

Nietzsche's Vision of the Overhuman.

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Abbreviations.

For Nietzsche's work in German:

KSA: Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Einzelbänden*, edited by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari. München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag. 1988

Translations of passages provided from the KSA and not found in Kaufmann's WP are mine.

For Heraclitus' Fragments:

TEGP: Graham, W. Daniel. (ed. & trans.) *The Texts of Early Greek Philosophy – The complete Fragments and Selected Testimonies of the Major Presocratics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2010

Translations of Nietzsche's works are abbreviated as follows:

PTAG: *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*. Marianne Cowan (trans.) Washington: A Gateway Edition. 1962

WP: *The Will to Power*. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale (trans.) New York: Vintage Books. 1968

TSZ: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Graham Parkes (trans.) Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2005

GM: *On the Genealogy of Morality*. Maudemarie Clark and Alan J. Swensen (trans.) Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. 1998

TI: *Twilight of the Idols*. Duncan Large (trans.) Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1998

EH: *Ecce Homo*. Duncan Large (trans.) Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2007

UM: *Untimely Meditations*. R.J. Hollingdale (trans.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1997

BGE: *Beyond Good and Evil*. Judith Norman (trans.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2002

GS: *The Gay Science*. Josefine Nauckhoff (trans.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2001

D: *Daybreak*. R.J. Hollingdale (trans.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1997

AC: *The Anti-Christ*. Judith Norman (trans.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2005

BT: *The Birth of Tragedy*. Ronald Speirs (trans.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1999

HATH: *Human, All Too Human*. R.J. Hollingdale (trans.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1996

PPP: *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers*. Greg Whitlock (trans.) Urbana: University of Illinois Press. 2001

FEI: *On the Future of our Educational Institutions*. Michael W. Grenke (trans.) South Bent, Indiana: St. Augustine's Press. 2004

PT: *Philosophy and Truth – Selections from Nietzsche's Notebooks of the early 1870's*. Daniel Breazeale (ed. and trans.) Amherst: Humanity Books. 1979

HC: Homer's Contest. In Pearson, Ansell-Keith & Large, Duncan. *The Nietzsche Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell. 2006

CW: The Case of Wagner. In: *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols and Other Writings*. Aaron Ridley & Judith Norman (ed.) Judith Norman (trans.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2005

Abstract

In this thesis we are going to examine the problem of the Overhuman [*Übermensch*] in the work of German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. The Overhuman is a subject the notoriety of which far exceeds its careful treatment by Nietzsche's commentators. Nietzsche's mistreatment by the Nazis, the simplistic association of the term with Hollywood phantasies, as well as the large number of issues that the term covers, are some of the reasons for the relative obscurity of the term. On our part, we are going to investigate our subject by examining a broad array of issues and problems that Nietzsche wishes to address through the use of the term Overhuman. We are going to argue that, following the demise of various humanist ideologies in the West (all united under the all-powerful signifier of a transcendent God), man faces the challenge of having to justify his existence on earth solely by the utilization of immanent reasons, an event perhaps unprecedented in human history. Nietzsche tries partly to exemplify and partly imagine an earth that is going to be man-made and the various challenges and problems that this process is going to entail. We will argue that the term Overhuman refers to a process whereby man rediscovers an immanent culture and the new rules according to which life on earth is to take place; we are also going to examine the new political order which is going to replace the old one, which for the most part produced man as a docile animal, unable to stand up for his own rights and demands. Furthermore, we will examine the extent of the interconnection between the human and the Overhuman, an issue of the highest importance for Nietzsche. Finally, we are going to argue for a different, non-productive understanding of time that the Overhuman inaugurates and humanity is in desperate need for. Our thesis will argue for the centrality of the notion of the Overhuman in Nietzsche's work; indeed we will argue that this is Nietzsche's most persistent and most widely researched problem, and we are going to argue that without an, as much as possible, holistic examination of Nietzsche's philosophy, the researcher will be either at a loss to understand Nietzsche's Overhuman as problematic, or he will be destined to drive himself to wrong conclusions. Our thesis will show the extent of the challenge that Nietzsche's thinking poses to Western culture and that any further cultural development of the human is unimaginable without modern humanity first facing the issues that Nietzsche has raised through his conception of the Overhuman.

*É que um mundo todo vivo tem a
força de um Inferno.*

*'Because a world fully alive, it
would have the power of hell.'*

Clarice Lispector, *A paixão segundo G.H.*

*Someone, you or me, comes forward and says: I
would like to learn to live finally.*

Finally but why?

*To learn to live: a strange watchword. Who would
learn? From whom? To teach to live, but to whom?
Will we ever know? Will we ever know how to live
and first of all what "to learn to live" means? And
why "finally"*

Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*

Introduction

to live is to betray your God: every life-act, every act that affirms we are living beings; requires the violation of your God's commandments;

Carlos Fuentes, *The death of Artemio Cruz*

Introducing Overhuman Thought.

Among other activities a Sunday visit to the zoo is an ordinary event in the life of every family in the West (and beyond). Children and parents alike expect to get a glimpse of the natural life of beasts and plants, to learn about the diversity of nature and wonder at the many similarities between human and non-human animals¹. Throughout the 19th century and up to the beginnings of the 20th, European families flocked to the zoos in order to learn something about the life of the beasts in conditions resembling those of their natural environment. There is a twist in the story though. The kind of zoos very popular in those years were human zoos, zoos where human animals were exhibited much to the excitement, and sometimes the utter disgust, of the spectators, the average European family. In a series of exhibitions from the beginning of the 19th century to the 1930's when the decline of the human zoos began, thousands of people (Zulus, Indians, Nubians, and others) were forcibly removed from their natural environments and placed in zoos where they were exhibited, among non-human animals, for the satisfaction of the curiosity of the European families in the age of the Empires². The two great centres of human zoos were naturally Paris and London, where people from their colonized territories (Africa for France and India for Britain) got imported and exhibited in zoos for the obvious reason of demonstrating the utter necessity of civilizing

¹ With the exception, of course, of various religious groups.

² On the subject of the human zoos please see: Blanchard, Pascal (ed.). *Human Zoos – Science and Spectacle in the age of Colonial Empires*. Teresa Bridgeman (trans.) Liverpool: Liverpool University Press. 2008

the exhibited ‘beasts’. The logic underlying the existence of the human zoos is the logic of colonialism itself. The savage, which lives in a pre-civilized state, has to be civilized i.e. *humanized*, to be brought from a state of animal condition to the life of the civilized humans. The civilized West has the moral obligation to humanize the world of wild human-animals since to be (fully) human is to belong to what is properly human, i.e. to culture and not to what belongs to the animal, i.e. to nature. This strict dichotomy between culture and nature was pursued with ‘religious’ fervour among the civilized West, sometimes leading to atrocities such as that of colonization and the extinction of local cultures, to racism and the extremes of 20th century such as eugenic programs and mass exterminations of (the perceived) ‘defective stock’. However, the culture/nature dichotomy is also a normal part of the education of every civilized European. To be (fully) human in the West is to exist within the bounds of ‘civilized’ manners coming down to us today through a long process of training and education³. Every boy and girl of a ‘good’ family learns from a young age that the use of cutlery is ‘civilized’ behaviour and to eat with your hands is to live the life of animals. Equally, every boy and girl of a ‘good’ family knows not to spit on the floor, not to speak with the mouth full, to control (all of) his/her bodily functions etc. To do otherwise is to depart from the life of the humans and to embrace the (perhaps) free and enjoyable *yet* animal, and thus despicable, unworthy of the humans, life of savages and (non-human) animals.

Western humanity is accustomed through millennia of history to define the human through its relation to a transcendent deity who guarantees the special relation of the created (human) and the Uncreated (God). Through this relation humans have acquired a privileged status in creation. Their mission is to “multiply and fill the earth.”⁴ So long as this bond remains strong humans will remain participators in divine nature and human history, in the words of Athanasius of Alexandria, will be a grand project of *theopoiesis*.⁵ What happens, though, when this bond brakes? From the Age of Enlightenment onwards the West has, for the first time in its history, consciously and systematically undermined the conditions that made possible the human’s dependence on a transcendent deity. Humans have become increasingly independent and the source for the meaning of their short sojourn upon earth has been moved

³ Norbert Elias has explored this process in his classic: Elias, Norbert. *The Civilizing Process*. Edmund Jephcott (trans.) Oxford: Blackwell Publishers. 2000.

⁴ *The Bible – English Standard Version*. ESV Bible. The German/English Parallel Edition. Illinois: Crossway & Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Genesis: 9:1

⁵ On the issue of salvation and deification see: McGrath, Alistair. *Christian Theology – An Introduction*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell. 2011, pp. 315-347

from the deity back to the human. Nietzsche is clear: “There was never a greater deed – and whoever is born after us will on account of this deed belong to a higher history than all history up to now!”⁶ Far from being a time of celebration, the human’s increased independence marks for Nietzsche the time of the greatest responsibility. Indeed it is a time when one loses one’s orientation as all the old certainties collapse behind one. How is one to live after the death of God? And more importantly perhaps, *who* is the human when the ultimate guarantor of his humanness has been taken out of the picture? *Who* is the human when all transcendental presuppositions have been removed and when all that remains is the fluidity of human history? This is the question to which Nietzsche dedicates his life, and tracking this trajectory is the purpose of this work.

Since the space of God has been emptied, the only source of meaning with regard to the human condition is to be derived through a long process of re-naturalization of the human animal. Humans have to learn to be modest: “We have stopped deriving humanity from ‘spirit’, from ‘divinity’, we have stuck human beings back among the animals.”⁷ Nietzsche’s naturalistic programme aims to show that all formerly transcendental faculties of the human animals are in reality nothing but *loci* of the competing instincts and forces within organisms.⁸ Their purpose of development was not a gift from some deity with which humans will come closer to God but rather a by-product of evolution which helped weaker creatures to survive⁹. Equally, on a macro-level Nietzsche will investigate the many ways that humans constitute themselves through their cultures. Nietzsche’s GM is hence a story of how a culture constitutes what we have come to call ‘the human-animal’ as opposed to ‘non-human animals’. Nietzsche places particular importance on the theory and history of culture(s) because it is culture that has taken the space of transcendental explanations relating to the human. From now on it is culture that ‘makes’ humans; to the investigation of this topic Nietzsche has dedicated the most considerable part of his productive life, from his early affiliation to Wagner up to his late concerns about the harmful effects that German diet has on spiritual matters in EH. But although culture is the new privileged space of the humans, Nietzsche will come to question the *specific* course that a *certain* culture has taken and the type of humans that this culture has come to produce. Throughout his oeuvre Nietzsche has confronted the question of how a culture has to constitute itself in order to produce the type

⁶ GS: 122

⁷ AC: 14, D: 49

⁸ GS: 333, 354. WP: 387. KSA: 13:11 [310], AC: 14, BGE: 268

⁹ See Cox, Christoph. *Nietzsche – Naturalism and Interpretation*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1999, pp. 71-86

of humans that it will inevitably produce. But as Europeans we are in the grip of the dominant culture of the West which is the by-product of the two enormous forces of Greece and Judaism. Christianity becomes Nietzsche's principle enemy since it encapsulates a movement of decadence (from Socrates to the Judaic priest) that has hampered the development of humanity and has forced it to concentrate on the kind of development prescribed by it by the dominant forces reigning in the West whereas *other* forces, which are certainly present in humans, have been forced to remain latent. To borrow a well-known term from Marcuse, *the problem of Western culture is that it produces a one-dimensional man instead of a multi-dimensional humanity* which for Nietzsche *is possible* (at least as experiment)¹⁰. But how did such a crooked way become possible and how did perversity itself come to be called normality?

Nietzsche puts forward a rather provocative idea according to which the seed of destruction was imported to the Hellenic world by Plato, an *exemplary anti-Greek* in matters of culture¹¹. Nietzsche takes seriously the legend according to which Plato was educated in Egypt, and he considers this an event which was to have enormous consequences in the history of culture. Plato achieves two things. First, he makes Christianity possible, since he imports from the East the notion of the 'ideal' which he immediately juxtaposes with the notion of the 'real'. The 'ideal' is utilized to 'save' humanity from the perceived dangers of the 'real', dangers which threaten the very foundations of life. In his BT Nietzsche has expressed these dangers through the so-called 'wisdom of Silenus' which summarizes the perils threatening humanity from the prospect of a nonsensical existence¹². Simultaneously to the genesis of the possibility of Christianity, Plato also inaugurates the cultural decadence of the Hellenic world which, once fixated on the 'real', becomes now hostile to it and perseveres in biological existence by investing into a future 'imagined' life and existence. In TI: IV, Nietzsche describes the process whereby the 'real' becomes superfluous through its gradual devaluation due to the influence of Christian culture. What was once the possession of a whole culture (the Hellenic culture) becomes, through the destructive influence of the East¹³, the privilege of the few. The 'real' world is accessible not to humanity as a whole but only to those who, through the utilization of ascetic practices, will be able to achieve the perfection required by the 'ideal'. Life comes to expect a justification which lies outside life, from an externally

¹⁰ BGE: 44

¹¹ "I find he has strayed so far from all the fundamental instincts of the Hellenes, he is so spoilt by morality, so proto-Christian..." TI: What I owe the Ancients: 2

¹² BT: 3

¹³ TI: What I owe the Ancients: 3

imposed ‘ideal world’, which gradually becomes the only source of justification and thus the only source of meaning for life. The result of this long cultural process is the relocation of the immanent foundations of life to a transcendent source of meaning which remains nevertheless unattained and ultimately unknown. ‘Faith’ replaces inquiry; the ‘ideal’ unknown world comes to replace the ‘real’ world which is rendered unnecessary since all meaning has been transferred to the ‘ideal’¹⁴, but with the abolition of the ‘real’ the ‘ideal’ is rendered superfluous as well. In EH Nietzsche explains: “Reality has been robbed of its value, its sense, its truthfulness insofar as an ideal world was *faked up*... The ‘real world’ and the ‘apparent world’ – in plain words: the *fake* world and reality...The *lie* of the ideal has till now been the curse on reality; on its account humanity itself has become fake and false right down to its deepest instincts – to the point of worshipping values *opposite* to the only ones which would guarantee it a flourishing, a future, the exalted *right* to a future.”¹⁵ It is the moment of what Nietzsche calls the ‘shortest shadow’, the moment of the advent of nihilism, the withdrawal of all meaning from the world. But the hour of the greatest peril is also the time of the greatest opportunity. Either the world is going to be lost or it is going to revitalize itself, it is going to offer itself the right to a future. *Incipit Zarathustra*.

Zarathustra’s advent describes the end of the West’s principal ideological foundation; that of humanism. For our purposes humanism “is the idea by which a constant identification with a quasi-mystical universal human ‘nature’ produces great cultural achievements, which serve to promote the cohesion of humanity in general.”¹⁶ Since the mystical element has been removed, human animals have been left without an identification process from which to extract their significance. The sort of (transcendental) qualities once identified with the extra-natural element of man (through *grace* for Western theology or through inhabiting the same *ousia* with the divine (*ὁμοούσιος*) for the Eastern Church) have to either be forever lost or to pass back to a sort of animal which has been deprived of any transcendental elements.

But if humanism describes the religious stage in the development of humanity, a stage that has largely come to its end¹⁷, does that mean that an era of post-humanity has to also leave behind the long process of the humanization of man which culture is? Nietzsche believed that

¹⁴ “with the real world we have also done away with the apparent one!” TI: How the ‘Real World’ finally became a fable.

¹⁵ EH: Foreword, 2

¹⁶ Herbrechter, Stefan. *Posthumanism – A Critical Analysis*. London: Bloomsbury. 2013, p. 12

¹⁷ The ‘end of the religious’ or the so-called ‘death of God’ is of course a rather theoretical discussion in the West which is based in the erosion of the ideological conditions that made possible such a belief in God. In reality God returns to the West through the younger and most virile version of the old monotheisms i.e. Islam.

human animals are characterised by a plasticity [plastische Kraft] which allows them to develop, to transform, and to incorporate everything foreign and alien so that they can make use of it for their cultural evolution¹⁸. The example here would be the extraordinary power of incorporation that ancient Greek culture had which allowed it to welcome foreign elements and then transform them to something uniquely Hellenic. The human animal characterized by this astonishing plasticity is able perennially to develop into new and unexpected forms and types which allow it to embrace an ever-renewed space of experience. In this sense the human animal represents something eternally unfinished, a process rather than a definite, well-defined reality¹⁹. Contrary to the phantasies of modern liberalism, which treats every anthropomorphic being as fully human, Nietzsche believes that human animals have to *achieve* their humanness and in that respect *one never stops becoming human*. Humanization thus describes the process of becoming-human, which is to say a tautological statement, since for Nietzsche the human can be nothing other than a process of becoming-human. Post-humanity, rather than an era which leaves the human behind it, becomes an era which aims to *rehabilitate* the human, where rehabilitation describes accordingly the process of leaving behind the extra-natural features of the human animal and re-inhabiting the natural.

For this, though, a critique of the values of the West is required, since it is those values that are to be held responsible for the decline of 'man'. Nihilism has been identified by Nietzsche as a particularly Western phenomenon²⁰. It is the ultimate consequence of Christian morality, which has idolized a catastrophic mystical belief in the value of truth over and against untruth, which has been devalued and persecuted²¹. Whereas the Western mind works by abstractions and exclusions, Nietzsche attempts to *revalue* the formerly excluded and bring it back into light as something worthy and valuable, as something which has something important and interesting to say for the humans and to the humans. Revaluation is the long process of discovering the *terra incognita* of the human animal. It is, as Nietzsche notes, the prerequisite of every attempt to escape nihilism.²² The revaluation of values is thus closely linked to the overcoming of the cultural conditions which have made nihilism possible and thus Western culture as well. The cultural unity of the triad of Athens-Rome-Jerusalem has to be placed under scrutiny and ultimately to be overcome. To be sure, this is a task of titanic proportions which only a type of existence other than the human of today, a type of human

¹⁸ UM: On the uses and disadvantages of history of life: Section: 1

¹⁹ BGE: 62

²⁰ WP: 1, KSA: 12:2[127]

²¹ GM: III, 27

²² WP: 28, KSA: 12:10[42]

which is the result of the process of the Christian-moral interpretation of the world, could possibly achieve. It requires a type of human both *more* than human, since the human has to be overcome, and *truly* human, since it is only *as* human that the human can return to itself, to the experiment which, in every case, it is. This process and this *hope* is what Nietzsche calls *Übermensch* (Overhuman).

Overhuman adventures.

Unlike other Nietzschean notions (Will to Power, eternal return, perspectivism etc.) the idea of the Overhuman has a rather unfortunate and undeserving history. Squeezed between its Nazi appropriation and the Hollywood pipedreams for an all-powerful defender of humanity the Overhuman is usually treated awkwardly by interpreters as either a sign of something else ('higher' humans, the end of subjectivity, cultural rejuvenation, critique of morality) or a simply unfortunate term which fails to convey anything significant. The vast majority agree on seeing the Overhuman as a metaphor for a kind of 'higher' humanity which overcomes the cultural restrictions of the day, but also for a humanity that manages to concentrate all of its creative powers into a creative whole, in order that it can then accomplish a work which overcomes the fragmentation of the lives of everyday individuals. For *William Salter*, an early (and unfortunately unacknowledged) master of Nietzschean studies, the Overhuman "is a poetic designation for great individuals carried to their utmost human limit"²³. Salter pays particular attention to the possibility of conceiving Overhuman along Darwinian lines but, being an astute reader of Nietzsche, he is quick to dismiss the idea. An early proponent of an *agonistic* Nietzsche, Salter clarifies the necessity for 'unfavourable' social conditions that the oppositional Overhuman spirit needs in order to flourish²⁴. The Overhuman will have a fundamentally different valuation of life than the valuation of the "industrial masses (the business and working class)" with all of their piety in "industrious habits, fixed rules, moderation in all things, settled convictions". On the contrary, Overhuman life is going to be characterised by a life dedicated to "leisure, adventure, unbelief ... even excess"²⁵. That

²³ Salter, Mackintire William. *Nietzsche the Thinker: A Study*. New York: Henry Holt and Company. 1917, p. 400

²⁴ *Ibid.* p. 409

²⁵ *Ibid.* p. 413

importance of the different type of life that the Overhuman needs in order to flourish is going to be elucidated in the first chapter of this work.

In his university lectures in the 1930's, *Karl Jaspers* recognizes that the thought of the Overhuman is not just a peripheral thought for Nietzsche but rather the very core of his thinking. "Nietzsche strives to promote the task of bringing forth the superman with his whole thinking."²⁶ Jaspers, alone among commentators, recognizes the centrality of the Overhuman teaching, yet he claims that Nietzsche had not elucidated the precise conditions under which the Overhuman can come about²⁷. In this thesis we are going to show that Nietzsche *did* show the way toward a possible preparation for those conditions, even if explicit proposals are foreign to the Nietzschean oeuvre which ultimately aims at the self-training and self-education of individuals.

The case of *Walter Kaufmann* is a peculiar one. Recognised in Anglo-American circles as the pope of Nietzschean studies, his work is more valuable as a testament to the needs of a particular society (the 'modern democratic West') and a particular era (post-war) rather than for its enduring philosophical significance. The need for a Kaufmann interpretation of Nietzsche sprang out of the experience of the Nazi over-politicised version of Nietzsche. While Nazis made politics the very centre of their (certainly simplistic) reading of Nietzsche, the post-war era in its attempt to de-Nazify (and thus also erroneously to de-politicize) Nietzsche moved to the opposite extreme. With Kaufmann we witness, then, the genesis of a '*Buddha-Nietzsche*', a reading of Nietzsche cut off from its socio-cultural environment, aiming solely at the self-enlightenment of individuals through hard work and artistic creation. Kaufmann's Overhuman, then, is someone who achieves self-mastery, a man "who overcomes himself, sublimating his impulses, consecrating his passions, and giving style to his character"²⁸. The kind of overcoming envisaged by Kaufmann is an overcoming which takes place in the individual's private sphere and does not or cannot be allowed to affect the society around it. In Kaufmann's wake stands the highly influential work of another interpreter, that of *Alexander Nehamas*. Nehamas' highly aestheticized reading of Nietzsche wants the Overhuman to be aware of the flux within which is eternally caught²⁹. The

²⁶ Jaspers, Karl. *Nietzsche – An Introduction to the understanding of his philosophical activity*. Charles F. Wallraff and Frederick J. Schmitz (trans.) Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press. 1997, p. 168

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Kaufmann, Walter. *Nietzsche – Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1974, p. 312

²⁹ Nehamas, Alexander. *Nietzsche – Life as Literature*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press. 1985, p. 158

Overhuman is ultimately the one who is devoted to a constant ‘self-overcoming’, since his existence is the product of a Heraclitean movement and thus it cannot rest on any certainty. However interesting Kaufmann’s and Nehamas’ readings may be, they represent an isolated, de-politicised, and thus ultimately, for us, *indifferent* Nietzsche. In this thesis we will try to show that projects such as revaluation, critique of Christianity, modernity, democracy and others have *real* and *tangible* consequences to life. These consequences signpost a different reality toward which Nietzsche’s thinking aims to and do not confine themselves to the privacy of ‘self-change’ and the isolation of private goals. A ‘different’ morality clearly changes the rules of the game; it does not simply change our private lives. A ‘different’ morality produces humans other than the humans that have been produced so far. The de-politicized, aesthetic reading of Nietzsche aims to downplay the political consequences of his teaching. It produces a Nietzsche suitable to modern audiences but not necessarily true to himself.

Richard Schacht sheds further light on the close connection between ‘higher types’ and the Overhuman without though associating the latter with the thought of the return as Kaufmann had done.³⁰ The Overhuman for Schacht, as for the majority of the commentators, represents the coming into life of an ideal type envisaged already by Goethe, where the holistic development of spirituality and strength will eventually lead to the overcoming of a type of civilization perceived as an exclusively taming process³¹. The central question for Schacht regards the exact point of differentiation between higher and common types, and while Schacht attributes to Nietzsche traces of Lamarckianism, he also recognizes that Nietzsche ultimately abandons (biological) Lamarckianism in favour of a process of differentiation among humans which is centred on culture and education³². *Wolfgang Müller-Lauter* further investigates the matter of the relation between higher types and the Overhuman. For him, though, these two types represent two differing realities where the most significant point of their differentiation is the connection of the Overhuman to the thought of the return³³, a connection for which the higher humans remain oblivious³⁴. Müller-Lauter’s contribution consists in clarifying the differing uses of the Will-to-Power by the higher types and the Overhumans. While higher types remain victims to an understanding of the Will-to-Power as

³⁰ Kaufmann, Walter. *Ibid.* p. 327

³¹ Schacht, Richard. *Nietzsche*. London: Routledge. 1983, p. 332

³² *Ibid.* pp. 335-337

³³ Throughout this thesis we will refer to ‘eternal recurrence’ and Nietzsche’s multiple experiments with the circularity of time as ‘the thought of the return’.

³⁴ Müller-Lauter, Wolfgang. *Nietzsche – His philosophy of contradictions and the contradictions of his philosophy*. David J. Parent (trans.) Urbana: University of Illinois Press. 1999, p. 89

an infinite empowerment of humans, the Overhuman's conception of the Will-to-Power consists of a constant changing of this power's goals. While the power of the higher types is a power toward something stable and unchangeable, the power of the Overhuman is never one but a multiplicity of powers (as well as the counter-powers which constitute them) and an infinity of goals. The Overhuman always wills for something other³⁵.

In one of the most influential misinterpretations of Nietzsche's thought, *Martin Heidegger* understood the Overhuman as the culmination of the process of subjectivisation which Western metaphysics ultimately is. Heidegger sees Nietzsche as a thinker of a 'single thought', the thought of the Will-to-Power which Heidegger, in the most unashamedly conservative reading, understands exclusively within the Nazi framework of his time namely as *power to domination*. Heidegger's power (but *not* Nietzsche's) has as a single goal "the aimlessness of man's absolute dominance over the earth. The man of such dominance is the Over-man."³⁶ Understood within a framework of domination *Heidegger's* Overhuman completes the process of nihilism by conceiving man "as the absolute centre and sole measure of beings as a whole"³⁷ and thus also completes a process which starts with Plato and culminates in the thought of Enlightenment, a thought which wants man to perennially create (and thus also un-create) his values, a process, which as Michael Watts observes, can only lead to the total undermining of the very notion of value-positing³⁸. Against the 'dominant' power of the Overhuman which seeks to bring the whole of the earth under his control Heidegger will suggest a kind of self-abandonment which will liberate humanity from its bond to a subjectivizing thought which thinks only under the spell of the *will*. Not *will* but a *release from all willing*, into a 'fundamental attunement' (*Grundstimmung*) with the world, is to be Heidegger's mystical suggestion as to the solution to the problem of civilization. Heidegger makes two mistakes. Firstly, he conceives the history of philosophy as a process of subjectivization, which erroneously thinks it will inevitably culminate to the master of *will* i.e. the Overhuman. But, as we are going to show in this thesis, Nietzsche's Overhuman is hardly a master of *this singular thing called will*; the Overhuman resembles more the dexterous navigator trying within a sea of *wills* to direct his ship in the direction he prefers. Far from being a dominator of the earth, the sovereignty of the Overhuman consists on letting things (and him as well) be free, on disconnecting himself from the tyranny of production(s)

³⁵ *Ibid.* p. 80

³⁶ Heidegger, Martin. *Nietzsche*. Frank A. Capuzzi. (trans.) San Francisco: Harper SanFrancisco. 1991. Vol. IV, p. 82

³⁷ *Ibid.* p. 83

³⁸ Watts, Michael. *The philosophy of Heidegger*. Durham: Accumen. 2011, p. 37

and results and living a life of pure (self-)consumption³⁹. Heidegger's second mistake concerns his attribution to Nietzsche of a notion of power which Nietzsche simply never held. Because of that, Heidegger had formed a very 'timely' portrait of Nietzsche, which has, however, little to do with the Nietzsche presented in this thesis.

In one of the most interesting and fruitful contemplations on Nietzsche's thought, Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo has claimed that any treatment of Nietzsche's mediations concerning overhuman thought can only pass through the investigation of the problem of *nihilism*, which for him constitutes the most urgent and the most pressing of the problems of humanity. Vattimo makes the provocative claim that nihilism is not just the outcome of the logic governing 'Socratism, Platonism, and Christianity', but rather constitutes the very essence of Western civilization. For Nietzsche, the West is nihilistic, since "the emphasis of life is put on the 'beyond' rather than on life itself – when it is put *on nothingness* –, then the emphasis has been completely removed from life."⁴⁰ Vattimo agrees with Nietzsche that "nihilism is already there" each time the world is justified by a 'meaning or a goal' lying outside the world itself.⁴¹ But what makes the West nihilistic 'through and through'? Why does nihilism constitute the being of the West?

Vattimo believes that the history of nihilism is inextricably linked to humanity's inability to "break free of the crushing weight of the past"⁴². From the time of *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History of Life*, Nietzsche has attempted to find a way to liberate the present from the crushing weight of the past, which devoids both individuals and cultures from their creative capacities. Both there and in GM⁴³, the cultivation of forgetfulness becomes the necessary presupposition of action. Nihilism is linked to the experience of a 'historical malady' which describes the will's inability to will retroactively, i.e. to influence and perhaps change the 'given'. This fundamental experience, the inability to change the given, creates in humans feelings of revenge which then permeate every cultural achievement of humanity. Zarathustra describes revenge as "the will's ill-will toward time and its 'It was

³⁹ See the Fourth Chapter of this work.

⁴⁰ AC: 42

⁴¹ Vattimo, Gianni. *Dialogue with Nietzsche* (trans. William McCuaig). New York: Columbia University Press. 2006. p. 12

⁴² P.15

⁴³ UM: On the uses and disadvantages of history for life: 1 and GM: II, 1

[es war]”⁴⁴. The solution to the problem of revenge, and thus also the solution to the problem of nihilism, Vattimo believes, will come from the solution to the problem of temporality.

Vattimo is one of Nietzsche’s interpreters who absolutely link the thought of the return to the thought of the Overhuman⁴⁵. Through his reading of *On the Vision and the Riddle*, he claims that the Moment [Augenblick] eternalizes the present by forcing both past and future to acquire their meaning from the present moment of decision. Instead of a present crushed by the past or dominated by a final future end, the circularity of the *Augenblick* guarantees the infinite value of a ‘pregnant’ present. “Every moment of history becomes decisive for all eternity”⁴⁶. The value of the thought of the return lies in the thought that the present moment(s) of a circular time become all equally valuable from the perspective of life. Nietzsche’s ‘present’ liberates itself both from the historical malady, the crushing weight of the past, and from a linear teleological understanding of time which would imprison the human animal within logic of production.

In the wake of Vattimo’s important contributions, this thesis will also argue for the necessity of the connection between the thought of the Overhuman and that of a non-linear understanding of time; the prioritization of an eternalized present will be examined in detail in the chapter ‘Eternal Return. A Sovereign Thought’. In his essay ‘The Wisdom of the Superman’, Vattimo has also stressed the factor of *irony* and especially that irony which turns inwards. Vattimo understands the Overhuman as the principal actor of this irony, since it allows the Overhuman to differentiate itself from other actors of a ‘crude’ overhumanity, what Vattimo calls ‘mass overman’⁴⁷. The problem of Overhuman power, the power which differentiates the Overhuman from a subject simply exercising power, will be examined in detail in our chapter ‘On power’. Vattimo closes this essay by wondering whether his understanding of a power-relieved Overhuman might not open the way to a future human perceived as ‘a locus of welcoming’ and even a case of the manifestation of Christian *caritas*. On the subject of both irony and *caritas*, Vattimo is heavily reliant (although he does not acknowledge it) on the meditations of Georges Bataille regarding sovereignty. Bataille has placed particular importance on both irony and laughter⁴⁸, as well as on something which (only superficially) looks like Christian *caritas*, namely self-sacrifice. The extent of the

⁴⁴ Z: On redemption

⁴⁵ Vattimo, Gianni. *Dialogue with Nietzsche*. *Ibid.* p.20

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* p.22

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p. 131

⁴⁸ Bataille, Georges. *Guilty* (trans. Stuart Kendal). Albany: State University of New York. 2011. pp.90-96

Overhuman's willingness to self-sacrifice in relation to the Christian views on the subject will be also examined further in our fourth chapter.

In recent years the traditional awkwardness with which commentators have treated the thought of the Overhuman has reached a new peak in the work of what we would call (word) *fetishists*. Daniel Conway⁴⁹, Bernard Reginster⁵⁰, and (to a lesser extent) Laurence Lampert⁵¹ have taken a rather strange position which relates the number of appearances of the *word* Übermensch in Nietzsche's oeuvre with the importance that Overhuman thought had on his work. They all conclude that since the (word) Übermensch does not appear frequently on Nietzsche's work, that must indicate the relative unimportance that Overhuman thought plays for Nietzsche. To begin with, the fetishists' observation concerning the limited appearances of the word is correct, *yet* their overall view concerning the unimportance of a notion like that of the Overhuman (thought) is certainly not right. This work will show that, on the contrary, *Overhuman thought was Nietzsche's lifelong preoccupation* and it appears throughout his oeuvre behind the investigation of ideas such as a higher humanity, aristocracy, order of rank, and even in the thought of the return itself. On his early PTAG, Nietzsche notes: "The task is to bring to light what we must *ever love and honour* and what no subsequent enlightenment can take away: great individual human beings."⁵² Despite the many twists and turns that Nietzsche's meditations will take through the years, his dedication to the necessity of the overcoming of the West's nihilistic route through the implementation of the reverse cultural conditions⁵³ that will make the *higher* possible again remains unaltered. On a note from 1884 he confesses that: "...*the destiny of humanity depends upon the attainment of its highest type*" and he continues: "From my childhood I have pondered the conditions for the existence of the sage, and I will not conceal my joyous conviction that he is again becoming *possible* in Europe – perhaps only for a short time."⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Conway, Daniel, "Overcoming the Übermensch: Nietzsche's revaluation of values", in: *Journal of the British Society of Phenomenology*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (October 1989)

⁵⁰ Reginster, Bernard. *The affirmation of life – Nietzsche on overcoming nihilism*. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press. 2006, p. 250-251

⁵¹ Lampert, Laurence. *Nietzsche's teaching – An interpretation of Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. 1986, p. 20-21

⁵² PTAG: p. 24

⁵³ BGE: 44

⁵⁴ WP: 987. KSA: 11:26 [75]

Philology of the Overhuman.

Rather than an isolated term in Nietzsche's large oeuvre, the Overhuman makes its appearance throughout his writings, though disguised behind a large array of terms that Nietzsche employs in order to describe an *ascending type of life*. This is a life that, as it becomes richer and more complex, comes to embrace the *polyphony* of life⁵⁵ against the monophony⁵⁶ of morality, a morality which, as Nietzsche describes in GM, is employed to endorse the increasing banalization of human history. In what follows we will describe Nietzsche's uses of the term Overhuman and then turn to a brief examination of the various terms that Nietzsche uses, at times as synonyms and at times as variations of the main term Overhuman. We will argue that Nietzsche's employment of this large array of terms, which all seek to describe a stronger and more inclusive type of human, rather than diminishing the importance of his meditations on the Overhuman⁵⁷, increases it to the degree of elevating it to his most persistent and omnipresent thought.

It has been suggested⁵⁸ that Nietzsche derives his term Overhuman [Übermensch] from one of Lucian's satirical texts: *Kataplous*. While Kaufmann ignores the context of Lucian's text, Babette Babich has recently argued for the influence that Lucian's text exercised on Nietzsche and that a reading of the Overhuman cannot ignore Lucian's *parodic* ὑπεράνθρωπος. In that text, also translated as *Journey into the Underworld*, Lucian tells the story of the journey to Hades of the tyrant Megapenthes, who, however powerful he was in life, now on the way to Hades comes to realize that he is to be stripped from all his power(s) and all of his earthly possessions. Babich characterizes the text as "a meditation on *vanitas* and its inevitable reversal"⁵⁹. Megapenthes is a man of power who makes the humble shoemaker Micyllus report that he "thought him a very god" and that, while in life Megapenthes seemed "a superman [ὑπεράνθρωπος] thrice-blessed, better looking and a full royal cubit taller than almost anyone else", *nevertheless* "when he was dead, not only did he cut an utterly ridiculous figure in my eyes on being stripped of his pomp, but I laughed at

⁵⁵ HATH: 111

⁵⁶ Nietzsche expresses this monophony as the brutal imposition of 'one norm' [Eine Norm] which all humans ought to follow in GS:143

⁵⁷ As the commentators which we have described as 'word-fetishists' have argued that it does.

⁵⁸ By Walter Kaufmann in Kaufmann, Walter. *Nietzsche – Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1974, p.307

⁵⁹ Babich, Babette, "Nietzsche's Zarathustra and Parodic Style: On Lucian's Hyperanthropos and Nietzsche's Übermensch" (2013). *Articles and Chapters in Academic Book Collections*. p. 61

myself even more than at him because I had marvelled at such a worthless creature...”⁶⁰ Lucian’s *hyperanthropos*, then, is a parodic meditation on power and its inevitable loss. Babich suggests that “Nietzsche’s Zarathustra also teaches the *Übermensch* in a *parodic* fashion”, particularly in the later added parodic fourth part of TSZ. For Babich “it is characteristic of both Lucian and Nietzsche to mix things up”⁶¹, in the sense that everything solemn (the tyrant Megapenthes) is to be mixed with the gaiety produced by the reversal of his fate. The power of the hyperanthropos comes to be ridiculed in front of the inevitability of death and loss.

As evidenced by the parodic fourth part of TSZ and especially the chapter ‘On the superior humans’, where Nietzsche ridicules the superior humans on the basis of taking themselves too seriously and thus being unable to understand the significance of *personal failure* as the most valuable part of Zarathustra’s message⁶², Nietzsche is aware of the simplifications that every theory of power is prone to. In this thesis we are going to illuminate this neglected aspect of a *hyperanthropos* who has to learn to laugh, as one always laughs: *at himself*. While Nietzsche never questions power as a constituent part of nature, he believes that brute force [Kraft] has to be overcome by something that integrates *the other of force* and sublimates it into something new. This is power proper [Macht].⁶³ In the second chapter of this thesis we are going to argue that Nietzsche regulates ‘brute force’ by integrating it to *agon* — which for its part is regulated by principles and rules that do not allow power to be expressed in an annihilating fashion, something that the Nazi interpretation of power was unable to comprehend. In the last chapter of this thesis we are going to discuss Nietzsche’s resistance to the productive logic of the West and his ridicule of productive power in favour of unproductive sovereignty. In our view, then, the Overhuman mixes solemnity with laughter and resists the logic of success in favour of loss, a loss which nevertheless remains sovereign, in that it gets elevated into the most valuable experience of life.

⁶⁰ Lucian. *The downward journey or the Tyrant*, in: Lucian Volume II. A.M. Harmon (trans.) Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press. 1915. p.35

⁶¹ *Ibid.* p.67

⁶² Nietzsche’s glorification of failure, in the sense of resistance to timely aspirations and the logic of production, reaches a climax in Zarathustra’s dismissal of the superior humans in TSZ’s ‘On the superior humans’. “You superior humans, the worst about you is: that none of you has learned to dance as one has to dance – dance away beyond yourselves! What does it matter that you have failed!”

⁶³ See footnote: 108

The Overhuman first makes a shy appearance, as a noun⁶⁴ in plural form, in 1882's GS: 143. In the context of a discussion on the advantages of Greek polytheism, Nietzsche juxtaposes the history of morality, which produced and reproduced the ideal of *one norm*, to Greek polytheism, which produced the ideal of a *plurality of norms*. Nietzsche argues that "the invention of gods, heroes, and overmen (*Übermenschen*) of all kinds, as well as deviant or inferior forms of humanoid life (*Neben- und Untermenschen*), dwarfs, fairies, centaurs, satyrs, demons, and devils, was the invaluable preliminary exercise for ... the sovereignty of the individual."⁶⁵ Although in this passage the Overhuman is not granted an individual existence, it is the product of sovereign individuals. However, its placement within a *reverse* history of humanity, a history that overturns the one-dimensional development of humanity hitherto, sheds light on the use of that concept later by Nietzsche. Indeed, the Overhuman is going to express the *plurality* and *synthesis* of antithetical forces, rather than exclusions as it has done until now in the history of morality.

The Overhuman makes its first proper appearance in the opening pages of TSZ. As Zarathustra introduces himself as the *teacher of the Overhuman*, Nietzsche makes clear what the book is to be about. TSZ describes what the Overhuman is and how humanity could, through a process of overcomings, achieve its overhuman potential. Immediately after the pronouncement of the subject matter of the book, Nietzsche provides the two preliminary fundamental characteristics of the Overhuman: The Overhuman describes a process of overcoming ("The human is something that shall be overcome [überwunden].") and it is regarded as the "sense of the earth" [der Sinn der Erde].⁶⁶ Overcoming is one of the key Nietzschean terms. It describes a process where something or someone *goes beyond* a previous state of affairs. Culturally speaking, humanity is called to overcome "those values, drives and habits and conditions of our current existence that Nietzsche identifies as having a pernicious effect."⁶⁷ Katrina Mitcheson rightly points to the connection between Nietzschean overcoming and Hegelian sublation [Aufhebung]. To overcome, rather than jumping over something and leaving this something behind⁶⁸, actually means to go beyond by *transforming*

⁶⁴ As in many languages the adjective *übermenlich* is a perfectly common word. (e.g. English: superhuman effort, French: effort surhumain, Spanish: esfuerzo sobrehumano, Greek: υπεράνθρωπη προσπάθεια.) Nietzsche uses it a lot before GS without any Overhuman reverberations. The word becomes a philosophical concept after its passage from adjective to noun.

⁶⁵ GS: 143

⁶⁶ TSZ: Zarathustra's prologue: 3

⁶⁷ Mitcheson, Katrina. *Nietzsche, Truth and Transformation*. Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan. 2013, p.2

⁶⁸ Zarathustra remarks in relation to the human that "...only a jester thinks: 'The human can also be overjumped.'" TSZ: On old and new tables: 4

the thing left behind. Equally, when Nietzsche calls for the transvaluation [Umwertung] of values, he does not urge the abandonment of values but rather their transformation into something new⁶⁹. The Overhuman, then, is called to exercise a long series of overcomings where new valuations are going to replace the old ones and multiple experiments are going to replace the hitherto one-dimensional development of humanity. In this thesis we are going to describe the Overhuman in terms of four steps or four overcomings⁷⁰ (cultural, political, moral, and temporal) necessary for the disengagement of humanity from its human past and embracing of the future. As for the second of the main characteristics of the Overhuman, that of its faithfulness to the earth, Nietzsche makes clear⁷¹ the antithesis between the *immanent* project of the transvaluation of values and through it the preparation for the Overhuman, as opposed to the project of the history of morality which aims at the domestication of man through his dependence on transcendent presuppositions. Later in TSZ, this post-metaphysical outlook is expressed by Zarathustra's pronouncement: "*Dead are all Gods: now we want the Overhuman to live*"⁷².

But while in the beginning of the book Zarathustra had introduced himself as the teacher of the Overhuman, later in part three, his animals assign to him the new role of the teacher of 'eternal recurrence' which now becomes Zarathustra's 'fate'.⁷³ Zarathustra's preoccupation with time makes clear that the two concepts, that of the Overhuman and that of the thought of the return, are inextricable. For the Overhuman to be possible, another relation to time and 'time's *it was*' has to be established. Productive time, the kind that has produced man so far, is not adequate for the birth of the Overhuman. As we will argue in Chapter Four of this thesis, man accumulates time so that he can produce *things*, while the Overhuman *wastes* time so that he can give birth to his sovereignty. The time of the Overhuman is not the time of things but the time of the squandering sun, the monstrous energy of the universe. This thesis is going to respect Nietzsche's demand for faith in the *real* and our view of the Overhuman will take place against the momentous event of the assassination of the transcendental signifier God and all of its manifestations⁷⁴. Subsequently, this thesis is going to argue for the

⁶⁹ Mitcheson, Katrina. *Ibid* p.2-4

⁷⁰ The number of course is the result of space restrictions and personal abilities. Ideally, an examination of the Overhuman should include the investigation of a very great number of overcomings. But this is a work requiring the involvement of a great number of scholars working in collaboration. It is a project then belonging to the future.

⁷¹ The rest of the sentence reads: "...and do not believe those who talk of over-earthly hopes" TSZ: Zarathustra's prologue: 3

⁷² TSZ: On the Bestowing Virtue

⁷³ TSZ: The Convalescent

⁷⁴ What Nietzsche in GS: 108, calls the 'shadow' of Buddha.

rebirth of man in the time of the Overhuman, in the time of the final dispensation of accumulative time in favour of the wasteful movement of the future.

After TSZ, Nietzsche seldom refers to the (term) Overhuman. His most noteworthy mentions are to be found in AC and EH. The AC remark is of particular interest. In TSZ Nietzsche has made the following claim: “Never yet has there been an Overhuman”⁷⁵ but in AC he claims that “there is a continuous series of individual successes in the most varied places on earth and from the most varied cultures; here a *higher type* does in fact present itself, a type of Overhuman [eine Art Übermensch] in relation to humanity in general.”⁷⁶ Certainly, as Nietzsche himself clarifies, TSZ’s Overhuman and AC’s *higher type* who is ‘sort of Overhuman’ are not the same. Yet the fact that Nietzsche characterizes higher types as a ‘type of Overhuman’ indicates that both serve the same logic, i.e. that of the enhancement of the human animal.⁷⁷ And although in TSZ the Overhuman is *specifically* linked to the thought of the return, the logic within the Overhuman operates far exceeds the limits of TSZ and embraces the whole of Nietzsche’s oeuvre. Before developing this idea in the following paragraphs, let us mention the other interesting late remark concerning the Overhuman to be found in late Nietzsche.

In EH Nietzsche remarks that his use of the term ‘Overhuman’ is utilized to express his opposition to various nihilistic human types like Christians, modern, or simply those designated as ‘good’ men. He complains that the readers have misunderstood the Overhuman for some kind of idealistic type. In Nietzschean language the *ideal* (and the type idealistic) express mainly a “negation of some aspect of life or of existence more generally” as well as “the positing of and probably subordination to some transcendent reality”⁷⁸. An idealistic type is a human type who wishes to ‘escape reality’ by subordinating himself to some imagined state (the ‘beyond’⁷⁹) in which his life will be justified. Nietzsche goes on to suggest that the greatest confusion is the association of his anti-idealistic Overhuman with Darwinism. Without going into Nietzsche’s tumultuous relation to Darwinism⁸⁰, let us just note that Nietzsche opposes the idea of progress (through the mechanism of natural selection

⁷⁵ TSZ: On the priests

⁷⁶ AC: 4

⁷⁷ For the details of ‘enhancement’ see our: ‘Improvement and overcoming in Nietzsche’s thought.’

⁷⁸ Burnham, Douglas. *The Nietzsche Dictionary*. London: Bloomsbury. 2014. p.178-179

⁷⁹ Whatever ‘beyond’. Religious, like in paradise, or political like in socialism.

⁸⁰ On Nietzsche and Darwinism see Ansell-Pearson, Keith, *Viroid Life – Perspectives on Nietzsche and the Transhuman condition*. London: Routledge. 1997. pp.86-122, Richardson, John, *Nietzsche’s New Darwinism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2004, Johnson R. Dirk. *Nietzsche’s Anti-Darwinism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2010.

which privileges only the weak⁸¹) which is supposed to lead to an ultimate telos in favour of the natural prodigality of earth and the return to the primordially of the forces constituting the human animal.⁸² While evolution has produced the human animal, an *enduring* type of animal which is solely concerned for the preservation of his species⁸³, Overhumanity is to be characterised by its *profound disregard*⁸⁴ for itself and its self-placement in the logic of *unproduction*.

This thesis argues that *Übermensch* is one of the versions, one of the multiple faces, of the Overhuman. Nietzsche has experimented throughout his life with trying to find a way to express the different route that human history is in urgent need of taking. Nowhere does Nietzsche express more clearly this deep interrelation between the *Übermensch* and his multiple designations for the Overhuman than in a Nachlass note from 1887. There, he sees modern human history as the history of the gradual diminution and dwarfing of man. The economic management of the earth is going to lead inevitably to the production of a type of human resembling “a tremendous clockwork, composed of ever smaller, ever more subtly ‘adapted’ gears”. Against this movement, another is needed. Nietzsche uses the words *Gegenbewegung* (counter-movement) and *umgekehrten Bewegung* (reversed movement). The last phrase is of particular interest, since it has been used before, in the remarkable BGE: 44, where the task of the philosophers of the future (another of the manifestations of the Overhuman) is to *reverse* the conditions that hitherto have created humanity.⁸⁵ Nietzsche makes clear that this counter-movement, by opposing the slave-like masses, aims to produce a new type of human. “It aims to bring to light a stronger species, a higher type that arises and preserves itself under different conditions from those of the average man. My concept, my metaphor for this type is, as one knows, the word ‘overman’ [*Übermensch*]”⁸⁶

Nietzsche’s preoccupation with a higher humanity⁸⁷ begins already from his student years in the prestigious *Schulpforta*. In his 1862 student essay ‘Napoleon III as President’, he asserts that the role of the genius far exceeds that of the rest of humanity and that the genius should not be judged according to the laws applying to the rest of humanity. At the time highly

⁸¹ TI: Reconnaissance Raids of an Untimely Man: 14

⁸² See our: ‘Elements of Nietzschean psychology’.

⁸³ KSA: 9: 11 [178]

⁸⁴ Disregard is *profound* when it refers to the realignment of humanity to the ‘absurd extravagance’ of nature (See: TI: Reconnaissance Raids of an Untimely Man: 14, TSZ: On the Bestowing Virtue), otherwise is just an abandonment of the self out of self-pity or pessimism which Nietzsche certainly does not endorse.

⁸⁵ No wonder then these philosophers are called in BGE: 44: *Wir Umgekehrten* (we the reverse ones)

⁸⁶ WP: 866, KSA: 12:10 [17]

⁸⁷ What in the above mentioned passage is called “a synthetic, summarizing, justifying man”. *Ibid.*

idealistic, and in the spirit of Hegel, young Nietzsche believes that the genius is “the final link to a chain” a chain which sets apart the genius from the rest of the failing humanity.⁸⁸ A few years later, as a young professor in Basel, Nietzsche writes an important, but never quite published, text, PTAG. Here, he attempts to understand early Greek philosophy not in the usual dispassionate way of academia, but through insisting that one is to approach philosophy as an example of a higher bios, a bios exemplified in “great individual human beings [der Große Mensch]”.⁸⁹ Likewise, the publication, between 1873 and 1876, of the four UM marks the culmination of Nietzsche’s early preoccupation with culture as the incubator of exceptional human beings. As we will examine in the first chapter of this thesis, Nietzsche continues to view history in a teleological manner where the telos is to be the replacement of the species human (the product of the moral history of the West) with individual human beings which have turned out best due to favourable conditions. The organized and persistent cultivation of these conditions remains the task of culture whereas the aim, the ultimate telos of culture, must be the production of *grosse Menschen*⁹⁰.

During his middle period, a period characterized by the depth of his psychological observations, his (short-lived) faith to the scientific spirit of the Enlightenment, and his political moderation, Nietzsche continues to investigate the theme of the meaning of the *higher* and the multiple dichotomies between higher and lower. His focus is now the psychological investigation of what constitutes a noble soul (D: 278, 380, GS: 3, HATH: 206) as well as the investigation of lower forms of human culture as prerequisites of the envisaged higher forms (HATH: 224, 246). Characteristically, in HATH (including WS) alone there are 51 references in the themes of nobility, higher humanity, and higher cultures. Although numbers fall in D (9 references) and GS (8 references), the quality of his observations does not. Thus, in the exceptional GS: 3 the noble nature is characterized by unreasonableness (the noble succumbs to his drives, he does *not* follow reason⁹¹), magnanimity, self-sacrifice, incomprehensibility, and impracticality, whereas the common nature pursues the safeguarding of the conditions of its self-preservation, an attitude surely practical yet certainly not noble.

⁸⁸ Nietzsche, Friedrich. Napoleon III as president. In: Cameron, Frank & Dombowsky, Don. *The Political writings of Friedrich Nietzsche*. London: PalgraveMacmillan. 2008, p.26

⁸⁹ PTAG: p. 24

⁹⁰ SE: 6

⁹¹ See also the critique of Socrates and his blind faith in reason in TI: The problem of Socrates.

During the last period of his productive life Nietzsche becomes practically obsessed with the pursuit of an ascending type of life which will finally produce the synthesizing human of the future⁹². Throughout his last writings Nietzsche uses a large array of terms in order to refer to this type of human ('higher men', 'new aristocracy', 'masters of the earth', 'nobles', 'stronger race' etc.⁹³). These types are not identical. They all express the same willingness to *reverse*⁹⁴ the project of the (self)-subjugation of humanity, but the ways of this reversal are multiple. Thus in the last part of BGE, *What is noble?*, we find the infamous proposal concerning the bond between the overhuman future and the establishment of the order of rank in society: "Every enhancement so far in the type 'man' has been the work of an aristocratic society – and that is how it will be, again and again, since this sort of society believes in a long ladder of rank order and value distinctions between men, and in some sense needs slavery."⁹⁵ Certainly assertions like the above contradict Zarathustra's squandering and self-sacrificing Overhuman which we are going to describe in the fourth part of our thesis. Yet, for Nietzsche, such contradictions are neither accidental nor simply stylistic choices but rather the very heart of his project.

In GM Nietzsche describes in painstaking detail the production of human animals as sick, weak, and domesticated animals. The history of humanity becomes the narrative of a long history of subjugation and intellectual slavery. Humans have been turned into the type of animals that are unable to envisage another future for themselves, a future involving the rehabilitation of earth and their terrible naturalness⁹⁶. "The ascetic treats life...as an error that one refutes through deeds."⁹⁷ *But there has never been such an error*. Humans are in no need of repair or improvements of any kind. Nietzsche suggests, and this is the core of our thesis as well, that one has to *dare*⁹⁸ to envisage a future which will embrace the human beyond the artificial binaries of the history of morality. "The higher man is inhuman and superhuman: these belong together"⁹⁹. Against the human of the history of morality who is unable to

⁹² WP: 1017, KSA: 12:10[5] also WP: 983, KSA: 11:27[60] e.g. in Napoleon the highest and the most terrible are remarkably combined.

⁹³ Detwiler, Bruce. *Nietzsche and the politics of aristocratic radicalism*. Chicago: Chicago University Press. 1990, p.100

⁹⁴ BGE: 44

⁹⁵ *Ibid*: 257

⁹⁶ Against the Stoic vision of an orderly nature, Nietzsche proclaims nature to be *terrible* since it is unruly, wasteful, indifferent, purposeless, merciless, and beyond justice. See BGE: 9 and TI: Reconnaissance Raids of an Untimely Man: 48

⁹⁷ GM: III, 11

⁹⁸ In the most possible Kantian fashion and in the true spirit of Enlightenment. For Nietzsche's vision of a new Enlightenment see: KSA: 11: 27 [79]

⁹⁹ WP: 1027, KSA: 12:9[154] See also: WP: 966. KSA: 11:27 [59]

engage the wholeness of his drives and he thus *is* either the one or the other, the true ‘nobles’, the ‘higher men’, the ‘masters of the earth’—in short, the Overhuman—is a *synthesis* of the most contradictory forces. The Overhuman is to incorporate the unruliness and wastefulness of nature. He is to be the great synthesising event in the history of the Earth and thus the inception of a new civilization upon the Earth.

Identifying the Overhuman.

What we call *humanity* is the conglomeration of domesticated animals. Because of this, humanity matters only to the extent that the investigation of the history of its domestication can serve as a valuable lesson toward its overcoming and attainment of a type of human which, by developing under the *reverse conditions*¹⁰⁰ from those of the present, will eventually unfetter a range of possibilities as yet only latent. Humanity’s mystical dependence on the divine is over and with that humanity is exposed for what it is: a *religious prejudice* whose time is up, as well as a short episode in a human history filled with man’s arrogance. “We do not regard the animals as moral beings. But do you suppose the animals regard us as moral beings? – An animal which could speak said: Humanity is a prejudice of which we animals at least are free.”¹⁰¹ However, only to the extent that humanity is a story about masses and multitudes is it destined to be lost. Nietzsche believes that there is a way in which humanity could justify its existence upon earth. This is the production of individual exceptional human types¹⁰². Humanity is justified only through its function as an incubator of the exceptional. But Nietzsche sets the problem which will occupy our work: “This more valuable type has appeared often enough already: but only as a stroke of luck, as an exception, never as *willed*.”¹⁰³ Humanity is justified only because types such as Napoleon, Alexander, Caesar¹⁰⁴ or Goethe¹⁰⁵ were made possible. The question remains whether those types could be the conscious and deliberate outcome of a cultural process. Could a culture produce on a massive scale, so to speak, exceptional human types? Nietzsche believes that this is not possible. The reason, as will be further discussed in Chapter Four of this work, is

¹⁰⁰ BGE: 44, WP: 957

¹⁰¹ D: 333

¹⁰² UM: Schopenhauer as Educator, Section: 6

¹⁰³ AC: 3

¹⁰⁴ D: 549

¹⁰⁵ TI: Reconnaissance Raids of an Untimely man: 49, WP: 380

that the *highest* represents a complexity which is always on the brink of collapse. “The richest and most complex forms...perish more easily: only the lowest preserve an apparent indestructibility...The higher type represents an incomparably greater complexity – a greater sum of co-ordinated elements: so its disintegration is also incomparably more likely. The ‘genius’ is the sublimest machine there is – consequently the most fragile.”¹⁰⁶ In front of the brutal strength of the “organized herd instincts”¹⁰⁷ of the ‘weak’, those rare plants that are the exceptions get defeated. That happens because the ‘weak’ represent brute force [Kraft] while the *highest* are bearers of power [Macht] that has become *sublimated*¹⁰⁸. The true sign of great human being, Nietzsche contests, is “his victory over strength [Der Sieg über Kraft]”¹⁰⁹ But if the only hope for the justification of humanity is lost, what remains?

Although Nietzsche does not believe that the massive production of the exceptional is possible (or even desirable), it is possible, however, “to will this type of ‘chance’ consciously”¹¹⁰; this is the work of culture.¹¹¹ As Keith Ansell-Pearson notes: “...a culture can only lay down the conditions that are favourable to the unpredictable and non-calculable lightning-like appearance of unique, singular human beings. Types are hereditary, but then a type is not a ‘lucky stroke’, ‘nothing extreme’. The task is to make ‘the scales more delicate and hope for the assistance of favourable accidents’”¹¹² A philosophy aiming at the educational and cultural preparation of the future ‘masters of the earth’ will then be a philosophy which is going to attempt a radical change at the cultural paradigm of the present and a philosophy which will *reverse*¹¹³ the conditions that have created the current one-dimensional moral fanatics¹¹⁴ of the West. A culture matters to the degree that it opens up the future to multiple possibilities and to the degree that it sets individuals free from the bonds of

¹⁰⁶ WP: 684. KSA: 13:14 [133]

¹⁰⁷ WP: 685. KSA: 13:14 [123]

¹⁰⁸ “Contrary to the slave’s worship of brute force, only a force sublimated by rational Apollonian elements and thereby elevated to a culturally valuable level should merit our admiration. This is qualitative power and its most intense expression can be found in the ‘genius’ in whom this force is inwardly directed towards creating a genuine selfhood.” Golomb, Jacob. “Will to Power: Does it lead to the “coldest of all cold monsters”?”. In: *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche*, edited by Ken James & John Richardson. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2013, p. 527

¹⁰⁹ D: 548

¹¹⁰ WP: 979. KSA: 11:35 [407]

¹¹¹ “Mankind ought to seek out and create the favourable conditions under which those great redemptive men can come into existence.” UM: Schopenhauer as Educator, Section: 6

¹¹² Ansell-Pearson, Keith. *Viroid Life – Perspectives on Nietzsche and the Transhuman condition*. London: Routledge. 1997, p. 101. Also see: WP: 907, 933, 957, 960

¹¹³ WP: 957. KSA: 11:37 [8], BGE: 44

¹¹⁴ In TI: The problem of Socrates, Nietzsche describes the development of Greek philosophy after Socrates as a case of *fanaticism* particularly a *moral one* since from Plato onwards philosophy becomes the servant of a religious prejudice: of the good, of the rational, of the clear etc.

tradition. Nietzsche's lifelong preoccupation with the thought of the Overhuman was his attempt to consider such a future and to contemplate the cultural presuppositions for the attainment of such a future. This work is going to follow this Nietzschean path. In what follows we will describe the particular socio-cultural conditions that are required for the cultivation of this type of human, which comes after current Western/Christian paradigm and which Nietzsche calls the 'Overhuman'.

Chapter One paves the way for the investigation of the Overhuman condition by looking closely at Nietzsche's understanding of culture and the way with which culture creates the conditions for the development of particular types of human animals. The chapter is going to clarify the degree to which culture and the thought of the Overhuman are intermingled. While one of the aims of every philosophy after Kant is the emancipation of the individual from the fetters of its tradition, Nietzsche nevertheless strongly believes that a cultural ideal, like that of the Overhuman, will be prepared not only in people's private spheres but also institutionally¹¹⁵. A morality is not only our private sense of right and wrong but also the way with which a state or a society internalizes this sense and transforms it into laws and rules of conduct. These rules then *produce* individuals accordingly. For this reason a culture becomes the battlefield of all *agons* that have to be fought in the name of the future and Nietzsche, at least on his early years and still under Wagner's influence, treats culture as the privileged space of his Overhuman investigations. A typical example of the kind of cultural reversal that Nietzsche has in mind is his treatment of the much abused term 'philosopher'. The chapter will clarify the degree of the difference between modernity's *scholar* and what Nietzsche understands as the *commander-philosopher* of the future. In a truly Greek fashion, Nietzsche places all of his attention on the *βίος* (bios) of the individual rather than on its *ἔργον* (work), and makes the former rather than the latter the source of human value. Finally the chapter is going to shed light on some popular misunderstandings regarding the conflation of posthumanity with recent developments in science and technology. Rather than being ahistorical and value-neutral, science is filled with human history's attempt to *improve* the species by working on its perceived weaknesses¹¹⁶. But *improvement* is an ideological term which harbours various attempts from all sorts of groups to direct human development toward a prearranged goal. As the latest manifestation of the ascetic ideal¹¹⁷, science's

¹¹⁵ Nietzsche's FEI would be the most obvious example of Nietzsche's insistence on the importance of institutions.

¹¹⁶ GS: 344. Also TI: The improvers of humanity.

¹¹⁷ GM: III, 25

dependence on the mystical origins of something called ‘Truth’ reveals the extent of its dependence on the current cultural paradigm and thus to the one-dimensional development of the human animals which will ultimately lead them to the stalemate of suicidal nihilism. The chapter will conclude by arguing that the Transhumanists’ vision of Posthumanity is, rather, the opposite of the cultural criticism that Nietzsche seeks as the source of his valuation of the Overhuman. The Overhuman will challenge the whole of the history of humanity and thus also humanity’s dependence on mystical terms of religious origins.

Chapter Two will further explore the role of institutions in Nietzsche’s thought and in particular will expose Nietzsche’s *profound* relation to politics. In that respect we are going to investigate Nietzsche’s critique of the *petty* politics of 19th century Europe and his subsequent prioritization of a form of politics that he calls *Grosse Politik*. Nietzsche believes that the former form of politics expresses a movement of decadence which through the implementation of egalitarian politics aims at the equalization of the value of the human while the latter, through the application of the *order of rank*, aims at the revaluation of exceptional forms of life, granting to them special rights which will allow them to flourish. For Nietzsche the West has been for too long a victim of a politics of decadence which has created only the instinct-less animals of today who are structurally unable to harbour great passions and thus also unable to produce great works. However, Nietzsche is not up for easy simplifications. In the second part of the chapter we will propose a novel reading of Nietzsche’s contribution to politics. Hegelian in origin, perhaps much to Nietzsche’s dismay, our reading will suggest that rather than aiming at the implementation of a *Kraft*¹¹⁸-*Politik*, in order to eradicate the conditions that brought about the production of the late-bourgeois, Nietzschean politics aim, through our reading of Nietzsche’s unusual understanding of *Macht*, to bring about a state of *perpetual conflict* whose intention is to upset established orders and to introduce an *agonistic* spirit in modern politics which will realign humanity with its antithetical founding forces.

Chapter Three will be occupied with the examination of *On the Genealogy of Morality*. *Genealogy* is an exceptional work that charts the psychological history of decadence. It is a history of the many ways in which the human animal has been turned into the submissive

¹¹⁸ By *Kraft* we mean here a type of politics which is based on (brute) strength as opposed to a kind of politics which is based on (agonistic) *Macht*. For more on the *Kraft-Macht* distinction, see: Golomb, Jacob. “Will to Power: Does it lead to the “coldest of all cold monsters”?”. In: *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche*, edited by Ken James & John Richardson. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2013, p. 527-530

animal of late modernity. How did this future-oriented animal, which the human is, come to refuse its own right to a future of its own creation? Why does the human animal produce and reproduce itself constantly in relation to the problem of nihilism and the threat of a meaningless existence? Through the investigation of humanity's psychological constitution, Nietzsche finds it exceptionally peculiar that humans have been turned into the docile beings they are. There is, Nietzsche detects, an undercurrent of Overhuman forces in this psychological history, which have however never been utilized. Paradoxically, Nietzsche observes, the conditions of decadence are also the conditions of the overcoming of decadence. "The same conditions that hasten the evolution of the herd animal also hasten the evolution of the leader animal."¹¹⁹ *Genealogy* declares its faith in no clear-cut solutions which in any case would be a remainder of the faith of metaphysics in dichotomies. Instead the Overhuman's genealogy reveals a very complex animal that is able, *in principle*, to harbour the most extreme contradictions and yet to "give birth to a dancing star."¹²⁰

In the final chapter we will offer our own distinct contribution to the (embryonic) literature on the Overhuman. With the help of the exceptional Nietzschean Georges Bataille, we are going to further clarify Nietzsche's unique conception of the Overhuman as that animal which necessarily perishes due to the great level of its complexity and fragility. We are going to argue that the perceived superiority of the *super/over/Über* human, rather than consisting in some quality of a brutally perceived strength, consists in the willingness of the Overhuman to squander itself not so much due to some moral principle but rather out of a will to realign the human with the wasteful movement of the cosmos. Our reading of the *thought of the return* will allow us to relate the thought of the Overhuman to a meta(but also *pre*)-Christian conception of time for which the future is not considered an *accumulation* of moments in need of a final redemption but rather an *eternity of moments of infinite value* in no need of redemption. Finally our perception of a *squandering Overhuman* will allow us to place Nietzsche's meditations in the context of a suggestion concerning a different way of life. The Overhuman is not another abstract thought. It is not to be judged by the usual methods of metaphysics. The thought of the Overhuman inaugurates the right to a different life. It is a choice about the kind of life *you* live and also the acceptance of the consequences of choosing that life.

¹¹⁹ WP: 956. KSA: 11:35 [10]

¹²⁰ TSZ: Prologue: 5

Nietzsche on the challenges of culture and the illusions of Transhumanity.

*You 're on earth, there's no cure
for that!*

Endgame, Samuel Beckett

The first part of this chapter will argue for the importance of *culture* as the womb of the Overhuman in Nietzsche's thought. In SE Nietzsche notes that "mankind ought to seek out and create the favourable conditions under which those great redemptive men can come into existence."¹²¹ The mention of 'favourable conditions' clearly indicates that Nietzsche thinks that exceptionality ought to be cultivated by the institutions of society. Nietzsche believes that the value of a culture depends on the degree of its dedication to the production of individual great human beings. In his early period, more than in the middle or late, Nietzsche, under the influence of Wagner, thinks of the Overhuman primarily as a social task. We will argue that while Nietzsche idolizes the type of culture which dedicates itself to the production of the exceptional, he also criticizes the type of culture which confines itself to the role of the (cultural) excuse for bourgeois civility. We will also argue that Nietzsche attempts a paradigm shift from the detached study of philosophy to the *bios* of the philosopher. We will show that by shifting the weight from philosophy to *philosophers*, Nietzsche returns to philosophy its subversive role which is largely lost in modernity, while also portraying philosophers as precursors of the Overhuman. In the second part of this chapter we will examine the movement of *transhumanism*, one of the most interesting branches of posthumanism. We will argue that popular forms of posthumanism are based on presuppositions that Nietzsche would never have accepted. Particularly, we will argue that Nietzsche would have opposed transhumanism's unquestioned reliance on the productive logic of Christian times, in favour of a circular logic of return to the primordial forces constituting the human animal or transhumanism's understanding of the human problem as a problem of technics instead of a problem regarding values. We will show the extent to which

¹²¹ UM: Schopenhauer as Educator: 6

the thought of the Overhuman is to be differentiated from posthumanist illusions seeking to bypass the problem of the human by resurrecting religious asceticism in the form of technic.

Culture in Nietzsche's work.

What is culture? Why do we need it? To begin with, we would like to position Nietzsche's meditations on the modern zoo-political problematic developed by Peter Sloterdijk, for whom a culture is to be treated as a zoo or a theme-park (a 'homeostatic anthroposphere') in which humans voluntarily place themselves, *dwell* in a truly Heideggerian fashion, whereas this voluntary placement calls also for the establishment of rules according to which humans will control their environment and subsequently produce themselves¹²². For the most part we intend to treat Nietzsche's meditations on culture within the horizon of Sloterdijk's conception of *anthropotechny*, which concerns itself with the various technologies or disciplines which produce *anthropous* (ανθρώπους). Sloterdijk himself defines anthropotechnics as follows: "By this I mean the methods of mental and physical practicing by which humans from the most diverse cultures have attempted to optimize their cosmic and immunological status in the face of vague risks of living and acute certainties of death."¹²³ Two terminological clarifications are needed here. Sloterdijk's mention of 'practicing' refers to the Foucauldian 'technologies of the self', the techniques or practices with which humans seek to clarify, interpret and give meaning to the problem of their existence. In the words of Foucault, 'arts of existence' are: "those intentional and voluntary actions by which men not only set themselves rules of conduct, but also seek to transform themselves, to change themselves in their singular being, and to make their life into an oeuvre that carries certain aesthetic values and meets certain stylistic criteria."¹²⁴ In that sense Sloterdijk's meditations on anthropotechnics largely follow, at least in a methodological level, those of Foucault; however Sloterdijk distances himself from the (late) Foucauldian project of an aestheticization of existence in favour of the rehabilitation of (the Platonic in origin) *thymos*, a concept used by Sloterdijk both as a methodological tool in service of understanding various social phenomena (notably revolutions) and as his own suggestion for the

¹²² Sloterdijk, Peter. "Rules for the Human Zoo: A response to the Letter on Humanism", *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, volume 27, 2009, p. 25

¹²³ *Id.* *You must change your life*. Wieland Hoban (trans.) Cambridge: Polity Press. 2013, p. 10

¹²⁴ Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality - The use of pleasure* (Vol. 2). Robert Hurley (trans). London: Penguin. 1985, p. 10-11

rehabilitation of thymotic practices (Nietzsche's infinite overcomings) as a way of attacking the levelling aspects of modernity. The second terminological clarification refers to the use of the word immunology by Sloterdijk. Immunology is indeed the science of the immune system. Sloterdijk equates cultures and living organisms and describes them as large immunological systems, systems in need of protection and repair.¹²⁵ Thus man's biography becomes the biography of *Hommo immunologicus*¹²⁶. In what follows we intend to treat Nietzsche's meditations on culture as a long history of anthropotechnology, where humans fashion themselves firstly in the way they want, secondly in the way they *must do so* as products of this large immunological sphere that culture is, and finally in the way they *have to*, due to the external threats in their environment. In short, humans are to be treated here as animals which produce themselves, are further produced by the disciplines which had produced them, and then have to repair themselves from attacks against them. Nietzsche indeed understands this immunological aspect of culture. Truly, it is only because of Wagner and Wagner's insistence on the preparation of the future within communities (bubbles, spheres) of co-minded revolutionaries that he is able to understand it. But the more he distances himself from Wagner, the more Nietzsche comes to question his youthful preoccupation with immunology, i.e. with the protection that a culture needs. Later, Nietzsche still thinks of humans as products of their products, but the bubble now has burst and humans have to expose themselves to various diseases. Two paths lie in front of them. They will either live and grow stronger *or* they will perish.

In the summer of the remarkable year of 1888, Nietzsche writes: "The high points of culture and civilization do not coincide: one should not be deceived about the abysmal antagonism of culture and civilization. The great moments of culture were always, morally speaking, times of corruption; and conversely, the periods when the taming of the human animal ("civilization") was desired and enforced were times of intolerance against the boldest and most spiritual natures. Civilization has aims different from those of culture –perhaps are even opposite-"¹²⁷. This is a remarkable passage for many reasons. To start with, nowhere else in his work does Nietzsche make such a clear distinction between culture and civilization. While he exhaustively investigates both various culture(s) and various civilizations, he will never suggest that there is an 'abysmal antagonism' between the two. Moreover, he uses the terms

¹²⁵ Sloterdijk, Peter. *You must change your life*. *Ibid.* p. 8

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* p. 10

¹²⁷ WP: 121, KSA: 13:16 [10], See also: Lemm, Vanessa. *Nietzsche's animal philosophy*. New York: Fordham University Press. 2009, p. 11

‘culture’ and ‘civilization’ interchangeably or in a completely opposite sense, as in the passage from GM: 1.11, where the word *culture* is used instead of the word *civilization* as in the Nachlass note. In the Nachlass note (1888), *civilization* describes the *gewollten und erwugenden Thierzähmung* (willed and forced animal training), while in the GM passage, *culture*’s meaning is “to breed a tame and civilized animal, a household pet, out of the beast of prey ‘man’”¹²⁸ There is little doubt that Nietzsche’s texts are experiments in both style and thought and that consistency (the will to a system) is not one of his aims. Does that then mean that we should not take the above passage seriously? We believe not. This is because the description of ‘Civilization’ that Nietzsche offers in the Nachlass passage coincides with the description of the process described in GM: II, whereby the human animal internalizes punishment and through this internalization a *Gedächtnis des Willens* (a memory of the will) is created. The animal that civilization wills and constantly produces belongs to memory, where memory acts as the foundation of a *responsible*, promise-making humanity; that is to say, in Nietzsche’s words a ‘reliable, regular, necessary’¹²⁹ humankind, or *in short*, a ‘uniform’¹³⁰ species. Memory and responsibility produce and reproduce the need for a species of animals dedicated to their moral and rational improvement *forgetful-all-too-forgetful* of their animal origins, their originary strength, their independence and their solitude.

The ‘memory of the will’, the production of a reliable animal which can be held responsible, punished, and then internalize this punishment and through this internalization create his ‘conscience’, is the product of the long history of civilization/culture. It has to be noted that the narrative of GM (1887) follows the early thoughts of Nietzsche on Socratic and Alexandrian culture in BT (1872). The production of the ‘reliable’ man is the outcome of the efforts of the scientific optimism of Socrates and the subsequent development of a culture which was depicted in the establishment of the remarkable city of Alexandria. Alexandria, more than a city, was a symbol of Alexander’s willingness to create a *space* in which and from which knowledge would be the absolute criterion of life, a city where its breathtaking library would be the kernel of the new scientific revolution inspired by the dialectical optimism of Socrates. Alexandria boasts that ‘truth’ will be discovered no matter what. But, *as expected*, Nietzsche thinks otherwise. Socratic optimism will never discover ‘truth’ because as a process it is from the very start bound to duplicate that which originally

¹²⁸ GM: I, 11

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*: II, 2

generated it: the will to truth will come to be destroyed when it recognizes that the history of truth is a history based on exclusions, untold stories, horrible secrets; in short, the history of truth narrates not truth but the ideology which generates the need for a history of truth. The following passage is characteristic of this very Nietzschean approach. In his re-examination of ‘The Problem of Socrates’ in TI (1888), Nietzsche explains the rise of Socratism as the product of a blackmailed culture. Either Greeks had to accept that the world is ultimately knowable (therefore deducible to the categories of understanding) or they would have to succumb to the pessimism of this type of *Schein* that deceives itself by not acknowledging itself as what it truly is: an illusion.

How is then the Greek who throws himself blindly to Socratism? “...you have to imitate Socrates and establish a permanent state of *daylight* against all dark desires – the daylight of reason. You have to be clever, clear and bright at any cost: any concession to the instincts, to the unconscious, leads downwards...”¹³¹ The process of a human animal becoming ‘*reliable, regular, necessary...*’ described in GM:1.2 which concerned the establishment of memory through the implementation of the laws of causality is reflected here in the organization of Socratic-Alexandrian culture, with its blind devotion to an idolatry of reason/clarity which can only produce (and thus it can only understand) that from which it comes: its necessary presupposition. Clarity understands only that which is clear and eternally produces it generating a closed *systematic* process of reasoning which may be useful *yet* ultimately is irrelevant.

Before examining Nietzsche’s definition and description of the role of culture, let us briefly refer to another case of what a culture cannot be. A case that reveals the kind of culture that is unable to generate the multiplicity required for the production of ‘a higher species than man’ [eine höhere Gattung als den Menschen]¹³² as Nietzsche writes in 1880, a *species* which will be based on the perennial production and the perennial reproduction of individual differences, which serve to open up the human species to a time of experimentation, to a time which will be finally true to the experimental character of human animals. To that end Nietzsche publishes in 1873 one of the most devastating pieces of cultural critique ever to be produced, the ‘First Untimely Meditation’, titled *David Strauss, the Confessor and the Writer*. In this he combines the use of sharp irony with shattering attacks on the complacent German bourgeoisie. David Friedrich Strauss, better known for his momentous *Life of Jesus*, is the

¹³¹ TI: The problem of Socrates: 10

¹³² KSA 9: 6 [158]

undeserving¹³³ subject of the attack. Acting out of the influence of the Wagnerian circle, Nietzsche concentrates his attack on Strauss' *The Old Faith and the New: A Confession*. The materialism which is to replace the faith in a Christian God is an anathema for the Wagnerian circle struggling to build a culture around the need of perennially dying Gods which, although they have been withdrawn from the stage of the human drama, yet exist eternally as *dying*, as the need for a founding *mythos* which will generate community and hold it together. Yet Nietzsche's points and personal attack on David Strauss are rather trivial, mostly philological in nature, and largely irrelevant to the modern reader. What is relevant for us is the *true* subject of the First Meditation, which is none other than the hypocrisy of the 'cultured' middle classes. The historical background of the essay has to do with the wave of national euphoria sweeping away the German states at the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian war. The question is clear enough: What happens when someone (military) wins the most culturally advanced nation of the Western world? Much to Nietzsche's dismay, his compatriots misinterpreted military victory for a victory also in the field of culture, the logic supposedly being that the strength of the (would be) nation depicts its vitality in every field of human affairs. To Nietzsche, the cultural critic and the astute observer of human frailties, all this seems to be a colossal simplification of the workings of history and human psychology: "...a great victory is a great danger. Human nature finds it harder to endure a victory than a defeat,"¹³⁴ Nietzsche warns.

This is an amazing passage and certainly revelatory of Nietzsche's views not only in politics, history, or psychology but in the way in which he envisages the human to come, the *Übermensch*. The question that Nietzsche asks is the following: What happens to a *victorious* culture, a culture that thinks of itself as victorious? In the same way we can ask along with Nietzsche: What happens to a victorious human animal, an animal that thinks of itself as being somehow successful in various fields of human affairs? Nietzsche's answer is devastating and stands as a warning to all those visionaries of superhuman victories and exterminating angels of the future who will sweep out *error* in favour of their own private truth. Nietzsche's response in the First Meditation is that a culture which thinks itself as 'victorious', or as 'true', is a culture destined to perish. If German culture is destined to fail it will be because it failed to realize the extent to which a culture is always *already* inseminated by the seed of the error that constitutes it. In reality there is no culture because humanity has

¹³³ As Nietzsche later admitted: Breazeale, Daniel. Introduction. In UM: p. xiii

¹³⁴ UM: David Strauss, the Confessor and the Writer: 1

run out of the need for any collective enterprises, as Nietzsche will come to realize later. And if culture is where we find ourselves to be and a vision for where we want ourselves to go, it is also an impossible enterprise, since in 1873, in the midst of all the Wagnerian noise spreading out of Bayreuth, Nietzsche may preach the need for a culture as ‘the unity of artistic style in all the expressions of the life of the people’¹³⁵ but he is also, even subconsciously, aware that times have changed and that modernity with its radical bifurcation (that between ideality and reality) of the human animal has no time for the rebirth of German, Greek, or any other culture. Does Nietzsche know all that in 1873? No, he doesn’t. He is still a child of his times, he hasn’t yet become *untimely*. But what he offers in the First Meditation, i.e. the psychology of the cultural philistine (*Bildungsphilister*) is an indication of his acute sensitivity to the changing times and also an indication that, despite his idealistic preaching for the reunification of culture, he is also aware of the dramatic swift that has taken place at the very heart of modern culture. As moderns we are no longer bound to a life of natural unity between *theoria* and *praxis*, but to a life of sheer contemplation. In short Plato has beaten the Greeks¹³⁶ and Marx (only if considered from within the cultural paradigm of modernity) with his eleventh thesis on Feuerbach was ultimately right. The cultural philistine describes a type of human as a passive consumer of art works which fail to change in any fundamental way his monotonous existence. Like a neurotic New Yorker from a Woody Allen film, the closest you get to thinking or feeling differently is by eternally delaying it through discussing it with your therapist. Here is how Nietzsche describes the life of the philistine: “The philistine...he sternly segregates the ‘serious things in life’ – that is to say profession, business, wife and child – from its pleasures: and to the latter belongs more or less everything that has to do with culture. Therefore woe to an art that starts to take itself seriously and makes demands that touch upon his livelihood, his business and his habits, his philistine ‘serious things in life’...”¹³⁷ Nietzsche’s reflection on the human type of the cultural philistine in the First Meditation open up a theme which is of utmost importance to any examination of the event of culture. How do we place ourselves in culture, what attitude do we take and indeed what is the role of philosophy to the extent that it communicates with culture. In what follows we intend to show the kind of philosophical life that Nietzsche advocates and why Nietzsche revisits (but without wanting to imitate) the Greeks in his attempt to explore the phenomenon of modern culture.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ One must always remember, as Sloterdijk rightly notes, what an ‘un-Greek affair’ Platonism always was. See: Sloterdijk, Peter. *You must change your life. Op.cit.* p. 26

¹³⁷ UM: David Strauss, the Confessor and the Writer: 2

A note on “philosophy as a ‘way’ of life”.

Visions of destructions are common among the youth, and sometimes acts of destruction as well. For the new to come something old must die. Some twenty years before the beginning of the construction of *Bayreuth Festspielhaus*, Richard Wagner reportedly expresses the desire to “built a theatre on the banks of the Rhine, perform *The Ring* in it on four consecutive nights, and then burn the theatre down in flames.”¹³⁸ Fortunately the initial plan is never executed. What changes between the 1850’s and the 1870’s? Why is *Bayreuth* not burned down? Is it only the conservatism of old age which comes to restrain the uncontrollable desires of the youth, or is it something more than that? The answer lies partly in Wagner’s close friendship during the 1850’s with the infamous anarchist Mikhail Bakunin, who believes in the necessity of a complete (and at times spectacular) destruction of the old order, a destruction which would accelerate the possibility of a new formation of social relations no longer based upon the distribution of power but on the free association of the members of society and the common management of the means of production. Bakunin and Wagner take part in the insurrection in Dresden (or the *May Uprising*) in 1849. Many buildings get destroyed, people get killed, Bakunin is arrested and Wagner flees to Switzerland. Downtown Dresden is in ruins, the rebellion ends in a spectacular failure. Our claim is that despite the usual outbursts and visions of destruction that Wagner had throughout his life, the very construction of Bayreuth denotes the passing from a world of ruins to something constructive, something which can be used as the symbolic centre of a new beginning and to facilitate the rejuvenation of a culture that has exhausted itself. This is what Bayreuth symbolizes: the necessity of destruction married with a plausible vision for the future¹³⁹. It also symbolizes something else which is crucial both to Wagner and to (early) Nietzsche: that whatever vision for the future one has, this has to be moulded within a community which shares the same fundamental values concerning the necessity of distancing itself from a past that has been proved infertile and the cultivation of the conditions necessary for the production of new and exciting forms of human existence.

¹³⁸ Magee, Bryan. *Wagner and Philosophy*. London: Penguin Books. 2001, p.40

¹³⁹ “For many things the time has come to die out; this new art is a prophet which sees the end approaching for other things than the arts.” UM: Richard Wagner in Bayreuth: 1

Undoubtedly Nietzsche is one of the thinkers who most celebrated and taught the value of solitude. In various aphorisms the solitary one is praised for his independence of mind, the clarity that comes from thinking alone instead of the confusion of the market place (TSZ: 45). In BGE¹⁴⁰ solitude is the greatest virtue to be identified with ‘cleanness’ as opposed to every social formation which makes things inevitably ‘unclean’ [*unreinlich*]. But the time has not yet come when Nietzsche will start to value solitude more over companionship. In the 1870’s Nietzsche still shares (or better, reverberates) the vision of a transformed culture, a vision born and nourished in the rooms of the Wagner estate, the Villa Tribschen in Lucerne to which Nietzsche was a frequent visitor.

In a footnote to his lectures on the Pre-Platonic philosophers given at the University of Basel in 1872, Nietzsche reflects on the connection between ‘a genius’ and the culture within which this genius is born. How was it possible that Hellas gave birth to such a *variety* of philosophical types, Nietzsche wonders, when normally a people “produces only *one* enduring philosophical type”¹⁴¹? He goes on to characterize the Hellenic world as the “Republic of Geniuses”¹⁴². In those lectures Nietzsche seeks to give an answer not to the question concerning the birth of philosophy in the Greek world but instead to the question concerning the birth of the philosopher. He writes: “We want to observe how ‘the philosopher’ appeared among the Greeks, not just how philosophy appeared among them.”¹⁴³ The question he asks is: How did the philosopher become possible as a *type* among the Greeks? Already in this early stage of his thought we can observe the anthropocentric core of Nietzsche’s thought, his work as a psychologist, a vivisector of the human soul. How does such an original type as that of the philosopher originate from within a culture, and thus what is his relation to the non-original? The *Volk*? Indeed why is it important for Nietzsche to raise the question of the *philosopher* instead that of *philosophy*? The answer lies in Nietzsche’s classical training, which directs him toward a different understanding of philosophical activity from that of those trained in philosophy. In what follows we will examine the classical understanding of philosophy and how that understanding paved the way for Nietzsche’s fascination with the philosophical genius and thus exemplary individuals.

¹⁴⁰ BGE: 284

¹⁴¹ PPP: p. 4

¹⁴² *Ibid.* Although the concept of ‘genius’ originates in Schopenhauer Nietzsche strips it here of its metaphysical content, which is described in the second volume of the WWR in purely Platonic context as consisting “of the intellect emancipated from the service of the will” and uses it instead as a political notion. Schopenhauer, Arthur. *The World as Will and Representation*. E.F.J. Payne (trans) New York: Dover Publications. Vol. II. 1969, p. 388

¹⁴³ PPP: p. 3

On how one ‘does’ philosophy.

When is the first time that the word ‘philosophy’ makes its appearance? Pythagoras and Heraclitus are the prime candidates for using some or other form of *φιλοσοφία*. However, the evidence, as Pierre Hadot informs us, is contestable. His position is that it is only with Herodotus that we can certainly speak for the first appearance of some form or another of *φιλοσοφία* or philosophic activity. The story from Herodotus’s *Histories*, as again Hadot informs us, places Croesus, king of Lydia, to address his guest, the legendary legislator, Solon in the following words: ‘My Athenian guest, the rumour of your wisdom [*sophies*] and your travels has reached us. We hear that since you have a taste for wisdom [*philosopheon*], you have visited many lands because of your desire to see.’¹⁴⁴ This is thus the suggestion: whoever has a taste for wisdom [*philosopheon*] packs his bags and begins to travel the world because of his ‘desire to see’, as Herodotus puts it. According to this schema, philosophic activity is fused into the experiences of *a life that must necessarily go beyond everydayness* (the one with no taste in wisdom stays home, for in doing this he would do what is convenient to him and the others, his everydayness would lack the element of the *unexpected*¹⁴⁵).

Pierre Hadot, in his monumental *Qu’est-ce que la philosophie antique?*, and Michel Foucault, in his ‘Lectures at the College de France 1981-1982’ titled ‘*The Hermeneutics of the subject*’, are among those who have done a great service on illuminating the method of philosophizing among the Greeks and the way that this method developed in Hellenistic philosophy. Foucault distinguishes between the mode of philosophizing in Greek, Roman, and Hellenistic times on the one hand and on the post-Cartesian development of philosophy on the other. The difference between these two modes consists of this: while for the ancient cultures philosophy’s role is primarily *therapeutic*, to cure humans from their errors which inevitably lead to a life of anguish, modern philosophy restricts its role to that of the detached observer of a truth that happens without the participation of the subject but solely as the result of a process of logical reasoning. Nothing can be more alien to the moderns than the transformative mechanism that philosophy exercises upon the subject in terms of the ‘true’.

¹⁴⁴ Hadot, Pierre. *What is ancient philosophy?* Michael Chase (trans.) Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. 2004, p. 16

¹⁴⁵ Could you imagine Oedipus staying home?

According to that model, the validity of what is ‘true’ must be checked by the extent to which the subject confronts his proclamation of what is ‘true’. Foucault notes: “What authenticates the fact that I tell you the truth is that as subject of my conduct I really am, absolutely, integrally, and totally identical to the subject of enunciation I am when I tell you what I tell you.”¹⁴⁶ Or to put it more simply: “There can be no teaching of the truth without the person who speaks the truth being the example of this truth.”¹⁴⁷ The way the ancients exercised philosophy was not by approaching something foreign to the subject (the ‘Truth’), but as something that it is constantly produced out of the activity of the subject in his search for what is ‘true’. To philosophize is to make a radical choice concerning the way you live and indeed to make that choice that is going to correct the errors of your previous misjudgements and in that way to prepare the way in which the subject becomes the recipient of the unfolding of what previously was hidden, a-*letheia*. Access to the truth is not a right, Foucault notes¹⁴⁸. Greeks and Romans prepare themselves in many ways in order to get ready for a truth that perennially unfolds *in the way one prepares for it*. In contrast to the mode of philosophizing of the ancients, the moderns distance themselves from the spiritual (transformative) character of philosophy. It is not just that philosophy succumbs to the Lockean understanding of it as an *under-labourer* to science. Knowledge in modernity is identified with science. Foucault again notes: “I think the modern age of the history of truth begins when knowledge itself and knowledge alone gives access to the truth. That is to say, it is when the philosopher (or the scientist, or simply someone who seeks the truth) can recognize the truth and have access to it in himself and solely through his activity of knowing, without anything else being demanded of him and without him having to change or alter his being as subject” (Foucault, 2005: 17). The picture is familiar: the scientist discovering ‘truth’ in his laboratory. No demands are made of him. The scientific process of truth-finding and the scientist’s mode of living are not to be connected or to communicate at any moment. They are totally and *fundamentally* separate. *‘Non ridere, non lugere, neque detestari, sed intelligere!’* [Not to laugh, not to lament, not to detest, but to understand.] Spinoza’s famous proclamation may infuriate Nietzsche¹⁴⁹, who regards the struggle of antithetical forces as the birthplace of every *intelligere*; nevertheless, it is a sign of the new

¹⁴⁶ Foucault, Michel. *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*. Graham Burchell (trans.). New York: Pagnave Macmillan. 2005, p. 407

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p. 406

¹⁴⁸ “Spirituality postulates that the truth is never given to the subject by right.” *Ibid*, p. 15

¹⁴⁹ GS: 333. Nietzsche of course misunderstands Spinoza. See Yovel, Yirmiyahu. *Spinoza and other heretics – The adventures of immanence*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1989, p. 116

mode of knowledge with which the Enlightenment comes to take the place of ancient spiritualism.

There is probably not a more powerful visual representation of the role of philosopher in modernity than the picture ‘*Philosopher in Meditation*’ (dated 1632) by the Dutch painter Rembrandt. Rembrandt presents an old man sitting on a chair contemplating, while in front of him and upon his desk lies an open book. What immediately strikes the viewer of this painting, apart from the rather eerie feeling of the philosopher’s total isolation from the rest of the world, is the powerful play with shadow and light taking place at the picture. Whereas the room is hardly lit, from the window in front of the philosopher’s desk we can see a light which almost stops or gets greatly reduced as it enters the room. The light is outside, and what gets inside is disproportionately little compared to what it should be. From Plato’s allegory of the cave to Descartes’ *lumine naturali*, light has been associated with understanding and a clarity which reveals what was previously hidden. Indeed it can be said that the whole of creation actually begins with God’s command: *γενηθήτω φῶς* (Let there be light). But the philosopher, *strangely* a man devoted to understanding i.e. to light, sits in a dark place (inside a room, a library) and dares not to look at the source of the light or to place himself in a lighted space. Is that a comment by Rembrandt on the position of the intellectual in modernity? A comment on the intellectual’s weakness to be, as the pre-Socratics were, a stimulant for their culture, or as Nietzsche would have it, ‘commanders and legislators’? We will argue that this is indeed the case and that Nietzsche would have certainly thought of that painting as a comment on the *decadent* scholarly spirit of modernity.

From philosophy to the philosopher. A change of paradigm.

In the much-quoted first aphorism from ‘Reason in Philosophy’, Nietzsche accuses philosophers of their ‘Egypticism’; that is, the inherited¹⁵⁰ tendency of philosophers to examine something by de-historicizing it, by not taking into account that, as he puts it in HATH, ‘everything has become’¹⁵¹. From Plato onwards, philosophy examines beings *sub specie aeterni*, sacrificing thus the particular to the universal. In a rather cryptic passage from

¹⁵⁰ Inherited from Plato.

¹⁵¹ HATH: 2

‘On First and Last Things’¹⁵² he identifies the principal error of what he calls ‘Metaphysical philosophy’ as its inability to give an account of how something originates in its opposite (truth in error, logic in unlogic etc). Because metaphysical philosophy has no answer to give, it finds refuge in the thought that all higher valued concepts originate in some mystical *Ur*-source which the being-in-itself is supposed to be. Against this methodology of metaphysics he suggests that we, on the contrary, have to exercise a *historical philosophising* [historische Philosophieren], through which it will be revealed that all concepts, ideas and sensations are interlinked. This historical philosophising is the product of the positivist turn (*yet* short-lived) that HATH had inaugurated. Nietzsche explicitly suggests that historical philosophising is to be an integral part of natural sciences. He goes on to characterise this new methodology as a “*chemistry* of the moral, religious and aesthetic conceptions and sensations.”¹⁵³ Unlike the mystical reverence that the old metaphysics had demanded (one is not supposed to question Truth¹⁵⁴), the new science of chemistry reveals the archetypal unity of all things. “What if this chemistry were to end up revealing that in this domain too the most glorious colours are derived from base, indeed from despised materials?”¹⁵⁵ Whereas to the old metaphysician the origin of the ‘most glorious’ in the most ‘despised’ would have been an anathema, if not something downright incomprehensible, for the ‘new’ philosopher it inaugurates the possibility of philosophical ‘praxis’ separate from the dogmas of metaphysics. The ‘new’ philosophy will not have anything to do with ‘conceptual mummies’, it will not exhaust itself in the contemplation of the *beyond* but on the contrary it will be, as Nietzsche never tires of repeating, a *nomothetic* activity, i.e. an activity dedicated to the production of new forms of human existence, and the philosopher is no longer the ‘contemplator’ (an activity certainly reminiscent of his religious past) but the *nomothetes* of the future. “*But true philosophers are commanders and legislators: they say ‘That is how it should be!’*”¹⁵⁶

This shift to the understanding of philosophy, which was certainly under way since the time of Nietzsche’s work on Diogenes Laertius in Leipzig in 1867¹⁵⁷, allows Nietzsche to dedicate his time mainly to the examination of the particular aspects constituting the *personality* of the philosopher and only secondarily to the philosophical ideas comprising the philosopher’s work. We have to understand precisely the *why* and *how* of this move if we are to follow the

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*: 1

¹⁵⁴ Is that not the history of the Middle Ages in the West?

¹⁵⁵ HATH: 1

¹⁵⁶ BGE: 211

¹⁵⁷ Curtis, Cate. *Friedrich Nietzsche – A biography*. London: Pimlico. 2003, p. 75-76

Nietzschean problematic. The question that Nietzsche wishes to ask does not concern the intricacies of dogmas but *the conditions of possibility* for the production of new life-forms. Thus, in an illuminating passage from his university course on the Pre-Platonic philosophers delivered in Basel from 1872 to 1876, Nietzsche states that one of the aims of his investigation is “to observe how ‘the philosopher’ appeared among the Greeks, not just how philosophy appeared among them.”¹⁵⁸ In another similar passage he also asks: “What is the relationship between the people and the genius...?”¹⁵⁹ The examination of the subject matter of the birth of the philosopher (how the *type* philosopher originated) is linked to the riddle of Greek culture, the problem of culture, and the origins of ‘genius’, questions which preoccupied Nietzsche throughout the 1870’s. What interests Nietzsche is clarifying the conditions which can produce the ‘exemplary’ type and deciphering the mystery of the personality of the exemplar. Not only the notebooks from 1870, but also the rest of Nietzsche’s meditations on the problem of the philosopher¹⁶⁰, do nothing more than reinforce Foucault’s insight on the blending of truth with the philosophical life.

As with all of Nietzsche’s meditations¹⁶¹, the idea of the philosopher-legislator¹⁶² has a long development throughout his oeuvre. In the notebooks from the 1870’s, the philosopher is called “a self-revelation of nature’s workshop”; he appears “during those times of great danger, when the wheel of time is turning faster and faster”¹⁶³. The philosopher is a *Versucher* (the one who attempts); he comes when a culture has exhausted (or it thinks that it has) its possibilities and has no way to produce new forms of human existence. Unlike the man of science who is driven by an “unmeasured and indiscriminate knowledge drive” (“a sign that life has grown old”¹⁶⁴), the philosopher of ‘tragic knowledge’ redirects the drive to knowledge against knowledge itself so as to “return to art its rights”¹⁶⁵. ‘Pure’ knowing is not the task now, but rather ‘creating’¹⁶⁶, i.e. the process where one abandons the suicidal will to truth in favour of a “good will to appearance” which is naturally the role of art¹⁶⁷. This ‘creating’ knowledge will later become the drive to ‘law giving’. As Douglas Burnham

¹⁵⁸ PPP: p. 3

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ Notably the chapter ‘We Scholars’ in BGE

¹⁶¹ Or ‘thoughts’, or ‘concepts’. Insofar as one accepts the use of the word ‘concept’ in order to describe a Nietzschean ‘idea’. As far as we are concerned the use of the word ‘meditation’ is the most appropriate since it expresses the idea of long and copious preparation for a constantly developing thought.

¹⁶² Naturally echoing that of the Platonic ‘philosopher-king’.

¹⁶³ PT: The philosopher, Section: 24

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.* Section: 25

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.* Section: 37

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.* Section: 84

¹⁶⁷ GS: 107

beautifully puts it “knowledge then does not represent the world...but rather fashions it.”¹⁶⁸ How is the philosopher supposed to do that other than by transforming *himself* into a work of art? Nietzsche is adamant and in total agreement with the (indeed rather extreme) position of Michel Foucault¹⁶⁹. “The philosopher’s product is his life...His life is his work of art...”¹⁷⁰ and again: his life [the philosopher’s] “occupies the most important position, *before* his *works*”¹⁷¹. Nietzsche, like Foucault, does not say that what characterizes a philosopher is the number of books that he writes, whether he has disciples, or if he is the initiator of new philosophical schools. Nothing of that matters for Nietzsche. One is a philosopher to the extent that philosophical theory can be incorporated into one’s everyday life. Again Nietzsche says that the philosopher of tragic knowledge does not come in order to create a new ‘faith’ but in order to cultivate ‘a new life’¹⁷². The philosopher then as a spiritual leader, the leader of a cult, the leader of a people, is already an early insight that Nietzsche will continue to cultivate throughout his life. It is also one of the multiple links between what *is* and what is destined to be overcome i.e. one of the points where one meets the Overhuman.

In BGE one of the masks of the Overhuman is that of the “philosopher of the future or ‘true philosopher’”. Nietzsche there resists the traditional understanding of the philosopher *solely* as an academic, a scholar, or an intellectual. Scholarship and academic contemplation are not attributes to be denied; on the contrary, they are components of the philosopher’s weaponry, but the ‘new’ philosopher steps *beyond* the contemplative activity of critical thinking onto the world of action [Praxis] in order to change it. Famously, in his *Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach*, Marx declared the mission of the revolutionary as that of coming to fulfil the work of the philosopher by applying the philosophical findings to the world of everyday experience and political action. If post-Hegelians had found a new way to understand man and society, then that way had to be translated into a new *ethics* and a new way to arrange conduct among men. *Like* Marx, Nietzsche also believes that the work of philosophy has to be fulfilled by its application to political action, for that reason the philosopher is now to be transformed into a ‘commander and legislator’; *unlike* Marx, though, Nietzsche does not believe that the work of the philosopher had finished by ‘interpreting the world’. It is still the mission of philosophy and philosophers to go on *by taking upon themselves* the work of revolutionary change. For

¹⁶⁸ Burnham, Douglas. *Reading Nietzsche – An analysis of Beyond Good and Evil*. Stocksfield: Accumen. 2007, p. 146

¹⁶⁹ Or one should say Foucault is in agreement with Nietzsche?

¹⁷⁰ PT: Philosophy in hard times: 48

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² *Ibid.* The philosopher: 37

that reason Nietzsche retains the worn-out word ‘*Philosoph*’ but gives it an entirely new meaning.

Indeed, one cannot be clearer than that: “I am going to insist that people finally stop mistaking philosophical labourers and scientific men in general for philosophers”¹⁷³. As we already know from Foucault, the scientific man’s relation to truth is only ‘external’ to the subject. Truth does not affect the “serious things in [one’s] life”, Nietzsche would add. But the idea that Nietzsche has for the philosopher is the very opposite of that of the ‘scientific’ man¹⁷⁴. In one of his (many and remarkable) lists he presents the multiple masks of the philosopher. This untimely man has then to be: 1. a critic, 2. a sceptic, 3. a dogmatist, 4. a historian, 5. a poet, 6. a collector, 7. a traveller 8. a guesser of riddles, 9. a moralist, 10. a seer, 11. a ‘free spirit’, and as if all the above were not enough he then adds 12. and practically everything. [!] ¹⁷⁵. It is clear then that the philosopher has to assume a superhuman role “in order to run through the range of human values and value feelings and *be able* to gaze with many eyes and consciences from the heights into every distance, from the depths up to every height, from the corner onto every expanse.”¹⁷⁶ The *poet-philosopher*, the *traveller-philosopher* etc. place themselves in the service of a task higher than themselves. One does not overturn values for the sake of overturning them, one overturns values because one is obliged¹⁷⁷ to listen to the will of the task which with great pressure commands him to create values, to *be* as a creator, which means as a legislator.

Are Nietzsche’s meditations on the role of philosophers idiosyncratic in nature, or do they exemplify something more? Are they meditations of a man unlearned in academic philosophy and thus unable to appreciate the depth and the value of philosophical reasoning? Is Nietzsche in short a ‘simplifier’ and a ‘poet-philosopher’, as Heidegger complained that he had been by the academic establishment in Germany at the beginning of the century?¹⁷⁸ These questions are crucial, since they ultimately target something even higher than the person of Nietzsche, namely the role and the scope of philosophy itself. In a remarkable passage Kant admits the following: “The ancient Greek philosophers...remained more

¹⁷³ BGE: 211

¹⁷⁴ That doesn’t mean though that the ‘true philosopher’ does not presuppose the scientific man but only as that which has to be *sublated*.

¹⁷⁵ BGE: 211

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ The new philosopher is also a *poet* thus the serviceman of *Moirai*, he obeys something other than the rules of logic.

¹⁷⁸ Heidegger, Martin. *Nietzsche, Vol. I The will to power as Art*. David Farrell Krell (trans.). San Francisco: Harper San Francisco. 1979, p. 5

faithful to the Idea of the philosopher than their modern counterparts have done. ‘When will you finally begin to live virtuously?’ said Plato to an old man who told him he was attending classes on virtue. The point is not always to speculate, but also ultimately to think about applying our knowledge. Today, however, he who lives in conformity with what he teaches is taken for a dreamer.”¹⁷⁹ Nietzsche’s uncanniness consists in not following the paradigm of the ‘modern ones’, who Kant accuses of having abandoned the fundamental connection between speculation and ‘living’ (which for the Greeks meant a life dedicated to the good of the polis); instead Nietzsche attempts to follow what is most foreign to modernity, the paradigm of the ancients. Because of that, his thoughts sound ‘strange’ and certainly unfashionable to an age that has been trained to idolize the part instead of the whole and to glorify isolated individuals instead of the life of cultures and the fate of civilizations. The philosopher for Nietzsche is an exceptional human type because he dedicates himself to what is unsure and to what escapes the utilitarian calculations of which modern living consists. The philosopher is a forerunner of the Overhuman because he escapes utility altogether and dedicates himself to aims higher from those of the human of today. “To the rabble, wisdom seems like a kind of escape, device or trick for pulling yourself out of the game when things get rough. But the real philosopher...lives ‘unphilosophically,’ ‘unwisely,’ in a manner which is above all *not clever*, and feels the weight and duty of a hundred experiments and temptations of life: he constantly puts *himself* at risk, he plays *the* rough game...”¹⁸⁰ Nietzsche’s meditations on philosophy and the philosophers, then, are of great importance to us, since they inaugurate Nietzsche’s faith in the necessity of a vital change which has to take place at the very heart of modern culture, a change which will restore ‘faith in man’ as the locus of the fundamental forces constituting the phenomenon of life on earth, a type of human which will be able to reunite what is fragmentary to a unified whole.

More on Culture as a factory of greatness.

In the notebooks from 1870, meditations on the new emerging forms of philosophers take place concurrently with meditations on culture. The philosopher (or the ‘genius’) finds himself always in a dialectical relation with his (or with any) culture. The mysteries of the one cannot be deciphered without deciphering the mysteries of the other. If, as we have seen,

¹⁷⁹ Kant quoted in Hadot, Pierre. *What is ancient philosophy? Op.cit.* p. xiii

¹⁸⁰ BGE: 205

the new philosopher is to assume almost superhuman powers in order to overturn the existing values and create new ones, what is the role of culture as a whole? Indeed we have to return now to our initial question. Why do we have culture?

In an aphorism from 1872, we read “The problem of *culture* is seldom grasped correctly. The goal of a *culture* is not the greatest possible *happiness* of a people, nor is it the unhindered development of all their talents; instead, culture shows itself in the correct *proportion* of these developments...In all the drives of the Greeks there is manifested a *mastering unity* – let us call it the Hellenic *will*...The culture of a people is manifest in the *unifying mastery* of *their drives*...”¹⁸¹ What is important to note in this aphorism is that the process of ‘mastering unity’ takes place against a conception of the polity as a conglomeration of individuals seeking happiness and contentment. Nietzsche is saying that culture is there neither to serve an abstraction (i.e. the people) nor to offer to this abstraction what was described in ‘The Birth of Tragedy’ as the illusion of Socratic/Alexandrian culture, its optimistic willingness (and its *hubris*) to render the world intelligible. We owe to “the enormous courage and wisdom of *Kant* and *Schopenhauer* ...”¹⁸² the deconstruction of the ‘hidden foundation of our culture’, the graspability of the world of appearances and the elevation of appearance into the status “of the sole and supreme reality”. This is the point where a new ‘tragic culture’ ought to begin with the replacement of Socratic rationalism (science) by wisdom, where wisdom indicates (at least at the time of the BT) an immersion in the primordial unity of the Apollonian and Dionysian forces. But even more than that, the challenge here is the revitalization of an Aeschylean culture and not the continuation of a Euripidean one. But what does this mean and what is the significance of the prioritization of the Aeschylean over the Euripidean culture?

In BT Nietzsche describes the influence of Euripides in Greek art and society as catastrophic. But what is the major difference between tragedy represented by Aeschylus and the New Attic Drama that Euripides comes to represent? The difference is that tragedy (the field of Dionysus) describes *structures* whereas Euripidean drama describes the *psychology* of its heroes, i.e. the spectators who have taken the place of the symbolic figures of Apollo and Dionysus on stage. Tragedy does not describe the sufferings of humans because it does not concern itself with imitation, but it describes the sufferings of the symbolic figures of Gods as appearances of elemental structures of the world itself. Prometheus, Nietzsche notes, is

¹⁸¹ PT: The Philosopher, Section: 46

¹⁸² BT: 18

interesting because in him one can discern “his simultaneously Apolline and Dionysian nature”¹⁸³; in Prometheus we see the forces constituting the human drama, not the adventures of an individual. Euripides is guilty for Nietzsche because he initiates the process of the *psychologization* of all art and culture. From Euripides onwards the adventures of individuals (a notion that for the Greeks never existed) become the primary focus of art and culture, and psychology is called on to explain their behaviour, whereas Aeschylean culture uses *myth* not as a principle of explanation but rather as the motivational force of a culture and its people. According to this schema, Wagner (and the young Nietzsche) would be the progeny of Aeschylus, whereas much of today’s theatre¹⁸⁴ would be the offspring of Euripides.

With dark colours Nietzsche paints the canvas of Euripidean influence on Greek Tragedy. What is the outrageous move of Euripides? That the spectator comes on stage! “Thanks to him people from everyday life pushed their way out of the audience and on to the stage; the mirror which once revealed only great and bold features now became painfully true to life, reproducing conscientiously even the lines which nature had drawn badly.”¹⁸⁵ This does not raise a problem only within aesthetics, as certain commentators have assumed that it does.¹⁸⁶ For Euripides, naturalism, as Burnham and Jesinghausen have rightly suggested, functions as a “normative image”¹⁸⁷ in service of the education of the public. But the destructive influence of Euripides is not limited only to aesthetics. The Euripidean move takes place primarily in the field of politics. The placing of the public on stage is a political move designed to offer to the public the rights of what was once exceptional. With Euripides everyone now has the right to make his life the object of art, whereas previously it was only structures revealed through the acts of exceptional figures (e.g. Prometheus) that were the object of Tragedy. Nietzsche could not be clearer on this when he says that Odysseus, “the typical Hellene of older art” has “now [sunk] to the level of Graeculus”.¹⁸⁸ Graeculus is an interesting word that gives us the clue to the political reverberations that Nietzsche associates with Euripides. The word Graeculus (literally the *little Greek*) is widely used during the years of Roman conquest

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*: 51

¹⁸⁴ Especially the tradition of naturalism and psychologism which have created great plays (e.g. Tennessee Williams and most of the American theatre) yet they are plays exhausting themselves to the investigation of private psychologies *not* structures, a tradition that it would be utterly alien to the Greeks. An exception to the psychologist stage interpretation of much of modern theatre is of course the work of Theodoros Terzopoulos. For more see: Raddatz, Frank-Michael. *Reise mit Dionysos - Das Theater des Theodoros Terzopoulos*. Verlag: Theater der Zeit. 2006

¹⁸⁵ BT: 55

¹⁸⁶ Burnham, Douglas & Jesinghausen, Martin. *Nietzsche's The Birth of Tragedy*. London: Continuum. 2010, p. 88

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.* p. 89

¹⁸⁸ BT: 11

of Greece, mainly in a derogative sense. Especially when used by Cicero, it describes a liar, dishonest, lazy, pretentious, ‘know-it-all’ kind of person¹⁸⁹. Despite the obvious political reasons that the (military superior but culturally inferior) conquerors Romans have to insult the conquered (military inferior but culturally superior) Greeks, the word also indicates what Nietzsche describes as ‘a good-natured and cunning domestic slave’ who from now on will be the center of art. In short: the *rabble* as the very core of artistic creation. It is not difficult to imagine the level of Nietzsche’s horror!

Let us now return to the challenge that Aeschylean culture poses. Aeschylus is important for Nietzsche because he functions as the lighthouse for another possible beginning. As humanity we are called to choose the narrative of our origins, and therefore of our future also. The choice that as humanity we are called to make is the following: either we are going to pick the Semitic myth of the Fall, with all its ramifications of deception, cunning etc. and thus place *guilt* at the very beginning of our existence, or we are going to pick Prometheus. As Quentin Taylor notes: “In the Greek myth...sacrilege represents the decisive act of man’s enhancement; for through sacrilege man ‘gains culture’, the ‘best and highest possession man can acquire... BT: 9’”. Let us pay attention to how Nietzsche describes this stubborn rebel: Prometheus, who is naturally the personification of Hellenic culture: “Raising himself to Titanic heights, man fights for and achieves his own culture, and he compels the gods to ally themselves with him because of his very own wisdom, he holds existence and its limits in his hands.”¹⁹⁰ The Hellenic and the Judaic are two responses to the problem of the orientation of culture. Nietzsche believes that while the Hellenic represents an ascent in matters of human development, the Judaic, in contrast, represents a descent. The Hellenic is stubborn, rebellious, disobedient, and disorderly. Cultural production begins *only* as the result of an act of holy defiance, *to spit on the face of God(s)* and in that way to lose ‘paradise’ (reward) while gaining culture. Judea represents for Nietzsche the counter-movement in the field of culture; there the soul is trained to look “obliquely at things”¹⁹¹, hiding becomes the soul’s home and resentment of the soul’s principal affect. Nietzsche’s apotheosis of the Aeschylean is based on his fundamental attitude of resistance toward a culture which has turned *guilt* into its foundation stone. What type of people can such a culture create? Only *modern* humans, believing in the happiness of all and in the universal value of mediocrities. But a culture’s

¹⁸⁹ Goldhill, Simon (ed.). *Being Greek under Rome: Cultural Identity, the Second Sophistic and the Development of Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2001

¹⁹⁰ BT: 9

¹⁹¹ GM: II, 10

role lies elsewhere and Nietzsche is adamant. A culture's role lies *only* in the production of the exceptional¹⁹², of that which overcomes our everyday self and realizes forcefully-made-latent potentials. Nothing else matters because everything else would be to live the life of the animals¹⁹³.

In the third timeless meditation, *Schopenhauer as Educator*, we find two of the most explicit and interesting definitions of culture. The first is: "Culture is...perfecting of nature."¹⁹⁴ Here, culture is the propaedeutic of nature. You do not 'find' nature, you 'achieve' nature. Nietzsche's naturalism has nothing to do with the naiveties of the Stoics. Philosophy is either a nomothetic activity or harmless chat. Equally, for Nietzsche man is called to perfect the work of nature through its legislating activity. "Living – is that not precisely wanting to be other than this Nature? Is not living – estimating, preferring, being unjust, being limited, wanting to be different?"¹⁹⁵ Nietzsche's vision of the philosopher-legislator and a society based on aristocratic values entails constant work on the natural gifts that all (and not some) humans possess.¹⁹⁶ What distinguishes the Nietzschean 'genius' from the lazy is that the first have consciously and systematically cultivated their innate talents *under conditions of the most extreme discipline*. It is because a will to a *great discipline* is at work in the life of every 'genius' that these people stand at the top of the social structure. It is only because they are able to command (themselves) that eventually are called to command (others). Perfecting nature is called "an *ascent*" from which one is called to play with 'great tasks'. "*Physis* calls for *nomoi*", as Leo Strauss notes, and the quest for *nomoi* is the work of culture. This leads us to the second definition of culture given in SE: "...the goal of culture is to promote the production of true *human beings* and nothing else."¹⁹⁷

Two things could be said here, the first regarding Nietzsche's definition of the human and the second regarding 'nothing else'. As to the former, let us just note that the 'true' human being is the one who will understand himself as a field of contradictory forces seeking domination. *Greatness* then consists in an act of great synthesising. The human hitherto produced lacks great unity. This unifying act is to be the task of the future. "The great synthetic man is lacking, in whom the various forces are unhesitatingly harnessed for the attainment of one

¹⁹² UM: Schopenhauer as educator: 6

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*: 5

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*: 1

¹⁹⁵ BGE: 9

¹⁹⁶ For more on that see: Conant, James. "Nietzsche's Perfectionism", in: Schacht, Richard (ed.). *Nietzsche's Postmoralism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2001, p. 212

¹⁹⁷ UM: Schopenhauer as educator: 6

goal.”¹⁹⁸ As to the latter, Nietzsche is not telling us that we need culture in order to think, to feel, to participate in the development or the bonding of human communities. He tells us that culture, i.e. the production of true *human beings*, is a goal in itself and that nothing else matters. James Conant has argued that culture for Nietzsche is not a term of exclusion but rather one of participation¹⁹⁹. We are all able to achieve great works of culture and the value of exemplary individuals consists in showing us that we are able to follow our *own* footsteps. *After all, Zarathustra demands that his disciples defy him.* Conant’s reading is certainly valuable but ultimately misguided. Nietzsche was not a class-aristocrat, but he certainly *was* an aristocrat in the sense that the quest for greatness belongs to those who have trained themselves to ignore the value of mere survival and to dedicate themselves to something which overcomes them. A decisive factor of the ‘selection-process’ of those deemed to command over those who will be commanded is the willingness of the first to let go of what is most valuable to them, their own existence²⁰⁰. To hang on to existence is a sign of animality and, though the human being is one more animal among other animals, it is also this animal that has been tortured, and tortured itself, so much that it finally developed an *inner world*, as *Genealogy* teaches us, a ‘chamber of torture’, which he calls his *soul*, his *consciousness*.²⁰¹

As Nietzsche passes from his early to the middle period of his work (1878-1882), we see a change in his understanding of the phenomenon of culture. While in the early period culture relied on the force of myth (any myth) and the narratives that these myths can create, with his gradual emancipation from both the Wagnerian world-view and Schopenhauer’s metaphysics Nietzsche comes to adopt a more ‘scientific spirit’, where science indicates an emphasis *on method and mistrust* according to the finest tradition of the Enlightenment. Wagner’s picture on the wall comes down and is replaced with that of the French Enlightenment’s hero: Voltaire! To be sure, this is only a dalliance and a long-term affair, at least with the egalitarian presuppositions of the French Enlightenment, is never established. What *is* established, though, through the help of science, is a willingness to engage in a methodological dissection of the suppositions not only of tradition but also which had informed his earliest thought *up to a certain point*. Even if the new hero becomes the scientist, Nietzsche still recognizes the necessity of what we would like to call *the unthought*

¹⁹⁸ WP: 883. KSA: 12:9 [119]

¹⁹⁹ Conant James, “Nietzsche’s Perfectionism”. *Op.cit.*

²⁰⁰ UM: Schopenhauer as educator: 5

²⁰¹ More on that: see our Third chapter

remainder. The unthought remainder refers both to that which is left unthought and to that which contaminates the possibility of a *wissenschaftliche* (not only scientific) approach to truth. It refers to what haunts the dreams of the bourgeoisie and to the monstrous *Ursprung* of reason; to the monsters from Goya's etching '*The sleep of reason creates monsters*'. For that reason, because the only way that a culture has to renew itself is through *a shamanic call of the spirits*, Nietzsche introduces the idea of the 'double brain': "But if science provides us with less and less pleasure, and deprives us of more and more pleasure through casting suspicion on the consolations of metaphysics, religion and art, then that mightiest source of joy to which mankind owns almost all its humanity will become impoverished. For this reason a higher culture must give man a double-brain, as it were two brain-ventricles, one for the perceptions of science, the other for those of non-science: lying beside one another, not confused together, separable, capable of shut off; this is a demand of health."²⁰² As Paul Franco rightly observes, this is the "new version of the Apollonian-Dionysian dialectic"²⁰³ where illusions are controlled by science and science becomes aware of its limits through illusions.

However more receptive Nietzsche becomes to democratic sentiments in his middle period, the remarkable consistency on the necessity of the higher/lower distinction remains unaltered. A typical example is to be found in HATH: 439 "A higher culture can come into existence only when there are two different castes in society: that of the workers and that of the idle, of those capable of true leisure." The idle here are synonymous with the slaves of the early and the late period. Nietzsche, following the Hellenes, has provided a very clear definition of slavery: "...he who does not have two-thirds of his day to himself is a slave, let him be what he may otherwise: statesmen, businessman, official, scholar."²⁰⁴ The only possibility of culture is a life devoted to contemplation, free from the demands of everyday existence. *Can you imagine Socrates having to go to the office?*

Nietzsche never stops discussing culture and making observations on various cultural themes throughout his life. However, in his later period (1883-1888), the theme of culture as a possibility of production of renewed forms of human existence gradually gives way to discussions on politics, as paradigmatically happens in BGE. It seems that as Wagner's influence fades away, Nietzsche leaves behind him his youthful preoccupation with culture

²⁰² HATH: 251

²⁰³ Franco, Paul. *Nietzsche's Enlightenment*. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press. 2011, p. 48

²⁰⁴ HATH: 283

and paves the way to what he would later call ‘great politics’, which is not devoid of the aims of culture, but instead of being presenting in an aesthetic field (as opera, music, etc.), they come now to be applied in the field of politics and political institutions. In a *Nachlass* note from May-July 1885, we are informed that what Nietzsche is looking for now is “Institutionen zur Züchtung höherer Menschen” (institutions required for the breeding of higher humans)²⁰⁵. As we are going to argue later²⁰⁶, through his study of politics Nietzsche takes a more radical step toward what he always thought as philosophy’s nomothetic activity. His *agonistic policy*, which for us is not a politics of competition but rather a policy of giving and letting-go, is going to become the principle arena for the application of all those principles that are foreign to the current paradigm of the Judeo/Christian civilization. Nietzsche’s ‘experiment with politics’ is an experiment on how far politics can incorporate the need for a different direction in culture from the direction in which we are heading now.

On Overhumans and Transhumans.

In *Kolyma Tales*, an account of the life in Soviet labour camps, author and former inmate Varlam Shalamov describes with a dry, downplayed tone and with emotional detachment life reduced to its bare minimum. Inmates’ lives are portrayed in all of their horrific simplicity. Unlike other, more sentimental, portrayals of camp life, such as Solzhenitsyn’s *The Gulag Archipelago*, Shalamov’s narrative lacks anything that can remotely resemble the human. In the Kolyma Gulag camps everything once known to constitute a human life is absent: “All human emotions – love, friendship, envy, concern for one’s fellow man, compassion, longing for fame, honesty – had left us with the flesh that had melted from our bodies during their long fasts.”²⁰⁷ In a confession of the things that he learned from the life in the camps, Shalamov notes: “The extraordinary fragility of human nature, of civilization. A human being would turn into a beast after three weeks of hard work, cold, starvation and beatings.”²⁰⁸ Shalamov’s account is a strong reminder of the misunderstood relation between the technological and the perceived ‘moral’ progress of humanity. Certainly human life is a goal-

²⁰⁵ KSA: 11: 35 [47]

²⁰⁶ On our Second chapter

²⁰⁷ Shalamov, Varlam. *Kolyma Tales*. Tr. John Glad. London: Penguin Books. 1994, p. 32

²⁰⁸ Available at: <http://shalamov.ru/en/library/34/1.html> [Accessed 11 May 2014]

oriented activity²⁰⁹; one gets up in the morning, drinks his coffee, goes to work, etc. Yet *micro-goal oriented activity* is to be differentiated from *macro-progress ideologies*. What we have come to call Western/Christian civilization is a culture based on the eschatological vision of a final redemption of time and the humans. Following a tradition of hierarchical posting of being²¹⁰, Christian culture is based on the assumption that through the utilization of ascetic practices (which are designed to control the *thymoeid* part of the soul), individuals will come closer to what overcomes nature (and the unwanted passions of the soul, or the material of the senses) and become *Form* (for Plato), pure being, or God. Unlike though of the *micro-goal oriented activity* of the humans, which arranges their everydayness around meaningful activities, the *macro-progress ideologies*, like Christian civilization, do not aim only at the arrangement of everydayness but at the total alignment of the history of humanity and the character of existence to the goals that ideology has set for the humans. Individuals in the grip of *macro-progress ideologies* find themselves in a heteronomous relation to the culture of the ideology which they are called to serve, whereas *micro-goal oriented activity* remains largely autonomous.

Since Christian civilization is moved by eschatological visions, it has produced individuals who are inextricably linked to this *movement of production* which takes place continually until the final redemption of humanity. According to this model, *humans ought to better themselves*²¹¹. The overcoming of obstacles, the successful achievements of tasks, however small or insignificant they may be, constitutes the very foundation of Western/Christian culture and civilization. Humans ‘improve’ themselves in infinite ways. Western/Christian civilization is entangled in what we could call ‘*ideologies of improvement*’. The ‘*ideologies of improvement*’ refer to all those institutions through which human animals seek to achieve their ‘end’ within the context of a linear and progressive understanding of time. Education, religion, science, and politics (left or right) are all forms of these ideologies. Thus *an educated person* would be someone believing in the continuous transforming effects on his

²⁰⁹ Aristotle. *Nicomachean ethics*. In: Barnes, Johnathan (ed.). *The Complete Works of Aristotle* Vol. II. W.D. Ross (trans.). Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1984. 1094, 1-3

²¹⁰ Plato. *Republic*. In: Cooper M. John (ed.). *Plato – Complete Works*. G.M.A. Grube (trans.) Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company. 1997. 509b. See also the term “*Sein*” in: Nimtz, Christian (Herausgeber), Jordan, Stefan (Herausgeber). *Lexikon Philosophie. Hundert Grundbegriffe*, Stuttgart, Verlag: Reclam. 2011

²¹¹ Actually they don’t! As Zarathustra comes to realize, the current state of humanity is dominated by the last human, in the words of Peter Sloterdijk: “the most despicable creature under the sun: the human without longing, the final stuffy bourgeois, who has invented happiness and gazes after the passing women while sunbathing by the pool...” Sloterdijk, Peter. *You must change your life*. *Op.cit.* p. 176. I use the assumption nonetheless because it is one of the tenets of Western-Christian civilization.

personality through the accumulation of knowledge made possible through the system of education. Such a person will seek to ‘improve’ himself by going to school, then to university, and by visiting museums and galleries. It is generally believed that despite the constantly moving target of ‘sufficient knowledge’, individuals tend to aim toward some goal from which some kind of understanding can shed light on the subjects under investigation. Similarly for a religious person, the end of his *askesis* will be *theosis*, the state of identification of the human with the divine; for a person concerned with politics the ‘end’ will be the final triumph of the proletariat or the maximum accumulation of profits and so on.

In the rest of this chapter we will be interested in one particular way of ‘improvement’ that has endured throughout history despite its many failings and shortcomings. We are going to examine the movement known as ‘transhumanism’ and its multiple connections with eugenics. Our aim is to place the aims and the ‘philosophy’ of the transhumanist movement under the scrutiny of a 19th century philosopher whose ideas, as it has been suggested, has influenced eugenic thought. We intend to show that Nietzsche would never have advocated eugenic thought (with all of its paraphernalia) as this would have been alien to his entire teaching concerning the much-misunderstood notion of the ‘overcoming’ of the human animal. We will argue that the *Overhumans* suggested by Nietzsche not only differ dramatically from the posthumans of the transhumanists but represent a fuller and richer possibility for the understanding and the flourishing of the human animal. Ultimately our purpose is to suggest a different way (a *βίος* not a *θεωρία*) of seeing and understanding the possibility of human flourishing independent of the science-dependent thought of the transhumanists.

From Eugenics to Transhumanism.

We will begin with a very short history of the Eugenic movement, since that will enable us to situate it within the long history of what we have called ‘ideologies of improvement’. The history of eugenics is as old as mankind itself. According to the founder of modern eugenics, Sir Francis Galton, “Eugenics is the science which deals with all influences that improve the inborn qualities of a race, and especially with those that develop them to the utmost

advantage.”²¹² Famously, babies born with defects were thrown by the ancient Spartans into a chasm on Mount Taygetus. Various eugenic techniques have been used throughout the world and from many seemingly very different civilizations. Modern eugenics was for many years the most promising field of study for the newest and most ‘virile’ of the nations of the West. The United States of America was to harbour the dreams of this new science and it was to lead what the author Edwin Black has called the ‘campaign to create a master race’²¹³. The first breeding communities are created already in 1865, and from then on, America’s intense desire to safeguard the strong from the weak leads in 1907 to the first eugenic legislation passed by the state of Indiana concerning the involuntary sterilization of particular individuals. Not much time passes until the ‘good news’ of the new science reaches across the Atlantic. The British upper classes are anxious about the rise in numbers of ‘defective stock’²¹⁴ and, as a result, the *First International Congress on Eugenics* is organised in London in 1911. King George V is represented by the First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill. Soon the Germans take over. Largely as a response to the degrading living conditions of the working classes in Manchester, where drunkenness, disorder, and illness reign, the German establishment further promotes the *Sozialhygiene* movement. The results are well known. Adolf Hitler’s deputy Rudolf Hess famously stated that “Nazism is applied biology”²¹⁵. After the war the convenient placement of the guilt with those ‘evil Germans’ leaves the USA and their allies to further pursue their eugenic policies. It has been estimated that from the beginning of the century until the end of 1960’s in the USA, some 70,000 individuals were forcibly sterilised.²¹⁶ In Scandinavian countries the situation is similar. In Sweden alone between 1935 and 1975, 62,888 sterilizations were performed²¹⁷. Despite the regional differences (e.g. in Scandinavia eugenics is considered an ally of the social—and socialistic—policies of the welfare state whereas in the USA as an expression of the need for the protection of the *Nordic race*—the North Europeans who populated the American

²¹² Galton, Francis. “Eugenics: Its Definition, Scope, and Aims”. In: *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Jul. 1904), pp. 1-25

²¹³ Black, Edwin. *War against the weak – Eugenics and America’s campaign to create a master race*. New York: Four Walls Eight Windows. 2003

²¹⁴ The expression belongs to the legendary American eugenicist and conservationist Madison Grant famous for his book ‘*The Passing of the Great Race*’, in which he advocates a racial history of civilization, and also for his close friendship to presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Herbert Hoover.

²¹⁵ Rudolf Hess quoted in: Lifton Jay Robert. *The Nazi Doctors – Medical killing and the psychology of Genocide*. USA: Basic Books. 1986, p. 129

²¹⁶ Black, Edwin. *War against the weak – Eugenics and America’s campaign to create a master race*. *Ibid.* p. 398

²¹⁷ Spektorowski, Alberto and Mizrachi, Elisabet. “Eugenics and the Welfare State in Sweden: The Politics of Social Margins and the Idea of a Productive Society”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (Jul. 2004), pp. 333-352

Continent—from alien infection), the core ideology remains the same. The infectious degeneration of the masses calls for the protection of highly gifted populations or individuals. Man wishes to better himself and the *State* is there to assist him in his quest.

Transhumanism is an international movement which aims to promote the use of technology to enhance human abilities, physical or intellectual, or to eliminate ageing and to support the right of individuals to choose their preferred way of reproduction with the assistance of technology. A core belief of the movement is that technology is able to help humans to liberate all of their creative abilities which are now incapable of flourishing due to the restrictions of the body. As they characteristically put it: “Cancer, malaria, dementia, aging, starvation, unnecessary suffering, cognitive shortcomings are all among the presents that we wisely refuse.”²¹⁸ Nick Bostrom, one of the leading figures of the movement, places Transhumanism in the tradition of the Western Enlightenment and describes it as ‘rational humanism’²¹⁹. Although the term ‘rational’ is not explained, we will take it to be used in contradiction to ‘irrational’ or better *metaphysical* humanism; the religious humanism which emphasizes the inherent value of the human due its καθ’εικονα (in his own image) relation to God. Rational humanism, then, would be the humanism which emanates from the secular tradition of the Enlightenment and locates the value of the human in its relation not to a transcendent being but to Nature from which we inherited our ‘natural rights’ — ‘Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness’, in the words of Thomas Jefferson. Indeed, David Pearce in his *The Hedonistic Imperative* proposes the elimination of all suffering from all sentient beings through the use of drugs or neurosurgery.²²⁰ Transhumanists react passionately to the association of their movement with ‘traditional’ eugenics. The difference is located at the contribution of the state. Whereas the old eugenics was about the State’s right to impose its ideology (through eugenic methods) on the new ‘liberal’, as it has been called, in eugenics what it is of paramount importance is, in the words of Nicholas Agar, ‘state neutrality’²²¹. Articles 7 and 8 of *The Transhumanist Declaration*²²² state clearly the

²¹⁸ Bostrom, Nick. *In Defence of Posthuman Dignity*. 2005. [online] Available at: <http://www.nickbostrom.com/ethics/dignity.html> [Accessed 18 June 2011]

²¹⁹ Bostrom, Nick. *What is Transhumanism*. 2001 [online] Available at: <http://www.nickbostrom.com/old/transhumanism.html> [Accessed 18 June 2011]

²²⁰ Pearce, David. *The Abolitionist Project*. 2007. [online] Available at: <http://www.hedweb.com/abolitionist-project/index.html> [Accessed 18 June 2011]

²²¹ Agar Nicholas quoted in Sandel, J. Michael. “The case against perfection: What’s wrong with designer children, bionic athletes, and genetic engineering”, in: Savulescu, Julian & Bostrom, Nick. *Human Enhancement*. Oxford –New York: Oxford University Press. 2009, p. 85

²²² Transhumanist Declaration in: More, Max & Vita-More, Natasha (ed.). *The Transhumanist Reader*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell. 2013, p. 54-55

movement's commitment to the free distribution of techniques of human enhancement. Bostrom elaborates: "Because people are likely to differ profoundly in their attitudes towards human enhancement technologies, it is crucial that no one solution be imposed on everyone from above but that individuals get to consult their own consciences as to what is right for themselves and their families. Information, public debate, and education are the appropriate means by which to encourage others to make wise choices, not a global ban on a broad range of potentially beneficial medical and other enhancement options."²²³ It would seem then that there is a crucial difference between non-liberal and liberal eugenics. Transhumanists manage to avoid the problem of power and its imposition, which had remained unsolved by the old non-liberal eugenics,. Also, they manage to avoid the unsettling ideologies of racial supremacy. According to the new 'liberal' model, science produces the techniques and a well-informed democratic society distributes the 'means' of enhancement to the public. There are, however, three presuppositions that Transhumanist thought conveniently chooses to ignore. First, transhumanists presuppose the ideological neutrality of what they call 'science'. But science is nothing objective or neutral except if one confuses the merits of the applicability of technics with science itself. It is to the divine Kant, Nietzsche supports, that we owe the dissolution of the Socratic scientific optimism and its stubbornness to believe "in our ability to grasp and solve...all the puzzles of the universe"²²⁴. For Nietzsche, Kant has proved the elevation of appearance to sole reality and the ultimate unknowability of the 'true essence of things'. Science thus becomes a "naïve humanitarian correction"²²⁵, a regression to Socratism, a misunderstanding of a 'text' for a certain 'interpretation' among other possible, perhaps more fruitful, interpretations. Second, the transhumanists' naive belief in the modern democratic liberal state fails to do justice to problems of inequality caused by differences in wealth, cultural origin, geographical location, and class differences. Can what is true and possible in Denmark also be true and possible in Malawi? Transhumanists betray their dependence (and thus also their limitations) on the cultural models of a handful of Western post-industrialized democracies from which they come. Third, the Transhumanists finally presuppose the *neutrality* of the flow of information. But this is certainly a naivety with no bearing on any society where various interest groups compete for the domination of their positions over and against the position of the rest of the groups.

²²³ Bostrom, Nick. *In Defence of Posthuman Dignity*, 2005. [online] Available at: <http://www.nickbostrom.com/ethics/dignity.html> [Accessed 18 June 2011]

²²⁴ BT: 18

²²⁵ *Ibid.*: 22

More than all of the above, though, there is additionally an *unexamined presupposition* of the Transhumanist movement, their naive belief at the (purported) ‘*progress*’ of the human animal, and subsequently their dubious use of the notion of ‘*breeding*’. It will be argued that it is necessary to think of Eugenics and Transhumanism within the logic of the ‘ideologies of improvement’ and thus to expose the limited horizon of possibilities for the human animal that result from the application of such ideologies. Our link and guide to our path will be the thought of Friedrich Nietzsche.

In the essay “On Becoming Posthuman” one of the leading figures of Transhumanism and founder of the Extropy Institute, Dr. Max More, starts by quoting Nietzsche: “I teach you the overman. Man is something that is to be overcome. What have you done to overcome him?”²²⁶ Quoting out of context is naturally a familiar practice. But what if we juxtapose against the quote that More gives another Nietzschean quote, let’s say the following: “Mankind does *not* represent a development of the better or the stronger or the higher in the way that is believed today. ‘Progress’ is merely a modern idea, that is to say a false idea”²²⁷? We then have two completely different pictures of the problem of the human coming from the same thinker. Two questions then need to be examined. First: What does ‘improvement’ mean to Nietzsche? Second: What does the notion of the *overcoming* of the human signify?

Improvement and Overcoming in Nietzsche’s thought.

In 1888 Nietzsche begins his peculiar autobiography *Ecce Homo* (half a self-interpretation of his work, half a reinvention of himself) by making a peculiar statement: “The last thing *I* would promise would be to improve humanity”, and he continues: “I do not set up new idols; let the old ones learn what it means to have legs of clay.”²²⁸ A peculiar statement indeed coming from the man who tried to overturn Christian morality in the name of a radically new human *to come* which will be able to justify human existence on earth and as such the whole of existence. Nietzsche uses the term ‘Improvement’ (*Verbesserung*) in order to designate two essential tendencies of civilizing process. The first is the process of the taming (*Zähmung*) of the human animal and the second is the process of breeding (*Züchtung*) human

²²⁶ Nietzsche quoted in More, Max. *On Becoming Posthuman*. 2009. [online]

Available at: <http://eserver.org/courses/spring98/76101R/readings/becoming.html> [Accessed: 05/07/2014]

²²⁷ AC: 4

²²⁸ EH: 2

animals. What he, in TI, calls the ‘Improvers of humanity’ are those who make use of these antithetical tendencies in order to produce human animals. GM is the long exposition of the story of the taming of the human animal. In that book, the civilizing process is nothing more than a synonym for the subjugation of the instincts of healthy animals to the needs and demands of organized societies. GM tells us the sad story of the transformation of *health* into *sickness* and also the transformation of a human animal living *alongside* nature into a *Hausthier*, a household pet. “The *meaning of all culture* is simply to breed a tame and civilized animal, a *domestic animal*, out of the beast of prey ‘man’”²²⁹ This is the process of all culture (*aller Cultur*); however, in the context of GM the process of ‘taming’ takes place within the context of Christian civilization. It is because of the uncanny cleverness of the priest (note that Nietzsche is quite adamant about the power of priestly intelligence: “—nobody else’s intelligence [Geist] stands a chance against the intelligence [Geist] of priestly revenge.”²³⁰) that the human produces himself as *both* tame and interesting. It is because the priest sets in motion the process of the internalization of human animals (thus creating ‘souls’ for themselves) that out of this process of internalization what is born is both sick (since it is internalized) and interesting (since it has acquired *depth*). The *Rache* (revenge) of the priest takes the form of *ideals*, specifically ascetic ones. GM’s Third Essay tells the story of the positing of ascetic ideals as the way to ‘block’ the prospect of nihilism. Christian askesis refers to a methodology of abstinence aiming at the liberation of the soul from the fetters of the body as the necessary precondition for the vision of God²³¹. Christianity and the culture produced by its dogmas (what is called ‘The West’) is a culture based on the necessity of the restriction of the forces latent in human animals. “Christianity is a metaphysics of the hangman.”²³² What is to be the response to the Christian dystopia? What could be the response to the levelling effects of the Christian world-order and to the degenerate cultures that that has been produced, namely the modern, liberal, democratic West?

In the afore-mentioned chapter from TI, the response seems to lie in the idealization of *breeding* methods, such as those found in the *Laws of Manu*, the ancient Hindu Dharmashartras (legal texts). In the *Laws of Manu* Nietzsche finds a social organisation which suits his taste. The caste system allows different social classes to flourish and the

²²⁹ GM: I: 11. The original text as follows: “...der *Sinn aller Cultur* sei, aus dem Raubthiere "Mensch" ein zahmes und civilisirtes Thier, ein *Hausthier* herauszuzüchten” KSA (Zur Genealogie der Moral) I. 11

²³⁰ *Ibid.* I: 11, “gegen den Geist der priesterlichen Rache kommt überhaupt aller übrige Geist kaum in Betracht” *Ibid.* KSA (Zur Genealogie der Moral) I. 7

²³¹ Hadot, Pierre. *What is ancient philosophy?* *Op.cit.* p. 246

²³² TI: The four great errors: 7

highest specimens of mankind to develop their abilities without being contaminated by the Christian (modern, democratic, liberal) morality of the masses and their banal taste in all matters. That there *are* and *should* be exceptional and non-exceptional individuals undoubtedly constitutes the presupposition of all Nietzscheanism. “The order of castes, order of rank, only formulates the supreme form of life itself.. [The order of rank] is necessary for the preservation of society.”²³³ Compared to the guilt-laden morality of Christianity, one indeed *breathes* better here. “One breathes a sigh of relief on emerging from the sickly dungeon-air of Christianity into this healthier, higher, *wider* world.”²³⁴ The evidently cheerful mood in which Nietzsche finds himself when asserting the rights of selected minorities has led even some of his most careful readers to misread him. Thus, in his treatment on the relation between Nietzsche and Manu, Daniel Conway²³⁵ has been led to a one-sided understanding of breeding in relation to Hindu Laws and Nietzsche. Nietzsche refers to the *Laws of Manu* on two occasions: in the chapter on *The Improvers of Humanity* in TI and again in AC. Conway’s analysis follows the clear-cut logic of AC: the caste system is the political translation of the natural order, society produces all different types of human animals, plurality of production is guaranteed in the same way as the protection of the highest specimens. Conway is right, but he is right only in the context of AC, not in that of TI, in which *breeding as such* is treated as a by-product of what he calls *morality*, which denotes the cultivation on behalf of a certain culture (the Christian world-order) of a certain type of the human animal. Let us examine the textual evidence. TI VII:2 begins by associating *improvement* with *morality*. The improvers of humanity cultivate (or breed) their animals by the use of moral training. Morality (or moral training) then *includes* two tendencies: the one is *taming* and the other is *breeding*. Our argument is that in the context of TI VII: 2, breeding *also* (and not just *taming*) is a part of morality. Additionally, Nietzsche puts to work his strong sense of irony when he asserts that both terms (*taming* and *breeding*) are *zoological* terms, terms which refers to the irrational *zoon* (ζῷον), an undoubtedly degrading way of referring to human animals. In TI VII: 3 Nietzsche is even clearer: “Let us take the other case of so-called morality, the case of *breeding* a particular race and kind.”²³⁶ If, then, in TI VII *breeding* is a *zoological* and not an *anthropic* term, a term used by the breeder *par excellence* of human animals, the Christian priest (in all of his manifestations throughout history), then how could we speak about a human which overcomes the human without that overcoming

²³³ AC: 57

²³⁴ TI: The ‘improvers’ of humanity. Section: 3

²³⁵ Conway, W. Daniel. *Nietzsche and the Political*. London: Routledge. 1997, p. 34-39

²³⁶ TI: The ‘improvers’ of humanity: 3

being an *improvement* of the human species? “The human is an *endpoint*”[der Mensch ist ein Ende]²³⁷.

“One should speak only when one may not stay silent; and then only of that which one has overcome...my writings speak *only* for my overcomings...To this extent [they] are to be *dated back* — they always speak of something ‘behind me’”²³⁸ Although the above passage is taken from HATH, the paradigmatic text on self-overcoming is Nietzsche’s autobiography, EH. There, more than in any other text, the reader can observe the slow process of recovery from a long illness, never explicitly identified by Nietzsche, yet clearly, as the figure of Doppelgänger in *Why I am so wise: II* shows, associated with his previous attachments on Schopenhauer’s philosophy and certainly to Schopenhauer’s great admirer Wagner. In that passage illness becomes the presupposition of health not in the sense of a necessary coexistence—*one ultimately has to choose health over illness*—but as the necessary shock that an organism has to undergo in order to emerge stronger than before: “...the years when my vitality was at its lowest were when I *stopped* being a pessimist: the instinct for self-recovery *forbade* me a philosophy of poverty and discouragement...”²³⁹ Overcoming in EH is associated with the process whereby one gets released from illness (“illness slowly released me”²⁴⁰) by coming to overturn the conditions that rendered him *decadent* in the first place. Overcoming requires a ‘rigorous self-discipline’ which will allow the free-spirit to be liberated from the fetters of tradition and his socio-cultural environment. Paul Franco has identified the principle qualities of a free-spirit (a preparatory human being) as: “curiosity about the average human being, a *presto tempo* in thinking and writing, independence, esotericism and a love of masks, suspicion, hardness and lack of illusions” and finally ‘the ultimate virtue’, “honesty”²⁴¹ Similarly TSZ can be read as a long preparation for the final achievement of an ever-changing stage of creative playfulness and innocence symbolized by the figure of the child in ‘On the Three Transformations’. Zarathustra’s disciples have to undergo a series of transformative practices to the point where they will finally be able to achieve ‘independence and command’. Overcoming in TSZ presupposes above all else a will to the most severe (inhuman that is to say *overhuman*) self-discipline on behalf of the disciple so as to master his multifarious drives in a synthesis which will lead him to independence. Whereas *improvement* is then associated with the process of the taming of the human animal

²³⁷ AC: 3

²³⁸ HATH: II: Preface, 1

²³⁹ EH: Why I am so wise: II

²⁴⁰ EH: Human, All Too Human: 4

²⁴¹ Franco, Paul. *Nietzsche’s Enlightenment*. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press. 2011, p. 184

and the process where one is called to align himself to an externally imposed ideal, *overcoming* is associated with self-discipline and self-command, a willingness to leave behind ‘Zarathustra’ for *he may have deceived you*.

Elements of Nietzschean psychology.

In the rest of this chapter we will highlight the main aspects of a possible new understanding of human animals²⁴². This new way aspires to move beyond the traditional way of understanding, what has hitherto been called ‘man’: a *mistake* in need of correction. Throughout history ‘armies’ of correctors have sought to correct the human by improving it. According to the new model of understanding humans that we will propose here, they are in *no need of correction* since they have neither done anything wrong nor *sinned* in any possible way. In that respect this new understanding of the human is *fundamentally* anti-Christian, since its first and only presupposition is that human animals are *intrinsically* innocent and hence stand in no need of ‘correction’. In that sense the *overcoming* of the human refers to an attempt (which perhaps could also be *the* mission of a meta-Christian culture) to bring to light the various *antithetical* forces constituting the human animal, and through an act of plastic power [Plastische Kraft]²⁴³ to reformulate them into a creative whole: “To become master of the chaos one is; to compel one’s chaos to become form: to become logical, simple, unambiguous, mathematics, *law* – that is the grand ambition here.”²⁴⁴ And it is a grand ambition indeed! Not only because the mastery of the chaos is unquestionably a Sisyphean task but also because the *recognition* that the human animal *is* chaos is one of the most ambitious and far-reaching of Nietzsche’s contributions.

Aside from the work of Schopenhauer, it would not be an exaggeration to suggest that Nietzsche ‘learns philosophy’ from one book. That book is none other than the monumental *Geschichte des Materialismus* (History of Materialism) by Friedrich Lange. Through Lange, but also through his further investigations, Nietzsche becomes acquainted with the work of a series of natural scientists such as the pathologist Rudolf Virchow, the biologist Ernst Haeckel, the English physiologist Michael Foster, the embryologist Wilhelm Roux, and

²⁴² The full extent of this understanding is going to be clarified on the following chapters.

²⁴³ UM: Schopenhauer as Educator. Section.1

²⁴⁴ WP: 842. KSA: 13: 14 [61]

others²⁴⁵. The time in which Nietzsche lives is marked by the rise of the new science of Darwinism and also by a new interest in the revolutionary implications that the study of nature can have for the study of social phenomena. One particular aspect of the fascination with the *Naturwissenschaften* in the second half of 19th century in Germany is of particular relevance for us here. The latest developments in cell biology stress the importance of regarding living organisms as a unity of well-coordinated individual parts; it is the *Zellenstaat* (cell state) which becomes the ideological foundation, created by the elite of academic professors, of the ideal of *Kulturstaat*²⁴⁶. The state is regarded as nothing more than the extension of the healthy coordination between the cells taking place in(side) every living organism. Both Rudolf Virchow and Ernst Haeckel compare cells to citizens; Virchow has a more egalitarian view since the cells cooperate for the good of the organism, whereas Haeckel believes in a more hierarchical structure. A student of Haeckel is the embryologist Wilhelm Roux, who later exercises an enormous influence on Nietzsche. His *Der Kampf der Theile im Organismus* continues and expands the work of his teacher. According to Roux, the organism is a battlefield where the different cells struggle for mastery. The origins of Nietzsche's notion of the *Rangordnung* is to be found here, since Nietzsche believes that the internal struggle leads to the constitution of an hierarchy of forces which compete in order to prevail²⁴⁷.

Nietzsche's biological readings help him to situate himself in a tradition other than the prevalent Christian one. How many souls do we have? Nietzsche, the Greek scholar, the reader of Homer and Plato shapes himself in a tradition which understands the human as the locus of multiple powers striving to prevail. The monumental work of Bruno Snell²⁴⁸ has shown that for Homer the *human* refers to nothing unitary but to a *virtual place* with multiple centres of psychic energies and mental functioning. Every limb is a force and every organ a mental activity. *The Homeric man is a grand landscape of powers*, not a unitary subject. Plato comes to organise the anarchic environment of Homeric man by reorganising the parts of the soul in order to suit his authoritarian political vision. In the most audacious move in the history of mankind, Plato relocates the *noos* (understanding) from the breast (where it was for Homer) to the head; this follows the relocation of the *thymoeid* (spirited) part of the soul

²⁴⁵ Moore, Gregory. *Nietzsche, Biology and Metaphor*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2002, p. 21-56

²⁴⁶ On the history of *Zellenstaat* see: Weindling, Paul. "Theories of the Cell State in Imperial Germany", in: Webster, Charles (ed.). *Biology, Medicine and Society (1840-1940)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2002.

²⁴⁷ Moore, Gregory. *Nietzsche, Biology and Metaphor*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2002, p. 38

²⁴⁸ Snell, Bruno. *The discovery of the mind in Greek philosophy and literature*. New York: Dover Publications. 1982

above the diaphragm and the *epithumetic* (appetitive) part below the diaphragm.²⁴⁹ So we live in the shadow of Plato. We believe that the ‘rational’ is the ‘highest’ and the ‘appetitive’ (the ‘animal’ needs of the human) the lowest. Plato manufactures humans (a human soul governed by the all-powerful *noos*), and those Platonic humans will become the norm for the Christian/Western civilization. Here is not the place to expand upon this theme. Let us just note what Nietzsche keeps from Homer and Plato and what he rejects. What he keeps is the notion of the polycentricism of the psyche and what he rejects is the Platonic subordination of the parts of the soul from *one single* centre. Nietzsche’s understanding of the soul as a multiplicity seeks to replace Plato’s authoritarian vision with an *eternal* struggle for domination. Alluding to Goethe’s celebrated passage from Faust, “*Zwei Seelen wohnen, ach! in meiner Brust*”²⁵⁰, Nietzsche believes that the subject is a multiplicity of forces seeking domination. “The assumption of one single subject is perhaps unnecessary; perhaps it is just as permissible to assume a multiplicity of subjects, whose interaction and struggle is the basis of our thought and our consciousness in general? A kind of aristocracy of “cells” in which dominion resides?... *My hypotheses: The subject as multiplicity.*”²⁵¹ The Christian (because Platonic in origin) vision of a single everlasting soul (explicated by St. Gregory of Nyssa at the 4th century AC) is replaced by a vision of a soul “as a society constructed out of drives and affects”²⁵².

In what remains we will suggest that throughout his career Nietzsche radically opposes any linear (or progressive) understanding of the human animal which seeks to cure/fix/repair his (purported) shortcomings/weaknesses/failings and that his opposing circular understanding of the human animal is proposed as an antidote to a culture which gave human animals guilt for what they are, so as to control them better and manipulate them. According to Nietzsche’s circular understanding of the human, it is *necessity* itself which returns *again and again and again* so that nothing can interfere with the very process of the return. The eternal return of what is necessary liberates human animals from the burden of responsibility which the improvers of humanity imposed upon them. In that way the human becomes what he truly is: an animal aware of his fatality.

²⁴⁹ Plato. Timaeus. In: Cooper, M. John (ed.). *Plato – Complete Works*. Donald J. Zeyl (trans.). Indianapolis / Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company. 70 a-e

²⁵⁰ Goethe, Wolfgang Johann. *Faust*. Hamburg: Nicol Verlag. 2001. 1: Vers. 1112

²⁵¹ WP: 490. KSA: 11:40 [42]

²⁵² BGE: 12. A fine analysis can be found in Burnham Douglas *Reading Nietzsche – An Analysis of Beyond Good and Evil*. *Op.cit.*

Already in 1872 (the year in which he writes the now much-celebrated essay *Homer's Contest*), Nietzsche develops his central thesis on the value of the oppositional understanding of production. In a way it is a familiar Hegelian argument, insofar as Hegel follows Heraclitus. For Hegel, productions are results of striving between two antithetical movements. Inconsistencies give rise to new movements which represent both the older movements and the new ones. Young Nietzsche, in his treatment of the Greek concept of the *agon*, repeats this familiar movement. But whereas in Hegel dialectics culminates at the omnipotence of the *one*, Nietzsche's project aims for the production of an *eternal* strife of oppositional forces. The goal is to safeguard the very possibility of strife as the prerequisite of production. The *political* aim is the protection of diverse forces of intensity which will work as the birthplaces of future productions. "That is the kernel of the Hellenic idea of competition [*agon*]: it loathes a monopoly of predominance and fears the dangers of this, it desires, as *protective measure* against genius – a second genius."²⁵³ Young Nietzsche understands all too well what Hegel cannot: that to stop the process of production (that is to say, of strife) is to endanger life itself with its continuous need for growth and expansion. The 'end of history' for Nietzsche in that essay will have nothing to do with the complacent hypnotic life of the last humans of the Fukuyamean dystopia. "If we take away the contest from the Greek life, we gaze immediately into the pre-Homeric abyss of a gruesome savagery of hatred and pleasure in destruction."²⁵⁴

This problematic on the importance of the sustainability of oppositional forces continues with the BT. An *exemplary* anti-Classicist text²⁵⁵, BT attacks the very core of a civilization based on the (false) equation of beauty with harmony developed in length by Winckelmann in his *History of the Art in Antiquity*. There is nothing *harmonious* about beauty, Nietzsche tells us; *truth is terrible*²⁵⁶ and what we call art is the battlefield of the oppositional forces of the Dionysian and the Apollonian which, for all their force, must be bound together if tragic culture is to emerge. Indeed the very possibility of culture rests upon the sustainability of the destructive forces of the Dionysian and the form-giving forces of the Apollonian. To think of one without the other is not only to misunderstand the rise of art in Greece, but, more than that, to promote a culture which is based on the subjugation of diversity and the one-dimensional development of certain forces over others. Such a culture is not only undesirable

²⁵³ HC: p. 88

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p. 99

²⁵⁵ For more on that see: Burnham, Douglas & Jesinghausen, Martin. *Nietzsche's The Birth of Tragedy*. *Op.cit.* p. 53-58

²⁵⁶ BT: 7

but altogether impossible, since Nietzsche's Heraclitean understanding of eternal production through strife does not allow for a non-oppositional understanding of history and culture.

Nietzsche's insights into the necessity of opposition find their culmination in the most unlikely text. TSZ's main concern is to preach the necessity of the overcoming of humans since they are products of a decadent civilization which is based on the equalization of the value of the human. *Justice speaks otherwise* and affirms difference and order of rank where the old humans believed that equality (*Gleichheit*) is the answer to the riddle of production. Let us look at the following passage: "But once I asked, and almost choked on my question: what? Is the rabble too *needed* for life? Are poisoned wells needed and stinking fires and dirt-soiled dreams and maggots in the bread of life? Not my hatred but my disgust gnawed hungrily at my life! Ah, I often grew weary of the spirit when I found that even the rabble was spirited."²⁵⁷ What is this passage telling us? To begin with, it affirms the order of rank in society. It tells us that society includes *higher* (which in the Nietzschean jargon means more *complex*) forms of life and *lower* forms of life. Then it tells us that *lower* forms of life still have a value because they are *needed for life*. Life denotes the will to oppose and eventually incorporate antithetical forces. All life is *will to power*. Later on²⁵⁸ we are going to explicate Nietzsche's notion of power within an agonistic model which does not allow annihilation ("There is no annihilation in the sphere of spirit."²⁵⁹) but only the eternal production of forces which resist power. Indeed Nietzsche, as we interpret him, utilizes power only to the extent that power itself is able and willing to generate that which overcomes it. Outside of the model of 'agonistic power', power stands only as a force of destruction that has little to contribute.

When the human animal is understood as what is produced within this field of antithetical forces, then it becomes apparent that any understanding of the human as an animal progressing from earlier stages of development to later and more complex ones is rendered superfluous. In this chapter we have tried to show that to the simplistic logic of *development* in which eugenics and neo-eugenics thought falls victim, Nietzsche would oppose his richer vision of the human animal which it doesn't obey the logic of progress. According to the Nietzschean model, then, the overcoming of the human animals refers to their *receptivity* to the power of the forces which constitute them. This model avoids the necessity of *correction* which is engraved in every ideology of improvement. One does not have to get rid of the

²⁵⁷ TSZ: II: On the Rabble

²⁵⁸ See our Third Chapter: Nietzsche on agonistic power

²⁵⁹ WP: 588. KSA: 12:7 [49]

inhuman as moral Christian thought does, it needs only to recognize and accept its creative power: “the higher man is inhuman and superhuman: these belong together... one ought not to desire the one without the other.”²⁶⁰ Through the *agon* forces become more and more *intense*, since they have to struggle against each other, but they don’t need either to be annihilated or to be corrected. Forces *are* what they are. The Nietzschean model escapes the logic of the priest and the corrector. One does not have to *fix* the humans because they are already *ontologically* what it is necessary²⁶¹ for them to be.

Concluding remarks.

When in his BT Friedrich Nietzsche, out of a growing despair with a ‘dissatisfied modern culture’, called for a “rebirth of the German myth”²⁶², he was echoing the long tradition of what George Williamson has called *the longing for myth* in German culture and history. According to Thomas Mann, the distinct characteristic of German culture is its rootedness in a primordial, mythologised and poetic spirit as opposed to the spirit of the French or the English, which finds expression through its interaction with the social and political reality of its time²⁶³. Despite the inconsistencies and tribulations of the tradition, *myth* will function for many German writers, artists and intellectuals as the counterforce both to the ills of modernity and to a Christianity considered by many as an alien occupying force expressive of the culture of the Semitic people upon the German peoples²⁶⁴. Despite the differences, there remains an eerie similarity between persons otherwise so radically different as the romantic philosopher Friedrich Schelling and the Nazi ideologue Alfred Rosenberg. For both of them the demythologization of German culture is the source of all evils and thus they urgently call for the rehabilitation of culture with a ‘new mythology’²⁶⁵. For Schelling this new mythology,

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*: 1027. KSA: 12:9 [154]

²⁶¹ “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!” GS: 276

²⁶² BT: 23

²⁶³ Mann in: Williamson, S. George. *The Longing for Myth in Germany – Religion and Aesthetic Culture from Romanticism to Nietzsche*. Chicago: Chicago University Press. 2004, p. 2

²⁶⁴ See Jacob, Grimm. *Teutonic Mythology*. James Steven Stallybrass (trans.) London: George Bell and Sons, York Street. 1882

²⁶⁵ From then on they certainly differ on what precisely this new mythology will have to entail. For Rosenberg this new mythology will inspire political action by stressing the values of honour, will and discipline whereas for Schelling’s companion Hegel (the Hegel of the ‘Oldest program of German Idealism’) the new mythology must orient itself toward the closing of gap between the enlightened and the unenlightened by uniting reason with heart. See: Williamson, S. George. *Ibid.* p. 57 and p. 291

which will unify the up to that point differing aspects of culture (the aesthetic, the religious and that of the public life (*Oeffentlichkeit*)), “shall be the creation, not of some individual author, but of a new *race* (my italics), personifying, as it were, one single poet.”²⁶⁶

For (early) Nietzsche, the child of the Wagnerian continuation of the tradition of the German early Romantics, this ‘new race’, under the different names of ‘free spirits’, ‘Overhumans’, ‘masters of the earth’, and ‘new nobility’, will come to overturn the traditions of the Christian-Western Civilization by a working-through of all existing moral values which will ultimately lead to their reevaluation. For Nietzsche the result is uncertain, since the human must remain faithful to its experimental nature. However, the ‘battle’ for the reevaluation of values will take place *in* the gap created by modern culture’s propensity to nihilism. Nihilism is the greatest threat that humanity *has* to face if it is to re-emerge stronger than before and different to its cultural past. But Nietzsche insists: “Attempts to escape nihilism without reevaluating our values so far: they produce the opposite, make the problem more acute.”²⁶⁷

Eugenic thought and its latest manifestation in the form of transhumanism is precisely an attempt to bypass the problem of nihilism without dealing with the problem of the reevaluation of values. It is the *quick way out* of the problem. Transhumanism’s dependence on science is also revelatory of its dependence on Socratic optimism and the tradition of the idolization of truth which culminates in Christian morality. In a remarkable passage from TI, Nietzsche accuses Socrates as the founder of a tradition which elevates *some* aspects of the human experience over others. *Reason* becomes not only philosophy’s but also humanity’s tribunal. Depending on how well experience can fit into the guidelines of reason, it is either accepted or expelled. “We must be clever, clear, bright at all costs [um jeden Preis]: any yielding to the instincts, to the unconscious, leads *downwards*...”²⁶⁸ Nietzsche insists, even rhetorically, that the Socratic idolization of reason over the (uncontrollable) instincts is passed unaltered to the Christian culture and from there to modernity’s infatuation with science. The following passage from GM is revelatory: “Christian morality itself, the ever more strictly understood concept of truthfulness, the father-confessor subtlety of the Christian conscience, translated and sublimated into the scientific conscience, into intellectual cleanliness at any price [um jeden Preis].”²⁶⁹ The double appearance of *um jeden Preis* both in the TI passage and in the

²⁶⁶ Schelling, F.W.J. *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800). Peter Heath (trans.) Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia. 1979, p. 233

²⁶⁷ WP: 28. KSA: 12:10 [42]

²⁶⁸ TI: The problem of Socrates: 10

²⁶⁹ GM: 3, 27

GM passage shows that Nietzsche considers the business of the separation and promotion of some aspects of human conscience over others of paramount importance. Science continues the work of Christianity in that it considers ‘truth’ to have an absolute and universal value. Science itself, as the womb of truth, is elevated to a sacred level. In that sense, what science commands *has to be*.

Yet science is not neutral. It serves the paradigm that made it possible, therefore also those forces which are utilized to create a certain type of human over other possible types. And if the principle of non-contradiction (an anathema for Heraclitus) has managed to create the human of today—the industrious bourgeois, the ‘good’ Christian, the *all-too-human*—Nietzsche resorts to other possibilities which could possibly produce other, contradictory, reversed types. “...the falsest judgments...are the most indispensable to us...To acknowledge untruth as a condition of life”²⁷⁰. Transhumanism is too dependent on the current paradigm of Western/Christian civilization to be able to create something new in the field of *anthropoiesis*. All that eugenics can produce is imitations of the bankrupted model of Western man. On the contrary, the transvaluation of values aims at the radical critique of the current anthropological paradigm and it moves beyond that, to the exploration of forces which until now were forcibly made latent. The Overhuman is to be hardly recognizable to the human not because of its dependence to the scientific idolatry of Truth but because it will become possible through the necessary *reversal*²⁷¹ of the current paradigm of Western/Christian civilization. And if the Transhumanists melodramatically wish “the well-being of all sentience”²⁷², Nietzsche, in an eerie anticipation of the Transhumanist’s thought, advises the following: “You want, if possible...to *abolish suffering*. And us? – it looks as though we would prefer it to be heightened and made even worse that it has ever been! Well-being as you understand it – that is not a goal; it looks to us like an *end*...The discipline of suffering, of *great* suffering – don’t you know that *this* discipline has been the sole cause of every enhancement in humanity so far?”²⁷³

²⁷⁰ BGE: 4

²⁷¹ *Ibid.* Section: 44

²⁷² Transhumanist Declaration in: More, Max & Vita-More Natasha (ed.). *The Transhumanist Reader. Op.cit.* p.

54

²⁷³ BGE: 225

Nietzsche on Overhuman Politics

or

Cultivating the impossible.

Let us glance ahead a century, and let us suppose that my attack on two millennia of perversity and defilement of the human has been successful. That new party of life which takes in hand the greatest of all tasks, the breeding of a higher humanity, including the ruthless destruction of everything degenerating and parasitic, will make possible again that excess of life on earth from which the Dionysian state, too, must arise once again.

Nietzsche, Ecce Homo: BT. 4

demokratie ist lustig

Joseph Beuys

Introduction.

In one of his famous sketches concerning the problem of European nihilism, Nietzsche describes the history of the future as the history of the arrival of nihilism. What lies in the future is not an event of liberation, redemption, or justification. The future is about *nothing*, the same nothing constituting the very essence of the West. “For some time now, our whole European culture has been moving as toward a catastrophe [eine Katastrophe], with a torture tension that is growing from decade to decade...”²⁷⁴ Nietzsche describes this catastrophe in a very practical manner. The ‘end of history’ (what Nietzsche calls ‘Katastrophe’) is going to see the triumph of a type of human characterized by plebeian spirit²⁷⁵, fatty diets²⁷⁶, *training* instead of education²⁷⁷, bad taste²⁷⁸, in short: *a gutted human animal*, an animal from which all vital instincts have been removed. Admittedly, the picture of the future that Nietzsche draws is rather unhelpful. How are we supposed to orient ourselves in the coming vacuum of history? What is the purpose of human communities in light of the imminent *Katastrophe*? Nietzsche’s meditations on politics are going to take place against the background of this looming threat. For that reason, it is in his concern with politics that one finds the most provocative Nietzsche, a Nietzsche unafraid to experiment with the most dangerous thoughts, remaining nevertheless aware of the dangers²⁷⁹.

This chapter is going to explore Nietzsche’s relation to politics on two major steps. In the first part of the chapter we are going to examine Nietzsche’s critique of the political project of modernity and the reasons for his deep dissatisfaction with the way political communities have developed in the West. Nietzsche’s concern with politics develops naturally from his early meditations on culture²⁸⁰, which however heavily relied on the imposing figure of Wagner. While early Nietzsche concentrated on cultural rejuvenation (specifically that of Germany), later Nietzsche concentrates on questions regarding the critique of the current political status quo (that of modern liberal democracies) or governing (through the development of the ‘order of rank’), issues which are going to be examined in the first part of

²⁷⁴ WP: Preface, 2, KSA: 13:11[411]

²⁷⁵ TSZ: The sorcerer

²⁷⁶ EH: Why I am so clever: 1

²⁷⁷ FEI: p. 37

²⁷⁸ CW: Postscript

²⁷⁹ As it paradigmatically happens in BGE: 203, where Nietzsche worries for the possible *degeneration* (in the German original he uses the verb type *entarten*) of the envisaged *new philosophers* who are going to oppose the levelling of a democratized (=diminished) humanity.

²⁸⁰ Examined in our first chapter.

this chapter. In the second part of the chapter we are going to examine Nietzsche's early understanding of the agon and his late development of 'Will to Power'. Our argument is going to be that Nietzsche's antidote to the levelling effects of modern liberalism is the suggestion of a *politics of perpetual conflict*, a politics which reconciles the human with the strife which in any case already is. In our exposition we will suggest and clarify the following definition of the agon: *Agon is an institutionalized experiment which allows man to flourish by freely developing his unsteady character within the bounds of the institutions within which the agon takes place.* We believe that this specific understanding of the *agon* is close to the Nietzschean prerequisites regarding, first, the necessity for experimentation, and second, Nietzsche's much declared faith in the *necessity* of both preservation and strengthening of what is 'lower' or 'sick', in the name of the intensification of the opposing drives of life.

First Part: Diagnostics of the present.

We concluded the previous chapter with Nietzsche's warning regarding the exigency of the project that concerns the revaluation of values as humanity comes to face the threat of centuries of nihilism, due to the lack of an aim *high* enough, which would be able to reorient the currently fragmented human animals toward the task of producing a 'higher species'²⁸¹. This is a species strong enough to 'keep up the faith in man'²⁸², meaning the faith in the immanent values that man alone gives birth to, as opposed to the transcendent ideals produced by various interest groups for the sake of the manipulation of human production toward a *single* type of human animal. On the contrary, revaluation inaugurates the process that will eventually reveal the possibility for a *multiplicity* of production(s). But why is the task of revaluation so urgent? What is the current state of humanity? Where have two millennia of Western/Christian values led humanity? What, in short, are the diagnostics of the present?

Shortly after the pronouncement of the Overhuman as his core teaching, Zarathustra goes on to proclaim the *inevitable* arrival of a counter force: that of *the last human*. Who is the last human? The last human represents the culmination of two millennia of Christian/Western civilization. He is the human who has discovered happiness in the form of capitalist

²⁸¹ WP: 27. KSA 12:9 [44]

²⁸² *Ibid.*

consumption and shallow entertainment. He has left behind him all the wars of the past (for what good is antagonism?) and ‘rubs up’ against his neighbour, ‘for one needs the warmth’²⁸³. Our thesis is that the last human in TSZ reappears (under the new light of asceticism this time) in GM III: 28 as the man who “still prefers to will *nothingness*, than *not* to will...” In the legendary final passage of GM, the meaninglessness of suffering comes to be covered once and for all by the ascetic ideal, which places suffering ‘within the perspective of guilt’. The logic of GM III: 28 develops as follows: Man suffers; he finds no meaning to his suffering; the gate opens to suicidal nihilism; the priest comes to save the (biological) existence of man by offering him the (priest made version) ascetic ideal (degradation of earthly pleasures and promise of extra-worldly rewards)²⁸⁴; man now *knows* why he suffers (he suffers because he deserves it); man is saved²⁸⁵.

The life of the man who is saved once and for all in the concluding chapter of GM is the life of the last human in TSZ. Albert Camus’ novel “The Fall” describes the overtaking of a life of superficial regularity by the forces of darkness and irrationality. “A *bourgeois hell, inhabited of course by bad dreams*”²⁸⁶. Camus thus characterizes the life of his protagonist, whereas for Nietzsche his last human has to numb his existence with the poison of mass produced ‘happiness’: “A *little poison now and then: that makes for agreeable dreams,*” adding, perhaps with a smirk: “*And a lot of poison at the end, for an agreeable dying.*”²⁸⁷

The last human is not only the constant flirting with the nihilism that makes him Christian, as GM: III. 27 describes, but is also the product of a modernity that has gone off track. For Nietzsche’s teacher Jacob Burckhardt, modernity describes the long process of the trivialization of the human²⁸⁸. For Burckhardt, and the people that Alan S. Kahan has called *aristocratic liberals*²⁸⁹, modernity is inextricably linked with the threat of despotism, despotism embodied in the growing commercial spirit which overtakes every aspect of social and cultural life, from universities to the production of art, to the hegemony of one social class over all others (the rise of the middle classes and their *-fashioned in the needs of*

²⁸³ TSZ: Zarathustra’s Prologue: 5

²⁸⁴ Conway, Daniel. *Nietzsche’s On the genealogy of Morals – A Reader’s Guide*. London: Continuum. 2008, p. 101

²⁸⁵ For a detailed exposition of what happens in GM: III see our Third chapter.

²⁸⁶ Burnham, Douglas & Papandreopoulos, George. “Existentialism”, *The Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, ISSN 2161-0002, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/> [Accessed: 02/07/2014]

²⁸⁷ TSZ: Zarathustra’s Prologue: 5

²⁸⁸ Nietzsche will later describe this process as the ‘taming’ of man. See: Kahan, S. Alan. *Aristocratic Liberalism*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers. 2001, p. 51

²⁸⁹ Jacob Burckhardt, John Stuart Mill and Alexis de Tocqueville.

commercialism- ethics), and lastly to a highly centralized state that will eradicate every need of individual expression or initiative on behalf of the individual and subordinate it to the demands of a highly unified and (thus) unanimous/anonymous and heteronomous mass. For example, this has taken place in Blair's 'Cool' Britannia with the rise of the 'nanny state'.²⁹⁰ In particular, it was Burckhardt who had elevated the notion of 'diversity' not only to a desirable feature of the kind of humanity of which modernity hinders its expression, but, more importantly, to that feature which defines the *very idea* of what Europe is all about contra the Orient. In that fashion he writes: "This is European: the expression of *all* powers, in sculpture, art and word, institutions and parties, up to the individual – the development of the intellect on all sides and in all directions – the striving of the mind to express *everything* within it, not, like the Orient, to silently surrender to world monarchies and theocracies."²⁹¹ In his magnum opus, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, Burckhardt continues to present the highest exemplar of mankind, the Renaissance's *Italian*, as a figure of demonic energy and diversity, the complete opposite of that other (utterly fictional, of course) figure of calm and always-composed classical Greek which Winckelmann had devised. "The Italians of the fourteenth century knew little of false modesty or of hypocrisy in any shape; not one of them was afraid of singularity, of being and seeming unlike his neighbours."²⁹² Aristocratic Liberals push to the extreme this notion of an uncontrollable movement of diversity. It is not a matter of dilettantism for them; rather, it is the only possibility against a society that becomes increasingly homogenised. As the figure of the 'demonic' Renaissance man gets transfigured in Nietzsche's promotion of a Dionysian ethics, so the tradition of Aristocratic Radicalism reverberates throughout TSZ in an attempt of the *teacher-Zarathustra* to turn his disciples from muttering apes ("Everyone wants the same thing, everyone is the same: whoever feels differently goes voluntary to the madhouse.")²⁹³ to autonomous individuals.

What, then, is the last human? Is it just a *warning* as certain commentators seem to believe²⁹⁴? Does Nietzsche tell us, 'Be careful, otherwise you are heading to the last human'? Isn't it true that the humans have still chaos within them and they can thus *still* give birth to a dancing star?²⁹⁵ No, it is not! "The time will come [Es kommt die Zeit] when the

²⁹⁰ Kahan, S. Alan. *Aristocratic Liberalism*. *Ibid.* p.58

²⁹¹ Burckhardt in: *Ibid.* p. 104

²⁹² Burckhardt, Jacob. *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*. S.G.C. Middlemore (trans.). London: Penguin. 1990, p. 99

²⁹³ TSZ: Zarathustra's Prologue: 5

²⁹⁴ Burnham, Douglas & Jesinghausen, Martin. *Nietzsche's Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 2010, p.24

²⁹⁵ TSZ: Zarathustra's Prologue: 5

human will give birth to no more stars. Alas! There will come the time of the most despicable human, who is no longer able to despise himself.”²⁹⁶ The last human is *not* a warning in case things go wrong. *The last human is the conclusion of man’s short walk upon the earth.* It is how man ends and we *do* know that man *is* a conclusion (‘der Mensch ist ein Ende’)²⁹⁷. “Right here is where the destiny of Europe lies – in losing our fear of man we have also lost our love for him, our respect for him, our hope in him and even our will to be man. The sight of man now makes us tired – what is nihilism today if it is not *that?* ... We are tired of man...”²⁹⁸ *and because we are tired of man...* “‘We have invented happiness’ – say the last humans and they blink.”²⁹⁹ The time of the great despisers is over. Man does not despise himself. He is content. Man does not fear himself. For what is to be feared in this ‘tamed and civilized animal, this household pet’ that we have turned man into, from the beast of prey that he formerly was? And where there is nothing to be feared, what is to be respected? The Nietzschean man has respect only for the pioneers of the impossible and the untouchable, and we have turned man into something the sight of whom makes us tired. These are not the times when man falls in battle. These are the times of the last humans. These are the times when man dies with ten tubes coming out of his mouth, with computers following his ‘vital’ signs and a diet of pills to preserve his biological existence. These are the times of the end of all dignity, of all fear, of all hope. These are the times of the last humans.

On democrats and other hooligans.

The episode is quite known. In May 1871 during the last days of the Paris Commune—of what has come to be known as the ‘Week of Blood’—and while Thier’s soldiers are trying to retake the city, the Communards counter-attack and set on fire various buildings, the Tuileries Palace among them. The flames just *threaten* the Louvre but the European newspapers of the day report that the Louvre is on fire, along with the building the valuable artworks it houses. When the news reached Professor Friedrich Nietzsche of the University of Basel, he collapses. He cancels his class and proclaims: “This is the worst day of my life.” He

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁷ AC: 3

²⁹⁸ GM: I, 12

²⁹⁹ TSZ: Zarathustra’s Prologue: 5

later writes: “When I heard of the fires in Paris, I felt for several days annihilated and was overwhelmed by fears and doubts.”³⁰⁰

Nietzsche attacks the French Revolution ferociously and systematically throughout his oeuvre. In GM: 1, 16, Nietzsche describes the history of the West as a battleground of two opposite forces. This fight takes place chronologically in three periods. The first battle is that which can be summarized by the following script: ‘Rome against Judea, Judea against Rome’; Nietzsche goes on to suggest that “up to now there has been no greater event than *this* battle, *this* question, *this* contradiction of mortal enemies.”³⁰¹ While Rome expresses the virile spirit of the extroverted masters, Judea symbolizes the degenerate spirit of resentment. It is the first ‘revolt in morals’ which the slaves instigate against their masters. The psychology of the slave (a man trained to live in the shadows in order to survive) is such that it enables him to become more prudent than the master and thus to prevail (“A race of such human beings of *ressentiment* in the end necessarily becomes *more prudent* [klüger] than any nobler race”³⁰²). In the second period, the classical spirit reawakens at the time of the (Italian) Renaissance, the most brilliant period of humanity, after the Greeks, and certainly the period to which modernity owns most of its positive characteristics. Nietzsche enumerates what we owe to the Renaissance: liberation of thought; disrespect of authorities; victory of education over the arrogance of ancestry; enthusiasm for science and the scientific past of mankind; unfettering of the individual; a passion of truthfulness and an aversion for appearance and mere effect³⁰³. Unfortunately the (Italian) Renaissance is to be defeated by the Germans, who should “have on their consciences all the great cultural crimes of four centuries!”, and specifically by this ‘disaster of a monk’ Luther, who “restored the church, and what is a thousand times worse, Christianity, at the very point *when it was succumbing...*”³⁰⁴ (German) Reformation stands for the ‘peasant rebellion of the Spirit’. Luther, by democratizing the Church, by turning every man into a priest, plebeianizes the Spirit; he declares his “abysmal hatred of ‘the higher human beings’”, who the priests, as the most *spiritual* (i.e. the most *internalized*) human beings, are. The third period marks what Nietzsche calls “the last great slave revolt”³⁰⁵. It is the period of the French Revolution; which is ‘great’ because no one can stand in the way of the infuriated slaves who have systematically trained over long periods to

³⁰⁰ “Agonistic Politics, 1871-1874”. In: Cameron, Frank & Dombowsky, Don. *The Political writings of Friedrich Nietzsche*. London: PalgraveMacmillan. 2008, p. 35

³⁰¹ GM: 1,16

³⁰² GM: 1,10

³⁰³ HATH: 237

³⁰⁴ EH: The Wagner Case, 2

³⁰⁵ BGE: 45

consider their slave status as an injustice against existence itself. The revolt had been anticipated already from the time of the BT. There Nietzsche explains the paradox of Alexandrian culture, which both needs (as every healthy culture needs) a slave class as its foundation and also understands (since Alexandrian culture is the product of Socratic optimism) that such a division of society between masters and slaves cannot hold. This naïve optimism gives rise to notions such as ‘human dignity’ and ‘the dignity of labour’, which are designed to undermine the authority of the master race. The destruction of the master race nevertheless comes at the expense of the *whole* of society, since the slaves are on the way to destruction as such (it is possible then that the slaves *will* burn the Louvre since the Louvre is the symbol of the old order and the house of the artistic expression of a class that has to be destroyed). “There is nothing more terrible than a class of barbaric slaves which has learned to regard its existence as an injustice and which sets out to take revenge, not just for itself but for all future generations”³⁰⁶. This is the paradoxical situation where the slaves find themselves. They will take revenge against existence itself, which they have been trained to consider unfair.

From within the fires and tribulations of the French Revolution “like a last signpost to the *other path*”³⁰⁷ Napoleon appears and, with his appearance an up-to-that-moment intellectual problem, *becomes* flesh: the problem of nobility. The much-quoted phrase “Napoleon, this synthesis of *Unmensch* and *Übermensch*...”³⁰⁸ is not a comment so much on Napoleon, as it is usually read, but on a problem that for Nietzsche was of fundamental importance. The problem is *not* whether a historical figure was simultaneously a ‘brute’ and a superman/genius, but rather: How is it possible for nobility itself to be simultaneously a *combination* of the lowest and the highest, and can it be possible for such an ‘unholy’ combination to be maintained or even produced? *This is the problem* and Nietzsche will go on again and again to discuss it through positive assessments of nobility, as in ‘What is Noble?’ in BGE, or through negative assessments, as in ‘On the superior Human’ in TSZ, a fact that shows his lifelong struggle with this question.

What happens after the French Revolution? Nietzsche stands undecided. In BGE (1886) the revolution is described as the *last* ‘great slave revolt’, whereas in (1887) Nietzsche wonders: “Was it over after that? Was that greatest among all conflicts of ideals placed *ad acta* for

³⁰⁶ BT: 18

³⁰⁷ GM: 1.16

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

ever? Or just postponed indefinitely?...”³⁰⁹ Despite Nietzsche’s aversion to all kinds of teleologies, it is clear that in both cases (in BGE and in GM) the French Revolution describes an *end* of some sort; but that this end belongs not to the Nietzschean logic but to the logic of the ‘human history’, which Nietzsche recognizes as *not* his own. It is possible, then (which means that it belongs to the logic of the unfolding of human history so far), that the world *does* end with the triumph of slave morality (symbolized by the French Revolution)³¹⁰. We thus revisit here the problem examined before, of whether the last human is an eternally postponed warning or an—immanent—reality. The response is to be, once more, that for Nietzsche, human history follows a path that leads it straight to its own demise through the destruction of all possible alternatives (moralities) and the triumph of the one mode (expressed by the herd morality) of human existence over all others: that of the *content* man.

This (moral) decline of man from a wild (externalized) animal to a domesticated pet has been consistently produced and reproduced in the hospitable womb of democracy and by (and this is even perhaps of the greatest importance) the ideology created from and around the notion of democracy, what Nietzsche calls *demokratische Bewegung*³¹¹ or *demokratische Gesamtbewegung*³¹² (the whole democratic movement). Herman Siemens has shown³¹³ that while Nietzsche had a rather underdeveloped understanding of democracy as a political term, he nevertheless uses the term democracy more as a cultural trait and not as a specific political activity. When he then speaks of “der demokratische Geschmack” (the democratic taste), this has to do with an attitude, a way of behaving or evaluating, rather than with the intricacies of political negotiations. As Siemens again notes, “Democracy, then refers primarily to a set of values or ideas—increasingly identified as one of a network of mere ‘modern ideas’ in

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

³¹⁰ For all of his disparaging comments for Hegel, we can see here the peculiar similarities between Nietzsche’s understanding of the final defeat of master morality and the subsequent triumph of the slaves and Hegel’s understanding of the ‘end of history’ (at least in Kojeve’s very interesting anthropological reading of Hegel), which coincides with the French Revolution: the final triumph of the State where all contradictions are resolved. For Hegel (through Kojeve and Fukuyama), the final resolution of all contradictions brings about the birth of a new type of human which Fukuyama calls “men without chests”: the content bourgeois of the modern Western liberal democracies, a man which personifies the utter opposition to Kojeve’s famous definition of man as ‘action negating the given’. For more on that see: McCarney, Joseph. *Hegel on History*. London: Routledge. 2000, p. 169-191. Kojeve, Alexander. *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*. H.J. Nichols (trans.) Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press. 1969, p. 208-210. Fukuyama, Francis. *The end of history and the Last Man*. New York: Free Press. 1992. Particularly part V, The Last Man.

³¹¹ BGE: 242

³¹² KSA 11: 26 [352]

³¹³ Siemens, W.H. “Nietzsche’s critique of democracy (1870-1886)”, *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, Issue 38, 2009

Nietzsche's later writings—but also to a disposition, attitude, or type that flourishes and dominates under those values.”³¹⁴

To find out what a man of ‘democratic taste’ could look like, we have to begin with the primary (strictly political in character) understanding of democracy. The problem with that lies in the fact that Nietzsche never (at least to any considerable extent) speaks directly for it (thus his underdeveloped understanding of political terminology), but only indirectly. That from BGE onwards democracy is largely considered the offspring of Christianity, and Christianity the movement of the gradual degeneration of the West, does not offer great help toward the examination of the term democracy. Let us try, then, to examine the basic principles of democracy and Nietzsche's relation to those principles. Giving a definition of democracy is notoriously difficult. Both the notion and the practice of it had such a tumultuous, and many times contradictory, development throughout history³¹⁵ that it has come to mean the most contradictory things to the most contradictory people (and peoples). Let us, however, take as a starting point two of democracy's most fundamental characteristics, as those have been galvanized through democracy's long development in history. A political regime can be characterized as democratic if the following *two* (minimum) functions are at work: first, rule of the majority of the people and second, (some sort of) equality (at least that of status at birth).

In the first chapter we examined in detail what Nietzsche's objection to the first function would be. In the post-French Revolution West, democracy does not simply imply the *kratos*³¹⁶ of the *demos* but the *kratos* of the majority. And while for the Greeks the *demos* was already both a limited and a selective proportion of the overall population of the city state³¹⁷, with the profound influence that the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau had on the French revolutionaries, power now is to be held by *all* since everyone is tacitly a member of the *general will*. Under the rule of the majorities the current social situation is described by

³¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 21

³¹⁵ The Nasser regime in Egypt called itself ‘democracy’ (presidential), the Franco regime in Spain called itself ‘democracy’ (organic), the Soviet one called itself ‘People's democracy’, the modern ‘democratic’ West calls itself ‘democracy’ etc.

³¹⁶ A strange Greek word. It means *authority* or *power* but Castoriadis has once suggested that it may additionally denote *brute* force as in the case of Creon in Sophocles' *Antigone* where Creon identifies himself with *kratos*. See: Καστοριάδης, Κορνήλιος. *Οι ομιλίες στην Ελλάδα*. Αθήνα: Ύψιλον. 2000, p. 128

³¹⁷ *Selective* because citizenship was restricted to freeborn males of Athenian citizenship excluding women, slaves and resident aliens (while throughout the fourth century full citizenship rights were attained only by those over the age of thirty) and *elective* because with all the restrictions applied the number of demos in Athens was not exceeded the 30% of the overall population of Athens. See: Mogens, Herman Hansen. *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes: Structure, Principles and Ideology*. Oxford: Blackwell. 1999. p. 92

Nietzsche as the ‘kingdom of the mob’ [*das Reich des Pöbels*]³¹⁸. The present belongs to the mob which places their ‘small’ virtues, i.e. those virtues aiming at the biological preservation of the species (as opposed to the virtues aiming at the strengthening and the cultural elevation of mankind), in the service of the prevalent ideology of the day, which is none other than the Utilitarian principle—the “happiness of the greatest number”³¹⁹—a principle, though, which represents the ‘greatest danger’ for the superior humans. The protest against the democratic mob follows in the wake of Plato’s criticism of democratic mentality. For Plato, democracy is responsible for bringing about a “class of idle and extravagant men”³²⁰, a class of people so softened by “the insatiable desire for freedom”³²¹ that they are unable to exercise any control over their passions. The problem with democracy is that it is solely concerned with freedom instead of virtue. This freedom leads to an extreme relativism where all respect to authority is lost, and in that way all possibility of learning is lost also, since everyone is concerned only with being at the same place as the other, to have the same value as everyone else, neither higher (as a teacher does) nor lower. “A teacher in such a community is afraid of his students and flatters them, while the students despise their teachers or tutors. And, in general, the young imitate their elders and compete with them in word and deed, while the old stoop to the level of the young and are full of play and pleasantries, imitating the young for fear of appearing disagreeable and authoritarian.”³²² For Socrates democracy seems to be just a step before anarchy and the demolition of all social distinctions. Nietzsche, except in his ‘middle period’, largely shares this opinion. Democracy represents the succumbing to the basest instincts of the mob when the role of culture should be the constant exercise to the untouchable and the impossible, i.e. a mission that only the rarest of individuals can undertake. For Nietzsche the role of society is to perfect the shortcomings of nature³²³, what nature failed to do right, and this will be made possible if humanity is to align itself with what is exemplary instead of what is common and plebeian: “For the question is this: how can your life...receive the highest value...? Certainly only by your living for the good of the rarest and most valuable exemplars, and not for the good of the majority, that is to say those who, taken individually, are the least valuable exemplars.”³²⁴

³¹⁸ TSZ: The sorcerer

³¹⁹ *Ibid.* On the superior human, 3

³²⁰ Plato. Republic. In: Cooper, M. John (ed.). *Plato – Complete Works*. G.M.A. Grube (trans.) Indianapolis / Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company. 564b

³²¹ *Ibid.* 562c

³²² *Ibid.* 563a

³²³ UM: Schopenhauer as educator: 5

³²⁴ *Ibid.*

The second function that a regime has to fulfil in order to be characterized as democratic is that of (some sort of) equality (before the Law). The idea is of course as old as the Greeks themselves. In his famous funeral oration, the Athenian leader Pericles asserts that the dynamic character of Athenian democracy depends on the security that every citizen feels by living in a state whose institutions judge all citizens equally without taking into consideration possession of wealth, social status etc. This Athenian dynamism is transmitted into the founding text of American politics and one of the most interesting products of the European enlightenment: the Declaration of Independence. To show the extent of Nietzsche's distance from traditional notions of equality, it would be useful to compare a passage from the Declaration of Independence to a passage from TI. The first is well known: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."³²⁵ How does Nietzsche respond to this? "The doctrine of equality!...But there is no more venomous poison in existence: for it appears to be preached by justice itself, it is actually the end of justice... 'Equality to the equal; inequality to the unequal' – that would be true justice speaking: and its corollary, 'never make the unequal equal'."³²⁶ Let us examine the two texts.

The passage from the Declaration of Independence asserts the equal value of all people at birth. It is an honest text that does not hide its presuppositions. To the question of the philosopher who seeks to discover the source of men's equality, the text gives its response: rights are endowed by the Creator (the Christian God in this case) and are guaranteed by Him. Insofar as the community of the faithful accepts this role for the Creator then their belief can indeed function as the connecting and most importantly the meaning-giving, ideology of the community. An offspring of the American declaration is 'The Universal Declaration of Human Rights' adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on the 10th of December 1948. The experience of WWII had shown the rather questionable place of God in human affairs, as well as the need for a negotiation of differences among states that is based on 'reason' rather than on brute force. In that spirit the former guarantor of rights (the Christian God) is exiled and his place taken by this good-old Aristotelian faith in (in many

³²⁵ Declaration of Independence. Available online: http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration_transcript.html [Accessed: 02/07/2014]

³²⁶ TI: Reconnaissance Raids of an Untimely Man: 48

respects even vaguer notion) ‘Reason’³²⁷. In both cases the problem is obvious: The proclaimed equality of all people is based on rather shaky foundations. Religious societies may rest their hopes on an omnipotent God and secular societies may rest their hopes on the omnipotent reason, but in both cases the belief says something about the community’s needs whilst saying nothing about the foundation of belief.³²⁸ Nietzsche spots the problematic character of ‘the doctrine of equality’. It is supposed to be preached by ‘justice’ (God) itself, but is that really the case? What if the metaphysical claim of justice were replaced by a non-metaphysical claim, a claim produced by the tensions among the different social strata that constitute a society instead of a religious belief to the justificatory role of a transcendent entity? Nietzsche replaces the democratic belief in equality (*Gleichheit* in German with all the reverberations of ‘uniformity’, ‘identity’, ‘sameness’ that the word radiates) with a belief in a kind of equality that is distributed among members of the same class but not among members of different classes: ‘equality to the equal; inequality to the unequal’. In the place of the horizontality of equality, Nietzsche will place the verticality of *Rangordnung* (order of rank) and with this move he will try to envisage the politics of the future. In what follows we will examine the paramount importance that this idea has to Nietzschean politics.

The problem of orientation in Nietzschean politics. Verticality, horizontality or circularity? Upwards, downwards or all over?

Sometime in 1884 Nietzsche writes in his notebooks: “In this age of *suffrage universel*, in which everybody is allowed to sit in judgement upon everything and everybody, I feel compelled to re-establish *order of rank*.”³²⁹ It is indeed a great distance that separates this Nietzsche from the Nietzsche of the perspectival theory of truth, anti-foundationalism, de-centred subjectivity, distrust to all authorities etc. The problem of the discontinuity between

³²⁷ Article 1 of ‘The Universal Declaration of Human Rights’ states: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.” Available online: <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/> [Accessed: 02/07/2014]

³²⁸ Take for example the case of ‘reason’. Wasn’t Adolf Eichmann a reasonable man? From what we know he was. In their psychiatric evaluation of Anders Behring Breivik (the perpetrator of the 2011 Norway attacks) leading psychiatrists Aspaas and Tørrissen concluded that Breivik at the time of the attacks was a reasonable man motivated solely by his political beliefs. In short reason can hardly be the guarantor of humanity. Most often the opposite is the case. Breivik’s psychiatric report is available online at:

<https://sites.google.com/site/breivikreport/documents/anders-breivik-psychiatric-report-2012-04-10#24.0>

³²⁹ WP: 854. KSA 11. 26 [9]

Nietzsche's political views and Nietzsche's 'philosophy' has troubled commentators for a long time, who, in the absence of any satisfactory solution to the problem, usually decide to choose a side and go along with it ignoring the apparent contradictions of the whole Nietzschean problematic. In that spirit Mark Warren has spoken about the existence of "two Nietzsches", the 'political' one and the 'philosophical' one who seem to be in opposition to each other. Warren continues: "Nietzsche's own politics...violates the intellectual integrity of his philosophical project. Viewed through his politics, Nietzsche's philosophy becomes crude and uninteresting."³³⁰ The above statement is problematic for two reasons. First, it assumes the existence on behalf of Nietzsche of some 'philosophical' project, but given Nietzsche's explicit renunciation of any systematic character of his work in the notorious TI: 26 ("I mistrust all systematisers and avoid them. The will to a system is a lack of integrity"), Warren's statement is invalid. Second, if Nietzsche does not have a system, as he proclaims, then the 'two' Nietzsches do not have to reconcile. They simply have to coexist.

In a similar spirit Keith Ansell-Pearson has drawn attention to the (apparent) distance between the authoritarian spirit of Nietzsche's politics and the liberating effects of his philosophy. He writes: "...what strikes one about his [Nietzsche's] 'Dionysian' philosophical thinking is the extent to which it undermines the foundations on which his conception of political order is constructed."³³¹ Don Dombowsky³³² has rightly pointed out a misunderstanding lurking at this conception of the 'Dionysian'. While the 'Dionysian' may indeed denote overcoming which again, as Ansell-Pearson notes, "implies the necessity of overcoming fixed boundaries, divisions and orders of rank"³³³, one has to wonder whether overcoming serves some purpose (which is not to say that it also serves a *telos*) or it takes place as part of a general picture of life that misunderstands itself for some kind of *hippie-style* general licentiousness. This is certainly not the case for Nietzsche, with all of his adoration for 'discipline and command'. Nietzsche places his attention on a different conception of the Dionysian, which is for him more fruitful and more possible to aid the necessary process of overcoming which is life. His own version describes the kind of virtue that every active-nihilist (that is to say: every creator) has to have in life: a desire for "destruction, for change and for becoming" as an expression of "an overflowing energy pregnant with the future"; but then the same desire to destruction that gives birth to creation

³³⁰ Warren, Mark. *Nietzsche and Political Thought*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press. 1991, p. 208

³³¹ Ansell-Pearson, Keith. *An introduction to Nietzsche as political thinker*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1994, p. 55

³³² Dombowsky, Don. *Nietzsche's Machiavellian Politics*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. 2004, p. 74

³³³ Ansell-Pearson, Keith. *An introduction to Nietzsche as political thinker*. *Ibid.* p.55

and impregnates the future can also express “the hatred of the ill-constituted, deprived, and underprivileged one who destroys and must destroy because what exists, indeed all existence, all being, outrages and provokes him.”³³⁴ Nietzsche calls this human-type ‘our anarchists’. The Dionysian thus is an energy directing itself to a *changing yet always clearly visible goal*. To suggest otherwise would be to suggest that human existence lacks a goal³³⁵. But human existence *does* have a goal which is none other than the overcoming of obstacles (clearly defined every time).

In another, rather neglected, aphorism, Nietzsche describes himself as someone whose “nature is designed entirely for brief habits”, for brief habits allow one “to know many things and states down to the bottom of their sweetnesses and bitternesses”, while on the other hand, ‘enduring habits’ (Nietzsche gives the examples of permanent professional position, permanent human relations, permanent residence, even an enduring ‘good health’) are like ‘tyrants’ to every ‘free-spirit’. The aphorism concludes with an interesting thought: “To me the most intolerable, the truly terrible, would of course be a life entirely without habits, a life that continually demanded improvisation – that would be my exile and my Siberia.”³³⁶ The Dionysian, then, is clearly the opposite of a life that demands constant improvisation (is this kind of life possible at all?) the opposite of a life that exhausts itself in constant attacks on illusory enemies; rather, the Dionysian denotes a life aligning itself to the (equally impossible) overhuman demand for a “new, tremendous aristocracy, based on the severest self-legislation, in which the will of philosophical men of power and artists-tyrants will be made to endure for millennia...”³³⁷ An aristocracy heralding perhaps “...*das Zarathustra-Reich von tausend Jahren*”³³⁸?

While clearly a Dionysian life denotes much more than a state of general permissiveness, this does not, however, solve the central political problem of authority, which Nietzsche is not in any rush to tackle. While the notion of *Rangordnung* certainly holds a special charm to him, in other aphorisms he is quick to disassociate the life of the aristocracies from the lives of those who do not belong to them. In D: 124 and especially in BGE: 202, Nietzsche promotes the idea of ‘multiple moralities’. A morality here is a way of *evaluating* which is utilised in order to promote specific purposes. It is implied, although not clearly expressed, that differing

³³⁴ GS: 370

³³⁵ I take it as obvious that Nietzsche’s resistance to metaphysical teleology has nothing to do with the setting of certain goals by humans.

³³⁶ GS: 295

³³⁷ WP: 960, KSA: 12. 2 [57]

³³⁸ TSZ: The Honey offering

peoples can have differing moralities and that differing groups (within the same cultures) can also have differing moralities. In an unpublished note from 1887, he clarifies: “The ideas of the herd should rule in the herd – but not reach beyond it.”³³⁹ In another note from 1883 he notes that against the levelling effects that the current model of Christian/Western civilization had upon humans, his own movement aims at the *opening up* of all antithesis, of all contradictions and of all chasms. Not to connect is the aim but to separate since the tension produced by separation presumably is advantageous to culture, as in the case of the Apollonian and the Dionysian. “The goal is *absolutely not* to conceive the latter as masters of the former. But two types and species are to exist side by side – separated as far as possible; *like the gods of Epicurus the one paying no heed to the other.*”³⁴⁰ Nietzsche never resolves the multiple tensions created by his seemingly contradictory statements. But as we are going to suggest later³⁴¹, a final resolution was perhaps never a part of his plans, not only because ‘resolving’ heralds the collapse of tension and thus the collapse of creativity, but also because the purpose of the development of his concepts of ‘agon’ and ‘power’ is precisely to safeguard the possibility of an *everlasting tension*, the possibility of a final non-resolution, which leaves the space open for further experimentations and overcomings.

Genius and greatness in German Idealism and Nietzsche.

The notion of ‘genius’ has a long and multifaceted history in German Idealism. Although in Kant and Schopenhauer it is mainly linked to issues of aesthetic production, and thus it is not the same as the notion of ‘greatness’ to Nietzsche, for whom it refers mainly to a web of attributes characteristic of the higher individuals in their separateness from the mass of mankind, it is nevertheless also linked to this very Nietzschean notion of the inability to judge the exceptional, since the one who is called to judge it, is not himself a part of it, and he can thus not participate in the rules according to those judged as the exceptional. In the ‘Analytic of the Sublime’, Kant introduces the notion of ‘genius’ as a way of explaining the transcendental conditions of the possibility of the production of fine art³⁴². According to his

³³⁹ WP: 287, KSA: 12.7 [6]

³⁴⁰ KSA: 10.7 [21], the translation belongs to Keith-Ansell Pearson from: Ansell-Pearson, Keith. *Nietzsche contra Rousseau*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1991, p. 211

³⁴¹ See our Third chapter: Nietzsche on agonistic power.

³⁴² Burnham, Douglas. *An Introduction to Kant's Critique of Judgement*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 2000, p. 110-111

definition: “*Genius* is the talent (natural endowment) that gives the rule to art. Since talent is an innate productive ability of the artist and as such belongs itself to nature, we could also put it this way: *Genius* is the innate mental predisposition (*ingenium*) through which nature gives the rule to art.”³⁴³ For our purposes it is important to note that the ‘Genius’ is not “a predisposition consisting of a skill for something that can be learned by following some rule or other.”³⁴⁴ Thus Genius is *unknown to itself*, since it obeys only the necessity of nature which produces it. Kant is adamant that “if an author owes a product to his genius, he himself does not know how he came by the ideas for it; nor is it in his power [Gewalt] to devise such products at his pleasure, or by following a plan, and to communicate [his procedure] to others in precepts that would enable them to bring about like products.”³⁴⁵ It is *nature*, paragraph 46 concludes, that uses the Genius as the medium for the prescription of the ‘rule’ of art and Genius is a Genius to the extent that he acts as the medium of nature.

For Schopenhauer, a ‘genius’ stands above the world of ordinary experience; he has the ability “temporarily to put one’s interests, willing and purposes entirely out of mind, and consequently, fully to relinquish one’s personality in order to remain as the pure cognitive subject”. Schopenhauer uses the metaphor of genius as the ‘clear eye of the world’; it is “nothing other than the most perfect objectivity”³⁴⁶. However, the true realm of genius is the field of Art, and this is because the Genius can overcome the actual and, through a heightening of perception, create a more perfect picture of life than that of conceptual thinking; “For this reason imagination is needed, in order to complete, arrange, amplify, fix, retain, and repeat at pleasure all the significant pictures of life.”³⁴⁷ Exactly because the Genius is able to move beyond the word of individuated Will and grasp the eternal Ideas, true geniuses are rare and incommunicable beings. “He is too rare to be capable of easily coming across his like, and too different from the rest to be their companion.” The Genius lives a life of solitude away from the rest of society which does not understand that which exceeds the average. “They [the geniuses] will therefore feel more at ease with their equals, although as a rule this is possible only through the works they have left behind.”³⁴⁸

³⁴³ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Judgment*. Werner S. Pluhar. (trans.). Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company. 1987, p. 174

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.* p. 175

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁶ Schopenhauer, Arthur. *The World as Will and Representation* Vol. I. E.F.J. Payne (trans.). New York: Dover Publications. 1969, p. 209

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.* Vol. II. p. 379

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.* p. 390

In his ‘Lectures on the Philosophy of World History’ and all of its versions, Hegel advances the notion of the ‘world historical individual’ as an instrument of the Spirit which will help the development of the idea of freedom in its historical unfolding. The Spirit and the world historical individuals coincide. “Such are the great men of history: the substance of their own particular ends is the will of the world spirit.”³⁴⁹ The need of the Spirit to advance and to develop is something existing intrinsically in every individual, but they are too much preoccupied with their own interests to realize this need of the Spirit. The great individuals fulfil exactly that role. They are “the first to formulate the desires of their fellows explicitly.”³⁵⁰ The following passage exhibits in detail both the role of the great individuals and why people follow them. “For the spirit in its further evolution is the inner soul of all individuals, although it remains in a state of unconsciousness until great men call it to life. It is the true object of all men’s desires...they follow these leaders of the souls because they feel the irresistible power of their own inner spirit pulling them in the same direction.”³⁵¹ Hegel gives as examples of great individuals Caesar, Alexander, and Napoleon. Hegel’s admiration for Napoleon is well-known. Regarding the event of Napoleon’s victory in the battle of Jena, Hegel wrote: “The Emperor—this world soul—riding on horseback through the city to the review of his troops — it is indeed a wonderful feeling to see such a man.”³⁵² Hegel applauds Napoleon because it is on occasions like that that the Spirit advances to a higher level. Something old dies and something new is born. Similarly in the case of Alexander, even if many see Alexander’s imperialism as a product of the decline of the Greek spirit, the old world dies and a new epoch arises. Commentators sympathetic to Hegel, such as Joseph McCarney, have tried to explain the source of the power that the world historical individuals possess. “The source of their power is not sheer genius imposing its vision on a recalcitrant (unruly) world but a precocious gift of interpretation which reveals the world’s own emergent vision of itself. What matters is not the ability to swim against the tide but the ability to catch it early and use it full. The great historical figures are servants of a larger purpose, not autonomous creators and masters of events. So much is this the case that their individuality seems wholly absorbed in their mission: ‘What they are is just their deed; their passion comprises the range of their nature, their character.’ Moreover, their lives are utterly consumed in its pursuit: ‘When their end is attained they fall aside like Caesar, or are

³⁴⁹ Hegel, Friedrich Wilhelm Georg. *Lectures on the philosophy of World History – Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1975, p. 76

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.* p. 84

³⁵¹ *Ibid.* p. 84-85

³⁵² Hegel in: Plant, Raymond. *Hegel*, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1973, p. 120

deported like Napoleon”³⁵³ Finally, Hegel is eager to stress that the acts and the deeds of the world’s great individuals are not to be judged according to the common morality, because their acts overcome every sense of established norms. “The litany of private virtues – modesty, humility, chastity, liberality, etc. - must not be raised against them.”³⁵⁴ Who is able to judge a Napoleon or an Alexander? By whose criteria are they going to be judged? And equally, who is going to set limits to their actions? Or more importantly, how are they going to be recognized at all? The degree of similarity between the views of Hegel and the 18 year old student Friedrich Nietzsche of the prestigious *Schulpforta* is extraordinary. In a school essay aiming to support the dictatorship of Napoleon III, the young Nietzsche notes: “The genius is governed by other and higher laws than the ordinary person, laws that often seem to contradict the general principles of morality and law, even though they are the same when perceived from the broadest points of view.”³⁵⁵ Nietzsche, despite of all his abhorrence for Hegel, continues the Hegelian problematic regarding both the justification and the possible or impossible *recognition* of great individuals by the rest of society. His stand is the defence of an aristocratic stratification of society in the service of the production of exemplary individuals and the idealization of greatness, a notion certainly coming from the German Romantics even though Nietzsche never acknowledged this.

An aristocracy, as the word denotes, is the authority (*kratos*) of those who are *aristoi* (excellent). As we have seen before, ‘the present’ is characterized by Nietzsche as a ‘kingdom of the mob’ (*das Reich des Pöbels*)³⁵⁶ in which everyone is entitled to judge everything and everyone else without knowledge or training of any kind. Following Plato’s critique of democracy, Nietzsche also believes that there is something deeply *un-natural* in the equalization of the value of citizens in modern democracies. By the term *un-natural* we wish to signify exactly that: the situation in the modern democratic West is dire insofar as it is *against nature*. In the infamous BGE: 259, *life* is described as “essentially a process of appropriating, injuring, overpowering the alien and the weaker, oppressing, being harsh, imposing your own form, incorporating, and at least, the very least exploiting”³⁵⁷. Life is characterized by a constant movement in which the forces that constitute an organism fight for their preservation and expansion and in this same passage life is associated with the ‘Will

³⁵³ McCarney, Joseph. *Hegel on history*. UK: Routledge. 2000, p. 112

³⁵⁴ Hegel, Friedrich Wilhelm Georg. *Lectures on the philosophy of World History – Introduction*. *Op.cit.* p. 141

³⁵⁵ Nietzsche, Friedrich. Napoleon III as president. In: Cameron, Frank & Dombowsky, Don. *The Political writings of Friedrich Nietzsche*. *Op.cit.* p. 26

³⁵⁶ TSZ: The sorcerer

³⁵⁷ BGE: 259

to Power’, the movement that describes a process that takes place in three steps of *appropriation, incorporation, and exploitation*. The last refers to the use for the organism’s advantage of a hostile element. The notion of the ‘will to power’ as used by Nietzsche is not synonymous with what we could call ‘life’. When Nietzsche uses the word ‘life’ in BGE: 259, he is using it as a synonym of the ‘will to power’ which is an antonym of the non-Nietzschean notion of life. What is the difference? ‘Growth’ is one of the components of the ‘Will to Power’, but it is only in a very limited degree also an element of *life* whose main characteristic is a will to survival *not* of a will to expansion beyond itself. Unlike Schopenhauer’s ‘will to life’ and Spinoza’s ‘conatus’, the main characteristic of the ‘Will to Power’ is “precisely *not* to want to preserve itself”³⁵⁸. The will to preservation, the will to sustain the organism in its current form, is for Nietzsche only a characteristic of the herd, *not* of single organisms: “the herd seeks to maintain a type...The herd tends towards standstill and survival; there is nothing creative in it.”³⁵⁹ Willing to live, then, in the sense of wanting to maintain an organism in biological existence, has absolutely nothing to do with the Nietzschean understanding of ‘will to power’/life which can be called thus only insofar as it describes that which wants to overcome itself even by putting in danger its own biological existence. What is at work in the ‘will to power’ is a “desire to become master, to become more, to become stronger”³⁶⁰. Democracy is then *un-natural* because it prohibits the expression of life as a force of appropriation and incorporation, and instead elevates the common to the status of *aristos*, thus taking away the possibility of judgment since all values (what Nietzsche is most interested in) occupy the same (Gleich) space as Plato has shown with his example of the teacher and the student. Nietzsche’s response to this age of *suffrage universel* is to re-establish the ‘order of rank’ which is part of his grand program of re-naturalizing humanity. When Rousseau turns his eyes back to the past he sees ‘happy’ savages living in a state of nature, in the ‘compassionate’ atmosphere of the pre-civilized world. But when Nietzsche sees nature he sees something entirely different, namely ‘order of rank’ and ‘pathos of distance’.

What is the ‘order of rank’? In *The Anti-Christ* Nietzsche presents the social structure developed in *Manu-Smṛiti*, the book of laws compiled by the legendary Hindu lawgiver Manu, as that social system which is most aligned to the demands of nature. To be sure, the structure

³⁵⁸ Nietzsche quoted in Moore, Gregory. *Nietzsche, Biology and Metaphor*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2002, p. 46

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.* p. 34

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

of that system is highly hierarchical. At the top of the pyramid stands the highest caste, ‘the few’ who find happiness where other people would find their downfall “in labyrinths, in harshness towards themselves and towards others...”, and “they relax by playing with vices that would overwhelm others”³⁶¹. In the middle of the pyramid are the “custodians of the law, the guardians of order and security”, who are closer to the very few at the top, and they are assigned the ‘crude’ work of commanding the ‘mediocre’ which is the grand majority of society. What is interesting about Nietzsche’s description of the three classes is what legitimates the functioning of the grand majority as a ‘wheel’ for the rest of society. Nietzsche says that what differentiates the few from the many is the “the type of their happiness [die Art Glück]”³⁶². This is certainly a strange (and very original indeed!) thing to suggest: that social stratification is based not on wealth (as Marx would have it) nor on intelligence (as racist groups would have it) nor on capacities (as the Neoliberals would want it) but on...*happiness!* For Nietzsche, what makes you happy defines your place in the social order. We have seen what makes the ‘few’ happy. They like to experiment, to overcome themselves, to be hard on themselves and others, and they play with their vices. They are as the nobles are in the first essay of GM; they find happiness in “strong, free, happy action”³⁶³, and additionally they are ascetics (i.e. internalized in the highest degree) and have used ascetic practices to their advantage. In Nietzsche’s biological vocabulary, the ‘few’ behave like a ‘single organism’; they have only contempt for their biological existence. They are willing to ‘risk their lives’ in the service of the project of overcoming: this is their happiness, this is a noble happiness. On the contrary, once again, we see of what the happiness of the majority consists: resentment for the rights of the ‘few’ and to be stubbornly clinging to the value of their petty, uncreative lives. Nietzsche believes that the people *par excellence* who express this type of petty happiness are: “The socialist rabble, the Chandala-apostles who undermine workers’ ‘instincts and pleasures, their feelings of modesty about their little existences — who make them jealous, who teach them revenge.”³⁶⁴

³⁶¹ My translation of “...mit Lasten zu spielen, die Andre erdrücken, eine Erholung...” in AC: 57. I find Norman’s translation of ‘Laster’ as ‘burden’ (and thus the subsequent translation of erdrücken as ‘crash’) unsatisfactory. Hollingdale is right to translate ‘Laster’ as vice and thus to translate erdrücken as ‘overwhelm’. Hollingdale’s translation of that difficult passage follows the German syntax but it becomes awkward in English. I have followed Norman’s better English syntax by substituting the words I found necessary to be translated differently.

³⁶² AC: 57

³⁶³ GM: I: 7

³⁶⁴ AC: 57

The mention of socialism is not accidental. As a philosophy of life, socialism is the natural extension of the democratic mentality. It wishes primarily two things: excessive state power and ‘happiness for all’. For the aristocratic liberals, like Jacob Burckhardt, increasing the power of the state can only endanger the possibility of the self-development of the individual, since one of the principal effects of the centralization of power is the control of it and the channelling of it to whatever ends the state considers appropriate. In the same spirit Nietzsche also thinks that the aim of the “Caesarean despotic state” that is developed under socialism is the “annihilation of the individual”. In a truly libertarian manner he expresses his support for “as little state as possible”³⁶⁵, and in TSZ the state has to be left behind altogether if the road is to be opened for the Overhuman.³⁶⁶ The second thing that socialism wishes is the permanent abolition of conflict in human societies. A noble aim for every humanist and the fatal stroke to humanity for everyone, like Nietzsche, believing that the only possibility for the evolution of individuals³⁶⁷ is the preservation and further cultivation of the agonistic core of both the human psyche and the human communities.

A note on terminology: What is the meaning of *Grosse Politik*?

Fortunately, the time of ‘rescuing’ Nietzsche by turning him to a hardly recognizable advocate of a ‘blurry’ cult of self-fashioning and a neo-Buddhist eternal self-creation, taking place away from the institutions which produce humans, has passed. The scholarship of the future will show not only the responsibility of those who failed to listen to Nietzsche’s warning regarding the stultifying results of *power*³⁶⁸, but also of all those who wished to turn Nietzsche into a ‘safe’ academic subject and an object of discussions going nowhere. It was the project of Walter Kaufmann and his followers today (from the whole spectrum of philosophical studies) to depoliticize Nietzsche so as to make him digestible, *ironically* to precisely the kind of humanity that Nietzsche believed is not and cannot be his audience: the *liberal, democrat* of today’s fragmented European societies. If Nietzsche speaks at all then his voice comes from the future and is directed to the future. *It is the voice of justice*. But a

³⁶⁵ HATH: 473

³⁶⁶ TSZ: On the New Idol

³⁶⁷ Evolution in Nietzschean jargon describes the process whereby an organism becomes more complex. Complex means the evolution into a single organism of many and powerful contradictory drives. This is why the ideal type of man (the Übermensch) can only be a Caesar with the heart of the Christ. WP: 983, KSA: 11:27[60]

³⁶⁸ “power stultifies” [die Macht verdummt] TI: What the Germans lack: 1

justice other than what we have been trained to call justice: a misnomer for the revenge of the ‘barbaric classes of slaves’ in BT which have been trained to consider their existence as an injustice, and for that they seek only revenge.³⁶⁹ Because justice speaks otherwise and its voice is hardly recognizable to present day humans, it can only exist as a demand of those who are to come from a time beyond Christian guilt and its ramifications in politics (in the form of equal rights for all), in morality (in the form of selected production of humans), and in metaphysics (in the form of the belief in binary oppositions). “For when the truth squares up to the lie of millennia, we will have upheavals, a spasm of earthquakes, a removal of mountain and valley such as have never been dreamed of. The notion of politics will then completely dissolve into a spiritual war, and all configurations of power from the old society will be exploded – they are all based on a lie: there will be wars such as there have never yet been on earth. Only since I came on the scene has there been *great politics* on earth.”³⁷⁰ The above passage, aside from its rhetorical force for the sake of impression, also expresses a deep *yet unacknowledged* movement in Nietzsche’s thought. If there has been a kind of politics which creates only lies, then there must be a new kind of politics which will expose those ‘lies of millennia’ and will turn humanity from an existence directed to the preservation of its biological reality at any cost toward the production of new forms of human existence, *of great individuals and philosophers of the future* who, through their *inhuman* self-discipline, will justify human existence on earth by creating great works of art: themselves *as* others.

And yet Nietzsche is adamant: “Every philosophy which believes that the problem of existence is touched on, not to say solved, by a political event is a joke – and pseudo philosophy.”³⁷¹ Throughout his writings Nietzsche consistently attacks the association of philosophy and culture with a *certain kind of politics*. Our claim, then, is that Nietzsche attacks not all forms of politics but only this kind of politics dedicated to the production of a certain type of human (the Christian) and a certain type of European (the 19th century nationalist), and that, on the contrary, he privileges the kind of politics which is dedicated to multiple productions of humans (a reverse experiment in terms of morality) within a continent which will have overcome the petty nationalisms of the 19th century. There are then two distinct understandings of politics in Nietzsche, one that can be called ‘petty’ and the other which he calls ‘*grosse Politik*’.

³⁶⁹ BT: 18

³⁷⁰ EH: Why I am a destiny: 1

³⁷¹ UM: Schopenhauer as educator: 4

Petty politics is a by-product of the *civilizing process* as defined earlier in this chapter. It is this political procedure which is dedicated to the production of a single type (*Typus Mensch*) of human existence primarily through the morality of custom (remember that the problem that Nietzsche has with Christian morality is not primarily that it is harmful for this or that but that *it claims universality* – it wishes to be the *only* morality!). Petty politics is inextricably linked to the political institutions of the present (or the political institutions in Nietzsche’s time). For this reason, every attack on ‘petty’ politics is simultaneously an attack on ‘Germans’ or the politics of the Bismarkean Reich. In aphorism 377 from the fifth book of GS, *we the good Europeans* must oppose German nationalism and racial hatred. We can resist ‘petty’ politics because unlike the Germans *we* are “too well-informed” and “too well-travelled”. Unlike the urban inhabitants of the modern European cities, we like to wonder ‘in mountains, apart’. In EH ‘petty’ politics is associated with an attack on culture: “this most *anticultural* sickness and unreason there is, nationalism, this *nevrose nationale* with which Europe is sick, this perpetration of European particularism, of petty politics.”³⁷² Back to GS: 377, to this European particularism, *we the good Europeans* and the philosophers of the future know of no home: we are “homeless...too diverse and racially mixed”, and for these reasons we are the true heirs “of millennia of European spirit”.

‘Petty’ politics is a politics which cannot understand political procedure outside the framework of the Nation-State. Indeed its *pettiness* describes the very essence of the state thus: “coldest of all cold monsters”³⁷³. But it is again the German insistence on turning the state into the organizer of every aspect of human activity, and forcing it to speak in the name of the people, which is to be blamed. Whereas the Hellenic Will produced society due to “a mysterious connection... between the state and art, political greed and artistic creation, battlefield and work of art”³⁷⁴, the Germans have only managed, through the success of Hegelian philosophy and its “apotheosis of the state”³⁷⁵, to subordinate culture and education to the demands of the preachers of the “education of the people” (i.e. those who promote “a *speedy* education” for the sake of future money-earning beings³⁷⁶), and those who “misuse politics as an instrument of the stock exchange”³⁷⁷.

³⁷² EH: The case of Wagner: 2

³⁷³ TSZ: On the new Idol

³⁷⁴ Nietzsche, Friedrich. The Greek State, in: *The Nietzsche Reader*, ed. By Keith Ansell-Pearson and Duncan Large. Oxford: Blackwell. 2006

³⁷⁵ FEI: p. 76

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.* p. 37

³⁷⁷ Nietzsche, Friedrich. The Greek State. *Ibid.* p. 93

If ‘petty’ politics is successful in that it created the European of today—a *democratized* spirit, this unparalleled attack on the rank-order of nature, the enemy of everything great, everything rare, and everything worth living for—what is to be *our* response, the response of the *good Europeans* and of those who have not wished the subordination of culture to the politics of the day? In *The Wanderer and His Shadow* our task is “to *prepare the way* for that still distant state of things in which the good Europeans will come into possession of their great task: the direction and supervision of the total culture of the earth.”³⁷⁸ ‘*Grosse Politik*’ is to be *alas* only a very partial but yet very valuable attempt to provide an answer to the greatest question in political theory (at least political theory as understood within a Nietzschean perspective). To be sure, humanity has bred a number of ‘valuable types’ (*höherwerthigere Typus*), what Nietzsche in *Antichrist* finds out will be his guiding thought in his later years and the main question of a Nietzschean politics: “This more valuable type has appeared often enough already: but only as a stroke of luck, as an exception, never as willed.”³⁷⁹ The quest for *the willed production of the exception* is to be the task of the grand politics.

The term ‘*Grosse Politik*’ has been associated with Bismarck’s *blood and iron* politics concerning the necessity of the unification of Germany at any cost. The term is very much around in newspapers and public debates from 1862 onwards. In BGE: 241 Nietzsche is highly dismissive of the need for ‘*Grosse Politik*’: “This is the age of the masses: they lie prostrate in front of anything massive. And the same in *politics* too. They call a statesman ‘great’ if he builds them a new tower of Babel or some sort of monstrosity of empire and power...”³⁸⁰ In various aphorisms³⁸¹ Nietzsche associates the ‘*Grosse Politik*’ with the psychological need for power felt by the masses, a need which subsequently paves the way for the ‘spiritual impoverishment’ of the nation. When politics is solely understood as *power-politics*, then, “the political emergence of a people almost necessarily draws after it a spiritual impoverishment and enfeeblement and a diminution of the capacity for undertakings demanding great concentration and application.”³⁸²

At the end of his treatise on the constitution of a virtuous character and a ‘good’ life, the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle comes to the realization that any examination on ethical matters is destined to remain incomplete insofar as it is not to be followed by the legislating

³⁷⁸ HATH: *The Wanderer and his shadow*: 87

³⁷⁹ AC: 3

³⁸⁰ BGE: 241

³⁸¹ HATH: 481, D: 189

³⁸² HATH: 481

activity inherent both in politics and in ethics. For Aristotle, as for Nietzsche too, philosophy is a nomothetic activity, a study and also *an experiment* on legislation. "...he who wants to make men...better by his care must try to become capable of legislating," says Aristotle, and the book X concludes thus: "Now our predecessors have left the subject of legislation to us unexamined; it is perhaps, therefore, that we should ourselves study it, and in general study the question of the constitution, in order to complete to the best of our ability the philosophy of human nature."³⁸³ Aristotle certainly recognizes the interconnection between ethics and politics, but we would like to push this connection even more. Tracy B. Strong has successfully argued that in Nietzsche the problem of morality is not associated with the health of particular individuals but with the health of society as a whole. The first essay of GM makes this apparent. There, as Strong argues, the investigation into the origin of moral categories "depends on the desire to assert power over another group of people – and under slave morality to *control* and render them predictable". His conclusion, which we fully accept and endorse here, is the following: "all morality is fundamentally a form of politics"³⁸⁴. This wider definition of politics helps us to better contextualize Nietzsche's understanding of the necessity of *Grosse Politik* and the way with which this once-mocked notion comes to be internalized by Nietzsche and used for his own purposes.

Historical research has shown³⁸⁵ that from the time of Zarathustra (parts 1, II: 1883) onwards, Nietzsche starts to use the term *Grosse Politik* as either a synonym or a precondition for the production of higher individuals. Specifically, there are two very interesting passages from the Nachlass of May-July 1885. The first notes that: "The highest Europeans, precursors of Grand Politics"³⁸⁶. A couple of aphorisms later we find the following: "The new philosopher can only emerge in conjunction with a ruling caste, as its greatest spiritualization. Grand Politics, the total government of the earth is near; complete lack of principles for that."³⁸⁷ This Nachlass note is naturally very similar to the notorious opening of aphorism 257 BGE: "Every enhancement so far in the type "man" has been the work of an aristocratic society...". One could also add here the draft letter from December

³⁸³ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, in: Barnes, Jonathan (ed.). *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, Princeton – New Jersey : Princeton University Press. 1985. 1181:10

³⁸⁴ Strong, B. Tracy. *Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration*. Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press. 2000, p. 189

³⁸⁵ Bergmann, Peter. *Nietzsche – the last antipolitical German*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press. 1987, p. 162-163

³⁸⁶ KSA 11:35 [46] (my translation)

³⁸⁷ KSA 11:35 [46] (my translation)

1888 to Georg Brandes, where he describes his work *The Antichrist* as “Grosse Politik par excellence”³⁸⁸.

Commentators agree that from 1885 onwards Nietzsche leaves behind the term *Grosse Politik* as utilized by German nationalistic circles, and starts to use the term in order to describe his own vision of a transfigured Western civilization.³⁸⁹ Keith Ansell-Pearson notes that it is around this time that “Nietzsche embraces a Machiavellian-inspired politics, which believes it is able to justify its despotic rule through the cultivation of a higher and nobler culture.”³⁹⁰ Grand Politics becomes now the principle project concerning the “breeding of a new caste to rule Europe”³⁹¹. And yet the ‘despotic rule’ of which Ansell-Pearson speaks is already present in Nietzsche’s thought as early as 1871, and the ‘Greek State’ where Nietzsche had, notoriously, justified the necessity of slavery as the precondition of all culture. “The misery of men living a life of toil has to be increased to make the production of the world of art possible for a small number of Olympian men.”³⁹² The utilization of a type of (Grand) politics which is going to safeguard the possibility of multiple human productions against the levelling effect of Western/Christian civilization is present even in embryonic form from the very start of Nietzsche’s contemplations on culture. Indeed, this type of Grand politics, hierarchical in type and authoritarian in style, is judged to be inextricably linked to the very character of culture which describes the process of production of great humans (not artworks) perhaps necessarily against the well-being of the working masses. ‘Grand Politics’ is then by name only utilised late in Nietzsche’s work, while in principle it is present from the very start.

We have seen that the role of culture is the production of great individuals or *true* human beings, and this means: *the cultivation of the conditions which will allow the multiplication of the forces constituting the human subject*. The petty politics of European particularism is but a by-product of an approach to culture concentrating at the monopoly of production of human types. In GM the process whereby the inversion of the aristocratic values takes place and the new—Judaic in origin—valuation is described as a ‘*grand politics of revenge*’³⁹³. Against this most spiritual revenge an unleashing of the dormant forces constituting this field of

³⁸⁸ Diethel, Carol. *The A to Z of Nietzscheanism*. Lanham: The Scarecrow Press. 2007, p. 113

³⁸⁹ Bergmann, Peter. *Nietzsche – the last antipolitical German*. *Ibid.* p. 162 and Ansell-Pearson, Keith. *An introduction to Nietzsche as political thinker*. *Op.cit.* p. 148

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 148

³⁹¹ BGE: 251

³⁹² Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Greek State*. *Op.cit.* p. 30

³⁹³ GM: 1, 18

antithetical powers—the human—is called on. “The time for petty politics is over: the next century will bring the struggle for the domination of the earth – the *compulsion* to great politics.”³⁹⁴ Nietzsche collapses on the streets of Turin at the 3 of January 1889. His very last notebook, dated December 1888–beginning 1889, is titled ‘Die grosse Politik’, which means that Nietzsche spends the last 32 days of his (sane) life writing on the theme of ‘grosse Politik’. This is his final testimony. In these few pages the subject of the spiritualization of war, found in EH, returns. Taking once more the figure of Anti-Christ, Nietzsche declares the war “zwischen Willen zum Leben und Rachsucht gegen das Leben”³⁹⁵ (between the will to live and desire for revenge against life). The text is reminiscent of Matthew 10:34 when Jesus declares his own version of war: “Μὴ νομίσητε ὅτι ἦλθον βαλεῖν εἰρήνην ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν• οὐκ ἦλθον βαλεῖν εἰρήνην ἀλλὰ μάχαιραν.”³⁹⁶ Similarly, Nietzsche begins with: “Ich bringe den Krieg.” He brings the war, but neither “zwischen Volk und Volk” (between people and people), nor “zwischen Ständen” (between social classes). His war (the ‘grosse Politik’) is directed against those taking revenge at life (“Der christliche Priester ist die lasterhafteste Art Mensch” — the priest is the most deprived type of man) or against the Christian majority (“die Gemeinheit der Zahl” — the nastiness of numbers). The aim of ‘Grosse Politik’ is nothing less than the great synthetic act of the future, “die Menschheit als Ganzes und Höheres zu züchten” (to breed a higher and complete humanity). In *early Nietzsche* both the act of ‘breeding’ (culture is the ‘production of true human beings’) and the act of synthesising (culture is ‘unity of style’) belong to the realm of culture. In *later Nietzsche*, culture retreats and its place is filled by ‘Grosse Politik’. Certainly the two are not the same. They describe nevertheless the same willingness and the same fundamental goal toward a *reverse experiment*, through which humanity will produce what couldn’t be produced up to now, the Übermensch: “something perfect, completely formed, happy, powerful, triumphant, in which there is still something to fear! Of a human being who justifies man *himself*; a human being who is a stroke of luck, completing and redeeming man, and for whose sake one may hold fast to *belief in man*.”³⁹⁷

We have seen so far Nietzsche’s relentless attack on the current model of culture which is dominated by the values of Christianity, as well as the values of a *transfigured* Christianity,

³⁹⁴ BGE: 208

³⁹⁵ KSA: 13: 25 [1]

³⁹⁶ “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.” *The Bible – English Standard Version. ESV Bible. The German/English Parallel Edition. Illinois: Crossway & Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft. Matthew 10:34*

³⁹⁷ GM: I, 12

namely the values of the modern democratic West. Nietzsche's early preoccupation with culture as the possibility of setting the West free from the bounds of authoritarian Christianity come to be replaced by his new interest in a peculiar kind of anti-politics, which, although rejecting the political project of the present (equality, safety, well-being), embraces another kind of Über-politics that goes beyond the petty arrangements of the present (what *petty politics* occupies itself with) toward a politics which is going to direct humanity away from the West's final conclusion: the last man, the petty bourgeois. This type of Über-politics is going to be founded on the reverse principles of the petty politics of the present. Its aims are not going to be 'equality, safety and well-being' but rather the production of those conditions which will allow the perennial protection of the possibility of conflict as the only way toward a creative future.

Second Part: Towards a politics of perpetual conflict. The uncanny Nietzschean contribution.

Mapping the history of resistance.

It is hardly surprising that for the author of the essay "*A renewed attempt to answer the question: 'Is the human race continually improving?'*" politics should aim at the constitution of a perpetual state of 'peace', which, strangely enough, is already guaranteed by 'Nature herself' who with her hidden—yet purposeful—plan leads men through the abolition of all violence to the final state of the one peaceful cosmopolitan state³⁹⁸. *Thus spake* the Liberal thought of all times. Yet for all of his positivism, Kant was never naïve. While he recognizes that men—in spite of themselves—work always to fulfil the work of Nature (as Hegel also believed) and thus to bring about the final state of peace, yet, in the fascinating fourth proposition from the '*Idea for a Universal History*', he also admits that "...human beings would live the arcadian life of shepherds, in full harmony, contentment, and mutual love. But all human talents would thus lie eternally dormant, and human beings, as good-natured as the sheep that they put out to pasture, would thus give their own lives hardly more worth than

³⁹⁸ Kant, Immanuel. Perpetual peace: A philosophical Sketch. In: Kant, Immanuel. *Perpetual Peace and other writings on politics, peace, and history*. Pauline Kleingeld (ed.), David L. Colclasure (trans.). New Haven: Yale University Press. 2006, p. 108

that of their domesticated animals.”³⁹⁹ This is quite a powerful statement, and yet for the unphilosophical mind it would be hubris to associate the sacred words of the King of Königsberg with the words of an American State Department official. However, the similarities are eerie. In the final paragraph of his famous essay on the ‘End of History’, Fukuyama describes the situation that both Kant and Hegel (through Kojeve) envisaged, the final triumph of Western liberalism and the democratic project: “The end of history will be a very sad time. The struggle for recognition, the willingness to risk one's life for a purely abstract goal, the worldwide ideological struggle that called forth daring, courage, imagination, and idealism, will be replaced by economic calculation, the endless solving of technical problems, environmental concerns, and the satisfaction of sophisticated consumer demands. In the post-historical period there will be neither art nor philosophy, just the perpetual caretaking of the museum of human history.”⁴⁰⁰ Despite their different reasons, both Kant and Hegel believed in the necessity (logical for Hegel, moral for Kant) of the unfolding of human history toward a final *telos*. But while for Hegel the ‘mechanical course of nature’⁴⁰¹ inevitably leading toward the final collapse of all contradictions does not posit any significant moral problem, since both the process and the problems raised by it are purely logical, for Kant, this otherwise inevitable situation *does* raise a significant *moral* problem which is no other than, at the end of history or at the time of the cosmopolitan state (call it whatever you like), the *value* of the human beings, so “good-natured [benign] as the sheep that they put out to pasture” (*gutartig wie die Schafe*), will have been decreased to that of the illogical animals, a surely paradoxical outcome never intended by Nature whose ‘regulative idea’ was always the moral advancement (the ‘perfectibility’⁴⁰²) of humanity. What Kant describes is a cultural possibility that in the end gets avoided because the field of history is dominated not only by the human tendency toward the resolution of conflicts, but also by what Kant calls ‘Nature’ which drives men toward discomfort, i.e. toward action. “Humans wish to live leisurely and enjoy themselves, but nature wills that human beings abandon their sloth and passive contentment and thrust themselves into work and hardship, only to find means, in turn, to cleverly escape the latter.”⁴⁰³ Kant, then, despite his faith in Reason (i.e. in the necessity of the moral perfectibility of man) manages to glimpse what Nietzsche made his

³⁹⁹ Kant, Immanuel. Idea for a universal history. In: *ibid.* p. 7

⁴⁰⁰ Fukuyama, Francis. *The End of History?* 1989. Available online: <http://www.wesjones.com/eoh.htm> [accessed 02/07/2014]

⁴⁰¹ Kant, Immanuel. Perpetual peace. A philosophical Sketch. In: *ibid.* p. 85

⁴⁰² More on Kant and the perfectibility of Man see in: Passmore, John. *The perfectibility of Man*. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund. 2000, pp. 338-348

⁴⁰³ Kant, Immanuel. Idea for a universal history. *Op.cit.* p. 7

lifelong occupation to describe: that it is possible that the process of civilization could be linked to the gradual taming (*Zähmung* for Nietzsche) of the human animal and that the ‘progress’ (for Kant) of humanity is only possible after the recognition of an *Ur*-antagonism, characteristic of the human species, driving humans toward constantly creating and recreating themselves and the world around them.

In the fourth proposition of the ‘*Idea for a Universal History*’, Kant admits that society evolves through Nature’s employment of antagonistic relations among human beings. Precisely, Kant describes antagonism as: “the *unsocial sociability* of human beings, that is, their tendency to enter into society, a tendency connected, however, with a constant resistance that continually threatens to break up this society.”⁴⁰⁴ Relations of dependence and resistance lie at the core of society and they constitute the only possibility for the advancement of the human species. Kant draws a picture of humanity that is not only far from being harmonious but that *resistance to harmony constitutes the only possibility of humanity’s existence at all*. History becomes possible because conflict rescues humanity from what Fukuyama has called the “very prospect of centuries of boredom”⁴⁰⁵ lying at the end of history.

The second of the ‘giants’ of classical German philosophy agrees with Kant that what drives history is not reason, but rather something *other* than reason if not entirely foreign to it. For Hegel, the unfolding of the idea of freedom, which History is, despite the deterministic character of the process, takes place by mobilizing the *passions* in every man so that progress takes place through men’s conflicts with each other. “For it is not the universal Idea which enters into opposition, conflict and danger; it keeps itself in the background, untouched and unharmed, and sends forth the particular interests of passion to fight and wear themselves out in its stead. It is what we may call the cunning of reason that it sets the passions to work in its service, so that the agents by which it gives itself existence must pay the penalty and suffer the loss.”⁴⁰⁶

In his ‘Philosophy of History’ Hegel sees History as traveling from the East (where the majority of people are unfree) to the West (where all are free). The final purpose of history is the self-realization of the Spirit, i.e. the final collapse of subject and object, since at the end of the dialectical unfolding of history the two recognize themselves as being identical. The

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.* p. 6

⁴⁰⁵ Fukuyama, Francis. *The End of History? Op.cit.*

⁴⁰⁶ Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. *Lectures on the philosophy of world history - Introduction. Op.cit.* p. 89

progress of history is aided by what Hegel calls the *world's great individuals*. The role of those individuals is to advance Spirit to a higher level and in that way to advance History itself. Hegel stresses that every man is a bearer of Spirit, but men as a mass are very much preoccupied with their own private interests to assist the progress of Spirit. The world's great individuals give form to men's inner desires, they express what the common man is afraid to express and in that way, by destroying the old order, create the possibilities for the creation of the new stage of Spirit's development⁴⁰⁷. A great individual belongs to the future, neither to the past nor to the present. He exists solely in order to prepare the advent of the future. For this reason the great individual is not answerable to the morality or to the laws of the present. Morality is for shopkeepers⁴⁰⁸; the great individual belongs to world's history. Therefore: "The litany of private virtues—modesty, humility, chastity, liberality, etc.—must not be raised against them."⁴⁰⁹ Hegel indeed expresses the distance that the world's great individuals have from the rest of society in very Nietzschean terms. In a Nachlass note from 1887, Nietzsche writes: "A man with a taste of his own, enclosed and concealed by his solitude, incommunicable, reserved — an unfathomed man, thus a man of a higher, at any rate of a different species: how should you be able to evaluate him, since you cannot know him, cannot compare him?"⁴¹⁰ Hegel and Nietzsche are clearly in agreement when it comes to the necessity of the unaccountability of the great individuals. Hegel goes on to suggest that history as the unfolding of freedom finds its completion (*Vollendung*) in the Christian/Western world⁴¹¹ where freedom in the form of universal human rights gets finally established: "For Europe is the absolute end of history, just as Asia is the beginning."⁴¹²

Let us now see what particular form the cunning of reason takes, through which History progresses, when it is to be examined with the spectacles of self-consciousness, the adventures of which are examined in detail in the 'Phenomenology of the Spirit'. In the much-discussed chapter on 'Lordship and Bondage', self-consciousness after having duplicated itself understands the need to be recognized by another self-consciousness which is not going to be a mirror picture of itself but a free, independent self-consciousness, since the fundamental presupposition of recognition is to set the 'other' free, or else recognition is reduced to brute coercion. One is only recognized by another which is wholly other and both

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.* p. 84

⁴⁰⁸ I allude here to the famous description of England as a 'nation of shopkeepers' by Napoleon which Nietzsche never tires of repeating in different contexts as in TI: Reconnaissance Raids of an Untimely Man: 38

⁴⁰⁹ Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. *Lectures on the philosophy of world history Introduction*. *Ibid.* p. 141

⁴¹⁰ WP: 878, KSA: 12: 9 [55]

⁴¹¹ Hegel, G.W.F. *The Philosophy of History*. J.Sibree (trans.). New York: Dover Publications. 1956, p. 421

⁴¹² Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. *Lectures on the philosophy of world history - Introduction*. *Op.cit.* p. 197

self-consciousnesses must mutually recognize each other, which means to accept the other as free.⁴¹³ This is, of course, the final and much-desired state of recognition, but before it a battle has to take place between the two self-consciousnesses, a battle where the opposing self-consciousnesses have to prove that they are not attached to any particularity whatsoever, including life itself. They both have to prove that they are completely and utterly free, which means they have no commitments, no attachments to anything external to their own existence. A self-consciousness which is attached to life is a self-consciousness which is attached to something external to its own self. Hegel thinks that a self (consciousness) is not characterized by its commitment to life but by its commitment to its independence; therefore life (biological existence) is treated as something accidental or in any case not of particular importance to self-consciousness's development. In Hegel's words: "...it is only through staking one's life that freedom is won; only thus is it proved that for self-consciousness, its essential being is not [just] being ... but rather there is nothing present in it which could not be regarded as a vanishing moment, that it is pure being-for-self."⁴¹⁴ or as Alexandre Kojève puts it in his own anthropological terms: "...to be for one self, or to be a man, is not to be bound to any determinate *existence*, not to be bound to the universal isolated-particularity of existence as such, not to be bound to life."⁴¹⁵ The problem arising from the struggle for recognition is of course obvious. Both self-consciousnesses want their freedom, i.e. their contempt for every attachment including 'my' life and 'your' life, to be recognized by the other, but if the outcome of the battle is to be the death of the other then recognition cannot take place. Self-consciousness finds itself in the paradoxical condition to be compelled *to preserve the other in life* in order to render him able to be participant in a relation where both members have to recognize the other.

But why is Hegel of any importance to our discussion of Nietzsche? Because, as Fukuyama has rightly observed⁴¹⁶, in that 'little' incident taking place in paragraph 187 of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel introduces a notion utterly alien to the contemporary Western-liberal politics: Hegel makes one of the most important human characteristics "the willingness to risk one's life in a battle for pure prestige"⁴¹⁷, in a battle for something purely *symbolic* as is recognition. Fukuyama draws our attention to the fact that in the liberal tradition of politics,

⁴¹³ Hegel, G.W.F. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press. 1977 §184

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.* §187

⁴¹⁵ Kojève, Alexandre. *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel – Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press. 1980, p. 12

⁴¹⁶ Fukuyama, Francis. *The end of history and the Last Man*. *Op.cit.* p. 148

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*

freedom is considered the absence of restraint. Hobbes famously describes freedom as follows: “LIBERTY, or FREEDOME, signifieth (properly) the absence of Opposition” where ‘Opposition’ is further defined as the “external impediments of motion”.⁴¹⁸ In this sense, from the time one removes an external obstacle—for example, a dictator in an unfree regime or excessive working hours in capitalist regimes—which do not allow for the overall cultivation of the individual, then the subject can consider himself as ‘free’. But this ‘formal’ definition of freedom, typical to the Anglo-Saxon liberal tradition, fails to recognize man’s ability to negate nature and by negating nature to form himself as ‘freedom’, i.e. as a being undetermined by nature. If man’s most fundamental characteristic is the instinct of self-preservation, then by his willingness to risk his life in the battle for ‘pure prestige’, he announces his passage from the world of ‘objects’⁴¹⁹ to the world of (desiring) subjects. As Alexander Kojève has noticed: “All human, anthropogenic desire—the desire that generates self-consciousness, the human reality—is finally, a function of the desire for “recognition.” And the risk of life by which the human reality “comes to light” is a risk for the sake of such a desire. Therefore, to speak of the “origin” of self-consciousness is necessarily to speak of a fight to the death for “recognition.”⁴²⁰ This is then the reason for the importance of Hegel (through Kojève and Fukuyama) as (uncannily to be sure and surely much to the dismay of Nietzsche himself) a precursor of Nietzsche: Hegel shifts the balance from the constitution of a society based on rules “for mutual self-preservation” (the Liberal model) to a society (of the future – that announces itself from a not yet existing future) which is willing to risk ‘its life’ for an abstract-intangible-uncertain goal, for the sake of establishing itself as a negating desire which means, among others, that a desire seeks to establish itself as a desire, as something declaring: ‘*This is the way things ought to be and this is the way things are going to be!*’⁴²¹ As Fukuyama notes: “Beyond establishing rules for mutual self-preservation, liberal societies do not attempt to define any positive goals for their citizens or promote a particular way of life as superior or desirable to another.”⁴²² Beyond the modern glorification of equality, we find ourselves here on entirely new (and awfully dangerous to be sure) terrain; terrain in which philosophers are no longer ‘commentators’ but *commanders* and *legislators* and in which great goals *are* set and it is required and expected that these be followed to the end. The terrain is of course ‘dangerous’ because a ‘great goal’ takes us away from the

⁴¹⁸ Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1996. Chapter 21

⁴¹⁹ Kojève, Alexander. *Introduction to the reading of Hegel – Lectures on the phenomenology of Spirit*. *Ibid.* p. 3

⁴²⁰ Kojève quoted in: Fukuyama, Francis. *The end of history and the Last Man*. *Op.cit.* p. 143

⁴²¹ Until I (as the negating desire that I am) negate them again.

⁴²² Fukuyama, Francis. *The end of history and the Last Man*. *Op.cit.* p. 160

comfort of our everyday lives and sets upon us certain demands which (very possibly) we are unable to fulfil.

What does a liberal society finally produce? If we follow Fukuyama's pessimistic view, it is the 'bourgeois': "...the human being narrowly consumed with his own immediate self-preservation and material well-being, interested in the community around him only to the extent that it fosters or is a means of achieving his private good."⁴²³ The picture is of course familiar: the obese, trash TV-watching, passive consumer of the modern democratic West may have manipulated the achievements of the Enlightenment (twisting—metaphysical-freedom to consumerist freedom—"I am free" means then 'I have the freedom to buy A or B, or to vote for A or B') to his personal advantage; nevertheless it is still highly questionable if the passive majorities taking over the West are a new product or the newest manifestation of humanity's need for stability expressing itself through its self-fortification within the walls of the familiar idiocy of the status quo. Fukuyama's conclusion may be misleading (why is it, for example, that only liberalism produces the 'bourgeois'—or something closely resembling the 'bourgeois'—and not the entire history of the West? Nietzsche would ask) but Nietzsche had reached similar (although much more radical) conclusions. Thus, while Nietzsche, wearing the clothes of a forerunner of the 'Occupy Wall Street' movement, laments the sacrifice of education to the shrine of "money-making and world commerce"⁴²⁴ and the pursuit of sciences "in a spirit of the blindest *laissez faire*"⁴²⁵, as well as the glorification of 'work' (according to Max Weber protestant in origin) in modern societies against the freedom and playfulness necessary (Hellenic in origin) to the overall cultivation of individuals⁴²⁶, he also goes further by suggesting, in GM:1, that it is the whole history of the Christian-Western world that has produced man as a domesticated animal deprived of his most viable instincts, who fosters no more great contradictions, who is not 'in opposition' to himself: a 'civilized'-tea-drinker dropping by for a short visit and a bit of harmless gossip. "Are we not, with this tremendous objective of obliterating all the sharp edges of life, well on the way to turning mankind into sand? Sand! Small, soft, round, unending sand! Is that your ideal, you heralds of the sympathetic affections?"⁴²⁷

⁴²³ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁴ UM: Schopenhauer as Educator: 6

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁶ D: 173

⁴²⁷ D: 174

One of the principal problems identified as contributing to the process of turning man into sand is the triumph of herd morality *over all other possible moralities*. In BGE: 202 Nietzsche recognizes this triumph as Europe’s most immediate and threatening problem. The assumption that Nietzsche believed that the solution to the problem of morality will come out from morality itself is then wrong. Current (of Christian origins) morality is a closed and autonomous system in which every part supports the rest and all the parts support the whole. In BGE: 202 Nietzsche makes clear what he has further developed in one of his Nachlass notes; that: “The ideas of the heard should rule in the herd – but not reach out beyond it.”⁴²⁸ The problem with Christian morality is that “it stubbornly and ruthlessly declares I am morality itself and nothing else is moral!”⁴²⁹ The triumph of Christian morality resulted in the production of a certain type of human (the herd) who has conquered the West and presents itself as the *only* form that humanity can take. What it would be the obvious solution to the problem of European morality? To raise a new idol and set it in the place of the old one. The supposed solution is naturally problematic for two reasons. First, this is not what Nietzsche tries to do (“I do not set up new idols; let the old ones learn what it means to have legs of clay.”⁴³⁰), and second, it runs contrary to the fundamental characteristic of the Free Spirit: independence. Unlike the fragments of the past, the new humans are not going to inscribe their laws on tables made of stone, but their laws will be moulded on the battlefield of contest, contest which is going to be the ‘paradoxical’ ground of the humans of the future whose justification of existence will lie in their liberation from the final purpose of the *completion* of existence. What form can a politics of becoming take? A politics without a final aim and without the prejudice of the preservation of the humans as its sole concern? In an unpublished note from 1887 Nietzsche introduces us to the subject: “I have declared war on the anaemic Christian ideal...not with the aim of destroying it but only of putting an end to its tyranny and clearing the way for new ideals, for more *robust ideals*—The continuance of the Christian ideal is one of the most desirable things there are—even for the sake of the ideals that want to stand beside it and perhaps above it—they must have opponents, strong opponents, if they are to become *strong*.—Thus we immoralists require the power of morality: our drive of self-preservation wants our *opponents* to retain their strength—it only wants to become *master over them*.”⁴³¹

⁴²⁸ WP: 287, KSA: 12:7 [6]

⁴²⁹ BGE: 202

⁴³⁰ EH: Forward. 2

⁴³¹ WP: 361, KSA: 12:10 [117]

The above aphorism introduces us to the paradoxical and unfamiliar universe of Nietzschean politics where generations of scholars lose their balance and eventually fall, trying to walk, like tightrope walkers do, between the extremes of the bogeyman called ‘Will to Power’ and the needs of the present which demands a ‘timely’ Nietzsche, suitable to the desires and demands of those state mechanisms and public opinions that every scholar either serves or is depended upon. As we have stressed again in this thesis, Nietzsche is a paradoxical thinker profoundly unsuitable for categorizations and attempts to use him for serving the ideologies of the day. His voice comes from a future that is *not* ours, insofar as we belong to a form of the human destined to perish due to his perverse (unnatural) history and insofar as he belongs not precisely to the future⁴³² but to the limit from which he can glimpse (he has made himself able to glimpse) the future to come. Especially when it comes to politics, one has always not to forget his warning: “It seems increasingly clear to me that the philosopher, being *necessarily* a person of tomorrow and the day after tomorrow, has, in every age, been and has *needed* to be at odds with his today: his enemy has always been the ideal of today.”⁴³³

With this in mind, in what follows we are going to examine the kind of politics that Nietzsche announces as an alternative to the herd morality (and thus the kind of politics that this morality produces) of the present. For that we are going firstly to examine the concept of the *agon* and then the notion of the ‘Will to Power’ and secondly to propose a connection of the *agon* with the ‘Will to Power’, a connection which will allow us to reach two conclusions. The first is going to regard the *agon* as the necessary alternative to the levelling effects of modern democratic liberalism in favour of a society based on contest; and the second is going to clarify that the much misunderstood Nietzschean understanding of ‘power’ has nothing to do with annihilating one’s enemy but with *honouring* him, insofar as he accepts his participation to the *agon*. For us, then, Nietzschean power announces a *verticality* of values combined with a constant *recycling* of power between opponents, which has the benefit of not allowing power to become the exclusive monopoly of one or the other. By not being owned by anyone and simultaneously being owned by everyone, power is let free to be expressed as a constituent component of life. Instead of being—exclusively—a principle of domination, it becomes—additionally—a principle of incorporation. As we are going to demonstrate, incorporation (*Einverleibung*) changes the very character of what Nietzsche

⁴³² In EH: Why I am so wise: 2 he recognizes his ambivalent nature as a decadent i.e. as someone who belongs to either the past or the present and as someone wishing to cure himself i.e. as someone wishing to belong to a humanity yet to come.

⁴³³ BGE: 212

calls appropriation (*Aneignung*) to such a degree that *domination* (what ‘Will to Power’ is supposed to be) gets transformed into something hardly recognizable, certainly not the bogeyman of generations of Nietzsche’s *layman* readers.

Nietzsche on *agonistic* power.

a. On agon

It is in one of Nietzsche’s early texts that we find his most essential contribution to the examination of the Hellenic notion of the *agon*. Discussions about contest are to be found in texts before Nietzsche’s own, although the most important contribution is made around the same time as Nietzsche’s by his teacher Jacob Burckhardt⁴³⁴. In HC Nietzsche pays particular attention to Hesiod’s ‘Work and Days’. While in his ‘Theogony’ Hesiod had referred to *Eris* (strife) as the goddess of discord and strife, in his ‘Work and Days’ Hesiod mentions two *Eris*-goddesses. One is the goddess of senseless destruction; she promotes war and strife for the sake of it, because all she knows is to attack without either rules or honour. But the other is a force which drives men to compete in a creative manner against each other. Nietzsche characteristically writes that: “if someone who lacks property sees someone else who is rich, he likewise hurries off to sow and plant and set his house in order; neighbour competes with neighbour for prosperity.”⁴³⁵ This example clarifies the difference between the modern function of ‘envy’, which is strictly a reactive feeling, and that of the Greek function of it, which serves as a propeller of creative action. For Nietzsche the bad-*Eris* compels men to a ‘struggle-to-the-death’, whereas good-*Eris* compels men to ‘contest’. To contest, then, is not to exterminate the other, but to be propelled to act and to create something great.

Following the discussion on *Eris*, Nietzsche refers to the Hellenic custom of Ostracism. Ostracism was indeed a strange custom of the Greeks. Its aim was to send into exile for a period of ten years a political figure (a would-be tyrant) who threatened Athenian democracy. Throughout the years of its use, ostracism was used both for protecting democracy and for

⁴³⁴ Murray and Acampora have contested the belief that Burckhardt was the source of Nietzsche’s views on the *agon*. According to them Nietzsche was thinking of the *agon* before Burckhardt, inspired perhaps by the texts of George Grote and Ernst Curtius. See Acampora, Davis Christa. *Contesting Nietzsche*. Chicago: Chicago University Press. 2013. ff 7: p. 211

⁴³⁵ HC: p. 97

serving political rivalries of opposing political groups.⁴³⁶ Nietzsche somehow misses the latter and idolizes the former by distorting the function of ostracism which was the exile of the would-be *tyrant* and not the exile of any geniuses⁴³⁷. Despite the philological inaccuracies, what Nietzsche tries to create, *ironically in a very German fashion*, is a renewed mythologization of the Greek culture; in this he certainly succeeds. His (fictional) understanding of ostracism paves the way for his reading of the *agon*. According to Nietzsche, ostracism's purpose was, by removing the one who was to dominate, to create the possibilities for new contests among opponents. In that way at no point one (person) was to dominate over any other persons (or ideas). As he notes: "That is the kernel of the Hellenic idea of competition: it loathes monopoly of predominance and fears the dangers of this, it desires, as protective measure against genius – a second genius."⁴³⁸

Nietzsche's *contest*, or Hesiod's good-Eris, promotes a culture of creative antagonism in which opponents are called to excel themselves in any given field. The mention of Homer is nothing but accidental. Nietzsche stresses that "if we take away the contest from Greek life, we gaze immediately into the pre-Homeric abyss of a gruesome savagery of hatred and pleasure in destruction."⁴³⁹ Two things have to be said here. The first is Nietzsche's absolute devotion to *Kriegs-Praxis*⁴⁴⁰, the rules which ought to govern every contest. These rules are set exactly in order to protect the contest from degenerating to a 'savagery of hatred'. In the remarkable opening from 'Why I am so wise': 7, Nietzsche introduces his ethics of combat. He makes clear from the very start that, unlike what the democratic reading of *agon* supports⁴⁴¹, here we do not deal with some round-table debate among academics but with *Krieg* (war) in which those involved are not talkative interlocutors but warriors having enemies! The aphorism revolves around the possibility of having, *of being able to have*, an enemy. The 'democratic' reading of the *agon* provocatively chooses to ignore what Nietzsche says in favour of what Nietzsche 'should' have said or of what Nietzsche should mean for us today. What is difficult though is to try to *think* what Nietzsche means by saying: "Being *able* to be an enemy, being an enemy..."⁴⁴² How do I make myself able to be an enemy? Well, for

⁴³⁶ Dillon, Matthew & Garland, Lynda. *The ancient Greeks, History and Culture from Archaic Times to the death of Alexander*. London: Routledge. 2012, pp. 360-364

⁴³⁷ Hardly anyone from those sent into exile was a genius anyway!

⁴³⁸ HC: p. 98

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.* p. 99

⁴⁴⁰ EH: Why I am so wise: 7

⁴⁴¹ See for example: Hatab, J. Lawrence. *A Nietzschean Defence of Democracy*. Chicago: Open Court. 1995 and Owen, David. "Equality, Democracy, and Self-Respect: Reflections on Nietzsche's Agonal Perfectionism", *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, Issue 24, 2002

⁴⁴² EH: Why I am so wise: 7

a start one has to be ‘naturally warlike’⁴⁴³, he has to seek war (conflict) not to avoid it. He has to seek conflict because this is how “one tests and challenges one’s own strength with one’s equal”⁴⁴⁴. He also has to attack first, not wait to respond. The attacker is a creator whereas the responder is a slave; he reacts instead of acting. Above all he has to have a ‘strong nature’. What a ‘strong nature’ means is immediately clarified: it is one which “needs resistances, so it *seeks* resistance”⁴⁴⁵. I have to build myself in such a way as to always seek that which threatens to annihilate me. I have to constantly engage in battles and conflicts where the aim is to *honour* my enemy, by the only way that one honours his enemies: by attacking them! Yet, the enemy is not a private person; one does not attack individual cases but only the cause that serve those individuals. “I never attack people – I make use of a person only as a kind of strong magnifying glass with which one can make visible some general but insidious and quite intangible exigency.”⁴⁴⁶ In individual cases the other has to be treated with the respect befitted to the agon. The limits between savagery and contest are clearly defined. The aim is not a ‘struggle-to-the-death’⁴⁴⁷ (notice again the Hegelian terminology) but rather the preservation of the conditions of perennial conflict. The attacker has to stop *just a bit* before the extermination of the other. Nietzsche could not be clearer on that!⁴⁴⁸

The second thing that we have to remark regarding Nietzsche’s mention of Homer is the following. Christa Davis-Acampora, in her important “Contesting Nietzsche”, has rightly stressed Homer’s importance as Nietzsche’s role model in the contest between what Homer inaugurates and what came before him. What comes before Homer? What is this ‘pre-Homeric abyss’ that, according to Nietzsche, existence is always susceptible to fall into? Acampora notes that the answer is to be found in BT where Nietzsche crystalizes the pre-Homeric wisdom in the words of Silenus: “The very best thing is utterly beyond your reach not to have been born, not to *be*, to be *nothing*. However, the second best thing for you is: to die soon.”⁴⁴⁹ Existence is always on the verge of falling back into this (pre-Homeric) abyss: the passive nihilism described in the *Nachlass* notes as “decline and recession of the power of the spirit”⁴⁵⁰. Acampora notes that both Silenus and Hesiod express a view of life as a constant fight against that which man cannot overcome, man’s final defeat in front of the

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.* [Ich bin meiner Art nach kriegerisch]

⁴⁴⁴ Tuncel, Yunus. *Agon in Nietzsche*. Wisconsin: Marquette University Press. 2013, p. 99

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁶ EH: Why I am so wise: 7

⁴⁴⁷ HC: p. 97

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁹ BT: 3

⁴⁵⁰ WP: 22, KSA: 12:9 [35]

forces of destiny which wants him to succumb to the devastating power of the inevitable.⁴⁵¹ *At the end we will all die. So what's the point?* There is (perhaps) no human being upon this earth that has not had such a thought (at least) once in his life. Silenus' powerful statement is not powerful because of its rhetoric potency; it is powerful because it is true and it is powerful because (most) men's lives consist in a battle with the strength of Silenus' statement. Albert Camus has beautifully captured this archetypical agony of man: "There is but one truly serious philosophical problem and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy. All the rest – whether or not the world has three dimensions, whether the mind has nine or twelve categories – comes afterwards. These are games; one must first answer."⁴⁵² Acampora rightly describes Homer as the re-evaluator *par excellence*; Homer manages, through the glorification of the life of the agon, to breathe a new life into questions related to the purpose of existence. Homer's answer to the question 'Is life worth living?' is then nothing less than a glorious *Yes*. It is not only that man should never wish something other than life, biological existence is of no significance to the kind of life that Homer has in mind! What matters for Homer and for the kind of people that Homer describes in his works, is something much greater than life as biological preservation, namely *glory*. Homeric heroes fight not for their own personal interest; they fight because it is only through the victory of their people/cities etc. that they can achieve personal glory as well. The path to eternal life (which for the Greeks meant to be remembered by your people) passes through the great achievements of your community, of your polis.

The agonistic constitution of Hellenic culture is the response to the question that Nietzsche asks: "Why did the whole Greek world rejoice over the pictures of battle in the Iliad?" As Papagiorgis has noted, the function of war in Homer's Iliad is radically different from the perception of war that we have today. Perhaps that is the reason behind Nietzsche's insistence that we have never understood the above question "in a sufficiently Greek way" and that even if we could understand it the knowledge of it would "shudder"⁴⁵³ us! For Homer, then, war, far from being a tremendous disaster to be avoided at all costs, is more the laboratory in which, precisely because it takes place at the 'beginning' of a civilization, the most fundamental issues of human co-existence begin to arise. It is on the battlefield, where heroes contest with each other, where dealing with questions like those of justice, morality, faith,

⁴⁵¹ On that see Acampora, Davis Christa. *Contesting Nietzsche. Op.cit.* p. 51

⁴⁵² Camus, Albert. *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Justin O'Brien (trans.). London: Penguin. 2000, p. 11

⁴⁵³ HC: p. 95

murder, love, and family becomes an imperative matter because deeds do not yet have meaning but it is urgent to acquire one, and it is war that helps the formulation of those (very first) values⁴⁵⁴. To think then of war as a necessity, indeed as the more urgent cultural necessity, is a truth able to shudder the ‘modern ones’ with all of their resistance and abhorrence to everything threatening their material well-being and obviously the ‘choice of life’ that this quest for material happiness produces. Have you understood the Greeks? Have you understood them the *Greek way*? No, of course not! Because, as Nietzsche seems to believe, that culture has died and modernity represents something entirely different.

But Homer represents a break with the future as well. This is why he is incomprehensible. He does not only represent the necessity for a revaluated past but also the necessity to overcome a future that has only managed to produce a “tame man...incurably mediocre and unedifying”⁴⁵⁵. Because humanity does not progress to the better, the ‘future’ is the enemy of an exceptional re-evaluator like Homer. Christianity, this “Platonism for the people”⁴⁵⁶, has internalized the once-public arena of the agon; what once was a battle among external enemies has now become a battle taking place within man himself. But the crucial reevaluation of the agon is the utter disrespect on the part of Christianity. While under the Greek model the opponent was considered the most valuable part to one’s agon and he thus had to be protected, now, with Christianity, the opponent becomes the mortal enemy that has to be annihilated. It is not only the ‘evil thoughts’ that a good Christian has to fight against. Principally it is man himself, his living flesh, which the good Christian has to fight against. The destruction of our most human qualities becomes for the Christian the path to salvation, his redemption. Acampora has noted⁴⁵⁷ that the major difference between the Greek and Christian models is that because the cultural model of the Greeks was that of an ‘evaluative economy that indexes value with risk’, in principle every man could acquire more value even by the value of the Gods. In truly Hegelian fashion⁴⁵⁸ for the Greeks, the value of the human was determined by his willingness to risk his life in a battle for true recognition! The Christian God, on the other hand, takes upon himself the possibility of human redemption by sacrificing himself. It is only after God’s sacrifice that the possibility of human redemption is opened. Acampora rightly wonders: “If participation in agon is one of the ways in which we are human as well as one of the ways in which we create the significance of humanity, then

⁴⁵⁴ Παπαγιώργης, Κωστής. *Η Ομηρική Μάχη*. Αθήνα: Καστανιώτης, 2001, p. 60

⁴⁵⁵ GM: 1, 11

⁴⁵⁶ BGE: Preface

⁴⁵⁷ Acampora, Davis Christa. *Contesting Nietzsche*. *Op.cit.* p. 113

⁴⁵⁸ Or rather vice versa.

the elimination of the possibility of meaningful struggle (nothing could possibly compare with what Christ accomplishes) undermines the mode of value production Nietzsche thinks is potentially so creative and perpetually renewable (and thus redemptive in a different respect).”⁴⁵⁹ Certainly reservations have to be raised against Acampora’s suggestion of the potential meaninglessness of action under the Christian model. *Theosis* is for Christianity certainly an (almost) impossible task, as it requires the abandonment of man’s very nature and the attainment of another one, a task attainable only by very few exceptional individuals: the Saints. However, Acampora is certainly right on the revaluating powers of Christianity and the change of focus of the *agon* from an external to an internal battle; and also that under the Christian model man needs a mediator on the path to his redemption who plays down man’s individual struggle against his opponents.

What could be the importance of *agon*, if not to announce the possibility of a re-ordering of social-political order through a new understanding of power? As we have already suggested, contesters are not interlocutors in round-table conversations but fighters in a *battle to death for pure prestige*. What is at stake in the *agon* is nothing else than the form that power has to take after the millennia of *ressentiment* that the West had succumbed to under the influence of Christianity. What is at stake is the form that power has to take beyond the millennia of politics of *revenge* instigated by the powerless, yet canny, slaves. Unbeknownst even to Nietzsche himself, his early reflections on the *agon* become the laboratory in which his late understanding of power will get formulated. If the Greeks were always the cultural model, the absolute and unparalleled model, of the West, the kind of power fermented within their agonistic culture allowed them to develop an orientation toward the *exemplary*, which means toward that which is not bound to the laws of preservation ruling the world of (every) today. As will be shown, it is only through the spectacles of ‘Will to Power’ that *agon* is to be of any value for us today; and it is also only through the dialectical character of the *agon* that ‘Will to Power’ can become a principle of creation instead of degenerating to bygone forms of power executed by what now we are called to overcome: the man of revenge, i.e. this cultural product [the priest, the teacher, the civil servant] which had been systematically trained to manipulate power for the exclusive benefit of his own ‘species’ over and against the interests of every other species or form of life.

⁴⁵⁹ Acampora, Davis Christa. *Contesting Nietzsche. Op.cit.*

b. On power

As we have already mentioned earlier in this chapter, the locus classicus of Nietzsche's understanding of power (BGE: 259) has been the object of various misunderstandings, due to the overlooking of the important term 'incorporation' that Nietzsche uses in his attempt to define life. The incorporation of the 'other' denotes that life may be 'growth', but in every case it is a *sustainable* growth, not the kind that annihilates everything else to serve its own interests. At stake here is what Nietzsche could mean by 'mastery' or by a 'master drive'. John Richardson has suggested that 'Mastery is bringing another will into a subordinate role within one's own effort, thereby 'incorporating' the other as a sort of organ or tool.'⁴⁶⁰ Richardson's position could be partly justifiable especially due to the allusion of the other as a *tool*, which is in agreement with Nietzsche's mention of the aristocracy in need of reducing 'countless people' to the function of slaves and *tools* (*Werkzeugen*) for the sake of the aristocracy itself in the infamous BGE: 258. However, this is not the position that we are going to adopt here. The reason is that this definition of mastery contradicts the *Kriegspraxis* (the practise and the rules of war) exemplified in EH: 1, 7. There, the (alluded) definition of power is not that of using the other as a tool, but instead of raising the other (the other drive when we speak about 'power') to the level of the attacker. *To render someone powerful enough to sustain the attack and perhaps to counter-attack also*: this is what to be master means. But is that a sustainable position? Is that something that Nietzsche, with all of his contradictions and experimentations, could have continuously followed throughout his writings? We are going to demonstrate that indeed that is the case and that this position is to be of paramount importance for his anti-political politics.

But Nietzschean power does not 'emanate' from some transcendental source; it is the product of interaction among individual agents, so the question that we have to ask has to concern the individuals which are the sources of power. What kind of *subject* is the one willing and exercising power? "That I must be struggle and Becoming and purpose and conflict of purposes: ah, whoever guesses my will also guesses along what *crooked* ways [krummen Wegen] it has to walk! Whatever I create and however much I love it – soon I must oppose

⁴⁶⁰ Richardson, John. *Nietzsche's system*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1996, p. 32

both it and my love: thus my will wills it.”⁴⁶¹ This *will* then is the opposite of the other, overconfident *will* manifested in the stentorious Napoleonic cry ‘March forward!’ Our *will* is *crooked*, that is to say it is a *will* not sure of itself but rather crippled, indirect, irregular, uneven, at times even devious or at least oblique. It is also the opposite of that other philosophical *will*, that of our reverent teacher Schopenhauer, who did only what was expected of a philosopher: he adopted and exaggerated a ‘popular prejudice’. In reality *will* is a unity only ‘in a word’. The Napoleonic cry ‘March forward!’ is nothing but a grammatical misunderstanding. *Will* is ‘complicated’⁴⁶². It is only out of habit (and an unfinished grammar) that one believes that a deed is a consequence of our will. The ego that wills the *will* was never there as a substance which caused the deeds. “No subject ‘atoms’”⁴⁶³ but instead a ‘constantly shifting’... *something*. “No ‘substance,’ rather something [*Etwas*] that in itself strives after greater strength, and that wants to “preserve” itself only indirectly (it wants to *surpass* itself).”⁴⁶⁴ And while in BGE one can still speak about some kind of *will*, however complicated that may be, in the *Nachlass* notes will disappears altogether: “there is no such thing as *will*”⁴⁶⁵.

It has to become clear then that the subject that wills the ‘will to power’ is unambiguous. We have only one word, the “synthetic concept of the ‘I’”⁴⁶⁶, to describe such a ‘multifarious thing [vielfachen Dinge]’ as the will. The ‘I’ then does not describe a unity but *something* that is many. In the above mentioned BGE: 19, Nietzsche describes the processes of the will as relations of commanding and obeying. “What is called ‘freedom of the will’ is essentially the affect of superiority with respect to something that must obey”⁴⁶⁷, but in every case ‘we’ are both the one who commands and the one who obeys, and more than that, *we* can only be as a multiplicity: “Our body is, after all, only a society constructed out of many souls.”⁴⁶⁸ Nietzsche was not alone in supporting such a thesis. The idea has been around from the time of Goethe and well into the second half of 19th century. In his own copy of Lange’s GM, Nietzsche had found and marked the following passage from Goethe: “Every living thing, is not a single thing, but a plurality; even insofar as it appears to us as an individual, it still

⁴⁶¹ TSZ: On self-overcoming

⁴⁶² BGE: 19

⁴⁶³ WP: 488. KSA: 12:9 [98]

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁶ BGE: 19

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

remains a collection of living independent beings.”⁴⁶⁹ In our chapter ‘Elements of Nietzschean psychology’ we have seen that Nietzsche was influenced by Virchow’s description of individual organisms as ‘cell states’ [Zellenstaat], although Nietzsche follows the non-egalitarian version of the plurality in unity in every given organism put forward by Haeckel, who proposed a more hierarchical structure of organisms. But it is not only in biology or in literature that we can find elaborations of the possibility of a multiple subject. In the late half of the 19th century another idea was very much around as a result of experiments in the field of psychology, a then rather loose collection of doctors, magnetizers and hypnotists: that of *polypsychism*. The idea of polypsychism (multiple souls) was put forward in an attempt to explain the relation between the dreaming subject and the actual dream, or even more complicated phenomena such as multiple personalities. As a term it is first used by the French magnetizer Joseph Pierre Durand, but it soon becomes one of the most discussed subjects of the emerging dynamic psychiatry. Spiritism had accustomed man to the idea that one could be possessed by more than one evil spirit. Later, in the experience of dreams where one can identify with multiple personalities, or in the multiple personalities phenomenon, one can find the presence of *something* [Etwas] that is multiple. Ellenberger quotes G.N.M. Tyrrell in explaining polypsychism as such: “The personality is a multiplicity in unity of a kind which is almost impossible to express in words.” Ellenberg adds: “This multiplicity of personalities implies that they belong to ranges of varying depths and are also graded in some hierarchic order.” Tyrrell continues: “The lesson is surely that identity of selfhood is not depended on numerical separateness in the way that we habitually think it is...Selfhood has not the kind of unity which we associate with numerical separateness.”⁴⁷⁰ But the similarities do not stop here. For Nietzsche there is always a master or commanding drive which coordinates the multiplicity of drives; unity is achieved through the organization of drives: “All unity is unity only as organization and co-operation – just as human community is a unity – as opposed to an atomistic anarchy, as a pattern of domination that *signifies* a unity but *is* not a unity.”⁴⁷¹ Tallis explains the structure of the polypsychic individual: “the human psyche [was] a community of lesser minds, whose operation was coordinated by a master (or executive) mind. The arrangement might be compared to a classical orchestra. Each of the individual sections—for example, strings, wind or brass—can function independently;

⁴⁶⁹ Lange, Albert Frederick. *The History of Materialism*, Vol. III. E.C.T. (trans.) Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co Ltd. 1925, p. 38

⁴⁷⁰ Ellenberger, F. Henri. *The discovery of the unconscious – The history and evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry*. USA: Basic Books. 1970, p. 147

⁴⁷¹ WP: 561. KSA: 12:2 [87]

however, they are usually united under the conductor's baton...This overseeing mind—the conductor—is the identity we recognize as ourselves when we introspect.”⁴⁷² Unfortunately we do not have a way to know whether Nietzsche had come into contact with the writings of these early researchers of the human psyche. Nevertheless, the similarities are striking and indicative of the intellectual climate of the era, so foreign in many respects to our own.

It is not our intention here to present the whole range of discussions concerning ‘Will to Power’. This has been done elsewhere and with great success.⁴⁷³ Our purpose is to shed light on those elements of Will to Power that clarify the distance of the Nietzschean project, concerning the understanding of power, from previous or later understandings of it. In particular, we would like to stress the interconnection of (Nietzschean) power with the undertaking of an agonistic culture and to reveal the deep tension between Nietzsche's self-proclaimed faith to hierarchy against the horizontality of power due to its immersion in the agon. *This* power then becomes the precursor of the one proclaimed by Michel Foucault: a self-producing ‘strength’ emanating not from a single source but coming from everywhere, a positive rather than negative constituent of life itself, not a structure of a social mechanism.⁴⁷⁴ Don Dombowsky has admitted that ‘strictly speaking’, Nietzsche is an anti-political thinker because “he does not foresee an end in violence”⁴⁷⁵. The proposition is certainly valid, yet incorrect. The idea that in the faraway past the human condition was nothing but a ‘war of all against all’ and that politics is the procedure which will take humans away from the age of barbarism to the age of peaceful coexistence is certainly popular, yet according to Nietzsche, it is just another myth of ‘modernity’. There is no such thing as a progress from ‘bad’ to ‘good’. “Our ‘progress’ represents just one of the consequences of the general waning of *vitality*,”⁴⁷⁶ humanity does not leave barbarism behind. Only ‘the improvers of humanity’ think that something like that is possible. Humanity always seeks to integrate barbarism into the process of life so that what was once just ‘barbaric’ is forced to be a part of a rejuvenated humanity, of life itself. This is why the last great age of humanity is not that of the liberal/democratic West but that of the “wasteful and disastrous Renaissance

⁴⁷² Tallis, Frank. *Hidden Minds – A History of the Unconscious*. New York: Helios Press. 2012, p. 28

⁴⁷³ By far the best contribution to the literature of the Will to Power is: Williams, L. Linda. *Nietzsche's Mirror – The World as Will to Power*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 2001.

⁴⁷⁴ Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality – The Will to Knowledge* Vol. I. Robert Hurley (trans.). London: Penguin. 1979, p. 93

⁴⁷⁵ Dombowsky, Don. *Nietzsche's Machiavellian Politics*. *Op.cit.* p. 1

⁴⁷⁶ TI: Reconnaissance Raids of an Untimely Man: 37

[verschwenderische und verhängnissreiche]”⁴⁷⁷. At the end of politics one finds neither peace, as the liberals think, nor ‘gruesome savagery’. At the end of ‘politics’ one finds *our* anti-politics (which is still politics) which consists at *the regulation of violence within the context of the agon*, which means within a context that will be able to generate positive forces able to overturn the millennia of the monolithic development of humanity and to produce the context out of which multiple productions (human, artistic, moral) will be possible and justified.

For what kind of power does Nietzsche, then? Two aphorisms from *Daybreak* give us a good idea of what we think Nietzsche means when he refers to power. In D: 262 we read: “Not necessity, not desire – no, the love of power is the demon of men...Take everything from them and satisfy this, and they are almost happy.” As in many other passages in D⁴⁷⁸, power here functions primarily as a psychological motivation. Long before it is deemed (by Nietzsche’s interpreters) a metaphysical principle, power is what guides and what explains the deeds of men. In the above passage the context is that of ‘petty’ politics. Power is identified with “The ‘*Reich*’”⁴⁷⁹. Presumably those seeking power are those seeking the ephemeral feeling of strength over others and those thinking that the *state* is an answer to the problem of culture and one of its main opponents. Another aphorism from *Daybreak* gives us a subtler view on the problem of power: “We are still on our knees before *strength* [Kraft] after the ancient custom of slaves – and yet when the degree of *worthiness to be revered* is fixed, only *the degree of rationality in strength* is decisive: we must access to what extent precisely strength has been overcome by something higher, in the service of which it now stands as means and instrument!”⁴⁸⁰ Three comments: first, certainly *Kraft* is not *Macht*⁴⁸¹, yet they are very close to each other, since in the works of the middle period *Macht*, except from a principle of psychological motivation, is used also to describe the kind of political power which borders that of the exercise of force as in GS: 13. Second, we see at the structure of the proposition the expression of the very core of the idea of the agon: not strength—this would be barbaric (un-Hellenic)—but *rationality* in strength, i.e. how one (opponent, culture) circulates power in such a way as to generate a great work of art (or a

⁴⁷⁷ TI: Skirmishes of an untimely man: 37. I use here the translation of Judith Norman. In: Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols and other writings*. Judith Norman (trans.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2005.

⁴⁷⁸ D: 23, 189, 348, 356

⁴⁷⁹ D: 262

⁴⁸⁰ D: 548

⁴⁸¹ *Gefühl der Macht* is the expression used in D and HATH

great human being, which is the same) which is going to perfect nature, *this bad economist*⁴⁸². Also, the right management of the degree of rationality is important. Presumably an over-rationalized strength is on its way to losing its vitality and force. Too much rationality (Socratism would be the example here) is going to corrode the foundations of culture by removing all of its vital elements. The third point, similar to the second one, is that one (an opponent, a culture etc.) has to be aware that strength is something to be overcome. It is not there in its own right but only to serve something which overcomes it. We see here Nietzsche's aversion to preservation repeated. Even what I love most, I must deny and leave behind, *thus my will wills it*.

The dialectic of forces which constitute the Will to Power continue to be expressed at the series of the *Nachlass* notes, where we find Will to Power as having no other goal other than that of the safeguarding of the eternal *play* of forces which constitute it. In a famous *Nachlass* note the world is described as 'Will to Power' "*—and nothing besides—*": "a play of forces and waves of forces, at the same time one and many, increasing here and at the same time decreasing there; a sea of forces flowing and rushing together..."⁴⁸³ This *Nachlass* note echoes the findings of physiologist Ludwig Büchner regarding conservation of energy. According to Büchner, "nature did not know a stand-still...it was rather a never-ending cycle of motion that corresponded to diverse kinds of force. These forces were not able to be created or destroyed, but they were interconvertible into one another in such a way that their sum was a constant, and force itself was immortal...A force could be transformed into another form, but the total amount of force in the world remained equal in amount."⁴⁸⁴ Along similar lines, Nietzsche describes this world as "a monster of energy, without beginning, without end; a firm, iron magnitude of force that does not grow bigger or smaller, that does not expend itself but only transforms itself..."⁴⁸⁵ The Dionysian vision of the world as an eternally self-creating and self-destroying flux is nicely expressed in the above passage through Nietzsche's fierce rejection of teleology in favour of the eternal flux of all things. If energy is indeed conserved and not lost, then the perennial interplay of forces is guaranteed and the agon can transform the play of forces from a play aiming at the domination of one opponent over the other to a necessary perennial conservation of the agon itself. The only 'thing' guaranteed under this model is that the world as a *monster* of never-perishing energy.

⁴⁸² UM: Schopenhauer as educator: 6

⁴⁸³ WP: 1067, KSA: 11:38 [12]

⁴⁸⁴ Gregory Frederick quoted in Schutte, Ofelia. *Beyond Nihilism –Nietzsche without masks*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 1984, p. 205

⁴⁸⁵ WP: 1067, KSA: 11:38 [12]

Keith Ansell-Pearson⁴⁸⁶, and more recently Don Dombowsky⁴⁸⁷, have drawn attention to the influence that Machiavelli had exercised on Nietzsche. For both of them Nietzsche is a descendent of the Machiavellian school of political theory, particularly regarding the relativization of notions of good and evil and also the stress that both place on *virtù*, a notion that depicts a whole range of ideals (such as courage, excellence, strength, and political ability), during the Italian renaissance, at least according to Nietzsche's reading. Dombowski lists a series of similarities between Nietzsche and Machiavelli that are particularly useful to every student of Nietzschean politics. However, one has to ask whether Nietzsche, despite all parallels with other thinkers, had a really developed blueprint of political theory? The answer here must be negative. While a treatise like Machiavelli's *The Prince* is intended to guide those about to hold positions of power through everyday political problems and practical solutions, Nietzsche's response is to attempt a treatise on the politics of *virtue*! The details of the everyday management of power are of no concern to Nietzsche. Ansell-Pearson notes: "Nietzsche is concerned...not so much with mastery as with art, not manipulation but architectonic, political sculpture rather than political mastery..."⁴⁸⁸ Nietzsche intended to write a treatise on politics, for which we are left with only a *Nachlass* note which, however, is characteristic of the Nietzschean spirit: "This treatise deals with the grand *politics* of virtue. It is intended for the use of those whose interest must lie in learning, not how one *becomes* virtuous, but how one *makes* virtuous – how virtue is made to dominate. I even intend to prove that to desire the one – the domination of virtue – one absolutely must *not* desire the other; one automatically renounces becoming virtuous oneself..."⁴⁸⁹

There is no question to us that the Grand Politics of the future will concern the domination of virtue, of *virtù*, of all those ideals which are going to oppose the slavish character of this sickly household pet called *human*. However, and perhaps despite *our* justifiable rage⁴⁹⁰, Nietzschean domination is of a strange character. As we hope we have demonstrated, Nietzsche forces power to be expressed within the limits that are set by the agon. In that sense the following *Nachlass* note is of great importance: "The will to power can manifest itself only against resistances; therefore it seeks that which resists it."⁴⁹¹ Power depends on what

⁴⁸⁶ Ansell-Pearson, Keith. *Nietzsche contra Rousseau. Op.cit.* pp. 38-43

⁴⁸⁷ Dombowsky, Don. *Nietzsche's Machiavellian Politics. Op.cit.* pp. 131-167

⁴⁸⁸ Ansell-Pearson, Keith. *Nietzsche contra Rousseau. Op.cit.* p. 40

⁴⁸⁹ WP: 304, KSA: 13:11 [54]

⁴⁹⁰ I use 'rage' here in the particular sense that it is used by Fukuyama and Sloterdijk. As indicative of the necessity for the rehabilitation of the Greek *thymos*. For more on that see: Sloterdijk, Peter. *Rage and Time*. Mario Wenning (trans.) New York: Columbia University Press. 2010, pp. 1-44

⁴⁹¹ WP: 656, KSA: 12:9 [151]

resists it! Without an opponent, power (life) cannot exist. The following from the aphorism is concerned with what a successful *incorporation* may suggest. The proposal is that the *other*, by its incorporation to the *same*, is going to increase [vermehrt hat] the (now former) *same*, not to destroy it or to infect it. Incorporation is to power what vaccination is for the body. With vaccination, the virus, i.e. the alien force, is called to *increase* the health of the main body. Disease becomes the condition of health: “Waste, decay, elimination need not be condemned: they are necessary consequences of life, of the growth of life. The phenomenon of decadence is as necessary as any increase and advance of life: one is in no position to abolish it.”⁴⁹² Nietzsche’s remarks on various matters of politics can only make sense when placed within the perspective of the agon which safeguards Nietzsche’s *Kriegspraxis* and intensifies the dynamic of contradictory forces which constitute the human and its culture(s).

Conclusion

In an interview from 1976, Michel Foucault notes: “If power were never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but to say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it? What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn’t only weigh on us as a force that says no; it also traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network that runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is only repression.”⁴⁹³ In one of his many disparaging comments on the various failures of the Germans, Nietzsche notes: “You pay a high price for coming to power: power *stultifies*...”⁴⁹⁴ Nietzsche had nothing but contempt for the kind of power administered by state officials or weak personalities using power as a way to cover their insecurities. There is power and then there is *Power*. While Nietzsche severely criticizes the former, he idolizes the form of power that serves the destruction of old ideals and paves the way to the formation of new forms of human existence. The ‘Will to Power’ is *productive* power insofar as its presupposition is to constantly produce that which resists it. It cannot exist (as power) otherwise. In that sense, Nietzsche paved the way for the Foucauldian

⁴⁹² WP: 40, KSA: 13:14 [75]

⁴⁹³ Foucault, Michel. Truth and Power. In: Foucault, Michel. *Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984. Vol. 3*, p. 120

⁴⁹⁴ TI: What the Germans lack

understanding of power as a productive force encompassing the whole of the social body against the traditional Marxian depiction of power as a vertical force of depression.

Does this mean that one cannot find Nietzschean statements declaring an admiration for the kind of destructive power? Certainly one can. BGE: 258 is one of these statements, where the glorification of the destructive and barbaric effects of power leaves the scholar unable to comment. Yet the overall picture on the problem of power that we have tried to develop in this chapter has pushed forward another understanding of power which is much more prominent throughout Nietzsche's oeuvre. Something important is at stake for us. The kind of power that we push forward produces the type of human that comes after the human. The Overhuman is the locus of the antithetical forces of power that constitute the human and will produce the Overhuman condition. We believe that we have shown that the type of human which is going to be produced from within the institutionalization of conflict (which the *agon* is) is to be, what Nietzsche calls in BGE: 44, a 'reverse experiment', an experiment on how the human could be if produced under the reverse conditions from those which have until now produced it. A vision of power is the kernel of every theory about politics. Nietzsche's vision of power both overcomes what comes before him and develops the conditions for an experiment in politics like no other before him. A note of caution, though; what we have tried to do has nothing to do with the postmodern justification of 'all things being equal'. The 'Will to Power' does not legitimize the *lower* as modern, as liberal democracies do⁴⁹⁵; its aim is not to equalize value but rather the opposite. The aim of the 'Will to Power' is to distribute value according to one's willingness to participate in the *agon* and also *to place the lower in the right order of rank*. According to this model, humans are getting their value from the *context* (the particular *agon* which they undertake) in which they develop their creative powers. Outside of context, humans do not have value. One has to remember that this would be a major difference and a constant source of friction between Nietzsche and 'us', the modern ones.

Nietzsche always believed that the most typical of the characteristics of the mediocre is that they wish to extinguish, to abolish the *other*. The mediocre are caught up in a *grand enterprise for the purification of existence* where nothing "harmful, evil, dangerous, questionable, destructive would remain."⁴⁹⁶ But 'we', free spirits and philosophers of the future, know better. Our vision for what comes after the human is different. In a remarkable

⁴⁹⁵ Universal suffrage and other 'modern' inventions.

⁴⁹⁶ WP: 881, KSA: 12:10 [111]

Nachlass note from 1887, Nietzsche notes: “Our insight is the opposite of this: that with every growth of man, his other side must grow too; that the highest man, if such a concept be allowed, would be the man who represented the antithetical character of existence most strongly, as its glory and sole justification-”⁴⁹⁷ Nietzschean politics tries exactly that: to *glorify* and *justify* the ‘antithetical character of existence’. Its vision is not consistency. Its aim is not to preserve the old but to do away with it and to prepare the new. It is the kind of *dangerous* politics because it says: Enough! *Let’s play now!*

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

Nietzsche on the genealogy of *Guilt* and the future of *Innocence*.

[Man's] superiority over the other animals may come down to his capacity for neurosis.

Freud, Introductory lectures on psychoanalysis

In this chapter we are going to examine one of Nietzsche's most provocative and most neglected texts, when it comes to the examination of overhuman thought: *On the Genealogy of Morality*. In the preceding chapters we concentrated on Nietzsche's preoccupation with collective enterprises (like cultures and political communities), whereas in this chapter we are going to follow Nietzsche's attempt to describe the genesis of the human soul as an inner space of conflicts and contradictions. We will argue that this genesis takes place in the three steps or essays which comprise GM. At first, we will argue for the interdependent relation between nobles and slaves, an interdependence which is established by the ambiguous figure of the priest. Then we will argue that through the process of what Nietzsche calls internalization [Verinnerlichung], we witness the genesis of a type of animal which, despite being in conflict with itself, is able to give birth to its history precisely because of this conflictual space of its genesis. This history describes the unfolding of the dramatization of the webs of contradictions which comprises and eternally creatively destabilizes the human animal, rather than history as the progress of a necessarily unambiguous rationality, as Hegel would want it. Our central claim would be that with his GM, Nietzsche suggests that in a first level the conditions that have brought about the human animal could also function as the incubator for the genesis of the Overhuman. However, in a second level Nietzsche also recognizes that an educational process is also needed (cultivation of atheism, rehabilitation — re-naturalization—of asceticism) if the Overhuman is to evolve out of its human origins. GM, more than any other of Nietzsche's texts, describes the necessity of the interdependence between the human and the Overhuman and as thus it is invaluable to our investigation.

Introducing Genealogy.

GM is a text haunted by the future; not a future in the sense of an end-point to be found at the end of a process, but rather a future as a *promise* of a healing which will restore the lost strength of the body and the lost possibilities of the human animal. For that to be done, though, an exhaustive examination and critique is needed which will reveal the multiple moments of origins of the social phenomena under investigation. In GM we see, more than in any other of Nietzsche's writings, the kind of *historical philosophising* designed to combat the mistakes and misunderstandings of the metaphysical tradition of philosophy. In HATH: 2 Nietzsche had criticized philosophers for their 'lack of historical sense' a lack which has led them to an examination of the human outside of the historical, social, environmental, or other conditions that had brought them about. 'Philosophy' is accused of examining the human from a position where, peculiarly, the human is nowhere to be found. The 'view from nowhere' is a projected myth that only reveals the needs and the wills of the various groups that founded it, but does not reveal much about the human, which *is* for Nietzsche only to the extent that it is the product of historical development. "...Everything has become: there are *no eternal facts*, just as there are no absolute truths. Consequently what is needed from now on is *historical philosophising* and with it the virtue of modesty."⁴⁹⁸

For Nietzsche this new 'historical philosophising' aims principally to expose precisely the extent to which humans have come to be in such a way and not in some other way. *Genealogy* will uncover not just the fact of human domestication, but the wide extent of such a domestication. Eventually the whole of Western culture will be accused of having produced a toothless, gutted animal from which every possibility of a future has been removed. But the response to "millennia of conscience-vivisection and cruelty to the animal-self"⁴⁹⁹ is not going to be simply the following of some other path. What we have come to call the 'human' is a name-tag for a long story of submission; to pretend that one is somehow able to jump over this history is to fundamentally misunderstand both the role of culture in the history of human communities and the multiple ways which this history gets internalized by the humans. Nietzsche's paradoxical suggestion is that because humans are the products of

⁴⁹⁸ HATH: 2

⁴⁹⁹ GM: II: 24

antithetical forces, they create themselves; their history also becomes a continual field of conflict. Because humans can still harbour *wills* fighting against the walls of their ‘torture-chambers’, humans can still claim the possibility of a future history of histories, a perennial unfolding of human potentialities depicting the contradictory constitution of the humans. It is from the depths of sickness that humans get to create themselves despite their sickness. This too reveals precisely the extent of Nietzsche’s love and concern for the humans⁵⁰⁰ and thus also the extent of the debt of the Overhuman to the human. *Genealogy* expands and analyses Zarathustra’s pronouncement that “...only a jester thinks: ‘The human can also be *overjumped*.’”⁵⁰¹ Although *Genealogy* is a long accusation of the specific route that the psycho-cultural development of humanity has taken, it is also a testament to the importance of that history which has provided humans with all the instruments necessary to their torture, allowing them thus to produce history and themselves in it as perennially *unsettled*, *discontent*, and of course *homeless*.⁵⁰²

GM expresses its polemical character stylistically also. To be sure, a *polemic* indicates neither an academic text nor a dispassionate examination. *Genealogy* is what it says it is⁵⁰³: eine Streitschrift! The English translation of Streitschrift as a ‘polemic’ conveys precisely the message that Nietzsche wants. A polemic⁵⁰⁴ is not just a ‘spirited’ argumentation but a straightforwardly aggressive one. The intention of a polemic is *not* persuasion but victory. As Nietzsche himself warns later in his life, in the *Genealogy Dionysus is at work* and, as is well known, “Dionysus...is also the God of darkness.”⁵⁰⁵ *Genealogy* is a text rising out of the fumes and agonies of battles. Its audience are warriors. For these reasons we are going to treat *Genealogy* as a manifesto; a manifesto drawing our attention to the history of the psychological constitution of the domesticated animals that humans *have become* and possibly, *through* that history, a manifesto expressing the need for multiple alternative productions of human animals, *for the need for the creation of futures* instead of *a future*.

⁵⁰⁰ This has nothing to do with the metaphysical presuppositions of ‘humanism’ with all of its dependence on transcendental signifiers. Nietzsche’s love of the humans is directed toward an attitude of respect for the animality (strength, independence, and unruliness in relation to demands of authorities) of the human animal.

⁵⁰¹ TSZ: On old and new tables: 4

⁵⁰² A self-inflicted state of homelessness was one of the virtues that the ancient Cynics promoted as a way of freedom from the bounds of civic life and necessary to their intellectual independence. Nietzsche also sought liberation from the ‘enduring habits’ that capture one to a stable and complacent life. On the relation between Nietzsche and ancient Cynicism see: Braham, R. Bracht. “Nietzsche’s Cynicism”. In: Bishop, Paul (ed.). *Nietzsche and Antiquity – His reaction and response to the Classical Tradition*. New York: Camden House. 2004, pp. 170-181

⁵⁰³ Much to the dismay of ‘commentators’ who like to treat GM as a ‘neutral’, dispassionate text.

⁵⁰⁴ From the Greek: polemos (war)

⁵⁰⁵ EH: *Genealogy of Morals*

Thus we have the paradoxical character of *Genealogy*: a *polemic*, haunted by the ghost of *Übermensch*, expressing the need for a regained *innocence*. The Overhuman conceptually makes a sudden appearance in I: 12; however, it is there throughout *Genealogy* as a future promise of that which has to come after the decline of the present. Alongside the Overhuman, also as a promise coming from the future, the faith in the possibility of a *second innocence* is announced, again only as a passing remark, as if Nietzsche has no faith on the possibility of a final ‘victory of atheism’⁵⁰⁶ which will restore the human’s faith to earth.

The world turned upside down: The revolt of the slaves.

In the novel *La Virgin de los Sicarios*, Colombian writer Fernando Vallejo describes life in the ‘capital of hate’, the city of Medellin, former home of the infamous drug lord Pablo Escobar. In the city where death reigns supreme, a wrong look can cost you your life and a complaint to the taxi driver to lower the sound of the unbearable pop music can leave you with your bones broken and your head shattered on tarmac⁵⁰⁷. *So what?* The women from the *comunas* of Medellin will never stop producing ruthless killers who will populate the streets of this abomination of a city until they all kill each other in a delirium of hate, “in the delirium of an absurd life”⁵⁰⁸; as the writer says, the wretched citizens of Medellin are consumed by their hate, completely unable to envisage a life beyond that of a *bellum omnium contra omnes*.

Why should we read the First Essay, *we* free-spirits and inhabitants of a post-apocalyptic world where the slaves have won? Because the story that Nietzsche tells is a very interesting one. Because, unlike the citizens of Medellin, this part of humanity which Nietzsche calls ‘slaves’ has managed to do something really remarkable: the slaves have made *hate* creative, and this creative hate has given birth to new ideals and those ideals created new values, values that came to replace the old ones: the values of the world before the victory of the slaves. In the First Essay Nietzsche will ask the following questions: How did the West fail to recognize that what it calls morality is just the representation of the interests of a particular group: the slaves? How did this ‘herd morality’ become the dominant mode of valuation, so dominant that it has come to be identified with morality itself? This is of course familiar

⁵⁰⁶ GM: II, 20

⁵⁰⁷ Vallejo, Fernando. *Our Lady of the Assassins*. (trans.) Paul Hammond. London: Serpent’s tail. 2001

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p. 26

territory for Nietzsche. *Genealogy* continuous where BGE left off, and specifically, GM: I continues where BGE's chapter *The Religious Character* left off. But, whereas the approach in BGE is historical, e.g. the last slave revolt in morals is identified with the French Revolution, the approach in *Genealogy* leans toward the psycho-cultural aspect of human genesis. The slave revolt is examined not as a historical event but as a stage in the development of the psychological constitution of the human. Who is then the slave and what is the nature of his hate?

Unlike the Biblical version that wants the 'beginning' to be identified with light, *our* values lie in those 'dark corners of the soul' of which St. Augustine spoke⁵⁰⁹. English moralists, with all of their naïve faith to all things human, may have believed in the final victory of the greatest happiness for the greatest number, but for Nietzsche we are at the mercy of the most pathetic and of the lowliest. Our morality is the product of our *ressentiment*, that which we cannot achieve for ourselves and thus we create an imaginary revenge against those who can achieve it. This kind of morality is a slavish morality, Nietzsche insists, and it has to be placed before the other type of morality, which Nietzsche calls 'noble', so it can be properly judged. The First Essay begins by turning upside down our conceptions of 'good' and 'evil'. 'Good' is not the product of what is useful, as the English moralists had thought, but rather is the right to a 'pathos of distance' that some higher or noble individuals have against what is lower in society. The terms 'good' and 'evil' are *hierarchical descriptions of ways of life*, not expressions of approval or disapproval of selfless acts. The latter became possible only after the 'decline of aristocratic value-judgements' where the value-judgment was characterised as good or evil, respectively, according to its usefulness to the recipient of the act⁵¹⁰. Morality as we know it today begins when these lower parts of society begin to experience their own existence as unjust and seek to overturn the 'traditional' mode of valuation. "The beginning of the slave's revolt in morality occurs when *ressentiment* itself becomes creative and gives birth to values: the *ressentiment* of beings denied the true reaction, that of deed, who recover their losses only through an imaginary revenge."⁵¹¹ According to Nietzsche, *ressentiment* is not the monopoly of the slave but also occurs in noble natures. So what is the difference? As

⁵⁰⁹ Augustine, Saint. *Confessions*. Henry Chadwick (trans.). Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1992. Chapter VIII

⁵¹⁰ e.g. I am poor. I am in need of charity. I name the act of charity 'good' because it is useful to me. After time and with the habitual praise of the act it is deemed 'good', a universal value that everyone ought to respect.

⁵¹¹ GM: I, 10

SOED informs us, resentment⁵¹² is “An indignant sense of injury or insult received or perceived, a sense of grievance; (a feeling of) ill will, bitterness, or anger against a person or thing.”⁵¹³ The point that we have to stress is that *ressentiment* is *frustrated action* and its birth place is sensitivity. Robert C. Solomon draws attention to the association of *ressentiment* with *feeling* rather than with action. “Because resentment is thus frustrated as action and in its expression, it becomes more pronounced as a feeling (from the Latin “resentire”, to feel) – a strong, often bitter feeling that also indicates sensitivity and vulnerability.”⁵¹⁴ *Ressentiment* does appear in nobles. “For the *ressentiment* of the noble human being, when it appears in him, runs its course and exhausts itself in an immediate reaction, therefore it does not *poison-*”⁵¹⁵. I: 10 describes the difference between the nobles and the slaves as that of the orientation of the valuing process. Noble is the one who says ‘Yes’ to himself and his actions, slave is the one who says ‘No’ to every external stimuli, to everything that is not about or of ‘his’ own self. Slave morality, then, is simply reaction (to external stimuli), not action (coming from itself alone); slave morality needs an opposing world against which will affirm its own. In this work we are familiar with setting up obstacles and willingly creating contradictions. These are the characteristics of the Overhuman himself. The slave has already set the path for his first victory over the noble who, let us not forget, is not praised by Nietzsche. The noble in *Genealogy*⁵¹⁶ may appear to enjoy the results of his resistance to internalization, but he does so only with the way of the beast and not the way of man. He has the ‘innocent conscience of the beast’, and on his way leaves a “hideous succession of murder, arson, rape, torture”⁵¹⁷. The noble is closer to the beast than to man. He appears to be more a type of a *proto-human* than a fully developed human. As Nietzsche will make clear in the Second Essay, it is only with the development of ‘bad conscience’ that human *proper* is developed.

⁵¹² Nietzsche uses the French word ‘ressentiment’. Despite their minute differences, the French word and its English and German analogues mean basically the same. For a discussion of etymology see Rüdiger, Bittner. “Ressentiment” in: Schacht, Richard (ed.). *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1994, p. 128; Solomon, Robert C. “One Hundred Years of Ressentiment” in: Schacht, Richard (ed.) *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality*. *Ibid.* p. 103; Clark, Maudemarie and Swensen, Alan J. end notes 19:3, p. 135 in: GM.

⁵¹³ *Shorter Oxford Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Sixth Edition 2007, p. 2543

⁵¹⁴ Solomon, Robert C. “One Hundred Years of Ressentiment” *Ibid.* p. 103

⁵¹⁵ GM: I, 10

⁵¹⁶ ‘Nobility’ is of course a key Nietzschean concept with a very rich history. Here we refer exclusively to the ‘original nobles’ of the First Essay, the creatures which exhibit what Ridley calls the “lowest degree of internalization”. Ridley, Aaron. *Six character studies from the ‘Genealogy’*. New York: Cornell University. 1998, p. 131. For the rich history of the ‘Noble’ in Nietzsche’s thinking see: Burnham, Douglas. *The Nietzsche Dictionary*. London: Bloomsbury. 2014, pp. 239-243

⁵¹⁷ GM: I, 11

At these initial stages the ‘original’ noble has an inner world “thin as if inserted between two skins”⁵¹⁸; he is not *deep* enough so as to count as a human.

The ‘slave’s revolt in morality’ takes place with the aid of a ‘priestly aristocracy’. The slaves suffer all kind of humiliations from the nobles. Due to their physical weakness they cannot rise against their oppressors; therefore, they need a *tale* according to which their own way of life is superior to that of their masters. Weakness becomes a virtue, poverty also, imagining instead of acting and so on. This tale is provided to them by the priest who comes to give meaning to the otherwise meaningless suffering of the slaves. In GS: 353 Nietzsche explains the function of the priest in relation to the meaning-giving activity upon the lives of the slaves. “The true invention of religion-founders is first to establish a certain way of life and everyday customs that work as *disciplina voluntatis* while at the same time removing boredom; and then to give just this life an interpretation that makes it appear illuminated by the highest worth, so that henceforth it becomes a good for which one fights...”⁵¹⁹ As Nietzsche will go on to explain at the notorious GM: III, 28, what man needs more than anything is a story that will help him endure suffering, a story that will give meaning to suffering. The priest alleviates suffering by offering an interpretation that will make existence meaningful. Before the arrival of the priest on stage, the earth was populated by the nobles (the proto-humans), the slaves (defeated animals on the verge of extinction due to the perceived meaningless of their suffering), and the priests (a curious case, since Nietzsche never explains their exact relation to the rest of the nobles). At the case of the noble (beasts) and the slaves, things are not of particular interest. There is no expectation for some kind of psychological evolution of the animal man. The noble will go on to rape and kill and the slave will survive always at the edge of extinction. But the priest, by assisting the slave to overturn the ‘traditional’ mode of valuation, by assisting that kind of being who needs (and because he needs he creates) an external world to resist, initiates the process of the genesis of the human *proper*. “It was on the soil of this essentially *dangerous* form of human existence, the priestly form, that man first became *an interesting animal*, that only here did the human soul acquire *depth* in a higher sense and become *evil* – and these are after all, the two basic forms of the previous superiority of man over other creatures!...”⁵²⁰

⁵¹⁸ GM: II, 16

⁵¹⁹ GS: 353

⁵²⁰ GM: I, 7

How does *ressentiment* work? Lacking opposition the noble is ‘upright’, ‘honest’, ‘straight with himself’; what he wants he grabs, and not much effort is involved. The opposite is the case for the slave. Fighting always against an opponent stronger than him, he has to learn to survive by constantly practicing his intelligence. He cannot afford a face-to-face fight. He is weaker; thus, he has to improvise. With great literary skill Nietzsche describes the workings of the slave’s soul: “His soul *looks obliquely* at things; his spirit loves hiding places, secret passages and backdoors, everything hidden strikes him as *his world, his security, his balm*; he knows all about being silent, not forgetting, waiting, belittling oneself for the moment, humbling oneself.” The picture of the grovelling slave is of course nauseating, yet Nietzsche concludes that “A race of such human beings of *ressentiment* in the end necessarily becomes *more prudent* [klüger] than any noble race.”⁵²¹ The slave will make prudence his ‘primary condition of existence’, as without it he could not exist. The noble, on the other hand, however careless may he may be, is closer to a love for humans because of this carelessness than to the poisoning *ressentiment* of the slave. The noble’s nobility lies in the fact that he does not take both himself and the others seriously enough⁵²²: “that is the sign of strong, full natures in which there is an excess of formative, reconstructive, healing power that also makes one forget...”⁵²³. The slave cannot forget; memory tortures him like a burning stick on his flesh. At this moment, the moment of the unbearable pain, the slave becomes a creator. He creates an opposite: *the evil one*, the one against whom the slave will direct his whole existence. And since the noble is the ‘evil one’, the slave cannot but understand himself as the ‘good one’. The slave revolt in morals has begun.

⁵²¹ GM: I, 10. Clark & Swensen translate klüger as ‘prudent’ whereas Diethe as ‘intelligent’.

⁵²² One could argue of course that this happens because the noble is in a position of power. He can afford not to take himself seriously!

⁵²³ GM: I, 10

Making guilty I⁵²⁴.

In what follows we are going to shed light to the process of the production of guilt proper (or existential guilt), and to link the process of this production with the cultural institution of Christianity. We are going to argue that to disregard this connection is to fundamentally misunderstand the history and the ideological foundations of what we call the ‘Christian-West’. Contra Ridley, we are going to show that a ‘change in consciousness’ could only be achieved through the persistent cultivation of cultural institutions which are based on principles other than those which have produced man as he is today, i.e. as a docile, tamed animal. The (questionable in every case) demise of the belief in a transcendent God in the modern West does not necessarily mean that the Christian ‘system’ has also perished, even if Nietzsche himself erroneously thought so on his attack on the ‘English flat-heads’ (via George Elliot) in TI: ix,5. The challenge will be for us to show that the psychological unfolding of man, as this process gets unfolded in *Genealogy*, harbours possibilities so far unexplored and reveals a picture of the human much more complicated and *Zukunftvolles* than we have previously thought.

⁵²⁴ Among Nietzsche commentators there is (almost) a consensus in treating the ‘sovereign individual’ as the closest description we could get of *Übermensch*. However, Christa Davis Acampora has persuasively argued in an influential essay that this cannot be the case. Her arguments are as follows: 1. In GM: II, 1 Nietzsche (continuing his meditations on the right balance between the historical and the unhistorical in UM: On the Uses and disadvantages of history of life, 1) celebrates the active force of forgetting as a precondition of acting. Promising requires a temporary suspension of the power of forgetting, yet the equitation of sovereignty with promising ignores Nietzsche’s persistent idolization of becoming over being. In short, promising requires a high degree of consistency (in all matters) which Nietzsche simply never held. 2. Following Hatab, Acampora agrees that autonomy in this passage describes ‘the modernist ideal of subjective autonomy’, a by-product of the Christian heritage which assigns free will to subjects so as to legitimize punishment. Hatab notes that “‘Autonomy’ is something that Nietzsche traces to the inversion of master morality; freedom in this sense means ‘responsible,’ ‘accountable,’ and therefore ‘reformable’ – all in the service of convincing the strong to ‘choose’ a different kind of behaviour. (GM:1, 13)” Hatab also notes that the ‘power over fate’ that the sovereign individual claims to have does not ‘square with’ Nietzsche’s celebration of ‘amor fati’ in EH II, 10. 3. Nowhere else in his writings does Nietzsche refer to the notion of sovereign individual. Acampora finally suggests that the sovereign individual, rather than being an appearance of *Übermensch*, signals the end-point of the humanizing process, of the process where man is produced as *reliable, regular, necessary*; in short, as a ‘household pet’. For that reason Nietzsche calls for the *overcoming* of the sovereign individual in favour of the Overhuman. Since we are in complete agreement with Acampora’s (and Hatab’s) position, we have chosen *not* to examine the ‘sovereign individual’ in our treatment of the genesis of the human, laying down the possibilities for the production of the Overhuman. See: Acampora’s essay “On Sovereignty and Overhumanity: Why it matters how we read Nietzsche’s *Genealogy* II: 2”. In: Acampora, Christa Davis (ed.). *Nietzsche’s On the Genealogy of Morals*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 2006, pp. 147-162. Also, Hatab’s position regarding the sovereign individual is explicated in: Hatab, J. Lawrence. *A Nietzschean Defence of Democracy*. Chicago: Open Court. 1995, pp. 37-38.

Let us return to the text of the second essay so as to examine the genesis of the notion of guilt. But before doing this, several steps have to be taken. The essay opens with the paradoxical suggestion that the real problem of man was always his attempted breeding as a promising animal. Why Nietzsche is making ‘promising’ the cornerstone of man’s whole existence? The answer is that the function of promising produces man primarily as a creature of time and secondarily as a responsible agent. Through ‘promising’ man learns to remember and honour the past (through the promise once given), he also learns to anticipate the future (through projecting the consequences of his ‘promising’ into the future) and finally by binding *in the present* one’s will to the future through the promise *once* given. The world of culture demands from man a certain control over the future. Unlike the non-human animals, man is the animal who builds libraries and these libraries represent the will’s memory, which assists man in the management of his everyday life within the bounds of culture and civilization. Nevertheless, it is still ironic that for Nietzsche man is, like every other animal, an animal which for the most part is ‘necessarily forgetful’⁵²⁵, since ‘active’ forgetfulness helps the organization of his inner life and the expulsion from the mental apparatus of all the unnecessary information. But *man is the animal who breeds contradictions* — he is not *just* a contradictory animal, he *breeds* contradictions. This forgetful animal then “has now bred in itself [hat sich...angezüchtet]”⁵²⁶ the opposite faculty, that of memory, which will allow him to exercise a certain degree of control over the future. Nothing, of course, is without its cost. Through the function of promising, man trains himself into a regimen of regularity. The man who has the right to promise and is thus the master of (his) time is the man who has trained himself into becoming regular and reliable. He is the opposite of the man after his *temps perdu*. He is the one who does not allow a *waste* of time but the one regulating the management of time. The one who *wastes* time is irresponsible; this man is after responsibility. Nietzsche describes this process: “In order to have this kind of command over the future in advance, man first have learned to separate the necessary from the accidental occurrence, to think causally, to see and anticipate what is distant as if it were present, to fix with certainty what is end, what is means thereto, in general to be able to reckon, to calculate, — for this, man himself must first of all become *calculable, regular, necessary*, in his own image of himself as well, in order to be able to vouch for himself as future, as one who promises does!”⁵²⁷ To become reliable, man has to forge himself into the ‘morality of

⁵²⁵ GM: II, 1

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*

custom' which Nietzsche explicates in D: 1, 9. There, morality had been identified with the unquestionable 'obedience to tradition'⁵²⁸. Morality represents the 'middle ages' of man's development, but the task is the passing from the gregarious and calculable animal of morality to the incalculable individual of the 'new' Enlightenment⁵²⁹; a type of human which will overcome morality's restrictions and commands, but which also will produce himself beyond the calculability and predictability that culture commands.

How does man 'breed' memory? Although the suggestion in 2:1 is that memory springs out of man himself without the influence of an external force⁵³⁰, in 2:3 Nietzsche goes on to suggest that man's *prehistory* (that is to say, the history of the human animal *before* the genesis of the human *proper*, i.e. the *internalized* human animal) is marked by *mnemo-technique*. As we have suggested before⁵³¹, the *finale* of man's short walk upon the earth is not going to be marked by some great battle or a revolutionary discovery, but rather is going to be a moment of slow disappearance within future centuries of boredom. In the words of T.S. Eliot, the world ends "*not with a bang but a whimper*"⁵³². The West is going to be exhausted by the political implementation of the secret of millennia of human struggle: *man's quest for happiness*, which has finally produced what Nietzsche calls the 'last human'. The West today has reached a point where it is insulated against its own history. The West ignores, Nietzsche suggests, that what gave birth to the human *proper*, i.e. to the internalized animal that is man, is, among other things, a long training in non-voluntary suffering. Suffering is central to Nietzsche's explication of the rise of bad conscience and the prevalence of the ascetic ideal, which in Freudian terminology is nothing other than a case of masochism, i.e. sadism turned against itself. In 2:1, suffering describes the process of forcefully civilizing the human animal by using the most deplorable methods of torture. In an era like ours where humans are protected⁵³³ against the use of physical punishment by the legal system and against psychological pain through the medicalization of the most basic of human emotions (love, pain, guilt, etc.), which renders affective experiences manageable to

⁵²⁸ "...morality is nothing other (therefore no more!) than obedience to customs, of whatever kind they may be; customs, however, are the traditional way of behaving and evaluating. In things in which no tradition commands there is no morality..." D: 9

⁵²⁹ Nietzsche's vision of the new Enlightenment keeps the basic demands of the old Enlightenment concerning the liberation of the individual spirit but denies the old Enlightenment's dependence on the democratic spirit. KSA: 11, 27 [80]

⁵³⁰ "has now bred in itself" [hat sich...angezüchtet]

⁵³¹ See our Second Chapter of this thesis: First Part: Diagnostics of the present

⁵³² Eliot, T.S. *The Hollow Men*. Available online. <http://aduni.org/~heather/occs/honors/Poem.htm> [Accessed: 04/07/2014]

⁵³³ Protection is of course in place as long as exceptions are allowed. See Guantanamo Bay.

an ever-weakened will, it is hardly imaginable that humans had to be forged for millennia through the most terrible punishments. Boiling, burning, crushing, drowning, kneecapping, whipping, and cutting are but a few of the methods employed throughout millennia of human history in order to turn the free savage into the domesticated animals that we have become⁵³⁴. Nietzsche's suggestion that "only what does not cease to give pain remains in one's memory"⁵³⁵ may be one of his usual rhetorical exaggerations, but nevertheless it describes the process according to which someone comes to 'reason'—which means the alignment of one's affects to the 'social straightjacket'.

Punishment is, though, one of the two 'dismal things' [düstere Sache] which haunt man. Although punishment is treated by Nietzsche as the birthplace of *conscience*, now is the time to investigate the origins of "the consciousness of guilt, the entire 'bad conscience'"⁵³⁶, which in II: 4 are treated as one and the same phenomenon. According to Nietzsche's etymological explanation, '*Schuld*' (guilt) is linked to '*Schulden*' (debts), which leads him, surprisingly independently of Marx, to base the genesis of the *moral* term (*ideology* in Marxian terminology) on its material conditions. The relation between a creditor and a debtor is used to explain the creation of the notion of responsibility from non-moral origins, and responsibility itself is used as an explanation of the production of the legal notion of the person. The Marxian-sounding claim concerning the precedence of materiality over ideology is repeated in II: 8, where Nietzsche actually says much more than that. He says that these primitive material relations arose prior to the formation of a social unit. "Purchase and sale, together with their psychological accessories, are older than even the beginnings of any societal associations and organizational forms"⁵³⁷. We need to be careful here, as Nietzsche is making two claims: *first*, that 'purchase and sale' is the most primordial relation of the human animal. This relation creates a certain type (*Typus*) of man (this is extracted by the relation of this sentence to the previous one), i.e. that of the 'calculating animal'. The *second* claim is that this calculating animal need not be the product of social interaction, but is in fact prior to it. II: 8 proposes that it is on the base of the distinction between the function of calculation and that of the absence of it that human animals are to be distinguished from non-rational animals. We have to be careful in how we interpret Nietzsche's employment of rationality in the pre-social history of man. Nietzsche is not telling us that man is simply a

⁵³⁴ More on the interesting history of torture one can find in: Donnelly, P. Mark & Diehl, Daniel. *The Big Book of Pain – Torture and Punishment Throughout History*. Gloucestershire: The History Press. 2011.

⁵³⁵ GM: II, 3

⁵³⁶ GM: II, 4

⁵³⁷ GM: II, 8

rational animal. He is telling us that the origins of the animal of ‘purchase and sale’, of contractual relations and subsequently the feelings of *guilt* produced by the (possible) failure to honour those obligations, are to be located in these primitive calculations. A man who fails to honour his obligations is indeed tortured by feelings of guilt generated by a logic of calculation between debtors and creditors. There is nothing particularly wrong with this proto-rationality. Insofar as one succumbs to the story of capitalist production, this proto-rationality assists the genesis of capitalist relations. However, this proto-rationality suffers from a serious deficiency. Relations of material exchange may have been established, but as Nietzsche insists, *the human is to be found somewhere else*, beyond the relations of material production⁵³⁸, namely in *spirituality* (the space of the ‘inner world’) which, despite being a stage that human animals have to eventually leave behind⁵³⁹, is also a stage that has constituted humans the way they are. Up to this point Nietzsche has explained the origins of contractual relations and the legal form of personhood that those relations produce. Now he has to explain the most difficult thing, the genesis of the human. To do this he needs to give a *future* to the calculating animal so that it can produce, through a series of conflicts, tensions and contradictions, a history for itself and for its species. This role is to be assigned to *bad-conscience* described as “something so new, deep, unheard of, enigmatic, contradictory, and full of future” that even “the appearance of earth” will get “essentially changed”⁵⁴⁰.

Interception. Reading Freud - Understanding Nietzsche.

In 1930 Freud publishes one of his seminal works: *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (translated as: *Civilization and Its Discontents*). Following Kant’s warning concerning the anti-social character of human nature⁵⁴¹, Freud exposes culture as a mechanism construed in order to control man’s ‘inclination to aggression’. Civilization is seen as based on a fundamental tension. On the one hand men are pleasure-seeking animals striving to gratify their most

⁵³⁸ Nietzsche criticizes relations of capitalist production throughout his oeuvre and particularly in UM. ‘Money-making’ mentality is rejected due to its profound disregard to all culture not conceived as entertainment and for producing a type of man which strives after (material) security. For Nietzsche’s critique of capitalism see Kilivris, Michael. “Beyond Goods and Services: Toward a Nietzschean Critique of Capitalism”, *KRITIKE*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (December 2011) 26-40, available online: http://www.kritike.org/journal/issue_10/kilivris_december2011.pdf [accessed: 28/05/2014]

⁵³⁹ AC: 14

⁵⁴⁰ GM: II, 16

⁵⁴¹ Kant, Immanuel. Idea for a universal history. In: Kant, Immanuel. *Perpetual Peace and other writings on politics, peace, and history*. Pauline Kleingeld (ed.), David L. Colclasure (trans.). New Haven: Yale University Press. 2006, p. 6

primitive desires, and on the other hand it is those uncontrolled desires that lead to destructive strife among members of a community. Civilization comes to exchange pleasure with the guarantee of security and the prolongation of man's biological existence. However, repressed desires can only lead to man's discontent over life within the bounds of culture. Man becomes effectively a neurotic animal and the history of mankind becomes the history of a collective neurosis.⁵⁴²

A neurosis, then, is the result of a desire that *has become* inhibited due to the control that culture exercises upon the primitive aggressive instincts of man. Aggression is Freud's prerequisite, the element that helps him to build a "history of the development of the individual"⁵⁴³. Freud describes the path that aggressiveness takes in three steps. At first aggressiveness gets internalized; "it is, in point of fact, sent back to where it came from – that is, it is directed towards his own ego". Once sent back to ego, aggressiveness gets attached to a part of ego that has been split up from it, that of the super-ego which has now taken the form of consciousness. Finally, aggressiveness has become an internal part of the super-ego and ready to exercise its harsh authority against ego itself⁵⁴⁴. Man *proper* gets born, a being split between two fundamental forces fighting against each other. What is interesting for us is then to note that for Freudian psychoanalysis, neurosis becomes the distinctive characteristic of man and differentiates him from the rest of the animal kingdom. In Freud's words: "[Man's] superiority over the other animals may come down to his capacity for neurosis."⁵⁴⁵ *Guilt* is the name given to the tension between the demands of the internalized authority (super-ego) and the desires of the ego, and *conscience* is called "the result of instinctual renunciation"⁵⁴⁶. Freud believes that the fundamental problem of civilization is the sense of guilt that has been inflicted to man through the workings of the super-ego. He arrives at the bleak conclusion that "the price we pay for our advance in civilization is a loss of happiness through the heightening of the sense of guilt."⁵⁴⁷

Psychoanalysis 'fame' among the general public lies in its stressing of the role of sexuality in the life of the humans from infancy to later age, despite of the fact that the 'public' never

⁵⁴² More on that in: Brown, O. Norman. *Life against Death – The psychoanalytic meaning of history*. Middletown, Connecticut : Wesleyan University Press. 1959. Chapter I: The disease called Man.

⁵⁴³ Freud, Sigmund. Civilization and its Discontents. In: *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. XXI. James Strachey (trans. ed.), Anna Freud (ed.). London: Vintage. 2001, p. 123

⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid.* p. 123

⁵⁴⁵ Freud, Sigmund. Introductory lectures in Psychoanalysis in: *Ibid.* Vol. XV. p. 346

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid.* p. 129

⁵⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p. 134

quite understood what psychoanalysis really meant by this overused term. In the revolutionary *Three Theories on Sexuality*, Freud detaches sexuality from the function of the genitals⁵⁴⁸ and turns it into an all-encompassing term which, after 1920, will come to coincide “with the Eros of the divine Plato”⁵⁴⁹. In Psychoanalysis *sexuality* refers to a *system of pleasures* rather than to biological functioning. As Laplanche & Pontalis note, sexuality “embraces a whole range of excitations and activities which may be observed from infancy onwards and which procure a pleasure that cannot be adequately explained in terms of the satisfaction of a basic physiological need...”⁵⁵⁰ This *system of pleasures* manifests itself for the most part in the life of infants. The infant is the pleasure-seeking animal *par excellence*. Unbound by the restrictions posed upon it later in his life by the reality-principle, the infant seeks pleasure at every part of his body (by sucking its thumb, by using its mouth, by controlling its bowel activity etc.). Infantile sexuality is a pre-civilized, pre-moral, necessarily narcissistic activity which has as its sole aim the satisfaction of the infant’s desires and nothing else. Children are ‘polymorphously perverse’⁵⁵¹ in Freud’s famous dictum. However, the pleasure-principle governing the lives of infants has to give way to the reality-principle governing the lives of adults. *Pleasure has to make room for culture*. As Norman O. Brown notes, in adult sexuality “sexual satisfaction is diverted and exploited for the purpose of maintaining a socially useful institution [that of the family]”; furthermore, “what was originally a much wider capacity for pleasure in the body has been narrowed in range, concentrated on one particular (the genital) organ, and subordinated to an aim derived not from the pleasure-principle but from the reality principle, namely, propagation.”⁵⁵² The ‘genital organization’ of sexuality turns sexuality to a culturally useful institution, yet it deprives adults of a whole universe of bodily pleasures⁵⁵³. The result of the frustration of desires is of course neurosis and the substitution of pleasure with the *devious* pleasure derived from neurotic symptoms. Could man ever return to *pleasure* i.e. to the world of infantile sexuality? Such a suggestion would be absurd. There is simply no way for man to deny civilization and to return to something which was never there anyway: to a hospitable nature,

⁵⁴⁸ In the words of Anna Freud in: Freud, Sigmund. Three essays on the theory of sexuality, in: Freud, Anna (ed.). *The essentials of Psychoanalysis*. James Strachey (trans.). London: Vintage. 2005, p. 272

⁵⁴⁹ *Ibid.* p. 280

⁵⁵⁰ Laplanche, Jean and Pontalis, Jean-Bernard. *The language of psychoanalysis*. London: Karnac Books. 2004, p. 418

⁵⁵¹ Freud, Sigmund. Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality. In: Gay, Peter (ed). *The Freud Reader*. London: Vintage Books. 1989, p. 268

⁵⁵² Brown, O. Norman. *Life against Death – The psychoanalytic meaning of history*. Middletown, Connecticut : Wesleyan University Press. 1959, p. 24

⁵⁵³ According to Freud, adults can only revisit the world of infantile sexuality during *foreplay*, which is a play where all parts of the body can participate.

which is nothing other than a quite popular bourgeois prejudice.⁵⁵⁴ Nevertheless, childhood, i.e. the pre-civilized, ‘innocent’ state of humanity, “remains man’s indestructible aim”. In his brilliant examination of psychoanalysis, Brown concludes that “Our indestructible unconscious desire for a return to childhood, our deep childhood fixation, is a desire for a return to the pleasure-principle, for a recovery of the body from which culture alienates us, and for play instead of work.”⁵⁵⁵ Freud’s model of the decentralized sexuality is based upon Nietzsche’s model of a decentralized self where instead of a centre, a unified *will*, we are met with *loci* of power perennially competing against each other.

As all things in both psychoanalysis and Nietzschean studies, *innocence* is an ambiguous concept. It does not denote some sort of naïve absence of knowledge, but rather the moment of its return. Innocence is there as long as it is *regained*, as long as it has come back from someplace else. Man, then, is the animal which has left innocence behind; he has ventured into the world of culture only to come back to where he started from, but nevertheless has not remained the same, because man returns to where he started from changed. That is the reason why in *Genealogy* Nietzsche does not advocate some sort of naïve naturalism but a *second innocence*⁵⁵⁶, an innocence that will come back after having experienced the fatality of all things human and especially the fatality of the world of culture. We have discussed Freud because he teaches us two things in relation to Nietzsche’s treatment of the genealogy of morality. The *first* is the notion of the inverted instinct, which is a reverberation of Nietzsche’s suggestion of the genesis of bad conscience, and the *second* is the notion of an innocence that has to be *regained* if it is to be innocent. Both concepts are crucial for an understanding of the workings of the Second Essay, a work more closely related to psychology than any other in Nietzsche’s oeuvre.

Making guilty II.

Let us return now to the phenomenon of bad conscience examined in the Second Essay. Like Nietzsche’s descendant Freud, Nietzsche regards bad conscience [das Schlechte Gewissen] to

⁵⁵⁴ The problem of the precise nature of Nietzsche’s advocacy of the return to nature has been dealt in Conway Daniel. *Returning to Nature - Nietzsche’s Götterdämmerung*, in Sedgwick, Peter. *Nietzsche: A critical Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell. 1995. p. 31. I owe the comment for an essentially ‘hostile’ nature to a private conversation with Douglas Burnham.

⁵⁵⁵ Brown, O. Norman. *Life against Death – The psychoanalytic meaning of history*. *Op.cit.* p. 38

⁵⁵⁶ GM: II, 20

be the outcome of man's confinement within the bounds of culture. The passing of humanity from a wandering life to the life of culture is described as an event equivalent to the transition of the first animals from the sea to land. Nietzsche describes this transition as having tremendous consequences to the type of animal which underwent it. We have to speak essentially of a change so radical in nature that it endorsed the production of an animal quite different from the one before. What happened to man, this formerly free-roaming animal, when he confined himself within the, undoubtedly comfortable, bounds of society? Nietzsche explains the process of what he calls the 'internalization [*Verinnerlichung*] of man' as such: "All instincts that do not discharge themselves outwardly *turn themselves inwards*- this is what I call the *internalizing* of man: thus first grows in man that which he later calls his 'soul'."⁵⁵⁷ The instincts of the formerly wild animal/man have to turn inward because man is not going to risk the benefits of society. For that he has to become something that previously was not: *reliable, regular, necessary*. The transition from the life of nature to the life of culture is to be a long process of *normalization*, of getting accustomed to the 'morality of custom' and to the demands of promise-keeping which force humans to get incorporated in the economic logic of society. As Simon May notes: "Becoming a citizen demands the *self-mastery* to participate in what is effectively a debtor-creditor relationship writ large, with the individual as the debtor and society, with its many benefits as the creditor."⁵⁵⁸

'Internalization' is a key process which helps us to fathom the genesis of the human animal out of the beasts of prey formerly roaming free, unbounded and with externalizing instincts in nature. 'Internalization' does not just indicate the turning of cruelty against itself, but also inaugurates a procedure which will give birth to a kind of being which could be called human as opposed to the creature that (the human) was up to that point. But 'internalization' gives birth to a rather strange being, i.e. to that being which has turned itself against itself and that *it exists only insofar as it turns itself against itself*. We are present at a key moment of Nietzschean anthropology! Nietzsche, while trying to define the experiment called 'man', also gives directions to the kind of being which he has called *Übermensch*. This is because the human, as Nietzsche tries to define it, has been hardly given a chance within the bounds of Western/Christian civilization, a civilization aiming at the extermination of the antithetical forces constituting the human in favour of the unconditional obedience to the ascetic paradigm of Christian metaphysics. Instead of Christian *askesis*, Nietzsche incorporates into

⁵⁵⁷ GM: II, 16

⁵⁵⁸ May, Simon. *Nietzsche's Ethics and his War on 'Morality'*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1999, p. 61

the process of the genesis of the human all those forces which, by competing against each other, will give birth to a monstrous energy which will generate the human. Let us pay attention to the way Nietzsche describes this process and also to the rhetorical force of the text itself: “The man who, for lack of external enemies and resistance, and wedged into an oppressive narrowness and regularity of custom, impatiently tore apart, persecuted, gnawed at, stirred up, maltreated himself; this animal that one wants to ‘tame’ and that beats itself raw on the bars of its cage; this deprived one, consumed by homesickness for the desert, who had to create out of himself an adventure, a place of torture, an uncertain and dangerous wilderness – this fool, this longing and desperate prisoner became the inventor of ‘bad conscience’.”⁵⁵⁹

For those who have visited a zoo the picture is familiar, although instead of humans we have seen pumas, tigers or lions, captivated within cages ‘beating themselves raw on the bars of their cages’. But the picture is also familiar because it depicts a moment of what Freud has called ‘psychical conflict’, the birth place of neurosis. Freud characterises this ability of man to be able to exist as neurotic as the moment of superiority of man against all other animals. Like Freud, Nietzsche also makes the moment of ‘internalization’ the primary moment of the process of the genesis of man. The result of the process of socialization, whereby man had to forcefully be separated from his old, natural instincts, created in man a terrible sickness. The social/logical/calculable human animal that we have been trained to call man is an animal which is from the very beginning sick. The name of this sickness is *bad conscience*. However, and here lies the difference of the human from the non-human animals, this was a strange kind of sickness, more like a pregnancy than a straightforward sickness. “An animal soul turned against itself, taking sides against itself, something so new, deep, unheard of, enigmatic, contradictory, and full of future [*Zukunftsvolles*] had come into being that the appearance of the earth has thereby essentially changed.”⁵⁶⁰

Bad conscience, “this *instinct for freedom*, forcibly made latent”⁵⁶¹ is then highly invested with contradictory forces. As psychoanalysis has taught us, conflicts are concentrations of psychic energy seeking to be discharged. Bad conscience may be an instinct turning back onto itself, but the conflict created by this ‘turning back’ has also created something *tremendous, full of future* which changed, Nietzsche suggests, the very ‘appearance of the

⁵⁵⁹ GM: II, 16

⁵⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶¹ GM: II, 17

earth'. The being created out of this conflict is nothing other than the human itself: *A moment of conflict, a contradiction, an enigma*. But what was an enigma at the moment of its birth has to get normalized and fitted to the 'social straightjacket'. As we have previously seen, it is through punishment that the human animal gets tamed. But now we witness a type of punishment which turns back on itself. Through bad conscience man has turned "hostility, cruelty, pleasure in persecution"⁵⁶² against himself. He has become the kind of animal that finds pleasure in inflicting pain upon himself. And yet, bad conscience has made something 'beautiful' out of the inward turning instincts. As Nietzsche insists, we can only understand bad conscience as a peculiar kind of sickness the same way and to the extent that pregnancy can be considered a sickness. To be sure, bad conscience produced a set of *ideals*; this is its positive side. Like the pregnant woman bad conscience brought into life, there may be something entirely new which is able to shape history and the humans in it. However, this set of ideals is far from being positive, i.e. life enhancing, and here lays the negative side: the monstrous birth. The value of the *un-egoistic*, the main pillar of Christian culture, has its origins in the pleasure that the human animal finds on inflicting cruelty upon himself. The pleasure of *selflessness, self-denial, self-sacrifice* is rooted in the initial cruelty that the inward-turned instincts exercise upon the individual which has to undergo the shock from the demands of its socialization. Bad conscience, *because* and not *despite* of its negative aspects, initiates a process whereby the things it produces will come later to question their own status, since, as Nietzsche will stress later, "All great things perish through themselves, through an act of self-cancellation..."⁵⁶³. This is then the reason why bad conscience is pregnant with future instead of being a process which, like neurosis, gets inhibited and paralyzes the individual.

The above is a key point if we want to understand the nature and the scope of the ascetic ideal. The 18th paragraph of the Second Essay is crucial because it stresses that the ascetic ideal is not just the product of a degenerate⁵⁶⁴ culture. If this were the case, a change of culture would have liberated individuals from their dependency on ascetic ideals. What the 18th paragraph does, though, is stress that the ascetic ideal is *also* the product of the human being within whom bad conscience has been positioned. The human then cannot avoid *some sort* of asceticism, since the need is created from 'within' the individual's 'self'. Thus

⁵⁶² GM: II, 16

⁵⁶³ GM: III, 27

⁵⁶⁴ We use the term '*degenerate*' here in order to describe a culture that produces only one type of the human being and blocks the possibility of multiple productions.

Nietzsche stresses that: “bad conscience, the will to self-maltreatment, first supplies the presupposition for the *value* of the unegoistic.”⁵⁶⁵ As we will see later, the ascetic ideal is not only a sign of a degenerating culture, but also what Nietzsche in the Third Essay calls *a healing instinct of a degenerating life*⁵⁶⁶. Ascetic ideals become the protective shield of a fast degenerating life. Abstinence, renunciation, mortification of the natural instincts seek to serve ideals of an imagined *beyond* and of a reward eternally delayed. The slave, or what they call today the ‘modern man’, has produced both from within and from without the principles of his self-punishment.

We have seen the development of what Nietzsche calls *bad conscience* [*schlechtes Gewissen*], which is the product of man’s forced confinement within the limits of culture, *yet* there is another form of conscience at work which Nietzsche calls the *consciousness of guilt* [*das Bewusstsein der Schuld*]. The *consciousness of guilt* chronologically follows the establishment of *bad conscience*. Unlike *bad conscience*, which is *both* the product of the inward turning instincts of the humans and the humans’ will to self-maltreatment, and of the culture which persistently cultivates the self-heating instincts of the animals of culture, the *consciousness of guilt* is the product of civilization alone (although such a claim has only a relative value since products of civilization are being regularly internalized to the degree of their practical identification with what comes prior to them).

The question of the *consciousness of guilt* was left *in the air* already in the Second Essay’s 4th paragraph, where it was first posed but left unanswered. Paragraph 19 continues from where things were left. Through the—previously examined—etymological relation between guilt and debt [*Schuld*], Nietzsche offers an anthropological explanation of the *infinite debt* of the humans to the Gods. His syllogism is based on the power of tradition over human communities. According to this explanation, every present generation acknowledges a ‘legal’ obligation to its forefathers. A community recognizes that it is only because of the infinite sacrifices and struggles of their ancestors that it can exist. Theology is a case of ‘ancestor worship’⁵⁶⁷, and the debt that the community feels that it owns to its ancestors increases the more the power of the community increases. Gradually ancestor’s worship reaches a point where individuals from long lost past become an *idea* and the continuation of the blind obedience to this idea becomes an *ideal*. What was previously a rather straightforward

⁵⁶⁵ GM: II, 18

⁵⁶⁶ GM: III, 13

⁵⁶⁷ Hatab, J. Lawrence. *Nietzsche’s On the Genealogy of Morality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2008, p. 103

commitment to honour the community's founders and protectors becomes now a commitment to honour *all* that tradition commands. But it is not a just a case of obedience to tradition, which is after all what morality is. The key to the problem of intertwining the past with debts is that the obligation to honour your ancestors has become divinized. It has been equated with a blind faith to honour your debts not toward a finite institution which it would give to your obligation the character of a contractual obligation, but it becomes an obligation toward an *infinite creditor*, or rather for the first stage, to a number of infinite creditors, the Gods. When do obligations to infinite creditors end? Unlike contractual obligations where the amount of debt sooner or later can get (in principle) repaid, obligations toward infinite creditors bind individuals or cultures to an infinite demand to repayment. Nowhere is this idea more apparent than at the case of Christianity, in with the invention of the concept of *sin* has forced the transformation of finite contractual debts to an irredeemable debt (in the form of *guilt*) which humanity is never going to repay.

A Note on Sin.

In paragraph 23 Nietzsche makes the suggestion of a possible rehabilitation of a Greek-inspired minimal notion of sin, in the form of foolishness or a non-moralized failure. His aim is the discharge of the Christian notion of sin which has captured humans into a web of infinite obligation toward an infinite creditor. We need to be liberated from those suffocating obligations which have been based on the assumption of humanity's original sin. In the Greeks, Nietzsche finds a way to keep both a minimum of accountability, necessary for the implementation of one's civic duties, and a way to detach obligations from their dependence to a transcendent and unaccountable creditor. Instead of burdening humans with obligations, this minimum notion of (de-moralised) 'sin' will redirect humans to their civic life and the life of the human communities within which they live and ultimately perish. It is a kind of a 'return to the earth' which re-establishes the humanness⁵⁶⁸, which is to say the *earthliness*, of man against his long attachment to things beyond *τα φυσικά*.

⁵⁶⁸ From Latin *humus*: earth

It is in Aristotle's *Poetics* that we find the classical understanding of *ἁμαρτία*⁵⁶⁹ as some 'great fault' (or 'error of judgement') on the part of the protagonist which will set into action a series of events leading eventually to his downfall. Unlike Augustine's determination to assign a free will [*liberum arbitrium*] to humans so they can be held responsible (i.e. punishable) in the eyes of God, the Greeks didn't live with concepts of either free will or moral responsibilities. Caught between Olympians and Chthonic⁵⁷⁰, deities the *mortals*⁵⁷¹ are simply the "subject to their competing powers" and their lives "dwelled in the ambiguity of sacred tensions: passion and moderation, natural drives and culture, malevolence and benevolence, death and life"⁵⁷². Since mortals are caught between Godly forces that they can neither control nor influence, responsibility for their wrongdoings—or for their errors of judgments—lies with those who have guided the lives of the mortals, i.e. the Gods and not with the mortals themselves. In this way the Greeks managed to avoid the burden of an infinite debt toward God and the inertia which is the result of excessive responsibility. Instead, they devoted their lives to all sorts of adventures which allowed them to set up in every corner of the known world "unperishing monuments in good *and bad*"⁵⁷³ celebrating the *whole* of the human being instead of a part of it (the 'moral', the 'good', the 'rational' etc.), succumbing to nothing, freeing their multiple wills to *power*, to *growth*, to *expansion* to flourish, and thus revealing the magnificent depths of that spiritual animal which is man.

With the arrival of Christianity, *ἁμαρτία* comes to acquire a meaning which was foreign to both the ancient Greeks and the Greeks of the Roman period. The Greek Fathers explain the fall of Adam from the state of grace as an *abuse* on the side of the humans of their free will and do not ascribe any notion of hereditary sin to the rest of humanity due to the fault of Adam. Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa "both taught that infants are born without sin"⁵⁷⁴. Additionally, John of Damascus utterly dismisses the idea of debt toward God and notes: "...from the time that God, the Son of God, who is unchangeable by reason of His Godhead, chose to suffer voluntarily, **He wiped out our debt**, by paying for us a most admirable and precious ransom"⁵⁷⁵. And while the Eastern Church develops a Christian

⁵⁶⁹ Aristotle. *Poetics*. In: Barnes, Johnathan (ed.). *The Complete Works of Aristotle Vol. II*. Bywater (trans.) Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1984. 1453 a10-15

⁵⁷⁰ Those belonging to the earth.

⁵⁷¹ Beings that have an awareness of their death, of their mortality, unlike the immortal Gods or animals.

⁵⁷² Hatab, J. Lawrence. *Nietzsche's On the Genealogy of Morality*. *Op.cit.* p. 52

⁵⁷³ GM: I, 11

⁵⁷⁴ McGrath, Alistair. *Christian Theology – An Introduction*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell. 2011, p. 350

⁵⁷⁵ St. John of Damascus quoted in: Rancour-Laferriere, Daniel. *The sign of the Cross, from Golgotha to Genocide*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers. 2011.

practice free of debts⁵⁷⁶, in the West, Augustine raises the concepts of *universal sin* and *transmitted guilt* into pillars of his *City of God*. Origen⁵⁷⁷ captures the idea nicely: “Everyone who enters the world may be said to be affected by a kind of contamination....By the very fact that humanity is placed in its mother’s womb, and that it takes the material of its body from the source of the father’s seed, it may be said to be contaminated in respect of both father and mother.”⁵⁷⁸ For Augustine “original sin [ex originali peccato]...was committed by free will [liberum arbitrium]. For this reason our guilty nature is liable to a just penalty.”⁵⁷⁹

Nowhere else is this sense of Augustine’s insistence on responsibility captured so well as in the well-known scene from Matthew 27-28 where Christ has been placed in front of Pilates. The scene is as such: Before the clamouring crowd, the prefect of Judaea makes his last attempt to save the life of a rather eccentric, and certainly not right in his head, man who claims to be the son of God. The crowd is nevertheless adamant. ‘Let him be crucified’ they shout. Since Pilates knows that a governor should not oppose his people in such petty matters, he gives in to their wishes. Crowds need their shows, how else can they keep silent when it comes to serious matters? He nevertheless feels uncomfortable with punishing a harmless eccentric; he wants to have nothing to do with His punishment, “I am innocent of the blood of this just person”, he declares. But the crowd wants nothing less than blood. “So be it” it responds to Pilate, “Τὸ αἷμα αὐτοῦ ἐφ’ ἡμᾶς καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ τέκνα ἡμῶν”⁵⁸⁰. The type of guilt that God’s people have assumed is not the usual kind. It is neither the guilt that we feel when we fail to keep our promises nor regret over unfulfilled obligations. It is what Mathias Risse has called: “...a persistent feeling of imperfection...” and “...a condition that shapes one’s whole existence”⁵⁸¹. The birth place of this type of guilt (what Simon May calls *moralized guilt* and what Risse calls *existential guilt*) is Christian civilization.

The Judaic ἐφ’ ἡμᾶς then does not just denote a linguistic eccentricity. It lays a whole cultural universe away from Greek ἀμαρτία. While Jewish crowds rush to assume responsibility, the noble Greek, as Nietzsche notes, believes that it is Gods who ‘have beguiled’ the humans and thus it is Gods, *not the humans*, that are the ‘causes of evil’ and since they are *evil* they take

⁵⁷⁶ At least in principle!

⁵⁷⁷ Origen was of course condemned for his heretical teaching by the Second Council of Constantinople, yet his teaching on sin is preserved untouched on Augustine.

⁵⁷⁸ Origen in: McGrath, Alistair. *The Christian Theology Reader*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell. 2011, p. 346

⁵⁷⁹ Augustine in *ibid.* p. 352

⁵⁸⁰ “His blood be on us, and on our children”. *The Bible – English Standard Version*. ESV Bible. The German/English Parallel Edition. Illinois: Crossway & Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Matthew 27:25

⁵⁸¹ Risse, Mathias. “On God and Guilt – A reply to Aaron Ridley”, *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, Issue 29, 2005, p. 46

upon themselves *guilt*. Man is rescued! "...these Greeks used their gods precisely to keep 'bad conscience' at arm's length, to be able to remain cheerful about their freedom of soul: that is the reverse of the use which Christianity made of its god."⁵⁸²

Making guilty II (continued)

The process whereby *bad conscience* develops into *consciousness of guilt* is called by *moralization* by Nietzsche. Janaway explains: "Moralization is the elevation of feeling guilty into a virtue, its incorporation into what the morally good individual is or does, into a conception of the kind of person one should be, by means of the rationalizing metaphysical picture in which the individual's essential instinctual nature deserves maltreatment, because it stands in antithesis to an infinite creditor."⁵⁸³ *Moralization* is a key process to the understanding of the development of the type of human being that the Western-Christian civilization has cultivated. In a recent debate between Mathias Risse and Aaron Ridley, the question of whether the process of moralization can take place independent of transcendental presuppositions (i.e. from the existence of God) or not was closely examined. From the way that we have developed Nietzsche's rationale of the development of *bad conscience* thus far, it is clear that for us Nietzsche refers to two types of consciousness with the second (chronologically) of them, i.e. the *consciousness of guilt*, being the outcome of the influence of Christian civilization. Ultimately what is at issue here is the extent of the influence of Christian civilization upon the development of a certain type of 'soul', the Western soul, i.e. a type of inverted existence which exists only as long as it turns against itself in a perennial masochistic crescendo. If, *in principle*, a type of consciousness which is independent of guilt could be developed and cultivated, then Nietzsche's demand for a *second innocence* could be possible. If not, humanity is destined to remain forever trapped in a logic of debt and eternal repayment.

Ridley⁵⁸⁴ firstly argues that at the first stage of its development, *bad conscience* is not characterized by a sense of 'inward pain' due to its debt to a creditor. The fact that one

⁵⁸² GM: II, 23

⁵⁸³ Janaway, Christopher. *Beyond Selflessness – Reading Nietzsche's Genealogy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2007, p. 142

⁵⁸⁴ Ridley, Aaron. "Guilt before God, or God before Guilt? The Second Essay of Nietzsche's Genealogy", *Journal of Nietzsche's Studies*, Issue 29, 2005

‘owes’ is experienced simply as a kind of inconvenience. *Moralization* signifies the process whereby humans, due to their confinement in society, start to redirect the instincts of cruelty toward themselves “out of pleasure in making-suffer”⁵⁸⁵. Someone says to himself: I am in debt—I am to be blamed for my debts—I ought to have done otherwise—I failed. This is, for Ridley, the genesis of guilt *proper*. Ridley subsequently suggests that Nietzsche makes clear that “one might in principle...learn to feel guilty about belief in God, a possibility that plainly presupposes the essential independence of guilt *from* God.”⁵⁸⁶ The passage that supports his argument is the following: “For all too long man has regarded his natural inclinations with an ‘evil eye,’ so that in him they have finally become wedded to ‘bad conscience.’ A reverse attempt would *in itself* be possible – but who is strong enough for it? – namely to wed to bad conscience the *unnatural* inclinations, all those aspirations to the beyond, to that which is contrary to the senses, contrary to the instincts, contrary to nature, contrary to animal...”⁵⁸⁷ There is nothing wrong, in principle, with this wonderful passage. One could *in principle* learn to wed *bad conscience* with unnatural inclinations. The foundation of an immanent culture is the task of Nietzsche’s interest in re-interpreting cultural practices through the reversal of the traditional modes of valuation. However, Ridley conflates *guilt*, which can only be the product of the Christian interpretation of existence, with bad consciousness in its ‘raw’ state, i.e. in its pre-moralized form. He writes: “...he [Nietzsche] quite evidently *does* regard “the consciousness of guilt” as separable...from the concept of God”⁵⁸⁸. Yet Nietzsche, in the passage mentioned above (which Ridley comments on), does *not* refer to the *consciousness of guilt* [Bewusstsein der Schuld] but to *bad conscience* [Schlechtes Gewissen]. *Bewusstsein der Schuld* is used by Nietzsche in order to describe this type of *guilt* which is the product of Christian civilization, and it is, as Mathias Risse rightly notes, *this* type of *guilt* Nietzsche is interested in, since it allows him the opportunity to attack the “Christian *sittliche Weltordnung*”⁵⁸⁹. In GM:III, 20, Nietzsche refers to this particular type of guilt as the most ingenious product of the priestly reinterpretation of existence. “Only in the hands of the priest, this true artist of the feeling of guilt, did it take on form – oh what a form! ‘Sin’ – for thus reads the priestly reinterpretation of the animal’s ‘bad conscience’...”⁵⁹⁰

⁵⁸⁵ GM: II, 18

⁵⁸⁶ Ridley, Aaron. *Six character studies from the ‘Genealogy’*. New York: Cornell University. 1998, p. 38

⁵⁸⁷ GM: II, 24

⁵⁸⁸ Ridley, Aaron. *Six character studies from the ‘Genealogy’*. *Ibid.*

⁵⁸⁹ Risse, Mathias. “On God and Guilt - A reply to Aaron Ridley”. *Art.cit.*

⁵⁹⁰ GM: III, 20

Christian civilization is then the mechanism of transformation of bad consciousness from a legal obligation, and the subsequent discomfort that the failure to honour this obligation entails, to a permanent feeling of guilt toward an infinite creditor. “The rise of the Christian god as the maximum god that has been attained thus far therefore also brought a maximum of feelings of guilt [Schuldbewusstseins] into appearance on earth.”⁵⁹¹ Nietzsche suggests that this process of ‘loading up’ the human with guilt has come to an end and that now a reverse process has begun. If Christianity is responsible for the accumulation of debt/guilt, then it must be inferred that a decline of faith will eventually bring about a decline in the quantity of guilt which will accordingly generate a type of human unknown to the Christian West. The suggestion is thus quite simple in its conception, but also wide ranging in its consequences: “...the perfect and final victory of atheism might free humanity from the entire feeling of having debts to its beginnings, its *causa prima*. Atheism and a kind of second innocence belong together.”⁵⁹²

We have seen that Nietzsche develops two quite distinct notions of conscience, *bad conscience* and the *consciousness of guilt*. A cultivation of the cultural conditions which will bring about the demise of the *consciousness of guilt* will be brought about by a persistent interrogating attitude in matters of faith. Ultimately one has to embrace a type of life that does not rely to transcendental presuppositions for its justification. One has to assume the role of Hamlet and gaze into the “true essence of things”, “the terrible truth [die grauenhafte Wahrheit]”⁵⁹³ of an existence devoid of any transcendental foundation and of any transcendent consolation, so as to embrace wholeheartedly a ‘natural’ existence, i.e. “indifference itself as a power”⁵⁹⁴, an existence beyond the externally imposed concepts of ‘good’ and ‘evil’. But the embrace of atheism is not enough, because Christian morality has found a way to survive even after the demise of the faith in God. The values of Christianity do not necessarily need a belief in God to survive. Nietzsche notes that this was the astounding work of those moralizing atheists, the English. “They are rid of the Christian God and are now all the more convinced that they have to hold on to Christian morality...”⁵⁹⁵. Nietzsche discovers in utter amazement that although Christianity is a system from which if you remove its central tenet, the belief in God, then the morality which the system supports it should fall too, this unfortunately has not happened. The English, this *nation de boutiquiers*

⁵⁹¹ GM: II, 20

⁵⁹² GM: II, 21

⁵⁹³ BT: 8

⁵⁹⁴ BGE: 9

⁵⁹⁵ TI: Reconnaissance Raids of an Untimely Man: 5

according to the famous quote by Napoleon, have got rid of God, through Darwin, and yet they got stuck to a morality wholly Christian, where all the main principles of Christianity have remained untouched (belief in progress, pity, humanism through blind faith to the fiction of the unchangeable human nature, etc.). Despite the rhetoric, this is not an attack on a people. It is an attack to *a cause that has become victorious*⁵⁹⁶ and has conquered the West at the expense of every other alternative.

Askesis contra ascetic ideals. The challenge of the Third Essay.

The Third Essay makes clear that one must fight against a large number of demons in order to reclaim the life that was forcefully removed from this docile animal that man has been trained to be. Apparently *Gods die many deaths*, and most of the times those deaths are not even final⁵⁹⁷. The Third Essay is an investigation into the “immense *power* of the ascetic ideal”⁵⁹⁸, an *ideal* which can make sense more as a *spectre*, a *phantasm*, a powerful leftover from the time of the omnipotence of Gods, or rather, from the time of the omnipotence of the one supreme God of Christianity. The immense power that the ascetic ideal has exercised upon humanity has blocked all exits out of the current paradigm of the Platonic-Christian tradition, with all of its dogmatic faith in *logos*, either in the form of *Ideas* remote from the activity of the senses or in the form of the transcendent *Logos* again unapproachable by the petty materiality of the sinful human condition. Let us pay attention to the rhetorical force with which Nietzsche tries to convey the message of desperation regarding humanity’s state:

⁵⁹⁶ According to the ‘first practice of war’, as explicated in EH: Why I am so wise: 7

⁵⁹⁷ There is nowhere that this idea finds a finer expression than in a poem entitled *Ionic* by Greek poet C.P. Cavafy:

| <u>Ιωνικόν</u> | <u>Ionic</u> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Γιατί τα σπάσαμε τ’ αγάλματά των, γιατί τους διώξαμεν απ’ τους ναούς των, διόλου δεν πέθαναν γι’ αυτό οι θεοί. Ω γη της Ιωνίας, σένα αγαπούν ακόμη, σένα η ψυχές των ενθυμούνται ακόμη.</p> | <p>Even though we have broken their statues, even though we drove them out of their temples, in no wise did the gods die for all that. O land of Ionia, it is you they love still, it is you their souls still remember.</p> |
| <p>Σαν ξημερώνει επάνω σου πρωί αυγουστιάτικο την ατμοσφαίρα σου περνά σφρίγος απ’ την ζωή των· και κάποτ’ αιθερία εφηβική μορφή, αόριστη, με διάβα γρήγορο, επάνω από τους λόφους σου περνά.</p> | <p>When upon your dawns an August morn, some vigour of their life pervades your atmosphere, and once in a while, an ethereal, youthful form, indistinct, in rapid stride, passes above your hills.</p> |

C.P. Cavafy. *The Collected Poems*. Evangelos Sachperoglou. (trans.). Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2008, p.

⁵⁹⁸ EH: Genealogy of Morals.

“Read from a distant star the majuscule script of our earthly existence would perhaps tempt one to conclude that the earth is the true ascetic star, a nook of discontented, arrogant, and repulsive creatures who could not get rid of a deep displeasure with themselves, with the earth, with all life and who caused themselves as much pain as possible out of pleasure in causing pain — probably their only pleasure.”⁵⁹⁹

What makes Nietzsche characterize the whole planet as an *ascetic star*? Why does he not characterize humanity as being ascetic or certain civilizations as more prone to ascetic practices? Why must he resort to such an extreme (even for Nietzschean standards) portrayal of his view? Has the entire earth been *soaked* to such a degree in ascetic ideal so as not to be able to exist otherwise than *as* ascetic? If this is the case, then has the Third essay a positive message to convey or rather do we all stand in front of a rather bleak future? Can we even be *aware* that this is the future we are heading toward if we have become all victims to ascetic ideal?

To begin with, some etymological clarifications are needed. There are three notions related to the ascetic ideal that one can find (implicitly or explicitly) in the Third Essay: *askesis*, asceticism, and the ascetic ideal. *Askesis* (exercise) refers to “the practice of spiritual exercises – [which] already existed within the philosophical tradition of antiquity.”⁶⁰⁰ By spiritual exercises we mean “practices which could be physical, as in dietary regimes, or discourse, as in dialogue and meditation, or intuitive, as in contemplation, but which were all intended to effect a modification and a transformation in the subject who practiced them.”⁶⁰¹ Spiritual exercises were inextricably linked to the particular model of Greek philosophy, the training of which “...intended not simply to develop the intelligence of the disciple, but to transform all aspects of his being – intellect, imagination, sensibility and will.”⁶⁰² There were all sorts of spiritual exercises depending on the views of every philosophical school (Platonic, Cynic, Pyrrhonian etc.). From those sets of exercises, the Platonic in particular stressed the importance of renouncing the “pleasures of the body”⁶⁰³ a body which was an obstacle to the contemplation of the divine *logos*.

Christianity’s intellectual womb is Platonism. The first Christians adapted Platonic spiritual exercises for their own purposes, which were not much different from those of their Greek

⁵⁹⁹ GM: III, 11

⁶⁰⁰ Hadot, Pierre. *Philosophy as a way of life*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing. 1995, p. 82

⁶⁰¹ *Id.* *What is ancient philosophy?* Cambridge-Massachusetts: Harvard University Press. 2002, p. 6

⁶⁰² *Id.* *Philosophy as a way of life. Ibid.* p. 21

⁶⁰³ *Ibid.* p. 190

contemporaries. *Asceticism* in Christianity is fundamentally based on the separation of the body from spirit as “a precondition for the vision of God”⁶⁰⁴. Clement of Alexandria observes that “true piety toward God consists in separating ourselves, irrevocably, from the body and its passions; perhaps this is why Socrates rightly calls philosophy a “training for death” – for we must renounce the senses in order to know true reality.”⁶⁰⁵ The long history of Christianity is filled with stories of flesh mortification so that the spirit can liberate itself from its earthly prison and be able to communicate with the divine *Logos*. A by-product of asceticism is what Nietzsche calls the *ascetic ideal*, and he particularly examines it in the Third Essay. The *ascetic ideal* denotes the type of life that the priest, in Nietzsche’s genealogy, has imposed upon the masses of the physically weak members of society. It is *ascetic* because the weak masses have only one way to counterattack the stronger members of society: by *waiting* and by inventing an imaginary revenge (i.e. not a direct but an indirect attack) as in the case of the turning upside down of the *former* physical and *now* moral valuations of ‘good’ and ‘bad’, and it is an *ideal* because it is a self-sufficient system which cannot accommodate any other alternative view of reality other than that that the ascetic ideal has created. The ascetic ideal is a “closed system of will, goal, and interpretation”.⁶⁰⁶

Before examining further the ascetic ideal and what it means for those upon whom it has been imposed, let us revisit Nietzsche’s ambivalent relation to asceticism. In Christian asceticism, individuals are called to endure a life of self-renunciation in the hope of some imagined future reward. The idolization of an imagined future can only be possible with a simultaneous degradation of what belongs to the here and the now of humanity. Since what exists *here* has been deprived of its value through a tremendous system of domination which we have come to (erroneously) call civilization, individuals have only the future to look toward and all of their hopes are to be placed to an imaginary goal, always *on the way* to being achieved, but never actually achieved.

Nietzsche, being an extraordinary classicist, finds a way to look beyond Christian asceticism toward what *askesis* used to signify. He finds then that the connection between asceticism and Christian renunciation of the self may be logical yet not necessary. In principle asceticism could be linked to ancient *askesis* once more, thus bypassing the negative consequences that Christian asceticism had upon humanity. In a revealing *Nachlass* note

⁶⁰⁴ *Ibid.* p. 246

⁶⁰⁵ Clement of Alexandria quoted in *ibid.* p. 246

⁶⁰⁶ GM: III, 23

from the autumn of 1887, he reveals that: “I also want to make asceticism natural again: in place of the aim of denial, the aim of strengthening; a gymnastic of the will; abstinence and periods of fasting of every kind, in the most spiritual realm, too; a casuistry of deeds in regard to the opinions we have regarding our strengths; an experiment with adventures and arbitrary dangers.”⁶⁰⁷ The passage is revealing because it brings to light the possibility of a *natural asceticism*, a possibility which the tremendous influence of religious asceticism has blocked. This is a type of asceticism that will not be hostile to the senses in favour of an imagined beyond, but it will remain *true to the earth* — through the gymnastic of the body. In that sense a religious ascetic may declare his willingness to serve the ideal of *chastity* as a way to accelerate the process of the separation of the flesh from the pure spirit; the eager aim of it is communication with the divine (sense-less) *logos*. Yet there is always the kind of chastity an athlete exercises before an important competition so that he can be strong. In that case asceticism serves, affirms, and fortifies a very natural end and a very natural process, that of *power*. “In this [chastity of philosophers] there is nothing of chastity out of an ascetic scruple and hatred of the senses, just as little as it is chastity when an athlete or jockey abstains from women: rather it is their dominant instinct that wants it this way, at least during times of great pregnancy”⁶⁰⁸. Already from the beginning of the essay, Nietzsche identifies multiple types of asceticism at work. The ascetic ideal can be found in a series of human types, from artists to philosophers and from the priests to that which could have toppled ascetic ideals but managed not only to not overturn them but to become the ascetic ideal’s “most recent and noblest form”⁶⁰⁹, science⁶¹⁰. The omnipresence of the ascetic ideal is a first indication of the degree of its absorption by human culture, but it is probably also a first indication of a human need to produce an *anti-life ideal* which will fortify biological existence against the imminent threat of absence of meaning. What makes humans tremble is not so much the pain of suffering but rather the prospect of a meaningless suffering; in short, the *terrifying truth of Silenus*, that it would have been perhaps better for us not to have been born.

Nietzsche is interested in the examination of religious asceticism and the ideal that it produces. He is interested in this for two reasons. The first is that the ascetic ideal produces and reproduces a totalitarian view of reality where everything not falling within its perspective is forced to be excluded. The second is that the ascetic ideal is not just to be

⁶⁰⁷ WP: 915, KSA: 12:9 [93]

⁶⁰⁸ GM: III, 8

⁶⁰⁹ GM: III, 23

⁶¹⁰ For more on the multiple manifestations of the ascetic ideal see Hatab, J. Lawrence. *Nietzsche's On the Genealogy of Morality*. *Op.cit.* p. 114

expressed in a religious context, but has taken all sorts of shapes and forms within human culture, to the degree of the characterization of the whole planet by Nietzsche as this ‘ascetic star’. As we have seen, the beginnings of the ascetic ideal lie in the promise to all those who do not participate in the *festival of earthly pleasures*, that one day they will be rewarded. Masses get persuaded to give up on this life for the sake of another one because they have been persuaded that life in the *here and now* is neither something valuable nor something desirable. What hides behind the ascetic ideal is nothing other than a will to *self-improvement*, the idea (that has become an *ideal*) that humans somehow ought⁶¹¹ to constantly work on their presumed weaknesses so that they can reach an ideal of perfection. This ideal is of course provided to the humans by the adherents of the ascetic ideal who rush to provide a meaning to the poor animals’ otherwise nonsensical existence. Ascetic ideals predominate, well hidden behind utilitarian arguments. *The priest comes in a thousand faces*. He becomes a *doctor* ready to cure mankind from illness, a *psychotherapist* ready to cure ‘deviance’, a *politician* caring for the ‘good’ of the nation and the importance of (current) sacrifices, a *teacher* (i.e. an instructor) ready to instruct future citizens into what is *useful* for society, a *capitalist* solely interested in the production and the idolization of more and more material things, a *socialist* interested in the elevation of the poor, ignorant, and for the most part indifferent *Volk*, to the level of the omnipotent judge of all history. In every case the priest says: “*Restrain, endure today, because the future will be better*”. But, there is no ‘better’! Paradoxically, Nietzsche observes, what the ascetic ideal has revealed is a secret yet exceptionally powerful wish to *self-annihilation*. What, under the influence of Platonic/Christian West, we have come to call ‘improvement’ is nothing but our unspoken desire to knock ourselves down out of the pleasure of punishment. “[I]mprove’ means for me – the same as ‘tamed,’ ‘weakened,’ ‘discouraged,’ ‘sophisticated,’ ‘pampered,’ ‘emasculated’ (hence almost the same as *injured*...)”⁶¹²

This last point brings us to the greatest question and the most important mystery, which the Third Essay attempts to examine. If Nietzsche understands the ‘priest’ as the most degenerate form of life, since it is the one who incites his disciples to say ‘No’ to life, then how was it possible for this thoroughly negative power to dominate the earth? How has the ‘priest’ forced to such an extent his own valuation (or rather *de-valuation*) of existence upon his willing slaves? What is the source of his immense power? The issue is of course complicated,

⁶¹¹ To whom really?

⁶¹² GM: III, 21

since it has to do with the ambivalent way with which Nietzsche treats the character of the slave. As Aaron Ridley has shown in his masterful treatment of the *Genealogy*⁶¹³, the priest belongs to two worlds, that of the noble caste but also that of the slave caste. The ‘priests’ are surely descendants of aristocrats, yet their “priestly-noble” manner of valuation somehow manages to get inverted and to create thus the appropriate conditions for the most *spiritual revenge*.⁶¹⁴ But if he was *only* an aristocrat the priest would have lived at a distance from the slaves. He could not have been in communication with them and the slaves would have never accepted him as their leader. It is because the priest is also partly a slave himself (because he succumbs to *hate*, he is a *great despiser*) that he can have such a tremendous influence on the slaves. “He must be sick himself, he must be related to the sick and short-changed from the ground up in order to understand them – in order to get along with them...”⁶¹⁵

The instigator of the slaves’ revolt in morals, then, is an ambiguous figure who incorporates features from both the aristocratic and the slave castes. Nietzsche characterizes this enigma as an “incarnate will to contradiction” and an “anti-nature”⁶¹⁶. How then has this immense power of *anti-nature* prevailed over nature and succeeded in imposing its own valuation of existence? Is it possible for nature (to the degree that the priest belongs to nature) to turn against itself and annihilate itself? Perhaps even more surprising than the answer that Nietzsche provides to this question is his own *tone of surprise* as if he is reluctant to accept the *colossal force of contradictions that life itself seems to constantly generate!* “It must [Es muss] be a necessity of the first rank that makes this species that is *hostile to life* grow and prosper again and again – it must be in the *interest of life itself* that this type of self-contradiction not die out” and later his amazement continuous: “This is all paradoxical [Grade paradox] in the highest degree: we stand here before a conflict that wants to be conflicted [einer Zwiespältigkeit, die sich selbst zwiespältig will]...”⁶¹⁷

How are we to think the paradox of an *anti-nature* which produces a conflict which wants to be perpetuated *as* a conflict, as being *in conflict with itself*? Nietzsche’s answer is equally paradoxical. He suggests that the ascetic ideal is a protective shield behind which the ‘instincts of life’ have remained intact, and despite the attempt of the priest to devalue them and annihilate them, have formed so that they can protect life itself (which means here

⁶¹³ See particularly the chapter on ‘The Slave’ in: Ridley, Aaron. *Six Character Studies from the ‘Genealogy’*. *Op.cit.*

⁶¹⁴ GM: I, 7

⁶¹⁵ GM: III, 15

⁶¹⁶ GM: III, 12

⁶¹⁷ GM: III, 11

strictly: biological existence) against the imminent threat of self-annihilation due to a lack of meaning. “...*the ascetic ideal springs from the protective and healing instincts of a degenerating life* that seeks with every means to hold its ground and is fighting for its existence...the ascetic ideal is an artifice for the *preservation* [Erhaltung] of life.”⁶¹⁸ But for what kind of ‘existence’ does this degenerating life strive? What kind of ‘life’ is that which gets ‘preserved’? Given Nietzsche’s abhorrence to a kind of life which gets restricted to its biological functioning⁶¹⁹, we are required to understand the type of life that the ascetic ideal seeks to preserve as the *opposite* of a life as such is defined in BGE: 9, as a process of “assessing, preferring, being unfair, being limited, wanting to be different”⁶²⁰. Unlike popular prejudice - that wants life to ‘befall’ humans, with them being the passive recipients of that momentous event, Nietzsche likes to remind us that life is something which the humans are called to choose, *or not*, and certainly is not a biological fact of neutral value.

And yet humans would do *anything* in order to preserve their biological existence. They would even authorise “the sickliest of human beings to derive a sense of meaning and vitality from their otherwise meaningless suffering”⁶²¹, as Conway has put it. In that sense the priest takes upon himself the tremendous work of barricading humans against a type of pessimism that will bring them to their knees. The priest does that by *changing the direction of resentment*⁶²². As a result of their confinement to culture and their oppression by stronger natures, the weak find themselves in an increasing state of dissatisfaction. They need to discharge their oppressed energy and their *resentment* toward something or someone. The priest orchestrates a type of slave-attack which is not based on the rules of *Kriegspraxis* exemplified in EH: I,7: it is not an *agon* between equals, but rather an attack based on cunning. Because the priest wants to *rule* over the slaves, he implicates them within a web of eternally self-reproducing torture. The slave needs someone to blame for his suffering, since as Simon May beautifully puts it, “blame anaesthetizes despair”⁶²³, and the priest responds: “That’s right, my sheep! Someone must be to blame for it – you alone are to blame for yourself!”⁶²⁴ Nietzsche characterizes this move as both ‘bold’ and ‘false enough’, a move that allows the priest to exploit the ‘bad-instincts’ of the herd to his own advantage. An

⁶¹⁸ GM: III, 13. Equally in BGE: 56 Nietzsche suggests that the priest changes the direction of resentment, to ward against the ultimate pessimistic implications of a sick life.

⁶¹⁹ See the Second Chapter of this thesis: Genius and greatness in German Idealism and Nietzsche.

⁶²⁰ BGE: 9

⁶²¹ Conway, Daniel. *Nietzsche’s On the Genealogy of Morals*. London: Continuum. 2008, p. 117

⁶²² GM: III, 15

⁶²³ May, Simon. *Nietzsche’s Ethics and his War on ‘Morality’*. *Op.cit.* p. 89

⁶²⁴ GM: III, 15

animal that feels sick with himself, an animal that biologically exists only so that he can perpetually blame himself for his sufferings is an animal rendered *harmless*, an animal *structurally* unable to act and an animal that will elevate any externally provided solution to his feelings of suffering as welcoming.

In the Third Essay, Nietzsche describes the history of humanity as a long history of succumbing to sickness, specifically to a type of sickness that was thought of as a protective shield against suicidal nihilism. The problem is that humanity has not known, has not experienced, anything other than this sickness which, for it, has become almost a synonym for life. We have become accustomed to taking sickness for health, Nietzsche is telling us. Christian civilization (the product of the priest) provided an exit-strategy to the agony of man by bringing “all suffering within the perspective of guilt”⁶²⁵. This had as a major advantage the rescuing of man’s *will*. But *will* indicates for Nietzsche above all the “affect of the command”⁶²⁶, which additionally signifies the possibility of someone who commands and someone who obeys since *will* is not unified but plural. To say then that *will* was rescued is to say that the possibility for the development of a type of man conscious of the plurality of the *will*, a man able to command and to obey contra the levelling effects of the Christian West, was left open. In this sense Nietzsche even characterizes the priest as one of the “yes-creating forces of life”, because despite all his harmful effects, the priest created the *wound* from which the sick human animal paradoxically nourishes himself⁶²⁷. The disadvantage of the influence of the priest was that this *rescued will* was mobilized not toward the advancement of a plural view of the human (as *will* itself signifies) but exclusively toward willing which is harmful to life, that which excludes and humiliates life on earth, because “man would rather will *nothingness* than *not* to will...”⁶²⁸

Concluding Remarks

Genealogy is the most frustrating of Nietzsche’s texts. Its dazzling conceptions are underdeveloped, confused, and contradictory to the extreme. Yet, *Genealogy*’s charm lies in

⁶²⁵ GM: III, 28

⁶²⁶ BGE: 19

⁶²⁷ “...even when he *wounds* himself, this master of destruction, self-destruction – afterwards it is the wound itself that compels him *to live*...” GM: III, 13

⁶²⁸ GM: III, 27

its being an immensely ambitious text. In it we are presented with a history of humanity from its very beginnings to its current state and even further. No one before Nietzsche dared to present such a *grand psycho-cultural history* of the development of humanity, and only Oswald Spengler dared to re-try it after Nietzsche, with inferior results. The central question with which *Genealogy* is concerned is the question of the ‘nature’ of the human or, to be more precise, *Genealogy* is interested in examining the conditions under which the human (this *experiment*⁶²⁹) has been developed in such a way so as to *have a nature*. The *nature* that the human animal *has come* to have is the product of a long process of subjugation. One of the central questions that the *Genealogy* poses is *who* or *what* was responsible for this process of subjugation. *At first* it looks as if the *Genealogy* is telling us that if what we have come to call *human* was the product of this long process of subjugation, then through the *reversal* of those conditions another kind of production would be, in principle, possible. A proposal of getting rid of all the harmful effects of culture and then meeting, on the other side, so to speak, a *human* untouched, perhaps even innocent of the ills of centuries of *webs of domination* exercised upon it, it looks rather appealing.

Yet, this is not what *Genealogy* is actually telling us. There are two reasons for this. The first is that nowhere in his genealogical narrative has Nietzsche suggested that a return to some sort of pure state of things would be possible, not only because a simple return to the past can ever be a viable proposal regarding the future of humanity, but also because what humans have come to *be* is now part of their constitution. One, either an individual or a culture, cannot simply remove elements of the constitution of the human, because those elements have by now been integrated into an organic whole. Nietzsche is telling us that there is no cure for our sickness because *we are constituted as sick*. When Freud suggested that neurosis is not just something that since it makes us uncomfortable we should get rid of it, but rather that *we are what we are because we are able to be neurotic*, i.e. able to develop an inner space harbouring the conditions of our struggle against ourselves, he was echoing this very basic Nietzschean conception, that *it is our very sickness that defines us as humans*, and not what we present as our healthy public *persona*. The former is where humans are born, (*inter*

⁶²⁹ According to the definition of the humans presented in D: 453

feces et urinam, as St. Augustine put it); the latter is where we try to hide our true face, the public arena.⁶³⁰

The second reason why *Genealogy's* suggestions are much more complicated than the reader initially thinks has to do with the overall conception of the human that *Genealogy* helps bring to light. We have to stress here that it is this conception that stands as a witness to the continuous relevance of the *Genealogy* for any discussion of the Overhuman. Scandalously, *Genealogy* is ignored by Nietzschean scholars in almost every discussion relevant to the notion of Overhuman.⁶³¹ Scholars tend to look at the most *obvious* places, and because of that they always get it wrong. However, the interpretation that we advance here places *Genealogy* to the peak of the texts relevant to discussions concerning posthumanism and Overhumanity. *Genealogy* is perhaps *the most relevant text* that one has to resort to when examining the notion of the Overhuman⁶³². But why is that, then?

In *Genealogy*, Nietzsche makes three very interesting moves which are represented by each of the three essays of the text. The first move is the *contest*⁶³³ between the slaves and the nobles. Rather than prescribing an egalitarian model of struggle, Nietzsche suggests that there are multiple ways which the lives of the nobles and the slaves meet and interconnect. The Nietzschean model of struggle is far more complicated than that of a historical struggle, Marxist style, between haves and have-nots. It is a model according to which forces (the ones represented by the nobles and the ones represented by the slaves) are not passive recipients of the produced power but the *active producers of power*, and thus they also produce the psycho-cultural conditions that have given birth to the human animal.

With the Second Essay, Nietzsche continues and elaborates the move of the First Essay. Here we witness the genesis of human animal as *intrinsically* (i.e. as a nature that *has become* natural) *guilty* of his most basic desires and hostile to the *closest things*⁶³⁴. But unlike the

⁶³⁰ I owe this observation to the legendary Dexter Morgan character from TV series 'Dexter'. In season 4, episode 11 Dexter wonders: "Who are any of us, really? We all have our public life, our private life... And your secret life, the one that defines you."

⁶³¹ The most notable exception would be Keith Ansell-Pearson's reading of the *Genealogy* as both a profound text of cultural criticism and also as a preparatory work for the arrival of the Overhuman through the overcoming of morality by morality itself. See: Ansell-Pearson, Keith. *Nietzsche contra Rousseau*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 1991, pp.102-149

⁶³² In that sense it is perhaps expectable that *Genealogy* is a text *destined* to be ignored.

⁶³³ It is a *contest* and not an *agon* because unlike what happens in the *agon*, in the *contest* participants are *not* interested in the well-being of their opponents. The historical time that we live in, *we inhabitants of late modernity*, is marked by the final and irreversible victory of the slaves and the brutal extermination of everything else. One has just to turn on the TV.

⁶³⁴ HATH: The Wanderer and his shadow: 16

simplistic model of the *Big Bad Wolf*, having to be held responsible for everything, Nietzsche rather suggests that with *internalization*, a process taking place due to the *unavoidable* confinement of human animals within the bounds of culture, a new type of animal is born which harbours a *contradiction* and an *enigma* brought forth by the turning back of instincts that were formerly discharged outwards. The sickness of bad consciousness is something new to human history and certainly something very promising, since *conflict* becomes the element that defines humans and makes them restless so that they can produce *history*, i.e. *conflict*.

The Third Essay closes the circle by proposing the third, final, and *seemingly* most pessimistic move. Even if the animal coming out of the Second Essay was seen as the product and producer of conflict, Nietzsche is telling us that it is from this very same (once) *Zukunftvolles* creature that we have to expect a *will to shut down existence* altogether by asserting its unconditional faith in anti-nature: the ascetic ideal. The human of the Third Essay prefers to *will nothingness than not to will*. Undoubtedly Nietzsche's last observation is far from helpful. The situation could be compared to having to choose between the life of a catatonic patient (*not to will*) and the state of someone suicidal (*to will nothingness*). Neither of the two options is particularly appealing. Yet Nietzsche seems to suggest that even a life constantly flirting with its self-annihilation is to be preferred over non-existence. Again, though, Nietzsche does not leave much space for optimism. The *will* that gets preserved is not neutral and beyond its historical realization. That is because this is a "willing that has received its direction from the ascetic ideal"⁶³⁵, and thus it is going to be a willing that is to will the 'hatred of the human' and not the love of it. However, because all willing (through the sufferings and adventures of inward-turning instincts) ultimately gets to generate contradictions and enigmas, perhaps the possibility arises of some future productions, unknown to us in the present.

Nietzsche makes two further explicit suggestions in *Genealogy* regarding the safeguarding of the possibility of a future for the human. The first is made in II: 20 and refers to the cultivation of atheism as the method which will release humanity from being bound to *existential guilt*, the type of guilt which links the human to an infinite obligation toward a transcendent force. However, Nietzsche notes in III: 27 that the abandonment of a belief in God has to entail the simultaneous abandonment of a belief in *truth* as a manifestation of the ascetic ideal, a manifestation, that is to say, of our need to live; a task which Paul Loeb has

⁶³⁵ GM: III, 28

rightly described as nothing less than a ‘suicide mission’.⁶³⁶ The second of Nietzsche’s explicit suggestions is made in II: 24 and refers to the possibility of the *reversal* of the enforced link between bad conscience and natural inclinations so as “to wed to bad conscience the *unnatural* inclinations, all those aspirations to the beyond, to that which is contrary to the senses, contrary to the instincts, contrary to nature, contrary to animal”⁶³⁷; or, as Aaron Ridley puts it, “...one should learn to feel bad about oneself for one’s transgressions against immanence”⁶³⁸. The type of bad conscience that Nietzsche speaks about in this passage is bad conscience in its ‘raw state’, i.e. prior to the process of moralization. This bad conscience refers to “this *instinct for freedom*, forcibly made latent”⁶³⁹. Is it plausible to wed what is already repressed with what is unnatural so as to celebrate a life paying tribute to immanence, to the closest things? Perhaps this is a legitimate task. This is not to suggest, however, the re-establishment of a culture of *shame* (a pre-moralized form of guilt) as one may perhaps conclude as a result of Bernard Williams’ influential reading of Greek antiquity⁶⁴⁰. *Shame* requires a degree of internalization of the power of the other over us, so it would be an utterly bizarre suggestion to re-establish it on behalf of such an exponent of the value of solitude⁶⁴¹ as Nietzsche. After all, Nietzsche is adamant: “*all* human misery and wrongdoing is caused by traditional social structures”⁶⁴². Despite this, it seems as if Nietzsche points toward the necessity of something which only *looks like* shame, with his “—foolishness, *not* sin! Do you understand that?”⁶⁴³ What does it mean to will foolishness over sin?

Rather than a simple return to the Greeks through a form of *shame*, although unquestionably prevalent among such a community-oriented culture as that of the Greeks, it is our suggestion that Nietzsche’s evocation of *foolishness*—as the necessity of the setting-free from the bounds of an infinite creditor—refers more to the establishment of a new relation to *truth* after Truth’s demise in the hands of Christian morality. Since the ascetic ideal has been historically and culturally linked with the humans’ close relation to a transcendental truth

⁶³⁶ Loeb, Paul. “Suicide, Meaning and Redemption” in: Dries, Manuel (ed.). *Nietzsche on Time and History*. Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter. 2008, pp. 163-190

⁶³⁷ GM: II, 24

⁶³⁸ Ridley, Aaron. *Six Character Studies from the ‘Genealogy’*. *Op.cit.* p. 134

⁶³⁹ GM: II, 17

⁶⁴⁰ See the chapter on Shame and Autonomy in: Williams, Bernard. *Shame and Necessity*. Berkley: University of California Press. 1993.

⁶⁴¹ For the value of solitude see: Mitcheson, Katrina. *Nietzsche, Truth and Transformation*. Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan. 2013, p. 143-144

⁶⁴² BGE: 44

⁶⁴³ GM: II, 23

which defines the limits and the aims of human culture, the abandonment of religious asceticism could make possible, once again, another relation to *truth* itself. Liberated from its transcendental presuppositions, *truth* can survive if conceived as what Keith Ansell-Pearson calls “a set of *practices* of truthfulness” and a “diet of knowledge”⁶⁴⁴. This diet would have to include the *closest things*, such as “doubt, suspicion, critical distance, subjecting all things to scrutiny...”⁶⁴⁵ which when cultivated for a long period of time may bear the fruit of another relation of humans with both their communities and their physical environment. But for that to be done an honest relation to our history has to be established.

GM: III, 28 has made clear that that a human expedition to a life beyond the realm of what culture has come to consider as *truth* will certainly amount to a suicide mission. The “ascetic ideal has been the “*faute de mieux*” *par excellence* there has been thus far.”⁶⁴⁶ Humans are so entangled in a life of projects (lives aiming somewhere) that they cannot abandon the ultimate ground of all truth: The realization that *Silenus was right after all*. This truth, that human existence on earth is after all an absurd project, is to be covered up by a long process of subjugation whereby humans become dependent on an interpretation of their existence which both preserves their biological existence and sets them in the service of a web of ideological mechanisms (religion, political ideologies, education etc.) which are to manipulate the human in such a way as to render it useful for their goals, i.e. to degrade human existence to a mechanism of production. Nietzsche believes that such an interpretation cannot be allowed to have an enduring effect in human history. His proposal is that an honest cultivation of atheism will entail the abandonment of the transcendental belief in truth but need *not* to herald also the rejection of a *life of truthfulness*. In AC⁶⁴⁷ Nietzsche has suggested that the separation of humanity from divinity is an act of profound *modesty* which is going to place humans back in their natural environment instead of letting them linger over the abysses of transcendent ideals. But an honest cultivation of atheism requires the critical conformation of humanity with its history and thus with the conditions that have cultivated humans the way they are today. This is not going to be an easy task. To overcome humanity, and not overjump it⁶⁴⁸, we have to discover the ‘over’ through *going under* and perishing for the sake of this very humanity. *Genealogy* does exactly that: it jumps into the unknown waters of the psycho-

⁶⁴⁴ Ansell-Pearson, Keith. “The incorporation of Truth”. In: Ansell-Pearson, Keith. (ed.). *A companion to Nietzsche*. Oxford: Blackwell. 2006, p. 237

⁶⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴⁶ GM: III, 28

⁶⁴⁷ AC: 14

⁶⁴⁸ TSZ: On Old and New Tablets: 4

cultural evolution of man. What it brings back to the surface is a much more complicated, contradictory and conflicting view of humans than what the current omnipotent Western/Christian culture has trained us to believe that the human is. *Isn't that already more than we can endure?*

The final overcoming: Otherwise than Time.

An ethics of expense for the New Century.

“The sun gives without ever receiving.”

Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share*: Vol.I, p.28

“For ever in a kind of love and for ever in a kind of selfishness and self-enjoyment! To be in possession of a dominion and at the same time concealed and renouncing! To lie continually in the sunshine and gentleness of grace, and yet to know that the paths that rise up to the sublime are close by! – That would be a life! That would be a reason for a long life!”

Friedrich Nietzsche, D: 449

In this chapter we are going to defend the following provocative claim: *In an agonist relation the winner certainly wins, yet what he wins is nothing. The nothing that he wins reveals the high degree of his power [Macht]. Through the nothingness of his victory his sovereignty is established.* However, before supporting such an intriguing claim, several steps have to be taken, and for that thought to be contemplated, certain training is needed. To this end, in the first part of the chapter we will examine the work of French intellectual Georges Bataille. This will allow us to familiarise ourselves with notions such as loss, squandering and waste in conjunction to power and sovereignty. Bataille will reveal to us that it is possible to *be* like a squandering sovereign whose power increases the more he gives away. Then, in the second part of the chapter, we will turn to Nietzsche and through our original reading of the thought of the return, we will argue that Nietzsche pushes even further his earlier conceptions regarding the agon. While early Nietzsche believed that the life of the agonist ought to be preserved, later Nietzsche experiments with the idea of self-sacrifice and leans toward a new understanding of power which empowers only to the degree that he is willing to give away the productive logic of Christo-capitalism. This reading of Nietzsche paves the way toward the constitution of a new *ethics of expense*. This ethics, this proposal for a new bios for the

humans, demands our breaking up from the experience of a linear time and the logic of production which follows it, and our embracing of a time perennially destined to *lose time* as humanity departs toward a bios based on wasteful activity; activity that produces nothing apart from its own sovereignty.

A note on how to read Nietzsche (through Bataille).

Georges Bataille's highly idiosyncratic work has rarely been seen as a fruitful way to illuminate Nietzsche's thoughts⁶⁴⁹. Indeed, 'illumination', the Platonic tradition of associating 'good' with 'light', was never the task of this most obscure of modern thinkers, who celebrated the impossibility of any 'conclusive image of the universe'⁶⁵⁰ and rendered the *eternal night of anguish* as the true birthplace of the human heart.⁶⁵¹ Yet, although Bataille certainly lacks in scholarship, he has nevertheless incorporated Nietzsche's teachings to a remarkable degree and produced a body of work *in the wake* of Nietzsche's thought, showing the multiple ways in which the 'master's' thought can be used in order to enhance the experience of thinking and the boundaries of philosophical work.

What then does Bataille have to teach us concerning the final stage of Nietzsche's meditations on the Overhuman condition? Bataille paves the way to a reading of Zarathustra's teachings, the Overhuman and the eternal return of all things, which is going to take seriously what has usually been left unexamined, namely Zarathustra's laughter. For Bataille, laughter achieves two things. First, it leaves all things in a permanent state of suspension. Nothing 'concludes' itself within the constant move from possibility to impossibility that laughter is. Laughter affirms nothing⁶⁵², it denies to things and humans a state of closure, and like ecstasy opens up man to the world. Secondly, Bataille notes that: "By laughing I celebrate the marriage of power and loss."⁶⁵³ The movement of power is fundamentally connected with *sovereignty* only to the extent that sovereignty is stripped off

⁶⁴⁹ A notable exception will be Weiss S. Allen: *Impossible Sovereignty: Between "The Will to Power" and "The Will to Chance"*. October, Vol. 36, Georges Bataille: Writings on Laughter, Sacrifice, Nietzsche, Un-Knowing (Spring, 1986), pp. 128-146. Also: Abel Lionel. *George Bataille and the Repetition of Nietzsche*, and Hollier Denis. *From Beyond Hegel to Nietzsche's Absence*, both essays in: Boldt-Irons, L. *On Bataille – Critical Essays*. Albany: State University of New York. 1995

⁶⁵⁰ Bataille, Georges. *Essential Writings*. Michael Richardson (ed.). London: Sage Publications. 1998, p. 175

⁶⁵¹ *Ibid.* p. 8

⁶⁵² Bataille, Georges. *Guilty*. Stuart Kendall (trans.) New York: State University of New York. 2011, p. 90

⁶⁵³ *Ibid.* p. 92

from the power which certainly constitutes it. *Loss* is the precondition of a power which affirms itself as *sovereignty*, as that which escapes the totalitarian closure of the system of power. In that sense one succeeds only when one loses, only when one denies bringing all things within the perspective of the all-knowing Cartesian subject. Zarathustra belongs to the movement of laughter. He denies bringing his thoughts to their final conclusion and leaves them suspended over the great void of life. He is the teacher of what Nietzsche has called in BGE: 294 a ‘golden laugh’, where this laughter is the response to the spirit of gravity; to all things solemn and to those who have taught them. Zarathustra, the Antichrist, wishes only to inaugurate an era after the history of all things solemn and grave.

In Luke 6:25, Jesus says to his disciples: “Woe unto you that laugh now! For ye shall mourn and weep”⁶⁵⁴. Zarathustra, the *Antichrist*, responds to Jesus by advising his own disciples the opposite: “What has been the greatest sin here on earth so far? Was it not the word of him who said: ‘Woe unto those who laugh now!’ Did he himself find no grounds on earth for laughter? Then he simply did not look...He – did not love enough: else he would also have loved us who laugh!...Get out of the way of all such unconditional men! That is a poor sick kind, a mob-kind: they look at life sadly; they have the evil eye for this earth”. A bit later Zarathustra urges the ‘superior humans’: “Laughter I have pronounced holy; you superior humans, learn from me – to laugh!”⁶⁵⁵ Zarathustra’s ‘golden laugh’ comes from a place which overcomes the history of the West as the unfolding of the utilitarian mechanism of salvation. Zarathustra laughs because this is all he has. The rest lies with the history of seriousness which is fed by the deniers of ‘this’ life and of ‘this’ earth. Zarathustra, then, is the one who responds to millennia of life vivisection and to a whole history of culture, from Plato (the grand master of all things ‘serious’) onwards, perceived as a long meditation on death, with a grand celebration of folly and dance, which are nevertheless to be taken as what they truly are—*divine*—yet their divinity comes from Gods that respond to different needs from those of the disciples of the Christian God. For the faithful, the Christian God can, perhaps, do many things. Yet of one thing it is incapable. For the religion that has elevated death to the source of man’s redemption from the sin of earthly existence, it is simply unthinkable to accommodate laughter, dance, and lightness in what it conceives as a ‘tragedy’ of existence. Life on earth is toil, and the faithful are aware of that, thus they cannot laugh. Yet Nietzsche wants Gods to respond to life’s need for enhancement, not annihilation, and

⁶⁵⁴ *The Bible* – English Standard Version. ESV Bible. The German/English Parallel Edition. Illinois: Crossway & Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Luke 6:25

⁶⁵⁵ TSZ: On the Superior humans, sections 16 and 20

thus humans also have to learn to face life on earth not as a punishment but as a *gift*. This requires other types of Gods, those who can simply make fun, both of themselves and of others. In every case, “Gods like to make fun of things: it seems as if they cannot stop laughing, even during holy rites”⁶⁵⁶. Zarathustra’s ‘divine’ laugh, which Bataille brings to the fore, is neither some kind of reflex to a witticism nor a temporary psychological discharge. This would be a ‘human’ laughter anyway. The Overhuman is born from within the movement which opposes the preachers of all things grave (death, salvation, redemption, sin etc.) and celebrates the eternal folly of knowledge, the buffoonery of a nonsensical existence.

In this chapter we are going to read the ‘return’ against the background of Nietzsche’s thought. The thought of the return is Nietzsche’s response to his lifelong occupation with exposing the malicious effects of Plato-Judeo/Christian culture. If not read like that, the thought of the return will remain perhaps an interesting (yet indifferent) thought experiment. Nietzsche’s lifelong occupation, we believe, was to expose the conditions under which a reverse experiment in terms of culture could be possible. His audience is not the late inhabitants of the democratic West but the ‘reversed ones’, the ones who have been taught to find the ‘exemplary’ in the *opposite* conditions from those of our civilization. Harsh as it is for us to admit it, *we* are not Nietzsche’s audience. The conditions for that have not yet been cultivated. Yet thinkers like Bataille, who have followed Nietzsche’s thought to an extraordinary degree, can help us to get perhaps a glimpse of something different from the one-dimensional future prescribed to us by the conditions of our civilization. Bataille has stressed that the ideology of the linearity of time supports only purposes of capitalist production, which is for him a way to re-entrap man into teleology where the telos is already fixed and prearranged by forces serving various political, social or religious interests which are nothing but neutral to the fate of the human. Contrary to what we are accustomed to think, Bataille prepares us to consider an earth pregnant with unending energy, for this reason certainly monstrous, as Nietzsche’s nature was: undisciplined, wild, exuberant and chaotic⁶⁵⁷; an earth that does not obey the guidelines of a system of revenge (as that of Plato-Judeo/Christian civilization). Bataille teaches us to be faithful to a chaotic earth that stands beyond the pre-prescribed notions of ‘good’ and ‘evil’ and incorporates the whole system of forces, which human (and cosmic) life is, back to the reality of human totality. To learn to read Bataille is to get slowly accustomed to the possibility of a reversed world; it is to learn

⁶⁵⁶ BGE: 294

⁶⁵⁷ KSA: 9: 11 [197]

that a future of revenge against existence cannot be allowed to be humanity's only path and that other possibilities are, *in principle*, possible. For these reasons our introduction to Nietzsche's experiment on the nature of time is going to be through Bataille's exposition of an earth and a life upon it beyond the demands of Christian teleology and the logic of production; toward a future of expenditure, i.e. of laughter and dance, toward a future where Gods *laugh* and perish *laughing*, out of love for *this* earth, for *these* humans, not out of some fantasised version of the earth and the humans. In short, if Gods can make 'fun of themselves', then humans have learn also to make fun of themselves and to discover lightness to all things grave and solemn. For that, though, another relation to the earth and ourselves has to be established. This is to say that we are in urgent need for a new narrative concerning our origins *and thus* our futures. This is what Bataille does. He teaches us that we have been fooled so far. *Our origins lie elsewhere, and equally our futures.*

Mauss's influence.

On his highly influential treatment of the notion of *gift* in archaic societies, Marcel Mauss notes that *Homo economicus* is a rather recent and certainly a very 'Western' way to understand man and his social activities⁶⁵⁸. Ultimately, Mauss believes, it is the wrong way to understand man, since the definition of the whole (Man is....) is extracted only from a small part of his overall social activity which seeks to dominate the entire existence of the human being at the expense of his entire historical and social reality. Mauss is not wrong. It was John Stuart Mill who set the limits of the 'new science' of political economy by restricting it to the research of man's economic exchanges taking place independently of man's overall social activity. "Political Economy considers mankind as occupied solely in acquiring and consuming wealth...[Political economy] does not treat the whole of man's nature as modified by the social state, nor of the whole conduct of man in society. It is concerned with him solely as a being who desires to possess wealth, and who is capable of judging the comparative efficacy of means for obtaining that end."⁶⁵⁹ Modernity compartmentalizes man's activities and treats them as independent of each other. A new type of man gets born,

⁶⁵⁸ Mauss, Marcel. *The Gift*. W.D. Douglas (trans.) London: Routledge. 1990, p. 98

⁶⁵⁹ Mill, John Stuart. "On the Definition of Political Economy, and on the Method of Investigation Proper to It", *London and Westminster Review*, October 1836. *Essays on Some Unsettled Questions of Political Economy*, 2nd ed. London: Longmans, Green, Reader & Dyer, 1874, essay 5, paragraphs 38 and 48.

the modern man, which forces Zarathustra to cry: “Verily, my friends, I walk among human beings as among fragments and severed limbs of human beings”⁶⁶⁰. Mauss argues that this was not always the case and that in archaic societies the economic and the social were blended into a functional whole which redirected economic exchange away from the realm of modernity’s utilitarian calculations and closer to a system of non-economic exchanges, which was based not on accumulation but on a complex system of obligations structured around the notion of the freely given *gift*.

Mauss’s investigations of gift-giving, as the heart of the social life of primitive societies, provides us with the key with which we can unlock Bataille’s certainly complex and unusual meditations on *solar economics* and the construction of a society which is based on a principle of *loss*. In the primitive societies of North West America and Melanesia, economic life was based not on the principle of accumulation of profits or material things but on the exchange of *gifts*, which, although material in form, they were highly invested with spiritual powers. The *potlatch* describes a gift-giving process with three necessary steps: to *give*, to *receive*, and to *return*. The *gift* is not just a material thing; it possesses something from the soul of the giver and from the spirit of nature. Among the ancient peoples of Samoa and New Zealand, the spiritual force of the gift permeates through all donors and recipients of gifts who are obliged to return gifts of a higher value than the gifts given to them. “...the thing given is not inactive. Invested with life, often possessing individuality, it seeks to return to...its ‘place of origin’ or to produce, on behalf of the clan and the native soil from which it sprang, an equivalent to replace it.”⁶⁶¹ The gift-giving process of the *potlatch*, which is based on the fundamental obligation to return something of a higher value from that which was given to you, creates what Mauss has called an “obligatory circulation of wealth, tribute and gifts”⁶⁶². Nothing is eternally ours to keep. An ideology of possession (and a practice of *possessing*) would be unthinkable to the ancient peoples under investigation. One ought to return because Nature’s spirit is not for the humans to possess.

This paradoxical economic organization of archaic societies cultivates an idea that one finds again and again in Bataille, and it will also be acknowledged in this chapter as the centre of the relation between Bataille and Nietzsche. The one who receives has the obligation to return, and to return more than what he was initially given, so that he can achieve both the

⁶⁶⁰ TSZ: On Redemption

⁶⁶¹ Mauss, Marcel. *The Gift*. *Op.cit.* p. 16

⁶⁶² *Ibid.* p.15

removal of obligation and a status higher than the status of the one who gave less. Paradoxically, then, *to win one has to lose*. Unlike the Western societies of utilitarian calculation where the winner is the one who *gets it all*, in archaic societies the winner is the one who *loses* the more, the one who wastes the bulk of his wealth on gifts and it is precisely *because* he loses that he wins the respect of his fellow men. There is certainly some sort of calculation here of respect or honour rather than material things. The purpose of the *potlatch* is to overturn the connection between accumulation and rank by replacing it with another connection, that between *loss* and rank. Bataille has noted that “Capitalism in a sense is an unreserved surrender to *things*, heedless of the consequences and seeing nothing beyond them.”⁶⁶³ By *losing*, and by wishing to lose, individuals and societies declare their liberation from their surrender to matter in favour of webs of interconnectedness among members of the community.

Mauss describes a sociology of *honour* as it functions among the people of the American Northwest which draws Bataille’s fascinated response. While in the modern West issues of rank are organized largely around the possession of wealth, which subsequently enables one to acquire an expensive education and later to get a high earning or high-profile position, in archaic societies issues of rank are organized around the notion of *unproductive expenditure*. Among the Native Americans of the Northwest the idea that one acquires a higher position in society depending on how much he wastes reaches a peak. Mauss notes: “Consumption and destruction of goods really go beyond all bounds. In certain kinds of potlatch one must expend all that one has, keeping nothing back. It is a competition to see who is the richest and also the most madly extravagant. Everything is based upon the principles of antagonism and rivalry. The political status of individuals in the brotherhoods and clans, and ranks of all kinds, are gained in a ‘war of property’...”⁶⁶⁴, which is to say in a war where property is measured by how much and how willing is one to waste. The peak, the summit of this process of expenditure is reached through the total destruction of goods which immediately places the ‘madly extravagant’ destroyer to the peak of the political ladder of society. “In a certain number of cases, it is not even a question of giving and returning gifts, but of destroying, so as not to give the slightest hint of desiring your gift to be reciprocated. Whole boxes of olachen (candlefish) oil or whale oil are burnt, as are houses and thousands of blankets. The most valuable copper objects are broken and thrown into the water, in order to

⁶⁶³ Bataille, Georges. *Essential Writings*. *Op.cit.* p. 82

⁶⁶⁴ Mauss, Marcel. *Op.cit.* p. 47

put down and to ‘flatten’ one’s rival. In this way one not only promotes oneself, but also one’s family, up the social scale.”⁶⁶⁵ Bataille does not fail to spot what he calls the ‘agonistic type’ of expenditure⁶⁶⁶, a term whose significance he draws from Nietzsche. Indeed, what characterizes this extravagant loss is above all its competitive character. Donors are not isolated individuals who give anonymously. but rather participants in a large public *festival of excess*, the type perhaps that Zarathustra participates in the fourth part of TSZ, which judges everyone’s position in the social ladder according to their willingness to waste unproductively.

On general (or solar) economics.

‘General economics’ refers to an understanding of the economic life of societies beyond their dependence on economic data, as in the case of the ‘restricted economy’ of modern capitalism. General economics, following the example of Mauss’ exposition of archaic societies, encompasses the whole of the life of society, taking into account sociological and anthropological findings which organize human life into an organic whole, unlike Mill’s vision of a political economy restricted to matters of possessing and managing (strictly) material wealth. Taking inspiration from Mauss’ anthropological findings, Bataille expands the notion of expenditure, already found in Mauss, to a principle able to embrace the entire *economy of life* and to provide inspiration for the organization of the social realm other than that of the current model of Protestantism-inspired capitalism. Indeed, one of capitalism’s (this indigenous combination of asceticism and absolute faith to some future salvation — salvation to be provided only after the ascetic renunciation of life) ideological pillars is the idea that resources are scarce, and thus a fundamental demand of society is the immediate satisfaction of scarce resources through accumulation of capital.⁶⁶⁷ This is Bataille’s first break with classical political economy. We do *not* live in a state of scarce resources. On the contrary, we live in a state of *abundance* of resources, and more than that, in a state of *over-abundance*. The planet produces *more*, not less, than what we need. The real economic

⁶⁶⁵ *Ibid.* p. 47-48

⁶⁶⁶ Bataille, Georges. “The notion of expenditure”. In: Bataille, Georges. *Visions of Excess – Selected Writings, 1927-1939*. Allan Stoekl (trans.) Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 1985, p. 123

⁶⁶⁷ Schaffer Lewis Davis. “Economic Scarcity and Political Philosophy: Ancient and Modern Views”, *International Political Science Review / Revue internationale de science politique*, Vol. 4, No. 3, Politics and Scarcity (1983), pp. 279-294

problem of humanity is *overproduction*. Overproduction creates the additional problem of the management of what Bataille calls the ‘accursed share’ which indicates the excessive energy that economy constantly produces but it cannot consume.

Based on the (now rather dubious) scientific research of his friend, nuclear scientist Georges Ambrosino⁶⁶⁸, Bataille proposes a model of perennial excessive energy, radiating from the sun and embracing every aspect of life on earth. “Solar energy is the source of life’s exuberant development. The origin and essence of our wealth are given in the radiation of the sun, which dispenses energy – wealth – without any return. The sun gives without ever receiving.”⁶⁶⁹ Allan Stoekl has described a three-stage process of ever-greater release of excessive energy. At first the sun provides the earth with excessive energy, which is then taken by the flora and fauna of the planet which consume energy by proliferating wildly, and then, at the last stage, man receives the proliferated energy of the planet and squanders it on unproductive activities like war, religious sacrifices and (unproductive) erotic activity.⁶⁷⁰ The question then that one has to ask is the following: What do we do with surplus energy? The management of this excessive energy is the real problem of humanity and the true question of economics. A redistribution of wealth (excessive energy) is necessary since the opposite leads to social discontent which subsequently lead to wars and revolutions as expressions of the cosmic need for unproductive activity. Bataille thinks that a paradigmatic example of the management of excessive energy was the Marshall Plan, the economic aid that United States offered to Europe after the Second World War for the rebuilt of European economies. As Paul Hegarty notes, the Marshall Plan managed to integrate to “societies dominated by a ‘Protestant ethic’ of utility and acquisition”⁶⁷¹ the principle of unproductive expenditure (already of course present in every society in the form of gifts, presents and social or sport spectacles where energy gets released for the sake of it) into the very core of capitalist economics and politics. Regardless of the validity or not of Bataille’s view (wouldn’t a producer – the US – need a consumer – Europe – to whom they could sell their products?) for Bataille it is the extent of the aid, and the apparent absence of obligation to return it, that disturbs the capitalist logic of accumulation by placing a ‘moment’ of unproductive expenditure at the very centre of it.

⁶⁶⁸ Stoekl, Allan. *Bataille’s Peak – Energy, Religion, and Postsustainability*. Minneapolis: Minneapolis University Press. 2007, p. 39

⁶⁶⁹ Bataille, Georges. *The Accursed Share* (Vol. I). Robert Hurley (trans.) New York: Zone Books. 1989, p. 28

⁶⁷⁰ Stoekl, Allan. *Bataille’s Peak – Energy, Religion, and Postsustainability*. *Ibid.* p. 38

⁶⁷¹ Hegarty, Paul. *Georges Bataille – Core Cultural Theorist*. London: Sage Publications. 2000, p. 50

But the question regarding economics is followed by an even more pressing question regarding the place of man in the midst of a ‘mad’ logic of useless consumption. Indeed, the ethical question is the following. If capitalism, with all of its values of “prudence, calculation and predictability”⁶⁷² has managed to produce man as ‘homo economicus’, then what type of man would a movement of useless expenditure would create? Bataille notes that: “The general movement of exudation (of waste) of living matter impels him [man], and he cannot stop it; moreover, being at the summit, his sovereignty in the living world identifies him with this movement; it destines him, in a privileged way, to that glorious operation, to useless consumption.”⁶⁷³ According to this passage, man is implicated in a ‘general movement of waste’ from which he cannot only escape, as if this movement is something external to his existence, but rather the movement defines his very existence as an operation of waste, as ‘useless consumption’. Bataille has no doubts as to the ethical consequences of such a view. “Changing from the perspectives of *restrictive* economy to those of *general* economy actually accomplices a Copernican transformation: a reversal of thinking – and of ethics.”⁶⁷⁴ To the omnipotent Western cultural model, the Plato/Judaeo-Christian line of thought, man is considered to be the principle *conservator* of planetary equilibrium who cautiously and persistently is destined to climb up Jacob's ladder on his attempt to reach the highest point of clarity, having ridded on the way everything that tied him to the earth; emotions, senses, drives, and of course matter itself. This operation needs persistence, responsibility, (Socratic) optimism and above all faith in the rational management of both the subject and the world so that the final point, *the light of reason*, can be reached. Isn't humanity, after all, the sweet offspring of God, the crown of creation, the most perfect achievement of Nature, the conclusion of evolution, the splendour of rationality, the end of all dialectics, the *Geist* of cosmos? Well, no! “Humans are in no way the crown of creation.”⁶⁷⁵ Nietzsche cried and Bataille listened. No, this ‘modern’, for Nietzsche, obsession with progress does not describe the movement of the cosmos but only a typically small, bourgeois need; the need to deceive oneself by anthropomorphising the cosmos, attributing to the cosmos characteristics typical to humans such as rationality, conservation, progress and, above all, harmony. ‘Unfortunately’ Nature is not the mirror image of a petty state employee, but rather an undisciplined, unorganized chaos irreducible to the demands of human science and certainly a chaos devoid

⁶⁷² Conor, Tracey Peter. *Georges Bataille and the mysticism of Sin*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press. 2000, p. 160

⁶⁷³ Bataille, Georges. *The Accursed Share* (Vol. I). *Op.cit.* p. 23

⁶⁷⁴ *Ibid.* p. 25

⁶⁷⁵ *Ibid.* p. 14

of God. Upsetting the well-known Spinozist dictum, where Spinoza identifies nature with God, Nietzsche, on the contrary, proclaims a new vision of a de-deified nature where chaos, instead of order, becomes Nature's unsettling identity: "*Chaos sive Natura*"⁶⁷⁶.

On this chaotic Nature humanity stands not as its greatest achievement but rather as its greatest waste. To start with, all life is waste. "The history of life on earth is mainly the effect of a wild exuberance; the dominant event is the development of luxury, the production of increasingly burdensome forms of life."⁶⁷⁷ Echoing Nietzsche⁶⁷⁸, Bataille also believes that man does not stand in a position superior to the rest of creation but rather is caught in the midst of this movement of expenditure and waste that life is. "...Man is only a roundabout, subsidiary response to the problem of growth. Doubtless, through labor and technique, he has made possible the extension of growth beyond the given limits. But just as the herbivore relative to the plant, and the carnivore relative to the herbivore, is a luxury, man is the most suited of all human beings to consume intensely, sumptuously, the excess energy offered up by the pressure of life to conflagrations befitting the solar origins of its movement."⁶⁷⁹ The problem for Bataille lies in that instead of man doing everything in order *to align human existence to the wasteful movement of the cosmos*, he has done everything to *restrict* his existence to the narrow boundaries of a secure life promised by the linear logic of a capitalist-governed Christian civilization. Would that be a typical case of the death instinct at work? Didn't Nietzsche and Freud proclaim the existence of destructive forces at the very heart of the exuberant movement of life? Perhaps that may be the case. But for Bataille, man is still caught between two ends. On the one hand is the utility of the world (a world that needs to make sense and needs a future so that it can avoid the horrors of the present) and on the other hand a world beyond utility, where man is free to "live only for fascination"⁶⁸⁰ surrendered to the wasteful movement of the cosmos. "The world to which we have belonged offers nothing to love outside of each individual insufficiency: its existence is limited to utility. A world that cannot be loved to the point of death – in the same way a man loves a woman- represents only self-interest and the obligation to work."⁶⁸¹ Against the principles of law and utility which the *homo economicus* represents, Bataille juxtaposes the headless monster that has escaped all utility and has embraced the monstrous responsibility of utter freedom in a

⁶⁷⁶ KSA: 9: 11 [197]

⁶⁷⁷ Bataille, Georges. *The Accursed Share* (Vol. I). *Op.cit.* p. 33

⁶⁷⁸ "Humans are in no way the crown of creation, all beings occupy the same level of perfection." AC:14

⁶⁷⁹ *Ibid.* p. 37

⁶⁸⁰ Bataille, Georges. "The sacred conspiracy". In: Bataille, Georges. *Visions of Excess – Selected Writings, 1927-1939. Op.cit.* p. 179

⁶⁸¹ *Ibid.*

Godless universe. Andre Masson produces the famous drawing for the first issue of the review *Acéphale*⁶⁸² which Bataille has created. In the first article of the issue, Bataille describes this picture of an *anti-man* who attacks the principles of classical economics and the Western fetishization of rationality and calculation. We provide the complete passage as it will work also as a bridge to our next enquiry into the notion of sovereignty. Bataille describes the Acéphale as follows: “Man has escaped from his head just as the condemned man has escaped from his prison. He has found beyond himself not God, who is the prohibition against crime, but a being who is unaware of prohibition. Beyond what I am, I meet a being who makes me laugh because he is headless; this fills me with dread because he is made of innocence and crime; he holds a steel weapon in his left hand, flames like those of a Sacred Heart in his right. He reunites in the same eruption Birth and Death. He is not a man. He is not a god either. He is not me but he is more than me: his stomach is the labyrinth in which he has lost himself, loses me with him, and in which I discover myself as him, in other words as a monster.”⁶⁸³

On Sovereignty and Nothingness.

Lexicographically, sovereignty is associated mainly with two things. The first is royal rank and the second is the power which usually emanates from the supreme authority of royalty. Bataille will retain the noble aim of achieving sovereignty, but only by turning authority on its head. The starting point for Bataille’s meditations on the problem of sovereignty is Hegel’s exposition of the master-slave dialectic⁶⁸⁴. Bataille clearly identifies mastery with sovereignty for the same reasons as Kojève has done before him. What gives mastery to the master is not his willingness to dominate but his willingness to stake his life on the agon with the slave. In Bataille’s terms, it is the master’s willingness to lose⁶⁸⁵, to lose himself, his life, in a moment of glorious expenditure, that turns the one participant into a sovereign and the other into a slave; because while the slave is after the most basic, and *base*, needs, the master is only after pure prestige, transcending thus the everyday world of utility and animal desire.

⁶⁸² Picture reproduced in *ibid.* p. 180

⁶⁸³ Bataille, Georges. “The sacred conspiracy” in *ibid.* p. 181

⁶⁸⁴ Gernerchak, M. Christopher. *The Sunday of the Negative – Reading Bataille Reading Hegel*. New York: State University of New York. 2003, p. 117-118

⁶⁸⁵ Regardless if whether the master loses or not his life.

“To struggle without having the satisfaction of animal needs as an object is above all in itself sovereign; it expresses a sovereignty.”⁶⁸⁶

Above all, sovereignty disturbs the world of everyday utility; the world dedicated to progress and the attainment of goals and targets, the world in which the rules of general economy apply. So while sovereignty may borrow from Hegel something like the dialectical unfolding of itself, and while for Hegel spirit gradually realizes, through its identification of itself with itself, its manifestation into absolute knowing, for Bataille sovereignty comes to realize its identification with the nothing which constitutes it from the very beginning. This nothing, though, is not the nothing of nihilism, the nothing that brings you to your knees with exhaustion and despair, but rather the nothing of negation, of Hegelian-Kojevian negation which is the prerequisite of freedom. Bataille never tires of repeating Kojève’s lesson: “Action is Negativity and Negativity, Action.”⁶⁸⁷ Negativity then has to be utilised against the efficacious activity of the social animal man. “In efficacious activity” Bataille notes, “man becomes the equivalent of a tool, which produces; he is like the thing the tool is, being itself a product. The implication of these facts are clear: the tool’s meaning is given by the future, in what the tool will produce, in the future utilization of the product; like the tool, he who serves – who works – has the value of that which will be later not of that which is.”⁶⁸⁸ Bataille is adamant that (capitalist) utility and (Christian) progress lock individuals within a logic of *futurity* which he calls the ‘project’. According to this logic, human beings are produced as anguished beings, since the overemphasis of the future over the present can only lead to the fetishization of death. The way out of this logic is the liberation from all ends and the celebration of non-productive activity, i.e. the type of activity that escapes the logic of progressive attainment of goals and targets. Instead of dying a ‘human’ death, then, i.e. a death where the individual has suffered the traumatism of his separation between a past and a future, Bataille calls for a sovereign death for which “the present is not subject to the demands of the future.”⁶⁸⁹ A sovereign existence is the type of existence that has liberated itself from the logic of futurity and has turned its attention to the present and to the consumption of wealth. “The sovereign...truly enjoys the products of this world beyond his

⁶⁸⁶ Bataille, Georges. *Essential Writings*. *Op.cit.* p. 123

⁶⁸⁷ *Ibid.* p. 123

⁶⁸⁸ *Id. The Accursed Share* (Vol. III). *Op.cit.* p. 218

⁶⁸⁹ *Ibid.* p. 219

needs. His sovereignty resides in this. Let us say that the sovereign (or the sovereign life) begins when, with the necessities ensured, the possibility of life opens up without limit.”⁶⁹⁰

The image of sovereignty is thus encapsulated in the figure of the *acéphale* who has given up all authority (this is what the absence of the head signifies), perhaps even the minimum of authority required for his sustainability to (biological) existence. Paradoxically, then, sovereign existence becomes both the maximum and the minimum (to the point of nothing) of subjectivity, since the subject embracing nothingness has to be first ‘fully’ subject, so as to be able to place his subjectivity into the hands of non-productive activity, an activity which, because it produces nothing and only consumes, always threatens the subject with a gradual evaporation. Is the headless man something that can still be recognized as human? If the human ‘has to be overcome’, what is to be found on the other side? A human? A monster? The *Acéphale* is certainly Bataille’s version of the Übermensch. It signifies the necessity of overcoming and the horror of what is to come. In his description of the graphic figure of the Acéphale, Bataille has noted that “He is not me but he is more than me”⁶⁹¹. But both Bataille’s ‘more’ and Nietzsche’s ‘over’ have nothing to do with a ‘living behind’ but rather with the possibility of the cultivation of those latent forces of the human in present time, in a time liberated from the bounds of the future. Bataille expresses this need by his outright rejection of utility and the embrace of useless consumption. Like Nietzsche, Bataille also believes that power is power as long as it cultivates the conditions of its disappearance, as long it sustains itself in an agonistic relation with what it threatens it. The following passage is illuminating: “If he wins, the man who once rejected constraint becomes, for himself as well as for the others, like those whom he once fought against and who constrained him. Puerility, sovereign, uncalculating caprice, cannot survive their victory. Sovereignty can only exist on condition that it should never assume power, which is action, the primacy of the future over the present moment, the primacy of the promised land. It is hard not to struggle in order to destroy a cruel adversary.”⁶⁹²

If, then, power has to be ‘nothing’, one is not wrong to question Bataille’s choice to ‘glorify’ the notorious criminal and child killer of 15th century Gilles de Rais, and to present him as an example of a sovereign existence. Why does the example of a sovereign existence have to be a child molester and not a nice old lady giving cookies to children? What makes Bataille

⁶⁹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 198

⁶⁹¹ *Id.* “The sacred conspiracy”. *Op.cit.* p. 181

⁶⁹² *Id. Essential Writings. Op.cit.* p. 190

speak for the “sovereign monstrosity of Rais”⁶⁹³ over and against examples of sacrifice, unegoistic behaviour, and unpretentious offering to the community? The reason, it seems to us, is twofold. In the beginning is violence, or rather transgression, i.e. the impulse to the violation of limits. A limit can be violated; indeed it calls for, it demands its violation⁶⁹⁴, as long as it exists. The double role of taboo, which Bataille examines in *Eroticism*, is both the (necessary) institution of the limit and the establishment of the conditions for its transgression. In the words of Paul Hegarty: “Transgression is a possibility contained within taboo – or else there would be no need for the taboo”⁶⁹⁵. Transgression serves for Bataille a function similar to Hegelian *aufhebung*; it both suspends and supersedes the power of prohibition. So violence is there against the background of a world already resistant to its impending violation. Violence generates the limit against which it smashes its head, so to speak. The power of violence and transgression is hardly news to Nietzscheans. The criminal has already been elevated by Nietzsche to a nonconformist figure of revolutionary (i.e. anti-establishment) ethos. Indeed, for Nietzsche our only hope against the prospect of an increasingly docile existence is the unsettling power of violent spirits: “The strongest and most evil spirits have so far done the most to advance humanity....”⁶⁹⁶ Sovereignty is thus linked with a fundamental experience of violation. This is why Rais is ‘sovereign’, because he dares to break a taboo; but the taboo that Rais breaks is not of an ordinary nature⁶⁹⁷ but of an extraordinary one — and this leads us to the second of our attempts to clarify his ‘sovereign monstrosity’.

“Ostensibly [Rais] would sit on the belly of his victim and, in this fashion, masturbating, come on the dying body; what mattered to him was less the sexual enjoyment than to see death at work. He liked to watch. He had the body cut open, the throat cut, the members carved to pieces; he relished seeing the blood.”⁶⁹⁸ Rais is not a monster because he does unthinkable things. He is a monster because he does these things against resistance-incapable victims (the victims are always children) and, most importantly, because his crimes are totally senseless “...we are at the antipodes of reason. Nothing in Gilles de Rais is reasonable. In every respect, he is monstrous”⁶⁹⁹, thus his ‘monstrosity’. But, again, he is a ‘sovereign’ monster. The monstrosity of which Bataille talks is of a special kind. As

⁶⁹³ *Id. The trial of Gilles de Rais*. Richard Robinson (trans.) Los Angeles: Amok. 2004, p. 20

⁶⁹⁴ “The heart is human to the extent that it rebels...” *Id. Essential Writings. Op.cit.* p. 158

⁶⁹⁵ Hegarty, Paul. *Georges Bataille – Core Cultural Theorist. Op.cit.* p. 109

⁶⁹⁶ GS: 4

⁶⁹⁷ If there are ‘ordinary’ taboos.

⁶⁹⁸ Bataille, Georges. *The trial of Gilles de Rais. Ibid.* p. 14

⁶⁹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 17

presented by Bataille, Rais lives a life of excess; he is a noble who waists his fortune on orgies, killings, and feasts. He has a profound disregard for the world of utility, for the world of projects, and thus for *the* future and *his* future. Rais lives “a life never dominated by calculation”⁷⁰⁰; his fascination is to see ‘death at work’ as he masturbates siting on the dead body. Rais is not afraid of death. He is fascinated by it. It is because his existence belongs entirely to a movement of expenditure in which death has no place. Because one is afraid of death as long as his existence is directed toward a future, “the fear of death appears linked from the start to the projection of oneself into a future time”⁷⁰¹. Once liberated from the world of utility which demands future-orientated individuals, one is also liberated from the anguish of death; “in a sense, he escapes death, in that he lives in the moment. The sovereign man lives and dies like an animal.”⁷⁰² In this respect Rais truly exemplifies the demand for innocence, which has nothing, of course, to do with judicial innocence, but rather for a fundamental demand for liberation from all final ends. Rais lives and dies like an animal, in the innocence of a moment liberated from the demands of the world of utility and calculation. He calculates nothing, he reserves nothing for himself except the summit experience of disregarding death. Thus, against a trembling humanity awaiting judgment and the prospect of a servile existence in an inhospitable world, his only response is an act of monstrous violence and perhaps also of (divine!) comedy: Masturbating in front of death.

Who gives without receiving? Who wastes extravagantly and thus places his existence on a route other than that of the dominant paradigm? Bataille has suggested that the movement of life belongs to the extravagant waste of solar energy rather than to the petty calculations of the last human. The last humans, with all of their futile projects, belong to the past of humanity. The future of humanity is going to come through its realignment to the wasteful movement of the cosmos. The human to come, the Overhuman, like the Sun, is going to spend himself in a profound festival of waste, his life is willingly outside of human projects; he is an outcast of the societies of the last humans. Zarathustra calls his disciples to sacrifice, to waste themselves, so that they can be true to the earth, to the movement of the cosmos rather than to the movement of the capitalist machine for which material production has become the sole meaning of all life on earth. “This is your thirst, to become sacrifices and bestowals yourselves...” and again “Insatiably your soul strives for treasures and jewels,

⁷⁰⁰ *Ibid.* p. 14

⁷⁰¹ *Id. The Accursed Share* (Vol. III). *Op.cit.* p. 218

⁷⁰² *Ibid.* p. 219

because your virtue is insatiable in wanting to bestow.”⁷⁰³ The Overhuman exists insofar as he gives without receiving, like Bataille’s Sun. His highest virtues are the bestowing virtues. The way the Overhuman understands his existence within time is by opposing the linear time of accumulations and rewards of the Western/Christian world and by inscribing himself in a perennial movement of repetition which marks the utmost limit of non-productivity. The Overhuman produces *nothing* other than his own wasteful movement. And this is why he is sovereign, because his existence serves *nothing* other than his own sovereignty, the pleasure of losing. That is all. “This is my poverty, that my hand never rests from bestowing.”⁷⁰⁴

Nietzsche, time and the Greeks.

In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche has famously described the thought of the eternal return as coming to him ‘suddenly’, as he was walking through the woods “6000 feet beyond man and time”⁷⁰⁵. Nietzsche’s rhetoric may have misguided scholars into treating the thought of the return as something independent from the rest of his philosophical meditations and to seek to answer the problems generated from the thought as logical puzzles. Although it may be true that thoughts do tend to appear suddenly, they also tend to be responses to problems already occupying the individual. Nietzsche’s preceding self-characterization as a ‘female elephant’⁷⁰⁶, as someone who has to prepare for a long time his thoughts so as to eventually give birth to them, has, naturally, escaped commentators’ attention. In what follows we are going to occupy ourselves with Nietzsche’s long pregnancy and the significance that the thought of the return has for the cultivation of a humanity under the reverse cultural conditions from those that have generated the current victory of the slaves over the rest of humanity, and indeed over the earth itself.

One of the most common mistakes concerning the thought of the return is that Nietzsche had some final word to say on the matter and that a final explanation on the thought of the return can be provided. Far from it — the thought of the return represents one more of the multiple experiments that Nietzsche had conducted throughout his career. The idea that a final answer can be provided is a gross misunderstanding of the nature and the scope of Nietzsche’s

⁷⁰³ TSZ: On the Bestowing Virtue

⁷⁰⁴ TSZ: The Night-Song

⁷⁰⁵ EH: Thus Spoke Zarathustra: 1

⁷⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

experimental and personal way of philosophising. Beyond the fruitless attempts to solve the logical puzzle of the return, one question seems to us to have survived and be in urgent need of investigation. Why does Nietzsche even think the thought of the return? Why does he think that this thought is of some great significance? To what, from the problems that preoccupied Nietzsche, is the thought of the return a response? To answer these questions seems to us that we have to bring to the surface Nietzsche's debt to Heraclitus⁷⁰⁷. Indeed, as we are going to support further, it is out of his dialogue with Heraclitus that Nietzsche comes to realize the significance and the urgency of another understanding of time for the cultivation of another type of humanity which will specifically place itself away from the guilt-ridden civilization of the meta-Platonic West.

Nietzsche learns from Heraclitus to think about time in the agonistic fashion of the Greeks, which is only approachable to us today as a remote eccentricity. It is unable to penetrate the bubble of our lives because of what Bataille calls 'projects' aiming for accumulation (of wealth, of good deeds, of knowledge), with us 'investing' in us, so that our asceticism one day to be rewarded by the meaning-giving *telos* of our lives. A life devoid of contradictions (negativity in Hegelian parlance) would ultimately be an unjust life since only 'strife is justice'⁷⁰⁸, according to the cosmic law which wants tension (*polemos*) to reign among all things, human and non-human⁷⁰⁹. The so-called doctrine of the 'harmony of opposites' is not only one of Heraclitus' main contributions, but also the key to his understanding of a *playful* time understood in terms of the doctrine of the eternal flux of all things.⁷¹⁰ Heraclitus complains that 'the people' (*οι πλείστοι*⁷¹¹) do not understand that something can agree with itself while being at variance with itself⁷¹². Indeed, one can understand 'the people's' reluctance to accept what is logically unacceptable⁷¹³. At the most one can understand Pythagoras and his followers. "For Pythagoras the best state was one in which opposite qualities were so blended by a law of proportion that their oppositions were neutralized and

⁷⁰⁷ On Nietzsche's relation to Heraclitus: Berry N. Jessica. Nietzsche and the Greeks. In: James Ken & Richardson John (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2013. Also: Wilkerson Dale. *Nietzsche and the Greeks*. London: Continuum. 2006 and Gillham Simon. An Impossible Virtue: Heraclitean Justice and Nietzsche's Second Untimely Meditation, in: Bishop Paul. *Nietzsche and Antiquity – His reaction and response to the classical tradition*. Suffolk: Camden House. 2004

⁷⁰⁸ TEGP, Fragment: 58 [F36]

⁷⁰⁹ *Ibid.* Fragment: 59 [F37]

⁷¹⁰ Jones-Emlyn C.J. , "Heraclitus and the Identity of Opposites", *Phronesis*, Vol. 21, No 2 (1976), p. 92

⁷¹¹ 'The multitude' as in Fragment: 19 [F11]

⁷¹² TEGP, Fragment: 70 [F41]

⁷¹³ It is not only 'the people' that do not understand the unity of opposites. Famously Aristotle himself had accused Heraclitus for violating the law of contradiction. Aristotle. *Metaphysics* In: Barnes, Johnathan (ed.). *The Complete Works of Aristotle* Vol. II. W.D. Ross (trans.) Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1984. Γ 1005 b 17-20

they produced, for example, euphony in music, health in the body, *cosmos* – order and beauty – in the Universe as a whole.”⁷¹⁴ Heraclitus agrees with Pythagoras on the existence of opposite forces; however, for him opposition is not neutralized but rather gets multiplied and perseveres. At the ‘centre of things’ there is no ‘order’ but rather a kind of harmony that turns back and bites itself, and therefore also never rests; “παλίντροπος αρμονίη”, a harmony that turns back, that is not in agreement with itself. As Guthrie rightly notes: “The *harmonia* was a dynamic one of vigorous and contrary motions neutralized by equilibrium and so unapparent.”⁷¹⁵ Where Pythagoras posed opposition only to cancel it later, Heraclitus insists on safeguarding it. (Pythagorean) rest is for the dead. “Heraclitus took away rest and standing still from the totality, for this is characteristic of dead things; motion assigned to everything...”⁷¹⁶

Naturally, time also is in constant motion. Yet the motion of time is not uninterrupted and orderly, but rather, in accordance with the cosmic law, must be *παλίντροπος* (at variance with itself); that is it has to be a time turning back against itself, a snake biting its own tail, perhaps every 18,000 solar years.⁷¹⁷ But Nietzsche learns from the ‘dark’ (*σκοτεινός*) Heraclitus something of even greater significance. Heraclitus schools his disciples in a form of paradoxical logic where harmony is restless, roads going up and roads going down are the same⁷¹⁸, waters being clean and being dirty at the same time⁷¹⁹, etc. In a famous series of fragments⁷²⁰ Heraclitus suggests that the waters one steps into are always different while the river remains the same. Sameness and difference are only sides of what Anaximander calls the *necessity* (*χρεών-chreon*)⁷²¹ that governs everything. For Heraclitus it is *Logos* which governs everything, a necessity beyond the petty history of the humans upon the earth. In his early lectures on the Pre-Socratics, Nietzsche expresses an idea prevalent also in his last works, especially in the *Anti-Christ*: “The highest form of nature is not humanity but [the never-resting] fire.”⁷²² In Heraclitus’ meditations on time, Nietzsche finds an ethics of life governed by the logos of the cosmos instead of the desiderata of humans. He especially links

⁷¹⁴ Guthrie, W.K.C. A. *History of Greek Philosophy: Volume 1, The Earlier Presocratics and the Pythagoreans: Earlier Presocratics and the Pythagoreans*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1979, p. 448

⁷¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 440

⁷¹⁶ TEGP, Fragment: 68

⁷¹⁷ *Ibid.*: 97

⁷¹⁸ *Ibid.*: 61 [F38]

⁷¹⁹ *Ibid.*: 79 [F49]

⁷²⁰ *Ibid.*: 62 [F39], 63, 65,66,68

⁷²¹ Anaximander, [F1] in: Graham, W. Daniel. (ed. & trans.) *The Texts of Early Greek Philosophy – The complete Fragments and Selected Testimonies of the Major Presocratics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2010.

⁷²² PPP: p. 74

teleological to moralistic thinking and seeks a way to escape from it. He finds his way out in a notion of time as a playing child and remarks: “We find here a purely aesthetic view of the world. We must exclude even more any moralistic tendencies to think teleologically here, for the cosmic child (*Weltkind*) behaves with no regard to purposes but rather only according to an immanent justice: it can act only wilfully and lawfully, but it does not *will* these ways.”⁷²³ The Logos underlying the eternal play of the world does not allow for either anthropomorphisms or for the positing of external value systems. “This is genuinely Hellenic!” he concludes, “It is in itself a harmony, yet one that touches on its opposite, bending back (*παλίντροπος*).” Yet this kind of paradoxical logic celebrated by the Heraclitean movement is not for the many⁷²⁴; one has to be on one’s way to become something other than what he already is in order to apprehend it — perhaps an Overhuman. “[Such a thought] is recognizable only to the contemplative god and to similar human beings.”⁷²⁵

Eternal Return: A Sovereign thought.

In this way, Heraclitus trains Nietzsche. An unruly time, a time which does not succumb to the utilitarian logic of the power structures which produce man as a ‘working-animal’, an animal dedicated to ‘projects’, aiming at the oblivion of the reality of death and the fatality of existence, is a time destined to be thought by either gods or ‘similar human beings’. This is indeed the way Nietzsche presents the eternal return on the famous GS: 341, as the *heaviest weight*: “If this thought gained power over you, as you are it would transform and possibly crush you.”⁷²⁶ Two things are interesting to note here. The first has to do with the ‘*wie du bist*’ (as you are). The thought of the return is not a neutral observation on the nature of time, it is not a detached scientific fact announced in conferences and concerning no one⁷²⁷. On the contrary, it is a thought that holds power over you, a thought that will eventually transform your entire disposition toward life and toward your *own* life. For this reason it is a thought that has to be cultivated, a thought which one has to prepare oneself for a long period of time

⁷²³ *Ibid.* p.70

⁷²⁴ πολλοί κακοί, the many are base. TEGP, Fragment: 21 [F12]

⁷²⁵ PPP: p. 74

⁷²⁶ GS: 341

⁷²⁷ Certainly Nietzsche on his unpublished notes did try to present the thought of the return as such. This, however, remained more a private enterprise than a public thesis.

(like a ‘female elephant’). That is because it is a thought that does not belong to the ‘here and now’ of a historical time produced by the various interests of the groups promoting it. In the first public appearance of the *ewige Wiederkunft* in GS: 285, Nietzsche is adamant: “You will never pray again, never adore again, never again rest in endless trust...there is no avenger for you anymore, no final corrector of the text of your life; there is no more reason to what happens, no love to what will happen to you; no more resting place stands open for your heart in which to find and no longer seek; you arm yourself against any ultimate peace, you will the eternal recurrence of war and peace.”⁷²⁸ The prospect of an ‘unreasonable’ future, where ‘reason’ is to be equated with a telos of human life and existence, a future without telos and without a final avenger against a life that humans have been trained to see as structurally unjust⁷²⁹, is indeed a prospect able to crush anyone. It needs a certain preparation so that one will not get crushed by it. And with that we reach our second observation. The idea of the return, Nietzsche seems to argue, is an idea that will possibly obliterate the individual who will undertake it, because no one is yet strong enough so to think it and incorporate it into his mode of existence. This is the problem of the dwarf in ‘On the Vision and the Riddle’ which we are going to analyse in the following paragraphs. Those able to overcome the crushing fatalism of senseless repetition are going to acknowledge the thought of the return as the ‘great cultivating idea’⁷³⁰. The ones who will be able to endure it will survive; the rest will perish.

But is the thought of the return a thought on the nature of time, or a thought on that which escapes all time altogether, even a circular or repetitive time? It is true that Nietzsche leaned toward an idea of a circular time, partly because this was the conception of time among various ancient peoples, most importantly that of the Greeks, and partly in order to oppose the Christian positing of a linear time. Nevertheless, as Laurence Hatab rightly observes, the thought of the return has as its primal aim the affirmation of the value of “temporal events as they are.”⁷³¹ But it has to be a beyond the temporal. The problem with time itself lies in the fact that it is experienced as a *value* which gets integrated within the current cultural paradigm. Nietzsche believes that along with all the other values supporting the current cultural paradigm, time also, insofar as it has become a cultural value, has to undertake the scrutiny of revaluation. We need a time which goes beyond the time of ‘our’ times, a time in

⁷²⁸ GS: 285

⁷²⁹ BT: 18

⁷³⁰ WP: 1053. KSA: 11:26 [376], 1056. KSA: 11: 25 [227]

⁷³¹ Hatab, J. Lawrence. *Nietzsche's Life Sentence – Coming to terms with Eternal Recurrence*. London: Routledge. 2005, p. 71-73

the service of life instead of a time in the service of production. Production accumulates, whereas life is wasteful. The realignment of time to life is going to bring about a *wasteful time*, a time which no longer resembles Aristotle's "succession ofnows (before and after) counted in motion"⁷³², but rather a time *erupted*, a time which, liberated from its utilitarian foundations, is going to resemble more the chaos of archetypical energy rather than the order of the humans. "This world: a monster of energy [*Kraft*]...a play of forces and waves of forces, at the same time one and many, increasing here and at the same time decreasing there; a sea of forces flowing and rushing together..."⁷³³ Nietzsche indeed identifies the thought of the return with circularity; nevertheless, it is not the circularity which aims at the eternal repetition of either identity or difference. It is a circularity aiming at the overcoming of any apparent dichotomy between being and becoming, it is a circularity aiming at the transformation of temporality into something else, namely: energy.

Nietzsche's opposition to a nihilistic circularity becomes apparent on Zarathustra's confrontation with the dwarf in 'The Vision and the Riddle'. After Zarathustra's description of his vision concerning the contradictory ways that meet at 'The Moment' (*Augenblick*), the dwarf murmurs, what he believes as Zarathustra's insight on the nature of time: "All truth is crooked; time itself is a circle."⁷³⁴ But Zarathustra bursts out in anger and accuses the dwarf of 'making it too easy' for itself. What does that mean? To be sure Zarathustra does not say that the dwarf did not understand anything. This would have been untrue. The dwarf *has understood* that time is indeed circular and that past and future meet at the moment of the present which is the moment of affirmation. What the dwarf had not understood is that the affirmation of the moment goes beyond time itself, since it concentrates in it, in the moment of affirmation which is a moment of eternity, being *and* becoming and then spews them out in the form of energy. "And are not all things knotted together so tightly that this moment draws after it *all* things that are to come? *Thus* – itself as well?"⁷³⁵ If the eternal return is to be of some value for a vision of culture which aims to combat the current nihilistic state of humanity brought about by the victory of slave morality and its values, then it has to symbolize something beyond the passivity of repetition which, as Alexander Nehamas observes, forces one to pose the question of what it may happen in the case of an indifferent

⁷³² Turetzky, Philip. *Time*. London: Routledge. 1998, p. 23

⁷³³ WP: 1067. KSA: 11:38 [12]

⁷³⁴ TSZ: On the vision and the riddle

⁷³⁵ *Ibid.*

attitude toward the thought of the return⁷³⁶; what if one were to respond to the challenge of the return with simply shrugging his shoulders? Nietzsche's positing of the *Augenblick*, which is the moment of an extraordinary decision⁷³⁷, aims to expose the existential imperative that informs Nietzsche's treatment of the return.

Laurence Hatab has rightly drawn our attention to the non-circular presentation of time, on behalf of Zarathustra, in 'On the Vision and the Riddle'. The two pathways extend to eternity and yet they meet (by contradicting themselves) at the *Augenblick*. Hatab proposes the following: "Did Nietzsche want to borrow something from this linear model of time [Christianity's model], namely the eternal value of moments in time? If so, the value of moments would no longer be conceived as an irreversible transition to something extra-temporal. The value of moments, as eternally repeated, would now be registered in their *concrete finitude*, in just the way that they manifest themselves."⁷³⁸ We believe that Hatab is right in his suggestion that Nietzsche's paradoxical task was the *eternalization of the moment*, the blending of eternity with a present that extends into infinity. Hatab is right because in that way moments get eternalized and time concentrates itself into a single moment (which nevertheless it will repeat itself eternally), which acquires infinite value. What is at stake here is nothing less than the value of the moment, a task which Nietzsche wishes to disclose. The thought of the return has as its task to reveal the uncompromising value of the *moment* against the fetishization of the future (or of the past, or of the present) by the power structures which have produced, and which they constantly reproduce, the decadent human being of the Judeo/Platonic-Christian tradition. Man belongs neither to the ghosts of an invented 'glorious' past, nor to the 'reward' awaiting him at the end of the process of endurance which has been called 'his' life.

Nietzsche's lifelong battle against teleological explanations of the human condition has to be mentioned here. On a note from 1888 he writes: "Becoming must be explained without resource to final intentions; becoming must appear justified at every moment...the present must absolutely not be justified by reference to a future, nor the past by reference to the present." Later on in the same note he adds: "Becoming is of equivalent value every moment;

⁷³⁶ Nehamas, Alexander. *Nietzsche – Life as Literature*. Cambridge-Massachusetts: Harvard University Press. 1985, p. 151

⁷³⁷ For more on the rich history of *Augenblick* in German philosophy see: Ward Coral. 'In the Blink of an Eye' *An Investigation into the Concept of the 'Decisive Moment' (Augenblick) as Found in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Western Philosophy*. PhD Thesis, Murdoch University. 2005. Available online: <http://researchrepository.murdoch.edu.au/391/2/02Whole.pdf>

⁷³⁸ Hatab, J. Lawrence. *Nietzsche's Life Sentence – Coming to terms with Eternal Recurrence*. *Op.cit.* p. 72

the sum of its values always remains the same.”⁷³⁹ This is what the dwarf was unable to understand: that a time which is simply circular is a time that misses the *existential exigency* of the value of becoming which is encapsulated by the force with which the contradictory pathways collide at the ‘pregnant’ *Augenblick*. In that moment, the moment of collision between past and future, man’s life explodes, since it is a moment that recognizes neither a final judge of existence nor an extra-temporal moment of origin (God-morality-nature) according to which one has to drive the ‘project’ of his life. The moment of the *moment* is a moment of Dionysian ecstasy which is to say of terror in front of the prospect of an existence from which all meaning has been removed; *a lacuna of being*, perhaps⁷⁴⁰. Yet it is, and this is only possible because of Nietzsche’s apprenticeship to Heraclitus, that out of this confrontation with the void of the world that *man* gets born, the same way nations get born only out of the experience of war.

The above interpretation is in agreement with the ethical-existential presentation of the thought of the return on GS: 341, and thus contradicts Nietzsche’s unfortunate experiments with cosmology in his unpublished notes. Despite of all the rhetoric, it is simply not the case that someone will want the eternal return of an identical life. The *same* has nothing to teach us anyway. What is significant in the thought of the return is the value with which one charges the unique moments of one’s life. Whereas this value is lost under a linear, future-orientated model of life or on an eternal passive recycling, it does not get lost in the ‘charged’ moment. Because the dispensation of value to the *moment* is an act of sovereignty which requires a long and arduous schooling on the requirements of free-spirit (independence, detachment, playfulness of spirit, etc.⁷⁴¹), it is also an act that will “impose upon becoming the character of being”⁷⁴² as, at times, Nietzsche seems to realize is needed. Not eternal transitoriness, then, but rather an eternalized being which will memorialize existence without mummifying it. The following passage reveals Nietzsche’s intentions: “A certain emperor always bore in mind the transitoriness of all things so as not to take them seriously and to live at peace among them. To me, on the contrary, everything seems far too valuable to be so fleeting: I seek an eternity for everything: ought one to pour the most precious salves and wines into the sea? – My consolation is that everything that has been is eternal: the sea will

⁷³⁹ WP: 708. KSA: 13:11 [72]

⁷⁴⁰ I own this observation to Dr. Jon Egan, from a private conversation.

⁷⁴¹ BGE: 41

⁷⁴² WP: 617. KSA: 12:7 [54]

cast it up again.”⁷⁴³ One has to pay attention here to the Bataille tone with which Nietzsche constructs his remark. To be sure, the answer to the question of whether one ‘ought’ to waste what is more precious to him is a resounding ‘yes’. Echoing Matthew 10:39, Nietzsche asserts that one has to lose if one wants to find. What one finally finds is the eternity of the moment which the sea casts up, which also means the *moment’s* infinite value.

Aaron Ridley has contested the above interpretation of the thought of the return. He has argued that Nietzsche’s prioritization of the present reveals his debt to Christian linearity and more than that in Christian eschatology, which is based on the Christian’s relation to a present which is “maximally weighty with redemptive potential”⁷⁴⁴. Ridley accuses Nietzsche that on his attempt to present the thought of the return as a “non-transcendental successor to Christianity”⁷⁴⁵ he has invested ‘will’ with so much power that past, present and future get concentrated on a ‘supreme moment of affirmation’ which loads the present with a weight similar to that which it has in Christian eschatology. According to Ridley, the past gets redeemed since it gets *willed*, the future gets redeemed since it is eternally repeated in a perennial present, and the present gets redeemed through repletion which makes it *matter* again. The moment of supreme affirmation is also the moment where the ‘will’ becomes omnipotent and an omnipotent will imposes itself as a being upon the becoming of life. “...the will is suddenly to find itself capable of transcending “the whole sphere of becoming and transitoriness” – of stepping outside of time, of the conditions of contingency and embodiment, and of re-establishing a harmony between truth and human well-being.”⁷⁴⁶ The result, as Ridley notes, is that both Nietzsche and the Christian “transcendentalize the present”⁷⁴⁷ and thus they both reveal a wish to escape the tragic wisdom of the immanent character of existence, the wisdom of the finitude of human existence but also the simple fact of human temporality and human experience in a present that is now to be considered as something to be transcendent instead of cherished. Perhaps Ridley is right when he claims that Nietzsche borrows too much from Christian eschatology. To make the *present* matter again, Nietzsche does indeed invest the ‘will’ that wills it with too much power. However, Nietzsche’s multiple statements concerning the thought of the return are ambiguous. Thus, Ridley bases his interpretation on TSZ: Of Redemption, which certainly describes the will’s relation, on the present, with that of the past. However, in ‘On the vision and the Riddle’, past

⁷⁴³ WP: 1065. KSA: 13:11 [94]

⁷⁴⁴ Ridley, Aaron. “Nietzsche’s Greatest Weight”, *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, No. 14 (Autumn 1997), p. 24

⁷⁴⁵ *Ibid.* p. 22

⁷⁴⁶ *Ibid.* p. 24

⁷⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

and future meet at the 'gateway' which has the name 'moment'. Is the 'moment' a present moment, then? We believe not. *The moment of the 'moment' is the eternity of its eternal repetition*, not the momentariness of the present. It is only out of habit that we suppose that the moment of the *Augenblick* has to do with the present. How could Nietzsche support that the moment of the 'moment' (let's say: the first kiss, the first contact with your new-born child, etc., i.e. what Nietzsche wants to eternalize because *as* moment is infinite, which is to say invaluable) is a moment locked in an eternal present (even of a present which wishes to transcend itself)? Should we then speak of a transcendence of the moment? Is that eternity? We believe that this is not the case. The eternity that Nietzsche is after is not the eternity of a fetishized present whose value is going to be reflected on the future. It is the eternity of the return to the power of the primordality of the forces which constitute the human. In that sense there is no transcendence, because there is neither a final judge nor a retreat to a messianic beyond. Nietzsche's eternity is not an eternity of escape where one 'jumps out' of his situation and finds refuge in an imaginary beyond. There is neither beyond nor refuge, but only eternal return to the agonistic relation of the forces whose expression 'we' are. In that way one gets to love his fate, he gets to love the inevitability of his existence, i.e. the fact that his fate was to discover what was kept hidden from him: *pure force*, recognizing of neither good nor evil, only the exigency of expression; *in eternity*.

To be sure, this is what (on a first level) sovereignty is; the immense power that one needs in order to offer an alternative interpretation to the imminent collapse of the world. Sovereignty comes into the fore after the collapse of all meaning. Nihilism is the womb of sovereignty, as Nietzsche makes clear⁷⁴⁸. In many of his unpublished notes, Nietzsche presents the thought of the return as an alternative to the detrimental and ultimately nihilistic doctrines of the West, "in place of 'metaphysics' and religion, the theory of eternal recurrence (this as means of breeding and selection)."⁷⁴⁹ It is clear that in his private notes Nietzsche intends the thought of the return to stand as the new "cultivating idea"⁷⁵⁰ that humanity desperately needs. A doctrine which is going to teach 'pure immanence', a life dedicated to the attendance of man's primordial needs beyond the moralizations that culture imposes; a doctrine devoid of "hells or threats"⁷⁵¹ since it is only upon the sovereign man to build the monument of his

⁷⁴⁸ WP: 55. KSA: 12:5 [71]

⁷⁴⁹ WP: 462. KSA: 12:9 [8]

⁷⁵⁰ WP: 1056. KSA: 11:25 [227]

⁷⁵¹ Nietzsche, Friedrich. Notes from 1881, 11 [160] In: Ansell-Pearson, Keith & Large, Duncan. *The Nietzsche Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell. 2006, p. 240

existence and most importantly to live without a reference to something external which provides meaning to his existence.

Who can bear a life of ‘pure immanence’? Most probably, none. “It [the thought of the return] is the great cultivating idea: the races that cannot bear it stand condemned; those who find it the greatest benefit are chosen to rule [zur Herrschaft ausersehn].”⁷⁵² It is only to a race of men who have done away with the beyond that the thought of the return can be useful as a ‘selective machine’, where the few who are strong enough will be chosen to rule over the masses of the weak who depend for their existence on the dictates of their projected phantasies. Like Nietzsche’s meditations on politics, his unpublished notes experiment with an idea of rule (*Herrschaft*) not fully worked out. In the next section we are going to see how, in his published material, Nietzsche remains true to his fundamental insight into the nature of the human as a locus of forces eternally competing against each other. The *rule* there is going to refer to the rule of the one who dispenses with the very idea of the permanency of the rule over other forces. Instead of the construction of another doctrine explaining the whole of the human experience, Nietzsche will try to distance himself from the inflexibility of doctrines and he will turn toward the articulation of the moment of the recognition and illumination of all those latent, uncultivated forces of the human; a moment in which, in a truly Hegelian fashion, the master is going to recognize himself as truly dependent on the slave for the recognition of his existence.

Sovereignty in ruins.

TSZ opens with Zarathustra’s remarkable statement concerning the necessity of his *going under* [Ich muss...untergehen]⁷⁵³. *Untergehen* is a verb describing not only a descent (toward something) but also destruction. In that sense *Ich muss...untergehen* means: ‘I must destroy [myself]’ or ‘I must perish’. Commentators like Lampert⁷⁵⁴ and Rosen⁷⁵⁵ are right in underlining the importance of Zarathustra’s descent as the antipode to Platonic/Christian culture which *ascends* toward [divine] light (or turns *toward* light, as in Plato’s parable of the

⁷⁵² WP: 1053. KSA: 11:26 [376]

⁷⁵³ TSZ: Prologue:1

⁷⁵⁴ Lampert, Laurence. *Nietzsche’s teaching – An interpretation of Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. 1986, p.16

⁷⁵⁵ Rosen, Stanley. *The Mask of Enlightenment – Nietzsche’s Zarathustra*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 2004, p.28

cave) in its attempt to approach the transcendent truth. Zarathustra the teacher follows a different path. Instead of ascending, and leaving behind what he finds unworthy to the contemplation of the divine logos, he *descends* and takes with him (incorporates) everything that has been neglected by the Platonic/Christian culture: the data of experience, the experience of the body, senses, etc. All of the above is certainly true. However, one must not lose sight of Zarathustra's literal use of *untergehen*. Zarathustra *really* has to perish, *really* has to destroy himself, *really* has to beat himself to the ground, so to speak, if he is to be worthy of his vocation as the teacher of the one who goes *over*, the Overhuman.⁷⁵⁶ This literal use of *untergehen* is reinforced further in the text when Zarathustra makes an even more remarkable calling to one's self-destruction: "I love those who do not know how to live except by going under [als Untergehende], for they are those who go over and across."⁷⁵⁷ Here Zarathustra makes a rather powerful claim. He tells us that, unfortunately, and despite the plethora of self-help literature, ultimately there does *not* exist a guidebook in life, something that can guide us around this mystery of our lives. How sad, in a sense! We go blind in the dark, helpless and abandoned. Where from? Where to? As if the above is not enough, Zarathustra makes another claim. He does not simply say that we are left alone, but additionally that he, 'our' teacher, will give all his love *only* to those who will *live by destroying themselves*. To be able to *live beyond life*, beyond the burden of self-preservation, is to want to perish. Ultimately the Sovereign, the Overhuman, is going to be the human willing to abandon himself so that he can find himself⁷⁵⁸. This is what characterises the

⁷⁵⁶ Burnham & Jesinghausen successfully spot this literal and yet neglected use of *untergehen*. Burnham, Douglas & Jesinghausen, Martin. *Nietzsche's Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 2010, p.16

⁷⁵⁷ TSZ: Prologue: 4

⁷⁵⁸ Here, as well as in the following pages, the idea of *self-sacrifice* is prevalent. The Christian-sounding formulation of the sentence is indeed provocative and urges us to clarify the kind of sacrifice Nietzsche speaks about. Does Nietzsche rightly sound 'too Christian' with his idolization of self-sacrifice or does he speak for something other than what a Christian will understand? In her outstanding essay 'Justice and Gift-Giving in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*' Vanessa Lemm attempts to provide an answer to the above mentioned problem. Lemm maintains that the practice of *gift-giving* in Zarathustra is to be differentiated from that of charity and alms since while the former promotes the *distance* between the one and the other, acknowledging thus the "other's irreducible singularity", the latter promotes "a hierarchical relationship of domination which not only reinforces dependency and injustice but also stirs feelings of resentment and revenge." Lemm further argues that the crucial difference between Nietzschean and Christian sacrifice is the selflessness/egoism dichotomy. Christian sacrifice is only superficially selfless. In reality, it is the result of an impoverished will. The 'love for one's neighbour' only shows an absence of a self and someone who cannot 'stand himself'. Love for the neighbour is a compensation for the absence of the love to one's self. It is an attempt to 'compensate for one's own interior emptiness." On the contrary, the Nietzschean squanderer's self-sacrifice is an expression of an 'overflowing of the self'; the squanderer gives (he gives himself not objects) because he is too 'full of him', he *is* too much and thus he has to give away. Lemm notes that "Nietzsche compares the overflowing of the self...to the natural movement of a river overflowing its banks. Both movements are 'involuntary (*unfreiwillig*): they illustrate the idea that gift-giving is not an act which can be traced back to an intentional subject, a conscious decision, or a wilful act. Gift-giving occurs inevitably, fatefully, involuntary. The giver of gifts gives him- or herself over to

Overhuman. He is not the power that dominates, but rather the power that sacrifices [itself] so that he can further live *as* power.

This distinctly Nietzschean idea of a multifarious and yet interdependent ‘power’ or *form of life* is expressed in Nietzsche’s meditations on time, which are characterized by a Heraclitean sense of contradictions that wish to be taken seriously *as* contradictions. There is probably no one other than Gilles Deleuze who tried to capture Nietzsche’s need to understand the possibility for an understanding of time beyond the uninterrupted and non-contradictory linearity of Christian time. Deleuze’s powerful interpretation of Nietzsche came as a response to a demand to liberate Nietzsche from the many problems that the thought of the eternal return had created; more specifically, the problem of the inconsistency between the ‘straight line of evolution’, perceived as the life of the Overhuman, and the cosmic demand for infinite repetitions of cosmic circles, which the eternal return is supposed to be. This problem was already posited in Georg Simmel’s (1907) work on Schopenhauer and Nietzsche⁷⁵⁹. Deleuze argued that the *eternal return* does not refer to a return of identical events, but rather on the event of the return itself. What returns in the return is not ‘facts’ but the very act of returning⁷⁶⁰, which returns as eternally differing since being and becoming are intertwined: “That everything returns is the closest approximation of a world of becoming to a world of being...”⁷⁶¹ That Deleuze heavily relied on mistaken French translations for his undoubtedly original exposition of the return is now well-known.⁷⁶² However, this does not minimize his contribution to efforts to provide Nietzsche with a way out of the deadlock that his apparent insistence on the sameness of the same in which returns had trapped him. Deleuze was certainly right in insisting that a type of identical sameness would remove from Nietzsche his right to an educational philosophy of overcomings, which is something that we still ought to safeguard today. But Deleuze makes also another, rather problematic, move in two steps. First, he invents a dichotomy that is highly unlikely to ever have existed in Nietzsche’s work,

the other not because they are free to give, but because he or she is not free not to give.” Lemm’s essay: Lemm Vanessa. Justice and Gift-Giving in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, in: Luchte James. *Nietzsche’s Thus Spoke Zarathustra - Before Sunrise*. London: Continuum. 2008. pp.165-181

⁷⁵⁹ Simmel, Georg. *Schopenhauer and Nietzsche*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press. 1991, p. 175

⁷⁶⁰ Deleuze, Gilles. *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. Hugh Tomlinson (trans.) London: Continuum. 1986, p. 46

⁷⁶¹ WP: 617. KSA: 12:7[54]

⁷⁶² For more on this issue please see: D’Iorio, Paolo. “Nietzsche et l’éternel retour. Genèse et interprétation”, *Nietzsche. Cahiers de l’Herne* (Paris: l’Herne, 2000): 361-389.) For an English translation:

http://www.nietzschecircle.com/Pdf/Diorio_Chouraqui-FINAL_APRIL_2011.pdf, [Accessed 18 February 2014]

that between active and reactive forces⁷⁶³, and in a second step he understands what he calls ‘reactive forces’ as essentially nihilistic⁷⁶⁴. This requires him to deny the eternal return of ‘the reactive’ as inconsistent and contradictory to Nietzsche’s affirmative philosophy.⁷⁶⁵ In what follows we are going to elaborate a reading of the *same* as indeed *differing* (thus we will be as audacious as Deleuze was and perhaps equally unfaithful to the letter of Nietzsche’s exposition), *yet* we are going to base our presentation on sources, and a logic, different from the logic of Deleuze. The issue for us is to expose exactly what Deleuze finds unacceptable: the *intentional* contradictions at the very core of the thought of the return, contradictions that nevertheless are the offspring of Nietzsche’s agonistic understanding of power. It is from this womb that the vision of the Overhuman is born, and it is a vision that has hardly anything to do with the fetishization of being and an eternity which remains blind to the demands of the grand educational project of the ‘revaluation of all values’. Our reading of the return illuminates an Overhuman who is eternally unstable, an Overhuman whose very sovereignty consists on holding nothing for himself, and his power, his sovereignty, consists in sustaining that which constantly threatens to annihilate him.

In GS and EH, references to the thought of the return are clear and unambiguous. The thought of the return is an experiment aimed at evaluating one’s disposition toward life. From Nietzsche’s phrasing in GS, it is clear that the question is only suited as an experiment aiming to expose how ‘well disposed’ one is toward life and his life. Nietzsche does not occupy himself with analysing the virtues of the eternal repetition of the same, since those are in every case impossible to locate. The eternal return of identity would oppose Nietzsche’s educational program regarding the fight against the long process of incorporation of errors and superstitions during man’s long period of what Kant called ‘self-incurred immaturity’. Nietzsche’s educational program, though, is not one that leads to a final point of illumination (one is never illuminated enough) but rather to the realization (and the subsequent demand for their utilization) of the latent forces at the very heart of human existence, forces that have

⁷⁶³ “Neither the word nor the concept of ‘reactive forces’ ever appears in Nietzsche’s philosophy” *Ibid.* Also: Cf. Brusotti, "Die 'Selbstverkleinerung des Menschen' in der Moderne. Studie zu Nietzsches 'Zur Genealogie der Moral'," *Nietzsche-Studien*, 21 (1992): 83, 102, 103; Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1962), 46-47 *passim*. To be sure Nietzsche *does* speak for reactive affects or reactive men, as in GM:II, 11, but this has nothing to do with the concept of a reactive force. Rather than reactive [Kraft] Nietzsche utilizes the concept of *resistance* [*Widerstehen*] in order to express the antithetical and yet interrelated life of the *Macht*, as in KSA: 13: 14 [79] and 12: 9 [151].

⁷⁶⁴ Deleuze, Gilles. *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. *Ibid.* p. 64-65

⁷⁶⁵ “The eternal return of the mean, small, reactive man notably makes the thought of the eternal return unbearable, it also makes the eternal return itself impossible; it puts contradiction into the eternal return.” *Ibid.* p. 65

been made latent by forces both external (e.g. the civilizing process) and internal (e.g. idleness and cowardice for Kant and, in a similar fashion, complacency for Nietzsche) to the human. Instead, then, of a passive observance of repetition, the thought of the return is structurally linked to an experience of living aiming at the liberation of man from history, to the extent that history is perceived as the fulfilment of a 'project', and the immersion in the eternity of the forces constituting man. Nietzsche's opposition to teleological explanations of history and the human finds its ultimate expression in the experience of the thought of the return.

In a *Nachlass* note from 1883, Nietzsche notes: "The absolute necessity of a total liberation from ends: otherwise we should not be permitted to try to sacrifice ourselves and let ourselves go. Only the innocence of becoming gives us the *greatest courage* and the *greatest freedom!*"⁷⁶⁶ The note is interesting for many reasons and it can be argued that it paves the way to our reading of the thought of the return. The note's compelling claim is the link between the exigency of man's disengagement from any logic of *teloi* and the prospect of absolute freedom which this liberation promises. Improvement is a key notion in Christian religion, and ascetic practices necessarily accompany a life dedicated to self-cultivation with regard to transcendental aims. In his GM, Nietzsche has shown how the ascetic life that the priest imposes as a value upon the masses of the heteronomous slaves has hindered their realisation of the immensity of the forces which constitute them and has forever sealed them in a protective cocoon against the threat of nihilism, i.e. the threat of having to 'dare' to create their own meaning of their existence. But Nietzsche makes also another, perhaps more audacious, claim. He asserts that the freedom one gets from the innocence of becoming is not so much a freedom *from* X or Y, but rather a freedom to something very specific, namely self-sacrifice⁷⁶⁷. He insists that the alternative vision to the current Western model of living life according to a project is the utter disassociation of human existence from the bounds of existence itself. Nietzsche's abhorrence of a life of mere survival is well-known, but on this note he calls for something more. We have to be ready, at all times, to let ourselves go, to sacrifice ourselves. Man is not to be the animal fighting for his 'right' to existence (to *be* is a privilege anyway); as long as he does that he dedicates his life to something petty, i.e. to himself.⁷⁶⁸ Modern humanity's quest to find itself is grossly misdirected. We have to look

⁷⁶⁶ WP: 787. KSA: 10:8 [19]

⁷⁶⁷ TSZ: On the Bestowing virtue

⁷⁶⁸ Admittedly 'our' narcissistic generation of 'virtual' internet figures hiding behind self-constructed profiles of an imagined life has elevated pettiness into something like a form of art. Public discourse has been replaced by

elsewhere! "...for your true nature lies, not concealed deep within you, but immeasurably high above you, or at least above that which you usually take yourself to be."⁷⁶⁹ Nietzsche turns the usual method of evaluation of humans upside down. Despite of the cries of liberals, democrats, Christians, and other moderns, your value does not lie in *yourself*, value is neither natural nor God-given. Your value lies in that to which you have dedicated yourself: in your work. And the ultimate value of this work is the courage to sacrifice everything to which you have dedicated your life to, like a great author whose act of greatness consists on burning all of his work or a painter who decides to destroy his paintings, not because they are not nice, but because one has to release oneself even from the necessities of self-honour. *Then, one becomes finally and for the first time free.*

We have seen before how Zarathustra's inaugural speech conveys the ambivalence of a movement that has to be a *going under* so that it can eventually be also a *going over*. Transitions and movements of this sort are prevalent throughout TSZ and they reach their peak at every mention of the thought of the return. The chapter 'On Convalescent' is one of those characteristic moments of Nietzschean dialectics where opposites meet only to be melted into a whole which is going to move the narrative forward. The chapter is concerned with the fate of the lowest, of that which does not deserve existence since all it can do is to accuse and debase it. Zarathustra is horrified at the idea that he may himself have to be what he loathes most: an accuser of humanity. Why does Zarathustra even dare to contemplate such a defeatist thought? How could he, the eulogist of all joy which comes from attending to the needs of the earth and of those who live according to nature's (chaotic) demands, turn against his own mission? Yet, Zarathustra confesses to his animals life's enigmatic teaching: "Ah, my animals, this alone have I learned so far, that for the human its most evil is necessary for its best" and that the human "must become better *and* more evil."⁷⁷⁰ The West has advanced so far by a process of *exclusion*, which was originally based on the Platonic teaching concerning the contemplation of the Forms. Nietzsche wishes to overturn the Platonic/Christian model of exclusion by advancing an interpretation of the human which is based on incorporation. The new type of the human advanced by Nietzsche is not going to exclude the other but incorporate it; that is the meaning of Zarathustra's advice to become more evil. We have to welcome what until now has been deemed unworthy, evil, inferior;

narcissistic monologues and the 'work' of a man's unique life has been replaced by posted photos of friendly strangers. *Nietzsche knows best though.*

⁷⁶⁹ UM: Schopenhauer as Educator: 1

⁷⁷⁰ TSZ: On Convalescent

only by this process of incorporation eventually we are going to *learn*; the rest is cowardice, in the most Kantian sense. Naturally, the process is not going to be easy. In a note from 1887 Nietzsche observes: “The time has come when we have to pay for having been Christians for two thousand years.”⁷⁷¹ The thought of incorporation is difficult to swallow even for Zarathustra. He literally chokes at the idea of a ‘great loathing for the human’. And yet he has to accept the greatest of all thoughts, that the love of his fate and the eternal return of all things demands also the return of the most despicable, of the most nauseating form of human animal, the return of the lowest: the last human, the complacent bourgeois, the Christian, the socialist, the democrat, the cultural philistine. “Ah, disgust! disgust! disgust!” cries Zarathustra at the realization of the necessity of the eternal return of the smallest human being⁷⁷².

To be sure, Zarathustra does not endorse the return of something changed, but the return of the same conditions that bring about life as a possibility of growth and incorporation. A few lines further, Zarathustra insists that he will eternally return to “this self-same life [*zu diesem gleichen und selbigen Leben*]...not to a new life or a better life or a similar life”⁷⁷³. Is this equivalent with the return of the identical? Nietzsche clearly believes that the life which returns is the same as the life already lived. Yet his rhetoric gets ahead of him, since it promotes something qualitatively different to what even Nietzsche believes that he endorses. The typical example is ‘The drunken song’ from the fourth part of TSZ. There Zarathustra praises *Joy*, for it wants all eternity. A life of joy seeks to incorporate in it everything that up to now has been left outside the corpus of ‘approved’ life for the humans. Joy wants all that life has to offer, beyond judgments and exclusions. Indeed, “so rich is joy that she thirsts for woe, for Hell, for hate, for disgrace, for the cripple, for *world*... You superior humans, it is for you that she yearns, this joy, intractable, blissful for your woe, you that have failed! For failures does all eternal joy yearn.”⁷⁷⁴ The passage raises many problems in relation to the thought of the return. What does it *precisely* mean that joy seeks the return of hate? It possibly means that joy, which wishes the return of all things, wishes also the incorporation of such a fundamental source of human knowledge as *hate*. According to Nietzsche’s agonistic model of life (power), one (one person, one culture) is the locus of antithetical forces fighting for victory. The ‘victory’ of a force is the recognition of the power of the other

⁷⁷¹ WP: 30. KSA: 13:11 [148]

⁷⁷² TSZ: On Convalescent.

⁷⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷⁴ TSZ: The drunken song

force. Joy, then, would not be a joy at all if it didn't seek the other which completes it. It needs the other the same way the master in Hegel's Phenomenology needs the slave in order to recognize him. However, Nietzsche goes one step further. Joy also needs Hell [Hölle]! Is the mention of hell made in order to exaggerate the conditions of resistance that joy needs in order to express itself, or as a premonition of the Christian condemnation that awaits this overfull joy which seeks all eternity? What does it mean precisely to suggest that through the thought of the return humanity should wish also the return of hell? Does it mean that humanity should seek the return of the conditions that will bring her [humanity] down?

The next line further complicates the matter. Zarathustra, turning to the 'superior humans' (those who pave the way to the Overhuman but who are not yet Overhumans themselves), warns them that "it is for you that she yearns this joy...for your woe, you that have failed! For failures does all eternal joy yearns."⁷⁷⁵ What does it *precisely* mean to say that *joy*, which wants all eternity, seeks also the eternal return of failures? According to the agonistic model of power, a force, as long as it resists, it can maintain itself both in life and in the agon. But what about failures? What about those who have simply failed to maintain themselves in the agon? Do they disappear? Here Nietzsche seems to suggest that even the most nauseating element in life will return also, because the joy of life, the willingness to incorporate the whole range of human experience, is so great that joy will not exclude anything. Nietzsche is on thin ice here. On the one hand he has repeatedly asserted the return to this 'self-same' life which is not going to be either 'new' or 'similar', and on the other hand he declares the return of failures as if what has failed is not going to change the kind of life that one lives! To seek the return of all woe and all hell is not simply to seek the return of conditions of resistance; it is to actively seek that which can potentially *fundamentally* upset the very conditions of life. It is not the case that the return wishes the return of an opposite. The return here seeks that which will perhaps challenge the very conditions of the return itself. Otherwise a 'hell' is not hell, but something simply unpleasant. The chapter 'The drunken song' is Heraclitean in the most precise fashion, because it upsets every rule of logic⁷⁷⁶ and yet it wants its fundamental suggestion to be taken seriously: that *joy*, a life beyond the exclusions of the Western/Christian paradigm, is not afraid to seek its own failure as well.

⁷⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷⁶ E.g. "Pain is also joy, curse is also a blessing, night is also a sun –be gone! or you will learn: a wise man is also a fool" TSZ: The drunken song: 10

But the above cannot be a declaration of pessimism and a testimony of defeat. If it were that, then Silenus would have had to be right after all, and man's short sojourn upon the earth had to be *in vain*. On another occasion, Nietzsche has warned all those who tend to spend themselves extravagantly (the 'higher types') that they should learn to conserve themselves, since this is the "greatest test of independence"⁷⁷⁷. To say that one has to be ready to wish failure is not the same with saying that one has to wish the eternal return of the *conditions* of failure. In the former is getting ready to accept defeat while in the latter wishes to incorporate the whole of life back to the cultural paradigm of the present. But Nietzsche is also telling us something else: that the wish of the return of the *conditions* of failure brings back the issue of the agonistic relation not only to one's own self but also to one's contemporaries. Ultimately one has to conserve himself against the fashions and the clamouring crowds of his times so that he can be ready to throw himself to the *right* sort of agon. To be sure, there are *competitions* of all kinds, and then there are *agons*. Competitions are what the Roman crowds in the Colosseum (and their contemporary equivalence in public arenas) craved: in some cases an exhibition of sheer power, in other cases exhibitions of (so-called) beauty, possessiveness of *things*, etc. The end of competition is the annihilation of the other. *The first is first and the second is nothing*, as the popular saying goes. In *agonistic* contests, on the other hand, the aim is the consolidation of the power of the one through the consolidation of the power of the other. There is a dialectic of forces at work here aiming again at an eternal *aufhebung*, not at a final stage of closure. "And all the people laughed at Zarathustra."⁷⁷⁸ Zarathustra *comes to learn* to conserve himself and not be wasted to pointless competitions. The crowds will never be ready to hear his message. He has thus to conserve himself for those who are ready (if any is), he has to prepare himself for the right sort of agons, for worthy opponents⁷⁷⁹ whose opposition to him will ultimately honour him.

Living wastefully. Concluding Remarks.

In their engagement with TSZ, Burnham & Jesinghausen stress the future-oriented character of the book and suggest that the question which the book wishes to pose is the following:

⁷⁷⁷ BGE: 41

⁷⁷⁸ TSZ: Zarathustra's prologue

⁷⁷⁹ EH: Why I am so wise: 7

“What does the future look like, and how can it be achieved?”⁷⁸⁰ Upon reading the suggested question a great sadness falls upon the human heart. Is there anything uncannier for humans today? Isn't it exactly this so-called 'future' that humanity has been deprived of through its long training in submission and the narrowness of its intellectual horizon to the one-dimensionality of a path which fails to do justice to the multiplicity of the forces that constitute this betrayed animal going by the name of human? It took someone audacious enough to dare to imagine the unimaginable: not *another* future⁷⁸¹ but rather the possibility of a *multiplicity of futures*. Zarathustra is certainly Nietzsche's reinvention of the Titan Prometheus. Both of them reinvent human beginnings by placing the origin of the human not in an act of submission (obedience before God) but on an act of *hubris*. Both of them steal from Gods what belongs to the Gods and offer it to the humans as a *gift*. If the West is going to break the spell of its Semitic origins, with all of its morbid appeal of death, then it has to educate itself with different myths from those on which it has based its education so far. Simply put, both Prometheus and Zarathustra suggest the unthinkable: that man is not and never was guilty of anything. The future then becomes the contemplation of something of which we do not know. *What does innocence look like?*

Zarathustra is forced to speak from a place of luminosity. His preaching is playful and his messages ambiguous because he doesn't obey the Platonic paradigm of propositional philosophy.⁷⁸² But he is not the new Christ, even if Nietzsche sets the scene for it, because Zarathustra teaches neither a dogma nor promises any salvation. Ultimately his disciples have to invent their own way; otherwise, they are going to be reduced to the level of the imitating ape. Zarathustra begins by offending (the Gods, history, little humans); his movement belongs to obscenity. He is hard to digest. “*I think as a girl takes off her dress. At the extremity of its movement, thought is indecency, even obscenity.*”⁷⁸³ Zarathustra is indeed indecent, since he dares to challenge the established history of humanity and demand the right of *futures* for the humans. Heraclitus was outraged at the inability of his fellows to understand the obvious: that *it is possible for A to be both A and not-A at the same time*⁷⁸⁴!

⁷⁸⁰ Burnham, Douglas & Jesinghausen, Martin. *Nietzsche's Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 2010, p. 6

⁷⁸¹ The point is not by simply subverting the current cultural paradigm to suggest the opposite. The point is the creation of those conditions that they will allow humanity to flourish under conditions of multiple paradigms.

⁷⁸² For an excellent treatment of Nietzsche's therapeutic philosophy see: Hutter Horst. *Shaping the future – Nietzsche's new regime of the soul and its ascetic practices*. Lanham: Lexington Books. 2006. Chapter One. Philosophy as Therapy and the Therapy of Philosophy. pp.9-47

⁷⁸³ Bataille, Georges. *Essential Writings*. *Op.cit.* p. 145

⁷⁸⁴ See: TEGP: Fragment: 70 [F41]

Zarathustra finds nothing strange about that. Only Socrates could find it impossible. Zarathustra reinvents a line of contemplating that was long lost due to the omnipotence of the Christianized Platonism over the history of the West. But the time is up. Zarathustra gives a *gift* to the humans and he does that from within a movement of profound joy, which inaugurates something unprecedented: a thinking that belongs to life, not of death. *How does one live?* With this question philosophy can truly begin. “See, there is no above, no below! Throw yourself around, and out, and back, you who are light! Sing! Speak no more!”⁷⁸⁵

It is obvious that the stand which we have taken in our reading of the thought of the eternal return is close to what has been called the ‘existential reading’⁷⁸⁶, which is a reading concentrating on the transformative effect that the thought of the return may have upon the lives of individuals. It is a reading that wishes to remain faithful to the overall picture of Nietzsche’s thinking, sometimes (given Nietzsche’s own endorsement of a cosmological reading of the return) even in spite of him. What is important for us is to highlight the precise way with which the thought of the return influences and is ultimately able to transform individual lives. “*I bring human beings a present*”⁷⁸⁷, Zarathustra exclaims after having confessed his love for the humans. The ‘present’ of Zarathustra, the teaching of the Overhuman, from the very beginning implicates his audience in a logic of profound selfishness which is inspired not by religious feelings of abandonment of the self, but rather by an attempt to re-discover a self long lost under the debris of civilization. Zarathustra does not give to the humans because he is compelled by pity. Zarathustra is pitiless. He gives because he cannot do otherwise. Like the sun of Bataille, Zarathustra gives because this is his fate and he cannot but love it. Zarathustra’s gift to the humans is to teach them the necessity of *loss* as a prerequisite of sovereignty, where the latter indicates the overhuman movement of the overcoming of the history of the West as a history of submission. If the humans want to overcome the current state of their one-dimensional civilization, they have to be ready to let themselves go, to perish, to lose what they have been trained to think of as ‘theirs’. Zarathustra warns his disciples that “only when you have all denied me will I return to you.”⁷⁸⁸

⁷⁸⁵ TSZ: The seven Seals

⁷⁸⁶ People like Richard Schacht, John Richardson, Tracy Strong, Kathleen Higgins, Bernd Magnus, Alexander Nehamas and Maudemerie Clark are among those embracing this reading.

⁷⁸⁷ TSZ: Prologue: 2

⁷⁸⁸ TSZ: On the bestowing virtue

What the humans have to deny is nothing less than their history. By history we mean the way with which a people, a civilization or an individual unfold(s) their dynamic based on an (imagined) myth of origin⁷⁸⁹. For this reason, history depends absolutely on its founding (imagined) myths. Nietzsche detects that the West has been unfolded according to a myth which, instead of letting humans realizing their full potential, has, on the contrary, severely limited their horizon. One of the fundamental tenets of the mythopoeic religious thought of the West is the need for the alignment of existence to an (imaginary) meaning-providing future which can only be achieved through the utilization of ascetic practices. The myth of the future is fundamentally linked with the thought of death as the extreme limit of the possibility of existence and as the sole provider of sense in what otherwise is a senseless existence. Thus humans have to be made to learn to invest onto their existence, the way an estate agent invests in a piece of property at the hope that one day he will be rewarded. Production takes the place of life. Production has no place for loss. A factory cannot afford to lose. On the contrary, life, as the expression of antithetical forces at work, is the principle stage of loss. *One only loses by living*. Every Beckett hero knows that. But it is not just any loss. It is not that one loses something which he then can regain. Neither is there any kind of compensation or security against loss. *One loses always*. And not just that; one must wish to relive the experience of loss again and again, in eternity.

Is that defeatist? It could be, if the defeat had to do with the recurrence of a loss of production, but here we are on the other side of production. We are on the side of an existence which, according to Bataille, has become *sovereign* since it has liberated itself from the logic of 'future projects' and has embraced a principle of *profound loss* (of power among other things⁷⁹⁰). We are on the side of *life* which does not lose 'stuff' in its advancement toward a final goal but rather *gains* at the very moment of its loss. What it gains is certainly eternity, since life gets to realize that the eternity of forces was always 'here' at the moment of the eruption which constitutes the *Augenblick*. What Nietzsche calls the Overhuman is indeed linked to a fundamental experience of time, but it is the experience of a *temps perdu*, a time that, as a gradual advancement toward a pre-arranged goal, has been lost. The Overhuman is the master of the lost time, *the master of all which gets lost*. The thought of the return is the thought with which we lose time. The time which gets lost is the time of

⁷⁸⁹ Origins are always imagined, since they are idealistic projections. However, this does not diminish their vitality and power, and neither is their ideality an argument against them (as it is not an argument against religion that religious feelings are human projections).

⁷⁹⁰ Bataille, Georges. *Essential Writings*. *Op.cit.* p. 190

capitalist production and Christian redemption. The future for which Nietzsche prepares humanity is to be radically different from the comfortable lives of late humans promised by the capitalist machine or the redeemed lives of ‘saved’ Christians and other religious characters. Indeed Nietzsche’s philosophy is one of the future, but it is an unknown future for which the humans of today can predict nothing. The question then of ‘What does innocence look like?’ finds no answer in the present time. We are in ignorance of the human after the revaluation of all values. But if we accept with Nietzsche that “the total character of the world...is for all eternity chaos, not in the sense of a lack of necessity but of a lack of order, organization, form, beauty, wisdom, and whatever else our aesthetic anthropomorphisms are called”⁷⁹¹, then we ‘ought’ to *throw existence again back into the primordial chaos from which it had originally sprung* without safeguards and securities. This would be a time of true sovereignty, beyond the anthropomorphisms of ‘good’ and ‘evil’ and the hesitations of an existence which for too long has been pampered by the comforts of salvation.

⁷⁹¹ GS: 109

Conclusion

*Alguna vez, tal vez, encontraremos
refugio en la realidad verdadera.*

'Perhaps sometime we'll find refuge
in true reality.'

Alejandra Pizarnik, *El infierno
musical*

I am neither man nor beast. I am
something new entirely. My own set
of rules.

From "*Dexter*", Season 1, episode 4

Toward the future.⁷⁹²

Contemplating the reasons for Greek cultural superiority over Judeo-Christianity, Nietzsche observes that the Greeks had managed to incorporate all elements of human expression into a whole, in which all that was considered ‘lower’ or even ‘evil’ was concentrated. These forces Greeks found ‘inescapable’. Instead, then, of repudiating what could be considered as ‘foreign’, ‘alien’, or ‘harmful’, it was thought best to *regulate* those elemental forces and shape them into something going beyond an opposition that was likely to lead nowhere. “This is the root of all moral free-mindedness of antiquity. One granted to the evil and suspicious, to the animal and backward, likewise to the barbarian, the pre-Greek and Asiatic, that still lived on the foundations of the Hellenic nature, a moderate discharge, and did not strive after their total annihilation.”⁷⁹³ In this way Greeks had achieved the ideal of an ‘exemplary life’ which consists “in a fullness of heart that does not exclude even the lowliest.”⁷⁹⁴ Nietzsche

⁷⁹² In an interview, Jacques Derrida has commented: “In general, I try and distinguish between what one calls the Future and “l’avenir” [the ‘to come’]. The future is that which – tomorrow, later, next century – will be. There is a future which is predictable, programmed, scheduled, foreseeable. But there is a future, l’avenir (to come) which refers to someone who comes whose arrival is totally unexpected. For me, that is the real future; that which is totally unpredictable; the Other who comes without my being able to anticipate their arrival. So if there is a real future, beyond the other known future, it is l’avenir in that it is the coming of the Other when I am completely unable to foresee their arrival.” Leaving aside Derrida’s messianic tone, let us make two important comments, the first regarding the language of direction (toward, aim, prepare, etc.) which is used in abundance in this thesis, and the second regarding the nature of the ‘future’. When it comes to the first, it was Aristotle who first recognized the human as a goal-oriented animal in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. In our first chapter we made the distinction between micro-goal activity (the activities of everyday life, e.g. wake up, make a coffee, read a book, etc.) and macro-progress ideologies (the ideologies of the ‘improvers of humanity’ who establish an heteronomous and dominating relation between the human and the ideologies who guide it). That the human is a goal-oriented animal does not contradict our thesis in the fourth chapter regarding the sovereign unproductivity of the Overhuman. The Overhuman directs itself toward a goal that nevertheless remains open. One conquers a height only to discover that there is another height to be conquered as well, or one conquers a height only to discover than then has to *descend* in order to *ascend* again to the following height. (I owe the imagery to Douglas Burnham from a private conversation) To our view the human is the animal which orients itself toward the infinite opening of the future. Anything else (an immovable animal, so to speak) would be absurd. This brings us to our second point, the ‘future’. Toward *what* is one who orients himself to the future directed? For us, the future does not indicate a closure, the place which one reaches after a long journey, but rather the *opening*. The *opening* refers to the event of the embrace of the radical indeterminacy of the human animal. The *opening* stays true to Nietzsche’s non-definition of the human as given in BGE: 62 (“humans are *the still undetermined animals*”). The *opening* wishes the (infinite) return of the human to the indeterminacy which constitutes it, *without* however giving up the task of opposing the history of morality and the institutions which have produced human animals so far. The difference between Derrida’s *Other* and Nietzsche’s Overhuman, then, is that while the former arrives totally unpredictably (and thus one – one individual, one culture – does *not* have to prepare for his arrival) the latter has been envisaged. The Overhuman places a *great demand* on us (*He* is not thus some kind of undemanding and loving father): the demand to *resist* the diminution and domestication of man which has lasted for too long. The *Other* stands in a passive relation to the history of humanity (*He* comes only to forgive, Derrida would say) whereas the Overhuman seeks to be actively involved in human history through acts of resistance that have to be undertaken by the warlike *preparatory human beings* (GS: 283). For Derrida’s interview: *Derrida*. (Directors) Kirby Dick and Amy Ziering Kofman. Film. Jane Doe Films. 2002. I thank Professor David Webb for his valuable comments on this matter.

⁷⁹³ HATH, Assorted Opinions: 220

⁷⁹⁴ WP: 169. KSA: 13:11 [275]

rightly detects⁷⁹⁵ that this attitude toward life could not have been achieved without the help of the most *intricate part of community*⁷⁹⁶, which is religion.

One of the most wondrous things about this strange people, the Greeks, was that they had created for themselves a sort of religion which reflected and promoted their agonistic culture, a religion which was based on the multiple *agons* among Gods and humans while simultaneously lacking any extra-worldly moral order to which the individual and the community had unquestioningly to obey. Not democracy, as ‘modernity’ wants it, but (the specifically Greek form of) *polytheism*, is the crowning achievement of the Greek people, and it is only because of polytheism that all subsequent developments in the field of culture became possible in the Greek world. This is because polytheism generated and promoted a culture of *agon* from which not even the Gods are excluded. Polytheism’s “multiplicity always implies opposition. Hera against Zeus, Aphrodite against Artemis, Dionysus against Apollo.”⁷⁹⁷ Famously, Greek religion knows of no *thou shalt not(s)*; the moral ‘management’ of the world is a matter of apportionment (*moira*) where both humans and Gods are supposed to respect the boundaries which guard each’s authority⁷⁹⁸. “What happens on the other side of the boundary does not affect [each God]”, the leading authority in Greek religion observes, and he continues: “Asylum attaches to the sanctuary ... elsewhere one may murder. Man must chart a course between numerous claims and necessities; piety is shrewdness and caution. This, of course, gives polytheism its ability to embrace a richly various reality without evading contradictions and without being forced to deny a part of the world. What is more, man is left a sphere of freedom beyond the satisfied claims; for this reason law and ethics could develop among the Greeks as human wisdom, free and yet in harmony with the god; wise sayings and laws are engraved on temple walls, but they are always regarded as human endeavour, not divine revelation.”⁷⁹⁹ It is with Greek polytheism, then, that for the first (and last) time in the West, the possibility (Nietzsche calls it “*the first great synthesis*”⁸⁰⁰) of a *free* man is born; a man whose value is measured not by the level of his obedience but by the audacity of his revolt. Civilization is born and with it a man *unruly*,

⁷⁹⁵ GM: II, 23

⁷⁹⁶ Durkheim, Emile. *The elementary forms of the religious life*. Joseph Ward Swain. (trans.) London: George Allen & Unwin LTD. 1915, p. 47

⁷⁹⁷ Burkert, Walter. *Greek Religion*. John Raffan (trans.) London: Blackwell Publishing. 1985, p. 248

⁷⁹⁸ This does not mean that Greeks ever actually respect these boundaries. The contrary is mostly the case. Homeric heroes constantly overcome divine boundaries, while the very beginning of civilization becomes possible only because of Prometheus’ profound defiance of Gods’ boundaries.

⁷⁹⁹ Burkert, Walter. *Greek Religion*. *Ibid.* p. 248. See also GS: 143

⁸⁰⁰ WP: 1051. KSA: 11:41 [6]

stubborn, determined, but also culturally equipped to move flexibly among alternatives and strong enough to be able to incorporate within him the wholeness of the world's experience. But a culture like that was not meant to endure. Endurance requires homogenization, and the multifariousness of Greek polytheism possibly broke down the forces which were kept in a constant state of agonistic (i.e. fragile) togetherness. Nietzsche has foreseen it: "the higher type represents an incomparably greater complexity – a greater sum of co-ordinated elements: so its disintegration is also incomparably more likely. The 'genius' is the sublimest machine there is – consequently the most fragile."⁸⁰¹ So the 'fragile machine' of Greek culture breaks, and with it the West enters into a long period of darkness which will give birth to a new type of the human as yet unprecedented upon the earth.

Christianity represents the counter-ideal of the Greek world. As the successor to the Platonic idealization of a projected 'meta'-natural world, Christianity knows only one path to salvation, and this path passes through negation, not affirmation. Christianity "has waged a war to the death against this higher type of person" [which the Greeks had created] by 'banning' all forceful constituting instincts of this exemplary form of life and excluding them from the formation of its own 'ideal' human type.⁸⁰² The old era which generated a 'plurality of norms'⁸⁰³ gives way to Christianity's new model of life, which is binary: here and there, nature and the Beyond, good and evil; the old model is deemed dangerous, perhaps even too difficult to follow. If the old piety required 'shrewdness', man's utilization of all his forces and abilities in order to direct himself into the world, the new model required nothing more than blind obedience. An ethics of *either/or* is relatively easy and requires no special abilities.

To be sure, the consequences of this decision are enormous and they have sealed the fate of humanity for many centuries to come. Nietzsche is clear that this unprecedented devaluation of life will not go unpunished.⁸⁰⁴ Humanity cannot just *jump over* its history and phantasize a future liberated from history. This would be an unforgivable return to idealism. There is simply not a post-historical stand from which one can view human history. Every stand is historical⁸⁰⁵. This naturally creates a significant problem both for Nietzsche, as the one trying to utter a discourse of and by the future, and for us as participants in his web of thought. Simply put: What does the Overhuman look like who stands not beyond history (for then we

⁸⁰¹ WP: 684. KSA: 13:14 [133]

⁸⁰² AC: 5, also WP: 845. KSA: 12:2 [114]

⁸⁰³ GS: 143

⁸⁰⁴ WP: Preface 2. KSA: 12:9 [35]. Also WP: 30. KSA: 13:11 [148]

⁸⁰⁵ Although there is always the possibility of an imminent *end of history* which will mark the end of the human endeavour upon earth. But beyond history *is* nothing and so it is of no concern to us.

would have to speak for an Overhuman theology, which in this work we did not) but at a historical point where he is to be considered humanity's most cherished accomplishment and the consequence of another historical route? The millennia-long training of humanity in the school of depreciation of life has left present-day humans with no clear picture of what the future could look like after the demise of the Christian/Western paradigm. Nietzsche does not pretend that he can see beyond the cultural fog of today, and neither should we, since that would simply be hypocrisy. Nietzsche is, after all, as we all are, a decadent [*décadent*]⁸⁰⁶, and as such is implicated with the mechanisms of a culture which produces humans as sick and failed animals.⁸⁰⁷ But aside from decadent, he (but not necessarily *we*) is also “the *opposite* of a *décadent*”⁸⁰⁸ since he has trained himself in fruitful contests (i.e. contests that have been lost⁸⁰⁹), as well as in a profound disregard for the ideals of today.⁸¹⁰ For these reasons he is able to express, even if only in a fragmentary and incomplete way, a vision concerning the future which remains, however, *foreign* to us, insofar as we are immersed in our cultural present and the conditions that made possible our sickness. We have tried to track this vision in this work, and we have worked throughout with the most basic of materials, since nothing concrete was given to us except for some thoughts on the need for new cultural principles, a few meditations on the political constitution of the future, some reflections on the psychological constitution of mankind, and finally an experiment in something *other* than time. Yet behind Nietzsche's half-finished meditations lurks a *persistence* that is unprecedented in his work, as well as a deep concern for a thought that is destined to overcome the bounds of its cultural context and respond to needs primordial and yet also timeless.

In a series of aphorisms⁸¹¹ Nietzsche has expressed the counter-ideal which the figure of the Overhuman exemplifies. The Christian/West is accused of forgetting the most important lesson that (Nietzsche's) Greeks taught: that it is futile to try to eradicate some of the antithetical forces that constitute human existence in favour of some other forces which are deemed ‘good’ or ‘life-enhancing’ depending on their use by institutions. Instead of condemning the ‘other’, Nietzsche calls for a ‘reverse’ experiment where the ‘other’ will be incorporated into the main body of culture and, it is expected, will fertilize it and make it

⁸⁰⁶ EH: Why I am so wise: 2

⁸⁰⁷ AC: 14

⁸⁰⁸ EH: Why I am so wise: 2

⁸⁰⁹ See Chapter Four.

⁸¹⁰ BGE: 212

⁸¹¹ Some of them: WP: 881, 966, 983, 1027, 1050, 1051. (KSA: 12:10 [111], 11:27 [59], 11:27 [60], 12:9 [154], 13:14 [14], 11:41 [6]). Also: GS: 4, 135, 370.

stronger and more dynamic. The Overhuman will encapsulate all those forces that have been forcefully made latent by the cataclysmic power of the Christian/Western paradigm, and will reappropriate on behalf of the earth what belongs to the earth — its most precious offspring, the human animal.⁸¹² This new ‘being’ is going to express forces that have not yet been expressed among living beings on earth. He is going to be the *second great unity and synthesis*. In this ‘being’ the most contradictory forces and the ‘greatest multiplicity of drives’⁸¹³ will be concentrated. There is nothing new about this as a cultural ideal. The Greeks held it before, and since the demise of their civilization this ideal had been expressed here and there but always *accidentally*. Goethe was such a happy accident, and Napoleon another; and various artists and thinkers among the centuries have incorporated it. For Nietzsche the problem lies in how one safeguards the maintenance of the highest degree of forces while simultaneously protecting the oppositional core of their relation. Due to the fragility of the system (extreme pressure exercised by all forces involved), in the past this has been proved, in the long run, unattainable. Nietzsche suspects that the long-run sustainability of the system can be guaranteed only if the cultural and other institutions of any given society work toward the cultivation of those conditions which will eventually allow the strengthening of the system in such a degree so as to endure the high intensity of the forces involved⁸¹⁴. In a *Nachlass* note from 1885, he sets the problem of the emergency of a setting of task(s) for the preparatory humans of today: “The great question and the great duty [Aufgabe] is coming closer, irrefutably, hesitantly, terrible as fate. How can the earth be managed as a whole? And toward which direction the human as a whole—and no longer a people, a race—will it be pulled and for what it will be bred?”⁸¹⁵ This is, then, the story of the institutional preparation of a future type of human which will achieve the double aim of the highest contradictions wedded to the highest degree of unity. The role of a culture and the role of humanity as a whole are to prepare the arrival of such a type. The measure of their worth is to be judged according to the degree of their dedication to the task. Nothing else matters⁸¹⁶.

To be sure, Nietzsche describes a process that belongs wholly to the future; not to the chronological future, but rather to an era after the overcoming of the current cultural conditions. It is highly doubtful that such an era will ever arrive. Certainly the state of our

⁸¹² TSZ: Zarathustra’s prologue: 3

⁸¹³ WP: 966. KSA: 11:27 [59]

⁸¹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸¹⁵ KSA: 11: 37 [8] My translation.

⁸¹⁶ KSA: 12: 10 [59] On the problem of the value of the human, see also: Siemens, Herman. “Yes, No, Maybe So... Nietzsche’s Equivocations on the relation between democracy and ‘Grosse Politik’”. In: Siemens, W. Herman & Roodt, Vasti. (ed.). *Nietzsche – Power and Politics*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter. 2008.

cultural present shows no signs of any preparations underway. This is because the institutions which are supposed to prepare this future are still the victims and perpetrators of the forces that have brought about the demise of the human animal. Culture is *still* entertainment, democracy's exclusive interest remains the idolization of the uneducated and ignorant masses, religious institutions *still* cultivate the human forces they find useful to their purposes and condemn every other opposing force, and finally humanity as a whole is still implicated in a movement of production toward a final goal largely coexisting with the grand movement of capitalist/materialist production, which aims at the final collapse of all contradictions and thus of all culture and all life on earth. In short, humanity is still too engulfed by the sickness that has made it possible to see beyond the 'present', onto a great health and to the new seas of a new universe.

Recapitulation, achievements, limitations.

Approaching the end of this investigation, we are obliged to pause and recall the main points of our research. In our introduction we charted the long history of the gradual exhaustion of humanist ideals in the West. This exhaustion made possible *posthuman thought*, an attempt to overcome the stalemates and limitations of humanism. Away from all transcendental truths, the human animal, which now slowly and with caution tries to come to being, attempts to assert for himself his right to an existence which is going to be directed and judged by his own immanent criteria, away from institutional and societal pressures or extra-worldly principles. In the chapters following our introduction, we have tried to identify the specific steps that must be taken for comprehension of the Nietzschean trajectory.

The quest for the Overhuman led us to examine the cultural presuppositions of such a possible genesis in our first chapter. Distancing ourselves from the Platonic and Christian ideals regarding the body-less and personality-less approach to truth, we tried to get back to what Nietzsche has called the 'closest things' [nächsten Dinge]⁸¹⁷ and to begin our examination of the problem of the Overhuman not from some imaginary projection of what the *true* and the *right* should look like, but from the living flesh of the one who directs himself in the world. To that end, we examined the genesis of the possibility of the philosopher as that being which unites the forces scattered in various cultures and makes

⁸¹⁷ WS: 16

possible the changing of the now-stale Western paradigm, which is based in the idolization of abstractions over and above the realities of individuals living in dynamic environments. Young Nietzsche, under the influence of Wagner, paid particular attention to the way a culture has to organize itself in order to become the womb for the creation of the exceptional, which means for the creation of that which will leave survival behind and sail toward the uncharted seas of life. We must guard ourselves from such “superfluous teleological principles”⁸¹⁸ as that of self-preservation. The Overhuman belongs to another paradigm and must be judged by its own criteria, not by the principles of the past. In our first chapter we also examined a popular misconception regarding the thought of the Overhuman. In an age like ours, where everything becomes easier, some have thought that Nietzschean posthumanity will have to relate itself to the scientific advancements of the day. The transhumanists have argued that the posthuman ought to leave suffering behind⁸¹⁹ and embark on a life enhanced by the support of sciences. We have argued that Nietzsche would attack transhumanists’ dreams from at least two directions. First, Nietzsche, far from abolishing ‘grave suffering’, prescribes what he calls ‘great suffering’ [des Grossen Leidens]⁸²⁰, and considers it to be “the sole cause of every enhancement in humanity so far”.⁸²¹ *Great suffering* not only shields individuals against the great hardships of life, but additionally is what creates *depth* in human animals, and thus the possibility of creating a ‘soul’ for themselves, as Nietzsche has argued in GM: II, 4. But Nietzsche also accuses science of being the latest manifestation of the ‘ascetic ideal’, and it is thus unable to provide an alternative to posthuman aspirations⁸²². We are in need of those who create values. Science does not create values; it is only in the service of those holding power. It has by itself no moral significance.

In our second chapter, we attempted to present and explain Nietzsche’s dismissal of democracy and his subsequent prioritization of a hierarchically structured society which will stand over and above the equalizing effects of modernity. We argued that, despite his occasional disparaging comments against Hegel⁸²³, Nietzsche adapts from him the higher role that great individuals are destined to play in human history, and also the necessity of a type of

⁸¹⁸ BGE: 13

⁸¹⁹ Transhumanist Declaration (2012), in: More, Max & Vita-More Natasha (ed.) *The Transhumanist Reader*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell. 2013, p.54

⁸²⁰ BGE: 225

⁸²¹ *Ibid*

⁸²² GM: III, 25

⁸²³ As in BGE: 244 where the modern Germans, their digestive problems, and Hegelian philosophy get entangled in a web which, admittedly, only Nietzsche can make sense of!

justice suitable only to them, instead of the universalizable principles of slave morality enforced in modern societies. We then tried to shed light on Nietzsche's term *Grand politics* and argued that his early aspirations regarding the rejuvenation of culture are transferred into his later meditations regarding the application of a type of politics beyond the petty nationalisms of the 19th century and the morals of the democratic masses. In the second part of our chapter, we juxtaposed the modern liberal democratic model against what we have argued to be Nietzsche's distinct contribution to political philosophy: agonistic power. We showed the particular way that Nietzsche understands the *agon*, and also that Nietzschean *power* is always agonistic and subsequently relational. Away from the pipedreams of domination and imposition, we argued that societies organised under the model of agonistic power will achieve distance from the West's democratic heritage without succumbing to barbarism.

In our third chapter we tried to make sense of Nietzsche's more ambitious but also frustratingly underdeveloped work, the *Genealogy*. *Genealogy* bears certain similarities to the work of Sigmund Freud. Both Nietzsche and Freud seek to detect the genesis of the human animal in a moment of *conflict*. For both of them, the human is the result of the tremendous forces exercised upon it, which has as a consequence the genesis of a being that finds nutrition in its antithetical moment of origin. Because of his origins, the human animal, rather than a seeker of stability and happiness, is a being bred by its contradictions and existing only because of them. In our presentation of the three essays constituting the *Genealogy*, we have tried to bring to light this model of the human to which both Nietzsche and Freud ascribed. We have tried to show the multiple moments of *conflicts*, *interactions*, and necessary *coexistences* that haunt *Genealogy* throughout, and to argue that the human of tomorrow will necessarily have his roots in its long and tumultuous history. In short, we have tried to show the importance of being *fully* human in order to be Overhuman.⁸²⁴

In our final chapter we have shown the many ways in which the work of intellectual, writer, and 'excrement philosopher'⁸²⁵ Georges Bataille meets, but also illuminates, Nietzsche's work. Bataille has conceived a cosmos which gloriously consumes itself, and that act of self-consumption marks its very moment of sovereignty. Through Bataille, we were able to make

⁸²⁴ The allusion is here to the remarkable Nachlass note from 1883: "One must also be perfect as a beast if one wants to be perfect as a human being." [KSA: 10: 4 [94]. Translation belongs to Graham Parkes from: Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Graham Parkes (trans.) Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2005, p.293

⁸²⁵ According to his famous characterization by André Breton.

sense of Nietzsche's multiple statements regarding the contradictory forces at work in the thought of the return, and moreover we were able to advance a theory according to which Nietzsche, rather than a proponent of some blurry, whining mentality, becomes the martyr for a type of life that achieves its highest affirmation at the moment of its glorious self-annihilation. The human to which Nietzsche aspires, then, becomes the human who lives with a *profound* disregard for the preservation of his biological or other existence. He becomes a human who does not 'save and conserve', but rather consumes his wealth, since only the child's play that humans ought to rediscover in themselves matters. After all: "αἰὼν παις ἔστι παίζων, πεσσεύων· παιδὸς ἡ βασιληίη."⁸²⁶

But what is our own contribution to Nietzschean studies, and specifically to the problem of the Overhuman, that we tried to tackle in this thesis? This work was originally conceived as a result of our frustration with the state of Nietzschean scholarship, which for the most part exhibits a hard-to-understand shyness when it comes to discussing the problem of the Overhuman in Nietzsche's work. Social and historical conditions (the misuse of Nietzsche by the Nazis, the Hollywood simplifications, the unquestioned political status quo—democracy, liberalism, equality—in the West, etc.) can perhaps explain the problem, but certainly cannot be a continual excuse. It is certainly true that Nietzsche never developed a systematic theory on the problem of the Overhuman, which functions as a 'blanket term' for an array of attitudes, characteristics, and theories that Nietzsche ascribes to the cultural model that he hopes will replace the current one. Despite the diffusion of Overhuman thought in Nietzsche's work, we have argued that the Overhuman is not just one of the many Nietzschean ideas, but rather is what Heidegger would call his 'single thought' which gives (some) coherence to his work and illuminates aspects of it that otherwise would be incomprehensible. We have argued that Overhuman thought permeates every aspect of Nietzsche's work and that the cultural model that the Overhuman inaugurates is present in Nietzsche's most diverse meditations, from cultural criticism to politics and from morality to the metaphysics of time. Every thought of Nietzsche, every aphorism of his, every meditation is constructed in such a way as to function as an open window to a future which will come only after the radical critique of the present. Nietzsche's thought is overhuman through and

⁸²⁶ "Eternity is a child at play, moving pieces in a game: the kingdom is a child's" TEGP: 154

through, without, however, being post-human⁸²⁷, since the Overhuman *sublates* humanity; he does not overshoot it.

In addition to our main concern, which was to establish the centrality of the Overhuman in Nietzsche's thought, we have also made a series of contributions to the various issues discussed in this thesis. In our first chapter we have argued that culture plays a major role in the thought of early Nietzsche, since it is only through a radical change in the way cultural institutions function that another type of a human animal can be produced in the future. We have also demonstrated that Nietzsche should not be associated with the proponents of the all-too-timely faith in the latest manifestation of the ascetic ideal, i.e. science. That science alleviates human misery could perhaps in some cases be true, but this is not what interests Nietzsche. Unfortunately, Nietzsche does not believe that the overcoming of nihilism will come through some latest discovery in the field of techno-science. His work concerns values and the creators of values. His struggle is to make these creators possible.

In our second chapter we have demonstrated Nietzsche's radical critique of democracy and the institutions associated with it. By placing Nietzsche in the company of Kant and Hegel, we have shown that his critique bears certain similarities to the thoughts of his most unlikely allies, the German idealists. We have argued that Nietzsche's contribution to political philosophy can be a very valuable one. An overhuman politics, which is going to replace the petty politics of the slaves, is going to be a politics based on the dynamic of a perpetual conflict, not on the negotiation of differences in favour of the liberal dream of security. We have argued that Nietzsche wishes nothing to be secure, nor to aim to security. In recent years a number of theorists⁸²⁸ have tried to apply *agonistics* (the placement of conflict at the heart of political process) to modern day politics. To a Nietzschean this would be a welcome move, were it not for their unwillingness to question the ground upon which they stand, i.e. the post-French Revolution democratic status quo. Rather than maintaining the status quo through little acts of defiance, we argued that Nietzsche organises a full blown attack against the whole paradigm of the West. One who dares such an outrageous attack understandably "breaks the history of humanity in two".⁸²⁹

⁸²⁷ To the degree that posthuman thought wishes to leave humanity behind without incorporating in its vision the long history of sickness that the human bears.

⁸²⁸ Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe would be the most prominent representatives of this 'wave'.

⁸²⁹ EH: Why I am a destiny, 8

In our third chapter we argued that the *Genealogy* is one of the prominent places where the problematic over the Overhuman takes place in Nietzsche. There, more than in any other text of his, Nietzsche argues for the centrality of the human in any discussion concerning the Overhuman. We have argued that with his *Genealogy* Nietzsche proves Robert Musil's suggestion⁸³⁰ concerning the coexistence of features and characteristics which, depending on the particular way of their utilization, give birth to forces capable of both creation and annihilation. The *Genealogy* proves that human complexity is so deep and multifarious as to force the entire *history of the past* (the history of the domestication of the human animal) to become also the vitalizing force of the story of the future (the story of the liberation of the human from the fetters of slave morality). We have argued that *Genealogy's* force lies in proving a paradox. Sickness becomes the precondition of health, of *great* health.

Our fourth chapter has presented what we believe to be a novel approach to the overall significance of Nietzsche's work. We sought to 'read between the lines' of the Nietzschean oeuvre and to present a Nietzsche that celebrates Zarathustra's *gift* to the humans and turns it into the very heart of his own thinking. We argued that with the thought of the return, Nietzsche seeks to overcome the *productive* time of the West. This is a time which *produces* both humans and things with no regard for their ontological difference, a time that has turned humans into telos-seeking machines, where this telos is manufactured by the dominant ideological forces of techno-capitalism: that of slave morality and accumulative economy. There is no telos, though. Like Cronus, man devours time and spits back to earth his wasteful product. Humans *are* this waste. This is their sovereignty.

As is understandable, a thesis which seeks to embrace most of the main parts of a thinker's body of work inevitably will fall into the hermeneutic circle. That is, because the thought of the Overhuman is so broad and covers many ideas, thoughts, and visions for the future, it is simply not possible for a writer to cover adequately every aspect of the subject under examination. That would require experts from all fields of Nietzschean studies. Inevitably, then, one has to accept one's (personal) limitations and subsequently the limitations of one's work. However, a weakness can also be the strength of one's work. Because the Overhuman is such a general term, the examination of the part, what is usually expected in an academic thesis, would inadequately address the vision of the whole, which the Overhuman is. Instead,

⁸³⁰ "Human nature is as capable of cannibalism as it is for the *Critique of Pure Reason*; the same convictions and qualities will serve to turn out either one, depending on circumstances..." Musil, Robert. *The Man Without Qualities*. Sophie Wilkins & Burton Pike(trans.) Basingstore: Picador. 1997, p. 11

then, of losing the whole, and thus our very subject as well, it was the intention of this thesis to attempt to address the whole, even if that meant the imperfect treatment of the parts. One of the many diseases proliferating in the academic world is that the exhaustive treatment of specific parts forces one, in the best of cases, to lose sight of the whole, let us say, philosopher under examination; and in the worst of cases, to turn the results from the examination of the parts to a general view of the whole. In the case of such an anti-systematic thinker as Nietzsche, this would be catastrophic. Let us take an example to illustrate our point. A researcher concentrating on Nietzsche's notion of the *agon* often faces the difficulty of elevating Nietzsche's 1872 findings (made under specific influences, addressed toward a specific audience, within the limits that academy and his role as university philosopher imposed upon him) to some kind of well-founded system that Nietzsche presumably held uninterrupted throughout his life. This Nietzsche would be then a Nietzsche who glorified contest and the winning mentality of the competitors involved — a Nietzsche for whom the repetition of the Greek agonistic model (a model existing only in the heads of the researchers who have invented it⁸³¹) is to be the only source for inspiration concerning the future. In our fourth chapter, but also throughout this work, we have argued that Nietzschean thought harbours many contradictory ideas that create multiple perspectives on any given issue. Perhaps we should, with good conscience and without embarrassment, stop talking for Nietzsche and start talking for Nietzsche(s) and their ideas, Nietzsche(s) and their visions.

⁸³¹ Commentators such as Yunus Tuncel have attempted to understand the whole phenomenon of Greek cultural superiority by reducing it to the sole principle of the *agon*, which, presumably, is able to explain everything (!) taking place in Greek culture. This is, of course, a typical case of trying to explain the past, or something foreign, by importing the methodological tools (and the aspirations and your ideological commitments) of your place of (intellectual) origin. Nothing can be further from the truth, though. Certainly there was *agon* in Greek culture — a lot of it. But there was also the other of the *agon*: events of interruptions, breaks, moments of utter madness and annihilation of everything, including one's self, exemplified in the orgiastic festivals of the Greeks and their subversive art (which had nothing to do with its German misinterpretation as 'beautiful' and 'harmonic'). It seems that the era of the Germanic misappropriation of Greece has given way to an 'American' era of misappropriation, an era which projects its antagonistic mentality onto invented all-inclusive concepts in its attempt to draw ideological legitimization for its crumbling socio-economic model. (According to this perverted view of reality, then, the Americanized capital(ist)-producing machine is supposed to be a mirror image of the Greek *agon*.) That Greece's cultural endurance is partly owed to archetypes like *mad* Media and the *Asiatic* Dionysus perhaps escapes the logic of commentators. Those who *read* Nietzsche know better though. When will you understand the Greeks "in a Greek way [einmal griechisch]"? Nietzsche wonders. Most probably, never. For Tuncel see: Tuncel, Yunus. *Agon in Nietzsche*. Wisconsin: Marquette University Press. 2013, particularly Chapter One. For a nice response to Tuncel see: Dodds, E.R. *The Greeks and the Irrational*. London: University of California Press. 1951. Nietzsche's question is to be found in: HC: p.95

But then again, is it not the case that Nietzsche is so big as to ‘contain multitudes’⁸³², which we are not ready to comprehend?

Apart from the problem of circularity, a series of issues would have benefited by a more extended treatment, if it was not for the space restrictions imposed upon us, but also for the personal inability of the writer to deal with every problem raised throughout the writing of this work. In that sense, an extended study concerning Nietzsche’s early understanding of the role of culture in relation to the process of the production of Overhuman animals is yet to be written, alongside a systematic treatment of Nietzsche’s understanding of the limits of natural sciences regarding the activity of human animals. Whereas Nietzsche’s critique of democracy is well-built in our work, questions are still raised concerning the applicability of our proposal to the *politics of conflict* which is to replace the present state of liberal democracy. Indeed, Nietzsche and our suggestions sound so foreign to our liberally trained ears that the threat of being isolated as idiosyncratic or downright barbaric always looms in the horizon. Connected to that problem, one also has to deal with the problem of the legitimising sources of the future philosophers-legislators and the instigators of Nietzsche’s reverse experiment in politics, which was only partly dealt with here. When it comes to the constitution of the human, as was exemplified in our necessarily sketchy treatment of the *Genealogy*, further work is needed in the field of the genesis of the soul out of the practice of punishment and the role played by it in future forms of human associations. The dramatic role of the instigator of the slaves’ revolt in morals, the priest, and what his presence means for the history of humanity, has not been adequately dealt in this work and further research is urgently needed. Finally, we are only at the beginning of the realization of the connection between the metaphysics of time and the productive character of capitalism. The work of Max Weber was only the foundation of work that has yet to unfold. In our research we have only touched on the many consequences of a possible shifting of our cultural paradigm. It is the work of future philosophers to try to articulate the precise conditions of the disengagement of man from his transcendental signifier (God, hope, time, telos, etc.) and the formulation of an immanent praxis of living. We have done our best to honour our share.

⁸³² Perhaps nothing expresses Nietzschean thought better than Walt Whitman’s poem ‘Song of Myself’ with its celebrated lyrics: “Do I contradict myself? Very well, then I contradict myself, I am large, I contain multitudes”. Whitman’s poem to be found in: <http://rpo.library.utoronto.ca/poems/song-myself> [Accessed: 04/10/2014]

Incipit Vita

Until recently philosophy was no more than a long history of necrophilia. “All that philosophers have been handling for thousands of years is conceptual mummies; nothing real has ever left their hands alive.”⁸³³ Plato was the first to characterize philosophy as ‘meditation on death’ [μελετη θανατου]⁸³⁴. This is the foundation of our dear vocation. Through the victory of Christianity, the whole of the planet was turned into an ‘ascetic star’⁸³⁵, and philosophers became the apologists of this life-denying culture. We have been systematically trained to believe in the necessity of some future redemption, of some hope, of rewards awaiting us at the end, or rather after the end, of our biological existence. We have learned to accept, to endure and to obey: the story of humanity in three verbs. How ironic, really, that at the end, and for all their arrogance, philosophers came to walk on the side of, if not fully ideologically supporting, what Nietzsche has called the ‘kingdom of the mob’ [das Reich des Pöbels]⁸³⁶, an unholy coalition of slaves, nationalists, money-making, and happiness-seeking last humans. Philosophy for too long has dedicated itself to the pursuit of the ‘ideal of today’.⁸³⁷ As for the philosophers? Philosophers have spent too much valuable time and have lost too much energy in trying to answer a nonsensical question: *How do we die?* For all of his simplifications, and his rather annoying optimism, Epicurus was right: “So death, the most frightening of bad things, is nothing to us; since when we exist, death is not yet present, and when death is present, then we do not exist.”⁸³⁸ By concentrating on what they cannot talk about, philosophers have left unexamined the most important question: *How do we live?* The history of the response to this question is yet to be written. It is the history of the future and belongs not to philosophy, which has been inseparable with death, but to a *thinking* liberated from the necrophilic instincts of the philosophic tradition. Nietzsche inaugurates this thinking. The future will tell whether humanity is up to the challenge of this thinking.

⁸³³ TI: ‘Reason’ in Philosophy

⁸³⁴ Plato, Phaedo in: Plato. Phaedo. In: Cooper, M. John (ed.) *Plato – Complete Works* G.M.A. Grube (trans.) Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company. 1997, 81a

⁸³⁵ GM: III, 11

⁸³⁶ TSZ: The sorcerer

⁸³⁷ BGE: 212

⁸³⁸ Epicurus, Letter to Menoeceus, in: Inwood Brad (trans. & Ed.) *The Epicurus Reader – Selected Writings and Testimonia*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company. 1994, p. 29

Until that day, the final day⁸³⁹, το Σάββατο των Σαββάτων⁸⁴⁰, where *existence will be realigned to the movement of the cosmos*, Nietzsche advises: “To wait and to prepare oneself; to await the emergence of new sources; to prepare oneself in solitude for strange faces and voices; to wash one’s soul ever cleaner from the marketplace and dust and noise of this age; to *overcome* everything Christian through something supra-Christian...to rediscover the South in one and to spread out above one a bright, glittering, mysterious southern sky; to reconquer southern health and hidden powerfulness of soul; step by step to become more comprehensive, more supranational, more European, more near Eastern, finally more *Greek* – for the Greek was the first great union and synthesis of everything Near Eastern, and on that account the *inception* of the European soul, the discovery of our “*new world*”: whoever lives under such imperatives, who knows what he may not encounter one day? Perhaps – a *new day!* [Vielleicht eben – **ein neuer Tag!**],”⁸⁴¹

⁸³⁹ Allow us, for once, the messianic tone.

⁸⁴⁰ ‘The Saturday of all Saturdays’ meaning the *final Sabbath* in Christian theology where Christians will rest from the hardships of earthly existence and Time itself will be completed with the second revelation of Christ. See: Φλωρόφσκυ, Γεωργίου, *Οι Βυζαντινοί Ασκητικοί και Πνευματικοί Πατέρες*. (Μετάφραση Παναγιώτη Κ. Πάλλη). Εκδόσεις Πουρναρά. Θεσσαλονίκη 1992, σελ. 302 - 308).

⁸⁴¹ WP: 1051. KSA: 11:41 [7]

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