

NIETZSCHE'S PERSPECTIVISM AND THE PROBLEM OF POLITICS

by

Richard Franklin Sigurdson

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## ABSTRACT

The objective of this thesis is the articulation and elaboration of Nietzsche's theory of perspectivism as a profound treatment of the problem of politics. This effort seems useful since the doctrine of perspectivism--unlike the more well-known ideas such as the will to power, the eternal return, and the Übermensch -- is seldom examined in the Nietzsche literature. Moreover, the relationship between perspectivism and politics has traditionally been ignored. The method of this thesis is primarily textual analysis. I attempt to "reconstruct" Nietzsche's thought on perspectivism and indicate its political significance.

I attempt to demonstrate that perspectivism is both a coherent theory of knowledge and a prescription for future philosophical inquiry. Nietzsche considers all reality as a dynamic process of "becoming". There can be no stable world order in this scheme, therefore Nietzsche denies the existence of unconditional truths or absolute facts. Nietzsche maintains that this position is validated by the empirical evidence of the social and political developments in the nineteenth century. He sees his age as the advent of nihilism since the previous objective norms and values have been devalued in light of the industrial and scientific revolu-

tions. He proposes an alternative epistemology grounded in the assumption that all knowing is interpretation from a certain perspective. The perspective one has is determined by one's quanta of energy and the direction of this vital force.

Perspectivism thus becomes a method for evaluating past interpretations by determining the degree of vital power exhibited in their aims and goals. By subjecting past and present forms of political organization to the test of examination from a multiplicity of viewpoints, Nietzsche arrives at basic insights into the problems of political life. He further suggests, albeit in a tentative manner, his own political ideals based upon his own perspectival interpretation. But his methodology does not insist that we accept his political formulas but challenges us to arrive at our own perspectives and to become our own individual selves, free from the restrictive traditions of previous political theories.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## SOURCES, ABBREVIATIONS, AND TRANSLATIONS

In order to keep documentation to a minimum, I have inserted much of it into the text and have used abbreviations of Nietzsche's titles. Nietzsche divided his works into numbered sections, therefore the numerals following the abbreviation indicate the section and not the page of the text. The exceptions are the early essays, The Greek State and Homer's Contest. Citations of these works refer to the page numbers of the Oscar Levy edition of The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche, Vol. 1. In all other cases, Roman numerals refer to the larger divisions of books, and Arabic numerals refer to the section or aphorism. Citations include references to Nietzsche's Prefaces (P) and Epilogues (E). Finally, the third chapter of Ecce Homo is divided into parts devoted to Nietzsche's separate works, and these parts are cited by their abbreviation. A key to the abbreviations follows:

S	<u>The Greek State</u> (1871)
HC	<u>Homer's Contest</u> (1871)
P	<u>The Last Philosopher</u> (1872)
BT	<u>The Birth of Tragedy</u> (1872)
TL	<u>On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense</u> (1873)
PTG	<u>Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the</u>

Greeks (1873)

- U     The Untimely Meditations (1873-76)
- U I    David Strauss, the Confessor and  
          Writer (1873)
- U II   The Advantage and Disadvantage of  
          History for Life (1874)
- U III  Schopenhauer as Educator (1874)
- U IV   Richard Wagner in Bayreuth (1876)
- HA     Human, All-too-Human (1878)
- MO     Mixed Opinions and Maxims (1879)
- WS     The Wanderer and His Shadow (1880)
- D     Daybreak (1881)
- GS     The Gay Science (1882)
- Z     Thus Spoke Zarathustra (1883-85)
- BGE    Beyond Good and Evil (1886)
- GM     On the Genealogy of Morals (1887)
- CW     The Case of Wagner (1888)
- T     Twilight of the Idols (1888)
- NCW    Nietzsche Contra Wagner (1888)
- A     The Antichrist (1888)
- EH     Ecce Homo (1888)
- WP     The Will to Power (1883-88)

Throughout the thesis I have used the most recent English translations available. For BT, BGE, GM, CW, and EH, I have used Walter Kaufmann's Basic Writings of Nietzsche (New York: Modern Library, 1968). For Z, T, NCW, and A, I have



used Kaufmann's The Portable Nietzsche (New York: Viking Press, 1954). For GS, I have used Kaufmann's The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rymes and an Appendix of Songs (New York: Vintage, 1974). For WP, I have used the translation by Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale, The Will to Power (New York: Vintage, 1968). For D, I have used Hollingdale's Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). For TL and P, I have used the translations by Daniel Breazeale in Philosophy and Truth: Selections From Nietzsche's Notebooks of the Early 1870's (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1979). For PTG, I have used Marion Cowan's translation, Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks (Chicago: Regnery, 1962). For U III, I have used the translation by J.W. Hillesheim and M.R. Simpson, Schopenhauer as Educator (Chicago: Regnery, 1965). For U II, I have used the translation by Peter Preuss, On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1980). For the rest of Nietzsche's works, I have used the translations in The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche, edited by Dr. Oscar Levy (London: George Allen and Unwin Co., 1909-1911). In this edition, S and HC are translated by M.A. Mugge; U I and U IV by Anthony Ludovici; HA by Henry Zimmern; and MO and WS by Paul Cohn.

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## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

The philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche has had a tremendous effect on twentieth century thought. The scope and range of his philosophy is evidenced by the continued interest in Nietzsche's thought by students in a variety of scholarly fields. For example, a colloquium held some years back considering the question of "Nietzsche's impact on the west", featured papers on Nietzsche and existentialism, poetry, science, music, prose styles, psychology, and politics.<sup>1</sup> Yet Nietzsche remains one of the most troublesome, misunderstood, and perplexing figures in the history of philosophy. Erich Heller captures the spirit of the problem when he explains that the question, "Do you understand Nietzsche?", is like asking, "Do you know Rome?" The answer is simple only if you have never been there.<sup>2</sup>

Nietzsche's philosophy is difficult to comprehend for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the problem of Nietzsche's style. He employs a variety of literary forms--

<sup>1</sup> Papers presented to the Colloquium held at Syracuse University, 2-4 December 1972, are reprinted in Symposium: A Quarterly Journal in Modern Foreign Languages, 28 (Spring 1974).

<sup>2</sup> Erich Heller, "Wittgenstein and Nietzsche", in The Artist's Journey into the Interior and Other Essays (New York: Random House, 1965), p. 203.

-aphorism, verse, parable, prose, and essay--and is methodologically committed to a plurality of viewpoints. Furthermore, Nietzsche despises "systems" of any kind and his work constitutes, one might say, a deliberate anti-system. His purpose, in part, is to break the grip our conventions of language hold on our thinking. He seems to want to make us aware of the limits of traditional concepts and propose a new freedom of expression and thought. His thought on any one topic, consequently, is not to be found in any single text or set of texts, but is diffused throughout his many books and personal notes.

In Europe Nietzsche's chaotic vitality has recently been welcomed by the nouveaux critiques, whose Nietzsche interpretations focus on the problem of language and "the question of style". Jacques Derrida, the most prominent of the movement's leaders, proposes a "deconstruction" of Nietzsche's meanings as a "spur" to further thought and controversy.<sup>3</sup> While this procedure is no doubt interesting in itself, it seems to me that these critics have tended to interpret Nietzsche according to their own enthusiasm, and so passionately, that, to use Nietzsche's words concerning a different case, "the text finally disappears under the interpretation" (BGE 38).

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<sup>3</sup> Jacques Derrida, Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles, trans. Barbara Harlow (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

The method of this discussion will follow more closely along the lines of modern analytical philosophy.<sup>4</sup> My method will consist primarily of a textual analysis of Nietzsche's books, essays, letters, and notes in an attempt to "reconstruct" his thoughts on the nature and function of perspectivism and its implications for a study of politics. In as many cases as possible I will let Nietzsche's words speak for themselves. On this matter I have heeded Nietzsche's warning that one "who has interpreted a passage in an author 'more profoundly' than intended, has not interpreted the author but obscured him" (WS 17). In the course of discussion I will rely on Nietzsche's notes and unpublished essays as well as his published books in an effort to give as complete a picture of Nietzsche's thinking as possible. Although there is much debate over this issue, I see no reason to assume that the notes comprising The Will to Power "represent hypotheses which Nietzsche abandoned" or that these notes contain ideas which Nietzsche did not espouse.<sup>5</sup> Many of these notes were, in fact, intended for use in an upcoming book that Nietzsche often refers to as "The Will to Power: Attempt at a Revaluation of Value".<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The major exponent of this method of Nietzsche analysis is Arthur C. Danto, Nietzsche as Philosopher (1965 rpt; New York: Columbia University Press Morningside edition, 1980).

<sup>5</sup> Harald Alderman, Nietzsche's Gift (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1977), p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> See Walter Kaufmann, Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist, 4th. ed. (Princeton: Princeton University

The primary objective of this thesis is the isolation and elaboration of Nietzsche's theory of perspectivism as a profound treatment of the problem of politics. Those who are acquainted with the secondary Nietzsche literature might find it odd that perspectivism may be linked to politics. In the first place, perspectivism is primarily an epistemological doctrine that is assumed by Nietzsche but seldom expressed in any great detail. Moreover, it has received scant attention in the scholarly world. As late as 1976 Ruediger Grimm could say, with a fair degree of honesty, that "there has been practically no work done in the area of Nietzsche's theory of knowledge."<sup>7</sup> Since the publication of Grimm's excellent book there have been several articles in English dealing with perspectivism, yet none have raised the issue of its possible implications for the study of politics.<sup>8</sup>

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Press, 1974), p. 113.

<sup>7</sup> Ruediger H. Grimm, Nietzsche's Theory of Knowledge (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1977), p.viii.; Of notable exception is Jean Granier, Le Problème de la vérité dans la philosophie de Nietzsche (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1966); and John T. Wilcox, Truth and Value in Nietzsche: A Study of His Metaethics and Epistemology (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1974).

<sup>8</sup> Eg. John Atwell, "Nietzsche's Perspectivism", in Southern Journal of Philosophy, 19 (Spring 1981), pp. 157-170; J. Hillis Miller, "The Disarticulation of the Self in Nietzsche", in The Monist, 64 (April 1981), pp. 245-261; George J. Stack, "Nietzsche's Perspectival Interpretation", in Philosophy Today, 25 (Fall 1981), pp. 221-251; and Kerry S. Walters, "The Ontological Basis for Nietzsche's Perspectivism", in Dialogue, 24 (April 1982), pp. 35-46.

The whole question of Nietzsche's politics has been avoided, or at least downplayed, in most of the literature since 1945. Most English language commentators tacitly accept the late Walter Kaufmann's depiction of Nietzsche's philosophy as anti-political.<sup>9</sup> Continental Nietzsche scholarship, on the other hand, tends to be overtly Heideggerian in style and content; Nietzsche is believed to be "the last metaphysician of the west."<sup>10</sup> In this interpretation, Nietzsche's influence is strictly limited to the ephemereal realm of ideas, and is explicitly denied in the practical realm of politics.<sup>11</sup> Both of these major figures in Nietzsche scholarship have been conditioned by the burden of dissociating Nietzsche's philosophy from its abuse at the hands of certain Nazi intellectuals.<sup>12</sup> Kaufmann certainly labours the

<sup>9</sup> Kaufmann, especially Chapter Five, pp. 157-177.

<sup>10</sup> See Heidegger's "Who is Nietzsche's Zarathustra?", in The New Nietzsche, ed. David B. Allison (New York: Delta Books, 1977). This volume contains essays by the leading Nietzsche scholars in Europe. In his "Preface" the editor pays homage to Heidegger and acknowledges that all of the articles deal with themes suggested by Heidegger's work.

<sup>11</sup> I will avoid considering Heidegger's idiosyncratic Nietzsche interpretation for the reason that it requires an extensive examination of the special role Nietzsche plays in the whole of Heidegger's philosophy. Suffice to say that by locating Nietzsche's significance within his own question of the historical "being of Being", Heidegger tells us more about his own thought than he does about Nietzsche. On this matter, see Bernd Magnus, Heidegger's Metahistory of Philosophy (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970). See also Richard Howey, Heidegger and Jaspers on Nietzsche (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973).

<sup>12</sup> Eg. Alfred Bäumler, Nietzsche der Philosoph und Politiker (Leipzig: Reclam Verlag, 1931), Heinrich Härtle, Nietzsche und der Nationalsozialismus (München: Zentralverlag

hardest at this task, while Heidegger, himself tainted by his association with Nazism, tends to avoid Nietzsche's politics altogether.<sup>13</sup> The result of this sordid affair has been that modern Nietzsche scholars, who quite correctly deny Nietzsche's alleged fascism, tend to deny him any political significance at all. Needless to say, the political implications of perspectivism have never been addressed at any length.

I have pursued the study of Nietzsche's perspectivism because it seems to me to be a crucial assumption throughout Nietzsche's work, and because it underlies the more well-known concepts of will to power, the eternal return, and Übermenschlichkeit. I find myself in agreement with Kerry Walters' statement that, there "are several themes that run throughout Nietzsche's work, but certainly the foundation of them all, the fundamental concept around which the rest of his notions revolve, is his doctrine of perspectivism."<sup>14</sup> Moreover, I believe that we can dissociate Nietzsche's thought from nazism, as Kaufmann does, without denying his political message. Similarly, Nietzsche may have engaged in

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der NSDAP, 1937), and Richard Oehler, Nietzsche und die Deutsche Zukunft (Leipzig, Armanen, 1935).

<sup>13</sup> For a discussion of the contexts of Heidegger's Nietzsche lectures, see David Farrell Krell's "Analysis" in both of Heidegger's Nietzsche: Vol. 1: The Will To Power as Art, trans. Krell (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979) and Nietzsche: Vol. 4: Nihilism, trans. Frank Cappuzi (San Francisco: 1982).

<sup>14</sup> Walters, p. 36.



metaphysics, but that does not necessarily imply that he has no significance for political theory.

I will argue that Nietzsche's perspectivism teaches that all existence is interpretation from a particular perspective, and that Nietzsche's conception of this idea is intended to allow a multiplicity of perspectives to shine their light, so to speak, and thus illuminate something that is fundamental and important about all political life. Secondly, Nietzsche proposes his perspectivism as a functional theory for political analysis, as a method in which true philosophers become "commanders and legislators". The affirmation of perspectivism, which involves a reevaluation of previous values, is a decisive element in the counter-movement to nihilism and is therefore possible only in the developing age of nihilism. Yet, as Nietzsche says, "the most valuable insights are discovered last; but the most valuable insights are the methods" (A 13).

Considering that Nietzsche's perspectivism is largely underdeveloped in the scholarly literature, and is not clearly expressed in any one or two passages or texts in Nietzsche's work, I have found it necessary to articulate this notion in some detail. The first condition for an understanding of "how we know" is an analysis of "what there is for us to know". Therefore, our discussion begins with an examination of the will to power as an ontological principle. According to Nietzsche, all reality is a turbulent chaos of perpetual

flux and becoming in which we may think of discrete power-  
quanta , some active some reactive, locked in combat for  
more power. This provocative suggestion is intended to  
characterize all existence-- organic and inanimate--in terms  
of organization of power within an unruly commonwealth.  
Nietzsche extends this model into the social realm and ex-  
plains that there are two basic moral perspectives. That is,  
there exists "master morality" which is the perspective of  
active force; and "slave morality" which corresponds to re-  
active force.

The question of "truth" for Nietzsche is considered pro-  
blematic since we cannot fix anything in this chaos as being  
"true". In Nietzsche's view , "truth" is "illusion" insofar  
as it claims to capture the eternal reality of an objective  
world order. This conception is associated primarily with  
Platonism, Christianity, and Kantian metaphysics. He re-  
gards the desire to "fix" a "real" world as an unscrupulous  
moral imperative on the part of weak power centers, and goes  
on to deny the adequacy of any system necessitating another  
world than the one in which we live. This "unconditional  
will to truth" inspired by Christianity tends to devalue the  
very tenets of the monotheistic world-view as its irrational  
assumptions are brought into question. Yet the scientific  
method is equally nihilistic since its demand for truth in  
an unconditional sense is impossible in a world of becoming.  
We are therefore entering an age of nihilism in which all of

our objective norms and most cherished values have been devalued.

Perspectivism, as a theory of knowledge, is adequate to the task of generating useful illusions ("truths") that will allow the strong and active types to construct their own world. We are only now seeing that all philosophies, political theories, and religious principles have been perspectival interpretations permitting certain groups to increase and maintain power. This realization, however, is possible for Nietzsche only in his time, since the advent of nihilism has uncovered a multiplicity of competing world views. The greatest danger in this situation is the residue from the old belief in absolute truth. Each perspective wants to be master and rule all of the others and, believing its perspective to be the "true" one, engages in wars of extermination with its rivals.

These assumptions inform Nietzsche's analysis of modern politics. He considers the vast majority of individuals to be weak and defenceless. They have been thrown back onto themselves under the radical individuation of society following the industrial and scientific revolutions. Most people cannot stand to live in a meaningless world, and so, lacking the strength to create their own goals, they fall back on false political dogmas. The weak find their expression of power as believers in every kind of doctrine. The ideologues, moreover, exploit this need in people and en-

courage conviction in the "truth" of their doctrines. The state, in a declining age, becomes one more false god, a new idol, to which the majority will sacrifice themselves and seek salvation. In any political unit, therefore, the danger increases that the self-service of the perspectives of the rulers will lead to destruction. At the global level, each nation-state is divided against all the others; at the national level, each party or ideology is preaching its doctrine of salvation.

Perspectivism teaches the wide variety of norms, morals and customs that are competing in the world. The political scientist's task is to catalogue the various norms and values of the past and future, thus providing the foundation for overcoming the past. But the scholar himself is a dependent being, he is unable to impose his will on the world. What is needed to overcome nihilism is a genuine philosopher who is also a commander and legislator. Only when the question of truth has been defined as problematic can there emerge a philosopher whose existence justifies all existence. This ideal, for Nietzsche, cannot be realized by means of a traditional political formula. It requires, rather, a radical transformation of man as the foundation for the politics of the future.

Chapter II  
THE WILL TO POWER

2.1 NIETZSCHE'S ONTOLOGY

In order to provide the proper context for a discussion of Nietzsche's perspectivism it is crucial to come to grips with the enigmatic principle of the will to power. This concept is perhaps the most consistently misunderstood and misrepresented of all of Nietzsche's so-called "affirmative doctrines". Frequently the will to power is represented as naked hunger for power at any price, or as the desire for ruthless domination and subjugation of others on the part of racially superior supermen. Hence Nietzsche is often referred to as an advocate of almost any brutal, authoritarian regime. I hope to make it clear, however, that the will to power has nothing to do with "power politics". It is rather an all-inclusive world-principle or theoretical hypothesis intended to generate a specific understanding of the world as flux.

The term "will to power" (der Wille zur Macht) actually occurs quite late in Nietzsche's writings. According to Walter Kaufmann the phrase first appears in Nietzsche's notebooks in the late 1870's, but it does not find its way into print until the first book of Thus Spoke Zarathustra,

published in 1883.<sup>15</sup> From this time, throughout all of the notebooks and published works of this period, the will to power assumes a prominent position in Nietzsche's thought. It is this principle that unites and integrates his various insights about man, society, and the cosmos.

I shall argue that the will to power is a hypothetical or experimental world principle meant to capture the essence of reality as such. As we will see, however, Nietzsche denies the possibility that man is capable of "knowing" reality in any way similar to the traditional concept of knowledge. For Nietzsche our knowledge of reality must therefore remain perspectival--it is only an interpretation of the world we create for ourselves and not an absolute statement of the way things really are.

Before Nietzsche formulates his mature conception of the will to power, he does conceive of an instinctive drive to increase one's power over the environment. To compensate for weakness, this drive often manifests itself in the form of revenge or resentment which in most cases is turned back onto the individual. That is, the drive is sublimated or repressed and only surfaces in a variety of negative and often harmful personality traits.<sup>16</sup> Through his own research

<sup>15</sup> Kaufmann, p. 179.

<sup>16</sup> See Kaufmann, pp. 211-307; R.J. Hollingdale, Nietzsche (London/Boston: Rotledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), pp. 76-126 and Frederick Copleston, Friedrich Nietzsche: Philosopher of Culture (1942 rpt. New York: Barnes and Nobles, 1975), pp. 76-97.

Nietzsche became acquainted with certain natural scientific theories which reinforced ideas he had found in the pre-Socratic Greek thinkers and in Eastern religions. This encouraged him to develop a holistic conception of man and the universe characterized by a pervasive physiological drive, evident in the lowest organisms to those of the greatest complexity, to master the environment and expand or expel energy.<sup>17</sup> Finally, Nietzsche projects this notion of a power-drive for mastery and exploitation of the environment into the inorganic world as well. There can be no doubt that Nietzsche conceives of even non-living manifestations of power in terms of a pervasive desire or "will". In its mature form this will to power becomes an ontological model of what we can tentatively say the world "is" and "does". In the words of Arthur Danto:<sup>18</sup>

It is hardly avoidable that we think of will to power in almost the same terms in which men once thought of substance, as that which underlies everything else and was the most fundamental of all. For the will to power is not something we have, but something we are. Not only are we will to power, but so is everything, human and animal, animate and material. The entire world is will to power; there is nothing other than it and its manifestations.

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<sup>17</sup> See: Mary Coolidge, "Ethics--Appolonian and Dionysian", Journal of Philosophy, 38 (August 1941), pp. 441-465, and Heinrich Dumoulin, "Buddhism and Nineteenth Century German Philosophy", trans. Julia Ching, in Journal of the History of Ideas, 42 (July-September 1981), pp. 457-470.

<sup>18</sup> Danto, p. 215.

Clearly, then, the will to power is an elemental concept in Nietzsche's thought, and therefore we must attempt to understand Nietzsche's conception of it.

Nietzsche's thinking was conditioned by his observation that the world as it appears to us is contradictory, ambiguous, and ultimately chaotic. Nietzsche completely rejects any view of the world that assumes its "being". Reality, to the extent we can discuss it at all, is described as "becoming". Hence the young Nietzsche praises Heraclitus for teaching that, "the everlasting and exclusive coming-to-be, the impermanence of everything actual, which constantly acts, and comes-to-be, but never is [characterizes] the whole nature of reality" (PTG 5). Later Nietzsche declares that the "whole character of the world is in all eternity chaos" (GS 109).

Nietzsche's world-conception emphasizes that reality as text is not static, but dynamic. The world is not grounded in being, but is in a state of perpetual flux. Nietzsche impressionistically paints his "world-conception" in a note from 1885:

And do you want to know what the world is for me? Shall I show it to you in my mirror? This world: a monster of energy, without beginning, without end, a firm iron magnitude of force ... enclosed by "nothingness" as by a boundary ... set in a definite space as a definite force ... as a play of forces, at the same time one and many, increasing here and decreasing there; a sea of forces flowing and rushing together ... as a becoming that knows no satiety, no disgust, no weariness--do you know want a name for this world? This world is the will to power--and nothing besides! And you yourselves are also this will to power--and nothing besides! (WP 1067)



This model of the world as chaotic ebbing and flowing of energy waves serves as a hypothetical world-principle throughout his later period.

Nietzsche reformulates this idea in more theoretical fashion in his published work. Here the will to power thesis is presented as an "experiment". Nietzsche asks us to assume that nothing is given as "real" except our world of desires and passions, and that we can arrive at no other "reality" than that of our drives. Then does it not follow that this "given reality" be sufficient not only for our understanding of ourselves, but of the material world as well? According to Nietzsche, "it is not only permitted to make this experiment, but the conscience of method demands it." If we accept Nietzsche's assumption that the will is causally operative, we may follow him further and assume that the will is the sole causal agent. Since "will can effect only will--and not matter", Nietzsche asks us to suppose that wherever "effects" are evident, even in "mechanistic occurrences", there is active "will force" (Willenskraft) or "will-effects" (Willens-Wirkung). Suppose finally, Nietzsche says,

that we succeeded in explaining our drives or passions as the development and ramification of one basic form of the will-- namely, of the will to power, as my proposition has it ... then we would have gained the right to determine all efficient force as--will to power. The world viewed from inside, the world defined and determined according to its "intelligible character"-- it would be "will to power" and nothing else. (BGE 36)

It is significant that Nietzsche proposes his thesis as an "experiment", for he could not, as we will see, claim that his hypothesis could explain the world in terms of any correspondence to its "reality".

## 2.2 POWER QUANTA AND THEIR INTERACTION

In Nietzsche's hypothetical world-view everything that exists is essentially will to power and its manifestations: "the essence of the world is will to power" (BGE 186); and "the essence of life [is] its will to power" (GM II.12). But what exactly is this will to power? And what are its basic characteristics?

In the first place, the will to power is not a homogenous world-substance or metaphysical absolute along the lines of the Vedantic Brahmin, Spinoza's God, or Hegel's Weltgeist. Any such resemblances, as Grimm has demonstrated, are largely accidental.<sup>19</sup> Rather it consists of discrete, discontinuous, unextended "quanta" of will to power. These "power quanta" (Machtquanten) are also not to be thought of as ultimate or irreducible "things" or "objects". Each "power center" (Kraftzentrum) is a dynamic instance of will to power which continually combines, divides, merges, and changes in whatever fashion according to both its own degree of force and that of opposing power centers. Since "will can effect only will", all there can be in Nietzsche's model

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<sup>19</sup> Grimm, pp. 2-16.

are power quanta effecting other power quanta in a vast, yet finite, field of force. The constant struggle of conflicting power, and the perpetual tension of the will to power, constitutes the dynamic process of reality.

Nietzsche's thesis rests on the assumption that nature and the universe are dynamic and pluralistic. Nietzsche was greatly influenced in this respect by several natural scientific theories current in his time. While still a student in Leipzig, Nietzsche discovered F.A Lange's theory of materialism.<sup>20</sup> He adopts from Lange the view that the world of our senses is a product of our organization; that the visible bodily organs, like all other parts of the phenomenal world, are merely pictures of an unknown object; and that the transcendental ground of our organization remains as obscure to us as the things that act upon us.<sup>21</sup>

At one point Lange mentions that Roger Boscovich (1711-1787) had developed an important theory of matter which had been largely ignored in his own time but had been vindicated by research in the nineteenth-century. Boscovich discovered contradictions in the prevailing theory of atomic materialism which could only be solved by supposing

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. Frederick Albert Lange, The History of Materialism, trans. E.R. Thomas (1866, Berlin; rpt. London: Kegan Paul, 1925).

<sup>21</sup> Nietzsche to Carl von Gersdorff, Naumberg, end of August, 1866. In Christopher Middleton, Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1969), No. 5. pp. 16-18; hereafter cited as Letters.

that the effects usually ascribed to the resilience of material particles was due to the repulsive forces of non-extended force-points. Boscovich, therefore, regarded these dynamic force points as the elemental constituents of matter. This new theory, Lange explains, replaced the materialist picture of the world based on sensory experience.<sup>22</sup>

Nietzsche incorporates Boscovich's conclusions into his own conception of the world as will to power. In 1882 Nietzsche wrote to his friend Peter Gast that, in the wake of Boscovich's theory, "there is no matter anymore--except as a popular relief".<sup>23</sup> Three years later, Nietzsche praises the "Pole Boscovich and the Pole Copernicus" for their opposition to optical observation.<sup>24</sup> Copernicus persuaded us to believe, contrary to our senses, that the earth does not stand still; Boscovich eradicates our belief in the last part of the earth that "stood fast"--the "particle atom" (BGE 12).

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<sup>22</sup> Lange, Book ii, p. 364.

<sup>23</sup> Nietzsche to Gast, 20 March 1882, Letters, no. 94, pp. 181-182.

<sup>24</sup> Although Nietzsche refers to Boscovich as a "Pole" in all of the German editions Kaufmann changes this to read, "the Dalmatian Boscovich...". No explanation is given, but one must assume that Kaufmann wants to correct Nietzsche. Boscovich was a native Serbo-Croatian born in the city of Ragusa (now Dubrovnik) in Upper Dalmatia. See Henry Vincent Gill, Roger Boscovich: Foreunner of Modern Physical Theories (Dublin: M.H. Gill & Sons, 1941).

In Boscovich Nietzsche finds a model of the physical world that corresponds to his own assumptions about the dynamic nature of reality. But Boscovich and his colleagues had merely "described" a world of force whose external "expression" takes the form of tiny bodies. These phenomena perpetually interact--at the sub-atomic level-- in terms of action and reaction, or an oscillation between reactive and repulsive forces.<sup>25</sup> Nietzsche extends this model in an attempt to construct an "inner phenomenalism". He writes:

The victorious concept "force", by means of which our physicists have created God and the world, needs to be completed: an inner will must be ascribed to it, which I designate as "will to power", i.e., as an insatiable desire to manifest power; or as the employment and exercise of power, as a creative drive, etc. (WP 619)

In Nietzsche's model each force center or quantum of power has a single existential characteristic: it desires above all to increase its own power by dominating or assimilating other power quanta. Each center of force strives to become master over all space and to extend its force, thrusting back that which resists its extension. Power quanta, however, are continually encountering similar efforts on the part of others and must come to an arrangement of forces with those that are similarly related to it (WP 636). These "power constellations" (Macht-konstellationen) are similarly dynamic. In fact, they exist only as temporary groups which

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<sup>25</sup> George Stack, "and Boscovich's Natural Philosophy", Pacific Philosophical Quarterly 62 (January 1981), pp. 69-87.

appear as units only from certain perspectives but disappear into the chaos of meaningless waves of forces from other perspectives.

Within each power-constellation there exist active and reactive forces whose constant struggle provides the dynamic process of reality. Active forces correspond to the successful, dominating power quanta. The reactive forces are less powerful and thus obey or react to the extension of force on the part of others. For Nietzsche, the essence of a power center is equated with its activity-- with the effects it produces and those which it resists. His is a purely holistic conception of the universe in which, "every atom effects the whole of being--it is thought away if one thinks away its radiation of power-will" (WP 634). The designation of forces is determined by their effects. Appropriation, domination, and subjugation are all effects of active power. While reaction, submission, and reflection are all effects of weaker forces. In Nietzsche's words: "What is active?--Reaching out for power ... What is Passive?--To be hindered from moving forward: thus an act of resistance and reaction" (WP 657).

The will to power is always a question of struggle between forces that are never equal. But, to the extent that resistance is present even in obedience, the individual power of inferiors is by no means surrendered. Likewise, there is in commanding "an admission that the absolute power of the

opponent has not been vanquished, incorporated, disintegrated " (WP 642). The question in all scientific, physiological, or sociological enquiries, then, is the degree of superior power and the degree of resistance.

At times, Nietzsche seems hopeful that a purely mathematical formula could be devised to measure these forces (WP 710), but he also recognizes that a mechanistic interpretation of reality cannot grasp the essential characteristics of force (WP 660). According to him, there exists a peculiar human trait which posits quality behind quantity. Moreover, "every creature different from us senses different qualities and consequently lives in a different world from that which we live" (WP 565). There could be no privileged measurement of quantities or qualities, because the will to power interprets everything from its own position in relation to its own power. Therefore, there is a multiplicity of evaluations and measurements. Nietzsche, it may be fair to say, proposes a theory of reality that is grounded in political organization. The structure of reality resembles the structure of any political unit.

### 2.3 THE WILL TO POWER AS LIFE

Life for Nietzsche is the form of the will to power with which we are most familiar. Life is distinguished from inorganic processes by its greater complexity, more advanced demands for nutrition, and its sharper differentiation of pow-

er. But the differences between a man, for instance, and a rock are matters of degree and not essence. In his notebooks, Nietzsche writes:

The will to accumulate force is special to the phenomena life, nourishment, procreation?--to society, state, custom, authority? Should we not be able to assume this in the cosmic order? Not merely conservation of energy, but maximal economy of use, so the only reality is the will to grow stronger of every center of force--not self preservation, but the will to appropriate, dominate, increase, and grow stronger. (WP 689)

This fundamental drive exhibited by every center of force--in a chemical, a plant, an individual, or a nation--is the essence of will to power. Nietzsche clearly emphasizes that this drive is towards increased power and not self-preservation. It would be completely incorrect to assume that Nietzsche is promoting some kind of neo-Darwinian social theory. He warns that,

Physiologists should think twice before putting down the instinct of self-preservation as the cardinal instinct of an organic being. A living thing seeks above all to discharge its strength--life itself is will to power; self-preservation is only one of the indirect and most frequent results. (BGE 13)

A science or philosophy based upon this instinct, therefore, would fail to grasp the more fundamental desire for an increase of the feeling of power which sometimes comes at the expense of preservation. Social Darwinists, like Herbert Spencer, are guilty of confusing cause and effect. People do not struggle in order to exist, Nietzsche tells us, but exist in order to struggle. In his words:



The struggle for existence is only an exception, a temporary restriction of the will to life. The great and small struggle always revolves around superiority, around growth and expansion, around power-- in accordance with the will to power which is the will to life (GS 349).

Clearly, Nietzsche attempts to dissociate himself from the crude "might makes right" theories current in the wake of the theory of evolution.

Pain and pleasure as primary factors of motivation are equally discounted by the will to power. Obstacles to life, dangers of every sort, are considered to be stimulants to active forces. The will to power can manifest itself only against resistance Nietzsche claims, it therefore seeks that which resists it (WP 656). Pleasure and pain are only secondary phenomena accompanying the meeting and overcoming of resistance. It is a banal moral prejudice to assume that man seeks pleasure and avoids pain. Both are normal ingredients to organic life. Pleasure is the increased feeling of power associated with overcoming resistance. Pain is misunderstood as merely the displeasure involved in the overexpenditure and exhaustion of power. But there is another sense of pain that accompanies meeting resistance that can be overcome, thus stimulating power (WP 702).

Grimm points out that Nietzsche's treatment of the pleasure-pain principle rests on the relationship between relative quantities of power, and whether they are increasing or decreasing. "This leads", according to Grimm, "to the further qualification that a strong and vital power constel-

lation (.eg a person) will have totally different pleasures (and pains) than a weak and exhausted power constellation." Consequently, the terms "pleasure" and "pain" lose their applicability, since they are both derivatives of the more fundamental will to power.<sup>26</sup> The pleasure-pain principle, and all utilitarian reformulations of it, are therefore invalidated by Nietzsche's power ontology as foundations for social or political theory.

The term "will" in Nietzsche's thesis should not be confused with the traditional conception of "will" as a faculty of the subject and as a substantial entity.<sup>27</sup> Nietzsche clearly denies the existence of the will as something simple, substantial, and concrete. Only a thoughtless person, he says, would believe in a notion of the will as brute-datum, comprehensible in itself (GS 127). For him, "willing seems to be above all something complicated, something that is a unit only as a word" (BGE 19). In fact, "the will of psychology hitherto is an unjustifiable generalization ... this will does not exist at all" (WP 692).

The will is a complex of interactions between feeling, thought, willing and commanding, such that only the effects come to the surface. It is illusory to think of a substantive "I" that performs the function of willing. If we were

<sup>26</sup> Grimm, p. 14.

<sup>27</sup> Perhaps Schopenhauer's Primal Will is the most extreme example of this. See his The World as Will and Idea, 3 vols., trans. R.B. Haldane and J. Kemp (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957).

to attempt to trace the complex multiplicity of struggles and reactions that appears to us as having effected a conscious action, we would find that our name for the entire process is merely an "empty word" (BGE 16, 19; WP 692, 693).

Since Nietzsche rejects the traditional concepts of God, Soul, or Will that are commonly ascribed transcendental value, it comes as no surprise that he rejects the ontological dualism which justifies their existence. Nietzsche denies the conception of man as "phenomenal" (body, matter) and "noumenon" (soul, spirit). A human being, rather, is nothing more than an incoherent, mutable aggregate of drives, affections, impulse, thought, and feelings, inter alia, in a relationship that is incalculable and indeterminate. Physiologically, a human is a particularly complex power constellation organized for maximal economy of power. The idea of a unified ego or substantive self is also rejected in favor of a "multiplicity of subjects, whose interactions and struggle is the basis for our thought and consciousness in general" (WP 490). We are, moreover, ruled by whatever drive or set of instincts is most successful at any given time. This rule is tyrannical and absolute since, "every single one [of these drives] would like only too well to represent just itself as the ultimate purpose of existence and the legitimate master of all the other drives" (BGE 6).

Some commentators overlook the passages where Nietzsche extends the will to power thesis into the cosmos as a

whole.<sup>28</sup> I have stressed them, however, not so much because he arrives at a definitive scientific theory, but because they were of obvious importance to him. Moreover, the same terms and phrases which Nietzsche uses in a biological or physiological sense refer to similar phenomena in the social realm. He attempts, above all, to arrive at an understanding of the world and society that is free from the moral presuppositions that he feels have poisoned scientific thought since the days of Socrates. For Nietzsche, all activity--organic and inorganic--involves a question of commanding and obeying within a "social structure composed of many souls". Morals or politics, therefore, becomes the decisive study for the philosopher. Nietzsche's primary concern is the articulation of a "doctrine of the relations of supremacy under which the phenomenon 'life' comes to be" (BGE 19).

#### 2.4 MASTER AND SLAVE MORALITIES

The will to power constitutes a functional principle in terms of which Nietzsche views and evaluates the problems of morality and politics. According to Nietzsche, "there are no moral phenomena only moral interpretations of phenomena" (BGE 108); and "there are altogether no moral facts" (T IV.1). Moralities are merely sign languages expressing the increase or decrease in active force. This is clear in

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<sup>28</sup> Eg. Kaufmann.

Nietzsche's portrait of master and slave moralities. The picture Nietzsche paints is quite simple, but its implications for moral philosophy are profound. Only its outline can be sketched in this chapter, however.

Nietzsche presents a "two-fold history of good and evil."<sup>29</sup> There exists two primary types of morality which Nietzsche calls "master morality and slave morality". A certain moral outlook originates in slaves, Nietzsche explains, and another in masters. Their respective conditions of power are reflected in the rationalizations and justifications of their moral perspectives. Nietzsche points out that all modern societies display a mixture of both types in every social class, and elements of each can be active simultaneously in any given individual. It is clear, then, that Nietzsche is referring to an abstract type and not any existent dichotomy. But, for the purpose of explication, he assumes an original condition in which a people has been conquered and enslaved by a more powerful caste. Under these circumstances, Nietzsche hypothesizes, the two distinct moralities arose.

In the first instance, the ruling caste determines what is "good", "noble", or "exalted" in terms of its own aristocratic qualities. Strength, pride, autonomy, freedom, and honor are considered virtuous. The noble human being natu-

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<sup>29</sup> Nietzsche introduces this thesis in HA 45, articulates it most clearly in BGE 259-260, and elaborates it throughout GM.

rally distinguishes himself from his opposite, the slave, and considers him "bad". This does not mean "evil", however, but simply that he is a bad example of the human type. Hence, moral designations were first applied to human beings, and only later, derivatively, to actions. In the first case, then, the opposition "good" and "bad" arose, meaning approximately the same thing as the opposition between "noble" and "contemptible". These judgements were originally applied to a certain group that was connected, not by human nature, but by their relation to power, and were not meant to be universally applicable.

In the second case, moral valuations of a different sort arose amongst the powerless, violated, and oppressed. These slaves extol virtues which are useful for themselves as a community: such as, kindness, sympathy, and pity. These valuations are rooted in a generally pessimistic suspicion about the condition of man and even a condemnation of man along with his condition. The strong and powerful are quite naturally looked upon with fear and suspicion. Ultimately, the independent individuals are judged to be "evil" while their own types are considered "good". According to Nietzsche, then, "bad" (schlecht) and "evil" (böse) are fundamentally different types of moral valuations. The former, arising in master morality, is a judgement from a position of strength. The master does not fear the slave. Therefore, that which is bad is not threatening, it is merely physical-

ly and aesthetically objectionable. The latter concept has a more drastic connotation: that which is evil is also dangerous, painful, and hence breeds hostility and resentment.

Thus the master is, and his morality extols, autonomy, independence, and self-control. "The noble type of man experiences itself as determining values", Nietzsche believes, "it knows itself to be that which first accords honors to things; it is value-creating" (BGE 260). The noble type is useful to a community but does not find its sole measure in its social utility. Nietzsche continues,

What is essential to the good and healthy aristocrat is that he does not see himself as a function (whether it be of the monarchy or commonwealth) but as its meaning and highest justification ... His fundamental faith simply has to be that society must not exist for society's sake but only as the foundation and scaffolding on which a choice type of man is able to raise itself to its highest task and to a higher state of being (BGE 258).

The noble type, moreover, does not expect its morality to be accepted by everyone and sanctions co-existence with slave morality since it is beyond fear and hatred. This is what Nietzsche means by a morality that is, "beyond good and evil"--one that is motivated by noble sentiments rather than resentment, suspicion, and revenge. Nietzsche says that the noble type is likely, due to its overabundance of power, to treat its inferiors with sympathy. But he emphasizes that they are free to "treat them as they please". Yet Nietzsche says of his conception of noble morality, that it is "beyond good and evil", it is not meant to be "beyond good and bad" (GM I.17).

The slave exists in a radically different world and naturally his perspective is different. He fears and despises those who are powerful, and resents his basically dependent, powerless, and miserable existence. Slave morality is thus a reaction to the overabundance of active force manifest in its opposite. The only way for the reactive forces to satisfy their instinctive desire for power is to bind together in an attempt to curb the overflowing forces of their masters. It must promote its own values as universal and absolute since it cannot co-exist with the powerful. According to Nietzsche: "The slave revolt in morality begins when resentment itself becomes creative and gives birth to values." This begins with saying "No" to everything that is not like itself, this "No" is its first creative deed. "In order to exist", Nietzsche says, "the slave always needs a hostile world; it needs, physiologically speaking, external stimuli in order to act-- its action is fundamentally reaction" (GM I.10). Nietzsche does not mean to suggest that resentment and reaction are conscious and directed, for the greater part of active life is unconscious. The slave, who lacks the physical power to displace his master, does so symbolically and mythically.

In Christianity the values of slave morality become "sanctioned and incarnate,"<sup>30</sup> while the virtues of the mas-

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<sup>30</sup> A phrase borrowed from Bernd Magnus, Nietzsche's Existential Imperative (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), p. 15.



ters become "sin". Rather than power, pride, and strength Christianity promotes obedience, humility, and chastity. The meek are promised the inheritance of the earth, and "hell" is invented as a place for evil masters. Moreover, slavish resentment construes its own dependent condition in terms of guilt and bad conscience, while existence becomes understood as punishment. Christianity abolishes the innocence of existence and confesses the weakness of mankind. It thus represents degeneracy, decline, and sickness of the spirit.

A central concern of Nietzsche's analysis of slave morality is the concept of "sublimation". His notion of "bad conscience", for instance, suggests that it arises when individuals are placed in a situation in which their instinctive desire for power cannot be expressed. Rather than reaching out in a natural discharge of energy, the drives are turned back onto the individual and internalized. This sublimation of the instinctive drive results in a self-attack that is ultimately a deprecation of life. This repression of the desire for freedom and autonomy, inherent in the will to power, becomes manifest in pathological behavior (GM II.16,17). There is a striking resemblance, I think, between Nietzsche's notion of sublimation and Freud's later analysis of repression and neurosis produced by socialization.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> For a discussion of the resemblances and similarities between Nietzsche and Freud, see: Mitchell Ginsberg, "Nietzschean Psychiatry", in Nietzsche: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Robert C. Solomon (Garden City, New

In section 13 of the first part of the Genealogy of Morals, Nietzsche provides an analysis of the notion "good" as it is construed by the men of resentment. According to Nietzsche, there is nothing strange in the idea that lambs dislike the great birds of prey, but this does not provide the ground for reproaching the eagle for bearing off little lambs. And if lambs get together and say amongst themselves that these birds are "evil" while the opposite (ie. lambs) are "good", there is no reason to find fault with this institution as a ideal. But, Nietzsche cautions:

To demand of strength that it should not express itself as strength ... is just as absurd as to demand of weakness that it should express itself as strength. A quantum of force is equivalent to a quantum of drive, will, effect--more, it is nothing other than precisely this willing, driving, effecting, and only owing to the seduction of language ... can it appear otherwise. For just as the popular mind separates the lightning from its flash ... so popular morality separates strength from the expression of strength, as if there were a neutral substratum behind the strong man, which was free to express strength or not to do so.

There is obviously no such substratum for Nietzsche. There is no "being" behind doing, effecting, or becoming. The "doer" is a fiction added to the deed--the deed is everything. The popular mind assumes a subject where there is none and maintains a belief in various forms of "free will" by means of which it seeks to make the eagle or the strong

York: Anchor Books, 1973), pp. 293-315; Rollo May, "Nietzsche's Contribution to Psychology", in Symposium, pp. 58-73;

and Richard Waugaman, "The Intellectual Relationship Between Freud and Nietzsche", in Psychiatry, 36 (November 1973), pp. 458-467.

individual "accountable" for being what they are.

Equally fictitious in Nietzsche's opinion is the assumption that an historical epoch is free to express itself according to an unlimited range of possibilities. The acts of man in any given age, along with the historian's perspective of his age and others, are determined by the particular relations of power manifest in that period. Nietzsche writes:

In its measure of strength every age also possesses a measure for what virtues are permitted and forbidden to it. Either it has the virtues of ascending life: then it will resist from the profoundest depth the virtues of declining life. Or the age itself represents declining life: then it also requires the virtues of decline, then it hates everything that justifies itself out of abundance, out of the overflowing riches of strength. (CW E)

Virtues and vice, therefore, are not absolute but reflect the degree of strength exhibited in any age. Nietzsche considers his age to be one of decline and thus proceeds to diagnose its evaluations of "good", "evil", "truth", and "falsity" according to the problem of decline. One must fully understand these symptoms of decline, Nietzsche argues, in order to see that "hiding under its most sacred norms and value formulas" is an impoverished health, an exhausted will to power, and a weariness of life (CW P).

With this sketch of Nietzsche's power quanta ontology in mind we can now turn to Nietzsche's analysis of the concept of "truth". He attempts to construct a theory of knowledge adequate to a world of continual flux, and constant becoming. His notion of truth, therefore, cannot be grounded in

fixity, permanence, or eternity. The tendency to posit "eternal verities" is a symptom of decline and exhaustion, and must be overcome within a theory of truth as a function of will to power.

Chapter III  
NIETZSCHE'S CONCEPTION OF TRUTH

3.1 TRUTH IN THE EARLY WORKS

Over and over Nietzsche repeatedly tells us that there is no truth, that there are no facts, and that what we have always believed to be true and factual is nothing but a corpus of lies, errors and illusions. Moreover, the world is also illusory, false, and fictitious. We are simply incapable of knowing anything truthful about it. One encounters statements to this effect at virtually every stage in Nietzsche's career. His notorious utterances on this topic have led some to dismiss altogether his views on epistemology as incoherent and irrelevant,<sup>32</sup> while others simply accept Nietzsche as a radical epistemological nihilist.<sup>33</sup> At closer examination, however, it becomes clear that Nietzsche is rejecting a specific conception of truth and knowledge which contradicts his principle of the will to power. He rejects the conception of truth promoted by previous moral systems as inadequate to the task of understanding truth as problematic. He evaluates the traditional concept of truth and proposes, alternatively, a theory of perspectival truth con-

<sup>32</sup> Eg. Copleston.

<sup>33</sup> Eg. Danto.

sistent with his dynamic ontology.

One commentator has said that, " Nietzsche approaches the question of truth not by attempting to define it, but by rationalizing the inadequacies in the human concept of it."<sup>34</sup> In fact, if we are to believe Nietzsche, he is the first philosopher to raise the question of the meaning and value of the quest for unconditional truth. He asks, "What in us really wants truth? ... Suppose we do want truth: why not untruth? and uncertainty? even ignorance?" (BGE 1). For Nietzsche, "the will to truth requires a critique--the value of truth must for once be experimentally called into question" (GM III.24). This problem interests Nietzsche from his earliest notes throughout his last works.

As early as 1872, in an unpublished essay entitled "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense", Nietzsche confronts the origin and history of truth. He argues that the problems of truth and knowledge are inextricably bound up with the problem of language. Knowing seems to involve the same metaphoric transference of experience from one sphere into an entirely different one that we find in language. That is:

To begin with a nerve stimulus is transferred into an image: first metaphor. The image in turn is imitated in sound: second metaphor. And each time there is a complete overleaping of one sphere, right into the middle of an entirely new and different one.(TL 1).

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<sup>34</sup> Mistry Freny, Nietzsche and Buddhism (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1981), p. 80.

Finally, the sound image is transferred into a concept which is meant to signify countless more-or-less similar cases. But Nietzsche claims that there are simply no similar things in the world, therefore our cognitive apparatus relies upon illusion and imagination. The concept "leaf", for instance, is meant to indicate countless unique and individual leaves and does so by means of tropes and generalization. Language, then, is far more than a neutral medium for communicating experience or timeless truths--it provides us with the means to construct a human world in which to live.

One implication of this for Nietzsche is that language plays an elemental role in the creation of society. When people organize into herds they establish what from then on is to be counted as truth. In other words, "a uniformly binding designation is invented for things, and this legislation of language likewise establishes the first laws of truth" (TL 1). Since our language is based on metaphor, these designations in no way touch the heart of any independent reality. The distinction between truth and lie is therefore apparent only within society. In Nietzsche's words, "truth" is simply "lying" in the accepted fashion. The liar is one who uses the conventional designations in an improper fashion. He poses a threat to the community, and is punished or excluded.

Truth, in this scheme, is not a direct correspondent of independent reality, but a socially invented rule. Truth, moreover,

is a moveable host of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred and embellished, and which, after long usage, seem to a people to be fixed, canonical, and binding. Truths are illusions which we have forgotten are illusions (TL 1).

These worn out metaphors that we call truths have become dominant in society as the reflection of the imposition of rule by a particular group or ruling class. They nevertheless allow a herd to survive and are therefore not easily discarded even after the initial conditions for their creation have long since disappeared.

Nietzsche considers metaphor formulation to be the "fundamental human drive" manifest in all language, art, and social life. By means of this process we organize the world in terms of explicitly human forms of organization (TL 2). In other words, we anthropomorphically fasten upon things in relation to us, and not to things-in-themselves. We project the notion of reality and causality into our tropes and only later forget this process. "Man", Nietzsche explains, "has an invincible inclination to allow himself to be deceived." Hence, man permits himself to be subjected to the domination of a truth and reality that is originally a work of his own imagination or construction.<sup>3 5</sup>

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<sup>3 5</sup> For a detailed discussion of Nietzsche's theory of metaphor see: Lawrence M. Hinman, "Nietzsche, Metaphor, and Truth", in Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, 43 (December 1982), pp. 179-199.



This early essay must also be understood , at least partially, as an attack on the positivism current in Nietzsche's day. According to Nietzsche, positivism erroneously assumes that we can have access to pure objects. But things-in-themselves, in Nietzsche's view, are actually perceptual metaphors. Only by forgetting the primitive world of the metaphor--that is, by forgetting that man is an "artistically creating subject"--can one live in repose and security. Such a pacified existence, Nietzsche seems to argue, underlies a belief in positivism. If, on the other hand, we could escape the "prison walls" of this faith our self-consciousness would be destroyed. Even then, considering man's majesterial vanity, it would be difficult for men to admit that an insect or a bird perceives an entirely different world from that of man, and that the question of which perception is "correct" would be quite meaningless. For Nietzsche, belief in the possibility of a correct perception (what he later calls the "immaculate perception" Z II.15) would require the "adequate expression of the subject in the object"--a foolish and contradictory impossibility. According to Nietzsche, there is no causality, no correctness, and no expression between dissimilar spheres. There is, at best, only an aesthetic relationship. Even when the same image is repeated millions of times until it finally appears at the same occasion every time for all mankind, it is not the sole necessary image and its relationship to the original is not a strictly causal one. In Nietzsche's words,

"the hardening and congealing of a metaphor guarantees absolutely nothing concerning its necessity and exclusive justification" (TL 1).

By ignoring the creative and artistic nature of our knowledge we have allowed metaphors to become canonical and have adopted them as absolute truths and pure facts. In a way, this is beneficial to man and society because it permits stability and justifies fixed relations of domination. To the extent that we have forgotten that our truths are originally metaphoric, however, our societies become suspicious of new metaphors, the myths of different people, and the desire to create new truths. Out of fear and laziness man in society negates the possibility of creating more powerful illusions. To borrow a phrase from Kerry Walters, "truth" is "doubly damned": on the one hand, what we normally accept as truth is only a falsehood justified by its "survival-value"; on the other, our moral timidity keeps us from discarding our interpretative truths even when they have clearly lost their operative utility.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Walters, p. 40.

### 3.2 THE UNCONDITIONAL WILL TO TRUTH

Nietzsche's early characterization of language as metaphorical seems to suggest that there is an extra-cognitive world of reality which language fails to tell us anything about. In this respect he would be arguing along familiar Kantian lines. However, in all of his subsequent works, Nietzsche opposes any kind of epistemological dualism and hence dispenses with the problem of how closely our concepts "correspond" to things-in-themselves. John Sallis explains that Nietzsche goes beyond Kantian contexts when he enquires why we place things into the object, and asks what necessitates this activity. Nietzsche's problem is thus to show that, first, from the ground of life there arises a special sense of man's relation to truth that serves to conceal this ground and construes the demand for truth as something unconditional. Second, Nietzsche analyzes how there occurs the transition from truth as a lie, to a correspondence of reality.<sup>37</sup>

In an influential and extensively documented analysis of Nietzsche's theory of knowledge, Hans Vaihinger has argued that Nietzsche's thought is greatly indebted to Kant.<sup>38</sup> He explains that Nietzsche's "doctrine of conscious illusion"--that is, his perspectivism--is a metaphysic of "as

<sup>37</sup> John Sallis, "Nietzsche's Underworld of Truth", in Philosophy Today, 16 (Spring 1972), pp. 12-19.

<sup>38</sup> Hans Vaihinger, "Nietzsche's Will to Illusion" in The Philosophy of "As If", trans. C.K. Ogden (London: Kegan Paul, 1924), pp. 341-362.



if". In other words, the conscious man might come to know that mathematics, language, logic, etc., are all falsifications or illusions, but will nevertheless live "as if" they were true. Illusions are therefore "biological and theoretical necessities."<sup>39</sup> For Nietzsche, Vaihinger claims, the realm of appearance is not to be censured by philosophers insofar as it proves itself useful and valuable. Despite the fact that Nietzsche continually heaps scorn on Kant, Vaihinger believes that "there is much Kant in Nietzsche". Nietzsche's comments about Kant, Vaihinger continues, show that he misunderstood the Kantian "as if", probably due to his reliance upon Lange's wrongheaded presentation of Kant's ideas.<sup>40</sup> In conclusion, Vaihinger argues that Nietzsche would have come to embrace the positive aspects of Christianity had he not been tragically incapacitated, and suggests that Nietzsche did, in fact, hold a notion similar to Kant's well-known imperative to live according to Christian morality as a "regulative principle".<sup>41</sup> Vaihinger's conclusions are surely idle hypotheses at best. Although we have no way of knowing what Nietzsche's later philosophy might

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<sup>39</sup> Vaihinger, 346.

<sup>40</sup> In fact, Nietzsche may not have had much experience with Kant's philosophy. His references to Kant (whom he called "the Chinaman of Königsberg") are inevitably polemical and seldom substantial. But it is not of importance whether Nietzsche correctly presents Kant's views, only that he saw in Kant an opponent and unhealthy dogmatist.

<sup>41</sup> Vaihinger, p. 362.

have been, if the themes of the books written in his last productive year are any indication, it would appear that he in no way intended to accept the Christian moral-hypothesis.

Nietzsche's interest in the role of the Christian God was not motivated by a desire on his part to find positive "regulative principles". He was mostly interested in a scrutiny of His value as "truth", and as a metaphysical controlling force. He finds no evidence that God is necessary, especially for higher types of humans. On the contrary, God is refuted by the evidence of injustice, error and the success of the "most unscrupulous polytropoi" (GS 344). Advancing a familiar argument, Nietzsche asserts that "a humanitarian God cannot be demonstrated by the world we know ... You are all afraid of the conclusion [therefore ...] you hold fast to your God and devise for him a world we do not know" (WP 1036).

In the same connection, Nietzsche criticizes Kant for concentrating on questions that are not cogent in our world. Kant's famous query--"How are synthetic a priori truths possible?"--should be changed, according to Nietzsche, to--"Why is belief in such judgements necessary?" (BGE 11). Even if such judgements prove to be necessary, Nietzsche continues, belief in them remains within the realm of visual evidence belonging to the perspectival optics of life. Kant has no right to postulate things about which our mind cannot bring forth evidence. In Kant's scheme, things-in-them-

selves, for instance, are said to be beyond rational proof. Hence, in Nietzsche's words, the lack of proof of their non-existence is advanced as proof of their existence (WP 17). At bottom, Kant's "theological instinct" is at work here in an effort to promote "morality as the essence of the world". His Christian dogmatism leads Kant to reduce reality to "mere" appearance and to honor a "mendaciously fabricated world of being as reality" (A 10).

In addition, Nietzsche argues that Kant was not entitled to his categorical imperative. In the Critique of Practical Reason, Kant postulates "God", "Soul", "Immortality", and "Freedom", after he had demonstrated, in the Critique of Pure Reason, that all of these concepts are untenable.<sup>42</sup> According to Nietzsche a strong power center will necessarily invent its own categorical imperative, one that it would not assume to be universally binding. Kant's motives are sullied, in Nietzsche's view, by a slave perspective. The demand that his imperative be impersonal and universal is a "chimera and expression of decline, of the final exhaustion of life, of the Chinese phase of Königsberg" (A 11). The "unconditional feeling" that "everyone must judge as I do" is tyrannical and indicates selfishness, blindness, pettiness, and frugality. It is selfish, Nietzsche explains, to experience one's own evaluations as a universal law; and

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<sup>42</sup> Kaufmann explains in a note that Nietzsche was not alone at his time in advancing this objection to the categorical imperative, note to GS 335, fn. 65, pp. 264-265.

blindness to this selfishness, "betrays that one has not yet discovered oneself nor created for oneself an ideal of one's own" (GS 335).

In his notebooks of the 1870's we discover that Nietzsche suspected very early that the drive for truth is a basically moral phenomenon rather than a natural one. "Man does not by nature exist in order to know", Nietzsche writes. The drive for knowledge arises as the desire to be the good man in society and is an "aesthetically generalized moral phenomenon" (P 130). Out of the truthfulness established by language in social life, comes the belief in truthfulness of the world as well as of man. The good man transfers his own moral inclination to the things of the world and believes, consequently, that the world must be true to him (P 134). Thus the objective, "theoretical man"--exemplified by the Platonic Socrates--feels his need for truth as a "duty" that becomes a desire for "truth at any price" (P 71).

This unconditional knowledge drive is essentially a faith that there is unlimited power in logic, reason, and science to "penetrate the deepest abysses of being." Socrates, "with his faith that the nature of things could be fathomed, ascribed to knowledge and insight the power of panacea, while understanding error as the evil par excellence" (BT 15). As we will see, Nietzsche finds this conviction false and predicated upon a decadent perspective. Socrates, in effect, is characterized as a political actor interested in

offsetting the powerful agonistic politics of the Greek polis. Thus powerful, passionate, impulsive, and creative wills are construed as evil in Socratic ethics. Dialectical thinking--from Socrates to Hegel--has promoted itself as politically disinterested and value neutral. It is often seen as an antidote to religious thinking since its method generates logical or rational evaluations. But, as Nietzsche points out, "faith in reason, with which the validity of these judgements must stand or fall, is, as faith, a moral phenomenon" (D P.4).

Nietzsche returns to this problem in the third essay of the Genealogy of Morals. Here he avers that the scientific man can never be free due to his intransigence about the "unconditional will to truth". Nietzsche writes:

That which constrains these men, however, this unconditional will to truth, is a faith in the ascetic ideal itself ... it is the faith in a metaphysical value, the absolute value of truth, sanctioned and guaranteed by this ideal alone. (GM III.24)

Scientific types do not question the value of truth, Nietzsche argues, and therefore leave the problem of the justification of their discipline unexamined. Science--no less than Christianity--possesses value for Nietzsche insofar as it offers salvation for mankind. Man is the "sickly animal" that suffers from the problem of its own meaning. Science is another ascetic ideal offering a moral interpretation of man's fallen condition. This interpretation, however, is not necessarily aimed at abolishing suffering, for suffering is



often craved by the weak types. It is not suffering itself, then, which is painful to man, it is the meaninglessness of suffering which man experiences as his greatest curse. This is the value of all ascetic ideals: in them suffering is interpreted, the void is seemingly filled, and the door temporarily closed to any kind of suicidal nihilism.

Unfortunately, the ascetic ideal itself leads to nihilism. While it is a useful illusion and the "faute de mieux so far", it brings with it fresh suffering--deeper, more inward suffering. Man is saved, possesses a meaning, but the direction of his will is ultimately destructive to life. When man wills truth unconditionally, his will constitutes,

a longing to get away from all appearance, change, becoming, death, wishing, from longing itself--all this means ... a will to nothingness, an aversion to life, a rebellion against the most fundamental propositions of life; but it still is and remains a will ... for man would rather will nothingness than not will at all. (GM III.28)

This chilling scenario is becoming reality in the world Nietzsche experiences. In the age of nihilism all philosophy, politics, and culture exhibit this will to nothingness implicit in the will to truth.

Nietzsche pursues this question further in book five of The Gay Science (written five years after the original book was published in 1882). He begins section 344 with praise for the scientific method:

In science convictions have no rights of citizenship ... Only when they descend to the modesty of hypothesis, of a provisional experimental point of

view, may they be granted admission and even a certain value in the realm of knowledge.

In other words, "a conviction may attain admission to science only when it ceases to be a conviction." However, there must have been a prior conviction in order for the discipline of science to have begun at all. Science rests upon the faith that, "Nothing is needed more than truth, and in relation to it everything else has only second-rate value." For Nietzsche, this conviction could not have arisen due to a calculus of utility since both truth and untruth are constantly affirmed as necessary to life. He concludes, therefore, that "will to truth" does not mean "I will not allow myself to be deceived", but "I will not deceive, not even myself"--and here we stand on moral ground. Behind this will is a thinly concealed will to death. That is, insofar as the morality of "truth at any price" constitutes an affirmation of another world than the one of life, nature and history--which is, after all, anything but moral--it negates its counterpart, this world, our world. The morality of science is destructive to life since it is based on a metaphysical faith. This conviction is identical to the Christian faith that was the faith of Plato, "that God is truth, truth divine."

Nietzsche believes that this faith is almost completely presupposed in the modern world. It finds its expression in the descriptivist or correspondence theory of truth. Danto

explains that:<sup>43</sup>

Philosophers and plain men alike are inclined to believe that there is an objective order to the world, which is antecedent to any theories we might have about the world; and that these theories are true or false strictly according to whether they represent the world correctly. The conception of an independent and objective world structure, and the conception of truth which states that truth consists in the satisfaction of a relationship of correspondence between a sentence and a fact, are views that Nietzsche rejects.

Nietzsche's attacks upon the religious and moral presuppositions of the correspondence theory are well documented and require no further elaboration here.<sup>44</sup> Suffice to say that Nietzsche conceives of the will to power as constant flux which admits to nothing stable about which our concepts could be said to apply. Within his scheme there are no substances, entities, facts, etc., therefore there is nothing to ground the subject-object relationship necessarily valid if statements are to correspond to anything.<sup>45</sup>

Nietzsche's analysis of the traditional conception of truth found in the notebooks of the late 1880's constitutes, as Grimm has demonstrated, a formal critique of the correspondence theory. Nietzsche argues that this theory is self-contradictory and inconsistent, and he provides a critique along much the same lines as Wittgenstein's diagnosis

<sup>43</sup> Danto, p. 72.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Danto, pp. 68-99; Grimm, pp. 43-65; and Wilcox, pp. 11-43 and 98-126.

<sup>45</sup> Grimm, p. 46.

of the same notion. Both Nietzsche and Wittgenstein recognize that the thinker cannot step outside of his cognitive faculties in order to observe to what extent his thought corresponds to an external and independent reality. Both philosophers see that the correspondence theory attempts to verify facts on the basis of a principle which does not itself admit to such verification.<sup>46</sup>

### 3.3 THE REAL WORLD AND THE APPARENT WORLD

Nietzsche's position on the correspondence theory of truth entails an attack upon a wide range of religious, metaphysical, and political theories. Traditionally, truth has been associated with that which is fixed, permanent, stable, and eternal. Plato and Aristotle, Aquinas and Augustine, Descartes and Kant, all ground their conceptions of truth in eternal verities of some kind or another. In fact, if Martin Heidegger is correct, the whole of western metaphysics since Plato has been primarily concerned with the question of being as eternal changelessness.<sup>47</sup>

Historically, those who have claimed that truth is by its very nature changeless and eternal have been led to deny the reality of our own physical world. The world that is "apparent" to us is obviously one of change, mutability, and flux. This world is therefore construed as "merely" apparent,

<sup>46</sup> Grimm, p. 50.

<sup>47</sup> See Heidegger, Being and Time, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (London: SCM Press, 1962).

while a true world of stability and permanence is posited above or beyond this world. In Nietzsche's opinion, Platonism and Christianity (which he often calls "Platonism for the people") have been most influential in perpetrating this spurious dichotomy. Plato, for instance, held that knowledge, if it is to be valid, must be so eternally. He therefore posits a fixed realm of ideal forms of which the soul has some prior knowledge. Christianity has adopted this world picture and developed it according to its needs.

The speech and thought of occidental philosophy has continually reinforced this ontological dualism. What is universal is contrasted to what is particular, and eternity is contrasted with temporality. We further distinguish between reality and appearance; being and becoming; freedom and necessity; utility and meaninglessness. Likewise we habitually bifurcate pleasure and pain; life and death; mind and senses; good and evil. Moreover, as Bernd Magnus puts it, this "schizoid habit" not only results in double vision but in a hierarchical vision as well. We value the eternal over the temporal, or freedom over necessity, just as we value good over evil.<sup>48</sup>

Nietzsche attacks this dualist world picture, firstly, as an unjustifiable condemnation of life in this world. At bottom, the valuation of another world beyond this one involves a judgement concerning life (i.e. "that it is no good") and,

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<sup>48</sup> Magnus, pp. 21-25.

as such, is untenable. For Nietzsche,

judgements of value concerning life, for or against it, can in the end, never be true: they have value only as symptoms, they are worthy of consideration only as symptoms; in themselves such judgements are stupidities ... the value of life cannot be estimated. Not by the living, for they are an interested party, ... and not by the dead, for a different reason. (T II.2)

Basically, the judgement against life evident in the desire for another, "true world" is a sign of decadence, decline, and weariness of life.

Nietzsche suggests that the judgement against life is, in fact, a necessary perspective for the exhausted and world weary. Socrates' desire for truth as a "panacea", for instance, is an example of a logical desire for one who could not compete in a vital society. Nietzsche avers that, "neither Socrates, nor his 'patients', had any choice about being rational: it was de rigueur, it was their last resort" (T II.10; Cf. WP 432, 433). Accordingly, Socratic dialectics is an expression of "plebeian resentment" through which the weak avenge themselves against the "agonistic impulse of the Greeks" (T II.7, 8). Shrewdness, severity, logicality, and rationality thus become weapons in the battle against the instinctive drives. The Socratic method had to become tyrannical in order to counter the tyranny of the drives. In Nietzsche's scheme, the equation "reason=virtue=happiness" is an expression of "logic as the will to power" (WP 433). This will, however, is necessarily decadent: "To have to fight the instincts--that is the formula

of decadence: as long as life is ascending, happiness equals instinct" (T.II.11).<sup>49</sup>

This equation of truth with virtue, moreover, has perpetrated a grave error in political thinking. Plato and Socrates advanced "that most fateful of prejudices, that profoundest of errors, that 'right knowledge must be followed by right action'" (D 116). Certainly, this assumption is fundamental to Plato's theorizing in the Republic. The rule of his philosopher-king is justified by the capacity in such an individual to know both what is true (good) and what actions will produce the desired effects.

Nietzsche not only denies the possibility for knowledge of the universally true and good, but he claims that "no amount of knowledge about an act ever suffices to ensure its performance, that the space between knowledge and action has never yet been bridged even in one single instance" (D 116). The rule of a philosopher can be justified only by his own will to power (and Plato actually offers this suggestion): i.e. if he does not rule, he will be ruled by someone else.

In Plato the "good" is equated with truth and permanence. Likewise, the early Christians incorporated this valuation and locate truth in God's eternity. The consequences of this

<sup>49</sup> A great deal of ink has been spilled in the attempt to explain Nietzsche's relationship with Socrates. See Leon H. Craig, "Nietzsche's 'Apology': On Reading Ecce Homo, a paper presented to the CPSA Annual Conference in Ottawa, Ontario, June 1982; Werner Dannhauser, Nietzsche's View of Socrates (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1974); and Kaufmann, especially "Nietzsche's Attitude Towards Socrates", pp.391-411.

way of thinking include the glorification of the mind at the expense of the body; the belief in the moral superiority of ascetic, other-worldly life styles; and the assumption of the church's superiority over the state.<sup>50</sup>

In Kant, finally, the distinction between the real and apparent world becomes subtle and refined. Kant's hypothetical "thing-in-itself" takes on the characteristics of the "true world" in contrast to our "apparent world". Not surprisingly, Nietzsche rejects this notion: "that things possess a constitution in themselves", he writes, "is a quite idle hypothesis: it presupposes that interpretation and subjectivity are not essential, that a thing freed from all relations would still be a thing" (WP 560). This thing-in-itself could not be, as Kant sees it, independent from human cognition, since it is itself a product of cognition. Nietzsche writes:

The thing-in-itself is nonsensical. If I remove the relationships, all the "properties", all the "activities" of a thing, the thing does not remain over; because thingness has only been invented by us owing to the requirements of logic; thus with the aim of defining, communication (to bind together the multiplicity of relationships, properties, activities). (WP 558)

This notion, moreover, is inconsistent with the rest of Kant's metaphysics. Kant denies that the category of causality applies between phenomena and things-in-themselves, so we cannot infer the existence of the latter by causal prin-

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<sup>50</sup> Grimm, p. 35.



ciplés.<sup>51</sup>

Nietzsche's reflections on the thing-in-itself help to illustrate his general position concerning ontological dualism. Nietzsche's theory is articulated in a particularly cogent passage from Twilight of the Idols entitled "How the 'True World' Became Fable". This "history of an error" is divided into six stages figuratively representing the development of this concept. In the first, Platonic stage, the "true world" is attainable only for the sage, the pious, the virtuous man. The second, Christian era, sees the "true world" as unattainable for now, but promised in the future for the pious. The third stage is Kantian: the "true world" is unattainable, indemonstrable, and unpromisable; but the very thought of it is a consolation, an obligation, and an imperative.<sup>52</sup> The fourth stage, "the cock-crow of positivism", regards the "true world" as unattained therefore unattainable: it is thus not consoling, redeeming, or obligating ("how could something unknown obligate us?"). Finally, Nietzsche sketches two more stages to the history of an error:

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<sup>51</sup> For a detailed discussion of this and other points regarding Nietzsche's Kant interpretation; see Wilcox, pp. 114-121.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. T III.6: "Any distinction between a 'true' and an 'apparent' world--whether in the Christian manner or the manner of Kant (in the end, an underhanded Christian) is only a suggestion of decadence and a symptom of the decline of life."

5. The "true" world--an idea which is no longer any good for anything, not even obligating--an idea which has become useless and superfluous--Consequently, a refuted idea: let us abolish it! (Bright day, Breakfast, return of bon sens and cheerfulness, Plato's embarrassed blush, pandemonium for all free spirits.).

6. The true world--we have abolished it. What world has remained? The apparent one perhaps? But no! With the true world we have also abolished the apparent one. (Noon: moment of briefest shadow, end of the longest error, high point of humanity, INCIPIIT ZARATHUSTRA.) (T IV).

With the destruction of the real world, there no longer exists the criteria on which to judge this world as "merely" apparent. We have now only this world, the one in which we live. As Joan Stambough puts it, "the old metaphysical framework of God-World-Man is simply abolished."<sup>3</sup>

The final stages represent the nihilism that Nietzsche encounters in all philosophical, political, and cultural movements of the nineteenth century. For Nietzsche, nihilism means that "the highest values have been devalued" (WP 2). But the value of nihilism is ambiguous: it can be a sign of increasing power of the spirit, as "active nihilism"; or it can be a sign of decline and recession of power as "passive nihilism" (WP 22). In stage 5 above, the abolition of the "true world" results in a mindless relativism and cheerfulness in which all meaningful criteria distinctions in human life are lost. The freedom for the "free spirits", however, is not experienced by Nietzsche as a con-

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<sup>3</sup> Joan Stambough, "Nietzsche Today", in Symposium, pp. 92-93.

dition of conscious awareness on the part of these individuals nor does it provide a means in itself of coping with a nihilistic age. Man in this stage does not recognize the significance of the fact of nihilism. Nietzsche provides a powerful account of this phenomenon in his parable of "the madman":

The Madman.--Have you not heard of that madman who lit a lantern in the bright morning hours, ran to the market place, and cried incessantly, "I seek God! I seek God!"--As many of those who did not believe in God were standing around just at that time, he provoked much laughter. Has he got lost? ... Or is he hiding? ... Thus they yelled and laughed.

The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his eyes. "Wither is God?", he cried; "I will tell you. We have killed him-- you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how did we do this? How could we drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe out the horizon? ... Are we not straying as through infinite nothing? ... God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him.

"How shall we comfort ourselves ... What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is the greatness of this deed not too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it?

Here the madman fell silent and looked at his listeners; and they too, were silent and stared at him in astonishment. At last he threw his lantern to the ground and it went out. "I have come too early", he said then; "my time is not yet. This tremendous event is still on its way, still wandering; it has not yet reached the ears of men ... This deed is still more distant from them than the most distant stars--and yet they have done it themselves. (GS 125)

Nietzsche's diagnosis is that passive nihilism has become triumphant. Nietzsche, in the words of Bernd Magnus, "not

only saw that the dualistic thrust which had informed European culture was untenable and had become bankrupt, but knew fully that this realization was undigestible."<sup>5 4</sup>

When Nietzsche speaks of the death of God he does not simply refer to the decline of the Judeo-Christian tradition. He refers, rather, to the historical fact that all transcendental values hitherto have lost their effectiveness as powerful guiding principles. It is significant that God's death--his murder--is encountered as an accomplished event by the emerging Zarathustra. Passive nihilism is therefore an empirical condition in which Nietzsche's philosophical activity begins. He does not preach nihilism, nor does he preach atheism (in fact, he ridicules the atheists for assuming that their faith will prove to be their salvation). Nietzsche's task, rather, is to "describe what is coming, what can no longer come differently: the advent of nihilism" (WP P.2). He avers that this nihilism "speaks to us even now in a hundred signs"; and that his formulation, "The Will to Power: An Attempt at a Revaluation of Values", constitutes a countermovement regarding both principle and task (WP P.4).

The advent of nihilism, moreover, is a necessary and logical conclusion to prevailing morality. "The end of Christianity", Nietzsche believes, "can only occur at the hands of its own morality". He continues:

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<sup>5 4</sup> Magnus, p. 138.

the sense of truthfulness, developed highly by Christianity, is nauseated by the falseness and mendaciousness of all Christian interpretations of the world and history; rebound from "God is truth" to the fanatical faith "All is false". (WP 1)

The supreme social values in whose service man has been told to live were especially hard and exacted a high human price. In Nietzsche's view they were erected over man to strengthen their voice, and construed as God's command, as reality, as the "true world", and as a hope for the future world. But now that the "shabby origin" of these values has become apparent--through the inclination for truthfulness promoted by Christianity--the universe, "seems to have lost value, seems 'meaningless'". But this is only a transitional stage" (WP 7). For Nietzsche,

the belief in ... aim- and meaninglessness, is the psychological necessary effect once the belief in God and an essentially moral order becomes untenable. Nihilism appears at that point ... One interpretation has collapsed; but because it was considered the interpretation, it now seems as if there were no meaning at all in existence. (WP 55)

The nihilist consequence--that is, the belief in valuelessness--is a direct result of moral valuation. We see that we cannot reach the sphere in which we placed our values, but this does not lead us to confer our values on the sphere of this world, the one in which we live (WP 8). On the contrary, "moral value judgements are ways of passing sentence, negating; morality is a way of turning one's back on the will to existence" (WP 11).

According to Nietzsche, all science and philosophy so far has been influenced by moral judgements. As we saw earlier, the scientific ideal expressed in the "will to truth" leads to the "will to nothingness"--to nihilism. The advent of nihilism appears to be inevitable to Nietzsche. We have measured the value of the universe according to categories that refer only to a fictitious world. As these values are recognized as false--a process encouraged by the rise of science and the industrial revolution--the feeling of valuelessness deepens and the conviction that existence has an end or goal is threatened. Briefly stated: "the categories 'aim', 'unity', and 'being' which we used to project some value into the world--we pull out again; so the world looks meaningless" (WP 12A).

Nihilism appears, Nietzsche explains, as a "pathological transitional stage"; it is clearly associated with the decline of life, with decadence, and world weariness. Nietzsche's imperative becomes a demand that we overcome nihilism by accepting the value of the world in its totality--as the world as will to power. For this to occur a form of extreme nihilism may be necessary:

The most extreme form of nihilism would be the view that every belief, every considering-something-true, is necessarily false because there is simply no true world: Thus a perspectival appearance whose origin lies in us ... it is the measure of strength to what extent we can admit to ourselves, without perishing, the merely apparent character, the necessity of lies. To this extent, nihilism, as the denial of a truthful world, of being, might be a divine way of thinking. (WP 15)

This fragment expresses the paradoxical relationship between Nietzsche and nihilism: he fears the advent of passive nihilism; and yet he sees that active nihilism may be necessary to eradicate all traces of the old traditional modes of thought. There is a controversy in the literature concerning Nietzsche's status in regard to nihilism. Danto, for instance, believes that Nietzsche is both a metaphysical nihilist (he believes there is no truth) and an axiological nihilist (his thought is consistent with a world in which there is no truth).<sup>55</sup> Richard Schacht has argued, persuasively I believe, that Nietzsche is a nihilist in neither of these cases.<sup>56</sup> Schacht demonstrates that, for Nietzsche, nihilism is not an end in itself, and that even active nihilism is only a means to a situation generating philosophers capable of overcoming nihilism. In other words, Nietzsche is not content to say that there is no truth, and leave it at that. He demands that a criterion for truth be made possible for those who are strong enough to bear it.

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<sup>55</sup> Danto, pp. 22-25.

<sup>56</sup> Richard Schacht, "Nietzsche and Nihilism" in Nietzsche: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Robert C. Solomon (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1973), pp. 58-82.

### 3.4 NIETZSCHE'S CRITERION FOR TRUTH

In light of what we have just said, it is obvious that Nietzsche's criterion for truth must be neither transcendental nor capable of transcendence. It must elicit, in the words of John Wilcox, "a this-worldly, fallible, hypothetical, perspectival, value-laden, historically developed, and simplifying truth--which we might call, using Nietzschean hyperbole, 'erroneous' truth."<sup>57</sup> Nietzsche says that, "there are no eternal facts, as there are no absolute truths" (HA 2). But nowhere does he suggest that there are no historically limited facts, or perspectival truths. In fact, he says that all higher civilizations recognized "little presumptuous truths" over "joy-diffusing and dazzling errors" perpetrated by metaphysicians (HA 3). Mistry Freny, discussing Nietzsche's relationship to Buddhism, claims that they both scrutinize "metaphysical absolutism as a presumption militating against the execution and reality of human spiritual autonomy and power."<sup>58</sup> In other words, Nietzsche denies absolute truths but admits to the reality of the individual's will to power.

As we saw earlier, Nietzsche denies the reality of a stable world order to which our statements of fact can correspond. He says that there exists only quanta of power locked in perpetual combat, endlessly changing, and ebbing

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<sup>57</sup> Wilcox, p. 156.

<sup>58</sup> Freny, p. 19.



and flowing in a turbulent chaos. What we experience as reality is the interplay of these quanta, some decreasing while others increase. Truth, as it is traditionally construed, has no rights in such a scheme. But can there be an alternative conception of truth in such a chaotic universe? If so, how are we to define and measure this truth?

Nietzsche's answer to these questions, as Grimm points out, springs from his power-quanta ontology.<sup>59</sup> According to Nietzsche, the "criterion for truth resides in the feeling of the enhancement of power" (WP 534). We call something true insofar as it increases our power and something false insofar as it decreases our power. Truth is therefore relative, perspectival, and ultimately subjective. What is considered true from the perspective of one power-constellation may be false from the point of view of another. The same phenomenon may be considered true by a strong power center, while a weak force must interpret it as false. As Kerry Walters has put it, "truth and falsity are reflections of an interpretation's survival-value, of its utility, and not of any possible correlation to objective facts."<sup>60</sup>

But Nietzsche is not proposing a "proof of strength" as the arbiter of truth. Something is not proved true simply by the effects it produces. This is a Christian doctrine associated with the apostle Paul who taught that "Faith

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<sup>59</sup> Grimm, p. 18.

<sup>60</sup> Walters, p. 39.

makes blessed hence it is true". Nietzsche bluntly refers to this notion as "indecent", and as a sign of decadence. Firstly, the supposed "making blessed" is only promised and not proved: one shall become blessed because of the condition of faith, yet the rewards remain in a state beyond man and the world. One might object, however, that faith increases an individual's strength and enhances the feeling of power. For Nietzsche this may be the case, but it presupposes deception and an unwillingness to affirm the world. In his view, "Faith makes blessed, therefore it lies" (A 50).

Theologians, philosophers, and politicians have all relied upon a similar faith in revealed truth to promote their causes. This position rests on the assumption that with their innovation truth is found and error and ignorance have come to an end. This, for Nietzsche, is "more fateful than error or ignorance because it cuts off the forces at work toward enlightenment and knowledge" (WP 452). Truth is not something "out there" waiting to be discovered, but something that is actively created over and over again in a perpetual struggle and overcoming of hardship (WP 552). This misunderstanding regarding truth is indicative of a basically poor philological method inherent in all believers. Philology here means, "the art of reading well--of reading facts without falsifying them by interpretation, without losing caution, patience, and delicacy in the desire to un-

derstand" (A 52). Nietzsche's conception of truth, in this practical sense, does admit to some standard of factual observation.

We must not confuse Nietzsche's position with the mindless relativism expressed in the conviction that "anybody's opinion is as good as anyone else's". Nothing could be further from Nietzsche's intentions. Grimm raises this issue and explains that since the world, for Nietzsche, is dynamic and active, his notion of truth is meant to reflect this. Truth is not a property of statements but a function of activity. An idea, concept, or theoretical proposition which provides resistance by stimulating my intellect, or otherwise exerting its power, is, ipso facto, a true idea.<sup>61</sup> The same applies to physical objects: "It is the highest degrees of performance that awaken the belief in the 'truth'; that is to say, the reality of the object" (WP 533).

We are still faced, however, with the question of the truth of Nietzsche's position. That is, we are compelled to ask whether Nietzsche is simply offering another set of truths in place of the old ones. One answer is found in Nietzsche's own analysis of his position. He writes: "Supposing that this also is only interpretation--and you will be eager enough to make this observation?--well, so much the better!" (BGE 22). This statement is, in fact, consistent with Nietzsche's power ontology. An unchanging standard of

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<sup>61</sup> Grimm, pp. 19-20.

truth does not apply, not even to his own thought, for it presupposes an inadequate conception of reality. He does not intend to establish a universal value criterion. Nietzsche offers his thesis as an "illusion" or useful fiction which, if utilized in our own sphere of activity, generates a functional increase in our power. What is more, as Grimm has laboured to demonstrate, Nietzsche's position is self-verifying (or self-referentially consistent) since it becomes "true" for those who can implement it successfully, and "false" for those who cannot.<sup>62</sup>

While Grimm's explanation remains somehow unsatisfactory, it does capture the essence of Nietzsche's conviction that truth is a human, all-to-human value judgement grounded in our own needs and desires rather than an independent realm of objective reality. Yet it seems obvious (and Grimm refuses to admit this possibility) that Nietzsche holds certain things to be "true" about man and the world. He writes: "We strive for the forbidden: in this sign my philosophy will triumph one day, for what one has forbidden so far as a matter of principle has always been--truth alone" (EH P.3).

Again:

"How much truth can a spirit endure, how much truth does a spirit dare?" This became for me the standard of value. Error is cowardice-- every achievement of knowledge is a consequence of courage, of severity towards oneself. (WP 1041; Cf. EH P.3, BGE 49)

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<sup>62</sup> Grimm, pp. 26-29; and Grimm, "Circularity and Self-Refer-  
ence in Nietzsche", in Metaphilosophy, 10 (July/October  
1979), pp. 289-305.

Finally: "At every step one has to wrestle for truth ... the service of truth is the hardest service" (A 50).

Nietzsche emphatically encourages an enquiry into the world as it really is. Fear, laziness, and resentment restrict most individuals from attaining an adequate understanding of the world and leads them to accept a meaning or purpose for their existence unreflectively. The truth about this world, Nietzsche admits, is terrible and ugly. Nature is hostile, brutal, and cruel and our drives are not always noble. Nevertheless Nietzsche insists upon an objectivity that does not unfairly distort our perspectives of the world. Only the most healthy and virile souls can stand the truth as it is.

Accordingly Nietzsche holds to a strictly physiological interpretation of value. He asks: "What is the objective measure of values? Solely the quantum of enhanced and organized power" (WP 674). He writes, "What determines rank, sets off rank, is only quanta of power, and nothing else" (WP 855). Again: "There is nothing in life that has value, except the degree of power--assuming life itself is will to power" (WP 55). Finally, he writes:

Indeed, every table of values, every "thou shalt" known to history or ethnology, requires first a physiological investigation and interpretation, rather than a psychological one; and every one of them needs a critique on the part of medical science. The question: What is the value of this or that table of values and "morals"? should be viewed from the most diverse perspectives; for the problem cannot be examined too subtly. (GM I. 17).

Obviously, Nietzsche assumes that there exists an order of rank among value systems, and that there is a valid measure for evaluating these values.

Nevertheless, Nietzsche does not seem to admit to the possibility of a trans-historical truth. Even the evaluation that the world is will to power is a truth that cannot be accepted by those who are too weak to comprehend it. Likewise, he does not accept the truths of slave morality. The point is that "the opposite forms in the optics of life are both necessary"; but they are ways of seeing immune to reasons and refutations. In his words, "One cannot refute Christianity; one cannot refute a disease of the eye ... the concepts 'true' and 'untrue' have, as it seems to me, no meaning in optics" (CW E).

We must bear in mind, however, that Nietzsche considers his power ontology as a life enhancing model of reality. It is not merely an interpretation along side of many others, but signifies a progressive step towards a more meaningful existence. He does not, however, preclude the possibility that new, more powerful interpretations will follow his.

## Chapter IV

### NIETZSCHE'S PERSPECTIVISM

#### 4.1 THE WORLD AS INTERPRETATION

In the previous chapters we have encountered the major propositions of Nietzsche's perspectivism, we need now only sketch in its detail. Perspectivism denies, not merely the possibility of all truth and knowledge, but its immutability. In other words, since Nietzsche construes life as an incessant battle of conflicting interpretations, he objects to the deification of the most recent victor of this battle as assured knowledge or truth. Interpretation, for Nietzsche, is endless process characterized by a continuous chain of victories and defeats in the perpetual struggle between perspectives. This position, by his own account, plays an elemental role in Nietzsche's social thought:

That the value of the world lies in our interpretation (-that other interpretations than merely human ones are perhaps possible-); that previous interpretations have been perspective valuations by virtue of which we can survive in life, i.e., in the will to power, for the growth of power; that every evaluation of man brings with it the overcoming of narrower interpretations; that every strengthening and increase of power opens up new perspectives and means believing in new horizons--this idea permeates my thought. (WP 616)

This provocative and insightful thesis underlines and informs all we have seen about Nietzsche's philosophy. The

purpose of this chapter will be to outline briefly the doctrine of perspectivism in both its analytical and normative contexts. Perspectivism, on the one hand, is a powerful methodology for an evaluation of previous perspectival interpretations. On the other hand, it constitutes an imperative to overcome nihilistic ways of thought and to strengthen the type man.

According to Nietzsche, each power center edits, arranges, appropriates, and dominates the chaos surrounding it. Each one interprets a world for itself according to its needs. This applies at all levels of life, from the highest to the lowest. A protoplasm for instance, extends its pseudopodia in an effort to organize, incorporate, and master its environment in a manner best suited for an increase of its power. Likewise a plant interprets the world from a plant-perspective, and therefore encounters an entirely different world than we do.<sup>63</sup> Each power center is concerned primarily with interpreting its world, introducing meaning into its existence.

In man the urge to interpret life is inextricably bound up with his fundamental character as will to power. We are bent upon finding a meaning for our existence, we feel compelled to understand the reason for our life on earth. But our answers are limited to the type of intellect man has,

<sup>63</sup> As early as 1872 Nietzsche writes: "For the plant the world is thus and such, for us the world is thus and such ... for a plant the world is a plant, the whole world is a plant; for us, it is human." (P 102)



which is to say that we know enough to enable us to live. Yet, through creation-- in art, morality, and politics--authentic attitudes are produced and affirmed. We seek to impose a reality or reason upon the chaos of reality as eternal flux. "To impose upon becoming the character of being", Nietzsche writes, "is the supreme will to power" (WP 617).

Existence itself is actively engaged in interpretation. Nietzsche says, "The will to power interprets: it defines, limits, determines degrees, variations of power ... In fact, interpretation is itself a means of becoming master of something" (WP 643). Nietzsche makes this point more forcefully in his published work:

Life itself is essentially appropriation, injury, overpowering of what is alien and weaker; suppression, hardness, imposition of one's own forms, incorporation, and at least, at its mildest, exploitation ... "Exploitation" does not belong to a corrupt or imperfect and primitive society: it belongs to the essence of what lives, as a basic organic function; it is a consequence of the will to power, which is after all, the will to life. (BGE 259)

Interpretation, at this level of reflection, is creative imposition of form upon chaos, annexation or appropriation, and above all, the will to dominate reality. Consequently, insofar as it renders as much violence on reality as any other force, our interpretation of the world is a falsification.

Nietzsche's theory of language and consciousness is important in this context. For him the development of the two go hand in hand. Our ability to fix perceptions into our con-

consciousness increases proportionately to our need to communicate. Hence, Nietzsche explains, "consciousness does not really belong to man's individual existence but rather to his social or herd nature ... it has developed subtlety only insofar as that was required by social and herd utility". Consequently, we cannot come to know ourselves through any amount of introspection, since we inevitably translate our incomprehensibly personal, unique, and individual actions into the perspective of the herd. "This", Nietzsche continues, "is the essence of phenomenalism and perspectivism: owing to the nature of our animal consciousness, the world of which we can become conscious is only a surface and sign-world, a world that is made common and meaner becoming conscious involves a great and thorough corruption, falsification, reduction to superficiality, and generalization" (GS 353).

Coming to know, according to this scheme, means, "to place oneself in a conditional relation to something; to feel oneself conditioned by something and oneself to condition it--it is therefore under all circumstances establishing, denoting, and making-conscious of conditions" (WP 555). What a thing is, in other words, is determined by its actions and reactions with regard to other power quanta. These relations continually change, hence a strong power center could, by placing itself in a more advantageous position, become something quite different than it previously was.

Likewise, any particular power constellation may be something entirely different (or even nothing) from the perspective of each and every other power constellation. Things, objects, qualities, activities, etc., are constituted through the interpretation of a power relationship. Their identity is not constant: if a power center increases or decreases power so will its relation to others, and so will its interpretation of those very things, objects, or qualities.

It follows that there are no facts as we traditionally think of them-- there are no constants, no laws to which these power struggles must adhere. Therefore "explanation" is not possible, only "interpretation-- the introduction of meaning" (WP 604). The basic task in life is to introduce a meaning into things, to place oneself in the most advantageous position in relation to other power centers. This requires, at a higher level, the positing of goals and a molding of "facts" accordingly. This, according to Nietzsche, is "active interpretation and not merely conceptual translation" (WP 605). But Nietzsche reminds us that, "people are capable of the most different interpretations and directions toward different goals" (WP 604). Accordingly, the world has no univocal meaning, its characteristics are projected into it by interpretation. And, as Nietzsche tells a friend in a letter, "that there is a correct, that is, one correct exposition-- seems to me to be psychologically and experi-

mentally wrong ... In short, the old philologist says, on the basis of his whole philological experience: there is no sole saving interpretation."<sup>64</sup> In fact, there is no world apart from interpretation, or more specifically, there are many worlds, in accordance with the multiplicity of perspectives, none of which is the correct one.

In one of the most important texts written by Nietzsche on perspectivism he argues, "against positivism, which halts at phenomena--facts is precisely what there is not; only interpretations". And against subjectivism: "everything is subjective is also interpretation". The subject is not something given, it is added and invented or projected behind what there is. For Nietzsche:

Insofar as the word "knowledge" has any meaning, the world is knowable; but it is interpretable otherwise, it has no meaning behind it, but countless meanings--Perspectivism.

It is our needs that interpret the world; drives and their for and against. Every drive has its perspective that it would like to compel all the other drives to accept as a norm. (WP 481)

In this fragment, and in many like it, Nietzsche rejects the conception of fact promoted by positivists. Elsewhere, as we have seen, he rejects the Kantian thing-in-itself and Plato's ideal forms, Cartesian substances and Schopenhauer's "pure subjects of knowledge".

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Nietzsche to Carl Fuchs, Sils, 26 August 1888, Letters, no. 175, p.

John Atwell has therefore concluded that, "perspectivism is not so much a unitary, positive thesis as a three-pronged attack on what may now be called 'pureness'--'pure facts'; 'pure objects' (or things); and 'pure subjects'."<sup>65</sup> He further argues that Nietzsche's perspectivism, allowing for variations on a theme, is similar to the position maintained by numerous twentieth century philosophers, all of whom hold that "facts are value-laden".<sup>66</sup>

Nietzsche, according to Atwell, advances a sort of contextualism. That is, facts exist only within a context or framework. Atwell quotes Mary Midgely as an example of a modern Nietzschean.<sup>67</sup>

What counts as a fact depends on the concept you use, on the questions you ask ... There is no neutral terminology. So there are no wholly neutral facts. All describing is classifying according to some conceptual scheme or other.

In other words, what counts as a fact depends on the perspective you are, on the sense you bring into the investigation. Nietzsche proposes a similar argument: "A proper physiology has to contend with unconscious resistance in the heart of the investigator (BGE 23). Atwell, unfortunately, does not see any positive or prescriptive message behind the

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<sup>65</sup> Atwell, p. 156.

<sup>66</sup> This slogan belongs to Norwood Hanson, see Patterns of Discovery (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958). Atwell also mentions John Kemeny, Phillipa Foot, Nelson Goodman, W. Sellars, and W.V.O. Quine in this context.

<sup>67</sup> Mary Midgely, Beasts and Man: The Roots of Human Nature (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1978), pp. 5-6.

method of perspectivism and, therefore, leaves his analysis of it incomplete.

#### 4.2 KNOWLEDGE AND POWER

In Nietzsche's perspectivism, knowledge is the increase of power and the enhancement of one's position in relation to the world. Knowledge is not something we acquire, it is something we create. All knowledge is interpretation, and interpretation constitutes the introduction of meaning. Knowledge is therefore a fundamentally political phenomenon that addresses the political questions of self-definition and personal power. Nietzsche insists that there is a crucial relationship between affirmation and critique, between the task of the "revaluation of values" and the affirmative, "yes-saying" spirit of Nietzsche's style of critique.<sup>68</sup> Nietzsche characterizes knowledge as the world-creating function of the will to power. We construct a world in which to live and best enhance our power:

We have arranged for ourselves a world in which to live--by positing bodies, lines, planes, causes and effects, motion and rest, form and content; without these articles of faith nobody now could endure life. But that does not prove them. Life is no argument. The conditions of life might include error. (GS 121)

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<sup>68</sup> On this see Erica Sherover, "Nietzsche on Yea- and Nay-Saying", in Journal of Existentialism, 5 (Summer 1965), pp. 423-426.

Nietzsche here specifies that nobody "now" could endure a life of error and chance. He does not wish to preclude the possibility that a higher type of man will be able to survive without these articles of faith.

Nietzsche realizes that there are many difficulties encountered on this road. Not the least of which is the fact that our very language impedes the creation of new more powerful modes of thought. Our speech implicitly prescribes the way in which the world is to be viewed; that is, "every word is a preconceived judgement" (WS 55). Early in his career Nietzsche writes:

Language as a Presumptive Science. The maker of language was not modest enough to think that he only gave designations to things, he believed that with his words he expressed the highest knowledge of things ... Much later--only now--it is dawning upon man that they have propagated a tremendous error in their belief in language. (HA 11)

The greatest error of this faith in words is the tendency to posit unity, identity, permanence, substance, cause, and being. "We enter a realm of crude fetishism when we summon before consciousness the basic presupposition of the metaphysics of language", Nietzsche laments; "I am afraid that we are not rid of God because we still have faith in grammar" (T III.5). In other words, "owing to the unconscious domination and guidance by similar grammatical functions ... the way seems barred against certain other possibilities of world-interpretation" (BGE 20).

Nonetheless, Nietzsche seems to hold out the possibility that a certain type of man will be able to affirm the world of becoming in all its turbulent chaos. Occasionally, as we will discuss later, he refers to this type as Übermenschen. These superior humans will be able to say "Yes" to all life, to life as will to power, and live without externally imposed ways of viewing the world. Other times, Nietzsche suggests that we still have the possibility of achieving this goal. Zarathustra says that,

one must still have chaos in oneself to give birth to a dancing star. I say unto you: you still have chaos in yourselves. (Z I P.5)

The implication here, and it is borne out in the theoretical works, is that one must have a tremendous multiplicity of perspectives within one's experience in order to create powerful forms and interpretations.

Nietzsche's imagery of dancing or flying is contrasted with the "spirit of gravity" which holds most of us down and limits our perceptions to what Nietzsche calls, using painters' terminology, "frog perspectives". His ideal, rather, is that overabundant power and energy will burst forth in such a frenzy that one will be able to view all interpretations from above, from the perspective of an eagle. Colin Wilson believes that Nietzsche proposes a new theory of meaning that is grounded in the powers of insight, perception, and distance. One needs to attain an "Archimedian point" from which to view phenomena, and this requires tremendous drive and energy. For Nietzsche, this is the significance of



Dionysian frenzy, it permits the philosopher the occasional flashes of insight which allow him to grasp his own possibilities and those of the world. In this sense, perspectivism is more than merely relativism--that is, a theory stating that any particular phenomenon admits to a number of mutually exclusive points of view--because it involves the frenzy which itself opens up a multiplicity of viewpoints.<sup>69</sup> This Dionysian frenzy, however, is kept in check by the Apollonian instinct to maintain coolness and practical judgment. The synthesis of these two attitudes to life is expressed most cogently in the title of his tenth published book, die Fröhliche Wissenschaft, the "Gay Science" (often translated as "joyful wisdom", but Nietzsche himself also used the phrase la gaya scienza).

This methodological point underlines his imperative for philosophers to approach their subject with scientific rigor, while at the same time enjoying an aesthetic and playful attitude. He writes that, "I do not know of any other way of associating with great tasks than play: as a sign of greatness, this is an essential presupposition" (EH II. 10).<sup>70</sup> Yet he maintains that we can approach, at least pro-

<sup>69</sup> Colin Wilson, "Dual Value Response: A New Key to Nietzsche?", in The Malahat Review, 24 (October 1972), pp. 53-66.

<sup>70</sup> For a discussion of Nietzsche and play, see: Eugen Fink, "The Ontology of Play", in Philosophy Today, 18 (Summer 1974), pp. 147-161, David Farrell Krell, "Towards an Ontology of Play", in Research in Phenomenology, 2 (1972), pp. 63-95 and Lawrence M. Hinman, "Nietzsche's Philosophy of Play", in Philosophy Today, 18, (Summer 1967), pp.

visionally, a positive objectivity through perspectival inquiry:

to see differently in this way for once, to want to see differently is no small discipline and preparation for the intellect for its future "objectivity"--the latter not understood as "contemplation without interest" (which is a nonsensical absurdity), but as the ability to control one's Pro and Con and to dispose of them, so that one knows how to employ a variety of perspectives and effective interpretations in the service of knowledge.

This is possible, according to Nietzsche, only if we dispense with the conceptual fiction that posits a "pure, will-less, painless, timeless knowing subject". For this would demand that we conceive of an eye that is not directed in any direction. But,

there is only a perspective seeing, only a perspective "knowing", and the more affects we allow to speak of one thing, the more eyes, different eyes, we use to observe one thing, the more complete will our "concept" of a thing, our "objectivity", be. (GM II.12)

Nietzsche's position is primarily that the social scientist should bring the same delicate appreciation for his text to his work as does the careful and sensitive philologist.

We must not, however, become like the crude natural scientists who reduce the world to one for calculators and mathematicians. He warns:

Above all, one should not wish to divest existence of its rich ambiguity: that is a dictate of good taste, gentlemen, the taste of reverence for everything that lies before our horizon. (GS 373)

In a note he defines his method in the following way:

Profound aversion to reposing once and for all in any one total view of the world. Fascination with the opposing point of view: refusal to be deprived of the stimulus of the enigmatic. (WP 470; Cf. WP 600)

This position, moreover, is consistent with his analysis of power and knowledge. Questions such as: How far does the perspectival character of existence extend; or whether existence without interpretation is possible--these cannot be decided even by the most scrupulous self-examination of the intellect. For, "in the course of the analysis the human intellect cannot avoid seeing itself in its own perspectives, and only in them." We cannot, so to speak, look around our own corner, Nietzsche says, and can only wonder what other kinds of intellects and perspectives there might be. Perhaps some being could experience time backward, or alternatively, forward and backward.<sup>71</sup> We do not know, Nietzsche avers, but at least we have come far enough to reject the immodesty involved in decreeing from one corner that perspectives are permitted only from this one corner. Nietzsche rejoices, rather, in the fact that the world--after the death of God--has become "infinite" for us all over again, inasmuch as it may include infinite interpretations. Of course, he realizes that this new prospect is also dangerous, and that most of his contemporaries are afraid of the

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<sup>71</sup> These playful wonderings of Nietzsche's have almost become experimentally testable in recent years. The theories of quantum physics have thrown the question of time and relativity towards new possibilities. Cf. Paul Davies, Other Worlds (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1980).

fact that, "too many ungodly interpretations are included in the unknown, too much devilry, stupidity, and foolishness of interpretation--even our own human, all-too-human folly, which we know (GS 371).

#### 4.3 PERSPECTIVISM AND SOCIETY

The methodological implications of perspectivism underline and inform Nietzsche's diagnosis of the culture and society he confronts in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Nietzsche's assessment of his age is clear enough. In a note from 1884, he writes: "Disintegration characterizes this time, and thus uncertainty: nothing stands firmly on its feet or on a hard faith in itself, one lives for tomorrow as the day after tomorrow is dubious" (WP 57). Perhaps, as Kaufmann suggests, this is not the way most of Nietzsche's contemporaries experienced their time.<sup>72</sup> But Nietzsche, as is well known, considers himself to be "untimely"; the role of the philosopher, correspondingly, is to "overcome his time in himself, to become timeless." The philosopher must therefore engage in combat with whatever marks him as a child of his time. "Well then", Nietzsche declares, "I am, no less than Wagner, a child of this time; that is, a decadent: but I comprehended this, I resisted it." As a philosopher, Nietzsche is not free, as is an artist, to do without enquiring into the malaise of his age; he must,

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<sup>72</sup> Kaufmann, WP, fn. 34, p. 40.

rather, become the "bad conscience of his time: for that he needs to understand it best" (CW P).

Perspectivism, however, does not stop at critique. "My style", Nietzsche says, "is affirmative, and deals with contradiction and criticism only as a means" (T VIII.6). Perspectivism is a valuable component of Nietzsche's attempt at formulating a valid countermovement to nihilism. As we saw earlier, Nietzsche experiences the inevitability of nihilism with ambivalence. On the one hand, he realizes the danger in the insight that, "Everything is false! Everything is permitted!" (WP 602). On the other hand, he recognizes the tremendous freedom for new beginnings in this age:

Indeed, we philosophers and "free spirits" feel, when we hear the news that "the old god is dead", as if a new dawn shone on us; ... At long last the horizon appears free to us again, even if it should not be bright; at long last our ships may venture out again, venture out to face any danger; all the daring of the lover of knowledge is permitted again; the sea, our sea, lies open again; perhaps there has never been such an "open sea".—  
(GS 343)

Certainly, both of these attitudes were possible in the late nineteenth century, yet few commentators have emphasized the degree to which Nietzsche's perspectivism is grounded in his experience with his age.

The cherished ideals of the Judeo-Christian world-view and its antecedents--that is, modern metaphysics, political economy, and liberalism--all tend to be, in the words of James Miller, "discredited under the impact of industrial-

zation and the scientific method of systematic skepticism.<sup>73</sup> Industrialization and its division of labour radically altered the role and consciousness of the individual in society. Machinery, according to Nietzsche, increases the factual individuation of man, but "it does not teach individual self-glorification, for it makes of the many a machine, and of each individual a tool for one purpose" (WS 218). Our attempt to determine a value of labour according to the amount of time, industry, inventiveness, constraint, or honesty bestowed upon it is an unjust practice. "We find every person irresponsible for his product, the labour", Nietzsche explains; "hence merit can never be derived therefrom ... the worker is not at liberty to decide whether he shall work or not, or to decide how he shall work." Nietzsche warns that, "this exploitation of the worker is ... a robbery at the expense of the future" (WS 286). Machinery is "impersonal", it robs a piece of work of its pride and its humanity to the extent that we now live "in the midst of an anonymous and impersonal serfdom" (WS 288). Industrialization needs individual cogs in its machine, yet it provides no foundation for the strength necessary for individuals to survive.

Previously, societies had provided powerful objective norms, conventions, and customs according to which the individual was encultured. Therefore, Nietzsche explains:

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<sup>73</sup> James Miller, "Some Implications of Nietzsche's Thought for Marxism", in Telos, 37 (Fall 1978), pp. 22-41 at p. 26.

during the longest period of the human past nothing was more terrible than to feel that one stood by oneself. To be alone, to experience things by oneself, neither to obey nor to rule, to be an individual-- that was not a pleasure, but a punishment; one was sentenced to "individuality". (GS 117)

Today the individual has been thrown back on his own resources. All objective norms and values have been devalued and the individual left to fend for himself. Most people, Nietzsche realizes, are incapable of facing the challenge of individuality and hence experience the "freedom" of nihilism as a terror. Why this fear? The individual, in Nietzsche's power ontology, is little more than a ceaselessly demanding battle of impulses and drives. The challenge, in Miller's words, to "govern this unruly subjective commonwealth" is beyond the capabilities of the vast majority of individuals.<sup>74</sup> The strength required to forge a satisfactory power balance without the external aid of the fictions of theologians, philosophers, and politicians is rare. In Nietzsche's words, "Independence is for the very few, it is a privilege of the strong" (BGE 29).

The modern individual, in the majority of cases, therefore seeks to escape his individuality, his freedom, and independence.<sup>75</sup> As we will see in the following chapter, many people blindly reaffirm old faiths in the guise of secular ideologies. The significance of Nietzsche's observation lies

<sup>74</sup> Miller, p. 28.

<sup>75</sup> This theme is similar to Erich Fromm's thesis in, Escape from Freedom (new York: 1941).

in the recognition that with the destruction of the monotheistic world-view we are now in an age in which no single world-view is capable of commanding the allegiance of the entire world, or of becoming the single controlling force in any given culture. In contrast to Marx, then, who assumes a limited set of fixed prejudices that reflect class rule, Nietzsche experiences a multiplicity of norms and an incommensurable plurality of forms of life. The death of God results in a variety of perspectives, and not His replacement by another absolute. The sunset of monotheism, so to speak, heralds a new and brighter tomorrow. Nietzsche elaborates that,

in certain cases suns of different colors shine near a single planet, sometimes with red light, sometimes with green light, occasionally illuminating the planet at the same time and flooding it with colors--so we modern men are determined, thanks to the complicated mechanics of our "starry sky", by different moralities; our actions shine alternatively in different colors, they are rarely univocal--and there are cases enough in which we perform actions of many colors. (BGE 215)

Clearly, then, Nietzsche believes that his age experiences an actual plurality of norms. In fact, the nineteenth century, and our own age, are marked by competing world-views in which none are strong enough to exercise complete control.

Europe can lay claim, Nietzsche argues, to a special "historical sense" which it experiences and interprets this variety of perspectives. In the wake of "that enchanting semi-barbarism" brought about by the "democratic mingling of classes and races", the nineteenth century knows this histo-



local sense as its "sixth sense". The past of every form of way of life, of cultures formerly separate and distinct, "now flows into us modern souls, and our instincts run back everywhere." Therefore, Nietzsche says that, "we ourselves are a kind of chaos!" (BGE 224). This historical sense teaches those who train themselves to feel the pulse of history that any attempts to deny or bridge this chaos can be nothing more than illusory.

The increased data concerning different cultures, different habitats, and different animal species reinforces Nietzsche's experience of a multiplicity of life forms. Science, moreover, teaches that nature can be understood without recourse to moral prejudices. In this context Nietzsche's desire to "translate man back into nature" (BGE 230), is not an imperative to live according to nature. He ridicules this proposition:

Imagine a being like nature, wasteful beyond measure, indifferent beyond measure, without purpose and consideration, without mercy and justice, fertile and desolate and uncertain at the same time; imagine indifference itself as power--who could live according to nature? Life is itself estimating, preferring--wanting to be different from nature. (BGE 9)

Nietzsche demands that human action be grounded in the recognition of the variety of perspectives and not in an external moral imperative. Zarathustra teaches us to, "remain faithful to the earth, and do not believe those who speak to you of other-worldly hopes" (Z P.3).

Man, for Nietzsche, does not exhibit a fixed human nature, he is something incomplete, fragmentary. In the famous words of Zarathustra:

Man is a rope tied between beast and overman--a rope over an abyss. ... What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not an end. ... The time is come for man to set himself a goal. (Z P.4.5).

The strong must posit a goal for themselves, Nietzsche warns, or the world will witness the victory of the herd instincts and man will have lost the opportunity to overcome what he is. These diverging possibilities are expressed in Nietzsche's dichotomy between the Übermensch and the letzte Mensch.

Nietzsche's greatest fear is the triumph of the "last men"--those who are all alike, demand nothing beyond pacification, and want everybody to be like them. Zarathustra spoke thus to the people:

"Alas, the time is coming when man will no longer give birth to a star. Alas, the time of the most despicable man is coming, he that is no longer able to despise himself. Behold, I show you the last man.

"The earth has become small, and on it hops the last man, who makes everything small. His race is as ineradicable as the flea-beetle; the last man lives longest.

"We have invented happiness, say the last men, and they blink ... No shepherd and one herd! Everybody wants the same, everybody is the same: whoever feels differently goes voluntarily into a madhouse. (Z P.3)

This speech is interrupted by the clamour and delight of the audience which yells: "Give us the last man, Oh Zarathustra!

Turn us into these last men!". The masses desire this kind of happiness, and they cannot understand its horror. At least one commentator has pointed out that Nietzsche's nightmarish vision of the "last men" resembles the classless society, interpreted in its crudest sense.<sup>76</sup> These men are "last", in Nietzsche's language, since they believe the most recent manifestation of the ascetic ideal--the one promoted by rationalism--and refuse to will beyond their established "truth". The "last man" cannot despise himself because, in his eyes, he is the perfectly rational animal--he is complete, intact, and signifies the epitome of human creation. Yet, in Nietzsche's estimation, he lacks the capacity to see himself in perspective, he lacks the necessary "pathos of distance".

Nietzsche's highest hope, in contrast, is the Übermensch, the "overman" or "Superman".<sup>77</sup> Zarathustra spoke thus to the people:

"I teach you the overman. Man is something that shall be overcome. What have you done to overcome him?

"All beings so far have created something beyond themselves; and do you want to be the ebb of this great flood and even go back to the beasts,

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<sup>76</sup> See Thomas Pangle, "The Roots of Contemporary Nihilism and its Political Consequences According to Nietzsche", in Review of Politics, 45 (January 1983), pp. 45-70.

<sup>77</sup> I will use the original German term because "overman" does not capture the connotation of this being a superior manifestation of man, and "Superman" conjures up visions of Clark Kent. Kaufmann uses "overman" therefore quotations from his translations will remain in that form.

rather than overcome man? (Z P.3)

There is a great deal of scholarly debate over just what Nietzsche means by Übermenschlichkeit. Nietzsche himself realized that there were already two glaring misunderstandings of his notion. That is, the word Übermensch had been understood as a sort of ideal type, a higher man, one who is "half saint, half genius"; while other "scholarly oxen" had suspected Nietzsche of Darwinism or, worse, hero worship in the fashion of Carlyle. (EH III.1).

Despite Nietzsche's warnings, commentators of the highest stature have been unable to resist characterizing the Übermensch as an ideal type.<sup>78</sup> The Übermensch in this context is an ideal type of strong individual, the antithesis to slave types, and a real possibility in some idealized future society. An alternative reading of Übermenschlichkeit is offered by Bernd Magnus who links it with the thought of the eternal recurrence. This latter doctrine--considered by Nietzsche himself as the fundamental conception of his work (EH Z.1)--holds that every event in this world will recur in exactly the same sequence over and over again, that, in fact, all events have already recurred and will do so eternally. According to Magnus, we need not concern ourselves with the actual truth or falsity of this doctrine, but need

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<sup>78</sup> This is common to Nietzsche admirers and detractors. See Danto, pp. 196-203; and Kaufmann, pp. 307-316; Cf. J.P. Stern, who believes that Hitler is the personification of this ideal type, Nietzsche (Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1977), pp. 85-86.

only reflect upon the attitude towards life that it suggests. In this context, Magnus takes the Übermensch to be the "nonspecific representation, the under-determined embodiment if you will, of a certain attitude toward life and the world--the attitude which finds them worthy of infinite repetition."<sup>79</sup> This attitudinal interpretation, it seems to me, is consistent with the spirit and context of Nietzsche's presentation of the eternal return and the Übermensch.

We first encounter the idea that all things recur eternally in the next to last section of The Gay Science, where it is referred to as the "greatest burden".<sup>80</sup> Nietzsche asks what your reaction would be if a demon were to steal into your loneliest loneliness and say:

"This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to return to you, all in the same succession and sequence ... The eternal hour-glass of existence is turned upside down again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!

Would you throw yourself down and gnash your teeth? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have assured him that you could think of nothing more divine?

<sup>79</sup> Bernd Magnus, "Perfectibility and Attitude in Nietzsche's Übermensch", in Review of Metaphysics, 36 (March 1983), pp. 633-659 at p. 643.

<sup>80</sup> Das grosste Schwergewicht. Kaufmann points out that the noun usually refers to a heavyweight in boxing, but that the phrase could also be translated as the "greatest stress"; GS, fn. 71, p 273. Although I have never seen it suggested, I prefer to use the phrase, "the greatest burden", which seems to me to be more idiomatic.

Once this thought takes possession of you, Nietzsche believes that it will change you as you are or crush you. You may experience it as the greatest burden, but imagine how well disposed to life and the world you would have to be to crave nothing more fervently than this ultimate confirmation and seal. (GS 341)

The last section of the book, entitled "Incipit Tragedia", introduces Zarathustra and sets the stage for the drama of Nietzsche's next book. In Zarathustra the protagonist is alternately called the teacher of the eternal recurrence and the teacher of Übermenschlichkeit. Zarathustra teaches affirmation and acceptance of all that is Dionysian-- the joy in creation and in destruction; the desire to overcome man; and the willingness that all events, happy and sad, recur eternally.

As many commentators have pointed out, Nietzsche's notebooks provide evidence that he believed his dynamic ontology logically generated his notion of the eternal recurrence.<sup>81</sup>

In a note from 1888 Nietzsche writes:

If the world may be thought of as a certain definite quantity of force and as a certain number of centres of force ... it follows that, in the great dice game of existence, it passes through a calculable number of combinations. In infinite time, every possible combination would at some time or other be realized; more: it would be realized an infinite number of times. (WP 1066)

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<sup>81</sup> See Danto, pp. 203-209; Magnus, pp. 86-109; Joe Krueger, "Nietzschean Recurrence as a Cosmological Hypothesis", in Journal of the History of Philosophy, 16 (1978), pp. 435-444 and Thomas A. Long, "Nietzsche and Eternal Recurrence", in The Personalist, 57 (1976), pp. 364-369.

Again, Nietzsche writes that the "law of the conservation of energy demands eternal recurrence" (WP 1063). However, we do not have any trans-recurrent consciousness, Nietzsche continues; thus we have no way of knowing what the future holds.

Nevertheless, Nietzsche clearly believes that the thought of the eternal return can have a profound effect upon the way we experience life. He advances this doctrine in the spirit of saying "Yes" to life and thus to all flux and becoming. That this involves accepting much which is painful, Nietzsche does not deny: "There is much filth in the world, but that does not mean the world itself is a filthy monster" (Z III.12.14). For Nietzsche, the highest expression of the "Yea-saying" spirit is found in the "Dionysian pessimism" of Greek tragedy. Inherent in this outlook is a certain amount of love of chance, accident, impulse, and fate.<sup>82</sup> Also important is the attitude expressed in Spiel, play or game. In his early analysis of pre-Socratic Greek philosophy Nietzsche writes:

In the world only play, play as artists and children engage in it, exhibits coming-to-be and passing away, structuring and destroying, without any moral addition, in forever equal innocence. And as children and artists play, so plays the ever-living fire. It constructs and destroys, all in innocence. Such is the game that the aeon plays with itself. (PTG 7)

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<sup>82</sup> See Sherover, p. 425.

This is the spirit of Dionysius himself--life is inexhaustible; the joy of becoming includes destroying, not out of malice or resentment but freely and innocently like a child at play.

It appears to me that the Übermensch is an attempt to capture the essence of this attitude to life as a means of overcoming the nihilism of our age. We have become nihilistic and no longer have any objective standards of value, yet we passively acquiesce in illusory forms of life from which we later suffer. The Übermensch signifies a return to health and an acceptance of a variety of norms and standards. This attitude, however, does not entail an unreflective belief that everything is well and good. Individuals who are like this Nietzsche calls the "omni-satisfied": they lack the sense to know when something tastes bad. Nietzsche is insisting, rather, that it is impossible to step out of life in order to make a judgement about it. Our judgements must be understood as conditioned by our needs and wants, so that we may decide what is right for ourselves and by ourselves.

Nietzsche's formula for overcoming nihilism takes the form of a revitalized polytheism. In Zarathustra's words: "Precisely this is godlike that there are gods, but no God" (Z III.12.2). The greatest advantage of polytheism is that it allows for the luxury of individuals, something monotheism must necessarily condemn. Previously, Nietzsche explains,



There was only one norm, man; and every people thought that it possessed this one ultimate norm. But above and outside, in some distant outer world, one was permitted to behold a plurality of norms; one god was not considered a denial of another god, nor blasphemy against him ... it was here that one first honored the rights of individuals. The invention of gods, heroes, and overmen of all kinds, as well as undermen and near-men, demons ... the freedom that one conceded to a god in his relation to other gods--one eventually granted oneself in relation to laws, customs, and neighbors. (GS 143)

Nietzsche's ideal, therefore, is not any specific type of man--a Cesare Borgia, Michelangelo, Goethe, or Napoleon, for instance--but a culture in which strong individuals could posit their own goals. As Nietzsche puts it, we could "create for ourselves our own eyes--and ever again more new eyes that are more our own: hence man alone among all the animals has no eternal horizons and perspectives" (GS 143).

Nietzsche's individualism, however, must not be confused with the same term used by liberal thinkers. According to Nietzsche's perspectival optics, words such as "freedom", "interest", "equality", etc., take on different connotations for different perspectives. Freedom, for instance, is not understood by aristocrats and by socialists in the same way. Nietzsche's value is always the degree of power, either increasing or decreasing. Hence, "self-interest is worth as much as the person who has it: it can be worth a great deal or it can be unworthy and contemptible" (T IX.33). Each individual can be scrutinized to see whether he represents the ascending or descending line of life. Having made this deci-

sion, one has a canon for the worth of his self-interest. For Nietzsche, the individual is not a free, unique, and valuable piece of humanity in all cases. The term itself is erroneous if used in the liberal fashion. The individual is nothing in himself, he is no "atom" or "link in the chain". He is "the whole single line of development of humanity up to himself". If he represents the declining life, he has small worth and decency demands that he take away as little from those who turned out well.

Individualism proposed by liberalism, it seems, is merely a symptom of declining life. The call for "equality", moreover, is a thinly disguised lust for power. The "will for equality" is the "tyrannomania of impotence", discharging the slave's "aggrieved conceit" and "repressed envy". Zarathustra notices that there are others who preach his doctrine of life, but he warns his audience not to confuse him with these others. These "tarantulas" turn their backs on life and preach of happiness and equality, which means that they want justice and punishment. These tarantulas desire only to avenge their weakness on those who have power, and in other times they were always the foremost slanderers and burners of heretics. Since their wills cannot will beyond their petty grievances, their first reaction is to bite and harm. In other words, they lack the power to direct their self-interest, and merely react to the actions of the strong (Z II.7).

In Nietzsche's view most individuals are guided by their drives and fears rather than self-interest. The capacity to make rational, self-interested decisions has been elevated to a primary position by most liberal and marxist sociologists. But Nietzsche grants little significance to this faculty: "man is an indifferent egoist; even the cleverest thinks his habits more important than his advantage" (WP 363). Nietzsche, according to Miller, believes that "most individuals, left to their own devices, crave security, order, certainty, the familiar, tried-and-true routine that seems to provide a steady foundation for life."<sup>3</sup> Consequently, in Nietzsche's perspectivism, the goal of reconciling the multiplicity of diverging thoughts and paths by somehow clarifying the enlightened common interest remains a pipe-dream.

In this century critical theory has attempted to reconcile critical Marxism with psychoanalysis. In his Knowledge and Human Interests, Jurgen Habermas has defended critical theory as a positive step towards human emancipation. He devotes a few pages at the end of the book to Nietzsche's theory of knowledge which, he says, does not contribute to a critical understanding of the world. Habermas uncovers a primordial urge to self-reflection that discloses the fundamental interests of mankind itself; thus its critical study can lead to liberation from injustice, error, and domina-

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<sup>3</sup> Miller, p. 32.

tion. As Miller points out, Nietzsche's perspectivism, if valid, undermines Habermas's position. Nietzsche disavows the connection between interest and critical thinking, and his notion of the perpetual struggle between basically incommensurable perspectives deflates the possibility of one single mode of critical reflection.<sup>84</sup> What is more, Habermas claims that "Nietzsche would never have arrived at perspectivism if from the very beginning he had not rejected epistemology as possible."<sup>85</sup> Yet, as we have seen, Nietzsche's perspectivism is grounded in the actual experience of a plurality of competing world-views rather than a mere philosophical prejudice.

Habermas is also concerned that Nietzsche's theory of knowledge does not admit that the discovery of illusions necessarily increases our understanding of the world. Indeed, Nietzsche writes: "The destruction of illusion does not produce truth, but only one more piece of ignorance, an extension of our 'empty space', an increase of our 'desert'" (WP 603). But this desert itself need not be infertile, as Nietzsche's own project seems to suggest. He does mean to deny that the universal claims of enlightenment are themselves erroneous, that the destruction of custom and objective values need not produce an improvement in our human condition. But Nietzsche also sees a new opportunity in the

<sup>84</sup> Miller, p. 40.

<sup>85</sup> Jurgen Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests, trans. J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), p. 298.

"open sea" of valuelessness for the healthy and vigorous lover of knowledge.

We may now turn to an examination of Nietzsche's evaluation of modern politics in order to see what role the political scientist can have in extending our "open sea". As political critic Nietzsche performs the task of accounting for the various forms of political organization, patterns of obligation, and ideological movements. By undermining our concept of truth, Nietzsche has devalued the highest values of all political doctrines--their claim to absolute "truth". The political critic, then, must see the political doctrines from many perspectives, in an attempt to see from within the perspective of the particular doctrines themselves. In this way, we might bring to light something that is common to all political phenomena. Ultimately, Nietzsche hopes that this task will indeed lead to the overcoming of these doctrines and the creation of new and better myths for the future.

## Chapter V

### NIETZSCHE'S CRITIQUE OF MODERN POLITICS

#### 5.1 NIETZSCHE'S CONCEPTION OF IDEOLOGY

Although Nietzsche himself does not use the term "ideology", and nowhere embarks upon an explicit analysis of the subject, his treatment of religion and morality is applicable, he maintains, in the political realm. Nietzsche argues that political doctrines, especially those of a social-democratic nature, are merely secularized versions of the Christian moral-hypothesis, and that political obligation is grounded in patterns of belief identical to the faith required by religion. Nietzsche advances a psychological diagnosis of the believer and the need to believe, as well as a theory of leadership grounded in the will to power. I will attempt to show that Nietzsche offers an analysis of the modern political problematic which is consistent with his perspectivism. He demonstrates the dangers of reposing in any one view of the world, and draws out the political consequences of "faith" and "conviction".

Generally speaking, the study of ideology has been of two kinds. That is, analysis of ideology as a generic concept (i.e. its nature and function) has been distinguished from the analysis of specific political beliefs (eg. socialism,

liberalism, and conservatism).<sup>86</sup> Nietzsche's examination of politics involves both of these tasks; we will begin with a discussion of the first. From the Greek idea and logos the term "ideology" means "knowledge of ideas". One of the earliest to use the term is Antoine Destutt de Tracy who regarded ideology as a science based upon the notion that all ideas can be traced back to the sensory data from which they arose. The political implications of the doctrine were drawn out along basically democratic lines by Helvetius and others. Their ideas posed a direct challenge to the imperialism of Napoleon who reciprocated by labelling his opponents "ideologues", denoting "visionaries". Thus the term "ideology" became a form of derision, denoting visionary or useless political theorizing.<sup>87</sup>

Perhaps the most influential theory of ideology now current is that promoted by Marx and Engels. Marx had become acquainted with the history of the term during his Paris exile, and used the term in the same derogatory fashion as did Napoleon.<sup>88</sup> In Marx and Engels, ideology is viewed as a system of false ideas that are promoted as objective but constitute, in reality, fixed prejudices of the ruling class. Ideology, in Marxian terminology, is secondary or "super-

<sup>86</sup> Mostafa Rejai, "Ideologies", in Dictionary of the History of Ideas, Vol. 2 (New York: Scribner & Sons, no date).

<sup>87</sup> See Hans Barth, Truth and Ideology, trans. Frederic Lilge (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), pp. 1-16.

<sup>88</sup> Barth, p. 48.

structural" and reflects the more fundamental "base" or material economic conditions in society. According to Bhikhu Parekh, Marx uses this term to mean both idealism and "apologia". Hence, Marx could explain the fact that such a talented philosopher as Hegel became an apologist due to his idealistic assumptions.<sup>89</sup>

Like Marx, Nietzsche regards modern ideologies as primarily false, idealistic, and determined by the play of power relations. But a knowledge of ideas, in Nietzsche's view, would have to take into consideration the free play of chance and accident rather than limit itself to the search for the rationale, or hidden logic, behind the history of a political doctrine. There is no coherent pattern through which we can understand history in terms of "development" or "purpose". For Nietzsche,

purposes and utilities are only signs that a will to power has become master of something less powerful and imposed upon it the character of a function; and the entire history of a "thing", an organ, or a custom, can in this way be a continuous sign-chain of ever new interpretations and adaptations whose causes do not even have to be related to one another, but on the contrary, in some cases succeed and alternate with one another in a purely chance fashion. (GM II.12)

Therefore, the uncovering of ideologies as false, or as interpretations from the perspective of the ruling class, does not lead, as Marx had anticipated, to the objective foundation of a new goal for mankind on the basis of scientific

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<sup>89</sup> Bhikhu Parekh, Marx's Theory of Ideology (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982).



historical laws. Nietzsche regards any view of history which posits a necessarily teleological theory of progress as an attempt to satisfy the fears of the weak types, and, as such, is itself ideological.

The starting point for Nietzsche's theory of ideology is the believer himself. Nietzsche's analysis of the devaluation of values implicit in his age concludes that the "death of God" is still not experienced as an accomplished fact by mankind. Individuals, fleeing from their individuality, are willing to embrace secular faiths for the same reason they needed Christianity. Nietzsche therefore embarks on a psychological examination of the believer.

At an early age Nietzsche perceives the effect of the peace of mind generated by faith. In a letter to his sister in 1865, Nietzsche asks: "Is it really so difficult to accept everything in which one has been brought up? ... Is that more difficult than to take new paths, struggling against habituation, uncertain of one's independent course?" He suggests that had they believed that salvation came not from Jesus but another--say Mohammed--that they would have enjoyed the same feeling of blessedness. He concludes that, "Faith alone makes blessed ... Every true faith is indeed infallible, it performs what the believing person hopes to find in it, but it does not offer the least support for establishing an objective truth."<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Nietzsche to Elisabeth Nietzsche, Bonn, 11 June 1865, Letters, no. 2, p. 7.

I repeat these youthful assumptions because he held them, more-or-less consistently, throughout his life.<sup>91</sup> In 1874, Nietzsche analyzes the base assumptions of faith. "At bottom", he suggests, "every man knows well enough that he is a unique being, only once on the earth; and by no extraordinary chance will such a marvellously picturesque piece of diversity in unity as he is, ever be put together a second time." Man knows this, yet hides it like an evil conscience behind external conventions. Faced with the existential fact of his being, in other words, man hides behind false ideologies, dogmas, lies, and errors. Why is this? Perhaps, Nietzsche says, it is due to fear or shyness. But no, in the majority of cases it is "inertia" that keeps man from coming to grips with this fact. "Men are more slothful than timid", Nietzsche avers, "and their greatest fear is of the burdens that an uncompromising honesty and nakedness of speech and action would lay on them" (U III.1).

Consequently, faith is a reaction of the will to power of weak individuals. In Nietzsche's words:

How much one needs a faith in order to flourish, how much that is "firm" and that one does not wish to be shaken because one clings to it, that is a measure of the degree of one's strength (or, to put the point more clearly, of one's weakness) ... for that is how man is: An article of faith can be

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<sup>91</sup> Twenty-three years later, only months before his collapse, Nietzsche writes: "That faith makes blessed under certain circumstances, that blessedness does not make a fixed idea a true one, that faith moves no mountains but puts mountains where there are none: a quick walk through a madhouse enlightens one sufficiently about this" (A 51).

refuted before him a thousand times--if he needed it, he would consider it "true" again and again.  
(GS 347)

Nietzsche continues that creeds such as positivism, nationalism, and nihilism always manifest above all the need for faith, a support, backbone, something to fall back on. This is a sign of decadence and exhaustion. The instinctive drive to form matter, appropriate and subjugate chaos, and to thrust forward is thwarted in dependent social beings and must take the path of least resistance. Faith, Nietzsche explains,

is always coveted most and needed most urgently where will is lacking; for will, as the effect of command, is the decisive sign of sovereignty and strength. In other words, the less one knows how to command, the more urgently one covets someone who commands, who commands severely-- a god, prince, class, physician, father confessor, dogma, or party conscience ... For fanaticism is the only "strength of will" that even the weak and insecure can be brought to attain. (GS 347)

The need for an ideology, for a firm reason to think this or that way, provides the weak with a means of discharging energy.

The power of ideologies is further complicated by the existence of martyrs. It is an "inference of idiots" that there must be something to a cause for which someone goes to death. Yet this is a powerful force behind the doctrine and immeasurably thwarts the spirit of examination. The existence of martyrs may prove nothing about the truth of the matter, but it tends to generate a faith in its "truth" for its believers (A 53). Zarathustra illustrates the dangers of this situation:

They wrote signs of blood on the way they walked, and their folly taught that with blood one proved truth. But blood is the worst witness of truth; blood poisons even the purest doctrines and turns them into delusions and hatred of the heart. And if man goes through fire for his doctrine--what does that prove? Verily, it is better if your doctrine comes out of your own fire. (Z II.4)

Clearly, Nietzsche recognizes the danger of absolute belief, and implies that it necessarily leads to violence and hostility.

Nietzsche consistently criticizes those who hold on to their convictions unconditionally. "Convictions", he says, "are more dangerous enemies of truth than lies" (HA 283). Nevertheless, he does not mean that we could live without forming opinions, nor that certain opinions are not to be considered noble. In an early aphorism he writes:

Dying for "Truth". We should not let ourselves be burnt for our opinions--we are not so certain of them as all that. But we might let ourselves be burnt for the right of possessing and changing our opinions. (WS 333)

In another aphorism, entitled "Opinions and Fish", Nietzsche distinguishes between "opinions" of which we must actively catch hold, and "convictions" which are dead, stiff, and passed on from one generation to the next. In Nietzsche's words: "I speak of live opinions ... Others are content to possess a cabinet of fossils--and in their head, 'convictions'" (WS 317).

Nietzsche returns to the problem of "convictions" in section 50 of The Antichrist. He argues that men of convictions are not worthy of the least consideration in the fundamental questions of value and disvalue. "Convictions are

prisons", Nietzsche avers; "to be permitted to join in the discussion of value and disvalue one must see five hundred convictions beneath oneself-- behind oneself." Freedom from convictions, in Nietzsche's view, is part of strength. Great passion uses and uses up convictions, it does not succumb to them--it knows itself sovereign. He writes:

The man of faith, the "believer" of every kind is a necessarily dependent man--one who cannot posit himself as an end, one who cannot posit any end at all by himself. The "believer" does not belong to himself, he can only be a means, he must be used up, he requires somebody to use him up. His instinct gives the highest honor to the morality of self-abnegation ... Every faith is itself an expression of self-abnegation, self-alienation.

The submission to a political creed will not and cannot lead to the overcoming of alienation. Yet things cannot be different for most people today. While the most powerful objective norms have been devalued the vast majority still needs something regulatory, something to "bind them from without and tie them down." In Nietzsche's estimation, we must come to understand that compulsion and slavery are the sole and ultimate conditions under which weak willed human beings can prosper. He writes:

Not to see many things, to be impartial at no point, to be party through and through, to have a strict and necessary perspective in all questions of value--this alone makes it possible for this kind of human being to exist at all.

The believer, therefore, is not permitted to have a conscience about what is true or untrue; to have integrity on this matter would destroy the ground of his existence. "The

pathological condition of this perspective", Nietzsche warns, "turns the convinced into fanatics". This is the case with Luther, Rousseau, Robespierre, and Saint-Simon--they are themselves sick spirits who know well enough that the "grand pose" makes a powerful impression on the masses. In Nietzsche's words: "the fanatics are picturesque; mankind prefers to see gestures than hear reasons" (A 50). In this fashion, the sick priests unite the masses by preaching doctrines of resentment and revenge.

This brings to mind an observation made by George Grant in his Massey lectures on "Time as History".<sup>2</sup> Grant comments:

Indeed, as I have watched Leni Riefentahl's famous documentaries of the Nazi era, particularly her shots of Hitler speaking, I have become aware of just that spirit which Nietzsche believes to be the curse of mankind--the spirit of revenge (that which, in Nietzsche's language, above all holds back man from becoming 'supermen'--Übermensch). As one watches Hitler speaking one sees that his effectiveness came from the uniting of his own hysterical self-pity with the same feeling in his audience. Life has been a field of pain and defeat for him both privately and publicly, as it had been for the Germans, and he summons up their resentment. In a political context, Hitler made specific demands; but behind anything specific one feels a demand more universal--a demand for unlimited revenge. As he writes in Zarathustra: "That man may be delivered from revenge: that is for me the bridge to the highest hope."

National Socialism, perhaps the greatest triumph of the "last men", necessarily transcends the particular and embraces universal truths. Hitler avenges himself on a world

<sup>2</sup> George Grant, Time as History (Toronto: The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 1969), p. 37.

that he blames for his misery, and the misery of the German people. Any specific demands for himself and his fatherland necessarily take on world-wide significance. In Nietzsche's thinking, these two realms should not be distinguished: to demand that something be the case for your group, in a world of will to power, implies that things be different for others as well. Every political demand involves a universal imperative that the world be such and such. Yet any attempt to impose a new reality along the lines of a pre-conceived ideal, in Nietzsche's view, is a symptom of decadence, a turning away from this world. At bottom, Nietzsche feels, this is nihilism par excellence: "A nihilist is a man who judges of the world as it is that it ought not to be, and of the world as it ought to be that it does not exist" (WP 585). In Hitler, resentment of the world as it is represents the greatest dangers of the age of nihilism.<sup>93</sup>

Fascism, certainly, exemplifies the greatest danger in the psychology of conviction, but Nietzsche considers this danger to be implicit in all forms of "faith". He asks the question: "Is there any difference between a lie and a conviction?". While all the world seems to think so, Nietzsche sees himself as an exception. Every conviction has its history, Nietzsche explains, and the lie is merely an embryonic form of the conviction. A change of ruling class, or a new

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<sup>93</sup> Albert Camus makes a similar point in his discussion of Nietzsche and nihilism, in The Rebel trans. Anthony Bower (New York: Vintage, 1956).

generation, sometimes a change of person suffices to confirm a lie as a conviction. In Nietzsche's words: "in the son that which became conviction in the father still was a lie" (A 55). We can take anti-Semitism as an example. In 1878 Nietzsche notices the growing power of this lie.<sup>94</sup> Nietzsche explains that,

the whole problem of the Jews exists only in nation states, for here ... their accumulated capital of spirit and will ... become so predominant as to arouse mass envy and hatred. In almost all contemporary nations, therefore--in direct proportion to the degree to which they act up nationalistically--the literary obscenity of leading the Jews to slaughter as scapegoats of every conceivable public and internal misfortune is spreading. (HA 475)

This "lie"--that Jews are responsible for the disasters of the nation-state--may easily become a conviction, a fanaticism, in the sons of those who first admit, out of their own weakness and resentment, its possibility. But Nietzsche does not mean to say that people cannot, therefore, be held responsible for their actions. By "lie" Nietzsche means:

wishing not see something one does see; wishing not to see something as one sees it. Whether the lie takes place before witnesses or without witnesses does not matter. The most common lie is that which one lies to oneself; lying to others is, relatively, an exception. (A 55)

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<sup>94</sup> The publication of HA in this year marks Nietzsche's break with Richard Wagner. For a discussion of their early relationship, see: Fredrick R. Love, The Young Nietzsche and the Wagnerian Experience (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963). For an account of the break itself, see: Kaufmann, pp. 30-41; Ronald Hayman, Nietzsche: A Critical Life (Hammondsworth: Penguin, 1982), pp. 184-206; and H.F. Peters, Zarathustra's Sister (New York: Crown Publications, 1977), pp. 33-51.



Hypothetically speaking, and here I am going beyond a textual matter, Nietzsche suggests that an individual like Hitler constitutes this exception. In fact, Nietzsche seems to hold certain notions later popularized by "elite theorists" such as Mosca and Pareto.<sup>95</sup> The fundamental fact in all human societies, in this view, is the division between the rulers and the mass. Like Mosca, Nietzsche believes that the rulers maintain their position in all cases through coercion, violence, and skillful manipulation of "political formulas"; and like Pareto, he assumes that the most significant portion of human behavior is motivated, not by deliberate and rational choice, but by unconscious habit. A successful politician, like Hitler, would be well versed in playing upon the fears of the people and promoting a political doctrine that will mollify these fears.

The mass of humanity, however, is instinctively inclined--by virtue of their prudence, experience, and vanity--to accept these lies and to continue lying to themselves when it proves convenient. "This wishing-not-to-see", Nietzsche explains, "is the first condition for all who are party in any sense: of necessity, the party man is a liar" (A 55). All parties, moreover, employ "big words" of morality to justify their lies. Even the anti-Semites in his day

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<sup>95</sup> Cf. Gaetano Mosca, The Ruling Class, ed. Arthur Livingstone, trans. Hanna D. Kahn (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1939); and Wilfredo Pareto, The Mind and Society, 4 vols., ed. Arthur Livingstone, trans. Andrew Bongiorno and A. Livingstone (1935; rpt. New York: Dover Publications, 1963).

have the audacity to say: "This is our conviction: we confess it before all the world, we live and die for it--Respect for all convictions!" On the contrary, Nietzsche exclaims: "An anti-Semite is certainly not any more decent because he lies as a matter of principle" (A 55).

Nietzsche's analysis of "convictions" generates a disturbing insight into the psychology of political belief. Nietzsche demonstrates that people are willing to submit to the most irrational political dogmas, and that their subservience to these ideals is based, not even on self-interest, but on a physiological need. What is more, since the true believer is committed to this faith, he is capable of performing almost any horrendous act while considering it to be a virtuous act. Political convictions of this sort, like optical perspectives, are immune to reasons and refutations. One of the most chilling aspects of Nietzsche's perspectival political analysis is the realization that individuals who are "evil", in fact, consider themselves to be "good".<sup>96</sup>

"The priests", on the other hand, "are much more delicate in such matters and they understand very well the objection which lies in the concept of conviction, namely, a mendaciousness which is a matter of principle because it serves an end" (A 55). The particular slogans used by various creeds are, for Nietzsche, mere words for the condition un-

<sup>96</sup> Nietzsche's thought on this matter brings to mind Hannah Arendt's controversial thesis of the "banality of evil"; see her Eichmann in Jerusalem (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich, 1965).

der which the priest attains power, and are fundamental to all political organizations. The "holy lie" common to Confucius, the Brahmin, and Christians is certainly not absent in Plato--it is at the bottom of the rationalization of the "ideal polis." Before we can look at specific "lies" predominant in Nietzsche's society, it may be useful to discuss his psychology of the religious and political founders.

## 5.2 THE ROLE OF IDEOLOGUES

The distinctive invention of the founder of peoples and religions is, first, to posit a particular kind of life that provides discipline of the will and at the same time abolishes uncertainty. Secondly, he must interpret this lifestyle such that it appears to be illuminated by the highest values so that it becomes something for which one fights and, under certain circumstances, gives up one's life. The latter task is ultimately the most important since the first condition is often present in some form or another beforehand. Thus the originality of the founder consists in his seeing, selecting, and interpreting this way of life for the first time as divine. To be a founder, then, one must be "psychologically infallible in one's knowledge of a certain type of souls who have not yet recognized that they belong together" (GS 353).

According to Nietzsche, the apostle Paul is in this respect the consummate political founder. He was inspired by

his own lust for power and achieved this end through shrewd manipulation of an embryonic political formula. Jesus himself lived a life of passive resistance similar in most aspects to other naive Buddhistic peace movements. Even his death had been, "only one more sign of how one ought to behave in relation to the authorities and laws of this world: not to defend oneself, that had been the lesson" (WP 170). Provided with the fact of Christ's death, however, Paul saw an opportunity to interpret it according to his own political advantage. That this interpretation was true or false never entered his head, Nietzsche assumes, only its effect was important. In fact, every sort of lie, slander, or forgery is permitted as long as it raises the temperature of the believers; until, in other words, people believe unconditionally in its "truth" (WP 172).

Paul's movement opposed the tactics of ruling Judaism and undermined its power by exploiting the need for "mystery" felt by the broad masses. Paul understood that the people's greatest need was for an interpretation of their suffering. From example of Christ's life and death, he therefore quite arbitrarily selected this, re-interpreted that, and finally came up with a loose mixture of "God on the cross", sin, blood-drinking, resurrection, and so on. These ideas proved to unite the masses and subvert the oppressive rule of the Roman Empire. In Nietzsche's words: "Paul wanted the end, consequently, he created the means ... his need was for pow-

er ... [but] he could use only concepts, doctrines, symbols, with which one tyrannizes masses and forms herds" (A 42). Ironically, Paul's church produced a new ruling order that was completely antithetical to Christ's teaching. The "tragic humour" of the situation, to use Nietzsche's words, is that,

Paul resurrected on a grand scale precisely that which Christ had annulled through his way of living. At last, when the church was complete, it sanctioned even the existence of the state. (WP 167)

Paul's role as religious and political founder serves Nietzsche as the epitome of a "holy lie" becoming "truth", and the justification for the political rule of a weak and clever herd.

The essential characteristics of the religious founder are also discussed in the context of the ascetic priest. According to Nietzsche, "The ascetic priest appears in almost every age; he belongs to no one 'race'; he prospers everywhere; he emerges from every class of society" (GM III.11). The priest propagates an ideal which springs from the "protective instinct of a degenerating life which tries by all means to sustain itself and to fight for its existence" (GM III.13). The priest is host to a perpetual battle between his deepest life instinct, which has remained intact, and his physiological disease and exhaustion. He seeks, therefore, to create the circumstances for his sickly will to power to satisfy itself and rule a sick society. It is nec-

essary, for this to be the case, that the consciousness of the fortunate be poisoned to the extent that one is ashamed of health. The gospel of the sick undermines the rule of the strong and provides a meaning for the suffering of the herd by offering an agent or cause for the resentment of the diseased.

The actual form of this ideal, according to Nietzsche, is of little consequence:

Whether one charge's one's misfortune to others or to oneself--the socialist does the former; the Christian the latter--really makes no difference. The common end, let us add, the unworthy, thing is that it is supposed to be somebody's fault that one is suffering ; in short, that the sufferer prescribes the honey of revenge for himself against his suffering. (T IX.34)

All modern political doctrines, in Nietzsche's estimation, are founded in this spirit of revenge. The founding of ideologies, peoples, nations, and parties is grounded in a lie concerning the utility or necessity of this or that community binding together as a herd. Strictly speaking, however, there is no basis in reality to assume that a people belong together. The concept of 'race', in Nietzsche's ontology, is a conceptual fiction, a popular myth, intended to unite people for a basically ulterior political motive.

This is not to say that there cannot be "noble" lies that bind superior types in healthy aristocracies. Nietzsche's point, however, is that there is something common about all political organization, something commonly dirty. That is, they are fictitious unities intended only for the domination

of a certain group in order for another to increase its power. Aristocracies, for instance, allow a certain type of man to increase his power, but this is done at the expense, and the pain, of weaker types of individuals. Yet Zarathustra recognizes in his speech, "On Redemption", that all recent moral and political teachings have been motivated by the spirit of revenge--they all construe mankind as fallen (Z II.20).

In contrast, one could imagine a religious founder who bases his teachings on a "noble lie". One could imagine a leader who preaches affirmation, life, and strength rather than revenge, laziness, and hatred. Lawrence Lampert has recently suggested that Zarathustra should be read as an account of Zarathustra's transformation from herald to superman.<sup>97</sup> In the first part of the book Zarathustra is the herald who anticipates a coming superman. He teaches that peoples are founded by "commanders and legislators", each calling into existence a new creation. The superman is coming, Zarathustra says, who will overthrow all existing structures and found a new global people--"mankind". According to Lampert, the politics of this teaching does not change during the following parts of the book, but Zarathustra himself is forced to become the superman who teaches the eternal return. Unlike previous founders, however, he no

<sup>97</sup> Lawrence Lampert, "'Ravens, Raging, and Uprooting': Nietzsche's Zarathustra as Political Thinker and Actor", a paper presented at the meeting of the Learned Societies, Vancouver (June 1983).

longer wants disciples who need to be told what to believe. Through an individual, singular act--which he urges on no one but himself--Zarathustra provides the basis for a new political order. When he wills the eternal return, Lampert writes, "the world sings its gratitude" and comes under a new rule--"the thousand year Reich of Zarathustra."<sup>8</sup> The teaching of the eternal return, Lampert argues, is a political teaching in the foundational sense: "it provides the horizons within which the new people 'mankind' is expected to live out a life 'true to the world'."<sup>9</sup>

Lampert's thesis emphasizes that the founder of peoples need not preach resentment and revenge. Societies have existed that exemplify noble and aristocratic traits, and there always remains a hope in Nietzsche's work for a new dawn and brighter tomorrow. But politics remains a dirty business, and Zarathustra's teaching is not meant, it seems to me, as a prescription for a new political movement. Zarathustra explicitly states that he does not want any followers, yet his message of self overcoming is a radical call to defy authority and create one's own categorical imperative. Zarathustra's ethics of radical individualism informs Nietzsche's own evaluation of various forms of political organization.

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<sup>8</sup> Lampert, pp 23-24.

<sup>9</sup> Lampert, p. 1.



### 5.3 NIETZSCHE'S CONCEPTION OF THE STATE

Any analysis of Nietzsche's conception of the state should first take into consideration his assertion that, "the cause of the origin of a thing and its eventual utility, its actual employment in a system of purposes, lie worlds apart." Whatever exists, Nietzsche continues, "is again and again re-interpreted to new ends, taken over, transformed, and redirected by some power superior to it." This process involves a perpetual becoming master through fresh interpretations by which any earlier "meaning" or "purpose" are obscured (GM II.12). It stands to reason, then, that an explanation of the origin of the state, for instance, or an analysis of some existing state, tells us nothing about the state "in-itself". Crucial to perspectivism is the notion that institutions and concepts have no single meaning, but a variety of meanings according to the perspectives they are.

We should remember this when analyzing Nietzsche's conception of the state. We must determine what form of state Nietzsche refers to before making a statement to the effect that, "the state becomes the devil in Nietzsche's ethics."<sup>100</sup> Nietzsche does not, in fact, maintain a single view of all states, but analyzes the various organizations of power in each instance.

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<sup>100</sup> Kaufmann, p. 158.

A state is a large power constellation with a certain limited quanta of energy at its disposal. It can be viewed from the perspective of its increase or decrease of organizational power. In this respect, Nietzsche considers the origin of the state as an increase in power, a powerful imposition of form, that is nonetheless horrible. The origin of the state is the objectification of the instinct towards violence and usurpation. Nietzsche explains that,

the welding of a hitherto unchecked and shapeless populace into a firm form was not only instituted by an act of violence but also carried to its conclusion by nothing but acts of violence--that the oldest "state" thus appeared a fearful tyranny, as a repressive and remorseful machine, and went on working until this raw material of people and semi-animals was at last not only thoroughly kneaded and pliant but also formed. (GM II.17)

Thus could Nietzsche say, in his early essay On the Greek State, that "a man who looks into the origin of the state will henceforth seek his salvation at an awful distance from it" (S p. 11).

Nietzsche attacks the "sentimentalism" which would have the state begin with a "contract". The state was begun by commanders, and true masters whose violence and brutality remains unmatched. What do these violent natures need with a "contract"? "One does not reckon with such natures", Nietzsche observes, "their work is an instinctive creation and imposition of forms: they are the most involuntary and unconscious artists there are" (GM II.17). As Nietzsche recognizes in his early essay, states originate in the violent,

bloody, and inexplicable usurpation by a conquering caste . Yet the weaker forces attach themselves to them with mysterious speed (S p.10). People are immediately willing to become subservient to a state, to invest it with special powers and deep significance, and even contemplate it with fervour as a goal and ultimate aim of the sacrifice of the individual. Nietzsche recognizes the paradox of the situation: "The state, of ignominious low birth, for the majority of men a continually flowing source of hardship ... and yet a word at which we forget ourselves, a battle cry; which has filled men with enthusiasm for innumerable really heroic deeds " (S p.10).<sup>101</sup>

For an example of a healthy state we need only look at Nietzsche's discussion of pre-Socratic Greek politics. In his early essay on this topic, and in another short piece from this period, Homer's Contest, Nietzsche fashions an understanding of an affirmative style of political organization. Nietzsche considers the Greeks as "political men in-themselves", since life in the polis exemplifies the spirit of agon. (Of course, the individuals Nietzsche refers to are all free citizens, they are not subjected to the strug-

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<sup>101</sup> It should perhaps be noted that Nietzsche wrote these words in 1870, the same year that France declared war on Germany. Although he was by then a Swiss citizen--a prerequisite for holding a chair at a Swiss University--and therefore did not have to serve in the war, Nietzsche acquired a leave of absence from Basel University to work as a medical orderly. After a few days at the front, he contracted dysentery and diphtheria and was sent home. See Hayman, pp. 127-129.

gles of life). At the heart of Greek politics is the spirit of the contest. Nietzsche explains that the whole of Greek antiquity thinks of spite and envy otherwise than we do. They agree with Hesiod that there are two Eris-goddesses: the first is evil and leads man against one another in hostile wars of extermination; the second, the good goddess, as jealousy, spite, and envy, incites men to activity but not to the action of war; she inspires the action of the contest (HC p.55).

In its best times, the Greek state provided an arena for culture and politics, games and contests, in which the darker side of the instinct towards domination and tyranny is allowed to discharge in a healthy, and unharmed manner. The occasional war also allows for the purification and consecration of the state in noble conflicts with states of more-or-less equal power. Equality is essential for the continuation of the agon. No one can be permitted to be the best, for the contest would fail and the eternal life-basis of the state would be endangered. Ostracism, therefore, was originally a noble practice. It was not seen as a safety-valve against tyranny but as a stimulant to re-awaken the competitive forces. The Greeks, Nietzsche explains, were hostile to the modern notion of the "exclusiveness" of genius, they assumed that in the natural order of things there are always several geniuses inciting one another to action. The Hellenic conception of the contest, therefore, "abominates autoc-

racy and fears its dangers; it desires as a preventative against the genius--a second genius" (HC p. 58). To this end, the ancient educational system is also founded in the spirit of the agon. It believed that selfishness, as the individual element of the agon, was neither good nor evil in itself; it obtains this character in the aim towards which it strives. Consequently, the Ancients construed the highest aim of agonistic action to be the welfare of the whole, of civic society.

The relationship between citizen and state was not, as it is now, antagonistic. The Greeks had a deep sense of what Nietzsche calls the "state instinct". That is, they could not conceive of their existence outside of the state and therefore did not perceive the state as a mere means to individual self-interest. This latter notion arises outside of the state instinct: "only those outside of this instinct know what they want from the state and what the state is to grant them" (S p.13).

Since those who are outside of the state can see its utility, it is unavoidable that such men gain great influence in affairs of the state while those still under the sway of the unconscious purposes of the state are themselves only means to the fulfilment of these purposes. Individuals like Themistocles and Alcibiades eventually gain power and betray Hellenism by giving up its fundamental thought--the contest. In the city-states factionalism, political parties,

and the threat of tyranny leads to the ruin of the Greek political genius. "If we remove the contest from Greek life," Nietzsche writes, "then we look at once into the pre-Homeric abyss of horrible savagery, hatred, and pleasure in destruction" (HC p.60). Nietzsche realizes that this violence was always there, underneath the exterior of the contest, and he knows that all political life is necessarily ugly and mean. Yet Nietzsche demonstrates that the contest ennobles this instinct, keeping it from becoming destructive. But without the contest, the desire for revenge and domination rears its ugly head. Without the contest, the genius is nothing more than a tyrant.

The golden age ends, according to Nietzsche, with the Athenian victories in the Persian wars. Athens becomes convinced that the only way to maintain its security is through military and economic superiority. The state becomes a means to security rather than an arena for the cultural and political procreation of the Olympian man. In the end, the Greeks are unable to bear their fame and fortune. Athens and Sparta, by destroying the independence of their allies and avenging with severity the rebellions of their subjects, bring about their own ruin out of crimes of the Hybris. Their overflow of power transforms envy, jealousy, and contesting ambition into revenge, resentment, and hatred. The Hellenic state and the Hellenic man likewise degenerates (HC p.61).

The development of European politics since the age of the contesting Greeks has not been a direct and continual line of decline--the Roman and Renaissance societies were also strong ages. Yet we cannot hope to simply recapture the spirit of the agonistic Greek political system in our own time. Nietzsche abhors the "wretched embellishment of the Greeks into an ideal" and prescribes, as a curative, a reading of Thucydides or Machiavelli (T X.2). We cannot place ourselves into the conditions of strong ages, not even by an act of thought: "our nerves would not endure that reality, not to speak of our muscles" (T IX.37). Therefore, Tracy Strong is correct, I think, to emphasize that Nietzsche does not hold up the Greeks as an example to modern times in the fashion of Hannah Arendt, Leo Strauss, or Eric Voegelin.<sup>102</sup> Neither is he lamenting the passing of an ideal age when the philosopher could live an "authentic" and meaningful existence as does Martin Heidegger.<sup>103</sup> But he does set up a conceptual contrast through which we can realize that our own conception of the state, grounded in our experience with decadence alone, should not be considered as complete, ultimate, or a necessary "progress" in relation to the past.

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<sup>102</sup> Tracy B. Strong, Friedrich Nietzsche and the Politics of Transfiguration (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), p. 191.

<sup>103</sup> See Karsten Harries, "Heidegger as Political Thinker", in Heidegger and Modern Philosophy, ed. Micheal Murray (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1978), pp. 304-328.

The modern form of politics represents, above all, sickness, decline, and degeneracy. "Democracy has always been a form of decline in organizing power," Nietzsche says. Modern democracies, along with "hybrids" such as the German Reich, are "the form of decline of the state." The institutions of the state do not hold up in the face of nihilism; for in order for them to be institutions at all they must express an iron will--"a will to tradition, to authority, to responsibility for centuries to come, to the solidarity of chains of generations, forward and backward ad infinitum" (T IX.39). This kind of authority and stability is impossible in the modern age, and ideologues preaching the message of this kind of subordination are liars and cretins attempting to advance their own rule by mollifying the masses. Ours is an age of disintegration and instability: one lives for the day, one lives a fast life, one no longer understands the meaning of noble subordination. Nietzsche writes:

It must disappear, for its foundation is disappearing, the belief in unconditional authority, in ultimate truth ... in "freer" circumstances people subordinate themselves only on conditions, in compliance with a mutual contract, consequently with all the provisos of self-interest. (HA 441)

This "free" society, as we have seen, is an illusion, and the concepts and formulas of modern thinkers are equally illusory. We imagine that our subordination is rational or self-interested, yet only the surface of our actions come to consciousness. What is lacking in the modern form of subordination, however, is the will to command one's drives and impulses.



In modern times, Nietzsche points out, the fiction of "freedom" is being promoted by those elements in society that are the least responsible to themselves or others. He says:

the claim for independence, for free development, for laiser aller is pressed most hotly by the very people for whom no reins would be too strict. That is true in politics ... as a symptom of decadence: our modern conception of "freedom" is one more proof of the degradation of the instincts. (T IX.41)

The modern idea of "freedom", Nietzsche avers, is a desire for irresponsibility. Moreover, it is desire to legislate slave morals and tyrannize the true masters.

In strong ages, "freedom" is "something one has or does not have, something one wants, something one conquers." How does Nietzsche measure freedom? "According to the resistance that must be overcome, according to the exertion required to stay on top." Freedom is found "five steps from tyranny, close to the danger of servitude." Freedom is not the absence of restraint or responsibility, but the overcoming of the most dangerous resistances, which Nietzsche believes to be the tyranny of the drives. Freedom is the "will to assume responsibility for oneself". It requires a "cleavage between man and man, status and status, the plurality of types; the will to be oneself, to stand out." But Nietzsche is clear about "the kind of freedom I do not mean": it is not freedom to give in to any desire, to be brutal or cruel, to abdicate the control over one's unruly drives (T IX.38-41).

The sort of freedom Nietzsche refers to cannot be possible under liberal institutions. What he calls the "pathos of distance", the cleavage between men, is destroyed in modern forms of the state. Individuals are squeezed together, the space between them is filled up. People cannot posit their own values in liberal states, for they have no measure of their differences or their status. But things were different when these institutions were being fought for. Liberal institutions were created by very illiberal instincts and actions that "really promoted freedom in a powerful way." These institutions, however, cease to be "liberal"--that is, freedom promoting--once they are attained. "Later on", explains Nietzsche, "there are no worse and no more thorough injurers of freedom than the liberal institution"(T IX.38).

It is the liberal state that Zarathustra attacks in his speech, "On the New Idol" (Z I.2). "State", he says, "this is the name of the coldest of all cold monsters." It is a lie that the state is the people, Nietzsche says, the state destroys peoples. Every people has its own "tongue of good and evil", its own rights and customs that its neighbors do not understand. Yet the state speaks in a "confusion of tongues of good and evil", for the purpose of serving the "all-too-many" and the "superfluous". The state, Zarathustra warns, "would use you as bait for the all-too-many". It does so in a number of ways: it has stolen education from the people and used it solely as a means for turning out identi-

cal citizens; it controls the media, and hence promotes the reading of papers in which the superfluous vomit their gall and devour each other; it encourages the superfluous to gather riches, and wanting power alone, seeks it in money; finally it forces people to act like monkeys and clamber over each other and drag each other down to their depths in a mad struggle to survive. Politics in this state is anything but the healthy contest of the ancient polis. Zarathustra speaks thus:

They all want to get to the throne: that is their madness--as if happiness sat on the throne. Often mud sits on the throne--and often the throne on mud.

If this is any evidence of Nietzsche's attitude towards modern politics, then Kaufmann is certainly correct to say that Nietzsche is "anti-political". But it is clear that Nietzsche attacks only the weak forms of the state. He is only "anti-political" if one understands "politics" as it was understood in the German Reich. Nietzsche clearly states that he may be the last "anti-political German" (EH I.3), and that he is opposed to politics as it is presently construed in Germany as "race hatred" and the "national scabies of the heart and blood poisoning" of "Bismarckophobia" (GS 377).<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> For a discussion of Nietzsche's relationship to Bismarck, see Theodor Schieder, "Nietzsche and Bismarck", trans. A. Hendee, in The Historian, 29 (August 1967), pp. 584-604.

Nietzsche's attack, then, is focussed upon the most recent manifestation of declining political organization--the nation-state. As early as 1870 he realizes that the modern state contributes to the individuation and alienation of mankind, and hence to the advent of meaninglessness and worthlessness, which it, in turn, thrives upon. In contrast to the polis, the nation-state is an abstract principle which justifies its existence in teleological terms. Its glory resides in the illusion of permanence and security in an age of decay. Yet, "the individuals in antiquity were freer, because their aims were nearer and tangible," Nietzsche explains; "Modern man, on the contrary, is everywhere hampered by infinity" (HC p.59). Therefore, as Nietzsche says elsewhere,

what will not be built any more henceforth, and cannot be built any more, is--a society in the old sense of that word; to build that, everything is lacking, above all the material. We are no longer material for a society; this is a truth for which the time has come. (GS 356)

The state as a meaningful and effective principle has degenerated, along with the individual's meaningful relationship to the state.

In the face of its decay, the state has attempted to resist this process by means of false doctrines, particularly nationalism. All forms of nationalism are, to Nietzsche, reactionary political movements. They are successful, at times, but always at the expense of culture. Given that a nation, as a power constellation, is a limited quanta of

power, its eventual expenditure or expulsion of its energy is of crucial importance. Nietzsche articulates the social consequences of his doctrine most dramatically in Twilight of the Idols:

In the end, no one can spend more than he has: that is true of the individual, it is true of a people. If one spends oneself for power, power politics, for world trade, for economies, parliamentarianism, and military interests--if we spend in this direction the quantum of understanding, seriousness, will, and self-overcoming which one represents, then it will be lacking for the other direction.

Culture and State--one should not deceive oneself about this--are antagonists: "Kultur-Staat" is a purely modern idea. One lives off the other, one thrives at the expense of the other. All great ages of culture are ages of political decline: what is great culturally has always been unpolitical, even anti-political. (T XIII.4).

The great age of classical Greek culture, for instance, follows the decline of agonistic politics. Goethe is possible only at a low ebb of German political strength. Likewise, in Nietzsche's own age, he perceives an appalling presumption on the part of the masses that the Reich possesses a transcendental value and mission. While at the same time its artistic and cultural production is almost nonexistent. Concerning the triumphs of the Reich, Nietzsche says: "One pays heavily for coming to power: power makes stupid" (T XIII.1). The virulent nationalism and "Bismarkophobia" current in Nietzsche's time leads him to denounce Germany's "bold politics" and "cheerful fatherlandishness" that views everything according to that "not very philosophical principle-- Deutschland, Deutschland über alles!" (GS 357)

In his notebooks Nietzsche considers the psychological consequences of modern states:

None of us has the courage to kill a man, or even whip him, or even to--but the tremendous machine of the state overpowers the individual so he repudiates responsibility for what he does ... this is enhanced through division of labour--so that no one any longer possesses the full responsibility.  
(WP 718)

Modern democracies, contrary to what their apologists seem to think, advance this process beyond any previous form. In modern democratic states, slave morality has successfully established an institutional justification for the abdication of responsibility. Even the leaders of such states are not, in a strict sense, responsible for the actions of the state. The dangers of this situation, Nietzsche warns, are only now becoming apparent: "Formerly one had the theory of the state as a calculating utility; now one has the practice as well" (WP 725).

The world is, Nietzsche prophesizes, embarking upon a period in its history that will witness global ideological wars waged for the control of the planet. Each nation is set off against each other and each, holding on to the last remnants of belief in God, believe themselves to be the sole warriors of truth. Accordingly, "all power structures of the old society will be exploded--they are all based on lies: there will be wars the like of which have never yet been seen on earth" (EH IV.1). Early in his writings, Nietzsche expresses the danger and inevitable foolishness of the present political system:

No government admits today that it keeps an army to satisfy occasionally the desire for conquest. Rather the army is supposed to serve for defence, and one invokes the morality that approves of self-defence. But this implies one's own morality; for the neighbor must be thought of as eager to attack and conquer if our state must think of means of self-defence. Moreover, the reasons given for requiring an army imply that our neighbor, who denies the desire for conquest just as much as does our own state ... is a hypocrite and cunning criminal who would like nothing better than to overpower a helpless and awkward victim without any fight. Thus all states are now ranged against each other: they presuppose their neighbor's bad disposition and their own good one. But this is inhumane, as bad as war and worse. At bottom, indeed, it is itself a challenge and cause of wars ... We must abjure the doctrine of the army as a means to self-defence just as completely as the desire for conquests.

At this time he still extends the hope that it is possible to find a means to real peace. He continues:

Perhaps the great day will come when a people, distinguished by wars and victories and by the highest development of military order and intelligence ... will exclaim, of its own free will, "We break the sword," and will smash its entire military establishment down to its lowest foundations. Rendering oneself unarmed when one had been the best armed, out of a height of feeling--that is the means to real peace, which must always rest on a peace of mind; whereas the so-called armed peace, as it now exists in all countries, is the absence of peace of mind. One trusts neither oneself nor one's neighbors and, half from fear, half from hatred, does not lay down arms. Rather perish than hate and fear, and twice rather perish than be hated and feared--this must someday become the highest maxim for every commonwealth too. (HA 473)

This remarkable passage is all the more outstanding coming from the pen of a man who has been blamed for the last two world wars.<sup>105</sup> This passage gives us an idea, I think, of

<sup>105</sup> As early as 1914 Nietzsche was blamed, by no less of a figure than Thomas Hardy, for "the particular ruthless-

the sort of nobility Nietzsche has in mind for his master morality. The wars and battles masters must fight are, for the most part, battles for knowledge and understanding. Nietzsche has been misunderstood if he is regarded solely as an advocate of brutality and violence.

Nietzsche explains that the fearful struggle between the two opposing values "good and bad, good and evil" has been raging for thousands of years, but its highest symbol is "Rome against Judea, Judea against Rome". The Romans were strong and noble, indeed nobody yet has been stronger nor more noble. Yet Rome collapsed from the disease of Judeo-Christian ressentiment and revenge. There was, in the Renaissance, a "glittering reawakening of the classical ideal", but Judea triumphed again through that "thoroughly plebeian (German and English) ressentiment movement called the Reformation." With the French Revolution, Judea triumphed once again over the "last political noblesse in Europe, that of the French seventeenth and eighteenth centuries" (GM I.16). The "classical ideal", then, plays an important role in Nietzsche's conception of what is noble, and an examination of it will shed a good deal of light on his political ideal.

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ness of German militarism." Cited by George Wilcox, "Nietzsche in the Thirties", in Malahat Review, 24 (October 1972), pp. 67-78. On this see, David Thatcher, Nietzsche in England: 1890-1914 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970); and Herbert L. Stewart, Nietzsche and the Ideals of Modern Germany (London: Edward Arnold, 1914).



The imperium Romanum, "the most magnificent form of organization", is valuable mostly for its being a "new beginning". Rome exhibited the political will to overcome its present and lay a grand foundation for a future measured not in years but millenia. As Nietzsche explains,

its construction was designed to prove itself through thousands of years; until today nobody has built again like this, nobody has even dreamed of building in such proportions sub specie aeterni. This organization was firm enough to withstand bad emperors: the accident of persons may not have anything to do with such matters--first principle of architecture. (A 58)

In this century, Hannah Arendt has defined the Roman political experience in a similar fashion:

At the heart of Roman politics ... stands the conviction of the sacredness of foundation, in the sense that once something has been founded it remains binding for all future generations. To be engaged in politics meant first and foremost to preserve the founding of the city of Rome.

Roman politics was deeply rooted in the soil, Arendt continues, and the founding of a new body politic became the beginning of the whole history of Rome.<sup>106</sup>

Nietzsche contrasts this Roman faith in foundational politics with the opposing point of view that first became evident in Periclean Athens--the faith in "acting". In democracies, as opposed to aristocracies, the individual must "play a role" in order to succeed because there are no firm distinctions in status. When this happens, the opposing hu-

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<sup>106</sup> Hannah Arendt, Between Past and Future, Enlarged ed. (New York 1954, rpt. Hammondsworth: Penguin, 1978), pp. 120-121.

man type, "the great architect", is disadvantaged and finally becomes impossible. The strength to build becomes paralyzed; the courage to make plans for the future is discouraged; and those with a genius for organization become scarce. For the fundamental faith that would enable man to calculate, and hence to make promises for the future dies when man becomes an "actor". What dies is "the faith that man has a value and meaning only insofar as he is a stone in a great edifice" (GS 356).

Aristocratic societies enable strong individuals to posit a meaning and value for all people and to develop the foundation for the "continual self-overcoming of man". Nietzsche clearly states that, "every enhancement of the type man has so far been the work of an aristocratic society" (BGE 257). Aristocracies breed the "sovereign individual", who is liberated from morality and custom, who has above all "the right to make promises" (GM II.2). Nietzsche's genealogical analysis of this type shows that the concept of liberty is an "invention of the ruling classes" (WS 9), because only they have the strength to impose their will in the future. Democracies symbolize a "loose soil" and shifting ground that cannot provide the roots for a future.

Rome was founded on the solid foundation of antiquity. It could construct for the future because the "methods" had already been created by the Greeks. The "art of reading well", the "sense for facts", and the "integrity of knowl-

edge" provide the founding Empire with solid organizational values. These methods are the most difficult creations of man because they are opposed by the habits and by laziness. Nietzsche explains that the,

nobility of instinct, the taste, the methodical research, the genius of organization and administration, the faith in, the will to, man's future, the great Yes to all things, become visible in the grand imperium Romanum, visible for all the senses, the grand style no longer mere art but become reality, truth, life. (A 59)

These noble values serve Nietzsche as an ideal for political organization throughout his career. The greatest tragedy, he feels, was that all of this was undone over night by the vengefulness of Christianity. The Roman Empire was not vanquished, he laments, but drained of its vitality by the vampire Christianity.

The Renaissance appeared as a brief attempt at a "reevaluation of Christian values", an attempt to once again introduce the possibilities for construction of something noble. For a brief period it became possible that the church could be destroyed. "Cesare Borgia as Pope", Nietzsche jokes, "that would have been the goal of the Renaissance, its real symbol."<sup>107</sup> But the German monk, Luther, ruined all chances of the destruction of the church. By attacking it, and allowing it to reorganize its popular support, he restored it. The power of the Judeo-Christian values was entrenched in a popular sectarian movement, and its hold was extended

<sup>107</sup> Nietzsche to Brandes, Turin, 20 November 1888, Letters, no. 187, p. 327.

through the widespread increase of democratic forms of government.

Nietzsche believes that slave moralities cannot construct for the future because they are grounded in a fundamental resentment towards life. Even the socialist programs for the future are simply reworkings of the Christian concept of the "beyond". Nietzsche's classical ideal, in contrast, is affirmative and foundational because noble types can make promises that they have the power to fulfil. The classical ideal is free from the concept of the "chosen people"--paralleled in the "dictatorship of the proletariat"--that assumes that the future is predetermined. Nietzsche's concept depends upon the firm foundation and method of constructing a future for the enhancement of the human condition.

We are now in a better position to discuss Nietzsche's position regarding the various political doctrines that were competing for power in his time. It is crucial to note that all of these ideologies desire the control of the state as a means to their own political ends. Furthermore, since they are all born of a declining line in the world, they all exhibit the characteristics of slave morality.

#### 5.4 SOCIALISM, LIBERALISM, AND CONSERVATISM

Nietzsche's attacks on socialism are well known, and he devoted more attention to a critique of socialism than to any other single political doctrine. One reason for this, I feel, is that Nietzsche believed socialism to be the logical conclusion to the Christian world-view. The virtues of Christianity--compassion, altruism, pity, resentment of riches, and an ascetic life--have become part and parcel of the socialist creed. Socialism shares the "Christian moral-hypothesis" that Nietzsche articulates in the following way: (1) it grants man an absolute value as opposed to his accidental existence in the flux of becoming and passing away; (2) it concedes to the world, in spite of suffering, the character of perfection--including individual freedom; (3) it posits absolute values that man can have knowledge of; and (4) it prevents man from taking sides against life--it is a means of preservation (WP 4). In other words, the Christian moral-hypothesis supplies a rationale for a miserable existence, and offers a paradigm of the good life to come.

Socialism is necessarily a teleological doctrine, and as such contradicts Nietzsche's ontological assumptions. Nietzsche believes that if the world had an end, it would have been reached by now (WP 1066). Any idea that rests on an ultimate purpose or end in the world is thereby refuted. Marxian historiography, for instance, searches for a univocal

historical coherence in which to ground social theory. Nietzsche's perspectivism would claim that this project is itself born of a slavish desire for an other-worldly power in which all doubts are resolved. This historical optimism is itself ideological, and it is an imperative to herd timidity.<sup>108</sup> For Nietzsche: "Mankind does not advance, it does not even exist." The overall experiment of man constitutes a few ages of success and others of failure, in which "all logic, order, union, and obligingness are lacking" (WP 90, Cf. A 42).

Like Christianity, socialism preaches the equality of souls, and the virtues of compassion and altruism. It preaches resentment against those who have possessions and serves as a rallying cry for the underprivileged and dispossessed. For Nietzsche, the political slogans of the socialists reveal that they are merely means for the individual ends of their proponents.

Socialism ... grasps that, to attain anything, one must organize oneself to a collective action, to a "power". But what it desires is not a social order as the goal of an individual but a social order as a means for making possible individuals ... the preaching of altruistic morality in the service of egoism: one of the most common lies of the nineteenth century. (WP 784)

Furthermore, the preaching of morality aside, the means to power that socialist "improvers of mankind" must believe in are, of course, by their own standards immoral: "all the

<sup>108</sup> For a further discussion of Marx's theory of history and the limits Nietzsche's thinking imposes on it, see Miller, pp. 26-33; and Strong, pp. 210-217.

means by which one has so far tried to make mankind moral were through and through immoral" (T XII.5).

Finally, Nietzsche criticizes socialists for what may be called their "economic optimism". That is, the faith that the mere development of productive forces will result in the type of well-rounded individual eager to "hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, and criticize after dinner." On the contrary, Nietzsche avers:

Once we possess that common economic management of the earth that will soon be inevitable, mankind will be able to find its best meaning as a machine in the service of the economy--as a tremendous clockwork, composed of ever smaller, ever more subtly "adapted" gears; as an ever growing superfluity of all dominating and commanding elements; as the whole of tremendous force, whose individual forces have minimal value. (WP 866)

In fact, if the workers have their way, Nietzsche suggests, they will by no means be willing to become cogs in the socialist future. All the worker desires is to raise himself high enough to live a mediocre existence. Nietzsche insists that we should conceive of a,

right as a privilege. A man's state of being is his privilege. Let us not underestimate the privileges of the mediocre. As man climbs higher, life becomes ever harder; the coldness increases, responsibility increases. (A 57)

Nietzsche continues to say that when the higher type treats the mediocre more tenderly than themselves or their peers, that "this is not merely politeness of the heart--but duty." The socialists should be decent enough, for their part, to realize that the worker should not be urged to sacrifice

himself for the sake of abstract principles of free production. But the socialists, in Nietzsche's opinion, have no feelings of duty or responsibility to the workers, they only desire to undermine the workers' sense of pride and teach them to be envious.

Nietzsche nevertheless regards socialism as the inevitable continuation of the democratization of society. But we must keep its significance in perspective, he claims, and not grant it more or less importance than other democratic developments. In the end, he sees it as a natural outgrowth of pent up power and force in an exploited group. Thus, he says, "as regards socialism ... if it is really a rising against oppression by those who for centuries have been oppressed and downtrodden, there is no problem of 'right' involved ... but only a problem of power, the same, for instance, as in the case of a natural force--steam for instance (HA 446). Nietzsche's major attack on the socialist camp is their moralistic tendency to disregard the fact that their ideology is a mere tool for a reorganization of power; they continually talk of their "right", of an "ought" while simply struggling for power.

As regards liberalism, Nietzsche speaks of its reverence for "freedom", "equality", and "justice" as the most successful manifestation of herd morality. The liberal is not much different from the socialist, except that his group has attained a certain amount of power. Liberalism has embedded



itself, institutionally, in the European political consciousness. All parties, Nietzsche realizes, speak in terms of liberal themes. The thrust of liberalism, in Nietzsche's estimation, is the decline of the separating, making distant, making above and below that characterizes aristocratic commonwealths. Liberalism is, however, escapist: it prefers to pacify, smooth over, and compromise rather than confront the reality of crisis. It is, once again, a sickly and weak reaction against the turbulent chaos of reality. It imposes an illusory feeling of calm, and preaches the basic goodness of mankind. This love of humanity is, to Nietzsche, obscene. He suggests that one needs an overly refined sense of the erotic to confer one's lust on the whole of humanity (GS 377).

The age of liberalism, and hence modernity, emphasizes "anxious self-solicitude, and neighbor love." Its virtues of work, modesty, legality, and scientism ("accumulating, economic, machine-like") are regarded by Nietzsche as symptoms of a weak age. Equality, as construed by liberals, is merely a "response to a certain factual increase in similarity, which finds its expression in the theory of 'equal rights'." Having observed the fact of increased similarity, liberal theorists--the fathers of empiricism and rationalism, not to mention naturalism--set it up as an ideal, as the "truth" to which political life must conform. In all political theories and constitutions of the modern age, therefore, we find

that the mendacious effect of decadence has assumed mastery and reverence. Even the social sciences have been inflicted with the liberal-democratic ideal. Modern sociologists--Herbert Spencer for instance--know from experience only the forms of social decay, their prescriptions are similarly decadent (T IX.37,38). As Thomas Pangle points out, Nietzsche perceives an "implicit harmony between the interpretation of the natural scientific method imposes on life, and the levelly homogeneity fostered by democracy."<sup>109</sup> The "rational" society proposed by the liberals is a utilitarian and plebeian nightmare to Nietzsche's eyes. It mitigates radically against the creativity essential to unique, abstract, and "individual" individuals.

Despite the ineffectiveness of socialist and liberal alternatives, Nietzsche does not view conservatism as a viable "counter-movement to nihilism." The conservative viewpoint is equally banal, impotent, and slavish. In a section of Twilight of the Idols entitled, "Whispered to the Conservatives", Nietzsche says that what was not known formerly, and is now possible to know, is the fact that today, "a reversion, a return in any sense or degree is simply not possible." Conservatism wants to take man back, or even screw him back ("morality is always Procrustes' bed"), to a former measure of virtue. Conservative politicians, Nietzsche finds, tend to "ape preachers of virtue" on this point.

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<sup>109</sup> Pangle, p. 69.

Nietzsche exclaims that,

today too there are still parties whose dream it is that all things might walk backwards like crabs. But one no longer is free to be a crab. Nothing avails: one must go forward--step by step into decadence (that is my definition of modern "progress"). One can check this development and dam it up, gather it and make it more vehement and sudden: one can do no more. (T IX.43)

The conservative position, moreover, extols a reverence for tradition, authority, law and order, and privilege in a world where there is no foundation for these institutions. Nietzsche sees these slogans for what they are: that is, as means to the preservation of a status quo in which the accidentally high-born and economically advantaged justify their desire to rule. he calls their attitude "ludicrous" because "it does not admit the element of violence in the law, the severity and egoism in every kind of authority." According to Nietzsche, the moral message is that, "I and my kind want to rule and survive ... that is the basic feeling behind every ancient legislation" (WP 755).

Finally, Nietzsche argues that the conservative position is the ultimate in political reaction, that it is outdated, its adherents blind, and its philosophy helpless in the face of any challenge. Conservatives always rely upon dishonesty to justify their faith:

the reasons and purposes for habits are always lies that are added after some people begin to attack these habits and ask for reasons and purposes. At this point the conservatives of all ages are thoroughly dishonest: they add lies. (GS 29)

Needless to say, modern conservatism is particularly objectionable to Nietzsche since the society it wishes to conserve is the result of a long line of declining life.

Clearly, Nietzsche wishes to set himself apart from all modern political movements. He and his readers are termed "children of the future" and necessarily disvalue "all ideals that lead one to be at home in this fragile, broken time of transition." Nietzsche sums up his own political outlook in a simple and concise fashion in this passage:

We "conserve" nothing; neither do we want to return to any past periods; we are not by any means "liberal" we do not work for "progress"; we do not ... "sing of the future": this song about "equal rights", "a free society", and "no more masters and no servants" has no allure for us ... No, we do not love humanity; but on the other hand ... we do not advocate nationalism and race hatred and to be able to participate in the national scabies of the heart and blood poisoning that now leads all nations in Europe to delimit and barricade themselves against each other as if it were a matter of quarantine ... We are, in one word--and let this be our word of honor--good Europeans. (GS 377)

Nietzsche's ideal seems to be a free Europe, possibly a united continental organization that would not, in any case, be one big nation-state.

A united Europe was a tantalizing notion for Nietzsche. Along with the general skepticism and "paralysis of the will" evident in Europe at his time, was a "strength of will, to will something for a long time", apparent in certain areas of Europe. But this will is by far the strongest in the enormous Russian Empire. The strength to will in Russia has been accumulated and stored up for a long period,

and is waiting to be discharged. At the present, Nietzsche says, we cannot know whether it will manifest itself as the will to negate or the will to affirm life. If it takes the former route, possibly by adopting parliamentary democracy, Europe would not have to worry about its enormous neighbor. But if it takes the latter route, which Nietzsche hopes will be the case, there would be such an increase in the menace of Russia that Europe would have to resolve to become menacing herself. She would have to,

acquire one will by means of a new caste that would rule Europe, a long, terrible will of its own that would be able to cast its goals millenia hence--so the long drawn out comedy of its splinter states as well as its dynastic and democratic splinter wills will come to an end. The time for petty politics is over: the very next century will bring the fight for the dominion of the earth--the compulsion to large scale politics (BGE 208).

This dream serves Nietzsche as an ideal for the future of Europe. He hopes for a new foundation that will construct a political unit in which Europe would be united both culturally and politically.

There are also times at which Nietzsche seems to call for a new aristocracy of enlightened individuals. In his essay, "On Aristocratic Radicalism", George Brandes--the first major thinker to take Nietzsche seriously, and the first to lecture on Nietzsche's philosophy in a university--depicts Nietzsche as the heir to thinkers such as Taine and Renan who fight against pettiness and Culture-philistinism.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>110</sup> George Brandes, Freidrich Nietzsche, trans. A.G. Chater (1889)

Brandes says that Nietzsche, like all great revolutionaries and liberators, calls not for the "united small" but the "few great". Nietzsche himself wrote to Brandes that the "expression 'aristocratic radicalism', which you employ, is very good. It is, permit me to say, the cleverest remark I have yet read about myself."<sup>111</sup> Nietzsche seldom refers to his ideal state, but in a playful aphorism he offers his version of the slogan, "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs". Entitled "My Utopia", the passage reads as follows:

In a better arrangement of society hard labour and the troubles of life will be meted out to those who suffer least from them; hence to those who are the most obtuse, and then, step by step, up to those who are most sensitive to the highest and most sublimated kinds of suffering and who thus will still suffer when life is made easier. (HA 462)

It is clear, however, that Nietzsche does not promote the virtues of any existing political movement, and that this call for a "new arrangement of society" is as good an example of his political vision as any.

Still there are those who feel that Nietzsche seems to preach a new aristocracy of the free individual. John Carroll has gone so far as to say, despite Nietzsche's claims to the contrary, that, "in political terms, his position is individualist anarchist ... a driving hostility to any un-

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rpt. London: William Heinemann, 1914), p. 37.

<sup>111</sup> Nietzsche to Brandes, Nizza, 2 December 1887, Letters, no. 160, p. 279.

questioned authority determines his social attitudes."<sup>112</sup> This in fact may be the case. His methodology tends to push the process of devaluation, which he feels is the major characteristic of the modern age, beyond its natural movement. Since he sees in the democratization and atomization of society a view of the state as an abstract force controlling and shaping man's life, all theories which promote the use of this state for one purpose or the other are reactions to this abstract force, and are themselves decadent movements. Modern Europeans are dominated by these doctrines and cannot attain the creativity and tangibility of aims that are truly human. Nietzsche's imperative to affirm your own existence is construed as a process that does not require the state, that denies the authority of the state over the free individual. But if Nietzsche is a revolutionary, as Brandes suggests, it is clear that this revolution must first be individual, and only later social.<sup>113</sup>

In conclusion, we may now ask if the extensive critique which is evident in Nietzsche's political scholarship may be the ground for a new political order or simply an extension of our ignorance. If all our ideologies are false dogmas promoted by one perspective of power or another, does the realization of this "truth" bring us any closer to the over-

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<sup>112</sup> John Carroll, Break-Out of the Crystal Palace (London/Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), p. 97.

<sup>113</sup> Strong makes a similar point but, for some reason, has it in his mind that Mao's Cultural Revolution is an adequate paradigm for Nietzsche's ideal; p. 216-217.

coming of our age? The vast amount of data concerning our political affairs is useful, I think, for an individual realization of one's relationship to society. The power of knowledge to allow us to live in a world which we have created for ourselves is indeed liberating. This, I feel, is the message of Nietzsche's "true philosopher". This higher man can actively interpret the data of the scholarly political scientist in order to determine who he is and what he wants out of life.



## Chapter VI

### CONCLUSION

For Nietzsche, perspectivism in moral and political inquiry is necessary in order to adequately express the condition of the world as will to power. In a discussion of the role of the thinker in society, Nietzsche distinguishes between "scholars" (Gelehrten or, sometimes, wissenschaftlichen Menschen) and philosophers. The former is merely a tool of the latter and, as such, is a primarily dependent being. The scholar, Nietzsche tells us, "is a type of man that is not noble ... that does not dominate and is neither authoritative nor self-sufficient" (BGE 206). In other words, the scholar is a slave who expresses the virtues and perspectives of slave morality. As an instrument of the philosopher, the scholar is justified solely by the ends he serves--he cannot be an end in himself. He is, according to Nietzsche, a "mirror" that,

is accustomed to submit before whatever wants to be known, without any other pleasure than that found in knowing or "mirroring" ... His mirror soul, eternally smoothing itself out, no longer knows how to affirm or negate; he does not command, neither does he destroy. (BGE 211)

The scholar cannot function unless it is possible to clearly distinguish what is meaningful, and he does this on the basis of what is most valuable--truth.

The social consequences of scholarship, in this presentation of it, is discussed by Nietzsche in the third of his Untimely Meditations, which deals with Schopenhauer's influence as an educator. Here Nietzsche insists that the scholar's passion for truth is often a thinly disguised desire for power. This often takes form in the scholar's attempt to advance himself, often unconsciously, by promoting the views of the particular ruling class (U III.6). Since the state has a special fear and suspicion of philosophy and all critical thinking, it will attempt to attract and accommodate scholars to create the impression that it has philosophy, and consequently "truth", on its side. But those who succumb to the seductions of the state are usually disappointed. Nietzsche explains that, to "scholars who become politicians the comic role is usually assigned; they have to be the good conscience of a state policy" (HA 469). These "state philosophers", as Nietzsche labels them, have only the title of "philosopher" without the power. For they must necessarily recognize only the "truth" of the perspective of the state or ruling party (U III.8).

By questioning truth in a radical fashion, as we have seen, and defining it as problematic, Nietzsche undermines the role of the scholar.<sup>114</sup> Nietzsche insists that we must stop confounding the scholar and the philosopher; time has

<sup>114</sup> The importance of this process for our purposes was suggested by my reading of Mark Blitz, "Nietzsche and Political Science: The Problem of Politics", in Symposium, pp. 74-85.

come, he urges, to "give each his due". One reason for this confusion, he suggests, is the fact that it might be necessary for a philosopher to have been a scholar at one point. Nietzsche himself, "had to be a scholar, too, at one time" (EH U.3). As a scholar, the philosopher learns "to pass through the whole range of human values and value feelings and to be able to see with many eyes and consciences, from a height and into every distance, from the depths and into every height." While these labours are merely a precondition for the philosopher's task, they are, nonetheless, crucial and valuable. The scholar, Nietzsche says rather condescendingly, should be proud to serve as a tool for the genuine philosopher. After the noble model of Kant and Hegel, the new scholar shall press into formulas all the former positing of values that have become dominant over a long period of time. Their task is to make all that has happened and been esteemed easy to look over, easy to understand. They should make the data intelligible and manageable. Nietzsche clearly sees this as the role of the modern political "scientist" or systematizer. These people, in themselves, are not independent types and cannot posit values.

The labour of the sytematizer, the scholar, and scientist provides the foundation for the philosophical genius. In their catalogues of value, their analyses of institutions and doctrines, and demythologizing of the past these scholars have, in fact, overcome the past. The stage is set, so to speak, for the future. In Nietzsche's words:

Genuine philosophers, however, are commanders and legislators ... They first determine the Whither and the What for man ... With a creative hand they reach for the future, and all that is and has been becomes a means for them, an instrument, a hammer. Their "knowing" is creating, their creation is a legislation, their will to truth is--will to power. (BGE 211)

In this passage I think we have Nietzsche's most powerful affirmative political statement. Insofar as one is a philosopher, in Nietzsche's sense of the word, one is free to legislate for oneself and command for oneself. By taking these actions one becomes, as Nietzsche had called himself, "dynamite" and "destiny". Nietzsche's critical attack upon the Christian moral tradition had been that it restricted free thought, its commandment was "thou shalt not think". Nietzsche's commandment, on the contrary, is to think and feel for yourselves, thus becoming who you are.

If "knowing" is "legislating", it must involve the consciousness and solution of political problems. Blitz, therefore, suggests that we examine Nietzsche's conception of "problems". We find that problems are perspectival. That is "a problem is a problem only in connection with a certain perspective, and the same term does not indicate the same problem."<sup>115</sup> Indeed, as we have seen, something perspectival cannot be fixed, eternal, the same everywhere and for everyone. Moreover: "From the moment faith in the God of the ascetic ideal is denied, a new problem arises: that of the value of truth" (GM III.24). This is the decisive study in

<sup>115</sup> Blitz, p. 76.

the age of nihilism. Nietzsche's analysis of the drive for truth, of the desire for fixity and permanence, leads him to the realization that we ourselves posit the problems of truth. Each problem, each holding something true, is an ultimately personal, in fact physiological, matter. It can be traced to our drives and their For and Against. There is no ultimate standard of truth, because we posit truth ourselves. There is no end outside of man that makes problems problematic. Rather, foreshadowing existentialism, Nietzsche avers that we are our own problems: "really 'deep down', there is, of course, something unteachable, some granite of spiritual fatum, of predetermined decision and answer to predetermined questions" (BGE 231).

The implication of this insight is that the philosopher justifies all existence by being his problem. The philosopher is his own question because being is synonymous with living. And, as we have seen, life is itself will to power, growth, overcoming resistance, and the whole of existence. We do not simply have a variety of drives, one of which is questioning. Questioning, like growing or willing, expresses what the drive is--they are one in the same. The philosopher in this scheme is merely the most "complete" man in a world in which most men are "fragmentary".

This philosopher of the future is the decisive actor in a counter-movement to nihilism. If all life is interpretation, and interpretation is the introduction of meaning,

then the creation of meaning in a meaningless world becomes the philosopher's task. Nietzsche's challenge consists of the demand that future philosophers overcome theoretical posturing and actively legislate new goals for mankind. Marx wrote in his last Theses on Feuerbach that the "philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; but the task is to change it."<sup>116</sup> Nietzsche's perspectivism presses this same demand. Interpretation is the active realignment of reality, and thus constitutes the most radical change in the world. Nietzsche himself explains that it,

is a measure of degree of strength of will to what extent one can do without meaning in things, to what extent one can endure to live in a meaningless world because one organizes a small portion of it oneself. The philosophical objective outlook can therefore be a sign that will and strength are small. For strength organizes what is close and closest. "men of knowledge", who desire only to ascertain what is, are those who cannot fix anything as it ought to be. Artists, as intermediary species: they at least fix an image of that which ought to be; they are productive, to the extent that they continually alter and transform; unlike men of knowledge, who leave everything as it is. (WP 585)

In the final analysis, then, we must do more than simply grant theoretical assent to the notion that all knowing is interpreting. Nietzsche clearly intends that we use this principle to create new, more powerful interpretations.

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<sup>116</sup> Karl Marx, cited in The Marx-Engels Reader, 2nd. ed., ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: Norton and Norton, 1978), p. 145. It should be noted that Marx was not making a general statement here. He was referring specifically to the Young Hegelians. Nevertheless, it expresses a prominent sentiment throughout Marx's work.

Nietzsche himself proposes specific interpretations of the world, and he has no hesitation in advancing a political theory grounded in these perspectival fictions. And although there is no truth, in a strict sense, Nietzsche has no qualms about passing judgement on other interpretations. Nietzsche clearly believed that his philosophy had more than a theoretical importance. He once said that, with him "great politics" begins (EH IV.1).

There is a strong connection between Nietzsche's admiration for the foundational politics of the Roman Empire and his vision of a new beginning for European politics. The "open sea" that has been created by the devaluation of values and norms provides, once again in history, the possibility for a politics that is measured by millenia. But before there can be a new beginning, there must be a complete destruction of all remaining residue from the oppressive monotheistic ages. The old ways of speech and action must be vanquished, and we must begin to lay a broad foundation for the future. Perspectivism is an essential method in the revaluation of values. It not only destroys the most sacred illusions of all previous moralities, but it provides the strong and healthy philosopher with the ability to see the world as a whole. If new philosophers are to be "architects" of a new future, they must be able to calculate and legislate the individuals as solid "stones" in a great edifice.

There is no doubt that Nietzsche conceives of his new foundation as a re-establishment of aristocratic values. He says of his philosophy that it,

brings the triumphant idea of which all other modes of thought will ultimately perish. It is the great cultivating idea: the races that cannot bear it stand condemned; those who find it the greatest benefit are chosen to rule. (WP 1053)

Since every enhancement of the type man has been the work of aristocracies it is not surprising that his perspectivism, as a foundational doctrine, will be accepted only by the few strong. Those who "stand condemned" in Nietzsche's eyes are those who cannot affirm the world as will to power. Just as the Jew and the Christian had "stood convicted of hatred for the whole human race" in Rome (GM I.16), so the bad examples of men will be condemned for resisting the attempt to enhance man by building something beyond him. Nietzsche's position is only valid provided that he has the right to link the salvation and future of the human race with the unconditional dominance of aristocratic, Roman values.

Nietzsche's evaluations arise out of his own perspective of ascending life as a necessary condition for his enhancement of power and for others like him. These other "homeless ones" are not happy to seek their salvation in petty politics, and in temporal struggles. With them "great politics" means an alliance of all aristocratic types in Europe as the true leaders. But this aristocracy must have the methods of philosophers who are commanders and legislators, just as the



Romans had the methods of the architect who could construct a solid structure. Nietzsche considers his method as a tool for this construction, the subtitle of Twilight of the Idols is "Philosophy with a Hammer". The hammer is a tool for destruction and for construction, and Nietzsche's perspectivism is a subtle mixture of the two. For the "greatest struggles a new weapon is needed", Nietzsche explains, "the hammer." It is needed to provoke a fearful decision, and "to confront Europe with the consequences: whether its will 'wills' destruction" (WP 1054). But there are two sorts of destruction, and we need a keen eye to see this distinction. There are those who want to destroy simply out of revenge, resentment, and a distaste for anything solid. But there is also destruction out of an overabundance of power, a destruction that is a necessary precondition for a new foundation to be built.

At this point we may have to confront the issue of Nietzsche's paradoxical position. He states emphatically that all knowing is interpreting, and that we should attempt to see with as many eyes as possible. Yet he advances a political formula that is locked into a narrow perspective of his own desire for a certain type of ruling order. If reality is merely chaos, if there is no stable world order, and our world is nothing more than a multiplicity of competing perspectives, is not everything which Nietzsche says itself nothing more than interpretation from his own perspective?

Does this not mean that after having denied the possibility of any one adequate formulation of the world, and hence any concrete project for its change, that Nietzsche nevertheless turns around and offers such a formulation and prescription?

There is little doubt that he is indeed offering another world interpretation. Even the statement "there are no facts only interpretations" must be an interpretation and not a fact. The world is not a "text" that admits to a single reading. Somebody could come along one day and "read" out of the same phenomena a totally different "picture" of the world. And in fact this is all that Nietzsche says he has done. Confronted with the "bad philology" of the prevailing moral and political dogmas, Nietzsche reads everywhere the "tyrannically inconsiderate and relentless enforcement of desires for power." Every word, every theory, and every value concerning the world is a claim to power. And Nietzsche is not an exception. He states: "Supposing that this also is only interpretation, and you will be eager enough to make this objection?--well, so much the better" (BGE 22).

Nietzsche's interpretation, however, constitutes a "radical new cognitive paradigm" which is free from the inconsistencies and inflexibility of the tradition.<sup>117</sup> This radical theory of knowledge, moreover, is intended to ground a radically new politics for the future. Nietzsche is decisively aware that his political formula is an interpretation, but

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<sup>117</sup> Grimm, p. 191.

therein lies its power and chief advantage. Nietzsche emphasizes that we can become free from the presupposition that there is a single binding reality for everyone, which determines and conditions our perceptions. Cognition, rather, is a physiological matter. That Nietzsche sees things differently than most is, to him, a sign of distinction. In his model there is no limit to the expanse of human possibilities, the "new infinity" which Nietzsche encourages by destroying all that makes life in this world bearable is justified by the possibility that a new beginning is once again imaginable.

Nietzsche's reformulation of the cognitive process is justified by its application in the political realm. We can employ it in political and social analysis and thus increase our vital powers in relation to the world and the human condition. But we do so not by defining its conformity to external laws but in actively interpreting the world according to our needs. The actual character of the world is of little significance apart from the questions, "What is it for me?" and "What is it for the future of an enhanced mankind?" Insofar as all previous political theories may be measured according to the degree to which they enhance and increase the power of the type man, Nietzsche argues that his interpretation is the best so far. He feels that he has predecessors in Thucydides and in Machiavelli's Prince. Here political theory seeks its justification in the "reality" of

individual life, not in "reason" , and still less in "morality" (T X.11).

To the modern reader, the notion that the individual knower literally constitutes his own reality should no longer seem extravagant. Robert Ornstein, for instance, has developed a psychology that demonstrates how the individual selects, edits, and appropriates sensory stimuli such that the individual's conscious reality is literally that individual's creation.<sup>118</sup> Gestalt psychology has further explained the phenomena of creative cognition. The rorschack ink blots operate in much the same fashion as Nietzsche's perspectivism would imply. The greater part of the "meaning" of an object is the result of our unconscious forming of a "picture" that is in many ways unique to us. Moreover, the optical shifts from one image to another involves the construction of an entirely different and new world of reality.

Atwell has suggested that Nietzsche's perspectival social science methodology is generally accepted today by a wide range of "ontological pluralists" and others who believe that "facts are theory laden". Nietzsche recognized long before most the interconnection of "facts", "theories", and "values". He further realized the superficiality of the human, all-too-human desire to bifurcate ontological concepts in order to flee from a world that does not admit to a sin-

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<sup>118</sup> Cited in Grimm, p. 196; see Robert Ornstein, The Psychology of Consciousness (San Fransisco: W.H. Freeman, 1972).

gle "sole-saving interpretation." This tendency has also insisted upon separating "social" from "personal" knowledge, an effort that is doomed to failure within the paradigm of Nietzsche's perspectivism.<sup>119</sup>

Thomas Kuhn, in his influential theory concerning the structure of scientific revolutions, has illustrated how a change in paradigm or reinterpretation of the word constitutes a change in the reality which we experience.<sup>120</sup> As both Magnus and Grimm have hinted, there are certain parallels with Nietzsche in Kuhn's notion of paradigm shifting.<sup>121</sup> Kuhn maintains that the paradigm shifts brought about by such seminal thinkers as Copernicus, Galileo, Kant, Einstein, and Heisenberg literally change the world which we experience. Although Kuhn does not take the epistemological and moral implications of this insight to the extents that we have seen that Nietzsche does, there are striking similarities in their presentations of this thought. Kuhn shows that paradigms are based upon presuppositions of "truth", without which science could not exist. But these "truths" (in Nietzsche's language "illusions") inevitably control

<sup>119</sup> Atwell mentions Goodman, Hanson, and Midgely as modern thinkers who have insisted that there can be no such dichotomy. Perhaps we should also include Micheal Polanyi into this group. See his Personal Knowledge (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

<sup>120</sup> Thomas Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, 2nd ed. (Chicago: International Encyclopedia of Unified Science), Vol. 2. No. 2. 1970.

<sup>121</sup> Magnus, Nietzsche's Existential Imperative, p. 33; and Grimm, pp. 85 and 196.

scientific inquiry itself. Within what Kuhn calls "normal science" there is an attempt to force nature into pre-constructed theoretical "Procruste's beds", which the paradigm supplies. Normal science does not attempt to create new "truths" or new theories, and phenomena that do not fit the paradigm are simply "not seen at all". Normal scientists in Kuhn's picture of them are basically an egoistic and slavish lot that is indeed intolerant and resentful of theories invented by others. Normal science is directed towards the articulation of "truths" that have already been "discovered" and resists any notion that new ones can be created.<sup>122</sup> Kuhn's examination of the nature of normal science brings into sharp focus the reluctance of most individuals towards altering accepted perspectives, and hence the tremendous revolutions brought about by a paradigm shift constituting the creation of completely new worlds.

The most extreme case of Nietzsche's perspectivism in action has been suggested by Dennis Rohatyn. He believes that there are significant parallels between Nietzsche's Übermensch and Carlos Casteneda's Yaqui sorcerer.<sup>123</sup> The sorcerer, Don Juan, teaches the powers of self-overcoming through a transcendence of traditional concepts and thought patterns (he is further aided by the powers of hallucination brought

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<sup>122</sup> Kuhn, p. 24.

<sup>123</sup> Dennis Rohatyn, "Who is Nietzsche's Overman", in his Two Dogmas of Philosophy and Other Essays (London: Associated Universities Presses, 1977).

about by various drugs). Rohatyn concentrates on the attitude one would have if one took perspectivism seriously. The result is a type of man who assumes that there must be creativity in valuation, pertinacity in one's personal actions, kindness towards inferiors, and respect for equals.<sup>124</sup> The resultant man must incessantly overcome himself, moving from one perspective to another more powerful one in a constant struggle to increase his vital powers.

Finally, perspectivism has been adopted by an important political theorist and social critic as the best possible method for analyzing the atomic age. In a little known book, Ortega Y Gasset has argued that perspectivism, often called "the doctrine of point of view", is a superior alternative to the relativist and rationalist conceptions of man and the world.<sup>125</sup> Here Ortega argues that perspective is a component part of reality, and that a reality that remained the same would be a ridiculous conception. He believes that reality possesses an infinite number of perspectives, and that the sole false perspective is that which claims to be the only one.<sup>126</sup> This "provincialism", as he calls it, has been decisively refuted by the invention of Einstein's theory of relativity. But this is not meant to be another step towards "subjectivism", for perspective acquires objectivity because

<sup>124</sup> Rohatyn, p. 143.

<sup>125</sup> Jose Ortega Y Gasset, The Modern Theme, trans. James Cleugh (New York: Harper and Row, 1961).

<sup>126</sup> Ortega, p. 92.

it determines an exclusive optic. If the social implications of perspectivism were to be comprehended, Ortega suggests, we would come to experience life and history in a different way. The individual would no longer be coerced into replacing his spontaneous viewpoint with a more standardized version, thus he could be "loyal to the unipersonal imperative which represents his individuality." It is the same with nations. Instead of regarding each other with hatred and suspicion, they could come to respect each other's point of view and derive from each new methods and perspectives towards their respective problems.<sup>127</sup>

The insight that all knowing is perspectival interpretation, it seems, can generate new and valuable insights through its own inner dynamism. It is methodologically unsound, however, to suggest that these examples prove Nietzsche's perspectivism in any ultimate way. But powerful and imaginative insights that are parallel to Nietzsche's own do illuminate the efficacy of Nietzsche's perspectival optics and the vast range of possibilities opened up for social, scientific, and political thought. We do not have to accept Nietzsche's own perspectival formulations to grant that a theory that all knowing involves active interpretation is of great promise and utility in a world of incommensurable forms of life. In fact, Nietzsche does not want disciples, he does not desire followers. He would prefer that each in-

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<sup>127</sup> Ortega, p. 144.



dividual who has the strength and imagination to create one's own world of meaning will become a master, an aristocrat, and a commander. Naturally this leaves the door open to all kinds of "ungodly" interpretations as well as "noble" ones. But the entire history of man has been a struggle between noble and slave perspectives, and no amount of wishful thinking and philosophizing on the part of the moralists has been able to change that. In the end, Nietzsche leaves himself vulnerable to exploitation by various interpretations, but he seems to be willing to take this risk in the hope that something new and constructive will follow his destruction of "truth" and "value".

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