but are also starting points for conversations. Such dialogue is necessary not only to facilitate peaceful coexistence but also to allow us to revisit our own familiar terrain with a newfound strangeness and wonder that keeps existing traditions alive. When our own traditions become too familiar and remain without challenges for too long, they risk becoming moribund.

Gadamer is not suggesting that cultural dialogue presents no difficulties, or that differences can always be negotiated in such a way as to produce social harmony. Furthermore, the effects of this process will often be unsettling as we will inevitably face challenges to our own identity. However, at the same time, we cannot dismiss Gadamer's exhortations as naïve philosophic musings for his ideas are born out of the experience of two world wars which reached a degree of devastation previously unknown to humankind: "We who have experienced two world wars . . . are not easily tempted to believe that we find ourselves in an ivory tower."[15] While the model of mutual dialogue may seem idealistic in some ways, Gadamer suggests that a world which is capable of destroying humankind and of completely devastating our natural environment, leaves us with no choice but to try to bring about a kind of global peace.[16] Realists can hardly afford to ignore the musings of idealistic philosophers such as Gadamer.

HEIDEGGER, NIETZSCHE, LAOZI, AND ZHUANGZI

Gadamer's philosophy suggests that a world which faces the possibility of its own extinction is in urgent need of a sense of unity which allows each to be concerned with the welfare of all and also with the natural world that human beings are a part of. At the same time, he acknowledges that fundamental differences not only between cultures, but also between individuals make a unity which is predicated on the imposition of a single vision both an unrealistic and undesirable goal. In order to work towards the aim of fostering global harmony, Gadamer implies that it does not suffice to work out a political framework for peaceful coexistence. Human beings require a sense of belonging in order to prevent them from lapsing into the kind of destructive frenzy that in his own time culminated in two world wars. The task he sets for philosophy is a delicate and challenging one. On the one hand, the fates of all civilizations and cultures are inextricably entangled, and so he insists that the notion of belonging must have a strong global dimension that rests on some notion of common humanity. At the same time, he recognizes that this by itself is too vague to provide human beings with a sense of grounding and therefore Gadamer also affirms the importance of being rooted in particular traditions that we know to be distinct from those of others and can claim as our own. The task of balancing these two aspects of meaning is not an easy one.

In undertaking this project, I begin with an assumption that there is a need to find some way of thinking about wholeness that celebrates dif-

ference rather than eradicating it. I have chosen the German philosophers Heidegger and Nietzsche, and the Chinese thinkers Laozi and Zhuangzi because each of them acknowledges the importance of thinking about a cosmic whole to which we belong, while at the same time celebrating plurality and difference. This is the underlying thread that I will use to link philosophers whose thought grows out of not only very different philosophical traditions, but also out of very different historical eras. Nevertheless their thinking is very germane today, because it not only explores the possibility for establishing interconnections between human beings, but also demands that nature be included within the philosophical horizon.

The recognition that we are part of a larger cosmos that cannot be defined and which emerges out of the interactions between beings while at the same time being prior to them is common to all of these writers. It is a concept of wholeness, based on process rather than substance. Because Nietzsche and Heidegger attempt to reinvest the unthinkable, intuitive and non-rational realms with philosophical legitimacy, they are often considered outcasts in a Western tradition which has prided itself on a heritage that extols abstract reason. Laozi and Zhuangzi also insist that there are realms of experience that can neither be understood nor spoken about. However, they do not confront a philosophical legacy in which it is assumed that the cosmos can be understood. Nevertheless, all of these thinkers in different ways draw attention to the limits of thought. Philosophy is not paralysed by these limits, for it receives its sustenance from that which cannot be known. Rather than seeing philosophy as a means by which the cosmos can be understood, it becomes a process by which our connection to it is affirmed. Creating meaning rather than establishing knowledge becomes the ultimate aim of philosophy for these thinkers.

The need to think about the whole in no way demands a repudiation of critical thought in order to maintain some kind of monolithic unity. Indeed, what Daoist thinking shows us, is that an intense questioning and skepticism in relation to established truths need not result in either moral recklessness or nihilism. Zhuangzi perhaps has the biggest reputation for skepticism in the Chinese philosophical tradition but his unrelenting critique is not the source of philosophical despair but rather is intended to foster a harmony in which the creative potential of each individual being is celebrated. Thus, an exploration of Daoist thought can help to challenge the assumption that the refusal to proclaim universal truths eventuates in a dangerous relativism which results in either never-ending conflict or a paralysing apathy.

Despite these important similarities there are also some significant differences in the understandings of the individual being's relationship to the whole. For Nietzsche and Heidegger, the establishment of a unique and individual identity is of great importance and thus the human subject will always be in need of marking out territory that it can claim as its own. While not denying that all individuals are interconnected and that their identity emerges out of such interconnection, they also point out that an important aspect of selfhood arises from the self's sense of separation from its world and from others. Thus our sense of belonging to the whole will at the same time always be accompanied by a feeling of estrangement from it. In the works of Laozi and Zhuangzi, it is made very clear that the interconnectedness of all beings is of primary importance. The self is to cultivate its uniqueness not by standing out, but rather by finding ways of establishing harmonious accord with others that allow the unique potential of each to flourish. While uniqueness is celebrated rather than spurned, there is an understanding that it is imperative that the Self free itself from excessive attachment to its own boundaries, for such attachment is bound to eventuate in conflict, struggle and pain.

Yet, while these differences between the philosophical traditions must be acknowledged, they must also not be exaggerated to the point of overlooking their similarities. In fact, a comparison between the works of Nietzsche and a thinker such as Zhuangzi helps to show that Nietzsche is not the radical individualist that he is often assumed to be. Furthermore, Zhuangzi can be invoked to elucidate the spiritual dimensions of Nietzschean thought, which are often ignored in the interpretive literature because his anti-Christian diatribes are often falsely equated with a blatant contempt for all that is spiritual. The connection between Heidegger and Daoist thinkers is more direct, since it is now known that Heidegger was very much influenced by Daoist thought. His later writings reflect a shift in perspective where he draws much more attention to the interconnected aspects of our being and it is here that the echoes of Daoist thinking are most pronounced. In fact, my encounter with Heidegger's often impenetrable and obscure later writings was made much easier by my previous exposure to Daoist modes of thinking.

One must also guard against assuming that the dilemmas and importance of individuation are not addressed in Daoist philosophy at all. Here again a comparison with Western thinkers can be useful in exposing these sometimes more subtle dimensions of Daoist thought. While a thinker such as Zhuangzi focuses on the way in which one thing can turn into

another, he also insists upon the importance of recognizing that one thing is not the other. Furthermore, he warns against the dangers inherent in the tendency to impose one's own perspective on others, and thereby reveals a sensitivity to the problem of individuation that separates beings from each other.

All of these thinkers in different ways draw attention to the fact that human beings are caught in a position where they are aware of the infinite whole but at the same time are finite beings. They thereby present diverse ways of coping with this sometimes uncomfortable position in-between which human beings occupy. For Nietzsche and Heidegger, the suffering and tension created out of this in-between-ness cannot and should not be totally eradicated, for it is what makes us human. Anxiety and despair for Nietzsche and Heidegger will always be a part of the human experience. At the same time, they maintain that we must try to celebrate our limits by seeing them as points of connection with other beings. This is why Nietzsche insists that there is a link between suffering and joy. Laozi and Zhuangzi, on the other hand, try to alleviate our suffering more completely by encouraging us to see our finite boundaries as openings by which we connect to the other. In this way, they suggest that we can become comfortable even with our own mortality, for our ending is always another beginning. Although we as individuals may die, we can draw solace from the fact that the Dao never does.

The need to accept our "in-between-ness" is not merely a mental exercise that prevents philosophical minds from going idle. For all of these thinkers it has important ramifications for the ways in which we interact with our world. Heidegger is insistent that the human being must divest itself of the propensity to grasp the whole in order to avoid the brutal violation of the natural world that is reflected for him in the stranglehold that technological thinking has on us. Not only nature but human beings have become objectified as a result, and we fail to treat each other in a humane way. Zhuangzi also berates Confucian thought for ignoring the natural realm and interpreting everything only in light of human interests. He argues that we must learn to appreciate the intrinsic value of nature, and not merely judge it in terms of the use "natural objects" have for us as human beings. Nietzsche maintains that we must acknowledge our interconnectedness so that we can affirm life once more without slipping into a kind of nihilistic despair from which we find it difficult to extricate ourselves. He inveighs against an atomization that results in contempt for ourselves, for each other and for the natural world.

METHOD AND CONTEXT

I am fully cognizant of the limits to a study such as this one, since I am schooled primarily in the Western philosophical tradition. For this reason, my work tilts more heavily towards using Daoist thinking to illuminate presuppositions of Western thought, rather than towards using Western thought to provide insights into Chinese philosophy. Because I assume that I am most likely to be addressing a Western audience, I will briefly try to put Daoist thought into a larger philosophical context. I will also provide a short account of the encounter that both Nietzsche and Heidegger had with non-Western philosophy in order to provide a historical framework for this discussion.

By way of a caveat, I would like to point out that the authorship of the Daoist texts I am examining, namely Laozi's *Daodejing* and Zhuangzi's *Zhuangzi* is by no means certain. It is currently widely assumed that they are the work of an assortment of writers, and have been reworked over time. This often is more troubling to Western than to Chinese interpreters, for Western thinkers tend to focus more closely on the way in which individual thinkers mark out their difference from previous philosophers in the tradition. As a result, attempts have been made to use word counts to assess where different authors may have made their contributions. Chinese philosophers tend to focus more on how works both fit into and emerge out of a tradition, and thus the question of precise authorship is not fore-grounded in quite the same way. The two approaches are by no means mutually exclusive, and reflect a difference in emphasis rather than a stark definition of opposites. Because my intention is largely to spark an interplay of ideas, I will not concern myself with the precise authorship of these texts. I will continue to refer to Laozi and Zhuangzi, while acknowledging that they may not be the authors of the textual passages I am citing.

Chinese philosophy has been largely although not exclusively dominated by the Confucian tradition and Daoist thought must therefore be seen in part as a response to the Confucian heritage. However, the differences between the philosophical streams are not as dramatic as they are sometimes made out to be and indeed a synthesis between the traditions was attempted by Neo-Confucian philosophers who incorporated not only Daoist but also Buddhist writings in an effort to revitalize the Confucian tradition. In so doing, they tried to provide Confucianism with a cosmological foundation that was more common to Daoist thinking.

The main objective of Confucian texts is to foster harmonious social relations. While in the West, it is often assumed that social peace depends upon the compliance of individuals to a common set of externalized rules, Confucian thinkers demand a rigorous process of self-cultivation in which certain rituals are fostered in order to ensure that social cooperation emerges not only out of one's practice but emanates from one's whole being. This accounts for the importance placed on music and on the acquaintance with traditional texts that provide a common cultural heritage around which the community orients itself. While this is often interpreted by western thinkers as demanding a blind obedience to authority, Confucian thinkers do insist on the importance of reinterpreting classical texts in light of new conditions, and therefore the approach to rituals is by no means as rigid as it is often made out to be. There is no conception of abstract universal principles that provide the foundation of social order. Instead, this is a contextualized order, which is constantly emerging out of the rituals or *li* which are intended to sustain it.

Daoism developed in part as a reaction to the rigidity of Confucian social norms and behaviour. According to Daoist thinkers, Confucian ritual made monkeys of human beings, who simply mimicked others and often were insincere in doing so. The complicated rituals of mourning, and the social hierarchies that were upheld by Confucian thinkers were all the objects of Daoist critique. It is no coincidence that Zhuangzi's texts often demonstrate a high esteem for social outcasts who would have been shunned by a Confucian tradition that establishes a more clear social hierarchy. Furthermore, Daoist thinkers insisted that Confucian practices prevented the development of the unique virtues of human beings. This should not be mistaken as a call for the kind of individualism we are familiar with in the West, for Daoist thinkers insist that these virtues arise out of our interaction with other human beings. But for Laozi and Zhuangzi, these virtues arise almost spontaneously and the process is often likened to a dance, where the steps are not outlined in advance, but nevertheless harmony is created through the movement of two individuals who develop their uniqueness together.

Furthermore, Daoist thinkers argue that the Confucian focus on social order is not attentive enough to the cosmos as a whole, and the nonhuman world of nature. For Daoist thinkers a participation in the ordered patterns of nature in itself holds the key to social peace. By cutting itself off from the world of nature, Daoist thinkers believed that Confucian harmony would always only be an external one.

While there is no direct evidence that Nietzsche had any familiarity with Daoist texts, he was at least receptive to non-European modes of thinking, which may in part account for the tremendous challenge that his philosophy poses to the Western philosophical tradition. This will undoubtedly come as a surprise to many, given the unjust accusations levelled against him of being a rabid German nationalist that posthumously lent philosophical support to the Nazi regime. This image was largely contrived by his sister and is hardly in keeping with the positions of Nietzsche himself, who barely concealed his disdain for the German state and German militarism. Far from being a fascist prototype, Nietzsche implored Germans to examine their own culture from the perspective of the foreign. He argued that Hellenistic thought had become alien to Germans, despite their claim to be rightful inheritors of the Greek tradition. There is also evidence that he had at least a superficial knowledge of non-Western philosophical texts, as is indicated by his sporadic references to Buddhism and to Indian thought. The similarities that I argue obtain between Daoist and Nietzsche modes of thinking, may in part arise out of his encounter with Buddhism.

Nietzsche relished the art of self-criticism, and at a time when Europe was engaged in colonial expansion, his criticism of Judeo-Christian culture undoubtedly ruffled many feathers. Even the ancient Greek heritage of the West was thrown into question. In one passage he writes that "the wonderful Moorish cultural world of Spain is more closely related to us, speaking more directly to our senses and taste, than Greece and Rome" (AC 60). Because one of Nietzsche's main objections to Western thought was its excessive rationalism, he praises Indian culture because it is less prone to analytical thinking. Many Western thinkers of the time revered Asian thinkers for their alleged "naturalness" but Eberhard Sheiffele points out that Nietzsche did not value non-European cultures for their primordiality and proximity to nature but because of what he perceived to be their intellectual superiority.[17] It is no mere coincidence that Zarathustra, a Persian prophet, is invoked in his works in order to revitalize a philosophical tradition which had become moribund.

The link between Heidegger's work and Asian thought is much more easily traced. He had regular contact with scholars from both China and Japan, some of whom, like Keiji Nishitani, and Paul-Shih-Yi Hsiao attended his lectures. Students of the Kyoto school in Japan were exploring the relationship between Zen Buddhism and Western philosophy. Heidegger worked with Hsiao on a translation of the *Daodejing* at Heidegger's cabin in Todtnauberg. Heidegger was apparently so meticu-

lous in his efforts that only eight chapters were completed. In *On the Way to Language*, Heidegger had included a conversation with a Japanese guest where he considers the possibility that something very different may be thought in Japanese. In this same collection he also points out that there may lie "concealed in the word 'Way,' *Tao* the mystery of all mysteries of thoughtful saying"(OWL 92). When Gadamer was asked why Heidegger, who was apparently greatly influenced by Asian philosophy made very few explicit references to it in his works, Gadamer replied that a scholar of Heidegger's stature would have been uncomfortable with his lack of knowledge of the language in which these works were written.

However, my aim in this book is not to trace the links between Heidegger, Nietzsche and Daoist thought in order to determine the degree of influence of Asian modes of thinking. Rather it is a comparative study of the ideas which highlights both the similarities and differences between some major thinkers of different philosophical traditions. In chapter 1, after a brief discussion about the legacy of Western metaphysics, I examine Nietzsche and Heidegger's critiques of metaphysical modes of thinking. I will argue that there are profound parallels between the notion of the Dao, Nietzsche's eternal return, and Being, which suggests that the whole is process rather than substance. In addition, I will maintain that Heidegger makes a strong case for reincorporating the unspeakable into philosophy, a position that is very close to that of his Daoist predecessors. Instead of clamouring to know the whole, we must acknowledge that it cannot be grasped. This does not mean that the whole should be banished from philosophical discourse altogether, for it is imperative that human beings constantly reestablish a relationship to it. The relationship between beings and Being, should be seen as a kind of dialogue. Daoist thinkers also argue that the whole is formless and is continually transforming. It is both prior to things, while emerging out of them. By pointing to the limits of language with respect to the Dao, Laozi and Zhuangzi open a space in philosophy for non-linguistic forms of knowing which have often been impugned by Western thinkers. I will argue that there are some notable similarities between Zhuangzi and Nietzsche's skepticism, which is not intended to shatter meaning, but rather provide the means for its creation.

In chapter 2, I compare the notion of authenticity as it surfaces in the writings of Nietzsche and Heidegger, and the idea of the genuine person or sage in Daoist philosophy. I will argue that in all cases, the authentic person is a type of wanderer who grapples with the in-betweenness of our existence, as a being both at home and not at home, and as a

finite being with a vague awareness of the infinite. It is this in-betweenness that demands a constant remaking of the self. In Heidegger and Nietzsche, the need to individuate and define the self against others is stressed. In Daoist thought the focus is on cultivating the non-self, which is not to be construed as altruism, but rather as that aspect of selfhood that grows out of the interaction with others. The later Heidegger, profoundly influenced by Daoist thinking argues for a very similar overcoming of the self in his critique of the humanism of the West. Even Nietzsche oscillates between an egoistic and non-egoistic conception of self as is reflected in his critique of notions of subjectivity.

In chapter 3, I focus on the importance of nothingness and argue that a recognition of nothingness is essential to overcoming nihilistic despair. In the early Heidegger and Nietzsche, nothingness, represented by death, is the terminus to human activity that drives individuals to self-create in order to ward off the encroaching abyss. Yet, in the later Heidegger, and to some extent in Nietzsche as well, there is a concept of nothingness which is much more radical, and becomes a kind of opening that allows beings to make themselves, while also constituting the source of interconnection between things. In the case of Heidegger, this new conception of nothingness is in large part shaped by Daoist philosophy, which sees nothingness as the nondifferentiation between all things that is at the same time in all things. It represents the radical groundlessness of existence that allows things to connect and also demonstrates that one thing both is and is not its other. Thus, in the Daoist view, nothingness allows us to appreciate the irreducible particularity of a thing, for it is the space between things that separates them, as well as the emptiness within things that allows them to connect. Since the uniqueness of a being rests on both its difference from others, and its connection to them, it is nothingness that is considered to be the fountainhead of multiplicity.

In chapter 4, I try to ascertain why similar metaphysical orientations lead to such disparate political orientations. Nietzsche and Heidegger favour a hierarchical social order and manifest a contempt for democracy which they associate with a kind of mob rule**.** Because genuine self-transformation involves coming to terms with some of the most anxiety-producing aspects of our existence, both thinkers assume that this is an activity that thrives in an environment of conflict which only the few are willing to participate in. While the dark political side of both Nietzsche and Heidegger is often attributed to the absence of clear moral precepts in their works, an examination of Daoist texts shows that this is not an inevitable connection. Daoist thinkers favour political regimes which are

perhaps best described as anarchic and Zhuangzi's sages have very little interest in political power. In fact, the need for political force or political hierarchy was in itself a sign of a kind of social decay where the natural harmony of the Dao had been lost. The objective of the sage-ruler described by Laozi is to try to foster an environment where politics is not necessary and where power relationships would disappear. He is to rule in such a way that the people end up ruling themselves.

In chapter 5, I examine the effect that metaphysical thinking has had on women, and argue that in part, metaphysical modes of understanding may emerge out of a sexual dynamic. I argue that there is a strong tendency to equate the cosmos with the feminine mother in both the works of Nietzsche and Laozi, and that this does not necessarily have emancipatory consequences for women, who are rendered powerless as a result. If women resemble the formless Dao, then they have no voice. In fact, it is because women are not recognized as human beings in-between that they are excluded from philosophical dialogue in Daoism, or beaten with Nietzsche's proverbial whip. Heidegger makes few references to women in his texts, but I will argue that his reconceptualization of metaphysics and Being can be appropriated by feminists to rethink the relationship that we have to our mothers.

Finally, in chapter 6, I argue that the comparison between these thinkers provides a way of thinking beyond the mysticism/rationalism dichotomy that has often been used to distinguish between Western and Asian thought. I will argue that Heidegger exposes the mystical elements that underlie all philosophizing and that Nietzsche's spiritual dimensions are also an integral component of his philosophy. Furthermore, when Laozi reminds us that we cannot think or speak of the whole, this does not just represent a mysticism that rejects all thought and speech, but rather is a reasonable reminder that the finite has no means of talking about the infinite. In fact, for all of these thinkers, it is important that human beings maintain a kind of awe with respect to the greater whole of which we are a part, since this not only provides us with an important fountain of meaning, but also prevents us from trying to engage in destructive conquest of the world which is our home.

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Chapter 1

Ways of Being, Ways of Thinking

If there is one tendency that almost all philosophical traditions have shared, it is the assumption that there is a larger whole in which we participate or to which we belong. In some traditions, the whole has been conceived of as process, in others, it has been regarded as a kind of universal substance or being. The study of the cosmos in the West is often identified with metaphysics, a word which in itself is already laden with assumptions, for it suggests that this wholeness is predicated on something beyond the physical and sensual world. In the late modern and postmodern era, the idea of metaphysics has come under assault at numerous levels, prompting many philosophers to sound its death knell. It has been maligned both for its escapism and reductionism. Plato, who is considered the father of metaphysics, posited a doctrine which holds that permanent and unchanging ideas constitute the essence and truth underlying a more ephemeral reality. The task of the philosopher is to try to approach the timeless structures that both generate and make sense of the cosmos.

The schism established between the realm of ideas and the concrete, sensible world is the Platonic legacy that has been the target of frequent criticism. It is argued that a reverence for timeless ideas easily evolves into an attempt to render the world amenable to human manipulation. It is however important to note that this form of domination is probably an unintended consequence of Platonism since for Plato the perfect world of the ideas is never completely accessible to the human mind. According to Plato, very few of us, if any, can gaze directly into the light of the sun without danger of being blinded. Plato continuously emphasized the awe

with which the realm of ideas should be treated. Approaching its light demands a careful journey through the realm of the shadows we inhabit. Furthermore, Plato describes the philosophic quest as erotic, precisely because the perfect forms elude us and thus philosophy is spurred on not only by its successes but also by its own failures. The relentless Socratic questioning which fails to arrive at infallible definitions indicates that the philosopher is compelled to be a wanderer who never reaches his terminus. Furthermore, precisely because the forms are considered to be transcendent as well as immanent, many things can partake of a single form, and thus the world is not as easily dividable into distinct and separate objects. In short, Plato's philosophy still provides the possibility for a notion of interconnection, even if this is predicated on abstract notions of forms. To suggest that Plato's thought can be equated merely with an excessive systematization and mechanization is an unfair exaggeration. First of all, it overlooks the eroticism that Plato believes is inherent in the activity of philosophy. Secondly, it also ignores the fact that because many things can share in a single form, they are not automatically defined by their separateness from one another. Nevertheless the two-world dimension of Plato's ideas cannot be denied, since the world we inhabit is always a pale shadow in comparison with the more real world of the forms.

Stanley Rosen has suggested that Aristotle, rather than Plato is the true father of the kind of metaphysics that is railed against by many contemporary thinkers. In this he follows Heidegger, who maintains that Aristotle coined many of the terms that became the foundation of Western metaphysical thought. In his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle maintains that the study of being qua being is the subject of the highest science, namely philosophy, because it does not study being in its various aspects, but rather being itself. An understanding of being necessitates an understanding of substances. All beings possess what Aristotle calls qualities, such as colour, weight, size, and shape, but these alone cannot help us to determine what a thing is for and therefore substance provides the unchanging foundation for all of these attributes. The idea of substance implies that there is some essence which allows an entity to remain self-identical through change. Substance is to be presented in terms of logical structures that are recognizable by reason and therefore things are seen primarily from the standpoint of the human mind. In addition, the concept of substance also presupposes that a thing's essence is to be found in that which distinguishes it from other beings, rather than that which connects it to other beings. The ultimate substance, an unmoving mover,

would not be subject to change. There is an insistence that permanence and unity are preferred over the particular, plural and transitory.[1]

Immanuel Kant was perhaps the first Western philosopher to pose a serious challenge to the Aristotelian heritage of Western metaphysics. He argued that our knowledge depends on the accordance of the object with the a priori structures of thought. Rather than arguing that form was to be found in the object itself, as Aristotle did, he argued that it was located in the subject. Our objects are conceived of as representations to us. He also revealed the unsettling possibility to Western thinkers that the object or the thing-in-itself could not be grasped by human cognition. In doing so, he admitted what many Western philosophers were reluctant to admit, namely that there was something that would be forever unknowable.

These perspectives provide a vivid contrast with Chinese cosmology which views change rather than stasis as fundamental. Unlike many Western thinkers, Chinese philosophers do not insist that the cosmos be underwritten by a clearly defined logos. Rather than conforming to a single pattern, in Chinese philosophical discourse, all things participate in a continuously unfolding process. Unity is based on interconnection between things rather than on a shared universal essence. The characteristics of things emerge out of their relationship with one another and thus there is no sharp distinction between Being and Becoming, nor is there a sharp differentiation between substances. According to some accounts, the universe recreates itself in a process of continuous transformation that develops from the primordial breath known as *qi* (氣). *Qi* is a difficult term to translate because it encompasses both material and spiritual realms and refers to a kind of primeval vapor that embodies cosmic energy. It permeates everything but does not exist outside its multifarious manifestations. *Qi* passes from one form into another, and when things disappear they return to *qi*. However, there is no conception that *qi* is superior to the variegated shapes it is manifested in. It connects all things as a kind of life energy but it cannot be identified as a single substratum that underlies all substances. When beings disappear they become the potential of *qi* once more.

Chinese cosmology tends to view the world as a spontaneous emergence. While the word cosmology in the West is derived from the Greek *cosmos* which connotes "form" and suggests that form has triumphed over chaos, in Chinese thinking there is no dichotomous relation between form and formlessness. Furthermore, the idea of deliberate agency is notably absent as is the idea of an "unmovable mover." There is no creator

who stands apart from the world that gives birth to the cosmos. The universe is seen, both in Confucian and Daoist understandings as a natural process without a definite beginning in time and without a personal creator. The *Huai-nanzi*, a Daoist work dating to approximately 122 BC refers to this: "There was a beginning. There was a time before that beginning. There was a time before the time which was before the beginning."[2] Creativity is a constant and organic process of unfolding. Joseph Needham has argued that the Chinese cosmos is comprised of dynamic energy rather than substance. Although creation stories do exist in Chinese mythology, they do not assume a position of preeminence. When Chinese thinkers write about underlying principles of the universe or the emergence of all things from *qi*, they are not thereby referring to a single temporal origin. Unlike Western thinkers, most Chinese philosophers do not hold to a definite or specific act of creation[3] but rather view creation as an ongoing process of return to origins.

According to Chinese accounts, the primordial breath of *qi* undergoes a transformation with its division into *yang* (陽), which created Heaven and the heavier breath *yin* (陰), which formed the earth. *Yang* represents movement and creativity while *yin* sets a limit on this movement. It is the *Yijing* or *Book of Changes* which provides the most well-known account of the relationship between *yin* and *yang*.[4] Here *yang* is represented by a solid line, symbolizing the continuous, while *yin* is receptive and is depicted by a broken line. *Yang* is seen as positive while *yin* is negative, but it is important to recognize that such negativity does not entail lack, but rather the power to receive. In the pictorial representation of *yin* and *yang*, both play a complementary role. According to Cyrille Javary, *yin* originally represented the dark side of the mountains while *yang* represented the southern sunny side implying that they are two sides of the same reality rather than opposites which contradict each other. He points out that the character for *yang* depicts the sun separated from the falling rain, suggesting that the sun has driven the clouds away at the end of a storm. *Yin*, on the other hand, includes the symbol for cloud as well as the idea of latency suggesting that the light is gradually eclipsed as the clouds emerge in the foreground. Neither moment is a static state since each includes the potential of the other, accounting for the alteration between them. The combination of *yin* and *yang* in each thing undergoes constant metamorphosis.[5]

The interaction between *yang* and *yin* is responsible for such movements as the rotation of the seasons, states of mind and also historical developments. The light of the sun increases until the summer solstice at

which point *yang* has reached its acme and *yin* begins its advance until *yang* returns. Once the limits of one are reached, the ascendancy of the other begins. While *yang* is ascending, *yin* becomes potential that will ascend. If Western philosophers often wonder how change can be accounted for, Chinese philosophers tend to take change for granted. The account of the interaction between *yin* and *yang* provides a marked contrast with a Platonic vision which privileges light and interprets darkness as its absence. In the *Book of Changes*, light and darkness play an equal role. Furthermore, the fact that *yin* and *yang* cannot be understood apart from each other directly counters the Aristotelian notion that any thing can be defined independently of other things.

The *Yijing* is often considered to be the most influential among Chinese classics and has exerted a profound influence on Chinese philosophy throughout the ages. The original meaning of *yi* (易) according to Richard Wilhelm was lizard and chameleon which symbolized changeability and easy mobility. The book consists of 64 hexagrams comprised of both divided and undivided lines symbolizing *yin* and *yang*. Each hexagram represents a situation rather than a fixed state and they continuously transform into others by changes in their lines. In this way, connections between hexagrams are underscored. Each hexagram refers to patterns in nature as well as psychological states of being which suggests that the changes that a person undergoes echo or reflect the rhythms of nature. Zhang Longxi points out that the meaning of the first hexagram *qian* (the creative), represented by six solid lines is symbolized by horse, head, sky, and father while *kun* (the receptive), consisting of six broken lines is represented by cow, belly, earth, and mother. While the meaning of *qian* cannot be easily encapsulated in language, it is something that horse, head, sky, and father have in common and the same thing applies to cow, belly, earth, and mother. Since *qian* is transformed into *kun*, the relationship between head and belly is analogous to the relationship between sky and earth. Zhang points out that while none of these images make sense in isolation, patterns can be discerned when they are juxtaposed in pairs although no single word captures the hexagram.[6]

There is no single character or hexagram which is considered to constitute the foundation or bulwark of all others. According to the *Book of Changes*, reflection on the simple facts of our existence heightens our awareness of constant change. In Chinese philosophy, it is the notion of permanence, rather than change that is illusory and any attempt to render the ever changing immutable is seen as a testament to human frailty or ignorance. However, this does not mean that Chinese philosophers

describe a world that is in constant tumult. Change, rather than being a source of upheaval is a process of harmonization: "The nature of the Creative is movement. Through movement it unites with ease what is divided. In this way the Creative remains effortless, because it guides infinitesimal movements when things are smallest."[7] The cycles of the seasons and the rising and setting sun are primary examples of the regularity of change and also imbue human actions with cosmological meaning. Even if there is a lack of equilibrium during certain periods, the assumption remains that equilibrium prevails in the larger scheme of things. Furthermore, there is no notion akin to the Western emphasis on beginnings or times prior to change: "Birth is the coming forth into the world of the visible; death is the return into the regions of the invisible. Neither of these signifies an absolute beginning nor an absolute ending, any more than do the changes of the seasons within the year."[8]

NIETZSCHE'S SLEDGEHAMMER

Friedrich Nietzsche launched what is perhaps one of the most ruthless attacks against metaphysics in Western philosophy. He chastises a tradition that, in his view, had been dominated by Platonic presumptions which pitted the true world of the form and the apparent world of change against each other. According to Nietzsche, such a distinction is essentially nihilistic, for it drives an artificial wedge between concepts and "life," denigrating the movement of the latter in favour of the immutability of the former: "you ask me about the idiosyncrasies of philosophers?. . . . There is their lack of historical sense, their hatred of even the idea of becoming, their Egyptianism. They think they are doing a thing *honour* when they dehistoricize it, when they make a mummy of it" (TI: 1). By disparaging all that falls outside of the purview of the concept, such a rigid conceptualism thoroughly undermines the kinesis which for Nietzsche comprises the essence of life. Metaphysics signifies the attempt to distill all phenomena into a single, unifying essence. This is highly problematic, not simply because it signifies a flight into a conceptual fantasyland, but because concepts are used to disembowel life.

Furthermore, for Nietzsche, the insistence on the truth of concepts has meant that we have robbed ourselves of the very real power of illusion to transform the world. Thought which refuses to recognize the agency of illusion is dangerous: "We have rid ourselves of the true world: what world are we left with? Perhaps that of appearances?. . . . But no! *Along*

with the true world, we have also rid ourselves of the apparent world" (TI: 7). We are incapable of positing new ideas, because the old ones have become entrenched as a result of their valorization as timeless and universal truths. When truths cease to be transformative they are bereft of meaning in Nietzsche's view. Ironically, the transforming potential of truths may in part be due to their immutability, for if the world is indeed characterized by constant change, as Nietzsche suggests, then truths, while not being able to halt change, can have an effect on how human beings participate in it, even if it takes the form of resistance. Nietzsche would not deny that this is the case, but would suggest that we bear the manipulative intention of truths in mind, so that if need be, new ones can develop.

Since philosophy was irrevocably tied to metaphysics for long periods of time, Nietzsche questions the privileged status that philosophy had assumed for itself as the most sublime and worthy of human pursuits. Yet, he does so in part to rescue philosophy from itself, thereby preventing it from being relegated to oblivion. Metaphysical presuppositions had damaged philosophy in Nietzsche's view. This does not imply that Nietzsche suggests we dismiss theory and put praxis in its place. Instead, he intimates that philosophy may in part have itself to blame for the world we live in now, which is philosophically barren and in many ways thoroughly routinized. Our world is far less pragmatic than it appears to be. Praxis has not eclipsed philosophy, but rather has been infused with a rigid theoretical impetus which has attempted to render everything predictable. Ironically, our pragmatism is a thinly disguised theoretical rigidity: "Where man cannot find anything to see or to grasp, he has no further business—that is certainly an imperative different from the Platonic one, but it may be the right imperative for a tough, industrious race of machinists and bridge builders of the future, who have nothing but *rough* work to do" (BGE I: 15). Thus, the danger is not that philosophy has no impact on the world, but rather that its impact might have been too powerful, reshaping the world along "theoretical lines" to the extent that the schism between philosophy and praxis has become dangerously narrow. Abstractions have become our reality, as we continue to be mesmerized by the truth of numbers and logic. Nietzsche makes the bold suggestion that philosophy's excessive theoretical bent may have undermined the activity of philosophising. Once our concepts have achieved a stranglehold on our existence, there is no longer any need to philosophise. We deliberately limit our experience to ways in which it can be categorized, and then we argue that praxis is important

and philosophy is irrelevant. The hubris of philosophy has therefore led to its extirpation from our consciousness.

Paradoxically, Nietzsche suggests that only a philosophy aware of its limitations could continue to thrive, thereby participating in rather than shunning the process of life. We must be aware that there is always a residue left behind by philosophy, which threatens the order it envisions but at the same time acts as a catalyst for the creation of new philosophical worlds. The threats to philosophy are also what keep it alive since philosophy must feed on something outside itself. Thus, both the detachment of philosophy and its indebtedness to the life forces which spawn it need to be acknowledged. In this way, life and philosophy can be mutually invigorating. Such entanglement is depicted by the dance of Life and Wisdom in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Zarathustra recognizes that his fondness for wisdom stems from a fondness for Life: "But that I am fond of Wisdom, and often too fond. . . . because she very much reminds me of Life!" (Z I: 32). Wisdom is portrayed as "changeable and defiant" often combing "her hair against the grain" (Z II: 10). Nietzsche does not imply, as is commonly supposed, that philosophy degenerate into a kind of crude biologism, but merely insists that the impulse to philosophize is part of the larger impulse to life and therefore philosophy should acknowledge its debts to the life forces that are its wellspring. Above all, the paradox of philosophy must be affirmed: namely that it both steps beyond the realm of the actual in order to change it while at the same time emerging from it. Furthermore, it must return to life in order to be able to step beyond it at all.

The tradition which revered Plato as its ancestral father is accused by Nietzsche of an overvaluation of theoretical truths that allegedly constitute the essence of reality, insisting that the "more Idea, the more being" (WP 527). Philosophy stood at the pinnacle of human knowledge because it was concerned with the cosmos as a whole rather than merely focussing on its constituent parts. Yet this vision came with a price. Nietzsche shuns such philosophical arrogance, insisting that philosophy reflects the needs of a limited being that has difficulty coming to terms with its finitude, and therefore invents a vision of a cosmos that tries to impose limits on the limitless in order to make the world predictable and amenable to mastery: "I do not believe that a 'drive to knowledge' is the father of philosophy; but rather that another drive has, here as elsewhere employed understanding (and misunderstanding) as a mere instrument. . . . for every drive wants to be master, and it attempts to philosophize in that spirit" (BGE I: 6).

Yet, behind Nietzsche's invective lurks a profound respect for the daring of philosophy which attempts to recast the world in its image and refuses to be constrained by existing conditions: "the charm of the Platonic way of thinking, which was a noble way of thinking, consisted precisely in resistance to obvious sense-evidence—perhaps among men who enjoyed even stronger and more demanding senses than our contemporaries" (BGE I: 14). While Nietzsche does not fully agree with the assault that he assumes Plato wages against the body, he also recognizes that Plato's thought at least tacitly pays tribute to the self-transforming nature of human beings. Platonic dialogues are marked by a relentless quest for permanent definitions, the pursuit of which is pleasurable because it is without terminus. It is the open-ended nature of the Platonic quest that is to be celebrated. So, while human beings long for permanence, the allure of philosophy inheres precisely in the inability to find it. Behind the thirst for stability lurks an insatiable desire for more, which would be thwarted by the very stability it allegedly seeks. In short, Nietzsche suggests that we long for permanence perhaps because we know it is unattainable and it can therefore keep fuelling our desire.

Nietzsche condemns Plato for preferring the "unreal to the actual" and being "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). Yet, there is also a tinge of praise in this critique, for the recognition of "untruth as a condition of life" also implies that one resists "accustomed value feelings in a dangerous way" (BGE I: 4). Nietzsche is therefore imploring human beings to recognize the revolutionary nature of the philosophic quest which overturns conventional presuppositions and subjects all facts to a ruthless critique.

Ironically it is the success of Plato that heralds philosophy's decline. While the "permanent ideas" originally are a powerful means of questioning established convention, the lust for permanence eventually ushers in a stifling conformity. Overconfidence in the truths of a desensualized and frigid reason mask a fear of change: "They all pose as if they had discovered and reached their real opinions through the self-development of a cold, pure divinely unconcerned dialectic (as opposed to the mystics of every rank, who are more honest and doltish and talk of inspiration) while at bottom it is an assumption, a hunch, indeed a kind of inspiration—most often a desire of the heart that has been filtered and made abstract" (BGE I: 5). Those realms of life which cannot so easily be forced into a theoretical mould are summarily impugned, thus narrowing the scope of philosophical investigation. Nietzsche is attuned to the paradoxical connection

between the zeal for incessant questioning and the desire to repose in a bed of comforting truths which can no longer be subjected to scrutiny.

Logic is the primary example of philosophical extremism, and thus much of Nietzsche's assault focuses on it. The propensity to privilege logic eventuates in a rigid scientism which closes its doors to everything that cannot be classified. For the sake of knowledge, the quest for knowledge is obstructed. Nietzsche repudiates Socratic arrogance for its "unshakeable faith that thought, using the thread of logic can penetrate the deepest abysses of being, and that thought is capable not only of knowing being but even of *correcting*" (BTr 15). Yet, at the same time Nietzsche reminds us of the aesthetic roots of logic thereby employing logic's own prejudices against the aesthetic realm to demystify logic itself. He offered the notion that "To be beautiful everything must be intelligible," as the counterpart to the Socratic dictum, " 'Knowledge is virtue' " (BTr 12). The alleged inevitability of science masks its aesthetic and mythical dimensions. Its myths inspire an even deeper faith because it disguises its mythical origins: ". . . above the entrance gate of science, reminds all of its missions—namely, to make existence appear comprehensible and thus justified; and if reasons do not suffice *myth* has to come to their aid in the end—myth which I have just called the necessary consequence, indeed the purpose, of science" (BTr 15).

Ironically, the tendency to take philosophy too seriously had sounded its death knell in Nietzsche's view. If philosophy is to avoid being consigned to irrelevance, it must learn to take itself less seriously. It must give up its pretensions of capturing the world by uncovering its logos, recognizing instead that its explanations are maps that navigate human beings through the whirlwind of life. Thus, it must be prepared to continuously reexamine its own presuppositions. Philosophy needs the incongruities that life can provide in order to revitalize itself. The beauty of philosophical theorems, according to Nietzsche, consists not only in the illusion of permanence that they provide, but in their vulnerability to onslaught from the forces of life that escape philosophical definition. That which threatens philosophy also rejuvenates it and thus the lacunas and incongruities in philosophical knowledge must be celebrated for they enable it to remain alive.

However, Nietzsche's scorn for traditional philosophy should not simply be equated with a dismissal of the idea of wholeness. If metaphysics is defined as an attempt to think the whole, then Nietzsche has not relegated it to the dustbin entirely. Instead of conceptual truth, Nietzsche prefers the medium of the metaphor as a means of expressing a cosmic

reality since it is much more fluid than the concept and demands continuous reinterpretation. The problem with traditional metaphysics is that by thinking about the whole in static terms, it stopped thinking about it altogether. It is important for Nietzsche that the whole be thought in its dynamism. Nietzsche did not discount the seemingly irrepressible desire of human beings to feel part of a larger whole. Indeed he acknowledges that human beings must have a sense of a larger unity, but denies that it can be conceptually grasped. A journey towards logos demands a suppression of the body and passions, continuously pitting the temptations of permanence against the pleasures of finitude.

Nietzsche attempts, in part, to collapse the dichotomous opposition between the eternal and the finite. He does not follow Hegel in making the finite the manifestation of the eternal, but rather paints a picture of a cosmos based on the interconnection of finite beings: "The world exists. It is not something that becomes, not something that passes away. Or rather: it becomes, it passes away, but it has never begun to become and never ceased from passing away—it maintains itself in both—It lives on itself: its excrements are its food. . . . it follows that in the great dice game of existence, it must play through a calculable number of combinations" (WP 1066). There is no single order that underwrites this cosmos and so the particular is spared the humiliation of being consigned to the role of pawn in a universalist game. Since the interconnection between finite beings constitutes the pulse of the cosmos, the finite cannot be subsumed by the universal, nor can it be subsidiary to it. An eternal cosmos can never be known, for we must straightjacket that which we wish to make knowable.

This remodelled Nietzschean metaphysics is captured most eloquently in his metaphor of the eternal return of the same. Rather than referring to a transcendent realm which is used to judge our worldly existence, Nietzsche suggests that the activity of life itself is eternal. We participate in eternity because the world that we are part of undergoes constant transformation, and this change is wrought both on and by limited beings. It is the link between all things that gives us a sense of wholeness. Without the actions of finite beings there could be no change and so the finite is an essential player in the game of eternity. The activity of becoming goes on in perpetuity. There is no final state which reconciles all opposites, nor is eternity attributed to an unchanging realm of ideas. My action is always an interaction and thus is part of the *process* of eternity.

Through the metaphor of the eternal return, Nietzsche tries to reconcile the notion of individual human agency with the demand for

harmony and belonging. There is no such thing as pure agency since all our actions stem at least in part from the world to which we belong. Nietzsche reminds us of the repetition that occurs in the cycles of the seasons, day and night, and actions of creation and destruction, emphasizing that we are merely part of a larger natural process which has a regularity that we cannot transcend. All past experiences will recur through their repetition. This cycle is without a goal and has neither beginning nor end. The same message is echoed to Zarathustra by his animals: "Everything goes, everything returns the wheel of existence rolls on forever'" (Z III 13).

Yet, at the same time Nietzsche is poignantly aware that the larger regularity that his animals point to is not experienced in the same way by human beings, who are agonizingly aware of their finitude. Even if the sun will always rise and set, there will come a time when my star will set forever. I will return again, not in my current form but rather through the effects that my life has had on others. The metaphor neither collapses sameness into difference nor collapses difference into sameness. What differentiates human beings from animals is that we are historical beings, who repeat the past by appropriating it and claiming it as our own through its transformation into something new. The German word *wiederholen* captures this ambiguity beautifully because it means to take the past again. This leaves open the possibility that it can be taken differently. Yet, the past remains embedded in the future, and thus from this perspective, the future is also identical to the past. There is identity in difference and difference in identity.

Furthermore, there is a tension built into the metaphor of the eternal return between the regularity of nature and the purposive actions of human beings who want to overcome the constraints they confront. Nowhere is this more evident than in Zarathustra's exhortation to bite off the head of the serpent, which represents death and asphyxiation but whose spirals also represent the cycle of life. The serpent is a symbol for the interconnection of life and death but it must be greeted with defiance:

> The shepherd however, bit as my cry had advised him, he bit with a good bite! He spat far away the snake's head—and sprang up. No longer a shepherd, no longer a man—a transformed being, surrounded with light, laughing! Never yet on earth had any man laughed as he laughed! (Z III 2)

In order to participate in the cycle of the eternal return, human beings must also struggle against its inexorable nature. Unlike animals, they do not just accept it as is. Creation also necessitates an attitude of rebellion in Nietzsche's view. This is why the prospect of the eternal return fills Zarathustra with both longing and dread. We are unwilling to surrender ourselves to a world that eventually consumes us in the endless cycle of repetition.

All truths are eventually destroyed by the flux of nature. Truths can achieve stability only by leaving something out, but that which is left out eventually forces us to engage in a renewed process of evaluation. Meaning for human beings emerges neither from a passive submission to the cycles of nature, nor from the active agency of the subject, but rather from the juxtaposition of the two. We create something new in order to become part of a world that we are already in. Each new step is both a departure from the world of nature and a homecoming. We use the familiar to venture into the unfamiliar and in this way we make ourselves belong. Our revolt against nature is at the same time an adaptation to it. Nietzsche's philosophy is therefore not simply about smashing boundaries but also about learning how to live within them. In order to inhabit them, we must sometimes rattle them to their foundations. The meaning of the cosmos stems at least in part from our agency.

Thus, Nietzsche's eternal return suggests that meaning demands both sameness and change. Overcoming the past is also a way of reliving it. This sense of connection endows us with the experience of wholeness and it does not necessitate that a single pattern be imposed upon our experiences. Nietzsche does not deny the existence of a whole, but insists that it is experienced through our interconnection with other beings.[9]

From Metaphysics to Being

Since Nietzsche made his explosive debut on the philosophical stage, Western thinkers have become increasingly suspicious of the promised land of a total and comprehensive knowledge. Hegel, who attempted to soothe the modern mind by making absolute understanding the result of a process, aired the final gasp of the absolute. In Hegel, the comfort of metaphysics is combined with the force of movement. It is through the unfolding of history that we are to come closer to a total understanding of the world. Nevertheless, this feat could not be accomplished without turning historical process into the handmaiden of philosophy, which

alone would offer a palliative for modern malaise. In the battle between mind and life, mind still emerges triumphant because living life is a mere stepping stone on the way towards comprehending it.[10] Absolute understanding is not dismissed outright, but rather is postponed to some indefinite point in the future. In the meantime, we may rest assured that we are heading towards it.

As I have pointed out, Nietzsche's eternal return conceives of wholeness very differently and refutes the idea of perpetual progress that Hegel clung to. The whole is to be affirmed and participated in, but not grasped conceptually. And yet, at the same time, Nietzsche is uncomfortable with human finitude, and this discomfort is manifested in the constant strife and uncertainty that he believes characterizes our existence if we refuse to hide behind a bed of comforting illusions. Hegel tries to soothe human beings by dangling the prospect of total understanding before us whereas Nietzsche makes every effort to shake us up. While Hegel proposes that we move forwards as the limits of each partial understanding are exposed, Nietzsche believes that we would never emerge fully from the agony and constraints of our partiality. The eternal return suggests that our mistakes and failures, along with our successes, will be repeated ad infinitum. Instead of progress, there is perpetual repetition. His philosophy undermines Hegelian confidence and presents our finitude as inescapable. Nietzsche leaves Hegel's panacea behind.

Martin Heidegger follows in Nietzsche's footsteps as a pivotal figure in the West's attempt to grapple with its growing unease regarding metaphysics. Like his predecessor, he is critical of metaphysical attempts to predicate truth on the unchanging essence of things. Nietzsche sees philosophy as the means through which the subject attempts to assert control over the world and impose limitations on the limitless. Heidegger, on the other hand, uses the notion of *Being* to expose the premetaphysical roots of philosophy. The term "Being," itself suggests that Heidegger does not want to abandon the idea of the whole completely, but at the same time, wants to stress that the cosmos not be identified with something beyond the world. He thereby redirects his attention to this world that we are in. At the same time, this in no way simplifies the task of prospective metaphysicians, because Heidegger vociferously denies that this Being can be grasped. Mystery is to be found in the world rather than beyond it. He underlines the importance of thinking about the whole as Being, while encouraging us to relinquish our desire to master or grasp it: "The question of the meaning of Being must be *formulated*. If it is a fundamental question, or indeed *the* fundamental question, it must be made transpar-

ent in an appropriate way" (BT 24, 5). Not Being is to be rendered transparent but rather the *question* of Being. The interrogation of Being is more important for Heidegger than any vain attempt to reveal the ultimate truth about it: "We do not even know the horizon in terms of which that meaning is to be grasped and fixed. *But this vague average understanding of Being is still a Fact*" (BT 25, 5). As Otto Pöggeler eloquently points out, philosophy does not constitute "the leap onto the rescuing shore, but rather the leap into the moving boat."[11]

For Heidegger, the question of Being constitutes "*the* fundamental question" (BT 24, 5), remaining the focus of his philosophical musings throughout his life, even though it undergoes considerable transformation. Upon cursory examination, the concept of Being appears to imply that there is a single reality which all beings partake of. The meaning of individual beings must rest on their participation in this universal Being, and if only we could uncover its secrets, then we could both grasp existence and decipher its meaning. However, this is precisely the kind of thinking Heidegger wants to steer us away from. While the concept of Being does imply that there is a whole or connection between all things that are, Heidegger does not assume that it can ever be known. He shows that meaning depends not on the comprehension of Being but rather on the process of thinking about it. Yet, he insists that thinking is only possible because we enjoy an intuitive awareness of the presence of Being. Without intuition, philosophic activity would have no starting point to launch it forward.

Meaning inheres in the activity of philosophy rather than in the results it produces. It demands a ceaseless interrogation through which we continually reestablish a relationship between ourselves and Being. We reflect upon the whole, but as beings who are in the midst of it, rather than as passive spectators (WM 99). Heidegger deems it "progressive to give our approval to 'metaphysics' again" (BT 21, 2) in light of this reorientation. An exploration of Being is always part of the process of being and is not the outcome of detached and objective examination. In this, Heidegger is very similar to Nietzsche whose metaphor of the eternal return suggests that we cannot extricate ourselves from the position of being in the midst of things.

The term *Sein* is both verb and noun, and therefore refers to processes as well as entities. Heidegger capitalizes on this ambiguity, for even beings constitute a complex of processes. Being is unknowable not only because our finitude robs us of access to it, but because it is not static. This also casts doubt on a subject/object dichotomy. Metaphysicians had taken our

substantive existence itself for granted, and turned their debates towards questions such as the existence of God, the reality of the outside world, and the immortality of the soul. Heidegger considers this shift away from Being to be a form of philosophical negligence: "a dogma has been developed which not only declares the question about the meaning of Being to be superfluous, but sanctions its complete neglect" (BT 21, 2).

Furthermore, metaphysical thought had traditionally rested on the assumption that there is a marked dualism between the thinking being and the material world that is its home. Modern philosophers had become increasingly doubtful about the possibility of capturing material essence with the tentacles of thought. Nevertheless philosophers such as Kant were unable to quell their thirst for certainty and so argued that the structures of thought were the only terrain where consistency could be found. While Kant's philosophy seems to denote a shift away from metaphysics towards epistemology, for Heidegger the two are integrally connected. In this sense, Kant revealed what metaphysics had implicitly always been about, namely the human subject's propensity to structure the world in its own image. For this reason, Heidegger insists that Kant's philosophy is still decidedly metaphysical.

Heidegger's mentor Husserl was uneasy with the philosophical solipsism that Kant's ideas potentially gave rise to and suggested that all phenomena are objects of consciousness, and thus every object should be understood in light of the way in which consciousness intends, or grasps it. Heidegger appropriates Husserl's understanding of phenomena as a relation between subject and object, but reduces the subject's intentionality considerably. His call to go "to the things themselves" (BT 50, 28) means that we have to acknowledge that the phenomena's act of showing itself is related to the subject's act of receiving it: "Thus we must *keep in mind* that the expression '*phenomena*' signifies *that which shows itself in itself*, the manifest" (BT 51, 28). The human subject is therefore no longer considered the sole agent of perception since it is but one participant in a two-way process. Both the pure subjectivity of the subject and the unadulterated objectivity of the object are thrown into question. While Kant declares that it is pointless to use knowledge to venture into the terrain of the thing-in-itself, Heidegger insists that it is imperative that we keep the limits of philosophy in mind in order to protect philosophy from its own excesses. Failing to do so would impel us to forget that we are nudged into thinking by Being: "Every seeking gets guided beforehand by what is sought" (BT 24, 5). Philosophy should no longer be seen as a way of mastering Being, but rather as a way of engaging in a dialogue with it.

If philosophy is seen as a kind of dialogue, its inability to capture Being should no longer elicit despair. Being's resistance to the strictures of thought imbues our world with a sense of wonder that impels us to continue philosophizing. It is Heidegger's willingness to push the frontiers of philosophy into non-philosophical realms that makes his thought so revolutionary. Metaphysical philosophy, in Heidegger's view, demonstrates a profound fear of the unknown, and assumes that all that is murky must be expelled from philosophical dialogue. Yet he insists that philosophy cannot help but begin with an intuition, which will always be nebulous. Every thought will eventually stumble upon some presupposition that is accepted prima facie and cannot be proven. This means that there is something that is more primordial than philosophy upon which philosophy is predicated, namely Being. This is evidenced by the fact that all of us exhibit an instinctive certainty as to what Being is and yet at the same time experience a discomfiting inability to say anything about it. We know that we exist, but we cannot provide a definition of existence, or even articulate what it means. Consequently, our philosophizing renders us less, rather than more, certain. The paradox of the unfamiliar familiar is precisely what precipitates the philosophical quest: "The very fact that we already live in an understanding of Being and that the meaning of Being is still veiled in darkness proves that it is necessary in principle to raise the question again" (BT 23, 4).

A dismissal of intuitive, or mystical knowledge, would entail cutting philosophy off from its wellspring. John Caputo argues that Heidegger's thought is radical because it refuses to settle on an ultimate rationale and indeed continuously invokes that which has none. In his view, Heidegger "calls for a leap beyond the realm of giving reasons in order to take up a non-conceptual, non-discursive, non-representational kind of 'thinking' which is profoundly divided from any of the traditional varieties of 'philosophy.' "[12]

Heidegger repeatedly turns the limitations of philosophy into a cause for celebration. Meaning consists in the continuous re-establishment of our relationship to Being. Heidegger, unlike Hegel, does not try to goad us on by tempting us with the suggestion that one day we may strike at the heart of Being itself. While Being makes philosophy possible, it can never be grasped by philosophy. This is why Heidegger insists "*Being* is the darkest of all terms" (BT 23, 4). According to Heidegger, Western philosophy has always been preoccupied with the question of Being but has lost sight of its origins by wrapping it in too many concepts. Our addiction to these concepts impels us to forget Being, which provided the

inspiration for their development in the first place. *Being and Time* opens by paying homage to Plato: "For manifestly you have long been aware of what you mean when you use the expressions 'being.' We, however, who used to think we understood it, have now become perplexed" (BT 19, 1). There is no indication that Heidegger has any intention of working out the answer to this question. Instead he wishes to keep us in a perpetual state of perplexity. Heidegger is not just attempting to reclaim the origins of Western philosophy, but rather is trying to begin the beginning again "more originally, with all the strangeness, darkness, insecurity that attend a true beginning" (IM 29). Rather than erasing the unknowable, Heidegger proposes that we ceaselessly rethink it. Questions that yield no answer are not to be shunned by philosophy; rather they are to be embraced by it. For Heidegger, wonder is as important, if not more important than certainty and also enables us to maintain respect for the world of which we are a part. Heidegger recognizes something that seems anathema to many Western philosophers, namely that in order to feel at home in the world we must learn how to feel small in the midst of its vastness. He wants to avoid what he refers to as the "vicious subjectivizing of the totality of entities" (BT 34, 14). This is why Heidegger chooses to make our everydayness remarkable. Rather than looking for meaning in another world that legitimates and gives meaning to this one, we should shift our gaze back towards this world which is replete with mystery.

Since meaning is assumed to be the most important aspect of metaphysical inquiry, Heidegger repudiates claims that our understanding should be objective and detached.[13] Every thing that exists is already part of a whole, and we are aware of wholeness prior to being aware of things in themselves: "No matter how fragmented our everyday existence may appear to be, however, it always deals with beings in a unity of the 'whole' if only in a shadowy way" (WM 99). Therefore the world cannot be interpreted as something external to us: "Ontologically, 'world' is not a way of characterizing those entities which *Dasein* essentially is *not*; it is rather a characteristic of *Dasein* itself" (BT 92, 64). Heidegger's philosophy suggests that it is the process of establishing and reaffirming connections that endows the world with meaning; nothing can be meaningful standing on its own. The alleged detachment of value-free sciences such as logic, economics and science is illusory in Heidegger's view for it merely represents a way of being-in-the world that relishes predictability and control above all: "No particular way of treating objects of inquiry dominates the others. Mathematical knowledge is no more rigorous than

philological-historical knowledge. It merely has the character of 'exactness' which does not coincide with rigour" (WM 94).

However, we can never possibly uncover all the structures and connections that go into the making of a single being and therefore there is no end to the philosophic quest. Heidegger's Being, like Nietzsche's eternity, is deep and provides an endless well from which we can draw philosophical sustenance. The juxtaposition of the familiar and the obscure makes philosophy possible. We enjoy the intuitive certainty that Being is, and yet when we try to articulate a definition of it, we confront an insoluble conundrum. This suggests that there is always something about our own being that escapes us, and it is that which impels us to participate in the quest for meaning, forming and revealing interconnections with the beings around us. Our homelessness incites us to build a home. According to Heidegger, philosophy must not expose everything to the blinding light of knowledge, but rather must recognize the importance of darkness. Light as well as darkness can blind. Philosophers must learn not to spurn the shadows.

Heidegger insists that all our musings about Being derive from an engagement with things that are. Polt points out that a Chinese garment worker, "in whose language subject and predicate can be connected without a copula, still understands being in every sentence she uses, because her sentences are about entities, beings, things that are."[14] At one level there is an implicit elemental understanding about Being which exists independently of language and indeed confounds it. We cannot understand Being without also be-ing in a world of beings. The fact that we are always at a loss for words is not a warning call to give up the quest for Being, but rather suggests that it will be an open-ended one. The mystery of Being must not be suppressed, and the paradox of both familiarity and ignorance must be upheld. Nothing could be more strange and yet also more familiar to us than Being. Traditional metaphysics had attempted to banish the unfamiliar; Heidegger wants to reintroduce us to it.

Being is unspeakable for several reasons. Lived experience can never simply be reduced to the concepts of the mind which always leave something out. Mind and Being, while always in a relation to each other, cannot be equated. Furthermore, although we have an awareness that there is something which links all beings, and which we all participate in, we shall never be able pin it down. In order to speak of something, we must limit it, and the reduction of Being to a concept or idea would be imposing boundaries on the boundaryless. Being is not a class or genus

in the Aristotelian sense, which unites objects due to common properties, nor is it a grand puppeteer that masterminds all movements of existence: "The 'universality' of Being '*transcends*' any universality of genus" (BT 22, 3).

Thus, Heidegger's objective is not to yield scientific certainty but rather to encourage a process whereby we continuously locate ourselves in the larger context of Being. It is a philosophy which affirms and celebrates the limitations of the human subject. The concept of Being reminds us that we are part of a whole that predates us, but at the same time, we are impelled to create this wholeness by interrogating the whole in such a way that interconnections are continuously forged. The whole is not static, it is movement, and this is why it will resist all attempts to be known.

Beyond Metaphysics: The Heideggerian Turn

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger focuses primarily on the human subject's inquisition of Being. His famous turn (*Kehre*) is often assumed to represent a descent into mysticism ensuing from a profound disenchantment with both politics and philosophy.[15] However the leap between his later and earlier writings is by no means as great as it is presumed. While the subject seems to fade further into the background in his later writings, even in *Being and Time*, Heidegger reminds us that it was Being that impels us to philosophize. Therefore, philosophy emerged out of a relationship between Being and human beings and was not a singularly human achievement. In his later writings, Heidegger more strongly underscores the point that human beings cannot and do not think on their own, but rather are incited to think by Being. If his works are marked by an increasing preference for poetry as a form of expression, it is because he believes that such an art is more attentive to its muse, namely Being. While in *Being and Time* he insists on the importance of thinking about the whole, in his later writings he reminds us that thinking about the whole is also a way of listening to it. The most dangerous legacy of metaphysics is the unquestioned centrality it accords the human subject. Heidegger's writings become more mystical in tone to remind us that we should not forget what makes knowing possible in the first place. Mysticism is not the antithesis of philosophy, for without it there could be no philosophy.

Günter Figal suggests that the foundations for Heidegger's turn were laid in 1934 with the resignation of his position as Rector at Freiburg University, whereupon his emphasis shifted increasingly from philosophy to poetry.[16] Human beings are warned against arrogating all credit for their philosophical explorations to themselves. The anthropomorphic nature of thought had to be both exposed and curbed and Heidegger believes poetry is a better vehicle for this than philosophy. Philosophy tends to accredit human beings' reason with its achievements while poets are more receptive to the idea that a spark of inspiration gives rise to their creations. This is one of the main lessons Heidegger draws from them. Thus, the turn to poetry does not mark a solipsistic retreat on Heidegger's part but rather signals an attempt to reconceive our way of being-in-the-world.

Heidegger is indebted to Immanuel Kant for drawing attention to the limits of philosophy. Kant had demonstrated that metaphysical claims could not be made with any certainty by human beings. Any attempt by a finite being to demarcate a whole would necessarily reduce its scope. Questions about the immortality of the soul, the cosmos, or the existence of God, by far transcended the reach of reason. Thus Kant insists they be removed from the purview of knowledge and relegated to the realm of belief. While Heidegger concurs with Kant about the need to recognize philosophical limitations, he did not think the solution lay in retreating behind the narrow walls where philosophical theorems could be more easily applied. This eventuates in a dangerous tendency to flatten out existence to the extent that it can be rendered amenable to comprehension, and once this occurs, there is no longer an impetus to think.

Philosophy begins to hamper thought rather than facilitating it if we refuse to recognize that we do not just simply think of our own accord but are impelled to think by Being:

> Still it may be that man wants to think, but can't. Ultimately he wants too much when he wants to think, and so can do too little. Man can think in the sense that he possesses the possibility to do so. This possibility alone, however, is no guarantee to us that we are capable of thinking. For we are capable of doing only what we are inclined to do. And again, we truly incline toward something only when it in turn inclines toward us. (WCT 369)

Thinking is not just something we do; it is a gift we receive from Being. As long as we refuse to recognize that thinking is a response we lose the

capacity to think for we become mired in a stifling solipsism: "*Most thought-provoking in our thought-provoking time is that we are still not thinking*" (WCT 371). Heidegger points out that the cabinetmaker learns how to build cabinets by discovering how to respond to different kinds of wood and that it is this "relatedness to the wood" which "maintains the whole craft" (WCT 379). In this respect, philosophers must show themselves willing to learn from the cabinetmaker.

According to Heidegger, it is imperative we recognize thought as something that happens to us. We will often find ourselves speechless when confronted with the mystery of Being. Therefore, in order to keep speaking, philosophers must also learn the art of speechlessness, for we must acknowledge that there are things which can never be adequately spoken about: "But if man is to find his way once again into the nearness of Being he must first learn to exist in the nameless. . . . Before he speaks man must first let himself be claimed again by Being, taking the risk that under this claim he will seldom have much to say" (LH 223). The inexplicable should not be expunged from our consciousness through an "incessant philosophizing" (WCT 370).

Heidegger insists that thinking is a kind of attunement, and the denies that the world lies prostrate before the philosopher who simply discloses its secrets. All things that are part of Being can only expose themselves in relation to others things, so the concept of a self-identical substance is thrown into question. Different aspects of an object's being are revealed in different circumstances. A flower's whiteness can only be exposed against a dark background. The lightness of its leaves becomes evident when they flutter about in the wind. Because of an infinite array of combinations, the possibilities for thought are endless. The inability to arrive at a definite essence does not signal weakness but rather strength:

> The finitude of philosophy consists not in the fact that it comes up against limits and cannot proceed further. It rather consists in this: in the singleness and simplicity of its central problematic, philosophy conceals a richness that again and again demands a renewed awakening. (MFL 156)

By insisting that an object shows itself differently in different circumstances, Heidegger dispenses with the notion that there is an inner core waiting to be unearthed. All beings depend upon other beings to be themselves. Thought is not a way for us to bring all things into our orbit,

but rather it is a medium through which things are encouraged to reveal themselves.

Heidegger invokes Hölderlin's phrase "Poetically Human Beings Dwell" in order to illuminate this different way of relating to "things," which should not just be reflected in our thought but also in our actions. We must build in such a way that things can show themselves to us in their multiplicity, but also in their togetherness. According to Heidegger, building is a response to the voice of the earth and the world, rather than a means of subjugating and taming it: "Mortals dwell in that they save the earth. . . . Saving does not only snatch something from a danger. To save properly means to set something free into its own essence. . . . Saving the earth does not master the earth and does not subjugate it, which is merely one step from boundless spoliation" (BDT 352). Heidegger describes the way in which a bridge crossing a river brings "stream and bank and land into each other's neighbourhood" (BDT 354). Not only is a passage provided for human beings to cross, but aspects of the river are allowed to show themselves through the bridge. Rather than seeing the bridge as a way in which we have mastered the stream, it is seen as a way of bringing ourselves into accordance with it. Through the bridge, the unity of stream and bank are revealed, and therefore the act of building becomes a way of gathering things together. For Heidegger these ideas are not just semantic exercises but are intended to help cure humanity of its metaphysical propensity to try to master the world: "Metaphysics is in all its forms and historical stages only one, but perhaps the essential stumbling block of the West and the precondition for its global dominance" (OM 71).

This emphasis on the variegated nature of being reveals another important shift in Heidegger's later writings. While he does not abandon the necessity of thinking wholeness, he begins to insist increasingly that an attunement to it demands an attendance to the multiplicity of the world. His famous image of the four-fold referring to the interaction of gods, mortals, earth, and sky serves as a tacit reminder that Being is both one and multiple: "This simple oneness of the four we call the *fourfold*" (BDT 352). Otto Pöggeler points out that the parts of the fourfold are always engaged in an interplay with each other and therefore unity does not emerge from identity but rather from a kind of dance between them.[17] And yet, multiplicity demands that we see things in their togetherness even though they are also singular. When Heidegger introduces each of the elements of the fourfold, he notes: "we are already thinking of the other three along with it, but we give no thought to the simple oneness

of the four" (BDT 351–52). This means that neither the unity of the four, nor the specific particularity of each one of the four should be forgotten.

There is a constant movement between the openness of the sky and the comforting enclosure of the earth. The divinities are *part* of a fourfold and therefore are not merely transcendent but also immanent since they interact with mortals, earth, and sky. The spiritual and material are to be brought together rather than driven apart: "By a *primal* oneness the four—earth and sky, divinities and mortals—belong together in the one" (BDT 352). By seeing the divine in the earthly, we are more inclined to treat the earthly with respect. Instead of regarding what is close to us with the distance of objectivity, we see it with the distance of wonder.

His invocation of gods has led to accusations that Heidegger abandoned philosophy and appealed to religion and mysticism in his later writings. However, I would argue that he merely draws out the mystical element that was always embedded in his concept of Being. Mysticism and philosophy are not antithetical to one another and his invocation of the gods underlines the need for enchantment. This is the meaning of his famous line in the *Spiegel* interview: "only a god can save us." The term Being is too easily reduced to a mere concept that is amenable to our control; a mistake that is less easily made with respect to gods. However, this is not to argue that the gods merely function as rhetorical devices, or metaphors for wonder, in Heidegger's writings. Whether or not the gods exist is left deliberately unclear in many of his works. Heidegger insists there is something divine that is both beyond us and in us. It is far and near at the same time, and it cannot be forced into the straightjacket of language. When I reach a mountain pass and am in awe of the landscape; it feels both intensely strange and familiar at the same time. That is an experience of the divine.

In his work, *Contributions to Philosophy*, Heidegger argues that philosophy is a process of en-owning (*Er-eignis*).[18] This term can help illuminate the understanding of the relationship of Being to human beings. *Ereignis* refers both to an event that happens to the subject as well as to the subject's act of making something its own. An individual can own only because she or he is also owned: "It is no longer a case of talking 'about' something and representing something objective, but rather of being owned over into enowning" (CP 3). A two-fold leap is involved here whereby the subject both moves towards Being and Being moves towards the subject. Each going-beyond also signifies a returning-to. Transcen-

dence and immanence are inextricably interlaced. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Hermann suggests that this signifies a shift in Heidegger's thought which de-emphasizes the activity of self-overcoming and denies that it is primarily through an examination of *Dasein's* acts of self-transcendence that the truth of Being is to be unveiled.[19] Moreover, *Ereignis* as event draws attention to the importance of the singular moment in which Being and being come together. Such a coming-together also necessitates a drifting apart. This tension is encapsulated in the term "*Seinsfuge*," which is a deliberate play on the musical term "fugue," where various voices intermingle, but at the same time both accentuate and compete with each other for the melody. In order for one voice to make its appearance, the other must disappear; yet both voices are necessary to create the melody.

Each *Ereignis* reveals a different face of Being as well as a different aspect of the self. Thus, it is an act of gathering. History is not only made by human beings as they become what they are through their own self-overcoming, but also is determined by Being which reveals itself to and through human beings in different ways. Self-overcoming is thus revealed as an act of an overcoming of the self by Being. Being and being are involved in a constant process of interplay (*Zuspiel*). An individual's particularity can only be developed in relation to Being as well as in relation to other beings. I become myself not only by going outside myself but by providing an opening for other things to be. Inside and outside cannot be rigidly dichotomized.

By associating philosophy more closely with the moment, Heidegger suggests that it cannot produce a definitive outline of what Being is, nor should this be its intent. This is why he refers repeatedly to the "other beginning," which is not a kind of primordial beginning that antecedes all subsequent beginnings, but it is a constant beginning. If Being does not have a single essence, then there are infinite ways of returning to it, and also countless ways of beginning the beginning again. The return to origins therefore signals a constant rebirth. Rather than distilling things into timeless concepts, philosophy must encourage a flowering of multiplicity:

> "The time of 'systems' is over. The time of re-building the essential shaping of beings according to the truth of be-ing has not yet arrived. In the meantime, in crossing to other beginnings, philosophy has to have achieved one crucial thing: projecting-open, i.e., the grounding enopening of the free-play of the time-space of the truth of be-ing" (CP 1, 4).

Nothing is itself by itself; is always becomes itself through something else. Everything that exists is both singular and multiple:

> Thus appearance, as the appearance "of something", does *not* mean showing-itself; it means rather the announcing-itself by something which does not show itself, but which announces itself through something which does show itself. (BT 52, 29)

In *Contributions to Philosophy*, Heidegger replaces the term "*Sein*" with "*Seyn*" (translated as Be-ing). This constitutes a renewed emphasis on the process of Being as well as on the relationship between Being and beings. No attempt should be made to reduce either Being to beings, or beings to Being. The inexorable vagueness of the term "Being" is not just due to the inability on the part of limited beings to conceptualize it, but rather arises because it is both one and multiple. The term "*Seyn*" underscores the multiplicity in oneness and oneness in multiplicity: "Be-ing is not and can never 'be' more-being than a being, but also not less-being than gods, because gods 'are' not at all" (CP 172 sec. 126). It is at the same time both much more than the particular but and not more than the particular. Both aspects of this paradox need to be upheld without reducing one to the other.

Thus, Heidegger's later philosophy serves as a more powerful reminder of the constant movement that comprises Being than his earlier writings. There is a marked similarity between Heidegger's notion of Being and Nietzsche's metaphor of the eternal return. Both emphasize that unity inheres in process rather than substance, and insists that particulars must not be forsaken in an effort to think wholeness. Indeed the whole must be thought in the particular without reducing one to the other. However, Heidegger also differs from Nietzsche in his insistence that we do not only philosophize for ourselves, but also so that Being can show itself through thought. We develop our ideas in response to Being which surfaces through them. As custodians of Being, we must provide an environment in which its multiplicity can flourish. Philosophy is not just a navigational device; it is a way of letting the world be. When metaphysical philosophers attempt to make Being amenable to comprehension, Being subsides from view because it is prevented from revealing itself in its resplendent variety. Heidegger's later philosophy is characterized by a powerful appeal to abandon the philosophical egoism that, in his view, is the most pernicious legacy of metaphysics. We must preserve the metaphysical propensity to reflect upon the whole while dispensing with the metaphysical impulse to capture it.

The Way of the Dao

Daoist philosophy can be invoked to suggest alternatives to Western metaphysics. There is a remarkable affinity between the cosmological ideas of Daoist thinkers and the thought of Heidegger and Nietzsche. For the purpose of this comparison, I concentrate primarily on the texts, which in China, have been subsumed under the category *dao jia* (道家) or the philosophical texts, without delving into the religious aspects of Daoism known as *dao jiao* (道教).[20] The term *dao jia* has been applied to a diverse stream of ideas, but I analyze two pivotal figures of Daoist thought, namely Zhuangzi (莊子) and Laozi (老子). Both these philosophers have single texts which bear their name, but the authorship of these books themselves has been cast into question. It is commonly acknowledged that the book, which is imputed to Zhuangzi, is a compilation of chapters of which only the first six are penned by Zhuangzi himself.[21] Laozi is an even more nebulous figure, who has been canonized in myth, but whose historical existence has by no means been verified. While some historians have argued that the *Daodejing* commonly attributed to Laozi is actually a compilation of popular sayings, it would seem to have at least been synthesized into a coherent form.

Daoist thinkers use the term "*Dao*" (道) to refer to a cosmic first principle which links all things that exist together. Connectedness through the Dao is primary in virtually all texts, even if the nature of this interconnection is interpreted in a myriad of ways. While Chinese thinkers tend to seek or follow the Dao or the way, Western thinkers often tend to pursue a union with the ultimate being or immutable truth. The idea of finding the way implies a process of constant harmonization and adaptation that eventuates in attunement to one's surrounding environment. On the other hand, the idea that there is an underlying truth not subject to the vicissitudes of change can give rise to notions that the ultimate truth is apart from the changing world that we inhabit. It is no coincidence that alienation is so much a part of the Western psyche, since the truth is said to reside in a transcendent realm that is distinct from our everyday experience.

The whole that Daoist thinkers envision is not based on a single logos but rather on the unity of process which interconnects what Laozi refers to as the "ten-thousand things." There is no notion that the Dao is master of them or that the ten-thousand things are pale manifestations of it. The Dao and the ten thousand things are inextricably linked: the Dao gives rise to them while also emerging out of their interactions.

While the Dao makes possible the interconnection of different things, it also exhibits a kind of formlessness that deemphasizes the differences between them. Because the ten thousand things all travel along the path of the Dao, all things are the same while at the same time being differentiated from each other. The formlessness of the Dao reminds us that the boundaries between things are arbitrary. One thing transforms into another both because it is the other and because it is not the other. This paradox is kept alive rather than papered over. When a willow tree spurts out of the arm of the man in the *Zhuangzi*, his companions are shocked but the man is not surprised because the willow tree and the man are all part of the Dao and thus at some fundamental level are the same. His companions are surprised because the willow tree and the man are obviously distinct beings. Neither of the reactions to this event is false; they merely represent different perspectives that are both aspects of the truth.

The Dao gives rise to all form because it is beyond all form. Because each being assumes its particular characteristics through interaction with other beings, being and becoming cannot be separated. Differentiation between things is not only due to a kind of Apollonian individuation and separation; it is due to the interconnection between different things that are intertwined in their journey along the way and allow each other's uniqueness to emerge. At the same time, the Dao represents a nondifferentiation between things that is always present within them and underlines their cooperative potential.

The emphasis on formlessness suggests that there is no predetermined pattern that regulates the interaction of beings, and therefore Roger Ames and David Hall point out that the Daoist universe is based "upon the spontaneity of the unordered."[22] In *On the Way to Language*, Heidegger suggests that the Dao may be the all-moving way that gives birth to reason, spirit, meaning, and logos, implying, in a very non-Hegelian vein, that these are subsidiary to it (OWL 92). From the Heideggerian perspective, the Dao, which connects all things, invites us to use reason and meaning in an effort to gather things together. When our intellect tries to link events and beings in this manner, we are both participating in and responding to the Dao. In making this suggestion, Heidegger questions the exalted status of reason as the locus of truth, for it becomes only one form of gathering we have at our disposal. Another more spontaneous form of gathering is suggested by Norman Girardot, who emphasizes that the notion of chaos (or *hundun* 混沌), as primeval is a central aspect of not only Daoist philosophy but of Chinese culture generally. Chaos does

not refer to a breakdown of order but rather to a kind of primal, undifferentiated unity to which everything returns on a recurring basis. The Dao resembles a hodgepodge of many things, which Girardot argues, form a kind of "concordant discord."[23] This does not mean that the world is constantly rocked with tumultuous changes and strife. In fact, Girardot compares the notion of chaos to a soup composed of many unique things that cannot be clearly separated from each other. Unity here is created out of difference rather than by annihilating it. By suggesting that chaos is primordial, Girardot implies that it is the harmonization and connection between things that takes precedence over their separation from each other.

The kind of whole that Daoist thinkers envision is akin to that produced by musicians when they improvise. Such musical harmony is created in the moment and depends on interactions between different individuals. However, music also includes dissonance. Dissonant chords do not simply undermine the prevailing harmony, they illuminate it. Still, there are regular patterns at work. Just as musicians are familiar with certain harmonic structures they use to create harmonious sounds, Daoist thinkers continually draw attention to the regular patterns of nature, such as the ebb and tide of the sea, and the rising and setting sun. Larger cyclical patterns of returning motion are frequently alluded to in order to attest to the fundamental regularity and harmoniousness of nature. There are numerous ways of interpreting the relationship between unity and strife in light of these ideas. One perspective is that discordant moments are temporary aberrations that will eventually return to balance. Another possibility is that discord and harmony are constant companions: as complementary opposites that illuminate each other. A further possibility is that the perception of discord is the mark of finitude, whereas from the nontemporal perspective of the infinite, all opposites are included in such a way that a balance is eventually struck between them.

The notion of beginnings in Daoist philosophy is very ambiguous. On the one hand, the Dao precedes the creation of duality in the world and therefore is prior to both heaven and earth:

> There is one thing that is invariably complete.
> Before Heaven and Earth were, it is already there:
> so still, so lonely.
> Alone it stands and does not change.
> It turns in a circle and does not endanger itself.

> One may call it 'the Mother of the world.'
> I do not know its name.
> I call it Dao.
> Painfully giving it a name
> I call it 'great.'
> Great: that means 'always in motion.'
> 'Always in motion' means 'far away.'
> 'Far away' means 'returning.' (DDJ 25)

This represents a primeval stage before the existence of separate phenomena and is described as complete and perfect because there is no differentiation between things. On a first reading, it may seem as though the Dao is an immutable origin from which all change emanates. This is the interpretation favoured by commentators such as Heshang Gong who argue that it is the locus of energy which is responsible for all subsequent emergence.[24] The Dao, from this perspective marks the genesis of the cosmos. However, this interpretation imputes to the Dao the temporal perspective of the human being, and does not seem to be substantiated by the paradoxical depictions of the Dao. In the beginning, the Dao was said to be very still and alone in spite of, or perhaps because of, its perfection. Yet, such an understanding is immediately followed by the passage that the Dao is always in motion. How can the Dao be both still and in motion at the same time? This paradox reveals the problem of perspective that results when finite beings try to describe the infinite. On the one hand, one could argue that there is a kind of motionlessness effected through circular patterns of change, similar to the regularity that Nietzsche describes in the eternal return or the relatively consistent patterns of transformation that are elucidated in the *Yijing*. If things constantly revolve in a circular fashion, then they always come back to the place they have left, and at some level have hardly moved at all. Perhaps another way of envisioning this is to liken the Dao to the center of a rotating circle, which itself does not move but that makes movement possible by drawing all things towards it. The Dao cannot "endanger itself" by moving in a circle. It is always complete in and of itself and each movement along the way points to other movements that are all part of the unfolding Dao. Only finite beings who experience distinct moments experience motion.

While there is no fundamental essence that is at the heart of all things, or a single source which all things can claim as their wellspring, a kind of unity emerges out of a process whereby one thing changes into another: "the flowing power gives them harmony" (DDJ 42). The Dao is

like a circle that continuously turns upon itself, even though its revolutions are not necessarily identical. Again, this is an understanding that is very similar to that of Nietzsche's eternal return which illuminates the difference in identity and identity in difference. Daoism does not posit a single moment of creation as do many religious traditions, including Christianity. Instead, creation is a perpetual event, and at the very moment in which the Dao gives birth to new things, these things also give birth to other things: "Dao is forever flowing. And yet it never overflows in its effectiveness. It is an abyss like the ancestor of all things" (DDJ 4).

The Dao is the connective tissue between all things, the formlessness that includes all things, the particularity of each thing and the unity that gives birth to things as well as emerging out of things. Reducing the Dao to any one of these, manifests a misguided effort to impose limits on the limitless. Because the ten thousand things experience their separation from each other, it impels them to return to the Dao. Yet, they can return to the Dao only because they have never strayed from it completely and are at some level aware of the fundamental interconnection of all things. We return home, only because our home is always with us. Change and changelessness are complementary opposites as are motionlessness and motion. Perhaps this also can cast light on the meaning of Zhuangzi's seemingly nonsensical assertion that a man can leave home today and return yesterday. Because he comes back it is as though he has never left. From the perspective of circularity and infinity, time and history collapse into a moment that, in itself, is infinite because it is connected to everything that is. There is no frenetic attempt to overcome the present in Daoist thinking, because infinity is located in the present rather than beyond it.

Rather than viewing the Dao as a definite point of origin, which precedes all other beginnings, it can be seen as a constant beginning that at the same time marks a continuous point of return. It has always been there and at the same time is always being created. Beginnings and endings are not separated because the Dao is beyond time. There is no ultimate beginning which precedes all other beginnings, but rather a perpetual beginning that is always also a return. Heidegger's appeal through the concept of *Ereignis* to constantly return to the "other beginning" may in part have developed out of his encounter with Daoist philosophy.[25] The Dao represents a kind of beginning that has always been and yet at the same time is always new. Nietzsche's idea of the eternal return with its focus on repetition and also newness through the reappropriation of the past yields a similar insight. The wholeness of the

cosmos must be experienced over and over again as we become aware of the interconnection between things. Each time we experience the oneness of the cosmos, we return anew to its beginning. There is not one beginning that precedes all others; rather there are constant beginnings.

Because the whole is neither predetermined nor uniform, it cannot be conceptually grasped, but this does not mean that Daoist philosophers refuse to think about it altogether. Indeed, the word "*Dao*" loosely refers to the whole, but no attempt is made to pin it down, or to detract from the obscurity of the term. The text of the *Daodejing* is based on a striking paradox, namely that the Dao cannot be articulated, thought or spoken:

> The Dao that can be expressed
> is not the eternal Dao.
> The name that can be named
> is not the eternal name. (DDJ 1)

At the same time, the inability to comprehend it or reduce it to a concept is not to prevent us from speaking about it. A name is "painfully" ascribed to it (DDJ 25) because the infinite cannot be reduced to finite terminology. Yet, at the same time, a name must be given to it, because human beings rely on words to give meaning to the world around them and to invoke the Dao. By labeling things, we attempt to bring them closer from the distance that separates us from them. And yet, the term Dao is intended to reveal both closeness and distance from the interconnected processes that embrace us. We speak of the Dao because we are removed from it and yet intimately immersed in it. This is the paradox of language that the *Daodejing* illustrates so beautifully. The Dao should be spoken about metaphorically, so that we realize that words cannot possibly capture it but merely point towards it. Daoist thinkers use metaphorical language in order to manifest a kind of reverence rather than to engage in an arrogant display of knowledge. The Dao is akin to Heidegger's concept of Being which constantly slips away, and yet is always an integral part of the conversation. We can be aware of its presence (and absence) but we can never know what it is nor will we ever be capable of pinning it down. It is the presence and the absence of the Dao that fills us with wonder. In speaking of the Dao, we do not claim to disclose its inner secrets, but rather pay homage to it.

Many parallels are drawn between the Dao and various natural phenomena. The Dao is frequently likened to water in its fluidity and formlessness. We can never grasp water, and yet it sustains and nourishes us. Water represents continuity as well as renewal:

> The highest benevolence is like water.
> The benevolence of water is
> to benefit things without strife. (DDJ 8)

Heraclitus reveals an important insight, akin to the Daoist understanding, when he insists that we can never dip into the same river twice, and yet it nevertheless remains the same river. The juxtaposition of newness and repetition is revealed here.

The use of natural metaphors is not merely a metaphorical ploy with which we can learn to deepen our understanding of the Dao. It indicates that the Dao is to foster an attunement to the world of nature which we inhabit and which is also a locus of meaning. Daoism explicitly rejects the human-centred view of the universe that characterizes Confucianism. This does not mean that Daoist philosophy is antispiritualist but rather that the fountains of spirituality are located in the world rather than beyond it. Benjamin Schwartz points out that the use of the term "Dao" represents a departure from previous traditions of Chinese thought such as Confucianism, which frequently used the word *tian* (天) or heaven to suggest a more intentional association, even if they do not hold to the concept of a transcendent and personal God in the Christian sense.[26] Admittedly, Schwartz may be reading Christian connotations into the language of *tian* but he is correct in insisting that Daoist thinking is radically antifoundationalist in that it has no interest in reducing the universe to fundamental building blocks or to the ultimate reality which defines it.

The process by which one thing changes into another is repeatedly emphasized in Daoism. The opening chapter of the *Zhuangzi* relays the story of a primordial fish, Kun, who inhabits the oceanic depths:

> In the darkness there is a fish, whose name is Vast. The fish is enormous. It also changes into a bird, whose name is roc, and the roc's back is I don't know how many thousand miles across. When it rises in the air, its wings are like the clouds of Heaven. When the seas move, this bird too travels to the south darkness, the darkness known as the Pool of Heaven. (Zh I 1)

The name *kun* itself also means fish roe and therefore the juxtaposes the minute and the huge. Ocean and sky represent *yin* and *yang*. Vast emerges out of the ocean *yin*, but changes into a bird associated with the sky. Eventually the bird changes back into the fish and returns to its primordial waters.[27]

The spiritualism of the Dao appears to be immanent and transcendent at the same time. There is no division between the fleeting or ephemeral world and a transcendental realm of permanence and perfection. It is not separate from the world, but at the same time is beyond all finite experiences. Awareness of the Dao does not involve cognizance of a higher reality that illuminates a less perfect world, but demands an attunement to the rhythms of nature and the cosmos as well as a cognizance of the interconnectedness of all things. This differs from mystical experiences in Christianity, where a transcendent divine being is far beyond this world and the achievement of union with this god demands a miraculous spark of divine grace or a leap of faith. Joseph Needham makes note of the difference between transcendental mysticism, which suggests that truth lies beyond the realm of daily experience, and an organic mysticism that focuses on the daily world or our experience. Rather than teaching us how to escape the confines of this world, organic mysticism attempts to cultivate harmonious relationships with it. The nature of the whole cannot be ascertained by dividing it into constituent parts: "parts in their organizational relations whether of a living body or the universe were sufficient to account by a kind of harmony of wills, for the observed phenomena."[28] In Daoist thought, spiritual oneness is achieved by relishing in the frolicking movement of the fish, as Zhuangzi does, or by perfecting a skill to the extent that it becomes effortless as does the butcher Cook Ding. Each being is recognized through its connectedness with other beings, and it is the infinity represented by these connections that results in immanence in transcendence and the transcendence in immanence. There is a similar spiritualism in Nietzsche's eternal return that is often ignored because his anti-Christian tirades are simply assumed to constitute a repudiation of spirituality. Yet, Zarathustra repeatedly expresses his love and awe for eternity, which does not allow him to achieve transcendence through union with a higher being, but allows him to affirm a life that is spiritualized in its concreteness rather than against it.

I argue that Heidegger's notion of the fourfold also draws attention to an immanent spirituality, which does not belittle human beings as creatures of either sin or imperfection. The *Daodejing* uses very similar language in this respect, referring to the "four Great Ones" and may be one source of inspiration behind the development of Heidegger's fourfold. The main difference is that the Dao rather than the gods appear in the Daoist fourfold:

> Thus Dao is great, Heaven is great, Earth is great, and Man too is great.
> There are in space four Great Ones,
> and Man is one of them.
> Man conforms to Earth.
> Earth conforms to Heaven
> Heaven conforms to Dao
> Dao conforms to itself. (DDJ 25)

While the Dao is not transcendent in the way that the Christian god is, to say that Daoist thought shuns transcendence altogether may also be a slight misreading and reflect a contemporary penchant for dismissing the term. Indeed, the fact that the Dao cannot be named could be interpreted as a signal of its transcendence. If transcendence, rather than referring to a separation from the world, refers to something that is larger and beyond the scope of human comprehension, then the Dao is indeed transcendent, for it can never be rendered amenable to human classifications. The description of the four Great Ones provided above depicts the Dao as the only Great One that conforms to itself, suggesting that it merits the greatest awe. Each of the other four elements models itself on something of bigger scope, which means that the process of extending horizons is a perpetual one. Fluidity is underscored. Only the Dao does not do so, for it makes the interconnections possible in the first place. I would argue that the Dao is both transcendent and immanent, in that it is both beyond all things and in all things, because it represents their togetherness. Whenever we feel a sense of oneness with the cosmos, this is an experience of the Dao. And yet, because we, as human beings, are but one of the ten thousand things, we can never fully comprehend the unity of the Dao. It is described as the "miraculous essence" and the "gateway through which all miracles emerge" (DDJ 1), which "seems to be earlier than heaven" (DDJ 4).

The term "Dao" implies movement, and therefore suggests that the unity does not inhere in a kind of overarching schema, but rather in a process and thus by necessity incorporates multiplicity: "without its individual parts there is no carriage" (DDJ 39). The Dao manifests itself in particular things as their *de* (德) which is often translated as their potential. In fact, the translation of this term has presented considerable difficulties. Richard Wilhelm translates it as "life," which does not exclude the meaning of potential because it implies growth. Neither potential nor growth can be grasped. Often, *de* is translated as "virtue," which in the West has strong

moral overtones. This probably resonates strongly with the Confucian meaning of the term where it has more pronounced ethical connotations and refers to the process whereby the self extends the self in order to harmonize with the community. Roger Ames translates the term as "virtuality," pointing out that in the *Shuowen* lexicon it is defined as climbing, ascending, or presencing.[29] Therefore the term implies that each particular changes in relation to its contextual environment and thus must become what it is. *De* does not refer to a kind of consistent singularity suggested by the term substance, for it is part of the dynamic flux of the Dao. Instead of insisting upon one translation at the expense of others, I argue that all of them should be kept in mind. If one translates it as "life," then we might lose sight of the emphasis that *de* intends to give to the particularity of things. If one translates it simply as particularity, then one may ignore the word's reference to the overlapping processes of growth, which constitute the unity implied by the term "life." *De* refers to a kind of specificity that emerges out of process, and therefore it cannot be thought of without the corresponding notion of the Dao. *De* is something that can be brought out only through interaction, and should not be clung to, because in doing so, we try to disrupt the constant flowing process:

> Whosoever cherishes Life (*De*)
> does not know about Life
> therefore he has Life.
> Whosoever does not cherish Life
> seeks not to lose Life:
> therefore he has no Life
> Whosoever cherishes Life
> Does not act and has no designs.
> Whosoever does not cherish Life
> Acts and has designs. (DDJ 38)

The attempt to grasp *de* either through action or knowledge in order to render it permanent, results in its asphyxiation. Instead, we must recognize that each particular life is both received from the Dao and at the same time, can only flower in conjunction with other beings. Because *de* is multiple in its oneness with the Dao, it shrivels away if we try to protect particularity by encasing it in philosophical categories. Life or virtue is not something that can be grasped, for it flows from the Dao. The uniqueness of each thing must be celebrated as an expression of the oneness of the Dao:

Heaven attained the One and became pure.
Earth attained the One and became firm.
The gods attained the One and became powerful.
The valley attained the One and fulfilled itself. (DDJ 39)

This passage clearly illustrates that each thing "attains the One" not by shunning particularity but by manifesting its specific nature. Heaven, earth, the gods and the valley all attain the one differently. Difference emerges out of interaction rather than from separation or individuation. There is no single prescription for attaining oneness with the Dao.

I argue that there is a strong affinity between Heidegger's notion of Being and the idea of the Dao. Indeed, the shift in emphasis that marks his later understanding of the term may in part be influenced by Daoist philosophy. While it is commonly acknowledged that the Heideggerian turn is inspired by poets such as Hölderlin and Trakl, as well as by the pre-Socratic philosophers, his indebtedness to Daoist philosophy is often overlooked. Reinhard May is one exception, for he points to the lasting impact that Daoism had on Heidegger's philosophy. There is a remarkable similarity between the connotations of the word "Dao" and Heidegger's term "Being" (*Sein*), which is more easily obscured by the English translation. Heidegger does not set Being in opposition to becoming, for the German term is both verb and noun. In his later writings, such as *Contributions to Philosophy*, he underscores this point by using the word "*Seyn*". Like the Dao, Being is something that resists all attempts at definition and remains perpetually obscure. Heidegger's philosophy represents a radical shift in the Western tradition, because it refuses to make obscurity the enemy of philosophy, just as the *Daodejing* begins by presenting the nebulous nature of the Dao as something that is to be celebrated rather than bemoaned. Furthermore, the relationship that Heidegger describes between Being and beings, particularly in his later writings, is akin to the relationship between Dao and *de*. Every particular thing has a unique virtue through which it manifests the Dao, just as beings receive their particularity from Being, without thereby being reduced to Being. *De* cannot be collapsed into the Dao anymore than the particularity of beings can be spurned. Particularity and multiplicity are not seen as the antitheses of wholeness, but rather as its correlates.

Nietzsche conveys a similar understanding by employing the metaphor of the eternal return, although there is no evidence that he had any exposure to Daoist philosophy.[30] The powerful sense of oneness that

Zarathustra experiences in relation to eternity, comes about not through his conceptualization of the whole, but through his awareness of the interaction between many things. Each particular moment must be relished and affirmed, not only in itself, but as an expression of eternity. Both the radical particularity of each moment and the wholeness that each moment represents must be celebrated. The moment is not celebrated as representative of the whole. Instead, it is one instance that is infinite due to the endless connections with all other moments.

Furthermore, Daoist philosophy helps to highlight an aspect of Nietzsche's thought that is overlooked, namely that Zarathustra also derives a sense of calm (as well as despair) from the notion that everything perpetually returns. Even in Nietzsche, there is comfort to be gleaned from the regularity of change. However, I do not want to gloss over the differences between Nietzsche and Daoist thought, since in Nietzsche, the human desire for self-creation will always be partly at loggerheads with the movement of the cosmos. Nietzsche has no desire to eliminate this tension and esteems both conflict and harmony. The eternal return of the same fills Zarathustra not only with longing but also with despair and disgust. Daoist thinking more definitely privileges harmony over discord. Nevertheless, the possibility of tension is not completely ignored in Daoist thought. For example, there is a recognition that while "return is the movement of the Dao," weakness "is the effect of the Dao" (DDJ 40). This may be a reference to finitude of things, which in contrast to the Dao, will eventually wither away. Furthermore, Laozi points out that human beings are treated as "straw dogs," a reference to figures made during festivities that were trampled upon once the rituals had ended. In all likelihood, this statement is meant to deflate the sense of importance that human beings ascribe to themselves.

The repetition that is embodied in the notion of the Dao should not impel us to neglect its manifold nature. Commentators such as Julia Ching have noted that the term Dao could "designate anything and everything."[31] A precise translation of the title is impossible because there is no corresponding English term as broad in scope. At the same time, the refusal to fix the Dao's meaning does serve to remind us that we can never speak definitively about it. No attempt should be made to demystify the Dao: "In its unity it is called the secret. The secret's still deeper secret is the gateway through which all miracles emerge" (DDJ 1). Therefore, it is fruitless to try to ascertain how the Dao works; this can never be known. The unknowable mystery of the Dao might be what induces us to follow its way. We are drawn to it, because we cannot know it.

Oneness in Daoism is found between things and therefore incorporates plurality rather than ruling it out. There is no Aristotelian law of noncontradiction here, and things can be both one and two or three at the same time. "Dao generates the One. The One generates the Two. The two generates the Three. The Three generates all things" (DDJ 46). The emphasis on the three should not be underestimated, for it makes clear that each thing is a confluence of other things. The Chinese character for three (三) consists of three horizontal lines indicating the presence of both the one and two in the three. Every being that exists is at the same time a unity and a multiplicity, just as is the Dao. This is why it is the Three and not the One that generates all things.

The cooperation of diverse elements is not contrived but rather " absolutely spontaneous and even involuntary."[32] This is a difficult notion for the Western mind to wrap itself around, for a spontaneous voluntarism does not seem compatible with a harmonious unity. Nevertheless, it is a paradox that is at the heart of Daoist philosophy, wherein freedom and necessity are not at loggerheads. The term "*ziran*" (自然), which is translated as both freedom and spontaneity, is indicative of this connection. It does not have the connotation of an individual asserting himself or herself against the world in defiance, but rather suggests that by attuning himself to other beings, he or she is acting in accordance with innate disposition. However, this inner potential cannot be known a priori and emerges out of interaction with others. The Heideggerian emphasis on the *Ereignis* (en-owning) is very similar to the Daoist notion of *ziran*, for it suggests that in order to make something my own, I must also allow myself to be shaped by something else. The frontier between inner and outer is thus collapsed. *Ereignis* also has a connotation of spontaneity. For example, a happenstance encounter with a certain individual may be decisive in allowing me to become who I am. My uniqueness can never develop in isolation. Laozi stresses that the Dao cannot be seen as a master of the universe, intimating that the freedom of all things is both a necessary condition of the Dao's unfolding and made possible through the openness of the Dao: "All things owe their existence to it, and it does not refuse itself to them. It clothes and nourishes all things and does not play at being their master" (DDJ 34). The Dao has no single organizing principle:

> Universal harmony comes about not through the celestial fiat of some King of Kings, but by the spontaneous co-operation of all beings in

> the universe brought about by their following the internal necessities of their own natures.[33]

Human beings become free by attuning themselves to this unordered harmony.

DAOIST SKEPTICISM

Daoist philosophy, like that of Nietzsche and Heidegger, draws attention to the limits of thought. This is not intended to paralyse us into some kind of reverent submission but rather opens the door to an awareness of oneness with the world as well as allowing for a proliferation of particularity. The ambiguity of the kind that we encounter upon perusing the *Daodejing* may be unsettling to some Western minds. As Isabelle Robinet points out, obscure expressions "become metaphors for things unknown that can be solved in innumerable creative ways."[34] She notes that the Chinese language celebrates the polysemy of words by placing them into a context where they cannot be defined unequivocally.[35] Part of the reason that the Chinese language has proven so frustrating to its Western students is that it is so heavily context-dependent. This also affects Chinese scholarship, as is evidenced by the hundreds of commentaries available on the *Daodejing* itself, which is constantly reinterpreted in light of the historical period. It resists a single interpretation, in part because the malleability of Chinese words allows for a kind of interpretive flexibility.

Zhuangzi plays with this interpretive flexibility much more than Laozi, and as a result he has often been upheld as the paragon of Chinese skepticism. However, one must be careful not to read too much of a Western connotation into the term. Skepticism in Zhuangzi is not intended to be destructive or cynical. Rather it is a celebration of ambiguity, which is intended to elicit a more engaged response from the reader. Like Nietzsche's cryptic and seemingly disjointed aphorisms, Zhuangzi's parables preclude a simple acceptance of the text. The open-ended nature of Zhuangzi's philosophy, like that of Nietzsche, is intended to provoke readers out of their complacency and prevent people from simply repeating familiar narratives: "One should therefore read him as one would a humorist writer knowing that he is frivolous when he is profound and profound when he is frivolous."[36] These words of Zhuangzi encourage the reader to look at things from his or her own perspective, and therefore help to create an authentic, lived relationship with the world. He cele-

brates the multiplicity of the world to a much greater extent than Laozi. Zhuangzi's skepticism is intended to facilitate participation in the process of the Dao. Wu Kuangming has referred to Zhuangzi's posture as a kind of musical hermeneutics because the "effect of communication is seen not in an increase of new knowledge, but in a realization of new situation."[37] Even the stance towards the text does not demand a kind of objective detachment but a participation in the experience.

Zhuangzi was considered iconoclastic for his acerbic criticisms of Confucian philosophy. However, unlike Nietzsche or Heidegger, he does not bear the weight of a metaphysical system on his shoulders. His skepticism was not directed against the preponderance of an all-encompassing truth or the claims of objectivity but rather against the rigid code of behaviour demanded by Confucian ethics. Although China, like Europe, experienced periods of profound political turmoil, particularly during the Warring States Period, there is no assumption that this period was due to the absence of a single order that could be imposed on the universe.

The *Zhuangzi* and the *Daodejing* strike many Western readers as puzzling because they shun the traditional Western philosophical endeavour to seek definitive answers. Indeed, it is hard not to be left with the impression that the main purpose of a work such as the *Daodejing* is to spurn solutions in order to allow for a proliferation of questions. The effort to erode faith in the fixed categories of knowledge is not intended to create turmoil, but rather to allow for a kind of openness towards other beings as well as foster receptivity to nonconceptual forms of knowing. It is to foster harmony rather than discord. Daoist thinkers assume that the uncertainty of knowledge makes room for mystery, which is not conceived of as an absence of knowledge but rather as an attunement to the ineffable wellspring of all meaning.

Nietzsche's critiques of philosophical or logical knowledge echo Zhuangzi and Laozi's criticisms of linguistic forms of knowing. Western philosophy has often dismissed from its philosophical consciousness that which cannot be adequately represented by linguistic signs or philosophical categories, consigning the unutterable to a black hole of meaninglessness and silence. Whatever eludes the confines of the human mind cannot become the foundation of a serious pursuit such as philosophy. Ironically, such dismissal often masquerades as objectivity, even in areas where the imposition of form and order necessitates a considerable degree of distortion. This kind of thinking is alien to Daoist thinkers for whom that which is of greatest significance cannot be spoken.

Paradoxically, in order to remind us of the importance of that which cannot be spoken, many Daoist texts speak at great length about the inability to speak about things. Daoist thinkers recognize the irony in using words to point to that which escapes them. According to Daoist thinkers, the excesses of philosophy are a result of the limits of human beings who try to impose a single perspective on a world that is multiperspectival.

To view the language of negation that characterizes the *Daodejing* as negativity also signals a resistance to nonlinguistic forms of knowing. The Dao can only be referred to by pointing to what it is not because language imposes a boundary on all things. Thus, the only way to express boundarylessness in language, which cannot operate without boundaries, is through negation of the boundaries that do exist. This is why the *Daodejing* begins by stating that the Dao is unutterable and unknowable: "The Dao that can be expressed is not the eternal Dao. The name that can be named is not the eternal name" (DDJ 1). However, this is not to say that the Dao can only be experienced negatively. The Dao refers to the harmony that exists between things at any time. Daoist thought also pays tribute to nonlinguistic and intuitive forms of knowing which are all too readily consigned to irrelevance in Western thought. Allan Watts points out that the Western philosopher is like the "wallflower who cannot learn a dance unless someone draws him a diagram of the steps, who cannot 'get it by the feel.'"[38] Watts points out the difference in the way which Western musicians and "Oriental musicians" learn music. Oriental musicians only have a rough outline of the melody that serves as a reminder of the melody. The musicians learn music not by reading notes but by listening to the performance of a teacher similar to the technique used by Western jazz artists. In short, the Daoist recognition of the limits of language does not render the unspoken silent, but rather opens up a space for other forms of knowledge, which in the West, are often considered peripheral. Reason and intuition are thus blended in Daoist philosophy. By recognizing the limits of language, the intuitive sense of the Dao can be strengthened, but we can never go beyond a vague awareness because the ineffable Dao can never be captured. Every word constitutes a reduction of an object or concept to either some of its parts, or its general outlines and therefore must by necessity leave something out.

Zhuangzi makes it clear that the presence of the Dao is something that can be felt, even if it cannot be expressed in words. This is akin to the kind of awareness of Being that Heidegger describes. Therefore, it is not simply encountered through the negation of words. The character,

Cook Ding, of the *Zhuangzi* is able carve an ox with grace because he ignores "sense" and follows his "spirit." When asked what enables him to cut the ox in this way, he exclaims that what he loves best is the Dao, "which is better than any art" (Zh 3, 23). One of the major Daoist critiques of Confucianism was that connections between people were based exclusively on ritual and thus had become shallow. Thus, the negation of language in Daoism is not simply destructive or deconstructive, but opens up another realm of experiences.

Angus Graham notes that the "denial that the Way is communicable in words is a familiar paradox of Taoism" prompting many to ask why the author went on to write the book.[39] The notion of that, which cannot be spoken is not worth speaking about, is a typical Western assumption. According to Daoist thinkers, that which cannot be spoken is precisely what is most worth speaking about. This is reminiscent of Heidegger's plea not to give up philosophizing because it cannot yield definitive answers. Although we need to guard against the illusion that The Dao can be grasped in language, this should not prevent us from celebrating it through language. Similarly, Heidegger's form of philosophizing can be seen as a celebration of Being rather than a grasping of it. In both the *Daodejing*, and *Being and Time*, philosophizing is a spiritual experience.

Speaking does play the important role of reminding us of the Dao. Arguing that language is inadequate is not tantamount to proclaiming it useless altogether. Indeed, the inadequacies of language are an important reminder of the interconnection between things that are based on something beyond rituals and norms. Imprecision, in Zhuangzi's view, is not merely disruptive because it marks receptivity to other influences. In his thought, order and disorder are not polar opposites. In part this position is reflected in the differences between the Chinese language and many western languages. Chinese words are more fluid, and very much context dependent. The fixation on grammar, which Nietzsche rails against, is notoriously absent in the Chinese language. The Chinese language is metaphorical and malleable; the connotations of words change throughout the course of history. Thus, it does not suffer from the metaphysical assumptions that Derrida suggests are entrenched in Western languages. Derrida claims Western language represses writing due to its phonetic foundation:

> The system of "hearing oneself-speak" through the phonic substance—which presents itself as the nonexterior, nonmundane, therefore nonempirical or noncontingent signifier—has necessarily dominated the history of the world during an entire epoch.[40]

Speech is assumed to carry the authority of the speaker, whereas writing is fluid and ambiguous, and its sources are multiple. Angus Graham points out that the Chinese language is not logocentric in the Derridean sense. There is no opposition between name and object. Names are used to point to objects rather than freeze them conceptually.[41]

One of the most familiar anecdotes contained within the *Zhuangzi* relays the conversation between the sophist Huizi[42] and Zhuangzi standing on top of a bridge. The limitations of knowledge are tested and its relativity is underscored. Zhuangzi refers to the pleasure of the fish who swim "around as they please" (Zh 17, 147). Huizi retorts that Zhuangzi, not being a fish cannot understand or even properly articulate their enjoyment. Zhuangzi replies: "You are not me, so how can you know I don't know what fish enjoy?" Huizi quips that he knows Zhuangzi is not a fish. Zhuangzi parries with the rejoinder: "You asked me how I could know what it is that fish really enjoy. Therefore, you already knew I knew it when you asked the question. And I know it by being here on the edge of the River Hao" (Zh 17, 147). As Graham points out, the expression *anzhi* (安置) (translated here as how) has the dual meaning of both "how" and "from where do you know."[43] Yet, Zhuangzi is not making claims to capture the essence of "fishhood," but by observing the fish can relate their experience to his own experience of enjoyment. Introspective awareness comes about through attunement to one's outside world. Watching the fish intensifies Zhuangzi's own experience of life.

Neither Huizi nor Zhuangzi are in complete error here. Huizi is correct in asserting that Zhuangzi can never completely fathom the experience of the fish, but as Zhuangzi points out, he is using his position to relate to the fish and therefore affirms his own enjoyment of standing on the bridge rather than making knowledge claims. While Huizi points out the limitations of Zhuangzi's "knowledge," Zhuangzi emphasizes that these limitations are what make the knowledge an exercise of relation between himself and other beings possible. We cannot relate to something that we can capture in its entirety. Only limited beings can reach out to each other and create the eternal flux of life in the process. Constantly changing horizons and possibilities are not impediments to knowledge but rather enhance its vitality. In short, absolute certainty would make living life impossible. If philosophy is to be an exercise in living life, it must necessarily be fallible. Knowledge is virtue only because of its limited nature.

This is not to say that the world is chaotic and disordered, for Daoist texts constantly refer to the unity of all things. But this unity itself is something that is intuited and cannot be grasped through any concept.

The symbols that invoke it, such as the Chinese word for "one" (which is a line), are seen as metaphors, and Daoist thinkers do not make essences out of symbols. One could argue that the symbols are deconstructed as they are employed, not for the sake of destabilization itself, but rather to point to their limitations and thereby catapult us beyond them. Daoist thinkers take it for granted that language can only represent a partial truth and there is no such thing as grasping the whole truth or essence. Like Nietzsche, they remind us of the illusory nature of all thought. Thus, skepticism is not a means by which philosophy is denigrated, but a means by which it remains vital and effective. The symbol does not become irrelevant because it is considered inadequate to that which it represents. Indeed, it remains alive because of its fluidity and the recognition that it points to something beyond it.

Like Nietzsche, Zhuangzi is poignantly aware that the limitations of philosophy are also the limitations of language:

> Our words are not just hot air. Words work because they say something, but the problem is that, if we cannot define a word's meaning, it doesn't really say anything. Is it possible that there really is something here? Or does it really mean nothing? Is it possible to make a proper case for it being any different from the chirruping of chicks? (Zh 2, 12)

What is referred to here as "defining the meaning of words" is perhaps better translated as "not having a certain or fixed meaning."[44] The truth of words inheres in their imprecise nature, which enables their meaning to change in accordance with circumstances: "When the Tao is obscured by pettiness and the words are obscured by elaboration, then we end up having the 'this is' and 'this is not' of the Confucians and Mohists" (Zh 2, 12). Words must remain flexible if they are to remain true to the Dao, for they not only represent, but also signify. Signification conveys our partial understanding and thus the very use of words is an acknowledgement of our limitation. Yet, these partial understandings also enable us to create something new, which would be impossible if we could represent things directly through words. Words say "no-thing" about the world because they are creations.

Even the seemingly meaningless chirruping of chicks is significant for it represents a kind of spontaneous expression of life that cannot simply be reduced to the role of explication. Words, in other words, are never purely functional. Their musical dimension ought to be acknowledged:

> "Flowing words are spoken every day and they harmonize through the influence of Heaven, continuing for ever and so extending my years. If nothing is said about them, they remain in agreement, and agreement is not affected by words: words are in agreement but agreement is not words. So it is said 'say nothing.'" (Zh 27, 244)

Heidegger might suggest that this attention to the poetry of words signals an awareness that Being is to come forth through them, rather than merely being represented by them.

Zhuangzi recognizes the duality of words, which on the one hand, are forms of convention that function through repetition and make a common understanding possible. Yet, if we do not resist the compunction to define everything, then we undermine the dynamic of creative harmonizing. Furthermore, there is an understanding here that the harmony of the words derives from the mysterious workings of the cosmos. There is thus an aspect of language that the understanding cannot grasp and which transports us beyond convention. Thus, a word is that which "makes things certain" in addition to "that which makes things uncertain" (Zh 27, 245). Zhuangzi acknowledges and embraces both the destabilizing and stabilizing aspect of words.

For Zhuangzi there is much activity that cannot be learned through words. A wheelright reveals this difficulty:

> When I work on a wheel, if I hit too softly, pleasant as this is, it doesn't make for a good wheel. If I hit furiously, I get tired and the thing doesn't work! So, not too soft, not too vigorous, I grasp it in my hand and hold it in my heart. I cannot express this by word of mouth, I just know it. I cannot teach this to my son, nor can my son learn it from me. (Zh 13, 115)

Heidegger's point, that the carpenter is led by the wood, conveys a similar understanding. The uncertainty of language must be underscored so that we can become attentive to the conditions at hand.

Philosophical Revival

Nietzsche, Zhuangzi, Laozi, and Heidegger invite us to acknowledge and revel in the limitations of philosophy. Rather than banishing that which cannot be encapsulated in philosophical categories from philosophical discourse, it must be repeatedly alluded to. Meaning does not derive from

an illusory ability to grasp the cosmos, but rather stems from the recognition that we are part of something that cannot be grasped because it is much larger than we are. Furthermore, our particularity should not be seen as a limitation or lack, but rather should be celebrated as part of the variegated splendour of the cosmos.

Instead of conceptually grasping the cosmos, one task of philosophy is to achieve a sense of unity by affirming and establishing our connection to it. Heidegger insists that the activity of bringing something from the shadows into the light is pleasurable and therefore the shadows should not be branded as the enemies of philosophy. Without obscurity or darkness, our life would be devoid of wonder and pathos. If we attempt to pin everything down armed with concepts and logic, then we will not be open to the multiple voices that speak to us. For Heidegger, the relationship with Being can be likened to a conversation, where the joy is not gleaned in arriving at some kind of conclusion but in the act of talking itself. This is very similar to the approach taken by Zhuangzi, whose engagement with the Dao is always playful.

For Laozi and Zhuangzi, the absence of a conceptual foundation does not mean the cosmos is disordered. Daoist thinkers repeatedly point to the regular cycles of the Dao. Nietzsche provides a striking contrast, for he draws attention to both the regularity of change and its tumultuous nature. While for Laozi and Zhuangzi, imbalances and strife are periodic aberrations, Nietzsche insists that they constitute an ineradicable part of cosmic activity. Once the straightjackets of reason are loosened, the unconscious drives that are unleashed are not necessarily predictable, and there is no guarantee that harmony will prevail. On the one hand, Dionysian forces can be flowing and reveal a kind of primordial unity:

> Under the charm of the Dionysian not only is the union between man and man reaffirmed, but nature which has become alienated, hostile or subjugated, celebrates once more her reconciliation with her lost son, man. . . . Now with the gospel of universal harmony, each one feels himself not only united, reconciled and fused with his neighbour, but as one with him, as if the veil of maya had been torn aside and were now merely fluttering in tatters before the mysterious primordial unity. (BTr 1)

On the other hand, Nietzsche describes gruesome festivals where the destructive and frenzied aspects of the Dionysian are unfurled, giving rise to an untamed conflict:

> In nearly every case these festivals centered in extravagant sexual licentiousness, whose waves overwhelmed all family life and its venerable traditions; the most savage natural instincts were unleashed, including even that horrible mixture of sensuality and cruelty which has always seemed to me to be the real "witches" brew (BTr 2)

While Daoist thinkers do not rule out discord, they imply that harmony will always be restored. Strife is a momentary aberration which will be corrected. For Nietzsche, there is no such thing as restoring harmony, for harmony and discord will be in continuous interplay.

A comparison with Daoism also helps to unveil a gentler side of Nietzsche. He insists that we tear asunder ossified cultural and philosophical dogma in order to hurl ourselves into the tumultuous whirlwind of constant change. This provides a strong contrast with Daoist skepticism which wants to unsettle Confucian dogma in order to attune us to the regularity of change in the Dao. Zhuangzi does not complain about order per se, but against a Confucian order which is superficially contrived. Yet, even Nietzsche draws attention to the regularities in nature from which we can draw solace and comfort. A comparison with Daoist thought can help to shed light on some of the nuances of Nietzsche's texts, which are often eclipsed by his vitriolic rhetoric.

Daoist thinkers elucidate the limitations of thought in order to pay homage to the whole. Deconstruction is a form of reconstruction because it opens us up to the multifaceted nature of the Dao. Knowledge claims are dismantled, not simply in order to deflate our own arrogance, but as part of a pleasurable enjoyment of the mysteries and multiplicity of the cosmos. Heidegger, Nietzsche, Laozi, and Zhuangzi would abhor a metaphysical philosophy that offers the possibility of harmonious unity at the expense of the concrete or particular. Thus, transcendence and immanence are not seen as mutually exclusive but rather as interdependent. Nietzsche's notion of the eternal return, Heidegger's notion of Being, and the Daoist notion of the Dao all reflect a kind of transcendence that can only be experienced through the concrete particularity of things. That which is closest to us is also replete with mystery. There is no Archimedian vantage point which allows for an objective overview of the cosmos. Harmony is created not by succumbing to a singular pattern but by allowing the particularities of things to foster the emergence of other particulars. In this way, Heidegger hopes to avert a propensity to master the universe either through technology or excessive rationalization, and Zhuangzi exhorts us to celebrate the uselessness of objects in an effort to

acknowledge their unique potential or *de*. The inexorable in-betweenness of all things is celebrated rather than lamented.

Philosophy no longer leads to predictability. Indeed, Nietzsche and Heidegger are both critical of Western metaphysics for this propensity, which they argue has resulted in the brutal attempts of science, technology, and logic to gain preponderance over the world. Instead, thought is to be conceived of as a form of journeying through which connections to an elusive whole are made on a continuous basis. There is no ultimate act of unravelling that will definitively unveil the secrets of the universe. Hegelian absolute understanding is not even held up as an inspiring ideal. Instead, philosophical knowledge ought to be closely linked to the creation of meaning, which derives from the ability to connect with the world on an ongoing basis. The self is not to be made coterminous with the cosmos, but must recognize its "partness." As Nietzsche emphasizes, eternity touches us when we recognize that all things are intertwined in the cycle of being, not when we have managed to become eternal ourselves. The invisibility of the Dao, or Being, also allows for inventiveness in fostering connections between things. Heidegger points out that the cosmic game of hide and seek (which we are drawn to by Being) that reveals and conceals itself is an infinite wellspring of wonder and enchantment.

Furthermore, Heidegger, as well as Laozi and Zhuangzi, would emphasize that we must refrain from trying to invoke closure on knowledge so that we remain open to other beings, and become attuned to the cosmic presence in all things. Things must be relished for their particularity and the fact that each particular suggests a multitude of different horizons must be acknowledged. Therefore, thinking demands a continuous openness to the world. In traditional metaphysics, the subject had to be able to distance itself from the world in order to gain knowledge about it. For Heidegger, Nietzsche, Laozi, and Zhuangzi, our partness cannot be eradicated but this is no grounds for philosophical despair. Because each of us is in the world differently, we have unique perspectives to contribute to it. There is no single way of looking at the cosmos. The eagle's vision of the world is no more accurate than that of the frog sitting in a pond; it is merely different. Our openness to other perspectives does not necessarily eventuate in the unveiling of deeper truths but rather suggests new ways of participating in life. Zhuangzi does not watch the fish in order to grasp the fish's essence but rather to find a different way of expressing his own enjoyment of the world.

The beauty of thought for all of these philosophers inheres in the fact that there always remains something to be explored. This constitutes

philosophy's brush with eternity. If Wisdom could capture Life, she could not dance with her. Only by opening ourselves up to uncharted territory can we continue to create new dances. According to Nietzsche, the danger of an extreme Socratism was that wisdom, which had become encased in rigid concepts, would eventually jettison all that could not fit into the proper mould. In Nietzsche's view, philosophy managed to put a stop to the dance of life, and became irrelevant because it had become so successful in its macabre attempt to freeze the world into categories. Not only do we think categorically, we live categorically. Once we live categorically, there is no more need to think. The extreme rationalization, which Nietzsche views as characteristic of modernity, is the result of a philosophy which has engulfed too much of the world.

A philosophy that has recreated the world in its image shrivels up because it can no longer open itself to the unpredictable. Zhuangzi relates the story of an ancient tree, which neither bore fruit, nor had wood that was conducive to carpentry. As a result, people were able to gather in its shade. He uses this in order to point to the use of the useless:

> Because they are useful they suffer, and they are unable to live out the years Heaven has given them. . . . Now I have perfected the art of uselessness and this is very useful to me! If I had been of use could I have grown so vast? Everyone knows the usefulness of the useful but no one knows the usefulness of the useless. (Zh 34, 36)

Philosophy must once again learn how to be useless in order to be of use.

Chapter 2

Finite Wanderers

Modern Western philosophy has made the subject the epicentre of inquiry. Kant suggests that the antennas of knowledge could neither reach God, nor yield an understanding of the infinite, but that certainty about the rules, which should guide a rational moral subject, would be more easily attainable. Even if the thing-in-itself proved to be somewhat elusive, patterns of subjective enquiry could be postulated more readily. Nevertheless, this retreat on the part of the subject proved to be dissatisfactory to many philosophers, because human beings yearn for something beyond their own reason to appeal to. Even Kant did not dispense with the notion of God entirely because human beings need a kind of "external reassurance" that their moral behaviour would somehow be rewarded. While the afterlife was unknowable, Kant reluctantly concedes that even our rationality is not sustainable without it. He widens the potential rift between the knowing subject and an unknowable world, and in so doing prepares the way for a philosophy of authenticity by focusing attention on the subject in a more direct way than had ever been done before. Hegel tries to soothe the modern mind by turning errors into partial truths that propel the subject along the path towards absolute knowledge. The finite does not fly in the face of the absolute, rather, it is the absolute itself in process. The grand Subject works through tottering individual subjects. In this way, Hegel tries to bridge the divide between subject and cosmos that Kant's philosophy had drawn attention to.

The ideal of authenticity maintains the preponderance of the subject but at the same time marks a shift away from the universal self towards a celebration of its specificity and nonuniversalizable nature. Kierkegaard

vehemently rejects the Hegelian system and makes clear that we are burdened with weighty ethical decisions without having recourse to the kind of metaphysical comfort provided by notions of the absolute. While Kierkegaard maintains a faith in God, this is a God that is radically other and cannot provide readymade solutions to human dilemmas. Faith in an inherently ordered universe is abandoned. Kierkegaard's philosophy suggests that the way in which individuals deal with their finitude, in light of the absence of an ordered universe, is the main test that the authentic self would have to undergo. Indeed, I would argue that authenticity becomes a greater concern once the pillars of metaphysical faith start to crumble. The subject can no longer simply derive its meaning from a clear notion of its place within a cosmic order. On the contrary, authenticity necessitates the creation of a meaningful life in an ungrounded world.

According to Nietzsche, metaphysics equates sameness with truth, which has the effect of rendering the human subject predictable. Ironically, once metaphysical truths become too ritualized, faith in them begins to crumble. Normal and abnormal, rather than right and wrong, become expressions of social approval and scorn. It is no surprise that the ideal of authenticity is often formulated against the backdrop of a homogeneous mass culture, which is condemned in the writings of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Heidegger, and is often seen as an upshot of metaphysical thinking. In such an environment, eccentricity and difference become powerful forms of revolt. Nietzsche venerates the iconoclast who strays from the norm. He sees mass culture as an attempt to stymie the constant becoming and flux that he associates with life. The growing spectre of facelessness sparks renewed interest in individuality and uniqueness, and the exhortation to chart a path that is uniquely one's own becomes a common refrain. This is more than just a marking of difference, it also signifies a way of participating in the kinesis, or movement, that constitutes life in Nietzsche's view.

Heidegger also espouses an ideal of authenticity which had been driven underground in the stampede of that he calls the *they-self* or *das Man*. According to Heidegger, uniqueness has to be celebrated in order to actively find a place within the cosmos or Being. By making a niche for oneself (that one can call one's own), one is also heeding the call of Being. Heidegger, like Nietzsche, does not insist that the self peel away the artificial exterior layers to reveal a true inner core, but rather that the authentic self be aware of its particular context and build a home within it rather than blindly accepting the conditions that he has fallen into.

One can only be aware of one's connection to Being if the attempt to forge ties to it are conscious. In the case of both thinkers, authenticity necessitates an active and deliberate attempt to cultivate one's interconnection with the larger world, for one's place in it cannot simply be taken for granted: it has to be made.

The notion that authenticity requires interconnectivity; creates a bridge between Heidegger and Nietzsche and the Chinese philosophical tradition. Confucian thought also makes reference to an idea of authenticity but it is not centred on finding a way in which to distinguish oneself from the crowd, rather, it is centred on genuineness and sincerity (*cheng* 誠). There is an emphasis on the process of self-cultivation, whereby the self is in a constant process of being made coterminous with its social and political environment. Social harmony is not simply based on obedience to an authoritarian rule of a king or lord. Harmony had to radiate from the nobles to the subject and back again from the subjects to the nobles.

Music and ritual played a central role in Confucian orders, because it was assumed that the physical, mental, and psychological aspects of the self were not separate, and therefore harmony had to be cultivated at all levels of one's being. Western readers will no doubt be reminded of the role that music plays in the formation of the soul according to Plato. For Confucian thinkers, there is not a sharp distinction between the inner personal self, and the outer social self, because such a division presupposes a kind of atomism where social order is achieved by demanding compliance to external rules. Thus, the Western assumption that Confucian thought demanded an extreme altruism, which surrenders the personality of the self, is misguided, for it does not recognize the extent to which the self is formed within the social order.

There is no doubt that Laozi and Zhuangzi reacted vociferously to a social order predicated on Confucian ritual, because they argued that in most cases it was not genuine and depended upon a fake mimicry. As a result, it is often presumed that all of these thinkers promote a kind of radical individualism that defiantly shuns social order and favours the life of the hermit. Indeed, Daoism has often been embraced in the West because of its seeming antipathy towards Confucianism, wherein the individual is entangled in a net of inescapable social rituals and obligations. While Confucian philosophy tends to revere the noble man, the Daoist sage is often an outcast who prefers to wander at the periphery of society and engage in direct communion with nature. Images of the recluse, the solitary saint as well as the social reprobate abound. In this

sense, there is much in common between Daoist thinkers and the philosophers of authenticity in the West who disdain the status quo.

However, neither Heidegger and Nietzsche nor Laozi and Zhuangzi can be said to simply advocate a philosophy of nonconformity. Laozi and Zhuangzi reject a simple compliance with Confucian custom because they insist that it encourages a mindless mimicry that alienates one from the Dao. They maintain that authenticity necessitates attunement to the Dao, just as Heidegger insists that authenticity be grounded in Being. Even Nietzsche, whose philosophy is more riddled with conflict and tension, insists that authenticity demands a connection to nature that most social orders scorn. Authenticity seems to promote social isolation only because prevailing social orders are blind to the larger cosmos, and because of this, obstruct genuine engagement between individuals. There is a strong suggestion in all of these works that without an attunement to the larger world of the cosmos or nature, the social order will eventually become hollow.

Yet, at the same time, one must be careful not to simply assimilate Western and Eastern ideas at the expense of glossing over the differences between them. Nietzsche and the early Heidegger insist that the self stand out in some way by marking territory as its own. While the self is part of the flux of life, it also must assiduously define boundaries that make it unique. According to both Nietzsche and Heidegger, the dynamic interplay between homelessness and belonging is constant and therefore the art of creating meaning is an agonizing one. Laozi and Zhuangzi do not share this preoccupation with "ownness" and maintaining the self (*shen*) 身 is important not as a means of marking out one's own unique place, but as a way of actively creating harmony between things. Whereas the self portrayed by Heidegger and Nietzsche must be visible and always in the foreground, the Daoist self should act in such a way as to remain inconspicuous.

Nevertheless, to claim that Heidegger and Nietzsche simply extol an assertive subject would constitute a distortion of their thought, for both are philosophers at a crossroads. On the one hand, they exemplify the subjectivist turn that is at the heart of late modern philosophy, yet at the same time, they chisel away at the very subjectivism that has characterized European thought. For this reason, they share much in common with Laozi and Zhuangzi, whose notion of authenticity has very little to do with the subject asserting itself defiantly against an indifferent universe. Uniqueness in Daoist thought is a means of reinforcing the connection

between things. The challenge facing the genuine individual (*zhenren*) 真人 is to recognize the importance of particularity, in himself as well as in all others, but not to cling to it. This raises the question suggested by Nietzsche's philosophy of whether such particularity can indeed even be cultivated without some kind of passionate commitment or defence of it. The sage is able to go beyond himself and move through the phases of his life with relative ease. In Heidegger's later works, notions of authenticity bear much resemblance to this train of thought. The subject fades increasingly into the background as its role as a conduit for Being is stressed. Even Nietzsche, through the metaphor of the eternal return, insists that we recognize that we are but one speck in an infinite universe. The acceptance of our inexorable finitude is an essential aspect of authenticity.

Dasein's Ontological Priority

I begin my analysis of authenticity with Heidegger, because in *Being and Time*, he attributes to human beings a special place within the cosmos. This does not mean that we can lay claim to some kind of objective, ontological distance that allows us to penetrate the truth about Being. Indeed, the term employed by Heidegger, "*Dasein*", underscores our embeddedness within the world and is meant to differentiate his thought from that of his predecessors. It constitutes a sharp repudiation of Cartesian notions of subjectivity. *Da* means there, and thus *Dasein* refers to a being that cannot extricate itself from its particular mooring in order to maintain an objective Cartesian posture towards the world.

Dasein is not simply there as are other beings and Heidegger's philosophical energy is directed towards emphasizing its ontological uniqueness. *Dasein* alone is constituted through its interpretation of the world. It is impelled to interpret Being because its being "is an issue for it" (BT 32, 12). However, this is not a one-way process. Being reveals itself through *Dasein*'s self-understanding: "*Dasein*, in its Being, has a relationship towards that Being—a relationship which itself is one of Being. And this means further that there is some way in which *Dasein* understands itself in its Being, and that to some degree it does so explicitly. It is peculiar to this entity that with and through its Being, this Being is disclosed to it" (BT 53, 12). Therefore, *Dasein*'s understanding of itself is not only relational, but also reveals something about Being. Heidegger bridges the

schism that Kant's philosophy had pointed to, by insisting that an examination of *Dasein* is in itself a part of the process of metaphysical understanding.

Heidegger does not imply that the self of *Dasein* is universalizable. He does not set the specificity of the self in opposition to the "universality" of Being for each *Dasein* is *in* Being differently. Furthermore, the fact that human beings are conscious of being part of a whole that is beyond their grasp as finite creatures means that they are never completely at ease in Being and therefore are impelled to make themselves on an ongoing basis. As a result *Dasein* is never fully present to itself: "presence-at-hand is the kind of Being which belongs to entities whose character is not that of *Dasein*" (BT 150,115). *Dasein* is a self-interpreting being in the fullest sense of the world. It is not a substance that somehow remains identical through change.

Self-making becomes the cornerstone of our authenticity in Heidegger's view and it arises in part out of the tension between the wholeness of Being and the finitude of *Dasein*. Thus, self-making is also a movement towards Being. An intuitive awareness of Being's wholeness ensures that we always stand out beyond our immediate situation. We straddle the domains of the finite and infinite. Thus, homelessness is a necessary component of authenticity. Heidegger uses the term *Existenz* to illuminate this phenomenon:

> And because we cannot define *Dasein*'s essence by citing a 'what' of the kind that pertains to a subject-matter, and because its essence lies rather in the fact that in each case it has its Being to be, and has it as its own, we have chosen to designate this entity as '*Dasein*,' a term which is purely an expression of its Being. *Dasein* always understands itself in terms of its existence—in terms of a possibility of itself: to be itself or not itself. (BT 32–33, 12)

Leading an authentic life does not mean we delve into our inner selves to reveal the fundamental core, but rather that we engage in an active dialogue with Being and find our place within the cosmos. We must also differentiate ourselves from others in order to have a space that we can claim to be our own.

Although Heidegger wants to discredit any notions of Archimedian vantage points, he nevertheless struggles to find a way in which the subject can hold on to its position of ontological privilege. He deliberately refutes the Cartesian split between the "extended substance" of our body and the

"reason" of our mind. Such a divided subject is always uncomfortable with the concreteness of its body: "man's 'substance' is not spirit as a synthesis of soul and body; it is rather *existence*" (BT 153, 117). Soul and body are not merely combined; they are intertwined. We are not just objects that happen to think as well. Instead, thinking and interpretation are mutually constitutive, and the knowledge we glean is at least partly transmitted through the body, which in turn shapes our theoretical understandings. Disembodied knowledge is not possible. Nevertheless Heidegger imputes to *Dasein* an ontological significance that derives from its *interpretive* acts: "Thus *Dasein* has turned out to be, more than any other entity, the one which must first be interrogated ontologically" (BT 34, 14). The privileged position of *Dasein* is reiterated throughout *Being and Time*: ". . . *Dasein*, as an entity with the possibility of existence, has ontological priority over every other entity" (BT 62, 38). Self-interpretation is of the utmost importance, not because it leads to definitive clarity, but because it allows us to participate consciously in the dynamic nature of Being. While Heidegger does not dismiss the importance of the body, it is nevertheless the conscious engagement with Being that sets *Dasein* apart. Heidegger asserts that we enjoy a special relationship to Being as a result of our interpretive capabilities. We are the only creatures who actively enter into a dialogue with Being: "*Dasein* is an entity, which in its very Being, comports itself understandingly towards that Being" (BT 78, 53). Therefore, to assert that body and mind assume an equal position in Heidegger's philosophy is an exaggeration. In *Being and Time*, the body is primarily a vehicle of self-interpretation that sheds special light not only upon *Dasein*, but upon Being itself.

Heidegger begins his analysis of *Dasein* not with abstract metaphysical concepts of freedom and identity, but rather by examining Being in its "everydayness" in order to highlight the holistic nature of even our most basic understanding (BT 76, 51). Each of us performs daily rituals that are taken for granted, but which presuppose at least a tacit awareness of the larger context in which these rituals occur. A specific event or pattern of action does not make sense in isolation but only as part of a series of actions. It has meaning only insofar as it points beyond itself. Thus, we do not regard the world as a series of individual entities which we retroactively piece together in order to form a whole. It is the wholeness of the world that is primary and we are always already part of it: " 'World' can be understood in another ontical sense—not, however, as those entities which *Dasein* essentially is not and which can be encountered within-the-world, but rather as

that '*wherein*' a factical *Dasein* as such can be said to 'live'" (BT 93, 65). Only when something is suddenly out of place are we incited to move beyond our state of preunderstanding and reflect on the object isolated from the context. Yet, when this occurs, we also develop a deeper understanding of how the parts fit together to form the whole. Wholes must unravel so that we begin to pay attention to them as such. Questions are posed when there is a rupture in our familiar patterns of experience. The disintegration of patterns is the precondition for their conscious reconstitution.

For Heidegger, the fact that we interpret things through wholes first attests to the significance of the whole itself. However, the whole is not characterized by a universal concept or a single pattern that constitutes its essence but rather through the interconnections between entities. By imputing such significance to interconnection, Heidegger is able to move away from the notion of a whole, which is fixed and immutable, and suggests instead that it is malleable and in flux. Furthermore, such a reconceptualization of "wholeness" enables Heidegger to affirm the importance of the particulars that comprise it, without reducing the parts to the whole or the whole to its parts. It also drastically alters the position of the philosopher. We can only experience interconnectivity if we are in-between things rather than gazing at them from a distance. The philosopher's muddled position in the middle of things is celebrated rather than spurned. Heidegger rejects the heralded position of the philosopher as passive spectator, positing in its place an image of the philosopher as actor and acted upon first, and thinker second. There are no a priori conditions or foundations which make knowledge possible, but rather a series of interlocking conditions that open a space for knowledge. Knowledge does not emerge out of thin air, but is possible only from a position in the midst of things. Previous philosophers had tried to eradicate the "in-between" aspect of our existence; Heidegger celebrated it. Authenticity is at least in part about living out the in-between-ness that characterizes our existence. If there is no single vantage point that can furnish us with the most comprehensive view of Being, and if Being in itself is constantly emerging out of *Dasein*'s relationships to it, then this means that the specificity and not just the universality of the human subject can be affirmed.

The connections between things are experienced before they are thought. The roots of philosophy can be unearthed in even our most simple activities. The most famous example that Heidegger uses to illustrate this is that of the hammer:

> The hammerer does not simply have knowledge about the hammer's character as equipment, but it has appropriated this equipment in a way which could not possibly be more suitable. . . . the less we just stare at the hammer-thing, and the more we seize hold of it and use it, the more primordial does our relationship to it become, and the more unveiledly is it encountered as that which it is—as equipment. (BT 98, 69)

Only when the hammer becomes dysfunctional do we think about its properties and functions. Our experience of the hammer comes before our conceptualization of it. It is significant that Heidegger begins his analysis of conceptualization with a physical grasping of things that are present at hand and ready for use since it anticipates Merleau-Ponty's idea that knowledge does not take place by ridding ourselves of the constraints of the body but rather through the body. Only a breakdown in practice leads to theoretical knowledge and perhaps this is why it is often assumed that philosophy requires a release from the body. Once we can no longer use the hammer, we focus our attention on the function of the hammer:

> The tool turns out to be damaged, or the material unsuitable. . . . We discover its unusability, however, not by looking at its properties, but rather by the circumspection of the dealings in which we use it. When its usability is thus discovered, equipment becomes conspicuous. (BT 102, 73)

We only begin to reflect on the essence of a hammer which resists the use to which it is supposed to be put: "If knowing is to be possible as a way of determining the nature of the present-at-hand by observing it, then there must first be a *deficiency* in our having-to-do with the world concernfully" (BT 88–9, 61–2).

The feeling of belonging that the self covets is dependent upon its capacity to make its world its own. If all our activities could be likened to a kind of seamless hammering, the question of belonging would never arise, and we would not be compelled to make ourselves at home. Alienation can never be disentangled from belonging: "that Being which is an issue for this entity in its very Being, is in each case mine" (BT 67). "*Eigen*," which is the root of the German terms for authenticity (*Eigentlichkeit*) means "one's own." This does not imply that we try to possess the world around us, but rather that we find someway of establishing an accord between ourselves and the world. Heidegger suggests that authenticity and inauthenticity will be constant companions:

> *Dasein* is in each case essentially its own possibility, it can, in its very itself win itself; it can also lose itself and never win itself; or only 'seem' to do so. But only insofar as it is essentially something which can be authentic—that is, something of its own—can it have lost itself and not yet won itself. As modes of Being, *authenticity* and inauthenti city. . . . are both grounded in the fact that any *Dasein* whatsoever is characterized by mineness. (BT 78, 53)

On the one hand, the act of appropriation suggested by the term "*Eigentlichkeit*" points towards a radical individualism which bases meaning on the act of possession. But the term "*eigen*" has multiple connotations. It does not exclude others, nor does it isolate the self. In fact, one could argue that appropriation is not only a way by which I make something "foreign" part of my world but also a means by which I, make myself part of the larger world.

Indeed, for Heidegger there is no isolated sphere of "ownness" because only a shared world can have meaning for me. Appropriation for Heidegger is therefore a decidedly social phenomenon. Here, he departs radically from Descartes as well as from his mentor Husserl, who argues that we should begin a phenomenological analysis by examining our own individual intentional states and then extrapolate to derive public meaning from them. While relationships for Descartes and Husserl are intersubjective, for Heidegger we are always with others:

> By 'Others' we do not mean everyone else but me-those over against whom the 'I' stands out. They are rather those from whom, for the most part, one does *not* distinguish oneself-those among whom one is too. . . . By reason of this *with-like* Being-in-the-world, the world is always the one that I share with Others. The world of *Dasein* is a *with-world*. (BT 154–55, 118)

Language plays a vital role in forging, revealing, and expressing the links between human beings. It is important to recognize that we can only reaffirm connections that at some level already exist. Heidegger insists that grammar and logic are not the foundations of language but rather *Rede* or talk which gives voice to bonds that are already there:

> Communication is never anything like a conveying of experiences, such as opinions or wishes, from the interior of one subject into the interior of another. *Dasein*-with is already essentially manifest in a co-state-of-mind and a co-understanding. In discourse, Being-with becomes

> 'explicitly' *shared*; that is to say, it *is already*, but it is unshared as something that has not been taken hold of and appropriated. (BT 205, 162)

Understanding words necessitates a form of preunderstanding. However, this preunderstanding is brought to light again through *Rede*, which makes unconscious togetherness explicit. Because the ties that bind us are always partially obfuscated, they are not only appropriated through words, but transformed by them. In the act of reaffirming what is already there, *Dasein* also has a transformative effect upon the world. The connection between people makes it possible for us to speak; it is not the act of speaking that connects isolated atoms.

If words are to remain authentic, they must maintain the connection between our preunderstanding and that which is created through the words themselves. This means that their nonverbal or prelinguistic substratum must be born in mind and there must be some form of consciousness of what words have left out. This is not easy to achieve and therefore words often uproot us from the very communities that they emerge from. Because the symbol can become familiar, and its origins obscured, a superficial repetition can erode preunderstanding. For example, we can forget the unspoken bonds that make the act of speaking possible and merely rely upon a shallow repetition of words to maintain social ties. For this reason every act of speech is both an unveiling and an obscuring:

> Because this telling has lost its primary relationship-of-being towards the entity talked about. . . . it does not communicate in such a way as to let this entity be appropriated in a primordial manner, but communicates rather by following the route of *gossiping* and *passing the word along*. (BT 212, 168)

When words have lost their grounding, they become idle talk, which Heidegger suggests is to some extent an unavoidable social phenomenon. Words become so familiar that they become alien. In order for words to remain meaningful, we must preserve a certain amount of discomfort about them.

Dasein's homelessness confers a special status upon it. The alienating experience of idle talk is also a precondition for *Dasein*'s conscious efforts to ground itself. The combination of being at home and not being at home is what makes *Dasein*'s experience authentic, for it forces it to situate itself within Being as a whole. Heidegger intimates that an intangible voice of

Being pulls *Dasein* beyond its immediate environs, forcing it to continuously transform the home that it is in. *Dasein* is always also more than it is. This is why the inauthentic social world that Heidegger somewhat disparagingly refers to as *das Man* becomes not just the enemy of authenticity, but also its driving force.

Perhaps one of the most well-known aspects of *Being and Time* is the description of inauthentic social relationships encapsulated in the term *das Man*, which is often translated as *the They*. Heidegger's relationship to "the they" is ambiguous. On the one hand, *Dasein* depends on others for its own self-understanding, since it draws meaning from the way in which things are interpreted by *das Man*. Yet, on the other hand, *das Man* threatens the self with a pernicious levelling in which the lowest common denominator takes hold, restricting "the possible options of choice to what lies within the range of the familiar, the attainable, the respectable-that which is fitting and proper" (BT 239, 195). Through the "easily handled rules and public norms of the 'they' we relieve ourselves of responsibility for our own existence (BT 334, 288).

Our existence is reduced to the level of an unthinking routine which offers the benefits of certainty but the poses the danger of being devoid of meaning:

> But this distantiality which belongs to Being-with, is such that *Dasein*, as everyday Being-with-one-another, stands in *subjection* to Others. It itself *is* not; its Being has been taken away by the Others. These Others, moreover, are not *definite* Others. On the contrary, any Other can represent them. . . . he 'who' is the neuter, *the "they"* (*das Man*)." (BT 164, 127)

Das Man refers to a lack of distinctness. Everyone is closed off to the other, but can nevertheless get along with them. Any being is replaceable in the world of *das Man* precisely because there is no genuine connection between individuals. Appropriation is unnecessary because everything gets "passed off as something familiar and accessible to everyone" (BT 165, 128). While the "they" is "alongside everywhere" (BT 165, 128) it is not necessarily part of me. The "they" refers to the relationships that are lived only at the surface and are sustained by mimicry rather than through interconnectivity: "Everyone is the other, and no one is himself" (BT 128, 165).

However, the force of the pull (*Zug*) into a fallen existence cannot be underestimated, for it is characterized by "forgetting." *Dasein* becomes

mired in immediate concerns, taking the world for granted. Social roles become our identity and we simply comply with the rules that are laid out for us. This is always inevitable to a certain extent if society is to function smoothly. There is a powerful comfort to be derived from this. Paradoxically the less of a self we become, the more self-absorbed we are as we engage in a flurry of activity in order to resist the thoughts which might rob us of our comfort: "this tranquillity in inauthentic Being does not seduce one into stagnation and inactivity, but drives one into uninhibited 'hustle' " (BT 222, 178). Constant activity marks the refusal to come to terms with the homelessness of our condition. Mimicry becomes the armour which keeps others out; there is no need to connect with that which is superficially identical to the self. An instrumental rationality takes hold which preoccupies itself with the strategies for meeting predetermined goals. Only a self that fears others and the groundlessness of its own existence strives to become exactly like others:

> Everything that is primordial gets glossed over as something that has long been well-known. Everything gained by struggle becomes just something to be manipulated. Every secret loses its force. . . . By publicness everything gets obscured, and what has thus been covered up gets passed off as something familiar and accessible to everyone. (BT 165, 127)

We easily succumb to this fallen state because it is comfortable. Yet, this pull of presence also provides the backdrop against which the more dynamic hues of Being can be recognized. Sartre insists that authenticity is something that we are aware of when we flee it. The fallen world, which we inhabit, is not simply the antithesis of authenticity. The authentic self does not wrest itself free from all preexisting interpretations in order to reveal an unsullied core, but rather refuses to take these interrelationships for granted and thereby appropriates situations for herself or himself. One must change in order to accord with the object one appropriates and therefore every act of appropriation is a means of not only owning the other but also of being owned by the other. This means that an authentic social order would always undergo transformation since different individuals will always appropriate what is already there in different ways.

Self-understanding is only possible through an other that is not identical to the Self and yet shares things that are in common with it. This juxtaposition of the familiar and the unfamiliar allows individuals to

interact. Authenticity demands an awareness that we can never be completely at home in the world, but rather that this home will always be under construction. Self and other never gaze at each other over an unbridgeable chasm, but are always, already deeply entangled. In a fallen state, the entanglement between self and other is assiduously denied and we simply mimic others but do not connect to them. The strangeness of the other is denied. The fallen world of mass culture is a world in which no one is willing to reveal themselves through others. By ensuring that the world around us is predictable and certain, we aspire towards a faceless public approval while forgetting the need to connect with others.

AUTHENTICITY AND HUMANISM

In a *Letter on Humanism*, Heidegger poses his most direct challenge to the metaphysics of subjectivity. To some extent he reformulates the positions put forward in *Being and Time* but the emphasis on *Dasein*'s ontological priority is abandoned. He insists that the "fallenness" represented by *das Man* arises out of a metaphysical posture and eventually sanctions the complete neglect of Being. For Heidegger, a perception of truth, based on the concept, is a way of making the world amenable to the human subject. The most "metaphysical" social order becomes a predictable one, where abstract trends can easily be discerned. One need only turn on the television set and listen to economic forecasts, which have such an air of absoluteness about them, that one forgets these are descriptions of patterns produced through the interaction of people rather than natural laws. Our desire to know the world conceptually eventuates in the tendency to make it knowable. Mass society is a kind of social metaphysics.

Yet, metaphysics also brings about its own disappearance through its social success, for social homogeneity eventually eliminates the need to think about the whole altogether. Only what is knowable is considered relevant, and the "unknowable" is derisively cast aside. The tendency to consign the arts and religion to irrelevance is the legacy of metaphysics. As Heidegger points out, in *Being and Time*, a certain degree of wonder impels us to turn our attention to Being. But, once this wonder is brutally stamped out of our existence, we become obsessed with the mundane rituals of daily life without reflecting upon them at all. With its greatest success, metaphysics has condemned itself into oblivion. Because human beings are no longer seen as connected to anything greater than themselves, they are objectified and treated as equipment for use, rather than

as beings that have intrinsic worth. They become the manifestation of a concept, or are reduced to the status of a statistic: "Homelessness so understood consists in the abandonment of Being by beings . . . The oblivion of Being makes itself known indirectly through the fact that man always observes and handles only beings" (LH 242). Heidegger suggests that when beings are separated from Being, they are easily instrumentalized.

For Heidegger, the propensity to think of wholeness, as predicated on either universal concepts or teleological notions of progress, stems from a tendency to put humanity on a pedestal at the centre of existence. Because things are considered primarily in the way they are represented to us, almost everything is objectified: "But metaphysics recognizes the clearing of Being either solely as the view of what is present in 'outward appearance' or critically as what is seen as a result of categorical representation on the part of subjectivity" (LH 235). For Heidegger, this has dangerous consequences for the way that we interact with our world. One example he cites is the rampant materialism endemic to contemporary Western societies. Materialism does not mark an obsession with matter but rather represents the attempt to crush the material by turning everything into the product of our will. It is associated with the feverish pursuit of goods which has very little to do with the sensual enjoyment of them. Our frenetic striving eventuates from a desire to harness everything for our purposes and turn it into a product of our making: "The essence of materialism does not consist in the assertion that everything is simply matter but rather in a metaphysical determination according to which every being appears as the material of labour" (LH 243).

In an attempt to provide a cure for the modern malaise stemming from an overinflated subjectivity, Heidegger suggests that the subject must begin a cautious retreat in order to save itself from the perils of its own overextension. This entails developing a new understanding towards things which we characteristically herald as human achievements. For example, humans are accredited with the development of language which allegedly is a testament to the power of the reasoning subject. It allows us to categorize things and navigate our way in an otherwise dizzying world. However, Heidegger maintains that such an understanding of language is one-sided. He insists that language be seen as the house of Being or the medium through which Being reveals itself to us. Human beings can speak only because they are spoken to. Therefore, Heidegger implies that language should be hailed as one mode of responsiveness to Being, through which an opening for its emergence is created. As a vehicle

for establishing connection, it at least partly depends on that which it is connecting to, namely Being. In short, we must be prepared to recognize the divine in language:

> Language is the house of Being. In its home man dwells. Those who think and those who create with words are the guardians of this home. Their guardianship accomplishes the manifestation of Being insofar as they bring the manifestation to language and maintain it in language through their speech. (LH 217)

Heidegger therefore deprives the subject of its exalted position and begins to focus more on humanity's role as the "shepherd of Being" (LH 234). We do not just speak for ourselves, but also with and through Being.

In the interests of a more humane treatment of both others and the natural world, Heidegger argues against Sartrian humanism, insisting that it is merely part of the metaphysical project to achieve human dominion over the earth. In fact, Sartre's philosophy itself provides evidence of a metaphysics which has destroyed itself, for he rejects all notions of cosmic significance, and as a radical atheist, thrusts human beings fully back onto themselves. The foundation of his existentialism is that human beings have nothing to rely upon. For the later Heidegger, this dominance on the part of the subject is essentially what metaphysics has always been about:

> . . . The essential worth of man does not consist in his being the substance of beings, as the "Subject" among them, so that as the tyrant of Being he may deign to release the beingness of beings into an all too loudly bruited "objectivity." (LH 234)

In Heidegger's view, to lead authentic lives we must stand "into the openness of Being" (LH 252). We can fashion a distinctive world for ourselves only because Being provides a space for us to emerge. Sartre conceives of a world in which human beings are the sole actors, whereas Heidegger insists upon the reciprocal interaction not only between beings but also between beings and Being. Sartre's radicalized isolation and freedom easily culminate in the kind of tyrannical behaviour that Camus describes in his play *Caligula*. For example, Sartre insists that by choosing himself, man is "thereby at the same time a legislator for the whole of mankind."[1] This is precisely the kind of attitude Heidegger fears since it refuses to acknowledge our debts to something larger than ourselves. In order to

treat each other humanely, we must realize that we are not complete in ourselves, and that the self always emerges out of its relatedness. We are called by Being, and are the only beings that are privy to its voice:

> Such standing in the clearing of Being I call the ek-sistence of man. This way of Being is proper only to man . . . Ek-sistence can be said only of the essence of man, that is, only of the human way "to be." For as far as our experience shows, only man is admitted to the destiny of ek-sistence. (LH 228)

Heidegger objects to the language of the rational animal which is first used by Aristotle in *De Anima* to distinguish human beings from other forms of life: "Metaphysics thinks of man on the basis of *animalitas* and does not think in the direction of his *humanitas*" (LH 227). Such an approach is too functional and does not pay close enough attention to the fact that human beings are "claimed by Being" (LH 227). If we are seen simply as animals with reason added in the Aristotelian sense, then we are distinguished predominantly by our capacity to categorize and observe, and not by the relationship we have to Being. What makes us human in Heidegger's view is the fact that we are always more than we are because as ecstatic beings we stand out into the "clearing of Being" (LH 227). By recognizing this, the "essence of man preserves the source that determines him" (LH 227). Heidegger reminds us that our humanity derives from the position of being suspended between the earthly and the divine as receivers of the messages of Being. We must learn to once again experience the awe in the face of something greater than ourselves for without doing so we become increasingly inhuman. This is why Heidegger insists in the famous *Spiegel* interview that "only a god can save us." He considers his antihumanism to be more humane because it advocates a kind of humility in the face of Being which allows us to respect others: "But this opposition does not mean that such thinking aligns itself against the humane and advocates the inhuman, that it promotes the inhumane and deprecates the dignity of Man . . ." (LH 234). While Aristotle's definition of what is human focuses on what distinguishes and separates human beings from all other forms of life, Heidegger's antihumanism focuses on what connects us. Indeed, one could argue that Heidegger is taking some steps in the direction of overcoming the ego-self that had been the bulwark of much of Western thought and culture.

Heidegger's repudiation of humanism does not imply that he rejects authentic uniqueness, but rather demands that we must receive from

Being in order to express our particularity. The self becomes itself through what it is not. He powerfully underscores this point by paying tribute to a poem by Hölderlin which celebrates German nationhood. Heidegger maintains that Hölderlin cannot be accused of chauvinism but rather portrays a kind of nationalism that is compatible with an openness to and respect for other nations. Hölderlin pays tribute to the German nation as a particular home in which the nearness and openness of Being are expressed. The nation is recognized as one distinct place among many other equally distinct places. Each nation comes to its own by revealing certain faces of Being and at the same time is connected to all other nations through Being. Because Hölderlin acknowledges that particularity depends on the openness of Being, he is able to salute the German nation as his home without having to belittle other nations in order to do so. In fact, Heidegger claims that Hölderlin's concept of nationalism exemplifies a greater respect for the particularity of other nations than what he considers to be a more vacuous cosmopolitanism or internationalism. By acknowledging that our particularity is indebted to Being, in which all beings share, differences are respected rather than becoming the justification for exclusion and tolerance. If we see particularity as emerging out of the space Being has provided, then we become more respectful of alterity and otherness:

> . . . when Hölderlin composes 'Homecoming' he is concerned that his 'countrymen' find their essence. He does not at all seek that essence in an egoism of his nation. He sees it rather in the context of a belongingness to the destiny of the West. But even the West is not thought regionally as the Occident in contrast to the Orient, nor merely as Europe, but rather world-historically out of nearness to the source. . . . 'German' is not spoken to the world so that the world might be reformed through the German essence; rather, it is spoken to the Germans so that from a fateful belongingness to the nations they might become world-historical along with them. The homeland of this historical dwelling is nearness to Being. (LH 241–42)

Heidegger's philosophy suggests that authenticity does not stem from any misguided notions of human beings as completely self-made creatures. Instead, he argues that Being manifests itself through the particular. Each of us, through our authenticity, both individually and collectively provide an opening for one aspect of it to emerge. Being is both one and manifold. Multiplicity does not undermine Being but is an essential part of its dynamic. Here, Heidegger exhibits an understanding

that is very close to that of the Daoist notion of *De* which celebrates the oneness in connectedness achieved through multiplicity. Heidegger emphasizes that the authentic self is the vehicle for the constant reappearance of Being. In so doing, he establishes a powerful link between the self's particularity and its togetherness.

Weathering the Storm: The Authentic Self and Nietzsche

There is a great similarity between Heidegger's early philosophy and that of Nietzsche in terms of the subject's need to differentiate itself and occupy a place of its own. Nevertheless, Heidegger in his later writings is very critical of Nietzsche, who he claims is the last metaphysician due to his attempt to redeem a Cartesian subject that is already in its death throes. Heidegger recognizes that Nietzsche begins to contest the priority of the subject while at the same time is reluctant to relinquish it. Since Nietzsche presages a philosophical future where the subject is no longer the primary focus of philosophical inquiry, he is a transitional figure, for he recognizes the flux in which the subject is embroiled and tries to make this very flux the essence of subjectivity itself. He thus carries us "from the preparatory phase of the modern age. . . . to the beginning of its consummation" (N 3: 6). Heidegger points to the notions of the will to power and the eternal recurrence (which constitute the most radical critique of the notion of subjectivity hitherto proposed by a Western philosopher), yet at the same time, expresses Nietzsche's need to revive the subject on the very basis of ideas that herald its collapse. For example, Heidegger insists that Nietzsche's efforts to battle the resentment against a past that is not of our own making by turning every "it was" into "thus I willed it," constitute a final attempt to stamp the world of flux with the character of permanence (N2: 201–2) as well as to engrave into the world the insignia of the subject. However, this passage can be interpreted in numerous ways. On the one hand, it turns everything into the product of the individual will. On the other hand, it may point to the need to relinquish control over the events in one's life and accept that one cannot entirely fashion oneself.

Although Heidegger's characterization of Nietzsche may be somewhat exaggerated, it elucidates the stranglehold the notion of subjectivity has on even one of the most vociferous critics of Western thought. Nietzsche is the last metaphysician because he recognizes the fragility of

the self, but even so, he cannot entirely resist the temptation to maintain a semblance of control over those experiences which threaten the self's autonomy. The will is generally viewed as the quintessential expression of subjective autonomy. Often the will impels us to act against our desires.[2] Only a self, which is not one, must assert its autonomy in this way. On the one hand, Nietzsche's idea of the will poses a formidable challenge to these assumptions. First of all, the roots of the Nietzschean will are not in the mind, as in Kant, but rather in the body. Nevertheless, the body he describes has many qualities that we associate with the mind:

> The will to power interprets (it is a question of interpretation when an organ is constructed): it defines limits, determines degrees, variation of power. . . . Equal *in that*—In fact, interpretation is itself a means of becoming master of something. (The organic process constantly presupposes interpretations.) (WP 643)

Nietzsche recognizes that the need for mastery manifests an attempt to rein in the limitless so that we, as finite beings, can cope with it. The will is the weapon employed by a being that feels it is under siege, and for Nietzsche no finite being can rid itself of this perception. In Nietzsche's view, every organism must individuate itself in order to survive. Therefore, what we commonly call the will represents the efforts of a finite being to protect its "boundaries" against "external" incursions.

Yet, at the same time, the will is also the force that collapses these boundaries. Like the Dao, It refers to something ineffable that flows through all beings, something we are merely in the midst of: "The will to power not a being, not a becoming, but a *pathos*: the most elemental fact from which a becoming and effecting first emerge" (WP 635). This implies that the will does *not* originate within the self and therefore marks a considerable departure from many of the presuppositions that have guided Western philosophy. Nietzsche complains that the inability to understand, or even adequately express his notion of the will, derives from the grammatical structure of European languages, which insist that every will must have a subject behind it. The impulse to grow permeates all living creatures and the act of willing is part of this dynamic. However, Nietzsche also highlights the combative aspect of growth that impels each being to crush other beings in order to extend its frontiers. Therefore, the fact that we share in a process of growth is no guarantee of harmony: "The will to power can manifest itself only against resistances; therefore it seeks that which resists it . . . Appropriation and assimilation are above

all a desire to overwhelm" (WP 656). By underlining the conflictual nature of willing in this way, Nietzsche implies that even our desire to define ourselves against others is not a purely individual phenomenon. The will represents both the process of retreating behind certain clearly defined boundaries and the constant collapsing of these boundaries.[3] The will is an expression of the divided nature of our being which as ego-self needs to maintain a separate identity, and as part of a life process needs to collapse that identity.

By using the terms associated with subjectivity to describe the non-human world, Nietzsche manifests both his willingness to challenge traditional notions of individual autonomy as well as the difficulty he has in doing so. According to Heidegger, this marks the last, desperate attempt, on the part of Nietzsche, to make the world amenable to our comprehension. However, Heidegger refuses to recognize that by superimposing, onto the world of nature, the attributes of the subject, the subjectivity of the subject is cast into question. By being the last metaphysicians, Nietzsche goes beyond metaphysics.

As an important transitional figure, Nietzsche's thought anticipates Heidegger's in many ways, and therefore Heidegger must acknowledge his debt to him. Nietzsche, like Heidegger, spurns a philosophy predicated on objectification which distances the observer from the world of which he is a part. An authentic existence demands constant reinterpretation of the world. Nietzsche is one of the first to cast doubt on the sacredness of truth, and indeed acknowledges that it may be used by the subject to artificially assert its dominion over the world: " 'This is *my* way; where is yours?' thus I answered those who asked me 'the way.' For *the* way—that does not exist" (Z III 11). For Nietzsche, truth is always fashioned by someone and for some purpose and cannot so readily be distinguished from illusion as the self-righteous philosophers of reason had supposed. He rejects all attempts to gloss over the multifaceted nature of truth. It does not allow us to lift the robes that bedeck the universe to reveal a genuine core, rather, it simplifies things so we can more easily choose a path to follow. It necessarily opens some paths and blocks other avenues; otherwise we would be drifting rudderless in a confusing ocean of possibilities. Nietzsche's insistence that we take a sledgehammer to ossified truths has often been interpreted as a signal of his profound disrespect for the rational in favour of the chaotic and primordial forces of life. However, this does not amount to an unabashed irrationalism on his part, because for Nietzsche, the collapse of time-honoured traditions is necessary for the revitalization of truths, and guards against the assumption

that the limited concepts we construct can be mistaken for the whole reality. Life is a constant journey for Nietzsche, and we should not become so enthralled with our maps that we refuse to leave home. We cannot help but interpret the world from some perspective but we must recognize the fluidity of all perspectives that must be recast in response to our interaction with other beings. In short, Nietzsche demands that we have a more humble appreciation of the value of truth. Truths must be porous rather than impenetrable. It is only possible to create if we refuse to permanently cower in the shadows of truth and venture into unexplored areas that not only threaten truths, but make their development possible.

For Nietzsche, the question of authenticity is related to the question of truth, for the authentic self is willing to incessantly reinterpret both himself or herself and his or her surroundings. The inauthenticity that Nietzsche finds so crippling represents an attempt to rest secure in the bed of truths we have constructed rather than recognizing that they are merely signposts. We begin to dwell in the concept and in so doing we disembowel it because it becomes a way of cocooning us from life rather than allowing us to live it.

For Nietzsche, as for Heidegger social conformity is made possible by a metaphysical posture that holds to the validity of permanent truths. When everything becomes manageable, nothing is liveable. Philosophers, in Nietzsche's view, had become much too effective at the art of management. Concepts which were radical inventions used to explore new horizons soon mummify our existence, so that it can be easily contained:

> There is their lack of historical sense, their hatred of even the idea of becoming, their Egyptianism. They think they are doing a thing *honour* when they dehistoricize it. . . . when they make a mummy of it. All that philosophers have handled for millennia has been conceptual mummies; nothing actual has escaped from their hands alive. They kill, they stuff, when they worship, these conceptual idolaters—they become a moral danger to everything when they worship." (TI III 1)

In Nietzsche's mind, there is a marked difference between using truths to make the journey possible and truths that paralyze us in an attempt to stop movement altogether.

The utilitarian ethic that accompanies burgeoning technological and bureaucratic imperatives does not contradict the drive for truth rather, it is its most ruthless manifestation. Both Heidegger and Nietzsche would reject the notion that meaning can derive from sameness. We repeat tasks

without a sense of either their connection to our past or the possibilities they may harbour (or foreclose) for the future. Like Heidegger, Nietzsche wants to differentiate between meaning and order. When we simply imitate those around us, our lives are ordered but not meaningful because we have failed to either connect or define ourselves in relation to our surroundings.

According to Nietzsche, the best way to participate in the dynamic flux he considers to be the essence of life, is to engage in constant acts of self-overcoming. This task brings to light both the humble and arrogant aspects of human nature. On the one hand, it is a celebration of human subjectivity. On the other, it serves as a reminder that nothing we create is permanent and will be both ravaged and shaped by the dizzying plethora of forces around us. It constitutes an admission that who we become is never within our control. Self-overcoming also necessitates the overcoming of the self.

The "Self-less" Herd

According to Nietzsche, the lifelessness of the modern era is exacerbated by Judeo-Christian thinking and its excessive otherworldliness. Through an ingenious ploy, priests had managed to ensure the preponderance of the herd by making suffering a form of atonement for sins. The sheer physicality and brutality of the power that sustained more powerful masters was undermined, because the completely inaccessible and ethereal figure of God was endowed with absolute power. All people, regardless of rank, were slaves. Those who are weakest and suffered most achieved the greatest atonement for their sins. Humility became a virtue as the burden of debt, weighing upon human souls, became so heavy they could never release themselves from it. Human sensuality and love for the earth are all reasons for guilt in the face of a spirituality which is remarkably ungrounded:

> . . . the earth was the distinctively *ascetic* planet, a nook of disgruntled, arrogant and offensive creatures filled with a profound disgust at themselves, at the earth, at all life, who inflict as much pain on themselves as they can. The ascetic treats life as a wrong road on which one must finally walk back to the point where it begins, or as a mistake that is put right by deed. (GM III 11)

Conformity became a substitute for belonging in a world where each was alone in his guilt before god. The resentment against sensuality, life, and the earth would also eventuate in the devotion to mechanical activity. An ascetic morality inflicted such pain and set such impossible demands on a body that was ineluctably drawn towards the pulse of life that alleviation could only come through a kind of mindless absorption in repetitive tasks. Mechanization and constant activity become the antidote to the overwhelming guilt that Christianity instilled: ". . . activity, and nothing but activity, enters consciousness, and there is consequently little room left in it for suffering" (GM III 18).

Nietzsche attributes the birth of mass culture, not to the development of forces of production, but rather to the platonic ideals of Christianity itself. Like Heidegger, Nietzsche affirms that the desert of the herd (or *das Man*) is an asocial one wherein human beings refuse to leave openings for others because this would leave them vulnerable. Eventually the suffering, which had made God necessary in the first place, is eradicated. Christian spiritualism in Nietzsche's view had bred universal self-contempt which survived even the death of God, and to shelter themselves against it, human beings had to escape into mindless rituals. Even after the last men in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* have lost their faith in God, they are content to worship a braying ass because what matters to them is not the existence of God itself, but the sense of comforting numbness that the act of worship itself can induce. It is a worship that is based not on awe but on mimicry: "I may not believe in God, perhaps: but it is certain that God seems to me most worthy belief in this form" (Z IV 18).

Atheism is not only a revolt against Christianity; it is born out of it. Christianity is responsible for its own demise. For Nietzsche, the ass-worship is symptomatic of the democratic age in which people kow-tow to the lowest common denominator. According to Nietzsche, this may masquerade as humility but in fact manifests a kind of arrogance because human beings want to ensure that nothing can overcome them. Thus, Nietzsche predicts that the legacy of Christianity will far outlive the belief in the Christian god. Human beings who simply mimic each other no longer have a need for God to make their behaviour predictable.

Reviving the Self

If Heidegger suggests that a return to the authentic self demands a cultivation of not only our sense of belonging but also our homelessness,

Nietzsche asserts that authenticity demands a recognition of the divided nature of our being. Perhaps the most vivid illustration of this dynamic is found in the *Birth of Tragedy*, where Nietzsche describes the interaction of Apollonian and Dionysian forces. The individuating effects of Apollo and their collapse into the wild Dionysian frenzy attune the self to *both* its limits and to its limitlessness. Through the Dionysian, Nietzsche celebrates the porous self that surrenders itself completely to the currents of life: "In the first place, as Dionysian artist, he has identified himself with the primal unity, its pain and contradiction. . . . Assuming that it has been correctly termed a repetition and a recast of the world we may say that he produces the copy of this primal unity as music. . . . The artist has already surrendered his subjectivity in the Dionysian process" (B Tr 5). There can be no self-creation without also allowing oneself to be created. Through the Dionysian, we become indifferent towards our particular lives in order to experience oneness with the larger process of life that we are a part of. Nevertheless, the surrender to Dionysian forces is frightening, for we quickly discover that it can threaten the carefully crafted house of the self and the conceptions which hold it in place. The Dionysian appears so dramatic and unrestrained to us because the forces of individuation in our social order are so strong. In Nietzsche's view, authenticity requires not only self-consciousness but also self-erasure. We must forget "how to walk and speak" so that we can be on our way "toward flying into the air, dancing" (BTr 1). Indeed Nietzsche maintains that "the Dionysian state with its annihilation of the ordinary bounds and limits of existence contains, while it lasts, a lethargic element in which all personal experiences of the past become immersed. This chasm of oblivion separates the world of everyday reality and of Dionysian reality" (BTr 7).

However, the Dionysian facilitates a self-awakening in addition to self-forgetting. It allows for an explosion of sensual stimuli, which allow the individual to become cognizant of the lived body that is often repressed in a culture which favours the Apollonian. Furthermore, the "loss" of the individuated self is also a precondition for its reappropriation. Dionysus and Apollo are not polar opposites, but they complement each other. Through the Dionysian, a world that has been segmented by language, concept, and form becomes fluid so that the shapes of things become increasingly nebulous, and the oneness of the world is experienced. The individual "is no longer and artist, he has become a work of art: in these paroxysms of intoxication the artistic power of all nature reveals itself to the highest gratification of the primordial unity" (BTr 1). Yet, the bound-

aries that have been collapsed must be re-established, and Apollo enters to rescue the self from the brink of oblivion. As god of individuation and form, he represents the impulse to give form to the shapeless. Both Apollo and Dionysus are illusions because Dionysus is the god of intoxication and Apollo is the god of the dream world. This does not suggest they are unreal, but rather that neither is complete in its own right: "These two different tendencies run parallel to each other, for the most part openly at variance, and they continually incite each other to new and more powerful births" (BTr 1). The authentic self constantly oscillates between them. It must define itself against the surrounding world while at the same time lose itself in it. Nietzsche suggests that the self is itself in its separateness from the world, and also in its togetherness. The Dionysian and Apollonian are reminders of these two aspects of selfhood.

What is noticeably absent from Nietzsche's account of authenticity is the intersubjective component of existence. Authenticity in Nietzsche demands that the individual face the forces of nature and existence alone, even if this encounter takes place through the medium of culture. In the *Birth of Tragedy*, there is little reference to the community, except as part of the artistic experience of the tragic play. For Nietzsche, the community is most often an obstacle the authentic individual must confront, but it is not in itself a forum for the experience of authenticity.

Because Nietzsche, like Heidegger, tends to equate the community with the herd, it is nature that acts as the redeemer of human beings. In order to regain his love for life, Nietzsche's hero, Zarathustra must leave the town of the pied-cow to revel in nature. The vistas provided by the mountain, and the ode to the sun that illuminates everything, expose the community as merely a small speck on an endless landscape. The expansive horizons provided by nature suggest, to individuals, the endless opportunities for self-overcoming. If Heidegger pays tribute to the openness of Being, Nietzsche celebrates the openness of nature. Both Being and nature provide a stark contrast to a community whose horizons have become all too well-defined. Nietzsche greets nature not as a mechanical order, but as a source of wonder that is similar to the awe Heidegger reserves for Being. In Nietzsche, nature is spiritualized.

Such awe provides essential sustenance for the authentic individual Nietzsche refers to as the *Übermensch.* In order to overcome oneself, one must not only be willing to distance oneself from one's origins, but also recognize something to go toward. The *Übermensch* emerges during the crisis that ensues from the death of God. He is a paradoxical figure. The term *"über"* suggests that the authentic hero is always in process, for it

means not only "above" but also a "going—across." The tightrope walker exhibits many characteristics of the "overman" for he is in the process of crossing a rope suspended between two points: "man is a rope, fastened between animal and superman, a rope over an abyss" (Z P 1). It is significant that he never makes it to his destination but is admired by Zarathustra for his efforts. This suggests that the *Übermensch* need not necessarily be superhuman. There is a strong connection between Heidegger's depiction of the authentic self as a creature of *Ausstand* and Nietzsche's notion of the *Übermensch*. The *Übermensch* is forever going beyond what he already is, not only because he deliberately tries to transcend limits, but also because he allows himself to be overcome by outside forces. Because he is constantly self-overcoming, he is a figure that will never congeal into a definite shape. He is always in the making. He is both self and non-self.

While Nietzsche's *Übermensch* is sometimes touted as a revolutionary or reformer that helps to eradicate defunct values, he also reflects a posture towards life that is accepting of a finite role in a much larger universe. His hubris is matched by his humility. Thus, it is highly significant that Nietzsche uses the image of the child to describe the *Übermensch*. The child for Nietzsche symbolizes unformed potential, and thus does not come into the world with preconceived notions of right and wrong. Therefore, to return to the openness of childhood is an exceedingly difficult task. The "Three Metamorphoses of Spirit" reveals the difficulties encountered on the road to this relived childhood. The first stage is that of the camel, the beast of burden who represses his desires in order to be an obedient servant: "What is the heaviest thing, you heroes? So asks the weight-bearing spirit, that I may take it upon me and rejoice in my strength. Is it not this: to debase yourself in order to injure your pride" (Z I 1). He acts in accordance with the cultural norms that weigh upon him, and he is willing to sacrifice himself for them. He is aware his boundaries are a site of domination. Yet, because he has to overcome himself in the act of obedience, he soon turns this obedience to rebellion, becoming aware of his own sovereignty and insisting on shaping his own future. He is transformed into the lion when he jettisons the load in order to become master of the desert: "but in the loneliest desert the second metamorphosis occurs: the spirit here becomes a lion, it wants to capture freedom and be lord in its own desert" (Z I 1). The lion refuses to allow anyone to transgress his boundaries. Neither the lion nor the camel is willing to engage in reciprocal relations with other. Once the lion has destroyed everything, there is nothing against which he can direct his

rage and he is free to create new values (Z I 1). The child, on the other hand is a symbol for spontaneity and reciprocity. She relishes the moment, without bearing the burdens of either the future or the past upon her soul. She has no preconceptions of who she is, and thus can respond to her environment. She plays with what is given, creating something new out of it. Her boundaries are much more porous than those of the lion and the camel since she demonstrates her openness to new experiences through her creative engagement with the world. Nevertheless the difficulty of returning to childhood should not be underestimated. The child does not have the burden of history weighing upon her soul.[4] This is why becoming like a child is a superhuman task. It should not go unnoticed that Nietzsche hints that the child is most itself because it is also a non-self.

The authentic self faces a remarkable challenge, for it must be open while staunchly defending its boundaries, thereby cultivating both Apollonian and Dionysian tendencies. As a result it cannot stand still and is denied many of the comforts of a permanent home. The kind of self-overcoming that Nietzsche demands is much more radical than that of Heidegger, for Heidegger does not advocate a life of perpetual wandering. According to Heidegger, one must leave one's home in order to return to it in a new way, and one must not abandon it as completely as Zarathustra does. At the same time, Nietzsche is not unaware of the dangers in this position, for Zarathustra continually bemoans his isolation and his lack of friends. Very few people are willing to spar with Zarathustra in the way that he demands and lead the kind of unsettling existence that he assumes to be authentic. And yet, at the same time, Nietzsche cannot resist the need for disciples despite his claims to reject companions who are merely followers. Furthermore, despite Nietzsche's recognition of the need for reciprocity he is still very much wedded to the notion of self-creation as an individual enterprise. Others are important as vehicles to one's own self-overcoming and are not fully recognized in their otherness. While Nietzsche insists that the cultivation of the self demands the interaction between beings in a cosmos whose horizons are limitless, one is still left with the impression that Zarathustra goes to others only in order to be able to return to himself. He is preoccupied above all with his own self-making. This focus on the self is what prompts Heidegger to include him in his list of metaphysical thinkers despite the considerable challenges that Nietzsche poses to the metaphysical tradition.

The Sage

Although Heidegger and Nietzsche are not radical individualists, the value of autonomy is extolled in their thought. As I have already pointed out, the ideal of authenticity in the West shuns a blind acceptance of ethical norms and ideologies, encouraging the individual to engage in a process of self-making. The Daoist concept of the sage is perhaps the closest approximation in Chinese thought to the authentic self portrayed by Heidegger and Nietzsche. Zhuangzi's term *zhenren* (真人) is often translated as genuineness or authenticity but one must be very careful not to read too many Western preconceptions of the term into a Chinese philosophical context. David Hall and Richard Ames point out that, according to the *Shuowen* lexicon of the Chinese language, the term *zhenren* which appears in the *Zhuangzi* and is often associated with authenticity is classified under the radical *bi*, the original form of *hua* (化), which means to transform. Thus, authenticity is linked to a process of transformation.[5] From this perspective, it seems to have much in common with the *Übermensch* or with *Dasein* as a creature of possibilities.

Both the Daoist sage and Zarathustra are wanderers. Indeed the *Zhuangzi* begins with a chapter entitled "Wandering Where You Will" and Zhuangzi points out that "the sage sees his role as that of a wanderer" (Zh 5, 44). However, the catalyst to wandering is by no means identical in these cases. Zarathustra's travelling is often frenetic and propelled by a sense of urgency stemming from the consciousness of his own finitude as well as by the need to bring his message to a people who may be reluctant to heed it. He has the sense of being at a crossroads which demands a constant overcoming and rejuvenation of the present state. The Daoist sage, on the other hand, travels with the flow of life, both participating in and fostering its harmony by providing openings for others. He wanders freely due to his propensity to let go of ego-attachments.

The events which impact the sage's life are seen as part of the transformation of things and he is not concerned with moulding his identity into a distinct form. Because of this, the Daoist sage travels restfully while Nietzsche's Zarathustra is beset with restlessness. Zarathustra confronts resistance because part of his goal is to overturn existing mores and prepare the horizon for new possibilities. He cannot entirely resist the tendency to recreate the world in his image. While the Western authentic hero is always in agony, exhorted to go where the going is difficult as part

of his project of self-overcoming, the Daoist sage faces the no less difficult task of becoming completely at ease in the midst of the flux that is life. Chen Guying maintains that Zhuangzi's attitude towards emotions is antithetical to that of Nietzsche: "Zhuang Zi considered the emotional constraints attendant upon human life—especially the feelings to trepidation which we associate with life and death—to be an enormous restraint on human beings."[6] He points out that while Zhuangzi dreams in a carefree way of being transformed into a butterfly, Nietzsche has nightmares of coffins bursting open while sinister laughter reverberates around him.[7]

The authentic self of both Nietzsche and the early Heidegger is characterized by striving whereas the sage in Zhuangzi is free from such striving and revels in the carefree aimlessness of his journey. This enables him to enjoy the movement of the Dao: "I shall ride the bird of ease and emptiness and go beyond the compass of the world and wander in the land of nowhere and the region of nothing" (Zh 7, 61). He is not goal oriented as is Zarathustra and because he travels in the "land of nowhere" he is open to all transformations that he encounters, merely using his "physical body as a place to dwell" (Zh 5, 38) knowing that his ears and eyes "convey fleeting images" (Zh 5, 38). He revels in these experiences without becoming attached to any one of them. Because he sees his self as part of the transformation of things rather than a whole that he must tend to, he is unperturbed by experiences that might otherwise be considered traumatic: "He observes the unity and does not see that which is lost. He considers the loss of his foot as being like a lump of earth thrown away" (Zh 5, 39). The sage sees the unity in transformation and therefore is not riveted to the particular form he assumes at any given moment: "Having discerned his own self as irrelevant, he saw with true clarity" (Zh 6, 52). The sage, attuned to the ultimate formlessness of the Dao can accept a plethora of forms.

Similarly, the sage accepts that he, like everything else, will arise and pass away. He does not struggle against his fate and there is no act that resembles the proverbial biting off of the serpent's head in Nietzsche because the sage has no ego: "The perfect man has no self. The spiritual has no merit; The holy man has no fame" (Zh 1, 3). The Chinese expression for "the perfect man has no self" is *zhi ren wu ji* 至人無己.[8] The reflexive *ji* is often used when a more egotistical conception of the self is being described while *shen* 身 refers to a nonclinging self that acts as a meeting point for others. By cultivating one's *shen* one becomes the facilitator of such a coming-together rather than staunchly defending one's

own boundaries. In contrast, *ji* prevents an open engagement with the world and refers to a sense of self marked by its separateness.

Nietzsche celebrates the delight that comes from loosening the boundaries that divide one from the world as evidenced by the high premium he puts on Dionysian intoxication. However, because there is a stark opposition between self and other or self and non-self, wanderers like Zarathustra always oscillate between a tenacious territorialism on the one hand, and being swept up by the currents of life on the other. Zarathustra must occasionally let the self go in order to be able to sculpt the self anew. In fact, Nietzsche's preoccupation with a Dionysian frenzy indicates how powerful the hold of individuation and separateness is. He is not blind to the pain that an obsession with one's frontiers can produce. However, because the cultivation of the self is always the ultimate project, his self-overcoming is always marked by territorialism. He cannot abandon the desire to be complete unto himself, and this means that a confrontational encounter with the world will be an indelible feature of his existence.

The sage does not actively struggle to become more than he already is by engaging in conflict and struggle with the world but rather overcomes himself by being open. His attitude is one of letting-be in which he lets himself become himself without defending his frontiers since his preoccupation is to foster harmonious relationships. While the sage "leaves no trace," hoping simply to become part of the rhythm of the Dao, the authentic selves in both Heidegger and Nietzsche are encouraged to leave their distinctive mark on the world and to carve out a place that they can mark as uniquely their own in order to impute meaning to their lives. Although this does not necessitate an asocial posture, since the intersubjective dimension of selfhood is often emphasized, there is an assumption that the self will struggle against something to define itself, whether this be the stultifying herd, the desires of the body or an inescapable mortality. This contrasts sharply with the posture of Daoist sages, who accept their condition with an almost eerie equanimity. For example, the *Zhuangzi* relays the story of a cripple, who suddenly has a willow tree shoot up out of his arm. When asked if this does not disturb him he responds:

> What should I dislike? Life exists through scrounging; if life comes through scrounging, then life is like a dump. Death and birth are like the morning and the night. You and I, Sir, observe the way of transformation, and now I am being transformed. (Zh 18, 151)

Zarathustra conveys a similar message to the hunchback, who is exhorted to affirm his condition in spite of his disability. However, the difficulty he has in practicing what he preaches is revealed when the hunchback retorts "Why does Zarathustra speak to his pupils differently than to himself?" (Z II 20) The hunchback recognizes that Zarathustra is perpetually in flight from himself since he desires to jettison constraints, be they self-imposed or twists of fate. Many of his experiences are seen as obstacles to be overcome en route to infinity and are valuable insofar as they are catalysts to overcoming. The sage, on the other hand has no self in need of escaping because he does not try to become the infinite but rather participates in it. Because he does not invest in a self, he can accept different forms that he may assume at any given moment, provided they do not lead to discord. He is self-content precisely because he is not self-obsessed. Zarathustra wanders because he is not at home anywhere, while the sage wanders because he is at home everywhere.

According to both Nietzsche and Heidegger, the finite self that is confronted with an awareness of infinity will always experience pangs of homelessness. On the one hand, it is wedded to its immediate environment while at the same time the expansiveness of the cosmos lures it away from its accustomed place. Growing pains are produced out of this tension. The authentic self in Western thought deliberately strives for the impossible. Zarathustra speaks of his longing to marry eternity, while *Dasein* tries to compose a whole out of the fragments of the self. Zhuangzi and Laozi would argue that there is no point in attempting such impossible tasks. Yet, in some ways, the challenges that the sage confronts are no less daunting, for he must purge his soul of longing and transcend his finitude by becoming completely comfortable with it. Zarathustra seeks infinity in the future, as his indicated by his desire for children that never arrive, while the sage finds infinity in the moment due to his recognition that everything is connected to everything else. This is why the sage is satisfied in the present while Zarathustra is not. No matter what activity they are engaged in, those figures in the *Zhuangzi* who are attuned to the Dao are joyful.

The sage is able to accept the finitude of all things. When asked why he does not mourn his wife's passing, Zhuangzi replies:

> When she first died, I certainly mourned just like everyone else! However, I then thought back to her birth and to the very roots of her being, before she was born. Indeed, not just before she was born, but before the time when her body was created. Not just before her body

> was created but before the very origin of her life's breath. Out of all this, thought the wonderful mystery of change she was given her life's breath. Her life's breath wrought a transformation and she had a body. Her body wrought a transformation and she was born. Now there is yet another transformation and she is dead. She is like the four seasons in the way that spring, summer, autumn and winter follow each other. (Zh 18, 151)

Zhuangzi's wife's life's breath is *qi* (氣) which is at the same time the primordial breath of the universe. Zhuangzi overcomes his mourning because he eventually regards his wife's life within the larger context of the Dao which collapses the distinction between the finite and the infinite. Whereas in Nietzsche, the finite must struggle against its own finitude in order to try to grasp the infinite, in Zhuangzi the finite being is born out of things that have always existed and returns in death to the things that always will be. This is why the acceptance of finitude is not a resignation to one's fate but rather involves the recognition that one is created out of a combination of movements and will be part of a further transformation after one's death. At the same time, the acceptance of death is by no means easy, as Zhuangzi indicates through his initial suffering at his wife's death.

Laozi and Zhuangzi share with Heidegger and Nietzsche the notion that the authentic individual must embrace the flux of life rather than attempting to shield itself from it armed with rigid rituals or concepts. Yet, the Nietzschean hero is constantly battling against a storm that threatens to consume him, while the Daoist sage is an emblem of calm who does not display any anguish at being buffeted about by the forces of life:

> The sages are quiescent, not because of any value in being quiescent, they simply are still. Not even the multitude of beings can disturb them, so they are calm. Water, when it is still, reflects back even your eyebrows and beard. . . . If water stilled offers such clarity, imagine what pure spirit offers! The sage's heart is stilled! Heaven and Earth are reflected in it, the mirror of all. Empty, still, calm, plain, quiet, silent, non-active, this is the centredness of Heaven and Earth and of the Tao and of Virtue. (Zh 13, 106)

Nietzsche's subject must constantly struggle to affirm its own significance in the face of an indifferent and overwhelming world, while the Daoist sage accepts his limitations and thus is at ease in his wanderings. The

European authentic hero is restless, the Daoist sage is in constant motion, but strolls restfully: "Through restlessness one loses mastery" (DDJ 26). In fact, the movement of the sage is so graceful that it becomes almost invisible, and is easily mistaken for stasis. Activity appears to be inactivity:

> Thus also is the Man of Calling
> He dwells in effectiveness without action.
> He practices teaching without talking.
> All beings emerge
> and he does not refuse himself to them.
> He generates and yet possesses nothing.
> He is effective and keeps nothing
> When the work is done
> he does not dwell with it.
> And just because he does not dwell
> he remains undeserted. (DDJ 28)

This does not mean that the sage resigns himself to complacent inactivity. The changes he effects are not the grandiose gestures of a Nietzschean *Übermensch*, because he does not simply enact his will, but rather harmonizes his actions with others such that they slip by almost unnoticed. If his actions were apparent to all, then he would have disrupted the harmony of the Dao. The *Übermensch* expects to encounter hostility and resistance, while the sage acts to avoid such tension. Because his movement is adapted to those around him, he does not dwell and therefore is never left undeserted. In contrast to the Nietzschean *Übermensch*, the Daoist sage is not concerned with seeing his imprint on the universe reflected back to him. It is invisibility rather than visibility that he covets. In this way, the sage hopes to avoid precisely the clash of wills advocated by Nietzsche. Those who are influenced by the sage are not even to be aware of his impact for he is to cultivate the multiplicity of the Dao rather than replicate the Dao's multiplicity within himself:

> A good wanderer leaves no trace.
> A good speaker has no need to refute.
> A good arithmetician needs no abacus.
> A good guard needs neither lock nor key—
> And yet no-one can open what he guards (DDJ 27).

The Daoist sage does not have recourse to an elaborate moral system. This has often led to accusations that Daoist philosophy is immoral because it lacks any objective ideals upon which notions of either rights or responsibilities could be predicated. Instead, self-cultivation and transformation are extolled, prompting both Western and Confucian commentators to warn of a kind of moral abandon with potentially "truly terrifying consequences."[9] However, as I have pointed out, self-cultivation refers to the act of making the self coterminous with others and therefore includes a moral perspective. Self and other are not seen as mutually exclusive but rather as integrally connected.

Without a doubt, Daoist thinkers have ridiculed Confucian morality. A moral system in their view deviates from nature and is likely to inject imbalance into the world because it relies upon force. Taboos invite transgression; order invites disorder. According to Laozi, the need for a moral system already points to social decay. When the natural benevolence of human beings towards one another can no longer be relied upon, morality is brought in as a temporary panacea. It represents a superficial order that acts as a substitute for the genuine engagement of beings with one another. Rules and laws act as a buffer between individuals. The harmony of nature that should be echoed by human beings is lost.

The cultivation of the physical body is essential to the Daoist moral vision, since the body contains the primordial breath of the universe, namely *qi*. There is no evidence of the spirit/body dichotomy that Nietzsche argues bedevils Western culture. The body is the field which connects human beings to nature as a whole. An attentiveness to nature is the cornerstone of a Daoist ethics and is a source of meaning. However, it is important to emphasize that the Daoist vision of nature is not the world of excess and tumult that Nietzsche describes, but rather is a realm of equilibrium where imbalances are eventually redressed: "Heaven and Earth have great beauty but no words. The four seasons follow their regular path but do not debate it. All forms of life have their own distinct nature but do not discuss them" (Zh 22, 189). The vision of nature as a kind of whirlwind in Nietzsche's thought stems from a perspective that puts the self at the centre.

The sage knows how to achieve order without having recourse to morality or force because his attunement to nature teaches him how to bring out the virtues of others. The sage rules by example rather than force, and his calmness is to pervade the social order:

> The ruler whose government is calm and unobtrusive
> his people are upright and honest.
> The ruler whose government is sharp-witted and strict,
> his people are underhanded and unreliable. (DDJ 58)

The ultimate objective of the sage is to minimize the necessity for willing: "Therefore the Man of Calling governs thus: He empties their hearts and fills their bellies. He weakens their will and strengthens their bones and brings about that the people remain without knowledge and without wishes. . . . He does the non-doing and thus everything falls into place" (DDJ 3). The fact that the sage weakens the will of people might smack of a brutal authoritarianism which forces people into a passive compliance, but this is not the intent of this passage. From the Daoist perspective, the will represents a confrontational stance towards others in which there is a struggle for domination. If the Daoist ruler seeks to reduce willing, it is because he hopes to encourage people to find harmonious means of relating to each other so that the particular virtues of each can thrive. The self does not establish its particularity against the other, but rather with the other. Of course, this kind of politics can only function in small communities where relationships are personalized. Laozi's hope is that small states ruled by sages might win the protection of large state since they do not incur resentment. Laozi is advocating a return to simplicity that will make people less solicitous. Peace is to be achieved not by attempting to satiate desires but by reducing them.[10]

While Laozi's sage rules by example from the top-down in such a way as to make rule unnecessary, Zhuangzi's *zhenren* often spurns the political realm altogether. Again this should not simply be interpreted as a blatant disregard for the political realm. Zhuangzi's sage rejects a world that thrives on glory and artificiality and chooses to effect social change from the bottom up. The genuineness of the sage is contrasted with the Confucian ruler who relies too heavily upon vacuous traditional rituals. The sage is continuous with his environment refusing to be constrained by moral rituals and conventions which interfere with his activity of harmonizing. In one story, Laozi chastises Confucius for insisting upon a confusing array of rituals:

> So, Sir, walk with Virtue and travel with the Tao and you will reach the perfect end. Why bother with all this benevolence and righteousness, prancing along as if you were beating a drum and looking for a lost child? Sir, you will just confuse people's true nature! (Zh 13, 113)

Zhuangzi was particularly critical of the Confucian virtues *li* (禮), translated as ritual and *ren* (仁) translated as benevolence. *Li* refers to a kind of ritualized ceremonial behaviour which allegedly allowed the pattern of cosmic order to be mirrored in society. It was concerned with harmony and self-cultivation, but in the Daoist view had degenerated into a kind of mindless mimicry that dictated behaviour such as the mourning at funerals. Similarly, the virtue of benevolence (*ren*) established the codes which regulated kinship behaviour such as the filial duty of sons to their fathers. The problem inhered not in the ideals themselves, but in the fact that they had become too ritualized and therefore undermined sincerity. In one passage, Laozi berates Confucius for clinging to ossified traditions that may not be relevant in different cultural and historical contexts: "So it is with rituals and prescriptions—they change according to the age. Now, take a monkey and dress it up to look like the Duke of Chou and the poor monkey will struggle and bite until he has got rid of clothes"(Zh 14 122). Enforced practices can generate false feelings and an obsession "with external things" (Zh 31 284): "So if you fake mourning and weeping, then no matter how thoroughly you do this, it's not real grief . . . In mourning at times of death, you don't get held up over the precision of the rituals . . . So the sage models himself upon Heaven, values truth, but does not kow-tow to convention" (Zh 31 284). The *zhenren* does not spurn convention because he wishes to forge a path solely for himself, but because it interferes with the adaptive flexibility that is conducive to the process of harmonization between individuals.

Many of these critiques can be compared with Heidegger's attacks on humanism. Heeding nonhuman forces helps to cultivate the kind of openness that is conducive to a humane interaction with others because it impels us to take our selves less seriously. It is no coincidence that Zhuangzi uses humour to cast doubt on the seriousness of our selves and the grave import of tragic events such as death. When the expansiveness of nature is taken into account, human beings are a mere drop in the well. Heidegger criticizes humanism because it is based on the imposition of human principles onto the world and therefore undermines the ability of the self to receive from beyond. People begin to treat each other as objects because their souls are closed off to each other. Laozi and Zhuangzi would argue that obedience to Confucian rituals has similar repercussions because it blocks the channels that connect people more directly. Even in Nietzsche the vast horizons of nature allow Zarathustra to open his soul to others and therefore make it possible for him to love even those higher men who repeatedly frustrate him.

Nevertheless, there are also important differences between the two traditions. In the early Heidegger, *Dasein* retains its preeminent position in the universe because it is the sole guardian of Being. Nietzsche is slightly more ambivalent about humanity's importance. He does not suggest that human beings have a special role and in fact uses language commonly attributed to human agency, such as the will, to describe nonhuman forces. Nature is described as willing and interpreting. Nietzsche both anthropomorphizes nature and naturalizes human beings. Laozi is less ambivalent. Nature does not accord human beings a special place in the cosmos, but rather is indifferent to humanity:

> Heaven and Earth are not benevolent.
> To them men are like straw dogs destined for sacrifice.
> The man of calling is not benevolent.
> To him men are like straw dogs destined for sacrifice. (DDJ 5)

As Richard Wilhelm points out, straw dogs were traditionally dressed in festive garments in the preparation for sacrifice but were discarded afterwards.[11] Once their purpose was fulfilled, they were burned as firewood, or trampled upon by passersby. Zhuangzi makes a similar point. Since humans are not exempt from the cycle of life and death, they do not enjoy a position of ontological privilege:

> When talking of all life, we count them in tens of thousands, and humanity is just one of them. People inhabit the Nine Provinces, but humanity is just one portion of all the life that is sustained by grain, wherever carriages or boats can go. In comparison to all the multitudinous forms of life, isn't humanity like just a single hair on a horse? (Zh 17, 138)

Since the sage sees the world from the perspective of the Dao, he neither elevates nor debases things: "Viewed from the perspective of the Tao . . . things are neither elevated nor lowly. Viewed from the perspective of things, each one considers itself as elevated and the rest as lowly" (Zh 17, 140). By refusing to bestow disproportionate importance upon any particular thing, the sage affirms the dignity of all things:

> Thus also is the man of Calling
> he sets an example without cutting others down to size;
> he is conscientious without being hurtful;

he is genuine without being arbitrary;
he is bright without being blinding. (DDJ 58)

Such indifference is not an ideal that Nietzsche extols. Like Laozi, Nietzsche accepts the notion that the world is in constant flux and that human beings are eventually engulfed by it. However, the self-overcoming activity of the *Übermensch* expresses both an acceptance of this condition and a rebellion against it. Unlike the Daoist sage, he is not comfortable with the idea of his own insignificance and finitude, and much emphasis is placed on the radical innovations which help him to overturn stale tables of values and revitalize ailing social orders. Zarathustra longs to etch his own signature into the world. He does not slip into the community quietly as does the sage but rather enters with much fanfare. The world becomes a mirror, which projects his image back to him.

At the same time, Zarathustra also criticizes his own lust for recognition, imploring the *Übermensch* to learn from the humility of the child and accept that everything which comes must also pass away. This bears some similarity to the Daoist ideas of self-forgetting. To the Western reader the persistent references to self-forgetting and emptiness might seem typical of a philosophy that values humility over pride, altruism over egoism and deference over self-assertion. But such an analysis glosses over the complexity of the Daoist sage. Like the *Übermensch*, the *zhenren* is exhorted to become like the child both in terms of its potential and its malleability. The child represents a radical openness that is able to shield itself against others precisely because it is not threatening:

Whosoever holds fast to Life's completeness
is like a newborn infant:
Poisonous snakes do not bite it.
Scavenging animals do not lay hold of it.
Birds of prey do not hunt for it.
Its bones are weak, its sinews soft,
and yet it can grip firmly. (DDJ 55)

In a world that is constantly moving, only a being that is malleable can grip firmly because it can alter its shape in order to accord with that which it is grasping. The fact that the sage does not cling to himself, and has mastered forgetting, is a source of strength that allows him to adjust his behaviour according to the context he is situated in: "Now you know your own inferiority, so it is now possible to discuss great principles with you"

(Zh 17, 137). Through his indifference he provides an opening for others:

> The Man of Calling has no heart of his own.
> He makes the people's heart his own heart.
> 'To the good I am good;
> to the non-good I am also good. . . .
> The Man of Calling lives very quietly in the world.
> People look for him and listen out for him with surprise,
> and the Man of Calling accepts them all as his children. (DDJ 49)

He achieves a metaphorical eternity because he is not riveted to his finite boundaries and therefore embodies the endless potential represented by the child:

> If he is the gorge of the world
> eternal Life does not leave him
> and he becomes again as a child. (DDJ 28)

The *zhenren* mirrors the world in its immediacy, neither imposing a grid of knowledge on it, nor interpreting the present in terms of ideals for the future: "The perfect man (*zhenren's*) heart is like a mirror. It does not search after things. It does not look for things. It does not seek knowledge, it just responds. As a result, he can handle everything and is not harmed by anything" (Zh 7 64). Thus, the indeterminacy of the sage is difficult to achieve because it demands an ability to respond to the particularities of others. When events are mediated through rigid categories of knowledge or convention, the unique nature of particular phenomena are both overlooked and suppressed. The act of mirroring does not imply that one uncover the unchanging essence that underlies things, but rather necessitates a sensitivity to its transitory particularity. Particularity, however, is not purely intrinsic, because it emerges through interaction with others. The action of the sage is accommodating and recognizes the contiguous relationship between self and other. Thus, mirroring is not simply imitation; it is an active search for the complementary relations between beings rather than a will to overpower them. The Daoist sage wants to "correlate his person with nature in such a way that his living minimizes any coercive repercussions to integrate the various currents and polarities internally and externally."[12]

The calm equanimity of the sage would seem to portray a kind of quiescent withdrawal, which simply allows the forces of nature to parade across his being, responding with a chameleon like adaptation. Yet, Zhuangzi makes it clear that such equanimity is both intuited and learned, and he refuses to drive a wedge between these two forms of knowledge. The sage's art of knowing is, according to Graham, an "unverbalizable knowing how" rather than "knowing that."[13] The *Zhuangzi* abounds with portraits of cooks, carpenters, and fisherman who do not analyse or reason from a priori principles, but are able to respond to the situation as it presents itself. Cook Ding explains: "I see the natural lines and my knife slides through the great hollows, follow the great cavities, using that which is already there to my advantage" (Zh 3 23). Without repeated practice, he could not manuver his knife so adroitly, nor would he be aware of the contours of the bones. This is not a lack of self-awareness, but a self-awareness which includes a profound awareness of the other, for his movement is always also a response. He both acts and is acted upon, and no single source of agency can be identified. The sage does not impose his rhythms on nature, but finds ways of coordinating different rhythms. He must therefore learn the art of forgetting in order to ensure that he can respond to new situations as they arise: "One who does not exist in self sees others as they really are. His movement is like water, his calmness like a mirror, his response is like that of an echo" (ZH 33 303). In short, the sage's motion is almost motionless because it minimizes friction. Conversely, for Nietzsche, the creation of something new is impossible without destruction: "And let everything that can break upon our truths—break! There is many a house still to build" (Z II 12).

The sage does not strive for knowledge about that which cannot be known, and instead celebrates the mystery and vastness of the cosmos. "What people know is nothing to what they don't know. The time since they were born is nothing in comparison to the time before they were born" (Zh 17, 139). At the same time, Zhuangzi is aware that human beings require footholds in order to wander through the world. As long as one realizes that footholds are only meant to facilitate one's journey, then one is not seduced by the trappings of knowledge:

> The Six Classics are the tired footpaths of the first kings, not the actual feet that trod those paths! Now, Sir, what you are going on about is just these worn footpaths. But footpaths are created by the feet that first walked them. They are not the feet themselves! (Zh 14, 126)

The sage does not resist the gradual erosion of the footpaths, recognizing that they are but small dots on an endless landscape. Paradoxically, by accepting that he too is a tiny speck, he cultivates an openness that allows his soul to share in the vastness of the cosmos.

GOING HOME

According to the writers examined in this study, authenticity refers to a process whereby the self comes to terms with the dynamic pulse of life. It is the flexibility and not the steadfastness of the self that is to be celebrated. Furthermore, because the cosmos is a process whereby finite beings interact with each other, finitude is something that must be affirmed rather than simply bemoaned. In the writings of all philosophers examined here, there is a powerful sense that the human being is a creature caught in between the finite and the infinite. While the Daoist sage does not rebel against his mortality in the manner of Zarathustra, he nevertheless wants to share in the vast openness of the Dao. He accepts the boundaries of the self by transforming them into openings for other beings and thus he aspires to achieve a kind of unity with the Dao. This is a powerful suggestion that the self can only have a taste of eternity through others. Even the Daoist sage wants to experience the limitless and does not fully embrace his finitude.

Therefore, it is not entirely accurate to say that the sage accepts his limitations while *Dasein*, and the *Übermensch* do not. The difference lies in the manner in which these writers suggest the connection between the limited and the limitless be forged. In the case of both Nietzsche and Heidegger, this necessitates struggle as the self tries to mould itself into a whole even though it realizes it will always remain incomplete. There is a sense that, in part, the self tries to achieve limitlessness not only for itself but on its own. This isolation helps make the individual the distinct being he is. At the same time, Nietzsche and Heidegger are weary of such solitude, insisting that the whole is a process that is continuously arising out of the interaction between beings. The self can become itself only through others, and therefore must recognize its partness. The self is always torn in two directions, namely, on the one hand to deny its partness and sculpt itself into a whole, and on the other, to accept it and acknowledge that eternity can be experienced only through interconnection. Nietzsche is unwilling to resolve this contradiction and refuses to favour one of these positions over the other.

The brush with eternity in Nietzsche, or with the voice of Being in Heidegger, always leaves us longing for more. Consequently, our thirst for infinity will never be quenched and as a result, suffering and torment can never be fully extirpated from our lives. Human beings who straddle the domains of the finite and infinite will always be ill at ease with any position they occupy. As a result, they are condemned to a constant flurry of activity. This unease is precisely what Daoist thinkers do not accept. Therefore, the Daoist sage must embrace the in-between-ness of his position by not clinging to the self. His motions appear effortless as he continually directs his focus to recreating harmony with the world around him. He celebrates the contiguous relationship with others as the nature of his being. By refusing to demarcate a realm for himself as his own, he renders himself immune to Nietzschean torment. He mirrors the openness of the Dao, and as a result, maintains a joyful posture towards life.

Reading Laozi and Zhuangzi can help to dispel the presumption common to Western thinkers that the self must always define itself against others. Interconnection does not constitute a threat to selfhood but rather makes self-development possible. At the same time, Nietzsche demonstrates that the enjoyment of a colourful variety of beings also necessitates a sometimes painful attachment to one's boundaries. If everyone were a cosmopolitan wanderer, there would be nothing for the amorphous internationalist to marvel at. In a similar vein, if everyone were like the Daoist sage, the world would not be as variegated. On the other hand, if no one were like the Daoist sage, the world would be prone to even greater conflict. The sage's opening allows the particularity of others to emerge, but the status of his own particularity is less certain. His soul becomes a conduit for achieving harmony between other beings. In order to accomplish this, he must become like the Dao in its formlessness and openness. To ensure that the distinctness of others does not create too much tumult, he must resist clinging to his own distinctness.

The sage, the *Übermensch*, or *Dasein* both can and cannot be models for everyone. Nietzsche's subtitle to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* which introduces the work as a book for everyone and for no one is very telling in this respect. Because the authentic individuals described bring to light the radical in-between-ness that is common to all human beings, there is a reflection of every human being in all of them. And yet, it is precisely because we are finite, that constant self-overcoming or self-transformation (no matter what form it takes), is not an easy act to follow. While we have boundaries that act as openings, often they but act as points of closure. Both the *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi* suggest that in the larger scheme

of things, all imbalances will eventually be ironed out. However, this is no solace to many human beings, who in the meantime must suffer the fate of the straw dogs that are trampled upon. As Heidegger illustrates, part of what it means to be human is that on can never treat one's own life with complete indifference. This suggests that there may be a role in the cosmos for the kind of individuation that is the source of one's suffering.

Laozi and Zhuangzi's sages remain serene in the knowledge that balance will eventually be restored, even if it is not in their lifetime. The conventional and conceptual rigidity of human beings can hamper our attunement to the Dao, but it can never arrest its flow. The purpose of the sage is to minimize situations in which the naturally harmonious Dao is ignored. In contrast, Nietzsche's philosophy suggests that in a world where finite beings interact, there will always be discord. He throws into question the notion that the cosmos forms a natural harmony by drawing attention to both its harmonious and conflictual elements. Whereas Laozi and Zhuangzi consider conflict to be unnatural, Nietzsche does not. Departing from the Dao, neglecting the voice of Being, or failing to revel in eternity may be inevitable parts of the cosmic journey. And yet, at the same time, the exhilaration that is experienced by achieving a kind of union with the Dao is only made possible through our departure. Only by leaving our home can we learn to truly savour it. At the same time, we could not go back to it if we had ever abandoned it completely.

Chapter 3

The Importance of Nothing[1]

The nihilistic undertones of late modern and contemporary philosophy are reflective of a world in which metaphysical horizons are rapidly collapsing. Nietzsche's infamous proclamation, "God is dead," marks the end of a metaphysical era in which a single order underpins all of existence. While Nietzsche is cognizant of the widespread despair that God's death might usher in, he inveighs against the notion that meaning depends on certainty, and argues that participation in the dynamic movement of life is more conducive to meaningful existence. He rebels against philosophies that invoke a transcendent realm of permanence, to denigrate and devalue the flux of life, arguing that this is the nihilistic act par excellence. In *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche notes that the philosophers are infected with a pervasive "weariness with life" (TI I: 1).

The term, "nihilism" has negative connotations in the West, precisely because of the grip metaphysical truths have on the Western psyche. Yet, one should guard against simply equating nihilism with an awareness of nothingness. Nihilism refers to a world stripped of its meaning. In this guise, nihilism often reflects the metaphysical assumptions to which we are still wedded, because it assumes that without a singular order, life is meaningless as we are buffeted about in a chaotic realm of flux. Therefore, nihilism is the symptom of beings who only reluctantly part with their metaphysical guiding stars and are imbued with nostalgia in their absence. While metaphysical truths themselves have been discredited, the assumption remains that only permanent truths can bestow meaning upon our lives. The disdain for change and flux is the residue that metaphysical thought has left behind. In Nietzsche's view, this kind of despondent

nihilism is not an impetus to creative action but rather leaves us imitating Zarathustra's higher men, who would rather worship a braying ass than nothing at all. The act of worship remains even if the ideals have been dethroned. Order is pursued for its own sake, even if it is no longer invested with metaphysical significance. The status quo is thoughtlessly adhered to, because a superficial stability becomes the substitute for the waning metaphysical horizon. Comfort takes the place of meaning as the primary goal. This, according to Nietzsche marks the crippling aspect of nihilism.

However, it is important to distinguish passive nihilism from what Nietzsche terms active nihilism: "A. Nihilism as a sign of increased power of the spirit: as *active* nihilism. B. Nihilism as decline and recession of the power of the spirit: as *passive* nihilism" (WP 22). Nietzsche insists that a loss of faith in universal orders can act as a tremendous catalyst to activity and incite a kind of self-reflection that becomes active nihilism. Groundlessness can make human beings aware of their endless potential since the destruction of absolute truths in Nietzsche's mind could allow for the creative proliferation of many truths. This kind of active nihilism overcomes what Nietzsche refers to as the more passive nihilism of the herd.

In his early writings, Heidegger adopts a similar view of nothingness to that of Nietzsche, and makes anxiety a pillar of authentic experience. Death, as the ultimate limit, brings us face to face with the ultimate groundlessness of our existence, which not only elicits despair but also can impel us to participate in a process of self-making. Furthermore, death individualizes human beings, releasing them from the iron grip that the assimilating masses have on *Dasein*. It is important to Heidegger that the awareness of an impending death is something each individual confronts on his or her own, for this serves as a reminder of the enormous responsibility each individual has to shape his or her own life. Death makes us aware of the potential that stretches before us, and we are described as beings of the "outstanding" (*Ausstand*). However, this should not be equated with a kind of radical individualism, for Heidegger insists that our consciousness as beings-towards-death makes us cognizant of our participation in the whole that is Being.

However, it is important to recognize that nothingness and nihilism can not always be equated. An examination of Daoist philosophy proves to be very fruitful in this regard, for it illustrates that nothingness cannot simply be reduced to a negation of what is or once was: an idea that the Western mind often has difficulty coming to terms with. Attunement to nothingness signifies openness to other beings, and therefore reminds us

of our fundamental interconnectivity in addition to being described as cosmological point of origin. The Daoist sage wanders, not because he is warding off a surrounding abyss, but because he tries to mimic the openness of nothing.

Conversely, Zarathustra's striving is frenetic, because he must constantly struggle against the encroaching abyss. Rather than associating nothingness with meaninglessness, Daoist thinkers suggest that it imbues the world with meaning because it is the space or opening that allows things to connect to each other. As the "in-between" aspect of all things, "nothing" is something to be celebrated for it brings particular beings into harmonious accord. Being and nothingness are interdependent rather than diametrically opposed, for things only come to be *through* nothing. Thus, nothingness is also the balm that helps to heal the wounds of an agonizing Nietzschean individuation. Nothingness is not simply an absence for its *presence* is keenly felt.

The later Heidegger, profoundly influenced by the Daoist and Zen Buddhist traditions, seems to speak of a more quiescent approach to nothingness that emphasizes waiting and *Gelassenheit* (letting-be).[2] Many analysts have interpreted this as part of an ever-escalating descent into nihilism on Heidegger's part. Such an interpretation is heavily influenced by the Western presupposition that regards nothingness above all as lack. Heidegger was adamant in deflecting such charges of nihilism. By referring to nothingness as the empty space that allows things to be and the openness that allows things to show themselves, Heidegger increasingly echoes Daoist suppositions. The later Heidegger celebrates nothingness not out of reverence for the gaping void, but as the connective tissue between things. Rather than casting a cloak of silence over all things, nothingness is what gives beings their particular voice.

Abysses and Spaces in Nietzsche

Nietzsche's writings abound with both odes to nihilism and vehement condemnations of it. The ultimate act of nihilism, in Nietzsche's view, is the destruction of nihilistic approaches to life itself, which Nietzsche believed were ushered in by metaphysical orders intended to prop up, explain, and justify our existence. According to Nietzsche, the "absolute" nature of "absolute" truths are inevitably thrown into question, and when they are torn asunder, the entire edifice (which had been built around them), also crumbles. Because metaphysical faith is the basis of meaning

in our lives, its demise sends ripples of despair through the human soul. Nietzsche refers to psychological despair that bedevils us when we feel there is no longer a purpose in our lives (WP 12). His hero, Zarathustra, encounters a prophet on his wanderings who laments the sorry state of affairs in the shadow of God's death: " 'It is all one, nothing is worthwhile, the world is without meaning, knowledge chokes' " (Z IV 2). Nietzsche's challenge is to resuscitate meaning in life without having recourse to "superterrestrial hopes."

Nietzsche's radical suggestion is that the erosion of permanent horizons is not the beginning of nihilism, but rather that reigning immutable truths whittle away the meaning in our existence by eviscerating and heaping scorn on life. "Life" pales in comparison to the glorious realm of truths, such as the Platonic forms, and it becomes the target of an increasing contempt. Ironically, the revenge against life eventually deprives truth of the nourishment it needs. This is why Nietzsche insists we should celebrate, rather than mourn, the demise of such truths. Paradoxically, once we are taught to hold life itself in contempt, we become infected with an emptiness that makes it impossible to love even the truths that we allegedly hold so dear. Truth becomes debilitating rather than invigorating.

Nietzsche suggests that Socrates and Plato are "symptoms of decay" (TI I:2), because they are the fathers of the universal reason, which has since become the hallmark of Western thought:

> If one needs to make a tyrant of *reason*, as Socrates did, then there must exist no little danger of something else playing the tyrant . . . 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 perish or—be *absurdly rational*. (TI I:9)

Reason becomes irrational once its tentacles begin to extend to all aspects of life in the attempt to expunge all spontaneity, sensuality, and movement.

For Nietzsche, it is but a short leap from Platonism to the attack on sensuousness typical of Christian dogma. Nietzsche writes that the world of Christianity is "purely fictional" because "neither its morality nor religion has any point of contact with reality" (A 15). For Nietzsche, Christianity propagated an essentially life-denying message that revealed deep dissatisfaction with the natural world. The life-denying message of the Christian God had initially instituted pain as desires were repressed and the body was "racked with homesickness for the

wild" (GM II:16). Zarathustra heaps condemnation upon such an existence:

> I entreat you, my brothers, *remain true to the earth*, and do not believe those who speak to you of superterrestrial hopes! They are poisoners, whether they know it or not. They are despisers of life, atrophying and self-poisoned men, of whom the earth is weary: so let them be gone. (Z P 3)

At this point, human beings had to learn to obey the commands that were being imposed upon them; this was the Judeo-Christian tradition's most creative moment. Eventually, in Nietzsche's view, Christianity succeeded in reducing everything to the lowest common denominator, ushering in a comfortable existence where action was reduced to a herd-like mimicry, with individuals not daring to challenge themselves or each other. God became increasingly unnecessary as the soul's pain diminished:

> This dominating sense of displeasure is combatted, *first*, by means that reduce the feeling of life in general to its lowest point. If possible, will and desire are abolished altogether; all that produces affects and 'blood' is avoided. . . . the result, expressed in moral-psychological terms is 'selflessness,' 'sanctification'; in physiological terms: hypnotisation—the attempt to win for man an approximation to what in certain animals is *hibernation*. . . . the minimum metabolism at which life will still subsist without really entering consciousness. (GM III 17)

Thus, in Nietzsche's view, the Judeo-Christian religion had established a God who was bound to self-destruct because he was no longer needed: "In this way Christianity *as a dogma* was destroyed by its own morality; in the same way Christianity *as morality* must now perish, too: we stand on the threshold of *this* event" (GM III 27). The rapid decline of faith in God was a testament to Christianity's success as well as its failure. The poultice that religion had provided was effective in rendering human beings so comatose that the panacea itself became unnecessary. Eventually, neither the pain of Apollonian individuation, nor Dionysian disindividuation, is experienced. Engaged in routine mimicry, the self's boundaries become irrelevant because we simply imitate others. Zarathustra points out that "your love of your neighbour is your bad love of yourselves" (Z I:16). For Nietzsche, this constitutes a lived nothingness that is dangerous precisely because it is so comfortable.

Nietzsche points out that the kind of posture represented by Christianity was dangerous because it led to negation without corresponding affirmation. But he does not condemn the dynamic that gave rise to it entirely and indeed suggests that it started out on a more constructive note. According to Nietzsche, the slaves, representing a weaker life force, were forced into a confrontation with powerful and ebullient masters that threatened to trample them. The master, overflowing in life, conceived of "the basic concept of the 'good' in advance and spontaneously out of himself" (GM I:11) and many of the weaker beings were crushed in the stampede of sheer strength. As a result, the first creative activity of the slave was to say "no" to the masters. Negation and nihilism marked the birth of morality and at the same time constituted an affirmation of the slave: "While every noble morality develops from a triumphant affirmation of itself, slave morality from the outset says No to what is 'outside', what is 'different', what is 'not itself' and this No is its creative deed" (GM I:10). Negation is born out of the reaction against a threatening world and the act of rebellion marks the birth of self-identity. The slave deludes himself and others into thinking that his inactivity is a deliberate choice, while the masters' actions represent a weakness of will. Subjectivity is born since the slave invents the "doer" who stands behind the deed (GM I:13). He turns his inability to act into a capability for choosing action. By negating the world which threatens him, he establishes a distance from it and thereby affirms himself. By compelling the master to accept the terms of the slave's negation, and transmuting the master's physical strength into a moral weakness, the slave has managed to turn the tables and usurp the master's throne. Thus, nihilism can be a powerful stimulant to creativity and in Nietzsche's words gave birth to the "sovereignty of the individual."

Yet, according to Nietzsche, this same negation can turn into a crippling nihilism that expunges all individuality. Negation, which began as a means of changing the world, ended up demanding a complacent adherence to the status quo, when the truth of the slaves became ossified as dogma. For Nietzsche, morality demands a kind of solidarity between slaves who protect each other in their weakness. Everything that is in the process of decline or decadence is preserved. Christianity extols both love for humanity and pity, which, in Nietzsche's view, are merely the means by which the weak maintain their grip on power: "Pity is the *praxis* of nihilism . . . a major instrument of heightening of *decadence*—Pity talks us into *nothingness*! Except that one does not say 'nothingness': one says instead 'the beyond,' or God or Nirvana, redemption, bliss" (A 7).

Nietzsche implies that the slaves can only remain creative if they confront the threat of the master. Once all have been reduced to the status of slaves, action and creativity are no longer necessary. According to Nietzsche, affirmation of life necessitates tension, and it cannot survive outside the theatre of conflict and struggle.

According to Nietzsche, this kind of struggle ceased with the establishment of the Christian God who becomes a symbol of perfection. Human beings are burdened with an ineradicable guilt and are held responsible for their own suffering (GM II:22). Sensuality is held to be the ultimate manifestation of sin, and human beings are implored to wage a constant battle against it. With the Christian God, human beings create something so powerful in its absoluteness that it renders them powerless. Nietzsche mocks the ingeniousness of creatures who are able to will themselves into not willing: "they would rather will nothingness than not will at all." The pain and humiliation spawned by the guilt before God requires an antidote, which often takes the form of mindless, mechanical activity: "It is beyond doubt that this regimen alleviates an existence of suffering to a not inconsiderable degree: this fact is today called, somewhat dishonestly, 'the blessings of work'" (GM III:18).

However, there is more to Nietzsche's condemnation of Christianity than meets the eye, for the death of God also lays the groundwork for spiritual rebirth. The symbol of the desert is very useful in helping to bring to the surface some of the subtle nuances of Nietzsche's texts that are easily eclipsed by his forceful rhetoric. On the one hand, the desert is the symbol for the contagious lifelessness that has been spread by the herd. Yet, on the other hand, in many religious traditions, the desert is a place of spiritual birth and this is a message that is not lost on Nietzsche. The desert symbolizes not just the negation of life, but also presents a kind of vast openness signifying unending potential. By invoking the symbol of the desert, Nietzsche plays on this dual understanding of the term.

It is in the desert that the spirit undergoes its "three metamorphoses" that allow it to emerge from its nihilistic despair. Nihilism provides the conditions for its own overcoming.[3] The beast of burden, namely the camel, is the first desert animal (Z I:1). It takes all heavy loads upon itself that the social order imposes and "hurries into the desert" where it cuts itself off from the sensual aspects of life. And yet, such servility also demands a mastery over the self, which gives it a taste for the exertion of power over others. The camel's "yes" to others, is a "no" to itself. Once it becomes the lion, this order is inversed and the lion says "no" to others, and "yes" to the self. There is no negation that is not also an affirmation.

The lion wants to be the commanding "lord in his own desert." The desire for mastery is born in slavery. For Nietzsche, it comes as no surprise that the oppressed often become the oppressors:

> For an ascetic life is a self-contradiction: here rules a *ressentiment* without equal, that of an insatiable instinct and power—will that wants to become master not over something in life but over life itself, over its most profound, powerful and basic condition. (GM III:11)

Nevertheless, the lives of both the obedient camel and the conquering lion experience an intense loneliness because a sense of connectedness is missing. Moreover, the lion destroys without being able to create: "To create new values—even the lion is incapable of that—but to create itself freedom for new creation—that the might of the lion can do" (Z I:1).

The intense loneliness and groundlessness of the desert also provides the impetus for the new beginning symbolized by the child. In the child, the connection between "yes" and "no" is affirmed. The child is able to fully affirm life, embracing its spontaneity. Its ability to forget indicates that it is capable of reveling in the openness of existence because it does not yet have an ego that it clings to. It is neither riveted to the past nor worried about the future, and it is not yet burdened with preconceptions about its own identity. The child plays with what he or she is given, and in so doing makes something new out of it. This signifies a move from an understanding of nothingness, as a life-denying force, to a more emancipatory understanding of nothingness as openness: "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 parable of the three metamorphoses illustrates that nihilism must be overcome through nothingness rather than against it. However, while Nietzsche celebrates nothingness as opening, there is also a strong sense in which it must be encountered as closure. In order to cast further light on the multiple understandings of nothingness evident in Nietzsche's work, the parable of both the tightrope walker and the metaphor of the eternal return is useful. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche proclaims that "man is a rope, fastened between animal and Superman—a rope over an abyss" (Z P:4). The human being as "bridge and not a goal" (Z P:4) is always in the making. The abyss symbolizes both the lack of grounding and the perils associated with a creature always in transition. The solitary tightrope walker is precariously balanced on a rope with the gaping abyss all around him and therefore the uneasy position we occupy suspended

above nothingness is brought to light through his predicament. He experiences this nothingness as his own, for a falsely placed step will send him plummeting to his death. This kind of nothingness separates him from everyone else and, almost brutally, thrusts him back onto himself. The uncompromising awareness of his life's fragility weds him to it even more closely, and bestows meaning on his delicate existence.

The tightrope walker's awareness of nothingness comes into direct confrontation with the nihilistic buffoon. Nietzsche associates this kind of nihilism with the herd that refuses to encounter nothingness. It is the nihilism of constant, empty activity. The buffoon represents the herd's contempt for anyone who dares to express his difference from the crowd. He taunts the tightrope walker, calling him a lame-foot and admonishes him for leaving the tower. At no risk to his own life, he jumps over the man, sending the latter plummeting to his death. According to Nietzsche, this exemplifies the bile that the herd is ready to spew out against anyone who transgresses their norms. It is a negation based on contempt. The tightrope walker represents a threat by revealing to the herd the lack of grounding that characterizes their own existence. He dares to forge a path of his own and, consequently, is met with execration. Indeed, only the social outcasts in Zarathustra's tale treat each other with respect. Zarathustra buries the tightrope walker, while the hermit provides Zarathustra with sustenance along his journey. The only real community here is among those whom society has ostracized. While the herd is responsible for the tightrope walker's death, they flee, "especially where the body would come crashing down" (Z P:3).

In the story of the tightrope walker, nothingness is represented as a kind of terminus the individual must confront. Yet at the same time, in Nietzsche there is also an encounter with a different nothingness, which is not experienced as one's own but rather reinforces the connectedness of all things. It is the kind of groundlessness that is part of the cycle of the eternal return. Nietzsche is by no means the radical individualist that he is often presumed to be. The metaphor of the eternal return reveals that all finite beings are intertwined. Each moment becomes significant as the confluence of past and future. The individual appropriates the past to make the future that stretches out before him. Freedom and necessity coalesce beautifully in this metaphor. The gateway is a marker both of separation and connection, which reminds Zarathustra of the whole that he is part of: "Oh my soul, there is nowhere a soul more loving and more embracing and more comprehensive than you!" (Z III:14). He is able to draw upon the resources of the world into which he is thrust, but at the

same time confronts, in the emptiness of the gateway, the essential groundlessness of existence. In the gateway, the intersection of being and nothingness is made manifest.

In this way, by underscoring the significance of the moment, Nietzsche hints at both the importance and insignificance of history. The term, *ewige Wiederkehr des Gleichen* (eternal return of the same), does not necessarily imply a recurrence of *identical* phenomenon, but rather can be translated as recurrence of the similar. Every act draws upon the past, while at the same time incorporating the groundlessness of the future. In fact, Nietzsche makes it clear that two paths lead to the gateway of the moment, one originating in the past, and the other originating in the future: "And are not all things bound fast together in such a way that this moment draws after it all future things? *Therefore*—draws itself too?" (Z III:2) On the one hand, this emphasizes the historical nature of human beings as self-making creatures who at each moment must appropriate from the past in order to create the future which lies open before them. And yet, the suggestion that the moment draws the future "after" it implies a nonhistorical understanding of humanity that only makes sense if the interconnection of all things is born in mind. This is akin to a mystical understanding that allows Zarathustra to experience a kind of eternal presence which affirms the unity of all things that both have been and are to come:

> If we affirm one single moment, we thus affirm not only ourselves but all of existence. For Nothing is self sufficient, neither in us ourselves nor in things; and if our soul has trembled with happiness and sounded like a harp string just once, all eternity was needed to produce this one event—and in this single moment of affirmation, all eternity was called good, redeemed, justified and affirmed. (WP 1032)

From the perspective of this unity, time is irrelevant. Zarathustra's animals remind him of a type of consciousness that is not historical: "Everything goes, everything returns; the wheel of existence rolls for ever. Everything dies; everything blossoms anew: the year of existence runs on forever" (Z III:13) Historical consciousness is temporarily overcome so that Zarathustra can experience the oneness of all of existence. "Everything breaks, everything is put together anew; eternally the same house of Being builds itself. Everything parts, everything greets itself again; eternally the ring of Being remains faithful to itself. In every now Being begins, around every here rolls the ball of there. The middle is everywhere. The path of eternity is curved" (Z III:13).

Nietzsche departs radically from most other Western philosophers by seeing nothingness not only as negation but as a connective force between all things: " 'Now I die and decay,' you would say, 'and in an instant I shall be nothingness. Souls are as mortal as bodies.' 'But the complex of causes in which I am entangled will recur—it will create me again! I myself am part of the causes of the eternal recurrence' " (Z III:13). Here, Zarathustra affirms the endless cycles of existence that he participates in. He goes beyond a merely human perspective in which human beings are at the centre of existence. As the eternal return demonstrates, nothingness not only individuates and separates beings, but also allows for the development of a nonegoistic form of subjectivity, where I become conscious of my particularity through the interconnectedness with other things. The moment is revered, both as the product of my choice and a point of connection, which allows me to go beyond the self.

A similar understanding of nothingness is revealed in the parable of the shepherd who chokes and writhes in the struggle against a black snake that is lodged in his throat. Eventually he bites the snake's head off and is immediately "a transformed being, surrounded with light, *laughing*" (Z III:2). Zarathustra had never heard such laughter, which was only made possible by the shepherd's confrontation with death. This is why Zarathustra exclaims: "My longing for this laughter consumes me: oh how do I endure still to live! And how I could endure to die now" (Z III:2). The peasant's act constitutes a defence of his own boundaries against the threat posed by the snake. However, the symbol of the serpent should not be glossed over, for it is not only a symbol of death in Christian mythology, but also constitutes a symbol of life in traditional alchemy. Nietzsche plays upon this dual meaning. The coils of the snake remind us of the eternal return and thus the interconnectedness of all things. The laughter of the peasant is symbolic of the awareness of connectedness that comes to him through his encounter with death. He is reborn because he has both affirmed the boundaries of the self and been liberated from.

We must not hide from the reality of death, for taking the sting out of death also robs us of the vitality of life, which is experienced both through the ego-self and beyond it. The fact that we want to maintain our boundaries while overcoming them (hinting that we are both self and more than self), means that pain will always be an integral part of our experience: "Pain too is a joy, cursing is also a blessing, so rich is joy that it thirst after pain, for hell for hatred . . . For all joy wants itself, and therefore it also wants suffering in the heart . . . Joy wants the eternity of *all* things, *wants deep, deep eternity!*" (Z IV: 19). Zarathustra's despondent

moods can never be permanently overcome for he will always alternate between despair and joy: "Lately I walked gloomily through a deathly grey twilight, gloomily and sternly with compressed lips. Not only one sun had gone down for me" (Z III:2). Nietzsche claims that without suffering philosophy would not be possible: "only the great pain . . . forces us philosophers to descend into our ultimate depths and to disabuse ourselves of trusting" (Epi NCW). And yet, in Nietzsche, there is also a strong sense that the despair associated with negation is something that must be transcended in order to prepare the way for moments of affirmation. It is significant that *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* both ends and begins with a sunrise rather than a sunset.

HEIDEGGER: BEINGS-TOWARDS-DEATH

For Heidegger, as for Nietzsche, the encounter with nothingness is an important aspect of realizing individual authenticity. In *Being and Time*, he presents death as a limit situation that is embedded in the consciousness of human beings described as beings-towards-death. On the one hand, death represents an internalization of an external limit, on the other hand, the awareness of death is always accompanied by attunement to the limitlessness of Being as a whole. We would not have such trouble accepting our mortality if it were not for the infiniteness of Being that is also in some sense a part of us. It is this juxtaposition between the openness of infinite Being and death's finality that drives the process of self-making. *Dasein* views its own life as incomplete only because it is intuitively aware of the "completeness" of Being: "It is essential to the basic constitution of Dasein that there is *constantly something still to be settled.* Such a lack of totality signifies that there is something still outstanding in one's potentiality-for-Being" (BT 279, 236). Thus, like Nietzsche, Heidegger suggests that self-creation is, in part, a struggle against the boundaries which constrain us. In making ourselves, we also affirm our connection to an infinite Being.

It is no coincidence that the chapter which launches Heidegger's discussion of death is entitled, "Dasein's Possibility of Being-a-Whole and Being-Towards-Death." Being's limitlessness gives rise to the feeling that something is missing, and this, combined with the prospect of an unavoidable ending, incites us to define boundaries for the self that we can call our own. The boundary of death makes us aware that we are determinate beings, and simultaneously forces us to reflect on the indeterminateness

that is also a part of *Dasein* because it is *in* Being. By shaping the contours of the self, we participate in Being's openness. As authentic individuals, we attempt to sculpt ourselves into a totality that is of our own making.

Consciousness of our mortality entails both the knowledge that we must die and that we were once born. These two endpoints endow us with a sense of self that remains identical through the changes it undergoes: "Dasein traverses the span of time granted to it between the two boundaries" (BT 325, 373). Because we stretch "*along between* birth and death" we are historical beings. The activity of self-making is an attempt to connect the pieces in-between into the whole suggested by these limits. We attempt to incorporate events into a whole that is always in the process of being made. As historical beings we reflect upon the past while also going-towards the future as that which is "outstanding" (*Ausstand*). In this way, we appropriate our destiny and the life that we have been thrust into. There is no such thing as a pure present, for the past and future converge on each moment: "Dasein does not exist as the sum of the momentary actualities of Experiences which come along successively and disappear. . . . The 'between' which relates to birth and death already lies *in the Being* of Dasein" (BT 426, 374). Because we are creatures suspended between past and future, our existence will always be slightly uncomfortable: "It is essential to the basic constitution of Dasein that there is *constantly something still to be settled* (*eine ständige Unbeschlossenheit*)" (BT 279, 236).

The future is not simply a denunciation of the past but also a reappropriation of it. Heidegger does not imply that progress has a unitary and inexorable direction, or that the past should be solemnly and uncritically revered. He challenges a prevalent notion that newness demands outright repudiation or deliberate ignorance of the past and insists that each step towards the future is always a partial reliving of the past. At the same time, it is the openness of Being reflected in the future that allows the past to be reconfigured. This means that there is no such thing as either a pure future or a pure past because they are inextricably entangled at each point in time. It is no mere coincidence that North American society, which attempts through medicine, cosmetics, and euphemisms to expunge the idea of death from our consciousness, is also among the least historically aware culture, clinging proudly to a frontier mentality that advocates deliberate erasure of the past. The idea that one needs to find oneself by severing social, familial and historical ties is a peculiarly North American phenomenon.[4] By attempting to camouflage the reality of

death, such a society prevents both reflecting on the past and considering the possibilities of the future. Thus, it is condemned to a kind of ritual repetition of the present:

> *Only an entity which, in its Being, is essentially futural so that it is free for its death and can let itself be thrown back upon its factical "there" by shattering itself against death—that is to say, only an entity which, as futural is equiprimordially in the process of having-been, can, by handing down to itself the possibility it has inherited, take over its thrownness and be in the movement of vision for 'its time.' Only authentic temporality which is at the same time finite, makes possible something like fate—that is to say, authentic historicality.* (BT 437, 385)

In this contemporary era, we believe that we live in the throes of constant change. This impression often takes the form of "more of the same" rather than genuine transformation. We build bigger and faster computers, cars, and appliances, but these changes do not signal fundamental shifts in orientation or perspective. The unwillingness to revisit the past makes a substantive reshaping of the present impossible, and thus we experience neither familiarity nor unfamiliarity but perpetual boredom. Heidegger is not suggesting that we imbue the past with a kind of metaphysical authority which John Caputo suggests characterizes Heidegger's obsessive search for Greek origins.[5] Instead, Heidegger intimates that we are conscious of participating in a process of both coming-from and going-towards. Future and past are equiprimordial in Heidegger's philosophy.

The in-betweenness that death alerts us to makes us uncomfortable and therefore we attempt to make ourselves whole in the effort to achieve a kind of "rapprochement" with Being. Death plays a very ironic role in this dynamic, since it is the closest we can come to achieving completeness but also is that which robs us of it forever. The only "complete" grasp of our lives would occur in death but of course we are no longer around then to reap its harvest: "As long as Dasein *is* as an entity, it has never reached its 'wholeness.' But if it gains such 'wholeness', this gain becomes the utter loss of Being-in-the-world" (BT 280, 236). Even when we die, the unfinished nature of our existence remains since we leave many loose ends behind: "For the most part, Dasein ends in unfulfilment, or else by having disintegrated and been used up" (BT 288, 244). Thus, death suggests the possibility of totality while shattering it at the same time. It reminds us that we are incomplete beings who must nevertheless always strive towards completion without the assurance that we will ever get

there: "just as Dasein is already its 'not-yet', and is its 'not-yet' constantly as long as it is, it is already its end too" (BT 289, 245). Death highlights the radical in-betweenness of our existence as beings who always are what they are not. At the same time, by occupying this uneasy position, we are always impelled to move towards Being. This fosters the sense of belonging that endows our lives with meaning: "outstanding, as a way of being missing, is grounded upon a belonging to. . . . Therefore, to be still outstanding means that what belongs together is not yet all together" (BT 286, 242). Meaninglessness and meaning are integrally connected.

Nietzsche's critique of the rabble is echoed by Heidegger in his notion of *das Man* (often translated as the-they), which describes individuals who are easily replaced due to the lack of differences between them. In German, the term "*Man*" is the generic "one" that refers to no one in particular: "These Others, moreover, are not *definite* Others. On the contrary, any Other can represent them" (BT 164, 126). *Das Man* reduces everything to "averageness," such that all things are "passed off as something familiar and accessible to everyone" (BT 165, 127). According to Heidegger, *das Man* tries to rescue us from the uncomfortable in-betweenness of our existence by distracting us from the reality of death. This is the outgrowth of a metaphysical impulse which attempts to banish the ungraspable from our consciousness, for death, in all its uncertainty, acts as a very powerful reminder of that which cannot be thought. The thoughtlessness of mass culture derives from a misguided attempt to cling to a kind of certainty that Being continuously threatens to undermine. *Das Man* does this by forcing us to fall victim to a constant repetition. Idle talk (*Gerede*) is the most obvious manifestation of this tendency. It refers to a noncommittal conversation that finds everything interesting, but it is not genuinely concerned with anything. It operates primarily on the surface by simply "passing-along" and in so doing does not disclose, (*erschliessen*) but rather closes off. What is not captured by the word is completely ignored. The language of idle talk is not used as a medium to go towards the things that limit it, instead, it relies upon repetition to breed a kind of familiarity that prevents us from approaching things in their "primordialness": "it does not communicate in such a way as to let this entity be appropriated in a primordial manner, but communicates rather by following the route of *gossiping* and *passing the word along*" (BT 212, 168) Idle talk refuses to acknowledge the realms that language cannot penetrate and thus, also fails to recognize the important role that silence plays in language: "To be able to keep silent, Dasein must have something to say—that is, it must have at its disposal an authentic and rich disclosedness of itself. In

that case one's reticence makes something manifest and does away with 'idle talk' " (BT 208, 165). Idle talk impedes understanding by preventing the individual from developing a relationship to that which is being talked about. Such engagement with other beings necessitates an attunement to that which is beyond language. By breeding a superficial familiarity, reflection is made unnecessary. Because we all say the same thing, we become increasingly distanced from each other. Without the allure of the unfamiliar, social relationships are considerably weakened.

> Idle talk is something which anyone can rake up; it not only releases one from the task of genuinely understanding but develops an undifferentiated kind of intelligibility, for which nothing is closed off any longer. . . . when Dasein maintains itself in idle talk, it is—as Being-in-the-world cut off from its primary and primordially genuine relationships-of-Being towards the world, towards Dasein-with, and towards its very Being-in. Such a Dasein keeps floating unattached, yet in so doing, it is always alongside the world, with others and towards itself. (BT 213, 169)

Constant repetition causes human beings to confuse familiarity with intelligibility: "Idle talk is the possibility of understanding everything without previously making the thing one's own" (BT 213, 169). This is not the kind of repetition described in Nietzsche's metaphor of the eternal return, in which the connection between past and present is upheld. Idle talk relies upon empty mimicry, which deliberately rejects a historical understanding of ritual and words in order to produce a vacuous repetition of the present.

Idle talk attempts to blind us to the reality of death by using language to camouflage it. For example, we speak of "passing away" or "going to rest" in an attempt to obscure death's finality:

> This evasive concealment in the face of death dominates everydayness so stubbornly that, in Being with one another, the "neighbours"; often still keep talking the "dying person" into the belief that he will escape death and soon return to the tranquillized everydayness of the world of his concern. (BT 297, 253)

By fostering indifference towards death, such public nihilism also renders us indifferent towards life. Death becomes a "banal" and constantly recurring event in the "publicness" of *das Man*, and its everyday nature is underscored in order to prevent human beings from reflecting upon it

too deeply: " 'Dying' is levelled off to an occurrence which reaches Dasein, to be sure, but belongs to nobody in particular. . . . In this manner, the 'they' provides a *constant tranquillization about death*" (BT 298–99, 253–54). Furthermore, because individuals in mass society are easily replaced, individual finitude becomes a nonissue:

> Dying, which is essentially mine in such a way that no one can be my representative, is perverted into an event of public occurrence which the "they" encounters. . . . By such ambiguity, Dasein puts itself in the position of losing itself in the "they" as regards a distinctive potentiality-for-Being which belongs to Dasein's ownmost Self. (BT 297, 253)

But if *das Man* indeed tries to hide our own death from us, this is also the realm where it is least successful. At some point, most individuals face the jarring reality of their finitude, and at this moment, they are released from the grip of *das Man* and become aware of themselves as individuals: "*No one can take the Other's dying away from him.* . . . By its very essence, death is in every case mine, in so far as it 'is' at all" (BT 284, 240). Even if we sacrifice ourselves for another, we cannot relieve another of her dying. The consciousness of death provides the best hope for individuation in a homogenizing society. Death generates a commitment to the particular self by making it aware of the boundaries that *das Man* had tried to obscure.

The Other Face of Nothingness

So far, the focus of this discussion has been on the individuating experience that arises from the encounter with nothingness as the negation of Being. However, Heidegger, like Nietzsche, reveals two faces of nothingness in his texts. The first face of nothingness is the limit represented by death that is contrasted with the limitlessness of Being. The second face of nothingness, that becomes increasingly pronounced in Heidegger's later writings, resembles a kind of absolute emptiness and groundlessness that is not defined against anything. Here, nothingness is no longer a limit, but rather limitlessness itself. It draws attention to the interconnectedness of all things rather than to the separation between them. For these reasons, we confront a formidable conundrum when trying to describe it, because language operates on the basis of limitation. Such nothingness is both part of our being, and at the same time other to it.

It can be experienced and is therefore present, but at the same time, is nothing, so it cannot be present. Since it is no "what" about which anything can be said, and language depends upon defining such "whatness," the only option available to us is to provide examples wherein such nothingness is experienced.

The first hint of the emergence of the "interconnective" aspect of nothingness is to be found in *Being and Time.* Here Heidegger stresses that death is not merely my own for I can only know about my impending death through others:

> The way in which everyday Being-towards-death understands the certainty which is thus grounded, betrays itself when it tries to 'think about death, even when it does so with critical foresight—that is to say, in an appropriate manner. So far as one knows, all men 'die'. Death is probably in the highest degree for every man, yet it is not 'unconditionally' certain. Taken strictly, a certainty which is 'only' *empirical* may be attributed to death. Such certainty necessarily falls short of the highest certainty, the apodictic, which we reach in certain domains of theoretical knowledge. (BT 301, 257)

This aspect of nothingness challenges the notion that death is experienced primarily through the individual, as well as the idea that it is only negation. When we think about the death of others, we cannot help but preserve their lives in our memories, as well as contemplate their legacy. Seldom is the image of the corpse the memory that lingers on in our consciousness. Instead we speak of the deceased whose traditions and rituals remain in the world from which they have departed. The deceased is still the object of care for those who are left behind and is "present" in his absence through the memories and mourning of others (BT 282, 238). Funeral rites do not just mourn the disappearance of the other, but are also rituals of remembrance by which we refuse to let the other dissipate into the vapours of oblivion. They are important aspects of a community's rebirth.

Nothingness is also a kind of radical openness and groundlessness that we experience as the uncanny call of conscience. The call of conscience constitutes an acknowledgement that that which is not our own allows us to return to the self: "When Dasein interprets itself in terms of that with which it concerns itself, the call passes over *what* Dasein, proximally and for the most part, understands itself as. And yet the Self has been reached, unequivocally and unmistakably" (BT 319, 274). Heidegger

insists that "in its 'who,' the caller is definable in a 'worldly' way by *nothing* at all." (BT 321, 276). One way of making sense of this confusing juxtaposition of opposites is to see the call as a kind of force that reminds us of our nondifferentiation from all that is, namely Being. On one level, the self is part of the indefinable whole that is Being, and this is why the call is familiar. And yet, on the other hand, the self is individuated, and this is why the call is also alien to it. In uncanniness our separateness and connectedness to Being is experienced at the same time. The self in its nondifferentiated form brushes against the self as differentiated Being. This contradiction can lead to anxiety:

> Uncanniness reveals itself authentically in the basic state-of-mind of anxiety; and, as the most elemental way in which thrown Dasein is disclosed, it puts Dasein's Being-in-the-world face to face with the 'nothing' of the world; in the face of this 'nothing' Dasein is anxious with anxiety about its ownmost potentiality-for-Being. (BT 321, 276)

This pull on the self, which does "not call him into the public idle talk of the 'they,' but *calls* him *back* from this *into the reticence of his existent* potentiality-for-Being" (BT 322, 278), represents the force of nothingness. It precipitates a return to the self by making the familiar self, foreign. By becoming aware that there are endless possibilities for my being, I am also thrust back onto the particular self that I am in all its distinctness. Only by realizing there is nothing self-evident about my specificity in a realm of radical openness, can I recognize the self as irreducibly particular. The following example elucidates Heidegger's meaning: When one plays the piano, one often has the sense of being carried away by the music. This is also a form of uncanniness, whereby one feels a distance from the self through the connection to something inexplicable and groundless, but at the same time is deeply attuned to one's "selfhood." By not being oneself, one is oneself. This reflects an encounter with nothingness.

The reason that the juxtaposition of *not* being the self and *being* the self makes sense, is because I am both an ego-self that is defined against the world, and a non-ego self that is interconnected with other beings. However, it is important to recognize that the non-ego self does not necessarily lack specificity because our uniqueness is always, in part, cultivated through our interconnection with others. Just as the resonance of one note in a piece of music comes out through the interplay with other notes, my selfhood is always developed in conjunction with other beings.

Nothingness helps to release us from the constraints of the ego-self and makes us aware of the non-ego self.

The above interpretation also helps to explain why Heidegger considers conscience to be the foundation of morality. It is because I both am and am not the other that I am responsible to her or him. When we experience the pangs of conscience, we are aware of something we should do that may not come easily to a self that is cognizant of its division from the other. Thus, conscience involves a struggle between the ego-self that is predicated on division and the non-ego self that is based on the interconnectivity of all things: "The call points *forward* to Dasein's potentiality-for-Being and it does this as a call which comes *from* uncanniness. . . . When the call gives us a potentiality-for Being to understand, it does not give us one which is ideal and universal; it discloses it as that which has been currently individualized and which belongs to the particular Dasein" (325–6, 282). Conscience impels me to go toward the other because I am both separated and not separated from her. For example, we may find ourselves thrust into a situation where we see a child drowning in a lake. Heidegger's analysis suggests, that in most cases, our sense of the right thing to do is not guided by abstract universal principles. Instead he intimates that our conscience makes us aware that we are responsible for this child at this moment because of a powerful sense of interconnectedness which begins to erode the boundary between my self and the child in need of help. At the same time, it is because I am distinct from her that I must go towards her in order to affirm this interconnection. Furthermore, I am made aware of my nondifferentiation with the world around me through the particular situation in which I find myself. At this very moment, I am responsible for *this* child that is drowning because I happen to be there. I am thrust into the responsibility which I must assume:

> Indeed the call is precisely something which *we ourselves* have neither planned nor prepared for nor voluntarily performed, nor have we ever done so. 'It' calls, against our expectations and even against our will. On the other hand, the call undoubtedly does not come from someone else who is with me in the world. The call comes *from* me and yet *from beyond me and over me*. (BT 320, 275)

Guilt is a related manifestation of *Dasein's* "in-betweenness." The feeling of guilt constitutes an awareness that we might have chosen

another course of action and therefore reflects our encounter with the groundlessness of our existence. We thereby assume responsibility for our actions, not only because of what we have done, but also because of what we did not do. Guilt emphasizes that I am what I am not. The fact that our actions are never the only possibilities open to us makes us feel guilty. If I were to perceive every step taken as inevitable, then I would not be burdened by guilt. As Michael Gelven points out, guilt is a precondition of morality since we must be aware of having had choices in order to be able to consider them significant.[6] Heidegger is not referring to a socially constructed guilt that concerns the meeting of obligations or the failure to meet them. This is a kind of secondary guilt. He is referring to a primordial guilt from which all other forms of guilt derive:

> The idea of guilt must not only be raised above the domain of that concern in which we reckon things up, but it must also be detached from relationship to any law or 'ought' such that failing to comply with it one loads himself with guilt. For here too 'guilt' is still necessarily defined as a *lack*—when something which ought to be and which can be is missing. . . . *Being guilty does not first result from an indebtedness, but that, on the contrary, indebtedness becomes possible only 'on the basis' of a primordial Being-guilty*. (BT 328–29, 283–84)

Because there are always unfulfilled possibilities, guilt can never be eradicated. But for Heidegger, guilt is not to become a prelude to self-flagellation and contempt. It can be seen as a celebration of our potential instead of underscoring our weakness and baseness. Our awareness of missed opportunities also serves as a reminder of other possibilities. The Christian moral system described by Nietzsche had turned guilt into something so paralyzing that it led to nihilism. Heidegger wants guilt to become liberating: a symbol of our potential rather than our failures. At the same time, this negation, or nullity, is not an absence, but rather signifies the multitude of potentials that lie stretched before us: " 'Nullity' " does not signify anything like not-Being-present-at-hand or not-subsisting; what one has in view here is rather a 'not' which is constitutive for this *Being* of Dasein—its thrownness. . . . it constantly is *not* other possibilities, and it has waived these in its existentiell projection" (BT 331, 285). Nothingness is not deprivation, but rather the potential of freedom: "Ontology came across the 'not' and made use of it. But is it so obvious that every 'not' signifies something negative in the sense of a lack?" (BT 332, 286).

The open aspect of nothingness comes to the fore much more powerfully in Heidegger's later writings because it is here that Heidegger begins to more explicitly challenge the idea that the ego-self is the only self there is. He underscores this point in *Contributions to Philosophy* by hyphenating the term "*Da-sein.*" This has sometimes been interpreted as a move on Heidegger's part to enfeeble the subject. But such a critique is predicated on the assumption that the subject must necessarily define itself against other beings. The word "*Da-sein*" is intended to draw attention to the dialogical nature of the human being. Agency emerges out of interaction and does not have its roots in the subject alone. This is also why there is no longer the same emphasis on sculpting the individual into a whole that characterized *Being and Time.* Instead, the interactive relationship between beings and Being is stressed. More attention is paid to nothingness as an opening which is to free human beings from some of the constraints that subjectivity imposes upon them. Nothingness is to help loosen the shackles that bind the self too firmly to its own boundaries and permits what in Buddhist philosophy is often referred to as a kind of self-emptying or what Daoists call self-forgetting.

The later Heidegger stresses that nothingness acts as a kind of gateway through which connections to other beings are forged. This is why it cannot simply be equated with nihilism and indeed can be invoked in order to overcome nihilism. Individual authenticity is not abandoned but rather is seen as emerging out of this interconnectedness. While *Being and Time* focuses on the individuation of *Dasein* (albeit not exclusively), the later Heidegger focuses increasingly on authenticity as the in-between aspect of our existence. Nothingness reminds us that we are not only creatures between birth and death, but are also always between beings. This realization can help to relieve us from some of the anxiety surrounding our mortality. If we focus on the fact that we are between beings, then our mortality is not associated with absolute finality in the same way.

Heidegger's later accounts of nothingness have much in common with Eastern spirituality. Therefore, they are subject to constant misinterpretation in the West. Heidegger himself expresses his frustration at the Western inability to differentiate between the experience of nothingness and nihilism. In a postscript to "What is Metaphysics," written in 1943, he defends his account of nothingness against charges of nihilism. As Reinhard May points out, Heidegger's analysis of nothingness sets him apart from almost all other Western philosophers.[7] Indeed, May points out that the concept of nothingness was almost immediately understood

in Japan, but in the West, it was simply equated with a stifling nihilism.[8]

Heidegger's inaugural lecture at Freiburg, "What is Metaphysics," combines the two aspects of nothingness I have discussed. On the one hand, Heidegger describes nothingness as the "negation of the totality of beings; it is non-being pure and simple" (WM 97). This, coupled with the prominent role that anxiety and dread play in his work, implies that he sees nothingness primarily as a negative force. Yet, he also claims that the idea of nothingness as negation must itself be negated (WM 97), implying that it has a kind of presence to which we respond: "Is the nothing given only because the 'not' i.e., negation, is given? Or is it the other way around? Are negation and the 'not' given only because the nothing is given?" (WM 97). Heidegger insists that *Dasein* has to "hold out into the nothing" (WM 103) because it requires an open space into which it can emerge. Without this space, it would have no place to go, and thus, it must recognize its debts to the spaces that allow it to be. *Dasein* cannot be itself without not being itself. It not only needs boundaries but also boundlessness in order to be. Without this it "could never be relate to beings or even to itself. Without the original revelation of the nothing, no selfhood and no freedom" (WM 103). Nothingness is not just a negation of beings; it is also a home that houses beings and a force that draws them out by enabling them to appear. It is the connective tissue between things that permits their unfolding: "The nothing does not merely serve as the counterconcept of being; rather, it originally belongs to their essential unfolding as such" (WM 104).

Heidegger asserts that "the nothing is more original than the 'not' and negation" (WM 97), because it refers to the connectedness of all things. This statement utterly confounded many of his Western interpreters and prompted them to argue that he had tumbled into a nihilistic abyss. Nothing could be further from the truth. If anything, this conception of nothingness marked Heidegger's departure from nihilism. He now acknowledges that without the "emptiness" of nothingness, our self-making would not be possible. Furthermore, nothingness is also the space between things that allows them to connect to each other and thereby engage in a process of mutual transformation. Opening one's soul to nothingness entails making a space for the entry of others.

In "What is Metaphysics," Heidegger claims that nothingness rears its head through the emotions of anxiety and love, which upon cursory examination seem to have little to do with one another. Yet, both reflect aspects of concern where indeterminacy and openness play a central role.

Love demands an openness of the self to another. Anxiety reflects discomfort with the idea that we are beings in perpetual progress: "The indeterminateness of that in the face of which and for which we become anxious is no mere lack of determination but rather the essential impossibility of determining it. Anxiety reveals the nothing" (WM 100–101). We are anxious when we are reluctant to relinquish the self's boundaries whereas love evokes the pleasurable aspect of letting go of such boundaries.

This letting go of boundaries is described in Heidegger's later works as *Gelassenheit.* The traditional connotation of "letting-be" (*Gelassenheit*) implies an attitude of neglect which has more in common with a perception of nothingness focussed on absence: "Ordinarily we speak of letting-be whenever, for example, we forgo some enterprise that has been planned. . . . To let something be has here the negative sense of letting it alone, of renouncing it, of indifference and even neglect" (ET 125). However, Heidegger wants to underscore the positive use of this term as opening:

> How is this essence of freedom to be thought? That which is opened up, that to which a presentative statement as correct corresponds, are beings opened up in an open comportment. Freedom for what is opened up in an open region legs beings be the beings they are. Freedom now reveals itself as letting beings be. (ET 125)

It permits a genuine engagement with things which does not attempt to manage them or subject them to our control:

> However, the phrase required now—to let beings be—does not refer to neglect and indifference but rather the opposite. To let be is to engage oneself with beings. … To let be—that is, to let beings be as the beings which they are means to engage oneself with the open region and its openness into which every being comes to stand, bringing that openness as it were, along with itself. (ET 125)

It is important not to simply equate letting-be with passivity. Every action depends in part on the actions of others and therefore Heidegger refuses to drive a wedge between activity and passivity. Once we view action as a process of also letting things be, then the focus shifts from a primarily conflictual view of relationships to one where emphasis is placed on the process of harmonization and the dialogical nature of action.

Recognizing the need for "passivity" in activity is therefore highly significant, for it allows us to bring ourselves into accord with other beings while at the same time recognizing that the authentic self emerges out of such accordance. This means that *Gelassenheit* should be a necessary component of our actions. We must act in such a way as to provide an opening for others. We are not just acting as empty containers in doing so, but rather we are allowing the self to be shaped by others so that it can be itself as an interconnected being. Things can never be as they are simply in and of themselves. They only become what they are through other things: "Wherever a present being encounters another present being or even only linger near it—but also where, as with Hegel, one being mirrors itself in another speculatively, there openness already rules, the free region is in play" (EP 441).

This kind of posture is also accentuated in *Contributions to Philosophy*, wherein Heidegger makes repeated reference to what he calls "reservedness" (*Verhaltenheit*), described as the midpoint between dismay and awe (CP 5). According to Heidegger, the groundlessness of the self triggers anxiety because we suddenly find ourselves alienated from all that we are traditionally riveted to. Initially we tremble at relinquishing the familiar, but eventually we experience the emancipatory effects of being catapulted into the expansive realm of the groundless non-ego self. This engenders feelings of awe. The "departure" from the self also signals a homecoming, whereby we become aware of the interconnectedness of all things that produce the self. For this reason, nothingness allows us to appreciate the interrelationship between the multiplicity of the world and the multiplicity that is the self.

Heidegger asserts that reservedness demands attentiveness to what he calls the "withdrawal" of Being. This withdrawal is described as a gift that heightens our awareness of the particularity of things. It is important to realize that Being is still present in the withdrawal. The withdrawal would only be considered an absence if Being is interpreted as substance rather than process. It is similar to the kind of withdrawal of the whole evident in Nietzsche's eternal return, when the moment is affirmed and all of eternity is embraced in doing so. Perhaps one of the easiest ways to shed light on this dynamic is to liken it to a kind of conversation. If one thinks of the self as developing through its interaction with others, then communication through language is a vital aspect of its authenticity. Yet, in order for me to converse with you, I must also occasionally withdraw or remain silent, so that you can speak. I am still present in my silence and both of us can become ourselves through the conversation. In this

way, my silence is both a way of moving towards you, as well as a withdrawal from you. Furthermore, by withdrawing I also allow your particularity to show itself by providing an opening for you. If I do not periodically remain silent, I cannot engage in a conversation with you. We do not only draw people out of themselves by speaking; we also draw them out through our silence. We must on occasion forget ourselves, so that other beings can be themselves. In the frenetic buzz of Western society, this has been neglected and Heidegger is exhorting us to respect these forgotten silences. If we were capable of saying everything at once, we would not be saying anything at all. Such withdrawal is essential because it allows us to see beings in a nonobjective way: "wherever plant, animal, rock, and sky become being without falling into objectness, there withdrawal of be-ing reigns" (CP 168). If each thing is seen in its distinctness and also in terms of the opening it provides for other things, then it cannot be considered radically separate and is therefore de-objectified. Withdrawal and *Gelassenheit* enable us to appreciate a being without turning it into equipment that exists primarily for our use since we must also provide the spaces that allow other things to appear.

Because withdrawal is seen as part of Being, Heidegger does not succumb to the Western philosophical habit of associating darkness with deprivation. He does not follow Plato's lead in making light the metaphor for truth, but rather insists upon the interplay between concealment and unconcealment. Heidegger invokes the Greek term for truth, namely *aletheia*, to emphasize this point, for it is composed of the prefix "a" (un) and *lath* (to be concealed). Reiner Schürmann points out that the word signals not only unconcealment but the undertow "back toward concealment."[9] For example, I can only highlight certain characteristics of a plant if its other aspects are concealed. Concealment allows me to focus on the varied aspects of the plant's being. To take this analogy a step further, different characteristics of the self are brought out in different circumstances, while others are concealed. We do not simply re-present objects to ourselves, rather, we connect with beings in such a way as to allow self and others to appear in a multitude of different ways. The attention to concealment manifests a respect for these differences. Concealment is akin to a kind of stepping back so that other things can come forward.

Truth for Heidegger is a kind of coming-together or gathering which can only take place through the interplay between concealment and unconcealment. Being does not conceal in order to tempt us to engage in an incessant chase for an elusive core. Rather concealment allows us to connect with both Being and other beings by allowing us to see them

in multiple lights. One aspect is hidden so that others can come to the fore. Furthermore, the darkness of concealment can remind us of the boundarylessness of Being. Nietzsche's repeated emphases on the importance of midnight are also instructive in this regard. Midnight is not simply a moment of delusion but breaks the boundaries between things and thus reminds us of the truth of their interconnection. It is not only darkness but also light which can blind.

These insights are poetically developed in Heidegger's concept of the clearing which he describes as a process by which we go from the darker density of the forest into an opening in the trees into which light can stream. Both the darkness of the forest and the opening of the clearing are aspects of truth. The forest must withdraw so that the light can come forth. Not only light, but also nothingness illuminates. We see the light in its opening only against the dark background that the forest provides:

> The forest clearing [*Lichtung*] is experienced in contrast to dense forest, called *Dickung* in our older language. The substantive Lichtung goes back to the verb *lichten*. The adjective *licht* is the same as "light." To lighten something means to make it light, free and open, eg., to make the forest free of trees at one place. The free space thus originating is the clearing. What is light in the sense of being free and open has nothing in common with the adjective "light". . . . Still, it is possible that a material relationship between the two exists. Light can stream into the clearing, into its openness and let brightness play with darkness in it. (EP 441–42)

Reinhard May points out that Heidegger's concept of the clearing may have developed out of his knowledge that the Chinese word for nothingness, namely *wu* (無), depicts the removal of trees from an area in order to open up a space.[10] Thus, it signifies not only the absence of trees, but also the opening that is provided for new growth to take place.

Rather than focusing solely on bringing the object to us, or transforming it into a reflection of our consciousness, we must experience it in its particularity, which is irreducible to the concept. This is why nothingness must be incorporated into our understanding of truth. By attuning us to the essential groundlessness of all things, nothingness also awakens us to the notion that things do not have an essence that can be grasped in thought. The temptation to get to the bottom of things is abandoned, and instead the infinite possibilities for disclosure are celebrated. Truth is a multidirectional process in which we provide an opening

through which things can show themselves, while we also reveal ourselves through the openings provided by other things. Each encounter with a new being will disclose different aspects of both the self and the being. We need the openings of others in order to be ourselves. Withdrawal is necessary so that accord can be established: "what brings into accord is not nothing, but rather a concealing of being as a whole" (ET 129). Truth is not a way of grasping the world, but a way of participating and connecting to it. The mystery of concealment is part of the joy of truth:

> The concealment of beings as a whole, untruth proper, is older than every openness of this or that being. It is also older than letting-be itself, which in disclosing already holds concealed and comports itself towards concealing. What conserves letting-be in this relatedness to concealing? Nothing less than the concealing of what is concealed as a whole, of beings as such, i.e., the mystery; not a particular mystery regarding this or that, but rather the one mystery—that, in general, mystery (the concealing of what is concealed) as such holds sway throughout man's Dasein. (ET 130)

The later Heidegger resists what he calls the "compulsion to ground", which is endemic to Western philosophy: "The understanding demands that there be a foundation for its statements and assertions. Only founded statements are intelligible" (PR 3). Human understanding rests on the illusion that it can get to the "bottom of what is encountered" (PR 3). But getting to the bottom of things robs us of all wonder, and effaces the variegated splendour of the world. We can only get to the bottom of a thing by deliberately ignoring its multidimensionality.

Heidegger is not maintaining that we ought to sit back quiescently and simply surrender ourselves to external influences. He insists that we keep in mind that our actions, which include thought, are not just ways of imposing our vision on the world, but ways in which we allow other things to be: "… letting beings be, which is an attuning, a bringing into accord, prevails throughout and anticipates all the open comportment that flourishes in it" (ET 129). Nothingness and the concomitant emptying of the self allow us to accept the other as other, without merely trying to reduce her or him to a mirror image of the self. It is the boundless nature of the opening that helps to engender a respect for particularity. Heidegger insists that we must learn to be silent, so that other voices can be heard. And we must keep this silence in mind, even when we are speaking, so the echoes of silence resound in the spoken word.

Nothingness and the Dao

The predominant and largely positive role that nothingness plays in Daoist writing provides a stark contrast to many Western philosophical works, where nothingness is greeted with apprehension and dread. What is immediately noticeable to the Western reader is that, while there is repeated reference to nothingness in these writings, there is virtually no trace of nihilism to be found in these texts. While this can in part be attributed to historical factors, it is also characteristic of an approach to existence which stresses the interconnectedness rather than the separateness of all things. Thus, an elucidation of nothingness in the works of Zhuangzi and Laozi helps not only to illuminate Western presumptions about the "abyss" but also highlights the shift in perspective that characterizes the later Heidegger, who borrowed many of his ideas with respect to nothingness from Daoist texts.

Both the early Heidegger and Nietzsche see nothingness as the negative limit that forces the individual to create meaning freely in an attempt to fend off an encroaching abyss. While Nietzsche pays homage to the power of nothingness that Zarathustra confronts, it is viewed primarily as a negative force that catapults him towards an almost rebellious affirmation of life. Furthermore, individual death is seen as symptomatic of a larger meaninglessness and therefore nihilism emerges out of a worldview which grants the subject primacy. It is against the backdrop of nothingness that the contours of the individual are brought into sharp relief, impelling her or him to carve out a "unified whole" out of the fragments that compose the self. By threatening to dissolve all boundaries, nothingness encourages the individual to demarcate them. In a philosophical tradition which privileges individuation, nothingness is interpreted primarily in the negative sense of deprivation. While I have pointed out that Nietzsche's notion of the eternal return also tacitly (and perhaps unwittingly) provides an alternative understanding of nothingness as opening, his insistence on nothingness as a force of negation is never entirely abandoned. Here he differs from the later Heidegger, who did shift his emphasis from a negative understanding of nothingness to one that is predicated on openness.

Rather than casting being and nothingness as polar opposites, Daoist thought consistently underlines their complementary nature. For the early Heidegger and Nietzsche, being and nothingness are connected through their opposition. Daoist philosophy stresses the entanglement of being *and* nothingness while viewing nothingness

itself as creative rather than as the negation that stimulates human creativity:

> "… non-existence" I call the beginning of Heaven and Earth. "Existence" I call the mother of individual beings. Therefore does the direction towards non-existence lead to the sight of the miraculous essence, the direction towards existence to the sight of spatial limitations. (DDJ 1)

This passage helps to underscore an important point, for it makes nothingness primary. From the perspective of Western tradition, which tends to equate being with substance, this seems incomprehensible. But the fact that nothingness is associated with the beginning in Daoism suggests that the interconnectedness and oneness of all things assumes priority over the divisions between them. This does not imply that existence and nothingness are mutually exclusive, for as I will show, each is part of the other. One of the foremost interpreters of Laozi, Wang Bi, suggests that the notion of *wu* (nothingness) is central to an understanding of the *Daodejing* and uses it to describe the nature of the Dao itself. In his interpretation of the opening lines of the text, Wang Bi maintains that non-being is a point of origin:

> … all being originated from nonbeing. The time before physical forms and names appeared was the beginning of the myriad things. After forms and names appear, "dao" develops them, nourishes them, provides their formal shape and completes their formal substance, that is, becomes their Mother. This means that the Tao produces and completes things with the formless and nameless.[11]

Wang Bi's analysis suggests *wu* is neither simply the negation of being but rather has a kind of mysterious presence as the underlying unity of all things. Alan K. Chan builds upon Wang Bi's analysis to suggest that *wu* has a fundamental substance which is both "ontologically distinct from and prior to 'being.'"[12] In the work of Laozi which emphasizes the interconnectedness and oneness of all things, "non-existence" is primordial because it highlights the nondifferentiation between beings. *Wu* cannot be named, but it is precisely that which ties the ten-thousand things together and makes them one. Existence as distinguished from nothingness is the site of particularity and the "ten thousand things."

Indeed, Heidegger's notion that nothingness is "more primary than the not and the negation" may be partly indebted to Daoist thought which also sees nothingness as a kind of beginning. By suggesting that nothing-

ness antecedes heaven and earth, Laozi intimates that it is related to the wholeness of the Dao. Existence, as distinguished from nothingness is the site of particularity and the ten thousand things (*wanwu* 万物). While existence depends on boundaries that allow us to differentiate things, nothingness is the radical openness that allows them to connect. Without differentiation there could not be connection. But at the same time, it is important not to demarcate existence and nonexistence or being and nothingness too sharply from one another. The *Daodejing* also emphasizes that together the two which "are one in origin" and "different only in name" (DDJ 1) constitute the whole. Things are unique not only because they are differentiated from each other but also because they are undifferentiated from each other. This is why there can be no being without nothingness and no nothingness without being. Neither one is simply the derivative of the other, for they are equiprimordial.

Because nothingness cannot be expressed in names, the *Daodejing* begins with a series of what appear to be negations. This should not be interpreted simply as an incorrigible skepticism but rather as a reverence for that which cannot be spoken:

> The Dao that can be expressed
> Is not the eternal Dao.
> The name that can be named
> Is not the eternal name. (DDJ 1)

Our finite names will always fall short of the infinite Dao which is being spoken about. The criticism of language manifests a kind of respect for the Dao and is intended to preserve a sense of wonder in relation to it. It also opens up a path for nonverbal forms of knowing.

> … day and night follow each other and we have no idea why. Enough, enough! Morning and night exist, we cannot know more about the Origins than this. Without them, we don't exist, without us they have no purpose. This is close to our meaning, but we cannot know what creates things to be thus. It is as if they have a Supreme Guidance, but there is no grasping such a One. (Zh 2, 10)

Heidegger might add that, by continuously undermining language it is nevertheless compelled to use, Daoism avoids the illness of the west, which was to transform *logos* into *ratio*. In Heidegger's view, the tendency to equate logos with rationality obscured the original meaning of the term

logos, which means "to gather things together." Rather than trying to ground things, Daoist language is self-critical in order to emphasize the groundlessness of what it is describing. The Dao is something that will always elude human expression because it can never be subjected to limited human categories: "To use what has a boundary to pursue what is limitless is dangerous; with this knowledge, if we still go after knowledge we will run into trouble" (Zh 3, 22). The unity the Dao produces is formless and therefore the metaphysical impetus to describe it must be resisted for the use of words necessarily thrusts form upon it:

> One looks for it and does not see it:
> its name is 'seed.'
> One listens for it and does not hear it:
> its name is 'small'.
> These three cannot be separated,
> Therefore, intermingled they form the One . . .
> It returns again to non-existence.
> This is called the formless form,
> the objectless image.
> This is called the darkly chaotic.
> Walking towards it one does not see its face;
> Following it one does not see its back.
> If one hold fast to the Dao of antiquity
> in order to master today's existence
> one may know the ancient beginning,
> This means: Dao's continuous thread. (DDJ 14)

A suggestion of this sort surfaces even in the work of Nietzsche, who on most occasions describes nothingness as the abyss. However, near the end of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, there is an outpouring of joy that celebrates the midnight hour precisely because it collapses the boundaries between things: "a scent and odour of eternity, an odour of roseate bliss, a brown, golden wine odour of ancient happiness, of intoxicated midnight's dying happiness, which sings: *The world is deep: deeper than day can comprehend!*" (Z IV: 19). Here, Nietzsche expresses his appreciation for formlessness, and midnight provides a perspective that the Apollonian day cannot offer by revealing the deep undifferentiated unity of all things.

The experience of nothingness is necessary, in order to free us from an excessive attachment to words, because it can help reveal a truth that names all too frequently conceal. Words necessarily draw boundaries

impelling human beings to forget that the nature of a particular being can only be known through its interconnection with other beings. While the maze of networks that any entity is entangled in is infinite, the ultimate essence of a thing can never be postulated. This is why nothingness makes us aware of the "thisness" of a thing, which is irreducible to thought. For example, some of the most intimate moments in friendship are often experienced in silence. There are occasions when speech would ruin a kind of nonverbal understanding between people. It is in the interest of preserving this nonverbal form of knowing that nothingness must be safeguarded. When names are substituted for the direct encounter with things themselves, we can sink into a comfortable familiarity which nevertheless distances us from the things at hand. The Daoist exhortation to foster nothingness reminds us that the phenomenological call to go "to the things themselves" demands an attunement to nonverbal forms of knowing that sharpen our sense of the particularity of a thing that is not confined to words.

In contrast to Laozi, Zhuangzi's writing puts less direct emphasis on the cosmological understanding of nothingness as a kind of primordial source. But Zhuangzi still invokes the concept in order to point to problems of our understanding. In the *Zhuangzi*, there is a brilliant passage that underscores the interplay between being and nothingness, and also describes the gradual movement away from attunement to nothingness:

> In the beginning they did not know that anything existed; this is virtually perfect knowledge, for nothing can be added. Later they knew that some things existed but they did not distinguish between them. Next came those who distinguished between things, but did not judge things as 'being' or 'not being.' It was when judgments were made that the Tao was damaged, and because the Tao was damaged, love became complete. (Zh 2, 14)

Here, a lack of knowledge is described as the most perfect knowledge because nothing is yet seen as differentiated from anything else. Later, it became known that things existed but no distinctions were made between them, because they were still viewed in terms of their interconnectivity rather than in terms of their separateness. Next distinctions were made, but being and non-being were not separated from each other. This suggests that non-being is recognized as an aspect of being because the opening that connects one thing to other things is recognized. Therefore, things are seen as distinct but not as isolated from each other. Finally,

when judgments were made, and an account of things was given that focused on their differentiation from each other, human beings strayed furthest from the Dao. And yet, because the Dao was damaged, love became complete because the irresistible pull of nothingness is still manifested in the desire to return to the nondifferentiated oneness of all things. The suggestion, that the most perfect knowledge is a lack of knowledge, makes clear that, for Zhuangzi, it is the undifferentiated nature of things that assumes priority.

Neither Laozi nor Zhuangzi would insist that we try to dispense with names. But at the same time, we should maintain an awareness of nothingness that reminds us of the nonoppositional nature of opposites: "If all on earth acknowledge the beautiful as beautiful, then thereby the ugly is already posited. If all on earth acknowledge the good as good, then thereby is the non-good already posited" (DDJ 2). On one level, this suggests that we think in dichotomizing terms. For example, we can only know what heat is in relation to cold. If I plunge my hand into two pots of water of differing temperatures, I will describe the difference between them as hot and cold. At first glance, this appears to be simple negation, because I identify one by virtue of the way in which it is *not* the other. Yet, at the same time, if hot and cold were not somehow connected to each other through their opposition, then I would also be incapable of comparing them. To say that hot and cold are experienced relative to each other suggests that they are intertwined. And because of this entanglement there is a sense that there is no difference between them. The argument, that they are absolutely distinct from each other, presupposes that the fundamental relationship between things is one of division. But there is another perspective which is no less valid. This constitutes the awareness that each thing is also a confluence of all other things that exist. In Indian philosophy this understanding is often described through the analogy of the fishnet, where an individual life is portrayed as a single knot which is both distinct from others and yet at the same time is connected to every other knot in the net. Because it is connected to everything else, it *is* everything else. From the perspective of interconnectedness, all things are their opposites.

For Zhuangzi, moral judgments such as good and evil emerge out of a worldview that sees things primarily in terms of their division from one another. However, from the perspective of the radical openness represented by nothingness, everything is one, and so the distinction between right and wrong also begins to fade away. When it is said that the sage "manages to harmonize right and wrong" (Zh 2, 14), this is not a prescrip-

tion for a kind of moral relativism in which anything goes. Rather it means that from a standpoint which regards things as nondifferentiated, the distinction between good and evil becomes less pronounced. However, Zhuangzi is not implying that the sage is completely indifferent to the course of events. Because he recognizes that things are both differentiated from each other and not differentiated from each other, he must harmonize between right and wrong rather than dispensing with morality entirely. He must balance his knowledge of the separation between things, with the understanding that they are also connected. Thus, Daoist philosophy would deny the possibility that good can every completely triumph over evil for without evil there could be no good:

> With regard to what is right and wrong, I say not being is being and being is not being. . . . But let us not get caught up in discussing this. Forget about life, forget about worrying about right and wrong. Plunge into the unknown and the endless and find your place there. (Zh 2, 20)

We might raise the objection that the sage's activity leaves us with few signposts that can help determine the proper moral course of action. But it is important to emphasize that the Daoist opposition to moral dogmatism is not intended to foster reckless moral abandon, but rather allows the sage to resolve conflict in a more contextualized manner. An attunement to nothingness can help foster a kind of moral pragmatism which neither relies solely on the applications of abstract rules, nor depends on an unthinking compliance with rigid moral rituals. For example, the Daoist sage could avoid the kind of labeling which needs to define an enemy in order to reassure itself of its own goodness. Furthermore, if my enemy's allegedly "immoral" behaviour is recognized as somehow having been provoked by my own, the boundaries between good and evil also become more blurred. If the dividing lines between good and evil are drawn too sharply, then one creates the very enemies that one purports to avoid. Nothingness can help to remind us of the divisive effects of moral labeling.

When Nietzsche rails against Judeo-Christian morality, insisting that the distinctions between good and evil disguise a latent power dynamic, he is lodging a complaint that is not altogether different from that of Daoist thinkers. In fact, the insights which Daoist texts provide can also help to shed light on Nietzsche's posture of going beyond good and evil. The notion that Nietzsche is an absolute moral relativist who wants to

tear all existing moralities asunder in order to allow creative flourishing no matter what consequences might ensue is too simple. Nietzsche's condemnation of morality also arises from the sense that all things are connected to each other that comes across most strongly in his image of the eternal return. Thus, an approach that aims to overcome morality does not necessarily extol violence and bloodshed, especially if it is predicated on an understanding that all things are connected. There is no suggestion in the works of either Laozi or Zhuangzi that the sage employ violent means to achieve harmony. On the contrary violence is explicitly shunned. Having said this, it is also important to recognize that Nietzsche does not abhor violence and indeed believes it to be inevitable because the boundaries which separate things are viewed by him to be as powerful as the forces that connect them.

Daoist thinkers want to avoid precisely the kind of divisiveness that Nietzsche thinks makes violence and conflict an inevitable part of the process of life. For Daoist thinkers, boundaries are often considered a source of anguish. While the two German philosophers are initially preoccupied with self-making, Daoist philosophy is concerned to obtain release from the self. When Heidegger emphasizes that the limits posed by birth and death makes the self an object of our care or concern, he is implying that such a commitment to self is desirable. Laozi and Zhuangzi are less comfortable with such an attachment to the self, because they insist that it is the cause of much division.

Having outlined the difference between these approaches, I would also emphasize that they are not necessarily antithetical, since both manifest a desire to come to terms with our finitude. While the authentic self of the early Heidegger struggles to make a whole out of the self, the Daoist sage tries to render his soul so open that it participates in the kind of openness that is the Dao. Here too, the sage is grappling with the fact that he as a finite being is "thrown" into an infinite universe. He becomes a kind of non-self (*wu ji* 無己) that does not cling to the self, but rather recognizes that his selfhood emerges through his interaction with others. The sage creates by letting-be and providing the spaces into which things can emerge. His wisdom inheres in the ability to cultivate harmony and to succeed in this endeavour, he must be attuned to the power of nothingness:

> The perfect man, in contrast, concentrates his spirit upon that which was before the beginning and rests in the strangeness of being in the fields of nothingness. Like water he flows without form, or pours out into the great purity. (Zh 32, 290)

The Daoist sage "remains undeserted" because his nonaction allows other things to go towards him. In this way, he is able to find fullness in emptiness:

> Thus also is the Man of Calling
> He dwells in effectiveness without action.
> He practices teaching without talking.
> All beings emerge
> and he does not refuse himself to them.
> He generates and yet possesses nothing.
> He is effective and keeps nothing.
> When the work is done
> he does not dwell with it.
> And just because he does not dwell
> he remains undeserted. (DDJ 2)

This provides a striking contrast with Zarathustra who does not tiptoe lightly through the world like the sage, but creates waves wherever he goes. From a Daoist perspective, Zarathustra is constantly gripped by an agonizing solitude because he has not learned the art of silence.

This type of activity the sage engages in is often referred to as *wu-wei* (無為), which is frequently translated as non-action: "In stillness they take actionless action. . . . Through actionless action they are happy, very happy; being so happy they are not afflicted by cares and worries . . ." (Zh 13, 107). However, this translation can be somewhat misleading for Western readers, since *wu-wei* does not imply the cessation of activity, but rather means that we should act in such a way that nothingness is part of one's action. Heidegger's concept of letting-be (*Gelassenheit*) resonates powerfully with the idea of *wu-wei*. One must provide an opening for other beings through one's action. This is by no means an easy task, which is why only the very few will become sages. If I am to establish accord between things, I must also be familiar with their *de* (德), or particular virtues, in order to provide the proper spaces that they can enter into. A pot that is to hold liquids must be tailored to that which it is intended to hold. Thus, nonaction is a very difficult skill to master, because it demands a sophisticated attentiveness to the openings in the world around one. Cook Ding expresses this when he describes his talent for butchery: "Between the joints there are spaces, and the blade of a knife has no real thickness. If you put what has no thickness into spaces such as these, there is plenty of room, certainly enough for the knife to work

through." (Zh 3, 23). Yet the cosmological understanding of nothingness and its practical application are not divorced. It is Cook Ding's awareness of spaces between things that allows him to work according to the spirit of the Dao and thereby return to the Dao in this way. His practical activity is also a spiritual experience and imbues his experience with a sense of oneness.

While Daoist writings are replete with the language of a spontaneous harmonization, this does not mean it is easily achieved. As the title of the second chapter in the *Zhuangzi*, "Working everything out evenly," suggests, harmony has to be actively cultivated. Harmonization allows us to experience activity with the calmness of nothingness. The authentic person or sage experiences and initiates movement but seems unaffected by it:

> He does not feel the heat of the burning deserts nor the cold of the vast Waters. He is not frightened by the lightning which can split open mountains, nor by the storms that can whip up the seas. Such a person rides the clouds and mounts upon the sun and moon, and wanders across and beyond the four seas. Neither death nor life concerns him, nor is he interested in what is good or bad! (Zh 2, 18)

The connection between harmony and stillness is continuously reinforced in Daoist thought: "Create emptiness up to the highest! Guard stillness up to the most complete. Then all things may rise together" (DDJ 16). According to Laozi, movement must become so peaceful that it mirrors nothingness: "Things in all their multitude: each one returns to its root. Returning to the root means stillness" (DDJ 16). It allows us to emphasize the harmonious rather than conflictual potential between things. This offers a stark contrast to the frenetic movement of Nietzsche and Heidegger's authentic individuals, who are spurred to act because of the threat that nothingness poses, as the cessation of all activity. In Daoism, movement is experienced as stillness not because we are rendered passive, but because the cultivation of harmony is intended to minimize conflict and tension, thereby providing serenity in change. For Nietzsche, an acceptance of change implies that we must embrace its turmoil. Conversely, Daoist thinkers prevail upon us to experience the seamless and quiet nature of change.

The propensity of the Daoist sage to be inconspicuous would seem to prize humility while Nietzsche appears to celebrate a kind of hubris. However, one could argue that what is expected of the Daoist sage is

much more difficult to achieve than what is demanded of the *Übermensch*. The *Übermensch* must rebel against death because he admits discomfort with his mortality. While he is asked to embrace his finitude in order to open himself up to the interactive processes that create the cycles of eternity, this is by no means an easy task because Nietzsche acknowledges that the boundaries of the self isolate as well as bond. The Daoist sage's release from the self is more complete, demanding that he see his limits only as openings: "just imagine what can be achieved by one who is in control of Heaven and Earth and who encompasses all life, who simply uses his physical body as a place to dwell, whose ears and eyes he knows only convey fleeting images, who knows how to unite all knowledge and whose heart never dies" (Zh 5, 39). Because he becomes indifferent to his own mortal body, the sage achieves a kind of eternity.

Daoist thinkers might conclude that a failure to heed nothingness precipitated the crisis of nihilism in the West by concealing the knowledge that all things are connected. For Nietzsche, symbols of absolute power, such as the Christian God or Platonic forms, camouflage the human desire for omnipotence and perfection. Eventually the symbol was revered in and of itself and a dangerous schism developed between life and this "super-terrestrial" realm. That which the symbol leaves out is summarily ignored and therefore there is very little possibility for the revitalization of such abstractions. As a result, the symbols collapse and life is pronounced meaningless. Daoist thinkers would agree with a diagnosis which holds that abstract symbols had become too powerful in Western philosophy. Daoist words act as pointers rather than essences, and thus the expectations placed upon them are not as great. From a Daoist perspective, one could argue that what leads to the nihilism Nietzsche describes is not the idea of god itself, but the notion that such a god could be described. A discomfort with silence and speechlessness in Western thought results in a gradual whittling away of the meaning in speech, which becomes what Heidegger refers to as *Gerede* (idle talk). Furthermore, because many Western thinkers ignore the fact that a thing cannot be grasped by the name, they ignore the irreducible thisness of the thing that allows us to form connections with it. Perhaps an analysis of friendship can help to underscore how this process works. On the one hand, we become close friends with another person because we are alike. At the same time, friendship is also based on the encounter with the "strangeness" of a friend who is radically other to me. This may in part be what prompts Nietzsche to say that his enemies are his best friends: "In your friend you should possess your best enemy. Your heart should feel closest

to him when you oppose him" (Z I 14). It is the combination of strangeness and familiarity that allows us to become close, for it shows an appreciation of connectedness that arises through the particularity of two different things:

> Have you ever watched your friend asleep—to discover what he looked like? Yet your friend's face is something else beside. It is your own face, in a wrought and imperfect mirror . . . The friend should be a master in conjecture and in keeping silence: you must not want to see everything. Your dream should tell you what your friend does when awake. (Z I 14)

When we attempt to expunge "strangeness" or "uncanniness" from experience then we also have a much harder time forming social bonds. If nothingness is not part of our understanding of difference, we will begin a precipitous fall towards social atomisation.

While there are many Western thinkers who readily acknowledge the importance of difference and consequently admit that knowledge is perspectival, this observation is often tinged with despair. Not only is such despair notably absent in Daoist thought, but human "limitations" are greeted with jubilation and also laughter. Furthermore, because oneness is seen as predicated on the connections between things, differences in perspectives are not seen as limits to the understanding. When one perspective is assumed to be all encompassing, it becomes the source of a joke. For example, in a humorous anecdote, Zhuangzi refers to a woman who is revered by human beings for her beauty, but whose presence the animals flee instantly upon sight:

> Monkeys mate with each other, deer go with deer. People said that Mao Chiang and Li Chi were the most beautiful women in the world, but fish seeing them dived away, birds took off into the air and deer ran off. Of these four, who really knows true beauty. (Zh 2, 17)

Zhuangzi suggests that this beauty is relative, and that the animals merely have a different perspective of beauty than human beings. This is not interpreted as misguided knowledge on the part of either human beings or animals. Zhuangzi appears to place much more emphasis on the multiplicity of the world than Laozi, as is evidenced by the diverse panoply of human beings and animals that parade through his stories.

There is a strong connection between the particularity of things and nothingness. In a very complex passage, Zhuangzi elucidates this link:

> Nothing exists which is not 'that,' nothing exists which is not 'this.' I cannot look at something through someone else's eyes, I can only truly know something which I know. Therefore 'that' comes out of 'this' and 'this' arises from 'that.' This is why we say 'that' and 'this' are born from each other, most definitely. . . . When 'this' and 'that' do not stand against each other, this is called the pivot of the Tao. Compare birth with death, compare death with life; compare what is possible with what is not possible and compare what is not possible with what is possible; because there is, there is not and because there is not, there is. (Zh 12)

Many layers of meaning can be gleaned from this passage. On the one hand, it is clear that "this" and "that" are not one another. The fact that there is nothing which is neither "this" nor "that" indicates that each thing is radically distinct from the next and its particularity cannot be reduced to words. Zhuangzi uses the vague terminology of the "this" and "that" to point out that the specificity or "thisness" of a thing cannot be defined. Yet, at the same time, what a thing *is* only makes since through that which it *is not* since "this" and "that" are connected. Because of this connection, each thing is both "this" and "that." Each thing "is" what it "is not" because of the connection between things made possible by the openness of nothingness.

Furthermore, this passage illustrates that there is no contradiction between the one and the many for the continuity between the myriad of things makes the Dao one. Every single thing suggests and opens the door for a multitude of other things to emerge. Rather than the "many" reflecting the "one," each "one" also reflects and points to the "many." Furthermore, the one is and is not itself: "That which is One is One. That which is not One is also One" (Zh ch 6). This is a powerful testament to the unity in difference and the difference in unity.

An acknowledgement of differences in perspectives is therefore not a source of disunity but rather allows us to recognize our "partness." The presence of nothingness in each thing allows it to become a vehicle of interconnections. This is why an awareness of nothingness fosters a respect for difference. One becomes aware of one's own particularity by being exposed to perspectives that are different from one's own. Nothingness reminds us that our boundaries are also openings and not simply limits. While in much of Western thought, emphasis is often placed on commonalities as a basis for community, in Zhuangzi's thought, differences become the basis for unity. No one perspective in Daoism, including the human, is seen as inherently superior:

> If someone sleeps in a damp place, he will ache all over and will be half paralysed, but is it the same for an eel? If someone climbs a tree, he will be frightened and shaking, but is it so for a monkey? Out of these three, which is the wisest about where to live? Humans eat meat, deer consume grass, centipedes devours snakes and owls and crows enjoy mice. Of these four which has the best taste? (Zh 19, 158)

Nothingness refers to a kind of non-essentialism of all things. Without the presence of nothingness, we would not be aware of the fact that one thing is not the other. But the presence of nothingness also reminds us that one thing is the other for all things are interconnected. As in Western philosophy, there is a sense that the nothing differentiates, but this differentiation is necessary for things to come together. Nothingness is therefore present rather than absent:

> Thirty spokes surround the hub:
> In their nothingness consists the carriage's effectiveness.
> One hollows the clay and shapes it into pots.
> In its nothingness consists the pot's effectiveness.
> One cuts out doors and windows to make the chamber.
> In their nothingness consists the chamber's effectiveness.
> Therefore: what exists serves for possession.
> What does not exist serves for effectiveness. (DDJ 11)

In the original Chinese, the term translated here as possession is *li,* (利) which does not strictly mean possession, but is also used to describe benefit, advantage, effectiveness, or potential. Without the empty spaces, the pot could not hold things, nor could the spokes come together to form a wheel. In an essay entitled, "On the Thing," Heidegger directly appropriates these metaphors by emphasizing that the emptiness of the jug is what makes it a container. He points out that the purpose of the jug is to hold liquids as well as to pour, and therefore its nothingness not only allows the jug to hold things in place, but also permits it to gather things together. The empty space in a wine jug draws attention to the wine which it holds. But at the same time, the act of pouring allows the wine to become a source of interconnection. Both the distinctness and nondistinctness of things come into play in Heidegger's portrayal of the jug.

From Nihilism to Nothingness

From the perspective of Daoist thinkers, everything is interconnected and therefore there is no such thing as a pure ending or pure beginning: "There is the beginning; there is not as yet any beginning of the beginning. There is what is, and there is what is not, and it is not easy to say whether what is not, is not; or whether what is, is" (Zh 2, 15). Non-being is not only pure absence but also represents potentiality. There is never any pure beginning that is not an ending as well as a continuation. The end of one particular thing marks the beginning of another. Because endings and beginnings are always connected in Daoist thought, it shows little trace of a kind of Heideggerian or Nietzschean *Angst*. Nothingness marks the birth of all things, because it is no-thing in particular, and therefore represents endless potential as well as harmony. Richard Wilhelm points out that the deepest secret is *wu ji*: the non-beginning that is often represented by a simple circle.[13] The circle is both whole and infinite because each point along it can be seen as both beginning and end.

While nothingness in philosophical Daoism is seen as an opening, in Western thought it is often associated with closure. This is indicative of the individualist assumptions that undergird Western philosophy, for if we live primarily for the self, then "the nothing" constitutes a haunting spectre of finality indeed. Nietzsche's tightrope walker perceives nothingness as the horrifying abyss which signals the end of his movement. It is literally the dead-end that forces him to focus fully on the activity he is engaged in. Similarly, Heidegger's authentic person must confront his own death in order to remind himself of his potential as a being continuously in process. This is why death becomes an important cornerstone of the authentic experience in Heidegger's view. The absolute finality of death contrasts starkly with the open-endedness of Being, Yet, at the same time, and from a Daoist perspective, one could argue that if death were only an ending, then it could not draw attention to our potential. Thus, it must also be an opening. Heidegger concedes that death is only absolute from an individual's perspective, since the process of mourning allows the deceased to live on in the rituals of others. The act of mourning underscores the continuity that is made possible not only in spite of death but also through it. When we worship or pay homage to our ancestors, we are not simply mourning their passing but are reconsolidating the community's bonds.

In Daoist thought, death is a reminder of the interconnection of all things. There is no passing-away that is not also a coming-to-be. This is

why the Daoist sage confronts his own death with relative equanimity. He is not frightened by his mortality because he "simply uses his physical body as a place to dwell" (Zh 5, 39). He knows that "death and birth (being and non-being), are one and the same" (Zh 6, 52). Rather than viewing his self in terms of the constraints he faces, he regards himself as one thread in an infinite net. The boundaries of his body are perceived not as limits but as openings. For this reason he transcends his limitations not by struggling against them in a superman-like fashion, but by accepting them through the acknowledgement that they are also points of connection. The sage is described as a non-self not because he is devoid of personality, but because he allows his personality to develop out of interaction with others.

There is an account of nothingness as opening even in Nietzsche's writings that is directly linked to his understanding of the eternal return which reveals the fundamental connectedness of all things. However, Nietzsche would not want to permanently overcome the sense of individuation that divides things from each other. It is not only our interaction with others, but also a tenacious commitment to our own boundaries that makes us unique. Conversely, the Daoist sage does not experience nothingness as his own and release from the individuated ego-self is his constant aim: "Nothing seen; nothing heard. Embrace the spirit in quietness, the body with its own rightness. Be still, be pure, do not make your body struggle, do not disturb your essence" (Zh 11, 86). For the sage, individuation is associated with turmoil, discord, and grief. Yet in a sense, he too depends on the individuated beings that he is able to bring together in harmony. His freedom from self only has meaning in a world where there are beings who are not freed from self in quite the same way. In other words, the sage also depends on the not-sage in order to be a sage.

However, to claim that the paradoxes of individuation are completely ignored in Daoist philosophy would also be an unjust rendering of these texts. Zhuangzi's famous butterfly dream provides a subtle example. He admits that he cannot know whether he is a butterfly dreaming he is a man or a man dreaming he is a butterfly:

> Once upon a time I, Chuang Tzu, dreamt that I was a butterfly, flitting around and enjoying myself. I had no idea I was Chuang Tzu. Then suddenly I woke up and was Chuang Tzu again. But I could not tell, had I been Chuang Tzu dreaming I was a butterfly or a butterfly dreaming I was now Chuang Tzu? However, there must be some sort of difference between Chuang Tzu and a butterfly! We call this the transformation of things. (Zh 2, 20)

Zhuangzi's dream experience is significant for it recalls the transformation of one thing into another that constitutes the Dao's process. It is no accident that this vision comes to him in sleep which in itself dissolves the boundaries of the ego-self. From the perspective of the Dao, it is irrelevant whether or not Zhuangzi really is a butterfly or a man. Yet at the same time, in the end he acknowledges that there must be a difference between himself and the butterfly. Oneness can only be expressed in diversity, therefore Zhuangzi and the butterfly must cultivate their distinct natures. At the same time, without recognizing the insignificance of the difference that separates them, one might be tempted to overlook the unity between them. The paradox of Zhuangzi's dream is that it celebrates both the irrelevance and importance of this difference. Things are both one and the same and not one and the same at the same time.

Nietzsche would take issue with the life proposed by the sage, because in his view, nihilism is not to be permanently eradicated, rather, it must be transcended, over and over again. The agonizing depths of nihilism must be experienced in order for an affirmation of life to have meaning. For Nietzsche, there could be no celebration of difference without a kind of territorial division between self and non-self. Both a tenacious commitment to one's boundaries, and the self transformation made possible by overcoming them, create the colourful differences between things. This means that, for Nietzsche, conflict and harmony will be constant companions, while the Daoist ideal is of a world where conflict is reduced to an absolute minimum.

Heidegger, Nietzsche, Laozi, and Zhuangzi cross paths in their understandings of nothingness. For both Nietzsche and the early Heidegger, an awareness of nothingness helps to overcome a paralyzing nihilism in part because it helps shape the distinctive features of the individual. It serves as a powerful force of individuation that prevents us from succumbing fully to the kind of amorphous blob that is the herd. The experience of nihilism is largely foreign to Daoist thinkers because they focus on nothingness as an opening, thereby privileging interconnection over individuation. Nevertheless, it is unfair to say that Daoist philosophers completely ignore the importance of individuation, just as it would be a gross oversimplification to maintain that Western thinkers are blind to the importance of interconnection. Despite their differences, all four thinkers would concur that nothingness makes possible a unity based on the interconnection of particular beings, rather than a unity predicated on homogeneity and sameness. It allows us to relish both the unity in diversity and the diversity in unity.

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Chapter 4

Hierarchy and Equality

By linking the philosophy of Heidegger and Nietzsche with Daoism, I lean towards highlighting those aspects of their thoughts that celebrate interconnection, diversity, and openness. Undoubtedly, for many, this account will appear skewed, in light of the darker political side that is an integral part of both Nietzsche's and Heidegger's legacies. Both have been connected with the Nazi regime, albeit for different reasons. While the allegations that Nietzsche was a proto-Nazi are blatantly unfair (given his utter contempt for both militarism and German nationalism), his preference for aristocratic politics, replete with notions of rank ordering and a glorification of violence, certainly fly in the face of the democratic principles many of us hold in high esteem. Heidegger's political history is more tainted than that of Nietzsche, because he lent his explicit support to the Nazi regime, which he erroneously believed provided a political vehicle for renewing modern humanity's connection to Being.

Undoubtedly this readily leads to the conclusion that both Nietzsche's and Heidegger's distrust for absolute moral principles and truths eventuates in a kind of politics where the unrestrained show of force is not only permitted but exalted, thereby revealing the danger inherent in a philosophy that refuses to espouse clear moral precepts. However, here the comparison with Daoist thinking is instructive. Daoism, while not appealing to absolute or metaphysical principles, abhors political violence and coercion. Therefore, no automatic link can be made between a nonmetaphysical posture and political authoritarianism. Laozi envisions rule by a sage, but this rule is so subtle that it is almost unnoticed, and its intention is to help cultivate the particularities of the ten-thousand things, rather than brutally squash them.

While this is easily associated with a kind of clever Machiavellianism, such an interpretation presupposes that the ultimate objective of the sage ruler is the perpetuation of his own power. However, the purpose of the sage ruler is to create a dynamic whereby his rule would become unnecessary. Through the power of his example, he would foster a spontaneous cooperation between things that would eventuate in self-rule. The sage ruler is to become the conduit for anarchic balance and harmony between individuals.

The stark differences between the political attitudes of Nietzsche and Heidegger and the Daoist thinkers suggest that something besides an anti-metaphysical posture explains the political leanings of the two German philosophers. Furthermore, one must not ignore antiauthoritarian streaks that surface in Nietzsche, and become more pronounced in the later Heidegger as well. Heidegger's later writings seem to represent a reversal of the politics he espoused in the early 1930s, while Zarathustra can also be said to offer a democratic vision of social relationships. This suggests that the political positions of both Heidegger and Nietzsche are ambiguous and do not necessarily see their embodiment in the brutal Nazi politics of the 1930s.

I would argue that the authoritarian dimension of both Heidegger and Nietzsche is largely the result of their contempt for the dynamics of the herd. They both praise the individual who actively transforms himself and thereby stands out from the crowd. Because such self-transformation involves coming to terms with some of the most anxiety-producing aspects of our existence, both thinkers assume this is an activity only the very few would dare engage in. Furthermore, Heidegger and Nietzsche concur that nothingness, as a force of negation, is what spurs on the self-transforming activity of these exceptional individuals. The best political regime, from this perspective, is one which facilitates the flourishing of the few. Furthermore, hierarchical regimes do not shy away from conflict, allowing the brave self to emerge out of a process of struggle. Heidegger assumed that the destructive tactics of the Nazis were the mark of a regime willing to constantly recreate itself through total mobilization. Both Nietzsche and Heidegger seem oblivious to the fact that destruction often sets off pernicious spirals of violence rather than laying the groundwork for creative activity.

NIETZSCHE AND RANK ORDERING

As I have suggested in previous chapters, Nietzsche offers a very complex portrait of the self which challenges the notions of subjectivity upon

which much of Western thought has been predicated. Yet, he is often accused of being a radical individualist preoccupied with how the self can maximize its power in relation to others. This misunderstanding is in part due to the nature of Nietzsche's political positions, which seem to belie the complexity of his philosophy of subjectivity. He is best described as a neoaristocratic conservative who is not only a proponent of political hierarchy, but also considers exploitation, violence, and domination indelible features of the political scene.

Nietzsche's perspectives on politics often seem crude, particularly when evaluated against the corpus of his work. But it is important to bear in mind that politics is only of secondary interest to him. Any cohesive political unity demands a degree of social homogenization that he finds suspect although he admits it is inevitable. Because Nietzsche isolates cultural and religious factors from economic and social factors, his grasp of social stratification is fairly simplistic. He is oblivious to many of the power relationships that emerge out of the socioeconomic dynamic. His main interest lies in cultural evaluation, and he insists that prevailing cultural orientations represent the internalization of external norms that are imposed by a dominant social group. Cultural innovation is the work of the outsider, who does not simply succumb to existing trends but dares to forge a path of his own. This is why genuine creativity always occurs at times of political decline in Nietzsche's view: "All great ages of culture are ages of political decline: what is great culturally has always been unpolitical, even *antipolitical*" (TI I: 4). Thus, Nietzsche's primary interest in politics is not how to build the best social order, but rather to ascertain which regime is most like to facilitate the emergence of the independent creative genius who can effect cultural change. Politics appears to be a cumbersome necessity for Nietzsche, and is not regarded by him as a forum for developing the creative interaction between individuals.

According to Nietzsche, the sovereign individual is most likely to emerge from the womb of an aristocratic society:

> Every enhancement of the type 'man' has so far been the work of an aristocratic society . . . a society that believe in the long ladder of an order of rank and differences in value between man and man, and that needs slavery in some sense or other. Without the *pathos of distance* which grows out of the ingrained difference between strata . . . that other more mysterious pathos could not have grown up either—the craving for an ever new widening of distances within the soul itself, the development of ever higher, rarer, more remote, further-stretching more comprehensive states—in brief, simply the enhancement of the

> type 'man', the continual 'self-overcoming of man' to use a moral formula in a supra-moral sense. (BGE 257)

He bases this idea on a rather crude extrapolation of the theory of the will to power. Because all life forms have a desire to establish boundaries against others as well as to collapse them, the development of individual sovereignty always emerges in the context of struggle: "life itself is *essentially* appropriation, injury, overpowering of what is alien and weaker . . . exploitation belongs to the *essence* of what lives, as a basic organic function; it is a consequence of the will to power, which is after all the will of life" (BGE 259). In Nietzsche's view, aristocracy accepts struggle and conflict as the norm of political life.

Yet, when Nietzsche tries to render his politics consistent with his theory of the will to power, he willfully ignores many of his own insights concerning human agency. Indeed, Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* offers many images that would seem to hint at a much more serene and peaceful social vision. I have pointed out in previous chapters that the image of the eternal return in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* constitutes a celebration of the interconnection of all forms of life that celebrates the particularity of all things. Moreover the metaphor is a humbling one, because it reminds human beings that they are not at the centre of existence but rather just one minute part of an infinite cosmos.

Zarathustra is in search of companions who will be able to engage with him in genuinely interactive relationships and not simply parrot his views while following him blindly like sheep. His notion of friendship at least, seems inherently democratic: "I now go away alone my disciples! You too now go away and be alone! . . . Now I bid you lose me and find yourselves and only when you have all denied me will I return to you" (Z I: 22). This suggests that Zarathustra seeks friendships wherein each stimulates the other's development and growth. This would not be possible if relationships between people were predicated on conflict alone and Zarathustra repeatedly insists on the importance of love. Zarathustra makes it clear that neither tyrants nor slaves can be genuine friends (Z I 14). At the end of the book, the sign that comes to Zarathustra is not a sword dripping with blood, but the lion, who has been transformed from the rebellious nay-saying creature of the three metamorphosis into the gentle loving companion encircled by doves:

> . . . when it grew clear before him, there lay at his feet a sallow, powerful animal that lovingly pressed his head against his knee and would not

> leave him, behaving like a dog that has found his old master again. The doves, however, were no less eager than the lion with their love; and every time a dove glided across the lion's nose, the lion shook its head and wondered and laughed. (Z IV 20)

However, the lion emits an intimating roar when confronted with the higher men, suggesting that such tactics may be necessary to awaken the community from its slumber. Thus, the gentle moments in Zarathustra's experience often do not surface in his encounters with the herd-like community. This implies that Nietzsche believes violence to be an inevitable tool to shock the moribund community into creative action.

The struggle between the egotistical and non-egotistical aspects of the self unfolds in Zarathustra's account of the honey-offering. Zarathustra hopes to use his honey to lure towards him the diverse creatures of the resplendent sea which is "full of many-coloured fishes and crabs for which even the gods might long and become fishers and casters of nets" (Z IV 1). However, in a parody of Christ he uses the honey as bait to entice the creatures of his sea to approach his height: "And what belongs to *me* in all seas, my in-and-for-me in all things—fish *it* out for me, bring *it* here to me: I wait for it, I the wickedest of all fishermen" (Z IV 1). Others must be brought into the fold of the self in order to make Zarathustra happy. Yet, the honey is not Zarathustra's gift alone because it is gathered by his animals and produced by the bees and so in itself is a celebration of the interconnection of all things.

Zarathustra warns against the very egoistic tendencies he himself manifests in his account of friendship, insisting that the friend "should be a master in conjecture and in keeping silence: you must not want to see everything" (Z I 16). The other cannot simply be reduced to an extension of the self. At the same time, he insists that the other is a rough and imperfect mirror in which one sees one's own reflection (Z I 16). One must willingly recognize that the other both is and is not the self. In Nietzsche's view we cannot do without the tension between individuals, nor can we do without the bonds of love that unite them.

It is the difficulty in accepting the interconnection between individuals that accounts for the awkwardness of gift-giving. By giving a gift, one must also acknowledge one's indebtedness to those who enable us to give it. Each giving is also a receiving: "You compel all things to come to you and into you that they may flow back from your fountain as gifts of your love" (Z I: 22). Most people are averse to the idea of receiving, because they are afraid of the porous boundaries that exist between self and other.

This is why the hermit suggests to Zarathustra that the mob is not yet ready to receive gifts: " 'Give them nothing,' said the saint. 'Rather take something off them and beat them with it—that will please them best; if only it be pleasing to you!' " (Z P: 2). In this way, they are comforted by their distinct separation from others and they do not have to deal with the uncertainty of interconnection and the possibility that the boundaries between them are more nebulous than they are prepared to acknowledge. Nietzsche's analysis points to the irony inherent in the act of giving gifts, particularly when it is based on the notion of a reciprocal exchange of equivalents. Ostensibly one gives a gift to connect with others, but if a payment in kind is insisted upon, then one assiduously protects the boundaries of the self against the other. The exact exchange of equivalents ensures that the connection between individuals does not undermine the fundamental separateness of individuals.

Since Nietzsche's concept of the self is multifaceted, it is worth exploring why his politics, by comparison, are so one-sided. The references to love and affirmation scattered throughout his texts seem to be driven underground by his political vision, which excludes all social relationships that are not based on struggle for the upper hand. In fact, one could argue that his politics are almost a knee-jerk reaction to liberal democracy, which Nietzsche holds in utter contempt. Because he sees only two alternatives (namely liberal democracy or aristocracy), Nietzsche's preference rests with the latter.

In Nietzsche's view, liberal democracy was a direct outgrowth of Christianity, therefore it was equated with the sinister process of social leveling. While Christianity pretended to bestow respect upon each individual soul, in reality it was contemptuous of the individual because it demanded that each person become a replica of the other and engage in a never ending process of self-flagellation. Furthermore, the idea that Christianity developed communities was a chimera, in Nietzsche's view, for it forced each individual to bear the heavy burden of their guilt alone. Nietzsche's last men may huddle together for comfort, but they do not intertwine their fates. In fact, priests depended upon social isolation to maintain the power of God and church. Since guilt, before an omnipotent God, was ineradicable, people would willingly turn to their spiritual leaders and comply with their demands in an effort to seek some relief from this guilt. For Nietzsche, the only bonds between individuals were a common belief in God.

In Nietzsche's view, liberal democracy is a secularized outgrowth of this same power dynamic. Liberalism's apparent exaltation of the indi-

vidual invested with rights and inclinations is an appropriation of the Christian concept of the soul. Liberal ideals of justice, equality, and peace reflect the attempt to bring heaven to earth by preventing others from exercising their power: "Christianity as a denaturalization of herd-animal morality: accompanied by absolute misunderstanding and self-deception. Democratization is a more natural form of it, one less mendacious" (WP 215). Thus, the ideal of equality, in Nietzsche's view, is predicated on a pernicious contempt for the other and a desire to arrest his or her growth: ". . . one speaks of '*equal* rights'—that is, as long as one has not yet gained superiority one wants to prevent one's competitors from growing in power" (WP 86). While this is undoubtedly an oversimplification of liberalism, the connection is useful, for it helps to unveil the latent power dynamic of liberal democracy. In Christian practice, the individual soul was otherworldly and cut off from its surroundings just as the liberal individual is an abstract phenomenon that does not seem to have a social identity. Nietzsche insists liberalism spreads its homogenizing poison: ". . . now it is the herd instinct, the mediocre nature which is of value from any point of view, which gets its supreme sanction through Christianity. This mediocre nature at last grows so conscious of itself (acquires courage for itself—) that it arrogates even *political* power to itself" (WP 215). The material, social, and economic factors, which contribute to the self's formation, are ignored in classical liberalism. Because of this, the individual is held solely responsible for his social position, the alleged equality in theory allows for a tremendous inequality in practice. However, Nietzsche overlooks this aspect of liberal democracy since he mistakes an abstract identity for a substantive identity.

However, Nietzsche's political philosophy is instructive in demonstrating how liberal democracy can eventuate in authoritarianism, for he does not consider it surprising that an extreme nationalism and authoritarian state emerge out of the womb of liberal democracy. Since the Christian self is heavily burdened with guilt, it is rendered passive and therefore is easily manipulated by the powers of the church. However, the belief in God eventually wanes, in part due to the success of liberal democracy in making life so comfortable that God is no longer needed. This precipitates a crisis in meaning, because individuals who are isolated need something to imbue them with a sense of belonging after God has been dethroned. In Nietzsche's view, it is the state that fills in this vacuum by propagating a pernicious nationalism and celebrating nationalist icons. Liberalism creates the very hollowness and social isolation that impels individuals to look to a strong arm to fill the void. The social atomization

cultivated by liberalism makes the authoritarian state possible. According to Nietzsche, the modern state's appetite would not be satiated until it had devoured everything: "this lies and crawls out of its mouth: 'I, the state, am the people . . . On earth there is nothing greater than I: the ordering finger of 'God am I'-thus roars this monster' " (Z I: 11). Nietzsche was prophetic in his suggestion that, as the new idol, the state would usurp the place once occupied by the Christian God.

According to Nietzsche, liberal democracy, just like Christianity, offers its opiate. While Christianity promises eternal life and peace, liberal democracy promotes a mindless consumption, which prevents individuals from seeing the power structure they are a part of. Thus, Nietzsche saw what many liberal thinkers in the West still refuse to see; namely that there may be a connection between liberal democracy and the authoritarian regimes that emerge out of the social isolation liberal democracy fosters. In short, liberal democracy is a chimera because individuals do not thereby shape their own future but are tricked into believing that they do: "Parliamentarianism—that is public permission to choose between five basic public opinions—flatters and wins the favour of all those who would like to *seem* independent and individual, as if they fought for their opinions" (GS 174). Nietzsche would not have been surprised to see the Nazi state emerge out of the Weimar republic and it is highly doubtful he would have been supportive of a totalitarian regime. The "individual" of liberal democracy is akin to the last man in *Zarathustra* who would rather worship a braying ass than nothing at all, because he is in desperate need for belonging. Indeed, he is separate from others, but he is not unique. Because he lacks possibilities for interactive relationships with others, the only possibilities (of belonging) open to him are worship of a common idol. The choice of the "ass" as an icon in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* indicates that it no longer matters what form this idol takes.

Nietzsche condemns liberal democracy because of its totalizing tendencies, which attempt to cut individuals off from possibilities of growth. He does not believe in liberalism's claim that it promotes self-development. In fact, one could argue that he condemns liberal democracy for the totalitarian streak he believes it harbors. He claims that liberal institutions "cease to be liberal as soon as they are attained: later on, there are no worse and no more thorough injurers of freedom than liberal institutions" (TI: 9 38). The herd's tentacles will leave no aspect of life untouched and the tyranny of public opinion will take hold. For Nietzsche, democracy is equivalent to mob rule: "The arming of the people—is ultimately the arming of the mob" (WP 754).

Nietzsche considers liberal democracy to be the outcome of attempts by the weak to maintain their control. He does not consider the possibility that such weakness is actively cultivated by those who hold the reins of power in order to ensure that the masses remain pliable. In short, what may be problematic about liberal democracy is precisely the aristocratic element that is obscured through its alleged exaltation of the individual. Thus, Nietzsche's political analysis commits the rather facile error of dividing society into weak and strong types, without thinking more deeply about the dynamic out of which such weakness and strength emerges.

Because Nietzsche cannot envision any alternative conceptions of democracy, he considers aristocracy to be the best possible regime because it is less likely to undermine creative flourishing. Lower types "must be reduced and lowered to incomplete human beings, to slaves, to instruments" (BGE 258) so that the strong are free to engage in acts of self-creation. Nietzsche's main preoccupation is not what would constitute the best political regime, but which regime would allow the flowering of creative types.

Contemptible though Nietzsche's political views may be, it is important to recognize that the kind of aristocratic hierarchy he has in mind spurns modern class-societies, which are fuelled by the desire for material and economic progress The kind of elitism we see today, in which an economic elite maintains a stranglehold on society is also condemned by Nietzsche, as it represents a culturally impoverished social order that is motivated by the same desire for comfort he identifies in democracy:

> It is clear, what I combat is economic optimism: as if increasing expenditure of everybody necessarily involves the increasing welfare of everybody. The opposite seems to me to be the case: *expenditure of everybody amounts to a collective loss: man is diminished*—so one no longer knows what *aim* this tremendous process has served. (WP 866)

In fact, Nietzsche sporadically demonstrates sympathy for the working classes, which are reduced to a mechanical, slave-like existence. He argues that such a life results in "absolute regularity, punctilious and unthinking obedience, a mode of life fixed once and for all, fully occupied time, a certain permission, indeed training for 'impersonality,' for self-forgetfulness, for *incuria sui*" (GM III 18). At the same time, Nietzsche is no champion of equality. He believes that such class differences are necessary because there are always those who thrive at the expense of

others. In Nietzsche's view, physical survival necessitates that social orders be founded on the backbreaking labour of the many: "A higher culture can come into being only where there are two castes of society: the working caste and the idle caste capable of true leisure; or to express it more emphatically, the caste of forced labour and the caste of free labour" (HAH 439). Because Nietzsche is primarily concerned with the development of the "type-man," the improvement of conditions for the masses was completely irrelevant to him.

Nietzsche's political analysis is not terribly sophisticated. He failed to realize that a socially and economically stratified society, in and of itself, could produce the kind of cultural leveling he is so quick to condemn. The problem with Nietzsche's analysis is that it is almost exclusively based on cultural criteria and does not pay sufficient attention to either the economic dynamics of the capitalist system (which take on a momentum of their own), nor to the effects of the bureaucratization of modern society. The mind-numbing work of the laborer cannot be explained by the desire of the weak to survive, for if this were the case, surely they would find a more rewarding means of doing so.

However, in revealing the lust for power that underlies the democratic sentiment, Nietzsche's analysis is useful for elucidating how a populist impulse, combined with an authoritarian streak, is evident in the politics of the New Right. These "new" authoritarians preach the virtues of democracy, not because they truly value creativity, difference, and reciprocity, but because they see the masses as a malleable instrument they can use to give an air of legitimacy to their regime. By unveiling the darker face of democracy, Nietzsche exposes its authoritarian underbelly. For Nietzsche, it comes as no surprise that a regime, which professes the virtues of democracy, is brutal in its repression of dissent for he sees the cultivation of equality as the deliberate production of complacent clones. He mistakenly assumes equality reflects the will to power of the weak, but does not consider the possibility that as a formal ideal it is often used by the strong to convince citizens that the responsibility for their suffering lies with them alone.

Because Nietzsche places so much importance on culture (that in his view usually is furthered through the extraordinary individual), he sees aristocracy as the only viable political regime. The extraordinary individual is also able to relinquish his boundaries in order to grow. However, this is not important for fostering harmonious relationships with others, but rather to precipitate self-development. Because he believes the exceptional individual is the motor of cultural evolution, Nietzsche condones

regimes that would be morally suspect to many of us. In fact, Nietzsche's politics reveals that despite the important headway he makes in affirming interconnection, it is still the process of individuation for which he reserves the highest regard. Because of this, he is able to justify a life of misery for the many so that the few who are comfortable with the constantly changing nature of their existence can thrive. Only the extraordinary individual accepts both the porousness of the self's boundaries and the separateness of his existence with others. Nietzsche's aristocratic politics does not necessarily thwart his metaphysics of subjectivity. Mark Warren suggest that there is an irreconcilable contradiction in his work which combines a postmodern philosophy with a premodern politics.[1] In his view, Nietzsche's archaic politics does not pay tribute to the complex subjectivity he describes. To some extent this is true. Yet, Nietzsche also makes clear that the complexity of the subject can only be fully experienced by the very few and this is why he favours aristocratic regimes, which are not afraid of recognizing the fundamental inequality of human beings.

The Dark Side of Heidegger's Nihilism

While the accusations directed against Nietzsche for being a proto-Nazi are unfair, the same is not true of Heidegger, whose political history is indelibly tainted due to the explicit support that he lent the Nazi regime. In 1933, Heidegger accepted the position of rector at the University of Freiburg, calling for a fundamental renewal of the university. In his "Rektoratsrede" to mark the occasion, he argued that a "spiritual world alone guarantees a nation its greatness" (RR 13), which he later claimed represented an effort to shield the university from the onslaught of increasing technologization. In order to accomplish this, the university would have to subject itself once more to "the power of the beginning of our historical-spiritual experience" (RR 8) by reflecting back on its Greek roots. Greeks had made science (*Wissenschaft*) the "innermost determining center of the whole national-political existence" (RR 10). On one level, this appears to be a plea to reintroduce meaning into a political life which had abandoned Being.

The 1933 Rektoratsrede was speckled with references to Plato's *Republic*, which became a kind of manifesto for Nazi philosophers of the time and due, above all, to Plato's attacks on democracy and his commitment to distinct social ranks. Furthermore, Plato called for philosophical leadership,

and Heidegger himself later confessed to Jaspers that he wanted to lead the Führer (den Führer führen). But Heidegger also lent explicit support to German militarism by outlining the three bonds that were to "permeate the students' whole life" namely "labor service, military service, and the service to knowledge—equally necessary and of equal rank" (RR 17).

Analysts such as Richard Wolin contend that this reflects a fundamental flaw in Heideggerian philosophy, which refuses to posit eternal truths and thus easily embraces the totalitarian trend of its time. Nietzsche would probably interpret this differently by arguing that the twilight of one idol, namely the absolute nature of the Christian God, had been supplanted by another, namely the fascist state. There is no indication that Heidegger's philosophy necessarily culminates in totalitarian politics, for the Heideggerian turn manifests a shift away from domination of any kind that would seem to pose at least an implicit challenge to Nazi doctrine. In the later writings the dominance of subject is questioned and the nonviolent relationship between things is celebrated. Thus, there is no inherent link between an antimetaphysical stance and political authoritarianism and Heidegger's philosophy is by no means politically one-sided. As Reiner Schürmann points out, it is possible to read Heidegger's philosophy not only through the lens of the Nazi era, but also through his later philosophy, which could hardly constitute a more dramatic departure from fascist ideology.[2]

I would argue that Heidegger shares some of the same presuppositions as Nietzsche in his utter contempt for liberal democracy, which grew out of his dissatisfaction with the Weimar regime. Just as Nietzsche turned to aristocracy because he considered it the only alternative to liberal democracy, Heidegger all too easily embraced the Nazi regime because of the fierce challenge it posed to democratic regimes. Like Nietzsche, Heidegger assumed that the authentic life was the exception rather than the norm, and his demarcation between authentic and inauthentic types translated into a rather facile political division between leaders and followers. The few that were capable of confronting nothingness in order to create themselves could only do so if the unthinking herd provided the unquestioning and docile labour. At the same time, the masses would derive meaning for their lives from the values that were bestowed upon them by their masters. They would participate in the creation of meaning only indirectly by providing the masters with the wherewithal to carve out new paths. Thus, a hierarchical social order would allow those who were willing to assume the responsibility for shaping their world the freedom and the resources to do so.

Heidegger does not consider the possibility that the mindless behaviour of *das Man* may be the response to social atomization that is produced by social inequality and an economic structure which isolates individuals from another. In an economy fuelled by competition, there is a decisive lack of trust, which eviscerates social bonds and prevents people from connecting in a meaningful way. He does not contemplate the possibility that genuine *Mitsein* could be undermined by inequality not equality. Like Nietzsche, he associates cultural leveling with equality itself, when cultural leveling is indeed compatible with drastic inequalities. Indeed, cultural leveling is necessary to mask economic and political inequalities and render them palatable.

Heidegger presents loneliness as the most authentic experience for it allows the individual to contemplate his relationship to Being. While it may be true that authenticity is more likely to be found in moments of solitude (if the braying of the masses is too loud), neither Heidegger nor Nietzsche considers the possibility that the desire for such loneliness is in large part a reaction to the world of *das Man. Das Man* emits much noise, but connections between people are very tenuous indeed and isolation is widespread. Seen from this perspective, the loneliness extolled by both Nietzsche and Heidegger does not merely constitute a condemnation of a herd-like existence, but it is also a participation in its dynamic. Nietzschean "eternity" and Heideggerian Being are experienced not through others but in isolation. Would such loneliness be a necessary precondition of authenticity in a non-herd-like community, wherein reciprocity and interconnection, rather than mindless mimicry, are the norm? Is particularity something that can only be experienced in utter isolation from others, or could it be experienced in conjunction with the particularity of another, that is different from my own? In this case, it would be possible to imagine an experience of authenticity that did not demand such painful isolation. The ravenous pursuit of the lost self referred to by both Heidegger and Nietzsche may be a symptom of the social malaise they criticize. While Heidegger and Nietzsche are willing to acknowledge that the homogenization we associate with modernity is a sign of social illness or decay, they do not consider that an obsessive quest for individual authenticity may be a further symptom, and instead, they impute to it a kind of transhistorical significance.

Heidegger is reluctant to posit clear ethical principles of any kind, and this prompts Wolin to suggest that only the naked Nietzschean will, stripped of all moral signposts, is left behind. However, this analysis is predicated on the assumption that, without abstract norms, individuals

would resort to a kind of brutal war of all against all, because egotistical selfishness is an incorrigible aspect of human nature. The will is in danger of "feeding off whatever choices happen to be served up by the contemporary historical hour."[3] This completely ignores the ethical dimension of Heidegger's philosophy which, as I suggested in Chapter 3, arises from a sense that the self is also fundamentally interconnected with others.

Furthermore, one must examine what it was about Nazism that appealed to Heidegger. Here, understanding the role that the crisis situation plays in cultivating authenticity is significant. Heidegger recognized that the Germany of his time was gripped by depression and international instability, but he argued that people were unwilling to confront the existential meaning of their distress and preferred to flee from it. In so doing, they missed the opportunity to reflect upon their relationship to Being and refused to embrace their role as self-making human beings. In short, according to Heidegger, when people should have seized the opportunity to reflect upon the cosmos, and create meaning for themselves, they were preoccupied with mundane survival. The insensitivity of the intellectual spared from some of the worst ravages of such suffering is notable in this approach.

Nazi ideology in Heidegger's view did capitalize on the crisis situation in order to reshape German nationhood. The Nazis were willing to take the tattered pieces of German identity and weave them into a whole that became the German Volk. It was Nazi aggressiveness, in a time of crisis, that appealed to Heidegger and set it apart from the phlegmatic Weimar republic, which in Heidegger's view, only perpetuated mediocrity. Nazis were prepared to use distress to create greatness, and they did so not by denying the nihilistic abyss but by confronting it. For Heidegger, this represented an important attempt to seize the creative potential that the nihilistic despair of the time offered.

Furthermore, Heidegger's Nazi sympathies cannot be understood without making reference to his utter contempt for *das Man*. To him, the Nazi regime constituted an assault on mediocrity that he thought had paralyzed modernity. Therefore, he saw hope for fulfilling a kind of Greco-German destiny, which would resurrect Being and bring it into the spotlight once more. National Socialism did not shy away from crisis but rather fomented it, forcing human beings into limit situations that Heidegger thought were conducive to authenticity. In some ways, the emphasis Heidegger places in his speech to the university on labour service, military service, and knowledge service, is incompatible with the authentic individual resolve he celebrates in *Being and Time*. Heidegger

makes the rather naïve assumption that a confrontation with crisis necessarily leads to creativity and authenticity. Heidegger completely underestimates the extent to which National Socialism depended on cultivating the very herd-environment that he condemned. Here Nietzsche would probably have been more astute, for he recognized that great idols relied on the stupor and atomization of individuals. Furthermore, the notion of Volk, in itself, was a chimera for the *Führerprinzip*, which depends on the common idolization of a single individual, rather than on the development of a genuine community. An environment that encourages neighbours to spy on each other and children to report their own parents, can hardly be described as fostering community. Fascist regimes must continually foment crises in order to survive, because there is nothing holding people together except the threat of the abyss or a common enemy. Nazi solidarity was not based on openness toward the other but rather relied heavily on the logic of closure toward the other. Of course, such a perpetual war footing is exhausting, and eventually the regime collapses under the weight of total mobilization.

Heidegger mistakenly believed that total mobilization would force the individual to continuously reevaluate his relationship to Being. He saw, in the Nazi regime, a politics of "ungroundedness" that would prevent the individual from relapsing into the kind of mediocre slumber propagated by the herd: "all faculties of will and thought, all powers of the heart and capacities of the body must be unfolded *through* struggle, intensified *in* struggle and preserved as struggle" (RR 18). Because he saw *das Man* as a social order that minimized struggle, like Nietzsche, Heidegger assumed that struggle itself would fuel creativity. He did not recognize that the Nazis regime created crisis situations in order to cultivate a herd mentality, which was the object of Heidegger's disgust. When individuals are under siege, they have a tendency to become less, rather than more conscious, and seek quick and facile solutions.

Heidegger's wholesale rejection of *das Man* and democracy opens the door to what Wolin, following Carl Schmidtt, calls decisionism, namely the legitimization of the decisions of an authoritarian leader who owes his position of power to the ability to stand above the herd as an incarnation of a kind of Nietzschean Übermensch. Heidegger's philosophy, with its emphasis on death and limit situations that jolt individuals out of the complacent slumber of the herd is very amenable to the kind of crisis mentality fascism thrives on, perpetuating its gruesome cycle of war, violence, and militarism.[4] Heidegger believed Nazism was an embodiment of the Nietzschean principle of active nihilism, which was prepared to

destroy archaic and outmoded belief systems and clear the path for historical greatness.

In Heidegger, Wolin identifies a kind of nihilism that makes war not just a way of politics by other means, as Clausewitz had suggested, or the unsavoury but inevitable tool of statehood as Machiavelli averred, but rather an instantiation of a kind of metaphysical politics. In short, for Wolin, fascism is the political underbelly of Heidegger's philosophy of Being. In this, Wolin lumps Heidegger together with the fascist philosopher Ernst Jünger who extols a kind of brinkmanship in war that allows human beings to leave their mark on history:

> No—war is not a material matter. . . . When two civilized peoples confront one another, there is more in the scales than explosive and steel. . . . Values are tested in comparison with which the brutality of means must—to anyone who has the power to judge—appear insignificant. A strength of will, all-embracing and concentrated to the last pitch in the highest untamed expression of life asserting itself even in its own annihilation is brought into play.[5]

Perched at the threshold of war, a society would be capable of divesting itself of the "softness" of the herd in order to obtain a more hard and steely complexion. Peace was seen as a kind of ceasefire wherein preparations were made for war. All aspects of society were to be enlisted in this drive for total war. In this way, the class divisions of a liberal political system can be overcome, for only when under constant threat can people unite behind the nation. This was Jünger's idea of a modern community. Heidegger, while he did not share Jünger's militarism, embraced the notion of struggle. University instructors were exhorted to accept the "most extreme posts of danger amid the constant uncertainty of the world" (RR 14), and invest hope in the authoritarian leader of the Führer to rescue social order from emasculation and reinstate an authentic community. Herein we can identify the problematic nature of Heidegger's notion of authenticity. Because authenticity was defined against the herd, the revitalization of a moribund social order must fall to exceptional individuals, who then act as its redeemers. The dreadful call of the Nothing can only reach the few. Being stands opposed to the bland uniformity that, he argues, is characteristic of *das Man*. Rank ordering is necessary as an expression of aesthetic beauty (IM 133). While Heidegger does not advocate strife in the literal sense of warfare as does Jünger (and indeed distances himself from the fascist philosopher in this respect), he

does argue that the call of Being compels "panic fear, true fear" (IM 149) and therefore a hierarchical society, which will allow the terrifying voice of Being to pierce through its sheltering walls is necessary: "The questioning of Being in general wrings from the Volk of labour and struggle, and forces it into its State to which the vocations belong" (RR 15).

The attentiveness to history, which Heidegger repeatedly emphasized in *Being and Time*, was transformed in the Nazi years into a more macabre *Seinsgeschichte*. Heidegger hoped the Nazi regime had the courage to extricate Germany from its somnolence with respect to Being, and instill in it a collective belonging, with an awareness of its own history. Only total mobilization would overcome the petty rivalries characteristic of bourgeois society. In the "Introduction to Metaphysics," Being is presented as an ominous force that human beings must respond to, but that nevertheless forces them to create a collective destiny for themselves. Being dangles the prospect of unity before us, but robs us of it at the same time and therefore a collective destiny must fill the void. The gentle, elusive Being, that in large part characterizes *Being and Time*, is now metamorphized into a Being that represents the "supreme antagonism" (IM 131). Being itself puts human beings on a constant war footing. The profoundly individuating and isolating confrontation with death that is adumbrated in *Being and Time*, demands the formation of a collectivity that can restore humankind to a sense of wholeness. Thus, Being is both gentle and harsh because it creates the desire for wholeness, but also deprives humankind of it, thereby compelling human beings to forge a history in which this wholeness can be partially retrieved.

In this way, it forces beings to actively participate in the process of Being, or in Nietzsche's words, to transform a passive nihilism into an active nihilism: "Where struggle ceases, the essence does not vanish but the world turns away" (IM 62). Being's duplicitous nature spurs human beings to chisel out their destiny. Being toys with us, demanding that human beings bring it out of hiding by creating a collective consciousness. If Being is seen as a kind of conflictual force, that goads us into self-creation, then war becomes the voice of Being.

The Sage-ruler and Anarchic Societies

If Nietzsche and Heidegger's antimetaphysical postures are accompanied by political authoritarianism, the reverse is true for Daoist thinkers who favour political regimes which are perhaps best described as anarchic. In

fact, Daoist thought has always occupied a place at the fringe of the prevalent political order since it was distrusted by the Confucian establishment for its politically subversive implications.[6] Daoist thinkers were not indifferent to politics (as is sometimes claimed), but dreamed of a world where political intervention would no longer be necessary. In fact, the need for political force or political hierarchy was in itself interpreted as a sign of moral decay in which human beings had lost sight of the natural harmony of the Dao. Politics was reluctantly accepted as necessary, although insufficient for it created an artificial order when the natural one had disintegrated.

Given this disdain for political activity, the sage-ruler is assigned the paradoxical task of ruling in such a way that politics will wither away. He is suspicious of power, and acts in a way that to most political leaders would seem counter-intuitive, for he rules without commanding: "when a great sage is in command, he doesn't try to take control of externals. He first allows people to do what comes naturally and he ensures that all things follow the way their nature take them'" (Zh 7, 61). Thus, the purpose of the sage is to try to foster an environment where politics is not necessary and where power relationships would evaporate.

The only thread which connects Daoist politics with Nietzsche and Heidegger is the antipolitical element that underlies it. Zhuangzi, when approached with the offer to rule lands, responds that he would rather crawl about in the mud. While this can be portrayed simply as a passive and irresponsible quietism, Zhuangzi's aversion to political rule stems from a repudiation of the egoism necessary to engage in power politics. His distaste reveals what is an indelible dimension of the aristocratic politics Nietzsche promotes, namely its connection to an egotistical understanding of self that sees others as sources of opposition. When the natural harmony of nature is abandoned, politics is necessary to prop up a superficial order. But in doing so, it undermines a deeper harmony. In Nietzsche, too, moments of interconnection are greatest when Zarathustra is immersed in the natural world. Thus, it is merely a matter of time before conflict rends the fabric of a political society. Political power in Zhuangzi's view can only furnish a temporary means of control, for it works against the Dao and is thus bound to erupt in conflict. The peace that political power provides is only fleeting.

For Laozi, politics brings out the lowest aspects of human nature and therefore the real sage would have little interest in it. Frenetic activity and business create the kind of social tumult that makes politics necessary because it impels one to lose sight of the nothingness that interconnects

all things and little choice remains but to impose restrictions on a society riddled with so much strife. Because political power represents the imposition of one's will over others, it unleashes an unhealthy contest of wills:

> But in order to win the world
> one must be free of all busy-ness.
> How do I know that this is the world's way?
> The more things there are in the world that one must not do,
> the more people are impoverished.
> The more people have sharp implements,
> the more house and state tumble into destruction.
> The more people cultivate art and cleverness,
> the more ominous signs arise.
> The more law and order are propagated,
> the more thieves and robbers there will be. (DDJ 57)

Both Laozi and Zhuangzi were extremely critical of the Confucian tradition, which was predicated on an ethical system that focussed on the cultivation of personality through the performance of rituals. Confucianism recommended that the ruler maintain harmony by the force of his personal example. In a chapter entitled, "Dealing with Emperors and Kings," the wisdom of such a posture is explicitly spurned: "That would ruin Virtue. If someone tries to govern everything below Heaven in this way, it's like trying to stride through the seas, or cut a tunnel through the river, or make a mosquito carry a mountain" (Zh 7, 61). From this perspective, most forms of rule are seen as a form of political violence that represents interference with attunement to the natural world. The importance the Confucian tradition places on saving face and the horror of losing it (*diu mianzi* 丢面子) reflects an image of the self that is largely defined by its social relationship to others. Zhuangzi, in particular, levels several criticisms against the Confucian tradition for promoting hierarchy and for prescribing rigid forms of behaviour that cannot take into account the unique virtues of distinct human beings: "In this time of perfect Virtue, people live side by side with the birds and beasts, sharing the world in common with all life. No one knows of distinctions such as nobles and peasantry" (Zh 9, 73). According to Zhuangzi, rituals and tradition invite the kind of submission that generates conflict: "He brought the cringing and grovelling of the rituals and music and infected all under Heaven with his offer of benevolence and righteousness, which he said would comfort the hearts of all" (Zh 9, 74). Zhuangzi's repeated reference

to various cripples, beggars, and thieves is intended to underscore this point, for many individuals who are considered useless contribute to society in unforeseen ways and living a full life. The insistence that everyone don the same robes would foreclose such possibilities. Cripple Shu lived a long life and was able to make a living, since his deformities prevented him from being recruited into the army and he was free to pursue other things.

For Zhuangzi, there is little difference between a typical ruler and a thief. He describes the similarity between Robber Zhi and Bo Yi:

> Po Yi died for the sake of fame at the bottom of Shou Yang mountain, Robber Chih died for gain on top of the Eastern Heights. These two both died in different ways but the fact is they, both shortened their lives and destroyed their innate natures. Yet we are expected to approve of Po Yi and dispaprove of Robber Chih. (ZH 8, 69)

Self-aggrandizement tends to be the objective of both the ruler and the robber and their dispositions make them fundamentally the same. The only difference between them is that in the case of the ruler, the means he employs are considered legitimate. Rulers that are generally thought of as "lofty by the whole world" (Zh 29, 265) violated their "inner selves" due to their rampant pursuit of profit (Zh 29, 265). Lords have armies at their disposal and can impute a kind of legitimacy that robbers do not enjoy. Thus, what effectively distinguishes the robber and the lord is the level of success, the availability of arms, and the fact that the lord aims much higher: "Minor criminals are locked up while great criminals are made into lords and rulers" (Zh 29 268).

According to Zhuangzi, the real sage would have no interest in ruling, but "someone who doesn't wish to rule the country is exactly the person to do so" (Zh 28, 249). With such a ruler, the hope is that a kind of actionless rule based on *wu-wei* could be implemented which would align political society more closely with the Dao of nature. For Daoist thinkers, human beings can distort nature's spontaneous relationships by misrepresenting things, and by regarding themselves as either superior or distinct. Even Confucian doctrine, which is criticized by Daoists, stresses the importance of making the self coterminous with others and a kind of radical individualism or egoism perpetuates imbalance and strife. Daoist thinkers differ from their Confucian predecessors in that they insist that nature, rather than social propriety, should be the locus of a spontaneous order. According to Laozi, the need for the Confucian principles of bene-

volence and righteousness arises when relationships based on natural order begin to distintegrate. In other words, Confucian morality is already a sign of social degeneration:

> Therefore if Dao is lot, then Life.
> Then Te arises
> When we neglect De,
> Then benevolence arises;
> When we neglect benevolence,
> Then rightness arises;
> When we negelect rightness
> Then social norms and rites arise. (DDJ 38)

The *Daodejing* is a more political text than the *Zhuangz*i because it gives instructions to potential rulers in an effort to undermine authoritarianism. It tries to convince leaders that domineering, violent, and aggressive practices undermine the longevity of social peace. Natural order, rather than political power in a traditional sense, should form the basis of authority and so the ruler must emulate the Dao rather than try to assert his own dominion over his subjects. The Daoist sage is to rule on the basis of nonaction or *wu-wei*: "If a wholly Great One rules—the people hardly know that he exists" (DDJ 17). The ruler should remain empty so that the natural virtues of others are drawn out: "Create emptiness up to the highest! Guard stillness up to the most" (DDJ 16). An open environment is fostered in order to allow individuals to to realize their unique potential:

> If we do nothing
> the people will change of themselves
> If we love stillness
> the people right themselves of themselves.
> If we undertake nothing
> the people will become rich of themselves
> If we have no cravings
> the people wi ll become simple of themselves. (DDJ 57)

Many passages in Daoist texts can be read as critiques of authoritarian rule. In fact, the ruler is principally a conduit through which a kind of radical democracy or anarchic self-rule is encouraged to develop:

> I have heard of leaving the world open to its own way and not interfering but I have never heard of trying to control the world . . . So it is that the noble master who finds he has to follow some course to govern the world will realize that actionless action is the best course. By non-action, he can rest in the real substance of his nature and destiny. If he appreciates his own body as he appreciates the world, then the world can be placed in his care. He who loves his body as he loves the world can be trusted to govern the world . . . If he is unconcerned and engaged in actionlesss action, his gentle spirit will draw all life to him like a dust cloud. (Zh 11, 82, 83–84)

In contrast to both Nietzsche and the Heidegger that flirted with Nazism, Daoist thinkers believe that creativity flourishes in an environment where each is open to the other. A herd-like existence should be avoided because the virtue of one individual is developed through others, and there is no vehement attempt to define boundaries. This is why the ideal ruler works against the egoism of his populace. A ruler whose basis for action is "might makes right," simply cultivates a destructive egoism that perpetuates conflict. Furthermore, the sage-ruler would shun the Machiavellian prescription to covet glory and honour because this would foster competition.

The Daoist ideal of anarchism is a kind of self-organizing system which has little need for coercive state interference. Daoists envision a return to a simple society where desires are reduced and government encourages local autonomy. While undoubtedly this may not be a realistic prescription for political order in an era where local bases of power have been eroded, the Daoist tendency to spurn politics point to the conditions that make political power inherently unstable. It unveils the dangers endemic in a political realm where greed and egoism prevail.

Despite their markedly antiauthoritarian leanings, Daoist political writings have been used to promote a very Machiavellian notion of power politics. *Han Fei Zi*, a legalist philosopher suggests that the aloofness of the sage-ruler described in the *Daodejing* was a prescription for being above the law in order to wield absolute control. The ultimate purpose of the leader was to maintain his own power base and protect the strength and security of the state. One way of ensuring a ruler remains in a position of authority, and incites both awe and fear, is to deliberately cultivate elusiveness. His true intentions should remain shrouded in mystery.

Han Fei Zi insists that the ruler mimic the *Dao* by being indecipherable, thereby keeping people under control and preventing anyone from discerning his genuine motives. In this way, he wards off threats to his

power on the part of ministers whose greed and ambition (in Han Fei Zi's view) make them formidable threats to state security. The sage ruler must become the consummate manipulator. The Dao to Han Fei Zi represents nothing but inscrutability and is to become a source of fear rather than harmony. What, in the *Daodejing*, is an admonition to the ruler to limit his attachment to material rewards or to the notion of glory, becomes secretive and deceptive in Han Fei Zi: "The ruler must not reveal his desires; for if he reveals his desires his ministers will put on the mask that pleases him . . . Discard likes and dislikes and the ministers will show their true form; discard wisdom and wile and the ministers will watch their step."[7] The Daoist exaltation of stillness in the sage, becomes a means by which the legalist ruler tricks them into exposing their defects: "The Way lies in what cannot be seen, its function in what cannot be known. Be empty, still and idle, and from your place of darkness, observe the defects of others. See but do not appear to see; listen but do not seem to listen; know but do not let it be known that you know."[8] Han Fei Zi completely thwarts the meaning of the *Daodejing* by transforming its antiauthoritarian writings into a manual for authoritarian rule.

Distrust of Politics

It is clear that the political visions of Laozi and Zhuangzi differ drastically from Heidegger and Nietzsche. However, this does not imply there is no overlap whatsoever in this regard. All four thinkers evince great distrust for the political realm. For Daoist thinkers, it constitutes a corruption of nature and becomes an unfortunate necessity when selfishness and egoism prevail. A true sage-ruler would somehow manage to transform the spirits of his subjects in order to attune them to the harmony inherent in nature and the Dao, thereby ushering in an era where politics would become unnecessary. Nietzsche does not hold to such high ideals but it is still notable that the moments of the most profound tranquility in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* occur when he is immersed in the realm of nature and has found a refuge from the clamour and bustle of the town. The messages conveyed by his animals are almost always of peace and a kind of nonviolent play: "all things themselves dance for such as think as we: they come and offer their hand and laugh and flee—and return" (Z III 13). Conversely, when he comes into contact with the inhabitants of the town, he assumes a more confrontational posture, bellowing into the crowd. Zarathustra responds to his animals that man is the cruellest animal

who "enjoys tragedies, bullfights and crucifixions and when he invented Hell for himself, behold it was his heaven on earth" (Z III 13). While Daoist thinkers believe it is possible to reconcile the world of politics with the realm of nature, Nietzsche clearly thinks this is not possible. This is why the kind of tranquility Nietzsche, Laozi, and Zhuangzi hold in high esteem can only be found in solitude.

Undoubtedly it is very easy to dismiss Daoist musings as unrealistic in a setting where the tendency of both states and individuals to prey on each other is ubiquitous. In a world of clashing egos, the nonegotistical self is readily dismissed as an idealistic chimera. However, Daoist philosophy highlights the fact that the political world we are most familiar with offers a one-sided portrayal of human nature. This attentiveness to the natural world is necessary to accentuate some neglected aspects of our humanity. This is a message that also reverberates through Nietzsche's writings. He insists we are not the centre of the universe, and reminds us of the fortitude required to learn how to feel small in the midst of its vastness. While it is obvious Laozi and Zhuangzi cannot provide a blueprint for political rule except perhaps in small communities, they at least provide both the inspiration to put a brake on the pervasive egoism that characterizes contemporary society, and offer a powerful critique of power politics.

Furthermore, an exploration of Daoist philosophy may also cast light on the dynamics of the herd that Nietzsche and Heidegger witness in their own era. If struggle and conflict become the primary form of social interaction, then this, in itself, may lead to the kind of social fatigue that impels people to follow authoritarian figures for their redemption and guidance. While Nietzsche, and to some extent Heidegger, assume that egoism is an indelible part of human nature, they do not consider the possibility that excessive egoism may be the source of the conformity they inveigh against. As divided, we are afraid of others and thus unwilling to become ourselves. We readily flock to a charismatic leader who claims to furnish us with an identity.

Laozi and Zhuangzi suggest that the multicoloured sea Nietzsche cherishes, thrives in a world where egoism is restrained rather than exalted. The attack on the self that ensues from a conflict-ridden existence may not always act as a spur to creation, but it can result in the very renunciation of self exemplified by the herd. This is why exaggerated egoism can be easily coupled with mindless conformity. If the self is under siege, it cannot develop the trust that permits an opening to another. At the same time, it becomes tired of maintaining a defensive posture, and thus simply

succumbs to prevailing norms or the power of an authoritarian figure. This is a why a social order that allegedly celebrates individualism can, at the same time, demand blinding conformity. We are reduced to mindless acts of mimicry by the very egoism that impels us to pay homage to selfishness. Living in a world where we all too readily assume that competition and conflict spawn creativity and uniqueness, Laozi and Zhuangzi offer powerful reminders that this may not be the case at all. Excessive egotistical desires need to be whittled away, not so that people become mindless drones, but so they can be open to one another as unique and social individuals.

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Chapter 5

Woman's Eclipse[1]

The alternatives to prevailing metaphysical views propounded by Heidegger, Nietzsche, Laozi, and Zhuangzi, have profound implications for feminist theory, even if none of these thinkers espouse explicitly feminist views. Nevertheless, one could argue that both an unspoken and explicit debt to the feminine is an integral part of their metaphysical or antimetaphysical orientations. Traditionally, the feminine has been associated with the murky realm of the unspeakable, silent, and material which could not, without some difficulty, be incorporated into a framework that valorized clarity, rationality, and speech. By reinfusing these forgotten, excluded realms with profound significance, all of these thinkers provide the necessary rationale for reincorporating this so-called, silenced "feminine" into philosophy. Yet, at the same time, their thinking reveals the potential perils involved in wedding the feminine too closely to these domains. By linking woman to all that is mysterious and unfathomable there is a danger that she assumes a quasi-metaphysical status, which prevents her from participating as a *human subject* in the social order. Her dehumanization out of reverence eventuates in a dehumanization of disrespect. Because she is seen as more than human, she becomes less than human; she is reduced to the being-through whom or even against whom masculine self-creation takes place. Ironically, her falsely perceived freedom from finitude robs her of her agency and subjectivity. She wields a mythological power that undermines her opportunity to exist or stand out into Being in the Heideggerian sense of the word.

Irigaray has pointed out that Western philosophical discourse has been kidnapped by and for the masculine and to the exclusion of the

feminine. The main function for women in this economy is as reproductive objects of exchange. The masculine subject represents all that is recognized and valued in our society: rationality, consciousness, culture, and visibility. The feminine becomes the silenced Other against which the masculine subject defines himself. This very need to assert "masculinity" against woman is a tacit reminder that those qualities, which man reveres, do not enjoy the status of self-sufficient truths that he arrogates to himself. No matter how far woman is pushed into the background, the "qualities" she allegedly represents will always return to haunt man.

While this may indeed be the legacy of much of Western philosophy, this analysis can less easily be applied to Daoist philosophy, where "feminine" virtues such as receptivity, openness and motherhood are openly celebrated and rationality, clarity and logical consistency by no means enjoy the highest status. Yin and Yang, which are associated with female and male "virtues" respectively are said to complement and complete one another. However, respect for the feminine does not necessarily translate into respect for women and the main subject in Daoist philosophy remains male. This suggests that there is more underlying the exclusion of women than a direct denigration of "feminine" principles. In fact, a reading of Daoist philosophy begs the question of how it can be that feminine principles enjoy the utmost respect but women, who allegedly embody these sacred principles, are silenced nevertheless.

While Heidegger himself makes no explicit connection between Being and the feminine, Nietzsche and Laozi's works abound with references to it. On the one hand, this suggests that the transition to post-metaphysical ways of thinking may provide an important opportunity to revivify the forgotten feminine. Yet associating the feminine with primordial mystery does not necessarily have emancipatory consequences for women. Even Confucian philosophy, notoriously much less friendly to women than Daoist philosophy, extolled virtues in male leaders that would likely be considered feminine in the West. It is a primary example of how the respect for femininity can be coupled with a devaluation of women. Indeed, conflating the "feminine," the "maternal," and woman can have deleterious consequences by sparking unjustified fear of women and rendering her subject-less because she is associated with the inexplicable powers of the universe. When a finite being is reduced to the status of a symbol that has limitless power, she becomes powerless. Her symbolic role provides conditions for the development of perfidious resentment and fear against her. Because she is seen as more than human, she eventually becomes less than human in an attempt to conquer this fear. There would

be no need to develop a whole mythology devoted to excluding and oppressing women if they were truly powerless. Women's "weakness" is a myth that was assiduously cultivated through millennia. Irigaray may be right in her assertion that metaphysical philosophy has powerful gendered connotations. In fact, the metaphysical edifice may very well, and in part, be constructed as a revolt against women.

Revealing Heidegger's Silence

According to Heidegger, the revitalization of philosophy requires that we pay tribute to that out of which philosophy emerges: Being. His demand, that thinking rather than philosophy or science, take center stage marks the beginning of an attempt to encourage dialogue with the primordial beyond the realm of proof and certainty. His lament, that Being has been papered over at best, or forgotten at worst, echoes the complaints of many contemporary feminists who argue that woman is the excluded and often unspoken "other" of philosophy. In *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, Irigaray maintains that "[s]exual difference is one of the most important issues of our age, if not in fact the burning issue. According to Heidegger, each age is preoccupied with one thing and one alone. Sexual difference is probably the issue of our age."[2] Just as Heidegger complains Being has been neglected by philosophers for too long, Irigaray vituperates against the sidelining of women in philosophical discourse. In fact, by reading Heidegger and Irigaray in conjunction with each other, the propensity to gloss over the question of Being can be integrally linked to the exclusion of women. Heidegger insists the unspoken assumptions of philosophy be brought to light, and this may provide an opening to explore its gendered dimensions.

Indeed, one could argue that the veiled Being described by Heidegger represents the silent feminine voice of philosophy, even if there is very little reference to a female principle or women in Heidegger's texts. The few attributions that do surface are telling, since women appear only in the form of goddesses such as Athena, Cura, and Aletheia. In one passage, Heidegger recounts an ancient fable in which the goddess Cura was crossing a river and noticed a piece of clay, which she then began to shape. Jupiter came by and gave it spirit, but he refused to allow Cura to bestow her name on it. Earth, who was herself a female figure, wanted her name to be bequeathed to Cura's creation. Saturn was invited in as the arbiter of the dispute and decided that Jupiter would receive the spirit at its death,

the earth would receive its body, but Cura, who first shaped the creature should possess it as long as it lives. He decided to name the being "homo" because it was made out of *humus* or earth (BT 242, 198). For Heidegger, this passage reveals that human beings, throughout their temporal existence, are stamped by care who is personified as a woman. It is the human relationship *to* others and *to* Being that is important and thus human beings must always be outside themselves in order to be themselves. By giving care such a prominent role, Heidegger challenges the myth of self-sufficiency and individual atomization that has shaped much of modern Western philosophy. In addition, he also tacitly inverts the Christian account of human creation, where woman is made out of the rib of man. However, what Heidegger leaves unquestioned is why *cura* and earth assume the guise of women.

Despite Heidegger's omission, Jean Graybeal argues that Heidegger's philosophy provides a tremendous opening for the feminine. Maintaining that there is a close affinity between Heidegger's thought and Julia Kristeva's semiotic theory, she asserts that Cura is the repressed semiotic that has been driven underground by the symbolic. In her view, Heidegger's pursuit of nonmetaphysical ways of thinking encourages a movement away from the patriarchal symbol of God the father, and makes a space for the expression of the feminine in language or *la mère qui jouit*.[3] The semiotic in Kristeva refers to meanings and locutions, such as preverbal gestures or intonations that are not simply derived from speech.[4] Kristeva underscores the importance of rhythms and sounds that arise when two bodies are fused into one. Thus, not only language is the locus of meaning and communication; indeed, the semiotic prepares the way for the development of language. While the symbolic is Apollonian in its assumption of the essential separateness of things, the semiotic represents a self that is always part of other. The propensity to ignore the semiotic represents an account of existence that stresses the essential separateness between things. Daoist thinkers also refer to primordial rhythms, not with respect to mother-child relations, but rather to the rhythms of the cosmos which are fused with meaning.

By invoking the goddess Cura, Heidegger underscores his point that we are always beings, both towards the other and towards the earth. However, this does not imply a simple unity. Rather, we are always beings-towards because we are both part of others and separate from them. Cura, or care, represents this combination of separateness and partness that makes authenticity possible. Care is a kind of movement towards another that is only possible because other is part of self and yet is separate from

self. One would not care for something else if one were either identical or completely separate from it. It accounts for the paradoxical unfamiliar familiarity that characterizes the call of conscience, which Heidegger argues emanates from both within the self and outside of the self. The outside is never purely external, just as the inside is never purely internal.

Kristeva's insistence on the recognition of both the semiotic and symbolic has social implications. The semiotic is not to silence the symbolic, but rather to rein in its excesses. The idle talk of *das Man* is an example of such excess for it enables human beings to get along and thus become predictable without intertwining themselves. Its homogenizing effects prevent us from coming to terms with both the strangeness and familiarity of the other. This combination of the two, *Heimlichkeit and Unheimlichkeit*, make self-making and authenticity possible. Kristeva prevails upon us to recognize the extent to which the semiotic prepares the way for the symbolic itself. Because we were once part of another, namely the mother, we need language to go towards other beings. The symbolic should not stifle its semiotic element.

There is a marked resemblance between Kristeva's ideas and Heidegger's account of our resistance to the notion that language is not just a tool we use to describe Being, but the house of Being. As such, it is not merely a human invention, but a response to the call of Being. If Heidegger implores us to pay homage to Being, Kristeva argues that we ignore our debt to the maternal by driving a wedge between the semiotic and symbolic realms. In addition, maternal associations act as a powerful reminder that the subject-object split is by no means definitive of our reality, for it is only achieved by repressing the infant's fusion with the mother's body in the maternal space of the *chora*.[5] Without remembering the mother, the multidimensional nature of the self as both individuated and part of an other cannot be recognized.

Patricia Huntington takes this analysis a step further and suggests that Heidegger offers a way out of the quagmire of castration logic, which equates subjectivity with maleness. According to this Freudian myth, the sight of a mother sans penis, incites in a son the fear of castration by the father. This fear is what brings him under the father's thumb and coerces him into submitting to the rules of society, allowing him to become an individual in a way that he could not have been had his ties to the mother remained intact. According to this logic, male subjectivity demands a sharp break from woman. As a result, woman is perceived as a threat to individuality in general and furthermore is prevented from developing her

own subjectivity because her rupture with her mother is by no means as decisive. What is simply left unexplained, is why the son fears castration in the first place, and what it is about the penis that allows it to evolve into a symbol of coherence and power. A woman's biology is deemed inherently deficient as is underscored by Freud's ludicrous assertion that the clitoris is nothing but an inferior replica of the sacred penis. As it stands, the story makes little sense, yet it has a frightening, pervasive influence. Irigaray is quite correct in her assertion that Freud's account allows for only one form of sexuality, namely male, and her sarcastic use of the term, "hom(m)osexual," to describe this dynamic is quite appropriate.

Using Heidegger's philosophy as a launching pad, one might attempt to ascertain what led to the establishment of a sexual divide based on such preposterous assumptions. Indeed, I argue that the split has less to do with biology, than with the cosmic assumptions superimposed onto biology. It reveals that Freud's theory is more metaphysical and less "scientific" than he was apt to assume. Heidegger acknowledges that our position as beings, suspended between the divine and the earthly, creates a perpetual sense of strangeness. But he encourages us to embrace, rather than reject, this uneasy space we occupy. The uncertainty about Being is to be celebrated rather than spurned, for the cryptic signals we receive from it provide infinite possibilities not only to create ourselves, but to establish our place within the cosmos or our relation to Being. Heidegger insists that we are "in the fourfold by dwelling" (BDT 352), referring to the earth, sky, mortals, and divinities. The fact that divinity touches us but always hides from us is underscored by his insistence that gods are always concealing and unconcealing themselves. Rather than being thoroughly frustrated with this cosmic game of hide and seek, Heidegger insists that we enjoy the process of constant opportunity for discovery that it presents. If Being did not hide as well as reveal itself, dialogue with it would be impossible. It is important to bear in mind that Heidegger claims Being can only reveal itself through us. Therefore, it is not a uniform process in which we are simply the ones who chase after Being; Being is not an omnipotent lord who wields his power over us.

If a connection can be made between the maternal and Being, then Heidegger suggests a possibility beyond the resentment against the mother that has left such a deep mark on Western philosophy. Rather than expressing rage at a mother whose "house" we cannot return to, it allows us to see this combination of separation and oneness as an opportunity for ongoing dialogue. It occasions a constant returning to the mother that obviates the need to be absorbed by her completely. Instead of becoming

the omnipotent, abject mother who casts us into a world of suffering, she becomes a constant interlocutor. If she is seen in this way, it enables us to see her as something other than mother as well. In this reading, Heidegger's philosophy presents an opportunity for going beyond resentment of the mother and abandoning a castration logic, which, out of fear, hurls the son into the arms of an austere father.

In addition to providing an outlet for a nonresentful return to the mother, Heidegger's philosophy allows us to discern reasons that might explain the denigration of women in Western philosophy. Although Heidegger does not directly describe this dynamic, an analysis can be cobbled together from his account of the dangerous anthropomorphism which has scarred Western metaphysics. A feminist perspective contributes to a further understanding of this anthropomorphism. In *Identity and Difference*, Heidegger criticizes the propensity to find an ultimate ground of existence and to equate Being with logos (thought) and language (ID 59). This need to reach a terminus, is the disease that infects Western metaphysics. According to Heidegger: "In all that surrounds and concerns it, human cognition seeks reasons, often only the most proximate ones, sometimes even the more remote reasons, but in the end it seeks first and last reasons" (PR 3).

Heidegger suggests that at some level we recognize that Being is the source of everything and this is why our inability to conceptualize it engenders so much frustration and leads to an attempt to master the natural world. The return to origins is an ineradicable aspect of philosophical questioning. He does not insist that we resist this temptation but beseeches us to recognize this origin cannot be *found* but rather must be continuously questioned. The source is not singular and will always resist efforts to hunt it down. Being conceals and unconceals. This preoccupation with the source provides the clue to women's subordination. There are striking parallels between Heidegger's depiction of the treatment of nature and the treatment of women. The most obvious origin of an individual's life is the mother. She is thus very easily connected to the source of all life or Being, which frustrates us by refusing to reveal its ways. Woman becomes the scapegoat for metaphysical frustration and she is attributed with exaggerated powers of life and death over men. All suffering is attributed to her. Heidegger complains that the assault waged against Being is also waged against her. Indeed, I argue that the assault against Being is closely connected to the assault on woman. Therefore, woman becomes the target of blame for man's ontological predicament and this fantasy has shaped much of Western philosophy.

In "Age of the World Picture," Heidegger argues that the modern drive for certainty reflects an inability to distinguish between reality and fantasy. Just as reason claims to be the foundation of all that exists, man constructs, for himself, the delusion that he is in command of his world. Woman must be denied a voice in order to sustain this fantasy, but at the same time, her connection to the primordial is preserved through images of the eternal feminine. Thus, the eternal feminine is the silent challenge to what Irigaray calls phallocentric philosophy, as well as the means by which the fantasy is reproduced. Woman cannot be extinguished completely because man's drive to master the earth derives from both his resentment and love for her. He wants to recapture the lost wholeness of the mother, but at the same time blames her for its loss. Unwittingly, she fuels his striving, but she cannot be allowed to undermine his effort, and so the eternal feminine must always be silent. In this way, the eternal feminine is akin to the image of Helena that the ceaselessly striving Faust glances upon in the mirror. She both challenges his restlessness as well as spurs him on, but she has no voice.

Heidegger laments the loss of spiritual depth that occurs when reason is allowed to eclipse everything. Irigaray argues that accompanying this is a sexual pallour that refuses to recognize the existence of two sexes. Since sexuality represents the yearnings of a finite being, the mother, in her quasi-divine form, is assumed to be sexless. Women are saddled with a sexuality, or asexuality that is not of their own making. As a result, the sexual woman is seen as the antithesis of the mother, such as the whore or prostitute. Woman is falsely dichotomized as the quasi-divine Maria, unblemished by sexual urges, or the whore who is deemed unfit for motherhood.

For Heidegger, one of the most catastrophic outcomes of metaphysical and anthropomorphic thinking is its assault on nature. (I will provide an outline of his argument and point to the strong correlation between the attack on nature and the subordination of women.) Heidegger maintains that "mastering" reality is dangerous because it stifles the voice of Being. When there is enforced symmetry between human reason and the material world, little dialogue is possible, and we cannot create but can only produce:

> The essential unfolding of technology threatens revealing, threatens it with the possibility that all revealing will be consumed in ordering and that everything will present itself only in the unconcealment of standing-reserve. (QCT 339)

The essence of technology is nothing technological (QCT 340), rather, it is metaphysical. He claims that the meaning of the ancient Greek term, *techne*, was very different. In Heidegger's view, the ancient Greeks were willing to acknowledge their indebtedness to Being when they created things, and therefore there was no sense that the human subject was the sole agent in the creative act. The Greek word for cause, "*aitia*," is a kind of occasioning, which is lost in its translation as "cause." The artist is not only the progenitor but also the medium for creation:

> For what presences by means of *physis*, has the irruption belonging to bringing-forth, e.g., the bursting of a blossom into bloom, in itself (*en heautoi*). In contrast, what is brought forth by the artisan or the artist, e.g., the silver chalice, has the irruption belonging to bringing forth, not in itself but in another (*en alloi*), in the craftsman or artist. (QCT 317)

Techne should therefore be seen as something which provides an opportunity for emergence. This is why Greek craftsmen paid more attention to how the sculpture fit into their environment, for it was a way of letting the environment show itself.

This meaning of *techne* is lost in the modern word "technology," which is interpreted as a mere means: "Technology is therefore no mere means. Technology is a way of revealing" (QCT 318). According to Heidegger, modern technology, in its present exploitative form is a "challenging which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy, which can be extracted and stored as such. But does this not hold true for the old windmill as well? No its sails do indeed turn in the wind; they are left entirely to the wind's blowing. But the windmill does not unlock energy from the air currents in order to store it" (QCT 320). There is a direct parallel between this and what Irigaray describes as a type of hom(m)osexual monoculture which forecloses avenues for an interchange, both sexual and intellectual, with women. Just as nature is reduced to the standing-reserve, ready to be exploited by human beings, woman is reduced to her reproductive function in a hom(m)osexual *economy* which instrumentalizes everything. She becomes chattel, exchanged like an object among various communities for the purposes of reproduction, and, like nature, is reduced simply to her "function." What is frightening about this scenario is that it is considered "natural" and "realistic" even when, as Heidegger argues, it is the outcome of fantasy. Heidegger's objective is to reveal the mythological underpinnings of such "realistic" postures. The

domination of nature and the domination of women are intertwined, because both become victims of an attempted metaphysical conquest.

Huntington points out that what Heidegger calls fantasizing, in Irigaray becomes fetishization.[6] The symbolic dimension of the power of the phallus is forgotten, as stark realism becomes the reification of fantasies. We erect symbols that become determinants of social action and then become so engrossed with them that we forget that they are merely symbols. This is why Heidegger's notion, that technology is the outcome of fantasy, is so significant. His plea, that we return to origins over and over again, also serves as a reminder to use our own symbols with caution. Here, Heidegger echoes the warning of the Daoist thinkers not to take our words too seriously.

The macabre success we have had at forcing the world into the mould that our symbols provide lays the groundwork for not only the "Europeanization of the earth and of man" (OWL), but for the "masculinization" of humanity. Eventually everything is reduced to its function, whereby woman becomes an agent of reproduction, and man becomes a merely functional labourer. Yet, what is silenced (namely Being), in the case of Heidegger, or woman, in the case of Irigaray, can never be completely effaced. I would argue that both nihilism and castration anxiety refer to the feeling of meaninglessness that accompanies our sense of loss. We must rethink the beginning again in order to counter the effects of nihilism in Heidegger's view. Just as we must return to Being, we must constantly return to our mothers. Sadly, rather than occasioning dialogue between the sexes or with Being, nihilism often eventuates in a more violent and determined assault upon both woman and the earth.

IRIGARAY'S CRITIQUE

Thus far, I have focused on the emancipatory potential of Heideggerian thought. However, the fact that neither the feminine, nor women, surface in his texts is indicative of its limitations. Irigaray focuses on these limitations in her critique. She suggests that Heidegger's concepts of both Being and nothingness represent an erasure of woman and a refusal to acknowledge man's debt to her. Furthermore, she claims that as a result Heidegger is cloaked in metaphysical and conceptual garb to a greater extent than he realizes. Nevertheless, Irigaray's project would not be possible if woman did not surreptitiously emerge from the very language that is used to camouflage her, and it is Irigaray's aim to tear down the

masks that attempt to prevent her emergence in the critique *l'Oubli de l'Air*.

Irigaray accomplishes this by tracing Heidegger's ideas back to what she considers their true roots: namely the relationship with a forgotten (m)other. If Heidegger insists in *Being and Time*, that Western philosophy has papered over the question of Being, then Irigaray asserts that Western philosophy, including Heidegger's, has veiled woman. Heidegger's attempt to rescue Being from oblivion inspires Irigaray to save woman from a similar threat of obsolescence. Without such a rescue operation, Heidegger cannot move beyond metaphysics, for woman's enforced exile necessitates the kinds of abstractions that ignore the materiality of the earth. A postmetaphysical age needs to allow women to shape the hallowed halls of philosophy.

Heidegger's reconception of nothingness represents a dramatic shift in Western philosophy. It represents a less domineering approach towards one's environs. Furthermore, his concept of nothingness, as openness, underscores the interconnection of all things and celebrates difference rather than singularity. Irigaray's critique suggests that while Heidegger takes an important step in the right direction, his notion of nothingness is still mired in the abstractions endemic to Western philosophy. She insists that the idea of nothingness has a material base, experienced as the first gasp of air that marks a child's first contact with the world. By forgetting the material roots of nothingness, Irigaray avows that Heidegger fails to free himself from the grip of logos, despite his claims to do so. She introduces the metaphor of air to remind us of the material dimension of his spirituality. The symbol of air expands Heidegger's concept of nothingness, and suggests that for Irigaray, Heidegger's openings are not wide enough.

Heidegger's notion of nothingness constitutes a plea to acknowledge the spaces into which all things emerge. Irigaray argues that he forgets the first spaces, namely the womb and the air which a child draws its first breath. Heidegger therefore ignores the first ". . . house of Being." A woman's body provides man's (and woman's) first dwelling without demanding payment in kind. In this way, she is like air, which we take from freely but do not give back. Moreover, closed spaces are as important as open ones, and the interaction between the opening and the enclosure is what gives us the gift of life: "the first envelope empties into another. This creates a double envelope or buckle. Is it the sign of the infinite? The bridge is where the two envelopes cross and intersect. In this space, the inside passes into the outside which returns to the inside after having

wandered around."[7] Irigaray suggests that emergence from the womb is both painful and exhilarating and that the taste of freedom is matched by the feeling of deprivation of the warmth that the womb provided. If nothingness has both an emancipating effect and fills us with Angst, it is because of the buried memory of the terrifying and exhilarating emergence from the womb.

This space into which we first emerge is not empty, insists Irigaray, since it consists of the air from which we draw sustenance. She acknowledges that air can easily be mistaken for nothingness, because it is silent and formless, and thus is easily displaced by the sun, whose effects are visible rather than tangible: "Air remains still—that which gives back life, but, first of all, in the form of an absence . . . This fountainhead of life, this mediation and space of life, gives itself without appearing to do so."[8] Western philosophy privileges the sun by assuming that it is the wellspring of truth, life, and goodness, when in fact it is air (which is always present, both in darkness and in light), that is more primordial. The convergence of what Heidegger calls the fourfold, or earth, sky, mortals, and gods would not be possible without air. Nothingness is abstracted from air and this is what impels Irigaray to claim that Heidegger is riveted to logos despite his continuous efforts to avoid succumbing to its abstractions. Playing on the French expression for nothingness, she insists that this nothingness does not exist, which in French is also the manner in which it is said that "nothing" is: "This nothing is (not) (*Ce rien n'est*) . . . it maintains itself more in language than in the living body."[9]

By using air as a metaphor, Irigaray brings us back to the forgotten mother. The muffled voice of the (m)other is contained in Heidegger's concept of Being. Playing upon Heidegger's suggestion that Being calls us, she reminds him that the first call was that of the mother's voice: "Her voice, like air was the first thing that entered into him. Was this a call? Or was she responding to a call."[10] Since this voice is absent, it pushes him into the throes of anxiety. The presence of her absence spawns nihilistic tendencies: "She cries from whence there is no longer a name."[11] Irigaray suggests that Heidegger cannot successfully extricate nothingness from the shackles of nihilism without remembering the call of the mother. If man does not turn to the direction from which this call arises, there will be no relief from his anxiety. Heidegger's warning, that we must learn not to spurn the shadows, impels Irigaray to heed the voice that cries out from the darkness: the feminine voice. Through woman man was given the first taste of Being, and therefore he should not ignore her. Only disguised as a goddess is she allowed to return to

Heidegger's philosophy. The problem is that one cannot easily speak with goddesses.

Irigaray argues that the pull of the mother is also what propels him to build a home: "Living in a living house, a living body, that envelops, protects, nourishes, gives him existence without demanding recompense."[12] The insistence on man's self-making marks his unacknowledged tribute to the mother. In an ironic inversion, Heidegger suggests that it is death that allows him to shape the variegated strands of his being into a whole. He becomes a being-toward-death in order to deny that he was first of all a being that is born. The wholeness made possible by death reminds him of the enclosure of the womb, but he refuses to see the correlation.

Indeed, one could argue that Heidegger's refusal to pay homage to the mother who has given birth to him is what impedes his ability to fully incorporate the social into his philosophy. He takes tentative steps in this direction, by insisting on the importance of care and by emphasizing that we are already thrown into social situations that are not exterior to us, but are integrally woven into our social and individual fabric: "Dasein-with of the Others is disclosed within-the-world for a Dasein, and so too from those who are Daseins with us, only because Dasein in itself is essentially a Being-with" (BT 156, 120). Yet, if Heidegger were aware of the connection between Being and the mother, he would not insist on the isolating nature of the quest for authenticity. There would be more emphasis than there is on being-towards as a being-with. If the connection between our sense of Being as a whole, and our connection to our mothers were acknowledged, than sociality would be more firmly entrenched in our understanding of Being. It would allow for a social ontology that does not divorce metaphysics from psychological and social concerns. *Mitsein* would be an integral part of the openness of Being and could help to prevent our spiraling descent into nihilism.

However, there is also an alternative interpretation of Heidegger's later philosophy, which challenges Irigaray's reading. Rather than viewing the groundlessness embodied in the notion of emptiness as exclusionary towards the feminine, it can be seen as accommodative of it. The abstraction of nothingness does not foreclose the feminine, rather, it guarantees equal validity with the masculine. For example, Carol Bigwood suggests that Heidegger's emphasis on the importance of both concealment and unconcealment incorporates both allegedly masculine and allegedly feminine elements.[13] By insisting on the complementarity of the two, Heidegger opens up the possibility for an equilibrium where neither the

masculine or feminine is able to achieve predominance. From such a perspective, Irigaray's emphasis on the mother may not provide a way beyond the resentment that has had such deleterious consequences for women.

Nietzsche's Warrior Mother

If Heidegger's philosophy obscures the connection between his reorientation of metaphysics and the maternal, Nietzsche's philosophy makes this connection abundantly clear. Maternal references abound in the writings of Nietzsche, and while this represents a more inclusive approach towards feminine characteristics on the one hand, it decisively relegates *women* to the periphery on the other. Nietzsche's writings reveal the dangerous results that an over-emphasis on the mother can have. It is possible to co-opt the feminine into one's discourse in order to enrich one's philosophical vocabulary, while at the same time refusing to admit women, qua subjects, as interlocutors into the philosophical conversation. From this perspective, Nietzsche's blatant misogyny does not contradict his way of including the feminine but rather grows out of it. In fact, if men can adapt the traits of women, then Nietzsche's fantasy is that he can relish the fruits of the feminine without a need for women. Although Nietzsche seems more welcoming of the feminine than many other philosophers, he is no more friendly towards women. His philosophy vividly illustrates the danger of simply conflating the feminine and women. The eternal feminine can be revered while women are silenced. This is made poignantly clear in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. In his conversation with the old woman, Zarathustra avers that "one should speak about woman only to men" (Z I: 18). In other words, women can be represented in philosophy, but they are not allowed to be part of the conversation.

In addition to simply equating the feminine and women, Nietzsche also associates the feminine with the maternal. The maternal powers of women become the justification for their ostracism. What is underemphasized by both Nietzsche, and some of his feminist critics, is that women are not only the mothers of men. If the nonmaternal aspect of women were recognized, the power of the mother might be somewhat demystified. Nietzsche's philosophy exhibits an overwhelming fear of women: "Perhaps I am the first psychologist of the eternally feminine. They all love me—an old story—not counting *abortive* females, who lack the stuff for children. Fortunately, I am not willing to be torn to pieces:

the perfect woman tears to pieces when she loves . . . Ah, what a dangerous, creeping subterranean little beast of prey she is" (EH III: 5). She is the one who threatens to dismember him and who is unthinkable, unspeakable, and unfathomable because she is a woman.

It is very telling indeed, that Nietzsche depicts both life and wisdom as women. Unlike many misogynists of his ilk, Nietzsche recognizes that his hatred of women grows out of both his fear and his love. In an unusual move, he has women ridicule his positions in his dialogues. Thus, he is perhaps one of the few Western thinkers who displays a critical posture towards his own misogyny. In one story relayed in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, life, impersonating as a woman mocks him for portraying her as the unfathomable: "'All fish talk like that . . . What *they* cannot fathom is unfathomable. But I am merely changeable and untamed and in everything a woman, and no virtuous one'" (Z II: 10). On the one hand, this citation suggests that Nietzsche is simply repeating the time-worn narrative, which depicts women as more natural and more wild than men, who are the bastions of culture. But this cannot be the case, because Nietzsche does not depict merely life as women but also wisdom, suggesting that women straddle the nature and culture divide. Traditionally, in Western thought, women have been dissociated from culture and relegated to the sphere of nature. Nietzsche admires women for their ability to be at home in both realms and for recognizing that the two need not be made synonymous. Indeed, Nietzsche's philosophy, while much more openly misogynistic than Heidegger's, suggests that women are more comfortable with the murkiness and unpredictability of life than are men. Nietzsche's life is not a virtuous one, not because she is the frenzied force that poses a constant threat to civilization, but rather because she has no need to impose rigid codes on a world. Nietzsche is making the bold suggestion that women know how to live and think while men do not.

In Nietzsche's view, women take for granted that they cannot comprehend the whole, and thus flit more gracefully and calmly through life than do men. They are content at the surface, because they realize that the subterranean depths do not contain a definitive essence. They are comfortable with the fragility of truth, while men are the warriors, who, in the absence of clearly defined boundaries, are forced to create them. When Nietzsche proclaims, that when going to woman, one must bring one's whip, he is not only unleashing a venomous hatred for women; he is expressing his own weakness. The boundaries between men and women must be sharply drawn so that he can remain comfortable in his masculinity. Nietzsche's suggestion that men must be warriors ascribes to men

the power over death because women have the power over life. He asserts that "man should be trained for war and woman for the recreation of the warrior: all else is folly" (Z I: 18). He must enshrine the power to kill over the power to give life, because of his awe before the life-giving powers of women. Conversely, women display the calm reminiscent of the Daoist sage: "When a man in the midst of *his* hubbub, in the midst of the breakers of his plots and plans, he there sees perhaps calm; enchanting beings glide past him, for whose happiness and retirement he longs—they *are women*" (GS II: 59). She accepts her limitations; he does not and thus he is always in the midst of his hubbub. He cannot ride the tide of change with the same sense of equanimity so he must become a warrior. It is because of this that Nietzsche depicts life and wisdom as two women engaged in a dance, where both differences and similarities are celebrated.

Nietzsche depicts the changes of life as producing constant turmoil. The tumultuous mood swings of Zarathustra attest to his emotional instability in the face of change. This implies that he is not as comfortable with the changeable nature of life as he would like to be, precisely because he clings to his individual boundaries. Women are more at ease with this and thus life and wisdom can dance with each other as equal partners. There is no attempt by one to dominate or subsume the other. In fact, life and wisdom tease Zarathustra for not knowing which one he is seduced by and suggest that a love of one entails a love for the other. When Zarathustra informs life that he loves wisdom, she suggests that this is equivalent to his adoration of her: "But whom are you speaking of . . . of me surely" (Z II: 10).

Perhaps nowhere is the connection between women and the cosmos made more powerfully than in Nietzsche's metaphor of the eternal recurrence of the same. It is also here that his resentment against women for their position rises to the surface. The idea of the eternal return portrays human beings' ambivalent attitude towards their finitude. Each moment is a point at which present and future conjoin, and therefore is interconnected with all other moments. But it is only through the moment, and the convergence that it represents, that we get a taste of eternity. It is to be derived not from a birds-eye view of the cosmos, but rather through the experience of the interconnection. In this way, the metaphor shares much in common with Heidegger's notions of openness and *Gelassenheit*, which suggests that each particular provides a space in which other particulars can show themselves, and this is how we become attuned to Being.

From this perspective, one could argue that the eternal return offers a very feminine understanding of the cosmos, which is not predicated on the comprehension of it, but rather on the sense of connection to other particulars: "From this gateway Moment, a long, eternal lane runs *back*: an eternity lies behind us. Must not all things that *can* have run have already run along this lane? Must not all things that *can* happen *have already happened*, been done, run past?" (Z III: 2). The sameness emphasized in the eternal return could also be an implicit reminder of the act of giving birth, where a new life emerges by repeating the same process over and over again, but differently. Nietzsche is not literally suggesting that all things that occur are identical to each other. Rather his insistence upon their sameness suggests that they are all part of the same process. Each singular event is a confluence of past events and therefore harbours remnants of the past. By reminding us of their sameness Nietzsche admonishes us to recognize that we are nothing special on our own but are part of an infinite cosmos.

Yet, at the same time, Nietzsche is clearly uneasy with his finitude, and this disquietude is coupled with his fear of women. He proclaims that he wants to marry, not a woman, but rather eternity: "Never yet did I find the woman by whom I wanted children, unless it be this woman whom I love, for I love you, O Eternity!" (Z III: 16). There is no more blatant testament to the connection Nietzsche makes between woman and the cosmos than this statement. On the one hand, he identifies women with eternity and on the other he wants to marry eternity so that he would have no need for women. Ironically, women creep into his philosophy in celebration of the connection between nature and culture, but are transformed into mere abstractions (such as the personification of eternity), so that corporeal connection with woman can be dispensed with.

To Nietzsche, women represent the cosmos because of their power to give life. At the same time, she represents the frustrations of a divided self, because it is through her that he first experienced the pain of individuation. Because she represents both unity and the lack thereof, he characterizes woman as inherently deceptive. Although Nietzsche espouses a philosophy whereby the contradictory nature of truth is embraced, his ostracism of women reveals the limits of his ability to do so: "Perhaps truth is a woman who has reasons for not letting her see her reasons? Perhaps her name is—to speak Greek—Baubo?" (GS P: 4). Because he views her as the wellspring of life, forgetting, as Mary O'Brien points out, that man too is an agent in reproduction,[14] he also imputes to her powers

of death which she does not have. This is why she always threatens him with dismemberment: "Fortunately I am not willing to be torn to pieces: the perfect woman tears to pieces when she loves. . . . Ah, what a dangerous subterranean little beast of prey she is" (EH III: 5).

Irigaray questions the circular metaphor of the eternal return. For Irigaray this suggests that Nietzsche is incapable of abandoning the realm of metaphysics. He becomes mired in abstractions because he cannot accept the sexual body of women. In *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche*, she presents herself to Nietzsche as a lover, not to appear subservient, but as a reminder of what he has cast aside, and also to ensure that she is a participant in a dialogue. Philosophy must accept the voices of two sexes, and not simply the one:

> And farther away than the place where you are beginning to be, I have turned back. I have washed off your masks and make up, scrubbed away your multi-coloured projections and designs, stripped off your veils and wraps that hid the shame of your nudity. I have even had to scrape my woman's flesh clean of the insignia and marks you had etched upon it.[15]

For Irigaray, the circle represents an enclosed space from which woman is barred. Whether it is in the form of the coils of the serpent, or the glorious sun, in Irigaray's view it emerges out of Nietzsche's paranoid egoism which refuses to admit woman into its realm. His worship of the sun as the perfect star, which in the rhythm of rising and setting evokes the eternal recurrence, is a testament to his predilection for the repetition of the familiar. However, she emphasizes that even the sun creates darkness and shadows: "But this torch, your lamp, makes shadow. Even (même) at noon. Even/self (même) seeing itself. Your noon leaves in the darkness the other side of the earth, and its inside, and the depths of the sea."[16] Given that Nietzsche constantly oscillates between the heights of the mountain and the valley below, and revels in both light and darkness, such a claim is perhaps somewhat exaggerated on Irigaray's part. Yet, it is clear that, as Irigaray claims, Nietzsche refuses to accept woman as an interlocutor and therefore must be mired in abstractions for he imagines a world where birth can take place without women. Nietzsche insists that God represents a kind of transcendence that demands an ascetic assault on the sensuous body. If this is the case, then he is guilty of a similar transgression. His notion of self-creation and birth demands both an assault on and a denial of woman's body and also reflects a kind of asceti-

cism that only allows for one form of sexuality. The fact that he wants to become the masculine mother is extremely telling in this regard: "But blessed is he who is pregnant! And in truth he who wants to kindle the light of the future must hang long over the mountains like a heavy storm!" (Z III: 16). He wants to give birth to himself without need for woman. In Irigaray's view this prevents him from truly listening to the secret voices of the earth: "And nothing is in store for him at mid-night except what, at his midday, he stored away. And if mid-night be even darker than his day had imagined, that is the way his star still rises to perfect his circle."[17] Irigaray suggests that Nietzsche spurns the primordial waters of life for the mountains, thereby rejecting the maternal fluids of life. Zarathustra remains condemned to give birth to abstractions because he tries to shield himself from material reality. Because Nietzsche does not admit woman into his realm, the nature-culture divide that he is assiduously struggles against, remains intact.

Although Nietzsche presents a philosophy centered on self-overcoming as an alternative to metaphysical orders, a feminist analysis suggests that Nietzsche's divorce from metaphysics is not as complete as one might suppose. Indeed, Irigaray regards the Nietzschean obsession with self-overcoming as an extension, rather than a repudiation of Western metaphysics, for it signals resistance to the fact that man is born of woman. To hide this truth from himself and from woman, he promulgates the myth of the self-made man, and engages in the frenetic activity of constant overcoming in order to arrogate the act of giving birth to himself: "And in your will to destroy, the will to reduce to nothingness anything[18] that might tie you to me by a necessity of first and last hour. To destroy actively what you had to give up in order to become a man. To annihilate the body that gave you life and that still keeps you living."[19] Irigaray intrudes upon his enclosed circle and reminds him of the forces of the sea using the French word "*mer*" with its homophone *mère*. In this she points Nietzsche in the direction of the primordial waters of birth, which do not clearly demarcate and cannot be broken, despite his prodigious efforts to do so:

> Even as the ships cross over her, yet she remains. The same. Incorruptible. And she laughs as they move onward, seeking the secret of their truth. When they get close to it, they don't notice it. They just keep moving on, in search of something that offers a solid resistance and opposition to their wandering. That offers a rampart to beat back their thought.[20]

Irigaray accepts Nietzsche's portrait of woman as the indefinable, which resists appropriations by truth:

> And the voice of her abysses is not to be folded and gathered up into a single thought. Rather it (*elle*) will bring down every sail already chartered if it makes itself heard.[21]

Derrida also appropriates Nietzsche's identification of woman with the undecidable:

> It is impossible to disassociate the questions of art, style and truth from the question of the woman. Nevertheless the question "what is woman?" is itself suspended by the simple formulation of their common problematic. One can no longer seek her, no more than one could search for woman's femininity or female sexuality. And she is certainly not to be found in any of the familiar modes of concept or knowledge. Yet it is impossible to resist looking for her.[22]

Here Derrida points to a troubling paradox when it comes to women. On the one hand, it is impossible to uncover some kind of "woman's essence" that will define her in perpetuity. Nietzsche's concept of womanhood is much like Heidegger's notion of Being, which we must always pay tribute to, and search for, all the while remaining content that we will never find what we seek. But at the same time, the need to sharply define sexual difference appears strong in the writings of Nietzsche, and if woman remains the indefinable, than she is at risk of being defined by man. His resistance to concepts reaches its limits at the door of woman, as his self-proclaimed need for the whip attests to. Being indefinable or unthinkable does not rescue woman from the violence of man; it makes her susceptible to it.

Nietzsche's philosophy may point to the dangers of the idealized vision of woman he puts forward. His account of the interplay between Dionysian and Apollonian forces suggests that while Dionysian disindividuation is both intoxicating and necessary to remind us of our connection to all that is living, it must have Apollo as its counterweight, for our particularity can only be preserved if boundaries are established as well as collapsed. Woman too must be allowed to express her Apollonian side. If she is represented by an image of the eternal-maternal wherein self-other boundaries are falsely assumed to be irrelevant to her, then she will always remain voiceless. This is why Irigaray insists woman needs her own lan-

guage, for only an individuated being can establish itself as a subject. Cura too insists on the importance of bestowing a name upon her creation. The symbolic must not be seen as an exclusively masculine category any more than the semiotic should be seen as an exclusively female preserve. Woman cannot be too closely identified with Being, otherwise she becomes subjectless. We must take care to ensure that Irigaray's admonition, to go back to the mother, does not simply produce another vision of the eternal feminine. The limitations and particularity of the mother must also be expressed. If men are seen as individuated, and women are symbols for the absence of boundaries, then women will always only provide the silent backdrop to men. And subject-less beings, no matter how highly they may be revered, will always be condemned to an eerie silence.

This silence is often obtained through acts of violence. In a disturbing role reversal, Nietzsche describes a male warrior who becomes the wellspring of life to woman, wisdom. She is nourished by the male figure who provides the depth to her surface:

> And woman has to obey and find a depth to her surface. Woman's nature is surface, a changeable stormy film upon shallow waters. But a man's nature is deep; it's torrent runs in subterranean caves: woman senses its power but does not comprehend it. (Z I: 18)

Man becomes the mother to woman, because death and destruction become primordial. In his role as agent of death, man can gain preponderance over woman, who is now reduced to the task of creating future warriors. She becomes what Heidegger would call the standing-reserve to man: "Man should be trained for war and woman for the recreation of the warrior. All else is folly" (Z I: 18). In a grotesque irony, death becomes the master of birth so that man can have power over woman. (The tendency to give nuclear weapons names such as "fat boy" are a testament to the frightening pervasiveness of such a tendency.) The glorification of violence becomes Nietzsche's response to the life-giving powers of woman. O'Brien's insistence, that man be reminded of his role in reproduction, assumes a great urgency in light of the terrifying tendency Nietzsche's philosophy has exposed.

Nietzsche's resentment towards woman provides a useful lens with which to analyze the undercurrent of resentment against woman that ripples through Western philosophy. This resentment is made more explicit in psychoanalytic philosophy, which maintains that the split

from the mother, necessary though it is to create individuality, is traumatic. Zarathustra is a testament to the powerful hold such trauma has on his psyche. He fears losing the self in the dismembering whirlwind of Dionysus. Yet, the extremes of Apollonian individuation that are manifested in his isolation point to the stagnation that can ensue from solitude. He falsely accuses woman of wielding tremendous power over him by tempting him with a morsel and then taking it away. Her rhythm of concealing and unconcealing, to use Heideggerian language becomes the source of an intense frustration. This condemns him to a life of perpetual wandering, where he oscillates between Apollonian heights and Dionysian depths, and between despair and jubilation. There appears to be no way out of his quandary. The gratitude and resentment against the mother is powerfully revealed in Nietzsche's writings.

Zarathustra's agony begs the question of why he cannot handle the contradictory nature of life that he celebrates. Nietzsche writes that women are more at ease with these contradictions. Perhaps sexual difference provides the clue to understanding Zarathustra's torment. Resentment towards the mother is not limited to boys alone but it may be more muted in girls because of their sexual likeness to the mother. Because of their identity with the mother, they can more readily accept the identity in difference and the difference in identity. Furthermore, males are more sensitive to the potential power difference between the sex that gives birth and the sex which does not. Vagina envy transforms into penis envy. The demystification of the act of giving birth may well help to prevent the overestimation of women's powers that led to their underestimation. The finitude of woman must be recognized.

The schism evident in Western philosophy between culture and nature may in fact be the outcome of a sexual division. Women are unjustly expelled from the realm of culture so that man, in response to her birth-giving power, can claim a sphere for himself. Women are then accused of being fickle mistresses of deception because they never easily assume the role that has been thrust upon them. Even the blows of the Nietzschean whip cannot render them completely silent. The difference between men and women should neither be underemphasized nor overemphasized. Irigaray rightly argues that Western philosophers have refused to embrace the otherness and difference of woman, but what she underemphasizes is that they have failed to recognize the common humanity of men and woman. The power of the mother ought neither to be denied nor inflated.

Laozi and the Mother of the World

Daoist philosophy has had a much better reputation than Confucianism for its positive characterization of the feminine. If Heidegger can be criticized for neglecting some of the gendered undercurrents in his thinking, this accusation cannot be leveled against Laozi, who makes the feminine a centerpiece of his thought. The references to the feminine are not just accidental; they are at the forefront of his philosophy. There is a clear sense that the inattentiveness to the Dao is matched by a pervasive obliteration of the feminine. Revitalizing the Dao necessitates greater receptivity to the feminine, which Laozi suggests is closer to it in spirit. Conflict and struggle are assumed to be the upshot of an untrammeled ascendancy of the masculine.

Although not a feminist text (in that the emancipation of woman is not its aim), Laozi espouses views very similar to those of Irigaray in arguing that the feminine has, for too long, suffered neglect. A singularly masculine world is prone to discord. While Heidegger's thought provides an opening for an implicit link between a feminine voice and Being, the link between the neglect of the Dao and the neglect of the feminine is made explicit in Laozi's work. Rather than extolling the masculine virtues of aggression, assertiveness, and strength, the book venerates receptivity, openness, and weakness—which are commonly associated with women. Although these linkages in themselves may be problematic from a feminist perspective, it is important to recognize that they are not necessarily associated with passivity. Weakness, for example, is not the absence of strength but rather signifies a kind of openness that refrains from imposing itself on the world. Indeed, Laozi assumes that weakness will prevail over strength precisely because of its expansiveness, flexibility and endurance. Strength eventually exhausts itself while the energy of weakness is boundless:

> Man, when he enters life,
> is soft and weak.
> When he dies
> he is hard and strong.
> Plants, when they enter life,
> are soft and tender.
> When they die
> they are dry and stiff.

> Therefore: the hard and the strong
> are companions of death;
> the soft and the weak
> are companions of life.
> Therefore: when weapons are strong they are not victorious
> When trees are strong they are cut down.
> The strong, the great, is below.
> The soft, the weak, is above. (DDJ 76)

In one passage, Laozi pays homage to water, which is the fountain of life. In this, we are reminded of Irigaray's exhortation to Nietzsche not to forget the primordial waters of life:

> In the whole world there is nothing softer
> and weaker than water.
> And yet nothing measures up to it
> in the way it works upon that which is hard.
> Nothing can change it.
> Everyone on earth knows
> that the weak conquers the strong
> and the soft conquers the hard—
> but no-one is capable of acting accordingly. (DDJ 78)

Water is associated with an enduring power exemplified by its ability to slowly erode the face of rocks. The formless not only prevails over form, it creates it.

Laozi's reminder has some very interesting implications for feminist theory. The symbol of the phallus in traditional psychoanalytic theory is praised for its Apollonian features. It has definite form, and its power derives from its visibility. The vagina, on the other hand, is both visible and invisible. Its boundaries are not as well-defined, and it is both singular and multiple. Irigaray resuscitates the vagina to point out its "ambivalence," which ought to be celebrated rather than scorned. It symbolizes both separation and connectedness. It is both one and multiple. The power of water alluded to by Laozi is similar in both its formlessness and its capacity to give form. By insisting that it is more powerful than rock, he implies that eventually the feminine will endure and that the victories of the masculine over the feminine can only be temporary. Continuous power struggles are not a signal of strength but rather of frailty since conquest by force is never long-lasting:

Whoever knows how to lead well
is not warlike.
Whosoever knows how to fight well
is not angry.
Whosoever knows how to conquer enemies
does not fight them.
Whosoever knows how to use men well
keeps himself below.
This is the life that does not quarrel;
this is the power of using men;
this is the pole that reaches up to Heaven. (DDJ 69)

Laozi's use of the symbol of water can also help to uncloak some of the important gendered presuppositions that underlie Nietzsche's thought. Upon first glance, the Dionysian might have much in common with Laozi's depiction of water in terms of its formlessness, fluidity, and strength. But this is where the similarity ends. There are many images of the Dionysian as a frenzied and disorderly force that violently smashes the boundaries between things. Laozi's serene depiction of water as a connective force helps us to see that Nietzsche's thought, in spite of its proclamations, leans heavily towards the Apollonian. The violent imagery that he uses to depict the Dionysian is symptomatic of the stranglehold that the Apollonian has over his consciousness. Dionysus's activity is represented as disindividuation rather than as connection and therefore is considered primarily destructive. Only a world in which Apollo reigns would focus on the destructive rather than the connective potential of Dionysus in this way. Furthermore, while the Dionysian seems to at least open a small crack through which the feminine can emerge, it also excludes the feminine. It is no coincidence that Nietzsche invokes two male gods to form the pillars of his philosophy. Dionysus does not emerge from a woman's womb but rather from the limbs of Zeus. In doing this, Nietzsche tries to deliberately camouflage our female origins.

Laozi, on the other hand, cannot be accused of turning a blind eye to our female origins. The feminine is associated with the murky and primordial forces out of which all life emerges:

The spirit of the valley never dies.
It is called 'the female.'
The gateway of the dark female
is called 'the root of Heaven and Earth.'

Uninterrupted as though persistent
it is effective without effort. (DDJ 6)

The fact that the feminine is considered to be the root of heaven and earth has interesting implications. In the *Book of Changes*, the female is associated with earth and the male is associated with heaven. In the *Daodejing*, the female is considered the source of both. Thus, Laozi imputes more power to the feminine than does the *Book of Changes*. The sexual imagery reflected in the notion of the gateway is obvious and it is clear that a connection is made between the origins of the universe and the act of giving birth.

Because she gives birth, woman is also associated with eternity. Laozi points out that he who goes back to the mother never dies. The connection between beginnings and eternity is not unique to Laozi. Heidegger insists that we must repeatedly rethink the beginning in order to experience the vast openness of Being. Nietzsche establishes the link between woman and eternity by personifying eternity as a woman whom he wishes to marry. For Laozi, eternity is linked to a feminine openness. Whereas the more masculine mountaintops cannot hold things, the valleys are receptacles that allow for the proliferation of many forms of life. It is in the valleys that communities flourish, and that dazzling fields of flowers can be found. The mountaintops tend to be shorn of life. Laozi suggests that not enough attention has been paid to the power of the feminine valley, just as Irigaray accuses Nietzsche of refusing to descend from his lofty mountaintop towards the primordial waters of birth.

Respectful though Laozi's link between the feminine and eternity might seem, it has some disturbing implications from a feminist perspective. The connection made between the act of giving birth and the Dao can also impel us to overlook some of important aspects of reproduction. This is not to say that Laozi is trying to equate the act of birth with the motion of the Dao, but it is important to bear in mind Zhuangzi's reminders not to mistake the symbol too readily for that which it is symbolizing. In fact, when the symbol of the feminine and woman become readily conflated, it can have some deleterious consequences for women. While the Dao may generate the ten thousand things effortlessly, it can hardly be said that the act of giving birth for women is effortless. One must distinguish between birth as an eternal process, and the finite woman who gives birth. The complaints of pregnant women, that their body is no longer their own, ought to be listened to as much as the voices of women who speak of emitting a new radiance. These different experi-

ences of the birth process attest to the fact that a woman also experiences the pains of individuation. She is not simply at one with the cosmos.

Furthermore, this seeming effortlessness with which the feminine principle appears to operate may obviate the need for woman to have a voice of her own:

> There is one thing that is invariable complete.
> Before Heaven and Earth were it is already there:
> so still so lonely.
> Alone it stands and does not change.
> It turns in a circle and does not endanger itself.
> One may call it 'the mother of the world.' (DDJ 25)

As Zhuangzi reminds us, all limited beings need words. Only the limitless Dao has no need for them. Laozi and Zhuangzi continuously enjoin us to keep the limitations of names in mind because of the distortions that they inevitably produce: "Use words sparingly, then all things will fall into place" (DDJ 23). This is not to imply that we should desist from speaking but rather suggests that silence must not be forgotten while we are speaking: "As all life is one, what need is there for words? Yet I have just said all life is one, so I have already spoken, haven't I" (Zh 2, 15). The passage reminds us to exercise caution when using words but also underscores their inevitability. Indeed words do not just undermine the harmony of the Dao, but embody it:

> Flowing words are spoken every day and they harmonize through the influence of Heaven, continuing for ever and so extending many years. If nothing is said about them, they remain in agreement, and agreement is not affected by words: words are in agreement but agreement is not words. So it is said, 'say nothing'. Words say nothing so you can talk all your life and say nothing. In contrast you can live your life without speaking and have said things of great worth. (Zh 27, 244)

By associating woman with the great beginning as the "Mother of the world" Laozi also implicitly links her to nothingness: "non-existence I call the beginning of Heaven and Earth." In doing so, he may be unwittingly furthering the tendency to deprive her of a voice. Woman, because she is primordial has no need to speak. The absence of a voice robs her of her humanity. As Heidegger points out, the ability to use language as a way of both addressing Being and heeding the voice of Being makes us

human. By being associated too closely with what Heidegger would call Being, or what Laozi calls the Dao, woman is prevented from establishing her relationship to it. Even though woman is rendered speechless because of her power, in effect this speechlessness makes her powerless. Ironically, forgetting that woman is also a finite being-toward-death can eventuate her dehumanization. She too has need for words, yet in the texts of Laozi and Zhuangzi, women do not speak. In the Zhuangzi, women appear only as the wives of men or symbols of beauty. While the feminine is visible, women are silent. This should neither simply be dismissed as an oversight nor ignored because it is in accordance with the conventions of the time. Daoist thinkers were willing to defy convention in many other ways.

Both Laozi and Nietzsche allow women to appear in their texts as mothers, while Heidegger and Zhuangzi make scant references to them. These two tendencies are connected. It is the overestimation of their role as mothers that impels them to forget women are also daughters, lovers, and sisters who, together with their mothers, are *finite* beings. By overemphasizing their difference from men, they overlook their similarity. Giving birth does not make women immortal. Women are not immune from the dilemmas of finitude. Heidegger exhorts human beings to celebrate their finitude and insists that without doing so, we cannot engage in the authentic act of creation. By refusing to recognize the finitude of women, men bar them from engaging in creative activity. Furthermore, men are supposed to drink from the well of their mothers in order to experience eternity. Women, on the other hand, are provided with no way of relating to the eternal:

> If one possesses the mother of the World
> one gains eternal duration.
> This is the Dao of the deep root,
> of the firm ground,
> of eternal existence
> and of lasting sight. (DDJ 59)

In becoming the fountainhead of man's eternity, woman is left with no wellspring of her own. Her relationship to her own mother is completely ignored. Not only men but women must be allowed to return to their mothers. In this way, women can be seen as something other than a mother. One should not underestimate the significance of Irigaray's reminder that not only the mother-son relationship but also the mother-

daughter relationship must be celebrated. It affirms the importance of mothers, but also sheds light on the woman who is *not* a mother.

At the same time, the importance of the passage in the *Daodejing* which insists that one must return to the mother in order to know the son should not be dismissed:

> The world has a beginning:
> that is the Mother of the World.
> Whosoever finds the mother
> in order to know the sons
> whosoever knows the sons
> and returns to the mother:
> he will not be in danger all his life long. (DDJ 52)

Feminist thinkers who contend that the mother is all too easily forgotten, can take some solace from this passage. It is a reminder that all men come from a mother and are not, like Dionysus, born from the thigh of Zeus. Men are urged to respect rather than shun the female side of their being. In contrast, monotheistic religions build their theological edifice around the notion that all beings owe their existence to a single male God: a theoretical construction which represents a deliberate erasure of the mother. Laozi cannot be accused of such crafty subterfuge to push the mother into the abyss of oblivion. Yet, it is important to recognize that daughters are entirely left out of this passage. The mother herself is merely a medium to obtain knowledge about the sons.

Too much emphasis on the mother can therefore result in her occlusion. We must recognize that women do not form the completely perfect self-sufficient circle Laozi describes. As O'Brien reminds us, men must become aware of themselves as partners in the process of giving life. If women are seen as complete in themselves, they are easily left out of the dialogue altogether. Rather than being treated with respect, they are assumed to have no needs of their own and thus are treated with contempt and resentment. If women are seen as more than finite, this allows men to blame women for the agonies of their finitude and impels philosophers such as Nietzsche to impute to them responsibility for men's mortality.

Even though women themselves have no voice in either Laozi's or Zhuangzi's philosophy, they are seen as potential panaceas for an ailing world. There is a clear indication that a world which has been dominated by the masculine finds itself in constant turmoil:

All men are so shining-bright
as if they were going to the great sacrificial feast,
as if they were climbing up the towers in spring.
Only I am so reluctant, I have not yet been given a sign:
like an infant, yet unable to laugh;
unquiet, roving as if I had no home
All men have abundance,
only I am as if forgotten.
I have the heart of a fool: so confused, so dark. . . .
I alone am different from all men:
But I consider it worthy
to seek nourishment from the mother. (DDJ 20)

The arrogance of men, who are preoccupied with appearances and who parade through the world emitting a lot of noise, is noted. This is very reminiscent of Nietzsche's claim, that men are in the midst of a hubbub, while women glide elegantly and peacefully across the surface. The speaker claims that he is not at home amidst this cacophony of men and so is condemned to the exile of the wanderer. Thus, he who is more attuned to the mother faces a life of ostracism and perpetual solitude. And while he rejects the aggressive behaviour of those men around him, he is not entirely at ease with his difference from them.

There is also a danger in only making women the cure for men's woes as man's perpetual caregiver. This propensity becomes evident in the depiction of the sage who must seek nourishment from the mother and thereby cultivate his feminine and masculine characteristics:

Whosoever knows his maleness
and guards his femaleness:
he is the gorge of the world.
If he is the gorge of the world
Eternal Life does not leave him
and he becomes again as child. (DDJ 28)

In effect, the sage is androgynous. A feminist perspective can help to shed light on the qualities of sagehood. In chapter 2, I point out that the journey towards sagehood is a difficult one, since it is by no means easy to be able to live life effortlessly. Throughout the *Daodejing*, the effortless existence of the feminine is alluded to. From the qualities Laozi attributes to the feminine and masculine, it would appear that a sage-like existence

would be more feminine than masculine. The suggestion that the sage must know his maleness and guard his femaleness is telling, because it implies that the journey he makes from being a limited being, with all the pain and limitation that this entails, to mirroring the openness of the Dao is highly significant. It is not just the fact that he reflects the openness of the Dao that makes him a sage, it is the self-overcoming that it took to get to this stage that accounts for his remarkable nature. Woman cannot be a sage because she did not have to go there; it is assumed that she *is* already there. While the dark female or the root of heaven and earth is "effective without effort," the sage or "man of calling" had to travel a great distance to be able to become like "woman." This is why his achievements are formidable and hers are merely natural:

> Thus also is the Man of Calling:
> He disregards himself,
> And his Self is increased.
> He gives himself away
> And his Self is preserved. (DDJ 7)

The suggestion that the man must achieve what the woman effortlessly is seems flattering to women. However, the fact that there are no female sages in either Laozi's or Zhuangzi's texts suggests that there is a high premium placed on man's achievement. Women cannot speak about sagehood because they did not have to become like the sages. Woman has no limitations to overcome and therefore she cannot teach mortals to appreciate the Dao. She cannot lead us back to the Dao because she has not strayed from it. Because she allegedly lacks the experience of individuation, she cannot partake of the male's wisdom. She is immune from the dilemmas of finitude and thus cannot turn finite heads in the direction of the Dao.

Throughout the *Daodejing*, androgyny is praised. However, it is assumed that only the male can be androgynous, while the female remains female, and has no need to adopt the characteristics of the male. This by no means constitutes a radical departure from traditional Chinese philosophy. The Confucian ruler too is praised for his androgynous characteristics and he is to rule not in an imperialistic manner, but so that his rule is hardly noticed. Nevertheless, this position is not incompatible with the exclusion of women. Just as Nietzsche can become the masculine mother and thereby tries to divest himself of the need for women, this kind of praise of feminine characteristics offers no guarantee of either

women's inclusion or equality. If man can adopt the traits of both sexes, then he still remains the superior being, while the woman remains mired in her femaleness. The ability to transcend his limitations accounts for man's higher social status. Because he not only knows his maleness but also knows how to overcome it, he can work to achieve harmony between people who are infected with too much "maleness." Friction and strife are no strangers to him, while they are presumed to be foreign to woman. As long as she is equated with the valley of the world, her power will be restricted to that of a metaphor. The sage does not exclude women with the force of a Nietzschean whip but rather does so quietly. While he draws upon the power of the female, he still does not share power with her.

THE (M)OTHER'S TURN

A feminist perspective casts light on the unspoken dynamic that may be at work in both metaphysical and postmetaphysical philosophy. The aggressive tendencies, which Heidegger argues characterizes metaphysical orientation, may in part arise from a deep-seated resentment against women qua mothers. Without understanding this, much of the Western metaphysical project remains shrouded in mystery. The strong connection between Heidegger's account of the abuse of Being, the rape of nature, and the often violent silencing of women is by no means accidental. Woman may not only be the victim of such metaphysics but the being against whom its edifice was constructed. Heidegger's plea not to reduce everything to an instrumental rationality and to respect the shadows as well as the light undoubtedly provides a port of entry for the feminine. Metaphysics, as Irigaray implies, was at least in part an attempt to deny sexual difference. A postmetaphysical philosophy must not only include women but allow itself to be shaped by women; sexual difference ought to be accommodated rather than spurned.

Philosophers such as Irigaray and Kristeva caution us to acknowledge our debt to our mothers so that we become aware of the way in which the spiritual and material as well as Self and other are entangled. By so doing, they hope that we avoid the pitfalls of a rigidly bifurcated world, where the spiritual and material, as well as self and other stare at each other across an unbridgeable divide. Furthermore, they argue that without such a return, we deprive ourselves of the knowledge about one very importance source of belonging, meaning, and enquiry, namely the mother. Through the mother we become aware of our dual needs for

wholeness as well as individuation. We recognize that we are individuals as well as being-with-others and that the two are inextricably intertwined. The memory of the mother helps to ensure that our relationship to Being is a social one.

But at the same time, one must return to the mother with caution. What is unspoken in Heidegger becomes explicit in Nietzsche and Laozi, namely a latent tendency to identify woman as mother with the power of the cosmos itself. To say that without our mothers, we could not have a sense of either the Dao, Being, or eternity is not to claim that one can simply equate woman with these realms. Nowhere does this become more blatantly obvious than in the philosophy of Nietzsche, who not only connects the maternal with the eternal but also provides a vivid depiction of the misogyny that can ensue from it. His philosophy unwittingly helps us to provide an account of the dehumanization and voicelessness to which woman is subjected. Rather than including woman, he appropriates her femininity only in order to render it unnecessary. His need to chase her into exile brandishing his whip in itself demonstrates the foolishness of his misogynistic mission.

Laozi is more respectful of the feminine, and unlike Nietzsche does not argue that the violence of the warrior should become the way of the world. Instead, he insists that feminine peace, receptivity, and openness to others are more lasting than masculine conflict and brutish strength can ever be. The Daoist sage absorbs the feminine without defining himself against it in the manner of Nietzsche. And yet, Laozi still excludes women, even though he does not use the force of the whip to do so. Because woman is associated with the silent and effortless ways of the Dao, she does not bear the mark of finitude that allows her to engage as a human subject among other subjects. It is her perceived lack of finitude that ensures the domain of the sage will always be the realm of the male. Revering the feminine too much can be as damaging to women as revering it too little. While the cosmos cannot be understood without woman, we should also avoid the temptation to make cosmos and woman synonymous.

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Chapter 6

Being(s) in Between

The rationalism of the West has often been contrasted with the mysticism of the East, and this dichotomization has frequently been invoked to affirm the superiority of one tradition over the other. On many occasions, the hegemony of the West is deemed justifiable because the rationality that it purportedly appeals to entitles it to enlighten peoples whose mysticism is the mark of a more primitive form of philosophical consciousness. Hegel is one notorious example of a Western philosopher who peremptorily dismisses Chinese and Indian philosophical traditions due to their prerational understandings that can lay no claim to a comprehensive grasp of either reason or freedom. Ideas of subjectivity, which are the trademark of much of Western philosophy, are inadequately developed in Hegel's view.[1]

The comparison between Laozi, Zhuangzi, Heidegger, and Nietzsche helps unsettle such rigid dichotomozations. Heidegger demonstrates that philosophy has always been motivated by the desire to think a whole that cannot be adequately defined and resists linguistic formulations. These mystical origins of philosophy have been driven underground by a tradition that impugns the unspeakable, overlooking the fact that philosophy could not have emerged without them. Heidegger maintains that even the rationalism of the West has mystical beginnings, and their forced obfuscation is reflective of an irrational desire to render everything subject to human control. He insists upon "beginning the beginning again" and repeatedly refers to the "other beginning of philosophy" in order to distinguish it from the Platonic and Aristotelian penchant for clarity and form. By ignoring its mystical element, Western philosophy helps to seal

its own death warrant, for it cannot survive indefinitely without drawing sustenance from that which cannot be thought. Heidegger is one of the few modern Western philosophers to make the revolutionary suggestion that philosophy must celebrate the unknowable. His invocation of the gods in his later writings does not signify his abandonment of philosophy but rather represents his effort to revitalize a tradition that had become moribund because it had cut itself off from its wellspring.

The Daoist thinkers Laozi and Zhuangzi also pay homage to a whole that cannot be fathomed. They insist that the unknowable Dao should be continuously evoked, although never defined. This is neither an unrealistic nor a world-denying posture since it is very reasonable to suggest that a finite human being cannot possibly grasp an infinite cosmos. Rather than encouraging withdrawal from the world, it inspires a transformed relationship to it. Instead of seeing things primarily through their separateness from each other, their interconnection is underscored. Such interconnection is both in particular beings and beyond them, and therefore the Dao is seen as transcendent and immanent at the same time. By correlating immanence and transcendence, the concrete world is imbued with wonder.

While Nietzsche is often assumed to be the antispiritual thinker par excellence, this constitutes a misinterpretation stemming from the assumption that his disdain for Christian religion signifies a repudiation of spiritualism altogether. It is no accident that Eastern thinkers such as Nishitani have often been more receptive to the spiritual dimension of his thought than Western commentators who are more inclined to equate spirituality with Christendom. The idea of the eternal return exhibits a mystical understanding that is very close to that of Daoist thinkers, since it refers to a kind of wholeness rooted in the earth, and celebrates the interconnection between all living things. Like Laozi and Zhuangzi, Nietzsche admits that our sense of belonging depends in part upon our willingness to concede that we constitute but a small speck in an infinite cosmos. The sense of cosmic unity is not achieved through a kind of transcendent denial of the concrete world, but rather emerges from the affirmation of life's interconnectedness. Nietzsche's eternal return collapses the transcendent/immanent dichotomy and offers the paradoxical possibility of experiencing transcendence through an affirmation of the particular moment.

It has often been claimed that Heidegger, Nietszche, Laozi, and Zhuangzi are all unethical thinkers because of the acerbic critiques they level against moral dogma. Nietzsche's diatribes against Christian moral-

ism have led many commentators to presume that he favours a morally relativistic universe where anything goes. Daoist statements that good and evil are one and the same are also alleged to represent a kind of moral indifference. The absence of a direct moral message in Heidegger's thought, coupled with his history of collusion with a sinister Nazi regime, has impelled many readers to cast doubt on his moral sincerity. Such prejudices overlook the ethical importance that the nonhuman world assumes for all of these thinkers. According to Heidegger, the most dangerous legacy of modern metaphysics is a triumphant humanism, which assumes that human beings alone bestow meaning upon existence. Because we fail to acknowledge the nonhuman realm of Being, we lack the openness that enables us to respect diversity and other beings on their own terms. Rather than constricting the moral realm, one could argue that Heidegger's thought provides the rationale for its expansion, since he also insists that the world of nature must be sheltered and protected by human beings. Furthermore, by participating in the openness of Being, and recognizing that the agency of human beings is not absolute, Heidegger hopes we can learn to relate to the world without falling victim to a kind of master-slave dynamic in which the only alternatives available are either domination or submission.

Similarly, Daoist thinkers are critical of moral dogma, which they insist presupposes a kind of divisiveness between beings and ignores the world of nature. If anything can be said to constitute a source of Daoist "ethics," then it would be nothingness. Nothingness is the radical openness that allows the sage to treat all beings with respect because it enables him to focus on the connections between things rather than on the barriers that divide them. Nothingness is the space between things that makes them distinct from each other, and the space within things which links them. As the "space between," nothingness draws attention to the particularity of things, and as the "space within," it draws attention to their essential sameness.

Both Laozi and Zhuangzi are critical of Confucian moral rigidity. They argue that rituals, which are simply followed, prevent people from relating to each other on more direct terms. As a result, the links between individuals become artificial and tenuous and do not allow the uniqueness of one person to cultivate uniqueness in the other. The natural potential (*de*) of individuals is undermined and therefore such a morality must always be buttressed by instruments of force. Daoist thinkers maintain that the sage, attuned to openness, would not need to rely upon coercion to achieve social peace. He does not forcefully mould people into the

shape he desires, but rather provides an environment in which they can become what they already are.

While Nietzsche's eternal return also affirms the interdependence of all beings, he is nevertheless the most morally ambivalent of these thinkers. Both Daoists and the later Heidegger focus on the connections between things, thereby celebrating mutual openness and condemning division and conflict. Nietzsche by no means repudiates such a moral vision, and indeed, he repeatedly reveals his respect for the virtues of reciprocity and interconnection, which make friendship possible. He too casts doubt on the idea of an isolated subject that can make itself purely on its own. Nevertheless, Nietzsche claims that there is a role for conflict, and insists that tensions between individuals cannot be avoided. While accepting that we have a profound need to become part of something larger than the self, he insists that we have an equally powerful desire to individuate ourselves and to maintain and establish our boundaries against others. Just as it would be a mistake to claim that Nietzsche rejects harmonious living, it would also be erroneous to not take his self-proclaimed antimoralism (or immoralism) seriously. For Nietzsche, the Apollonian desire to individuate and the Dionysian desire to collapse these divisions are equally important and he has no intention of granting victory to either one or the other.

If there is one matter that all of the thinkers of this study agree upon, it is that the whole should be conceived of as process rather than substance. The word "Dao" makes this very clear, for it can mean path, way, and thought. Heidegger's term "Being" is deliberately ambiguous as both noun and verb, while Nietzsche's metaphor of the eternal return underscores the importance of unity in movement. This has important ramifications for the way we relate to each other: for a whole that is interpreted as process, need not result in the diminution of the particulars that comprise it. There can be no process without the interaction of finite beings. As Zhuangzi repeatedly reminds us, there is no need to choose between the one and the many for the unity in diversity and the diversity in unity must be celebrated together. In his later writings, Heidegger insists that the irreducible "thisness" of beings must be affirmed and that Being withdraws in order to make this possible. Zhuangzi's assertion that things are always both "this" and "that" reminds us that they cannot be reduced to conceptual categories. Nietzsche's plea that we affirm the moment both in its specificity and as a part of the cycle of the eternal return conveys a similar message.

The insistence upon the singularity of things is by no means indicative of atomization. When Zhuangzi stands on the bridge and revels in the frolicking of the fish, he admits that, although he cannot know what it means to be a fish, he nevertheless can be attuned to the Dao through them. Without the Dao, *De* could not exist, but without the *De*, Dao could not exist. The particularity of a thing does not develop in isolation but rather through its connections with other things. Nevertheless, one thing cannot be reduced to the other. Not only the Dao but also each particular is one and multiple. This is why Laozi suggests that "three" and not the "one" gives birth to all things.

Heidegger and Nietzsche offer trenchant criticisms of the metaphysical tradition in Western philosophy. They argue that the rigidity of conceptual thought has obscured the importance of process and resulted in the brutal annihilation of difference. This is epitomized for them in the mass culture of modernity. The problem with metaphysics lies not in the fact that it pays tribute to the whole, but rather in its compunction to define the whole and distill it into a single essence. Therefore, it is unfair to claim that Nietzsche's and Heidegger's attempts to overcome metaphysics, constitute a complete annihilation of its legacy, for there are some aspects of its heritage that they wish to preserve. For one thing, the notion of thinking the whole is not abandoned. Heidegger's idea of Being, and Nietzsche's metaphor of the eternal return, attest to its importance. However, meaning is no longer derived from grounding or defining the whole, but rather arises out of the process of connecting to it on an ongoing basis.

According to many commentators, Nietzsche's cynicism leaves behind only the possibility of a kind of power politics where nothing can act as a check on the brutal competition for mastery. Aside from constituting an obvious exaggeration, such assessments also represent a rather facile understanding of Nietzsche's notion of power, which is not rooted in the individual and is *both* a source of division and connection. Indeed, Nietzsche laments that Western languages do not furnish him with the proper vocabulary for expressing this insight, for they do not allow him to speak of agency without at the same time implying that there is a subject behind it.

While Laozi and Zhuangzi cannot be considered antimetaphysical since, unlike their Western counterparts, they did not confront a metaphysical legacy that they felt compelled to undo, they do offer critiques of conceptual rigidity. They issue repeated warnings against the dangers

of over-naming and also resist all forms of social and moral dogmatism. If the limits of the name are ignored, one risks becoming blind to the particularity of things and impedes the process of spontaneous arising. Zhuangzi's skepticism and his tendency to shamelessly play with language is not just the mark of irreverence, but remind us of the respect which we owe to that which cannot be known.

However, it is important to bear in mind that metaphysics represents something far more dramatic than an overestimation of the power of names since it assumes that the truth of concepts is timeless. There is no such concept of universal legitimacy in Chinese philosophy. Although Confucian practices may have become ritualized, virtues such as *li* and benevolence or *ren* are not turned into de-contextualized transcendental categories that are blessed with universal significance. Even though *li* and *ren* may occasion unthinking compliance, the understanding of the terms is still always contextual. It would be a mistake to identify in Confucianism the seeds of the metaphysical impulse that Nietzsche and Heidegger identify in thinkers such as Aristotle and Plato for whom ideas and concepts enjoy a truth and validity independent of the world.

Zhuangzi's philosophy has often been compared to the deconstructive thinking of postmodern philosophers such as Derrida and there are indeed important similarities that can be observed in the methods of the two thinkers. Zhuangzi constantly challenges preconceived notions of right and wrong, and delights in pointing out contradictions that undermine knowledge-claims. However, there is also an important difference. Zhuangzi's purpose is not only to deconstruct but to facilitate the experience of oneness with the Dao by pointing to the divisiveness of language. Many postmodern thinkers are repelled by the idea of unity and oneness, because they assume that a totalizing tendency is always implicated in these notions. Oneness and sameness are equated. They thus reveal the metaphysical bias to which they are still wedded which assumes that we must choose between either oneness or difference. For Laozi and Zhuangzi no such choice is necessary.

While Daoist thinkers do not react against universalism per se, they do urge caution against a tendency to impose a single perspective on a continuously evolving and multiperspectival reality. In the *Zhuangzi*, there is a wonderful story about Lord Hundun, or chaos, which illuminates some of these dangers. Lord Hundun was renowned for his hospitability and managed to bring kings of various states together. In a well-meaning outburst of gratitude, some of his guests decided to reward him by boring holes into him in order to equip him with the same orifices

that human beings enjoyed. As a result chaos died. It had been his very formlessness that accounted for his hospitality and the attempt to saddle him with a human form was the cause of his destruction. This story issues a powerful warning about the dangers of trying to recreate the world in our image that is not altogether dissimilar from Heidegger's warnings about the dangers of a humanist metaphysics of subjectivity. Nietzsche also condemns metaphysics for its temptation to impose limits on the limitless. While the use of concepts cannot be avoided, the attempt to cling to them too fiercely ushers in a slow death. On Nietzsche's account, when the belief in God had managed to render the behaviour of human beings too predictable, life begins to lose meaning.

While cautioning against absolute truths, thinkers must be equally weary of proclaiming that there is an absolute falsehood. Heidegger would insist that the errors of metaphysics also have something to teach us since there is no concealment that does not at the same time offer the possibilities for unconcealment. According to Heidegger, the primary metaphysical error was the attempt to render Being and "being" synonymous by reducing Being to a kind of ultimate being from which other beings derive their meaning and significance. Metaphysics is "onto-theo-logical," in his view, because it tries to think the whole as a single being which can easily be encapsulated by the categories of thought. When Kant maintained that permanent laws were not to be found in the world but rather in structures of the mind, he had inadvertently stumbled upon an important truth of metaphysics, which is that it manifests an attempt on the part of the subject to retreat into the prison that it has built for itself.

Yet this mistake can be used to point to a truth about Being, even if it does so in a circuitous manner. According to Heidegger it is due to Being that we have some kind of intuitive preunderstanding of cosmic wholeness, which means that human beings are at every moment already beyond themselves as creatures of the outstanding (*Ausstand*). We are burdened with the task of becoming and making ourselves what we are rather than simply being what we are. Thus, we are not entirely mistaken in our conception that we are always somehow incomplete, even if completeness is destined to be forever beyond our grasp. Nietzsche also suggests that we have an appetite for eternity, and are prone to anxiety, as beings who uncomfortably straddle the realms of the finite and the infinite. After all, the physical body not only provides us with an awareness of openings but also with the experience of enclosure. In short, the in-between-ness of our existence is very uncomfortable. When Goethe's Mephisto accuses God of condemning Faust to a life of misery by enticing

him to crane his neck towards the heavens, while at the same time wedding him to earth, he illuminates the perpetual anxiety to which human beings are condemned. This is why Nietzsche maintains that our presence in the cosmos can never be devoid of suffering, but, paradoxically, that this suffering is also accompanied by joy. Zarathustra's "sacred yes" will always be accompanied by a rebellious "no."

If we acknowledge that such in-between-ness is often painful, the metaphysical tendency to render the cosmos accessible to the self does not seem as unnatural as Nietzsche's diatribes often suppose. Metaphysics may be interpreted as an effort to reduce the suffering and anxiety associated with the in-between-ness of the human condition. Daoist philosophy also seeks to minimize suffering although it proceeds in a very different manner. The sage completely accepts the in-between-ness of his existence and does not cling to the self. He learns to reconceive of his boundaries as openings to others and to become indifferent to his physical body. In short, he refuses to heed the body's messages that he is also enclosed. Repeated reference is made to the fact that the sage does not suffer. If Western metaphysics can be said to resist kinesis, Daoist philosophers refuse to acknowledge the possibility of closure, except as a prelude to further opening. The sage is indifferent to his death because he refuses to accept his ending as *his* ending, and sees it only as the potential for other beginnings. According to Nietzsche, this would also constitute a form of nihilism that arises out of the attempt to shield us from pain. For Nietzsche, pain is a necessary aspect of our being, and will always be the companion of joy. Heidegger's later philosophy demonstrates a similar resistance to the idea of closure. Concealment is not disaffirmed but rather is presented as the prelude to further openings. Although Heidegger suggests that truth inheres in the movement between concealment and unconcealment, there is nonetheless a strong suggestion that the movement from the forest into the opening is the more pleasurable one. After all, he does not talk about a movement from the clearing into the forest.

Both the feeling of pain and the desire to eradicate it can give birth to nihilism. According to Nietzsche, there is a kind of primary nihilism reflected in the need to deny life because of the pain it produces. The Christian God or the Platonic forms are for him the most paradigmatic examples of such nihilism. Yet, there is also a kind of secondary nihilism, which overcomes us when we realize that the truths which we assumed to be stable, have been discredited, and we conclude that as a result life is meaningless. This by no means necessarily marks the end of a life-

denying posture for the most comfortable response is to simply engage in acts of mimicry which provide predictability but no longer furnish us with value. As one of the higher men remarks to Zarathustra, it is preferable to worship a braying ass than nothing at all. However, for truth to be valuable, it must bring about a change in our condition and allow us to reconnect with the world in a new way.

Nihilism plays an important role in its own self-overcoming for the realization that there is no absolute truth also provides endless opportunities for creation and interconnection. There is a link between this understanding of nihilism and the Daoist conception of nothingness as opening rather than negation. Nothingness is a force that draws things out of themselves and therefore cannot be reduced to the concept of absence. Heidegger clearly appropriates such an understanding of nothingness in his later writings, wherein he maintains that nothingness is more primary than negation. But if Western thinkers are often blind to the positive potential of nothingness, then perhaps Daoist thinkers are equally dismissive of the importance of nothingness as negation. Most human beings do not confront the knowledge of their death with the equanimity of the Daoist sage. Indeed, we resist it knowing full well that such resistance is futile. Heidegger notes that as beings-towards-death we attempt to sculpt ourselves into a whole while knowing we will ultimately fail in our efforts. Nevertheless there is an understanding here that our particular individuality develops as a result of the negative pull of nothingness.

For Nietzsche these contradictory pulls on the self are experienced first and foremost through the body. It has clearly defined boundaries that are constantly under siege. Yet, visible and tactile sensations also remind us that no body simply stands on its own. The body is torn in multiple directions and this, in part, accounts for the anxiety that figures such as Zarathustra must repeatedly confront. Nietzsche would deny that human beings ever willingly become the straw dogs destined for sacrifice. Conversely, the sage can observe the transformations of his body with an uncanny calm that Zarathustra can seldom maintain for long. Daoist thinkers reject the kind of clinging to the boundaries of the self, which Nietzsche suggests that such grasping is sometimes necessary. From a Nietzschean perspective, the sage lacks the pathos of a being that grapples more directly with its contradictory nature.

Heidegger would probably concur with Nietzsche that the discomfort stemming from contradictory pulls on the self can ever be entirely eliminated. His book, *Contributions of Philosophy*, extols the virtues of both "reservedness" and anxiety. Although Heidegger maintains that the self's

homelessness is both inevitable and necessary, he does not want to eliminate entirely the commitment to home. While the sage wanders, he never feels displaced because he is not riveted to one place or another. Heidegger too suggests that we must leave home, but that we must be prepared to undergo the pain of our departure. Without the pain of exile, there could not be the same joy in returning. Heidegger also insists that the act of leaving allows us to experience our home anew and we thereby return to a familiar place differently. The newness of the familiar is what gives our lives meaning. Wandering is an essential aspect of authenticity but this does not mean that Heidegger extols perpetual groundlessness. Groundlessness is to allow us to return to home ground in a new way, rather than impelling us to abandon it altogether.

Another forceful complaint which Nietzsche and Heidegger launch against metaphysics is that it resists kinesis and attempts to freeze the dynamic pulse of life into static and immutable categories which are then crowned as self-evident truths. And yet, Daoist thinkers, who take for granted that the cosmos is always moving, also underscore the virtue of motionlessness, which Heidegger incorporates in some of his later writings as the ideas of *Gelassenheit* and reservedness that demand an attunement to the stillness of the cosmos. Throughout the *Daodejing*, the most graceful motion is the kind that appears motionless, as is evidenced by the sage who wanders in such a way that he appears to sit still. Motionlessness is associated with a kind of harmonizing. Even Nietzsche, who is the philosopher of striving par excellence, occasionally draws attention to Zarathustra's meditative moments. This is more than just accidental. Asian philosophies which accept the inevitability of change are also more attuned to the art of meditation and the value of stillness. Western culture on the one hand struggles to identify timeless truths, and on the other hand refuses to realize the value in standing still. A year without increasing economic growth is considered catastrophic news. Heidegger astutely points out that the frenzied pursuit of material goods does not represent genuine change, but rather more of the same. Perhaps the incessant striving Nietzsche deems to be meaningful, is as much a product of metaphysics as a rebellion against it. Forcing a changing world to conform to abstract ideals requires a great deal of overcoming. Nietzsche himself admits this, when he acknowledges how difficult it must have been initially to implement the denaturalizing principles of Christianity. Perhaps it is precisely because such abstract ideals are alien to Daoist thinkers that they do not advocate frenetic striving, but rather a gentle movement which mirrors stillness through continuous adaptation to surroundings. One

could argue that the dramatic mood swings and frenetic activity of Zarathustra arise from an inattentiveness to the stillness of the cosmos.

Not only is wandering an essential part of authenticity, but truth is wandering. Nevertheless the effects of such journeying are described very differently. The calmness of the sage-wanderer contrasts sharply with the exuberance and despair of Zarathustra. Heidegger's accounts of anxiety are alien to both Laozi and Zhuangzi. And yet, all these thinkers would maintain that our wandering is in part propelled by our interplay with an elusive divine. Heidegger suggests that we are thrust into a game of hide and seek with the gods who are far and close at the same time. They both taunt us and entice us through their acts of appearance and disappearance. Their existence can neither be affirmed nor denied, and Heidegger has no intention of trying to resolve this ambiguity. He wants to avoid the kind of dynamic that Nietzsche argues arises out of Judeo-Christian notions of godhood, which posit a being so far beyond human beings that their connection to him is eventually lost. At the same time, Heidegger does not want the gods to come too close, for then we are tempted to replace them with our own subjectivity. Contrary to what many commentators assume, Nietzsche is as critical of a brutal materialism which repudiates the spiritual as he is of an ascetic spirituality which denies the natural. For him, both are equally stubborn in their efforts to drive a wedge between the earthly and the divine. He claims that children are much wiser in this respect because they know that we are a composite of body and soul, while overly educated scientists claim that we are only soul and not body, and Christian believers want to rid themselves of the body altogether:

> Body am I and soul—thus speaks the child. And why shouldn't one speak like children?
>
> But the awakened one who knows, says: Body am I entirely, and nothing more: and soul is only a word for something about the body.
>
> The body is great reason. . . .
>
> Your small reason, my brother, which you call "spirit", is only a tool of your body. A small tool and toy of your great reason . . .
>
> Behind your thoughts and feelings, my brother stands a powerful commander, an unknown director—who is called Self. He lives in your body, he is your body. (Z I 4)

Daoist thinkers draw attention to the divinity in our existence, although they less frequently use the language of gods and indeed suggest that the Dao is more primordial than the gods. This perhaps reflects a conscious

intention to avoid the kind of anthropomorphism that characterizes the worship of gods. They want to steer away from the tendency to attribute to the Dao anything resembling a divine will that would allow human will to masquerade as divine. The spiritual experience in Daoist texts does not take the form of divine revelation but rather reflects a kind of graceful attunement to the rhythms of the Dao.

The reluctance to accept the in-between-ness of our existence in Western philosophy cannot be understood without rethinking our relationship to our mothers. While Heidegger implores us to think the beginning again, there is one beginning that is conspicuous in his thought only by its omission and this is our birth. Nietzsche's philosophy shows that there is often an unspoken link made between the cosmos and women and his desire to marry eternity who is in the form of a woman is a profound testament to this. Because the mother first gave us life, there is a risky tendency to identify her with the cosmos itself, since we owe our existence in big part to her. There is a buried recognition in all of us that we were once indistinguishable from our mothers and this may give rise to what Nietzsche refers to as the Dionysian reconciliation between human beings and nature. It is not only the break with the mother that allows us to become individuals, but also the means by which we try to "return" to her. The mother too reminds us of our position in-between.

While there is a clear link between the primordial union with the mother and the mystical experience of unity with the cosmos at large, it is important not to simply equate the two, for woman is not the cosmos or Being but rather a being. Indeed, the dyadic unity between mother and child which we often appeal to is not devoid of pain for the mother, who as an individuated being must undergo the pain of pregnancy and birth. Nevertheless this early fusion is often idealized and the attempt to render being and Being synonymous may in part have its roots here.

To claim that the first cosmic or spiritual experience that we have is through the body of the mother is not the same as to identify the mother with the cosmos. Unfortunately for women, this is a mistake that is made all too often. Superhuman powers are ascribed to her, and thus she becomes a target of both resentment and neglect. If the Dao and Being are voiceless, women are forcefully denied a voice. As Irigaray astutely points out, women become those beings without a language of their own. The frustrations at our in-between-ness are directed at her as she is held up as semi-divine but at the same time is blamed for our miseries. Nietzsche's references to women as both the "subterranean beast of prey" and as the emblems of truth, attest to this. These seemingly contradictory

tendencies are connected. Woman is revered in images of the eternal feminine but brutalized at the same time. It is because she embodies the truth of existence for Nietzsche that he feels the sickening need to approach her with the whip.

Above all, we must recognize that woman too is caught in the exhilarating and painful position of a being that is always in-between. As I have already demonstrated, Nietzsche's philosophy makes the cosmic attributes that are superimposed onto women abundantly clear through his depiction of woman as eternity, Life and Wisdom. His jealousy is revealed in his desire to become the masculine mother so that he can be the eternity that eludes him. And yet, at the same time, Nietzsche also suggests that woman is more comfortable with the in-between-ness of her existence. She is represented as both life and wisdom and uses the language of philosophy at a distance in order to engage in conversation rather than to master. Wisdom does not attempt to dominate Life but rather participates in a dance with her. While man is always embroiled in a tumultuous storm, woman, like the Daoist sage, glides calmly over the surface.

Daoist texts also implicitly suggest that our first cosmic experience is through our mothers by referring to the Dao as the "mother of the universe." While they recognize the important feminine and maternal dimensions of the cosmos, women do not appear as interlocutors or sages in the texts of either Laozi or Zhuangzi. Because Daoism imputes a cosmic significance to woman, she is compared to the receptive valley which allows for a profusion of life forms. Moreover, Laozi maintains that the miseries of the world can in large part be attributed to the failure to pay attention to the significance of the mother. Only by going back to the mother, who is eternal, can the sons be understood.

The condition of women serves as a powerful reminder of the dangers inherent in trying to eradicate the in-between-ness of our existence. Woman is assumed not to be a creature in-between and thus she is treated in an inhumane fashion. Because she is perceived to be more than human she is treated as less than human. A compassionate relationship with others demands that the in-between-ness of existence be recognized as the source of both our anguish and our joy. When we assume that certain peoples, races, or genders are incapable of suffering, we begin to treat them as "straws dogs destined for sacrifice."

Furthermore, only a creature that is in-between, in this way, feels the compulsion to find meaning in its existence. Such meaning is derived from establishing interconnections between things and making oneself part of the world to which one already belongs. This process of self-

transformation is by no means an easy task, and human beings cannot simply turn a blind eye to the fact that they are not only beings replete with possibilities, but beings who are trapped within confining walls. Individuals are distinct from each other in part because they are separated from each other. Laozi and Zhuangzi point to the joy that can be gleaned from the process of spontaneous harmonizing, which not only fosters connections between things but also allows the self to become the unique being that it is. Heidegger and Nietzsche point out that there will always also be tension and suffering in a world that is both one and multiple. Despite these important differences of perspective, these thinkers would concur that oneness and difference do not stare at each other across an unbridgeable chasm but rather are irrevocably intertwined.

Notes

Notes to Introduction

1. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (Hammondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p. 321.

2. J. J. Clarke, *Oriental Enlightenment*: *The Encounter between Asian and Western Thought* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 42.

3. See Voltaire, *Essai sur les moeurs et l'esprit des nations et sur les principaux faits de l'histoire depuis Charlemagne jusqu'à Louis XIII* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 1993).

4. Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilization in China*, Vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), p. 259.

5. Lu Xun, "Wenhua pianzhi lun," in *Lun Xun Quanji* (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1981), pp. 44–62.

6. David A. Kelly, "Nietzsche and the Chinese Mind," in *Nietzsche and Asian Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 158.

7. Ibid., p. 155.

8. See Li Shicen, *Nicai yu xiandai zhexue* (Taibei: Zhengwen shuju, Minguo 60, 1971).

9. Roger Ames, "Nietzsche's 'Will to Power' and Chinese 'Virtuality'," in *Nietzsche and Asian Thought*, p. 132.

10. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Das Erbe Europas* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1989), p. 30.

11. Ibid., p. 158.

12. Quoted by John Van Bragt, "Translator's Introduction," In *Religion and Nothingness*, Keiji Nishitani (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), p. 28.

13. Fred Dallmayr, *Beyond Orientalism: Essays on Cross-Cultural Encounter* (Albany: State University of New York Press), p. 41.

14. Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Continuum, 1994), p. 269.

15. Gadamer, *Das Erbe Europas*, p. 7.

16. Ibid., p. 13.

17. Eberhard Scheiffele, "Questioning one's Own from the Perspective of the Foreign," in *Nietzsche and Asian Thought*, p. 42.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

1. The propensity to find a kind of unity in change did not originate with Plato and Aristotle. It was also common to pre-Socratics such as Thales, who attempted to discover the basic "stuff" of which the universe is made.

2. Huainanzi, in *Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, ed. Wing-tsit Chan (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 306.

3. Chinese cosmological myths differ fundamentally from the Judeo-Christian account of origins in the sense that there is no single creator or divine will that imposes a seal of authority on the act of creation. Instead there are many creation myths and no one story enjoys preponderance. In religious Daoism, the idea of a creator God is common, and Laozi himself is sometimes depicted in this way.

4. There is no single author to whom the text of the *Yijing* can be attributed and the text itself evolved over many centuries. For example, mythological accounts maintain that Fu Xi, King Wen, and the Duke of Zhou are responsible for the work. Historical accounts maintain that Wu Xian may have developed the practice of divination using yarrow sticks. Confucius is assumed to have written some of the extensive commentaries. Confucian scholars of the Han period may have contributed to the organization of the hexagrams according to combinations of eight trigrams, which are said to reflect the structure of the universe. Wang Bi developed an organizational structure through inversion of hexagrams. Shao Yong of the Song period is said to have developed structures by which the dual lines evolve into the trigrams which are followed by quadrigrams until the sixty-four hexagrams are developed. See Cyrille Javary, *Understanding the I Ching* (Boston: Shambala Press, 1997).

5. Cyrille Javary, *Understanding the I Ching*, p. 6.

6. Zhang Longxi, *The Tao and the Logos* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), pp. 49–50.

7. *The I Ching or Book of Changes*, trans. Richard Wilhelm (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 286.

8. Ibid., p. 294.

9. While there is no evidence that Nietzsche encountered Daoist texts, the idea of the eternal return bears a remarkable similarity to Asian modes of thinking. This may be due to Nietzsche's encounter with Buddhist thought, which espouses the notion of dependent origination. According to this perception, reality is seen as a web of interrelations, each giving birth to the other.

10. Jacques Derrida claims that Heidegger deliberately brackets terms such as *Geist*, subjectivity, and consciousness in order to avoid falling into the Cartesian trap where mind and matter confronted each other across a divide. See Jacques Derrida, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1989).

11. Otto Pöggeler, *Der Denkweg Martin Heideggers* (Stuttgart: Verlag Günter Neske, 1963), p. 70.

12. John Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought* (Oberlin, Ohio: Oberlin Printing Company, 1978), p. 4.

13. Gelven clarifies this point through the use of an example. One cannot answer the question "what is a jail" by just referring to its physical appearance, but must address the question of why people are put into jail. We cannot understand entities without understanding their meaning. Richard Gelven, *A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time* (De Kalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1989), p. 8.

14. Richard Polt, *Heidegger: An Introduction* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), p. 27.

15. I return to Heidegger's politics in Chapter 3.

16. Günter Figal, *Heidegger zur Einführung* (Hamburg: Junius Verlag, 1992), p. 135.

17. Otto Pöggeler, *Der Denkweg Martin Heideggers* (Stuttgart; Verlag Günter Neske), p. 253.

18. Fred Dallmayr points out that *Contributions to Philosophy* forms a crucial link between Heidegger's earlier and later phases. He suggests that this work marks the exit from traditional metaphysics and "the gateway to the new beginnings, a gateway eluding human fabrication or control." Fred Dallmayr, *The Other Heidegger* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 110.

19. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann, *Wege ins Ereignis: Zu Heidegger's "Beiträge zur Philosophie"* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1992), p. 30.

20. Isabelle Robinet has made a convincing argument for dispensing with the distinction between the religious and philosophical wings of Daoism. She argues that the distinction is primarily a Western imposition issuing from those who are unfamiliar with the techniques that lead to mystical experience. See Isabelle Robinet, *Taoism: Growth of a Religion*, trans. Phyllis Brooks (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 3.

21. A. C. Graham has attempted to distinguish between three separate strains of thought in the later chapters. The first he calls the "primitivist document" (chapters 8–10 and parts of 11 and 12), which is pre-Han material that emphasizes a primitive utopia that closely resembles the vision of the *Daodejing*. Second, he identifies an "individualist document" (chapters 28, 29, and 31), which apparently reflects the school of Yang Chu. Third, the "syncretist documents" (chapters 12–13 and 33) are assumed to be a blend of Daoist, Confucian, and Legalist thought. See A. G. Graham, *Disputers of the Tao* (La Salle, Il: Open Court), 1989.

22. David Hall and Richard Ames, *Anticipating China: Thinking through the Narratives of Chinese and Western Cultures* (Albany: State University of New York Press), p. 230.

23. N. J. Girardot, *Myth and Meaning in Early Taoism* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983), p. 43.

24. Alan Chan attributes a cosmological interpretation of the *Daodejing* to Heshang Gong, who sees the Dao as primal energy that subsequently gives birth to the cosmos. All beings, spirits, and humans are connected by the One. See Alan Chan, "A Tale of Two Commentaries" in *Lao-tzu and the Tao-te-ching*, ed. Livia Kohn and Michael Lafargue (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), p. 92.

25. Chang Chung-yuan remarks that Heidegger "is the only Western philosopher who not only intellectually understands Tao but has intuitively experienced the essence

of it as well." See Chang Chung-yuan, *Tao: A New Way of Thinking* (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1975), p. 96.

26. Benjamin Schwartz, "The Thought of the Tao-te ching," in *Lao-tzu and the Tao-te-ching*, ed. Livian Kohn and Michael LaFargue, p. 192.

27. Kirill Ole Thompson, "What is the Reason for Failure or Success? The Fisherman's Song Goes Deep into the River" in *Wandering at Ease in the Zhuangzi*, ed. Roger Ames (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), p. 18.

28. Joseph Needham argues that the this-worldly orientation of Daoism makes it one of the few forms of mysticism that is not hostile to science but even conducive to it. See Joseph Needham, *The Grand Titration: Science and Society in East and West* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1969), p. 163.

29. Roger Ames, "Nietzsche's Will to Power and Chinese 'Virtuality,'" in *Nietzsche and Asian Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), p. 134.

30. Nietzsche had encountered Buddhist thought and the notion of dependent origination, which also highlights the interconnection of all things.

31. Julia Ching, *Chinese Religions* (London: Macmillan, 1993), p. 85.

32. Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilization*, Vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956), p. 35.

33. Joseph Needham, *The Grand Titration: Science and Society in East and West*, p. 323.

34. Isabelle Robinet, "Later Commentaries: Textual Polysemy and Syncretistic Interpretations," in *Lao-tzu and the Tao-Te-Ching*, ed. Livia Kohn and Michael LaFargue, p. 122.

35. Ibid., p. 123.

36. Lin Yutang, *The Wisdom of China and India* (New York: Random House Modern Library, 1942), p. 627.

37. Wu Kuang-ming, *Chuang-tzu: Philosopher at Play* (Lexington, KY: Crossroad Publishing, 1982), p. 39.

38. Allan Watts, *The Way of Zen* (New York: Vintage Books, 1957), p. 9.

39. Angus Graham, *Disputers of the Tao* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1989), p. 199.

40. See Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976).

41. Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, p. 228.

42. Huizi was what is often referred to by Western analysts as a Sophist. In the fourth century BC there were thinkers who enjoyed paradox and argumentation. In Chinese, they are known as *bian zhe* (辩者) or those who argue. Comparisons are made between the Greek and Chinese sophists because both emerged at the same time as rational discourse, signifying the ability to dismantle positions as well as erect them. Huizi was a chief minister of King Hui of Wei and a friend of Zhuangzi. See A. C. Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, pp. 75–76.

43. Ibid., p. 3.

44. *Zhuangzi Duben*, (Taipei: Sanmin shu ju yinxing, 1988), p. 15.

Notes to Chapter 2

1. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism*, trans. Philip Mairet (London: Metheun, 1966), p. 30.

2. Kant argues that freedom refers to the ability to combat the heteronymous desires which hold sway over us in order to act in accordance with the universal laws of reason. The central role that the will plays in his philosophy indicates that there is something beyond mere reason that impels us to act. See Immanuel Kant, "Groundwork on the Metaphysics of Morals," in *Kant*, ed. Lewis White Beck (New York: Macmillan, 1987), p. 272.

3. Roger Ames notes that there is a powerful similarity between the Daoist concept of *De* and the Nietzschean notion of the will to power. For Nietzsche, as for the Daoists, existence is a dynamic continuity and therefore notions of "free will" as we traditionally know them are suspect. Ames uses the idea of the focus-field to explain the will. Any particular focus can be understood in terms of what distinguishes it from other things so that each particular can only be understood in the context of the relations that it is a part of. He acknowledges that Nietzsche places much more emphasis on the conflictual nature of such willing than the classical Chinese thinkers who emphasize the harmonious possibilities that difference presents. "Nietzsche's Will to Power and Chinese 'Virtuality'," in *Nietzsche and Asian Thought* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992), p. 145–147.

4. It is interesting to note that the *Daodejing* also extols the unformed potential of childhood, praising its softness and receptivity. See Laozi, *Daodejing* (Beijing: Beijing University Press, 1988.

5. Richard Ames and David Hall, *Thinking from the Han*: *Self, Truth and Transcendence in Chinese and Western Culture* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), p. 163.

6. Chen Guying, "Zhuang Zi and Nietzsche: Plays of Perspectives," in *Nietzsche and Asian Thought*, p. 117.

7. Ibid., p. 118.

8. *Zhuangzi Duben* (Taipei: Sanmin shu ju yinxing, 1988), p. 5.

9. H. G. Creel, *Chinese Thought from Confucius to Mao Tse-tung* (London: Eyre and Spottisword, 1954), p. 124.

10. Benjamin Schwartz suggests that there is a contradiction in the "civilizing-negating" policies of the sage ruler who seems to restore the world back to the simplicity of the Dao and nature but at the same time is a Machiavellian who "stoops to conquer, emptying people's mind to make them "docile instruments of the ruler's policies." He suggests that the large state's policy of winning small states by kindness and humility is a "subtle brand of imperialism." However, if conquest itself were the main goal of the Daoist sage then there would not be so much emphasis on attunement to the Dao. See

Benjamin Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 214.

11. Laozi, *Tao Te Ching*, trans. Richard Wilhelm, p. 118.

12. Daniel Coyle, "On the Zhenren," in *Wandering at Ease through the Zhuangzi*, ed. Roger Ames (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), p. 204.

13. Angus Graham, *Disputers of the Tao* (La Salle: Open Court, 1989), p. 186.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

1. Part of this chapter was originally published as an article in *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* IV: 1:97–116. 2004. It is published here with the permission of its original publishers, Global Scholarly Publications.

2. Reinhard May points out that Heidegger's later work was particularly influenced by Daoism and Zen Buddhism. In many cases, Heidegger appropriated major ideas from the Daoist classics without acknowledging his sources. In addition to reading both the *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi*, Heidegger also had exchanges with a number of East Asian scholars such as Chang Chung-yuan, Paul Shi-yi Hsiao, and Tezuka Tomio. See Reinhard May, *Heidegger's Hidden Sources*, trans. Graham Parkes (London: Routledge, 1996).

3. Keiji Nishitani astutely points out that nihilism is part of the process of its own self-overcoming. He draws attention to the fact that Nietzsche's nihilism is not merely an inhibiting factor but also a regenerative force that makes the affirmation of life possible. See Keiji Nishitani, *The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism*, trans. Graham Parkes (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990).

4. In an essay entitled "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," Heidegger traces the etymology of the German word *bauen* (to build) and indicates that it meant to dwell in Old High German. This meant that building was integrally connected to being at home. The connection between building and dwelling is something that has been lost to us in Heidegger's view. See Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), p. 348.

5. John Caputo suggests that Heidegger is in search of a definitive origin when he turns to the early Greeks who are said to steer "the very destiny of the West" and "represent an overarching, normative, claiming Origin." Caputo connects this quest for origins to Heidegger's *Kampfphilosophie* of the Nazi era, and implies that it undermines the emphasis Heidegger puts on facticity and care in many of his writings. John Caputo, *De-Mythologizing Heidegger* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 2.

6. Michael Gelven, *A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time* (De Kalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1989), p. 161.

7. Reinhard May, *Heidegger's Hidden Sources: East Asian Influences on His Work*, p. 21.

8. The Kyoto school in Japan accredits Heidegger with having reached a standpoint extremely close to Zen.

9. Reiner Schürmann, *Heidegger on Being and Acting: From Principles to Anarchy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 173.

10. Reinhard May, *Heidegger's Hidden Sources: East Asian Influences on His Work*, p. 32.

11. Wang Bi, *Commentary on the Lao-Tzu*, trans. Ariane Rump in collaboration with Wing-tsit Chan (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1981), p. 1.

12. Chan, Alan, K. L., *Two Visions of the Way: A Study of the Wang Pi and Ho-shang Kung Commentaries on the Lao-Tzu* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), p. 46.

13. Richard Wilhelm, *Tao Te Ching* (London: Arkana, 1985), Note 1, p. 116.

Notes to Chapter 4

1. Mark Warren, *Nietzsche and Political Thought* (Boston: MIT Press, 1989), p. 209.

2. Schürmann argues that Heidegger's later philosophy resonates very strongly in the deconstructive politics that follows him and favours pluralism, the recognition of difference and an attentiveness to otherness which is anathema to fascism. See Reiner Schürmann, *Heidegger on Being and Acting*: *From Principles to Anarchy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).

3. Richard Wolin, *The Politics of Being: The Political Thought of Martin Heidegger* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), p. 64.

4. Ibid., p. 22–27.

5. Ernst Jünger, *Copse 125: A Chronicle of the Trench Warfare of 1918* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1988), ix.

6. It is no coincidence that Daoist movements were often associated with political rebellion against the status quo. For example, the Yellow Turban movement instigated uprisings that threatened the Han dynasty and sought to usher in an era of Great Peace where harmony, wisdom and social equality would prevail. See Isabelle Robinet, *Taoism: Growth of a Religion* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992).

7. Han Fei Tzu, *Basic Writings*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), p. 16.

8. Ibid., p. 17–18.

Notes to Chapter 5

1. Parts of this chapter appear as "Women's Eclipse: The Silenced Feminine in Nietzsche and Heidegger," in *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 31, no. 2 (March 2005): 165–184.

2. Luce Irigaray, *The Irigaray Reader.* ed. Margaret Whitford (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), p. 165.

3. Jean Graybeal, *Language and "The Feminine" in Nietzsche and Heidegger* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 2.

4. Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. Margaret Waller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), p. 26.

5. Ibid., p. 49.

6. Patricia Huntington, *Ecstatic Subjects, Utopia and Recognition* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), p. 179.

7. Luce Irigaray, *L'Oubli de l'Air Chez Martin Heidegger* (Paris: Minuit, 1983), p. 33.

8. Ibid., p. 43.

9. Ibid., p. 38.

10. Ibid., p. 48.

11. Ibid., p. 49.

12. Ibid., p. 61.

13. Carol Bigwood, *Earth Muse: Feminism, Nature and Art* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993).

14. See Mary O'Brien, *The Politics of Reproduction* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981).

15. Luce Irigaray, *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche*, trans. Gillian Gill (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 4.

16. Ibid., p. 6.

17. Ibid., p. 10.

18. Katrin Froese, "Bodies and Eternity: Nietzsche's Conception of the Feminine," in *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 26, no. 1 (2000): 30–31.

19. Irigary, *Marine Lover*, p. 26.

20. Ibid., p. 58.

21. Ibid., p. 48–9.

22. Jacques Derrida, *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles/Eperons: Les Styles de Nietzsche* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979) p. 39.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 6

1. G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* Vol. 1 (Lincoln: Nebraska University Press, 1995), p. 124–25.

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Index

PHILOSOPHY / EASTERN THOUGHT

NIETZSCHE, HEIDEGGER, AND DAOIST THOUGHT

Crossing Paths In-Between

Katrin Froese

In this book, Katrin Froese juxtaposes the Daoist texts of Laozi and Zhuangzi with the thought of Nietzsche and Heidegger to argue that there is a need for rethinking the idea of a cosmological whole. By moving away from the quest for certainty, Froese suggests a way of philosophizing that does not seek to capture the whole, but rather becomes a means of affirming a connection to it, one that celebrates difference rather than eradicating it.

Human beings have a vague awareness of the infinite, but they are nevertheless finite beings. Froese maintains that rather than bemoaning the murkiness of knowledge, the thinkers considered here celebrate the creativity and tendency to wander through that space of not knowing, or "in-between-ness." However, for Neitzsche and the early Heidegger, this in-between-ness can often produce a sense of meaninglessness that sends individuals on a frenetic quest to mark out space that is uniquely their own. Laozi and Zhuangzi, on the other hand, paint a portrait of the self that provides openings for others rather than deliberately forging an identity that it can claim as its own. In this way, human beings can become joyful wanderers that revel in the movements of the Dao and are comfortable with their own finitude. Froese also suggests that Nietzsche and Heidegger are philosophers at a crossroads, for they both exemplify the modern emphasis on self-creation and at the same time share the Daoist insight into the perils of excessive egoism that can lead to misguided attempts to master the world.

"This is an excellent book, knowledgeable, clear, and well written. It brings forth important issues that are of contemporary concern and will no doubt pave the way for future comparative studies in the traditions being discussed."

— Joanne D. Birdwhistell, The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey

KATRIN FROESE is Associate Professor of Religious Studies and Philosophy at the University of Calgary and the author of *Rousseau and Nietzsche: Toward an Aesthetic Morality.*

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