

# TRANSLATING MAN

by

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(Under the direction of William L. Power)

## ABSTRACT

Nietzsche, using the metaphor of translation, sought to translate man back into nature in what he coined, “terms of life.” During the transcription process, he discovered that living is the will to power and nothing besides. Using this new understanding of life, he attempted to re-translate man’s quintessential attributes, knowledge and morality, into this new language of power. With his new and revised edition of the text of man, Nietzsche believed he had written the most thorough and accurate assessment of humanity yet offered. The idea of eternal recurrence stands as the last chapter in his new human text. Nietzsche thought that a willful expectation of an eternal recurrence of all events would be a complete spiritual affirmation of his newly discovered principle...the will to power. He further believed that such a grave idea could serve as an expedient to the resentment and nihilism plaguing Western morality and philosophy. Nietzsche, at last, dreamed that an individual or class of individuals would emerge, able to bare the thought of recurrence and serve as the founding archons to an apotheosized future.

INDEX WORDS: Nietzsche, Translation, Will to Power, Knowledge, Nihilism, Resentment, Affirmation

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*My Desire to Please God  
Exceeded His Ability to Exist*

## DEDICATION

For *my* parents, David and Jeanette.

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I must first recognize my father, David Eric Covington, whose pursuit of knowledge and learning refined in me the drive which led to the necessity of saying what lays herein.

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qualities I will always carry and treasure, respectively: *manhood*, *friendship*, and the *teachings of the Buddha*. I love you.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

#### Purpose of this study

Many scholars have mistaken Nietzsche's teachings as leading to the annihilation of all values. This is a categorical mistake. The purpose of this thesis is to help avert this grave disaster. This thesis shall explicate what Nietzsche proposed as a new reading of the human after modern science had brought about the collapse of our shared and inherited human value. He believed that once humans could no longer, with a good conscience, understand themselves as essentially different and separated out from the rest of the natural world, there would be a collapse of all lasting value signaling the demise of humanity. Nietzsche hoped to provide man with an alternative to this total collapse of human value. This thesis will conclude by showing that, far from promoting pessimism or nihilism, Nietzsche is in fact offering its very cure.

#### Reading Nietzsche

Friedrich Nietzsche is one of the most prolific writers in the history of philosophy and by his own assessment, the best writer Germany had yet produced. Nietzsche's writings are wholly unlike any other modern philosopher's. So much so that most Nietzschean newcomers are overwhelmed by either the ranting and polemical tone of his works or by the sheer enormity of his genius. This, unfortunately, often leads to wildly absurd readings of his work. Therefore, prior to beginning our endeavor to explicate the heart of Nietzsche's philosophy, we will look briefly at *how* Nietzsche should be read

touching on the three major obstacles facing Nietzsche's readers: aphorism, audience and language.

During his lifetime, Nietzsche saw through to publication no fewer than eighteen books and, posthumously, another three. The majority of Nietzsche's published books consist of hundreds of short, laconic aphorisms broadly divided into "chapters" which serve to thematically unite his myriad of aphoristic observations. Nietzsche praises the aphoristic form in the following excerpt from *Mixed Opinions and Maxims*. Here the author gives us a rare and delightful insight into the reasons behind his artistic literary tastes.

**"Praise of aphorisms. —A good aphorism is too hard for the tooth of time and is not consumed by all millennia, although it serves every time for nourishment: thus it is a great paradox of literature, the intransitory amid the changing, the food that always remained esteemed, like salt, and never losses it savor, as even that does."<sup>1</sup>**

Nietzschean journals are full of articles addressing the problem of method when assessing these "paradox's of literature." Nietzschean scholarship, in large part, sustains itself by repeatedly asking these types of *foreground* questions. Such poignant concerns raised time and again are, for example: (1) How is the reader to treat the author's use of the aphorism? (2) Are readers permitted to "pick and choose" aphorisms from across the entirety of the philosopher's career? (3) Should the writings preserved from the genius's childhood be forced to support the theories he espoused as an adult? (4) Or, as readers, should we let only the author's late works represent his philosophy? (5) Or, perhaps, we should be democratic in our methodology (a truly most *un-Nietzschean* approach) and allow only his most famous writings to speak on the philosopher's behalf: *The Gay*

*Science, Zarathustra, and Beyond Good and Evil*. These problems dissolve themselves, however, once a more grounded understanding of Nietzsche's entire project is reached.

Nietzsche's collection of writings were not only intended as "pure" philosophy (if such a thing exists) but were representative of questions and concerns which plagued the author throughout his life. Thoughts that earlier in his life and career may have lain hidden just below the surface of his writings would later as his artistry improved rise to the surface where with maturity he could expertly address those drives and questions which he initially only dimly perceived. Questions concerning morality, for example, interested Nietzsche even in his earliest writings as a schoolboy in *Schuleforte*, a prestigious German school for boys. Certainly, at that time, however, he had not become ripe enough to produce something like, *On The Genealogy of Morals*, which was completed just a year prior to his collapse in Turin, in 1887.

As Nietzsche matured chronologically and philosophically, he took along the way calculated steps to isolate himself from his nineteenth-century academic contemporaries. He believed most people he encountered were incapable of sharing in either his philosophy or in his ideals concerning post Franco-Prussian War Germany. Eventually, he came to believe that no one living during his lifetime could fully grasp his philosophical vision either.

Unwearied and seemingly undaunted by this philosophical solitude, he began addressing his thoughts to a wider audience: at first, to a group he called "*free spirits*," which he coined to describe individuals that are "the antipodes of the type of human now

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<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. Assorted Opinions and Maxims, translated by Marion Faber (Nebraska Publishing, Omaha, 1977), 168.

in existence.”<sup>2</sup> Free spirits were hoped, by Nietzsche, to be individuals who had freed themselves from the shackles of tradition, of being bound to a reverence for things or ideas once held dear. They were, he hoped, the Voltaires and Montaignes still lurking out there somewhere in nineteenth-century Europe. Eventually, Nietzsche became doubtful about the existence of even a few of these free spirits living in his century. So, again undaunted, he began addressing his writings to *future readers* whom he hoped would arise after his own death.

In the forward to one of his last books, *The Anti-Christ*, Nietzsche provides us with an insight into the type of reader that he assumed himself to be addressing. He begins by describing this particular text as belonging, “to the very few. Perhaps none of them is even living yet,” and asks, “...how could I confound myself with those for whom there are ears today?”<sup>3</sup> He then goes on to describe a kind of *reading regimen* his future readers share, claiming they are “honest in intellectual matters to the point of harshness,” and “have become indifferent,” never asking “whether truth is useful or a fatality.” He says these future reading free spirits must have “courage for the forbidden” and “reverence for oneself, love for oneself, unconditional freedom with respect to oneself...”<sup>4</sup>

Moreover he tells us in the preface to the *Genealogy of Morals*, if his works are “incomprehensible to anyone and jars on his ears, the fault, it seems to me, is not necessarily mine.” He tells us here that he assumes his readers to have read *all* of his earlier writings and “not spared some trouble in doing so; for they are, [to be read] *ruck*

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<sup>2</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. Human All Too Human, translated by Marion Faber and Stephen Lehmann. (University of Nebraska Publishing, 1996), 2.

*und vorsichtig.*” This German phrase is notoriously hard to bring into English. It has the sense of meaning: “looking forward and backward” simultaneously.<sup>5</sup>

The high standard Nietzsche places on his audience creates an uneasy tension between the reader and the author. The reader is never certain whether he or she is the *kind* of reader Nietzsche had longed would leaf through his books. The reader is always left wondering, “Was he speaking to me?” Nietzsche was a master psychologist, and this sort of forced introspection and internal critique by his readers was, I assume, a desired and not *accidental* effect.

Finally, let us turn to the more immediate and concrete problems confronting the would-be Nietzschean reader. There are several varieties of grammatical and linguistic quagmires Nietzsche forces his readers to wade through. Not only is the non-German speaking reader burdened with all the problems involved in translation, but he or she must also surmount the deliberate language barriers that Nietzsche artfully constructed.

Nietzsche placed poetic obstructions carefully in his writings to prevent “the rabble” (those he did not properly consider his audience) from drinking at his “well.” For example, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, the author frequently, in the course of his prose style aphorisms, will create space for himself to answer his own questions or to reveal his *true* thoughts. However, instead of continuing on in German prose, he will quote, in the vernacular, an often obscure French, Greek, or Roman poet, leaving only the most assiduous and earnest readers scrambling through libraries searching for translations. In

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<sup>3</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. *Twilight of the Idols and The Anti-Christ*, translated by R.J. Hollingdale. (Penguin Publishing, New York. 1990), 125.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 125

<sup>5</sup> Perhaps we can use the author’s stringent reading requirements as a litmus test to separate the wheat from the chaff in Nietzschean scholarship. Perhaps they are questions Nietzschean readers and would-be Nietzschean spokesmen should let stand on their conscience, hollowing them out, before using Nietzsche’s words in support of their own agendas.

simply overcoming the myriad of linguistic and grammatical hurdles, any reader would have already surmounted a *Herculean task*. It is also important for Nietzschean neophytes to have at least a cursory familiarity with the background of Nietzsche's education and his own academic resume.

During his college years, Nietzsche was a student of philology and, later, a philology professor at the University of Basel, in Switzerland. Philology, a discipline hardly referred to today, was, in the nineteenth century, the crucible for several fields of study encompassing etymology, classics, literary criticism, and philosophy. The field of philology has, today, flowered into several autonomous departments on university campuses, including religious studies.

In the classroom and in his books, Nietzsche often used the methodology of his field to solve the problems of philosophy, so much so that Nietzsche's *kind* of philosophy could more aptly be called *historosophy*. Nietzsche says the following about his philological training and the role it played in the development of his ideas: "A certain amount of historical and philological schooling, together with an inborn fastidiousness of taste in respect to psychological questions in general, soon transformed my problem into another one: Under what conditions did man devise these value judgments good and evil? ... Out of my answers there grew new questions, inquiries, conjectures, probabilities – until at length I had a country of my own."<sup>6</sup> This *historosophy* is, for many readers, the heart of Nietzsche's brilliance and genius.

It suffices to say that the Nietzschean reader has more than a few obstacles to overcome if the *true* Nietzsche is to be reached. Only once a reader has adequately met

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<sup>6</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. On The Genealogy of Morals, translated by Walter Kaufmann. (Vintage Press, New York, 1967), preface, 3.



the author's challenges of *language, style, and philology*, can he or she begin unraveling the real Nietzschean enigma.

### Towards A Methodology

Nietzsche's *task*, at least part of his task, is the task of philosophy itself: The working out of a comprehensive theory of existence, man's place in it, and a theory which can ultimately claim to be true. However, anyone who has had encounters with Nietzsche in the past will readily concede that his writings do not fit neatly into any of the traditional philosophical categories. In fact, Nietzsche pours a tremendous amount of rhetorical invective onto the aims and practices of philosophy as it has been carried out thus far. Despite Nietzsche's efforts to *unhinge* our inherited philosophical conceptions, however, his philosophy can still be described using what he may call, "archaic categories." As such, it is fair to say he was searching for a comprehensive and credible naturalism. Nietzsche's philosophy then is both ontological and axiological, in as much as it is a claim about the nature of being and a vision of values. Thus, at the most basic level, Nietzsche had at least a two-fold task: First, to *create* a credible philosophy; second, to *incorporate* his new teaching.

*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, which, by Nietzsche's own account, represents the pinnacle of his philosophy, witnesses the protagonist Zarathustra struggling to develop what will become this new Nietzschean philosophy and his equaling ardent struggle of presenting it. The text of *Zarathustra* is composed in an intentionally esoteric style. In using lengthy soliloquies and hieratic language, Nietzsche prevents both the "the rabble" and us from making a ready appropriation of Zarathustra's wisdom. Thus, a simple

outlining of Zarathustra's speeches does not suffice our present endeavor of uncovering and *lucidly* explicating what Nietzsche took to be the core *task* of his of philosophy. This is not the end of *our* task; however, we may continue and leave Zarathustra enraptured on Nietzsche's philosophical mountaintop, performing prophetic sign-acts for an audience of which we may, or may not, be a part.

If we consider *Zarathustra* to be the precipice of Nietzsche's philosophy, then his next text, *Beyond Good and Evil*, is the relief map. In a letter to one of his university colleagues discussing *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche writes the following: "This book says the same things as *Zarathustra* but differently, very differently."<sup>7</sup> Differently, we may assume, in the sense of being more approachable, less imagistic, and less infused with parables and metaphors.

*Beyond Good and Evil* may represent Zarathustra's own wish to *come back down*, to return to men (at least, some men,) and to give them his wisdom. Perhaps Nietzsche, like Zarathustra, had *become full again* and wished to *pour out his wisdom* and offer his cup of knowledge to those who would drink from it. Unfortunately, the hundred years since Nietzsche's death have shown us that his teachings have, so far, not elicited a much more welcoming response from the European marketplace than Zarathustra met in his.<sup>8</sup>

*Beyond Good and Evil* was completed in the spring of 1886 and published the same summer with the subtitle, "A Prelude to the Philosophy of the Future." *On The Genealogy of Morals* followed a year later, with a note on the title page of the original publication that introduced it as an appendix to his previous book (*BGE*). Indeed, *On The*

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<sup>7</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche, edited and translated by Christopher Middleton. (Hackett Publishing, Indianapolis, 1996) Letter to Jacob Burkhardt, September 22, 1886.

*Genealogy of Morals*, in its three parts, is little more than a detailed description of the ideas painted with much broader strokes in part five of *Beyond Good and Evil*. So, the question becomes: If, *On The Genealogy of Morals*, was a supplement to *Beyond Good and Evil*, which, in turn, understood itself to be a “Prelude to the Philosophy of the Future,” then what was the philosophy of the future that these texts were preparing? We can start to approximate the answer in *The Genealogy of Morals*, itself. During a discussion of asceticism, Nietzsche promises, “I shall probe these things more thoroughly and severely in another connection (under the title “On the History of European Nihilism”); it will be contained in a work in progress: *The Will to Power: Attempt at a Revaluation of All Values*.”<sup>9</sup>

Nietzsche never saw this last text through to publication and today it is survived in a collection of writings from his late notebooks known collectively as, *The Will to Power*. Reasons for that project’s incompleteness range from Nietzsche’s simply having lost interest to running into philosophical incompatibilities or perhaps he foresaw being forced to acknowledge his intellectual shortcomings in the sciences, especially in physics and in biology.

There is a way in which one can argue that the project of the *Revaluation of All Values* began to see at least partial completion. In Nietzsche’s autobiography, *Ecce Homo*, he explicitly refers to *The Anti-Christ* as, “the first installment of a *Revaluation of All Values*.”<sup>10</sup> So, it seems that we have, at least, the first installment of his last project. It is my judgment that Nietzsche was planning to write his *magnum opus*, called either

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<sup>8</sup> For a detailed and comprehensive account of the history of Nietzsche’s reception in Europe see The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany 1900-1990, by Steven Ascheim. The focus of the text is centered on Germany but provides insightful discussion on Nietzsche’s reception across the continent as well.

*The Will to Power* or *An Attempt at a Revaluation of all Values*, which would have become that “philosophy of the future,” for which, his other texts had been preparing.

Since his first publication, *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche had searched for a credible ontology and justification for existence. His later discouragement with his youthful ideas on existence, justified in terms of aesthetic experience, coupled with his philosophical humility and caution, prevented him from putting forth another complete ontology until late in his life.

Further, it is my contention that if we are to fully understand and appreciate Nietzsche’s vision, then we are forced to take the doctrine of The Will to Power seriously; not to do so, is to gravely misunderstand Nietzsche. The Will to Power is the lens through which Nietzsche’s philosophical vision comes into resolute focus. Thus, I understand *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *Beyond Good and Evil*, and *The Anti-Christ* to be prolegomena essays to Nietzsche’s would have been grand finale, *The Will to Power: A Revaluation of All Values*. However, the *twilight* of Nietzsche’s life descended before the project saw completion, leaving the construction of this text to us.

It is *our task* to extract the theory of The Will to Power from Nietzsche’s other works and to sift through his private notebooks looking for any pertinent ideas and, perhaps, gain insight on how he planned to present it. This is an objectionable premise to hold, since little of what Nietzsche says about the will to power can be found in published texts. Most of his thoughts on the subject are found scribbled in notebooks, on the backs of envelopes, or on papers which he had specifically designated to be thrown away, surviving to us only through disobedient house maids. Left only with these scattered,

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<sup>9</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. On The Genealogy of Morals, translated by Walter Kaufmann. (Vintage Books, New York, 1967.), III27, p.159.

disparate and discarded remnants of Nietzsche's thoughts makes any attempt at appropriating them suspicious, to say the least. To claim that the *heart* of Nietzsche's philosophy was found in the trash is a tendentious position from which to begin building his systematic philosophy. However, without an inclusion of Nietzsche's thoughts on the will to power, his other fundamental idea, the *eternal return*, will be completely misunderstood. The eternal return is, as this thesis will show, an individual's ability to affirm the *truth* of the will to power. The two thoughts cannot be un-*incorporated*.

What an indulgence to imagine Nietzsche having foreseen this entire dilemma and, in true Nietzschean fashion, purposely leaving us with only dissipated fragments. The master ironist, forcing those who are perhaps his longed for readers and the bearers of his hoped for listening ears, to piece the story together and become the *lightning* for the realization of this tremendous project. Our *task* of completing the *Will to Power* is, in many ways then, an immediate, present, and *untimely* interaction with Nietzsche. Through our completion of the text, we bring the author's philosophy full circle and his spirit back to life.<sup>11</sup>

### The Task of Translation

Nietzsche explicitly avows his task and the task for others who wish to join him. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, he writes, "We free, very free spirits have chosen the task of translating man back into nature."<sup>12</sup> Ever the philology professor, one of Nietzsche's

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<sup>10</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. *Ecce Homo*, translated by Walter Kaufmann. (Vintage Books, New York, 1967), 315.

<sup>11</sup> "Where ever two or more are gathered in my name there will I be also".

<sup>12</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. *Beyond Good and Evil*, translated by Judith Norman. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK. 2002), 230.

favorite metaphors is representing human existence in terms of texts. Nietzsche, like Shakespeare, thought all men are indeed like books, open for all men to read. But for Nietzsche, one must, of course, know *how to read*.

Nietzsche's task, then, is a retranslation of the *text* of man: As editor, recovering from the original text what we *really* are and coloring in and highlighting the hues and nuances of our nature that have been intentionally edited out or simply unnoticed by previous scribes. Nietzsche, living during the latter half of the nineteenth century, in a Europe that had been steeped in two hundred years of scientific inquiry, wanted to cast off all the misinterpretations and misreadings so far construed about the text of man. He forcefully describes this task and demanded that we "master the many vain and fanciful interpretations and secondary meanings which have been hitherto scribbled and daubed over the eternal basic text of man."<sup>13</sup> Nietzsche was convinced that what *we truly are* can only be recovered in the casting off of all prior mistranslations and in consciously fighting for the attritionment of poor interpretations. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, we hear Nietzsche as a general, mustering his troops to wage an intellectual war against those interpretations of man that have too long sung to him seductive siren songs rapidly promising: "You are more! You are higher! You are of a different origin!"<sup>14</sup>

Nietzsche understood his task, his *war*, to be the construction of a new picture of human self-understanding, one written with a more inclusive and broader reading of our nature, bringing to bear the insights and discoveries of science. The artist in Nietzsche wanted to paint a portrait of humanity with much more honest proportions than those paintings now hanging in the museum of our past. The dimensions of perspective and the

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 230

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 230

width of the margins in the new human text, Nietzsche insisted, must be consistent only with what is *knowable*, and must not rely on unfounded postulates and assumptions which, he says, have heretofore determined perspective.

## CHAPTER 2

### The Will to Power

#### Naturalizing Man

The first step in the creation of this new human text was to rid nature of the projected human concepts long read into her. Nietzsche terms this “naturalization.” For Nietzsche, to *naturalize* something means “to understand it in terms of life,”<sup>15</sup> because, he claims, there is “nothing more fundamental or deeper our intellects can focus upon than the natural life processes.”<sup>16</sup> Nietzsche can, in a very broad sense, be seen as a natural biologist, even though he was in staunch disagreement with most of the popular biological theories of his day. He especially took great enjoyment in rejecting the recently unveiled theory of evolution, by the English, which, as Nietzsche understood it, crowned Britain the jewel of existence, too.

Nietzsche’s *kind* of naturalism is best described as a “philosophy of life.” The task of translating man back into nature, for Nietzsche, meant trying to comprehend human nature grounded only in terms of living. As we are about to see, Nietzsche understands living, itself, to be a will to power. Nietzsche, then uses this will to power as a dialect into which human existence can be written and more clearly explained. The will to power will become for Nietzsche the canon, the lexicon, and the grammar through which and into which we can “translate man back in to nature.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. Beyond Good and Evil, translated by Judith Norman. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK. 2002), 230.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 230

<sup>17</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. Beyond Good and Evil, translated by Judith Norman. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK. 2002), 230.



### Discovering the Will to Power

Zarathustra first formally introduces us to the will to power in his speech, “Of the Thousand and One Goals.” Here, Nietzsche, through Zarathustra, proclaims, “A table of virtues hangs over every people. Behold, it is the table of its overcomings; behold, it is the voice of its will to power.”<sup>18</sup> But what is it? What does it mean? One explanation can found in *Beyond Good and Evil*. There, Nietzsche writes that, “if one were to use the will to power as an explanatory model, one would succeed in explaining the entire instinctive and higher spiritual life of humans as the development and ramification of one basic form of the will – namely, of the will to power.”<sup>19</sup>

One might ask, “Why will *to* power? Why not will *of* power or *for* power? In fact, there may be little difference in Nietzsche’s mind between *of* and *for*. The rendering of the phrase “will *to* power” could just as easily have been called “will *for* power,” since, as Nietzsche writes in the *Genealogy*, “a will to power is a will such that the thing willed is power.”<sup>20</sup> But one must take caution here *at the beginning*, not to allow the *to* or the *for* to suggest, in anyway, a teleological or goal oriented force. The meaning of “will to power” is not to be taken as synonymous with “goal of man,” where the implication is, “to what end?” is existence impelling humanity. The will to power is end free and telos free. Power, for Nietzsche, is neither a state that will be nor is it a state that is working towards its attainment. The will to power is a state that perpetually exists.

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<sup>18</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* translated by R.J. Hollingdale. (Penguin Publishing, New York, 1969.), p.84.

<sup>19</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. *Beyond Good and Evil*, translated by Judith Norman. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK. 2002), 230.

<sup>20</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. *On The Genealogy of Morals*, translated by Walter Kaufmann. (Vintage Books, New York, 1967.), II, p. 77.

## The Philology of Physics

Nietzsche begins his deconstruction of traditional understandings of nature by first qualifying himself as “an old philologist who cannot refrain from putting his finger on bad arts of interpretation.”<sup>21</sup> We can already see the importation of his philological arts being brought to bear on other fields of inquiry as well. Since the text in question here is nature as a whole, it is against physicists then, whose area of expertise this subject has long been, that Nietzsche begins leveling his critiques. He accuses them of bad philology, “of taking as given to the text of nature what is only interpretation.” The so-called “laws of nature,” Nietzsche says, “far from being established as the final cause for action in the universe they can at most demonstrate *tendencies of a seeming regularity*”<sup>22</sup> of our universe, and even those law-like-tendencies can only be assessed from our limited perspective.

Further, he condemns physicists for having read, *into nature*, human conventions. Nietzsche felt that through describing nature as subject to laws, physicists had implicitly posited human governmental and social constructs, such as a lawgiver and a lawgiver’s requirement for obedience. As such, he claims that modern physics is in the service of modern politics, especially democratic politics, describing Nature as if she too were a democracy demanding a Kafkaesque *equality before the Law*. In his characteristically ironic tone, Nietzsche asks what would happen if someone came along, motivated by a different (at least un-democratic) interest and found, in nature, not *a set of laws*, but a *single* will to power.

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<sup>21</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. Beyond Good and Evil, translated by Judith Norman. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK. 2002), 22.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 22

The objection which, traditionally, has been immediately raised, is how does Nietzsche have access to the text itself, without the obfuscation of interpretations which he seems to claim these others are bound? His detractors often tried to offhandedly dismiss the theory of The Will to Power as, itself, merely *an interpretation*. Nietzsche, not ignorant to this easy and foreground objection, had to devise a repeatable experiment proving that the will to power can be legitimized and to demonstrate that he has not completely removed all grounds for the validity of a *single* interpretation.

### The Will to Power Experiment

For Nietzsche, the only experience we can assume to be given as real is “our world of *desires* and *passions*.”<sup>23</sup> Since, he felt, humans ubiquitously seem to be granted access to the affects of drives and passions, he says that we should then ask, “If what is given as real, in the drives of our person, would also suffice to explain the motivations and drives of the whole?”<sup>24</sup> If the human can be reduced to his drives and passions as a working explanatory model for his behavior, then why should it be assumed that what affects the totality of existence should be of a different nature and origin than what affects us? Why isn’t the mechanistic or material world similar in its nature to us in ours?

If the answer to the foregoing is affirmative, and if we agree that the mechanistic world can similarly and adequately be explained in terms of drives then existence, as a whole, has the same *kind* of reality endemic to it as that known and endemic to us. The

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<sup>23</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. Beyond Good and Evil, translated by Judith Norman. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK. 2002), 36.

*affects* driving the whole, Nietzsche says, would be a more *primitive form* of the world of affects. They would essentially exist as a *preform of life*, in which all force and energy lie contained in a powerful unity prior to having undergone any developments of the inorganic, organic, or spiritual-mental processes (of the human at any rate) through which, Nietzsche says, the will to power *articulates* itself.

According to Nietzsche, if one posits “will” as that force driving our instinctive life and as the ground of our knowledge, then our entire existence could be explained as the development and ramification of one basic will that, Nietzsche suggests, is the *will to power*. This being done, “one would have gained the right to determine all efficient force univocally as- will to power.”<sup>25</sup> It would be “the world viewed from the inside, the world defined and determined according to its intelligible character.” The intelligible character of the world, that is, what can be *grasped* as intelligible by the only route available and discernible to us, “... it would be will to power and nothing besides.”<sup>26</sup>

“In the end,” Nietzsche says “the question is whether we really recognize will as *efficient*, whether we believe in the causality of will.”<sup>27</sup> If we do believe in the causality of will, and fundamentally Nietzsche argues “belief in this is precisely our belief in causality itself.”<sup>28</sup> If we do believe in causality, then “we *have* to make the experiment of positing causality of will hypothetically as the only one.”<sup>29</sup> Nietzsche assumed that if the foregoing methodology were sound, “one must venture the hypothesis that wherever “effects” are recognized, will is operating upon will.”<sup>30</sup> With this, Nietzsche thought he

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 36

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 36.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 36.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 36.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 36.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 36.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 36.

had not only secured the grounds for legitimizing *his* interpretation, but he had also discovered a secret and subterranean passage into the heart of existence herself.

### The Failure of Mechanistic Interpretations

Nietzsche hoped that the will to power could serve as a supplement to physics, providing a meaningful co-explanation to the concept, “force.” He argues that the physicist’s conception of force was insufficient to explain movement and requires supplementing with an *inner side*. He says, “Motion itself would then only be a symptom of inner events.”<sup>31</sup>

It is precisely these *inner events* to which Nietzsche believes himself to have found access. He writes, “The triumphant concept ‘force,’ with which our physicists have created the concept God and the world, needs supplementing: it must be ascribed an inner world, which I call ‘will to power.’”<sup>32</sup> A “will” which Nietzsche understood to be, “an insatiable craving to manifest power; or employ, or exercise power, as a creative drive, etc.” Thus he deduced, “there is no help for it: one must understand all motion, all ‘appearances’, all ‘laws’ as mere symptoms of inner events.”<sup>33</sup> All motion, movement and change are symptoms of this will to power, the inner, outer, and only event.

For Nietzsche, mechanistic language (seeing existence comprised of divisible parts and subject to laws) is only a *sign language* for an internal world that constantly struggles and overcomes itself in a contest for power. Mechanical movements and the

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<sup>31</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. Writings from the Late Notebooks, translated by Kate Sturge. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK. 2003), 36 [31].

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 36 [31].

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 36 [31].

laws that describe them are, for Nietzsche, only a means of expression for multitudinous events happening within... laws are, therefore, only *symptomatology*.

Laws, for Nietzsche, far from being the final explanation of causes are only *foreground* interpretations of existence made from our limited perspective. Nietzsche writes, “The supposed ‘natural laws’ are formulae for ‘power relationships’—the mechanistic way of thinking is philosophy of the foreground. It educates us to determine formulae, [and] provides a great sense of relief.”<sup>34</sup> To think Nietzscheanly means to begin seeing all movements as gestures, as signs, as a type of sign language into which the struggles and play of inner forces *translate* themselves. We must begin to see *living*, itself, *as the will to power*.

It is proper to speak of existence using a singular term of “the” will to power, since it implied, by Nietzsche, that nature is a continuous and unbroken ring of interrelated conditioning causes. Below the level of appearances, behind and within them, there stands an interplay of conditioning causes, spurred on by a will to power. There is, in Nietzsche’s terms, “an absolute homogeneity of all events.”<sup>35</sup> There is no inner/outer world distinction or dichotomy. Appearances, themselves, are *expressions* of the will to power. The world of appearances is the will to power *expressed* and *refined* into the organic and present to our perception. Assuming a will to power as operable in nature does not level all events to a least common denominator (among other reasons, it would be far too democratic for Nietzsche’s tastes), rather, it helps to establish why nature exhibits hierarchical structures of what Nietzsche calls “orders of rank.”

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<sup>34</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. Writings from the Late Notebooks, translated by Kate Sturge. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK. 2003), 34 [247].

<sup>35</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. The Will to Power, translated by Walter Kaufmann. (Vintage Publishing, New York, 1968), 272.

For Nietzsche, an “order of rank” designates varying levels of organization within ecosystems, communities and even within organisms. Reading existence as the organic fruition of a singular will to power allows for an explanation of variation and individualization, without dissolving individual entities into a completely reductive algorithm. Therefore, rather than the will to power wiping away *beings* from the slate of existence, it is instead a designation for determining relations within and among them. Given the will to power, all events (organisms, molecules, objects, elements and chemicals, etc.) are properly designated specific quanta of a will to power. Each event represents an attempt at some level to gain or maintain power. Organisms themselves are a form of the will to power: Every ‘thing’ becomes representative of events occurring among inner forces.

Will to power, therefore, is not a *quality* of matter, but it is its *predicate*. All functions occurring within the organic world can be traced back to the will to power. Nietzsche expected that with the enumeration of this singular will “one could find in it the solution [to both] the problem of procreation and nourishment” and in doing so “one would have gained the right to determine all efficient force univocally [also translated as unequivocally] as – will to power.”<sup>36</sup>

We shall turn now and begin explicitly laying out Nietzsche’s re-translation of the human in terms of the living, which we now *know* is for Nietzsche, the will to power. We will focus on two topics that saturate Nietzsche’s writings: cognition and morality. At that point we will carefully outline Nietzsche’s use of the will to power as his golden

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<sup>36</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. Beyond Good and Evil, translated by Judith Norman. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK. 2002), 36.

meter for measuring and “describ[ing] correctly the unity in which thinking, willing, and feeling, and all the affects, are conjoined.”<sup>37</sup>

Since Nietzsche understands desire to be the fundamental drive in humans, we can already begin to see the problems involved in engaging in anything like objective thoughts, where “objective” means unconnected and separate from our organism. Therefore, consistency in method requires an explanation of how our unique cognitive prowess is not evidence for an unearthly origin to humanity, nor a gift secured from a sympathetic god, but the development and refinement of the basic tendency which ultimately drives the entirety of existence...*the will to power*.

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<sup>37</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. Writings from the Late Notebooks, translated by Kate Sturge. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK. 2003), 38.



## CHAPTER 3

### Epistemology

#### Philosopher's *Error*

Nietzsche condemns all philosophers, thus far, for having the same common failing: "Inquiring into the nature of man while, only taking into consideration man in his present state."<sup>38</sup> He argues that, until now, when philosophers have spoken of man, they believed themselves to be witnessing and describing unalterable and eternal facts concerning him. "They have all," Nietzsche charges, "been guilty of erroneously thinking of man as an "*aeterna veritas*," as something that remains constant in the midst of all the flux."<sup>39</sup>

Nietzsche says of philosophers, "They simply have not or will not learn that man has *become*, that the faculty of cognition too has become."<sup>40</sup> In short, all previous philosophers have been bad philologists, each one of them guilty of not having sought out the variation and change written into the *text* of our cognition. Nietzsche, of course, considered this an egregious philological crime. Since all previous translations failed to take into account the history and processes through which the *text* of our cognition has been written, then any assessment on their part concerning the nature of our intellects must, Nietzsche concluded, be in *error*. Here surveying the empty library of human knowledge Nietzsche reclines at a small wooden desk in his cramped Swiss *albergio* ready to write the first accurate assessment ever written about the true natural nature of man.

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<sup>38</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. *Human All Too Human*, translated by Marion Faber and Stephen Lehmann. (University of Nebraska Publishing, 1996), 2.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 2.

As we saw above, Nietzsche utilized the will to power to try to turn away from a mechanistic reading of existence. Therefore, he found no reason to posit mechanical processes at all. As he understood them, all of the presuppositions of mechanistic language (matter, atom, pressure and force) are not *hard core facts* of existence, rather they are limited interpretations, *projected* and *foisted* upon reality.

Nietzsche charges that philosophers have long believed by our mental appropriation of phenomena we are distilling the “actually existing” into our minds and thereby attaining *knowledge* of actually existing things. We have, Nietzsche argues, blindly *believed* that in judging “this *is* that” or “that *is not* this” to be actually assessing constant and given forms within existence. For Nietzsche, this type of knowledge is merely a *belief*, a *will* or a *desire*, for *things* to *be* one way or another. For Nietzsche, there is no “true” or “objective” knowing, only a will that as far as possible things *shall be* this way or that.

Nietzsche argues that knowledge, as it has been understood heretofore, supposes a *true knowing* of objects. Such knowing, Nietzsche believed, is impossible within a world of constant becoming and pursuant to the will to power existence is a constant becoming. Existence for Nietzsche, is a unified, un-differentiated, interwoven nexus of power. In such a configuration, there could never exist a stagnant moment in the ceaseless change. If there can be no cessation in the flux and change, then no *thing* (understood as a momentary constancy within the flux) could ever *become* fixed or isolated. According to prevailing epistemologies, these are the very conditions of knowing. In Nietzsche’s

words, “Knowledge does not find a foothold.”<sup>41</sup> In a world of phantasmagaphoria, no “object” ever comes to “be”, thus, there can “be” no *knowable* objects.

### A Logical Dilemma

Nietzsche teaches that with the tools and rules of logic man also only *believed* himself to be accessing absolute states of truth concerning existence. Logic, according to Nietzsche, is not an *error* free matrix to overlay existence. It is a reflection of how the *human mind* works, not the universe’s. The cornerstone rule of logic, the law of non-contradiction (nothing can be *both* A and *not* A simultaneously), is not for Nietzsche a given fact about existence. Instead such rules are reflections of “a course of logical thinking and concluding in our present brain [that] corresponds to a process and struggle of drives.”<sup>42</sup> The laws of logic are stumbled upon human evolutionary tactics performed by the muscle of our cognition that creates a convenient reality to adequately fits our biological needs. Thus rational thought, far from having been bestowed upon humanity fully intact, has a pre-history of change and development.

This sort of explanation Nietzsche considered a *naturalistic* way of understanding the presence and shape of human cognition today. Nietzsche deduced from the changing nature of the human intellect that it is fallible in nature, having undergone both change and growth. The discovery of the fallible nature of the intellect, provided Nietzsche with what he thought were adequate grounds to become radically skeptical in regarding the

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<sup>41</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. Beyond Good and Evil, translated by Judith Norman. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 2002), 230.

information and data generated by our minds. Most acutely, however, he thought we should turn our scrutinizing philosophical eyes on the information our intellects do *not* provide but assume for example, on what has been called our “a synthetic *apriori*” knowledge.

### Constant Error

Everything essential in the development of mankind took place in primeval times over literally millions of years, long before the four thousand years we consider history. During those eons, the constantly fluxing nature of existence must not for a long time have been seen or even sensed by our ancient ancestors. If existence is a perpetuating changing flux of becoming as Nietzsche supposes, then ironically, it seems that the creatures who *did not* see existence as it really is (accurately) held an advantage over those creatures that saw everything moving in its flux. Thus, Nietzsche points out, it was seeing existence in *error* that proved to be species preserving. The animal that did *not* see life as it truly was survived. Such an animal outlived those creatures that saw everywhere and into everything change and perpetual motion. These slow subsumers of experience could not quickly and adequately compare moments of experience as being similar (if not equal) especially in regard to food and prey and thus either starve or be eaten. Thus, the *belief* in the identical became essential to our ancestors for survival. Humans today, therefore, are in Nietzsche’s terms, *necessitated to error*. Logic served man by making all that he encountered appear identical, constant and ascertainable. All

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<sup>42</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. The Gay Science, translated by Josefine Nauckhoff. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001), 111.

of which Nietzsche claims, was “an illogical tendency.” To treat the merely similar as identical is *illogical*. Never the less it is this belief that serves as the foundation of logic. The uniformity of logical reasoning trans-anthropologically is not an indication of the otherness of our species; rather, it only speaks to a long prehistory of human intellectual trial and error.

Logic becomes revalued in Nietzsche’s new text on human cognition as merely a method and means for rearranging fictional constructs that have no correspondence to reality. Logic and classification both originate not from a direct apprehension and appraisal of the “true” but from a need to *assimilate, control and dominate*...the need to live. Knowledge then is the *belief* that something *is* thus and thus which is itself the product “of a will that as far as possible it shall be the same.”<sup>43</sup> Thus, the proto-humans ability to will sameness in regard to perceivable harmful and beneficial phenomena was the will to power manifest in the muscle of our cognition, trying to dominate and manipulate its surroundings in our organism’s over all drive to live and continue doing so. Thus speaks life: “My will to power walks with your will to truth.”

### Incorporation

The key to Nietzsche’s epistemology lies in understanding that for him the strength of items of knowledge, lies not in their degree of truth (that is, how *true* they are), but rather in how *old* they are. Nietzsche terms this kind of knowledge “incorporated.” That is, the degree to which an *error* has been able to serve the

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<sup>43</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. Writings from the Late Notebooks, translated by Kate Sturge. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 2003), 9 [66].

promulgation of our species, it has become *incorporated* into the very matrix of our living. Nietzsche theorized that when an *error* was hit upon which fulfills the requirement “to live,” (that is placed on all organic creatures) it would become then not just a property of an organism but part of the very condition of its being alive.<sup>44</sup>

Nietzsche would have us believe that throughout tremendous periods of time, the intellect begot nothing but errors, some of which proved useful and preservative for our species (like identity and sameness). The early human, whose intellect either hit upon these *errors* or inherited them from progenitors with fortuitous illogical tendencies, fought the fight for himself and his posterity with greater good fortune than those humans who could not similarly subsume their surroundings. Eventually, these *errors* were handed down generation to generation until finally becoming part of the basic components of the human intellect.

Some of these errors proved to be extremely useful and included such beliefs as: “There are enduring things, that there are identical things, that there are things, material bodies and that a thing is what it appears to be.”<sup>45</sup> Most of the well-established assumptions for operation are errors. “Error” for Nietzsche, does not necessarily mean “absolutely false” but should be understood to mean “not *quite* true.” Our cognitive *errors* are not necessarily true statements about reality. They are *beliefs*, which enabled at least one of our ancestors to meet the requirement placed upon him, as upon all creatures: *To live!*

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<sup>44</sup> To what extent can Nietzsche’s new truth endure incorporation? This *was* our species question (and may yet *become* for us our experiment).

<sup>45</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. The Gay Science, translated by Josefine Nauckhoff. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001), 101.

This prehistory of cognition has been forgotten and so far unnoticed, so much so that, Nietzsche claims, where, “in matters of the mind, we can no longer do otherwise we deem a ‘psychological necessity.’”<sup>46</sup> This *necessity*, however, is one that has (become) evolved, “and it is downright childish to believe that our *space*, our *time*, our instincts for *causality* are something that could have meaning even apart from man.”<sup>47</sup> Today we experience only the outcome of those millennia of struggle that bred these modes of thinking into us, “in so rapid and succinct a progression,” that their secret and primeval naissance remains hidden to us.

The mind has evolved and is still evolving and among the countless ways of *inferring, judging, and subsuming* our surroundings, the perspectives currently in use by us, are not necessarily the most *truthful*. They are simply our inherited genetic perspectives. Today there can be no separation from man and his cognitive *errors*. They have become *incorporated* into the very matrix and fabric of our being, but this proves nothing about there being *true* or *untrue*. Perceiving means perceiving within the confines of our inherited errors. With cognition, man has *constructed* a world in which he can live...not *discovered* a world which he can know. All we *know*, then, is the relation of our being to our living and the pre-cognitive wisdom handed down from our genetic past.

Nietzsche writes, in the *Gay Science*, “We have arranged for ourselves a world in which we are able to live – by positing bodies, lines, planes, causes and effects, motion and rest, form and content; without these articles of faith no one could endure living! But

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 101

<sup>47</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. Writings from the Late Notebooks, translated by Kate Sturge. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 2003), 34 [89].

that does not prove them. Life is not an argument; the conditions of life might include error.”<sup>48</sup>

Nietzsche revalues the word *Truth* to mean the kind of *error* without which humans could not have lived. It is the value for maintaining and promoting life and living which ultimately decides the *truth of knowledge*. “The falseness of a judgment,” Nietzsche *reminds* his *future* audience of free spirits, “is to us not necessarily an objection to a judgment.”<sup>49</sup> The question Nietzsche says we should ask is “to what extent is it life-advancing, life-preserving, species-preserving, perhaps even species breeding?” Nietzsche explicitly declares “the falsest judgments (to which a synthetic *apriori* judgments belong) are the most indispensable to us.”<sup>50</sup> If humans had not “granted as true the fictions of logic” or had not the means to “measure reality against the purely invented world of the unconditional and self-identical” and “without a continual falsification of the world...mankind could not live.”<sup>51</sup> To renounce false judgments is to renounce Life!

“Henceforth, my dear philosophers,” Nietzsche writes, “let us be on guard against the dangerous ...snares of such contradictory concepts as “pure reason,” [and] “knowledge in itself.”” Concerning these modes of knowing, Nietzsche writes, “They always demand that we should think of an eye that is completely unthinkable, an eye turned in no particular direction, [it is] an old conceptual fiction that posited a pure, will-less, painless, timeless knowing subject.” The problem, Nietzsche says, is that with such an omniscient eyeball, “the active and interpreting forces, through which alone seeing

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<sup>48</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Gay Science*, translated by Josefine Nauckhoff. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001), 121.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 121.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 121.



becomes seeing something, are supposed to be lacking.”<sup>52</sup> “Knowing” then, means a sampling group of phenomena, is selected out of the nexus of inter-dependent causation, and are *synthesized* by an interpreting being in its effort to live and continue doing so.

For Nietzsche, there is only a perspective *seeing*, only a perspective *knowing*. Knowledge can only be an inadequate expression of an existing relationship between two interpreting entities. To eliminate the necessity of relations altogether, if we could somehow, “suspend every affect, supposing we were capable of this – what would that mean but to castrate the intellect?”<sup>53</sup>

### Perspectivism

“Perspectivism” is the term that has been coined to describe Nietzsche’s insistence that there is no absolute knowledge that transcends all or any possible perspective. Since knowledge, for Nietzsche, is always constrained by one’s perspective, then anything we *know*, we only know from a certain and limited perspective.

Perspectivism is often critiqued from the stand point of the “liar’s paradox.” If the liar claims, “Everything that I say is false,” and if that statement is taken as true, then it would actually be false, since it would be a true claim made by the liar. Nietzsche has certainly been accused of making similar paradoxical claims. For example, if Nietzsche claims that all knowledge is relative or perspectival in character, then even *this* claim should also be taken as relative and perspective bound and therefore, seemingly

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<sup>51</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. Beyond Good and Evil, translated by Judith Norman. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 2002), 4.

<sup>52</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. Twilight of the Idols, translated by Walter Kaufmann. (Viking Press, New York. 1967), Reason in Philosophy, 5.

restricting the ability to make ubiquitous claims of knowledge. Perspectivism could not, by definition, be an absolute truth claim. For Nietzsche's critics, perspectivism merely contributes to philosophy's warehouse of German rantings.

Nietzsche would have no problem admitting that his own knowledge claims are interpretations. In fact, he would probably be frustrated by the fact that this has bothered so many scholars. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, for example, he points out this very fact concerning his philosophy, stating "Supposing that this also is only interpretation—and you will be eager enough to make this objection? –Well, so much the better." <sup>54</sup>

Nietzsche's prefers to ask, instead, how far the perspectival character of existence extends. Would an existence without interpretation mean an existence without "meaning?" If existence, at every level, is an act of overpowering, subsuming, appropriating, *interpreting* its environment, then does *all of existence* have meaning?

Though he has not fully satisfied this paradox, Nietzsche hopes, instead, "that today, we are at least far from the ludicrous immodesty of decreeing from out of our corner that perspectives are permissible only from out of this corner. The world has rather once again become for us infinite in so far as we cannot object the possibility that it contains in itself infinite interpretations."<sup>55</sup> Listen as a young Nietzsche describes the hubris of the human and his intellect:

**"Once upon a time, in some out of the way corner of that universe which is dispersed into numberless twinkling solar systems, there was a star upon which clever beasts invented knowing. That was the most arrogant and mendacious minute in of "world history," but never the less it was only a minute. After nature had drawn a few breaths, the star cooled and congealed, and the clever beasts had to**

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<sup>53</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. *On The Genealogy of Morals*, translated by Walter Kaufmann. (Vintage Books, New York, 1967), III 12.

<sup>54</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. *Beyond Good and Evil*, translated by Judith Norman. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 2002), 22.

<sup>55</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Gay Science*, translated by Josefine Nauckhoff. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001), 124.

die. –One might invent such a fable, and yet still would not have adequately illustrated how miserable, how shadowy and transient, how aimless and arbitrary the human intellect looks within nature. There were eternities during which it did not exist. And when it is all over with the human intellect, nothing will have happened...”<sup>56</sup>

### Dissolving the Self: *Error of False Cause*

Purpose and motive, Nietzsche argues, are little more than a means of making something that happens naturally, or of its own accord, comprehensible and practicable to us. The belief that an action happens in consequence of a motive, was one, Nietzsche says, that “gradually and instinctively generalized in the days when everything that happened was imagined after the pattern of consciousness, which reasons as follows: everything happens because of a motive; the final cause is the efficient cause.”<sup>57</sup> In other words, whatever happens, is the fruition of a motivation to make it happen. Thus, *what* we perceive is the *reason* for its own coming to be. The *final cause* is the *efficient cause*.

Nietzsche claims that human intellects invert the order of cause and effect, here again giving us a satisfying feeling of having grasped a fundamental and basic structure of existence. The inversion occurs in the following way: Drives are the most fundamental reality, thoughts are products of drives, that is certain drives produce the arising of certain thoughts. Nietzsche says we then invert the order of cause and effect by attributing the feelings and emotions we experience, as fruit of thought. In reality, Nietzsche claims, the thought is, itself, already an afterthought, *a step behind* the drive.

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<sup>56</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. On Truth and Lies In A Non-Moral Sense, translated by Daniel Breazeale. (Humanity Books, New York, 1979), p.79.

The external world *affects* us. The *effect* is telegraphed into our brain. There, Nietzsche says, it is “arranged, given shape, and traced back to its cause, then the cause is projected, and only then does the fact enter our consciousness,” but only as after thought. The world of appearances appears to us as a *cause* only once it has already exerted its affect and after the effect has been processed. That is, we are constantly reversing the order of what happens. While *I* see and believe my-*self* to be conscious of the present, *I* am already seeing an after effect as the drives race on, overcoming and reconfiguring themselves in continual vie for power.

Accordingly, for Nietzsche, *feeling*, *willing* and *thinking* show only outcomes, the causes of which, are entirely unknown to the human. The way in which outcomes of emotion, desire or thought succeed one another (as if one succeeded out of its predecessor) is, according to Nietzsche, most likely an illusion. It may well be the case that causes are connected to one another only in such a way that the final cause merely gives us the impression of being logically or psychologically associated.

There seems to be at least plausible deniability in assuming one intellectual or psychological phenomenon to be the direct cause of another intellectual or psychological phenomenon, even if this seems uniformly experienced to be so. The necessity of its seeming to be a hard core fact of our existence is not grounded in any sort of hard core fact of existence itself. All that may be definitively said about the succession of cause and effect *we perceive* is that our progenitors experienced the world in this same temporal fashion. The true world of causes remains hidden from us behind the veil of

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<sup>57</sup>Friedrich Nietzsche. Writings from the Late Notebooks, translated by Kate Sturge. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK. 2003), 34 [53].

our well-developed neatly organizing rationality. Causation, Nietzsche thought, is in all likelihood unutterably more complicated:

**“What does man actually know about himself? Is he, indeed, ever able to perceive himself completely, as if laid out in a lighted display case? Does nature not conceal most things from him—even concerning his own body—in order to confine and lock him within a proud, deceptive consciousness, aloof from the coils of the bowels, the rapid flow of blood stream, and the intricate quivering of the fibers! She threw away the key. And woe to the fateful curiosity which might one day might have the power to peer out and down through a crack in the chamber of consciousness and then suspect that man is sustained in the indifference of his ignorance by that which is pitiless, greedy, insatiable, and murderous—as if hanging in dreams on the back of a tiger...”<sup>58</sup>**

The intellect and the senses are simplifying lenses and filters, bringing into focus an *erroneous, miniaturized, logicized* world of causes. Nietzsche assumes if our intellect did not have some fixed forms to alight upon and orientate by, then living would be impossible. Accordingly, we are *knowers* only to the extent that we are able to satisfy our biological needs of appropriating and manipulating our organism through its environment. “But that doesn’t prove anything about the truth of all logical facts.”<sup>59</sup>

If all movements are signs of something happening within, and if *thinking* is a form of *movement*, then thinking is not itself what happens but is a sign language for the balancing out of internal relations and struggles between quanta of power...a war to which we have no access. Thoughts are actions; they are little more than signs of a “play and struggle of the affects, still connected to their hidden roots.”<sup>60</sup> Drives, then, are the most basic force. Thoughts are a mental, visual sign language of the affect’s drive for power. Thoughts are not like birds ensnared by our intellects and caged in our

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<sup>58</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. On Truth and Lies In A Non-Moral Sense, translated by Daniel Breazeale. (Humanity Books, New York, 1979), p.80.

<sup>59</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. Writings from the Late Notebooks, translated by Kate Sturge. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK. 2003), 34 [46].

consciousness, rather thoughts are like waves rising from the torrential river of the will to power's desire.

### Language, Grammar, and "I"

Language too plays an essential component in human naiveté concerning the validity of what is considered knowledge. Words, Nietzsche thought, are not only the tools we use to think but also *how* we think. He deduced then, that any *errors* or assumptions of language would inevitably be sublimated by the speaker thereby aiding in the proliferation of the speaker's ignorance concerning the truth of what he knows and what he says. The most egregious of the deceptions played upon us by language, are the inferences it entices us to draw about existence, based on the rules of grammar. Grammar, Nietzsche argues, not only controls the way in which our thoughts are organized, but also determines the order, scope and limit of thoughts possible for us to have.

Language hypostatizes *subjects* as the efficient cause for action. That projection, in turn, leads to two disastrous inferences: First it forces us to project an essential autonomous ego, housed secretly in our body, that is the truly responsible acting agency of our person, that *we* are unique, distinctive, separate entities who are the cause of action in our lives. Secondly, that there exist discernible subjects or entities that are the cause of action in the world.

Nietzsche writes, "Up to now belief in grammar, in the linguistic subject, object, in verbs has subjugated the metaphysicians: I teach the renunciation of this belief. It is

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 16.

only thinking that posits the I: but up to now philosophers have believed, like the ‘common people’, that in ‘I think’ there lay something of an unmediated certainty and that this ‘I’ was the given cause of thinking, in analogy with which we ‘understood’ all other casual relations.”<sup>61</sup> Thus, humans conclude that they are autonomous agents in respect to the rest of existence.

This hypostatization also aids in determining the human’s relationship with other ‘objects’ of existence. For example, positing subject-agencies as the efficient cause for action leads humans to believe that they can have a “personal” relationship with the world. These false grammatical inferences, Nietzsche suggests, may have contributed to the formation of gods. Humans reason that since they are themselves motivated to action by the promise of certain rewards, gifts and offerings, then presumably so too are the agencies behind and responsible for the world of experience. For example, the agency that motivates the sea (Poseidon) surely must have desires, which, if satisfied, could induce Zeus’s lonely brother to allow for safe passage. The one trick that humans, like Odysseus, cannot seem to perform is finding what it is that gods *truly* desire.

Thus, language posits and helps reinforce the *erroneous* belief in our-selves, as a separate internal reality that is deftly appraising existence as it is rolled out in front of our omniscient eyes, an *error*, but a necessary one. To speak truly Nietzscheanly, we must all *believe* in ourselves! Not to do so would have, in our primeval past, ensured the annihilation of our ancestors from the gene pool. A strong animal is characterized as an organism that is sure of its right to exist, its need to exist, and pre-consciously believes that it does exist.

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<sup>61</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. Writings from the Late Notebooks, translated by Kate Sturge. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 2003), 34 [46].

What would happen to an organism that came to have mistrust in its right to live, in its right to exist, even in its own existence? Is that a healthy animal? What type of veterinary medicine would it take to cure it? How does a doctor reinvigorate an animal whose will has turned away from life and instead wills death? How does a doctor make an animal want to live again?

### Language Economy

According to Nietzsche, our words have definitions and meanings only within the constructs of language. That is, words are only meaningful in the context of *other* words, wherein they can derive their meaning. Without the presence of supporting pointers, in the form of grammar and other words...words themselves lose meaning. For Nietzsche, it is breaking the rules of our *language game* to ask about the truth of a word, so long as “truth” is understood to represent an accurate fact about the status of existence.

Language is hyperinflation. It is the classical “run on the bank” to ask what philosophy asks of language: To try and exchange the currency of words for its bullion of truth, to try and have the guarantee of a word brought out from the safe of language. There is no currency in the bank of words. The word bank is empty. Language is the ultimate counterfeit currency, trading in monetary units it doesn’t own. Language economies are like corrupt governments, always promising to guarantee the value of their currency, yet always promising that the *truth* is in another account.

For example, what is a definition if not the pointing to other accounts and other markets as providing the bullion for the word whose account is under audit? Where is the



bottom definition? Shouldn't there be a 'self-caused' definition at the base of language, a word that is its own definition? Where is language's golden meter? There isn't one. If that is the case, what is a lie? How could anything ever be untrue? Seemingly, it's all *un-true*. In language economies, an investor may write, but never cash checks. It is a hyper-inflationary market devoid of bullion. Philosophers are like market economists, speculating on how the bullion of *truth* will look when we are finally able to cash our checks.

We have long relied upon, and believed in, the *truth* of concepts, which has certainly been harmlessly beneficial. Nevertheless, when we begin to make the unconscious assumption that since words sell themselves as translucent labels, then all words must have a direct object to which they correspond. Thus, our search for them becomes an impossible labyrinth from which we can never escape.

Language depends on deception and it is necessary that investors in the language economy believe that their currency is somewhere equally back with bullion. Would the economy fail if the 'truth' leaked out about the gossamer foundation on which our Wall Street of language is laid? What a depression that would send us into. What an FDR it would take to pull us out!

### End of Essentialism

Nietzsche unabashedly claims that what actually separates him most deeply from the metaphysicians is that, "I don't concede that the 'I' is what thinks. Instead, I take the I itself to be a construction of thinking, of the same rank as 'matter', 'thing', 'substance',

‘individual’, ‘purpose’, ‘number’.”<sup>62</sup> For Nietzsche the “I” is another *regulative fiction* with which a kind of constancy, and thus “knowability,” is inserted into, and invented into, the world of becoming.

The assumption of the single subject is unnecessary. He argues it is seemingly just as permissible to assume a multiplicity of subjects within us whose interplay and struggles define the contours of our consciousness and paint the thoughts of our minds. Perhaps, he suggests, there exists within us, “a kind of aristocracy of cells,” locked, like the city states of Attic Greece, in *agon*, always vying for mastery, dominance and their chance to serve as archon.

Nietzsche writes, “If there is anything of an ‘I’ (of a unity within us), it certainly does not lie in the conscious ‘I’ and in feeling, willing, thinking, but somewhere else: In the sustaining, appropriating, expelling, watchful prudence of our whole organism, of which our conscious self is only a tool.”<sup>63</sup> These are a multiplicity behind which it is not necessary to posit a unity. It is enough to understand them as individual city-states. Since, Nietzsche thought that all of our conscious motives are merely superficial phenomena, behind which, is hidden the struggle of our drives for dominion, it is not an “I” that collects the self’s disparate parts, but the thirsting drive of our will.

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 34 [46].

### The Error of *Being*: What *really* kills God?

Nietzsche thought that if his reading of existence as the will to power was correct, then many of the questions philosophers have long pondered are, in actuality, little more than constructed dilemmas, predicated on the assumptions of language, not ontology. Theologians and lay theists, for example, often ask the question of, “Who?” concerning the motivations of existence, trying to puzzle out such conundrums as, “*Who* is responsible for the tragedies which befall me?” or, “*Who* made the world to be?” These sorts of questions have plagued theology, as far back as Homer. For Nietzsche, these are questions which only arise out of error, since, as we have seen, existence is at bottom (and top) an arrangement of unconscious forces, feeling themselves out in a continued struggle for mastery and power.

Moreover, a state of perpetual becoming is a state in which everything that seems to *be* is really just a passing moment or a vivisected slice of a long story or inter-causation and in-extrapulatable nexus of affects. Given his ontology, Nietzsche concluded “the assumption of the unconditional, of substance, of being, of a thing, etc., can only be error.”<sup>64</sup> There absolutely could *be* no unconditioned.<sup>65</sup> Positings of an eternal super-ego to the “Who?” behind existence is, for Nietzsche, an absurd claim. Such positings lead only to an irreconcilable paradox, since nothing unconditioned could exist in a conditioned world. There would *be* no where for it to *be*! It could not *be* that God exists so long as God is understood as an absolutely unconditioned *being other*.

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<sup>63</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. Writings from the Late Notebooks, translated by Kate Sturge. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 2003), 34 [46].

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, 5 [51].

<sup>65</sup> “Matter is not void because of voidness. Voidness is not separate from matter.”

However, the absolute possibility concerning the non-existence of an absolutely unconditioned being could never be fully claimed either. Nietzsche would happily be the first to deny making such categorical claims. The *possibility* of a metaphysical world, however, certainly remains. A metaphysical world could exist beyond our perception, even beyond the influences of our world of causation. Although *possible*, it is an idea one could do nothing with, “least of all,” Nietzsche points out, “ground one's happiness, salvation, and life on the gossamer of such a possibility.”<sup>66</sup> Moreover, nothing could be asserted about a metaphysical world except that it is a “total being other, inaccessible, and incomprehensible; it would be a thing with negative qualities.”<sup>67</sup> Even if the existence of such a world could be absolutely demonstrated, the “knowledge” of it would be, according to Nietzsche, the most useless of all knowledge, “like a sailor wanting to know the chemical composition of water while trapped in a shipwreck.”<sup>68</sup> Metaphysics is traditionally defined as “the investigation into subjects that empirical evidence precludes us from directly apprehending, such as what is the nature of space and time, what is ‘reality itself’ and the search for the existence of God.”<sup>69</sup>

If Nietzsche’s foregoing appraisal of the limits of human knowledge is correct, then man’s indictment by life to live does not impel our *knowing* to extend far enough to even begin appraising metaphysical questions. What’s more, the questions themselves are not the products of careful and considered observation but of unnoticed inferences, drawn from an illegitimate use of language and a misreading of the text of human cognition.

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<sup>66</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. Writings from the Late Notebooks, translated by Kate Sturge. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 2003), 35[51].

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 35 [51]

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 35 [51]

### Knowledge as Judgment / Judgment as Belief

Knowledge, in the forms of judgment, assessment, and perception, are regulative (limited) fictions, with the help of which, a kind of *constancy* and *knowability* was inserted into, invented into and was *willed* into a world of perpetual becoming. The world of becoming “could not, in the strictest sense, be “grasped”, be “known” and “into which things *being* some way could only be “inserted.”<sup>70</sup>

So if *being* does not exist in the world, why is it that we talk about it? For Nietzsche, the answer is simple: “We ‘made’ the ‘world’ to be.”<sup>71</sup> We imprinted *being* into the schema of reality. “*Being*,” Nietzsche writes, “is everywhere thought into and foisted upon the world.”<sup>72</sup> We needed a world of this kind. We needed a world in which we could live. *To be*, we needed to *be* in that kind of world. We simply could not live in a state of pure becoming, so we posited *being* to preserve ourselves.<sup>73</sup> There are then, in reality, “no durable, definable units, no atoms, no monads: here too ‘being’ is imposed by us (for practical, useful, perspectival reasons).”<sup>74</sup> The *real world*, then, is an ‘added’ lie.

Change, mutation and becoming were formerly taken as proof of appearance, as a sign of the presence of something that led us astray. Today, we see ourselves entangled in error, necessitated to error to precisely the extent that “our prejudice in favor of reason compels us to posit unity, identity, duration, substance, cause, materiality, being;

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<sup>69</sup> Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy, Robert Audi, editor. (Cambridge, UK, 1995)

<sup>70</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. Writings from the Late Notebooks, translated by Kate Sturge. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK. 2003), 11 [73].

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, 9 [91]

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, 9 [97]

<sup>73</sup> For Nietzsche’s train of thought on this idea, see the Writings from the Late Notebooks 34 [49], 34 [247], 36 [23] and 14 [93].

<sup>74</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. Writings from the Late Notebooks, translated by Kate Sturge. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK. 2003), 11[73].

however sure we may be, on the basis of strict reckoning, that only error is to be found here.”<sup>75</sup>

The situation is the same, Nietzsche tells us, with the motions of the sun. However, in that case *error* has our eyes, whereas in the present case our language is the perpetual advocate of error. Language, Nietzsche thought, belongs in its origin to the age of the most rudimentary form of psychology. Nietzsche says we find ourselves in the midst of a “rude fetishism when we call to mind the basic presuppositions of the metaphysics of language – which is to say, of reason.” It is this, and this alone, which sees everywhere deed and doer; this, which believes in the will as cause in general; this, which believes in the ‘ego’ as being, in the ego as substance and which projects its belief in the ego-substance on to all things. Only thus does it create the concept ‘thing.’ *Being* is everywhere thought in, foisted on, as cause; it is only from the conception “ego” that there follows, derivatively, the concept “being.”

“To posit a distinction between an ‘essence of things’ and a world of appearances,” Nietzsche claims, “pretends to know, or imagines to know, far too much, as if the distinction they assume is justified.”<sup>76</sup> The problem is that to make such a distinction, one would have to conceive of our intellect, “as afflicted with a contradictory character.”<sup>77</sup> On the one hand, our intellect would be adapted to a perspectival way of seeing which our species must have to preserve its existence, and simultaneously “capable of grasping this perspectival seeing as perspectival, the appearance as appearance.” The intellect must come equipped as it were, “with a belief in ‘reality’ as if

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<sup>75</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. The Twilight of the Idols. translated by R.J. Hollingdale (Penguin Classics, New York, 1990).

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 6 [23]

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 6 [23]

it were the only one, and yet also with knowledge about this belief, the knowledge that it's only a perspectival restriction with respect to a true reality.” Yet once a belief is examined with this knowledge it ceases to be belief, “is dissolved as belief.”

Thenceforth, it is seen as *error*, as *necessary error*, and as *necessary belief*.

Nietzsche, in keeping with his project of naturalization and defining man only by his discernible and apprehendable traits, “must not conceive of our intellect as being so contradictory that it is simultaneously both a belief and a knowledge of that belief as belief.” Therefore, “let's abolish the ‘thing-in-itself,’ and with it, one of the least clear concepts, that of appearance! This whole antithesis, like the older one of ‘matter and spirit’ has been proven unusable.”

“That which we now call the world,” Nietzsche concludes, “is the result of a host of errors and fantasies which have gradually arisen in the course of the total evolution of organic nature, have become entwined with one another and are now inherited by us as the accumulated treasure of the entire past – as a treasure: for the value of our humanity depends on it!”<sup>78</sup>

### Knowledge Re-Translated

Knowledge involves believing that something is “thus and thus.” Any such belief must always be false, given a world of becoming in which there could be no possibility of things *being* in some definite way or another. *Being* is itself a belief, a judgment, declaring, “This shall be so!” Thus, for Nietzsche, there is *being* only to the extent that

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<sup>78</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. Human All Too Human, translated by Marion Faber and Stephen Lehmann. (University of Nebraska Publishing, 1996), 16.

there is *living*. Since it is *living* that makes *knowing* possible and living is itself a manifestation of the will to power, then living is the predicate of knowing, and it is the will to power itself that demands knowledge of the world.

To live means to feel, to appropriate, to subdue and to overcome. Living takes the shape of cognitive knowing in the human, aiding the human organism in appropriating, subduing, and overcoming on its own *unconscience* drive for power. Knowing is a slave to living, the organic outgrowth and manifestation of the will to power. The will to power is the “inventive force that thought up categories.”<sup>79</sup> Seeking to service the needs of our organism: “security, of quick comprehensibility using signs and sounds, of means of abbreviation.” As such, the categories of “substance, subject, object, being, becoming, are not metaphysical truths,” but orienteering devices created by the will in ‘us’. So speaks Life again, “My will to power walks with your will to truth.”

In keeping with his *task of retranslating* man in terms of life, Nietzsche believes he has sufficiently naturalized human cognition in terms of life, as a means of living, and as an expression of the will to power. Our entire existence is an act of interpretation, appropriation and domination. Our cognition, in as far as it tries to ‘wrap our minds’ around phenomena and force (skew) reality to conform to our human intellectual constructs.

Our long revered and heavenly endowed faculties of reason are, in the end, only rough guides and metaphors that our long ago ancestors randomly hit upon, providing for them an increase in the over all power of their organism. In the end, our knowledge is

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<sup>79</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. Writings from the Late Notebooks, translated by Kate Sturge. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK. 2003), 6 [11].



neither an endowment from heaven, nor a participation in the universal intellect, but a tool in the bag of our crafty species....

**“For this intellect has no additional mission which would lead it beyond human life. Rather it is human and only its possessor takes it so solemnly—as though the world’s axis turned within it. But if we could communicate with a gnat, we would learn that he likewise flies through the air with the same solemnity, that he feels the flying center of the universe within himself...”<sup>80</sup>**

### Knowledge as the Instinct of Fear?

Nietzsche wondered, “What [do] the people really understand by knowledge? What does it want when it wants knowledge?” He surmised nothing more than this, “Something strange shall be traced back to something familiar.”<sup>81</sup> The familiar is that to which we are accustomed so we are no longer surprised by it. It is the plain, the everyday and the things with which we feel ourselves at home.

Is our need to know precisely this: A *need* for the familiar? Is the will to knowledge really a will to “discover among all that is strange, unaccustomed and questionable something which no longer disturbs us?”<sup>82</sup> Is it the instinct to fear that bids us to know? Is the rejoicing of the man of knowledge not precisely the rejoicing of the feeling of security re-attained? Schopenhauer, Nietzsche suggested, “supposed the world to be ‘known’ when he had traced it back to the ‘idea’: was it not, alas, because the ‘idea’ was so familiar to him, because he was so accustomed to and now had so little to fear

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<sup>80</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. On Truth and Lies In A Non-Moral Sense, translated by Daniel Breazeale. (Humanity Books, New York, 1979), p.79.

<sup>81</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich. The Gay Science, translated by Josefine Nauckhoff. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001), 355.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 355

from the ‘idea’?”<sup>83</sup> If this is true, think of the complacency that is evident in all the great men of knowledge so far.

Nietzsche demands that we reconsider all great philosophical principles in this light. “For what is familiar is known,” over this, Nietzsche says, “all philosophers have been in accord.”<sup>84</sup> He says that even the most cautious among them assume that the familiar is easier to know than the strange. He says this foreground assumption and oversight is understandable if not forgivable, since it does appear necessary as a “law of method to start out from the ‘inner world’, from the ‘facts of consciousness’ because they are the world more familiar to us! Error of errors! The familiar is that to which we are accustomed; and that to which we are accustomed is the hardest to ‘know’, that is to see as a problem, that is to see as strange, as distant, as ‘outside us’. It is something almost contradictory to sense to want to take the non-strange as object as all...”<sup>85</sup>

This seems an interesting critique that could be leveled against Nietzsche. The will to power as the ‘real’ motivation behind existence, at least how I have presented, Nietzsche justified though its seeming ubiquity to all human experience. I think it could be well argued, using Nietzsche’s own critique, that with the enumeration of the *will to power*, Nietzsche has not made any adequate truth claims, rather he has only fallen in line with his philosophical predecessors. His writings, then, are merely confessions to us, not of “truth” as such, but only a description of the feeling and experience most *familiar* to him.

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 355

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 355

<sup>85</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. The Gay Science , translated by Josefine Nauckhoff. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001), 355.

## CHAPTER 4

### Morality

#### The Need for a *Genealogy* of Morals

In the second chapter of his new text on man, Nietzsche tries to *naturalize* morality in keeping with his avowed task of translating man back into nature and out of the metaphysical clouds from into which he has for so long read himself. Nietzsche now needs to successfully demonstrate that moral laws, like knowledge, are neither sacred mimics of a natural moral order, nor long ago demands made by a divine authority. He must show instead that the fruit of morality grows out of the human *humus*...the Adam from the *adama*. This quest embarks Nietzsche upon a voyage that sails him into truly yet uncharted scholastic seas, where he discovers his own unique intellectual landscape and arguably his greatest contribution to scholarship, the *Genealogy* project.

Nietzsche writes, “in Europe today the ‘science of morals’ is still young, inept, clumsy, and coarse fingered.”<sup>86</sup> Even the expression, “science of morals,” was, Nietzsche felt, “considering what is designated by it, far too proud, and contrary to good taste.” “Hitherto, philosophers with a straight-laced seriousness that provokes laughter, demanded,” Nietzsche says, “something much higher, more pretentious, more solemn of themselves as soon as they have concerned themselves with morality as a science.”

Nietzsche criticized the philosophy of morality as it has been carried out thus far. He objected to the practices of the great German moralists (Kant, Schopenhauer, and Hegel) because rather than establishing a typology of morals they instead sought to find the rational grounds for morality, while never taking into question the problem of

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<sup>86</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. *Beyond Good and Evil*, translated by Judith Norman. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 2002), 186.

morality itself. They were each and every one of them, Nietzsche claims, not courageous Don Juan's of knowledge, but only servants, slaves, and mouthpieces for their own moralities. In Nietzsche's words "they are spokesmen for the herd."

Nietzsche believed that every philosopher before the advent of his *Genealogical* project has not only *searched* for but *believed* he had found the almighty rational ground. Morality itself, however, was taken as given. As Nietzsche says, "they did not so much as catch sight of the real problems of morality- for these come into view only if we compare many moralities." In all *science of morals* the problem of morality itself had been lacking. The "suspicion" was lacking that there was anything problematic here, at the beginning.

### Herd Wisdom

Nietzsche first wondered, "What is our oldest moral judgment? What was the first moral discrimination made? What *really* are our reactions to the behavior of someone in our presence?"<sup>87</sup> "First of all," Nietzsche says, "we see what there is in it for us" then [we] *invert* this value judgment and take this *effect* as the intention behind the behavior." Finally, "we ascribe the harboring of such intentions as a permanent quality of the person whose behavior we are observing." Thereafter, designating the encountered individual as 'harmful or beneficial.' This, Nietzsche decries, is our "Threefold error! Threefold primeval blunder," perhaps an atavistic judgment, a legacy from our animal past. "Is the origin of all morality," Nietzsche asked, "not to be sought in the detestable petty

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<sup>87</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. *Daybreak*, translated by R.J Hollingdale (Cambridge Texts in History of Philosophy, Cambridge, 1997), 2.

conclusions: What harms *me* is something *evil* (harmful in itself); what is useful *to me* is something *good* (beneficial and advantageous in itself).”

Nietzsche says that wherever we encounter “a morality, we find a valuation and order of rank of human drives and actions.”<sup>88</sup> We have already encountered Nietzsche’s designation “order of rank” and said that it is a designation between hierarchies and degrees of power and strength. Within moralities, these valuations and orders of rank are always the expression of the needs of a community or herd. Moral codes, Nietzsche teaches us, read in descending order of primacy, that which is its first, second and third requirement for survival. Moral laws are not only the herd’s list of rules for survival collectively, but also become the supreme value standard for every individual within the herd or community. “Morality,” for Nietzsche, “is the herd instinct in the individual.” Moral rules and laws are the will to power promoted by the community and expressed in the degree to which it molds the individual’s actions. Nietzsche believed that with morality an individual is led into being a function of the herd and thereafter can only attribute value to himself as a function of the herd.

### Ossification of Morality into Law: A *Moses* for All

For Nietzsche, a great innovator stands on top of every culture’s Sinai and is the first to proclaim, “Thus, it *shall* be!” initiating every individual morality. Later, perhaps after hundreds of generations, long after the context and history of the codes origination is forgotten, a morality takes on the tone of absolutism. The imperative voice of an

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<sup>88</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. The Gay Science , translated by Josefine Nauckhoff. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001), 116.

individual creator proclaiming “thus it shall be” is no longer heard and moralities haughtily proclaim, “Thus it *is!*” and dresses itself up in *truth*. Like knowledge, moralities, too, are initially the products of a human will that forces existence to be viewed as “thus and thus.” Time however, Nietzsche teaches us, cooks all contingent, forced truths into recipes of absolutism. Law books originate as a summary of “the experience, policy and experimental morality of long centuries, it settles accounts, it creates nothing new.”<sup>89</sup> A law book never tells the utility of the law, of the reason for it, of the casuistry which preceded it: For in that way it would lose the imperative tone, the ‘thou shalt,’ the very precondition of its being obeyed.

At a certain point in the evolution of a people the most far-sighted class proclaims the experience in accordance with which a people should live (that is, can live) to be fixed and settled. Their objective is to secure and retain the greatest *knowledge* bought at the expense of the herd’s prior ages of experimentation and bad experience. But that which was to be prevented above all was the continuation of experimenting. Moral laws erect a behavioral wall to prevent a continual flux and change of values within a herd.

Nietzsche says this wall is erected and fortified with two types of mortar, as it were. First, he says, moralities call upon the weapon of revelation. That is, the assertion that the origination of these laws is not human but divine. Revelation *forgets* that moral codes were “not sought and found slowly and with many blunders, but, being of divine origin, is whole, perfect, without history, a gift, a miracle, merely communicated.”<sup>90</sup> Secondly, the mud of revelation mixes with the straw of tradition and bravely asserts that “the law has already existed from time immemorial, that it is impious, a crime against the

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<sup>89</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. The Anti-Christ, translated by R.J. Hollingdale (Penguin Classics, New York, 1990), 57.

ancestors, to call it into question.”<sup>91</sup> The “higher rational” of such moral legislation “lies in the intention of gradually making the way of life recognized as correct (that is demonstrated by a tremendous amount of finely sifted experience) unconscious: so that a complete automatism of instinct is achieved.”<sup>92</sup>

### “Master” and “Slave” Moralities

We can envision Nietzsche as a middle-aged philologist nestled into a small boarding room in the Swiss Valley, uncovering for himself new and yet undreamed of visions concerning man. By the winter of 1886, Nietzsche had become almost completely isolated from his philosophical and philological contemporaries. By now in his career, Nietzsche is writing exclusively to his future readers. He has uncovered an entirely new vision of history and an entirely new understanding of man, both that must be written with a new vocabulary that does not yet even exist and one that he will have to invent.

Nietzsche tells us that, having *toured* “the many finer and coarser moralities which have ruled or still rule on earth, I found certain traits regularly recurring together.” He states that, eventually, “two basic types were revealed,” and “a basic distinction emerged... a ‘master morality’ and a ‘slave morality.’”<sup>93</sup> His argument is that moral value distinctions have arisen either among “a ruling order which was pleasurably conscience of its distinction from the ruled...the slaves and dependents of every

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 57.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, 57.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, 57.

degree.”<sup>94</sup> When the rulers determine the concept “good,” “it is always the exalted proud states of soul which are considered distinguishing in determining the order of rank.”<sup>95</sup> The noble human separates himself out from among the others who do not exhibit such proud and exalted states. Nietzsche says, “He despises them.”

In a master morality, the antithesis “good” and “bad” means the exact same thing as ‘noble’ and ‘despicable.’ The antithesis ‘good’ and ‘evil’ has a different origination. In a master morality, Nietzsche tells us, “the cowardly, the timid, the petty and those who think only of narrow utility are despised.”

The noble type of man feels himself to be the determiner of values. He does not need to be approved of and he judges, “what harms me is harmful in itself.” In Nietzsche’s words, “He creates value.” The possessor of a master morality mindset knows, Nietzsche says, “everything to be part of himself;” as such, master morality is self-glorification. Nietzsche says that this bestowing of honor onto the states of existence comes from a feeling “of plenitude, of power which seeks to overflow.” The noble human being honors, in himself, the man of power. He honors the man who has power over himself, the man who understands how to “speak and how to keep silent.”

The noble man, Nietzsche tells us, also “enjoys practicing severity and harshness upon himself and feels reverence for all that is severe and harsh.” Master morality is further characterized by a deep reverence for age, tradition, and “a belief and prejudice in favor of ancestors and against decedents is typical of the morality of the powerful.” A master morality is severe in its unbending principle “that one has duties only towards

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<sup>93</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. *Beyond Good and Evil*, translated by Judith Norman. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 2002), 260.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, 260

<sup>95</sup> Ibid, 260



one's equals." Towards beings of a lower rank, or alien, nobles felt they may act as one wishes or "as the heart dictates." The noble human being does aid the unfortunate but not, "or almost not," Nietzsche qualifies, "from pity but more from an urge begotten by superfluidity of power."

Slave morality is the categorical antithesis to the master morality. The mindset or world-view, as it were, of the slave morality supposes that "the abused, oppressed, suffering, un-free, those *uncertain* of themselves and weary...[in total is] a pessimistic mistrust of the entire situation of man."<sup>96</sup> Slave morality, Nietzsche concludes, is a condemnation of man compounded with a frustration and condemnation of the situation in which the slave finds himself. We have already seen that, for Nietzsche, living is the will to power. Thus, any will that does not *will* more power, is a *will* away from the living and away from life. Slave morality, we can already see, is a turning away from the active powerful traits of the human organism. Is it then, a will to death?

Who is a slave? A "slave" is anyone suspicious of the virtues of the powerful. For a slave, any quality that serves "to make easier the existence of suffering" will be elevated and inflated above all others or, as Nietzsche states "flooded with light." Here Nietzsche tells us we can find the genealogical heritage of "pity, the kind and helping hand, the warm heart, patience, industriousness, humility, friendliness." For a slave, someone suffering from existence, these would be the most useful qualities and virtues to esteem and perhaps, Nietzsche speculated, "the only means of enduring the burden of existence."

"Slave morality," Nietzsche tells us, "is essentially the morality of utility," and it is here that we can find the *ursprung* of the "famous antithesis, "good" and "evil." The

slave defined evil as, “a subtlety and strength which could not admit of contempt.”

Power and danger were felt to be *evil*, so the slave deduces evil is what inspires fear, in direct opposition to the master morality, who coin as good, precisely those who inspire fear.

So, within the slave’s way of thinking, the “good man” is always the “harmless man.” The “good man,” or the “good-natured,” Nietzsche supposes, “is easy to deceive [and] perhaps a bit stupid.”<sup>97</sup> Nietzsche states that evidence of this can be found within language. He states, language tends to exhibit an inclination “of bringing the words ‘good’ and ‘stupid’ closer to each other,” but fails to provide us with an example (an egregious philological crime?). The final and fundamental distinction between the chasm that divides ‘master’ and ‘slave’ moralities or ‘noble’ and ‘common’ worldviews is “the longing for freedom.” Only a slave needs to feel free.

How deep do the roots of slavery run? Are there conditions under which nobles or masters are still bound? Are there restraints by which all men are bound? Do only slaves really seek freedom? Wasn’t Nietzsche in search of the ultimate “free spirit?” Was he a slave? Isn’t his avowed task to seek freedom? Free from what? What binds humans fundamentally? Is the human will itself a slave? Are we *bound* to seek freedom? How does a fundamentally enslaved will free itself? *Das ist die frage!*

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid, 260.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, 260.

### The Birth of “Good” and “Evil”

Accordingly the judgment “good” did not originate with those to whom “goodness” was shown. It was the “good” themselves, the noble, powerful, high place, and high minded who posited themselves and their actions as “good.” In Nietzsche’s terms, they designate themselves as, “the first rank.” These nobles feel themselves to be “the antithesis to everything low, low-minded, common, and plebeian.” It was across this chasm dividing human natures that the nobles first glimpsed and felt, what Nietzsche terms, “the pathos of distance.” That is, the masters assumed the right to create values and to create the names of values. The pathos of nobility and distance is “the permanent and domineering collective fundamental feeling of a higher ruling type in relation to a lower type, to a ‘beneath.’ That, Nietzsche proposes, is “the origin of the antithesis ‘good’ and ‘bad.’”

### *La Revolution des Misérables: Le Ressentiment Prend la Haute Main.*

“The slave revolt in morality begins when resentment, itself, becomes creative and gives birth to values.” The resentment of creatures to whom the real reaction, that of the deed, is denied can indemnify themselves only through an imaginary revenge. Every noble morality develops from a triumphant affirmation of itself. Slave morality, from the outset, says “No!” to all that is outside, to all that is different and to all that is not itself. This “No!” however, is its creative act. This reversal of the value-creating view of the noble, forces the slave’s eye to be projected outward instead of back on himself. For Nietzsche, this is the fertilizer of resentment. Slave morality, requires for its existence, a

contrary and outer world. It requires an external stimulus in order to act at all. Its action is, from the beginning, *re*-action.

With the nobles, the mode of valuation is very different. Their valuation acts and grows spontaneously and it seeks its antithesis and opposite, only in order to affirm itself. The noble uses his positivistic image of himself to establish the paragon of possible natures in men. Thus, he allots value to other men in their nature's relation in similarity to his, thereby giving us the noble distinction of high and low. The masters, or the "well born," feel themselves to be happy. They do not have to first artificially construct their happiness. They do not need to convince themselves of their happiness. They do not need to lie themselves into happiness. A slave can only establish his own value while gazing upon his enemy.

The man of resentment, the slave, is neither honest nor straightforward with himself. As Nietzsche says, "his soul *squints*." "His spirit loves hiding places, secret paths, and back doors. Everything covert strikes him as his world, his security, his refreshment." As a slave, he knows how to wait, how to keep silent, how not to forget and how to make himself small and humble. Eventually, a race of such men of resentment will necessarily end up cleverer than any noble race. It will hold cleverness in an altogether higher degree of honor. It is seen as a condition of its existence. Cleverness, then, is of the highest rank and the first order.

When the noble man feels resentment it consummates and exhausts itself in an immediate reaction, therefore, it does not poison his spirit with resentment. A noble is unable to take his enemies, misfortunes, and even his misdeeds seriously, for too long. That, for Nietzsche, is the sign of a strong nature and a healthy organism. Noble men,

Nietzsche states, “shake from themselves with a single shrug much vermin which would bore its way into others.” The noble man longs for enemies so that his enemy may provide the noble with distinction and opportunities for increasing his own honor...Alexander versus Darius.

Now picture, on the other hand, the enemy, as the man of resentment conceives of him. This conception itself, is precisely, the slave’s creative act. It is his one and soulful creative deed. He has birthed the conception “the evil enemy” and reified and aggrandized his conception and created “the Evil One Himself.” It is from this basic conception then, that the man of resentment creates his own conception of value. The “good man” as conceived by the resentful slave, is “good” only in so far as he lacks the “evil” attributes of the noble...Paul versus Rome.

The “resentful man,” vilifies the strong, self-confident, and unquestioned strength of the noble. The resentful then inscribe on their tablets of morality virtues to sustain the oppressed and vilify the strong and limit strengths freedom. To require of strength that it should not express itself as strength, that is should not desire to conquer, to subdue or become master is the bedrock doctrine of the philosophy of resentment.

In the next chapter we will see that determining which of these two moralities is prevalent in our culture today is another one of Nietzsche’s paramount tasks. Those familiar with Nietzsche’s anti-Christian crusade can perhaps already guess from which class he believes our modern morality to be descended.

### Moral accountability and the *Myth* of Freewill

Nietzsche outlines “the principle stages in the history of the sensations by virtue of which we make anyone accountable for his actions,”<sup>98</sup> that is to say, of the “moral sensations.” First, humans called individual actions “good” or “bad,” “quite irrespective of their motives but solely on account of their useful or harmful consequences.”

However, eventually humans *forgot*<sup>99</sup> the origin of these designations and believed that the qualities “good” and “evil” are inherent in the actions themselves irrespective of the consequences.

In so doing, humans committed, Nietzsche says, “the same error as that by which language designated the stone itself as hard, the tree itself as green,” by taking for *cause* that which is *effect*. Humans, similarly, consigned the being ‘good’ or being ‘evil’ to the motives and regard the deeds in themselves as morally ambiguous. We then, Nietzsche claims, push this error further and “no longer accord the predicate ‘good’ or ‘evil’ to the individual motive [but] to the whole nature of a man out of whom the motive grows as the plant does from the soil.” Having done so, humans successfully made men accountable for the *effects* “they” produce, which is to say of their actions, their motives, and “finally for their entire nature.”<sup>100</sup>

Today, however, Nietzsche states, “science has finally discovered that this nature, too, cannot be accountable, in as much as it is altogether a necessary consequence

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<sup>98</sup>Friedrich Nietzsche. Human All Too Human, translated by Marion Faber and Stephen Lehmann. (University of Nebraska Publishing, 1996), 45.

<sup>99</sup> It is somewhat ironic that Nietzsche should rely so heavily here on the role played by ‘forgetfulness’ in the formation of the concepts ‘good’ and ‘evil’. In his later works he condemns the British Empiricists for allotting the role of “forgetfulness” to much significance in the formation of the concepts ‘good’ and ‘evil’. See the preface to *On The Genealogy of Morals*. Perhaps he simply forgot!

<sup>100</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. Human All Too Human, translated by Marion Faber and Stephen Lehmann. (University of Nebraska Publishing, 1996), 44.

[having been] assembled from the elements and influences of things past and present.”<sup>101</sup>

For Nietzsche, this meant “that man can be accountable for nothing, not for his nature, nor for his motives, nor for his actions, nor for the effects he produces.

### Moral Error

Given the nexus of conditioning causes which existence as the will to power is then, Nietzsche concluded, “no one is accountable for his deeds, [nor] for his nature.” No one being accountable for their deeds and no one responsible for their natures implies, for Nietzsche, that “to judge is the same thing as to be unjust.” Judging, condemning, requiring an answer for motives, is not the foundation for justice but is itself unjust! Nietzsche thought that “the proposition is as clear as day, and yet here everyone prefers to retreat back into the shadows and untruth: from fear of the consequences.”<sup>102</sup> Nietzsche thought that he had secured solid ground for claiming “that the history of the moral sensations is the history of an error, the error of accountability.” The *error of accountability* itself rests, Nietzsche says, “on a more basic and fundamental error, the error of freedom of will.”

### Error of Free-will

Nietzsche stridently claims that, “It is only under the misleading influence of language and the fundamental errors of reason fossilized in it, which understands and

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid, 39

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, 39

misunderstands all operation as conditioned by an operator, by a “subject.” He states for example, that similarly to separating out the lighting from the flash and taking the latter as an action, as an operation on the part of a subject called lightning. So, too, slave moralities operate on an erroneous assumption of an actual separation “of strength from expressions of strength.” “Slaves,” Nietzsche states, “assume there is a neutral substratum behind the man of strength that is free to either express its strength or not.” There is, of course, as we have seen, for Nietzsche, no such substratum. There is no *being* behind *doing*. The *do-er* is merely *added* to the *deed*. No evil man, no evil nature. Only slaves long for freedom and yearn for a *benevolent* master.

### Geniuses of Resentment

The virtues of patience, humility and justice heard *free of moralistic prejudice*, really Nietzsche states, means nothing more than, “we who are weak are, after all, weak, and it would be a good thing to do nothing for which we are insufficiently strong.”<sup>103</sup> Nietzsche further states that this is merely the maxim of the “lowest form of prudence; that even insects possess, who, when there is danger, pretend to be dead, so as not to do too much.”<sup>104</sup> But this weakness, impotence, and vengeful creative stance of slave morality have, “clothed itself in the finery of the virtue of renunciation”<sup>105</sup> and cloaked in its ephods, the weakness of the weak man himself.

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<sup>103</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich. *On The Genealogy of Morals*, translated by Walter Kaufmann. (Vintage Books, New York, 1967). ‘Good and Evil’, ‘Good and Bad’ 2,4,5,10,11,13

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, 2,4,5,10,13

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, 2,4,5,10,13



The tablets of slave morality ingenuously and duplicitously “pass off a deed that performs itself necessarily, as a voluntary achievement or something willed or something chosen.” The slave turns genius in his resentment. His spirit’s ability to *mask* its impotent nature and condition in a value system that redeems and justifies its suffering condition. The slave becomes an alchemist in resentful states and spins his hatred in gold. The anger and rage the slave’s spirit and will feel in its impotent and powerless position transforms itself into creativity and converts the virtues of the weak into virtue itself! His creative hubris knows no bounds. The slave projects his virtues of weakness into existence itself. Reading into the very fabric of reality the slaves moral law! The slave has according to Nietzsche, passed off his own inescapably weak nature that “happens necessarily and of its own accord” appear to be the product of careful and considered purposeful intentions. Slaves are not only *geniuses of resentment* they are geniuses of propaganda. Nietzsche asks us to consider whether the whole our two thousand year European history, is not the long tale of resentment gaining the upper hand? Was Christianity a slave revolt in morality? It certainly openly avows the virtues of pity, caring, and mercy. What was it really that brought down the Roman Empire? Did the Christians infect the Romans with their slave morality and successfully convince their Roman masters of their own evil natures?

### Virtues of the *Evil*

“Free-doers” are, Nietzsche tells us, at a distinct “disadvantage compared with free thinkers.”<sup>106</sup> He states “people seemingly suffer more obviously from the consequences of deeds rather than those of thoughts.” Nietzsche says, however, if we consider that both the free thinker and the free doer are in search of a type of gratification. For example, in the case of the free thinker, simply thinking through and announcing (perhaps forbidden ideas) provides this type of gratification. Seemingly, both are on equal footing. With regard to the consequences, the decision will even go against the free thinker, provided one does not judge (as all the world does) by what is most immediately and crassly obvious. One has to take back much of the defamation which people have cast upon all those who broke through the spell of a custom by means of a deed in general, they are called criminals. Whoever has overthrown an existing law of custom has hitherto always first been accounted a *bad man*. But when the law could not afterwards be reinstated and this fact was accepted, the predicate gradually changed.

“Of what use have the strongest and most evil spirits in humanity been?”<sup>107</sup> Nietzsche tells us that so far it was they who have until now advanced mankind the most. It was always the evil and strong spirit that has “again and again, reignited the slumbering passions.”<sup>108</sup> Nietzsche, as philologist and historian, thought “all ordered societies make the passions drowsy.” It was the evil man that has awakened “again and again the sense of comparison, of contradiction, of joy in the new, daring, untried. It is the evil man that compels men and societies to set their opinions by and against, to oppose one moral

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<sup>106</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. Daybreak, translated by R.J Hollingdale (Cambridge Texts in History of Philosophy, Cambridge, 1997), 20.

<sup>107</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. The Gay Science , translated by Josefine Nauckhoff. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001), 4.

model against another. These comparisons, often bought, at the expense of war are played out in several ways: Militaristically, the establishment of new religions and of new moralities.

Nietzsche teaches that it is the “same ‘wickedness’ in every teacher and preacher of the *new* as makes a conqueror infamous.” The *new* “is, however, under all circumstances, the *evil*, since it is that which wants to conquer and overturn the old boundary stones and old pieties.” Only the *old* is good. The good men are those who sustain the old ideas and can continually till them in their garden and bear fruit with them. They are, Nietzsche states, “the agriculturists of the spirit.” But the garden of the good “will at length become exhausted, and the plowshare of evil must come again and again. ‘Man is evil’ - all the wisest men have told me that to comfort me. Ah, if only it be true today! For evil is man’s best strength. ‘Man must grow better and more evil’ - thus do I teach.”<sup>109</sup>

Nietzsche is offering his new interpretation at the end of the nineteenth century culminating almost two hundred years of moral theorizing, on the continent and in Britain. Nietzsche presents his genealogy of morals as a counter-theory to what he says was then a “fundamentally false theory of morality celebrated in England.”<sup>110</sup> Nietzsche thought the British Utilitarians had merely equated the judgments ‘good’ and ‘evil’ with the terms ‘useful’ and ‘not useful.’ Accordingly, Nietzsche understood them to be saying that “what is called good is that which preserves the species, and that which is called evil is that which injures the species.” Nietzsche found no such British hospitality in his reading of man’s nature. For Nietzsche, the evil impulses are just as useful,

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid, 4

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, 4

indispensable and preservative for our species as the good, “only they serve a different function.”<sup>111</sup>

### *Beyond ‘Good’ and ‘Evil’: The End of Moral Judgment*

“One knows my demand of philosophers that they place themselves *beyond* good and evil- that they have the illusion of moral judgment beneath them.”<sup>112</sup> Nietzsche states this strict demand followed from one of his most profound insights: “There are no moral facts whatsoever.”<sup>113</sup> Nietzsche thought that moral judgment and religious judgment are similar in that neither believes in realities that exist! They both belong “to a level of ignorance at which even the concept of the real, the distinction between the real and the imaginary, is lacking...to this extent moral judgment never is to be taken literally: as such it never contains anything but nonsense.”<sup>114</sup> This is not the end of morality however, because as “semiotics it remains of incalculable value.” The moral law codes people etch into stone and hang above themselves reveal, “to the informed man, at least, the most precious realities of cultures and inner worlds which did not know enough to ‘understand’ themselves.”<sup>115</sup> This is the subtlety of Nietzsche’s revaluation of morality... “[it] is merely sign language, merely symptomatology.” Morality, Nietzsche

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<sup>110</sup> Genealogy I, 1

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, 4

<sup>112</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. *Twilight of The Idols*, translated Walter Kaufmann (Viking Press, New York 1967), *The Improver’s of Mankind*, p.66-70.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid, p.66-70

<sup>114</sup> Ibid, p.66-70

<sup>115</sup> Ibid, p.66-70

teaches us, “is only an *interpretation* of certain phenomena, more precisely a *mis-interpretation*.”<sup>116</sup>

### ‘Improving Mankind’: *Breeding the Moral Animal*

Above all else, Nietzsche claims, morality has meant the ‘improvement’ of man. It is a word that has “two”, Nietzsche avers, “divergent tendencies.” Morality has served to both *tame* the beast of man and to *breed* a certain species of man. These two tendencies have so far been called ‘improvement.’ Morality calls the taming of the animal, man, ‘improvement.’ Nietzsche likens our morality of taming and breeding to the tactics employed by animal trainers. But, Nietzsche asks his audience, are not the animals “weakened, made less harmful, become sickly beasts through the depressive emotions of fear, pain, injury, and hunger?” Is it any different with the taming of the animal, man? Has the priest not ‘improved’ the European man? In the early Middle Ages, the Church was in fact above all a “menagerie, one everywhere hunted down the fairest specimens of the ‘blond beast.’” Thus, the Church ‘improved’ the noble race of the Teutons. And what did this noble blond Teutonic beast look like after he had been tamed and “improved” by the animal trainers working for the Church? Like a caricature of a human being, like an aberration, he had become a “sinner” ...he was in a cage. When the Church’s animal trainers finished, the beast lay there now, “sick, miserable, [and] filled with ill will towards himself.” The Church, Nietzsche says, filled the European animal “full of hatred for the impulses toward life, full of suspicion of all that was still strong and happy.” In physiological terms, in the struggle with the beast,

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid, p.66-70

making it sick *can* be the only means of making it weak. This, Nietzsche claims the Church understood; it corrupted the human being, it weakened him- but it claimed to have ‘improved’ him.

Nietzsche states, the problem he raises “Is not what ought to succeed mankind in the sequence of species (the human being is an end); but what type of human being one ought to breed, ought to will as more valuable, as more worthy of life, as more certain of the future.” He says this “more valuable type” has existed already, but so far only “as a lucky accident, as an exception, never as willed.” This higher type rather than being willed, or breed “has rather been the most feared, he has hitherto been virtually the thing to be feared- and out of fear the reverse type has been willed, bred, achieved: The domestic animal, the herd animal, the sick animal...*the Christian.*”

**“Everything has its day. When man gave all things a sex he thought, not that he was playing, but that he had gained a profound insight:- it was only very late that he confessed to himself what an enormous error this was, and perhaps even now he has not confessed it completely.- In the same way man has ascribed, to all that exists, a connection in morality and laid an ethical significance on the world’s back. One day, this will have as much value, and no more, as the belief in the masculinity or femininity of the sun has today.”<sup>117</sup>**

### A New Translation

“So far,” Nietzsche writes, “when one has spoken of humanity, the idea is fundamental that this is something that separates and distinguishes man from nature.”<sup>118</sup> For Nietzsche, there is no such separation. *Natural* qualities, and those called “properly *human*,” are indivisibly grown together. Nothing is given as real except the affects that

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<sup>117</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. *Daybreak*, translated by R.J Hollingdale (Cambridge Texts in History of Philosophy, Cambridge, 1997), 2.

drive us, going so far as to convince us into thinking *we* are the active agents of our person with such duplicity that we come to believe “we” are freely making unique autonomous choices. As a playground for the affects, *we* cannot *rise* to a higher plane of existence; *we* can only *sink* and resettle into its powerful subterranean depths.

Neither thoughts nor morality are endowments from above. Our thinking and our *valuing* are both expressions and sign languages of more fundamental desires and drives seeking to achieve their own ends. Psychology, according to Nietzsche, is really symptomatology of the economy of the entire organism. Thus, man, even in his highest and most noble capacities of knowledge and morality, is wholly natural. Those of his abilities which are awesome and considered *supra-human* are the very soil out of which alone humanity...can grow.

*We* are, in sum, a sign language of the affects. In the human body, the whole distant and recent past of “all organic becoming regains life and corporeality.”<sup>119</sup> Through the human body flows a tremendous, inaudible river of the will to power. For Nietzsche, “the body is a more astonishing idea than the old ‘soul.’”<sup>120</sup> He writes, “There is no end to one’s admiration for how the human body has become possible; how such a prodigious alliance of living beings, each dependent and subservient and yet in a certain sense also commanding and acting out of its own will, can live, grow, and for a while prevail, as a whole.”<sup>121</sup>

Living is the will to power. Morality and knowledge are only *interpretations* and a *feeling out* of existence. They are themselves means and expressions of the will to

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<sup>118</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. *Human All Too Human*, translated by Marion Faber and Stephen Lehmann. (University of Nebraska Publishing, 1996), 2.

<sup>119</sup> ?

power. Both are prejudices, *beliefs* that determine judgment. We say, “that is,” or “this is not,” “it shall be,” or “it shall not be;” all judgments, all at bottom prejudices, projections and beliefs!<sup>122</sup>

There are no moral phenomena at all, only a moral interpretation of phenomena. Morality is a thing added on, a rider placed on the back of existence. Being and Morality are foisted onto existence, not discovered. There is no “knowledge” at all, only knowable interpretations of phenomena.

Thus ends the translation project. Man’s two quintessential attributes have been re-translated in terms of life. We shall now turn to Nietzsche’s critique of Western morality. We shall begin to uncover a new layer of Nietzsche’s task as that of a physician diagnosing the disease *crippling* Western man. After which discussion, we shall return to the Will to Power and show how Nietzsche believed his ontology could be *incorporated* into our cognition and thus *cure* our disease.

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<sup>101</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. Writings from the Late Notebooks, translated by Kate Sturge. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK. 2003), 36[35].

<sup>121</sup> Ibid, 36[35]

<sup>122</sup> Existence then is not too dissimilar from Nietzsche writings, so much prejudice projected against it!



## CHAPTER 5

### The Rise of Nihilism

#### Our Morality and its *Ill* Health

What is our morality? This is a question that infuriates critics of Nietzsche, because he never explicitly defines *which* morality it is that he is critiquing. In the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche describes his project as a “critique of the morality of compassion,”<sup>123</sup> while in other places, he calls his project a “critique of Christian morality.”<sup>124</sup> Neither of these curt descriptions seems to suffice what will be a lengthy, wordy, polemical rant that occupies the greatest percentage of his published philosophy.

Christianity has meant and continues to mean, widely different things to many different people. In two thousand years of Christian tradition, there have been numerous and varying perspectives and interpretations within the faith itself. Jesuits and Mormons hardly seem to be reconciled under the same theological rubric, however both denominations consider themselves to be staunchly *Christian*. Limiting the range of perspective of Christianity seems to many, a categorical mistake and even sounds anti-Nietzschean in methodology.

Although un-satisfying, we must be content in Nietzsche’s broad assessment of *our* morality if we are to continue in our project. We must simply be content with Nietzsche’s dismissive attitude in having to first qualify his objections. We must content ourselves with Nietzsche’s own broad summation of which Western morality he found

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<sup>123</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. *On The Genealogy of Morals*, translated by Walter Kaufmann. (Vintage Books, New York, 1967.), preface 5-6.

<sup>124</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, translated by Kate Sturge. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK. 2003), 2[127].

objectionable, “The morality dominant in our time and culture.”<sup>125</sup> Through the sheer number of times he refers to this ambiguous dominant Western morality as “Christian/Platonic,” we can more than approximate his vision of our moral system.

Nietzsche is leveling a critique against certain modes of human thinking and valuing. He does not understand his task to be a continuation of Luther, and he is not interested in reforming the Church. Thus, he does not feel compelled to lay out which Christian doctrines he finds problematic. He is disgusted with a certain way of assessing, valuing and judging life in transcendent categories... the mode of expression that he thought lay at the heart of Christianity.

Religion and morality do not necessarily form one topic in Nietzsche’s writings. In many instances, he seems to treat the two as one. I would suggest, however, that those instances appear in the published texts and may only represent an easy lexicon for Nietzschean neophytes to begin grasping his philosophy. In the unpublished works we find statements such as, “in itself, a religion has nothing to do with morality.”<sup>126</sup> The essence of religion, for Nietzsche, is transcendence and the essence of morality is rules of increased social strength. The West has married the two such that an individual’s transcendence is dependent upon his participation in our morality. This union is for Nietzsche not necessary. The marriage of religion to morality is one which Nietzsche is secure in using, since his critique and re-interpretation of man concentrates exclusively on the West the major religions of which, Christianity and Islam are both “essentially

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<sup>125</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. On The Genealogy of Morals, translated by Walter Kaufmann. (Vintage Books, New York, 1967.), III 2.

<sup>126</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. Writings from the Late Notebooks, translated by Kate Sturge. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 2003), 2[97].

moral religions.”<sup>127</sup> Nietzsche assesses them as prescribing “how we ought to live and gain a hearing for their demands with [eternal] rewards and punishments.”<sup>128</sup>

### Decadent Transcendence

For Nietzsche the Christian/Platonic morality is an anemia construed as an ideal. As he states “Its contempt of the body parades its hatred of the physical around under the resplendent banner of *salvation of the soul*,” which, as Nietzsche understands it, is really the destruction of the physical. For Nietzsche, Christianity and its Platonic transcendent moral valuation system, turns its adherents against themselves. In Nietzsche’s language, it is *decadent*.

“Decadence” was Nietzsche’s term to describe moralities that are in conflict with and resist the natural instincts. Selflessness, for example, which Nietzsche claims has precisely been called morality thus far is in some sense an ego *turned against* itself. Nietzsche’s fears about our value system stem largely, from a physiological critique. When any part of an organism fails to enforce, with complete assurance, its own self-preservation, it begins to degenerate, to attrition and eventually to die off. If those are the ideals esteemed in our value system then is it not also an attritioning, a wearing away, and a slow death?

Nietzsche further condemns our morality for basing its demands and grounding its justification in unreal categories. He writes, “In Christianity, neither morality nor

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<sup>127</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. Writings from the Late Notebooks, translated by Kate Sturge. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK. 2003), 2[197].

<sup>128</sup> Ibid, 2[197].

religion has even a single point of contact with reality.”<sup>129</sup> Nothing but imaginary causes: God, soul, ego, spirit, and free will, all nothing but imaginary effects (“sin,” “redemption,” “grace,” “punishment,” “forgiveness of sins”).”<sup>130</sup> Within the Christian/Platonic world-view, the individual is at no time taught how to interact with the forces of the real world and thus unable to confront them in one’s own life.

The modern moral mind is, for Nietzsche, an admixture of decadent Christian ethics and Platonic transcendentalism and it is under these modes of thought that the Western soul has been trained and bred. Eventually, Nietzsche claims, they created an animal that could only conceive of its worth by using value standards that lie outside of this world, in some nether region or long believed in and hoped for *beyond*. As a consequence of training the instincts in such a way, we precluded ourselves from the possibility of valuing and esteeming in terms other than transcendent ones: The good,” “the true,” and “the beautiful,” in themselves, all assumed to be eternal realities.

The danger, as Nietzsche understood it, is that through valuing in transcendent terms and categories, a *reflexive negative value judgment* is made back against *this* world (the one in which we live) our world of *becoming*. By placing meaning outside of reality, we usurped this world, our world, the world in which we are born, live, act and die, of meaning (not only the *world* but *ourselves* too!). It has followed that we have meaning, only as reflections of eternal entities. What if these entities do not exist? What then is to be said of our value? *Does it not exist?*

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<sup>129</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. The Anti-Christ, translated by R.J. Hollingdale (Penguin Books, New York, 1990), 15.

### Physiological Critique

For Nietzsche, the most deadly poison and derision that Christianity pours onto the innocence of existence is its insistence upon interpreting *suffering* to mean *punishment*. Suffering, Nietzsche argues, according to the Christian scheme, entered the world as a form of retaliation against Adam and Eve's sin. Nietzsche writes, "Only in Christendom did everything become punishment, well-deserved punishment: it also makes the sufferer's imagination suffer, so that with every misfortune he feels himself morally reprehensible and cast out."<sup>131</sup>

It should be clear why Nietzsche thinks this world-view to be so psychologically debilitating. Existence is the will to power, an accumulation and overcoming of forces...creation *and* destruction. Christianity has vilified half of existence! Moreover, it teaches its adherents that they are responsible for the suffering that exists in the world, as heirs to the original sinners and the present members of the sinful fraternity of man. Further, Christianity compels individuals not only to see existence as suffering and imbued with evil, it teaches believers to fear making *errors*, since the repercussions will be met with fiery eternal after effects. The only hope a *sinner* has is that, like the slave, hope that God will be merciful and look past the punishment he or she truly deserves. And what are our crimes again? Living! Procreating! Seeking knowledge! In a word...*Existing*!

God's mercy is itself, never clearly understood. On the one hand, God is supposed to be a loving father but at the same time vengeful ruler. God is seemingly forced to retaliate for sins, which Nietzsche claims, are sins against his *honor*. Nietzsche

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid, 15

claims this is evident in the doctrine of atonement which, for Nietzsche, implies that God could only be appeased if a divine human being were brutally tortured and killed.

It is Christianity's malevolent portrayal of nature about which Nietzsche is most vitriolic, particularly human nature. Christianity, Nietzsche says, interprets the natural human appetites as *dangerous temptations*. The body, in Christianity, is seen as a source for sin that must be controlled or subdued, even to the point of harming it. To this end, Nietzsche claims that fasting, abstinence and self-flagellation were Christian methods for slow suicide. The goal of Christian virtue, accordingly, was the destruction of the body and a diminishment of the active and powerful drives of the human organism. Nietzsche asks us to consider the lengths to which Christianity has gone to annihilate and excoriate the instincts and drives in its followers. He writes, "The most famous formula for this is to be found in the New Testament, in the Sermon on the Mount, where, incidentally, things are by no means looked at from a height. There, it is said, for example, with particular reference to sexuality, 'If thy eye offend thee, pluck it out.' Fortunately, no Christian acts in accordance with this precept."<sup>132</sup>

The Christian world-view teaches not only hatred of the body but also turns its adherents against their own psychological makeup. It is a derision of existence and the human. Consider the list of Christianity's most deadly sins: pride, envy, greed, gluttony, sloth, lust and anger...the seven *deadly* sins! All expressions of the natural instincts: Life! Life itself represents the greatest objection for Christianity! How could anything

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<sup>131</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. *Daybreak*, translated by R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997), 78.

<sup>132</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Twilight of the Idols and The Anti-Christ*, translated by R.J. Hollingdale (Penguin Books, New York, 1990), book IV.

natural be *immoral*? Are we not permitted, then, to say that Christianity is hostile to life? Even *opposed* to life?

But there is a deeper paradox that exists at the bottom of the Christian world-view: It is impossible to destroy the instincts and the passions without destroying the individual. Christianity, then, sets its adherents up for failure, since individuals could never completely subdue their own instincts without dying. The followers of Christianity are, therefore, according to Christianity, always failures in as much as they remain alive. Christianity, according to Nietzsche, encourages self-hatred. It vilifies the drives, urges and instincts by which life itself is possible and not only life but also the instincts that make the human strong, physically and mentally. It is, for those familiar with Nietzsche, an easy dichotomy to express: “*Dionysos versus the Crucified.*”

Under the Christian world-view, the individual is in a perpetual war against the instincts. They feel themselves to be failures, in so far as the Christian is never able too fully subdue the passions. Christianity is a zero-sum game. There could be no advances, religiously, until after death and the destruction of the body. In as much as Christianity promulgates a war between the spirit and the flesh, it is only further evidence of the degree to which Christianity promotes inner strife and delivers unattainable commands to its adherents. According to Nietzsche, anyone who takes seriously the Christian conception of the body is bound to develop a sick and unhealthy vision of themselves. In fact, according to Nietzsche, Christianity, as an institution, depends on this paradox between the natural drives and the impossibility of meeting Christian demands.

Once an adherent to the Christian world-view has acquiesced to the life-denying demands made upon them, they at once seek an antidote to avoid damnation for their

miserable plight. There, the Church stands ready to solve the problem it has itself created and cure the disease it has spread. The Church, so Nietzsche thought, makes sick, in order to offer a cure.

Since thoughts are the symbols and signs of the relation of the drives to one another, thoughts then can be interpreted to understand the health of the drives. Thoughts betray the health of an organism. Sick thoughts and sick hopes equals sick and dying drives; sick and dying organisms. Christianity is a great infirmary. It makes sick, is sick and preaches a morality of caring for the sick. That, Nietzsche teaches, is the philosophy of the great infirmary of Christianity.

However, Christianity is not completely a will to death. Since, for Nietzsche, the world is the will to power, and nothing besides, then the impulse to vitality will always shine forth, even if in the most degraded possible forms. At the end of the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche confesses that, even in the emaciated image of the saint, there is still expressed a will to power, though sick, dying and unhealthy there still speaks out, from the skeleton of the saint, life's drive for power.

### Reifying Error: *Truth Uncovered*

The European spirit has not been *completely* debased during its sentence under the Christian/Platonic world-view. Though Nietzsche does rail against Christianity and the sick and dying demands it places upon its adherents, he also admires it for, among many reasons, having elevated the virtue of honesty to "Godly heights." With this reification of honesty and the Christian commitment to truth, Christianity inadvertently paved the way



for science and eventually for its own destruction. Nietzsche writes, “Christianity, too, has made a great contribution to the enlightenment, and taught moral skepticism very trenchantly and effectively, accusing and embittering men, yet with untiring patience and subtlety; it destroyed the faith in his “virtues” in every single individual... In the end, however, we have applied this same skepticism also to all religious states and processes.”<sup>133</sup>

Nietzsche understood science to be the refined heir of the Christian/Platonic legacy; in as much as it still assumes the absolute value of truth. The scientific project began, as an extension of the priest, that is, one who seeks to know God (understood as absolute truth) better. They are both a pursuit of the truth, based on the conviction that “the truth will set you free.”

Nietzsche claims it was the consistent Christian demand for truth at any cost that brought down the Christian ontological claims. The structures of the Christian worldview eventually collapsed under the weight of their own dictums. Nietzsche writes, “You see what it was that really triumphed over the Christian god: Christian morality itself, the concept of truthfulness that was understood ever more rigorously...the Christian conscience, translated and sublimated into a scientific conscience, into intellectual cleanliness at any price.”<sup>134</sup>

Science killed God. In doing so, it called into question the very foundation of our Western morality...a morality based not only on the existence of *a* God... but the existence of a *specific* God, whose character we hope others are reflecting. The scientific project began as an extension of the priest and originally thought itself to be in search for

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<sup>133</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. The Gay Science, translated by Josefine Nauckhoff. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001), 122.

the truths about God. Nietzsche worried what will happen when this same endeavor uncovers his total absence? Nietzsche thinks that the prospect of a loss of meaning will create, in men, a sense of vertigo, a helpless spinning out of control. Nietzsche thought that the death of God and the absence of a moral ground would cause a catastrophic eruption among men.

Yet, so far, the news of God's death seems to be too far off. Only a few seem to hear it. Who is aware of this disaster? Modern man seems still, to be unaware of the ramifications of his scientific inquiries. He goes on measuring and weighing in the same ways he always has, with his weights under measured, ignoring the black flag on the horizon of his culture. He *blinks*.

### Nihilism: The Truth of Truth

Nietzsche called our modern morality, “the morality of *Why?*.” *Why?* is still not free from what he felt was the unhealthy life-negating tradition of Christian/Platonic thinking. Our modern morality of asking, “*Why?*,” is placing existence on a scale and finding that it doesn’t measure up. A morality of *Why?*, assumes that Existence, herself, should come prepared with witnesses and affidavits to her trial, put on by man. *Why?*, is the axis of a wheel, turned by all the spokes of human cognitive *error*. As we have seen, *Why?*, is an assumption created in part, by projecting a belief in the rules of grammar into existence. Thus, forcing our cognition to see, into everywhere and everything, subjects and predicates. *Why?*, is a forced assumption made by the metaphysics of grammar.

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid, 357

As we have also seen, *Why?*, is an assumption, drawn from poor, limited and perspective-bound inferences about the relations between causes in existence. *Why?*, in its search for efficient causation, posits, in the case of the *human*, a safely housed ego as the responsible agent for our actions and, in the case of *Existence*, a safely housed God manipulating causal relations, seemingly at his whim.

Nietzsche thought that, until now, asking the question of, “*Why?*,” has not seemed to present a problem to anyone, least of all philosophers. Nietzsche thought that, here at the beginning of philosophy itself, there was a problem. He wondered how those who had professed to doubt everything had here, at the beginning, failed to find philosophy’s first assumption: Whether the question of, “*Why?*,” should even be asked. Maybe, as Nietzsche suggests, throughout *Beyond Good and Evil*, “truth” is a woman. Maybe, she is a woman, unwilling to share her secrets. Perhaps, her beauty is contained in our distance. Perhaps, truth is a woman, and she only loves a warrior and all philosophers, so far, perhaps simply have been inept suitors! *But who has yet been willing to wager such dangerous perhaps?*

Nihilism, is the direct result of a feeling of a *justified*, “*Why?*” leveled against existence, finding no answer and coming up short. *Why?*, understood as the search for truth, the quest for knowledge and the will to know, finds itself stranded at the end of its long race, unvictorious and lacking. *Why?* finds no answer, no goal, no purpose. This dark sun Nietzsche saw setting on man. When news of this reached the ears of all men, he thought a cry would be let out yet unheard on earth. This, is nihilism: When the creative drive and will that has sustained (and is) the human spirit finds no solace, no purpose and no redemption for all of its past and future creative efforts.

A loss of belief in the *truth of truth* is on the way. Nietzsche feared a coming global human awareness, that life is a phenomenon that cannot be explained, and that existence and humanity itself lacks meaning. This coming global recognition, Nietzsche terms, “*nihilism*.” He seems to have believed that the death of God, the absence of a moral ground and the inability to find an answer to “*Why?*,” would cause a catastrophic eruption among men.

### Trap of the Modern Spirit

Our modern Western souls are left in a vacuum, where once believed in transcendent values and ideals lived. Modern man is left in a spiritual limbo. Either we live in a state of denial concerning the untenability of hitherto believed in realities and deny the death of God, or we are forced to somehow isolate that knowledge forcibly *not incorporating* it into our lives.

Worse still, perhaps, we lose all hope of meaning, because the ways in which we previously understood meaning have been undermined. We no longer know how to *find* meaning. We have assumed, for so long, that meaning is exterior, outside, or beyond, and to *have* meaning implies that one has *found* meaning, either through discovery or revelation. Nietzsche feared that, since the destruction of the Christian/Platonic world-view, we can neither expect to discover meaning through revelation, nor do we know how to create it for ourselves. To use apt Nietzschean phrasing: We have forgotten how to exercise our *theogonic prowess*.

### Resentment: Ever Increasing Depths of Nihilism

It is Nietzsche's argument that Christianity, or any religion, morality, world-view, or philosophy that posits another, *more real*, absolute or ultimate entity, substratum or super-stratum, to serve as the foundation, essence, container of existence is in point of fact nihilistic. Any such perspective is a turning away and denial of life, of the living, of creation, of destruction. It is a hatred of existence that reads existence like a crime for which we are being perpetually punished with our sufferings. Is existence a punishment? Is living a *life-sentence*?

For Nietzsche, any *seeking other* is a form of nihilism, a weariness of life and of the living. So much so, that it could almost serve as a gauge to determine the health and strength of an individual's spirit. Any quest for an eternal is a no-saying, a turning away from existence as it is. It is a saying no to life. It is resentment. So presumably, the more an individual professes a belief in and the goodness of another reality is in fact, a profession of *hate*, not *faith*. God, for Nietzsche, is the most caricatured form of resentment. There are many forms of resentment, however, that do not require the introduction of the word, God. Any anger at the motions of *becoming* is resentment. All *hatred of sickness* and the whole morality of *pain avoidance* is all a no-saying, a turning away from life and is the *essence of nihilism*.

For Nietzsche, there were two types of theories about ultimate reality: nihilism and absolutism. His late notebooks show Nietzsche compiling evidence, claiming all theories about ultimate reality contain either one or the other of these two positions. They either deny the living altogether or they posit some ultimate entity, substratum or superstratum that serves as the essence, foundation, or reason for existence. Although

these worldviews outwardly appear to be *affirming* existence, they are actually negating our world of becoming in favor of some eternal ultimate reality. They are the preachers of the afterworld, about whom Zarathustra warns his disciples. They are slanderers and despisers of the earth. They induce their adherents to view the world of existence as less ultimate, less worthy of actual being and turn our world of becoming into a world of imperfection. Thus, any membership into these churches requires ascetic practice in order to escape from reality and put the messy world of existence beneath oneself.

Given the vehemence with which Nietzsche criticizes the morality, values and the inherited Western ethical system, many readers quickly assess Nietzsche, not only to be a nihilist himself, but to be the forerunner and leading spokesman for the destruction of all that we hold dear. It is certainly true that Nietzsche admonishes his disciples in the voice of Zarathustra to *push what is falling*. However, to read Nietzsche so restrictively is to gravely mistake his overall *task* and to categorically misunderstand his dire need to create an affirmationist philosophy, which will replace the current morality of sickness. Nietzsche's deconstructionist tendencies are only in an effort to prepare a room for a *new morality* in the mansion of the future.

### Becoming Free

Is simply rejecting the Christian-Platonic god sufficient to restore man to spiritual health? Is atheism free? No. Because, *it* still says, "no." Because atheism is dependent upon established institutions of thought, in order to even possess value for itself. Atheism is not a creative act of self-expression; rather it is simply the negation of one

specific moral prejudice that has existed. As such it a “slavish” worldview. Atheism, is a hangover from having, for centuries, indulged in too many *godly spirits*.<sup>135</sup> There is still so much resignation and abnegation in it atheistic hearts. If atheists are still not free, then who is free? Who is rid of the disease of our culture and its other worldly tendencies?

How do we become free from God and his nihilistic transcendence? Can science free us? Science is what man *thinks* has freed him from the shackles of religious tradition and superstition, but science as we have just seen, is paradoxically the refined heir of the Christian/Platonic legacy since it too believes in truths absolute goodness and assumes its value to be self evident.

The slow and subtle trickling of God’s poisonous transcendent prejudice seeps into the dark caverns of our minds, where it is still able to rule and govern the thoughts of even those who think themselves most free. God’s transcending categories linger on, in what Nietzsche termed the “shadows of God.”<sup>136</sup> He writes, “After the Buddha was dead, they still showed his shadow in a cave for centuries.”<sup>137</sup> We too, Nietzsche warned, living in the wake of God’s death, must be excruciatingly inexorable here. We too, must defeat the shadows of God cloaked in his modern ephod.

The modern *scientific* counterpart, to belief in God, is the belief in the universe as an organism. The ascription of meaning and purpose to the world, in light of what appears to our senses to be very good evidence, seems to speak overwhelmingly to us of an unfolding plan and necessity of our existence. This for, Nietzsche is an all too inviting

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<sup>135</sup> I am indebted to Sonam Kachru, for first coining the phrase, “hangover from God.” With this and countless other instances, I owe my friend, and teacher, a grave debt. Forgive me if saturation with your wisdom does not show its required scholastic debt. Having forgotten the moment of acquired knowledge, we both count as fortuitous. “Thank you,” for the many jewels you sowed freely in my garden.

<sup>136</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Gay Science*, translated by Josefine Nauckhoff. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001), 277.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid, 2

shadow of God. “We didn’t go to all the trouble of liberating ourselves from God just to crawl back in the womb of the universe.”<sup>138</sup> The death of God means coming to terms with the fact there is *no meta-narrative*, *no “telos”* save the ones our crafty cognitions mold together and project as evidence of external order and internal perceiver.

### A Great Health

Nietzsche advocates that we look for a great health that affirms the earth and eschews the transcendent. As such we must be careful inspectors of ourselves and of our thoughts. We must be sure to *wash the bowl* out of which we eat our thoughts, lest even the new hopes be infected with residue from our one time reliance on God and the shadows of his attendant morality.

Nietzsche, forever the optimist, hoped that the delineation of nihilism could be a prerequisite for transcending it. However, if the metaphysical is recognized as illusory and if our world is firmly established as the only world, then a new mode of transcendence will be necessary, a *non-metaphysical* mode to transcend the desolation in which the modern spirit finds itself trapped and alone. How *would* such a mode of transcendence be possible when the words themselves are contradictory?

This is Nietzsche’s ultimate task. This was Nietzsche’s most burning question: What would really bring meaning back to the Earth? How can we free spirits *be* certain that we have completely *overcome* nihilism, not only the cultural malaise we uncover in the history of our society, but the very depths and roots of it in ourselves? How can the

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gravity and weight eternity once conferred on the actions of men as he conjured up images of God and his angels analyzing every human action, after his death ever again be tied to the moment? *Entrée Zarathustra*.

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<sup>138</sup>Friedrich Nietzsche. The Gay Science , translated by Josefine Nauckhoff. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001), 109.

## CHAPTER 6

### Zarathustra

#### The Crisis of Zarathustra

Nietzsche relates to us the history of the text of *Zarathustra*, in his autobiography, *Ecce Homo*. There, he tells us, that the first glimpses of Zarathustra, as a character, began to *overtake* him in the late summer of 1882. By that point in Nietzsche's career, he is almost ten years past his first publication, *The Birth of Tragedy* (which met a resoundingly unwelcome response from the Academy). He has also completed his entire series of books for the *Human, All Too Human* project and completed the first four parts of the *Gay Science*. The discoveries made by Nietzsche during this first phase of his career we have been *loosely* paralleling in outline thus far in this paper.

The works prior to 1882 can be broadly categorized as deconstructive, since the explicit aim of all of these works was to knock man off of his "holy" pedestal and ground his deified attributes in the soil of the organic...to return Adam to the *adama*. Nietzsche sums up his project to this point in his career at the end of the third book of the *Gay Science* (which Nietzsche had originally intended to conclude his *Human, All Too Human* series). There we find in classic Nietzschean style a laconic and concise general summation of his *re-translation* project to that point. He tells us that *man has been reared* by four distinct errors: "First he never saw himself other than imperfectly, second he attributed to himself imaginary qualities, third he felt himself in a false order of rank with animals and nature, fourth he continually invented new tables of laws of values and for a time took each of them to be eternal and unconditional."<sup>139</sup> But (and this is a

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<sup>139</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich. The Gay Science, translated by Josefine Nauckhoff. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001), 115.

dangerous “but”) if “one deducts the effect of the errors, one also deduct[s] away humanity, humanness and human dignity.”<sup>140</sup>

This passage marks a distinct turning point in Nietzsche’s life, career and philosophy. Nietzsche’s *historosophy* project had uncovered the glass bottom of faith on which man has constructed his personal and cultural identity. Moreover, Nietzsche thinks he has uncovered the *truth* behind the virtues that sustain Western culture as pessimistic and nihilistic. Nietzsche’s detour through our history had uncovered a disease and a horror of paradox: Can man still be a great animal once his reliance and reification of *knowledge* reveals to him all his *truths* are beliefs?

Nietzsche as *historian* and *philosopher* uncovered the tendentious roots of Western morality, and as *prophet* trembled at his vision for the future. A future he feared that would be devoid of meaning, once Western man collectively uncovers the nihilistic, pessimistic, and unfounded truths created by our genius slavish epistemological and moral ancestors. Nietzsche, as historian, philosopher, prophet, and now as *physician*, believed that he must find a cure for this disease. Nihilism is the collective term for the virus infecting and deteriorating the spirit of the Western animal, man. Nietzsche believed that he must find a cure.

The crisis Nietzsche uncovered is simple. For him, the will to power is living. So, anything that is alive is, by its very nature is an expression of power. Thus, that which is not gaining ascendancy in power is attritioning in strength. Nietzsche’s survey of Western moral history had shown him that Western man’s will was no longer towards living. The virtues that have been deified by Western morality are, Nietzsche found, in

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<sup>140</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Gay Science*, translated by Josefine Nauckhoff. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001), 115.

diametrical opposition to the will to life and the will to power. So it was that he read the scriptures of Western morality like a death sentence and a cage for our once strong organism. Nietzsche lays the blame for this will away from life on the doorsteps of the Church and nails his indictment to the door of the Vatican...the visible icon for the taming of Western man.

But Nietzsche, at this point in his career, no longer wanted to be a naysayer. He tells us, "I do not want to wage war against ugliness. I do not want to accuse; I do not even want to accuse the accusers."<sup>141</sup> Nietzsche, from the spring of 1881 to the summer of 1883, tried to make a fundamental switch and transition in his own life and career. A transition which, as the remainder of this thesis shows, was one he thought necessary for all humans seeking freedom and the highest form of living to make.

We read in the fourth book of the *Gay Science*, written in the spring of 1882, Nietzsche's "formula" for this transition. He writes, "I want to learn more and more how to see what is necessary in things as what is beautiful in things- thus I will be one of those who make things beautiful. *Amor fati*: let that be my love from now on!"<sup>142</sup> So now Nietzsche, as philosopher, doctor and now *affirmationist*, needed to find a way to artistically embody his transformationist spirit.

Nietzsche reached back into *hallowed antiquity* and pulled from the dusty shelves of ancient Persian religion, the figure of Zarathustra. Zarathustra, as an historical figure, lived between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries b.c.e. in Persia. Zoroastrianism, the religion founded on the teachings of the historical Zarathustra (Zoroaster) reached its climax in Babylon around the time of the Jewish Exile. The essence of Zoroastrianism is a

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid, 276

<sup>142</sup> Ibid, 276

perpetual conflict and *agon* between two opposing forces at work in the universe. The historical Zarathustra proclaimed that there was an all good god, *Ahura Mazada* and an all evil god, *Ahura Mainyu*, who were in constant conflict and opposition with one another. Why did Nietzsche choose the figure of Zarathustra to embody what would become his new teaching? Zarathustra, Nietzsche tells us, was the first person in history to read into existence ‘good’ and ‘evil’. Zarathustra was the first to read into everywhere and into everything, his own ‘good’ and his own ‘evil’ and in so doing offered humanity the first “translation of morality into the realm of metaphysics, as force, as cause, as end-in-itself.”<sup>143</sup> Thus Nietzsche believed it was Zarathustra who “created this most fateful of errors, morality.”<sup>144</sup>

Zarathustra embodies the strength of the will and of the human spirit. Zarathustra, the character, the text, and the historical figure were Nietzsche’s fiery icons, blazing in the darkness among the destruction and extinguishment of the Western light. The Church had set up the figure of Christ as its icon for the abnegation of the will and willingness to suffer under the life-sentence of existence. Nietzsche gives birth to Zarathustra on the far bank of the Jordan, looking back *down* on the “holy” city. Zarathustra is the presiding satyr at a Dionysian festival held in honor of the death of that noble crucified Nazarene. The Church elevates the crucified into eternity with its praise, while Zarathustra buries him by his own hands.

Zarathustra has three basic teachings. One, the will is a liberator releasing individuals from chains nihilism and holy pessimism. Two, no one knows what is “good” or “evil” unless he or she is the creator. Three, to will the creation of a super

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<sup>143</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Ecce Homo*, translated by Walter Kaufmann. (Vintage Books, New York, 1967), section on *Zarathustra*.

human is the only way to redeem the present and the past and turn the *fragments and riddles* of the past into purpose and meaning, thereby restoring meaning to the earth free from metaphysical transcendence and other worldly decadence.

### The Way of the Creators of “Good” and “Evil”

Zarathustra tells us that when he first visited men, he “found them sitting upon an old self-conceit” each smug in the confidence of having “long since known what was good and evil for man.”<sup>145</sup> Zarathustra was amazed that “all talk of virtue seemed to them an ancient wearied affair” and only spoke of ‘good’ and ‘evil’ before retiring in order to procure a more sound sleep. Zarathustra tells us he came to these contented sleepers and disturbed their sound somnolence through his teaching: “Nobody yet knows what is good and evil- unless it be the creator!”

Zarathustra, working in his rhetorical didactic style asks his audience “Do you call yourself free?” Like Nietzsche’s dismissal of atheism as an act of resentment, not creativity, Zarathustra similarly commands: “I want to hear your ruling idea, not that you have escaped from a yoke.” Free from what? Is for both Zarathustra and Nietzsche a limited and resentful question in its essence. One should focus upon creating a new ideal rather than defining oneself as a slave does, only ascribing himself value and goodness in so far as he *lacks* a quality of his master. Zarathustra says it much more poetically, “your eye should clearly tell me: free *for* what?”<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid, section on *Zarathustra*

<sup>145</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. Thus Spoke Zarathustra translated by R.J. Hollingdale. (Penguin Publishing, New York, 1969.), p.88-91.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid, p.88-91.

As we have seen any worldview which is restricted to defining itself only in relation to its opposite is a slave and full of hatred and resentment. It is not a creative act of self-expression. The truly free are only those who are able to “furnish [themselves] with [their] own good and evil and hang up [their] own will above [themselves] as a law.” This is Zarathustra’s imperative: “Can you be judge of yourself and avenger of your law?”<sup>147</sup> If not Zarathustra taught we should limit ourselves only to “the purification of our opinions,” but if so “to the creation of our own new tables of values.”<sup>148</sup>

Zarathustra like Nietzsche teaches that, “all the names of good and evil are images: they do not speak out, they only hint.” As we have already seen Nietzsche does not take a moral rule or requirement to be reflective of a moral order, rather it is list of rules hit upon by a people to help insure continued prosperity of its culture. Reading moral law codes in this way Nietzsche termed symptomatology and Zarathustra says, “He is a fool who seeks knowledge from them.”

“When you are the willers of a single will, and you call this dispeller of need your essential and necessity: that is when your virtue has its origin and beginning. Truly, it is a new good and evil! Truly a new roaring in the depths and the voice of a new fountain!”<sup>149</sup> “May your spirit and virtue serve the meaning of the earth, and may the value of all things be fixed anew by you. To that end you should be fighters! To that end you should be creators!”<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. Thus Spoke Zarathustra translated by R.J. Hollingdale. (Penguin Publishing, New York, 1969.), p.88-91.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid, p.88-91

<sup>149</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. Thus Spoke Zarathustra translated by R.J. Hollingdale. (Penguin Publishing, New York, 1969), p 100-101.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid, 102

Zarathustra teaches, “He who creates a goal for mankind gives the earth its meaning and its future.” Only the creator can endow the qualities ‘good’ and ‘evil’ into the world. And only through the willing of his own “private vision and goal, does he restore health to his own will, he redeems the entirety of the past.” Zarathustra, like Nietzsche, accounts degeneration the worst of all possible states for an individual or a culture possess. Thus Zarathustra says he “always suspects degeneration where the bestowing soul is lacking.”<sup>151</sup> It seems to follow that the restoration of health can follow the dispellation of ones own virtue. Only the creator is healthy.

Nietzsche, as we have seen, uncovered in the annals of the human spirit a disease and the absence of goal for mankind now that the truth of truth has been revealed. He writes in his late notebooks, “If there is no goal in the whole history of humanity, then we must put one in.” “Assuming”, as Nietzsche does, “that we have need of a goal and that we’ve come to see through the illusions of goals and purposes and the reason we have need of goals is that we have need of a will – which is the spine of us.” Will is the compensation for lost ‘belief’, i.e., for the idea that there is a divine will, one which has plans for us.”<sup>152</sup> But what shall we will? What shall our goal be?

### *Der Uebermensch*

Zarathustra and Nietzsche believed that the final hurdle to surmount in overcoming nihilism was to will and desire something or someone that would justify all of the past and redeem the future from meaninglessness. Zarathustra admonishes his audience

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<sup>151</sup> Z ?



that rather than wallowing in their nihilistic plight, they become creators and willers and dispellers of a single will, thus returning meaning to themselves and to the Earth.

And what does Zarathustra recommend? Behold, “I teach you the superman.” Man, Zarathustra and Nietzsche teach is something that should be overcome. “Man”, Zarathustra tells us “is a rope, fastened between animal and superman- a rope over an abyss.” An abyss that if traversed raises man out of his present ape-like state and propels him towards overcoming his own all too human nature and the creation of something new. “All creatures hitherto have created something beyond themselves: do you want to be the ebb of this great tide, and return to the animals rather than overcome man? You have made your way from worm to man, and much in you is still worm. Once you were apes, and even now man is more of an ape than any ape. Man is a dangerous going-across, a dangerous wayfaring, a dangerous looking-back. What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not a goal. What can be loved in man is that he is a going-across and a *down-going*.” But how shall man be overcome?

Zarathustra proclaims that “Our way is upward [away] from the species across to the super-species” and when “our mind flies upwards” being integrally connect to its physical birth place, “is an image of our bodies, an image of an advance and elevation.” All the names of the virtues so far yet offered are Zarathustra teaches, “such images of advances and elevations.” And it is in that manner that the “body goes through history, evolving and battling.” And what is the “spirit to the body?” Zarathustra asks, if not ‘the herald, companion, and echo of its battles and victories.’

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<sup>152</sup>Friedrich Nietzsche. Writings from the Late Notebooks, translated by Kate Sturge. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK. 2003), 6 [9].

So what shall be the sign and the banner that we are to proclaim in advance of the new body? The *superman* is of paramount and sole concern- and *not* man. The superman is the meaning of the earth. Let your will say, the superman shall be the meaning of the earth! Zarathustra dreamed that the only way to return meaning to the earth out of the metaphysical and decadent clouds into which it has for so long been read, was to will the creation of an earthly superman or demigod whose very being would justify all of the suffering past and redeem the earth with his own living. The Earth as it turns is without meaning and the dark sun of nihilism is setting on man when he discovers this.

Zarathustra thought that the only way to avoid these disastrous consequences was for humans to collectively will the creation of an earthly being whose existence and having lived justifies all of the ‘suffering’ present and past. Since the earth is without meaning we must provide it. We must insert meaning into the world. But rather than creating for ourselves fantasies which do little more than allay our fears concerning the inevitability of our own destruction, we should individually and collectively will the creation of a higher being. That will alone Zarathustra thought can redeem us from our nihilistic present and transform all our suffering past into purpose and meaning. When man realized this and accepted the truth of Zarathustra’s teaching, Nietzsche referred to as “The great noontide.” When man can stand “at the middle of his course between animal and Superman and celebrates his journey to the evening as his highest hope: for it is the journey to a new morning. Then man going under, will bless himself; for he will be going over to the Superman; and the sun of his knowledge will stand at noontide.”

Zarathustra's formula for the extinguishment of nihilism: "All gods are dead: now we want the Superman to live' – let this be our last will one day at the great noontide!"<sup>153</sup> And he warns, "Watch and listen, you solitaires! *From the future* comes a wind with a stealthy flapping of wings; and good tidings to delicate ears. Truly the earth shall yet become a house of healing! And already a new odor floats about it, an odor that brings health- *a New Hope!*"<sup>154</sup>

### And Thus Slept Zarathustra

And thus Zarathustra lay down content with his wisdom and full of satisfaction and hope of a redemptive future. So it was with stuffed belly and soul that Zarathustra fell blissfully asleep; only to be awoken in his dream to the futility of his own teachings. and the impotence, resentment and no saying saturating every philosophy thus far. To his horror Zarathustra realizes that far from having delivered a cure for nihilism, his superman as he is so far described is also bound by resentment...resentment to Time. Zarathustra's nightmare will reveal to him that the *Will* alone cannot be the liberator and antidote to nihilism, if the will is itself still not free!

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<sup>153</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. Thus Spoke Zarathustra translated by R.J. Hollingdale. (Penguin Publishing, New York, 1969), p.104.

## CHAPTER 7

### The Eternal Return

#### A Dark Prophecy

Nietzsche hid the solution to the problem of nihilism and the antidote to Christian/Platonic pessimism in the middle of his masterpiece, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

Towards the end of the second chapter in *Zarathustra*, a soothsayer delivers, for Zarathustra, a dark and gloomy prophecy concerning the future of mankind:

“-And I saw a great sadness come over mankind. The best grew weary of their works. A teaching went forth, a belief ran beside it; everything is empty, everything is one, everything is past! And from every hill it resounded: everything is empty, everything is one, everything is past! We have harvested, it is true, but why did all our fruits turn rotten and brown? What fell from the wicked moon last night? All our work has been in vain, our wine has become poison, an evil eye has scorched our fields and our hearts. We have all become dry; and if fire fell upon us, we should scatter like ashes-yes, we have made weary fire itself. All our wells have dried up. Even the sea has receded. The earth wants to break open, but the depths will not devour us! Alas, where is there still a sea in which one could drown: thus our lament resounds-across shallow swamps. Truly, we have grown too weary, even to die; now we are still awake, and we live on-in sepulchres!”<sup>155</sup>

The prophecy shocks Zarathustra, who has, until now, been extremely confident in his bearing and in his zeal for his teachings. But this prophecy transforms Zarathustra into a grieving and despair stricken teacher, mourning for the future of his wisdom. This prophecy is Nietzsche’s vision for a despairing future, man is about to face.

The prophet, who is obviously Nietzsche, sees a future coming, which is devoid of values or the desire to create values. He sees the future of mankind suffering from the paradoxical drives of our last two millennia that have undermined all of our values. He fears a despairing teaching is about to descend upon all mankind that teaches “all is empty, all is the same, all has been, therefore take no care for what tomorrow will bring, all action is futile.” This teaching and bleak future Nietzsche experienced as an immense

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid, 102-103

<sup>155</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* translated by R.J. Hollingdale. (Penguin Publishing, New York, 1969), p.155-156,

sadness that will soon descend upon humanity. Nietzsche, in his office of prophecy, perched in the crow's nest high above the ship of the human spirit, spotted a black sunset and a *long twilight* into which the ship of the human spirit is about to sail. Nietzsche, as Zarathustra's prophet, begins to understand what nihilism will mean for the coming history of mankind.

### Zarathustra's Nightmare

After listening to the nihilistic prophecy, Zarathustra has a nightmare. In his nightmare Zarathustra sees man to be imprisoned by what is itself imprisoned, "a coffin within the casket." Zarathustra sees the past in glass coffins out of which peer relentless and unwillable the lifeless sigh of "it was." What gazes lifelessly out at him from glass coffins is the whole of the past, all that has passed out of life into "dusty death, and then is heard no more,"<sup>156</sup> visible but inaccessible, as if in a museum under glass.

Zarathustra's account of his nightmare is divided into two parts: the first describes the situation of the dreamer. The second the event that led to his awakening. The dreamer is a life-renouncing night watchman, perched beside a gate, in the lonely mountain castle of death. Accompanied by darkness, loneliness, and silence, he watches over the glass coffins of death out of which gaze all that has ever lived. We are also told the watchman has in his possession "the rustiest of all keys for the creakiest of all gates."<sup>157</sup> The lonely night watchman then hears three knocks on the gate. He is, however, unable to open the gate, because this time his keys will not work. Instead, a

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<sup>156</sup> Shakespeare, Macbeth, Act IV, Scene 5, line 26.

tremendous wind blows open the gate and throws forth a black coffin. Zarathustra cries in horror as the contents of the coffin come peeling out, “in the roaring and whistling, the coffin burst asunder and vomited forth a thousand peels of laughter. It laughed and mocked and roared.”<sup>158</sup> Dreadfully and terrified, the dreamer sat up releasing an audible terror that at last awakened him from horror.

Despondent and seeking an interpretation, Zarathustra turns to his disciples. Zarathustra would seemingly be the dreamer, since he uses “I” throughout, but his disciples assume that the *dreamer*, who cries out in terror, symbolizes *not* Zarathustra but his *enemies*. They see Zarathustra, as the wind that blows open the locked gate, freeing those imprisoned inside. Further, the disciple contends that Zarathustra is the black coffin itself with “its grimaces and laughters.”<sup>159</sup> The reader is not given Zarathustra opinion of this interpretation, since he does not verbally acknowledge it. The text only notes that he looked at his beloved disciple and “shook his head.”<sup>160</sup> Nietzsche fell asleep and awakened in Zarathustra’s nightmare only to realize that, although he has proclaimed freedom and *awakening*, he is himself neither free nor awake.

To the attentive reader and worthy audience of Nietzsche, Zarathustra’s nightmare awakens *us* into understanding both Nietzsche and Zarathustra. I will try to outline the following four pillars that support Zarathustra and Nietzsche’s complete vision: One, willing any sort of hopeful future is not redemptive, since any future to is still fated to become past. Two, the fundamental condition of the will’s imprisonment by time.

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<sup>157</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. Thus Spoke Zarathustra translated by R.J. Hollingdale. (Penguin Publishing, New York, 1969), p.156.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid, p.157

<sup>159</sup> Ibid, p.157

<sup>160</sup> Although Zarathustra claims that his disciples’ interpretation is wrong, they seemingly have good grounds for defending their position. Up unto this point in the text, Zarathustra has certainly presented himself as the freezing powerful North wind and mocker of all solemnity.

Three, the will's frustration with the knowledge of its own limits is the root of resentment itself. Four, the only redemption for the will is for it (the will, itself) to be able to will the becoming past of all events, thus willing its own destruction, a will no one has yet had.

### Future is Not Free

Zarathustra's nightmare revealed to him, that even in willing a redemptive future, he too was still infected with resentment. His, was resent for the present and the past. He says many times, "How could I stand to bare the state of men if not as limbs and fragments of the future,"<sup>161</sup> a future, which Zarathustra thought, through his teachings, could be created. But his nightmare has honed his hearing so that now he can hear the whispering voices of resentment and anger beneath his own breath. He now realizes that the future too will become a past, it cannot survive the magician of time, becoming past. Even Zarathustra's teachings would one day become past. Even if a tremendous era dawned for man that realized all of Zarathustra's so far avowed hopes, they would, one day too, become past and themselves then in need of redemption. The belief that in willing a better future, you are redeeming yourself from the past, is itself wrought with resentment for the present.

It was this future redemptive teaching, about the superman or the super-society, that if cultivated, Zarathustra hoped would redeem all of the sacrifices, creations and destructions in mankind's bellicose history. Initially, Nietzsche and Zarathustra hoped that if a great teaching could be given to mankind that freed him from his reliance upon heretofore believed in realities, then humanity would be free to create for itself new goals

and new boundaries, free from the world and strength denying voices of our religious and philosophical pasts. Nietzsche and Zarathustra thought that this cold North wind, of the truth of truth, could serve as the necessary provocation for an apotheosized future, ushered in by Zarathustra's messiah, *der Uebermensch*; but in Zarathustra's nightmare, his superman has glimpsed his kryptonite.

### Will's Fundamental Imprisonment

Zarathustra's nightmare reveals mankind's fundamental imprisonment: "This yes, this alone," Zarathustra says, "is revenge itself: the will's antipathy towards time and time's it was." We cannot *unhinge* time, we cannot will backwards, we cannot find the sorcerer's stone that converts past into the present. The will is stranded by this impotence and man is shipwrecked by this knowledge.

Nietzsche realized, through Zarathustra's nightmare, that the *essence* of nihilism and resentment does not lay in the superficial foreground estimations made by the *preachers of death*, the fire-breathing dogs, or the *afterworlds-men*, but rather at the very heart of the human's creative will. Zarathustra says the human will finds itself like an innocent convict waiting to be sentenced to an eternity behind a glass coffin, for a crime which it could but not help to commit...*living*.

There is nothing that can escape from the prison of time. Time is the universal solvent, dissolving every "it *will be*" to an "it *was*." This is the darkest, nightmarish despair that made Zarathustra tremble and, for a time, paralyzed Nietzsche. Nietzsche and Dante both found that hell awaited them beneath the same banner: "Lose all hope

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<sup>161</sup> Z.?



past here.” Thus, having given up on all the living, we find Zarathustra in his nightmare, as the night watchman, seated among the coffins housing overcome life himself waiting to be transformed and hermetically sealed behind glass.

In Zarathustra’s nightmare, we see him as the dreaming night watchman, who thought he held the keys that opened the gate for hope to enter the future. Now, with the iron-clad gate slammed behind him, the watchman (Zarathustra) found himself in even more terror in the “deathly silence” that followed. In the silence, no matter how great the exertion, the gate could not be reopened with Zarathustra’s superhuman key. Suddenly, we are told, the gate is thrown open by a force other than Zarathustra’s own. What appears is a coffin, out of which laughter peels. However, rather than the laughter coming from a joyful naked dancer, celebrating his conversion to free spirithood, as his disciples would like to believe, the laughter is actually mockery, mocking anyone who foolishly hopes for a redeeming future.

The black coffin is Time, laughing at man’s Promethean imprisonment of being force to desire a *future* that will always become a *past*. Temporality has been the nightmare for even the most affirmative human spirits. The prophecy seems to be confirmed in the nightmare. Any future from which deliverance is hoped to come, throws up, for the willer, only another glass coffin filled with laughter. It is Time, laughing at the ignorant dreamer, dreaming away Time’s grinning death, laughing at he who hopes for a moment of respite from Time. But Time cooks all beings. And now, Nietzsche and Zarathustra wonder, “Who could cook the cooker of beings?”

The dream is for Zarathustra overly despairing, since all of his teachings thus far in the novel are predicated on a call for a superhuman effort to prepare for a coming

superhuman, upon whose arrival, all that is fragment and limb, will be made whole.

Zarathustra and the despairing night watchman have both witnessed the death of their last hope. Zarathustra's superman is not strong enough to close the gate on Time, and the watchman discovers he does possess the key to lock it out.

The lonely mountain castle of death appears as the prison of time and man as a "spectator on the past" whose "loneliest melancholy" is that he cannot "break time and time's desire." Man sees "time" as an evil alchemist who turns all bright possible futures into shadowy irretrievable pasts. The meaning of Zarathustra's nightmare Nietzsche intended to show as *mankind's nightmare*, one from which, Zarathustra says, no man has yet *awakened*.

Even a will as *naturalized* as the one prescribed by Zarathustra (or discovered by Nietzsche), free from other worldly inclinations and their attendant resentment, is still tainted and stained with resentful inclinations. Even in desiring the coming of a supreme age in man, there remains the creative resentment of a will devising its own redemption and justification for suffering, it is still a saying "no" and a desire away from the law of destructive time.

Zarathustra's vision, in as much as it looks forward to a *time* when the suffering present and isolated past will be released from its bondage behind glass, is tainted. No teaching predicated on the future could free the present, since it too will still *suffer* the experience of becoming past. The creative will, stranded on the highest mountain of existence, is always looking out over the abysmal canyon surrounding it. The will finds itself alone, surveying dark depths which transforms all that falls into it from present to past, even this mountain, even this creative will.

For Zarathustra, the future had once made knowledge of the will's stranded predicament bearable, but now no redemption that lies in the future could ever be sufficient. Zarathustra's creative will is, itself, still *crippled*, since there does seem to be a limit to the sea's upon which existence can sail. Although, as Zarathustra and Nietzsche have rightly taught, the limits are no longer "God" or "eternity," but Time's unrelenting desire to change all *that is* to all *that was*. This is the limit of the creative will. This is the sea upon which man's knowledge shipwrecks him. The *will* and Prometheus are chained together, both punished for sacrificing to the future.

Let us be explicit about what exactly it is that mankind must be redeemed from. Thus spoke Zarathustra: "To redeem the past and to transform all *it was* into *thus I will it*-that, alone, do I call redemption."<sup>162</sup> The will is, itself, a prisoner, trapped in its inability to will backwards, trapped in its inability not to become past. "That it cannot break time and time's desire – that is the will's loneliest melancholy."<sup>163</sup> To break free from the prison of time's desire and be able to perform the creative acts to which it is naturally impelled, the creative will would either have to learn to break time's desire or to will backwards. The will would have to read forward and backward into all time...reading itself: *ruck und vorsichtig*.

### The Rage of the Will: Mighty, Murderous, and Doomed

The greatest and most treacherous obstacle that the human spirit and the human will to power faces is its inability to will *backward* (*vorsichtig*). The will rages against

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<sup>162</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. Thus Spoke Zarathustra translated by R.J. Hollingdale. (Penguin Publishing, New York, 1969), p.157.

the “it was,” the perpetual alchemy of existence that converts all presents into pasts. The creative will (human *spirit*) *rages* against its trapped condition and turns sick with revenge until it becomes an *ill will*. The will then directs itself resentfully, not simply against the past, but against *passage as such*, because Time in its passage seals every present and every possible future under “glass coffins.” Time transforms all *it is* or it will be to *it was*. It is this inability to convert the becoming of “it was” into “it will be again,” that Zarathustra teaches to be the fundamental impotence of the will.

Out of the will’s self-loathing and disgust over its impotence, the will becomes mad in its cage of temporality. It begins to paint marvelous graffiti, as it were, on the prison walls, pictorially representing for itself (and future prisoners), *Why?* the will finds itself in its trapped predicament and what must be done in order to escape. It is the will’s anger at the passage of time impels the will to become creative in its hatred and create for itself *redemptions* and *justifications* for the life-sentence it feels forced to suffer under and then perish by.

The creative will sick with revenge decided that the world, *as it is*, is not of any value and should not be the object of the will’s love, affirmation, or affection. The creative will feels trapped in its obligatory subservience to time and, therefore, it reasons, not free; a discovery that the will accounts a most grave injustice. But, since it is not free to overcome destruction, it wills its own destruction as the justification and redemption from the suffering of existence. Thus the will reasons: Since everything passes away, everything deserves to pass away. But why? Why does it *deserve* to pass away? What crime has it committed? Existing! Living is itself punishment for the crime of existence.

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid, p.157-158

This, Zarathustra teaches, is how the madness of the will in its rage of hatred has reasoned and rationalized its own terminal condition.

Such madness dreams of ascetic and selfless releases through a relinquishment of the will, or in Nietzsche terms, to become “the crucified,” one who is punished for his existence. Under such mad world-view’s and philosophies man is taught to surrender himself to the “whips and scorns of time” as it were, and bear under the weight of this deserved punishment, until at last a man’s will becomes complete will-less-ness. It is only at death that an adherent to such a mad philosophy could attain redemption, when at last his evil will to live is extinguished, terminating his punishment.

The creative human will forever strives for an increase in its own power; but, in the end, it always find itself at last alone, stranded and forced to suffer the fate of temporality. The creative human spirit suffers, then, in its very being. It recognizes its own temporal limits, yet it cannot cease to desire surpassing them. “Except the will at last redeem itself and willing become not-willing,” then the will always stands against existence, resentfully and disdainfully. But fearing his audience might conclude that Zarathustra’s wisdom teaches them now to be renouncers of the will and become ‘selfless;’ he reminds them, “you my brothers, know this fable-song of madness! I led you away from these fable-songs when I taught you: The will is creator.”<sup>164</sup>

Stuck in such ominous and gloomy settings, the spirit of revenge had to punish life, itself, rather than accept defeat and will total nothingness. The creative will, Zarathustra preaches, grows mad in its prison of unbreakable time, but creatively mad, and invents for itself imaginary redemptions from its temporal prison. The creative will forces itself to believe that it has rolled away the stone through its schemes of

redemption. But, since the will is not free to will completely, it wills what is necessary, its own destruction, as the appearance of redemption. Thus, the will, what Zarathustra had thus far taught to be the liberator, becomes the malefactor.

Zarathustra says, “Truly a great foolishness dwells in our will; and that this foolishness acquired spirit has become a curse to all human kind.”<sup>165</sup> The spirit of revenge, my friends, that up to now, has been mankind’s chief concern; and where there was suffering, there was supposed to be punishment. “Punishment,” is what revenge calls itself. It feigns a good conscience with a lie. Because there is suffering in the willer himself, since he cannot will backwards – therefore willing itself and all life was supposed to be punishment!

Zarathustra tells us, the madness of the vengeful will has always spoken thus: “Everything passes away, therefore everything deserves to pass away. And that the law of time, that time devour her children, is justice itself.”<sup>166</sup> Madness spoke further thus: “Things are ordered morally according to justice and punishment. Oh, where is redemption from the stream of things and from the punishment of existence?” Thus madness preached and wondered. Can there be redemption when there is eternal justice? Alas, the stone, “it was” cannot be rolled away: All punishments too must be eternal. No deed can be annihilated; how could a deed be undone through punishment? Existence too then must be an eternally- recurring deed and guilt; this is what is eternal in the punishment—Existence itself!

Zarathustra’s nightmare, the will’s imprisonment and humanity’s shipwreck, may only be disaster in the foreground. These shipwrecks may yet yield treasure and provide

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid, p.158

<sup>165</sup> Ibid, p.156-159

a possibility for redemption. Perhaps, like Nietzsche's outlining of nihilism as a means for overcoming it. Zarathustra's nightmare may be our means to awakening. Zarathustra can neither advocate the cessation of willing nor perpetuate another resentful teaching. Nor does he want to relinquish hope for the future, but neither no longer can he redeem the present at the expense of the future. Zarathustra must find a way to affirm both goodness of the will's ability to create, the goodness in its creations and the goodness in its becoming destruction.

### On Redemption

Zarathustra teaches that *all interpretations* of the human condition, or as Nietzsche would say, "all texts so far written about him" have, until now stemmed from a motivation for revenge. Zarathustra proclaims, "The spirit of revenge, my friends, that was 'till now, the subject of man's best reflection; and where suffering was, there should punishment always be."<sup>167</sup> "Even in the wisdom of the wisest," Zarathustra tells us, in "those who have experienced the tragedy of their own creative will or spirit of victory, as intolerably thwarted by the unbearable, there shall we find revenge has turned spiritual." The discovery of the ineptitude of the creative will and the vengeful stance it takes against existence calls for a twofold redemption: One, man must be redeemed from all prior redemptions, Nietzsche's task. Two, he must be redeemed from the creative, seething, seditiousness of the will, Zarathustra's task.

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid, p.156-159

<sup>167</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. Thus Spoke Zarathustra translated by R.J. Hollingdale. (Penguin Publishing, New York, 1969), p.156 –159.

Thus spoke Zarathustra, his formula for redemption: Every “it was” is a fragment, a riddle, a dreadful chance until the creative will says to it: “But I willed it thus!” Until the creative will says to it: “But I will it thus! Thus shall I will it!”

Zarathustra and Nietzsche surveyed the whole of the history of man and wondered: “Has anyone ever spoken like that? And, when will this take place? Has the will yet been unharnessed from its own folly? Has the will become its own redeemer and bringer of joy? Has it unlearned the spirit of revenge? And, *who* has taught it to be reconciled with time? The will that is the will to power must will something higher than any reconciliation- but how shall that happen? *Who* has taught the will to will backwards too?”<sup>168</sup>

Zarathustra’s formula for redeeming the past, all that was a fragment, a riddle, is an accident-until the creative will says to it “But thus I willed it!” Until an immensely powerful creative will says to it, “But thus I willed it! Thus shall I will it!” and can will “it was” to the past, present, and future, the past remains accidental and un-willable, inaccessible stumbling block that causes the arising of the sense of revenge in the will. Zarathustra learns that the will must be able to affirm: its own destruction, its own becoming past, and its own future entombed behind a glass coffin.

This formula, and this alone, Nietzsche claims, redeems the creative will from its revenge on the passage of time. In order for the will to be *redeemed* from its vengeful stance towards existence, the will must will and desire for all things to be as they are, *not* willing or desiring the non-destruction of any particular being, or the non-destruction of

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<sup>168</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. Thus Spoke Zarathustra translated by R.J. Hollingdale. (Penguin Publishing, New York, 1969), p.156 –159.



the will itself. Zarathustra pleads and urges his audience to the same wisdom that Hamlet imparts to Horatio, “Let *be*.”<sup>169</sup>

This affirmation of the goodness in the necessity of destruction, and this alone, releases the will from resentment. It would be a will capable of saying a tremendous and overwhelming “Yes!” to *all* moments, as beautiful in their fatedness to become past. It is a will that restores meaning to the present, restores purpose to action, and provides the ground for meaning in the future. Zarathustra, with this triumphant scream of “Yes!” silences the gloomy prophet, and, Nietzsche discovers the panacea for nihilism.

Redemption can only be attained by a creative will that has learned to say to all the past that peers out of glass coffins, to all that is fragment and accident, to all that has brought this moment into being, “Thus I willed it!” Even at the end of its temporal days, the redeemed creative will still shouts joyfully,

*“Into thy hands do I commend my spirit.*

*That was life? Well then, once more.”*<sup>170</sup>

### Spiritual Affirmation

Willing the eternal creation and destruction of the spirit, an *eternal return*, of all past and future events is the spiritual counter part to the theory of the will to power. Such a will is a test of an organism’s ability to affirm life. Given the dual nature of the will to power, creation and destruction, the will to power must, in order to affirm its own *being*, affirm its own destruction. A complete and total affirmation of the truth of the will to

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<sup>169</sup> Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act IV, Scene 2, line 225.

<sup>170</sup> Surely, that noble Nazarene must have had a divine father to learn such godly wisdom.

power, an inextricably intertwined nexus of inter-conditioning causes, linked to one another in an unbreakable ring of causation, each moment giving birth to conditions set by the parameters of the past. No present ever escapes its causally conditioned past. No future could ever arise free of prior conditionments. Thus, future and past are bound together in one ring of causation, truly the wedding ring of rings.

Every present is shaped by its past and, like the will, it is an *unwillable*, *unchangeable*, *immaleable* past that imprisons the present. Like the coffin flying through the air out of the gates of the future, full of death and mocking laughter, the future is already fated to become like the glass coffins and, thus, past. All futures are already conditioned. No present begins anew. Each present is already tied to conditions set in the past. No future, then, could ever escape its having to become past.

The will to power, in its creations and destructions, can neither expect a time in the future to reach equilibrium, nor can it expect to eternally give rise to variations in the effects produced by the affects' drive for power. Thus, the will to power finds itself limited both in scope and duration. Discovering this, as we have seen, creates anguish in the will, at which time, the will can either become resentful towards its trapped condition, or the will can affirm the goodness of its condition, accepting its inextricable position and willfully affirming its being so.

A will, having thus acknowledged the eternal return, ceases its desire to take revenge on time and its resentment towards the present, since the will no longer desires for existence to be any other way than it is. Recognition of the eternal return, is the will's coming to recognize that existence must be this way and no other. Let us be clear, Zarathustra does *not* advocate a simple resignation on part of the human spirit to sigh at

the necessity of the passage of beings. *That* is nihilism. To some degree, nihilism is a worse spiritual crime than resentment. The eternal return is the middle way between resentment and nihilism. It both recognizes the limits of existence and affirms its goodness within those parameters. It is a total Yes! -saying and a total Yes! -doing to the necessity of all conditionment.

Nietzsche hoped that recurrence would provide a new center of gravity after the collapse of the old one. Nietzsche wondered, with what else do you replace the thought? What other thought gives so much gravity to the moment? With inside the eternal return, an individual can never escape the moment. There is no outside reality in which one can hide. There is, literally, no other place to run. Every moment is sealed with the weight of eternity. Cognition of every moment's recurrence, Nietzsche hoped, would impart, to us, the weight of eternity onto this and every moment. "Nailing us," Kundera says, "to existence, like Jesus was nailed to the cross."<sup>171</sup>

Nietzsche writes, in the *Gay Science*, that it would be, "The Most Dangerous Point of View: everything I now do or omit is as important for everything that is to come as the greatest event of the past. Seen from this tremendous perspective, from that of their effects, all actions appear equally great or small."<sup>172</sup> Nietzsche hoped that with this thought humans would reconsider the actions of their lives in light of eternity as it were, thoughtfully and carefully, as if the entire weight of the future and of the past rested on their individual decisions.

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<sup>171</sup> Milan Kundera. The Unbearable Lightness of Being. (Harper and Row Press, Boston, 1984), p. 5.

### Final Translation

Nietzsche further believed that with the idea of recurrence, man would at last be truly free and strong enough to turn a deaf ear to the “siren song of metaphysical bird catchers.”<sup>173</sup> Deaf to the siren songs and stories that have, for too long, lulled men away from the goodness of the earth and the strength and prowess of themselves. Nietzsche brazenly hoped that man could now catalogue, as archaic and atavistic, all prior translations of mankind that have lulled his passions to sleep and promised him, “You are more, you are higher, you are of a different order.”<sup>174</sup>

For Nietzsche, the *will to power* and the *eternal recurrence*, restore to beings, organisms, and all events *gravity*, as things in themselves. Events can no longer be seen as vapid, hollow *appearances* against a façade of the more real. Nor are they seen as passing temporal phenomena in existence’s race towards a goal. Appearances are, themselves, the most real things.

Recurrence sings a song celebrating the present order, the present state, and all past states exactly as they have been. The highest good is earthly life, and the earthly being with the highest affirmation for earthly living *wills the eternal return*, thus the strongest and greatest of wills to power will the eternal return. The strongest, healthiest individuals would will, Zarathustra teaches, an eternal recurrence of all events exactly as they have happened, forwards and backwards, *ruck und vorsichtig*. Who is it that wills this immense will? Is it the new qualification that the superman must hold? Can *anyone* will so greatly? “That one wants nothing to be different, not forward, not backward, not

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<sup>172</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Gay Science*, translated by Josefine Nauckhoff. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 2001), 233.

<sup>173</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. *Beyond Good and Evil*, translated by Judith Norman. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 2002), 230.

into all eternity. Not merely to bear what is necessary...but to love it.”<sup>175</sup> Least we feel isolated in *our* will’s impotence, Nietzsche reminds us, “If *you* have ever said “Yes!” to any moment, [any event, any one frame of existence,] you have said “Yes!” to all existence.”<sup>176</sup>

Nietzsche hopes that in living out Zarathustra’s vision, one would *will to be* exactly who one *is*, truly *becoming the person you are, no longer ashamed in front of one’s self*. If an individual were able to do this, then they would become transformed and their *will* redeemed. An individual capable of performing this last powerful act of affirmation, will have completely extirpated *resentment*, become thoroughly *naturalized*, and fully *re-translated* back into nature.

### Proofs

Nietzsche never presented any sort of theoretical proofs concerning the eternal return in his published works, but his notebooks, however, are littered with practice arguments for the cosmological truth of recurrence. The basic synopsis of the proof is as follows: The quantum of force of the universe, as matter or energy, is limited, but time is infinite. Thus, in infinite time, all possible configurations of matter and energy are possible and, in fact, have already taken place and will recur ad infinitum. Change, is nothing more than a transfer of energy; energy into energy, heat into motion, *etc.*

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid, 230.

<sup>175</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. Ecce Homo, translated by Walter Kaufmann. (Vintage Books, New York, 1967), p.219.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid, p.219.

More simply, if the world is infinite in respect to time and finite with respect to possible states, then either the whole has a goal or it does not. If we assume it has a goal, then we are forced to ask why this goal has not yet been reached, given infinite time prior to the present and a finite possibility of states. Thus, seemingly not having arrived at a goal, we can deduce that the universe is devoid of a goal. The universe, then, must exist as either the continuous effulgence of variation in states, or as the eternal return of the same ordering of states. To assume the former, is to contradict the necessity that the infinity of time allows all possible states, of which there are a finite number; thus, the universe must be an eternal recurrence of the same. Moreover, infinite variation, Nietzsche feared, was a reintroduction of the old idea of God. Accordingly, the world of forces is not subject to any standstill, otherwise it would have been reached, and, as Zarathustra, says "the clock of existence would stand still."<sup>177</sup> Existence, then, never reaches a state of equilibrium. It never has a moment of respite. Whatever condition the universe *will* reach, has already *been* reached; and not just once, but times without number.

This moment, for instance, has already been here once, and it will return many times with all of the forces distributed exactly as they are now. "Humanity," Zarathustra shouts, "your whole life becomes like an hour glass."<sup>178</sup> "Oh, Man, attend! You are always becoming inverted and always running out once more- one vast minute of time, in between, until all conditions under which you arose converge once more in this the eternal revolution of time."<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. Thus Spoke Zarathustra translated by R.J. Hollingdale. (Penguin Publishing, New York, 1969.), p.219.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid, p.219

<sup>179</sup> Ibid, p.219

How much weight did Nietzsche hope for these proofs to provide? It seems we may never be able to answer this question, since Nietzsche neither published any of these formulas nor wrote in his notebooks how they were to be used. It is, perhaps, sufficient to point out that when the opportunity arises for Zarathustra to affirm eternal recurrence, he *whispers* it into the ear of Life- unheard by the audience. Life, stunned, or making an equally profound statement on the perspectival limits of man's knowledge, replies, "No one *knows* that."

#### Episode IV: A New Hope

Nietzsche thought there might, one day, exist a dividing line between those who could bear the thought of recurrence and those who could not. He thought it would create a division, a new aristocracy, between those who could and could not bear the weight of recurrence, not only a new social class, but possibly a new future, a new humanity, and, he most ardently hoped, a new philosopher.<sup>180</sup>

The future philosopher would be, Nietzsche hoped, "an artist of values who measures life by an aesthetic judgment of greatness."<sup>181</sup> One who will have mastered the art of balance between truth and knowledge. One who will have recognized, along with Nietzsche, that "whatever value might be attributed to truth, truthfulness, and selflessness, it could be possible that appearance, the will to deception, and craven self-interest, should be accorded a higher and more fundamental value for life...Perhaps! - But who is willing to take charge of such a dangerous Perhaps!" For this, Nietzsche thought, we must await the arrival of a new *breed* of philosophers, "whose taste and

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<sup>180</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. Beyond Good and Evil, translated by Judith Norman. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 2002), 56.

inclination are somehow the reverse of those who have been so far- the philosophers of the dangerous ‘Perhaps’ in every sense. - And in all seriousness: I see these new philosophers coming."<sup>182</sup>

The goal of the future philosopher is to prepare for, and create, the *new* philosophy of the future. He would be a sort of “artistic Socrates,” who would be able to serve as the founder and supreme judge of an entirely new culture. Such a philosopher would be able to occupy the place vacated by myth, and he would be able to create a future because of his self-confident creativity, his having overcome all forms of resentment, and his willingness to desire the eternal return.

Nietzsche’s task is a spiritual warfare against the opinions of modernity, against centuries of deeply entrenched prejudices and well-fortified moralities. It is a war fought with a new weapon...*sight*. Nietzsche gives us new eyes, new eyes to see what has been too close, too foreground, inverse Oedipus eyes. Instead of putting our eyes out to the truth of our existence, Nietzsche hoped we would see through new eyes that joyfully celebrate the enormity of which we are a part. He hoped that instead of being devastated by our new knowledge and our new rendering of man, we would become invigorated by it. A new *seeing*, Nietzsche knew to be the greatest weapon in our war against resentment. Nietzsche hoped he had given mankind a new *vision*, not a new *riddle*. He dreamed that there would arise an individual to take command of the ship of the Human Spirit and set humanity’s course by his vision, sailing us past *new horizons* and into yet *uncharted seas*.

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid, 56

<sup>182</sup> Ibid, 2



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