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An Esoteric Doctrine: Nietzsche's Politics and Way of Life

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Master of Arts

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AN ESOTERIC DOCTRINE: NIETZSCHE'S POLITICS AND WAY OF LIFE

(Thesis format: Monograph)

by

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Graduate Program in Theory and Criticism

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment

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Abstract

Two current perspectives within Anglo-American Nietzsche studies are Nietzsche as radical aristocrat who supports the exploitation of the masses, and Nietzsche as thinker who revives the ancient understanding of philosophy as a way of life. A Hellenized Nietzschean way of life, however, shares the liberal concern for the suffering individual that the aristocratic Nietzsche condemns for contributing to modern decadence. This thesis reconciles the two interpretations by examining the way Nietzsche's way of life is the condition of his politics. Before a new aristocratic order dedicated to the promotion of greatness can arise, there must be philosophers of the future capable of founding it. A repurposing of Christian asceticism, Nietzsche's way of life assists these creatures become what they are by increasing their will through the intensification of an inner conflict in which a ruling drive struggles to employ the other drives in the service of its task.

Keywords

Nietzsche; politics; philosophy as way of life; education; Epicurus; Christian asceticism

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Introduction

When approaching the study of Nietzsche, one has many readings to choose from. While Nietzsche wrote of the text disappearing under the interpretation (BGE 38), it is now the reader who disappears under the interpretations of Nietzsche. On the surface of this great sea, a new Nietzsche has appeared. It is one whose primary concern is not providing an explanation of the world, but a way of living in it. It makes its first entry in the works of Michel Foucault and Pierre Hadot, who suggest that Nietzsche revives the Hellenistic conception of philosophy as an art, or *technê*, of living. “Not until Nietzsche, Bergson, and existentialism,” Hadot writes, “does philosophy consciously return to being a concrete attitude, a way of life and of seeing the world” (108).¹ In reply to those who criticize Greek philosophy for a lack of coherence, Hadot asserts that rather than the organization of propositions, the aim of the Hellenistic schools is the transformation of the subject through the combination of a *logos* and *askēsis*. Contained in every doctrine are techniques or “spiritual exercises” that the student employs in the effort to achieve a certain state of being. To become indifferent to his royal pains, for instance, Marcus Aurelius adopts the Stoic’s cosmic perspective, and reflects on his life’s insignificance in relation to the size and age of the universe. “Keep before your eyes the swift onset of oblivion,” he writes, “for the entire earth is but a point, and the place of our own habitation but a minute corner of it” (4.3).

For Nietzsche, a defining feature of modernity is the absence of such goals that are difficult enough to last lifetimes, and persuasive enough to unite populations. At first, this nihilism appears to be the result of the death of God. When, in the form of modern science, Christianity’s will-to-truth turned on the religion and found God unconvincing, it took from the West a star it had sailed towards for two thousand years. More fundamentally, however, nihilism is the result of the will’s very need for a direction. “[T]he basic fact of the human will,” Nietzsche explains, is that “*it needs a goal* – and it will rather will *nothingness* than *not* will” (GM III 1). Without an object to strive for, will has the mysterious tendency to fashion for itself the goal of its own

¹ From *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*: “Read again all of nineteenth century philosophy – well, almost all: Hegel anyway, Schelling, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, the Husserl of the *Krisis*, and Heidegger as well (...) In all these philosophies, a certain structure of spirituality tries to link knowledge, the activity of knowing, and the conditions and effects of this activity, to a transformation in the subject’s being” (Foucault 28).

destruction. Nihilism begins as a silence to the question “why,” but turns into a slide towards annihilation. The unbelievability of God did not cause nihilism. God and salvation with its requirements of denial and death, is the name for the will’s self-destruction, and the largest sign of a pre-existing lack of purpose.

Rather than despair, Nietzsche recognizes that nihilism provides the opportunity for heroics. Through the persuasive force of his writing, he works to replace the destruction of the ascetic ideal with the goal of cultivating great beings. It is an ambition he stays faithful to. In “Schopenhauer as Educator,” he calls “the procreation of genius” the “goal of all culture” (3). In *Ecce Homo*, he describes “the attempt to raise humanity higher” as “the greatest of all tasks” (“BT” 4). Greatness is defined in terms of “will” as the source of everything good. It is will that makes one strong, that makes one creative, that makes one happy. In its multiple forms and effects, it is also will that frustrates the desire to pin every word to a meaning. At its most contained, will, or the “will to power,” is the tendency to seek out and overcome resistance expressed by individuals *as well as* the drives they are composed of. Whether it is the soldier standing over the enemy, the artist standing back from the easel, or the drive-to-continue overriding the cry-for-rest, it is the effect of will.

Outlined by Hadot and Foucault, the image of Nietzsche as philosopher of *bios* is filled in by Horst Hutter and Michael Ure. In *Shaping the Future*, Hutter presents Nietzsche’s philosophy as the renewal of the “Platonic task of being a philosophical legislator of modern souls, culture, and political society” (1). It is a dual task involving the destruction of a slavish “second nature,” as well as the creation of a class capable of steering humanity through the waves of nihilism. Before the affirmation of life can express itself, the accumulation of Christian resentment must be removed from the fundamentally healthy individual. Once liberated, the free spirit is to read Nietzsche’s philosophy and live its call for solitude, dance, and agonistic friendship. Hutter “map[s] out the ascetic practices of a Nietzschean way of life,” and argues that “Nietzsche’s ‘doctrines’ are ‘attempts’ and ‘temptations’ that aim to provoke his free-spirited readers into changing themselves” (2).

In *Nietzsche’s Therapy*, Ure presents Nietzsche’s middle period as the moment when Hellenistic and psychoanalytic therapies meet. He contends that Nietzsche uses philosophy to transform the

symptoms of an unhealthy narcissism brought on by the loss of God. While reflecting on the loss of his own metaphysical need, Nietzsche uncovers pity, vengefulness, and the melancholic desire for death as expressed in the ascetic ideal. Rather than remove these symptoms, Ure argues that Nietzsche incorporates them into a “mature individualism” that by reducing their pathological intensity allows for friendship.

Another recent appearance in the secondary literature is Nietzsche as political thinker. After World War Two, the dominant view was that Nietzsche had nothing to say on the topic of the organization of society. Commentators like Walter Kaufmann looked past Nietzsche’s advocacy of aristocracy in order to preserve a tamer, less fascist, image of him. When they were examined, Nietzsche’s political remarks were found to deviate so far from liberal belief that they were dismissed as un-political. This is the more recent response of Martha Nussbaum. In her essay “Is Nietzsche a Political Thinker?” Nussbaum outlines seven criteria of political discourse, and argues that on six of them, Nietzsche has nothing to offer. “In political thought,” she concludes, “let us simply forget about Nietzsche, except to argue against his baneful influence” (12). The experience of reading Nietzsche is often one of agreements that come faster and faster until the chain of affirmation is broken by a thought that exists too far outside one’s present. Nietzsche’s belief in the necessity of inequality is such an interruption. “[W]e are by no means ‘liberal,’” he writes, “‘equal rights’, ‘free society’, ‘no more masters and no servants’ – has no allure for us. We hold it absolutely undesirable that a realm of justice and concord should be established on earth” (GS 377).

Despite remaining untimely, the political Nietzsche is used by theorists to rethink the meaning of freedom and equality in the twenty-first century. William Connolly writes of the way Nietzsche provides elements for a new “ethico-political sensibility” that challenges liberalism’s implicit demand for a “true” self. He equates Nietzsche’s call to think “beyond good and evil” with the radical democrat’s effort to move beyond the need for a stable identity and the practice of othering it entails. Like cultures that create an enemy to establish their sense of self, the slave must label the strong “evil” before constituting itself “good” (GM I 10). “To reach ‘beyond’ good and evil,” Connolly writes, “is to nurture a new sense of restraint and a revised orientation to the very differences through which an individual and a culture achieve self-definition” (132). In order to use Nietzsche as a stone to spark against, political theorists avoid certain details.

Connolly, for instance, is careful to write around Nietzsche's call to "become what one is," as well as his belief in "the fundamental law of [one's] own true self" (UM III 1). Democratic appropriations of Nietzsche demonstrate the way that the life of an interpretation, like its author, rests on the will-to-illusion.

While the political and Hellenized Nietzsches are united by youth, they stand glaring at each other. A Nietzschean way of life expresses a liberal concern for the individual that the aristocratic Nietzsche does not share. In aristocratic societies, the distance between master and slave is so great that the individual cannot be seen, let alone analyzed (GS 18). Nietzsche remains immune to the spell of the Enlightenment. Contra Kant, he maintains individuals have value only as means. Only as a stone in the foundation of exemplary being can the individual be proud. "[I]ndividuals,' as peoples and philosophers have understood them so far, are a mistake," Nietzsche writes, "individuals are nothing in themselves" (TI "Skirmishes" 33). While liberal democracies purport to protect the rights of citizens so they may pursue their many goals, the true role of the state is to ensure that everyone participates in the *one* goal of greatness. How can Nietzsche, the philosophers of "great politics," be concerned with the invisible slave?

In what follows, I aim to remove the hostility between these readings by demonstrating the way in which Nietzsche's way of life is the condition of his politics. Before a new aristocratic order can arise, there must be those with the strength required to found it. Nietzsche's way of life contributes to the becoming of such creatures by increasing their will through the intensification of an inner conflict in which a ruling drive struggles to employ the other drives in the service of its task. Rather than the bearer of rights, it is directed toward the rare being with the potential to step out from the herd, and into the process of becoming "philosopher of the future".

While in Thales the philosopher and scientist are one, in the Enlightenment, science declares its independence and begins to play master. The reversal is the result of the way philosophy has lost its ruling instinct, as well as the respect of those it ruled. Today, anyone who lives too far from society, or enjoys too little sun is called "wise". The philosopher is reduced to the critic, the scholar, the *scientist*. In addition to a desire to know, however, the philosopher is home to creative and commanding drives. Philosophers are more than scholars who live in a house of books. At their fullest, they lead populations towards destinations they create: "[T]rue

philosophers are commander and legislators: they say ‘That is how it should be!’ they are the ones who first determine the ‘where to’ and ‘what for’ of people” (BGE 211). Nietzsche writes in the effort to resurrect this early concept of the philosopher-founder that finds its clearest expression in both Plato and his *Republic*.

Within Plato, theory is married to practice. He is “the incarnate desire to become the supreme philosophical lawgiver and founder of states” (HH 261). But, like most marriages, the union fails and Plato’s just society remains just an idea. In addition to the philosopher-founder, Nietzsche writes to revive Plato’s political ideal, for only a hierarchal society unified by a common goal can serve as the soil in which greatness grows. “Every enhancement so far in the type ‘man,’” Nietzsche writes, “has been the work of an aristocratic society” (BGE 257).

Nietzsche’s revival is not a perfect return. His future society allows for art as a symbol of all that incites resistance, for it is through conflict that will as the essence of greatness increases.

Although not a friend of philosophical systems, every now and then Nietzsche drops a line on which assumptions can be built. “Ask yourself,” he writes, “whether a tree which is supposed to grow to a proud height could do without bad weather and storms: whether misfortune and external resistance (...) do not belong to the favorable conditions without which any great growth even of virtue is scarcely possible?” (GS 19). Whether the authority under threat is called “tradition” or “reason,” gadflies are not to be banished, but resisted. Occurring whenever opposing forces meet, conflict assumes many forms. It happens when city-state battles city-state, when playwright competes with playwright, when drive suppresses drive. As well as its consequence, Nietzsche’s politics is also the *continuation* of his *bios* in so far as it functions to increase a conflict that goes by many names.

Chapter one examines the role of education in maintaining the future aristocracy’s order of rank. Nietzsche’s goal of greatness sits atop a number of smaller tasks. Today great beings are flowers in the snow, and before figures in the shape of a Goethe or Napoleon can appear with regularity, there must be a society devoted to their cultivation. In order for aristocracy to return to the modern world, there must be philosophers of the future, who in turn require a source from which they can learn how to become what they are. This is the role of Nietzsche, who at the bottom of the millennium-long track to greatness, stands as educator.

After even his friends misinterpret his philosophy, Nietzsche comes to believe his teaching of greatness, and the inability of modernity to secure it, is only for the free spirited. These readers do not have their understanding obstructed by the prejudice of such timely beliefs as the objectivity of morality, and the obvious superiority of democracy. Nietzsche depicts the experience of having his audience shrink from the many to the few in the prologue of *Zarathustra*. Like Nietzsche, Zarathustra comes to public attention as an educator. “I teach you the Overman” (3), he announces to the nearest town. As a being that overflows with will, the Overman represents the ideal of greatness. As a being that strives for the increase of will, it is another expression for becoming what one is. The townspeople, however, do not understand. Unable to conceive of an existence or skill beyond their current life and abilities, they mistake the Overman for the human. That is, they mistake the bridge between the animal and the Overman for the Overman itself. “‘We’ve heard enough of the tightrope walker;’” someone shouts, “‘now let’s see him also!’” (3).

After hearing the laughter of his class, Zarathustra switches tactics and attempts to teach the indeterminacy of the human not with an image of how high it may climb, but with a story of how low it may fall. He describes the era of the “last man” as a time when in the process of achieving the greatest good for the greatest number, moralists destroy competition, suffering, and inequality as the necessary conditions of cultural achievement. It is a time when no one desires because all needs are met, when no one commands because no one needs the hassle. But instead of recoiling in horror from this vacuum of will, the crowd shouts: “‘Give us this last man, O Zarathustra (...) Make us into these last men!’” (5). Like his author, Zarathustra wakes up to the realization that his lessons are for those who possess not only the ability, but also the desire to learn. “‘No more will I speak to the people,’” he tells himself, “‘I will join the creators (...) I will show them the rainbow and all the steps to the overman’” (9).

Although disillusioned, Zarathustra does not completely turn his back on the town, for not everyone in the herd lacks will. Zarathustra consoles the tightrope walker who has enough will to attempt the journey between animal and Overman, but not enough to succeed. After falling, the ropedancer sees the truth of his nature in the distance between the ground and the ideal he fails to reach: “‘I am not much more than a beast that has been taught to dance by being dealt blows and meager morsels’” (6). Nietzsche too shows an interest in those who attempt to leave the herd by

becoming more than their modest will allows. He does so not because he admires the effort, however, but because it is these failures who become resentful.² It is these broken figures who after picking themselves up, begin to destroy a greatness they could not grasp by collapsing society's order to rank.

Those who have “turned out badly” (GS 359) attack the higher-type by freeing the “slaves” and introducing a “slave morality”. The result is that while the higher-type are robbed of the material and moral support on which their greatness depends, the lower-type are deprived of existential significance. The beauty of greatness is that as a world-encompassing goal, it escapes the demand for justification by turning it back on those who demand it. The life of the individual has meaning only in so far as it contributes to the production of the exemplary being. ““The Overman is the meaning of the earth,” Zarathustra tells the townspeople, ““Let your will say: The Overman shall be the meaning of the earth”” (3). While the education of the philosopher as instruction in becoming what one is contributes to the establishment of the future aristocracy, the education of the lower-type as consolation for resentment contributes to its *preservation*.

Chapter two presents Nietzsche as a jealous writer who in the process of outlining his own way of life, critiques Epicureanism as an influential mode of being. Whether it is called consumer or late capitalist, Western society continues to act under the command to “enjoy”. Although Nietzsche's ambivalence towards Epicurus is noted in the secondary literature, no study explains Nietzsche's objection to pleasure by detailing his understanding of the relationship between pain and greatness. “[D]espite his ongoing interest in the Hellenistic philosopher,” Morgan Rempel writes, “Nietzsche's reflections on Epicurus (...) and Epicurean philosophy as a whole, have received relatively little scholarly attention” (342). “Nietzsche's treatment of Epicureanism and suffering,” Wilson Shearin continues, “deserves fuller treatment” (72). I aim to fill the gap in Nietzsche scholarship, and argue that Nietzsche attacks the Epicurean goal of pleasure for encouraging the avoidance of conflict as that which is necessary for the realization of his own goal of greatness. For Nietzsche, the flaw of modern society is that it continues to teach a slave morality that when internalized, causes one to avoid struggle. Although the Christian and modern

² Not everyone can become what one is. As the jester tells the tightrope walker: ““What are you doing here between towers? You belong *in* the tower” (6).

Epicurean appear distinct, both venerate a state of being experienced as rest. While the Epicurean calls it pleasure, the Christian calls it God.

Chapter three asks: what way of life does Nietzsche teach? It is a difficult question, for Nietzsche does not present his life of the philosopher in the same detail as Plato's education of the guardian. A Nietzschean way of life must be cobbled together from scattered passages. It is also an unpopular question. Alexander Nehamas writes that Nietzsche "refus[es] to offer any descriptions of what an ideal person or an ideal life would be like" (8). Frank Cameron claims that "[t]he promotion of human excellence is not a matter of providing formulas or principles describing what one 'ought' to do" (190). Nietzsche himself writes against those who would turn to him for advice on how to walk through the world. "Now I bid you lose me and find yourselves;" Zarathustra tells his disciples, "and only when you have all denied me will I return to you" (Z:1 "On the Bestowing Virtue" 3). Like every multiplicity, however, Nietzsche is not always consistent. While at times it is his will-to-destroy that philosophizes, at other times it is his will-to-found. After one year at Basel, Nietzsche writes to Erwin Rhode: "So one day we shall cast off this yoke – for *me* that is certain. And then we shall create a new Greek academy" (qtd. in Middleton 74). In *Ecce Homo*, he later predicts: "Someday institutions will be needed in which men live and teach as I conceive of living and teaching" ("Books" 1).

Expanding on Nietzsche's remarks regarding the utilitarian value of Christian asceticism (BGE 61, WTP 915), I argue that Nietzsche envisions philosophers of the future leading an ascetic way of life involving the denial of the drives by the drives. For Nietzsche, asceticism is an education of the will. It is the means by which philosophers grow the will to the point at which it is capable of founding an aristocratic order in a democratic time. Such a life requires sensitivity to one's self as a collection of drives, as well as hardness towards those whose gratification only distracts from the task. While Epicureans avoid conflict, ascetics seek it by placing themselves in situations where a ruling drive must refuse the demands of a sea of instincts each wanting to play master. There is nothing masochistic about this way of life, for as Nietzsche emphasizes, on the other side of resistance one finds the pleasure of power.

In writing of the way Nietzsche repurposes Christian asceticism to train the philosopher, I follow the lead of Horst Hutter. In *Shaping the Future*, Hutter argues that through the adoption of a

Nietzschean way of life, “[f]ree spirits are asked to transform themselves into the philosophical legislators of the future” (3). The virtue of Hutter’s work is that in opposition to the tendency within Nietzsche studies to label any self-imposed discomfort “ascetic,” Hutter provides a discussion of six specific techniques that Nietzsche includes in his philosophy. As with most works on the relation between Nietzsche and asceticism, however, Hutter does not refer to the lives or texts of actual ascetics. This study departs from Hutter by grounding Nietzsche’s understanding of asceticism in examples from Early Christianity provided by St Paul, Athanasius, and St Augustine. Consequently, I view asceticism not as a collection of techniques that create the self, but as the practice of self-denial that strengthens the will. In so far as asceticism is a life spent overcoming resistances initially experienced as pain, it is another name for a life of pleasurable suffering.

Chapter 1

1 A Healthy Slumber: Nietzsche's Education for the Lower-Type

For those who teach at the upper levels, education may involve the transformation of students towards an ideal. But for those in the middle regions, education is as much about the management of the majority as the shaping of the brightest. In what follows, I argue that Nietzsche's educational theory outlines two types of instruction that correspond to his distinction between two types: the higher and the lower, the strong and the weak, the master and the slave. Following Mark E. Jonas, I argue that the role of education for the lower-type is protection against resentment as the greatest danger to aristocracies. Unlike Jonas, however, I contend that the content of this education is not "becoming what one is," but the effort to prevent and console the very awareness of what one is. The argument is based on a reading of resentment as contempt for one's nature turned into destructive hatred for the ideal that reveals it. As an expression for actualizing one's self-image in general, and the process of discovering one's ruling drive in particular, becoming what one is belongs only to the education of the higher-type.

1.1 The State and Greatness

To understand Nietzsche's claim that every human enhancement is the result of an aristocratic society, one must turn to the work of his Basel colleague, Jacob Burckhardt. In *The Greeks and Greek Civilization*, Burckhardt writes of agon as the defining feature of the Archaic Period.³ In addition to the desire to win, agon is the transformative power of conflict, as it is through competition that the abilities reach their full strength. "The agon was a motive power known to no other people," Burckhardt writes of the Greeks, "the general leavening element that, given the essential condition of freedom, proved capable of working upon the will and the potentialities of every individual" (162). While at first confined to athletics, agon comes to be a part of every element of Greek society. In *Works and Days*, Hesiod writes of how the lower classes compete

³ Spanning from the eighth to the sixth century, the Archaic Period, or what Burckhardt calls the "Agonal Age," begins with the establishment of the city-state, and ends with the rise of Athenian imperialism. During this time, aristocracy replaces tribal relations as the most common form of government (Pomeroy 63).

with the wealth of their neighbors. In *Twilight*, Nietzsche writes of how Socrates's dialectics fascinates the Athenians as a new form of agon ("Socrates" 8).

Burckhardt's study reveals that aristocracies reserve the right to human elevation because only they allow for the expression of agon. Societies dedicated to absolute equality must exclude its public manifestation, for the victory of one member over another uncovers the very inequality they try to remove. Even when competition is permitted, agon cannot exist in egalitarian societies since true combat only occurs between members of a class defined not only by wealth, but "blood". Although competitors in a democracy are made equal in rights, they remain unequal in nature. Secondly, only an aristocratic class can devote itself to agon. One must be free from work to live a life spent preparing for, participating in, and recovering from contest. During the Archaic Period, the ruling class despises labour as that which prevents them from approximating the victories depicted in the epics of Homer. Their transformation into the heroes of the past relies on the existence of a lower class whose members inherit the curse of practical activity.

Displaying the influence of Burckhardt, Nietzsche's 1872 *Prefaces to Unwritten Works* further elucidates the relationship between aristocracy and greatness. In "The Greek State," Nietzsche clarifies the connection by explaining that only a society in which the majority is forced to work beyond the satisfaction of its needs can give rise to culture. It is surplus labour that provides artists with the leisure necessary to create both themselves and their work. "[W]e must accept this cruel-sounding truth," Nietzsche writes, "that *slavery belongs to the essence of culture*" (40). Acting under the influence of a Nature that wants to see itself reflected in the work of genius, the role of the state is to maintain the division between artist and slave. By "slave," Nietzsche does not mean those with iron around their necks. Rather, he writes from an aristocratic perspective that sees all activity related to securing the necessities of life as oppressive: "[H]e who does not have two-thirds of his day to himself is a slave" (HH 283).

Said another way, the connection between aristocracy and greatness is that only societies divided into means and ends allow for becoming. Denoting not just change, becoming is the process in which an entity uses or consumes a part of itself in order to be something else. For Nietzsche, culture is an act of becoming, for it involves the development of an elite through the "shameful" but "necessary" sacrifice of a lower class. "[W]e may compare this grand culture with a blood-

stained victor,” Nietzsche writes of Greek society, “who in his triumphal procession drags along the defeated chained to his chariot” (“The Greek State” 41). While at first a hostile force, the defeated are incorporated into the polis as slaves, and then put to work to further its goals.

A second link in the chain between aristocracy and greatness is provided by conflict. In “Homer’s Contest,” Nietzsche reveals that behind the accomplishments of ancient Greece stands the goddess Eris. After filling populations with the joy of destruction, it is Eris who leads them on to the savagery of war. Her contribution to greatness is seen in the way war organizes masses into military castes that give rise to the military genius. Her cruelty is seen in Homer’s image of Achilles dragging Hector’s body behind his chariot. In addition to the Eris of destruction, Nietzsche notes that Hesiod writes of a “good” Eris who fosters an envy that leads not to war, but contest. This Eris contributes to the enhancement of *every* individual, for as described in the work of Burckhardt, it is through agon that the abilities reach their potential. Rather than an embarrassing sin, the Greeks experience envy as a benevolent spur that motivates one to ascend to another’s height. “[T]his strife is a good one for mortals,” Hesiod writes, “It is she who stirs an unhandy man, even him, to start working” (89). Even the art of ancient philosophy may owe its life to envy. Nietzsche suggests that Plato wrote the dialogues to show the Sophists that he too could use rhetoric.

Said another way, the connection between aristocracy and greatness is that only a warrior caste allows for the expression of the drives that lead to conflict. More than their civilized counterparts, it is envy, hatred, vengeance, and suffering that urge the individual on to contest. While in democratic societies such instincts are called “evil,” in aristocracies they are encouraged by a morality that calls them holy, virtuous, *good*. “Hellenic popular pedagogy demands that every talent must develop through struggle:” Nietzsche writes, “whereas modern educators fear nothing more than the unchaining of so-called ambition. Here one fears selfishness as the ‘evil in itself’” (“Homer’s Contest” 56). The evil values are able to find a home in aristocratic societies because they are the values of the ruling class. As a “predatory people who still possessed an unbroken strength of will and lust for power” (BGE 257), the Greek aristocracies develop a morality that justifies their cruelty. When separated from an origin in God, values are revealed to legitimize the actions and preserve the strength of those who create them.

Nietzsche's affection for aristocracies of the past comes from the way they show the conditions in which greatness appears. His hope for an aristocracy of the future, however, comes from the fact that only a group with absolute power has the ability to saturate society with the values that give rise to the exceptional individual. Only nobility can "experiment" (A 57) in the sense of introducing a table of values to observe what type results. As the head of this future society, the philosopher is to decide upon, impose, and control morality. He is to "express hostility towards those influences, habits, laws [and] institutions in which he fails to recognize his goal" (UM III 6). For Nietzsche, the primary role of politics is not to distribute resources, but pros and cons. It is not to steer away from war, but towards it. The role of politics, of "great politics," is the intensification of conflict as the enigmatic spring of greatness through the regulation of value.

Nietzsche's idea of great politics has three defining features, beginning with the buildup of will on a global scale. While in section 208 of *Beyond*, Nietzsche points to Russia as the storehouse of will, in the preface he explains that all of Europe holds an energy waiting to be released. The West's two thousand year struggle to rid itself of Christianity "has created a magnificent tension of spirit in Europe, the likes of which the earth has never known". The second feature is a goal large enough to hold this collective will. While the Enlightenment's ideals of freedom and equality look like such an aim, on closer inspection they turn out to be another form of the will's self-destruction: "Refraining mutually from injury, violence, and exploitation [...] as soon as this principle is extended, and possibly even accepted as the *fundamental principle of society*, it immediately proves to be what it really is – a will to the *denial* of life" (259). The third feature of great politics is the expansion of war as that which increases the will to power and consequently the presence of greatness. In the future "[t]he concept of politics will have merged entirely with a war of spirits," Nietzsche writes, "there will be wars the like of which have never yet been seen on earth. It is only beginning with me that the earth knows *great politics*" (EH "Destiny" 1).

By "war of spirits," Nietzsche does not mean armed conflict as represented by Homer, for war occurs not just between chariots, but within them as well. In *Phaedrus*, Plato compares the soul's rational element to a charioteer, who on the way to truth struggles to control the horses of passion and courage. By "war of spirits," Nietzsche primarily means this conflict between drives. The repression and utilization of the drives by the drives grows the will as much as war between states. It is to be encouraged by rulers who understand that it is through the collision of atoms

that new beings appear. Nietzsche describes the multiplication of inner conflict as “wars the like of which have never yet been seen on earth” because until him, the understanding for such struggle has not existed. In the letters of Paul, battles within the self occur between two forces, one of which the individual does not even feel responsible for. In Nietzsche’s theory of drives, however, conflict occurs between a sea of instincts too numerous to name, all of which the individual has the potential to control. In the era of great politics, to be warlike is to pit the instincts against one another through the eager acceptance of challenge.

1.2 The Greatest Danger

In section 57 of *The Anti-Christ*, Nietzsche explains that modern society protects against the questioning of its laws by grounding them in the perfection of God or the truth of reason, because if the egoistic motivations behind them ever came to light, it would lead to the redistribution of power. The virtue of aristocratic society is that since its organization derives from nature, it has no need for such noble lies. “Nature, *not* Manu,” Nietzsche writes, “separates from one another the predominantly spiritual type, the predominantly muscular and temperamental type, and the third type distinguished neither in the one nor the other, the mediocre type”. The order of rank in aristocratic societies is a reflection of the inherent difference in will between individuals. This difference is to be accepted and even increased through the cultivation of those who in their ambition and ability tower above the rest. What aristocracies must protect against is not the uncovering of their origins, but the resentment of the lower classes who seek to remove the distance between individuals by bringing everyone down to the will of the lowest.

At its most basic, resentment is the impotence of the weak turned into a desire for the destruction of the strong. On the empirical level, it attacks aristocracies by agitating the foundation of obedient workers on which its free time depends. In the nineteenth century, this threat appears as socialism, which demands more rights and less alienation for the proletariat. “Whom among today’s rabble do I hate the most?” Nietzsche asks, “The Socialist rabble (...) who undermine the worker’s instinct, his pleasure, his feeling of contentment with his little state of being” (A 57). For Nietzsche, there is a joy that belongs only to the specialist or cog. While the factory worker might only turn the screw, and the scholar might only turn the page, they do it well, and in

mastering the task, feel happy. By instilling their own false desire for the development of all capacities, socialists rob the lower classes of this “privilege of the *mediocre*”. Further, in working to create a classless society, socialists remove inequality as one of the necessary conditions for greatness. For Nietzsche, it is Marx who turns the world upside down, for by giving workers control of production, he would turn slaves into masters.⁴

Although resentment begins as anger, it turns creative and gives birth to value. The most effective way the weak have of destroying the strong is by replacing the morality on which their strength depends. “The knightly-aristocratic value judgments presupposed a powerful physicality,” Nietzsche writes, “a flourishing, abundant, even overflowing health, together with that which serves to preserve it: war, adventure, hunting, dancing, war games, and in general all that involves vigorous, free, joyful activity” (GM I 7). But while conflict preserves the will of aristocracies, it is their values that preserve this conflict. The weak attack the values of the strong as the source of their greatness by replacing them with their own morality. As represented by the image of God on the cross, the “slave morality” of the weak is the reversal of the “master morality” of the strong. It is not the noble drives that lead towards conflict that are “good,” but the selfless drives that lead away from it. It is not the warlike and happy who are held up as standards, but as seen in the Sermon on the Mount, “the peacemakers” and those who “mourn”.

Slave morality appears first as Platonism, and later as Christianity, or what Nietzsche calls “Platonism for the ‘people’” (BGE “Preface” 1). What they have in common is an ideal that encourages the suppression of the drives used to attain the older goals of master morality. While in Platonism the ideal is knowledge of the Good, in Christianity it is knowledge of God. The effect of slave morality on aristocracies is illustrated by Christianity’s effect on the Roman Empire. “Christianity was the vampire of the *imperium Romanum*,” Nietzsche writes, “-overnight, it obliterated the Romans’ tremendous deed of laying the ground for a great culture” (A 58). As vampire, Christianity sucked the love for Rome out of every Roman. It replaced concern for the world with a concern for the afterlife that necessitated the suppression of the

⁴ The extent to which Nietzsche believes socialism to be a threat to culture is seen in his reaction to reports that members of the Paris Commune burnt down the Louvre. “The news of the past few days,” Nietzsche writes to a Basel colleague, “was so terrible that I was in an unbearable mood. What is one’s significance as a scholar in the face of such earthquakes of culture! [...] This is the worst day of my life” (qtd. in Cameron & Dombowsky 35).

strength needed to repel barbarian attack. The instincts that had been used to achieve the ideal of the warrior were now seen as ties to the world that held one back from salvation.

1.3 The Role of Education

In *Beyond*, Nietzsche writes that an aristocracy's "fundamental belief must always be that society *cannot* exist for the sake of society, but only as the substructure and framework for raising an exceptional type of being" (258). In the secondary literature, there is debate on how Nietzsche intends this scaffolding to be treated. Elitist interpretations continue Nietzsche's language, and argue that the masses are to be used, exploited, and sacrificed.⁵ In response, Mark E. Jonas contends that "Nietzsche prefers a spiritual aristocracy in which the aristocratic few do not dominate and enslave the masses but ensure that they are provided with a robust education that allows them to flourish culturally and economically" (672). Like other democratic interpretations, he writes to reduce Nietzsche's untimeliness. By arguing that Nietzsche intends the aristocracy to provide for the flourishing of the masses, Jonas has Nietzsche express the liberal position that the role of government is the protection of a liberty understood as the unfettered development of the individual. That is to say, he mistakes Nietzsche for someone he is not (EH "Preface" 1).

For Jonas, the function of education in Nietzsche's future aristocracy is to protect against resentment. Synthesizing the educational ideas found throughout Nietzsche's corpus, he argues that the masses are to be given an education composed of a professional and cultural element. The professional education is found in section 57 of *Anti-Christ*, where Nietzsche outlines his "ideal society" (687). "A high culture is a pyramid:" Nietzsche writes, "it needs a broad base, its first presupposition is a strongly and healthily consolidated mediocrity. Crafts, trade, farming, *science*, most of art – in a word, *employment* can only really function on the basis of a mediocrity

⁵ Elitist interpretations, including this study, maintain that Nietzsche desires the establishment of an aristocratic order in which a ruling higher-type regard the masses as a means to the cultivation of greatness. However imagined, this exploitation involves a violation of the liberal belief in freedom, equality, and rights. A recent example is Don Dombowsky's *Nietzsche's Machiavellian Politics*. In contrast to liberal democratic readings, Dombowsky contends that Nietzsche's authoritarian politics cannot be separated from his "Dionysian" philosophy. He argues that Nietzsche's radicalization of the aristocratic critique of democracy is inspired by his reading of *The Prince*. Machiavelli's *virtù* is seen as the precursor to Nietzsche's "immoralism" in which "evil" acts are committed for the sake of the strength of the state, and the achievement of greatness.

of ability and desire”. The cultural component is found in “Schopenhauer as Educator”. “In the opening pages,” Jonas writes, “[Nietzsche] suggests that what creates the herd-like quality of the masses – the quality that ultimately makes them vulnerable to *ressentiment* – is not their lack of talent but their laziness in becoming who they are” (692). In addition to a vocation, the masses are to be taught a “toughness” that allows them to overcome their laziness and avoid resentment.

Expanded on in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche introduces the idea of becoming what one is in “Schopenhauer as Educator”. His command to ““Be your self!”” (1) is a version of the liberal goal of self-realization that receives its modern expression in Wilhelm von Humboldt’s *The Limits of State Action*.⁶ The goal is based on the Greek ideal of the harmonious individual as expressed in Pericles’s Funeral Oration. Pericles tells the crowd that in addition to its government, it is the Athenians themselves who contribute to the glory of Athens. The citizen is so well rounded that he can enjoy luxury without growing soft, conduct business without forgetting the polis, and remain “open to the world” (Thucydides 146) despite conquering it. As with his politics, however, even Nietzsche’s ideal of self-development involves an element of inequality.

In “Schopenhauer,” Nietzsche reflects on whether his educator would focus on one or all of his abilities, and concludes that he would overcome this opposition by revealing a ruling idea that develops them all. “That educating philosopher of whom I dreamed,” Nietzsche writes, “would, I came to think, not only discover the central force, he would also know how to prevent its acting destructively on the other forces: his educational task would, it seemed to me, be to mould the whole man into a living solar and planetary system” (2). Within the higher-type, all the drives are strong, but one is stronger than the rest. It establishes inner harmony by employing the abilities of the others to achieve the political and artistic goals that flow from it. Every drive has its own desire, and to become what one is means to reflect on what one has loved most as the breadcrumbs that lead back to the home to the self. It is to get beyond the influence of convention to discover one’s ruling drive.

⁶ “The true end of Man, or that which is prescribed by the eternal and immutable dictates of reason, and not suggested by vague and transient desires, is the highest and most harmonious development of his powers to a complete and consistent whole” (12).

The danger of equal development is the weakness of instinctual anarchy. Nietzsche writes of entire eras in which no drive possesses the will to establish dominance, and consequently individuals feel free to be anyone. He describes it as “the Athenian faith that first became noticeable in the Periclean age (...) where the individual is convinced he can do just about anything *and is up to playing any role*” (GS 356). While in his oration Pericles expresses the virtue of equality, in his death he demonstrates its danger, for as soon as Athens lost its ruler, it fell to Sparta.

The fault of Jonas’s article is that while acknowledging Nietzsche’s distinction between types, it ignores his insistence that each one has its own laws. The strong and the weak are to have their own morality (BGE 228), *as well as* education. “Any higher education is only for the exceptions:” Nietzsche writes, “you have to be privileged to have the right to such a high privilege (...) What are the *conditions* for the decline of German culture? That ‘higher education’ is not a *privilege* any more” (TI “Germans” 5). By writing as if the process of becoming what one is were accessible to all, Jonas participates in the dilution of education Nietzsche writes against.⁷ Cultural education is exclusive not just because it is only the higher-type who have the will for a ruling drive, but because failed educations have dangerous consequences. Contrary to Jonas’s interpretation, one does not become resentful by never trying to become what one is, but by trying and failing.

1.4 A Third Type

In his 1872 lecture series, *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions*, Nietzsche levels two criticisms against higher education in Germany. First, it is intended for everyone instead of remaining the domain of the few. Second, it is training for the marketplace rather than a nursery for the great. “[T]he aim of the public school has (...) considerably departed from the original

⁷ Even if Nietzsche intended “‘Be your self!’” to be followed by everyone, by the time of *Beyond*, he has had enough experience in the classroom to change his mind: “In our very popular, which is to say vulgar age, ‘education’ and ‘culture’ essentially *have* to be the art of deception – to deceive about lineage, about the inherited vulgarity in body and soul. An educator who preaches truthfulness above all else these days and constantly calls for his students to ‘be true! be natural! be what you are!’ – after a while, even a virtuous and trusting ass like this will learn to reach for that [pitchfork] of Horace, in order to [drive out nature]: and with what success? ‘The vulgar’ [always returns]” (264).

plan laid down by Wolf, which was the cultivation of the pupil,” Nietzsche says, “The old estimate of scholarship and scholarly culture (...) seems after a slow and spiritless struggle rather to have taken the place of the culture-principle” (65). Today, public schools possess a “motely” spirit, claiming to provide both a classical and scientific education despite the conflict between these aims. While classical education strengthens all talents, scientific education results in the over-development of one. To survive in the academic world, scholars devote themselves to a branch of knowledge while looking past the tree. For Nietzsche, the consequence of scholarship is an emphasis on knowing at the expense of becoming. Students are taught how well the Ancients spoke, but not how to speak well themselves. They learn what the Ancient virtues were, but not how to be virtuous: “[N]ot one real piece of ability, of new capacity, out of years of effort! Only a knowledge of what men were once capable of knowing!” (D 195). Modern education teaches students the outline of the Greek ideal, but not how to step into it.

The image Nietzsche brings into the future is not from the Golden Age of the fifth century, but the older age of the pre-Platonics. While Plato was a “mixed type,” and the Athenians felt they could be any type, philosophers from Thales to Socrates are “pure types,” having all ability under the command of a single drive. The pre-Platonics conducted their investigations under the influence of a drive-to-know, which Nietzsche divides into three types. While the scientist has the blind desire to know everything, and the intellectual the self-serving desire to know what is useful, the philosopher has the tasteful desire for the difficult and rare. “A sharp savoring and selecting,” Nietzsche writes, “makes out the peculiar art of the philosopher” (PTA 43). In order to determine the essence of the world as that which is most worth knowing, the philosopher’s ruling idea controls the abilities it finds around it. To arrive at the conclusion “all is water,” for instance, Thales makes use of the imagination, while suppressing the demand for logic and proof.

In “The Greek State,” Nietzsche writes that to enjoy the child, the mother must forget the birth. That is, artists must look past the often-painful experience of creation in order to appreciate their work. In *Science*, he writes that to *understand* the work, one must not give birth at all: “A perpetually creative person, a ‘mother’ type in the grand sense of the term (...) such a person would finally produce works *that far excel his own judgement*, so that he utters insanities about them and himself” (369). Beyond the pain of the mother who cannot understand the child,

however, there is the pain of the mother who cannot have the child. It is the anguish of artists whose ambition outstrips their ability, of the ontologically restless who are unable to become what they want to be.

Before embarking on a project of self-realization, the individual throws an image into the future, and hopes that with perseverance and hard work, the ideal will become real. In “Schopenhauer as Educator,” for instance, Nietzsche keeps before him the image of the Schopenhauerean man who “*takes upon himself the suffering involved in being truthful*” (4). It is he who helps modernity emerge from animality by recovering the pre-Platonic courage to descend into the essence of things and reveal the metaphysical significance of life. He suffers not only from the truth, but *for* the truth as his philosophy departs so far from epistemological skepticism that he earns the ridicule of his contemporaries. More often than not, however, one’s becoming stops short of the projected ideal. In his fifth lecture, Nietzsche describes the psychology of a student who is encouraged to achieve culture despite lacking a “leader” or ruling drive:

He looks into his own breast, analyses his faculties, and finds he is only peering into hollow and chaotic vacuity. And then he once more falls from the heights of his eagerly-desired self-knowledge into an ironical skepticism. He divests his struggles of their real importance, and feels himself ready to undertake any class of useful work, however degrading. He now seeks consolation in hasty and incessant action as to hide himself from himself. And thus his helplessness and the want of a leader towards culture drive him from one form of life into another. (133)

Only a few possess a calling to which they must sacrifice everything, and those who fail to become what they are turn into not free spirits, but free radicals who break down society’s order of rank.

In “Educational Institutions,” Nietzsche performs a rehearsal of the *Genealogy* by investigating the origin of the democratization of higher education. Observing education is something that for children stops in the afternoon, and for adults as soon as one starts making money, Nietzsche initially suspects the greed of the marketplace. Education is expanded in the belief that an increase in knowledge will result in the increase of wealth. Nietzsche next considers the egoism of the State. By using the school to mold servants, the State is able to perpetuate its existence while replacing the Church as the dominant force in its citizen’s lives. But regardless if those in a

suit or uniform make the cry, Nietzsche concludes that the demand for education comes from the resentment of those who failed it. “Why this education on the masses on such an extended scale?” he asks, “Because the true German spirit is hated, because the aristocratic nature of true culture is feared, because the people endeavor in this way to drive single great individuals into self-exile” (FEI 89). The resentful destroy the genius by letting into educational institutions all those it was intended to keep out. Education does not so much create great individuals, as provide them with the space in which to discover their true self. It protects their energy from work, their contemplation from noise, and, most importantly, the task of their ruling drive. Not immune to doubt, the higher-type are at risk of abandoning their creation in favor of an outside world that promises material success. It is these creations that have the potential to immortalize the people in which they arise. By accepting the masses, education produces not art, but commodities, not Greeks, but barbarians.

While resentment manifests itself in historical instances of the oppressed attacking their oppressors, underneath the hostility it is the destruction of an ideal entire populations fail to achieve. The resentful destroy through creating. After failing to secure land for himself, Hesiod attacks the aristocracy through poetry that undermines the noble values. “Work is no disgrace;” he writes, “idleness is the disgrace” (310). After failing to restrain his sensuality, Luther attacks the monk through his doctrine of justification by faith. “[T]he impossible monk,” Nietzsche writes, “smashed an ideal he could not attain” (GS 358). After failing to become what they imagined they were, the masses attack the genius by making education available for all. The weak destroy ideals not because they hate them, but because they despise their own nature. They serve as a painful reminder of their limitations. In the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche writes that resentment begins when “the priestly mode of valuation [branches] off from the knightly-aristocratic” (I 7). What he does not include, however, is the cause of this rift. The answer is the aristocracy themselves. In their armor they shone too bright, and as reflections of the impotence of the weak, had to be destroyed.

Nietzsche points to Paul as the embodiment of resentment. He calls him the “Chandala hatred of Rome, against ‘the world’, become flesh” (A 58). As Paul’s contribution to the spread and doctrine of Christianity shows, it is not that the resentful lack will, but that their will is pointed the wrong way. It is directed away from life and all that increases the will to power. They

possess an envy, hatred, and vengeance that lead not to conflict, but castration. While written about as a homogenous group, the “slaves” or “weak” are divided into two categories: those with enough will to try and be more than they are, but not enough to succeed, and those with so little will they do not try at all. After two thousand years of struggle, resentment has succeeded in leveling the will of humanity. Today, everything is much more equal. Its victory can be seen in the way slave morality has become the dominant morality, as well as by the sight of modern populations. Lacking vitality, the masses have no desire for challenge. Their horizon goes no further than a comfortable job followed by a comfortable chair. Because they suffer from what they are, the first group may be called the “sick”.⁸ It includes the figures of Luther, Paul, and Socrates. Because they take on the appearance of tame animals not even aware of what they are, the second may be called the “herd”. They are represented by the idea of the “last man” who may not be just an idea.

Nietzsche alludes to this division in “Educational Institutions”. In relation to students who become disillusioned with themselves, Nietzsche writes: “There you have the picture of this glorious independence of yours, of that academic freedom, reflected in the highest minds – those which are truly in need of culture, compared with whom that other crowd of indifferent natures does not count at all” (FEI 133). An examination of Nietzsche’s educational theory must consider not only the training of the highest and lowest, but also the sick who find themselves stuck in the middle.

1.5 The Blessing of Work

Within the aristocracy of the future, the education of the sick has two aims. It is to provide consolation as well as prevent the spread of resentment. The way the sick infect the herd with hatred or “nausea” for their nature is demonstrated by the case of Socrates.

⁸ In the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche writes: The *sick* are man's greatest danger; *not* the evil, *not* the ‘beasts of prey.’ Those who are failures from the start, downtrodden, crushed - it is they, the *weakest*, who must undermine life among men, who call into question and poison most dangerously our trust in life, in man, and in ourselves. Where does one not encounter that veiled glance which burdens one with a profound sadness, that inward - turned glance of the born failure which betrays how such a man speaks to himself - that glance which is a sigh! ‘If only I were someone else,’ sighs this glance: ‘but there is no hope of that I am who I am: how could I ever get free of myself? And yet - I *am sick of myself!*’ (III 14)

While in *Tragic Age*, Socrates is included among the pure types, in *Twilight*, Nietzsche suspects him of resentment (“Socrates” 7). As can be seen from his image, Socrates lacks the will to be noble. Without a commanding drive, his life is a succession of extremes, each emotion contorting his face a different direction until it solidifies into a grotesque mask. Excluded by an appearance that reveals his reality, Socrates attacks the nobility by placing reason at the center of Greek life. The strong are faced with a choice: either learn to argue, or learn to lose. “With Socrates,” Nietzsche writes, “Greek taste suddenly changed in favor of dialectics: what really happened here? Above all, a noble taste was defeated; with dialectics, the rabble rises to the top” (5). The problem with reason-as-ruler is that it is not a drive, but “tool” (BGE 191). While will determines the end, reason works out the means. In ages that do not respect will, reason dresses the will up as itself by supporting beliefs arrived at instinctually with *reasons*. By replacing a drive for reason, Socrates commits the very un-aristocratic move of exchanging a monarch for its attendant.

Dialectics, however, is not among Socrates’s charges. In *Apology*, he is condemned for “corrupting the young,” that is to say, for undermining the Athenian’s faith in themselves by encouraging them to know themselves. Socrates robs the Athenians of their Periclean confidence through examination. By questioning politicians, poets, and craftsman until they contradict, he shows the rich and poor alike that they are not as wise as they think. He shows them “they think they are somebody when they are nobody” (Plato 44). Socrates undermines Athenian confidence a second way by setting himself up as an ideal one cannot help but fall short of. One becomes what one is not only by thinking back on what one has loved, but by striving forward towards an image. As image, Socrates is unchanging, being the same in public and private life. After establishing the tyrant of reason within himself, he is disciplined, persuading not with pathos, but argument. Courageous, he disregards death in pursuit of the good. Socrates provides such an example that a Socratic ideal is established independent of his life. As to why he does not cry or bring his family to trial, Socrates explains: “it does not seem right to me to do these things, especially at my age and with my reputation. For it is generally believed, whether it be true or false, that in certain respects Socrates is superior to the majority of men” (38). Socrates becomes a standard that even Socrates must live up to.

Before one can feel hatred towards one's self, one must first know one's self. While Socrates claims that the unexamined life is not worth living, for the majority, it is the *examined* life that is worthless. Only after one turns the spotlight inward and discovers the absence of a calling does life take on the appearance of a mistake. The key to protecting against resentment is preventing the herd from achieving self-enlightenment at the hands of the sick. Socrates speaks truly when regarding his sentence, he tells the jury: "You did this in the belief that you would avoid giving an account of your life" (42). In the aristocracy of the future, the sick who seduce the herd with knowledge must be managed, requiring not just an educator, but a priest.⁹

In Nietzsche's writing, the philosopher, educator, and priest bleed into one other. In *Untimely Meditations*, he writes the philosopher-educator. In the *Genealogy*, he describes the philosopher-priest, as well as the priest-educator who "trains" (III 18) the sick in methods of consolation. At first, the priest looks like an enemy of life. His teaching of humility and chastity discourages life as both the increase of will and the continuation of the species. The figure's appearance in every age, however, reveals its necessity for life.

The priest promotes the life of the weak by attaching metaphysical significance to their way of being. After encountering a people tired of both themselves and their existence, Paul seduces the Mediterranean back to life by interpreting their tired existence as the bridge to another world (GS 353). But while "savior" (GM III 15) to the weak, the priest's supreme value for life comes from the way he protects the higher-type, and consequently the future life of humanity.¹⁰ The priest safeguards the great not by interpreting their existence, but by controlling the resentment of the sick. "[I]f one wanted to express the value of the priestly existence in the briefest formula," Nietzsche writes, "it would be: the priest *alters the direction of resentment*" (15). While the

⁹ In *Beyond*, Nietzsche writes: "The philosopher as we understand him (...) this philosopher will make use of religion for his breeding and education work [...] Finally, as for the common people, the great majority, who exist and are only *allowed* to exist to serve and to be of general utility, religion gives them an invaluable sense of contentment with their situation and type" (61).

¹⁰ "[T]he higher *ought* not to degrade itself to the status of an instrument of the lower, the pathos of distance *ought* to keep their tasks eternally separate! Their right to exist, the privilege of the full-toned bell over the false and cracked, is a thousand times greater: they alone are our *warranty* for the future, they alone are *liable* for the future of man" (GM III 14).

priest makes the strong “weak,” he makes the weak “tame” (15). He renders the sick harmless, able to live within society without attacking their masters.

The most “interesting” way the priest manages the hatred of the sick is by intervening at the destructive stage of resentment, and redirecting their anger back towards themselves. With the concept of sin, the priest reminds his followers that their failure to become more than they are is the result of their limited nature, and further, that they are ultimately responsible for it: “Man, suffering from himself in some way or other (...) receives a hint, he receives from his sorcerer, the ascetic priest, the *first* hint as to the ‘cause’ of his suffering: he must seek it in *himself*, in some *guilt*, in a piece of the past” (20). As to why Christians are unable to achieve salvation by following the law, for example, Luther explains that it is not because the law is impossible in itself, but because they have inherited their parents’ transgression, which makes it impossible for them. As with all ideals, the law is not only what the weak strive for, but what reveals themselves to themselves. The commandments, Luther writes, “are intended to teach man to know himself, that through them he may recognize his inability to do good and may despair of his own ability” (57). Luther is an example of both the sick and the priest. He is the curious case of a sickness that educates itself out of its destructive path. While Luther destroys the law as the monks’ means to salvation, he maintains the law as good works that follow from the good Christian.

In addition to turning the sick into sinners, the priest also forms them as workers. The priest’s “innocent” means of managing resentment is the prescription of “mechanical activity” (GM III 18). While guilt redirects the anger of the sick, work redirects their focus. “The alleviation consists in this,” Nietzsche writes, “that the interest of the sufferer is directed entirely away from his suffering – that activity, and nothing but activity, enters consciousness” (18). For the sick, toil has a number of advantages. First, as exhausting activity, work reduces will to the lowest point. At the level where the individual has energy for only the simplest of pleasures, the will no longer strives, and consequently, no longer experiences the pain of conflict. Second, as an activity characterized by constant employment, work does not allow time for melancholy reflection. To know oneself can be a painful truth, and while Oedipus reacts by destroying a means to truth, the priest teaches the sick to simply hide the truth behind the busyness of a job. Third, as a space filled with the “petty pleasures” (18) of doing good, helping, and rewarding,

work provides small victories that re-inflate will. Alone in their nook, workers feel a regained potential for greatness. Once more they believe they can make the jump between what they are, and what they want to be.

Each type of work represents an increase in alienation from the truth of one's self as limited nature determined by will. In exhausting work, the sick are aware of the painful truth, but no longer care. In busy work, the awareness is pushed out of consciousness. In rewarding work, the painful truth is replaced with pleasurable illusion. In the aristocracy of the future, mechanical activity performs two essential functions: it provides the surplus labour on which art depends, as well as an activity in which the sick can forget themselves.

1.6 Conclusion

In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche explains that his ability to see through morality to its cause and motivations is a result of the way he has experienced life from the perspective of both the healthy and the sick ("Wise" 2). Sickness here refers not to Nietzsche's physical ailments, but to decadence in the sense of a condition in which one chooses a life detrimental to one's will. As soon as Nietzsche begins to pay attention to the "small things," not only does he cease to be decadent, but he ceases to be sick. In addition to sickness as decadence, however, Nietzsche also writes from the sickness of *resentment*, from the pain of an artist who struggles to live up to the ideal of his educator: "If we think of how much Schopenhauer for instance must have *heard* during the course of his life, then we might well say to ourselves afterwards: 'Alas, your deaf ears, your dull head, your flickering understanding, your shriveled heart, all that I call mine, how I despise you! Not to be able to fly, only to flutter!'" (UM III 5). Nietzsche does not write from two perspectives, but from two *sets* of perspectives: from decadence to the "well-turned-out," from resentment to the Schopenhauerean image of man. While in *Meditations*, Nietzsche is the fig that longs to ripen if only it were not in the shade, in *Zarathustra* he approaches the sun. During its creation, he is "'6000 feet beyond man and time'" (EH "Z" 1).

But while Nietzsche's ego may soar above the Earth, his philosophy remains within it. Instead of the world-view of the metaphysician, Nietzsche offers a perspective, his theory of will remaining at the stage of "proposition" (BGE 36). Failing to create "a picture of life as a whole" (UM III 3),

Nietzsche's contempt for his inability to approximate the Schopenhauerean man turns into anger, and he begins to direct his criticism towards the flute-playing pessimist. The greatest indicator of Nietzsche's destructive vengeance is that by the time of *Ecce Homo*, the image of Schopenhauer has disappeared: "In the *third* and *fourth* Untimely Ones, two images of the hardest self-love, self-discipline are put up (...) Schopenhauer and Wagner *or*, in one word, Nietzsche" ("UM" 1). In the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche explains that in order to educate the sick, the priest himself must be sick, for "how else would they understand each other?" (III 15). While for philosophers of the future, Nietzsche assumes the role of Schopenhauer as educator, in his insight into the management of resentment, he is very much the ascetic priest.

Chapter 2

2 The Religion of Comfortableness: Nietzsche's Critique of Epicurean Pleasure

Despite teaching that death is nothing to be feared, Epicurus did not want to die. In *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, Diogenes Laertius writes that Epicurus's last words are not about the repayment of his debt, but the remembrance of his work.¹¹ By summarizing his technical writing in the more digestible letters, Epicurus protects himself against the death of being forgotten, and the success of his defense can be seen in the ethical hedonism of utilitarianism. Like Epicurus, John Stuart Mill identifies the good with pleasure. "[E]very writer," he explains, "from Epicurus to Bentham, who maintained the theory of utility, meant by it, not something to be contradistinguished from pleasure, but pleasure itself, together with exemption from pain" (277). But while Epicurus is remembered in the work of Mill, in the work of Nietzsche, his extended life in moral philosophy comes under threat. In what follows, I trace the development of Nietzsche's relationship to Epicurus, and show the way his revaluation of values replaces pleasure with human greatness as the standard for moral evaluation. I contend that Nietzsche's objection to Epicureanism is that as a way of life dedicated to the pursuit of pleasure, it works against the development of the higher-type who need the pain of resistance for the increase of will.

2.1 The Goal of Pleasure

The goal of Epicureanism is a pleasure composed of *aponia* and *ataraxia*. While *aponia* is the state of a pain-free body, *ataraxia* is the state of mental tranquility. The advantage of pleasure is that in comparison to the goals of the other Hellenistic schools, it is not difficult to understand. One can imagine students of Zeno wondering to themselves if they are living in harmony yet. Epicureanism rests on the pillars of psychological hedonism as the belief that human action is motivated by an aversion to pain, and ethical hedonism as the belief that only pleasure has moral value. "I do not know how I shall conceive the good," Epicurus writes, "if I take away the

¹¹ "Hermippus relates that he entered a bronze bath of lukewarm water and asked for unmixed wine which he swallowed, and then, having bidden his friends remember his doctrines, breathed his last" (X 16-18).

pleasures of taste, if I take away sexual pleasures, if I take away the pleasure of hearing” (*Fragments* 10).¹²

In his letters, Epicurus provides instruction on how to manage fear and desire as obstacles to pleasure. The desire to possess can lead to the fear of loss, and the pleasure that follows the gratification of desire is itself often followed by pain. Epicurean ethics seeks to free its adherents from such complications through an *askesis*, or training, of the appetitive element. “We must consider that of the desires some are natural and others idle,” Epicurus writes, “of the natural desires, some are necessary while others are natural only” (*Letter to Menoeceus* 128). Epicureans reflect on the difference between desires, and work to limit the need for those that are neither natural nor necessary through the gradual reduction of the frequency of their gratification. Desire is treated as a force that grows when gratified, but withers when starved.

One attack leveled at Epicurus by both his Roman and Christian readers is that by placing the sensual needs of the mortal body over the spiritual aspirations of the immortal soul, he encourages his followers to live the life of animals. Cicero quips: “Epicurus, brought forward out of his sty, not out of his school” (*Against Piso* 238). This objection, however, is based on the idea of pleasure as something positive, as the happiness experienced in action for example. While Epicurus does acknowledge the existence of positive pleasure,¹³ the pleasure he establishes as the highest good is the negative pleasure of the absence of mental and physical pain. It is the feeling of satiation after eating, of relaxation after exercise, of reflection after suffering. Far from encouraging the gratification of every desire, Epicurus teaches his followers to be selective when deciding what desire to indulge. Desires that come with pain are avoided, while pains that end in pleasure are endured. Epicureanism is beyond good and evil in the sense

¹² Before setting up his school in Athens around 306 B.C.E, Epicurus studied the philosophy of Democritus. In *On the Goal of Life*, Cicero explains that Democritus “neglected his ancestral estate and left his farm uncultivated because he was searching for - what else - happiness (...) he calls the chief good ‘contentment’ and often ‘equanimity’, which is to say, a mind freed of fear (qtd. in Waterfield190). As a modified version of Democritus’s contentment, the Epicurean flight from pain that Nietzsche comes to critique so much derives in part from the pre-Platonics he loves so much.

¹³ “Peace of mind and freedom from bodily pain are static pleasures; joy and gladness, however, are regarded as active emotions, in accordance with their motility” (*Fragments* 1).

of belief in opposites, for it acknowledges that a single source can give rise to both suffering and joy.

2.2 An Initial Romance

In his middle period, Nietzsche's comments on Epicurus are overwhelmingly positive. While John Stuart Mill is called "flathead" (WP 30), Epicurus is named "soul-soother of later antiquity" (WS 7). During this time, Epicurus assists Nietzsche in overcoming the "metaphysical need of man" (HH 37). Taken from the title of Schopenhauer's essay "On Man's Need for Metaphysics,"¹⁴ the metaphysical need refers to the West's dependence on the division of reality for the solace of its pain. The most familiar consolation is the Christian teaching that beyond the experience of the everyday there exists a world where the faithful will live for eternity. Nietzsche reveals his own metaphysical need in a letter to Carl von Gersdorff. In it, he suggests that the value of a philosophy depends on its ability to transport readers into the immaterial. Nietzsche writes the letter after learning of the death of his friend's son:

This is a time in which you can test for yourself what truth there is in Schopenhauer's doctrine. If the fourth book of his chief work (...) does not have the power to raise you up and lead you through and beyond the outward violent grief (...) to that mood in which one sees that earthly veil pull away from oneself – then I too want to have nothing more to do with this philosophy. (qtd. in Middleton 20)

In his published writing, Nietzsche expresses the metaphysical need in *Birth of Tragedy*. The work begins with the idea that the ancient Greeks experienced tremendous suffering, and concludes that to overcome their pain, they invented Gods and theatre. "The Greeks knew and felt the fears and horrors of existence," Nietzsche writes, "[I]n order to be able to live at all they had to interpose the radiant dream-birth of the Olympians between themselves and those horrors" (BT 3). Nietzsche describes the Greek experience of tragedy using the terms of Schopenhauer's philosophy, which divides reality into the illusionary world of appearance, and the true world of

¹⁴ "[I]t is the knowledge of death, and therewith the consideration of the suffering and misery of life," Schopenhauer writes, "that give the strongest impulse to philosophical reflection and metaphysical explanation of the world" (WWR II 161).

will. For Schopenhauer, everything in the world of appearance, including humans, is a manifestation of will as endlessly striving force. Will can be seen in the way gravity pushes forever downwards, and felt in the way the gratification of one desire leads to the longing of a new one. Nietzsche argues that during a performance, the Greeks identify not with the suffering characters on stage who represent appearance, but with the chorus, which in its unification of many voices into one, symbolizes will. While identified with the chorus, spectators gain momentary insight into the illusion of their individuality and feel unconcerned about the problems of existence from the vantage point of will. For Nietzsche, tragedy provides the audience with “the metaphysical consolation (...) that whatever superficial changes may occur, life is at bottom indestructibly powerful and joyful (...) remaining the same for ever, regardless of the changing generation and the path of history” (BT 7). Tragedy assures spectators that after death they will continue to live on in the form of will as eternal essence of the world.

Although *Birth of Tragedy* examines how metaphysics is used to successfully overcome pessimism, in his middle works, Nietzsche starts to question the value of metaphysical consolation. To begin with, he accuses religion of exaggerating the amount of pain in the world. “All preachers of morals as well as all theologians share one bad habit,” he writes, “all of them try to con men into believing that they are in a very bad way and need some ultimate, hard, radical cure” (GS 326). Life has been represented as miserable for so long that the representation has become the truth. But like the morality of an action, life’s essential misery has not been discovered in the world, but created and laid on top of it. Secondly, Nietzsche critiques the effectiveness of metaphysical consolation. Unlike scientific methods, religious comforts remove the feeling rather than the source of pain. “When we are assailed by an ill we can dispose of it either by getting rid of its cause or by changing the effect it produces on our sensibilities,” Nietzsche writes, “Religion and art (and metaphysical philosophy too) endeavor to bring about a change of sensibility” (HH 108). Nietzsche calls Christianity’s strategy of masking pain “intoxication” (GS 370). One intoxicant, represented by the verse, “whom God loveth he chastiseth,” is the reinterpretation of pain so that it is seen not as the result of bad governance or poor health, but as a sign of divine favour. Nietzsche’s third critique is that metaphysical consolations create more pain than they remove. “It has been the means of comfort which have bestowed upon life that fundamental character of suffering it is now believed to possess” (D 52) he writes. In order to relieve the uncertainty of not knowing why one suffers, for instance,

Christianity provides the answer of sin. But as this response leads to guilt and the fear of being uncomfortably hot for eternity, the result is more pain than the original condition of ignorance.

While critical of religious consolations, Nietzsche acknowledges they are developed in response to real pain, and that banishing them from society before science is ready to provide alternative palliatives, leads to a crisis in which moderns have no means for alleviating suffering:

How one would like to exchange the false assertions of the priests that there is a God who desires that we do good (...) for truths that would be as salutary, pacifying and beneficial as those errors are! Yet such truths do not exist (...) The tragedy, however, lies in the fact that one cannot *believe* these dogmas of religion and metaphysics (...) while on the other hand one has, through the development of humanity, grown so tender, sensitive and afflicted one has need of means of cure and comfort of the most potent description. (HH 109)

It is here that Epicurus assists Nietzsche in overcoming the metaphysical need by providing him with two consolations that do not depend on splitting the world in half. They come in the form of concern for the “closest things” (WS 5), and the technique of “putting on ice” (EH “HH” 1). Keith Ansell-Pearson argues that “it is primarily from [Epicurus] that [Nietzsche] gets the inspiration to detach from the first and last things and to devote attention to the closest things” (101). As the knowledge and practices necessary for well-being in the physical world, the closest things include sleep, socializing, and contemplation (WS 6). In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche calls the closest things of nutrition, place, and climate “more important than everything one has taken to be important so far” (“Clever” 10). While an Epicurean concern for the closest things is not evident from Ansell-Pearson’s essay, an examination of the teachings of Epicurus reveals a concern for the individual as purely physical being. On health he writes: “A stable physical condition and assurance of its continuance furnish the highest and most certain joy” (*Fragments* 90). On nutrition he explains: “I revel with pleasure in the body, living as I do on bread and water; I spit on extravagant pleasures” (37). As well as helping him overcome Christianity, Epicurus shows Nietzsche that one can write about food and still be called a philosopher.

Concern for closest things serves as consolation by protecting against the pain caused by Christianity’s denial of the body. It is not sin but “being unknowledgeable in the smallest and most everyday things (...) that transforms the earth for so many into a ‘vale of tears’” (WS 6).

As to why the closest things are ignored, Nietzsche points to power-hungry priests who direct human understanding towards speculative topics such as the nature of God. After looking past what is necessary for their health, the religious seek out the priest for guidance. “We must again become good neighbors to the closest things,” Nietzsche advises, “and cease from gazing so contemptuously past them at clouds and monsters of the night” (WS 16). Concern for the closest things is to become a sign of living in a post-metaphysical reality. When the idea of the real world is abolished, whether in the form of Christianity’s afterlife or Schopenhauer’s will, it is not only the apparent world that is destroyed, but the concerns of the real world as well (TI “Real World”). The sky really does become the limit and individuals have nothing else to care for than the materiality of the everyday.

The second consolation Nietzsche borrows from Epicurus is the art of “putting on ice.” It is the provision of multiple hypotheses for phenomena typically thought to have only one. “Epicurus,” Nietzsche writes:

had that wonderful insight (...) that to quieten the heart it is absolutely not necessary to have solved the ultimate and outermost theoretical questions [...] [W]hen some hypothesis belonging half to physics and half to morals had cast gloom over someone’s spirits, he refrained from refuting this hypothesis and admitted it might well be true: but he added that there was *yet another* hypothesis to explain the same phenomenon [...] Thus he who wishes to offer consolation (...) should call to mind the two pacifying formulae of Epicurus (...) Reduced to their simplest form they would perhaps become: firstly, if that is how things are they do not concern us; secondly, things may be thus but they may also be otherwise. (WS 7)

For Epicurus, the foot that most frequently kicks up sand in the tranquil mind is the fear of punishment in the afterlife (*Letter to Herodotus* 81). The fear is connected to the popular image of spectating deities who squint down at humankind with their whips held high in expectation. Epicurus fights the belief by providing alternative explanations for natural phenomena thought to be proof of supernatural forces. On thunder and lightning he writes: “Thunder may result from the confinement of wind in the hollows of clouds (...) and the booming sound of fire filled with air inside of them, or else by the breakup of clouds that have congealed into a form like ice. Phenomena require us to admit that this event, like them all, occurs in various ways” (*Letter to Pythocles* 100). By persuading his followers that thunder can be caused by something other than

ill-tempered Gods, Epicurus reduces the fear associated with the thought that violent natural phenomena are expressions of divine displeasure.

Neither Nietzsche nor Epicurus argues against a belief in the effort to disprove it. Instead, they provide alternative explanations that surround an offending belief and make it less persuasive through the doubt they cast on its probability. In *Human*, the work in which “[o]ne error after another is coolly placed on ice” (EH “HH” 1), Nietzsche applies the Epicurean technique to the ideal of the “genius”. Nietzsche counters that rather than being born great, geniuses become great. “Do not talk about giftedness, inborn talents!” he writes, “One can name great men of all kinds who were very little gifted. They *acquired* greatness, became ‘geniuses’” (HH 163). Second, Nietzsche contends that the skills of the genius are no different than those of any other labourer. Like farmers, they need to know how to toil. Like salesman, they need to know how to close. Possessing no x-ray vision that allows them to see beyond the veil of appearance, geniuses develop their skill over time. Third, Nietzsche presents the genius as an idea developed by the ego to defend itself from deflation. “Because we think well of ourselves, but nonetheless never suppose ourselves capable of producing a painting like one of Raphael’s,” he explains, “we convince ourselves that the capacity to do so is quite extraordinary (...) or, if we are still religiously inclined, a mercy from on high” (HH 162). By seeing the genius as a statistical outlier or religious miracle, comparison becomes impossible. One avoids ever standing next to the talented, and having the height one one’s skill revealed in relation to theirs. Finally, Nietzsche contends that the genius, as well as the work of the genius, is an appearance cultivated by artists aware of humanity’s prejudice that what becomes is of less value than what has always been. “The artist knows that his work produces its full effect when it excites (...) a belief that it came into being with a miraculous suddenness,” he writes, “and so he may assist this illusion and introduce those elements of rapturous restlessness” (HH 145). Although investments are encouraged to mature, and wines are left to age, great art is expected to be born stork-like without any effort. With this belief in mind, artists hide how much time went into the final product.

In addition to helping him overcome the metaphysical need, Epicurus earns Nietzsche’s admiration for being an ally in the war against Christianity. As a rival of the Academy, the Garden opposes Platonism as the germ of Christianity. Joseph Vincenzo argues that for

Nietzsche, Epicurus represents “a counter movement against the latent, pre-existing form of Christianity which came into the world for the first time in Hellenistic Greece with the rise of Platonism” (383). By presenting the Gods as indifferent and death as definitive, Epicurus removes the threat of Hell as one of Christianity’s methods of control. “Christianity discovered the idea of punishment in Hell throughout the whole Roman Empire,” Nietzsche writes, “[A]ll the numerous secret cults has brooded over it with especial satisfaction as on the most promising egg of their power. Epicurus believed he could confer no greater benefit on his fellows than by tearing up the roots of *this* belief” (D 72). Epicureanism and Platonism disagree point for point on the fundamental questions of philosophy. While Platonism presents empirical reality as the manifestation of Forms, Epicureanism explains it in terms of atoms in the void. While Platonism has knowledge arriving through the soul’s rational element, Epicureanism sees it coming through the senses. Most importantly, while Platonism executes the metaphysical division of reality and locates ultimate value in the immaterial, Epicureanism places good and bad in the everyday world of the senses. For Nietzsche, Epicurus represents a life-affirming alternative to the devaluation of the apparent begun by Platonism, and continued by Christianity.

2.3 A Disguised Epicurean

While Nietzsche’s middle period presents Epicureanism and Christianity as enemies, his work of the late 1880s reveals them to be in agreement. As ways of life, both Epicureanism and Christianity are dedicated to attaining a state of being in which all pain is absent. To “human beings of late cultures,” Nietzsche writes, “[h]appiness appears to them, in agreement with a tranquilizing (for example, Epicurean or Christian) medicine and way of thought, pre-eminently as the happiness of resting” (BGE 200). For Epicureans, this happiness is represented by the pleasure of a healthy body and calm mind, while for Christians it is found in union with God. As individuals, Christian and Epicurean suffer from a weak will. “[T]here are two kinds of sufferers,” Nietzsche writes in book five of *Science*:

first, those who suffer from the *over-fullness of life* (...) and then those who suffer from the *impoverishment of life* and seek rest (...) or intoxication, convulsions, anesthesia, and madness. All romanticism in art and insight corresponds to the dual needs of the latter type [...] Thus I gradually learned to understand Epicurus, the opposite of a Dionysian

pessimist; also the ‘Christian’ who is actually only a kind of Epicurean – both are essentially romantics. (370)

By suffering from “the *impoverishment of life*,” Epicurean and Christian can be understood to suffer from a lack of will, for as Nietzsche emphasizes: “life simply *is* will to power” (BGE 13, 259). This second point of similarity follows from the first, and Nietzsche arrives at it through the art of the “backward inference” (GS 370). While commentators typically explain the work using the biographical details of the author, Nietzsche explains the author using the details of the work. It is from the observation that philosophy after Socrates continually underlines the importance of moderation, for instance, that he infers the instinctual anarchy of late Greece (D 165). The jump from text to author rests on Nietzsche’s belief that thought comes from and therefore reflects on will (GM “Preface” 2). While strong wills give rise to philosophies that advocate ambition and contest, weak wills encourage contentment and withdrawal.

Nietzsche sees Epicurean and Christian as two expressions of the same widespread depression of will he first glimpses through the figure of Socrates. In contrast to the instinctual anarchy of fifth century, the pre-Platonics had themselves under control thanks to a healthy will capable of folding back on itself and placing all drives under the direction of one. They had no need to escape into the ideal as can be seen from the realism of Thucydides (TI “Ancients” 2). They had no need for a “*counter-tyrant*” (TI “Socrates” 9) as represented by the dialectics of Socrates. As to why the world experienced “a tremendous collapse and disease of the will” (GS 347), Nietzsche is not exactly clear. In keeping with the influence of German Materialism he mentions “dietary mistake[s] made by a whole people over a long period of time” (GS 134). In keeping with the idiosyncrasy of nineteenth-century science, he cites the mixing of races (BGE 200). Nietzsche’s main criticism of Epicurus is not who he is, however, but how he prevents those who follow him from becoming what they are. “Hedonism, pessimism, utilitarianism, eudamonianism,” Nietzsche writes, “these are all ways of thinking that measure the value of things according to *pleasure* and *pain*, which is to say according to incidental states and trivialities [...] Well-being as you understand it – that is no goal; it looks to us like an *end* !” (BGE 225).

2.4 The Value of Pain

Nietzsche plays a number of roles in his writing. When critiquing ideals, he is a vandal pushing over idols in the museum of philosophy. When declaring the death of God, he is a herald who announces what is coming. But while at times vandal and herald, it is as “dynamite” (EH “Destiny” 1) that Nietzsche initiates the revaluation of values, which breaks up the moral landscape by turning evil into good, and good into bad.¹⁵ In the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche explains that as a child he was occupied by the question of the origin of morality, but that this question later turned into the question of its value. “A certain amount of historical and philological schooling,” he writes, “soon transformed my problem into another one: under what conditions did man devise these value judgments good and evil? and what value do they themselves possess?” (“Preface” 3). This second question leads to a second question of its own: from where does a morality derive its value? That is to say, from where does morality pick up the label “good” or “bad”?

In the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche writes of the way morality is used by the weak to level the strong. In *Daybreak*, the work in which his revaluation begins (EH “D” 1), Nietzsche writes of the way morality *should* be used to achieve universal goals. “Only if mankind possessed a universally recognized *goal* would it be possible to propose ‘thus and thus is the *right* course of action,’” he writes, “for the present there exists no such goal” (D 108). For free spirits capable of seeing, the goal of life in the beyond has been seen through and must be replaced. The ship of humanity must have a course. For Nietzsche, the thought that populations are allowed to lounge on deck while humanity floats along is unbearable. “[I]f [one] succeeded in encompassing and feeling within himself the total consciousness of mankind,” he writes, “he would collapse with a curse on existence – for mankind has as a whole *no* goal” (HH 33). Although Nietzsche can think of morality without a God, he cannot think of life without a task lying far outside the present.

¹⁵ It is as dynamite, for instance, that Nietzsche works to reverse the evaluation of “selfish” actions by revealing how all acts are motivated by egoism and determined by a force other than the autonomous “I”. There is no action that does not have its cause in one of a hundred drives or environmental cues, and there is no giving that is not at the same time a taking. Even saints who give their life for their belief take pleasure in the donation through the thought that the reputation they leave behind will pave the way to Heaven. It is fate and self-interest that lie under moral action, and through the acceptance of this honest admission, Nietzsche hopes to “restore to men their goodwill towards actions decried as egoistic and restore to these actions their *value*” (D 148).

By the time Nietzsche writes *Beyond*, the conditions needed for the creation of world-encompassing goals have arrived. First, the death of God has changed the way free spirits conceive of morality. Morals are no longer thought of as unquestionable truths, but as laws capable of being created by the individual. Secondly, “philosophers of the future” (BGE 44) as beings creative enough to fashion goals for all of humanity have begun to come into existence.¹⁶ “*Genuine philosophers*,” Nietzsche writes, “*are commanders and legislators: they say, ‘thus it shall be!’ They first determine the Where To and What For of man*” (BGE 211). In contrast to philosophical labourers who busy themselves with knowing the past, philosophers of the future climb the rungs of poet, moralist, and free spirit to a height from which they can create the goals and corresponding values of the future. More sculptor than knower, Nietzsche’s philosopher is to take humanity from the hands of Christianity, which for two thousand years has been working on one shape: the herd animal. While Christianity protects and produces the weak, the philosopher cultivates the strong: beings with such will they have no need to compare themselves with the misery of others to know that they are happy.

Goals are not unknown today. Refrigerators are covered with lists, best sellers recommend beginning with the end in mind, and at the start of each school year, children write down their academic goals never to think of them again. There are goals that take days as well as years, but outside of the accumulation of wealth, none that last lifetimes. With the ego of a shepherd who sees himself as responsible for the sheep beyond every hill, Nietzsche takes it upon himself to set a destination for the world flock and establishes the goal of human greatness. In “Schopenhauer

¹⁶ While in some passages Nietzsche writes as if philosophers of the future are still in the distance (BGE 203), in others he acts as if they have already arrived. At the end of “‘Good and Evil,’ ‘Good and Bad’”, Nietzsche calls on scholars to investigate the relationship between values and goals from the perspectives provided by their corners of academia. Scholars from philosophy to physiology are to assist the philosopher in determining what values result in what type of people, in the way Nietzsche the philologist allows Nietzsche the philosopher to grasp how the ancient values of cruelty and competition gave rise to the ancient Greeks. Through the historical study of culture, Nietzsche aims to establish what values lead to the greatest number, and what values lead to just the greatest. “*All the sciences have from now on to prepare the way for the future task of the philosophers*,” he writes, “*this task understood as the solution of the problem of value, the determination of the order of rank among values*” (GM I 17). While in *Beyond*, Nietzsche writes as a free spirit awaiting the philosopher, in the *Genealogy*, a philosopher of the future has arrived, and he looks a lot like Nietzsche.

as Educator,” he writes of “the procreation of genius – which is the goal of all culture” (3). In *Ecce Homo*, he writes of “the greatest of all tasks, the attempt to raise humanity higher (“BT” 4). Although Nietzsche objects to the metaphysical division of reality into two worlds, he has no trouble dividing humanity into two groups.¹⁷

It is from this goal of the elevation of humanity that morality picks up the label “good” or “bad”. If an “evil” such as cruelty contributes to the development of the higher type, it is revalued (BGE 44). If a “good” such as sympathy delays their appearance, it is passed over (GM “Preface” 6). In *Nietzsche on Morality*, Brian Leiter writes that “[w]hat unifies Nietzsche’s seemingly disparate remarks – about altruism, happiness, pity, equality, Kantian respect for persons [and] utilitarianism - is that he thinks a culture in which such norms prevail as morality will be a culture which eliminates the conditions for the realization of human excellence” (129). Morality is to be the soil in which greatness grows, and Nietzsche’s fundamental objection to Epicureanism is that as a way of life devoted to the avoidance of pain, it hinders the development of the higher type who need to suffer to come into being. “The discipline of suffering, of *great* suffering – do you not know that only *this* discipline has created all enhancements of man so far?” Nietzsche asks (BGE 225). A step towards Epicurean pleasure is a step away from Nietzschean greatness, and Nietzsche wants every free spirit on his side.

Leiter identifies five features of greatness. The higher type isolate themselves from the herd (BGE 26), are motivated by a task requiring all their talent (EH “Clever” 9), and possess a health defined not by the ability to avoid sickness, but by the ability to overcome it. They have self-reverence, and are life-affirming spirits prepared to answer “yes” if a demon ever happens to ask them if they would like to live it all again. As Nietzsche most often points to Goethe and Beethoven as examples of the higher type, and because the five features are those needed by artists living in a society hostile to all that is not profitable, Leiter equates Nietzsche’s higher-type with great artists. Using a cracked idol picked up off the floor, he writes: “That Nietzsche’s

¹⁷ “None of these ponderous herd animals,” he writes, “wants to know or even sense that ‘the general welfare’ is no ideal, no goal (...) that the demand of one morality for all is detrimental for the higher men; in short, that there is an order of rank between man and man” (BGE 228).

paradigmatic higher type is the artistic genius is worth emphasizing. For, ultimately, Nietzsche admired creative individuals the most” (123).

In order for the relationship between suffering and greatness to be comprehensible, however, two more features need to be added. First, the higher-type are characterized by a wealth of will. In the voice of the future philosopher Nietzsche declares: ““He shall be greatest who can be loneliest, the most concealed, the most deviant, the human beyond good and evil, the master of his virtues, he that is overrich in will. Precisely this shall be called *greatness*”” (BGE 212). Second, the higher-type are at risk of losing will and falling out of greatness. Rather than a fixed measurement, the will fluctuates, and as it does the human slides back and forth along the rope “fastened between beast and Overhuman” (Z “Prologue” 4). While one’s potential amount of will is set by climate (WS 188) and breeding (BGE 213), one’s actual amount is determined by action. Morality is of such importance to Nietzsche because through its influence on behaviour it has the ability to either fill a will to overflowing, or turn a great one dry. In the past, higher types have failed to become what they are due to a combination of Christianity’s corrupting influence, and a lack of knowledge regarding what values are conducive to the growth of will. Now that the relationship between pain and will has been uncovered, suffering is not to be consoled, but encouraged.¹⁸

Bernard Reginster’s interpretation of the will to power further clarifies the relationship between suffering and greatness. In *The Affirmation of Life*, Reginster writes that “[t]he will to power, in the last analysis, is a will to the very *activity of overcoming resistance*” (127). Reginster joins Walter Kaufmann in seeing will as a theory of human motivation rather than hypothesis about the essence of the world. Reginster’s interpretation has the interesting implication that the will to power is also the will to pain, for as he points out, Nietzsche continues Schopenhauer’s

¹⁸ For those who find that what does not kill them makes them weaker, the relationship between suffering and greatness is demonstrated by Nietzsche’s life. While sickness puts an end to most people’s productivity, Nietzsche needs it to write. It is sickness that frees him from Basel, defamiliarizes his world, and forces him to close the book. “Sickness *detached me slowly*,” he writes, “it bestowed on me the necessity of lying still, of leisure, of waiting and being patient. – But that means, of thinking” (EH “HH” 4). It is also illness that provides Nietzsche with the motivation to write. All his works have the impression of being produced in the euphoria that comes after pain. They celebrate the clarity of science in relation to the obscurity of metaphysical, as well as the cheerfulness of the recently recovered in relation to the dark of the sickroom. With a body too sensitive for coffee, the sense of well being one feels after a period of prolonged suffering may have been the only stimulant available.

conception of pain as the feeling that will is hindered. For will to increase, a resistance that is at the same time a suffering must be overcome. But as Epicureans shun most forms of pain, they avoid the very struggle necessary for greatness.

While the great both need and seek out challenge, the Epicurean remains behind the walls of the Garden. “The Epicurean,” Nietzsche writes, “selects the situation, the persons, and even the events that suit his extremely irritable, intellectual constitution; he gives up all others, which means almost everything, because they would be too strong and heavy for him to digest” (GS 306). The Epicurean selects *internal* resistance by starving rather than controlling desire. The Epicurean selects *external* resistance by avoiding social life. “The most perfect means of securing safety from men,” Epicurus writes, “is the assurance that comes from quietude and withdrawal from the world” (*Principal Doctrines* 14). The Epicurean even selects the truth. Unlike Plato’s Academy or Aristotle’s Lyceum, the members of the Garden do not conduct research (Clay 26). No students are sent out to catalogue nature. No geometry is studied before entering. Rather than say how the world really is, its physics aims to say just enough so that its members no longer jump at the sound of thunder. “[W]e must not think that there is any other aim of knowledge about the heavens,” Epicurus writes, “that peace of mind and unshakeable confidence” (*Letter to Pythocles* 85). It is not the will-to-truth that motivates Epicureanism, but the will-to-relaxation.

2.5 Conclusion

In his biography on Nietzsche, Julian Young suggests that Nietzsche is kind to Epicurus in his middle period because it is during this time that he uses Epicureanism to console himself. Seeing Epicureanism as representative of ancient philosophy’s general goal of achieving *eudaemonia*, or well-being, through a way of life, Young writes that Nietzsche’s “bodily condition was (...) precisely the kind of hostile fate Greek philosophy was designed to overcome. It made him a paradigm case for treatment by Epicurean philosophy” (280). A case can certainly be made for the idea that Nietzsche sees in Epicurus the secret to his health. With the exception of *Science*, Nietzsche writes the works of his middle period during his ten-years at Basel, the most painful period of his life. Also, it is in *The Wanderer and his Shadow*, the work during which Nietzsche’s health is at its lowest (EH “Wise” 1), that Nietzsche’s affection for Epicurus is at its

highest. It is here that Nietzsche calls Epicurus the “soul-soother of later antiquity” (7) as well as “one of the greatest of men” (295). After post-war commentary took away his madness, Nietzsche’s pain remains one of the last romantic features of his life biographers are free to emphasize. Pain has become a part of the Nietzsche story with authors challenging themselves to write a description of his health that comes as close as possible to the dramatic without falling over into the hyperbolic. Although Nietzsche is no longer a mad artist, he is still a very sick one. One should not, however, exaggerate Nietzsche’s misfortune. As he himself points out: “We know quite well how to drip sweetnesses onto our bitternesses” (GS 326). In addition to his ailments, one should remember he became a professor at twenty-four. In addition to his loneliness, one should remember he spent winters in Italy and summers in Switzerland. Hostile fate? Nietzsche retired at thirty-four.

Chapter 3

3 The Will to the Desert: Nietzsche's Use and Understanding of Asceticism

In the cosmos of philosophy, the figure of Foucault looms so large that there is a tendency for Nietzsche studies to be pulled into his reading of asceticism as a collection of self-constituting techniques, or “practices of the self”.¹⁹ Hicks and Rosenberg, for instance, write that Nietzsche “repeatedly stresses the positive role of ascetic procedures in contrast to the negative (Pauline) ‘idealization of asceticism’. Ascetic procedures, as opposed to the ascetic ideal, are directed to the end of self-cultivation” (142). Nietzsche, however, never read Foucault. Rather than Hellenistic *askēsis*, his understanding of asceticism comes from the two bibles he grew out of: the New Testament and Schopenhauer’s *World as Will*. In opposition to those who make the case that Nietzsche incorporates asceticism into an ethics of self-fashioning, I argue he repurposes Christian asceticism into a means by which philosophers of the future become what they are through the increase of will. Those who engage in Nietzsche’s “naturalized asceticism” (WTP 915) cannot be said to be fashioned by it, for they are already great on account of their birth.

3.1 An Ethics of Self-Fashioning

In *Contesting Spirit*, Tyler Roberts argues that Nietzsche’s primary concern is the question of how one becomes a tragic artist: “The tragic artist is *not* a pessimist – it is precisely he who *affirms* all that is questionable and terrible in existence, he is *Dionysian*” (TI “Reason” 6). For Roberts, Nietzsche’s answer is the creation of a self-cultivating philosophy one uses to transform into a Dionysian spirit capable of saying “yes” to life. Roberts suggests that by “transfiguring” (19) ascetic techniques to construct a Dionysian spirit, Nietzsche anticipates modern scholarship that sees asceticism not as a negative force that kills desire, but as a positive force that constructs the self. “[S]ome scholars have recently argued that it is a mistake to view all forms of asceticism as pathological phenomena,” he writes, “Instead, they suggest we think about asceticism as

¹⁹ In “The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom,” Foucault explains: “I am now interested in how the subject constitutes itself in an active fashion through practices of the self, these practices are nevertheless not something invented by the individual himself. They are models that he finds in his culture and are proposed, suggested, imposed on him by his culture, his society, and his social group” (291).

askēsis, as an empowering means of re-creating mind and body (...) I argue that Nietzsche himself offers resources for such a rethinking of asceticism” (20).

There are two difficulties with Roberts’s work. First, he assigns a contemporary understanding of asceticism to Nietzsche, rather than looking to the text for Nietzsche’s own.²⁰ Second, in the effort to make Nietzsche anticipate Foucault’s productive power, he misrepresents Nietzsche’s understanding of how asceticism functions. Roberts distinguishes between a dualistic “ascetic ideal” in which spirit denies nature, and a dialectic “naturalized asceticism,” which he applies to Nietzsche. In both Christianity’s ascetic ideal and Nietzsche’s naturalized asceticism, however, there is no synthesis. Asceticism is always dualistic for Nietzsche in the sense that it always involves one part of the individual tyrannizing over another (HH 137, BGE 158). Rather than transfigure Christian asceticism, Nietzsche re-orientates it to achieve non-religious goals.

In “The Aesthetic and Ascetic Dimension of an Ethics of Self Fashioning,” Milchman and Rosenberg follow Roberts in equating Nietzsche’s naturalized asceticism with Foucault’s practices of the self. Regarding the death of God, they write: “Both Nietzsche and Foucault were well aware of the dangers to which this cultural crisis exposed humankind, even as they both responded to it by articulating an ethics and aesthetics of self-fashioning” (44). For the majority, the absence of God brings nihilism, while for free spirits it elicits a joyful sense of possibility. As Nietzsche describes: “we philosophers and ‘free spirits’ feel, when we hear the news that ‘the old god is dead,’ as if a new dawn shone on us (...) At long last the horizon appears free to us again (...) at long last our ships may venture out again” (GS 343). Milchman and Rosenberg argue that for Nietzsche, the death of God means the death of the Christian subject, and that his joy comes specifically from the possibility of creating a new subjectivity. They contend that it is towards new beings that Nietzsche’s ships set sail: the philosopher of the future, the higher-type, the Overman.

In their effort to make Nietzsche’s remarks on the self agree with Foucault’s understanding of asceticism, Milchman and Rosenberg contort the text too far. They write that “for both of these thinkers, philosophy had to *grip* the reader/auditor in a direct and personal way. Both the thinker

²⁰ Roberts writes: “[W]ith the term *asceticism*, I indicate a wide range of what Foucault calls ‘practices of the self,’ that is, practices and disciplines of desire by which a person cultivates his or her subjectivity” (82).

and her audience would undergo a *transformation* as a result of the experience. So, as Nietzsche puts it in *The Gay Science*, “the art of transfiguration *is* philosophy” (45). In the passage this line is taken from, however, Nietzsche is not arguing that philosophy can or should transform the reader. He is suggesting that a philosophy, when viewed as a whole by those who know what to look for, serves as a record of the changes in the author’s health. That is to say, he offers an understanding of philosophy as a reflection of the fluctuations in an author’s will to power. The full passage reads: “A philosopher who has traversed many kinds of health, and keeps traversing them, has passed through an equal number of philosophies; he simply cannot keep from transposing his states every time into the most spiritual form and distance: this act of transfiguration *is* philosophy” (“Preface” 3). An author’s sickness is known through symptoms such as the veneration of rest, and the desire to escape the material world. In philosophy, the first sign takes the form of dogmatism, teleology, and the search for first principles, while the second is most commonly expressed by metaphysical thinking that draws a line through reality and then wonders how to cross it. Nietzsche’s own philosophy is an example of the art of transfiguration. It begins with metaphysics and ends with “war without powder” (EH “HH” 1) as an expression of continual intellectual conflict. In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche takes the reader on a tour of his work as a history of his transition from sickness to health. He points out that on their left they will see the influence of Richard Wagner, and on their right his liberation from idealism. Reading Nietzsche is more accurately thought of as a test. Those without the health required to endure the change in his thought find themselves in the position of Parmenides: swimming for the bank, wondering when winter will put a stop to the flux.

Hicks, Milchman, Roberts, and Rosenberg all argue for a Nietzschean ethics of self-fashioning that maintains individuals are free to not only act, but become whoever they wish. Support for the interpretation is understandable, as at times Nietzsche encourages his readers to regard their life as an art project.²¹ In *Science*, for example, he writes that he and his free-spirited friends “*want to become those we are* – human beings who are new, unique, incomparable, who give themselves laws, who create themselves” (355). In doing so, however, they look past the fact that Nietzsche is not a proponent of free will. He excuses beasts of prey for being unable to be other

²¹ One of the main proponents is Alexander Nehamas. In *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* he writes: “The self, according to Nietzsche, is not a constant, stable entity. On the contrary, it is something one becomes, something, he would even say, one constructs” (7).

than they are, and critiques the practice of punishment for its underlying belief that individuals are in control of their actions.

Brian Leiter resolves the conflict between Nietzsche's expressions of fatalism and self-creation with what he calls Nietzsche's "doctrine of types". He writes that for Nietzsche, "there are essential natural facts about persons that significantly circumscribe the range of life trajectories that persons can realize and that, as a result, make one's life 'fated'" (225). Natural facts include one's values (BGE 208), one's readiness for great responsibility (213), and most importantly, "the expanse of the will" (213). These facts do not determine who individuals will be, but they do place limits on who they may become. Only those of noble birth, for instance, have the potential to become philosophers of the future. "[A] right to philosophy," Nietzsche writes, "one has only by virtue of one's origins (...). Many generations must have labored to prepare the origin of the philosopher; every one of his virtues must have been acquired, nurtured, inherited, and digested singly" (213). Rather than a collection of techniques used for unfettered becoming, Nietzsche's asceticism is the means by which philosophers activate the virtues or "natural facts" that make them candidates for future rule.

3.2 The Ascetic

Aside from the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche's only sustained discussion of asceticism comes in sections 136 to 144 of *Human*. Here he notes that "those strange phenomena of morality usually called asceticism [...] are still unexplained" (136). The absence of secular interpretations for ascetic behaviour is the result of morality's success in defending itself against thought that asks after origin. Knowing the herd experiences the unexplained as proof of the supernatural, as well as a call for those who can make it speak, the priestly class does all it can to maintain the ascetic's miraculous appearance. Nietzsche begins his dissection of the ascetic with the assumption that saintly behaviour has not one, but many origins. Like the genius, he lays the ascetic on ice. "Let us therefore venture first to isolate individual drives in the soul of the saint and ascetic," he writes, "and then conclude by thinking of them entwined together". Here then is Nietzsche's first definition of the ascetic: the ascetic as rope of instinct.

In his dissection, Nietzsche identifies two drives, the first being power. “[C]ertain men feel so great a need to exercise their strength and lust for power,” he writes, “that in default of other objects or because their efforts in other directions have always miscarried, they at last hit upon the idea of tyrannizing over certain parts of their own nature” (HH 137). Power is always becoming in Nietzsche’s work. In *Daybreak*, it is the strength to turn thought into action (42). In the *Genealogy*, it makes its first appearance as a feeling of wellbeing (I 10). In the case of the ascetic, power is both an ability and a feeling that applies only to the ascetic’s tyrannizing, or ruling part. As ability, it is the ruling part’s capacity to force or oppress. As feeling, it is the satisfaction that accompanies successful control. Perhaps in memory of *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche provides the example of a will-to-truth so strong it makes a thinker express beliefs his concern-for-reputation would rather keep silent. The ascetic is the paradigmatic example of the way power is exercised on the self by the self (D 113). While barbarians are full of physical strength and can therefore impose their will in the most obvious way, ascetics are weak even before they fast, and must be content with controlling themselves.

The New Testament plays a role in the division of the Christian ascetic. Regarding the ascetic’s self-rule, Nietzsche writes: “The entire morality of the Sermon on the Mount belongs here: man takes a real delight in oppressing himself with excessive claims and afterwards idolizing this tyrannically demanding something in his soul” (HH 137). The implication is that if one looks close enough, one can see scripture written on the ascetic’s ruling part, for rather than an ambiguous “something,” it is the composite of internalized religious commands. In writing of the New Testament as a force that divides the self, Nietzsche continues a line of thought begun in *Will as World*. In volume two, Schopenhauer places the origin of Christian asceticism in the New Testament, and argues that its primary teaching is denial of the self and world. “[T]he ascetic tendency is certainly unmistakable in genuine and original Christianity,” he writes, “as it was developed in the writings of the Church Fathers from the kernel of the New Testament” (616). For Schopenhauer, pessimism and Christianity both express the need for salvation from a world of misery, and its attainability through the denial of the will (628). The only difference is that while religion has to deliver the truth in allegory, philosophy, which always gives itself the best readers, can show it without veil.

Accompanying the ascetics' drive for power is their oscillation between torment and peace. The behaviour is the result of the way the ruling part alternates between success and failure in subduing the passions. While victory is seen as a sign of grace and experienced as power, defeat is interpreted as proof of damnation and brings on grief. Augustine, for example, after reflecting on how long his hope for chastity has lost out to his love for women, turns to his friend Alypius and asks: "'What is wrong with us? (...) Uneducated people are rising up and capturing heaven, and we with our high culture without any heart – see where we roll in the mud of flesh and blood'" (146). Only after Augustine follows the command to read the Bible, and has his will-to-serve restored to dominance, can he turn to Alypius "with a face now at peace" (153). For Schopenhauer, the ascetic's oscillation is the result of the will's alternating success in denying *itself*. The denial of the will is never complete, for however low it may be brought, it always returns. When kept close to death the ascetic is at peace, but when the will grows back, it brings with it the torment of desire. Where Nietzsche's account of oscillation differs from Schopenhauer's is that he does not see the ascetic as engaged in honest struggle. For Nietzsche, the ascetic's ruling part loses on purpose and allows what it has oppressed to rise up again so that it may continue to experience power through the overcoming of resistance. "[N]ow [the saint] desires a complete cessation of sensations of a disturbing, tormenting, stimulating kind," he writes, "now he seeks conflict and ignites it in himself, because boredom has shown him its yawning face" (HH 142).

The ascetic's oscillation begins after a sudden switch from the affirmation to the denial of life. The most famous case is that of Paul, who leaves for Damascus with hate, and returns with love. Schopenhauer identifies two roads to denial, the first being knowledge of the world as will. Saints capable of penetrating the illusion of individuality understand that all humans are manifestations of will. Recognizing themselves as the source of all suffering, they begin to file themselves down with the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty, and humility, or what Nietzsche calls "[t]he three great slogans of the ascetic ideal" (GM III 8). The more common road to denial is tragedy, as for the majority it is not knowledge but sorrow that allows them to see through appearance. Schopenhauer provides the example of prisoners who once on the scaffold switch from fighting their fate and cursing their enemies, to apologizing for their actions and welcoming death. This "great and rapid revolutionary change in man's innermost nature," he writes, "has hitherto been entirely neglected by philosophers" (WWR II 631).

When in the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche first asks “[w]hat is the meaning of ascetic ideals? [...] What does it mean when an artist leaps over into his opposite?” (III 2), he is responding to Schopenhauer’s call for explanations of the ascetic’s under-theorized adoption of life-denying values. Nietzsche uses the example of Wagner, whose work begins with the hope of changing the world, and ends by expressing the need to escape it. In “Art and Revolution,” Wagner criticizes Paul for teaching Christians to think of their body as a “loathsome dungeon” (59),²² but then in *Parsifal*, approximates Paul through the celebration of chastity. Nietzsche’s answer is that in the case of artists, the adoption of opposing values means nothing, for they are simply the mouthpiece of popular ideas. Nietzsche, who himself uses a few borrowed words, is able to see that when Wagner praises renunciation, it is Schopenhauer who speaks.

The second drive Nietzsche cuts from the saint is concern-for-the-self. “In many respects the ascetic too seeks to make life easier for himself,” he writes, “and he does so as a rule by complete subordination to the will of another” (HH 139). By living under an abbot or according to a book, ascetics free themselves from the discomfort of responsibility. If Saint Antony, for example, the “founder” of Christian monasticism were ever reprimanded for leaving his sister destitute, he could always point to the authority of the Gospel. In his *Life of Antony*, Athanasius explains how Antony goes into the desert after hearing that Jesus told those who wished to be perfect to sell their possessions and give the money to the poor (31). Once in the desert, ascetics continue to make their life easier. They ward off boredom by imagining desires as demons, and their bodies as battlefields on which the forces of good and evil fight. Athanasius relates how during one especially restless night, Antony’s desires assume the form of animals that smash through the walls of his cell.

Visions are the clearest example of the way ascetic behaviour is born of multiple origins, for at the same time as inner-conflict helps ascetics pass the time, it increases their power over others. “It is not what the saint *is*,” Nietzsche writes, “but what he *signifies* in the eyes of the non-saints that gives him his world-historical value” (HH 143). On account of their struggles, ascetics are seen as links to the beyond, making them highly influential figures. After tales of his battles

²² While the ancient Greek was capable of great art because he allowed the expression of every drive, “the [Medieval] Christian, who impartially cast aside both Nature and himself, could only sacrifice to his God on the altar of renunciation” (60).

spread, Antony is forced from his mountain solitude by crowds that come to learn the path to salvation. “[H]e persuaded many to take up the solitary life,” Athanasius explains, “And so, from then on, there were monasteries in the mountains and the desert was made a city by monks” (42).

Where Nietzsche’s explanation of the ascetic departs from Schopenhauer’s is in his theory of drives. For Schopenhauer, asceticism is paradoxical. Denial requires two agents, one of which oppresses the other, but as will is always one substance, it lacks the opposing force necessary for self-denial: “How is the denial of the will *possible*? how is the saint possible? This really seems to have been the question over which Schopenhauer became a philosopher” (BGE 47).

Nietzsche’s resolves Schopenhauer’s paradox by presenting the will as a multiplicity of drives in continual conflict. In *Daybreak*, he writes of the individual as a “totality of *drives*” (119). In *Beyond*, he explains that “every single one of them would like only too well to represent just *itself* as the ultimate purpose of existence” (6). When the ascetic engages in self-denial, it is not the will denying the will, or the soul disciplining the flesh, but one drive saying “no” to and commanding all the others.

As the conscious denial of the instincts, asceticism does not belong to the religious. It is practiced by artists who in order to create must prevent the drives from seeking their separate ends, while simultaneously employing them in the service of creation. “How one becomes what one is,” is the phrase Nietzsche gives to the process in which one’s strongest drive eventually comes to power and puts the others to work in the service of its goals. It is this master drive, what Nietzsche calls the “ruling passion” (UM IV 2), or “organizing idea” (EH “Clever” 9), that represents the ascetic’s ruling part. In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche writes that one becomes what one is by forgetting what one is. It is while consumed with duty that “the organizing ‘idea’ that is destined to rule keeps growing deep down – it begins to command (...) one by one, it trains all subservient capacities before giving any hint of the dominant task, ‘goal,’ ‘aim,’ or ‘meaning’” (“Clever” 9). Nietzsche’s own task is the revaluation of all values, and the drive to which it belongs might be called the will-to-restore, for Nietzsche’s “new” (BGE 212) values are more of a return to older Greek virtues.

3.3 The Philosopher's Discipline

In book five of *Science*, Nietzsche presents his philosophy as a stroll through the remains of Christianity. “We Europeans confront a world of tremendous ruins,” he writes, “The Church is this city of decline” (358). Nietzsche points to what has fallen as well as indicates what still stands. Although entire populations no longer believe in God, for example, the feeling of sin remains. During his walk, Nietzsche also adds to the destruction: “What defines me, what sets me apart from the whole rest of humanity is that I *uncovered* Christian morality [...] [It] is an event without parallel, a real catastrophe” (EH “Destiny” 7-8). Nietzsche uncovers Christianity, exposing its beliefs to the acid rain of criticism, a number of ways. He reveals the origin of Christian morality in resentment. He reveals the effect of Christian values on the higher-type. He reveals the spring of self-interest behind Christian behaviour. It is this last method to which Nietzsche’s dissection of the ascetic belongs, for by discovering the ego in the saint, he destroys their obscuring halo.

While no doubt a vandal, Nietzsche is also an odd conservationist. As the Christians picked through the Ancient world, Nietzsche walks through the Christian one, picking up a stone here and there for use in his construction of human greatness. In *Daybreak*, he writes that those who outgrow religion must be like charioteers who at the end of the track have no choice but to turn around. Nietzsche’s philosophy is such a maneuver. It is the turning around of Nietzsche, who returns to the study of Christianity after his adolescent disillusionment, as well as Christianity itself, which is re-oriented towards life. Nietzsche takes asceticism, Christianity’s “lowest foundation” (GS 358), and repurposes it to assist the philosophers of the future with their task of furthering the development of humanity. This development is not measured by the attainment of a certain condition for all, but by the creation of exemplary individuals whose brilliance will justify the existence of all those who labour to bring them into being.

In *Beyond*, Nietzsche writes that the philosophers’ task demands that they “create values” (211). The etching of tablets, however, is only a part of their responsibility. Divided into three stages, the philosopher’s task begins with a vision of human greatness that reflects insight into the way the human is something that becomes. Zarathustra’s Overman is one example. Secondly, philosophers are to fashion values capable of bringing the ideal into the real. These values will

be a reversal of the Christian morality that caused greatness to make an early exit from world history. In the third and longest stage, philosophers are to rule over an aristocratic society devoted to the realization of their vision. Populations will be sacrificed, and scholars put to work studying the relationship between value and culture. While today it is science that wants to “lay down laws for philosophy” (204), science and its labourers are merely “instruments” (207) to be used by the new philosopher kings. The philosophers’ task requires creativity, knowledge and hardness towards oneself and others. That is to say, it requires will, and asceticism is to be the means to increase it. “I also want to make asceticism natural again,” Nietzsche writes, “in place of the aim of denial, the aim of strengthening; a gymnastics of the will; abstinence and periods of fasting of all kinds” (WTP 915).

It is not difficult to find incitements to denial in the New Testament. Paul instructs his new converts to “deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it” (1 Cor 7:31), and clarifies that although celibacy is not necessary for salvation, it is the preferred state (7:8).²³ The first time asceticism is incorporated into a Christian way of life, however, is in the work of the fourth century monk Evagrius Ponticus. Evagrius writes within the theology of Origen, who under the influence of Alexandrian Platonism understands human souls as originally spiritual beings that have fallen from unity with God. Evagrius presents the ascetic life as three stages a monk must pass through in order to overcome this alienation. There is the practical life occupied with impassibility or the mastery of passion, the contemplative life in which the monk uncovers the truth in beings, and finally the theological life in which the advanced gain insight into the nature of God. “Do you want to take up the solitary life for what it is, and to race after the trophies of stillness?” Evagrius asks, “Leave behind the concerns of the world, the principalities and powers set over them; that is, stand free of material concerns and the passions, beyond all desire” (5). In the *Praktikos*, Evagrius addresses monks engaged in the practical life and offers advice on how to combat the eight evil thoughts or demons. By stirring up desire, demons prevent impassibility and make progression to the next stage impossible. For demons that attack the body, Evagrius recommends fasting. For those such as anger that affect the mind, he counsels the unceasing vigilance of thought. The writings of Evagrius form the theoretical foundation of

²³ For Nietzsche, Paul is responsible for, or at least symbolic of, Christianity’s life denying character. “People like St Paul have an ‘evil eye’ for the passions,” he writes, “they come to know only what is dirty, disfiguring, and heart-breaking about them; hence their ideal impulse seeks the annihilation of the passions” (GS 139).

Egyptian, or early Christian, monasticism (Dunn 16). While Evagrius seems far from Nietzsche, it is to this period that Nietzsche refers when he writes of the philosopher's admiration for "those resolute men who one day said No to all servitude and went into some *desert*" (GM III 7).

Like Christian asceticism, Nietzsche's naturalized asceticism involves self-denial. "Everyday is ill employed," he writes, "in which one has not denied oneself some small thing at least once" (WS 305). The fundamental difference is that while Christian asceticism is practiced in order to weaken that which is denied, natural asceticism is practiced in order to *strengthen* that which denies. Every time the philosopher's ruling idea pushes back a drive that makes its way into consciousness, a resistance is overcome and the will increases (A 2). The philosopher feels happy, more powerful, and increasingly open to challenge. For Nietzsche, Christian asceticism involves denial to the point of death. "The church combats the passions by cutting them off in every sense," he writes, "its technique, its 'cure', is *castration*" (TI "Morality" 1). The drives, however, are not to be killed but "spiritualized", that is to say, *used*. Not only is their overcoming necessary for the experience of power, but their abilities are needed for the completion of the philosopher's task. While the philosopher's discipline is harsh, it is fundamentally instinct friendly, and hence "natural".

Nietzsche's asceticism prepares philosophers for future rule by providing them with practice imposing order on an unruly multiplicity. "Asceticism and puritanism," he writes, "are almost indispensable means for educating and ennobling a race that wishes to become master over its origins among the rabble and that works its way up toward future rule" (BGE 61). Before philosophers can rule society, they must be able to rule themselves. Their master drive must be capable of denying the others, while at the same time ensuring their participation in its task. It is by practicing self-denial until their ruling drives are strong enough to unify their inner lives that philosophers rise above the "rabble" who suffer from instinctual anarchy, and characterize all sick culture.

Asceticism is able to train philosophers on account of the structural similarity between individual and society. Both the noble individual and aristocratic society are composed of a ruling element that imposes a goal, and a mass of conflicting forces that would like to impose their own. "[O]ur body is but a social structure composed of many souls" (BGE 19) Nietzsche writes. A parallel is

established between the ruling drive that makes use of all instincts, and the ruling philosopher who makes use of all scholars. As the philosopher cannot be distinguished from the ruling idea that calls itself “I,” the training it receives through asceticism carries over into its political career.

As well as denial, the philosopher’s discipline shares a methodological approach with Christian asceticism. Philosophers do not become who they are all at once, but rather slowly over the course of a process involving many stages. In section six of *Beyond*, Nietzsche sketches a path to the philosopher that looks not unlike the monk’s path to perfection. He writes:

It may be necessary for the education of a genuine philosopher that he himself has also once stood on all these steps on which his servants, the scientific laborers of philosophy, remain standing – *have to* remain standing. Perhaps he himself must have been critic and skeptic and dogmatist and historian and also poet and collector and traveler and solver of riddles and moralist and seer and ‘free spirit’. (211)

On the stairway to the philosopher, every step represents an increase in will, and asceticism is the means by which the philosopher steps up. When one drive denies another, two swords meet in battle and although the individual is both winner and loser, the will increases. “[W]hat happens here is what happens in every well-constructed and happy commonwealth,” Nietzsche writes, “namely, the governing class identifies itself with the success of the commonwealth” (BGE 19). At the bottom of the stairs lays the nihilist who on account of an extreme impoverishment of will “does not merely say No, but – horrible thought – *does* No” (BGE 208). After hearing the news that God is dead, it is the nihilist who reacts by joining the Russian soldier face down in the snow. Beyond this body sits the skeptic, who on account of a weak will defers all judgment. Nietzsche prescribes the “lulling poppy of skepticism” (208) to combat the nihilist’s will-to-nothingness, for although skeptics are unable to affirm life, they cannot deny it either. The inability to pass judgment is a result of the way classes have mixed and combined their standards of evaluation. As hybrids of master and slave moralities, skeptics find themselves stuck between two equally persuasive arguments, and unable to say either “yes” or “no”. On the third step stands the critic. While skeptics have so many conflicting methods of evaluation that they never determine the value of anything, critics have only one and so feel confident expressing the value of everything.

Like the monk on the path to perfection, the scholar on the path to the philosopher must be wary of obstacles. “The dangers for a philosopher’s development are indeed so manifold,” Nietzsche writes, “that one may doubt whether this fruit can still ripen at all” (BGE 205). The greatest danger is the demon of specialization that impedes progress not by stimulating the drives, but by keeping them silent. Specialists exercise the abilities their field requires, but greatness is defined by the use of all talent, and philosophers are to “betray something of [their] own ideal” (BGE 212). Confined to a discipline, scholars cannot grow their will through contact with fresh streams of thought that must be either worked or thrown out. They cannot change from one who learns what is already the case, to one who plays a role in the creation of the not yet. What distinguishes free spirits from the other steps is that as a result of a “great liberation” (HH “Preface” 3), they are removed from such obstacles. Having flown above all hooks, be it the moralist’s duty or the scholar’s nook, they have the independence to conflict with the outer world, as well as the time to order the inner one.

Considering Nietzsche’s view of academics, it is surprising that he titles section six of *Beyond*, “We Scholars”. “Scholars who at bottom do little nowadays but thumb books,” he writes, “ultimately lose their capacity to think for themselves” (EH “Clever” 8). For Nietzsche, thoughts that arise in the presence of books are mere reactions lacking the possibility of originality. He views reading as a vacation from one’s own ideas, and approves only of thoughts born standing up. While writing about Nietzsche, that is to say, when reading about what others have written, one has the uncomfortable experience of recognizing oneself as the scholar Nietzsche derides. Nietzsche, however, is not above self-denigration. In fact, it is by making fun of himself that he increases his opinion of himself. The artist “arrives at the ultimate pinnacle of his greatness only when he comes to see himself and his art *beneath* him - when he knows how to *laugh* at himself” (EH “Books” 3). Nietzsche includes himself in the title for he too was a scholar, and the path he sets for the philosopher is modeled on the one he followed. Like the philosopher, Nietzsche occupied many identities before becoming what he is.²⁴ “I was many things and in many places in order to be able to become one thing,” he writes, “I *had* to be a scholar, too, for some time” (EH “UM” 3). Like the philosopher, Nietzsche’s thought is characterized by increasing

²⁴ In *Twilight* he writes: “Those were steps for me, and I climbed them, - to do it, I had to get over them. But they thought that I wanted to come to rest on them ...” (“Maxims” 42).

affirmation. While *Tragedy* is written in the shadow of pessimism, *Ecce Homo* ends by expressing allegiance to Dionysus as symbol for the happy acceptance of all that life contains. Nietzsche is concerned about the direction of the will as much as its strength, and at the top of the philosopher's staircase one finds not only the greatest will, but also the loudest "yes".

A final similarity. As with Christian asceticism, the philosopher's discipline is connected to an idea of transcendence. While for the Christian, denial is the means by which the soul goes beyond the material world,²⁵ for the philosopher, asceticism is the means by which the thinker goes beyond the influence of the present. As those who question the unquestionable, philosophers need protection from their age. In "the era of the 'morality of mores'" (GM III 9) when reason was immoral and change the greatest danger, the first contemplatives wore the armor of ascetic madness. It is only by starving themselves into the sand that they could ward off the hostility of the strong. Today, philosophers are still untimely, only it is not their lives that are in danger, but their future as philosophers. Professional comfort offers many chairs and the spread of equality makes greatness taboo. In order to become who they are, philosophers need a space beyond modernity, and asceticism provides a path to such a desert. While for the priest, asceticism "counts as a bridge to that other mode of existence" (11), for the philosopher, "[a]scetic ideals reveal so many bridges to *independence*" (7). By protecting philosophers against distractions that pull them from thought, chastity, poverty, and humility represent the conditions of their cultivation.

3.4 Conclusion

The philosopher's discipline involves more than the individual going beyond the present. As that which equips philosophers to carry out their task of ushering in a new greatness, it participates in humanity going beyond itself. When realized, the philosophers' vision is to be something more than the all too human. If humanity's lucky strikes have been springs, then these new beings will be fountains that like Antony bring life to the desert.

²⁵ Evagrius describes the contemplative mind as "possess[ing] little or no awareness at all of the irrational part of the soul, for knowledge has carried it off to the heights, and separated it from sensible things" (66).

Throughout his writing, Nietzsche worries that humanity is falling back into being. ““All beings have so far created something beyond themselves,”” Zarathustra tells his audience, ““and you want to be the ebb of this great tide and even go back to the beasts rather than overcome the human?”” (Z “Preface” 3). The significance of the Overman is that as a goal humanity can aspire to in the wake of God, it has the potential to prevent another fall. Unlike salvation, however, the philosophers’ vision represents transcendence not *between* worlds, but *within* the world. A recovering metaphysician, the only division Nietzsche allows himself is an ontological-temporal distinction between what the human is now, and what it will be in the future. During his climb among the ruins of Christianity, Nietzsche tips the great chain of being on its side and replaces reason with will. On this horizontal model of being, the human is no longer a hybrid of angel and animal, but creator and creature (BGE 225). Not just the ascetic, every individual is a divided self, composed of drives under a ruler that in its pride calls the other drives “animal”. The greatest threat to the philosopher’s vision is the appearance of the “last man”. As those without the will required for one drive to assume dominance for any length of time, they lack the possibility of self-denial as the internal mechanism by which the will is increased, and the human surpassed. “[O]ne must still have chaos within,” Zarathustra explains, “in order to give birth to a dancing star”” (Z “Preface” 5). Not a stairway to heaven, Nietzsche’s asceticism is a strand in the rope tied between the human and what comes next.

Conclusion

In the face of Nietzsche's writing, it can seem as if there is only one question to ask: what does it mean? Nietzsche is a Delphic thinker who attracts many priests. Walter Kaufmann, for example, writes that "Nietzsche's way of writing (...) make[s] it difficult for the contemporary reader to find out what Nietzsche himself stood for," and so, "[t]he present book aims at a comprehensive reconstruction of Nietzsche's thought" (xiii). In writing of "Nietzsche," commentators imply his work contains a single meaning, and that through the act of interpretation, this meaning can be recovered. In addition to God, however, the author has also died. Today, the meaning of a work is not determined by the intention of an author, but created through the interaction of reader and text. Rather than a vessel of authoritative reading, the work is regarded as a collection of signs that make possible a number of interpretations. Today, one writes not of "Nietzsche," but "Nietzsches".

In the absence of an author to be discovered, the role of commentary changes. Instead of writing to explain what a work means, commentators write to show how it can be *applied*. They ask how a text can be used to solve new problems, or think differently about familiar topics. As seen in the work of William Connolly, these questions are posed to Nietzsche as political thinker. Nietzsche, however, collapses the difference between these approaches. For Nietzsche, the arrival of the philosopher-founder is not a hope, but a necessary event his philosophy helps to bring into being. Regarding the free spirit as the last stage in the philosopher's metamorphosis, he writes: "perhaps I shall do something to speed their coming if I describe in advance under what vicissitudes, upon what paths, I *see* them coming?" (HH "Preface" 2). Nietzsche's writing describes the coming age, at the same time as it participates in its creation, by providing a source of conflict in a current age dedicated to peace. In the effort to determining what Nietzsche means, his free spirited readers struggle against the text, and in struggling, use it to increase their will.

When reading Nietzsche, one contends with incomplete thought. "To understand the most *abbreviated* language ever spoken by a philosopher," he writes in a draft of *Ecce Homo*, "one must follow the *opposite* procedure of that generally required by philosophical literature. Usually, one must *condense*, or upset one's digestion; I have to be diluted" ("Appendix" 2).

While most philosophers use too many words, and have their readers wondering how many pages until the end, Nietzsche includes too few.

Nietzsche begins his inquiry into philosophy through the writing of Diogenes Laertius, and in a sense, he never leaves.²⁶ Like Diogenes, Nietzsche writes about philosophers without being a philosopher in the way his subjects are. He is too interested in personality. He is too interesting, period. With no formal training in philosophy, Nietzsche strays from the norms of the tradition. Instead of taking small steps from proposition to proposition, he follows the pre-Platonics in making imaginative leaps. Instead of deducing from first principles, he infers an author's health from the author's work. In its lack of conventional method, Nietzsche's writing is something less than philosophy, while in its ability to hold the reader's attention, something more.

There are a few explanations as to why Nietzsche does not always include the reasons that lead to his belief. First, they are dishonest, giving the appearance of rationality to what is irrational in origin. Nietzsche follows Hume in maintaining that belief is the sudden product of will rather than a destination one arrives at by following a line of pros and cons (D 358). Second, reasons are a sign of sickness. Dialectics indicate that rationality has been used to establish an internal order that the drives are too weak to impose themselves. The decadence of the fifth century, for example, is seen in the way the Athenians philosophize like they build, with every position supported by the pillar of reason. Most importantly, however, the absence of reasons forces the reader to complete Nietzsche's thought. The "incomplete presentation of an idea, of a whole philosophy, is sometimes more effective than its exhaustive realization," Nietzsche writes, "[M]ore is left for the beholder to do, he is impelled to continue working on that which appears before him so strongly etched in light and shadow, to think it through to the end, and to overcome even that constraint which has hitherto prevented it from stepping forth fully formed" (HH 178).

The value of Nietzsche's writing is that it incites the will to resist. In its ambiguity, it elicits many "no's" that are followed by a search for one's own "yes". As the bricks of his philosophy,

²⁶Nietzsche first reads Schopenhauer in 1865. In 1869 and 1870, he publishes three studies on Diogenes Laertius (Barnes 115).

Nietzsche's aphorisms do not always constitute arguments in the sense of conclusions resting on premises, and so to determine his position on a topic, or his reasons for holding it, readers must add their own thought. They must struggle against the text, increasing the significance of some passages, while downplaying the importance of others, in order to make their interpretation agree with the ideas Nietzsche does present. To interpret Nietzsche is to stargaze. One traces a constellation in the aphorisms by pointing to a few, and leaving the rest in the dark.

When reading Nietzsche, one also contends with contradiction. Both within and between works, Nietzsche's views on a topic change. His thought is rough water and one can easily become sick of it, sick *from* it. For instance, while in *Beyond*, Nietzsche writes of free spirits as potential philosophers who will save humanity from nihilism (211), in the 1886 preface to *Human*, he explains they are a fantasy he uses to save himself from loneliness. In addition to founders, philosophers are those with the courage to question the unquestionable. "Philosophy, as I have so far understood and lived it," Nietzsche writes, "means living voluntarily among ice and high mountains – seeking out everything strange and questionable in existence" (EH "Preface" 3). This solitude, however, is not as voluntary as Nietzsche makes it seem. Ruled by an insatiable will-to-knowledge, philosophers give voice to painful truths that no one wants to hear. The consequence of Nietzsche's all-too-human observations is an isolation he tries to recover from by seeking the company of friends who are no longer there. "Thus," he writes, "when I needed to I once also *invented* for myself the 'free spirits'" (HH "Preface" 2).

A more significant contradiction results when the reader tries to identify the central aim of Nietzsche's philosophy. In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche presents the revaluation of values as "the dominant task" ("Clever" 9) of his ruling drive, only to later call raising the will of humanity "the greatest of all tasks" ("BT" 4). While the first aim is theoretical, involving the study of grey documents, the second requires competition under blue sky. As Nietzsche himself demonstrates, however, most contradiction is only apparent. Opposing terms are reconciled through the discovery of a common origin, or the unveiling of a common goal. Pain and pleasure, for instance, share an origin in resistance. While pain is the experience of resistance, pleasure is the experience of its overcoming.²⁷ Conversely, the conflict between critique of morality and

²⁷ To utilitarians who believe that happiness can be increased through a decrease in suffering, Nietzsche writes: "Oh, how little do you know of the *happiness* of man, you comfortable and good-natured ones! For happiness and

increase of will is dissolved through reference to a common goal. In order for the philosopher's vision of a future greatness to be realized, will must rise to the point of overflowing, which in turn requires the introduction of values that lead to conflict. The result of Nietzsche's genealogical investigation into morality is not only the knowledge of what values to install in the future aristocracy, but the crucial insight that they *can be*. Nietzsche shows that rather than timeless truths, moralities are inventions with history.

When it is not merely apparent, the conflict within Nietzsche's philosophy is the result of the conflict within him. Slave and master moralities have been at war for two thousand years, and "today there is perhaps no more decisive mark of a '*higher nature*,' a more spiritual nature, than that of being divided in this sense and a genuine battleground of these opposed values" (GM I 16). As one adopts the values that maintain one's particular amount of will, to be a composite of master and slave moralities is to waver between a strong and weak will, that is to say, between sickness and health. As a distressed professor, Nietzsche writes approvingly of Epicureanism, while as a good European, he disparages Epicurean pleasure as a precursor to Christian salvation. As a disciple of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche writes within a metaphysical framework, while as an untimely thinker, he recognizes the desire to escape reality as a sign of decadence. Despite his moments of health, however, Nietzsche mourns for lost consolations.²⁸ Once beyond convention, free spirits realize that nets are not only what confine, they are also what catch.

The general consensus in Nietzsche studies is that by the end of his middle period, Nietzsche writes from the perspective of a health that manifests itself in a "Dionysian" affirmation of life. Frank Cameron, for example, writes that in book four of *Science*, Nietzsche outlines an "affirmative ethics" (193) composed of the concepts "eternal return," "becoming what one is," and "*amor fati*". Rather than indications of Nietzsche's victory over resentment, however, these

misfortune are two siblings and twins who either grow up together or – as with you – *remain small* together!" (GS 338).

²⁸ The resilience of the metaphysical need "can be seen from the fact that even when the free spirit has divested himself of everything metaphysical the highest effects of art can easily set the metaphysical strings, which have long been silent or indeed snapped apart, vibrating in sympathy; so it can happen, for example, that a passage in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony will make him feel he is hovering above the earth in a dome of stars with the dream of *immortality* in his heart: all the stars seem to glitter around him and the earth seems to sink farther and farther away" (HH 153).

ideals express his ongoing struggle against it. When the appearance of Socrates is kept in mind, section 276 reads as acceptance of one's inability to be other than what one is: "I want to learn more and more how to see what is necessary in things as what is beautiful in them - thus I will be one of those who make things beautiful. *Amor fati*: let that be my love from now on! I do not want to wage war against ugliness". The last line of *Ecce Homo* is not Dionysus "defeats" the Crucified, but Dionysus "versus" the Crucified ("Destiny" 9). The war between master and slave moralities continues. While one may never get beyond good and evil, or answer the question of what Nietzsche means, in the struggle the will grows. This, perhaps, is the meaning of "[w]hat does not kill me makes me stronger" (TI "Maxims" 8).

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